ROMA TRE

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"Who Can Harness History?"
America's Quest for World Order, the Gulf Crisis, and the Making of the Post-Cold War Era
1990-1992

Diego Pagliarulo

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Docente Guida/Tutor: Prof. Leopoldo Nuti

Coordinatore: Prof. Leopoldo Nuti

Abstract

The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the Gulf crisis of 1990-91 and its aftermath through the prism of how it served as a test and a defining moment for US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, in terms of both how to articulate America's global leadership and how to understand the key challenges of contemporary international security. Based on extensive research on newly-available archival evidence from the George H.W. Bush Presidential Library, this piece of research examines how the policies taken by President George H.W. Bush and his national security staff in response to the challenges posed by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait led them to the development of a framework for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

The dissertation argues that the Bush Administration entered office in 1989 determined to articulate a national security strategy strictly consistent with the Cold War "containment" doctrine of confrontation with the Soviet Union, and that the US contribution to the Cold War endgame was strongly influenced by that conservative foreign policy outlook. Evidence suggests that, although they felt that the Gulf crisis was in fact the first crisis of a new era, Bush and his staff understood the challenge posed by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait mainly through the prism of traditional and Cold War US national security doctrines, such as the Carter Doctrine and the assumption that no hostile power should achieve hegemony over a region of critical strategic and economic relevance to American interests. The acknowledgment that the preservation of an international system of multilateral cooperation led by the US would be a critical asset for a post-Cold War national security policy led the Bush Cabinet to articulate its strategy toward the Gulf crisis by appealing to universal principles of international cooperation and collective security, and in this effort to conceptualize a vision for a post-Cold War "new world order," the President and his staff drew inspiration from past US efforts to organize the peace in the aftermath of major conflicts. The promotion of universal values, however, contrasted with the pursuit of some strategic goals considered vital by the White House to the achievement of a settlement in the Gulf favorable to American

national interests, especially the dismantlement of Iraq's unconventional arsenal and the neutralization of the threat to regional stability posed by Saddam Hussein's regime. The Bush Administration hoped to circumvent these crucial political and strategic dilemmas by adopting a military strategy that appeared to be capable of achieving the national goals in a way that made them justifiable as instrumental to the pursuit of the universally endorsed objectives of liberating Kuwait and minimize casualties. The US-led military campaign failed to create all the political outcomes the White House was hoping for, and eventually the President and his advisers resolved to content themselves of a limited but outstanding military success which boosted US global standing. The Bush Cabinet, however, was not prepared to foreswear its desire to achieve all the goals it had judged necessary to achieve a satisfying settlement of the conflict with Saddam's Iraq. Such an attitude forced the Administration to divert increasing political and diplomatic resources from the pursuit of other long term objectives which appeared within reach in the aftermath of the Gulf War, such as the achievement of a sustainable and cooperative regional order in the Gulf and the promotion of a settlement to other long-standing conflicts in the Middle east.

This dissertation argues that such an over-ambitious attitude was the result of the combination between the Bush Administration's original conservative political outlook and its assessment of the implications of America's emerging status as the only remaining superpower. The dissertation finally notes that, despite its costs in terms of legitimacy of, and support for, US global leadership, the foreign policy template developed by the George H.W. Bush Administration turned out to be appealing in the view of subsequent American Presidents and national security teams as well, and represents one of the most relevant legacies of the Gulf War experience to the making of post-Cold Was US grand strategy.

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Aknowledgements

This dissertation – as arguably any piece of research – is in large part the product of the teaching and example of the many brilliant scholars I have had the privilege to work with; of the patience and helpfulness of the archivists, librarians, and administrative personnel I benefited from; and of the love and friendship of the many people who supported me.

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The people I interviewed – Ambassadors Charles Freeman, Thomas Pickering, and Roman Popadiuk; Gen. Brent Scowcroft; and Dr. Philip Zelikow – gave me sincere and informative personal recollections about the decisions they took and the documents they produced. They all demonstrated an exemplary openness and willingness to contribute to the understanding of the dramatic events they dealt with.

My research trips to the various archives I visited would not have been as productive as they were without the assistance of so many professional and helpful archivists. The Bush library staff, particularly Dr. Robert Holzweiss, Liz Myers, Chris Pembelton, and Rebecca Sams, definitely deserve a special mention. I also need to thank the Scowcroft Institute at the Bush School of Government of Texas A&M University for funding part of my research at the Bush Library. Griffin Rozell, who was Assistant Director of the Scowcroft Institute by the time I carried out my archival research, was incredibly friendly and helpful.

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Introduction

"There is one fundamental issue that faces America as it faces no other nation. It is an issue peculiar to America and peculiar to America in the 20th Century – now. It is deeper even than the immediate issue of War. If America meets it correctly, then, despite hosts of dangers and difficulties, we can look forward and move forward to a future worthy of men, with peace in our hearts."

Henry R. Luce, 1941[1]

"As Americans, we know that there are times when we must step forward and accept our responsibility to lead the world away from the dark chaos of dictators, toward the brighter promise of a better day."

President George H.W. Bush, January 29, 1991[2]

The topic of this dissertation is a story of power and opportunities – unprecedented power and unprecedented opportunities, as the main characters would probably describe it. It's the story of how an American President and his staff entered office ready to fight another round of the Cold War – the struggle that had defined their understanding of international relations, and to a large extent their broader political experience – and suddenly found themselves "standing alone at the heights of power"[3] in a brand new world in which it appeared legitimate to ask the question "Who can harness history?" and confidently answer "Only the U.S."[4] – a new world where former arch-enemies appeared ready to cooperate and follow America's lead, but new, and often uncharted, threats replaced the old and familiar ones. It is the story of the confrontation between George H.W. Bush – then the leader of the most powerful nation on earth and of the triumphant "free world" – and Saddam Hussein – the modern epitome of the bloody tyrant and rogue leader. It

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1   Henry R. Luce, "The American Century", *Life*, February 17, 1941, pp. 61-65, reprinted in *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 159-171.

2   "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union January 29, 1991,", *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2656&year=1991&month=01 .

3   George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* , (New York: Knopf, 1998) p. 564

4   Brent Scowcroft, "Who Can Harness History? Only the U.S.", *The New York Times*, July 2, 1993, http://www.nytimes.com/1993/07/02/opinion/who-can-harness-history-only-the-us.html .

is the story of how the US response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait became a formative experience for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era – of how Bush's and his staff's reactions and initiatives taken as a consequence of the challenge posed by Saddam since August 2, 1990, led them to the development of a framework for American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era.

The Gulf crisis of 1990-91 occurred at a critical transitional period in the history of modern international relations. Only a few months before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the fall of the Berlin Wall had ignited a process of revolutionary change in Europe and in global affairs, both in geopolitical and ideological terms. Just a few months after the crisis subsided the Soviet Union ceased to exist, the bipolar world disappeared and the US found itself as the sole global superpower of the post-Cold War era. The conflict also served as a catalyst for the debate about the future of international relations and America's role in the world. Prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait scholars and pundits in the US were debating whether the end of the Cold War represented the "End of History."[5] The Gulf War shifted the focus of the debate on the implications of the end of bipolarity and the apparent "Unipolar Moment" enjoyed by the US.[6] Yet just a couple of years after the liberation of Kuwait the main question revolved around how to relate to the apparently inevitable tendencies toward anarchy in certain areas of the world, and whether the future of international affairs would be characterized by tensions and clashes among competing "civilizations."[7] The purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to analyze the Gulf Crisis through the prism of how it served as a test and a defining moment for US foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, in terms of both how to articulate America's global leadership and how to understand the key challenges of contemporary international security.

The crisis in the Gulf of 1990-91 is still a relatively new field of research in the

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5   Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?", *The National Interest*, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18.
6   Charles Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 70, No. 1, (Winter 1990-1991), pp. 23-33.
7   Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy", *The Atlantic,* February 1994, http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/4670/ ; Samuel P. Huntington, "A Clash of Civilizations?", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 3, (Summer 1993), pp. 22-49.

domain of international history. In its immediate aftermath reporters and scholars of strategy and international affairs produced quite a few pieces of analysis of the conflict, especially of the war, and a few of them – such as the *Gulf Conflict, 1990-91* by Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh or *The Generals' War* by Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor – continue to serve as indispensable references or engaging inside stories and sources of inspiration for researchers.[8] Memoirs by top American political and military officials – such as those of President Geroge H.W. Bush and his National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft; Gen. Norman H. Scwarzkopf, the commander of American and allied forces in the Gulf during the crisis; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; Gen. Colin Powell, who served as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff from 1989 to 1993; and Richard N. Haass, then Special Assistant to the President for Near East and South Asian Affairs at the NSC – provide critical and authoritative accounts and interpretations of American policy toward the crisis.[9] They give important insights on the Bush Administration's overall foreign policy outlook as well as on decision-making at critical junctures of the crisis, and on the President's and his advisers shrewdness in the conduct of relations with foreign leaders and sensitivity for what Baker has called "the politics of diplomacy."[10] The obvious limit of those personal recollections is the fact that their authors could not be completely impartial or

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8   Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91. Diplomacy and war in the New World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994); Michael R. Gordon and General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little Brown, 1995). Other useful studies of the conflict published in its immediate aftermath include: Roland Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: a Political and Strategic Analysis* (London: Brassey's for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992); Jeffrey McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict: A Military Analysis* (London: Brassey's for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993); Bassma Kodmani-Darwish et May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient* (Paris: IFRI-Editeur Dunod, 1991); Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York : Simon and Shuster, 1991); James Gow (ed.), *Iraq, The Gulf Conflict and the World Community (London: Brassey's, 1993); Nicole Gnesotto and John Rooper (eds.), Western Europe and the Gulf* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1992).

9   George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* , (New York: Knopf, 1998); Norman H. Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992); James A. Baker III with Thomas De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolutions, War and Peace 1989-1992* (New York, Putnam's, 1995); Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books-Random House, 1996); Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice. A Memoir of Two Iraq Wars* (New York: Random House, 2009). For a general overview of the Foreign policy of the Bush Administration see: Steven Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration. In Search of a New World Order* (London: Cassel, 1999).

10   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. XV, passim.

detached from the events they lived. Memoirs by foreign leaders – such as Mikhail Gorbachev and his Middle East envoy, Yevgeni Primakov, or UN Secretary Generals – provide scholars with an opportunity for cross-checking, and thus help develop a more critical understanding of the events of 1990-91.[11] A recently released and interesting, although controversial, recollection of the events examined in this dissertation is provided by a series of interviews with Saddam Hussein conducted by the FBI in 2004, after the capture of the Iraqi dictator.[12]

Only progress in the declassification of official documents, however, has enabled scholars, and this author among others, to analyze American policy toward the Gulf Crisis from a truly historical perspective. The present dissertation, therefore, is based on archival evidence collected at the Bush Library in College Station, TX; at the Library of Congress, in Washington DC (the Papers of Anthony Lake); and the Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives at King's College, in London (Freedman Collection); as well as a number of interviews with former American diplomats and foreign policy-makers, conducted by this author between 2009 and 2010. It also relies on a review of analyses of the end of the Cold War as well as of the major crises of the early 1990s, studies on the evolution of world politics and American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era, memoirs and personal recollections by former American officials that served during the first Bush Administration. Other sources include some of the classic works on American foreign relations and the most influential publications that shaped the American foreign policy debate during the late 1980s and the early 1990s are considered. Critically, as noted above, sources also include

The only major study of the Gulf crisis published so far which draws on an extensive archival research is *Circle in the Sand*, by Christian Alfonsi, an engaging and at times provocative account that argues that the policy choices taken by the George H.W. Bush Administration in 1990-91 directly contributed to the tragedy of

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11   Mikhail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996); Evguéni Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad, histoire d'une négociation secrète* (Paris : Editions du Seuil,1991) ; Javier Perez De Cuellar, *Pilgrimage for Peace: a Secretary General's Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished. A US-UN Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999).

12   National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI. Twenty Interviews and Five Conversations with 'High Value Detainee #1' in 2004", Edited by Joyce Battle, Assisted by Brendan McQuade, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/index.htm .

9/11 and the invasion of Iraq of 2003 by the Administration of Bush's son.[13] This dissertation is comparable to Alfonsi's work since it provides an in-depth examination of the Gulf crisis and assesses the importance of that experience to the making of American foreign policy in the post-Cold War era. It differs from Alfonsi's work, however, in some important respects. First, thanks to the completion of a number of mandatory review requests, this author has had access to previously classified archival evidence, especially transcripts of conversations between President Bush and foreign leaders. These documents give interesting indications about how the Administration understood the stakes in the Gulf crisis and the differences in the way leaders at White House explained them to their closest allies, or the leaders of other major powers and international institutions. Second, the objective of this dissertation is not to analyze the Gulf crisis of 1990-91 through the prism of later events or to establish direct links with them. The relevance of the George H.W. Bush Administration's response to the invasion of Kuwait to post-Cold War US foreign and national security policy will indeed be emphasized in this dissertation, but it will emerge from an analysis of the mentality and the ideological factors that shaped the decisions taken at critical junctures during the Cold War endgame, the the crisis of 1990-91 and, finally, in its aftermath. Of critical importance within this framework will be the examination of the analogies between the challenges faced (and perceived) by Bush and his advisers and the dilemmas faced by Twentieth Century American leaders who happened to be in a comparable situation. As the next chapters will show, interpretations of, and perceived lessons from, past events weighted heavily on the Bush Cabinet's decision-making. For this reason, even before proceeding with the outline of the structure and the main thesis of this dissertation, this introduction will provide a short critical survey of the scholarly interpretations of the previous US attempts to shape the international system.

America and the Challenge of World Order

On January 29, 1991, American air forces in the Persian Gulf, along with their

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13   Christian Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand. The Bush Dynasty in Iraq* (New York: Vintage, 2007), passim.

coalition partners, were in the midst of *Instant Thunder*, one of the most intensive and effective air campaigns in military history.[14] On that day, at 9:09 pm US President George H.W. Bush delivered his Address on the state of the Union before a joint session of Congress. "What is at stake", the President said, "is more than one small country: it is a big idea:

  a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common
  cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind – peace and security,
  freedom and the rule of law.[15]

This was by no means the first time an American President used that kind of words to describe his nation's wartime commitment. Back in December 1941, as he announced the US entry into the Second World War, President Franklin D. Roosevelt told Americans that they were fighting "not for conquest, not for vengeance, but for a world in which this Nation, and all this Nation represents, will be safe for our children."[16] Remarkably, on April 2, 1917, as he requested authorization for American participation in the First World War, President Woodrow Wilson – the father of 20th Century American internationalism – told Congressmen that "our object now […] is to vindicate the principles of peace and justice in the life of the world."[17]

The world of George H.W. Bush was very different from the worlds of Roosevelt and Wilson. Furthermore, Bush's conservative worldview and political outlook were rather different from those of his illustrious progressive predecessors. These three statesman, however, shared the characteristic of leading the most powerful

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14 As specified in the following chapters, *Instant Thunder* was the name of the air component of Operation *Desert Storm*, the US-led military effort to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait and end the Gulf conflict of 1990-91. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 312-330.

15   "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union", January 29, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2656&year=1991&month=01

16 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat", December 9, 1941, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=16056 .

17   Woodrow Wilson "Address to a Joint Session of Congress Requesting a Declaration of War Against Germany", April 2, 1917, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65366 .

country in the world in coincidence with critical transitional and transformative events in the history of international relations, and they all were confronted with the problem of using American military power in such critical junctures. They all claimed that their country had been forced to enter a conflict, but at the same time they argued that the crises they and their people faced were also opportunities to create a "new order" in international affairs that would be more consistent with American principles and interests.[18] They all expressed confidence that in critical moments American power could achieve a new, better and more sustainable peace.

As the quotes above suggest, the story of the effort made by President George H.W. Bush and his staff to create a new world order out of the Gulf crisis is actually only a chapter in the broader story of America's XX Century quest to establish a world order consistent with its values and interests. The third chapter in that story, as a number of influential scholars noted.[19]

As John Gerard Ruggie observed, in the aftermath of the Cold War, Bush, like his two predecessors, articulated a typically American internationalist approach which supports self-determination, comprehensive and institutionalized security arrangements and openness in international economic relations.[20] That recipe for order and stability in international relations is indeed a reflections of key concepts – such as those of liberty, democracy and self-government – that inform the main political documents since America's struggle for independence and lay at the basis of the American political mind. A review of American history, however, suggests that the understanding of the relevance of those values to the conduct of the country's foreign relations has been rather multifaceted. As noted by H.W. Brands, US leaders have alternatively interpreted those values as a motivation for "interventionist" foreign policies – according to which the US has an obligation to improve the world – or as a justification for restrained and "exemplarist" foreign policies – according to which "America's highest obligation to the world is the

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18   George H.W. Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress…", cit.; Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Fireside Chat", cit.; Woodrow Wilson "Address to a Joint Session of Congress", cit.

19   Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone, 1995), pp. 804-836; John Gerard Ruggie, "Third Try at World Order? America and Multilateralism After the Cold War", *Political Science Quarterly*, N. 4, autumn 1994, pp. 553-570 John Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. XI-XIII.

20   Ruggie, "Third Try at World Order?", p. 555.

perfection of the institutions of freedom at home."[21] Scholars have noted that that basic dichotomy can actually be dissected into even more different schools of thought. As argued by Walter Russell Mead, for example, on the one hand the camp of those arguing for active US engagement in international affairs features a constituency that thinks that engagement must be geared at ensuring American wealth and another one that thinks engagement must be intended to spread democracy and make the world a better place to live in. On the other hand, Mead continues, the camp of the supporters of restraint and disengagement is in fact composed by a faction which sees power with suspicion, and argued that involvement in foreign affairs and wars is a threat to the perfection of the republican institutions at home, and another faction which shares skepticism for foreign affairs, but is ready to fight when the nation's honor and basic values appear to be directly threatened by hostile foreign powers.[22]

The country's rise to the status of global power at the turn of the Twentieth Century placed American leaders in a position to exercise a decisive influence in the shaping of world order, but also forced them to face the dilemmas inherent in the pursuit of the national interest and the implementation of competing visions of America's purpose. The first American leader to be given the opportunity to wield US power and influence in order to achieve a new order in world affairs was President Woodrow Wilson during the First World War. The Great War experience consecrated America's status as a great power, indeed the most powerful nation in the world, and Wilson's interpretation of that conflict, as well as his vision of his country's purpose and the future of the world, left a fundamental mark on the American conception of international relations and foreign policy approach.

Wilson understood the Great War as a dark consequence of modernity, rather than as a simple aberration. Technological progress and the increasing destructive

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21 H.W. Brands, "Exemplary America versus Interventionist America", in Robert Hutchings (ed.), *At the End of the American Century. America's Role in the Post-Cold War World* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 30.

22 Mead famously dubbed these four schools of thought as "Hamiltonian," "Wilsonian," "Jeffersonian," and "Jacksonian." Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence. American Foreign Policy and how it Changed the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pp. XVII, 99-263. Political scientist Colin Dueck suggests that the four schools could also be understood respectively as "Realist,", "Internationalist," "Progressive," and "Nationalist." Colin Dueck, *Reluctand Crusaders. Power, Culture and Change in American Grand Strategy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 31-33.

capacity of armaments on the one hand, and the growing interdependence of international political and economic relations on the other, he argued, had created conditions that would escalate any future war among major powers to the astonishing levels of horror and destruction witnessed during the First World War. The bottom line of Wilson's reasoning was that the logic of balance of power politics and the secret diplomacy that had characterized great power relations up to the eve of the Great War were no longer practicable, because in the modern world any great power tension would carry the risk of degenerating into another destructive general conflict such as the one that had followed the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on June 28, 1914.[23] The American people, and Wilson himself, considered the First World War primarily the result of the general incapability of European states, with their tradition of secretiveness and power politics, to deal with each other peacefully.[24] Despite America's growing power and influence as an international actor, the country's strong financial and commercial relations with the Allies, and Wilson's own sympathetic attitude toward the democratic regimes of Britain and France, the President was eager to keep the US out of the war. As far as Wilson was concerned, violence was an immoral instrument to solve international disputes, and the President publicly argued that the only reasonable solution to the conflict would be a "peace without victory" for any of the contenders, and a restructuring of international relations under America's lead.[25]

As Arthur S. Link noted, however, "An absolute neutrality was in any event impossible because of the total character of the war and America's importance in

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23 Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century. US Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 13; Ross A. Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American Conception of National Security", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 25, No. 1 (Winter 2001), pp. 2-3.

24 Arthur S. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist. A Look at His Major Foreign Policies* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1963), pp. 33-34.

25 Woodrow Wilson, "Address to the Senate of the United States: 'A World League for Peace'", January 22, 1917, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online], http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65396 ; Kendrick Clements, "Woodrow Wilson and World War I", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Mar. 2004), pp. 63-68; Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", p. 9; Rose, *How Wars End*, pp. 18-19; Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars. Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 105-115; Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, p. 34; Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, pp. 39-41.

the world economy."[26] US economic prosperity was dependent on international trade, and given Britain's mastery of the oceans, there was an inescapable bound of economic interdependence between America and the Entente powers.[27] Geopolitical and balance of power calculations, moreover, strongly suggested that the US should actively support the Entente and prevent Germany from achieving hegemony over continental Europe and be in a position to isolate politically and economically the US from the continent.[28]

By early 1917, the implementation of Germany's decision to adopt a policy of unrestricted submarine warfare in the Atlantic – a strategy that directly threatened the life and property of American citizens, and which had been rejected by German leaders earlier in the war because of the very concern of provoking the US entry in the war on the Entente's side – as well as evidence of other provocative German initiatives against American interests, eventually persuaded Wilson that neutrality was no longer tenable, and that the US should become a belligerent in the Great War.[29]

From Wilson's standpoint, the problem of defeating Germany now fused with the problem of reforming radically the international system.[30] "The present German submarine warfare against commerce is a warfare against mankind," Wilson argued in his war message in April 1917. "It is a war against all nations. […] The challenge is to all mankind." America, Wilson claimed, was not merely fighting for its national interest or to defeat its enemies, but rather to achieve a new, more equitable and sustainable order. "What we demand in this war", Wilson famously argued, " is nothing peculiar to ourselves,"

It is that the world be made fit and safe to live in; and particularly that it

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26   Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, p. 43.
27   Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, pp. 43-46.
28   George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy [Expanded Edition]*(Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984)*,* pp. 64-65; Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Touchstone, 1994), pp. 42-44.
29   Thomas J. Knock, *To End All Wars Woodrow Wilson and the Quest for a New World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 115-122; Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", pp. 12-13. Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, pp. 72-90. The outrage toward the German strategy of unrestricted submarine warfare was famously compounded by the leakage through British intelligence services of a German offer to Mexico of support for a war of territorial expansion against the US.
30   Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, p. 46

be made safe for every peace-loving nation which, like our own, wishes to live its own life, determine its own institutions, be assured of justice and fair dealing by the other peoples of the world as against force and selfish aggression.[31]

As America entered the war, Wilson began his effort to articulate in more specific terms his vision for a new world order. Wilson's vision for a "world safe for democracy" reflected his conception of America's values and role in international affairs, and included the end of secret diplomacy and the serious promotion of disarmament; the establishment of free trade and freedom of navigation on a global scale; the promotion of the principle of self-determination and an "impartial adjustment of all colonial claims" that would take into account "the interests of the populations concerned."[32] Critically, given the President's understanding of World War I as the product of the European tradition of conflict and power politics, a sustainable peace would require the adoption of a new conception of international relations, one based on a "community of power," rather than a balance of power. The keystone of this new order would be the establishment of a universal international organization tasked to promote international peace, democracy and national self-determination. The key principle underpinning this new order would be the principle of "collective security", according to which all members of the international community – no matter how big or powerful – would join their forces in order to defeat aggression and ban the use of force as a means to settle international disputes.[33]

America's decisive role in the Entente's victory gave Wilson an opportunity to

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31   Woodrow Wilson, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the Conditions of Peace", January 8, 1918, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online], http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65405 .

32   Woodrow Wilson, "Address to a Joint Session of Congress on the Conditions of Peace", January 8, 1918, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=65405 ; Tony Smith, "Making the Wolrd Safe for Democracy in the American Century", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (Spring 1999), pp. 174-176; Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", pp. 9-10; Lloyd E. Ambrosius, Wilsonianism. *Woodrow Wilson and His Legacy in American Foreign Relations* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 2.

33   Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century. US Foreign Policy since 1900* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), pp. 13, 66-67; Ross A. Kennedy, "Woordow Wilson, World War I, and an American Conception of National Security", p. 2.

turn his project into reality, and that effort resulted into the establishment of the League of Nations. Despite the popularity of the project and the great hopes it had raised, however, the League soon revealed itself incapable to serve as an effective collective security organization. As they had been crucial to the establishment of the League, American attitudes also played a decisive role in the failure of the post-First World War international order. Wilson himself was concerned to create a collective security system compatible with state sovereignty.[34] As noted by historian Marc Trachtenberg, moreover, his approach to the peace negotiations in general, and to the problem of finding a settlement with Germany in particular, was torn between his preference for "reconciliation" and his conception of "justice" – which demanded punishment and rehabilitation.[35] Finally, Wilson's project clashed with the instincts and conceptions of national interest of the other powers, and the League of Nation's covenant actually ended up being a compromise that awkwardly balanced the aspirations for national self-determination, international openness and cooperation with the logic of power politics and the imperial interests of the remaining European great powers. That compromise proved to be unacceptable for the US public opinion and political establishment, and the US Senate failed to ratify the Covenant, with the paradoxical consequence that the US – the very promoter of the League and of the new order – didn't join the new organization.[36] Deprived of US support and crippled by other structural

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34   Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", pp. 26-27.

35   Marc Trachtenberg, "Versailles after Sixty Years", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Jul . 1982), pp. 491-492, 495-496.

36   Knock*, To End All Wars*, pp. 227-245; Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), pp. 2-8; Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", pp. 29-30; Gideon Rose, *How Wars End. Why We Always Fight the Last Battle* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 2011), pp. 6, 27-29, 46-49.; Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, pp. 44-47, 51-64.Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, pp. 123-124. One of the issues that gave rise in the US to the strongest forms of criticism against the compromise Wilson had brokered at the Paris Peace Conference, was Article 10 of the Covenant of the League of Nations, by which "The Members of the League undertake to respect and preserve as against external aggression the territorial integrity and existing political independence of all Members of the League." According to the League's detractors, article 10 would *de facto* imply an American commitment to the preservation of the European colonial empires. *The Covenant of the League of Nations*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/leagcov.asp ; Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, pp. 136-137. From that point of view, the contention that Wilson's project was "an essentially conservative effort" to perpetrate a 19th Century liberal conception of order – made by William Appleman Williams – does not appear so far off the mark. Willam Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York-London: Norton, 1984), p. 92.

weaknesses, the new international organization was not able to address the challenge posed by the aggressive foreign policies of the rising Fascist dictatorships, and in the event the League of Nations was not enough to save the world from another global war.[37]

Among the primary causes of the failure of the League of Nations was the excessive rigidity showed by Wilson during the ratification process in the US.[38] As noted by Arthur Link, the American debate over ratification was not a simple quarrel between isolationists and internationalists, but rather a contest between the champions of a strong system of international security – led by Wilson himself – and the proponents of a more limited commitment in international affairs.[39] The main weakness of Wilson's project, according to a number of influential scholars of American foreign relations, was its excessive idealism. Indeed, Wilson's assertion that the new order should transcend the logic of power and rely on the inherent moral superiority of universal values and principles such as democracy and liberalism, as well as his confidence that, once established, the system could be enforced through the power and influence of world public opinion, does sound rather radical compared to the prevailing conceptions of the time and out of touch with the realities of international politics.[40] According to other scholars, however, Wilson's conception and his efforts to foster an organized peace, should not be simply considered as an exercise in idealism, but rather as an attempt significantly

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37 It should be noted that additional key weaknesses deemed the League to fail. As lamented by Walter Lippman at the time, the settlement in fact condemned small and weak Central European states to check the geopolitical and ideological ambitions of the two outcast of the Paris peace, Germany and the Soviet Union. Walter LaFeber, *The American Age. U.S. Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad 1750 to the Present* (New York: Norton, 1994), p. 325.

38 Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN*, p. 2; Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, pp. 128-133.Historian Lloyd E. Ambrosius emphasizes Wilson's paternalistic conceptions of race and nation as a limit in his promotion of his view of world order. Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, pp. 21-47.

39 Link, *Wilson the Diplomatist*, p. 134.

40 Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 29-55, 218-245; George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy,* cit., pp. 55-73. E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939* [edited by Michael Cox] (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), pp. 32-37. Rose, *How Wars End*, pp. 45-46.; Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism,* p. 5; Kennedy, "Woodrow Wilson, World War I, and an American conception of National Security", p. 30. As Lloyd Ambrosius interestingly argues: "Wilson refused to recognize the world's pluralism, emphasizing instead its interdependence. He expected the League of Nations to preserve world peace through collective security or international social control. Rejecting pluralism for the world, as he did for the United States, Wilson sought to escape the inherent dilemma between nationalism and internationalism. But his vision of an organic world community never overcame the diversity among nation-states." Ambrosius, *Wilsonianims,* p. 28.

informed by pragmatic considerations to create a new world order that would be both sustainable and compatible with American power, purpose, and liberal values.[41] Over time Wilson's internationalism proved appealing indeed, especially to American statesmen and the American people. As even such a realist as Henry Kissinger acknowledged, although at the time the President could not convince his own country of their merit, his ideas lived on, and continued to influence both scholars and practitioners of American foreign relations.[42]

The Second World War provided a new opportunity for the US to use its preponderant power to influence the shaping of international order. Once again, as the country gradually plunged into global war, and massively began to translate its immense resources into war-fighting power and international influence, the principles of collective security and international organization served as a decisive source of inspiration for American leaders concerned with the planning for a postwar settlement. Despite the fact that preventing Nazi and Fascist domination of Europe and East Asia was clearly in the country's national interest, until the Japanese attack at Pearl Harbor in early December 1941 President Roosevelt's policies toward the conflict were constrained by the attitudes of an American nation which was reluctant to engage in a new foreign military enterprise, as well as by the fact that the prospect of seeing the country engaged simultaneously in major conflicts across both the Atlantic and the Pacific was daunting indeed.[43] As Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley observe, however, America's moral commitment to a new world order began even before the country's actual entry into the conflict, with the signature of the Atlantic Charter by FDR and Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill, in August 1941.[44] The Charter condemned aggression as a form of settlement of international disputes and called for self determination and free trade, in an analogy with the principles that had been proposed by Wilson

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41   Frank Ninkovich, *The Wilsonian Century*, cit., pp. 12-13, 78; Rose, *How Wars End*, pp. 29-30, 44-45; Dueck, *Reluctant Crusaders*, pp. 52-53.
42   Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 30. See also: Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, pp. 3, 7-8; Ninkovic, *The Wilsonian Century*, passim.; Mead, *Special Providence*, p. 9.
43   Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, pp. 369-393; Warren F. Kimball, "Franklin D. Roosevelt and World War II", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Mar. 2004), pp. 83-99; Robert Dallek, *FDR and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 269-313.
44   Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN…*, cit., pp. 30, 41.

during World War I.[45] The Charter, however, also incorporated the lessons that America's World War II leaders had learned from their formative experiences – the world economic depression of the 1930s and the rise of fascist dictatorships, which FDR and his collaborators saw as intertwined developments.[46] As a consequence, the document also called for greater international cooperation to improve social and economic standards on a global scale. The US effort to win the war was thus informed by the desire to achieve the completion, both in the US and on a global scale, of the program of reforms intended to promote greater welfare and social justice which had been launched during the New Deal era.[47]

The Atlantic Charter also called for the establishment of a "permanent system of general security" as a key requirement for the prevention and punishment of future aggression, and from that moment onward, any American policy statement concerning the post-World War II order reflected the country's commitment to the creation of a new system of organized peace.[48] This second American-led effort to organize the international community for the prevention of major wars led to the creation of the UN.[49] The new organization, however, was not a mere revival of Wilsonianism, but also an attempt to avoid the shortcomings that had condemned the League of Nations to failure. FDR, Anders Stephanson argues, understood World War II as a massive international police operation against "gangsterism," embodied by the Nazi and Fascist aggressor regimes, rather than a traditional war.[50] The President's recipe for stability in the post-war era, therefore, was informed by the idea that the Allied powers – the US, Britain, the Soviet Union, and possibly

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45   Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp .
46   John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York, Columbia Univeristy Press, 1972), pp. 11, 18-23; Elizaberh Bogwardt, *A New Deal for the World* (Cambridge, MA and London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 6-7. Robert A. Pollard, *Economic Security and the Origins of the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), pp. 5-9, 13.
47   Bogwardt, *A New Deal for the World*, pp. 5, 7-8; Randall B. Woods, "FDR and the New Economic Order", in David B. Wollner, Warren F. Kimball, and David Reynolds (eds.), *FDR's World. War. Peace, Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 175-177. As Woods notes, the US Treasury also took advantage of America's wartime economic preponderance to secure the transfer of world financial leadership from Britain to the US. Woods, "FDR and the New Economic Order", pp. 180-181.
48   Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/wwii/atlantic.asp .
49   Townsend Hoopes and Douglas Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN*, p. IX.
50   Anders Stephanson, "The Cold War Considered as a US Project", in Silvio Pons and Federico Romero (eds.), *Reinterpreting the End of the Cold War. Issues, Interpretations, Periodizations* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2005), p. 55.

China – should act as "policemen," and underpin a post-war peace revolving around a system of collective security based on regionalism and an open global economic system.[51] FDR's UN project, according to Robert Dallek's definition, should be interpreted as an attempt to reconcile the president's awareness that great power politics would be an essential component of the post-World War II world with the widespread demand in the US for new idealistic or universalist arrangements for assuring the peace. The new international organization, based on a revived principle of collective security, was considered a necessary vehicle for permanently involving the US in world affairs.[52] As FDR and the framers of the UN understood, the key to the effectiveness of the new organization – and to a postwar order based on a universalist arrangement – would be finding a balance between the principle of sovereign equality and the realities of the existence of greater and smaller powers. Hence, the structure of the UN provided for a General Assembly where all states were represented on an equal base, but concentrated the power to decide on the (military and non-military) response to threats or violations of international peace in a Security Council of limited membership and where five major powers – the US, the Soviet Union, Britain, France and China – enjoyed the status of permanent members with veto power. The UN would neither aspire to be a "world government" nor attempt to overcome or deny the logic of national interest and power politics. Rather, it was meant to be an association of sovereign states united by a willingness to cooperate to prevent the outbreak of another major conflict of the kind of the Second World War; an organization where in practical terms each member would be entitled with greater or smaller influence and responsibilities in accordance with its specific status in terms of power.[53]

In spite of its appealing and fascinating underlying vision and its articulate design, most scholars agree that FDR's project did have limits. In general, it

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51   Warren F. Kimball, "The Sheriffs: FDR's Postwar World", in Wollner, Kimball and Raynolds (eds.), *FDR's World*, p. 97. FDR's "vision of the postwar world order," Kimball argues, "specifically excluded using military power for political goals, and envisaged a regional approach that would limit the direct policing and persuading role of the United States to the Western Hemisphere." Kimball, "The Sheriffs", p. 91.

52   And from this point of view, Dallek argues, FDR was successful. Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 536-537. See also: Kimball, "The Sheriffs:" pp. 98-101.

53   Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man: The Past, Present and Future of the United Nations* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 31-45; Hoopes and Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN*, pp. 111-114; Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, pp. 23-28.

suffered from the unavoidable tension between the universalist principle of collective security and the principles of state sovereignty and national interest. More specifically, there was a tension between FDR's vision of global justice and cooperation and the realities of divergent world-views and suspicion which dominated the relationship between the US and Britain on the one hand and the Soviet Union on the other.[54] In retrospect, as Hoopes and Brinkley observe, given the state of international affairs at the end of World War II, there were only two possible solutions to keep the peace in the postwar world: the continued unity and cooperation among the great powers – especially the US and the Soviet Union, which were clearly emerging as the most powerful actors in the new system – or an equilibrium maintained by a complex balance of power between and among them.[55] In the aftermath of such a long, bloody and destructive global conflict the case for great power cooperation was strong indeed. Yet for a variety of reasons cohesion among the members of the "Grand Alliance", especially between the US and the Soviet Union, began to collapse as soon as the defeat of the Nazi and Fascist dictatorships was achieved. On the one hand, a new geopolitical confrontation developed. The war had consecrated the US and the Soviet Union as the world's leading powers – the two superpowers as the two countries became known – and the defeat of Germany and Japan had created a critical power vacuum on the Eurasian landmass. Through immense sacrifices the Soviet Union had expanded its borders westward and seized control of the rest of Eastern Europe. Meanwhile the war effort had tremendously boosted American global economic and military power. The US was without question the wealthiest country in the world, and was establishing itself as the ultimate guarantor of stability and reconstruction in Western Europe and other strategically critical areas in the Middle East and in the Pacific. On the other hand, the rise of American and Soviet power was accompanied by a clash of ideologies – democracy and free market on one side and one-party rule and planned economy on the other. The leaders of both superpowers saw any increase in power or influence on the part of their opponents as a threat to the very existence of their own social model, and felt that the new strategic

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54   Walter LaFeber, "FDR's Worldviews, 1941-1945", in Wollner, Kimball and Raynolds, *FDR's World*, p. 218; Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, pp. 6-7.
55   Hoopes and Brinkley, *FDR and the Creation of the UN*, pp. 113-114.

realities, though dangerous, offered precious opportunities to establish a new global balance of power capable of ensuring the ultimate survival of their own way of life. In short, as Melvyn Leffler argued, the structure of the postwar international system and the opposing ideological mindsets of leaders in Washington and Moscow eventually overcame that original desire to explore the opportunities for further collaboration.[56] The World War experience and the position of military and economic strength achieved by the US by the end of the conflict also played a critical role in shaping the American conception of national security.[57] As noted by Leffler, in the aftermath of the war, US leaders became increasingly persuaded that the perpetuation of that situation of "preponderance of power," both in terms of military power and access to areas of strategic and economic interest, would be critical to ensure the country's security and prosperity, and American assessments of the Soviet threat became increasingly influenced by the perception of Soviet subversive intentions, rather than its actual military power.[58] In the event, the aspirations for a new world order based on cooperation, collective security and economic openness that had informed American planning for the post-Second World War were frustrated by the geopolitical realities of the postwar era. Leaders in Washington soon concluded that the immediate strategic priority was to "contain" what was perceived to be Soviet aggressive expansionism, and to "promote tendencies which must eventually find their outlet in either the breakup or the gradual mellowing of Soviet power."[59]

As noted by John Ikenberry, as a consequence of the failure to find an acceptable settlement among the former members of the "Grand Alliance," the end

56   Melvin Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind. The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), pp. 79-83.

57   With regard to this point, it seems interesting to recall political scientist Robert Gilpin's remark that as a state grows in terms of welfare and power, it will select a "larger bundle of security and welfare golas than a less wealthy and less powerful state." Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in Wolrd Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 22-23.

58   Melyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48", *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 89, No. 2 (Apr. 1984), pp. 349, 379-380. Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power. National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Pres, 1992), pp. 3, 6, 18-19, 496-498, 513.

59   X [George F. Kennan], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, (July 1947), http://www.foreignaffairs.org/19470701faessay25403/x/the-sources-of-soviet-conduct.html?mode=print ; John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 24-52.

of World War II actually produced two postwar settlements. The first was a "containment order" revolving around the relationship between the two superpowers and based on the balance of power, nuclear deterrence and political and ideological confrontation. The second was the order established among the US, Western Europe and Japan. This settlement, in turn, was led by the US and based on economic openness, political reciprocity and multilateralism.[60] It seems fair to argue that the latter settlement reflected the preferences for an organized peace that had emerged within the American leadership during the war.[61] However, the superpower confrontation implied that as long as the former settlement – the "containment order" – remained in place, any attempt by Washington to establish the Western "liberal" order on a global scale would be constrained by the risk of escalating tension with the Soviet Union up to the outbreak of another general war, with unprecedented dramatic consequence for civilization as a whole. Thus, as it emerged from the Second World War, the world entered into a new phase of total and global conflict: the Cold War. The international system crystallized into a bipolar configuration revolving around the geopolitical confrontation between the two superpowers and the competition among two economic, political and social models. World peace now rested on terror and self-restraint induced by the prospect of total destruction inherent in any direct military confrontation between superpowers armed with nuclear weapons, and, although that state of affairs was perceived as dangerous and unsatisfying by both American and Soviet leaders, for more than four decades it proved impossible to move beyond this situation.[62]

Main thesis and structure of the dissertation

The end of the Cold War, and the dismissal of the "containment order" had a terrific and revolutionary impact on international affairs: suddenly America found itself once again in a position of preponderant power at an historical juncture when

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60   John Ikenberry, *After Victory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 170.

61   As noted by political scientist Gideon Rose, "The Cold War, in other words, is best understood not as some new struggle, but rather as a continuation of the positive fight America had already been pursuing for several years." Rose, *How Wars End*, p. 7

62   John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System", *International Security*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Spring 1986), pp. 99-142; Kenneth N. Waltz, "The Stability of a Bipolar World", *Daedalus*, Vol. 93, No. 3 (Summer 1964), pp. 881-909; Melvin Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, pp. 3-9.

the whole organization of the international community was in question. Once again, for the third time in the 20th Century, leaders in Washington were presented with an opportunity to use American power and influence to shape a new world settlement. Long-standing certitudes and familiar power-relations suddenly collapsed along with the fall of the Berlin Wall, yet – as the only remaining superpower – the US appeared indeed to possess the means to succeed.

As Chapter One will show, however, by the time it took office in 1989, the Bush team brought into the White House a rather cautious and traditionalist outlook. The President and his advisers had been feeling uneasy about the developments in the superpower relationship that had been happening under their predecessors' watch, and were determined to bring back a much more orthodox Cold War strategy based on a stricter application of the doctrine of "containment" and a reassertion of a firm American leadership over the Western camp. It was only gradually that the Bush Administration developed an expectation that it was worth trying to engage the Soviet Union, in an attempt to transform the superpower relationship from one of confrontation into one of cautious cooperation, and to exploit American influence to secure a favorable new settlement in a Europe that would be transformed anyway.

The first chapter will then examine the impact of the transformation of the international scene and the radical geopolitical and ideological developments that accompanied the Cold War endgame on strategic thinking and planning within the first Bush Cabinet. Finally, the Panama crisis of 1989 will be reviewed, as the first example of American military intervention in a "post-Cold War" international environment.

Chapter Two to Five, which represent the core of this research, will analyze the Gulf crisis of 1990-91, the episode that definitely revealed to the world the meaning and implications of America's new status as the only remaining superpower. As Chapter Two will argue, although it was immediately clear that the invasion of Kuwait was the first crisis of a new era in international relations, the Bush Cabinet understood the stakes in the conflict through the lens of traditional American geopolitics – namely, it concluded that Saddam's aggression would place him in a position to aspire to achieve hegemony in the Persian Gulf region, and to

undermine American interests in the area and in the broader Middle East. It was in that early days of the crisis, the chapter will suggest, that the White House and the Baghdad regime set themselves virtually with no escape route on a collision course, yet it was during those same early days that some of the critical dilemmas that influenced the Bush Administration's response throughout the crisis materialized.

Chapter Three will describe the process through which the President and his cabinet finally decided that the Gulf crisis should be resolved militarily, and the process through which the Administration endeavored to have its approach legitimized by the international community. A consensus progressively developed within the Bush Cabinet that the crisis could also be an opportunity to consolidate and expand the position of global leadership America had been enjoying since the end of the Cold War. With the UN Security Council finally able to overcome its Cold War divisions, the UN appeared as the best forum to certify the legitimacy of both the American preferred response to the Gulf crisis and American global leadership in general. The process nonetheless forced the President and his staff to articulate their policies in a way consistent with the UN's universal principles, and, given Saddam's own attempt to challenge those initiatives by resorting to the same universal principles, the process assumed the characteristics of a struggle of visions for the organization of the post-Cold War era. By his own admission, President Bush – and for that matter the rest of his cabinet too – didn't do the "vision thing." Yet, as economist John Maynard Keynes famously observed, even pragmatic men, "who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence," may turn out to be influenced by the ideas of past thinkers.[63] In their effort to articulate a vision for world order and to appeal for domestic and international support for that view, Bush and his staff turned out to be by no means an exception to Keynes's rule, since their vision was clearly inspired by the efforts of Wilson and especially

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63   Keynes's full quote, for the record, is: "The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influence, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air, are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back. I am sure that the power of vested interests is vastly exaggerated compared with the gradual encroachment of ideas." John M. Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1935), p. 383.

Roosevelt at creating an organized peace[64] – or at least by what they thought were the lessons to be drawn from those past experiences.

Chapter Four will analyze Operation *Desert Storm,* the war to liberate Kuwait and to create the conditions for a new order in the Gulf – and in international affairs. As the chapter will show, although consensus among the President and his advisers who supported military action was developed early in the crisis, consensus about the actual war aims was slow to come, and in a certain way was never fully achieved. *Desert Storm* was to be the war to liberate Kuwait and undo the Iraqi aggression – limited objectives that would make the campaign a sort of international police action and that were universally supported by the international community; but it was also to be a war to create a new and stable regional equilibrium in the Gulf – an objective that was much more ambiguous and that in the view of Bush and his advisers required first and foremost the neutralization of Iraq's threat to the security of other Arab oil monarchies in the area, and possibly Saddam's replacement by a friendlier ruler. As the chapter will suggest, developments on the ground during the Gulf War and assessments concerning global political trends and contingencies persuaded the first Bush Administration that, in spite of the long term preference for regime change in Iraq it shared with most of its closest allies, success in the liberation of Kuwait was enough to halt military operations.

Fred Iklé argued in a famous book that "it is the way in which a war is brought to an end that has the most decisive long term impact."[65] This observation seems particularly appropriate with regard to the Gulf War of 1991. Iklé judged that the restraint shown by the Bush Administration was a wise policy, and this author strongly agrees with that view, in spite of the vast number of authoritative analyses which argue the opposite.[66] As Chapter 5 will show, however, as important as the decision to end the war were the policies adopted by Bush and his staff in the

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64   Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration*, p. 130.
65   Fred Charles Iklé, *Every War Must End [Second Revised Edition]* (New york: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. XVII.
66   Iklé, *Every War Must End,* pp. XVII-XXV. For Contrsting opinions see: Thomas G. Mahnken, "A Squandered Opportunity? The Decision to End the Gulf War", Andrew Bacevich and Efraim Inbar (ed.), *The Gulf War of 1991 Reconsidered* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 121-148; Kenneth Pollack, *The Threatening Storm. The Case for Invading Iraq* (New Tork: Random House, 2002), p. 55; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand* p. 407. This point will be dealt more in detail in the conclusions to this dissertation.

aftermath of the conflict, when some of the key security challenges of the post-Cold War era – the threats from the collapse of states and the proliferation of nuclear weapons – manifested themselves in full in Iraq, and yet a critically important window of opportunity opened up to develop an approach to address them. As Chapter Five and Six (the epilogue) will argue, the way in which the Bush Administration reacted to, and prioritized among, those threats and the policies it adopted to deal with them had profound implications for the framework of foreign policy it developed for the post-Cold War era and left to its successors.

In the Conclusions, this author will provide a critical summary of the main findings of his research, will explain how the policies adopted by the Bush Administration during the Gulf War give important indications concerning a certain kind of mentality that survived in subsequent post-Cold War administrations, and will give his own answer to the question that forms the title of this dissertation. He will do so from the vantage point of a non-American – and, for the record, a loving critic of the US and its role in international affairs – who, contrary to the main characters of this story, has had the time and opportunity to examine the terrific and fast-paced chain of events of 1989-1992 in cold blood and free from the pressures of day-to-day decision-making.

Two of the most influential interpretations of the history of American foreign relations, those provided by George F. Kennan and William Appleman Williams, are both somewhat critical of the attitudes of US leaders, although for different reasons. While Kennan saw American leaders as excessively affected by a parochial and naïve view of international politics, and excessively moralist and legalistic in its conduct, Williams saw them as a Machiavellian and cynical élite, determined to implement a foreign policy geared at advancing their materialist and egotist interests.[67] As it will emerge from this dissertation, this author thinks that both Kennan and Williams somewhat have a point, and that both interpretations are useful to understand the American response to the Gulf crisis and the challenges of the post-Cold War era. On the one hand, this study of the Gulf conflict shows that American leaders were often opportunist and cynical indeed, as Williams suggested, yet they were by no means the main cause of the great evils of this

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67   Kennan, *American Diplomacy*, passim; Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy,* passim.

world. On balance, their response to the Gulf crisis was consistent with the wishes of the international community. The foreign leaders they dealt with or confronted, moreover, were most of the time at least equally cynical and opportunist, and in some cases blatantly brutal and murderous. On the other hand, and despite the aura of realism and pragmatism that surrounds the foreign policy team of George H.W. Bush, some of the key decisions taken during the conflict which turned out to have the most lasting impact were indeed influenced by that naïveté and excessively legalistic conception of international politics lamented by Kennan.

Chapter 1

Prologue

"Beyond Containment": The George H.W. Bush Administration and the Challenges of a Changing World (January 1989-July 1990)

"It would be unwise thoughtlessly to abandon policies that have brought us this far."
National Security Review – 3, February 15, 1989

"A new breeze is blowing" President George H.W. Bush remarked during his inaugural address, in mid-January 1989, "this is a time when the future seems a door you can walk right through into a room called tomorrow."[1]

By the time the new Administration took office, the world had witnessed indeed a number of significant and promising developments in the realm of international affairs, especially concerning the relationship between East and West. Behind closed doors, however, the Bush Cabinet was not sure about the implications of these changes for America's foreign and national security policy. The President and his staff had spent most of their political life as staunch Cold Warriors, and, in spite of the increasingly widespread sense of opportunity to achieve breakthroughs in the bipolar confrontation, they were extremely reluctant to depart from the assumptions that had guided American grand strategy since the end of the Second World War.

The evolution of the East-West confrontation in the late 1980s and its implications

As a total conflict, the Cold War imposed enormous costs on the countries involved, and severely challenged the capabilities of the two superpowers. The problem of the sustainability of the bipolar confrontation clearly emerged during the 1970s as a series of global economic shocks and recessions put into question

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1   "Inaugural Address", January 20, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=1&year=1989&month=01 .

whether it was affordable to continue on the path of geopolitical and ideological struggle on a global scale.

As historian Olav Njolstad argues, in an attempt to extricate itself from the dilemmas of the Cold War, the US Administration led by Richard Nixon pursued a policy of détente, based on the calculation that after all the bipolar status quo offered both superpowers considerable advantages and stability, and by implication a sort of *modus vivendi* with the Kremlin could be worked out. The Soviet leadership did respond positively to the policy of détente, but for tactical, rather than strategic reasons: they thought that détente could help them achieve strategic parity and then put them in a position to change the *status quo* in their favor.[2] Eventually, as Njolstad notes, détente collapsed due to its failure to move the superpower relationship beyond the logic of geopolitical and ideological confrontation that had ignited their conflict in the first place.[3] Leaders in Washington and Moscow failed to develop mutual trust or a significant degree of economic exchanges, or to agree on truly common values and interests, and as a result, by the late 1970s the world appeared to be inescapably affected by a general trend of increasing East-West tension and global instability.

Détente, and its implicit assumption of a decline in American power, had faced severe criticism on the domestic level, and Ronald Reagan's victory in the 1980 presidential election marked the beginning of a new phase of US foreign policy based on the rejection of both the bipolar *status quo* and the idea of accommodation with the Soviet Union. The Reagan Administration adopted a new, confident and assertive foreign policy style, and at least through 1983 it aggressively challenged the Soviet Union on the ideological, strategic and geopolitical level.[4] The superpower confrontation revamped, arms control negotiations reached a stalemate, and the two superpowers newly plunged into a series of regional conflicts by proxy that ranged from Africa to South West Asia to Latin America, with devastating effects for the countries involved. In March 1983

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2   Olav Njolstad, "The collapse of superpower détente, 1975-1980", in Melvin Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War,* Vol. III (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge Univesity Press, 2010), p. 137.
3   Njolstat, "The collapse of superpower détente", pp. 152-155.
4   Beth A. Fischer, "US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush", in Leffler and Westad (eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War,* Vol. III, pp. 269-272.

President Ronald Reagan famously referred to the Soviet Union as the "the focus of evil in the modern world" and launched a program of massive military buildup that included experimentation in the field of anti-ballistic technology, thus breaking a taboo in the superpower strategic relationship.[5] The American President actually maintained that he was ready to negotiate with Moscow, although he wanted to do so from a position of strength, and for the first part of his mandate that proved impossible. However, between 1984 and 1988 Washington gradually shifted towards a much more cooperative and dialogue-oriented approach, and the goal increasingly become an improvement superpower relations.[6] Among the main factors that prompted this rebalancing act, as historian Beth A. Fischer argues, there was Reagan's abhorrence for nuclear weapons and his fear of an accidental nuclear exchange (concern shared with Gorbachev, and one of the factors that made Reagan so eager to support the SDI project). In addition, the escalation in East-West tension had increased the risk of misperception and accidental war between the two blocs, and Washington's Western European allies were pushing for a less confrontational approach. Finally, by 1984 there was an increased perception that the massive military buildup launched in the previous years had shifted the strategic balance back to the US advantage, and that the time was now ripe for negotiations on favorable terms.[7] As a result, Reagan began to seek opportunities to establish a dialogue with his Soviet counterparts, in order to try to solve the mutual mistrust that was seen to be the root cause of the superpower confrontation and of the horrific nuclear arms race that had paradoxically prevented a general conflict in

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5   Ronald Reagan, "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Association of Evangelicals in Orlando, Florida, March 8, 1983, John T. Woolley and Gerhard Peters, *The American Presidency Project* [online]. Santa Barbara, CA. Available from World Wide Web: http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41023 . According to scholars of International Relations and nuclear strategy, a critical element of self-restraint and stability in the superpower relationship had been the ability of both the US and the USSR to destroy each other in the event of a nuclear exchange; an implication of the enormous number of nuclear weapons available and the virtual impossibility of destroying a sufficient number of the enemy's strategic weapons in a first strike. Nuclear strategists argued that, since anti-ballistic technology was intended to neutralize a nuclear first strike, it would increase the incentives to use nuclear weapons for the country that possessed such a technology.

6   Interestingly, as historian Beth A. Fischer notes, Reagan began seeking a rapprochement with the Soviet Union before Gorbachev came to power. Fischer, "US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush", pp. 275-277.

7   Fischer, "US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush", p. 273-275.

the postwar years.[8] For some time, however, Reagan's efforts were frustrated by the incapability of leaders in Moscow develop a consensus about how to respond to the stimuli from the changing international environment.

Eventually, from 1985 onward, with rise to power in the Kremlin of a new, young, and visionary leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, the trend toward increased superpower dialogue witnessed a dramatic acceleration.[9] By the mid 1980s Soviet leaders had begun to realize that their social and economic model was stagnating and crippled with inefficiency. The Socialist economic system centered on the USSR had isolated itself from many of the critical developments in international economics and technology that had occurred in the rest of the world, and had become clearly underperforming in comparison with the industrialized countries of the West.[10] Meanwhile Moscow's foreign political and military commitments had been draining resources that had become desperately needed at home.[11] Gorbachev had concluded that if the Soviet Union was to overcome these daunting challenges, it would have to resort to "new thinking", a new approach aimed at reforming the Socialism model championed by Moscow and make it more open, human and dynamic. As he took power in the Soviet Union, the code words of Gorbachev's approach thus became *perestroika* – reform – and *glasnost* – transparency. The new leader launched a series of policy initiatives intended to revive the Soviet economy and society, whose impact, however, was less encouraging than expected.[12] In parallel to his domestic reform program, the quest for a new foreign policy became a fundamental tenet of Gorbachev's "new thinking". The Soviet leader was determined to put an end to costly military commitments such as the occupation of Afghanistan, were Soviet troops were stuck in a military quagmire since the ill-conceived invasion of late 1979, and the troops deployments needed to ensure the

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8   Fischer, "US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush", p. 280.
9   Archie Brown, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War", in Richard K. Herman and Richard Ned Lebow (eds.), *Ending the Cold War. Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations* (London: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 31-32.
10   Stephen G. Brooks and William C. Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War", in William C. Wohlforth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 274-280;
11   Brooks and Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War", pp. 288-293; Saki Ruth Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era: The transformation of the Global Security Order* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005), pp. 169-171.
12   Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, pp. 22-27, 33-36.

survival of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe.[13] Even more importantly, in general terms as long as the Soviet Union was engaged in a global confrontation with the US – especially in the field of the strategic arms race – it appeared impossible to free the resources required for the advancement of the domestic revival. Furthermore, as evidence began to mount that his domestic reform plan was not working as expected, the need to overcome the Cold War became even more compelling in the eyes of the Soviet leader and his closest advisers.[14]

In short, Gorbachev's faltering effort to reform and reinvigorate the USSR contributed to create those conditions by which the US could finally negotiate from a position of strength, as wished by leaders in Washington. As a result, in the second half of the 1980s the resumption of constructive dialogue between the superpowers led to breakthroughs in the field of both strategic armaments and third world confrontation that would have been unconceivable at the beginning of the decade. In December 1987 Reagan and Gorbachev signed in Washington the INF treaty, by which for the first time the two superpowers agreed not only to limit, but also to reduce their strategic armaments. American and Soviet leaders committed to remove an entire category of nuclear armaments – intermediate range ballistic missiles – from the European theater, and to establish an extensive and intrusive verification process.[15] In parallel to arms control, fundamental turning points were reached with regard to regional conflicts. In April 1988 a UN mediation finally produced an agreement, signed by Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva, by which Moscow committed to the complete withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, and by the end of the year it became possible to ease the superpower proxy confrontation in Africa too.[16]

The process of ending the Cold War appeared to draw even closer in December 1988, when Gorbachev announced during a speech before the UN General

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13   Brown, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War", pp. 49-50.
14   Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, pp. 42-48.
15   Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, pp. 116-117; Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, Third Edition (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004), pp. 397-400; Matthew Evangelista, "Turning Points in Arms Control", in Richard K. Herrmann and Richard Ned Lebow (eds.), *Ending the Cold War. Interpretations, Causation, and the Study of International Relations* (London: Palgrave, 2004), pp. 87-88. It seems interesting to notice that the provisions of the INF Treaty implied much larger reductions in Soviet missiles than in American ones.
16   Richard K. Herrmann, "Regional Conflicts as Turning Points", in Herrmann and Lebow, *Ending the Cold War*, pp. 62-64.

Assembly his unilateral decision to reduce by 500,000 persons the armed forces of his country, and to implement substantial withdrawals of Soviet troops from Eastern Europe. On that occasion, in a further effort to break the Cold War deadlock, the Soviet leader even acknowledged "freedom of choice" for every nation, thus de facto dismissing the Brezhnev Doctrine that had informed the Kremlin's policy towards the rest of the Eastern bloc.[17] At the time of his speech, Gorbachev also sent an important message to George H.W. Bush, the winner of the 1988 US Presidential election:

> The future U.S. administration headed by newly elected President George Bush will find in us a partner, ready – without long pauses and backward movements – to continue the dialogue in a spirit of realism, openness, and goodwill, and with a striving for concrete results, over an agenda encompassing the key issues of Soviet-U.S. relations and international politics.[18]

By the end of 1988, in sum, the basic pillars underpinning the Cold War were still in place. However, thanks to Gorbachev's courage in challenging the assumptions of Soviet security policy and Reagan's willingness to reach out to his Kremlin's counterparts, the superpower relationship had evolved towards a much less confrontational equilibrium.[19] Yet, to the astonishment of Gorbachev and his advisers, as time went by in the aftermath of the 1988 election the new US President and his foreign policy team were apparently in no hurry to continue negotiations.[20] It would indeed take months for the Bush Administration to make the first substantial moves to engage the Soviets.[21]

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17   According to the "Brezhnev Doctrine", formulated by Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev in 1968, the Soviet Union had the right to intervene in the affairs of any of the Communist bloc countries to suppress "counter-revolution". Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, p. 49.

18   **"**Address by Mikhail Gorbachev at the 43rd U.N. General Assembly Session", December 7, 1988 (Excerpts), http://www.wilsoncenter.org/coldwarfiles/files/Documents/1988-1107.Gorbachev.pdf **.**

19   Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind*, p. 422. Brown, "Gorbachev and the End of the Cold War", p. 51.

20   Michail Gorbachev, *Memoirs* (London: Doubleday, 1996), pp. 496-497.

21   Vladislav M. Zubok, "New Evidence on the 'Soviet Factor' in the Peaceful Revolutions of 1989 ", *CWIHP Bulletin* N. 13, (Fall/Winter 2001), p. 12.

The Pause of 1989 and the dilemmas of American strategic planning

Bush had been Vice President during both of Reagan's mandates, but as a matter of fact he and his closest advisers were eager to distance themselves from the approaches of those Administrations – including the one in which Bush himself had served – that had tried to overcome the traditional assumptions of American Cold War grand strategy.[22] After all, as a former member of the Bush National Security Council observed in a conversation with this author, most of the senior members of the Administration had come of age by the time of the Second World War, and that conflict, as well as the ensuing Cold War, had been their formative experiences.[23] President George H.W. Bush was in fact a World War II veteran – he had served as a navy pilot in the Pacific theater. As noted by Steven Hurst, Bush was in many ways "a quintessential product of the east coast establishment" which had exercised a dominant role in the shaping of US foreign policy in the Twentieth Century. A Massachusetts native, the 41st President of the United States was the son of a Wall Street businessman and US Senator, Prescott Bush. Yet his personal and political experience were not limited to that horizon. A few years after graduating from Yale University, he moved to Texas, where he became a successful businessman in the oil industry. Bush started his political career as a Republican in Texas, and entered the national political scene in the mid-1960s, after having been elected to the House of Representatives. Bush's government career took off during the Nixon Administration, and it became increasingly related with the conduct of foreign affairs: Nixon appointed him Ambassador to the UN, and then Chief of the US liaison office to China – where Bush served as the *de facto* US Ambassador. Bush was then appointed Director of Central Intelligence by President Gerard Ford. He came back at the center of executive decision-making as Vice-President in the Reagan Administration. It seems fair to argue that by the time he took his post at the White House, Bush was indeed one of the Presidents with the greatest foreign

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22 As Robert Hutchings, a member of the Bush National Security Council observes, "There was no such a thing as a "Reagan-Bush" foreign policy. Before 1989 there was Reagan; afterwards there was Bush." Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 6.
23 Author's phone conversation with Dr. Philip Zelikow, February 22, 2010.

policy experience in America's history. His closest national security advisers shared a remarkable government experience as well. His National Security Advisor, Brent Scowcroft, had been a pilot too, before an airplane crash had induced him to switch his career to the study and teaching of military strategy and national security. A competent and self-effacing expert of complex national security issues – such as arms controls – Scowcroft had also served as a military attaché to the US Embassy to Yugoslavia and later as National Security Advisor in the Ford Administration, where he and Bush had first met, and had started their close and enduring friendship. Secretary of State James Baker was another close friend of Bush's. A gregarious and highly successful lawyer in Houston, Texas, Baker had served first as Chief of Staff and then as Secretary of the Treasury in the Reagan Administration. "If James Baker had been the perfect companion for George Bush's life as a sportsman, businessman, and rising politician," political scientist Christian Alfonsi noted, "Scowcroft was the perfect confidant for his life as a president." Secretary of Defense Richard Cheney, who was appointed after the failure of the nomination of Bush's first choice, Sen. John Tower, also had a remarkable experience of Washington politics. A long-serving House Republican with the reputation of a pragmatic moderate and the voting record of a staunch conservative, Cheney had served as Chairman of the House's Intelligence Commission, and by the time he was appointed he had become the House Republican whip. Finally, Bush's other key Pentagon nominee, Gen. Colin Powell, who became the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "had established himself as that rare person who somehow understood both the civilian and military side of the Capitol," as noted by Walter LaFeber. A Vietnam veteran and – despite his origins as a ROTC, rather than West Point, graduate – a bright and fast-rising Army officer, Powell had served as assistant to Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, and then as National Security Advisor, in the Reagan Administration.[24] Differences in views and attitudes, did

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24   Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration*, pp. 8-15; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 77-85, 257-259; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed,* pp. 16-26; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: The Free Press, 2009), pp. 734-736; James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans. The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London and New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 97, 169-170; Bartholomew H. Sparrow, "Realism's Practitioner: Brent Scowcroft and the Making of a New World Order, 1989-1993", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 2010), pp. 141-153; Walter LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine", *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 124, No. 1 (2009),

exist: some of Bush's top advisers – especially Baker and his staff – were quite ready to explore new approaches toward the superpower confrontation and other security issues, while others – such as Scowcroft, his deputy, Robert Gates and Cheney at the Pentagon – remained more cautious.[25] In general, however, the most senior members of the Administration had a record of substantially similar views and had already worked together in Government. During their service at the highest levels of American politics they had had to deal with sensitive issues – such as the Iran-Contra scandal or the failed intervention in the Lebanese civil war – which had had important repercussions on the conduct of both domestic and foreign affairs. On the whole, the new Administration was made of conservative, pragmatist, and moderately internationalist individuals.[26] As a result, by the beginning of 1989 the new Administration's priorities concerning foreign policy were rather traditional: the restoration of bipartisan consensus on the domestic level, the revitalization of relations within the Western Alliance and a more "realist" rethinking of the US approach toward the Soviet Union.[27]

The Bush Administration was ill-at-ease with the Reagan-Gorbachev relationship. To many within the Bush Cabinet, Gorbachev's approach mostly consisted of a "propaganda offensive."[28] Key members of the new foreign policy

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pp. 71-74.

25 Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 20; Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows. The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996), pp. 454-457; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 16-26. Author's phone conversation with Dr. Philip Zelikow, February 22, 2010. On that point, Zelikow added that as far as he recalls, "cautiousness" didn't necessarily mean a reluctance to take bold action or a failure to understand that the world was entering a new era. See also: George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), pp.154-155.

26 According to Rice and Zelikow, if there was a philosophical coloration within the George H.W. Bush Administration, it combined on the one hand a kind of "pragmatic internationalism", and on the other hand a suspicion of both the multilateralist impulses of the Carter Administration and the unilateralism of the Reagan Administration. Condoleezza Rice and Philip Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed: A Study in Statecraft* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 20

27 Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, "Once Burned, Twice Shy? The Pause of 1989", in William C. Wohlforth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 147-148. Robert Hutchings, Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. 6-11. James A. Baker III with Thomas De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolutions, War and Peace 1989-1992* (New York, Putnam's, 1995), pp. 45-46.

28 George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), p. 6. Michael Cox and Stephen Hurst, "'His Finest Hour?' George Bush and the Diplomacy of

team assumed that Gorbachev's main goal was to reform and reinvigorate the Soviet system, not to dismantle it, and that made them particularly reluctant about continuing on the path of dialogue and negotiation that had been established during the Reagan years.[29] Thus, although as a Soviet leader Gorbachev appeared to be much more promising than his predecessors, that didn't seem to be enough to persuade the new foreign policy team at the White House that it was possible to establish a truly new relationship with Moscow. As Robert Gates puts it: "We thought that, unless and until the Soviet Union abandoned communism, no matter how much Gorbachev did, many of his actions could be reversed and the USSR would continue to be a major potential security problem for the US."[30]

In short, as Melvyn Leffler observes, Bush entered the White House with a typical Cold War mindset – fearful of communist expansion, alarmed by Soviet military power and committed to alliance cohesion and political bipartisanship in foreign policy.[31] That basic outlook was almost unanimously shared by the rest of his staff. Hence, as the new Administration took office within a framework of apparent but uncertain change in international affairs, the President and his advisers felt the need to undertake a major review of American foreign policy posture – the "pause" of 1989.[32]

The first step in the strategic review process was to assess the situation and "bring everyone up to speed".[33] The main concern was to put together a series of guidelines based on mainstream views and establish closer contacts between the senior and junior members of the Administration, rather than imagining radically new approaches to foreign and national security policy. As a consequence, throughout the spring of 1989 the main concern for American strategic planning revolved around the problem of how to ensure a stable and favorable balance in the

German Unification", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (December 2002), p. 128.

29   As Brent Scowcroft recalls in his memoirs, "The Reagan's Administration's willingness to declare an end to the Cold War, without taking into consideration what that would require, disturbed me." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 12-16.

30   Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows. The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1996), p. 474.

31   Melvyn Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind. The United States, The Soviet Union and the Cold War* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2007), pp. 423-424.

32   Chollet and Goldgeier, "Once Burned, Twice Shy?", pp. 145-147. As Scowcroft recalls, "We wanted quickly to put our own stamp on policy." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 37.

33   Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 460-461.

superpower relationship, and how to retake the initiative in the international arena from Gorbachev. Bush and his staff remained skeptic about the long term strategic implications of the progress in US-USSR negotiations achieved during the Reagan years – especially those on arms controls – and maintained that stability in international affairs and Western cohesion should take precedence over the search for strategic arms reductions "for their own sake."[34]

In general, the Bush Cabinet felt that the pillars of US national security policy – confrontation with the USSR and Western cohesion in confronting the USSR – should not be questioned. Any change in the East-West relation should revolve around the situation in Eastern Europe, where a united Western front should pressure Gorbachev to give in to the wind of change in Eastern Europe, relinquish Soviet military and political control, and possibly let Communism fall and (Western-style) reform begin.[35]

On February 15, 1989, Bush ordered three major National Security Reviews – on the US relationship with the Soviet Union as well as with Eastern and Western Europe – to be completed by mid March 1989. The three documents asked for a new set of strategic guidelines to guide US policies in the short term (three to five years) and in the long term (ten years). What the President wanted, however, was a return to a classic Cold War approach, rather than a departure from traditional assumptions. The first document, National Security Review – 3, concerning the relationship with the Soviet Union, stated plainly: "Our post-World War II policies toward the Soviet Union have been extraordinarily successful. Containment is being vindicated. […] It would be unwise thoughtlessly to abandon policies that have brought us this far." It was acknowledged that under Gorbachev's leadership the Soviet Union was changing, however, the President added: "My own sense is that the Soviet challenge may be even greater than before because it is more varied."[36] National Security Review – 4 concerned the situation in Eastern Europe. "The potential for real change in Eastern Europe is greater now than at any time in

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34   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 45.
35   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 37-38. Cox and Hurst, "His Finest Hour?", p. 132.
36   National Security Review – 3, "Comprehensive Review of US-Soviet Relations", February 15, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr3.pdf .

the post-war period", the document read, "Our objectives in the region, to see popular aspirations for liberty, prosperity and self-determination, are still valid."[37] As the language of NSR-4 suggests, by early 1989, Eastern Europe was definitely seen as a critical and promising area where the Administration should focus its active efforts to seize the initiative back from Gorbachev and shift the balance of the superpower relationship in favor of the US. It was critical to find a new way to challenge the Soviet leader on the issue of self-determination for the countries of the Eastern bloc, and to pressure the Kremlin to end the military occupation in that area. As Robert Hutchings, the Director for European Affairs of Bush National Security Council, recalls, by around that time, the Administration's view was that:

> Eastern Europe, where the Cold War began, was also where it had to end. This judgment, which contradicted the then-conventional wisdom that the United States needed to "meet Gorbachev halfway" and reach an "understanding" on the future of Eastern Europe, formed the basis of American grand strategy that served us well in navigating the challenges at the end of the Cold War. This organizing principle and its corollaries – self-determination in Eastern Europe, deep reductions in Soviet forces, and the internal transformation of the USSR itself – lent a singleness of purpose that helped steer policy through a period of profound, often chaotic, change.[38]

The last of the three documents, National Security Review – 5, ordered a review of the US relationship with Western Europe. The introductory lines acknowledged the "common cultural and ethnic inheritance" underlying the transatlantic relationship, and observed that the Alliance had been held together by the mutual concern about the external threat posed by the dominant military power on the Eurasian landmass, its totalitarian direction and expansionist inclinations." "The

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37   National Security Review – 4, "Comprehensive Review of US-East European Relations", February 15, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr4.pdf .
38   As Hutchings further specifies: "The ultimate aim was to end the Cold War and the division of Europe through the peaceful, democratic transformation of its Eastern half.Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 3, 46.

close bonds of Atlantic friendship, along with the NATO alliance and its commitment of large standing armies to the defense of the West", NSR-5 observed "have provided an unprecedented period of stability and security for Europe." However, the documents added, two developments were posing great challenges to the Alliance's coherence: the process of European integration and the "political success of Gorbachev and the USSR in weakening the perception of European publics of a threat to their security."[39] In short, the three National Security Reviews maintained that because of the very transitional moment it was necessary to stick to the long-established assumptions of Western unity and tough attitude toward the Kremlin. The main concern was not to lose the opportunity to extract critical concessions concerning the East-West relationship, and to foster some major changes within the Eastern bloc in the long term.

This outlook was confirmed in early March by National Security Review 12, which addressed the issue of American defense strategy. "Throughout the post-war era", the document read, "we have successfully provided for the security of the United States and for the furtherance of our security interests in the world by following a broad national defense strategy of containment."

> We have sought successfully, through the combined use of all elements of our national power, and in concert with our Allies, to prevent the Soviet Union from dominating the concentrations of industrial power and human capacity that are Western Europe and East Asia, and to protect our common security interests in other regions of the world. Central to this broad strategy have been the concepts of deterrence and flexible response.

As the President himself argued, what was needed was confidence in the traditional tenets of Cold War American security policy, rather than innovation:

> I do not expect this review to invent a new defense strategy for a new world. On the contrary, I believe that our fundamental purposes are

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39   National Security Review – 5, "Comprehensive review of US-West European Relations", February 15, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr5.pdf .

enduring and that the broad elements of our current strategy – our Alliances, our military capabilities – remain sound. This defense review should assess how, with limited resources, we can best maintain our strength, preserve our alliances, and meet our commitments in this changing but still dangerous world.[40]

As recalled by Brent Scowcroft, a memorandum prepared by the NSC Director of Soviet and Eastern European Affairs, Condoleezza Rice, in mid March 1989 set some principles about how to revive American strategy in a way consistent with the guidelines set out in February. First of all, the Administration should work on the domestic side to strengthen the image of a new foreign policy driven by clear objectives. Second, would be necessary to send a clear signal that the relationship with long-standing allies was the Administration's first priority. Third, it might be worth to undertake some initiatives concerning Eastern Europe. (The prospect of economic assistance was expected to exercise significant leverage in that area.) Finally, it appeared possible to establish closer cooperation with the Soviet Union on the basis of a superpower shared interest in regional stability.[41]

By spring 1989, in other words, the Administration concluded that the best approach toward the evolving superpower relationship should be based on a number of initiatives intended to "test" the goodwill of the Soviet leadership, and that the best way to implement this new approach was to begin from those issues where the Soviets appeared more likely to give way. Linkage between the US-USSR relationship and Soviet conduct in Eastern Europe appeared to be the issue on which to focus the Administration's attention and efforts, while Third Word conflicts appeared to be an area in which the superpower relationship could easily evolve toward dialogue and cooperation.[42]

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40   National Security Review 12, "Review of National Defense Strategy", March 3, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr12.pdf .

41   As for the prospects of cooperation in the Third World, progress on the Afghanistan and South Africa issues were considered encouraging.Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 40.

42   Chollet and Goldgeier, "Once Burned, Twice Shy?", pp.154-155; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 40-41; Accroding to Hutchings, by 1989 the Bush Administration's grand strategy involved a sequence of steps: 1) altering the psychology of the East West relationship (read: seize the initiative back from Gorbachev); 2) restoring the cohesion of the Western Alliance; 3) Placing Eastern Europe at the top of the international agenda. "Then, as U.S.-Soviet relations had been put on hold while the first three steps were being carried out,

The outlook debated during the strategic review eventually condensed in a more comprehensive formulation that was made public through a series of major speeches given by President Bush between late April and May 1989.[43] In the first of those speeches, on April 17, 1989, Bush used the pretext of the "Roundtable Agreement" achieved in Poland to discuss the general situation in Eastern Europe.[44] The President underscored the increasing appeal of democratic ideals beyond the "iron curtain", and reasserted Washington's rejection as a matter of principle of the division of the continent. Bush also praised efforts to open East European societies and political systems, and added that support – especially economic support – would come from the West, on condition that those countries adopted "sound economic practices."[45]

In a second major speech, held at Texas A&M University's Commencement ceremony on May 12, 1989, the specific approach toward the problem of European security was compounded by a broader approach concerning the need to transform the superpower relationship and to address the problem of the new challenges to international security that were emerging independently from the East-West confrontation. As Bush stated, it was time to "move beyond containment." However, as the President added, the achievement of that ambitious goal depended on the success of Gorbachev's reforms, and above all on the Kremlin's capability to take significant steps toward a more cooperative relationship with the West, such as a reduction of Soviet global military commitments and Moscow's increased collaboration towards the solution of regional conflicts.[46]

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the fourth was to challenge the Soviet leadership to respond to specific proposals." Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 46. Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 155-156. Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 38.

43 Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 38-47.

44 The Roundtable Agreement was reached in earlu April 1989 between the Polish Government and opposition frces. It included the re-legalization of the Solidarity movement and allowed it to take part in general elections, that would take place in the summer and would be partially free. Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, p. 80.

45 "Remarks to Citizens in Hamtramck, Michigan", April 17, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=326&year=1989&month=4 .

46 "Remarks at the Texas A&M University Commencement Ceremony in College Station", May 12, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=413&year=1989&month=5 . As a matter of fact, by the time the speech was delivered, the only initiative intended to check the

Bush used another speech for a commencement ceremony, this time at Boston University on May 21, 1989, to address the issue of transatlantic relations. The President underscored the Atlantic Alliance's centrality in American foreign policy ("that is why America remains committed to the Alliance and the strategy which has preserved freedom in Europe"[47]), but added that a critical risk for the West was "complacency" and urged for a more cautious and coordinated Allied approach to the East-West relationship. "It is clear that Soviet 'new thinking' has not yet totally overcome the old", Bush stated, "I believe in a deliberate step-by-step approach to East-West relations because recurring signs show that while change in the Soviet Union is dramatic, it's not yet complete."[48]

In a fourth speech, on May 24, 1989, the President gave additional comments about the opportunity of moving "beyond containment" in the superpower relationship. As the Cold War appeared to wind down, Bush observed, a new, critical strategic goal for the US would be "integrating the Soviet Union into the community of nations" as a way to ensure international stability.[49]

Bush's final major foreign policy statement in the aftermath of the "pause" was delivered in Mainz, West Germany, on May 31, 1989. The speech was intended to seize back from Gorbachev the lead of the development of new conceptions of political order in Europe. America's response to Gorbachev's vision of a "Common European Home", Bush explained, was a "Europe Whole and Free." Gorbachev should make good on his verbal commitment to "freedom of choice," since the *sine qua non* for the end of the Cold War would be Moscow's explicit acceptance of, and acquiescence toward, the trend of political transformation occurring in Eastern

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opportunities to improve the superpower relationship Bush felt confident to launch was a revival of the "Open Skies" negotiations proposed thirty years earlier by the Eisenhower Administration. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 53-54.

47   On that point, Bush added: we will also maintain, in cooperation with our allies, ground and air forces in Europe as long as they are wanted and needed to preserve the peace in Europe."

48   "Remarks at the Boston University Commencement Ceremony in Massachusetts", May 21, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=437&year=1989&month=5 .

49   "Remarks at the United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement Ceremony in New London, Connecticut", May 24, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=448&year=1989&month=5 . According to Raymond Garthoff, this speech represented Bush's endorsement of Gorbachev's perestroika ("*status quo* plus" approach). Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution, 1994), pp. 380-381.

Europe.[50]

The five speeches were accompanied by a series of diplomatic initiatives. In May 1989 Baker traveled to Moscow. On May 10 he met Shevardnadze; the two shared views on the need to rethink the US-USSR relationship, and Baker expressed support for perestroika on behalf of the Bush Administration. On May 11 the US Secretary of State met Gorbachev, who announced his intention to decrease Soviet military assistance to leftist regimes in Central America and the Kremlin's decision to withdraw a number of tactical nuclear weapons from Eastern Europe in tranches between late 1989 and early 1991.[51] The Administration also engaged the USSR on the issue of Arms control. At a NATO meeting in Brussels in late May the Administration made a bold proposal concerning CFE negotiations.[52] The Americans proposed reductions of NATO armaments, the establishment of a ceiling in US and Soviet forces deployed in Europe of 275,000 each and the speeding up of the pace of negotiations, and Washington's line was endorsed by the rest of the Alliance.[53] In July Bush traveled to Poland and Hungary. On the one hand, given Gorbachev's continuing popularity on the international arena, the President and his advisers felt it compelling to reach out to audiences in Eastern Europe, where the popular demand for political change was growing stronger and stronger. On the other hand, however, Bush and his staff were wary that an excessively bold American stance may foster instability. As a result, during the visit the President took care not to challenge too openly the ruling Communist establishments and to urge caution on all parties, even at the price of appearing sympathetic to the unrepresentative élites in power.[54] Even though the Administration had sensed that Eastern Europe was the key to turning the superpower balance in favor of the US, fear of upsetting the apparently stable bipolar equilibrium implied a very cautious posture on the part of the President. Stability was a precious commodity in the eyes

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50   "Remarks to Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany", May 31, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=476&year=1989&month=5 .
51   Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 72-83.
52   Negotiations on Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE) started in Vienna in March 1989. Dokrill, *The End of the Cold War Era*, pp. 124-125.
53   Acceptance of that ceiling implied a 30,000 cut on the part of the US and a 325,000 cut by the USSR. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 81; Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 461.
54   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 112-126; Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 466; Fischer, "US foreign policy under Reagan and Bush", pp. 282-283.

of Bush and his foreign policy staff, and given the situation by mid 1989 they were not ready to risk uncertainty in the East-West relation in return for the prospect of a new order.

Though by mid-1989 the new Administration was still struggling to regain the initiative, the White House was beginning to appreciate that supporting human rights and self determination, along with dialogue and cooperation, would allow the US both to influence political developments beyond the "iron curtain" and to reassert its leadership of the Western camp. On balance, however, no breakthrough had been achieved, and from the White House's standpoint the main strategic dilemmas concerning the objective of moving "beyond containment" had not been solved yet. In September 1989, these persistent dilemmas found their place in National Security Directive 23, which addressed the central problem of the evolving superpower relationship. The general outlook emerged during the spring was largely confirmed: optimism about the potential to move "beyond containment" was qualified by remarks reflecting a more traditional "Cold War" state of mind. As NSD-23 argued, containment could not be dismissed prematurely, since the Soviet military threat had not diminished. The document read that "the transformation of the Soviet Union from a source of instability into a productive force within the family of nations is a long term goal that can only be pursued from a position of American strength and with patience and creativity." Hence, it was crucial to obtain tangible results in terms Moscow's renunciation of the "Brezhnev Doctrine" and Soviet sincere cooperation on a range of "global" security challenges, such as countering the proliferation of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, international drugs trade, terrorism and dangers to the environment.[55] During that month Baker met Shevardnadze in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. As he recalls, by that time it was clear that the USSR leadership was ready to make new accommodating gestures, such as abandoning the linkage between progress on the START negotiations and research on anti-ballistic technology, and that US-USSR

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55   National Security Directive 23 "United States Relations with the Soviet Union", September 22, 1989, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsd/nsd23.pdf . in his memoirs Baker recalls that by that time he and his closer aides felt that Gorbachev's domestic position was weakening, and that it was in the interest of the US to do as much as it could to make progress with Gorbachev while he was still in power. See especially Ross's paper on the future of the USSR, September 11, 1989. Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 142-143.

agreement on nuclear testing and chemical weapons was within reach. As far as regional conflicts were concerned, moreover, it appeared that the Soviets were eager to pressure their regional partners to de-escalate them.[56] Dialogue continued, but by as late as early Autumn 1989 the Bush Cabinet didn't appear ready to take any bold initiative that may upset the familiar *status quo*. As a consequence of the strategic review of early 1989 and the subsequent approach adopted by the Administration, by Autumn 1989 there had not yet been a formal meeting between the President and Gorbachev.[57] An official summit was scheduled for the Summer of 1990, but the President and his advisers concluded that it was worth to organize a meeting before the end of 1989. The Soviets agreed on the proposal, and a summit was scheduled for early December in Malta. The decision was officially announced on October 31, 1989. By the time Bush and Gorbachev actually met the situation had become radically different.[58] The fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, along with the progress of the peaceful transitions from Communist regimes to democracy in Eastern Europe, eventually created the conditions on which the Bush Administration was prepared to engage in the Cold War endgame.

American priorities after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the settlement of the German Question.

The failure to find an acceptable settlement of the German question in the aftermath of the Second World War had been the key driver of the establishment of the Cold War, and since then Washington and its Western allies had formally maintained that the division of the country was an illegitimate product of Soviet aggressive attitudes. By the late 1980s, however, the existence of two Germanys had become a tacit assumptions in the relationship between the Western and Eastern blocs. Originally, the Bush Administration was not inclined to question this approach. According to Brent Scowcroft, the German question had been discussed within the Administration during the first half of 1989. On the issue, the mainstream view among his NSC advisers was that German unification would be critical to the end of the Cold War, and that the US should help West Germany take

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56   Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 151-152.
57   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 133-134.
58   Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 482.

the lead in the any process intended to achieve unification. The Europe experts at the State Department, however, were making the case for avoiding to raise the German question, since at the time no major European Government was willing to reopen the question, and to do that would likely have a destabilizing effect on the overall situation in the Continent. In the event, for most of 1989 the gut instinct of the President and his staff had been to "continue the ritual incantations" of support for German unification by peaceful means, but to refrain from initiatives on such a critical issue, lest it dangerously destabilize Europe. As Brent Scowcroft acknowledged, "What was wrong with a divided Germany as long as the situation was stable?"[59] By September 1989, however, as the East German refugee crisis in Hungary of the early summer made it evident that the status quo on the German question was no longer stable, the President and the rest of the Administration began to reverse their attitude. They began to state publicly that they were ready to discuss the issue of unification, and that they favored a solution worked out by the Germans themselves.[60]

Then, the fall of the Berlin Wall imposed an additional, drastic acceleration and shift in priorities in the American foreign policy agenda, but it seems fair to argue that the Bush Administration's approach to the challenge of German unification followed the guidelines of the strategic outlook developed prior to November 9, 1989. The first instinct at the White House was to see the German question first and foremost through the prism of "balance of power" considerations. As the President and his National Security Adviser, recalled in their memoirs, once the question of Germany's unification had been re-opened, for both military and geopolitical reasons Washington considered critically important to make sure that Germany remained firmly within NATO.[61] The Bush Administration assumed that a continued American political and military commitment was critical for the creation of a stable security architecture in Europe, and NATO was seen as the only framework capable of assuring the sustainability of Washington's commitment.[62] From this point of view, moreover, Germany was seen as the key to American

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59   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 188-189.
60   See for example: Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 81.
61   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 196-197.
62   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 230-231.

presence on the Continent. As Scowcroft recalled,

> It was important that Germany remain firmly within the Alliance, not just because it was important to anchor that nation to the West and to assuage the fears of its neighbors, but also because it was crucial to NATO. Germany is the geographic center of the alliance and its second largest economy and military power. A Germany outside NATO would "gut" the alliance. Its membership was also important to the US for practical reasons. Without Germany and our bases there, our military presence in NATO, and in Europe, would be difficult if not impossible to maintain.[63]

Since it soon became clear that for both practical and moral reasons German unification could not be questioned, it was critical for the White House to obtain a guarantee that the settlement of the German question would not be achieved at the expenses of the basic tenets of the post-World War II transatlantic relationship. In this respect, the Bush Administration found a very reliable partner in Helmut Kohl, the West German Chancellor. Kohl and his party, the CDU, had profound Atlanticist orientations and were ready to work on German unification within the framework of the transatlantic alliance.[64] Thus, from the standpoint of the Bush Cabinet, it was critical to strengthen Kohl and advance his vision for a unified Germany.[65] A close relationship between Washington and Bonn became a fundamental feature of the process of German unification, and at several critical junctures the partnership between Kohl and the Bush Administration was critical in shaping the final outcome of the process.[66]

The first test for the US-West German partnership came at the end of November 1989. In a speech before his country's Parliament, Kohl listed "Ten Points" concerning the steps to achieve German unification. The Chancellor promised

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63   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 196-197.
64   Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 76; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 58-59. The Americans felt quite ill-at-ease with West German Foreign Minister Hans Genscher. Genscher was readier to explore ways to achieve unification within a European, not strictly transatlantic framework.
65   Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 19.
66   Alexander Moens, "American diplomacy and German unification", *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 6 (1991), pp. 531-532.

increased West German economic assistance to the East, but only on condition that a fundamental political and economic change of regime was irreversibly undertaken. Kohl's vision contemplated the establishment of an interim confederative structure between the two Germanys and eventually a federal arrangement, and made the case for embedding the process of German unification into a broader process of construction of a new and comprehensive European political and security architecture.[67] Major Western European powers as well as the Soviet Union were offset by and worried about Bonn's activism. In general, European leaders were worried about the impact of German unification on the balance of power on the Continent. Great powers such as Britain, France and the Soviet Union, feared that unification would come at the price of their country's marginalization or, especially in the French and Soviet case, at the expenses of their designs for the establishment of a new European security architecture.[68] The Bush Administration, however, readily expressed an attitude supportive of Kohl's initiatives.[69] Secretary of State Baker's issued a statement concerning the US position that listed four critical conditions that would make German unification unquestionably feasible as far as Washington was concerned: first, self-determination must be pursued without prejudice to its outcome; second, unification should occur in the context of Germany's continued commitment to NATO and an increasingly integrated EC; third, unification should be gradual, peaceful, and part of a step-by-step process; and finally, the inviolability of borders must be respected as stated in the Helsinki Final Act.[70] At that particular juncture, at least from an American (and West German) perspective, geopolitical interests were wholly compatible with liberal principles, and the Administration didn't hesitate to support West German pressures to let the two Germanys settle the terms of unification on their own provided that the new state remained anchored to the

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67   Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, pp. 119-120; Michael Cox and Stephen Hurst, "'His Finest Hour?' George Bush and the Diplomacy of German Unification", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (December 2002), p. 133.
68   Cox and Hurst, "His Finest Hour?", pp. 133-134; Jacques Lévesque, "In the name of Europe's future: Soviet, French and British qualms about Kohl's rush to German unification", in in Frédéric Bozo, Marie-Pierre Rey, N. Piers Ludlow, and Leopoldo Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the End of the Cold War. A Reappraisal* (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 95-106; Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 2.
69   Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 165,
70   Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 167-168.;Cox and Hurst, "His Finest Hour?", p. 135.

West, particularly to NATO.[71] Calls for caution from key Western partners such as Britain and France as well as strong opposition from the Soviet Union, however, prompted the Bush Cabinet to look for a negotiating framework that would make it easier to reach a consensus on the final settlement. An appealing solution, the so-called "2+4" formula, was eventually developed at the State Department.[72] According to that proposal, East and West Germany would deal autonomously with issues relating to German unification, while the former four occupying powers – the US, Britain, France and the Soviet Union – would have a say concerning the "external" aspects of unification, such as Germany's relation with existing European alliances.[73] The main assumption was that the USSR had to be involved in the process of unification. The key advantage, from an American standpoint, was that the mechanism would ensure that reunification would not be the result of a deal between Moscow and Bonn in which Germany's tie to NATO would be compromised as the price for Soviet agreement to unification.[74] Moreover, that arrangement also implied that negotiations would be conducted within a restricted group of major Powers, not a large framework such as the CSCE, where decision-making would be much slower and achieving consensus would be harder.[75] Despite their initial qualms, the French and British Governments concluded that it would be in their interest to fall in line with the US-German position, and thus they endorsed the "2+4" formula and the prospect of German unification.[76] As a result, by early 1990 a common Western position on the problem of German unification began to develop and consolidate along the lines set by Washington and Bonn.[77] Now the

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71   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 167-168.
72   According to Robert Gates, the "2+4" formula was the brainchild of Dennis Ross and Robert Zoellik. Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 485.
73   Moens, "American diplomacy and German unification", p. 534.
74   Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 485.
75   Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 172.
76   Patrick Salmon, "The United Kingdom and German unification", in Bozo, Rey, Ludlow, and Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 177-190; Frédéric Bozo, "France, German unification and European integration", in Bozo, Rey, Ludlow and Nuti, *Europe and the End of the Cold War*, pp. 148-160. According to Rice and Zelikow, the fact that the Bonn and Washington Government were so united made it nearly impossible for other NATO/Western allies to go public with their concerns about unification. Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 165.
77   Alexander Moens argues that as negotiations proceeded, especially in the aftermath of the Christian Democrat electoral success in the March 1990 East German elections, the "2+4" formula increasingly appeared to be turning into a "5 *v.* 1" arrangement at the expenses of the Soviet Union. Moens, "American diplomacy and German unification", p. 537.

White House's priority was to ensure Moscow's acquiescence to a united Germany in NATO.[78]

Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze expressed his endorsement of the "2+4" formula in February 1990, yet despite consensus among the four occupying powers concerning the negotiating process, Moscow's opposition to the outcome desired by Washington and its allies remained an hard obstacle to overcome for American diplomacy.[79] As noted above, Bush had an opportunity to meet Gorbachev early after the fall of the Wall, in Malta on December 2-3, 1989. On that occasion no agreements were concluded, but the summit was an important occasion for the two leaders to have a direct exchange and establish a closer personal relationship.[80] Significantly, during the meetings Gorbachev took care to explain to Bush that the Kremlin no longer considered the US as an "enemy", and the US president expressed his support for Gorbachev's perestroika. Followed by a joint US-Soviet communiqué, the meeting was an encouraging step in the Cold War endgame.[81] However, Soviet resistance toward German unification – especially toward the prospect of losing East Germany as an ally and facing instead a united Germany as part of NATO – was strong. Bush and his advisers realized that the Soviet Union would be the great power that would lose the most from the implementation of the settlement originally advocated by Washington and Bonn.[82] Nonetheless, by early 1990 the President and his foreign policy staff concluded that it would be possible to favor the emergence of conditions that would induce Gorbachev and the Kremlin to acquiesce to a united Germany in NATO, or more cynically, as a member of the Bush NSC acknowledged, to "bribe the Soviets out of Germany" in concert with the Bonn Government.[83] After all, on the one hand, the West German Government was in a position to offer precious financial assistance

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78   Cox and Hurst, "His Finest Hour?", p. 145. See also Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 197; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 230-231.

79   Moens, "American diplomacy and German unification", p. 535.

80   Concerning that summit, Raymond Gathoff argued that Malta was for Bush and Gorbachev what Jackson Hole – in September 1989 – had been for Baker and Shevardnadze. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, p. 407.

81   Saki Ruth Dockrill, *The End of the Cold War Era. The Transformation of the Global Security Order* (London: Hodder Arnold, 2005); p. 126; "At Historic Crossroads: Documents on the December 1989 Malta Summit", in *CWIHP Bulletin* N. 12/13, Fall/Winter 2001, pp. 229-241.

82   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 184-187; Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 2.

83   Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 492.

to a Soviet Union whose economic situation was in tatters.[84] On the other hand, the Bush Administration was ready to throw its influence to advance a series of reforms within the transatlantic camp that would make it easier for Gorbachev to accept the Western line and strengthen the Soviet leader's position vis-à-vis Kremlin hardliners at home.[85]

In mid May 1990 Baker traveled to Moscow and met Shevardnadze. On that occasion the US Secretary of State delivered to his Soviet counterpart a set of nine US "assurances" concerning German unification: the German Army would be subjected to limitations within the framework of a "CFE 2" agreement, and the new Germany would commit not to acquire any nuclear or non-conventional military capability; for a transitional period NATO forces would not enter the East German territory, while the withdrawal of Soviet forces would be facilitated; negotiations on the reduction of nuclear armaments would continue; NATO would change its strategic concept in order to adapt it to the new situation of absence of East-West rivalry and in parallel an expansion of CSCE security responsibilities would be sought; an agreement on the German-Polish border would soon be reached; and, importantly, economic relations between the new Germany and the Soviet Union would be expanded, while East German economic obligations toward the USSR would be fulfilled.[86] By around the same time, Bush met Kohl in Washington, and they agreed that the most important pending issue was to ensure Moscow acquiescence to the removal of Soviet troops from East Germany without analogous concessions on NATO's part. The two leaders concluded that it would be useful to appeal to the provisions of Helsinki Final Act of 1975, particularly to those concerning the freedom of countries to choose their own alliances.[87] The compatibility of national interests and moral principles thus played a critical role in achieving a progress in negotiations with the Soviet Union. When Bush and

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84 As Mary Elise Sarotte reports, by summer 1990 the Soviet Union had lost the ability to secure loans on the international credit market. "West Germany", Robert Gates notes, "was offering them a pile of money". Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence. The 1990 Deals to "Bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In", *International Security*, Vol.35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), p. 122; Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 492-493.
85 Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 492-493; Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, pp. 256-257; Cox and Hurst, "His Finest Hour?", p. 145.
86 Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 248-251.
87 Mary Elise Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence. The 1990 Deals to "Bribe the Soviets Out" and Move NATO In", *International Security*, Vol.35, No. 1 (Summer 2010), p. 124.

Gorbachev met in Washington in late May 1990, the Soviet leader couldn't object to the argument that according to the provisions of the Helsinki Final Act of 1975 the people of a united Germany would be free to choose their foreign policy alignment.[88] The American leadership considered Gorbachev's acceptance of the Helsinki principles a critical positive step, but by the time of the Washington Summit there was no certainty that the definitive breakthrough on the German question had been reached.[89]

As Gorbachev personally acquiesced to the possibility of a united Germany in NATO, the US priority became making sure that his domestic position was strong enough to allow him to have the German settlement endorsed by the rest of the Soviet leadership. In order to achieve this result, the Bush Administration focused its energies on creating the strategic environment most favorable to Gorbachev on the road to the forthcoming Congress of the USSR Communist Party, which was scheduled for July 1990. On June 16, during a meeting at the White House, the President and his staff considered a number of key US initiatives intended to make it more reasonable for the Soviet leadership to accept German unification, such as inviting Warsaw Pact countries to open a permanent liaison mission at NATO; reducing US nuclear stockpiles and announcing a new US nuclear doctrine of "last resort;" committing to a new NATO strategic concept that would replace the doctrines of "flexible response" and "forward defense;" and committing to the creation of new institutions within the CSCE framework.[90] It became critically important for Washington to have a new, less confrontational strategic concept endorsed by the Atlantic Alliance. An European Strategy Steering Group, composed of members of the NSC and State Department was established to prepare a draft declaration to circulate at the upcoming London NATO summit.[91] As the

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88   "Briefing Allies on Washington Summit" U.S. Department of State to U.S. Embassies in NATO Capitals, Tokyo, Seoul, Canberra [and info to Moscow], 15 June 1990, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB320/16.pdf ; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 282. Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, pp. 277-278. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 533. Note that Sarotte argues that West German economic assistance was more important than American diplomacy in persuading the USSR leadership to acquiesce to German unification on Western/NATO terms. Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence.", pp. 121, 125-126.
89   "Briefing Allies on Washington Summit", cit.
90   Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, p. 311.
91   Gates, *From the Shadows*, pp. 494. According to gates, the main intellectual contributions were made by Zoellick, Blackwill, Zelikow, Ross and Rice.

North Atlantic Council convened in London in late June 1990, the US delegation decided to skip the traditional, bureaucratic decision-making process and directly circulate its proposed reforms to the other delegations, and managed to have them approved.[92] On July 6, 1990, the NAC issued the "London Declaration": East and West were no longer "adversaries", countries in the old Continent were finally choosing "a Europe whole and free."[93]

The London Declaration, along with further promises of economic aid made by Kohl during meetings in Moscow and in the Caucasus in mid July 1990, strengthened Gorbachev's position at the CPSU Congress that month. Eventually the Soviet leadership endorsed a settlement of the German question by which East Germany would de facto be taken over by West Germany according to the constitutional provisions of the West German Basic Law, and the new State would join NATO, although for an interim – and not very well specified – phase NATO's jurisdiction would not extend to the territory of the former East Germany.[94] With the unification of Germany, the fall of the Communist regimes in Eastern Europe and the beginning of their transition toward democracy and free market, a new era of hope began on the Continent. That Autumn the US, Britain, France and the Soviet Union formally relinquished their occupation rights over Germany, and the country was unified. In November the CFE Treaty was signed and the member states of the CSCE issued a joint declaration stating that "The era of confrontation and division of Europe" had ended, and from then on relations would be founded on "respect and cooperation".[95]

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92   Cox and Hurst, "'His Finest Hour?'", pp. 143-144.

93   North Atlantic Council, "London Declaration on a Transformed North Atlantic Alliance", July 6, 1990, http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/49-95/c900706a.htm . It seems interesting to notice that the expression "a Europe whole and free" chosen by the framers of the London Declaration replicated the formula proposed by Bush during his May 31, 1989 speech in Mainz. "Remarks to Citizens in Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany", May 31, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=476&year=1989&month=5 . In retrospect, the choice of that language might be seen as the last stone on the grave of Gorbachev's vision of a "Common European Home".

94   Historian Mary Elise Sarotte argues that West German economic assistance was more important than American diplomacy in persuading the USSR leadership to acquiesce to German unification on Western/NATO terms. Sarotte, "Perpetuating U.S. Preeminence.", pp. 121, 125-126.

95   "Charter of Paris for a New Europe", Paris, November 19, 1990, http://www.osce.org/documents/mcs/1990/11/4045_en.pdf . The Warsaw Pact was dismantled in summer 1991, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist by January 1992.

In the event, with regard to the German question, the Bush Administration managed to achieve all the results it had wished for: West Germany took over East Germany, the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops from the East and the new country remained a member of NATO. In retrospect, the settlement of 1989-1990 may not have been the best possible deal to ensure long term stability in Europe.[96] But by reshaping the continental balance of power and removing the existential threat posed by Soviet and Warsaw Pact hostility, it was clear that the Administration and its closest partners had managed to dramatically improve Western security.

The fall of the Berlin Wall and the process of German unification were catalysts for the end of the Cold War in Europe and the geopolitical transformation of the Continent. As a result, by early Summer 1990, the US found itself in a radically improved strategic position, not only with regard to Europe, but also in global terms. By that time, however, it was becoming increasingly evident that change, instability, and risk were not confined to the bipolar relationship.

Catching a glimpse of the post-Cold War era

Although the Cold War dominated strategic thinking and planning in the Bush Administration, by the late 1980s a number of political trends transcending the East-West confrontation were emerging in international affairs, and they too posed challenges to US national security.

The President appeared to be particularly concerned about emerging regional powers, particularly in the Middle East, and the unconventional threats that they may pose to US security and interests. Indeed, part of the defense policy review Bush ordered in early March 1989 was to be devoted to the assessment of how the acquisition of "long-range weapons, chemical, biological and nuclear warheads, and other advanced systems" by countries such as Libya and Iraq could threaten the

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96   In her account of the events of 1989-1990, historian Mary Elise Sarotte notes that the settlement failed to find a way to integrate the Soviet Union, and later Russia, in the new European security architecture. Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989. The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2009), pp. 195-214. As it will be observed later in this dissertation, moreover, the West was caught unprepared to deal with the violence and humanitarian emergencies that broke out in the Balkans and other areas in Europe as a consequence of the fall of Communism.

interests of the US and its allies. Another critical concern was related to the perceived willingness and capacity of such regional powers to use international terrorism in the pursuit of their strategic goals, at the expenses of American interests.[97]

These concerns with emerging powers determined to resort to unconventional threats – such as Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and terrorism – in order to advance their aspirations for regional hegemony, reflected intellectual trends that had been developing within academic and foreign policy circles. As Robert Litwak observes, by the late 1970s academic analysts started using the term "pariah state" to describe countries that were disturbingly pursuing an independent nuclear deterrent capability. In parallel, from 1979 onward, the US Department of State started issuing a "terrorist list" of countries officially designed by the Secretary of State under the Export Administration Act. Then, as the 1980s unfolded, the Cold War entered its final phase, and the perception of Soviet threat began to recede, US strategists increasingly paid attention to the problem of "pariah", "renegade", "outlaw" (and later "rogue") states, which as noted above were increasingly identified as regional powers determined to resort to unconventional weapons and strategies in order to advance their ambitions in contrast to Western interests.[98] Bush himself, as Vice President between 1981 and 1989, and a great many of his senior advisers, had experienced the bitterness of dealing with instability and "asymmetric" threats such as terrorism and hostage-taking stemming from crises

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97   National Security Review 12, "Review of National Defense Strategy", March 3, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr12.pdf . The White House also ordered a policy review concerning the specific challenges faced by the US in the Persian Gulf Area, where the risks of nuclear proliferation appeared alarmingly on the rise. National Security Review 10, "U.S. Policy Toward The Persian Gulf", February 22, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr10.pdf . Interestingly, as authors Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor note, a report prepared in 1979 for Defense Secretary Harold Brown, by Paul Wolfowitz – who would later serve in both the Geroge H.W. Bush and George W. Bush Administrations – identified specifically Iraq as a potentially serious troublemaker in the Persian Gulf region, because of that country's relative power advantage *vis-àvis* its Arab neighbors such as Kuwait or Saudi Arabia. Michael R. Gordon, General Bernard E. Trainor, *The Generals' War: The inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf* (Boston: Little Brown, 1995), p. 480; James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans. The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London and New York: Penguin, 2004), pp. 79-94; Paul K. Davis, *Analytical Architecture for Capabilities-Based Planning, Mission System Analysis and Transformation* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), pp. 68-69.
98   Rober Litwak, *Rogue Regimes and U.S. Foreign Policy* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Pressm 2000), pp. 7, 50-55. On the increasing concern for the threat from regional powers armed with unconventional weapons as a consequence of the waning of the Soviet threat see also: Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy*, pp. 407-434.

involving Third World countries.[99]

The priority given to the bipolar confrontation by the President and his staff prompted them to merge their Cold War concerns with those relating to the emerging "non-Cold War" security threats, and that reinforced the Administration's perception that regional challenges would be an important ground to test America's leadership of the Western camp and the Gorbachev's willingness to cooperate.[100] Bush publicly expressed this concern in late May 1989:

> the security challenges we face today do not come from the East alone. The emergence of regional powers is rapidly changing the strategic landscape. In the Middle East, in south Asia, in our own hemisphere, a growing number of nations are acquiring advanced and highly destructive capabilities -- in some cases, weapons of mass destruction and the means to deliver them. And it is an unfortunate fact that the world faces increasing threat from armed insurgencies, terrorists,[…] and in some regions, an unholy alliance of all three. Our task is clear: We must curb the proliferation of advanced weaponry. We must check the aggressive ambitions of renegade regimes, and we must enhance the ability of our friends to defend themselves […] We and our allies must construct a common strategy for stability in the developing world.[101]

However, although the Bush Administration's main concern about post-Cold War security challenges appeared to revolve around the spread of non-conventional weapons, during its first year in office it happened to be forced to deal with another kind of "non-Cold War" threat, involving political instability within a country and the need for foreign intervention to deal with the related external implications: the Panama crisis.

Panama had been strategically important to the US since the early 20th

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99   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 69-73.

100   National Security Directive 23 "United States Relations with the Soviet Union", cit.

101   "Remarks at the United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement Ceremony in New London, Connecticut", May 24, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=448&year=1989&month=5 It's interesting to notice that this was the same speech in which Bush talked about the challenge of "integrating the Soviet Union into the community of nations".

Century because of the Canal, whose construction had been possible thanks to the country's secession from Colombia (in fact engineered by the US) and whose control had been granted to the US by a lease agreement due to expire by the year 2000, a time by which Panama was expected to have become a stable, democratic country.[102] By the 1980s, however, instead of democratization, the country was experiencing the ruthless dictatorship of Manuel Noriega, a local military leader who was also involved in international drug trafficking. Evidence of Noriega's involvement in drug trafficking had been overlooked by the US/Reagan Administration, mainly because Noriega was apparently willing to cooperate in the Reagan Administration's struggle against the spread of Marxism in Latin America.[103]

The indictment of the Panamanian dictator by two US federal courts, in February 1988, finally exposed the fact that Washington's approach toward Noriega's regime was not sustainable in the long term.[104] By that time, however, in large part as a result of the Vietnam experience, there was no support within the White House for bolder or more direct forms of intervention in the small Central American state.[105] In particular, the Reagan Administration was split over the idea of resorting to military force.[106] As a result, it ended up opting for a series mixed signals that further destabilized the situation. From 1988 onward, the US leadership begun openly to encourage a popular uprising against Noriega and to send messages to the Panamanian military (PDF) intended to encourage a military coup.[107] Then, in May 1988 the White House aired publicly that if Noriega retired, the indictments would be dropped. The idea, however, was so controversial that it

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102 According to the Panama Canal Treaties signed by US President Jimmy Carter and Panama's strongman Col. Omar Torrijos, the Panama Canal would return under Panamanian sovereignty by 2000; meanwhile, Panama's leaders would work to establish democracy in their country. Eytan Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited: Lessons for the Use of Force in the Post-Cold War Era" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol 110, No. 4 (Winter 1995-1996), p. 540; LaFeber, *The American Age*, pp. 239-245. See also Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Shulster, 1991), p. 83. Karin von Hippel, *Democracy by Force. US Military Intervention in the post-Cold War World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 27-29.
103 Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", pp. 541-542.
104 von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 30.
105 Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", p. 540-542; von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 30-31; Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, pp. 179-180.
106 Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", pp. 546-551.
107 Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", pp. 547-548.

received strong criticism from Congress and even from then Vice President Bush, who was running for the 1988 Presidential election.[108] Bush had undertaken a commitment to wage a "war on drugs," and was contemptuous of Noriega, yet despite early attempts to review the US Panama policy, at first his Administration was not capable of escaping the wobbly stance adopted under Reagan.[109]

The situation further escalated in May 1989, when Noriega rigged Panama's general elections and then nullified the results, which had sanctioned the victory of the opposition led by Guillermo Endara.[110] The Bush Administration reacted with increasingly harsh rhetoric, and also tried to articulate its response within an inter-American framework, by stressing that the Panama crisis now involved respect for democracy and the rule of law (Panama Canal Treaties) in the Western Hemisphere.[111] Once again, however, in practice the Bush Administration failed to find an alternative to the policy of sending appeals to the Panamanian "people" – and more specifically to that country's military – to get rid of their dictator and to re-engage in the democratization process.[112] In spite of the White House's tougher rhetoric, Noriega persisted in his defiant stance.[113] In late September 1989, the Bush Administration was informed of a coup plot led by Moises Giroldi, a member of Noriega's clique. Giroldi, however, was not considered reliable by the US

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108   Bush was in the middle of the 1988 US Presidential campaign. Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", p. 549.
109   Bush asked for a review of the Panama policy soon after taking office. National Security Review – 2, "Panama", February 13, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsr/nsr2.pdf .
110   von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp.
111   Letter, "POTUS to Hemispheric Leaders", n.d., OA/ID CF01577-019, Pryce, William T., Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable From Department of State to ALOEC et. al., "talking points", OA/ID CF01577-020, Pryce, William T., Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Interestingly, in his memoirs James Baker maintains that the OAS itself would not be enough to find a solution, but that it was important to try that way, "if for no other reason than to make it clear, should force be necessary, that the US had exhausted every peaceful diplomatic alternative." Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 183.
112   Draft, "Message", 5/89, OA/ID CF01577-019, Pryce, William T., Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. "Message to the PDF" (n.d.), OA/ID CF01577-016, Pryce, William T., Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. On May 11, 1989, Bush made an indirect call for a coup by stating publicly that US objectives toward Panama included "democracy" and protection for US citizens. On May 13 Bush called on the Panamanian people and military to overthrow Noriega. Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 90-92; "Interview with Members of the White House Press Corps on the Situation in Panama", May 13, 1989, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=416&year=1989&month=5 .
113   Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", pp. 540-541.

military and intelligence community, and both General Colin Powell, the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Gen. Maxwell Thurman, the new Commander of the US SOUTHCOM, concluded that the Giroldi affair lacked the characteristics to allow a safe and feasible US intervention.[114] As a result, the US decided to minimize action and refrain from committing in support of the coup, which eventually failed.[115] The Giroldi episode exposed nonetheless the gap between the Bush Administration's rhetoric and its policies, and given Noriega's continued provocations, a consensus began to develop on the idea of military intervention.[116]

The last straw in the confrontation was the harassment and murder of US military personnel deployed in Panama by members of the PDF in mid December 1989.[117] That provocation led Bush and his advisers to the conclusion that military intervention was the only way to achieve an acceptable solution of the crisis. As serious talk of military intervention entered the debate within the White House, the Pentagon, and especially Gen. Powell, persuaded the President that what was needed was a large scale operation whose goal should not be limited to Noriega's capture, but also to the destruction of his regime – including the PDF.[118] Thus, on December 17, 1989, Bush endorsed Operation Just Cause, which involved a massive US military intervention conducted with overwhelming force, with the objective of overthrowing the Noriega regime, occupying Panama and swear in Guillermo Endara, the legitimate winner of the May 1989 election.[119] On December 20, 1989, 14,651 US troops landed on Panama.[120] The Bush Administration provided four major motivations for the Panama intervention: the need to save US lives and protect US property; the desire to restore democracy in Panama and to preserve the integrity of the canal treaties; and, finally, the necessity

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114   Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 119-120. Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", p. 556.
115   Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 121.
116   Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", p. 558; Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 129.
117   Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 156-157.
118   Gilboa, "The Panama Invasion Revisited", p. 558. See also Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 133-135. See also Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Ballantine Books-Random House, 1996), p. 403.
119   Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 169-171.
120   By the time of the operation the US deployed in Panama a total of more than 27,000 troops. von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp.33-35

to apprehend Noriega.[121] On December 21 the US military launched Operation Blind Logic, intended to assist the new Panamanian Government.[122] Although American forces swiftly toppled Noriega's regime and sworn in Endara, the Panama intervention did show some important shortcomings. Operation Blind Logic, the political reconstruction phase, was expected to endure for only one year past the intervention. Soon after the invasion, however, it became clear that US forces in Panama were not prepared to cope with the power vacuum created by the intervention, and that more time and effort was needed to stabilize the country and the new regime.[123] In addition, capturing Noriega turned out to be a much harder task than expected by US planners.[124] The crisis also prompted the White House to review and improve the crisis management process in order to ensure better inter-agency coordination.[125] On balance, however, the Bush Administration appeared to have successfully withstood a dictator and advanced the cause of democracy as well as the national interest.[126] As a military operation, Just Cause was smooth and effective, and it was largely interpreted by both the US leadership and public opinion as an encouraging signal that the country was overcoming the so-called "Vietnam Syndrome", and that under certain conditions force could be used as a viable instrument of foreign policy.[127]

During the period between mid-1989 and mid-1990 a chain of sudden and radical changes ignited a dramatic transformation in international affairs that went

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121 According to von Hippel, at the time of the invasion the excuses invoked by Bush1were not legitimate, although they did pave the way for a change in international law in the direction advocated by Bush1. See subsequent, UN-authorized, US military interventions., 47-50..

122 Woodward, *The Commanders*, pp. 182-184.

123 Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 417-418. As scholar Karin von Hippel reports, by early 1990, the limited success of US efforts to stabilize the situation and create the conditions for socio-political and economic reconstruction in Panama, led to a significant and decrease in local support for the US intervention. Eventually, the American military commitment continued through 1994. von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 35-37, 42, 50.

124 von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 49; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 417.

125 Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 186.

126 Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 178, 193.

127 Baker with De Franks, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 194; James Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans. The History of Bush's War Cabinet* (London and New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 180. As Colin Powell remarks in his memoirs, "The lessons I learned from Panama confirmed all my convictions over the preceding twenty years, since the day of doubt over Vietnam. Have a clear political objective and stick to it. Use all the force necessary and do not apologize for going big if that is what it takes. Decisive force ends wars quickly and in the long run saves lives. Whatever threats we faced in the future, I intended to make these rules the bedrock of my military counsel." Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 420-421

far beyond the imagination of people, scholars and political leaders alike, and posed a tremendous test to the assessment and decision-making capabilities of the statesmen involved. The American leadership was no exception to this trend. President George H.W. Bush and his advisers took office with plans to engage in another round of pure, old-school Cold War wrestling, and, despite increasing awareness that the international situation was evolving, they remained rather loath to abandon that posture. As long as there existed an Eastern bloc – and a Soviet Union on the lead – the Bush Administration was not prepared to acknowledge that the Cold War was ending, or that it could end. It was only in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall that the Bush Cabinet decided to fully and boldly engage in a Cold War endgame, but it remained unprepared to end the Cold War symmetrically – through accommodation with the Soviet Union – and highly determined to negotiate "from a position of strength," and overcome the containment order on terms set in Washington. As Stephen Brooks and William Wohlforth observe, "Washington was slow to respond to Gorbachev's concessions, never reciprocated them in kind, and never compromised its basic approach to international security."[128] The Administration set for itself the objective of "integrating" the Soviet Union into the "community of nations", and many members of the Bush Cabinet felt that Gorbachev could be a useful partner.[129] Nevertheless, despite the important results obtained through negotiation with the Soviets in ending the Cold War in Europe, in practical terms they didn't feel they could completely trust the Kremlin.[130]

In the event, however, their approach did lead to the results they had been wishing for, although in retrospect, as even some members of the Bush Administration acknowledged, America's success in ending the Cold War in Europe on such favorable terms could not have been achieved without support from reliable and committed local partners, such as West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl or the new, post-Communist leadership in Eastern Europe.[131]

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128 Brooks and Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War", pp. 305-308.
129 Author's conversation with Ambassador Roman Popadiuk, College Station, TX, October 7, 2009; Author's phone conversation with Dr. Philip Zelikow, February 22, 2010
130 Author's conversation with General Brent Scowcroft, Washington DC, January 21, 2010. Brooks and Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War", pp. 305-308.
131 Mary Elise Sarotte, *1989. The Struggle to Create Post-Cold War Europe* (Princeton, NJ and

The end of the Cold War, moreover, was not an isolated event. On the contrary, by the time the two superpowers engaged in the process that would settle East-West confrontation, new developments in international relations that transcended the bipolar order were already evident. The President and his senior advisers, entrenched in their Cold Warrior posture, didn't show a particular intellectual penchant for dealing with those problems. Partly due to their own government experience and partly in response to the stimuli coming from the American foreign policy establishment at large, however, a new set of "post-Cold War" security issues and priorities did enter the Bush Administration's agenda. More specifically, as James Mann observed, since the 1980s conservative thinkers and policymakers (who would rise to notoriety as the "neoconservatives" or the "Vulcans" in the post-Cold War era) had begun to lay down a number of new ideas concerning American foreign policy in a new world. Among those new trends, there was a growing concern with the threat to the US national interest posed by rising regional powers, especially those located in strategically critical areas such as the Middle East. Furthermore, there was a growing confidence in the potential of American military power as an instrument of foreign policy, both for the defense of national interests and for the promotion of political developments advocated by the US.[132] That confidence, however, was coupled by a cautious operational attitude, according to which American military power should be wielded massively, and with clear political objectives.[133]

Oxford, UK: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 210; Rice and Zelikow, *Germany United and Europe Transformed*, pp. 366-367 ;Robert Hutchings, *American Diplomacy and the End of the Cold War* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 52.

132   Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, pp. 137-138.

133   This approach to the use of US military power was in large part the product of the experience and influence of the new Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Colin Powell. Powell, strongly disillusioned by the wavering and incoherent performance of American leaders during the Vietnam War, had spent most of his career as a senior military officer making the case for the establishment of clear criteria for the commitment of US forces abroad. The "Doctrine" he developed during the Reagan years in concert with Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger maintained that America should undertake overseas military commitments only when: US or allied vital interests where at stake; the use of force was a last resort; support from Congress and the American public opinion was strong; military and political objectives were clear; political leaders were ready to commit an overwhelming force and to stay the course. Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 292; Colin Powell, "US Forces: The Challenge Ahead", *Foreign Affairs*, Winter 1992-1993, pp. 32-45. As argued by historian Walter LaFeber, and shown in the next chapters, another key requirement of the "Powell Doctrine" was in fact the existence of a clear exit strategy. LaFeber, "The Rise and Fall of Colin Powell and the Powell Doctrine", pp. 73-76.

The Bush Cabinet's exercise in strategic planning and its response to the events of late 1989 and early 1990 had a critical impact of the administration's foreign policy outlook and operational approach. Washington had apparently found a way to deal with the sudden and dangerous challenges of the Cold War endgame – and with other contingencies as well – in a way consistent with the longstanding tradition of American national security policy and without compromising the values the country stood for. As a consequence, the Bush team had grown more confident in its own statesmanship capabilities and in the perception that the world would respond positively to bold American initiatives.[134]

By Summer 1990 the Bush team finally appeared ready to walk through the threshold the President had hinted to in his inaugural speech. Leaders around the globe were sharing the feeling that the world was on the eve of a new era. However, as Saddam Hussein was about to demonstrate, not everyone had drawn the same conclusions from the developments of 1989-1990.

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134   Author's phone conversation with Dr. Philip Zelikow, February 22, 2010.

Chapter 2

World Order Under Threat: the "Defensive Option" (August-October 1990)

> *"timing is to foreign policy as location is to real estate"*
> Dennis Ross[1]

> *"This is the first test of the post war system."*
> Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger[2]

No one will ever know with certainty what kind of real estate agent Saddam Hussein would have been. At any rate, as a statesmen, James Baker commented, he had an "atrocious sense of timing"[3] – and of history. Driven by a mixture of desperation and ambition, by Summer 1990 the Iraqi dictator concluded that the best option available to him was to try to seize his country's tiny and wealthy neighbor. In pursuing his program, however, Saddam failed to appreciate that he was launching a major threat to some critical and long-established pillars of American security policy. The combination of the particular historical juncture at which he decided to invade and the approach he adopted, moreover, dramatically amplified the scope of the crisis, and made it a moral as well as geopolitical challenge not only to the US, but to the entire international community.

"The Guns of August"

On July 16, 1990 – by around the same time when Kohl and Gorbachev were negotiating the final steps of the Soviet withdrawal from East Germany – the Secretary General of the Arab League, Chadly Klibi, received a letter from Iraq's foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz. According to Aziz, Kuwait was exceeding its OPEC-

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1   Dennis Ross, *Statecraft. And How to Restore America's Standing in the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), p. 46. Ross served in the George H.W. Bush Administration as Director of the Policy Planning Staff at the Department of State.

2   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am" n.d., OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

3   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 2.

endorsed oil production quota by "stealing" oil from Rumaila, an oilfield shared by Iraq and Kuwait. That, the letter declared, amounted to an act of "economic warfare" against Iraq.[4] On the same day, in the US, analysts at the CIA detected a significant Iraqi military buildup along the border with Kuwait.[5] Oil – more precisely oil revenues and their perceived political implications – was the trigger of the Gulf crisis that broke out in summer 1990.

Ten years earlier, in the Fall of 1980, Saddam had gambled that revolution and instability in neighboring Iran would provide an opportunity to improve Iraq's regional geopolitical clout as well as the country's wealth, and had launched a military invasion of Iran's western, oil-rich and Arab-populated regions.[6] The gamble, however, proved to be a disastrous miscalculation. Instead of surrendering to Saddam's pressure and making concessions, the new Tehran regime led by ayatollah Khomeini managed to exploit the Iraqi invasion to rally the Iranian population and galvanize it into a massive counter-offensive, that turned the clash between the two Gulf powers into one of the XX Century's longest conflicts. As the war went on Iraq was forced to borrow money, mostly from the Gulf Arab oil monarchies, in order to buy weapons and sustain its military adventure, a trend that worsened as oil prices collapsed in the aftermath of the "counter-shock" of 1986.[7]

When Khomeini finally accepted a UN-brokered ceasefire, in July 1988, Saddam found himself as the leader of a devastated and poorer country. Eight years of war against Iran had brought no strategic improvement for Iraq, while the country's economy had dramatically deteriorated. In the meantime, the Iraqi Army

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4   Cable, "Iraqi Letter to Arab League Threatening Kuwait", 10/20/90, OA/ID CF01937-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, Embassy Baghdad to SECSTATE, "Iraqi Threats to Kuwait and the UAE", 07/18/90, OA/ID CF01937-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

5   Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1991), p. 205.

6   According to Kenneth Pollack, a former CIA Middle East analyst, the seizure of Khuzestan, the oil-rich and Arab-populated region of Iran invaded by Iraq in September 1980, would have guaranteed Saddam's regime the capability to meet 20% of the global demand of oil. Kenneth Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle. The Conflict between Iran and America* (New York: Random House, 2004) p. 184. Similarly, in 1991, the authoritative oil economist Morris Adelman commented that "The petrodollar flood of the 1970s twice afforded Iraq the military capability to seek more petrodollars, first from the nearby oilfields in Iran in 1980, then from those in Kuwait in August 1990." M.A. Adelman, "Oil Fallacies", *Foreign Policy*, No. 82 (Spring 1991), p. 4.

7   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 37-41; Efraim Karsh and Inari Ratusi, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait", *Survival*, vol. 33, No. 1, January/February 1991, p. 19.

had expanded enormously and an entire generation of Iraqis had experienced nothing but war. Now, the prospect of demobilizing and reintegrating hundreds of thousands of soldiers in an already fragile economic and social fabric was tantamount to suicide in the eyes of the Iraqi dictator and his inner circle. By the late 1980s, moreover, trends on the international level appeared to play against the Baghdad dictator. The decreasing tension between Washington and Moscow had reduced the capability of their regional clients to take advantage of the superpower competition, and the new ideological wave of democratization and human rights that dramatically contributed to the eventual collapse of the Eastern bloc further isolated the Baghdad regime.[8]

In sum, by early 1990, Saddam Hussein found himself desperately looking for a way to get out of the corner domestically, without further weakening Iraq's strategic position. On the one hand, despite the ceasefire tension with Iran remained high, and by implication the Baghdad leadership was reluctant to reduce military spending or halt investment in the development of non-conventional weapons. On the other hand, the regime badly needed money to cope with the country's dramatic social and economic crisis.[9] Eventually, Saddam began to shift the blame for Iraq's predicament away from himself and his regime, and to look abroad for scapegoats. This new approach became evident to Iraq's partners in late February 1990, during a meeting of the Arab Cooperation Council in Amman, Jordan.[10] At the summit, Saddam explained to his peers that in the new international situation it was imperative to establish a more cohesive Arab bloc under a strong leadership – which, needless to say, could be provided by Iraq – and argued that given the sacrifice in blood sustained by the Iraqi people in the struggle against Iran (which Saddam portrayed as a war fought for the interest of the entire Arab nation) Iraq's

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8   The growing unpopularity of Saddam's regime in the American media and public opinion became increasingly evident by 1989. In the Aftermath of the violent fall of the Ceausescu regime in Romania, there was loud speculation that the Baghdad regime might follow the same path. Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 31.; Amatzia Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", in D. W. Lesch (ed.), *The Middle East and the United States* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2003), pp. 338-340.

9   Karsh and Ratusi, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait", pp. 19-20; Charles Tripp, *A History of Iraq* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 248-251. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 37-41.

10   The Arab Cooperation Council was a regional grouping established by Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and South Yemen in February 1989.

debt should be forgiven.[11]

The brutal side of Saddam's new stance became evident to international observers during the Spring, when Farzad Bazoft, an Iranian journalist with British passport was arrested and then executed in Iraq on charges of being a spy. Meanwhile, Gerard Bull, a Canadian expert in ballistic technology was mysteriously murdered in Brussels, and soon after a series of nuclear related materials directed to Iraq were confiscated by Western authorities. Then, during a public speech in April 1990, the Baghdad strongman boosted that Iraq possessed enough chemical weapons to "make fire eat half of Israel", should the Jewish state "do anything against Iraq."[12]

From May 1990 onward the international implications of Saddam's new course became increasingly evident as the dictator assumed an aggressive stance on the issue of oil prices. Saddam had concluded that the only way to ease Iraq's domestic crisis without jeopardizing his own grip on the regime would be an increase in oil prices – and revenues for his country. The main obstacle, from that point of view, appeared to be the lack of discipline among OPEC members, especially the smaller ones, which were failing to abide by the production quotas agreed by the Organization. During a number of OPEC and Arab League meetings that month the Iraqi dictator vehemently denounced that practice, and explicitly accused some Gulf States – particularly Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates – of pursuing a selfish policy at the expenses of Iraq.[13] Under pressure from other influential OPEC

11   Eric Laurent e Pierre Salinger, *Guerra del Golfo. Il dossier segreto* (Milano: Mursia, 1991), pp. 9-11. John Roberts, "Oil, the Military and the Gulf War of 1991", RUSI Journal, Spring 1991, pp. 12-13. Even many years later, Saddam maintained that the financial contribution Iraq received from Gulf countries during the Iran-Iraq war were "aid," not "loans." National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 2, February 8, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/03.pdf ; Interview Session Number 9, February 24, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/10.pdf . As oil expert Robert Mabro observed, ""Iraq was burdened with a huge foreign debt. Although the Gulf countries, the major debtors, were not pressing for repayment, their refusal to cancel the debt definitely and irrevocably virtually closed Iraq's access to new loans from international commercial banks and other sources." Robert Mabro, "The impact of the Gulf crisis on world oil and OPEC", *International Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Spring 1994), p. 242.
12   Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 202; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 32; Karsh and Ratusi, "Why Saddam Hussein Invaded Kuwait", pp. 23-24; John K. Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy" in *Survival*, Vol. 33, No. 2, March/April 1991, p. 126. It seems useful to remind that back in 1981 an Israeli airstrike had destroyed the Osirak reactor bought by Iraq from France in 1976.
13   Laurent and Salinger, *Guerra del Golfo*, pp. 33-36; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 45-47; John K. Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", p. 127. During interviews

members such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, a stricter compliance with quotas and an increase in oil prices was agreed in July 1990.[14] The agreement, however, failed to contain the mounting crisis between Iraq and Kuwait, since, as testified by the Aziz letter to the Arab League mentioned above, the Baghdad regime vocally accused Kuwait of "stealing" Iraqi oil from the shared Rumayila well.

Thus, by early Summer 1990 Kuwait entered into Iraq's crosshairs, though that was not the first time. Since Iraq's independence in 1932, Baghdad leaders had claimed "historical" territorial rights over Kuwait, mainly on the ground that Kuwait's independence had been the result of "Western imperialism", a rather weak argument considering that Kuwait had become independent under the rule of the Al-Sabah dynasty earlier than Iraq, and that Iraq itself had been the product of analogous great power calculations in the aftermath of the First World War.[15] Apart from historical quarrels, Kuwait was obviously an appealing prize for Iraq from a strategic and economic point of view. It was not only very rich in oil and capital, but also a natural port located in the middle of the Persian Gulf, while Iraq had only limited access to the Gulf through the al-Faw Peninsula, a factor that severely constrained Baghdad's commercial and geopolitical influence in the region.[16]

Apart from traditional claims, moreover, tensions between the two countries had been exacerbated by the legacy of the Iran-Iraq war. Kuwait had become one of Iraq's largest foreign creditors, and not only had the small country persistently rejected Baghdad's request for debt cancellation, but it also had been a famously

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conducted by the FBI in 2004, after his capture, Saddam explained that by 1989-90 he was calling for a rise in oil prices to $24-25 per barrel, since that price, in his opinion, would not burden the consumer or hurt the producer. National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 9, February 24, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/10.pdf. It seems interesting to notice that, ironically, by around that time professional oil experts expected oil prices to rise not because of geopolitical tensions, but rather because of demand and supply dynamics. Edward L. Morse, "The Coming Oil Revolution", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 69, No. 5 (Winter 1990), pp. 36-56.

14   Youssef M. Ibrahim, "OPEC in Agreement to Raise Oil Price by Cutting Output", New York Times, July 28, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/07/28/business/opec-in-agreement-to-raise-oil-price-bycutting-output.html .

15   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 42-45. David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace. The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East* [20th Anniversary Edition] (New York: Holt, 2009), pp. 493-514.

16   As political scientist Robert Lieber put it: "The resources and income afforded by the seizure of Kuwait, as well as exerting leverage over Saudi Arabia and hence influence over world oil prices, offered a tempting target for the Iraqi leader." Robert J. Lieber, "Oil and Power after the Gulf War", *International Security* Vol. 17, No. 1 (Summer 1992), pp. 168.

undisciplined OPEC member.[17] Kuwait's massive extraction of oil from the Rumaila field it shared with Iraq had indeed been a manifestation of the Gulf monarchy's overproduction.[18]

By July 1990 the mounting crisis in the Gulf was on the radar screens of every major capital in the world, including Washington D.C. Since the end of the Second World War, the stability of Persian Gulf region – especially the free flow of the region's energy resources to global markets – had been judged to be a vital national interest by American leaders.[19] The Bush White House itself had already produced a specific National Security Directive, NSD 26, to restate a clear policy toward the region. "Access to Persian Gulf oil and the security of key friendly allies in the area," the Directive maintained, were "vital to US national security" to such an extent that the US should be prepared to use military force if necessary, "against the Soviet Union or any other regional power with interests inimical to our own."[20] As noted in the previous chapter, moreover, Iraq, with its unconventional arsenals and programs and its record of human right violations, was increasingly perceived by US governmental agencies – including the Central Command, the US military command charged with the task of planning for operations in the Middle East and South West Asia – as a potential source of trouble in the area.[21] For the same reasons the US media, public opinion, and members of Congress were

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17   It seems interesting to notice that, as some oil experts noted, by 1990 Kuwaiti income derived from foreign investments had exceeded the country's revenues from sales of crude oil and petroleum products. Paul Aarts and Michael Renner, "Oil and the Gulf War", *Middle East Report*, No. 171 (Jul.-Aug. 1991), p. 27. From this point of view, as political scientist Jean Edward Smith observed, Kuwait's reluctance to agree to an increase in oil prices may have been highly influenced by the expectation that such a policy would have depressed the stock, bond, and currency markets which by 1990 had become Kuwait's main source of income. Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1992), p. 28.

18   Laurent and Salinger, *Guerra del Golfo*, pp. 33-36; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 40-41, 47-48.

19   Gary Sick, "The United States in the Persian Gulf", in Lesch, *The Middle East and the United States*, p. 291; William E. Odom, "The Cold War Origins of the US Central Command", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 8, N. 2, Spring 2006, pp. 59-64; Daniel Yergin, *The Prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power* (New York: The Free Press, 2009), pp. 409.

20   National Security Directive 26, "U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf", October 22, 1989, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsd/nsd26.pdf .

21   Norman H. Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero* (New York: Bantam Books, 1992), pp. 309-336; Michael R. Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 6-14; CIA, Response to National Security Review-10: US Policy Toward the Persian Gulf, 03/03/1989, p. 7, http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp?pageNumber=1&freqReqRecord=nic_geo_nesa.txt; *Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict. An Interim Report to Congress,* p. I-8.

becoming increasingly uneasy about the Baghdad regime.[22]

Despite increasing alarm, however, there was a strong case for trying to foster a cooperative relation between Washington and Baghdad.[23] Since the early 1980s Saddam had been increasingly perceived by US Government officials and diplomats – as well as by the country's foreign policy establishment at large – as a pragmatic and potentially useful leader. From a geopolitical point of view, Iraq appeared to be an effective counterweight to Iran, now the greatest source of concern for the US in the Persian Gulf area. Until 1979 Iran had been a staunch partner of Washington, but the revolution and the rise of Khomeini's theocratic regime had suddenly turned it into one of the most anti-American regimes in the world and a supporter of terrorist groups throughout the Middle East, such as Hezbollah in civil war–ravaged Lebanon, which had kidnapped and killed a number of American citizens.[24] Saddam Hussein too was famous for his support for terrorists, especially those Palestinian groups engaged in terrorist activities against Israel. Iraq, however, had been fighting for eight years against Iran, and as the conflict had intensified, Saddam had shown an increased pragmatism towards other regional problems, and a willingness to adopt some of the policies recommended by Washington and other Western powers, such as taking a less confrontational stance towards Israel. Thus, by the late 1980s a number of US officials, especially at the State Department, argued that Saddam, if adequately dealt with, could be a useful partner in the promotion of a satisfying settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict and as an Arab bulwark against Iranian influence.[25] Economic interests were at play too. During the war against Iran, increased cooperation between Washington and Baghdad had not only provided Iraq with precious US satellite intelligence about its enemy, but had also led to the establishment of a substantial flow of financial aid from the US.[26] The most important form of American economic assistance to Iraq was the Commodities Credit Corporation (CCC), a sort of US Government insurance designed to make it safer for American producers to

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22   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 28-37; Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", pp. 338-339; Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", p. 126.
23   National Security Directive 26, "U.S. Policy Toward the Persian Gulf".
24   Kenneth M. Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle…*cit., pp. 203-205.
25   Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", pp.331-334; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 19-28.
26   Pollack, *The Persian Puzzle*, pp. 206-207; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp. 243-248.

sell Iraq their agricultural products, a scheme that guaranteed an important source of income for some American farmers, and was particularly dear to Congressmen from grain-producing states.[27] In short, by early 1990 both geopolitical and domestic considerations suggested a cooperative approach towards Baghdad. Indeed, in October 1989 Tariq Aziz traveled to Washington to meet US officials, and in February 1990 Undersecretary of State Robert Kimmit visited Iraq.[28] The "burn Israel" speech held by Saddam in April 1990 had indeed caused significant concern in the US, to the extent that a Congressional delegation led by Senator Robert Dole had been organized to make a trip to Iraq for clarifications but also to convey the message that Washington was still interested in dialogue and cooperation with Baghdad.[29]

By mid-July 1990, however, with his accusations of "economic warfare" against Kuwait and his military moves, Saddam was dangerously escalating. Iraq's demands were clearly exceeding any legitimate grievance, and the quotas issue began to look like a simple pretext for intimidation or some kind of show of force against Kuwait, such as a military incursion or the seizure of some coastal areas. From a Kuwaiti standpoint, however, giving in to Saddam's intimidation in an attempt to appease him appeared a losing option, since it was not clear what kind of concession would have satisfied the Iraqi dictator, or how far would he carry out his threats. Despite the rising tension, no one either in Washington or in the capitals of the closest US partners in the Middle East – not even in Kuwait – was capable of

27   Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", pp. 334-338. Zachary Karabell, "Backfire: US Policy toward Iraq 1988-2 August 1990", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 49, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 28-47. As Richard N. Haass, a former member of the Bush National Security Council reports, no actual US Government money was provided to Iraq under this programme. As far as Haass recalls, Iraq tended to pay its bills in full and on time. Richard N. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice* (New York: Random House, 2009), p. 29. Interestingly, Saddam Hussein personally recalled that from his point a turning point toward a more confrontational relationship between the US and Iraq was represented by a suspension of the CCC scheme - and consequently of US grain shipments to Iraq. National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 4, February 13, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/05.pdf ; see also Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 52.
28   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 37; Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", p. 339.
29   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 37; Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", p. 341; Laurent e Salinger, *Guerra del Golfo*, pp. 25-30; "US Senators Chat with Saddam", in *The Iraq War Reader. History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Touchstone, 2003), pp. 58-60. Ironically, during a meeting with Saddam Hussein, Sen. Howard Metzenbaum told the Iraqi strongman "I believe, Mr. President, that you can be a very influential force for peace in the Middle East."

devising an approach to defuse the crisis, so the only policy available turned out to be military restraint and a continuation of the attempt to reach a political solution.[30] On July 18, 1990 the US State Department issued a statement that confirmed the American commitment to ensure the freedom of navigation and the free flow of oil through the Persian Gulf and to support the individual and collective self-defense of America's regional partners.[31] Upon request the US did increase its naval presence in the United Arab Emirates (Operation Ivory Justice), but with regard to the Iraq-Kuwait crisis Washington, in concert with the Kuwaitis and other major regional partners, maintained a low-profile.[32]

On July 25, 1990, the US Ambassador in Baghdad, April Glaspie, was suddenly summoned to a meeting with the Iraqi dictator. The Ambassador had to attend the meeting without having the opportunity to receive specific instructions from Washington. After being forced to listen to a long lecture on an alleged "Imperialist-Zionist" conspiracy against Iraq – the staple of Saddam's rhetoric – which included the warning that the Iraqi leadership was not afraid of the US military and technological superiority, that it was not afraid of letting up to 100,000 Iraqi soldiers die and that it could resort to terrorism if antagonized, Glaspie was told that at any rate what Iraq was demanding was a simple increase in oil prices that would guarantee higher revenues for Iraq, and that Baghdad was not intending to resort to force against Kuwait as long as a diplomatic solution appeared within reach. The US Ambassador replied that although the US Government remained committed to the peace and security of the region, it was not willing to take a specific position in an inter-Arab issue such as the controversy between Iraq and Kuwait. The meeting concluded with a coup de theatre by Saddam, who took a phone call and then explained to Glaspie that he had just agreed with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak to a meeting with the Kuwaitis in Saudi Arabia within the next few days.[33] Glaspie came out from the meeting somewhat reassured, as she

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30   Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", pp. 345-346; Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", pp. 127-128.
31   Amatzia Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990, p. 346. Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 55.
32   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 19-20.
33   "The Glaspie Transcript: Saddam Meets the U.S. Ambassador", in Micah Sifri and Cristopher Cerf (eds.), *The Iraq War Reader*…, cit., pp. 61-71; Cable, Memo from Amembassy Baghdad to Secstate Wash DC, "Saddam's Message of Friendship to POTUS", 07/25/1990, OA/ID

reported to the State Department soon after the meeting: "Saddam, [...] is worried. He does not want to antagonize us. With the UAE maneuvers we have fully caught his attention. I believe we would now be well-advised to ease off on public criticism of Iraq until we see how negotiations develop."[34] She actually felt so reassured that she didn't judge it necessary to postpone her holidays back in the US. On July 26, 1990, both the US embassy in Iraq and the one in Kuwait sent Washington cables dealing with the Iraq-Kuwait dispute. The cable from Baghdad acknowledged that "the central issue for Iraq is revenue, not the border" but reported that the dispute was now being downplayed in Iraq.[35] The message from Kuwait was much more alarming, and argued that "The fundamental issue is one of hegemony: Who will play the leading role in OPEC, who will dictate Gulf security policy and, flowing from that, who will have the wherewithal to act effectively as the leader of the Arab world." The cable went on establishing a parallel between the situation in 1980 and 1990, arguing that in both cases Saddam's strategy was to adopt an aggressive stance on the regional arena in order to find an international solution to his regime's difficulties.[36] Both cables, however, argued that the US should adopt a low-key profile on the dispute.

Meanwhile the intelligence flow continued to signal an alarming increase in Iraqi military activity along the border with Kuwait. The Iraqi buildup appeared disproportionate to the purpose of a simple bluff, and as a NSC report observed on July 27, 1990: "Analysts believe that a shallow incursion into the northern oilfield, Rumaylah [sic], cannot be ruled out, while drastic military action is also possible if less likely."[37] Diplomatic channels nevertheless continued to urge restraint, in order

CF01937-002, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

34   Cable Embassy Baghdad to Secretary of State "Iraq/Kuwait: Ambassador's Meeting with Saddam Hussein", 07/25/90, OA/ID CF01937-01, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

35   Cable from Embassy, Baghdad to SECSTATE "Iraq blinks – Provisionally", 07/26/1990, OA/ID CF01937-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;

36   Cable "Iraq-Kuwait Tensions – What's Really at Stake?" 07/26/1990, OA/ID CF01937-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

37   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 52-57; Memo, Sandra Charles to Brent Scowcroft, "Interagency Meeting on the Persian Gulf", 07/27/1990, OA/ID CF01937-002, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

not to jeopardize the chances to reach a peaceful solution of the crisis at the incoming Iraq-Kuwait summit in Saudi Arabia. Thus, on July 28 President Bush sent a conciliatory message to Saddam Hussein, and a couple of days later, during a Senate testimony, undersecretary Kelly maintained that the US was not bound by any defense pact with the Gulf States.[38]

The meeting between the Iraqis and the Kuwaitis finally took place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on July 31, 1990. The fact that no senior leader from the two countries was attending was a signal of the very narrow margin for a compromise. The Iraqis allegedly demanded huge compensations for the oil they claimed Kuwait had "stolen" from Rumaila, and the Kuwaitis defiantly refused to make concessions.[39]

On July 31, on the eve of the meeting, Bush had a telephone conversation with King Hussein of Jordan, and the King expressed his belief that "something will be worked out for the benefit of greater cooperation and development in the area."[40] By the first of August, Washington time, however, the CIA was reporting sustained military preparations along Iraq's border with Kuwait. Now, as former NSC member Richard Haass recalls, military action looked highly likely.[41] At the White House the idea popped up that the President could make a personal phone call to Saddam in order to recommend restraint, and to convey once again the message that although the US was not taking no side on the issue, it hoped for a peaceful settlement.[42] The initiative was overtaken by the events. By the time Bush resolved to make the call Iraqi troops were already invading Kuwait.

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38   Baram, "US Input into Iraqi Decisionmaking, 1988-1990", p. 347; Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", pp. 128.
39   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 59-60. During the 2004 FBI interrogations, Saddam recalled that "the Deputy Chairman of the RCC had traveled to Saudi Arabia to solicit their assistance but returned without success. Thereafter, the matter could only be discussed and decided upon in favor of military action." National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI"Interview Session Number 9, February 24, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/10.pdf .
40   Telcon, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation Between potus AND King Hussein of Jordan", 07/31/90, OA/ID, CF01937-004, , Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
41   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 59.
42   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 59. Talking Points, "Point sto be made with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein", 08/01/90, OA/ID CF01932-002, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

"The Longest Week"[43]

Iraqi forces began to cross the border with Kuwait at dawn on August 2, 1990. By midday that same day, some 140,000 Iraqi soldiers spearheaded by two Republican Guard armored divisions – Saddam's élite forces – poured into the territory of the tiny Gulf monarchy, while Iraqi special forces conducted a separate assault in Kuwait City, probably with the goal of decapitating the Kuwaiti regime.[44] Although the small Kuwaiti army was clearly in no position to resist the massive Iraqi onslaught, many observers acknowledged that Iraqi military operations had been conducted "in a professional manner", and within twelve hours of the invasion Kuwait was under Iraq's control.[45] The Emir and his family, as well as thousands of Kuwaiti citizens, fled to Saudi Arabia, and the almost-bankrupted Baghdad regime ended up in possession of a new piece of very valuable real estate.

Although the massive Iraqi military buildup along the Iraq-Kuwait border had not passed unnoticed in Washington and in the capitals of the major US partners in the Middle East, the invasion represented a watershed event. As James Baker recalls, during a meeting in Irkutsk, Siberia, slightly before the event occurred, even his Soviet counterpart Eduard Shevardnadze ruled out an all-out invasion, reflecting an outlook shared by intelligence agencies in many other countries.[46] It was through the rapid chain of events that occurred in the very first days of the crisis that the main issues at stake in the Gulf were identified, and most of the key steps on the path toward one specific solution were taken.

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43   Maureen Dowd, "The Longest Week: How President Decided to Draw the Line", *New York Times*, August 9, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/08/09/world/confrontation-gulf-longest-week-presidentdecided-draw-line.html?ref=Kuwait .

44   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 31-33; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 67-69; Christian Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand. The Bush Dynasty in Iraq* (New York: Vintage, 2007), p. 50. It seems interesting to observe that Saddam's failure to physically eliminate the Kuwaiti royal family was an element of critical importance to the development of a strong international response. That failure allowed the international community to maintain recognition of an identifiable, legitimate Kuwaiti government throughout the crisis. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, p. 68.

45   Jean Edward Smith, *George Bush's War* (New York: Holt, 1992), pp. 13-14; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, p. 67.

46   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 3; Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 16. The Soviet Union had signed a cooperation treaty with Iraq in 1972, and by 1990 Iraq was one of Moscow's closest partners in the Middle East.

Once again, Saddam's decision to invade proved to be a huge miscalculation. Due to time zone differences, the news of the invasion reached New York by the evening of August 1, 1990. By that time the US Ambassador to the UN, Thomas R. Pickering happened to be at a farewell dinner party where the British representative was also present. A UN Security Council meeting was convened on that very night, and by the early hours of August 2, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 660, that condemned the invasion of Kuwait and called for the immediate and unconditional return to the status quo ante.[47] Furthermore, on the same day President Bush and Britain's Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were attending a conference on security and defense issues organized by the Aspen Institute in Aspen, Colorado. Iraq's aggression was once again condemned.[48] By coincidence, as noted above, US Secretary of State Baker happened to be in Siberia for a meeting with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, to discuss mutual strategic arms reductions. Iraq had been one of Moscow's closest partners in the Middle East, but the invasion resulted particularly irritating to the Kremlin's reform-minded leadership, which was attributing critical importance to global cooperation and superpower rapprochement. Thus, it was not difficult for Baker and Shevardnadze, who had developed a close personal relationship, to agree on the need to produce a joint statement. The task of producing the actual declaration was performed by their close aides Dennis Ross and Serghiei Tarashenko. Negotiations between the American and Soviet delegates was frantic, but by August 3 it was finally possible for Baker and Shevardnadze to read a joint statement that deemed the Iraqi aggression contrary to the basic rules of the international community and committed the two superpowers to halt arms

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47   UN Security Council, Resolution 660, August 2, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/10/IMG/NR057510.pdf?OpenElement. In addition to the Permanent Five Members (the US, the UK, the USSR, France, and the People Republic of China) by the time of the Gulf crisis the Security Council included Canada, Colombia, Cote d'Ivoire, Cuba, Ethiopia, Finland, Malaysia, Romania, Yemen, and Zaire. As former US Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering told this author, the language of the Resolution, which actually called for the liberation of Kuwait, was a fundamental input in the subsequent decision-making of the Bush Administration, though it seems fair to argue that by the time the resolution was passed no clear American goal had been decided. Author's conversation with Thomas R. Pickering, Washington DC, October 13, 2009.
48   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 74-75; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 319-320.

shipments to Iraq.[49] In short, in the space of two days, Saddam's move was publicly condemned three times in a row: by the main body representing the international community as a whole, by the superpowers, and by some of the closest allies in the Western camp.

However, beyond the scenes the situation looked much less clear, and, as the evidence available suggests, President Bush and his foreign policy team were no exception to this global trend of uncertainty. As many authoritative sources report, the knee-jerk reaction within the Administration was to worry about the security of Saudi Arabia.[50] The National Security Council first met to discuss the response to the Iraqi invasion at 8:00 on August 2, 1990, slightly before the Aspen Conference, and by that time the main concern was uncertainty about Saddam's next moves and the risk that after seizing Kuwait Iraqi forces would invade and occupy part of Saudi Arabia, something they were in a position to do, at least from a military point of view. At that meeting General Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, proposed to "draw a firm line with Saudi Arabia", yet the Ambassador to the UN, Thomas Pickering observed that drawing such a line would be somewhat controversial, since it would leave Kuwait on the other side.[51] In the event, the first round of debate within the NSC didn't produce clear guidelines. General Brent Scowcroft, the President's National Security Adviser, recalled: "There was a huge gap between those who saw what was happening as the major crisis of our time and those who treated it as the crisis du jour". According to Bush himself, "The truth is, at that moment I had no idea what our options were."[52]

At the Aspen Institute symposium, Prime Minister Thatcher immediately assumed a tough stance against Saddam Hussein, and during the day Bush appeared to have developed a clearer personal judgment about American objectives. In a phone conversation in the evening of August 2, the President told King Fahd of Saudi

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49   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 76-80. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy...*, pp. 1-3. Recalling that episode, Baker later argued that from his point of view it was on that day that he understood that the Cold War was over. William C. Wohlfworth (ed.), *Cold War Endgame. Oral Histories, Analysis, Debate* (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), p. 77.
50   Author's conversation with Thomas R. Pickering..., cit.; Bob Woodward, *The Commanders* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1991), pp. 226-229.
51   Woodward, *The Commanders...*, p. 229.
52   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 317-318.

Arabia: "Our goal, like yours is to get Iraq out and restore Kuwait's sovereignty."[53]

By the next day things had begun to take a clearer shape, and as the NSC convened on the morning of August 3 opinions converged in favor of a firm policy of confrontation, and a great many of the critical issues that subsequently shaped the debate within the Administration throughout the Gulf crisis emerged. In the opening remarks, Scowcroft declared: "My personal judgment is that the stakes in this for the United States are such that to accommodate Iraq should not be a policy option". If the Iraqis were allowed to get away unpunished, Scowcroft continued:

> they would dominate OPEC politics, Palestinian politics and the
> PLO, and lead the Arab world to the detriment of the United States,
> and the great stakes we have in the Middle East and Israel.

Undersecretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger made another critical consideration:

> This is the first test of the post war system. As the bipolar contest is
> relaxed, it permits this, giving people more flexibility because they
> are not worried about the involvement of the superpowers. The
> Soviets have come down hard. Saddam Hussein now has greater
> flexibility because the Soviets are tangled up in domestic issues. If
> he succeeds, others may try the same thing. It would be a bad
> lesson.[54]

By that time the main concern within the NSC still appeared to be the risk of an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia and the prospect of a dramatic shift in oil pricing power in favor of the Baghdad regime. CIA Director William Webster told the other members of the Cabinet that as a result of the invasion Saddam now directly

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53   Telcon "Presidential Phone Call to King Fahd August 2, 1990, 6:43 – 7:21 pm" n.d., OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
54   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am" n.d., OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

controlled "the second- and third-largest proven oil reserves with the fourth largest army in the world." Moreover, he observed, the Baghdad regime had gained access to Kuwait's financial assets and to the Persian Gulf.[55] A strong case was made that even short of a physical invasion of the Saudi kingdom, Iraq's permanent seizure of Kuwait would automatically put Saddam in a position to influence decisively the oil market, and, in the words of an attendant to the meeting, "it would mean a transfer of funds and economic power in the world to him." Furthermore, some critical concerns about the long term implications of the crisis emerged. As Gen. Colin Powell pointed out:

> The real solution must be long term. It is an international and regional problem, so the whole world must realize this has to be dealt with internationally. One question is how individualized is this aggression? If he [Saddam Hussein] is gone, would he have a more reasonable replacement?

Gen. Scowcroft added: "Iraq could fall apart."[56]

In the afternoon Bush had an important series of exchanges with other international leaders. On that day President Turgut Ozal of Turkey expressed his concern about Saddam Hussein's move, by arguing that "If he stays, then the problem will pop up again", and later on Britain's Margaret Thatcher gave Bush a similar assessment about the problem of Kuwait, by stating that "It is so serious that we can't do anything else but get him [Saddam Hussein] out."[57]

Saddam's aggression shocked the Arab world too. Virtually every Arab leader had dismissed the idea that Saddam would actually invade, and the Iraqi buildup had been considered as just part of a bluff intended to extract concessions from

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55   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 322-323. This section of the transcript of the meeting remained classified by the time this author visited the Bush Library.

56   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am"

57   Telcon "Telephone call to President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, August 3, 1990, 1:58 – 2:11 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Telcon, "Telephone Call with PM Margaret Thatcher of the United Kingdom, August 3, 1990, 3:03 – 3:10 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

Kuwait. On August 4, 1990, a meeting was held among the leaders of the major Arab countries which had a stake in the crisis. On that occasion a split emerged between the advocates of a more conciliatory and compromise-seeking approach – led by Jordan's King Hussein – and a more steadfast and uncompromising one – led by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, one of the leaders who had worked harder to avoid a showdown between Iraq and Kuwait, and was greatly concerned about maintaining close relations with the US.[58] In general, at any rate, it appeared that despite the magnitude of Saddam's move and the discredit he had brought to the idea of Arab solidarity, an acceptable "Arab solution" to the crisis would not be possible due to the political weaknesses and internal divisions among the major leaders.[59]

In the morning of August 4 the NSC convened to discuss the military options available, and it was acknowledged that so far the only feasible plan was a deployment aimed at ensuring the defense of Saudi Arabia. As Gen. Colin Powell, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told the other members of the Council, a costly but "doable" plan was available to achieve the mission of defending Saudi Arabia and laying down the basis for moving north into Kuwait.[60] The plan was somewhat of a relic of the now waned Cold War. As reminded in the previous chapter, the collapse of détente in the 1970s had ignited a wave of superpower confrontation that largely affected the Third World. The traditional American concern with the stability of the Persian Gulf had thus been heightened first by increased Soviet political and military activism in the Horn of Africa, and then by the combination of Moscow's decision to invade Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution. That chain of events created so much alarm in the US that in January 1980 President James Carter felt the need to state what since then had been known as the "Carter Doctrine", according to which:

58   Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", p. 130; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 97; Bassma Kodmani-Darwish et May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 75-78; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 319. Mubarak suspected King Hussein of hoping to receive financial assistance from Saddam in return for his ambiguous attitude toward the crisis. Telcon, "Presidential Call from POTUS to President Mubarak, August 7, 1990, 02:56-03:03", OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
59   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 69-72; Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", pp. 138-139.
60   Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990,

An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.[61]

The seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran and the subsequent hostage crisis – and the failed US rescue mission, Operation Eagle Claw – had created in the US a feeling of inadequacy regarding the military preparation to deal with the security challenges coming from the region. Thus, in addition to his doctrine, Carter had ordered the establishment by the US military of a Rapid Deployment Force designed to intervene in the region, a project that had been expanded in the 1980s with the creation by the Reagan Administration of the Central Command (CENTCOM), a specific command charged with the task of planning for possible American military intervention in the Middle East and South-West Asia, which at the time was expected to be a response to a Soviet move.[62] Since the late 1970s, however, a number of US officials and defense experts had begun to elaborate on the Carter Doctrine and to highlight the risk that a major threat to American interests in the region might be posed not by the USSR, but rather by a rising hostile regional power, a trend that had been further emphasized during the early phases of the first Bush Administration.[63] As a consequence, in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, a strategic framework for dealing with security crises in the Gulf was in place. A military plan originally designed to defend Saudi Arabia from a Soviet invasion was available too. As it turned out, the latest version of the plan, Internal Look 90-1002, had been war-gamed in July 1990. That time however,

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61   James Carter, *State of the Union Address 1980*, January 23, 1980, http://www.jimmycarterlibrary.org/documents/speeches/su80jec.phtml .
62   Odom, "The Cold War Origins of the US Central Command", pp. 74-77; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 42-43; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 85; Roland Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict: a Political and Strategic Analysis* (London: Brassey's for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1992), pp. 24-25.
63   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 480; Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, pp. 79-94. Paul K. Davis, *Analytical Architecture for Capabilities-Based Planning, Mission System Analysis and Transformation* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2002), pp. 68-69. US Department of Defense, *Conduct of the Persian Gulf Conflict. An Interim Report to Congress*, Washington D.C., GPO, July 1991, p. I-8.

the expected would-be enemy had been Iraq, not the Soviet Union.[64]

The President and his closest advisers considered a strong cooperation with Saudi Arabia – particularly Riyadh's explicit permission to the deployment of US forces – to be a critical element in any strategy to counter the threat now posed by Iraq, and talks between the American and Saudi leadership began immediately after the crisis. The first step in that direction was a meeting between members of the Administration and Bandar bin Sultan, the Saudi Ambassador to the US. Bandar was supportive of a massive American deployment, but recommended direct talks with King Fahd, the Saudi head of state.[65] The issue was a very delicate one, since the Bush Administration was eager to send troops to Saudi Arabia, but judged that a precondition for such a massive deployment was not only agreement with the Saudis, but also an explicit invitation from Riyadh. On August 4 Bush had a telephone conversation with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. The President told the King that he was "very concerned" about a possible Iraqi move south, into Saudi Arabia. Bush added that Saudi Arabia's security was "vital" to the US, that Washington was ready to deploy forces to Saudi Arabia and to keep them until "we are asked to leave", and that he was determined that Saddam "will not get away with this infamy". The two leaders agreed that Saddam could not be trusted, and that the matter would be definitely settled as soon as the Saudis would meet the US delegation led by Defense Secretary Richard Cheney.[66]

Meanwhile, at the UN Security Council a new draft resolution calling for economic sanctions against Iraq had started circulating. That afternoon Bush had another telephone conversation with Turkish President Ozal in which the issue of sanctions was discussed. Ozal expressed a critical doubt: "If the blockade is successful, then they [the Iraqis] go out of Kuwait. Is the problem solved?". President Bush's reply underscored the depth of the long-term strategic dilemma that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait had created. As the President acknowledged: "I

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64   Woodward, *The Commanders*, p. 220-221; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 336.

65   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 87.

66   Telcon, "Telcon with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia, August 14, 1990, 1:50-2:42 pm", OA/IDCF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

don't know how to be sure he would not do it again."[67]

At that point the Baghdad regime began sending controversial messages, which suggested that it might be looking for a compromise solution. On August 5, 1990, the Iraqi Government issued a declaration which stated its readiness to withdraw from Kuwait, but excluded the restoration of the Al-Sabah regime, a condition that contradicted the text of UN Security Council Resolution 660.[68] The next day, Saddam summoned Joseph Wilson, the American chargé d'affaires in Baghdad and, due to the departure of Ambassador Glaspie, the highest ranking US diplomat in Iraq. The dictator boosted that Kuwait was part of Iraq and that the Emir was "history," and warned Wilson that Iraq would not "let Kuwait be an easy bite", but also told him that he had neither intention of invading Saudi Arabia nor to disrupt oil supplies from the Persian Gulf.[69] By that time, however, Saddam's credibility had been shattered, a UN resolution calling for the unconditional restoration of the status quo ante had been passed, and both the American leadership and the leaders of Washington closest partners no longer appeared ready to accept anything less than the undoing of the Iraqi aggression.[70] President Bush told reporters with reference to the Iraqi invasion "this will not stand", and in the following days some important developments gave rise to new realities in the crisis.[71]

After consultations with Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan, the White House sent to Riyadh the delegation led by Cheney, which included Gen. Norman H. Schwarzkopf, CENTCOM's commander, Deputy National Security Advisor Robert Gates, and Undersecretary of State for Policy Paul Wolfowitz. A critical issues in US-Saudi negotiations had been the credibility of the US commitment.[72] Yet the

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67   Memcon, "Telephone Call to President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, August 4, 1990, 4:39 – 5:05 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01478-026, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
68   Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 89.
69   Cable, AmEmbassy Baghdad to SECSTATE, "Main Points of Charge's Meeting with President Saddam Hussein, 8/6/90, OA/ID, CF01478-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
70   Concerning the American position: Memcon, "Presidential Phone Call To King Hussein of Jordan, August 5, 1990", OA/ID CF01478-026, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
71   H.W. Brands observed that Bush's August 5 statement marked an important turning point on the path to the Gulf War. The Presidentt's words indicated that if other non-military measures failed, the US would fight to evict Saddam from Kuwait. H.W. Brands, "George Bush and the Gulf War of 1991", *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (March 2004), p. 121.
72   The Saudis had made reference to episodes of shaky US willingness to stay the course, such

high-ranking composition of the US delegation suggested that by the time it landed in Saudi Arabia the issue was not "whether", but rather "how" a massive American deployment would be implemented.[73] On August 6, 1990, in New York the UN Security Council voted resolution 661, which established an economic sanctions regime against Iraq.[74] On the Same day the American delegation led by Cheney, joined by Charles Freeman, the US Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, met King Fahd and his aides in Jeddah. The King was shown satellite imagery of the Iraqi deployment in Kuwait, and the Americans ensured him that the US Government was ready to commit forces to the defense of Saudi territory, to keep its forces there as long as necessary, and to remove them upon request by the King.[75] As noted above, by that time it was far from clear whether Saddam had serious intentions to push his military offensive beyond Kuwait. However, as Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh pointed out, from a Saudi point of view the most likely alternative to cooperation with the US appeared to be a compromise with an unpredictable Baghdad regime that had expanded territorially, was heavily armed, and dominated greater wealth.[76] After consulting his advisers, the King finally endorsed the idea of requesting American protection. The decision was not an easy one to take on short notice, but after all, the King allegedly told his counselors, "The Kuwaitis didn't rush into a decision, and today they're all guests in our hotels."[77]

Thus, on August 7, 1990 (Commencement Day/C-Day in CENTCOM's parlance) Operation Desert Shield began, with the deployment of US Air Force and Airborne Infantry units.[78] Then, on August 8, the situation reached another critical turning point as Iraq announced the annexation of Kuwait, which was unanimously rejected by the UN Security Council.[79] On the same day Bush publicly announced

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as the deployment to Saudi Arabia of a squadron of US F-16 that turned out to be disarmed, and the sudden American withdrawal from Lebanon in the aftermath of a terrorist attack that killed 281 Marines in October 1983. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 325.

73   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 329-330.

74   UN Security Council, Resolution 661, August 6, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/11/IMG/NR057511.pdf?OpenElement.

75   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 51-53; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 71, 92-94; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 87-88; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 352-356.

76   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 92.

77   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It doesn't Take a Hero,* p. 355.

78   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, p. 93.

79   UN Security Council, Resolution 662, August 9, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/12/IMG/NR057512.pdf?OpenElement .

the launch of Operation Desert Shield. As he announced his decision to send air and ground forces to Saudi Arabia – the "defensive option" - the President explained:

> my administration, as has been the case with every President from President Roosevelt to President Reagan, is committed to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf […] The stakes are high. Iraq is already a rich and powerful country that possesses the world's second largest reserves of oil and over a million men under arms. It's the fourth largest military in the world. Our country now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence. Much of the world is even more dependent upon imported oil and is even more vulnerable to Iraqi threats […] Let me be clear: The sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States.[80]

The American deployment had important international repercussions, especially on the Arab world. On August 10 an Arab League summit was held in Cairo, Egypt. As had emerged a few days earlier, a small but significant constituency, which among others included a moderate leader such as King Hussein of Jordan and a radical one such as OLP leader Yasser Arafat, was opposed to take bold actions against Iraq. The group of the advocates of a bold reaction to Saddan aggression, however, was on the rise, and turned out to include not only traditional partners of the US such as Egypt and the Gulf monarchies, but also Syria, a country that had been at odds with Washington because of its steadfast hostility towards Israel, and yet now happened to share with the US a strong interest in cracking

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80   George H.W. Bush, "Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia", August 8, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2147&year=1990&month=8 . It is interesting to note that in a letter to Saudi King Ibn Saud in 1950, President Truman told the king: "I wish to renew to Your Majesty the assurances which have been made to you several times in the past, that the United States is interested in the preservation of the independence and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia. No threat to your Kingdom could occur which would not be a matter of immediate concern to the United States." As Daniel Yergin observed with regard to the importance of the "oil factor" in the Gulf crisis: "In short, oil was fundamental to the crisis, not "cheap oil", but rather oil as a critical element in the global balance of power, as it had been ever since the First World War." Yergin, *The Prize*, pp. 409, 754-755.

down on Saddam's hegemonic ambitions.[81] Tension was high at the Cairo meeting, but eventually the League adopted a resolution that allowed Arab states to deploy troops in Saudi Arabia along with the US.[82]

A couple of days later, Saddam responded with a new controversial diplomatic initiative. On August 12 Baghdad issued a "peace initiative" by which the Iraqi Government declared itself ready to negotiate a withdrawal on condition that the solution of the controversy between Iraq and Kuwait would be addressed within the larger framework of an effort to solve all conflicts in the Middle East, including the Syrian occupation of Lebanon and, even more importantly, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Thus another critical and controversial element – "linkage," as it was frequently referred to – entered the Gulf crisis. That was a masterful propaganda coup for Saddam, who seized the opportunity to portray himself once again as the champion of the Arab cause before Arab public opinion.[83] Linkage, however, was immediately refused by the US and the multinational coalition Washington had begun assembling, on the ground that it was clearly a ruse to minimize the significance of the Iraqi aggression and to dodge the implementation of the UN resolutions calling for the unconditional restoration of the status quo ante in the Gulf.

In short, within a few days of the invasion, a number of critical conditions had been established. On the public level, Iraq had set itself on a collision course with the rest of the international community by rejecting the basic demands of the UN Security Council, while the United States had took the lead in shaping the UN response to the Iraqi challenge. Behind closed doors, President Bush and his top advisers had begun to set priorities concerning the situation in the Gulf. First and foremost, Washington had resolved that no change in the dynamic of oil supplies in the area should be accepted, and that Saddam's Iraq had become a critical threat to such a vital US national interest. Second, the Bush Administration had acknowledged that besides basic strategic and economic interests, the crisis

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81   Bassma Kodmani-Darwish et May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 78-81.
82   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 95-99. Eric Laurent and Pierre Salinger report that the resolution was adopted under strong Egyptian pressure and after a simple majority vote, contrary to the traditional consensus procedure that characterized the League decision-making. Laurent e Salinger, *Guerra del Golfo*, pp. 157-160.
83   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 101; Bassma Kodmani-Darwish et May Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient* (Paris: IFRI-Editeur Dunod, 1991), pp. 113-117.

featured another long term challenge: the need to set a precedent for establishing the rule of law as an essential component of international relations in the post-Cold War era. Third, the problem of how to ensure stability in such a strategically important region as the Persian Gulf had emerged. Now, as Robert Gates observed, President Bush's main concern had become balancing two equally desirable but occasionally incompatible objectives. The first was the effort to put together the largest possible coalition against Saddam Hussein and obtain widely supported international sanctions against Iraq. Here, Baker and his staff of diplomats and advisers were to play a critical role. The second was to protect American military freedom of maneuver against encroachment from that political coalition. The responsibility to fulfill this second task would fall on Cheney and the US military leadership.[84]

Implementing the "Defensive Option"

By mid-August, 1990, the Bush Administration had already taken the first steps toward the resolution of the most immediate challenge, and the UN had set the conceptual and diplomatic framework toward the resolution of the problem of Kuwait. As Bush had explained in his August 8 message, his Administration had identified four American objects concerning the Gulf crisis: the immediate, unconditional, and complete withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; the restoration of Kuwait's legitimate – and internationally recognized – government; the security and stability of the Persian Gulf; and the protection of American lives.[85] The same objectives were stated in National Security Directive 45, issued on August 20, 1990.[86]

Although an important military threshold had been passed with the deployment of US troops in Saudi Arabia, the "Defensive Option," by late Summer and early Fall 1990 the Gulf crisis essentially consisted of a politico-diplomatic contest on

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84   Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 497.
85   "Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia", August 8, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2147&year=1990&month=8 .
86   National Security Directive 45, "U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait", August 20, 1990, George Bush Presidential Library, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/pdfs/nsd/nsd45.pdf .

the UN stage between a US-led camp and Iraq. The Bush Administration launched a massive diplomatic effort aimed at consolidating the view that the crisis was not a confrontation between Iraq and the US or the West, but rather a conflict between Saddam Hussein and the international community. According to this narrative, the US, as the only remaining superpower, was to lead under the aegis of the UN a multinational effort to undo the aggression perpetrated by the Baghdad regime and to enforce the rule of law in international affairs. As James Baker recalls, this UN-centered diplomatic approach began to follow a clear pattern.[87] The first partners to contact were the British, who had stood for a bold and uncompromising US leadership from the onset of the crisis – due to to Prime Minister Thatcher's strong-minded attitude towards the issue, to Britain's tradition of commitment to the preservation of the balance of power of the Gulf region, and to a willingness to reassert the "special relationship" that bound Washington and London (which had been obscured by close US-German cooperation during the Cold War endgame).[88] With the Britons on board, the next step was to find a common ground with the French. That appeared more problematic. First of all, the French were traditionally loath to accept American leadership. France, moreover, had established a rather close commercial relationship with Iraq, and some element in the French Socialist Government, such as Defense Minister Pierre de Chevènement, did not hide their sympathies for the Baghdad regime. Nevertheless France was a pillar of Western security, and the key political actors in Paris, including President Francois Mitterrand, were eager to show their commitment to undo such a blatant act of aggression as Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, and establish a strong role for the UN Security Council, where France had a permanent seat. Thus, French support was a constant asset for American diplomacy throughout the crisis.[89] Once they had achieved a cohesive Western position, the Americans turned to the Soviets. The Soviet Union had been Washington global competitor for decades, and Iraq was one of Moscow's few political partners in the Middle East. Yet, as we observed in

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87   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 280-81.

88   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 110-114; Louise Fawcett and Robert O'Neill, "Britain, the Gulf crisis and European security", in Nicole Gnesotto and John Rooper (eds.), *Western Europe and the Gulf* (Paris: Institute for Security Studies of WEU, 1992) pp. 141-158.

89   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 114-118; François Heisbourg, "France and the Gulf crisis", in Gnesotto and Rooper, *Western Europe and the Gulf*, pp. 17-38.

the previous chapter, Gorbachev and his closest allies in the Kremlin – the "New Thinkers" – were eager to establish a cooperative relationship with the West and with the US in particular, and to conceive the Soviet national interest more in terms of global cooperation than in terms of preserving Soviet geopolitical clout in specific regions. Gorbachev's weakening domestic position, furthermore, was an additional incentive to favor a concerted solution worked out through the UN Security Council, a forum where he and the Soviet Union still enjoyed great prestige.[90] China was the most reluctant of the Permanent Members to accept the Washington line. Even more disturbing for the Chinese Government, however, appeared to be its possible diplomatic isolation, especially considering the magnitude of Saddam's violation of international law and of the principle of national sovereignty, and the opportunity provided by the crisis to restore a working relationship with the West in the aftermath of the Tian Anmen bloody repression.[91] After the US achieved the endorsement of the Permanent Five, the other members of the Security Council would generally fall in line. Aside from Cuba, the other notable, but unsurprising, exception was Yemen, the only Arab member of the Council by the time of the crisis.[92]

Endorsement by the UN Security Council was a critical asset to achieve even greater international support for the American position, first of all from the rest of the Western countries. Diplomats in the Bush Administration, however, were also very careful to give an "Arab face" to the multinational coalition they were assembling to confront the Iraqi challenge. President Bush was highly sensitive to the need to cultivate personal relationships with foreign leaders, and that quality, supported by Baker's relentless shuttle in the Middle East, gave remarkable results. Washington's key regional ally was Saudi Arabia, although Egypt, with its international standing, early diplomatic support, and commitment to send troops to

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90   Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 65-67; Ken Matthews, *The Gulf War and International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), pp.80-81; Margot Light, "Soviet policy in the Third World", *International Affairs*, Vol. 67, N.2, 1991, pp. 264-267.

91   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 280-81; Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 68-69; Matthews, *The Gulf War and International Relations*, pp.82-83.

92   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 280-81; Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 95-96; Matthews, *The Gulf War and International Relations*, pp.78-79. Yemen's Government had been strongly supported by Saddam's regime in its rivalry with Saudi Arabia.

the Gulf, was another critical and reliable partner. Another important political and (shakier) military commitment come from Morocco. A masterpiece of American diplomacy, however, was the achievement of Syrian political and military participation in the US-led coalition. The strong anti-Israeli credentials of the Damascus regime and its defiant attitude towards the West became an asset for Washington in the effort to neutralize Saddam's "anti-Imperialist/Zionist" rhetoric.[93] Other Muslim countries such as Pakistan and, even more importantly, Turkey supported the American initiatives. Turkey's role was critical both because of its NATO membership and the availability of military bases it provided and because its Government's consent to shut down the terminals of the oil pipeline that carried Iraqi oil was a sine qua non to the implementation of the sanctions regime established by Resolution 661.[94] A blot in the Bush Administration's remarkable diplomatic performance was the failure to obtain support from King Hussein of Jordan. The King had always been a voice of moderation in the region and a friend of Washington, but his position in the crisis turned out to be too delicate. Jordan shared a border with Iraq, and as soon as sanctions began to bite a huge inflow of refuges poured into the country, a situation that gave rise to a serious humanitarian emergency. Palestinians, moreover, were a large share of Jordan's population, and Arafat's support for Saddam further challenged the stability of the Kingdom.[95]

American leadership and the cohesion of the US-led coalition faced a critical test on August 19, 1990, when two Iraqi oil tankers challenged the UN sanctions regime and headed toward the port of Aden, in Yemen. The President and his advisers now faced a dilemma. On the one hand, it was necessary to ensure the enforcement of sanctions. On the other hand, many felt that unilateral military action would jeopardize the unity of the multinational coalition. The hardliners, especially Cheney, maintained that from the point of view of international law military action could be justified under article 51 of the UN Charter, which stated

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93   Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 78-81; George Joffe, "Reaction in North Africa" in James Gow (ed.), *Iraq, The Gulf Conflict and the World Community* (London: Brassey's, 1993), pp. 74-88.
94   Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp. 96-98.
95   Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, pp.86-90; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 131-139, 143-144. Hussein ibn Talal, King of Jordan, "The Middle East Cannot Afford Another War", *International Herald Tribune*, September 24, 1990.

the right of states to resort to military force in self-defense. After all, the US-led effort had originated from a request of the legitimate Kuwaiti Government, which had been the victim of an aggression. That point of view was strongly supported by Britain's Prime Minister Thatcher. Other important members of the Bush Cabinet such as Gen. Powell and above all Secretary of State Baker, however, argued that the achievement of a satisfying solution to the crisis required in the long term the strong political cohesion of the US-led coalition. Unilateral action, they added, would weaken international support for American initiatives, reduce Soviet support and undermine the unity of the UN Security Council. The President proved to be particularly sensitive to this kind of considerations. Having spent a large part of his political career dealing with diplomacy and foreign affairs, Bush himself had been the US representative to the UN during the Nixon Presidency.[96] In the event a consensus developed between the President and his top advisers that UN endorsement could provide Washington's policies toward the Gulf crisis with additional authority and legitimacy – a key requisite to exercise a stronger international leadership, to ensure support of US initiatives from well-established allies and acquiescence from former enemies, and to share the burden of dealing with the crisis.[97] As Bush himself told Thatcher during a telephone conversation later in the crisis, "Anything we can get to enhance our legal authority, the better it is."[98] The Administration thus decided to articulate its response to the Iraqi tanker issue through the UN. According to Baker, he himself took the responsibility to explain the American attitude to his Soviet counterpart Shevardnadze in the clearest possible terms: the US was ready to tolerate temporarily the Iraqi provocation, but only if Soviet support on the UN level for a new resolution that explicitly authorized the enforcement of the sanction regime was guaranteed.[99] Shevardnadze and other "New Thinkers" close to Gorbachev were eager to cooperate with the US, yet, as it was becoming increasingly evident, uneasiness towards cooperation

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96   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 257, 260.
97   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, pp. 71-72. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 277-278; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 416.
98   Telcon, "Telephone Conversation between POTUS and PM Thatcher, Sept. 14, 1990, 0729-0742", OA/ID CF01478-020, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Thatcher famously expressed her reluctant endorsement for Bush's philosophy with the following words: "Well, all right, George, but this is no time to go wobbly." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 352.
99   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 286-287.

with the US on the Gulf crisis was growing within some influent Kremlin constituencies, particularly "conservatives" from the military and the KGB and a group of "Arabists", such as Gorbachev's advisor Yevgeny Primakov, who stressed the importance of Iraq as a Soviet partner in the Middle East.[100] By that time Iraq's Deputy Prime Minister Sa'dun Hammadi was in Moscow, where he found significant support for his country.[101] In the event, however, the case for cooperation with Washington prevailed, and on August 25, 1990, with Soviet support, the UN Security Council voted a resolution that authorized military enforcement of the sanctions regime.[102] The UN resolution was strengthened by the commitment of the part of the Western European Union of a naval contingent to the Gulf.[103]

The diplomatic initiative continued through September 1990 with increased American efforts to keep the Soviets on board.[104] Coming to terms with American initiatives was becoming a painful job for Soviet leaders, and Gorbachev was actually eager to find a political solution to the crisis and to avoid a military showdown.[105] From Moscow's point of view, as a consequence, there was a strong case for seeking a compromise, as demonstrated by the Soviet desire for a general Middle East peace conference – an initiative that implicitly gave credit to Saddam's linkage argument – and by a visit to Moscow by Iraq's Foreign Minister Aziz on September 5, 1990.[106] A series of meetings between US and Soviet leaders in Helsinki, Finland, on September 9-10 provided an opportunity for important exchanges of views on the crisis. When he met Gorbachev on the 9th, Bush argued that although he too wished the crisis didn't escalate, Saddam should understand that "we can't afford to fail implementing the resolutions of the UN." Gorbachev

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100   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 148-149.
101   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 147.
102   UN Security Council, Resolution 665, August 25, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/15/IMG/NR057515.pdf?OpenElement
103   As Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh noted, with the passage of Resolution 665 the crisis crossed another important threshold in the militarization of the crisis. Now the possibility of military clashes between Iraq and the US-led coalition was explicitly contemplated. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 143-150, 152
104   "Remarks by President on Gulf Crisis to Cabinet (9/4/90, 10am), OA/ID CF01478-020, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
105   Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 551.
106   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 143-150.

expressed his satisfaction about US-Soviet cooperation, and his willingness to work with the US "as equal partners" to solve the crisis and to contribute to the new world in general. The Soviet leader, however, stated his concern about the fact that the US was assuming the "burden of dealing with the aggression," and that the crisis was increasingly becoming militarized. He maintained that, as suggested by his advisor Primakov, if Saddam was allowed to "save face," it would be possible to solve the crisis peacefully. Gorbachev also made his case for a Middle East peace conference after completion of the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait.[107] Another meeting took place between Baker and Shevardnadze, and as far as Bush and Scowcroft recall, the Soviet Foreign Minister showed a greater eagerness to stand by the US.[108] Bush strongly rejected the idea of linkage, making analogies with the policy of appeasement with the Nazi regime, but he confidentially agreed that after the solution of the current crisis, he would support the organization of a Middle East peace conference.[109]

From the Bush Administration's standpoint, the results obtained by early September appeared encouraging. As the President remarked in a confidential document to his staff,

> Our basic policy is in place. We have 5 UN Security Council resolutions endorsing our objectives, sanctions against Iraq, and the use of force to make them bite; a large and growing military force in Saudi Arabia capable of defending that country; and US ships at sea enforcing sanctions.

Bush also acknowledged the importance of strong international backing to the success of the US effort so far, and stressed the importance of Soviet cooperation, although he expressed scepticism about the chances for diplomacy and sanctions

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107   Memcon, "Memorandum of conversation between POTUS and Gorbachev on 9/9/90", 9/11/90, OA/ID CF01478-021, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
108   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed...* cit., p. 366.
109   Memcon, "Memorandum of conversation between POTUS and Gorbachev on 9/9/90"; Gates, *From the Shadows*, p. 498. As James Baker recalls, a four million dollars package of aid from Saudi Arabia to the USSR also helped to keep the Soviets on board. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp.291-295.

alone to bring about an acceptable solution to the crisis.[110] Thus in the aftermath of the Helsinki meeting, the President felt ready to go public with a bolder policy toward the crisis. As he told before a joint session of Congress on September 11, 1990:

> We stand today at a unique and extraordinary moment. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, as grave as it is, also offers a rare opportunity to move toward an historic period of cooperation. Out of these troubled times, our fifth objective -- a new world order -- can emerge: a new era -- freer from the threat of terror, stronger in the pursuit of justice, and more secure in the quest for peace. An era in which the nations of the world, East and West, North and South, can prosper and live in harmony. A hundred generations have searched for this elusive path to peace, while a thousand wars raged across the span of human endeavor. Today that new world is struggling to be born, a world quite different from the one we've known. A world where the rule of law supplants the rule of the jungle. A world in which nations recognize the shared responsibility for freedom and justice. A world where the strong respect the rights of the weak. This is the vision that I shared with President Gorbachev in Helsinki. He and other leaders from Europe, the Gulf, and around the world understand that how we manage this crisis today could shape the future for generations to come.[111]

In the following days signals of support for the increasingly ambitious American stance came from the international arena. On September 14, 1990, the British Parliament approved the London Government's proposal to deploy forces to Saudi Arabia, including an armoured division. (the 7th Division, also known as the Desert Rats of World War Two fame.) A couple of days later the French Government announced the decision to sent more than four thousand troops and a naval

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110 "Remarks by President on Gulf Crisis to Cabinet (9/4/90, 10am), OA/ID CF01478-020, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

111 George H.W. Bush, "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on The Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit", September 11, 1990, Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2217&year=1990&month=9 .

contingent to the Gulf. The French remained somewhat reluctant to march to the beat of the American drum, and declined putting their forces under US command. The Paris Government, moreover, engaged in diplomatic initiatives intended to explore the room for a political solution.[112] The provocative and defiant attitude of the Baghdad regime, however, helped Paris and Washington find a common ground. Iraqi forces, for instance, carried out a series of raids against foreign embassies in Kuwait, which also affected French diplomatic personnel, prompting strong French support for the passage of UN Security Council 670 which extended sanctions to include a ban on air transport toward Iraq.[113] As British, French, Egyptian and Syrian troops began to deploy along with the Americans and Saudis in the Gulf, US global leadership became increasingly evident from a military point of view.

In addition to political and military support, a critical concern for the Bush Administration was to ensure financial backing from the international community. By 1990, after a decade of expansion of government spending and growing deficits, the US was facing the prospect of a painful economic readjustment and a recession.[114] The Gulf crisis, which caused uncertainty on financial markets and the sudden and massive rise in oil prices, was putting additional pressure on the American economy. It was therefore crucial from Washington's point of view that other world oil producers expanded their output to offset the cut in supplies from Iraq and Kuwait due to the sanctions regime.[115] In addition, a priority for the President and his staff was to make sure that other countries with a stake in the crisis financially contributed to sustain the US military effort. Major financial contributions came from the Gulf States, but the Governments of Japan and the newly unified Germany. Due to their stakes in the crisis and their constitutional constraints on the deployment of military forces beyond their borders – a legacy of

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112   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 150-152.

113   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 150-152. UN Security Council, Resolution 670, September 25, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/20/IMG/NR057520.pdf?OpenElement .

114   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, p. 114.

115   National Security Directive 45, "U.S. Policy in Response to the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait", cit. It turns out that by 1990 the US was the world's largest importer of oil from Iraq. Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am", cit… ; Telcon, "Presidential Phone Call to Turgut Ozal, August 5, 1990, 3:32-3:37 pm", OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

the Second World War – these two major economic powers were expected, especially by American politicians, to make large financial contributions, which did come in the form of support for the deployment and aid to the Middle Eastern countries most directly affected by the crisis.[116]

In response to the bold American initiatives, Saddam Hussein showed a remarkable ability to exploit any tactical expedient to strike propaganda coups and open windows of opportunity for a settlement that would allow him to keep at least a significant part of the fruits of his aggression, and in quite a few occasions his efforts – especially linkage and the manipulation of foreign hostages – seemed to be appealing to at least part of the international community.

In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion, foreign nationals that happened to be in Kuwait and Iraq became somewhat trapped because of the sudden hostility between the Baghdad regime and the rest of the international community. Soon Saddam came to appreciate how these unlikely "guests" might become an asset in his struggle to obtain political concessions from his adversaries. The Baghdad regime immediately made clear that foreigners from Third World countries would be allowed to leave the territory under its control. That, however proved to be an hollow permission, since those granted the right to move seldom had the wherewithal to come back to their original countries. Among the results of this policy, a massive flow of refugees spread into the surrounding countries, creating a serious humanitarian emergency that was eventually contained through aid packages from Western countries.[117] Foreigners from Western countries and the Soviet Union, in contrast, were not allowed to leave Iraq and Kuwait. In spite of a UN Security Council calling for a fair treatment and the possibility to return home, Westerners and Soviet nationals became in substance hostages of Saddam, who used them as tools for propaganda and pressure on the members of the coalition that had rallied against his challenge.[118] Although the US and other Western

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116   Karl Kaiser and Klaus Becher, "Germany and the Iraq conflict", in Gnesotto and Rooper , *Western Europe and the Gulf* , pp. 39-70; Courtney and Purrington and A.K., "Tokyo's Policy Responses During the Gulf Crisis", in *Asian Survey,* vol. 31, No. 4, April 1991; Susan Willet, "The Economic Implications", in Gow, *Iraq, the Gulf Conflict and the World Community*, pp. 162-182. As Willett reports, according to some estimates, the US ended up earning money from the crisis.
117   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 131-134.
118   UN Security Council, Resolution 664, August 18, 1990,

Governments publicly stated that they would not be deterred from opposing Baghdad's aggression, in the months following the outbreak of the crisis an unlikely "pilgrimage" of former political leaders and celebrities to Iraq developed, and allowed Saddam to take center stage in the world media. After a while, however, it became increasingly clear that the hostage issue was unpopular and had the effect of rallying public opinion around Western governments, and thus would not let Saddam obtain significant concessions. Bush himself, having confronted several international crises involving the seizure of American citizens as hostages during his political career, was strongly determined, both in public and in private, not to show any weakness on that issue.[119]

Linkage was the second major element in Saddam's politico-diplomatic effort to counter the US-led coalition. As demonstrated by the exchange between Bush and Gorbachev in Helsinki, linkage, and especially the idea that the US and the international community were applying a double standard toward the plight of oil-rich Kuwait and poor Palestinians, did make an impact on global public opinion and on a number of international leaders. The undemocratic character of the Kuwaiti regime, moreover, didn't help the al-Sabah family make friends among the masses in the Arab states and throughout the world in general.

French President Mitterrand publicly gave credit to that kind of feeling on September 24, 1990. Speaking before the UN General Assembly, he acknowledged the need for a consistent and comprehensive solution to the problems of the Middle East, adding that if only Saddam showed willingness to withdraw from Kuwait, that may help solve many other regional conundrums. The French President also speculated that a mere restoration of the al-Sabah family may not be a satisfying outcome, and it would be better if the Kuwaitis were left free to choose their government.[120] Mitterrand's remarks troubled both the Bush Administration and its closest coalition partners. In the aftermath of the speech Bush strongly argued that the issue at stake in the crisis was "to see that naked aggression does not pay off," and that the nature of the regimes involved in the conflict should not be the

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http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1990/scres90.htm .

119   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 134-139, 172-175; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 69-73; "Remarks by President on Gulf Crisis to Cabinet (9/4/90, 10am)", cit.
120   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 166-167.

problem of the international community, a point echoed by senior British officials.[121] The Bush Administration's uneasiness toward linkage did not deter other foreign leaders, most notably Mikhail Gorbachev, from engaging in diplomatic initiatives in search for a negotiated solution. In early October 1990 the Soviet leader announced his decision to dispatch his assistant Yevgeny Primakov to the Middle East in order to explore the chances for a compromise. Primakov landed in Baghdad on October 4, where he met Tariq Aziz and then Saddam Hussein. As far as the Soviet envoy recalls, beyond the notorious "anti-Imperialist/Zionist" rhetoric and bombastic claims that the Baghdad regime would never surrender, it was possible to notice that Saddam was indeed interested in some sort of compromise by which Iraq would withdraw from Kuwait, as long as the formula allowed he and his inner circle to do so without jeopardizing their domestic hold on power – an impression supported by meetings Primakov had had with other Arab leaders close to Saddam, such as King Hussein of Jordan and Yasser Arafat.[122] Reporting to Gorbachev on his trip, Primakov made the case for a Soviet diplomatic initiative geared at devising an Iraqi withdrawal in return for a "save face" for Saddam, such as a UN Security Council commitment to the solution of the Arab Israeli conflict, negotiations to settle the political and economic controversies between Iraq and Kuwait, and the promotion of a more stable security system in the Gulf region.[123] Gorbachev decided to follow Primakov's recommendations and dispatched his envoy on a tour of Western capitals, including Washington D.C.[124] By the time the Soviet diplomat came to the US, the Arab-Israeli conflict was on the headlines because of a brutal repression of Palestinians

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121 "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session at a White House Briefing for Representatives of the Arab-American Community", September 24, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*,
http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2248&year=1990&month=9 ;
Bush and Scowcroft, A World Transformed, pp. 375-376; "Interview with Douglas Hurd, BBC-2 TV *Newsnight*, September 26, 1990", *The Gulf War aims, a series of quotes from the electronic media*, edited by David Stott, , Freedman Collection, Box 38, File 7, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London, UK.

122 Evguéni Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad. Histoire d'une négociation secrète* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1991) pp.36-41, 45-46, 49-56.

123 Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 58-61.

124 According to Gorbachev and Primakov, the Soviet iniziative was judged positively by the French and Italian Governments, as well as by many Arab leaders. Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 65-69; Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, p. 555.

perpetrated by the Israeli police in Jerusalem.[125] Primakov was given a chance to report to the President and his advisers, who, however, appeared unconvinced and determined to hold to their uncompromising stance. As Bush recalls, Primakov's account further persuaded him that Saddam was surrounded by lackeys and was losing sight of the real situation, and that, by implication, initiatives such as the Soviet mediation could not lead to an acceptable solution.[126] On his way back to Moscow, Primakov stopped in London to meet Prime Minister Thatcher, and then, after a few days in the Soviet Union he left for another trip in the Middle East. After visiting Egypt and Syria, by late October Gorbachev's envoy was once again in Iraq, where he met Saddam. Despite the aggressive and defiant stance in meetings that included his subordinates, Primakov recalls that in their private conversations the Iraqi dictator appeared highly interest in a face-saving compromise. Saddam maintained that he needed guarantees that should Iraqi troops begin a withdrawal, they would not become the target of a coalition offensive, and maintained that from the point of view of the Baghdad regime unconditional withdrawal was tantamount to suicide. Saddam, Primakov recalls, appeared seriously interested in a compromise, yet neither he nor his inner circle seemed ready to admit the tragic mistake they had made with the invasion and to assume responsibility for it.[127] The Soviet diplomatic initiative of October 1990 confirmed that there was no ground of negotiation as long as one side was arguing that aggression should not pay and was calling for a total and unconditional withdrawal, while the other was maintaining that some guarantee of at least partial reward for aggression should be a precondition to a peaceful settlement. In the event, even Mitterrand and Gorbachev concluded that faced by that alternative, their countries too should stand for the UN and against aggression, and confirmed their commitment to the US line.[128]

Late October 1990 was a moment of hard choices in Washington too. On October 22, 1990, instructions from Washington reached the US Consul in Jeddah. The cable contained information for King Fahd concerning the next diplomatic and

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125   Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 168
126   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 377-378
127   Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 97-103.
128   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 178-179.

military steps toward the liberation of Kuwait. On the diplomatic front, Saddam's regime should be kept under pressure through UNSC resolutions, as sanctions appeared to begin to bring the "desired effect". From the military point of view, the cable argued, "until the necessary forces are in place, it is premature to speak openly of deadlines or the recourse to military measures." After all, the ongoing military build-up was judged to be successful in narrowing Saddam's options. "Should it become clear that sanctions are not working or should Saddam further provoke us," however, "we would of course review all the alternatives including issuing deadlines and using military force."[129] At any rate, within the Bush Administration there was still a significant uncertainty about what measures were required to guarantee the UN-endorsed outcome, and about how to ensure an acceptable long term settlement of the Gulf crisis.

On October 29, 1990, the US Embassy to Saudi Arabia sent Washington an important analysis of the political and strategic challenges ahead. On the one hand, the cable from Riyadh argued that sanctions would not achieve the political objective of ejecting the Iraqis from Kuwait. On the other hand, the message argued that due to political and military constraints, such as harsher weather conditions and the annual pilgrimage to Mecca, the window of opportunity for going to war in the Gulf would close by early Spring 1991. Furthermore, the analysis suggested that a successful US-led military operation to liberate Kuwait would require a significant increase of US troops in the theater of operation, to be completed as soon as possible. The conclusion of the cable was: "Not to decide soon, in this case, is also to decide."[130] As Charles Freeman, the American Ambassador to Saudi Arabia at the time of the crisis, recalled, by late October 1990 the only UN-endorsed military mission was the defense of Saudi Arabia, and the US military deployment was geared only at fulfilling that task. Thus, the main objective of the cable was to make it clear to politicians in Washington that if they failed to make a decision on the liberation of Kuwait and to take the required

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129   Cable, SECSTATE to AmConsul Jeddah, "UNSC Resolution and Military action to liberate Kuwait", 10/22/90, OA/ID CF01584-031, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
130   Cable from AmEmbassy Riyadh to SECSTATE "Examining Our Military Options", 10/29/90 OA/ID CF01584-032, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

military measures, that objective would no longer be attainable for a long time, with significant costs.131 The cable came at a time when the President and his closest political and military advisers were indeed reviewing the military options available to the US, and their conclusion turned out to be quite in line with the assessment from the field.

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131 Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman, cit. It seems worth to note that as operation Desert Shield was launched, CENTCOM's headquarters were moved to Riyadh. Amb. Freeman recalled that around that time he had several conversations with CENTCOM's Commander in Chief, Gen. Norman H. Schwarzkopf. The analysis sent to Washington on October 29 1990 seems to reflect a deep interaction between the diplomatic and military assets available to the US in Saudi Arabia at the time.

Chapter 3

The "Offensive Option" and the Struggle for Legitimacy (November 1990-January 1991)

"we and our allies cannot and will not shirk our responsibilities. The state of Kuwait must be restored, or no nation will be safe and the promising future we anticipate will indeed be jeopardized"
President George H.W. Bush, November 8, 1990[1]

"The time had come to confront both Iraq and the American people with the proposition of war in the Desert"
Secretary of State James A. Baker III[2]

By the time Ambassador Freeman's cable from Saudi Arabia reached the White House, a consensus seemed to have formed around the idea that the invasion of Kuwait should be undone. In practical terms, however, the only real military measure agreed upon was deterrence of any Iraqi move into Saudi territory.[3] How to make sure that Saddam's aggression would not stand – as President Bush had famously said – remained a critical, open question.

Sanctions and their discontents

The main mission of operation Desert Shield – the deployment in Saudi Arabia of a force capable of deterring an Iraqi invasion – was achieved by mid-September 1990. Although Iraqi troops were continuing to pour into Kuwait, their deployment began to suggest that they were assuming defensive positions, and that the Baghdad regime was more concerned about securing its hold over the newly acquired territory than further expanding.[4] Meanwhile, it became clear that the sanctions

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1 George H.W. Bush, "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis", November 8, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2416&year=1990&month=11 .
2 Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 325.
3 Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990", cit.
4 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp 201-202; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 404-406; Baker III with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp.

regime established by the UN was working. As members of the US-led multinational coalition, Saudi Arabia and Turkey had promptly agreed to shut down the terminals of pipelines carrying oil from Iraq, and that move deprived the Baghdad regime of virtually all revenues. The combination of UN Security Council resolutions and what became a de facto US and allied naval (and air) blockade, moreover, ensured a very high degree of effectiveness for the UN sanctions regime. Apart from some negligible smuggling through the country's land borders, Iraq was virtually sealed off economically, with tangible effects in terms of production and welfare.[5]

There was widespread uncertainty, however, whether the response based on military deterrence and economic sanctions could lead to an acceptable political solution of the crisis. Many within the Bush Administration felt that in the long run sanctions would become increasingly difficult to enforce. A prolonged confrontation of that kind would have painful economic implications for the US and the international community in general and that, in turn, would undermine the unity of the multinational coalition Washington had put together. As Richard Darman, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, observed during a meeting of the NSC in early August 1990:

> With time cheating will go up. Unless the Saudis increase [oil] production, the effect on us will be a recession. […] Democracies and market-oriented economies are less prepared to wage this kind of battle than non-market economies, especially given that modern communication will affect us more than it will them. We need to assess not simply the change in Iraq's welfare, but what it takes to starve them.[6]

Darman's remark was blunt but not necessary inappropriate. Although the embargo was having visible effects on the Iraqi population, it remained indeed open to question whether that might influence Saddam's decision-making. After

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5   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 82-83, 143-153.

6   Minutes, "National Security Council meeting August 6, 1990, 5:05-6:00 pm", OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

all, Saddam was a skilled political survivor. He was in a position to ensure that his inner circle was spared the suffering from the embargo. The Baghdad regime's brutal control and propaganda apparatuses, moreover, could deter popular uprisings and manipulate the Iraqi public opinion by portraying the embargo as an "imperialist" plot. Finally, the regime could channel any spare resource into the military, with the effect of slowing down the erosion of the effectiveness of forces deployed in Kuwait.[7]

There was, in sum, a wide perception that time was on Saddam's side. Experience showed that, for a variety of reasons such as strategic considerations or the need to conciliate domestic constituencies or public opinion, some important international actors appeared to have an interest in scaling down the confrontation, even at the price of renegotiating some of the UN demands. Thus, a situation of persistent politico-diplomatic stalemate appeared likely to undermine the resolve of the US-led multinational coalition to enforce unconditionally the UN mandate. The economic prospects of a prolonged sanctions regime were daunting as well. Authoritative media outlets were estimating that for the coalition the financial costs of the sanctions regime would amount to around thirty billion dollars on an annual basis.[8] The crisis, moreover had ignited a steep rise in oil prices, and such a situation added pressure not only on the US, that was entering a recession, but also to the rest of the world economy. Third World countries, as well as the countries of Central and Eastern Europe that were transitioning from a planned to a market economy, were expected to be painfully hit by high oil prices due to their relative inefficiency in the management of energy resources.[9] Finally, a critical factor that added pressure toward action was evidence that the Baghdad regime was not only brutalizing the Kuwaiti population, but also launching policies aimed at changing the demographic composition of the Gulf emirate, by deporting Kuwaiti citizens. In other words, from this point of view, waiting for the sanctions to work implied the risk of giving the Baghdad regime the time to ensure that the annexation became irreversible.[10]

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7   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 194-198.
8   Samuel Britton, "Sanctions versus war – sober view", *Financial Times*, September 17, 1990.
9   Cristopher Flavin, "The Staggering Cost Of a Gulf War" *International Herald Tribune*, September 28, 1990, p. A23.
10   "Iraq's Occupation of Kuwait: Excerpts from Amnesty International's Report (December 19,

On August 23, 1990, Bush and Scowcroft had an opportunity for a private and straightforward exchange of opinions about the Gulf crisis during a fishing session at the President's holiday resort in Kennenbunkport, Maine. As Bush himself recalls, by that time he felt prepared to use force, if necessary, to liberate Kuwait, but the debate among his senior advisers was still wide open.[11] On the one hand, Defense Secretary Cheney, Vice President Dan Quayle, and White House Chief of Staff Jon Sununu were strongly making the case for a military solution, with or without further explicit UN authorization. Their position was echoed from London by Margaret Thatcher. Their view was that maintaining UN consensus might prove too costly and fail to bring about an acceptable solution, while art. 51 of the UN Charter provided sufficient legal authority to use force.[12] On the other hand, other authoritative members of the Bush Administration, such as Baker and his staff at the Department of State, were making the case against taking a path that might lead to war without strong multilateral support. They argued that articulating the response through the UN would not only provide an important cloak of legitimacy to any US response to the current crisis, but also boost Washington's global leadership in broader terms. From that standpoint, if force was to be used it was necessary to have an additional and explicit UN Security Council endorsement, which would prove that a military solution was not premature, and help preserve international and domestic support for American policies.[13] As NSC Special Assistant for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs Richard Haass argued in the early aftermath of the invasion, an effective way to deal with the crisis could be "something along the lines of the Korean War model of a U.S. led multi-national

1990)", in Micah Sifri, Michael Cerf (eds.), *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 157-160; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 217-218; Kodmani-Darwish et Chartouni-Dubarry, *Golfe et Moyen Orient*, p. 110; UN Security Council, Resolution 677, November 28, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/27/IMG/NR057527.pdf?OpenElement

11   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 353-354.
12   Minutes, "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990, 8:00-10:00 am", OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 143-150; Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 82.
13   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp 277-278, 281-283.

force."[14]

A critical issue concerning the options available as the crisis unfolded was the actual feasibility of a military operation to liberate Kuwait. The US military establishment was indeed vocal in urging caution in the evaluation of alternative ways to address the Iraqi challenge. After all, according to estimates widely shared among the Bush Administration's officials, Iraq had one of the largest standing armies in the world, and its forces had accumulated extensive combat experience during the eight year war against Iran. As Gen. Scwarzkopf observed before the President and the NSC in the aftermath of the invasion, Iraq's strengths included "Numbers, experience, CW [chemical weapons], and some modern arms. Their weaknesses are centralized command and control, a dependence on foreign spare parts, and a lack of offensive experience."[15] In military terms, the use of force was not a realistic option until mid-September 1990. Short of a sizeable deployment, the US and its allies lacked even an actual deterrent to further Iraqi offensive moves, and what really concerned military commanders was indeed the risk of an Iraqi attack on Saudi Arabia – particularly on that country's oil region, which happened to be close to the theater of operations.[16] Gen. Colin Powell took care to explain clearly to the President and his staff the risks and costs of an offensive military option. When he summarized the available military options during one of the first meetings of the NSC in early August 1990, he maintained that it was possible to deploy either an air and ground contingent capable of deterring an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia or one capable of driving Iraqi forces out of Kuwait, and possibly to go against Iraq. However, Powell stressed, the latter option would be "harder than Panama and Libya",

> This would be the NFL, not a scrimmage. It would mean a major
> confrontation. Most US forces would have to be committed to sustain, not

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14   Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990, 8:00 – 10:00 am", n.d., OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
15   Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990, 8:00-10:00 am," cit.
16   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 94; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 358-360; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 335.

for just one or two days.[17]

By late September 1990, with the completion of a significant US deployment and intelligence showing that the Iraqis were finally assuming defensive positions in Kuwait, serious talk of how to implement an offensive option became possible. The first step involved an analysis of the potential uses of airpower. Significant air assets had become available soon after the beginning of Operation Desert Shield, and by that time Schwarzkopf had already received from the Tactical Air Command the early draft of Instant Thunder, an innovative and radical plan for the strategic use of airpower to force the Iraqis out of Kuwait. According to the author of the plan, Col. John Warden, the "center of gravity" of the Iraqi military was represented by command and control facilities inside Iraq's territory. By implication, he argued, a strategic air campaign which exploited precision targeting technology available to the US and focused on striking at critical military and political targets, such as unconventional weapons storage sites and leadership and communication centers inside Iraq, would ensure a quick victory for Washington and its allies. As Warden maintained, within less than a week of such an air campaign, the Baghdad regime would be forced to surrender and withdraw its troops from Kuwait.[18] Warden's plan arose skepticism and criticism on the part of many senior members of Schwarzkopf's staff, but in fact the concept of a strategic air campaign became a pillar of the American military response to Saddam's challenge.[19] In spite of the considerable potential of airpower, however, both Schwarzkopf and Powell judged that a ground component was required to ensure military success in the Gulf. Thus it was decided to expand the scope of the air campaign to include preparation of the battlefield and air support for ground forces, and to add a land component to the plan.[20]

The problem was to devise a ground battle plan that would ensure victory and a minimal amount of casualties, a task that proved to be daunting in the early phases

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17   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am", cit.
18   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 77-80, 86-90; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 369-371.
19   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 76-77; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 460.
20   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 369-371.

of the crisis. In late September 1990 a team of four US Army Generals – fresh graduates from the School of Advanced Military Studies – joined CENTCOM's headquarters (which had been moved to Saudi Arabia) with the assignment of devising battle plans for a US and allied ground campaign to liberate Kuwait.[21] The first draft battle plan was issued in early October 1990, but the prospects it offered were rather bleak. Given the composition and numbers of US and allied troops deployed in the Gulf by that time, the planners concluded, the most feasible offensive option would be a frontal assault on Iraqi forces entrenched in Kuwait. It appeared clear, however, that the implementation of such a strategy would imply enormous casualties, a prospect both Schwarzkopf and Powell abhorred.[22] On October 11, 1990, a delegation from CENTCOM came to Washington to brief President Bush and his staff on military options available. As Gen. Buster Glosson, the commander of US air forces in the Gulf, explained, planning for the air component of the plan had reached an advanced and promising stage: an up-to-date version of Instant Thunder revolving around four distinct but overlapping phases. First of all, US and allied air forces would concentrate on hitting strategic targets inside Iraq, in order to neutralize the Baghdad regime's capability to direct its own forces. Then, the focus of the strategic air campaign would gradually shift towards the objective of achieving complete supremacy of the airspace over the theater of operations (the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations/KTO in CENTCOM's jargon). In the final stages, the air force would concentrate on achieving an high level of attrition of Iraqi forces deployed in Kuwait and, finally, assume the task of supporting the US-led coalition's ground offensive.[23] The part of the presentation concerning the options for a ground offensive carried out by Gen. Robert Johnston, Schwarzkopf's chief of staff, however, was on a different, and grimmer, note. Johnston briefed Bush and his staff on the October 6 plan, and – as vocally ordered by Schwarzkopf – added that the personal assessment of CENTCOM's Commander in Chief was that to devise any better plan, a significant increase of troops – at least an additional

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21   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 123-126. Allegedly, the four officers were nicknamed "the Jedis"
22   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 416-421; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991,* pp 204-205; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 470-471.
23   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 131-132.

heavy corps – was needed.[24]

The October 11 briefing added new and critical elements in the debate within the Bush Cabinet. The President and his closest advisers were mostly disappointed by the ground battle plan.[25] Some, such as Scowcroft, judged it to be too unimaginative, since the idea of an envelopment maneuver from the north-west to attack the Iraqi troops from behind had apparently not been considered by the planners.[26] Others, most notably Cheney, showed a sort of anxiety to work out a new plan to make possible a military solution. That October Cheney assigned one of his civilian advisers, Henry Rowen, the task of studying an alternative plan for the ground offensive. Rowen's intellectual efforts, revised by a group of military advisers, resulted into a plan revolving around an offensive through Western Iraq, implying an occupation of part of the Iraqi territory and a direct threat to the Baghdad regime.[27] Although initiatives of that kind alarmed Schwarzkopf and Powell, during October 1990 dialogue between the White House and top military commanders intensified and evolved into a new strategic concept for the offensive option. CENTCOM's planners were instructed to put together a new battle plan based on the idea of a massive envelopment maneuver of Iraqi troops deployed in Kuwait, in order to cut them off from the rest of the Iraqi military machine and inflict them an outstanding defeat.[28] Powell and Schwarzkopf personally met in Riyadh on October 22, 1990, to revise strategy. The two generals agreed that it was imperative to make it clear to Washington politicians that an outflanking maneuver such as the one that was being incorporated in the new plan needed a massive increase of US troop deployments in the Gulf.[29] As exchanges with British military commanders were suggesting, moreover, if the US and its allies were really

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24   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 133-134, 135-139; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 416-418.
25   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 140-141; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 205
26   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 380-381. For the record, the idea of an outflanking maneuver had been publicly suggested by a military expert at the Congressional Research Service in August 1990. John M. Collins, *US and Allied Options Early in the Gulf Crisis*, CRS Report for Congress, August 20, 1990; Freedman Collection, Box 36, File 5, Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College, London, UK.
27   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 142-145.
28   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 150.
29   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 153-154; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 204-208; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 425-426.

determined to resort to force to liberate Kuwait, it would be necessary to implement additional preparations as soon as possible, since – for the political and logistic reasons Amb. Freeman listed in his October 30 cable – the window of opportunity for a military action would close by February 1991.[30]

On October 30 the President and his staff were briefed about the new military plans. The critical question was now to decide whether to continue to rely on sanctions and deterrence or to put the option of a military solution of the Gulf crisis on the table. Switching to the "offensive option" would make the threat – and arguably the use – of force the main instrument to exercise pressure on Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, but to make that policy credible and effective it would be necessary to increase massively the US military presence in the Gulf. That in turn would significantly escalate the crisis and make the prospect of war all too realistic. Many authoritative voices recommended caution, and did not rule out that sanctions might eventually bring about an acceptable settlement.[31] Indeed, in early October Gen. Powell himself had told Bush that in his view both sanctions and war might eventually succeed, but had stressed that choosing an offensive strategy would require the commitment of overwhelming force.[32] How Congress and the US public opinion would react to such an escalation was rather uncertain. Yet, as it had emerged during one of the first meetings of the NSC in the aftermath of the invasion, Bush and his cabinet were persuaded that failing to back the Administration's rhetoric with bold measures would reduce the chances of achieving an acceptable solution to the crisis and shatter American global leadership at such a critical historical moment such as the end of the Cold War. Thus, on that day Bush endorsed the "offensive option." The decision implied more than doubling US troops deployed in the Gulf (which would eventually increase to around 500,000) mainly through the transfer from Germany to Saudi Arabia of the VII Corps, mostly composed of armored units – one of the linchpins of NATO's

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30   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 385; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 426.
31   Memo, Adm. David E. Jeremiah to Richard Haass, "The Gulf Crisis: 4 Futures, 10/24/90, OA/ID CF01584-033, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
32   Smith, *George Bush's War*, pp. 183-184.

strategy to defend the West during the Cold War.[33] Although the decision had been taken, the White House preferred to delay the announcement of the offensive option. First, it was necessary to consult privately with the Saudis and the Soviets. A critical domestic policy issue was also at stake: the mid-term elections were to take place on November 6, and the Bush Administration didn't want the prospect of war in the Gulf to enter the public debate at that moment.[34]

Finally, on November 8, 1990, the President held a news conference to announce the "offensive option." The Iraqi aggression, Bush reminded his audience, could not be tolerated, especially on the eve of a new and promising era. "The world community," he added, "also must prevent an individual clearly bent on regional domination from establishing a chokehold on the world's economic lifeline." Most important, "Iraq's brutality, aggression, and violations of international law cannot be allowed to succeed. […] we and our allies," the President concluded, "cannot and will not shirk our responsibilities. The state of Kuwait must be restored, or no nation will be safe and the promising future we anticipate will indeed be jeopardized."[35]

A new diplomatic offensive and Resolution 678

As expected, the announcement of the "offensive option" added tension to the already strained domestic and international debate about how to respond to Saddam's challenge. Hence, the Bush Administration faced once again the need to defend and consolidate political support for its initiatives. The US Congress was particularly shocked by the decision, and by the modalities under which it had been reached. As Congressman Lee Hamilton (D-Ind) recalled with reporters,

I think the November 8th date was a very significant date. Up to that point the President had almost unanimous support, very close to that. Then he

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33   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 154; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 206-208. As Gen. Scwarzkopf remarked, the Bush Administration actually provided CENTCOM with more assets than requested. Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 431, 438.

34   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 208-210; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 396; Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 201.

35   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis", November 8, 1990, cit.

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announced: 'no rotation', 'additional deployment'- without consultation with the Congress; without consultation, so far as I know, with our coalition partners. And you saw a real shift at this point in the support the President had.[36]

The White House decided to give priority to the defense and consolidation of international support, and particularly to the preservation of support from the UN Security Council. After all, it was calculated that with additional explicit endorsement by the UN – namely another Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force – the Administration's policies would have continued to enjoy international legitimacy, and that in turn would have fostered domestic support as well.[37] It appeared crucial, however, that any new UN resolution would have to be obtained before the end of November 1990, that is, before the rotating chairmanship of the Security Council – with the implied power to set the Council's agenda – would be passed by the US to Yemen.[38]

By the time the "offensive option" was announced, American diplomats had already begun drafting the text of the new resolution, and Secretary of State Baker had already embarked on a new tour abroad to ensure widespread support for the Administration's new approach.[39] The Middle East was the first region Baker visited. Once again, it appeared critical to obtain Saudi cooperation in the implementation of the additional deployment of US troops. In general, moreover, it was necessary to ensure that the Saudis and other Arab leaders agreed to put their forces under US operational command in case of hostilities, and to assess possible Arab political reactions to the event that Israel might be dragged into the conflict, perhaps by a deliberate Iraqi provocation. The Saudis supported additional deployments of US troops and committed to provide financial support to cover the costs of military operations and to assist logistically other Arab forces. They also

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36   BBC1-TV *Panorama: Is War Inevitable?* January 1, 1991 reprinted in *The Gulf War aims, a series of quotes from the electronic media*, edited by David Stott, Freedman Collection, Box 38, File 7, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, UK.

37   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p 400-401; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 338; Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 207.

38   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 404; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 303-305.

39   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 305-310.

agreed to give Schwarzkopf ultimate authority over planning and command should military operations begin.[40] In Cairo, President Mubarak supported the idea of a UN Resolution authorizing the use of force and he too accepted that his country's forces would be under US operational control in the event of hostilities.[41] All Arab leaders participating in the US-led coalitions, moreover, guaranteed their continued support even in the case of Israel's involvement, on condition that it was the result of an Iraqi provocation.[42] Among other things, Baker also had an opportunity for an early approach with China's Foreign Minister Quian Qichen at Cairo airport. China was a Permanent Member of the Security Council, and its opposition to US initiatives would have dealt a critical blow to the Bush Administration's quest for international leadership. Unfortunately Quian was uneasy about the prospect of a Resolution authorizing the use of force, and Baker hinted to the fact that Chinese support might help improve the US-China bilateral relationship. "My sense," Baker reported, "is that following Quian's return to China, they will conclude it is in their interest to either support a resolution or at worst abstain."[43]

The Secretary of State continued his tour with a stop in the USSR to make sure that the Soviets would continue to support the American line at the UN. The issue of a Security Council resolution to authorize the use of force had already been the object of an exchange between President Bush and Gorbachev at the end of October. Bush had sent Gorbachev a letter arguing that "the only way to achieve our ends peacefully is, ironically, to convince Saddam that military action is imminent." The president had thus made the case for a single UN Resolution to be passed by November 1990 at latest – before the rotating chairmanship of the Council passed to Yemen – authorizing the use of force at some point around the

40   Memo, James A. Baker III to POTUS, "Gulf Trip", 11/6/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Memo, James A. Baker III to POTUS, "London Meetings", 11/10/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
41   Memo, James A. Baker, III to POTUS, "Cairo Meetings", 11/7/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
42   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 305-308.
43   Memo, James A. Baker, III to POTUS, "Cairo Meetings", 11/7/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 308-309. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 232.

beginning of 1991.[44] Baker arrived in Moscow on November 8, and after a meeting with Shevardnadze, he was received by Gorbachev. As the Secretary of State recalled, the situation was extremely delicate, and required very careful handling, since by the time he met the Soviet leaders to consult them about the offensive option, Bush was actually about to announce it publicly. In other words, Baker's task was to convince the Kremlin leadership to endorse a decision already taken in Washington D.C. Baker went as far as to brief Shevardnadze – with support from his military adviser, Gen. Howard Graves – about the military strategy of the US-led coalition, a signal of the extent to which things had changed since 1989.[45] While the Soviet Foreign Minister appeared mainly concerned about cooperation and unity with the US, Gorbachev was hesitant about the issue of using force, though the Soviet leader appeared sympathetic with the concept that if the crisis wasn't solved by the beginning of 1991, a window of opportunity may close for a long time. Gorbachev fretfully asked Baker whether Bush and the rest of the Administration were aware of the gravity of their decision, especially of the fact that if the threat of using force failed to persuade Saddam to withdraw, war would break out in the Gulf. Baker insisted that the Americans were fully aware of the implications of their decisions, and focused on securing Soviet support for a UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force. Soviet leaders seemed keen on voting one "warning" resolution and then a second actually authorizing the use of force, yet Baker argued that a single resolution would be the only guarantee of sufficient pressure on Saddam and of effective action if diplomacy failed. The quid pro quo for Moscow's support was the inclusion in the draft resolution of a commitment by the US-UN Coalition to start hostilities only after a "pause of

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44   Letter, "POTUS to Mikhail Gorbachev", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-031, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. See also: Paper, "Baker Trip", 10/31/90, OA/ID CF01584-032, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

45   As Baker reports, during the meeting the Soviets asked to what extent Iraq's SCUD missiles - which were produced in the Soviet Union – represented a threat to the Coalition. To the dismay of the Soviets, Graves replied with scant sensitivity for his audience that the missiles didn't pose much of a threat because they were obsolete. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 310; Wohlfworth, *Cold War Endgame* (University Park, Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006) p. 111. As this discussed in the next chapter, however, Saddam did find a creative way to use his SCUDs effectively.

goodwill" which would last until January, 1991, thus leaving a window of opportunity open for additional mediation efforts.[46]

Baker then continued his trip in Western Europe, and stopped in London and Paris.[47] Despite their sombre reactions to American estimates of potential casualties, both British and French leaders were supportive of the "offensive option." In London, Prime Minister Thatcher expressed her scepticism about the idea of seeking explicit UN authorization to use force, though she conceded to Baker's argument that a UN Security Council resolution would help the Bush Administration politically, especially in the US.[48] In Paris, French President Mitterrand and Foreign Minister Dumas were supportive of the uncompromising stance toward the issue of Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, but, contrary to the British, stated that from their point of view an explicit UN Security Council resolution was needed to ensure political support for military action.[49]

The Bush Administration was determined to seize any opportunity to further its goal of strengthening the cohesion of the multinational coalition it had been assembling, and a CSCE summit in Paris in mid-November 1990 provided another important pit stop in the race to a new UN resolution. Saddam too, however, was determined to fight his battle for international public opinion, and didn't stand still. On November 18, 1990 – on the eve of the CSCE meeting – the Baghdad regime announced its decision to free all hostages: from Christmas 1990 onward, within the space of three months, all foreign nationals would be allowed to leave Iraq. Saddam, American and allied leaders acknowledged, had stricken another propaganda coup, but they felt it was necessary to resist that kind of pressure. If the three months time frame contained in the Iraqi proposal had been accepted, it would have been impossible to resort to force before Spring 1991. That in turn

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46   Cable, "Shevardnadze Letter to Secretary Baker on Use of Force Reslution", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, USDEL Secretary in USSR to SECSTATE, "Memorandum for POTUS: Moscow, November 8", 11/9/90, CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 310-313.
47   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 313-315.
48   Memo, James A. Baker III to POTUS, "London Meetings", 11/10/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
49   Memo, James A. Baker III to POTUS, "Paris Meetings", 11/10/90, CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

would have meant letting the window of opportunity for military action close and giving Saddam more time to pursue his agenda at the expenses of the Coalition's objectives.[50]

As Bush recalls, at the Paris Conference not all Western European leaders appeared ready to support military action in the Gulf. The new leaders of the former Warsaw Pact countries, in contrast, were largely supportive of Washington's line. The most uneasy, Bush recalls, were the Germans. After all, their country had been actually unified only in September, and public opinion was significantly pacifist. After a recent public statement by Kohl making the case for dialogue, moreover, the Baghdad regime had promised to free all German hostages on short notice. In general, however, Bush's impression was that Europeans were feeling safe under a strong American leadership.[51] During the Conference the President also had an opportunity for an exchange with Gorbachev. The two leaders definitely agreed on the idea of a single UN Security Council resolution containing an ultimatum for Iraq: the Baghdad regime would have to comply with all the Council's relevant resolutions before mid-January 1991, or there would be war. Gorbachev, however, insisted that the agreement was not made public. The Soviet Union, Bush reflected, had a large Muslim population, and the prospect of war could further weaken Gorbachev's domestic position. The Soviet leader, moreover, was waiting for the results of a new initiative attempted by his Middle East envoy Yevgeny Primakov, who had proposed the Baghdad regime to withdraw from Kuwait in return for an arrangement to guarantee Iraq easier access to the Persian Gulf. Bush acquiesced to Gorbachev's requests, as after all Baker and Shevardnadze were indeed working on the UN Resolution Washington needed.[52]

After the end of the Paris Conference, Bush left for a personal political and diplomatic initiative and flew to the Gulf region. He touched ground in Saudi Arabia, and he celebrated Thanksgiving Day with American troops. On November 21, 1990, the President met the exiled Emir of Kuwait, who had several important

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50   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 239-240; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 406.
51   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 407-408.
52   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 408-409; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 231-232.

questions to pose. "What if he [Saddam Hussein] decides to pull out before military action," the Emir asked, "will matters end at that point? Who would feel safe if he has all his weapons intact given his past behavior?". As Bush replied cautiously: "I'm convinced there has to be some kind of international safeguards should Saddam unilaterally pull out. […] I don't think that any of the countries putting sanctions on Iraq would think the security and stability of the Persian Gulf would be assured simply by returning to the status quo ante." Then the President added an additional concern: "There is a growing awareness that he's trying to get a nuclear bomb capability; in fact, this is one of the things that causes most of the concern in the US."[53] During the night, Bush and Baker also had a meeting with King Fahd. Bush expressed determination not to compromise or give Saddam a "face-saver", but was also concerned that sanctions would not work and time was on Saddam's side, and told the King about his effort to have a new UN Security Council resolution authorizing the use of "all means necessary to get Saddam comply."[54] "If the UN effort fails," he added, "we're still prepared to proceed on Article 51 basis, which may require a new request from the Amir." There was "One additional point" Bush wanted to make: "The status quo ante is not satisfactory, because, as we have seen, Saddam's chemical, biological and nuclear efforts make it clear that the status quo ante is not good enough. We need safeguards for the future."[55]

Military matters were another critical issue by the time Bush visited Saudi Arabia. Meetings with the Saudis suggested that the Arab members of the Coalition were unwilling to take part in offensive operations beyond the territory of Kuwait, a condition that posed important political constraints on how to organize the outflanking maneuver from Western Iraq CENTCOM was planning to implement.[56] By around the same time, incidentally, the British were calling to have their armored units included in the contingent tasked to perform the envelopment from the West. London appeared to want to take part in what was

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53   Minutes, "Bilateral Meeting with the Amir of Kuwait, November 21, 1990, 8:40-9:25 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
54   "I am concerned over the difficulty of holding this coalition together over time," Bush remarked.
55   Minutes, "Bilateral Meeting with King Fahd, November 21-22, 1990, 11:05 pm-12:57 am", OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
56   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 410-411.

expected to be center stage in the event of a war.[57] On November 22 Bush met Gen. Schwarzkopf for a briefing on the state of military preparations. Schwarzkopf had been revising plans with his staff, and by the time he met the President the battle plan for the ground war was virtually ready. The US Marines with Arab forces would engage frontally Iraqi troops in Southern Kuwait, with the mission of tying down the enemy forces. Meanwhile, the US VII and XVIII Corps, joined by British and French forces, would perform a massive outflanking maneuver through South-Western Iraq – the "left hook" – with the objective of encircling the Iraqi troops deployed in Kuwait and strike at them from behind. That plan would allow the coalition to deal a decisive blow at Baghdad's forces, especially the Republican Guard and armored units, and thus to liberate Kuwait while minimizing US and allied casualties.[58] As Bush recalls, Schwarzkopf's briefing contributed to persuade him that, contrary to the numerous alarmed and bleak assessments that were filling the public debate, a rapid and decisive victory would be at hand.[59]

The President continued his tour with a stop in Cairo to meet a supportive Mubarak and then to Geneva, were he was to have an important meeting with Syria's President Hafez Assad, America's newfound but uneasy ally. When they met, on November 23, the two leaders talked long about the Gulf crisis and conflict in the Middle East in general "There is no evidence that sanctions will cause him to turn 180 degrees and change course and get out." Bush observed. The American President signaled his concern about Saddam's unconventional weapons program, and his growing belief that a return to the status quo ante may fail to bring about an acceptable settlement in the Gulf. At any rate, Bush told his counterpart, "I am more determined than ever that Saddam Hussein must go out, and I hope it is peaceful. If not, force will be used." Bush also took care to signal Assad his position on the other critical issues concerning the Middle East, particularly the Arab-Israeli conflict, in which Syria had an important stake. "We tried to avoid

57   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 347-348. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 165-168; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 449. As Freedman and Karsh report, however, the British Commander, Gen. Peter de la Billière, was also concerned that the Marines would conduct their offensive with a daring posture that ill-fitted the British armored units.
58   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 442-444; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 153-158.
59   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 412.

linkage of the two questions," Bush said, "But I am always optimistic, and I hope that our cooperation in the Gulf will help us to move to make progress toward a lasting settlement based on UNSC Resolutions 242 and 338." Assad seemed indeed far more concerned about the Arab-Israeli conflict than the Gulf crisis, and persuaded that Israel had expansionist aims. As the Syrian President explained to Bush "It is true that the Gulf crisis is very important but no matter how significant it is, it is less dangerous than the Israelis coming and occupying our land." Concerning the Gulf, however, Assad agreed that no reward should be conceded to Saddam for his aggression, but when asked whether Syrian forces would participate in an offensive across Kuwait "to finish off their (Iraqi) armor," Assad proved very reluctant and ambiguous, tough he suggested that Syrian forces could perform some form of peacekeeping duties in the aftermath of Iraq's withdrawal.[60]

On November 24, 1990, the draft resolution finally began circulating within the UN Security Council. Negotiations to have such a resolution approved were by no means easy and the Administration, especially Secretary of State Baker, paid attention to any single member of the Council. Britain and France were on board, and the Soviets too had expressed their commitment to vote the resolution. China, however, was quite another matter. After an exchange with Foreign Minister Quian on November 18, Baker was aware that, although it was afraid of diplomatic isolation, China was by no means eager to vote a Resolution authorizing the US to wage war. It was judged unlikely that China would veto, but since Beijing did have that power within the Security Council, Baker decided to use every asset available to American diplomacy to secure China's support. On November 27, 1990 the Secretary of State instructed the US embassy in Beijing to deliver a Presidential letter to Chinese leaders. The letter argued that "China and the United States, as major powers and permanent members of the UN security Council, bear special responsibility for deterring aggression and establishing an environment in which the United Nations plays a decisive role in ensuring peace and security." It was suggested, moreover, that "The upcoming security Council vote this week, and Foreign Minister Quian's subsequent visit to Washington, give us a decisive

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60   Memcon, "President's Meeting with President Hafez Assad of Syria, November 23, 1990, 7:20-9:25 pm", OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

opportunity to achieve a significant advance in our bilateral relation." The cable explained the Embassy staff that "not stated in the letter but implicit in it is that the question of a meeting with the President depends on how the Chinese vote on the resolution."[61] Although, as Baker recalls, he had ensured Quian that a meeting would be held even if China abstained, the Secretary's instructions suggest that the Americans too were determined to use ambiguity as an incentive for the Chinese not to obstruct them.[62] In order to convince the other, non-permanent members of the Council, American diplomats did not shy away from playing the card of the appeal the US now exercised as the only remaining superpower, and in contacts with representatives of the smaller Council members they repeatedly hinted to the idea that a supportive vote on the Gulf crisis could improve their bilateral relations with the US in the long term.[63] The Americans tried hard to win support even from the Council renegades, Cuba and especially Yemen. Baker personally met Yemeni President Saleh, Soviet help was sought, and a Presidential letter was issued to obtain Yemen's vote and achieve the broadest possible support for the US approach.[64]

On November 28, the Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 677, which condemned Iraq's policies intended to alter the demographic composition of Kuwait.[65] On the same day Baker met Shevardnadze, who warned his American counterpart that the Baghdad regime had signaled to the Soviets its intention to attack Israel in the event of hostilities against Iraq.66 Baker and Shevardnadze also settled the last standing difference between the Washington and Moscow concerning the UN resolution – the actual deadline for the ultimatum to expire. The Americans had proposed early January 1991, while the Soviets were pressing for

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61   Cable, Secretary of State to American Embassy Beijing, "Presidential Letter to Chinese Leaders", 11/27/90, OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
62   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 316.
63   Edward P. Haley, *Strategies of Dominance* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), p. 45.
64   Cable, USDEL Saudi Arabia to American Embassy Moscow, "Message to Soviet Foreign Minister Regarding Yemen", 11/22/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, "Letter from POTUS to President Saleh", 11/3/90, OA/ID CF01584-029, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library
65   UN Security Council, Resolution 677, November 28, 1990, http://www.un.org/Docs/scres/1990/scres90.htm .
66   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 316.

late January. A compromise was reached, after an apparently illuminating suggestion by French President Mitterrand, by agreeing on January 15, 1991.[67]

On November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council finally convened to discuss and vote the critical resolution on the use of force. "Our aim today," Baker told solemnly at the plenary session, "is to convince Saddam Hussein that the just, humane demands of this Council and the international community cannot be ignored[…] We should put the choice to Saddam Hussein in unmistakable terms."[68] Baker's rhetoric was challenged by the Yemeni representative, but the vote confirmed that the Council largely endorsed the American approach.[69] Twelve of the fifteen members of the Council voted for the US-sponsored resolution; two - Cuba and Yemen – opposed it; and China abstained, de facto allowing it to pass.[70] Resolution 678 thus allowed the use – after a "pause of goodwill" expiring on January 15, 1991 – of "all necessary means to uphold and implement resolution 660 (1990) and all subsequent relevant resolutions and to restore international peace and security in the area."[71] The language of the resolution not only endorsed the objective of restoring Kuwait's sovereignty and internationally recognized Government, but also included a more general and less specific goal of restoring "international peace and security", which allowed significant freedom of maneuver in devising a strategy to solve the problem of Kuwait. Satisfied with the result of the vote, Baker told his audience:

We can use the end of the Cold War to get beyond the pattern of settling conflicts by force, or we can slip back into ever more savage regional conflicts in which might alone is right […] Simply put it, it is a choice between right and wrong.[72]

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67   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 321; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 414.
68   James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 326.
69   James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 326-327.
70   Although it didn't obstruct the implementation of the US-supported line, Baker recalls having been particularly disappointed by the Chinese abstention. Appearently, after the vote he wrote down the following note: "China can't go for military means – except in case of traffic jams – like the one in Tiananmen Square in June of 1989"; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 327.
71   UN Security Council, Resolution 678, November 29, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/28/IMG/NR057528.pdf?OpenElement .
72   James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy…,* cit., pp. 327-328.

As Bush and Baker recall, Resolution 678 represented a critical step towards American success in responding to the Gulf crisis. With the vote of November 29, 1990, both the military and political elements of the Bush Administration's strategy had been established, and, besides confirming American global leadership, the resolution also played an important role in influencing the domestic debate on the crisis.[73] The UN vote boosted the Administration, but a number of critical steps were still waiting to be taken.

The last political and diplomatic battles

The passage of Resolution 678 represented another fundamental turning point in the Gulf crisis, allowing the US to lead a multinational military effort with a broad mandate to solve the problem of Kuwait. However, the President and his staff still felt that their policy was under pressure on several fronts. On the domestic level, the White House's approach was facing strong criticism in Congress, especially from influential Democrats such as Sen. Sam Nunn, though a number of Republican Congressmen too expressed criticism about the "offensive option."[74] The "pause of goodwill" and the harsh Congressional debate, moreover, raised the danger that developments outside the control of the Presidency - such as a new mediation or a refusal to endorse military action by Capitol Hill - might preclude the fulfillment of the "common objectives" that had been set by the Administration and its main Coalition partners. In order to offset these risks, and to re-establish a leading position over both the domestic and diplomatic dimensions of the crisis, on November 30 the President decided to launch an "extra-mile" initiative, and to propose a US-Iraq meeting before the January 15 deadline expired. As Baker recalls, a similar idea had been discussed among the permanent members of the Security Council by the time of the debate about resolution 678, and the idea had

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73   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 328; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 415.
74   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 226-227, 290-294; Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 204.

supporters in Washington as well.[75] The initiative was perceived to be worth-taking from a domestic point of view, since many of the Administration's critics were arguing that the White House's approach was actually making the prospect of war a self-fulfilling prophecy. Thus, Bush felt that with such a proposal it would be possible to demonstrate that the responsibility for the escalation lied on Saddam's criminal behavior, not on the Administration's steadfast posture.[76] The announcement of the "extra-mile" initiative indeed contributed to a rise in public opinion support for the President.[77] The proposal, however, was taken without consultation with Washington's main partners, and was launched in a somewhat awkward way, since its lack of a specific set of dates actually left Saddam in a position to propose a meeting very close to the end of the "pause of goodwill", which may have rendered the deadline meaningless. Some of the closes allies of the US, and especially the Saudis, questioned the wisdom of such an initiative, arguing that Saddam would interpret it as evidence of American lack of gut.[78] On December 3, 1990, the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Syria even felt the need to issue a joint communiqué stating their willingness not to compromise with Saddam.[79]

The Iraqi dictator, on his part, didn't miss the opportunity to exploit Washington's clumsy move. On December 6, 1990, the Baghdad regime announced the immediate release of all foreign hostages – who after all had proved not to be a valuable strategic or propaganda asset in Saddam's hands.[80] Then, the Iraqi government began speculating about dates, and exploiting the confusion added by a proposal by the European Community to meet the Iraqis after the Americans.[81] Gorbachev too, always anxious to avoid a war between the US and one of Moscow's few Middle Eastern partners, joined the fray. As the Soviet leader explained in a message to Bush on December 7, he did support Resolution 678 and

75   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 347-349.
76   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 419; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 234-237; Smith, *George Bush's War.*, p. 204.
77   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 419-421.
78   Woodward, *The Commanders,* p. 336. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 419.
79   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 240-243.
80   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 238-240. As Freedman and Karsh report, the decision was taken after consultation with King Hussein of Jordan and Yasser Arafat, the few leaders who were still entertaining friendly relations with the Iraqi dictator.
81   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 243.

the US approach, but he also insisted that the main objective of the resolution was to foster a peaceful settlement based on a return to the status quo ante and once again made the case for direct talks between the Permanent Five members of the Security Council and Iraq, and for a Middle East Conference.[82] By mid-December 1990 the Bush Administration was still stuck in a stalemate on the issue, but then it was Saddam himself that helped the White House to get out of the corner. On December 15, the dictator threatened to reject the "extra-mile" initiative, and the next day he declared that he would seriously negotiate on Kuwait only after the solution of the Palestinian problem. As a result the Europeans withdrew their offer for talks and a new opportunity for Washington to seize the initiative was created.[83]

In the mean-time, the Bush Administration also had to fend off domestic challenges to its approach to the Gulf crisis. Throughout December 1990 the domestic debate was animated by both Congressional testimonies and the media. Congressmen, in general, agreed that under the Constitution the President could not launch major military operations against Iraq without Congressional authorization.[84] Bush and his closest advisors, especially Cheney and Scowcroft, were of a rather different opinion, yet a consensus developed within the Cabinet that, despite the expectation that a nay from Capitol Hill would jeopardize the entire Administration's policy, it was necessary to seek an explicit Congressional vote.[85] Congressional endorsement would reinforce the UN endorsement and give the White House a precious free hand in solving the crisis militarily and on its own terms. It would, moreover, shield the President from impeachment should military operations turn bad.

The 1990 lame duck session of Congress was therefore quite a busy one, with a long list of testimonies – by members of the Administration, experts, and former policy-makers – intended to prepare Senators and Representatives for a vote on the crisis. Authoritative former officials , such as former Chairman of the Joint Chief

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82   The copy of the transcript of the letter conserved in the Bush Library features, on the side of the passage concerning the return to the status quo ante, an hand-written note (probably by Richard Haass) that reads: "not exactly – have we talked w/ the Sovs yet on containing SH?". Letter, M. Gorbachev to POTUS, "[Persian Gulf Crisis Settlement]", 12/7/90, OA/ID CF01584-022, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
83   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 243-247.
84   Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 204
85   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 416.

of Staff Adm. Crowe and Gen. William Odom, maintained before Congress that sanctions still had a chance to succeed.[86] Their view was substantially echoed by former Defense Secretaries Robert McNamara, Harold Brown, James Schlesinger and Caspar Weinberger, who, though supportive of the "offensive option," made the case for giving sanctions more time to work.[87] Other influential conservative thinkers and former officials – such as Donald Rumsfeld, Frank Carlucci, Richard Perle, Jane Kirkpatrick, Melvin Laird, and Henry Kissinger – did support the Bush Administration's approach.[88]

Opposition to the Administration's policy remained high among Congressmen, especially among the Democrats. On December 3, 1990, Cheney and Powell testified before Congress. Cheney, one of the most hawkish members in the Administration, expressed his view that only military action would ensure the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Continuing to rely on sanctions, he added, would inflict great damage to the world economy, weaken the unity of the US-UN coalition, and allow the Iraqis to further entrench in Kuwait. Cheney maintained, moreover, that the Administration did have constitutional authority to use force in the Gulf. Powell's testimony focused on the military aspects of the Administration's approach. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff rebutted the widespread opinion that it was too risky to employ ground troops in the Gulf, and that airpower alone could compel an Iraqi withdrawal. "Such strategies are designed to hope to win," Powell remarked, "they are not designed to win." No matter how effective airpower was, he maintained, Saddam would remain in a position to decide whether the damage Iraq was suffering was enough for him to order withdraw. What was needed for the use of force to be credible and effective, Powell argued, was an overwhelming and multidimensional force. That was the only way for the US and its allies to be sure that, should war come, they would

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86   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed...* cit., pp. 417-418; ; Adm. William J. Crowe, Jr., "Give Sanctions a Chance (Testimony Before the Senate Armed Services Committee, November 28, 1990), in Sifri and Cerf, *The Gulf War Reader*, pp. 234-237.
87   Michael Gordon, "Ex-Defense Secretaries Advise Patience In The Gulf", in *New York Times*, December 3, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/03/world/mideast-tensions-ex-defense-secretaries-advise-patience-in-gulf.html .
88   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 426; Henry A. Kissinger, "How to Cut Iraq Down to Size" (Testimony Before the Senate Armed Service Committee, November 28, 1990), Micah Sifri, Michael Cerf (eds.), *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 238-242.

retain the strategic initiative and be capable of fighting on their own terms.[89] Sen. Sam Nunn, one of the harshest critics of the Administration, expressed his strong skepticism about the Bush approach:

> Nunn: If we have a war, we are never going to know whether they [sanctions] would have worked, aren't we?
>
> Powell: Well…
>
> Nunn: ... That's the major point here, I mean, the way you find out whether sanctions work or not is to give them enough time to work.[90]

On December 5, 1990, Baker testified before Congress too. In the previous days the Secretary of State had publicly made the case against sanctions on the controversial ground that they would in time hit the economy and reduce living standards in the US, a remark that had fed those who criticized the Administration's approach to the crisis as "blood for oil." In his congressional testimony, Baker took care to readjust his position, and told Congressmen that it was unthinkable that after the peaceful end of the Cold War and on the eve of a new era the US could tolerate tyrants to perpetrate aggression unpunished.[91]

Confrontation between the Administration and its opponents, within and without Congress, continued throughout December 1990. That month a Congressional delegation was assembled for a trip to the Middle East to clarify the chances to avoid military confrontation. The White House felt the need to issue a presidential letter to Egypt's President and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to suggests arguments against sanctions such as Saddam's unpredictability and bad faith, the policy of dismemberment of Kuwait perpetrated by the Baghdad regime. The White House

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89   Michael Gordon, "Cheney sees need to act militarily against the Iraqis", *New York Times*, December 4, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/04/world/mideast-tensions-cheney-sees-need-to-act-militarily-against-the-iraqis.html ; "Mideast Tensions; Excerpts from Gulf Testimony" *New York Times*, December 4, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/04/world/mideast-tensions-excerpts-from-gulf-testimony.html .

90   BBC-2 TV Nightnews, December 3, 1990, reprinted in *The Gulf War aims, a series of quotes from the electronic media*, edited by David Stott, p. 22, Freedman Collection, Box 38, File 7, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, UK..

91   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 335-337, 340.

also suggested to stress the multinational dimension of the US-led coalition and the foreign military and political support it was receiving.[92]

By that time the Administration was extremely concerned to have its narrative of the crisis and American response prevail. As a NSC memorandum concerning guidance for the relations with the press suggested, it was necessary to maintain a public relations posture emphasizing the idea that only an Iraqi unconditional withdrawal would create the conditions for a peaceful solution. Yet it appeared equally important to acknowledge that the Administration would not be satisfied with a return to the status quo ante, and that the international effort should also address the problem of Saddam's WMDs and the regional threat posed by Iraq.[93] On December 17, 1990, Bush met the Ambassadors of the 27 countries participating in the multinational coalition, a "living proof that the international coalition arrayed against Saddam's aggression remains deep and wide," as the President remarked in a press conference on the same day.[94] The meeting, as well as a recent resolution by the UN General Assembly condemning the invasion, Bush later explained, were a demonstration that it was not "Saddam Hussein and the Arab world against the United States" but rather "Saddam Hussein against the rest of the world."[95] The Iraqi dictator was indeed continuing to show defiance. In an diplomatic exchange with the Americans, the Baghdad Government depicted the crisis as the result of American aggression and the UN resolutions against Iraq as the result of American dominance within the Security Council and Washington's double standards approach to international disputes. There appeared to be no intention, on the part of Saddam to back down on American and UN-endorsed terms.[96] From the point of view of the US Embassy in Baghdad, however, the

92 Cable, "[Presidential Letters for King Fahd and President Mubarak]", 12/14/90, OA/ID CF01584-022, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
93 Memorandum for Eliane M. Mitsler, Roman Popadiuk, "guidance", 14-Dec-1990, OA/ID CF01584-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
94 "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session With Reporters Following Discussions With Allies on the Persian Gulf Crisis", December 17, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2561&year=1990&month=12 .
95 George H.W. Bush, "The President's News Conference With Regional Reporters", December 18, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2563&year=1990&month=12 .
96 Cable, AmEmbassy Baghdad to SECSTATE, "Iraqi Aide Memoire", 12/18/90, OA/ID

attitude of the Baghdad regime was more mixed. As Chargé d'Affaires Wilson reported, "while Iraq is still actively looking for a way out of this mess, the GOI [Government of Iraq] is of the belief that we are bluffing." From Baghdad, Wilson maintained that Saddam was looking for "fig leaves [...] to get out of this peacefully," and that the US could provide some by avoiding personal attacks on Saddam, by stating that if he withdrew, the Iraqi Army would remain intact, and by confirming the US commitment to a Middle East peace conference.[97]

In Washington, at any rate, the Administration's uncompromising public stance was strengthened by a growing support for a strong offensive posture. On December 19, 1990 an NSC memorandum, "Three Scenarios to End the Gulf Crisis," analyzed the options available to the Administration. The first scenario – "Threaten War and Fight if Necessary" – described a strategy based on aggressive reliance on military means within a multinational political and diplomatic framework. A "quick, devastating, and decisive victory", the paper maintained, could be portrayed as the first victory of the new post-war world order, and could create the political and diplomatic conditions for the pursuit of "a new Iraqi democratic government" and a "new regional security apparatus." The other two alternative scenarios – "Threaten War; Avoid hostilities" and "Downplay War; Rely on Sanctions" – the memorandum maintained would leave open the critical problems of maintaining the unity of the coalition and assessing the threat from Iraq's unconventional weapons.[98] None of the three options was explicitly recommended, although it seems quite clear that one of them was described in more appealing terms than the other two. Another NSC memorandum concerning "Responses to Iraqi withdrawal Proposals" suggested that a partial withdrawal would pose two critical challenges to the US-led coalition – namely it would still be necessary for the US and its allies to make it difficult "for Iraq to fight in the Kuwait Theater of Operations […] if it changes its mind;" and to reassert "Kuwaiti

CF01584-023, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

97   Cable, AmEmbassy Baghdad to SECSTATE, "Future Moves on the Gulf Crisis", 12/21/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

98   Memorandum, "Three Scenarios to End the Gulf Crisis", 12/19/90, OA/ID CF01584-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

control over the instruments and symbols of power and control in Kuwait as quickly as possible."[99] Another paper further speculated on the potential implications of different forms of Iraqi withdrawal prior to the January 15, 1991, deadline. By late December 1990 it was estimated that it would be almost impossible for Iraq to complete a full withdrawal before the deadline. In case of Baghdad's announcement of such an action, from the American point of view, it would be critical to succeed in the daunting task of keeping international pressure on Saddam to ensure the withdrawal. The most dangerous scenario however, was one of partial withdrawal, especially one completed before the January 15 deadline. It was estimated that in that case maintaining international pressure on Saddam would become extremely hard, and that the dictator might succeed to get away unpunished and partially rewarded for his aggression.[100] Expectations about the chances of an acceptable political solution were in sum low, while the potential benefits of a military solution appeared incrisisng.

It was a delicate moment for the Administration in terms of coalition politics too. On December 20, 1990, news broke out that Soviet Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, a reliable US supporter at the Kremlin, had resigned.[101] The following day, Bush met the new British Prime Minister, John Major. Margaret Thatcher, a truly strong-willed supporter of the uncompromising line, had been forced to resign in late November, but Major proved as supportive of the White House approach as his predecessor. During a telephone conversation, he expressed to Bush his conviction that "Saddam Hussein has to go," and the President replied that "If Saddam Hussein withdraws, that's not the end of it."[102] Although – as one of Schwarzkopf's senior advisers inadvertently told reporters – CENTCOM expected to complete preparations for the ground offensive later than mid-January 1991, when Cheney and Powell met the Commander on December 19, 1990, it was

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99   Memo, "Responses to Iraqi withdrawal proposals", 12/24/90, OA/ID CF01584-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

100   Working Paper, "Responding to Saddam's Pre-January 15 Initiatives", 12/31/90, OA/ID CF01584-16, , Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

101   As he resigned, Shevardnadze warned that a coup agaings Gorbachev was brewing. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 375; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 430-431.

102   Telcon "Telephone Conversation with PM John Major of Great Britain, December 21, 1990", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-023, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

judged possible to begin the air campaign in coincidence with the UN deadline.[103] Thus, as Bush recalls, by the time he met Major, he was able to inform the Prime Minister that offensive military operations were scheduled to start at 4:00 in the morning of January 16, 1991.[104]

By the time the new Congress convened, on January 3, 1991, a number of additional mediations had been attempted by international leaders, to no avail. The Iraqi leadership had publicly reacted to the passage of resolution 678 by confirming its defiant attitude. The White House, however, decided to launch its own last-minute proposal for a direct talk with the Iraqi leadership, and publicly announced Secretary Baker's readiness to meet Iraq's Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz on January 9. The President and his staff judged that such an initiative could influence a Congressional vote as well as European Community leaders, who were about to meet in order to agree on a common position on the crisis. As Bush recalls, moreover, an additional reason to make the proposal was his conviction that Saddam was indeed surrounded by lackeys and his stance was driven by the fact that he had lost contact with reality. From this point of view, the President felt it was important to give the Iraqis a clear warning about what was going to happen.[105]

On the following day the Iraqis accepted the offer, and it was eventually agreed that the meeting would take place in Geneva, Switzerland, on January 9, 1991. On January 5, Bush met the UN Secretary General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, who in turn had just met the Iraqi Ambassador to the UN. The President once again stressed how important it was that the UN demands were met in full – the very credibility of the Organization's as a tool for international security in the post-Cold War era was at stake, and from this standpoint no compromise was possible.[106] As Perez recalls, Bush expressed concern that Saddam may indeed decide to undertake a partial withdrawal, which would weaken the Coalition's resolve and thus make it

103 Smith, *George Bush's War*, p. 233; Eric Schmitt, "Forces not ready for January war, US General says", in *New York Times*, December 20, 1990, http://www.nytimes.com/1990/12/20/world/standoff-in-the-gulf-forces-not-ready-for-january-war-us-general-says.html; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 458-460.
104 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 429-430.
105 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 254-255; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 436-437. As examined below, Baker did convey a clear message about what the US was determined to achieve, and what the Bush Administration expected Saddam *not* to do.
106 Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 440.

more difficult to uphold the UN demands. The President appeared pessimistic about the idea that the meeting could really produce a solution by which Saddam pulled out without conditions. The Secretary General recalls having left the meeting with the impression that "the die had been cast."[107]

Baker too embarked on another tour of the major European partners of the US before reaching Geneva. On January 8, 1990 he met Mitterrand in Paris. The Secretary of State showed the French President a copy of a letter from Bush he'd been instructed to deliver Aziz. According to Baker, Mitterrand suggested some changes to the language of the message which were then endorsed by the White House.[108]

On January 9, finally, Baker and Aziz met. The meeting lasted around six hours, Baker was assisted by Undersecretary of State Robert Kimmit, Director of Policy Planning Staff Dennis Ross, and Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs John Kelly; Aziz was joined by Saddam's relative and personal interpreter, Amb. Barman al-Tikriti.[109] According to a report prepared by Baker in the aftermath, Aziz devoted a large part of his time to considerations concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict and to a recollection of events before August 2, 1990: "economic strangulation" against Iraq; Kuwait's "economic aggression;" and an alleged US media campaign to portray the Baghdad regime in negative terms. (On this point Baker apparently retorted that considering Iraq's behavior on and after August 2, "those descriptions were close to the mark.) Aziz also warned that "in the event of war all countries in the region will be involved including Israel." Baker's basic message was that "Iraq must either comply with the will of the international community and withdraw peacefully from Kuwait or be expelled by force."[110] The

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107 Javier Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace. A Secretary General's Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), pp. 255-260.
108 According to Baker, Mitterrand objected that the phrase "Iraq will escape destruction" – which was to be associated with the perspective of an Iraqi unconditional withdrawal – should be changed with "The Iraqi military establishment will escape destruction" – which was judged to leave less room for Saddam to speculate that the whole Coalition's approach was a conspiracy against Iraq. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 370-371; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 255.
109 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 253-260.
110 Cable, SECSTATE to Special Embassy Program, "Debrief of the Secretary's Meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister, January 9, 1991, in Geneva", 1/11/91, OA/ID CF0184-012, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

implementation of the "extra-mile" initiative provided among other things an opportunity for the Administration to state its vision of what should be the outcome of the crisis. During the meeting Baker gave Aziz a letter from President Bush to Saddam Hussein. The message stated that "anything less than full compliance with UN Security Council resolution 678 and its predecessors is unacceptable". If Saddam fully complied with UN demands, Iraq would "gain the opportunity to rejoin the international community", and the Iraqi military would "escape destruction". The letter contained a clear warning of what may ignite a dramatic escalation of war aims on the US side: "the United States will not tolerate the use of chemical and biological weapons or the destruction of Kuwait's oil fields and installations. Further, you will be held directly responsible for terrorist actions against any member of the coalition."[111] Considering the state of military preparations and the assumptions among coalition leaders about the required long term outcomes of the conflict, the Administration's reminder that full Iraqi compliance would allow the Baghdad regime to avoid war was an important offer, and had it been seized by Saddam, it may have radically changed the situation, and probably left the coalition in a rather awkward situation.[112] By the way, as Baker reported, though the talks proceeded "in a professional manner" and both sides did listen to one another, Aziz "gave no indications […] of any flexibility or readiness to comply with relevant UNSC resolutions," and refused even to take the letter. Such a language, the Iraqi Foreign Minister retorted amounted to an insult to an head of state, though, as the US delegation later noted, he did underline some passages.[113] If, as Saddam recalled, what the Iraqi leadership was looking for at

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111 George Bush, "Letter to Saddam" (January 9, 1991), Sifri and Cerf , *The Gulf War Reader*, pp. 178-179.

112   As Secretary of State Baker noted in a message to foreign leaders announcing the beginning of hostilities "Iraq had been assured that, it withdrew peacefully: (1) it would not be attacked; (2) it could negotiate a peaceful resolution of its differences with Kuwait after withdrawal as stated in UNSC Resolution 660; (3) economic sanctions not related to the military establishment would be quickly reviewed; (4) the U.S. sought no permanent ground presence in the region; and (5) the U.S. would continue t seek peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli dispute." Cable: SECSTATE to posts and embassies, "Commencement of Hostilities", 1/16/91, OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

113   Cable, SECSTATE to Special Embassy Program, "Debrief of the Secretary's Meeting with Iraqi Foreign Minister, January 9, 1991, in Geneva", cit.; According to Baker, Aziz underlined the following passages: "calamity for the people of Iraq"; "[a far greater tragedy] for you and your country"; "you will be held direct responsible for terrorist actions." Baker with De Frank,

Geneva was indeed a format that allowed Iraq to withdraw without portraying it as "defeated," Aziz failed to achieve that result.[114] As soon as the two top diplomats emerged from their Geneva meeting and gave their first impressions, it became clear that a military solution would be the only way out of the Gulf crisis.

On the following day, in Washington, Congress began the debate about whether to authorize the use of force in the Gulf. Although the Baker-Aziz meeting had had a profound impact on the orientations of Congressmen, there was intense debate in both houses for the following two days. On January 12, 1991, a Congressional resolution authorizing the use of force was finally passed - though by very narrow majorities, especially in the Senate.[115] No more legal or political obstacles now stood between the Bush Administration and the prospect of war in the Gulf.[116]

UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar made a last attempt to explore whatever remaining chance there was to avoid the war. He announced his willingness to travel to Iraq and meet Saddam in the very aftermath of the failed meeting between Baker and Aziz, and landed in Baghdad on January 12, in coincidence with the Congressional vote in Washington, but to his surprise the Iraqi leadership appeared in no hurry to meet him. Perez had an exchange of views with Aziz late that afternoon, and on the following morning it was former Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega and Yasser Arafat who took care of him.[117] Interestingly, as Perez recalls, Arafat suggested that Saddam was indeed interested in avoiding war. What was needed, the Palestinian leader explained, was a linkage between Iraq's withdrawal and a solution to the Palestinian problem that would save face both for Saddam and Bush.[118] The Secretary General was finally Summoned by Saddam in the late afternoon. It was clear that there were preciously few chances to achieve a breakthrough. As Perez recalls:

The Politics of Diplomacy, p. 363.

114   National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 12, March 5, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/13.pdf .

115   "Authorization for Use of Military Force" (Joint Congressional Resolution of January 12, 1991), Micah Sifri, Michael Cerf (eds.), *The Gulf War Reader*, pp. 287-289.;Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 294.

116   As President Bush recalls, "I felt the heavy weight that I might be faced with impeachment lifted from my shoulders as I heard the results". Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 446.

117   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 268-270; Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace,* pp. 261-263.

118   Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace,* p. 262.

Knowing that I could offer no compromise on the explicit provisions of the operative Security Council resolutions, I put together a package that was simply a reworking of the points that Secretary Baker had made to Tariq Aziz. […] The question was whether it would be more acceptable as a UN proposal, presented in my language.[119]

Saddam, however, was unwilling to accept any solution based on the principle that Iraq should withdraw without condition. He appeared unprepared to face the likely domestic implications of such a decision.[120] In the end, no breakthrough was achieved. As the Secretary General grimly reported to the Security Council back in New York on January 14, "it must sadly be concluded that a most ominous situation exists at present." The French delegation tried to circulate a draft declaration calling for Iraq's withdrawal in return for a peacekeeping mission and a Middle East peace conference, but since the proposal fell short of acknowledging the need to uphold all Security Council resolutions, it received no following.[121] On the same day, the EC Foreign Ministers issued a joint declaration acknowledging that all attempts to reach an acceptable peaceful solution to the crisis had been exhausted. Then, on January 15 and 16, the British and French Parliaments authorized their Governments to use force.[122]

On the day following the Congressional vote, the President and his staff met to review the guidelines concerning the incoming military campaign. The air campaign was to start on January 17 at 3:00 am, Gulf time. (7:00 pm on January 16 in Washington D.C.) The British, it was decided on January 15, would be informed first. Communications to the French, Egyptian, Canadian, Australian and Turkish governments would follow. Baker would personally inform the Soviets and the Saudis. Finally, Cheney would pass the information to the Israeli Government.[123]

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119   Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace,* p. 263.
120   Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace,* pp. 264-267.
121   Perez de Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace,* p. 269. Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 270-274
122   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 346-352.
123   Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed...* cit., pp. 447-449.

Slightly after 7:00 pm, on January 16, CNN broadcasting from Baghdad went off the air. The "Mother of All Battles", as Saddam was eager to call it, had begun.[124] After a political and diplomatic contest which had lasted for months, the international community had recognized that the challenge posed by Saddam was irreconcilable with the basic principles of peaceful relations among states, and had entitled the US and its allies to use "all necessary means" to bring about a solution to the Gulf crisis. The Bush Administration had been blessed by both Congress and the UN Security Council with enormous legitimacy and freedom of maneuver to use American military power. The Gulf War, the President and his staff asserted in an internal document, would be over only when the President had determined that the objectives had been met.[125]

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124   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 282, 300.
125   National Security Directive 54, "Responding to the Iraqi Aggression in the Gulf", January 15, 1991, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/ .

Chapter 4

Desert Storm: Strategic Dilemmas, a "Big Idea," and the
Fog of War
(January-February 1991)

"Much depends on what we decide are our goals..."
Defense Secretary Richard Cheney, August 4, 1990[1]

"On s'engage et puis on voit"
Napoléon Bonaparte[2]

Bush's famous public statement "This will not stand" in the early days of the crisis, signaled that the President and his advisers were ready to endorse the idea of solving the Gulf crisis by military means. Then, with the passing of Resolution 678 in November 1990, the UN Security Council agreed that the mission of the US-led coalition in the Gulf was not only to restore Kuwait's sovereignty, but also to "restore international peace and security in the area."[3] If, however, it was easy to figure out what the task of liberating Kuwait implied, it was much less clear what would take to restore peace and security in the Gulf. Military planning for Operation Desert Storm and the unfolding and termination of the Gulf War thus reflected an intricate combination of short term and long term politico-military dilemmas.

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1   Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990, 8:00 – 10:00 am", n.d., OA/ID CF01478-030, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
2   Quote found in Iklé, *Every War Must End* , p. 1. Incidentally, Iklé's book, first published in 1971, was considered very interesting by Gen. Colin Powell, who allegedly photocopied and circulated excerpts of the book within the Bush Administration by the time the decision to end the Gulf War was made. Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 504-505.
3   UN Security Council, Resolution 678, November 29, 1990, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/575/28/IMG/NR057528.pdf?OpenElement.

Strategic dilemmas: The problem of Kuwait and the problem of Saddam

Saddam Hussein, it has already been noted, had chosen a very awkward moment to invade Kuwait. As he himself explained to his Arab counterparts, the Iraqi dictator had indeed understood that by 1989-1990 – with the Soviet Union's decline, the end of the Cold War and the fall of global communism – dictatorships' shares were going down and US shares were going up.[4] As demonstrated by his actions from August 2, 1990, onward, his conclusion was that he had to act before it was too late to take advantage of the transitional phase in international affairs and defend, and possibly improve, his domestic and international position. Saddam, however, had failed to fully appreciate how his actions would affect the calculations in other major centers of international power, and especially how the US leadership would react to his brutal and provocative quest for survival and expansion.

As suggested by the record of NSC meetings in early August, 1990, Bush and his advisers appreciated that the particular historical juncture implied that the response to the events in the Gulf would set a precedent for the "post-Cold War" era. The crisis, immediately acquired a moral dimension. As former NSC member Philip Zelikow recalled in a conversation with this author, the brutal Iraqi invasion of Kuwait starkly contrasted with the peaceful democratic revolutions in Europe.[5] In addition, the tale of a dictator brutally invading a smaller and weaker neighbour sounded very 1930s, and many members of the Administration, the President included, were ready to point out that appeasing Saddam would lead to the same tragic results that had followed the appeasement of Adolf Hitler.[6] "If history teaches us anything,", Bush stated in the early days of the invasion, "it is that we must resist aggression or it will destroy our freedoms. Appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930's, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator

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4   Cooley, "Pre-war Gulf diplomacy", p. 126; Norman Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset and the Gulf War: Blueprint for Defeat", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 1 (March 1992), p. 12.

5   Author's conversation with Philip Zelikow, cit.

6   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 374-375, 399-400; "Baker will not rule out use of force against Iraq", *USIS Official Text*, October 30, 1990, Freedman Collection, Box 36, File 5, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College, London, UK. Bush famously recalled that by the time of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait he had just begun reading Martin Gilbert's lengthy history of the Second World War.

threatening his neighbors."[7] From this point of view, the crisis also became a clash between good and evil; and evil – in the forms of aggressors and dictators – should without question be defeated. Although many within the Administration felt uneasy resorting to this kind of moral argument – on the ground that it would raise too much the stakes in the conflict, and make it more difficult to reach a solution – the comparison between Saddam Hussein and Hitler had a strong influence on Bush, a former World War Two pilot, and many of his closest advisers, and proved to be a powerful issue in rallying American public opinion.[8] Given the transitional phase that was characterizing international affairs at the time, moreover, the crisis assumed the character of a critical challenge concerning the very nature of the post-Cold War order. After all, even the Soviets were now openly supporting the response to the crisis promoted by the US, and the UN was finally working the way its framers had wished for before the onset of the Cold War. In the eyes of policy-makers in Washington, an historical opportunity was now within grasp for the US to assert its global leadership and stir the development of international affairs toward a new order more congenial to American interests and values than the one experienced during the Cold War.[9]

In addition to ideological and moral considerations, Saddam's invasion of Kuwait also raised fundamental strategic and geopolitical dilemmas concerning the balance of power and stability of the Persian Gulf area. With his invasion, Saddam had definitely demonstrated to be an aggressive, unpredictable and, most important, unaccommodating leader. Thus, given Iraq's military might and oil riches, the

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7   "Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia", August 8, 1990, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2147&year=1990&month=8 . Interestingly, the comparison between Saddam and Hitler was made early in the crisis by German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, during a telephone conversation with Bush. Telcon, Telephone Call to Chancellor Kohl of the Federal Republic of Germany, August 3, 1990 6:01 – 6:11 pm.", OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. In order to assess the influence of that historical analogy on the development of an American strategy toward the Gulf crisis, it seems useful to make a reference to Robert Jervis's study of perception and misperception in international poliitcs. "By making accessible insights derived from previous events," Jervis argues, "analogies provide a useful shortcut to rationality. But they also obscure aspects of the present case that are different from the past one." Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), p. 220.
8   Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, p. 478; Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman, Washington DC, October 19, 2009. Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 130-131.
9   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 399-400.

current Baghdad regime was now perceived as a permanent threat to both US interests and the security of America's closest partners in the Middle East.[10]

In mid-August 1990 Bush met a Saudi delegation in his residence in Kennebunkport, Maine. What the Saudis wanted was the liberation of Kuwait, but they also made clear their preference for a military solution of the crisis, so that the process of restoration of Kuwait's sovereignty could be topped by a significant destruction of Iraq's military assets and a long term downgrade of Iraq's threat so Saudi security. Should Saddam withdraw without a fight, the Saudis added, they wished for some sort of international peacekeeping force along the Iraq-Kuwait border.[11] This exchange, as well as conversations between Bush and foreign leaders such as Turkey's President Ozal, British Prime Minister Thatcher and the Emir of Kuwait, indicate that, from August 2, 1990 onward, the President and his advisers, as well as the leaders of the closest partners of the US, agreed that Saddam Hussein's rule over Iraq had become a problem. A simple restoration of the status quo ante – such as a peaceful withdrawal from Kuwait allowing Iraq to keep its military might undiminished – would not ensure an acceptable and stable equilibrium in the area.

In short, the crisis that erupted on August 2, 1990 had created in fact different, intertwined but at times conflicting, problems: the "problem of Kuwait" and the related need to restore the international rule of law, and a larger problem which revolved around the need to create a new and more stable status quo in the Persian Gulf region. The latter was generally acknowledged as the "problem of Saddam."[12] As the debate behind closed doors among American political, military and diplomatic leaders suggests, however, there was no clear blueprint as to what would it take to solve the crisis in a way that allowed the US and its partners to deal once and for all with both problems, and preserve and enhance Washington's newly acquired position of global leadership.

As Gen. Powell had pointed out in the early days of the crisis, one critical question was how "individualized" the crisis was, and whether the problem for

10   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 408-409.
11   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, pp. 79-80; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 348-349.
12   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 215-222.

stability in the Gulf was merely Saddam.[13] By late August 1990, as far as American diplomats were concerned, a peaceful solution to the crisis was still possible, as long as Iraq fully met the terms of UNSC resolution 660 and 662.[14] At the end of the month, the President received a couple of cables from the US Mission to the UN, which tried to address the problem of a long term settlement in the Gulf.[15] "Our stated goals in the Iraq-Kuwait crisis and the UN Resolutions, which we have fully supported," the first cable read, "provide a firm structure for our objectives. However, we need now to begin to think about amplifying these as they relate to a solution." The assessment of the US Mission to the UN was that:

> The principal problem has been and is whether we can seek and accept any solution in which Saddam Hussein remains in power, Iraq is heavily armed and developing sophisticated weapons and able, as a result, to bully and threaten its neighbors.

The answer was negative, but the cable also noted:

> the continuation of Saddam as president should not be an issue for us. The President set that to rest early on in the process. While Saddam is a dangerous catalyst in an Iraq which is malevolent, it is his military strength, power and his economic potential that are concerning, not his personality. Others might be worse.

As a solution, the US team at the UN argued that it might be possible to negotiate the withdrawal of US and non-Arab forces from the Gulf in return for the establishment of a regional arms control regime intended to bring down the local

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13   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am", cit.

14   Cable, SECSTATE to AmEmbassy Baghdad, "Response to Tariq Aziz", 8/22/90, OA/ID CF01478-029, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

15   Cable US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE 8/30/90 "US Objectives: Iraq-Kuwait Settlement" OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Cable US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE 8/30/90 "Iraq-Kuwaiti Settlement Ideas" OA/ID CF01478-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

conventional and unconventional force levels.[16]

As the second of the two cables argued, it was considered necessary that "Iraq does not return to the status quo ante in a position where its considerable military muscle can be a source of intimidation and threat to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan or other states in the region."

Therefore:

Any withdrawal of non-Arab forces from the region should be complemented by a significant reduction in the size and capability of Iraqi military forces. I addition, we incorporate the idea of a peace agreement between Iraq and Kuwait and the removal of US sanctions only on the basis that the Iraqis agree to engage fully in a regional conference for the reduction of High technology weapons and their elimination.[17]

Confidence in the chances for a peaceful solution however, was not so widespread beyond diplomatic circles. By the time the US delegation to the UN sent its assessment to the Bush Administration, the issue of a long term settlement in the Gulf had also reached the public debate, and, as a report for the US Congress stated:

Iraq may remain a threat to American and Allied interests, unless the conflict terminated in total defeat of Iraqi armed forces and removed Saddam Hussein from power.[18]

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16   Cable US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE 8/30/90 "US Objectives: Iraq-Kuwait Settlement" OA/ID CF01478-027, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
17   Cable US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE "Iraq-Kuwaiti Settlement Ideas", 8/30/90, OA/ID CF01478-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. It's interesting to notice than on the copy of the cable available at the Bush Library there's an handwritten note that reads "I think this is impossible".
18   John M. Collins, *US and Allied Options Early in the Gulf Crisis*, CRS Report for Congress, August 20, 1990; Freedman Collection, Box 36, File 5, Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College, London, UK. Interestingly, the report analyzed several military options available for the US and its partners, and the solution that appeared to have the greater chances to achieve a favourable and acceptable long-term settlement was an outflanking maneuver, performed by an overwhelming force. Among other things, the Report listed as a policy option the removal of Saddam Hussein through a covert operation, though it didn't

As the focus of the debate among the President and his advisers began to shift towards the prospects of the "offensive option," analyses within the Administration reflected the rising belief that a mere restoration of the status quo ante would not be enough. "The current crisis in the Gulf," it was noted in a State Department memorandum in mid-September 1990,

> has changed the frame of reference which guided our traditional approach
> to safeguarding our interests in the Gulf. We cannot restore the status quo
> ante. Indeed, the two principal approaches on which we have relied for
> twenty years are no longer valid.[19]

As the paper continued, "A post-crisis architecture must be rooted primarily in the region but will still have to be enforced from the outside". In the event, though, it was acknowledged that the challenge of devising a more stable security structure in the region would be a very complicated one:

> This new architecture cannot appear to be drawn up or imposed
> unilaterally by the US. International participation, preferably legitimized
> by the UN and traditional or new intra-Arab councils will be critical if it is
> to succeed. But US leadership, particularly in providing military support
> for Saudi Arabia and the Smaller Gulf states will be the cornerstone on
> which the other parts of the structure rest.[20]

Thus, along with the belief that sanctions would not work within a reasonable timeframe and that aggression should not be rewarded in the post-Cold War order, the belief that an acceptable and sustainable long term regional balance required something more than the mere restoration of the status quo ante played a critical role in strengthening the Bush Administration's resolve to switch to the "offensive option" and its resistance to any negotiated solution. Trying to solve the "problem

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recommend it on the ground that such an initiative would have few chances to succeed.

19   According to the paper, the two approaches that had been tried but had failed were: 1) Reliance on a friendly regional hegemon; 2) Achieving a regional balance among three power centers: Iran, Iraq and the GCC states led by Saudi Arabia.

20   Memo William Burns to the Acting Secretary, "Reflections on Post-Crisis Security Arrangements in the Persian Gulf", 9/12/90, OA/ID CF01584-026, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

of Saddam", however, was a delicate task for leaders in Washington concerned with strengthening the position of global leadership America was assuming. Strategic objectives such as downgrading Iraq's military potential and undermining the Baghdad regime were at odds with such principles as the sanctity of state sovereignty and the prohibition of the resort to military force as a way to settle international disputes. These same principles had been successfully invoked by US leaders in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion, and were the basis of consensus within the international community concerning the response to the "problem of Kuwait." Pure geopolitical considerations also failed to give unequivocal guidance, since although Saddam and Iraq's military potential were perceived as a major threat to Gulf stability, they also provided an important counterweight to Iran's regional influence, another major concern for American leaders and their regional partners. Given the variegated ethnic and sectarian nature of the Iraqi polity, moreover, it was widely assumed that without a strongman such as Saddam at the top, the entire country could fall apart and open the gates of a civil conflict that might suck in all other regional powers. In late November 1990, on the day before UN Security Council Resolution 678 was passed, Henry Kissinger illustrated these puzzling implications of the conflict in a Congressional testimony. "America", Kissinger argued, "has no national interest in weakening Iraq to a point where it becomes a tempting target for covetous neighbors". "If war does prove unavoidable", he continued:

> our objective should be not to destroy Iraq, but rather to raise the cost of occupying Kuwait to unacceptable levels while reducing Iraq's capacity to threaten its neighbors. [21]

Resolution 678, with its broad mandate to "restore international peace and security in the area," was indeed a powerful diplomatic asset for the Bush

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21   Henry A. Kissinger, "How to Cut Iraq Down to Size" (Testimony Before the Senate Armed Service Committee, November 28, 1990), Micah Sifri, Michael Cerf (eds.), *The Gulf War Reader: History, Documents, Opinions* (New York: Random House, 1991), pp. 238-242. Interestingly, as Kissinger observed: "It is to be hoped that a united America can find a way that avoids both a military strategy of total destructiveness and a diplomatic strategy committed to amassing UN resolutions – the progressive disregard of which will at some point demonstrate the UN impotence rather than an international consensus."

Administration to enhance its leadership of the multinational coalition and preserve a large freedom of maneuver in the simultaneous pursuit of a solution to both the "problem of Kuwait" and the "problem of Saddam." The mission clearly endorsed by the Security Council on behalf of the international community, however, was the liberation of Kuwait, and even by the time the resolution was passed, there was no unanimous consensus among US governmental agencies concerning how to coordinate the military and diplomatic assets Washington had committed to the resolution of the crisis. On December 3, 1990, the US delegation to the UN sent Washington a cable suggesting the "next steps" toward the crisis. The cable maintained that complete withdrawal – as well as the release of all hostages by Iraq – should be a precondition to any negotiation with Baghdad, but it seemed not to rule out a non-military solution to the crisis. According to the US staff at the UN, a stable settlement could be achieved by working within the UN framework, through the deployment of a "Muslim" peacekeeping contingent and the mediation of the UN Secretary General. Sanctions too should be gradually lifted in the aftermath of the Iraqi withdrawal, although it was considered necessary to keep the military ones in place for some time in order to ensure the removal of Weapons of Mass Destruction and the reduction of conventional military imbalances.[22] By that time, however, the assumption that the crisis should be solved by military means had become dominant at the White House, and, as Amb. Pickering observed in retrospect, one of the main concerns of the Administration was indeed that Saddam may propose a negotiated solution by which Iraq would manage to keep parts of Kuwait and avoid destruction of its military power.[23] By the time of the passage of Resolution 678, in short, the strategic debate within the White House and between the Bush Administration and its main international partners largely focused on the problems outlined by the Kissinger testimony. However, despite this broad and important authorization, the solution of the crisis, especially of some of the long term problems it had given rise, remained puzzling.

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22   Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "UN and Gulf: Next Steps", 12/3/90, OA/ID CF01584-025, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

23   Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.

The debate went on during December 1990, in parallel to the Congressional debate about whether to approve the President's request for an endorsement the use of force and to military planning. Although in public there was a growing sense that the crisis would end up being solved by a war, behind closed doors there were a great many issues still pending.

Progress in military planning provided critical clues for White House strategists. The problem of marrying military means and political objectives emerged as early as during the first NSC meetings in the aftermath of the invasion, when Gen. Powell and Gen. Schwarzkopf presented to their political leaders their available assessments of the strengths and weaknesses of the Iraqi military machine, and began to argue that taking military actions in the Gulf would require the commitment of overwhelming force.[24] The formative experience of commanders such as Powell and Schwarzkopf had been the Vietnam War, and they had vivid memories of political leaders eager to take ambitious and controversial military commitments overseas without having a clear idea of the implications of their choices in terms of resources and potential casualties. As a result, their main concern was to make sure that any war plan would ensure victory and a minimal amount of casualties. As already noted, in spite of the considerable potential of airpower, both Schwarzkopf and Powell judged that a ground component was required to ensure military success in the Gulf, and that what was needed was the resort to an overwhelming force capable of quickly cracking down the apparently powerful Iraqi army, force the Baghdad regime to surrender, and then allow a rapid withdrawal of US forces.

Thus, as planning for offensive military operations evolved, political and military dilemmas underwent a process of mutual influence. On the one hand, the military leaders were vocal in making the case for a massive increase in troop numbers. As contingency planning for a ground offensive began in late Summer 1990, it was judged that an offensive military operation to liberate Kuwait based on the Desert Shield deployment would have resulted in very high American and coalition casualties.[25] Hence, Schwarzkopf and Powell strongly argued that forces,

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24   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am", cit.; Minutes "National Security Council meeting August 4, 1990, 8:00-10:00 am," cit.
25   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 378-379, 414-418.

particularly the armored component, should be increased to an overwhelming level, in order to avoid an offensive straight into the Iraqi defenses in Kuwait and allow an outflanking maneuver that could strike from north-eastern Saudi Arabia at the weakest sector of the Iraqi Army.[26] On the other hand, given the acknowledgment among political leaders both within the White House and in the coalition that a simple restoration of the status quo ante would not ensure an acceptable long term settlement of the Gulf conflict, the idea of a military operation based on strategic airpower and an overwhelming land offensive resulted rather promising, because it would allow coalition forces to achieve the liberation of Kuwait while also destroying the Iraq's military infrastructure and its most capable military units, and by consequence reducing the long term threat posed by the Baghdad regime to its neighbors.[27] As Brent Scowcroft recalled, a consensus eventually developed within the Administration that:

The most important [goal] was to reduce Saddam's military might so that he would no longer pose a threat to the region, yet to do so in such a way that Iraq was secure from external threats and the balance of power with Iran was preserved. [...] In the end the recommendation was to focus on destroying Iraq's best-trained and best-equipped forces – the Divisions of the elite Republican Guard – wherever we could find them. Since these troops were also the backbone of the regime, their destruction would further undermine Saddam's grip on power. Our Arab allies were convinced, and we began to assume, that dealing Saddam another battlefield defeat would shatter what support he had within the military, which probably would then topple him. Hitting the Republican Guard went to the heart of the problem.[28]

As the UN deadline closed in without any signal that a non-military solution

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26   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero,* pp. 413-421, Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp, 420-421; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 153-158.
27   "'Il faut naturellement détruire le potentiel militaro-industriel de l'Irak' déclare François Mitterrand" *Le Monde*, January 22, 1991.
28   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 432-433; see also: Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 444-446.

could be achieved, all the components of the US-led Coalition's strategy fell into place: Operation Desert Storm would start with a massive four-phased air campaign geared at destroying command, control and communication centres and NBC infrastructure and arsenals inside Iraq; suppressing the Iraqi air defences and establishing Coalition air supremacy; preparing the battlefield (and achieving significant attrition of Republican Guard units in particular); and finally supporting the advance of ground forces.[29] The ground war would then consist of a two-pronged attack: Marine and Arab units would engage Iraqi forces and keep them tied in southern Kuwait, while the VII and XVIII Corps, assisted by French and British units would perform the decisive "left-hook," encircle Iraqi forces, especially armoured and Republican Guard units, and destroy them.[30]

Talking to Turkey's President Ozal on December 28, 1990, Bush confirmed the readiness of American forces deployed in the Gulf. "Don't worry," he said, "We will be ready for what we have to do." Bush added, as he was frequently doing during that period, that from the White House's point of view, the worst outcome at that stage would be a partial withdrawal by Iraq.[31] By that time the President and his allies were set on a war footing and even a date for the start of hostilities had been decided.[32] However, from the strategic point of view a sort of ambiguity still surrounded the ultimate mission the US-led Coalition forces would have to accomplish. On December 30, a new cable from the Amb. Freeman in Riyadh, where CENTCOM's headquarters were located too, tried to analyze and clarify the issues at stake. The message listed a series of "explicit" and "implicit" objectives for the US-led coalition in the Gulf. The "explicit" objectives were those clearly and publicly endorsed by the UN and the Coalition, such as the liberation of Kuwait and the restoration of the country's legitimate Government. The "implicit"

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29   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 371; Jeffrey McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict: A Military Analysis* (London: Brassey's for The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1993), p. 25; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, p. 204.

30   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 421, 444, 523-524; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 153-158.

31   Telcon, "Telcon with President Turgut Ozal of Turkey, December 28, 1990, 10:45-10:56 am", OA/ID CF01584-023, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

32   Telcon "Telephone Conversation with PM John Major of Great Britain, December 21, 1990"… cit.; Ambassador Charles Freeman recalled that a date for the beginning of military operation had been decided as early as in mid-November 1990. Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman…, cit.

objectives were those not clearly and publicly endorsed but nonetheless considered vital for US interests in the Gulf, such as the destruction of Iraq's nuclear and chemical capabilities, and the neutralization of Iraq's offensive capabilities. The cable went on suggesting that the pursuit of the "implicit" objectives should be justified as instrumental to the immediate achievement of the "explicit" objectives, rather than as serving US long-term interests. It was also argued that critical requirements for success in the conflict were "a clear understanding of the terms we're asking Iraq to accept and an efficient and cohesive mechanism for negotiating their acceptance by Iraq."[33]

The failure of the Baker-Aziz meeting and the Congressional authorization to use force in early January 1991 finally dispelled any doubt that there would be a war in the Gulf. In turn, that led the Bush Administration to undertake an additional effort to devise a comprehensive and coherent set of military objectives. As the "pause of goodwill" expired on January 15, 1991, President Bush signed National Security Directive 54, by which he authorized military action "designed to bring about Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait." The mission stated in the directive was to: effect the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of all Iraqi forces from Kuwait; restore Kuwait's legitimate government; protect the lives of American citizens abroad; and promote the security and stability of the Persian Gulf. To achieve this objectives, among other things coalition forces would have to destroy Iraq's chemical, biological, nuclear capabilities; destroy Iraq's command, control and communication capabilities; eliminate the Republican Guards as an effective fighting force. It was also stated that "Should Iraq resort to using chemical, biological or nuclear weapons, or be found supporting terrorist acts against US or coalition partners anywhere in the world, or destroy Kuwait's

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33   The cable also contained an interesting assessment of the coalition's dynamics, according to which: "The core of the coalition is the US, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UK. Other members, for differing reasons, will be reluctant to break with this core if it is in firm agreement". Finally, the cable made the case for withdrawing from Iraqi territory once Kuwait had been secured, and for redeploying Desert Shield forces "out of the theater" at the earliest possible time. Cable from AmEmbassy Riyadh to SECSTATE, "US and Coalition War Aims: Sacked out in the Same Sand Dunes, Dreaming Different Dreams?", 12/30/90, OA/ID CF01584-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

oilfields, it shall become an explicit objective of the United States to replace the current leadership of Iraq."[34]

Instant Thunder: the politics of airpower

Operation Desert Storm began during the night between January 16 and 17, 1991. Special forces crossed the Iraqi border and carried out operations geared at neutralizing enemy radars, and allow Coalition aircrafts to operate at ease in the theater airspace. Some 400 airplanes – even a squad of B-52s which had left from the US on the day before – successfully and relentlessly bombed the Iraqi territory, focusing on targets of strategic importance such as Government buildings in Baghdad, the major nodes of the Iraqi air defense system, and SCUD missiles launch pads.[35] Although the beginning of military operation had been somewhat widely publicized in advance – through UN resolutions and diplomatic exchanges – the coalition managed to catch the Iraqis by surprise. Instant Thunder – the air campaign – immediately appeared to be a success beyond expectations: as the first night of operations came to a close, there were few casualties and no fatalities among US and allied forces.[36] The early success of the air campaign was a demonstration of the unchallenged technological edge achieved by the US military by the end of the Cold War. Stealth technology allowed US aircrafts – especially the newly introduced F-117 – to penetrate the enemy airspace undetected by enemy radars, while precision-guided munitions made it possible to hit specified targets with unprecedented accuracy and contain collateral damage.[37] Although these assets were actually available only to a small part of the Coalition aircraft, soon it became evident that American technological superiority was allowing the US and its allies to inflict an high level of attrition on enemy forces at a minimal cost in

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34   National Security Directive 54, January 15, 1991, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB39/.

35   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 300-301, 303-304; McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 24-25. Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor point out to the symbolic meaning of the use of B-52s: a demonstration that America was capable of striking globally even by relying on forces deployed on its own territory. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 223.

36   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 300.

37   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 312-315; Carl E. Vuono, "Desert Storm and the Future of Conventional Forces", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, No. 2, Spring 1991, pp. 49-68.

terms of allied casualties and an unprecedentedly low harm to the civilian population.[38]

The achievement of uncontested air supremacy over the Kuwaiti Theatre of Operations (KTO) was a top priority for US and Coalition military planners. Iraq's air forces didn't actually represent a major threat to the Coalition: Iraqi air assets were no match for the US, and pilots were for the most part poorly trained, so that soon after the beginning of hostilities the Baghdad regime began to order an increasing part of Iraqi aircraft to remain in bunkers rather than engage enemy air forces.[39] As CENTCOM planners knew, however, Iraq did have a relatively advanced air defense system, whose backbone was represented by Western equipment mainly imported from France during the 1980s. The system presented nevertheless some critical weaknesses, such as the fact that – like the rest of the Iraqi military apparatus – it had been designed to serve an highly centralized command and control structure. Although the technological standard was high for a Third World country like Iraq, moreover, it was still in another league compared with the equipment available to the US and its allies, and since France was now a major member of the Coalition, the Paris Government eventually managed to have the key characteristics of the system disclosed by the firm which had produced it.[40] Thus, the air campaign unfolded exactly as wished for by US and allied planners: America's unchallenged stealth and precision-targeting technology neutralized the Iraqi air defense system and allowed the Coalition to achieve air supremacy almost from the start, leaving US and allied aircraft free to strike at will all over the Iraqi territory and the Kuwaiti theatre of operations.[41]

Bush and other allied leaders began to appreciate the advantages of uncontested air dominance early after the beginning of Instant Thunder.[42] They were probably not the only ones. As political scientist Gregory Gause observes, the beginning of

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38   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 312-313.
39   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 306. As Freedman and Karsh observe, the embargo had forced the Baghdad regime to reduce the hours of training for its pilots.
40   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 102-122.
41   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 312-314.
42   Telcon, "Telcon with President Francois Mitterrand of France, January 20, 1991, 1:17-1:34 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Telcon, Call to Egyptian President Mubarak, January 21, 1991, 3:25-3:35 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

the air war – and the early and easy success achieved by the coalition forces – was a turning point in Saddam's perceptions.[43]

The Baghdad regime tried to offset US and Coalition's military and technological superiority by asymmetric means. On January 20, 1991, Coalition pilots that had been captured by the Iraqis were shown on TV, but that attempt at psychological war failed, and by January 23 US and allied forces began the systematic bombing of Iraqi aircraft shelters, forcing the Baghdad regime to look for alternative ways to spare its air assets, and even to order some airplanes to flight to Iranian territory.[44] Saddam and his collaborators proved nonetheless to be very skilled in terms of strategic improvisation, as demonstrated by their unexpected ability to turn military obsolete SCUD missiles into effective political assets.[45] From January 18 onwards, the Baghdad regime began to launch SCUD missiles at Israel - which was not a party to the conflict – and Saudi Arabia, in an attempt to undermine the political cohesion of the US-led coalition.[46] Although the leaders of Washington's main Arab partners had expressed their determination to remain in the coalition even in the event of an Israeli military response to Iraq's provocation, the SCUDs – and the potential political implications of any form of direct Israeli involvement in the war on the unity of the coalition – became a major concern for Bush and Allied leaders.[47] As a result, the Coalition immediately began to divert an

43   F. Gregory Gause III, "Iraq's Decisions to go to War, 1980 and 1990", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter 2002), p. 70.
44   Kevin M. Woods and Mark E. Stout, "Saddam's Perceptions and Misperceptions: The Case of 'Desert Storm'", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 1 (February 2010), pp. 35-36; Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset and the Gulf War", pp. 8-19; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 305. Incidentally, during the Iran-Iraq war, the Baghdad regime had sent some military airplanes to Jordan, to spare them from Iranian air offensives. The outbreak of the confrontation with the US had put Saddam in a position to find some sort of settlement to the conflict with Tehran, and that made it possible for the Baghdad regime to repeat the practice of storing part of its air assets on Iranian territory, beyond the reach of its enemy forces. As Baker reports, Egyptian President Mubarak argued that Saddam's behavior revealed the dictator's assumption that he could not win the war militarily, and that he's better to save his best military assets for a post-war phase. Baker whith De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 365. In the event, Iran didn't return the aircrafts.
45   As a matter of fact, it was an Iraqi SCUD attack on a US barrack on Saudi territory on February 25, 1991 that extracted the highest number of American casualties during the Gulf War. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 239.
46   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 307-309; McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 33; Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset and the Gulf War", pp. 10-11.
47   Telcon, "Telcon with President Francois Mitterrand of France, January 20, 1991, 1:17-1:34 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Telcon, Call to Egyptian President Mubarak, January 21, 1991, 3:25-3:35 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working

increasing share of its air assets to what became known as the "SCUD Hunt," an attempt to destroy Iraq's SCUD arsenals and related facilities.[48] The Shamir Government in Tel Aviv, however, soon came under pressure and began to show a desire to demonstrate to its public opinion that it would not accept to become a passive victim of Saddam's attacks. Israel's leaders went as far as to ask the Americans to create a corridor through Saudi Arabia's airspace to allow Israel's air forces to strike at Iraq, and to let an Israeli high officer join CENTCOM.[49] Bush and his closest advisers strongly opposed any form of Israeli direct military involvement, on the ground that it would play into Saddam's hands, and that the Israeli military could hardly do any better job than the coalition anyway. The Administration, moreover, dispatched to Tel Aviv Paul Wolfowitz from the Pentagon and Lawrence Eagleburger from the State Department, in order to negotiate the deployment of US Patriot surface-to-air missiles, which were expected to be capable at intercepting incoming Iraqi SCUDS.[50] Through confidential channels President Bush sent Shamir a message ensuring the delivery of American Patriot missiles and the coalition's commitment to devote part of the air campaign to the search of SCUDs in Western Iraq. Bush, however, warned Shamir to refrain from autonomous military initiatives. "I can tell you," the President wrote, "that there is no more effective means available, especially if we keep in mind our natural goal of dealing a decisive blow to Iraq – something that can only be accomplished by the continued effectiveness of the U.S.-led

Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. For the record, during interviews conducted by the FBI in 2004, after having been captured, Saddam stated he had personally ordered the launch of the SCUDs at Israel. According to him, the purpose was not to provoke Israel into entering the war but to hurt it and, by implication, to persuade the US to stop military operations against Iraq. National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 11, March 3, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/12.pdf .

48   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 456. The SCUD Hunt would eventually require the commitment of roughly one third of the Coalition air forces.

49   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 331-341; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 456.

50   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 336. Eventually, the Israelis decided to accept US manned Patriot batteries, a significant exception to the rule that the Jewish state would be self reliant in terms of personnel. American intelligence suspected that Iraq could have a limited number of chemical warheads for its SCUDs, but that Patriots would manage to minimize the dangers of a chemical attack, while coalition air forces could destroy Iraqi chemical and biological weapons facilities at minimal risk. Memo, Robert L. Foord to Director of Central Intelligence, "Response to Questions Concerning Iraqi CBW", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-014, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

coalition."[51] US and allied countermeasures brought rapid psychological relief and managed to reduce the SCUD threat, keep Israel out of the war, and preserve the Coalition's cohesion. Iraqi SCUD attacks, nonetheless, continued throughout the war, especially through the launch from mobile pads. In the event, by mid February 1991, despite earlier skepticism, Schwarzkopf resolved to accept British and Israeli suggestions to order Special Forces missions beyond the Iraq lines to detect and help neutralize the SCUD launchers.[52]

Aside from such concerns as minimizing civilian casualties, Bush and his staff decided to grant military commanders significant discretion concerning the air campaign's targeting philosophy.[53] CENTCOM's planners thus devised a rather variegated list of strategic targets – not necessarily military installations, but rather political and military "centers of gravity". Those fell into three main categories: unconventional arsenals and facilities; energy resources and industrial installations; and command and control centers.[54] As for the first category – unconventional weapons – although Saddam had a well-known record of using chemical weapons even against his own country's population, it was estimated that the Baghdad regime was not in possession of nuclear or biological assets capable of representing

51   Message, Brent Scowcroft, "[POTUS message to PM Shamir]", 1/91, OA/ID CF01584-012, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
52   Incidentally, as Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor report, during a visit to the United States in early February 1991, Israel's Defense Minister Moshe Arens and Chief of Staff Ehud Barak, suggested that Israel itself could mount an airborne operation in Iraq to do perform the job. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 228-248; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 337-338.
53   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 318. As established by the Nicholson-Goldwater Act of 1986, the chain of command during the Gulf War saw the President (Bush) at the top, immediately followed by the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff (Powell), and then the Commander in Chief of forces deployed on the theater of operations (Schwarzkopf). John L. Gaddis, "Toward the Post-Cold War World," *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, No. 2, Spring 1991
54   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 312-329. Concerning the targeting philosophy of the air campaign the Administration explained: "There are facilities […] that we regard as legitimate military targets, including production facilities, bridges, telecommunications facilities, government headquarters buildings, and radio and television transmission facilities which contribute directly or indirectly to Iraqi military and command and control capabilities." Other installations, the Administration maintained, might be considered legitimate military targets. These were industrial plants suspected of producing unconventional weapons-related material and targets located in the area where SCUD launchers operated. Cable, "Talking points For Response To Iraqi Charges On Gulf War", 02/06/91, OA/ID CF01584-004, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

a direct threat to the Coalition.[55] There was agreement within the intelligence community that Iraq didn't have nuclear weapons, although the dictator's desire to get a nuclear deterrent was well-known.[56] As commentators argued at the time of the war and archival evidence now suggests, therefore, the targeting of Iraq's NBC facilities responded to the "implicit" objective of downgrading permanently Iraq's military might and its capacity to be a threat to regional stability.[57] Coalition air forces conducted repeated strikes on Iraqi facilities suspected to be storage centers or research and development facilities for unconventional weapons, even at the risk of hitting installations unrelated to military purposes, as the media readily reported to the dismay of the White House.[58]

The second category of strategic targets – the energy and industrial infrastructure – was rather controversial. As Lawerence Freedman and Efraim Karsh observed, that kind of targeting could make sense within the framework of a long war of attrition such as the Second World War, but was of little military effectiveness within the framework of a limited conflict against an enemy that was clearly inferior in qualitative and technological terms, as Iraq was compared to the US and its allies in 1991.[59] The destruction of Iraq's industrial and energy infrastructure had a meaningless impact on the military balance during the Gulf

55   McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 33; "Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on President Bush's letter to President Saddam Hussein of Iraq", January 12, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2617&year=1991&month=01 . It is worth recalling that the Bush Administration had explicitly warned Saddam that should Ira resort to unconventional weapons, the US and its allies would escalate war aims to include the direct overthrow of the Baghdad regime. George Bush, "Letter to Saddam" (January 9, 1991), Sifri and Cerf , *The Gulf War Reader*, pp. 178-179.

56   The Iraqi nuclear program had been forcibly slowed down in 1981 by an Israeli air strike on the French-made Osirak reactor. Shai Feldman, "The Bombing of Osiraq Revisited", *International Security*, Vol. 7, No. 2, (Autumn 1982), pp. 114-142. As it wll be discussed more in detail in the next chapter, evidence collected in the aftermath of the war through confessions of deserters and, most importantly, through the work of the UN weapons inspection commission, showed that the scale of the Iraqi nuclear program was larger than expected, and that the Baghdad regime was actually much closer to the achievement of a nuclear deterrent than suggested by pre-war assessments. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 457-459.

57   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 319-321; Cable from AmEmbassy Riyadh to SECSTATE, "US and Coalition War Aims: Sacked out in the Same Sand Dunes, Dreaming Different Dreams?", cit.

58   Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 458-459. The most famous case was the destruction on January 22, 1991, of a facility that turned out to be a milk factory.

59   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 321-322.

War, but turned out to have dramatic effects for the Iraqi population in the post-war phase.[60]

The last category of targets – command and control centers – was characterized by a certain degree of ambiguity as well. Military planners explicitly acknowledged that if the Coalition managed to "silence" the Iraqi leadership – to make it impossible for the Baghdad regime to direct Iraqi forces in the theater of operations – that would make it easier for US and allied forces to liberate Kuwait.[61] The identification of "leadership" targets of military value, however, was often controversial, especially considering the intricate political system that had developed in Iraq under Saddam – a system where civilian and military positions and loyalties were highly intermingled. The most controversial question, from that point of view, was whether single individuals holding key politico-military positions, such as Saddam Hussein himself, could be a legitimate military target. American and allied leadership repeatedly stated that, according to the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of other states, Saddam was not an explicit target. The Bush Administration, in particular, had confirmed its willingness to abide by an Executive Order issued during the Ford era that explicitly forbade any American citizen to seek to assassinate a foreign leader; and had even fired an US Air Force general for having publicly argued that Saddam, as the top political leader of Iraq, was considered a "center of gravity" – and thus a target – by military planners.[62] It was nonetheless undeniable that since Saddam was in fact Iraq's top military decision-maker, if he had been killed in a coalition airstrike against Iraqi command and control facilities, that would have been considered "fair game" by US and allied leaders, and would have represented a decisive step toward military victory in the Gulf War.[63] The range of targets falling within the "Command and

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60   The destruction of an electrical power plant had, for example, the side effects of halting the functioning of water depurators, and this kind of incidents had the result of worsening the suffering of Iraqi civilians, that had been already been hardly hit by the embargo. As examined in the next chapter, the combined effect of the destruction of the industrial infrastructure and the decision to maintain the embargo condemned the Iraqi population to serious hardship in the years following the conflict.Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 321-322; Haley, *Strategies of Dominance*, pp. 58-59. Willet, "The Economic Implications", pp. 178-180.

61   Scharzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 369-370.

62   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 219, 323; Don Oberdorfer, "Bush Had A Plan To Depose Saddam", *International Herald Tribune*, January 21, 1993.

63   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 463-464. As Schwarzkopf recalls, "If he'd been killed in the process, I wouldn't have shed any tears." Scharzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't*

Control" category turned out to be wide indeed, including bunkers which were suspected to hide communication facilities or provide shelter for Iraqi leaders, and that sometimes, as in the case of the Amiriyya incident of February 12, 1991 – tragically turned out to be shelters for the civilian population.[64]

The strategic component of the air campaign, in sum, was a compelling demonstration of the extent to which the development of planning for the Gulf War reflected the dilemmas faced by political leaders, particularly the tension between those "implicit" and "explicit" objectives that had been pointed out in the December 30 cable from Saudi Arabia.[65]

After the first ten days of the air campaign, it was evident that the US and allied effort was successfully unfolding as planned. On January 27, 1991, CENTCOM officially stated that the Coalition had achieved air supremacy. The campaign was now continuing relentlessly, but its focus was beginning to shift toward attrition of Iraqi forces deployed in Kuwait.[66] The very one-sided nature of the air campaign, persuasively testified by media reporting, also increased international pressure for a "pause" and a return to negotiations. As Bush recalls, after a few days since the beginning of hostilities, Gorbachev called him urging for a suspension of the bombing, since, according to the Soviet Ambassador in Baghdad, the Iraqis were ready to announce their intention to withdraw from Kuwait in return for an interruption of the war. As far as Washington was concerned, however, the conditions for a suspension of hostilities were not in place: Saddam could boast having withstood the West and bombed Israel unpunished; and he could save most

Take a Hero, pp. 369-370. According to Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, during the last days of the war two GBU-28 shelter-penetrating bombs were dropped by American bombers on two bunkers where according to Iraqi defectors Saddam might have been hiding. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 410-411, 420-421.

64   The Amiriyya incident was widely reported by the media, and, considering that by that time the air campaign had been going on for almost one month, it strengthened the case of those arguing that the continuation of bombing was now unjustified. Other commentators, and, behind closed doors, some political leaders as well, however, had the impression that the incident had had the effect of scaring the Iraqi leadership, and making it more aware of the high costs of its continuing defiance. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 324-327; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 326-329.

65   Cable from AmEmbassy Riyadh to SECSTATE, "US and Coalition War Aims: Sacked out in the Same Sand Dunes, Dreaming Different Dreams?", cit.; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 318-319.

66   Scharzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 489; McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 28-29.

of his military machine, and threaten his neighbor another day.[67] Now that the war was being waged, the Bush Administration was more than ever determined to settle the conflict on its own terms. After all, American diplomats argued at the UN and in international fora, Saddam had already demonstrated his unwillingness to withdraw peacefully, and now the credibility of the UN as a pillar of international security in the post-Cold War era depended on success in ejecting Iraq from Kuwait and enforcing the UN resolutions concerning the crisis.[68]

The conflict, however, was undermining Gorbachev's domestic position. As demonstrated by Shevardnadze's resignations in late 1990 and the bloody military repression of a pro-independence rally in Lithuania in early January 1991, the influence of hardliners was mounting at the Kremlin.[69] Gorbachev's endorsement of the uncompromising stance on the Gulf conflict promoted by the US was under serious attack from conservatives in the high ranks of the party, the military and the secret services, who were now accusing the "New Thinkers" of giving away Soviet security by turning their back to a long-standing partner of Moscow in the Middle East and acquiescing to a massive deployment of US and allied forces close to the USSR's southern flank.[70] The Soviet leader thus decided to dispatch his new Foreign Minister, Alexander Bessmertnyk, to Washington, in order to consult with the American leadership and promote the case for negotiations and an early cessation of the conflict.[71] Bush and his advisers were by no means keen on halting military operations, but many at the State Department, including Secretary Baker, were persuaded that Soviet cooperation was too precious an asset for American global leadership not to give Gorbachev and his New Thinkers a chance to demonstrate their international standing. The main problem, from this point of

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67   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 454.
68   Cable, SECSTATE to UN Security Council Collective, "Gulf War/UN Security Council: Message from the secretary", 1/19/91, OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
69   Baker with De Frank, The Politics of Diplomacy, pp. 379-381; Raymond L. Garthoff, The *Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brooking Institution, 1994), pp. 447-453; Olga Alexandrova, "Soviet Policy in the Gulf Conflict", *Aussenpolitik*, vol. 42, No. 3, 1991, pp.231-250.
70   According to some observers, Soviet hardliners were also dismayed by the fact that the US and its allies were easily cracking down on Soviet equipped and trained Iraqi forces. Alexandrova, "Soviet Policy in the Gulf Conflict", 237-239; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 400-401.
71   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 391.

view, was to find a way to show that the US cared about Soviet concerns without actually changing American policy. In the event, Baker agreed to issue a joint statement with Bessmertnyk. The communiqué read that complete withdrawal was still the only acceptable solution, but American and Soviet leaders continued to believe that "a cessation of hostilities would be possible if Iraq would make an unequivocal commitment to withdraw from Kuwait."[72] As Baker recalls, under pressure from Bessmertnyk, the communiqué was read on January 29, 1991 – on the same day President Bush was to deliver his address on the State of the Union.[73] What Baker failed to realize was that the joint declaration actually implied the possibility that a negotiated solution could be worked out without clear reference to the demands of the relevant UN resolutions, as the White House had persistently been arguing. The initiative thus turned out to be rather awkward, and on the following days the Department of State had to repeatedly recant the communiqué.[74]

As the January 1991 State of the Union address showed, the Bush Administration was indeed determined to pursue its policy in full. "What is at stake," the President stated in language that would have pleased his predecessor Woodrow Wilson, "is more than one small country; it is a big idea:"

> a new world order, where diverse nations are drawn together in common cause to achieve the universal aspirations of mankind -- peace and security, freedom, and the rule of law. Such is a world worthy of our struggle and worthy of our children's future.

> The community of nations has resolutely gathered to condemn and repel lawless aggression. Saddam Hussein's unprovoked invasion -- his ruthless, systematic rape of a peaceful neighbor -- violated everything the community of nations holds dear. The world has said this aggression would not stand, and it will not stand. Together, we have resisted the trap of appeasement, cynicism, and isolation that gives temptation to tyrants. The world has answered Saddam's invasion with 12 United Nations

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72   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 392.
73   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 393.
74   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 394; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 459-460.

resolutions, starting with a demand for Iraq's immediate and unconditional withdrawal, and backed up by forces from 28 countries of 6 continents. With few exceptions, the world now stands as one.

Enforcement of all relevant UN resolutions; the liberation of Kuwait and the restoration of its legitimate government; the unwillingness to destroy Iraq as a nation but the commitment to achieve peace and security in the region – all the main themes advanced by the Administration since the beginning of the Gulf crisis, were strongly reiterated. The address, however, was enriched by references to values and objectives that went far beyond the framework of the current crisis. The "new world order" now described by Bush was first of all an order were aggression among states would not be tolerated, but, as the President maintained, the effort of American soldiers was intended to achieve more than the simple enforcement of the international rule of law:

> As Americans, we know that there are times when we must step forward and accept our responsibility to lead the world away from the dark chaos of dictators, toward the brighter promise of a better day. Almost 50 years ago we began a long struggle against aggressive totalitarianism. Now we face another defining hour for America and the world. […]
>
> This we do know: Our cause is just; our cause is moral; our cause is right.[75]

The view from Baghdad was a much bleaker one. The outstanding effectiveness of the US-led air campaign was a powerful demonstration that Iraq was not prepared to confront American military power, and gave credit to those warnings that the Iraqi Army would collapse under the pressure of a US-led ground

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75   "Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union," January 29, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2656&year=1991&month=01 . Incidentally, on the previous day Bush the Wilsonian had stated that, with regard to the crisis in the Gulf: "We seek nothing for ourselves." "Remarks at the Annual Convention of the National Religious Broadcasters", January 28, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2653&year=1991&month=01 .

offensive.[76] The Baghdad regime had been preparing for another kind of military confrontation, a long and bloody war of attrition on the ground, like the one that had been fought against Iran, but by the end of January 1991 there was no reason to expect that Washington and its allies would call off the air campaign before the effectiveness of Iraqi forces had been so downgraded that not only the defense of Kuwait, but the very survival of the regime would be called into question.[77] Saddam and his inner circle thus decided to try to steal the initiative from the US-led coalition and suck the Americans and their allies in a ground war of attrition that might offset their technological superiority.[78] The dictator ordered a ground offensive on Khafji, a Saudi city close to the border with Kuwait, where there had already been some clashes with Coalition forces.[79] Clearly, no matter how successful, such an attack could not turn by itself the strategic balance in Baghdad's favor, and high casualties could be expected, but that was probably the only hope for the regime to get out of the corner. The attack might inflict a psychological shock on the Saudis, or force the Coalition to an early launch of the ground offensive thus giving the Iraqi leadership a chance to inflict losses on the US and its allies and make the uncompromising line harder to sustain politically.[80] The assault appeared to have been conceived as an operation of major importance, with careful planning and selection of units and commanders. Gen. Salah Abou Mahmoud, one of the most competent military commanders in the Iraqi Army, was put in charge of the operation, and Saddam himself paid visit to earmarked troops to assess their level of preparedness.[81] Then, on the night of January 29-30, the attack was launched, and the Iraqis did manage to take Coalition forces by surprise and seize Khafji.[82] The offensive did shock Coalition leaders, especially the Saudis,

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76   F. Gregory Gause III, "Iraq's Decisions to go to War, 1980 and 1990", *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Winter 2002), p. 70.
77   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 362.
78   Cigar, "Iraq's Strategic Mindset and the Gulf War", pp. 14-22.
79   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 364.
80   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 268-271; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 364. During interviews conducted by the FBI in 2004, Saddam declared he himself had designed the attack. The purpose, he acknowledged, was to "force a fight" and to force casualties upon coalition forces. National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 11, March 3, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/12.pdf .
81   Gordon and Bernard, *The Generals' War*, pp. 268-269.
82   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals 'War*, pp. 268-269; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 365.

although their reaction was quite opposite to what Saddam and his advisers had been whishing for.[83] After absorbing the initial shock, by January 31, 1991, Saudi ground forces, after intense fighting and with American and British air support, managed to force the Iraqis to relinquish control of the city.[84] Rather than turning the table on the Coalition, the Battle of Khafji ended up as a proof that the combat capabilities of the Iraqi Army were actually below expectations.[85]

By early February 1991, politicians at the White House felt the need to assess the available political and military options. From the military standpoint, the air campaign was proceeding according to plan, and there was no need to rush into the ground war.[86] The President's most influential advisers were nonetheless becoming adamant to launch the ground campaign, and make sure that Iraqi military power ceased once and for all to be a source of trouble in the Persian Gulf. From the political point of view, moreover, a certain pressure to launch the ground war was beginning to develop, due to a widespread perception that the very success of the air war was leading to a multiplication of calls for an end to what was increasingly looking like a one-sided carnage, as well as to a resumption of diplomatic initiatives.[87]

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83   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 278-279. According to Schwarzkopf, the Saudis were ready to let Coalition air forces destroy the whole city rather than leave it in Iraqi hands. Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 494-495.
84   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 280-286.
85   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 365-366; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 496. According to Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, the Battle of Khafji was indeed a critical turning point in the Gulf War that Schwarzkopf and his entourage failed to appreciate. That failure, the two authors argue, prevented US commanders to revise the cautious assessment at the basis of their plans for the ground campaign, and that in turn undermined the chances to achieve complete destruction of the Republican Guard and Iraqi armor in general. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 288. Although Gordon's and Trainor's analysis is indeed compelling in retrospect, this author maintains that given the long record of intelligence assessments depicting the Iraqis as fierce fighters, the responsible concern to minimize casualties on the part of American commanders, and the fact that the explicit objective of Desert Storm was indeed the liberation of Kuwait, it's hard to blame Schwarzkopf and his subordinates for sticking to their plan. In retrospect, Saddam the strategist admitted that the attack may have been counterproductive. His view, however, was that the early demonstration of Iraqi military might at Khafji may have persuaded the US to prolong the air campaign. National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 11, cit.
86   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 362, 366.
87   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 462-463.

An important obstacle to a rush to the launch of the ground war was represented by the problem of battlefield damage assessment. CENTCOM planners estimated that a 50% average level of attrition of Iraqi forces – with higher percentages for units deployed in first lines – would allow coalition forces to breach the enemy lines at ease.[88] In practical terms, however, damage assessment was an art rather than a science: different intelligence agencies advocated different criteria, and as a result the assessments available to military commanders presented substantial differences. Schwarzkopf and his advisers were inclined to give credit to cautious and conservative assessments, and in the end CENTCOM adopted a "mixed" criterion based on "objective" evidence, such as photo analysis, and "subjective" intelligence, such as estimates concerning to what extent bombing had reduced the enemy's capability to combat and had enhanced the Coalition's air supremacy.[89] By early February 1991 intelligence estimates consistently began to provide optimistic assessments concerning attrition of Iraqi forces deployed in Kuwait, and pressure from politicians in Washington to launch the ground campaign began to rise. On February 8, 1991, Cheney and Powell traveled to Riyadh to consult with Schwarzkopf on the dates for the land offensive. CENTCOM's commander maintained that the most likely dates ranged between February 21 and 24: by that time attrition of enemy forces was expected to reach the target levels, and weather conditions would be ideal.[90] In addition, logistical constraints were still pending: troops earmarked to perform the "left hook" hadn't completed deployment in theirs sector yet. Finally, Gen. Fred Franks, the commander of the VII Corps, had asked for additional troops to ensure a smoother and safer advance into Iraqi territory.[91] Many at the White House were uneasy about delays at that juncture. Media coverage of the destruction wrought by the air campaign, combined with speculation about American and allied war aims, was provoking increased pressure from international public opinion and major international leaders alike.[92] In the

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88   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 366-367.
89   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 499-500.
90   Ambassador Charles Freeman recalled that a date for the beginning of military operation had been decided as early as in mid-November 1990. Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman, cit.
91   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 501.
92   John Wyles, "Italians cool on British war aims", *Financial Times*, January 30, 1991; "War aims: wider and still wider", *The Economist*, February 9, 1991; Tony Barber, "Gorbachev

event, however, Bush and his advisers resolved to grant the military autonomy they needed to manage operational issues.[93]

Pressure was not confined to the White House, though. If politicians in Washington were anxious to switch to the next phase in the war, by early February Saddam and his inner circle were desperate to find a way to avoid the Coalition's ground offensive. Thus, the dictator decided to turn to the Soviets for help to try and strike a last-minute diplomatic deal that would allow an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait short of compliance with all relevant UN Security Council resolutions. At the beginning of the month Gorbachev actually issued a public statement confirming Moscow's support for the US-UN line, and blaming Saddam's non-compliance with UN Security Council demands as the cause for the ongoing war. The Soviet leader, however, appeared alarmed by the hostilities, and adamant to prevent a ground war.[94] Thus, he also voiced his concern that the logic of US-led military operations in the Gulf was stretching the limits of the UN mandate, and announced his decision to dispatch Primakov for a new mission to Baghdad aimed at exploring the possibilities to reach a settlement that would prevent a ground war.[95] Primakov arrived to Baghdad on February 12, 1991, on the same day of the tragic bombing of a bunker in Amiryya, a neighborhood of the Iraqi capital, which had been suspected by the US and its allies to hide a command and control facility. After a meeting with Aziz, the Soviet diplomat was summoned by Saddam, this time in a private apartment in one of the city's suburbs.[96] The dictator's posture before his subordinates was still confident and defiant, but, as Primakov recalls, in private talks he was anxious to hear what the Soviets had in store. Primakov frankly warned Saddam that the US was ready to launch a full-scale land offensive, and that in that event there would be no chance for the Iraqis to escape a massive

warns Bush on his war aims", *The Independent*, February 10, 1991.

93   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 466; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 501. As noted by Gideon Rose, that attitude concerning the bounds of relationship between the civilian and military leadership was strongly influenced by the understanding of the Vietnam War experience shared by Bush and his closest advisers. Rose, *How Wars End*, pp. 219-221.

94   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 374; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 402.

95   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 376; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 468; Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 126-130.

96   Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 130-135 ; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 332-334.

defeat. If the Baghdad regime wanted to avoid that fate, Primakov continued, it would have to show its willingness to pull out of Kuwait before the launch of ground operations. Saddam appeared highly determined to avoid the ground war, and was now ready to accept the prospect of relinquishing the territory occupied since August 1990. There were nonetheless conditions for an Iraqi withdrawal: Iraqi forces should not become a target of the Coalition during withdrawal operations, and the sanctions regime should be lifted.[97]

After days of talks and hesitation, an Iraqi proposal was finally put together and issued. On February 15, 1991, in another glut of "anti-Imperialist/Zionist" rhetoric, the Baghdad regime announced through a radio address its "readiness to deal with Security Council resolution No. 660 of 1990." The Iraqi Revolutionary Command Council stated its readiness to comply with Resolution 660 on condition that all subsequent Resolutions concerning the crisis were abolished and that US and coalition forces withdrew from the Gulf and Israel pulled out from occupied territories. Then, according to the Baghdad regime, a settlement would be achieved if Iraq was granted reparations for the damage received so far and the country's debt was forgiven. Foreign military bases, moreover, were to be removed from the region and the Gulf states were to be left free to draw up regional security arrangements.[98] There was, in substance, only a minimal improvement in comparison with Saddam's peace proposal of August 12, 1990.[99] Saddam's "offer" didn't shake Bush's determination to pursue the coalition's military campaign in full. "We are fast approaching the point where air efforts alone will not force Saddam out of Kuwait, and where we could transition to a new phase of operations without risking great losses," a list of talking points prepared for a meeting with Congressional leaders scheduled for February 19 read. The President and his staff planned to discuss with a number of key Congressmen the latest Iraqi diplomatic initiative. As far as the White House was concerned, the Iraqi proposal was a demonstration that the Coalition's military campaign was finally putting pressure

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97   Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 130-135; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 377-378.

98   "War In the Gulf: Iraqi Statement; Baghdad's Offer and Conditions for Ending War Over Kuwait", *The New York Times*, February 16, 1991, Section 1, p. 5, http://www.nytimes.com/1991/02/16/world/war-gulf-iraqi-statement-baghdad-s-offer-conditions-for-ending-war-over-kuwait.html .

99   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 378.

on the Baghdad regime, but expecting compliance on the part of Saddam would be a mistake. "We have to keep in mind that up to now Saddam has used diplomacy as a tactic to divide the coalition" the list continued, adding that "we will not allow ourselves to be drawn into negotiations."[100] From the Administration's standpoint, Bush recalls, had military operations been halted short of the ground offensive, the job would not have been done in full. Short of the ground offensive, Saddam was expected to remain in place and in control of enough military assets to comfortably hold on to power and continue to threaten his neighbors.[101] Bush publicly described the Iraqi proposal as a "cruel hoax", and argued that the time had come for the Iraqi population and its military "to take matters into their own hands -- to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside, and to comply with the United Nations resolutions and then rejoin the family of peace-loving nations."[102]

Gorbachev, however, was attaching great priority to his effort to work out with Aziz a proposal for Iraqi withdrawal and prevent the launch of the ground war. That initiative made everybody in the Bush Cabinet very uneasy. As suggested by a number of draft letters addressed to the Kremlin, the President and his staff were adamant to convey to Gorbachev the message that nothing short of full Iraqi compliance with UN resolutions would satisfy the Coalition, and that from a long term perspective it was critical to ensure the removal of Saddam's unconventional weapons and to remove the regional threat posed by Iraq's military power in general.[103] On February 17, 1991, the Soviet leader met Tariq Aziz in Moscow, and the Iraqi Foreign Minister acknowledged that it was necessary to improve the

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100   "Feb. 19 Congressional Leadership Meeting", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

101   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp.470-471.

102   George H.W. Bush, "Remarks to the American Association for the Advancement of Science," February 15, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2709&year=1991&month=2 . It is interesting to notice the analogy with similar suggestions aired by Bush during the Panama crisis. Draft, "Message", 5/89, cit; "Message to the PDF" (n.d.), cit.; "Interview with Members of the White House Press Corps on the Situation in Panama", May 13, 1989, cit.

103   Draft Letter, POTUS to Mikhail Gorbachev, "[Your report on your meeting with Tariq Aziz]", 02/18/91, OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Draft Letter, POTUS to Mikhail Gorbachev, "[Comments on your letter reporting on your talks with Tariq Aziz]", 02/19/91, OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. As Scowcroft recalls, that was "a major objective, although it had not been feasible to list it openly as such while a peaceful solution of the crisis was possible." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 463.

credibility of the Baghdad proposal with a clear specification of the timing of the Iraqi pullout, with the only condition of a commitment on the part of the Coalition not to attack withdrawing forces.[104] Although the proposal had not Saddam's blessing, Gorbachev judged that the margins for avoiding the ground war were so tight that it was necessary to inform the Americans immediately, and ask them to postpone the beginning of ground operations.[105]

Bush and his advisers were now facing a dilemma. On the one hand, military commanders were not so averse to the idea of a ceasefire short of a ground war. After all, Kuwait would be liberated, casualties would be avoided, and Saddam's defeat would be evident anyway.[106] On the other hand, at the White House there was a strong consensus that halting hostilities now would leave unresolved the problem of Saddam's threat to the stability of the Persian Gulf.[107] Bush and his staff, however, didn't want to undermine the Soviet support. Thus, instead of straightforwardly rejecting the proposal, they concentrated on exposing its limits. A draft presidential letter addressed to the leaders of the major members of the Coalition explained that the Bush Cabinet's view of the Gorbachev-Aziz proposal was that to make a ceasefire plausible Iraq should undertake a major withdrawal, and that in any case no negotiation would be possible before Iraq fully complied with the relevant UN resolutions. Without a full Iraqi withdrawal, Bush added, the security of coalition forces deployed on the Kuwaiti Theater of Operations would be put at risk. However, the President wrote, he had assured Gorbachev that "we would not attack retreating Iraqi forces."[108] Then, on February 19, 1991, the White House announced that in order to make their proposal for a ceasefire credible, the Baghdad regime had to demonstrate its good faith by abiding to four conditions: the immediate interruption of SCUD attacks; the commitment not to resort to

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104 Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, pp. 138-140.

105 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 381; Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, p. 140; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 473.

106 Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 477-478; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 511-513.

107 As Scowcroft observes in his memoirs, "if Saddam withdrew with most f his armed forces intact, we hadn't really won". Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 473.

108 Draft Message, POTUS to heads of state of London, Paris, Cairo, Riyadh, Taif, Damascus, Tel Aviv, Rome, Camberra, "[Exchange with the Soviets]", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-004, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

unconventional weapons; an immediate exchange of prisoners; and the recognition that the ceasefire would be effective only after completion of the withdrawal.[109]

Meanwhile, in Moscow, frantic talks between Gorbachev and Aziz were continuing. Gorbachev personally discussed the developments with Bush in a telephone conversation on February 21, 1990. The Soviet leader noted that Aziz was ready to agree on a withdrawal in less than six weeks and was beginning to acknowledge that sanctions would be dropped only at an advanced stage of the Iraqi pullout. Bush, however, had strong perplexities about the peace initiative. "The idea of stopping and hoping he will then follow through on a cease fire," he said, "I'm certain will be unacceptable to the coalition, I am certain of that." Bush added that if a withdrawal was undertaken under the conditions Gorbachev had just outlined, some critical questions such as Iraq's unconventional weapons would remain open. "The idea that he [Saddam] can somehow get a victory out of a crushing defeat," Bush added, "would simply be unacceptable." Gorbachev replied that he appreciated the importance of joint American and Soviet resolve, but maintained that it was important to further explore the possibilities to work out with Aziz an ceasefire proposal. "We would be very interested," Bush said as he greeted his counterpart, "because time is running out."[110] In a phone conversation a few hours earlier, Bush had indeed discussed the timetable laying ahead for the coalition with French President Mitterrand. As it emerges from the transcript of the conversation – which was still largely classified by the time this author visited the Bush Library – as they debated the issue of the incoming ground war, Bush told Mitterrand that "What we are shooting for would be at 0400 in the morning on Sunday [February 24, 1991], which is about 8:00 p.m. [Saturday, February 23, 1991] over here and about midnight or 1:00 a.m. in Paris."[111]

After another round of talks Aziz agreed to shorten the timing of the withdrawal to three weeks (and four days to complete the pullout from Kuwait city), to release all prisoners within three days of the end of hostilities and to let an international

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109   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 473-474.
110   Telcon, "Gorbachev Call to POTUS 1845-1920", 02/21/91, OA/ID CF01584-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
111   Telcon, Telcon with Francois Mitterrand, President of France on February 21, 1991, 2:07-2:16 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

peacekeeping mission monitor the withdrawal, on condition that as soon as compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 660 had been certified, all subsequent resolution would be nullified.[112] On February 22, 1991, Bush and Baker discussed the Soviet-brokered peace proposal with Mitterrand. As Baker reported, the Iraqis were now proposing a complete withdrawal in three weeks and had abandoned any linkage and the call for an immediate suspension of sanctions. As Bush noted, however, while talking peace to the Soviets the Baghdad regime was beginning to set on fire Kuwait's oil wells and destroying the country's oil-related industrial facilities.[113] Evidence of Iraq's scorched earth policy in Kuwait further persuaded the President and his advisers that Saddam's proposal was just a ruse to buy time and break the momentum toward the final ground offensive which was necessary to undo his aggression. Bush made the same remarks to Gorbachev on the following day. The Soviet leader was adamant to avoid a ground war, and he strongly recommended Bush to take time to explore the proposal and to try to resume the diplomatic process at the UN. The President rebutted that although Saddam had indeed dropped some conditions, he was still calling for a conditional withdrawal, which came short of the UN-endorsed demands. "I don't believe there can be any flexibility in what we can do at this point," Bush told his reluctant counterpart.[114]

The White House eventually decided to issue a public, last-minute ultimatum to Saddam. Washington called for a the beginning of a large scale Iraqi withdrawal by February 23 at noon, UN time.[115] The President decided to consult with Gorbachev before disclosing the details of the ultimatum – which called for Iraq's complete

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112 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 382-383; Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, p. 146-147.

113 "Telcon, "Telcon with Francois Mitterrand of France on February 22, 1991, 9:11-9:35 a.m.", OA/ID CF01584-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. It might be important to recall that the US leadership had repeatedly warned the Baghdad regime that that kind of actions would lead to an escalation of war aims by Washington.

114 Telcon, "Telcon with President Mikhail Gorbachev of the USSR on February 23, 1991, 11:15-11:43 a.m.", OA/ID CF01584-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 478-479.

115 "Remarks on the Persian Gulf Conflict", February 22, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2729&year=1991&month=2 .

withdrawal within one week.[116] Gorbachev, who had been in touch with British, French, Italian, Japanese, Syrian, and Iranian leaders, expressed disappointment about the dismissal of his effort to find an acceptable political solution and avoid the ground offensive, although he had to concede that as a matter of fact he was still waiting for a formal reply on the part of Saddam. Bush maintained that his view was the Coalition view, and that Saddam's actions were evidence that he could not be trusted. The President also confirmed the importance of Soviet support and asked his Soviet counterpart not to abandon the common position. Gorbachev vocally defended his attempt to achieve an acceptable result and avoid the "tragedy" of a ground war, but Bush was unmovable, and remarked that a common position in that phase of the war would be a critical asset in US-Soviet negotiations on matters such as conventional and strategic arms reductions on the START and CFE level. In a very cold way, Gorbachev acknowledged the gap dividing Washington and Moscow said good bye.[117]

Weather conditions were worse than expected, but from Riyadh Schwarzkopf confirmed that G-Day – the beginning for the ground offensive – would be February 24, Persian Gulf time.[118] On February 23, at 10:00 pm Bush addressed the nation from the White House briefing room. "The liberation of Kuwait has now entered a final phase." He said. "I have complete confidence in the ability of the coalition forces swiftly and decisively to accomplish their mission."[119] It was dawn in the desert. The ground war – Operation Desert Sabre – had finally started.

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116   Considering estimates made by the American intelligence, it seems questionable whether so quick a withdrawal was physically possible. Incidentally, Gorbachev made analogous considerations.

117   Telcon, "Phone conversation among Secretary Baker, POTUS and President Gorbachev", n.d., CF01584-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Primakov, *Mission à Bagdad*, p. 150. In his memoirs, Bush recalls that the decisive conversation with Gorbachev took place on February 23, 1991, at 11:15. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 478-479. Since this conversation has no date, it's not sure when this heated exchange happened. It is nonetheless clear that the exchange must have happened on the very eve of the launch of the ground offensive. The way Bush tried to extract Gorbachev's immediate acquiescence by linking it to future possible concessions concerning other issues, moreover, makes the conversation very informative about the George H.W. Bush Administration's diplomatic style.

118   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 511-513.

119   "Address to the Nation Announcing Allied Military Ground Action in the Persian Gulf", February 23, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2734&year=1991&month=2 .

Desert Sabre: "100 Hours" to cut a Gordian Knot

On the eve of G-Day coalition forces were in place, ready to perform their missions. Two US Marine Divisions (1st Marine Expeditionary Force/1st MEF) were deployed along the border between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, along with two additional multinational contingents (Joint Forces Command North/JFCN and Joint Forces Command East/JFCE) consisting of Arab and Muslim troops, mainly Egyptians and Saudis.[120] Their mission was to directly engage the Iraqis along their entrenched positions and tie them down, while the US VII and XVIII Corps, joined respectively by British armored units and French light troops, would perform the most important job: the "left hook" that would engage the Iraqis from behind, envelop them, and destroy most of Baghdad's Republican Guard and armored units – a critical "center of gravity" for Desert Storm planners, and the big prize for politicians in Washington and allied capitals.[121]

Having established these main guidelines, Schwarzkopf and CENTCOM planners decided to leave field commanders with significant autonomy in operational terms.[122] The main rationale for such an operational approach was the expectation that it would enhance flexibility and effectiveness in the implementation of the battle plan. There was nonetheless a risk that individual commanders might react to specific contingencies in a way not necessarily consistent with the big picture. As Operation Desert Sabre unfolded, both the pros and cons of Schwarzkopf approach became evident.

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120 An additional contingent of US seaborne units had been moved to the Gulf region, but stationed offshore along the Kuwaiti coast. It was decided that its mission would be to deceive the Iraqis into believing that coalition forces were set to perform an amphibious landing. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 368-369; A few weeks prior to the beginning of the war, the Syrian government had backtracked and decided that its forces should not directly engage the Iraqis. Given the political importance of Syrian participation in the Coalition, Schwarzkopf eventually worked out a compromise by which the Syrian would be deployed behind the Egyptians. They would thus participate in the ground offensive, but their mission would be limited to hanging back other Arab troops. Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 467-468.

121 Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 523-524; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 191; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 391-393; McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 40-41; William J. Taylor Jr. and James Blackwell, "The Ground War in the Gulf", *Survival*, vol. 33, n. 3 (May/June 1991), pp. 231-245. It is interesting to note that the Arabs and Muslim troops were to take part in the contingent that would eventually enter Kuwaiti territory and liberate Kuwait city, but no Arab or Muslim troop would enter Iraqi territory.

122 Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 74, 464, 472-473.

The Marine-led offensive in southern Kuwait turned out to be bold and daring – and successful – beyond expectation. Although that offensive was only supposed to keep the Iraqis busy, Gen. Walter Boomer, the commander of the 1st MEF, had set out for a real fight. As it had been the case at Khafji, though, the Iraqis turned out to be less tough than expected. Their weapons and equipment were obsolescent, training was poor, command and control and supply lines were in tatters, and morale was generally low.[123] As a result, Iraqi defenses in that sector began to collapse as soon as they encountered the enemy. Soon after the ground offensive was unleashed it became clear that it would be necessary to speed up the "left hook."[124]

By the end of the first day, the Marines and their fellow troops were already far into Kuwait's territory, ready to set off for Kuwait City and other assigned targets.[125] The most critical encounter with the enemy took place at the al-Burqan oil facility on February 25, when a Marine Division advancing toward the al-Jaber airport engaged Iraqi armored units – led by Khafji-veteran Gen. Mahmoud. The Iraqis did fight, but Coalition forces managed to overcome their resistance easily and with few casualties. As a result, by the morning of February 26, 1991 the Marines and their fellow Arab and Muslim troops reached the outskirts of Kuwait City, and were ready for the final assault to seize the capital and liberate Kuwait.[126]

Following the development of the offensive from CENTCOM headquarters in Riyadh, Schwarzkopf realized that the early breakthrough in southern Kuwait was jeopardizing the overall success of the ground offensive. If the Marines kicked the Iraqis out of Kuwait too early, it would not be possible for the VII and XVIII Corps to complete the "left hook" on time to encircle the enemy and to destroy the Republican Guard and other armored units.[127] It was thus decided to unleash the advance of the US Army-led offensive through western Iraq slightly ahead of

123   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 354; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 393-399.
124   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 523-524.
125   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 355-364; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 393, 398-399.
126   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 371; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 398-399.
127   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 363.

schedule, in the afternoon of February 24.[128] In contrast to the Marines, however, the Army's advance into the western sector followed a methodic approach which proved to be effective but soon ended up being out of tempo with the southern push.129

On the far west side of the coalition deployment, the XVIII Corps and France's Division Daguet moved on with relative ease. Soon the US 101st Airborne Division managed to establish an outpost on the edges of the Euphrates River (Forward Operating Base Cobra), thus laying the bases for subsequent maneuvers to close Highway 8 – the most likely escape route for the Iraqis. The French too fulfilled their tasks as expected, and that made it possible to unleash the US armored units of the 24th Infantry Division.[130] By the end of February 24 the advance of XVIII Corps was quite satisfying, and by the next morning its troops were ready to launch operations to seize Highway 8 and complete the "left hook."[131]

The most troubling news came from the main sector of the Western front. It was from that area that the heavy armored units of the VII Corps were supposed to conduct the decisive attack on the Iraqi Republican Guard units.[132] Yet it was right there that the advance was being pursued in the most methodical – and slowest – way. The VII Corps had actually been stationed in Germany until the endorsement of the offensive option, in November 1990. Its troops had been trained to fight the Red Army along with NATO forces in Central Europe. Once moved to the Persian Gulf, the Corps had to readapt to operate along with different forces. Pre-war estimates suggested not only that the Iraqi Army was the fourth-largest in the world, but also that the Iraqis had been hardened by their recent combat experience in the war against Iran. Furthermore, considering that the Iraqi military machine had been largely equipped and trained by the Soviets, Gen. Franks and other VII Corps commanders saw little reason not to stick to their traditional, cautious and methodical approach, that would, among other things, help minimize casualties.[133]

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128   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 524-525.
129   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 527-529; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 375-399
130   McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 45-46.
131   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 375-387
132   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 154-155, 157; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 522-523.
133   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 377, 379. Among other things, Gordon and

As a consequence, the VII Corps and its fellow British 1st Armored Division (led by soon-to-be-famous Gen. Rupert Smith) did take on Iraqi units, but their advance soon fell out of sync with the unexpectedly fast progress of the rest of the coalition.[134] In sum, if the Marine-led advance from the south had been supposed to act as a sponge to keep the Iraqis tied down, it turned out to have the effect of a piston which was pushing a large number of Iraqi units beyond the reach of the "left hook."[135] It was thus becoming likely that a significant amount of Iraqi armor might manage to escape destruction, and that was particularly evident concerning the Republican Guard, whose units had been deployed far from the trenches of Kuwait and close to the Iraqi border – ready to withdraw into the mainland.[136] On February 25 the Baghdad regime ordered the withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait. From that moment onward the already feeble resistance of the Iraqi Army became a rout, and the war began to look like a carnage, with televised images of Iraqi retreating units jammed along highways and allied aircraft and armored divisions pounding them.[137]

These unexpected military developments begun to affect the view from Washington too. The news of the withdrawal was now public, and assessments from the battlefield confirmed that the Iraqis were indeed pulling out. The Baghdad regime, moreover, was apparently lobbying with the Soviets at the UN to try to broker a ceasefire.[138] On the night of February 25 Bush and his advisers met to discuss the latest developments. It was now critical to decide which were the objectives to achieve in order to make it possible to terminate the hostilities on terms acceptable to the US and its allies. As long as the White House was concerned, there would be no ceasefire until the Iraqis committed to abide without

Trainor observe that the VII Corps had not taken part in the Battle of Khafji, and thus had no concrete experience of the real performance of the Iraqi Army.

134 Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 375-399; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp 395-397.

135 Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War...* cit., p. 362.

136 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 388; Lawrence Freedman, and Efraim Karsh, "How Kuwait Was Won: Strategy in the Gulf War", in *International Security* vol. 16, No. 2 (Fall 1991), pp. 13-14.

137 Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 402-403.

138 Among the most evident signals that the Iraqis were not planning to stay in Kuwait there was the fact that they had begun to destroy the country's water desalinization facilities.
McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict...*, cit., p. 50; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 524-525.

conditions by all relevant UN Security Council resolutions. As Gen. Powell reported, moreover, CENTCOM estimated that it would take another couple of days to achieve satisfactory results.[139] Media coverage of the war, however, was stirring public opinion, and the costs of continued military operations were now perceived to be on the rise.[140]

In the morning of February 26, 1991, the White House publicly announced that there would be no ceasefire until the Baghdad regime clearly committed to meet the Coalition's basic demands, in other words, respect of all relevant UN Resolutions. As Bush maintained, Iraqi forces remained a threat to the Coalition, therefore they would continue to be targets for US and allied forces, unless soldiers deposed their weapons. The Soviets were critical about the statement, but for the time being there was no repercussion on the conduct of the ground war.[141]

Since the early hours of February 26 it had become evident that the Iraqi withdrawal had turned into a rout, and that the Baghdad regime was no longer in control of its forces on the battlefield. Politicians in Washington were anxious about the implementation of the "left hook." Schwarzkopf had personally reached out to Gen. Franks to urge him to speed up the pace of the advance of the VII Corps, yet the offensive from the West looked increasingly unbalanced toward the XVIII Corps.[142] By the morning of February 27 the 24th Infantry Division and the 101st Airborne Division – the spearheads of the XVIII Corps – had blocked all escape routes along Highway 8 around Talil and the Jalibah airport, and were ready for the final rush to close the gates in the Basra area.[143] Meanwhile, the Marines and the Arab forces had reached Kuwait City and established contacts with the units of the Kuwaiti resistance, who signaled that a safe seizure was at hand. The few Kuwaiti troops who had joined the coalition would have the honor to enter

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139   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 396.
140   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 481-482.
141   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 483; "Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the Iraqi Statement on Withdrawal From Kuwait", February 26, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2738&year=1991&month=2 ; George W.H. Bush, "Address to the Nation on the Iraqi Statement on Withdrawal From Kuwait", February 26, 1991 *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2739&year=1991&month=2 .
142   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 396-399; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 535-537.
143   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 400-404.

their capital, followed by their Arabs and Muslims fellows and then by the Americans.[144]

On the same day the Iraqi Government publicly announced its intention to comply with UN resolutions in full, to rescind the annexation of Kuwait, to pay reparations, and to release all prisoners in return for a ceasefire. Meanwhile, images of columns of Iraqi forces jammed along Highway 8 and other escape routes and bombed by the Coalition forces dominated media reporting. Although from a purely military point of view that was the safest way to achieve the Coalition's war aims, from a political point of view the war was becoming an unjustifiable, one-sided slaughter – Highway 8 had indeed been dubbed "the Highway of Death."[145]

By February 27 Bush and his advisers began to consider seriously the idea of ending the war. Powell contacted Schwarzkopf and asked him how soon it was possible to halt military operations. By that time pressures from the White House and CENTCOM headquarters had speeded up the VII Corps's advance, and the encirclement of Iraqi forces appeared to be almost complete, as Gen. Schwarzkopf remarked during a press conference.146 The situation on the battlefield was far from crystal clear, and according to CENTCOM's commander it would take at least another day to "close the gates" and destroy a satisfying amount of Iraqi armor.[147] Military leaders, at any rate, were fond of halting hostilities. After all, Kuwait had been liberated, casualties were low, and from Riyadh it appeared that given that time was running out anyway, there was little more that could be accomplished by stretching offensive operations to the limit. Speculation arose about the possibility of ending the war so that ground operation would last precisely 100 hours, and both political and military leaders ended up agreeing that this symbolic deadline was viable.[148] It was thus resolved that offensive military operations would be halted by 8:00 in the morning on February 28, Persian Gulf time. The expectation was that by

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144   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 373; Schwarzkopf with Petre, It Doesn't Take a Hero, pp. 537-539; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 398-399.

145   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 402-403; McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 47; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 415.

146   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 536-537; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, p. 404.

147   Gordon and Bernard Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 413-416; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 542-545.

148   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 542-544; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 413-432.

that time Kuwait would have been liberated, and that the Iraqi military potential would have been downgraded to such a level that the country could no longer pose a threat to its neighbors but remained strong enough to check Iran.[149] As many members of the Bush team recalled, another critical factor that influenced the President's decision was a willingness to show a commitment to the proper working of the UN Security Council, and to demonstrate to the rest of the coalition, and especially its Arab component, that the US was a dependable power.[150]

The President publicly announced the decision in a televised address at 9:00 pm on February 27. The message was simple: "Kuwait is liberated. Iraq's army is defeated". The Gulf War had ended. "We declared that the aggression against Kuwait would not stand," the President continued, "And tonight, America and the world have kept their word." America had won, the world had won. As Bush put it: "This is a victory for the United Nations, for all mankind, for the rule of law, and for what is right."[151] The conditions for a ceasefire, later embodied in UN Security Council Resolution 686, essentially amounted to Iraq's compliance with relevant UN resolutions, the rescinding of the annexation of Kuwait, compensation for Kuwait, immediate release of prisoners, disclosure of all land and sea mines in the theater of operations, and the arrangement of a meeting between coalition and Iraqi military leaders to negotiate the military aspects of the ceasefire.[152]

Schwarzkopf too held a press briefing from CENTCOM's headquarters in Riyadh. The "gate", the General stated, had been "closed" – at least closed enough to allow the substantial destruction of Iraq's offensive capability, and to declare victory. Schwarzkopf took care to add that the Coalition had no intention to

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149   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp.543-544; ; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 410; Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, pp. 129-131.

150   Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit. Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, January 22, 2010, Author's conversation with Ambassador Roman Popadiuk, October 7, 2009; Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp 490-491; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 412.

151   "Address to the Nation on the Suspension of Allied Offensive Combat Operations in the Persian Gulf", February 27, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2746&year=1991&month=2.

152 "Address to the Nation on the Suspension of Allied Offensive Combat Operations in the Persian Gulf", February 27, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2746&year=1991&month=2 ; UN Security Council Resolution 686 (1991), of 2 March 1991, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/22/IMG/NR059622.pdf?OpenElement .

continue the offensive into Iraq or to overthrow the Baghdad regime.[153] Field commanders were instructed to speed up operations in order to take advantage of the last few hours before the ceasefire to destroy as much Iraqi armor as possible, although it was now clear that a significant amount of Iraqi forces, including many Republican Guard units, would survive.[154]

The last clash between Iraqi and Coalition troops actually took place after the ceasefire. On the first of March some units of the 24th Infantry Division run into some units from the Hammurabi Republican Guard Division. The Iraqis fired, and met the Amerians' harsh response.[155] By that time, however, the attention had shifted to the forthcoming ceasefire talks. American leaders reportedly flirted with the idea of resuming Battleship Missouri, on whose deck the Japanese had surrendered at the end of the Second World War, but in the event it was decided that ceasefire talks should follow a more discrete formula, though they must take place on Iraqi territory, as a reminder of the magnitude of the Baghdad regime's débâcle.[156] The chosen location was the Safwan airfield in Southern Iraq, not that far from Kuwaiti territory. To Schwarzkopf's dismay it turned out that, contrary to what had apparently been reported by Gen. Franks, coalition forces didn't actually have physical control of the area. In the event it was still possible to persuade stationing Iraqi units to abandon the area peacefully, and set the stage for negotiations.[157]

The problem of Kuwait was for all intents and purposes solved by 9:02 pm, February 27, 1991. The performance of American forces was impressive and

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153   As Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor report, some junior members of the Bush Cabinet, such as Paul Wolfowitz, criticized Schwarzkopf's press conference, on the ground that his statements would disincentive the Iraqi military leadership to overthrow Saddam. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 416-419, 418;

154   Bush and his advisers speculated about the idea of ordering the Iraqis to abandon their tanks and armored military vehicles and withdraw on foot, in order to allow Coalition forces to destroy additional Iraqi armor without enemy casualties. It became evident, however, that it would be impossible to implement such a condition, and thus the idea was dropped. Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 546. Paper, "Arms Control After the War", 02/08/91, OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

155   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 435-438; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-199*, pp. 406-407.

156   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 548-549.

157   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 426-429, 439-441; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 548-549.

successful beyond expectation. It took a mere 100 hours for the coalition forces to overcome the Iraqi resistance, with extremely low casualties. Yet, due to different operational approaches adopted by field commanders and unexpected developments on the ground – what Gen. von Clausewitz famously called "friction" – not everything went according to plan. What remained pending was the solution of the "problem of Saddam." The strategy adopted by the Bush Administration, and endorsed by its coalition partners, had never clearly specified the relationship between the two problems and the deriving military missions, although they derived from different understandings of what was at stake in the crisis. On the one hand, solving the "problem of Kuwait" – the "explicit" and universally endorsed mission – reflected a "minimalist" approach geared at upholding basic principles of international law, such as the sanctity of states' sovereignty and the commitment to prevent brute force from becoming a legitimate instrument in the settlement of international disputes. On the other hand, solving the problem of Saddam – especially on terms "implicitly" set by Washington and its allies – reflected an understanding of the crisis and the mission that went beyond the simple conduct of an international "police" operation, and implied the pursuit of a specific and controversial political design. The ambiguity that surrounded the development of the American diplomatic and military strategy, had so far allowed the Bush Cabinet to dodge the dilemma of establishing whether the "explicit" and "implicit" objectives were actually complementary or conflicting. The critical decision to make Desert Sabre the "100-Hour War" signaled that at least in the short term, the two objectives were indeed conflicting, and that military force could in fact assure the definitive achievement of only the "minimalist" set of goals. What remained unclear as military operations came to an halt, was whether the Administration could still manage to achieve everything it wanted.

Chapter 5

"That Is the Bush View": the Birth of the Post-Cold War Era
(March 1991-December 1992)

"the whole concept of trying to bring peace to the rest of the Middle East […] relates to how Iraq is brought back into the family of nations."
President George H.W. Bush, March 1, 1991[1]

"we never really expected him [Saddam Hussein] to survive a defeat of such magnitude."
US Secretary of State James A. Baker III[2]

Despite the triumphant rhetoric that marked Bush's announcement of the end of Operation Desert Storm, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War many observers noted that the President didn't look particularly jubilant.[3] Indeed, although the coalition's mission to liberate Kuwait had been brilliantly accomplished, there were a great many questions left unanswered concerning the objective of restoring "international peace and security in the area". Bush himself acknowledged that point in his February 27 address and at a press conference on the first of March. Among other things, in that occasion a reporter asked Bush why he looked somber, and the answer was:

> You mentioned World War II; there was a definitive end to that conflict. And now we have Saddam Hussein still there, the man that wreaked this havoc upon his neighbors. We have our prisoners still held. We have people unaccounted for.

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1   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Conflict", March 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2755&year=1991&month=3 .

2   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy,* p. 442.

3   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Conflict", March 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2755&year=1991&month=3;

Bush acknowledged that celebrations were justified, but insisted that he was still focusing on what was left to be done.[4] True, Bush was not very emotional by nature,[5] yet in retrospect it seems clear that even on that day the President must have been aware that although the war had been brilliantly won, the peace his Administration was seeking was still to be achieved.

Developments on the ground in the Gulf would have a profound impact not only on the eventual settlement of the Gulf crisis, but on the very blueprint of the Bush Administration's attitude toward the world that was emerging from the ashes of the Cold War.

The Gulf War and the rise of a grand design for a new Middle East

Resolution 686, by which the UN Security council endorsed Washington's conditions for a ceasefire in the Gulf, was saluted by the US mission to the UN as a "watershed" in the Council's affairs. Yet it was also acknowledged that there were still "questions which need to be addressed in order to ensure that the peace we have secured at such a great cost is a lasting one."[6]

By the time the US-led military campaign was halted, the issues at stake appeared indeed to go beyond the future of Iraq and Kuwait. The Middle East, with its vast oil riches, was an extremely important region troubled by a series of interlocked conflicts and delicate geopolitical arrangements. The Bush Cabinet was aware of that state of affairs, and the conviction that it was in the interest of the United States to achieve a more stable political and economic order on the regional level had been a firm guideline throughout the Gulf crisis. As an NSC paper prepared during the war suggested:

We seek peace and stability for the Middle East because it is important in human terms, because this region contains most of the world's oil

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4   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf", March 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2755&year=1991&month=3 .

5   An interesting short description of the personality of George H.W. Bush and his closest advisers is provided by Christian Alfonsi. Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 77-87.

6   Cable from US Mission USUN, "Security Council adopts resolution on the Gulf establishing terms of cessation of hostilities", 3/3/1991, OA/ID CF01473-029, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

reserves, and because we have close ties with many Middle Eastern nations.[7]

The Bush team's attempts to develop a vision and a policy/strategy toward the Middle East identified the lack of popular legitimacy that characterized political leaders and regimes throughout the region, the lack of openness of their social and economic systems, and the low priority given by governments to the protection of the right of individuals, as critical obstacles to the kind of developments that would serve American interests in the area. It was suggested that stability and "evolutionary political change" toward greater democratization were critical priorities, and that the Middle Eastern countries needed economic reforms in the direction of greater openness to private entrepreneurship, stronger ties with industrialized countries, and less dependence on direct government intervention.[8] Although American influence over the unfolding of the region's "internal struggles" was judged to be limited, Washington's stakes in them were high, deserved attention, and demanded an effort to put together a "realistic U.S. approach." In particular, Washington should focus on the immediate need to bring peace and stability to the region, by encouraging the development of a more sustainable regional security system, arms limitations, conflict resolution, and, moderately, domestic political and economic openness.[9]

Victory against Saddam Hussein, as well as a demonstration that the US was a dependable and self-restrained ally, were considered a critical step toward the advancement of Washington's regional priorities.[10] As an NSC document argued in

7   Paper, "A Vision of the Future of the Middle East", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-020, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

8   As one of the documents read: "The poverty of much of the Arab world is not the fault of moderate oil states, most of whom have conducted generous foreign assistance programs for many years. As long as massive state interference in economic activities continues, there so will poverty, just as in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Paper, "A Vision of the Future of the Middle East", cit.

9   Paper, "A Vision of the Future of the Middle East", cit.; Paper, "The Middle East in the Post-War Period: Political Stability and Openness", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;; Paper, "Post-Crisis Economic Issues", 02/08/91, OA/ID CF01584-008, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

10   Information paper, "Iraq After the Fact: Opportunities for Change", 12/18/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

mid-December 1990:

An imposed settlement on Saddam Hussein, by war or diplomacy, may provide a unique opportunity to deal with many of the intractable regional issues. These include the Arab/Israeli dispute, weapons proliferation and security of water supplies, among others.[11]

Another NSC policy paper maintained that, as stated in NSD 45, the critical long term US objectives were an "available and accessible" supply of oil; the stability and security of regional political structures; and a regional environment favorable to US interests. "US military presence will probably underlie virtually any regional security arrangement," the paper argued. "However, its visible presence should not intrude onto the Arab landscape."[12] As another paper argued: "Whatever value a US military presence on the ground might have for military deterrence, it must be weighed against its costs to our broader political goals in the region, and, in particular, to our strategic objective of regional stability." There was a strong case for prepositioning and trade agreements with regional governments for the transfer of military equipment that could facilitate a US deployment. It was judged, however, that a visible US military presence would bring instability and hinder development toward domestic political reform and regional pacification.[13]

It was thus widely argued that, beyond the settlement of the Iraq-Kuwait problem once and for all, a key priority for Washington in the aftermath of the war would be to foster the emergence of a new security structure for the Persian Gulf that would guarantee the protection of the friendly Arab oil monarchies. Egypt had already put forward an interesting proposal for a new security arrangement in the Gulf Area: "A regional stabilization of the Gulf area based on a three-cornered

11   Information Paper, "Iraq After the Fact: Post-Crisis Decision Making", 12/18/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
12   Paper, "Think Piece; Dealing with a Post-Crisis Iraq", 12/20/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Interestingly, the paper argued, "Saddam and the Ba'ath party may or may not remain in power, although government structure is uncertain, this is not a major factor."
13   Paper, "Post-War Security Structures in the Gulf", 02/08/91, OAID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

balance consisting of Iran, Iraq and a GCC strengthened by an Arab force to include Egyptian and Syrian troops."[14] This security framework would be guaranteed by the United States, whose "over-the-horizon forces would benefit from very extensive prepositioning and interoperability."[15]

Another critical, and related, priority was to ensure the dismantlement of Iraq's WMD arsenals and the reduction of the country's conventional military might "to a level that does not threaten the region," and "to give a renewed impetus to global and regional WMD arms control," possibly within a UN framework.[16] There was also speculation that these developments could create the conditions for further geopolitical improvements, such as "managing Iran's integration into the post-crisis security environment." It was recognized that Iran would have to be "factored into any regional security structure at an early stage." Although it was evident that it was acquiescing to the US plan to crack on Saddam's regional influence, the Tehran regime was considered a potential troublemaker because of its "aspirations to regional hegemony." The challenge for the US and its regional partners would thus be "to manage these aspirations in such a way as to gain at least the tacit acquiescence of Iran in new regional security structures, while effecting a stable regional military balance and deflecting Iranian ambitions to assume the role of regional hegemony."[17]

In short, as an NSC study suggested in mid-December 1990: "After the defeat of Iraq, we can provide the impetus for redefining the regional power equation." First, "The historical rivalry between Cairo, Baghdad, and Damascus for leadership of the Arab world is being played out in Kuwait." US leverage could now be applied "to encourage the forces of moderation in Arab Governments." Second, "A

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14   The Egyptians were wary of Iran, but recognized that it should be given a stake in the new regional order.
15   Cable, AmEmbassy Cairo to SECSTATE, "Regional Endgames: Egyptian thinking About the Future of the Middle East", 9/24/90, OA/ID CF01478-019, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Another paper argued about a "super GCC" joined by Egypt. Paper, "Think Piece; Dealing with a Post-Crisis Iraq", 12/20/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
16   Paper, "Post-War Security Structures in the Gulf", 02/08/91, OAID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Paper, "Arms Control After the War", 02/08/91, OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
17   Outline, "[Post-Crisis Gulf Security Structures]", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-014, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

redefinition of Iran's role as a major regional power" was deemed extremely important, given the country's "enduring geostrategic positioning in geography, population, and economic potential." As for the region as a whole, it seemed that new "stability structures, modeled perhaps on the GCC [Gulf Cooperation Council]," could also be strengthened "by the careful application of American influence in key peninsular capitals."[18]

Critically, it was judged that a successful implementation of US response to the Gulf crisis could help advance toward a favorable solution of other long-standing regional conflicts, such as the Lebanese civil war and, most importantly, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Although the Bush Administration had successfully campaigned for the rejection of Saddam's "linkage," direct exchanges between Bush and Baker and a number of Arab leaders, as well as the diplomatic process at the UN, strongly indicated that the persistent plight of the Palestinian people was a fundamental obstacle to the stabilization of the Middle East, and to the integration of major regional actors into the kind of regional security framework envisaged by the White House.[19] "The Palestinian dispute has been the most enduring and the greatest cause of repeated conflicts in the area," an NSC paper observed. It appeared, however, that that state of affairs might finally be overcome: "Changes in the Communist world together with the current crisis in the area and its associated shifting alignment of political forces provide an unparalleled opportunity to make progress on this problem which is of vital importance." Although no detailed plan was proposed, the paper argued that some principles should guide any attempt to reach a stable settlement, most of all, the "land for peace" formula. Israel should give up land in return for security within its borders and peace with its neighbors, the Palestinian should be granted "self-governance and security," and other countries in the region should be prepared to give their Palestinian refugees full citizenship.[20] As another NSC policy paper argued: "we have a reasonable chance

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18   Information Paper, "Iraq After the Fact: Opportunities for Change", 12/18/90, cit.

19   Memcon, "President's Meeting with President Hafez Assad of Syria, November 23, 1990, 7:20-9:25 pm", OA/ID CF01584-028, Haass, Richard N. Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, Secstate to SC Foreign Ministers, "UNSC: Occupied Territories Resolutions-Letter", 12/16/90, OA/ID CF01584-023, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

20   Paper, "A Vision of the Future of the Middle East", n.d. cit.

that the Arab world will finally understand that our support for Israel does not automatically mean non-support for Arab Governments. Arab acknowledgment of Israel's right to exist as a sovereign state would be the preferred outcome of this dialogue." The paper maintained that "Resolution of the Palestinian issue must become a top post-crisis priority," and that the most realistic way to solve that issue would be within a framework of Arab acceptance of Israel.[21] By the last days of the Gulf War, new analyses examining the opportunities for "resolving or, to be more realistic, reducing the Arab-Israeli divide" made the case for a new "intense set of high-level (Secretary Baker)" consultations not only with major regional actors, such as Israel, Egypt or Syria, but also with European powers and the EC and the Soviet Union. The US, it was argued, should press for a deal based on the principles of "territory for peace, security and fairness" and leave regional actors free to negotiate the details of the final settlement of questions such as the creation of a Palestinian entity and the return of the Golan Heights to Syria. It was suggested that it would be crucial to create a framework perceived as fair by all regional actors. The best solution would be a comprehensive international conference, chaired by the US and the Soviet Union or by the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council.[22] The case for taking the lead in the construction of a multilateral and comprehensive framework was also strengthened by the apparent anxiety of other major members of the Desert Storm coalition about being cut off from the postwar settlement in the region, and their subsequent eagerness to seek coordination outside the US-led framework.[23]

Waiting for the coup: the fate of Iraq and the fate of the Bush Administration's grand design

The outstanding military success of Operation Desert Storm initially appeared

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21   Paper, "Think Piece; Dealing with a Post-Crisis Iraq", 12/20/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
22   Paper, "Beyond the Gulf War: Peace Process Choices", 02/21/91, OA/ID CF01584-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
23   Cable, AmEmbassy Paris to SECSTATE, "Trouble Brewing With France Over Post-War Settlement", 02/15/91, OA/ID CF01584-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

indeed to have created some of the conditions for progress toward the achievement of the Bush Administration's long term regional strategic priorities. On March 6, 1991 representatives of Egypt, Syria and GCC countries issued the Damascus Declaration. Elaborating on the idea suggested by Egypt, the Declaration called for Syrian and Egyptian troops to remain in the region as the nucleus of a Gulf security force to deter future threats.[24] At the same time, however, Desert Storm and the dynamics of Saddam's military defeat gave rise to unexpected and daunting developments.

Although the problem of how to secure a favorable long term settlement in the Gulf had been extensively discussed within the White House and in contacts between the President and the major US partners, by the time military operations were halted no clear or agreed upon strategy for war termination existed. The issue had been repeatedly raised in cables from the US embassy in Riyadh and from the US mission to the UN, and some proposals for a UN-guaranteed settlement had apparently begun to circulate within the Security Council.[25] However, in an analogy with the development of the ground campaign, the fast pace of the events that followed the end of Operation Desert Storm proved to be a critical factor in influencing the conflict's endgame.

Military representatives of the Coalition and the Baghdad regime finally met at Safwan on March 3, 1991. The Iraqi delegation featured Gen. Sultan Hashim Ahmad, the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Defense Ministry, and Gen. Mahmoud, the shrewd commander of Iraqi forces in the battles of Khafji and al-Burqan. Schwarzkopf led the Coalition delegation, assisted by Gen. Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the commander of Saudi forces and a close interlocutor for CENTCOM throughout the crisis.[26] The Iraqis, Schwarzkopf recalls, paled as they heard the number of prisoners the Coalition had captured – more than sixty thousands soldiers in contrast to some forty American and allied prisoners.[27] Communication between CENTCOM's commander and politicians in Washington concerning the

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24   McCausland, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 68.
25   Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.; Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman…, cit.; Christian Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 184-187.
26   Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 443-444; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 555.
27   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, p. 567.

terms of reference for the ceasefire had turned out to be less straightforward than expected, and instructions had been slow to come. In the end, the US and Coalition position at Safwan was that, in order to make the ceasefire permanent, Iraq had to return immediately all prisoners of war as well as the corpses of dead soldiers, implement a series of measures intended to guarantee safety in the theater of operations, such as disclosing the location of minefields and unconventional weapons stockpiles, and accept the current ceasefire line.

The chief concern for the Iraqi representatives appeared to be the preservation of their country's territorial integrity. Gen. Ahmad was adamant to make sure that the ceasefire line was temporary, and that coalition troops would withdraw from Iraq. Schwarzkopf confirmed that this was the coalition's will. The Iraqis, however, had another, apparently minor request. They wanted an explicit commitment on the part of the coalition to allow their helicopters to fly within the country's airspace. As the Baghdad representatives explained, the request was motivated by the destruction of the ground transport network inside Iraq due to the coalition air campaign, a situation that required the Baghdad Government to resort to alternative means of transportation. The request sounded reasonable to Schwarzkopf, who judged that although it was essential to the safety of coalition forces to interdict the Iraqis from flying fixed-wing military aircraft, Iraqi helicopters – even military helicopters – did not represent a threat.[28]

In the immediate aftermath of the war, the Administration's top priority seemed to be the quick and safe withdrawal of American troops.[29] The President and many of his closest political and military advisers felt that a smooth pullout would be seen on the international level, and especially in the Arab world, as a demonstration of America's sincere rejection of "imperialism" and its willingness to sustain a new framework of international cooperation centered on the UN.[30] Furthermore, given

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28   Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 561-568; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 446; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 407. The Iraqi request soon proved to be a demonstration of Baghdad's premeditated plan to suppress by military means the popular insurrections that had broken out in the aftermath of the war.

29   Information Paper, "Desert Shield Mop-Up Operations; Phase Six", 1/7/91, OA/ID CF01584-014, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

30   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 489-491; Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, January 22, 2010; Paper, "Think Piece; Dealing with a Post-Crisis Iraq", 12/20/90, OA/ID CF01584-024, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential

the contrast between the memories of past military quagmires such as Vietnam and the clear-cut military success in the fight to liberate Kuwait, there was an additional incentive to avoid any kind of "mission creep" or unneeded clashes between US troops now stationed in Iraq and what remained of the Iraqi Army.[31] The Safwan ceasefire thus seemed to mark another step right toward the settlement the Bush Cabinet was looking for: the Iraqis had admitted defeat, and now it appeared possible to hand authority back to the Kuwaitis and implement the drawdown of forces that American political and military leaders were adamant to see.

The Safwan meeting turned out to be a positive result for Saddam and his inner circle as well, though for different reasons. Kuwait had been lost, and the war had been a débâcle of such a magnitude that what was now at stake was the survival of the Baghdad regime itself – and, arguably the physical survival of the dictator and his closest collaborators. As a result, they too had grown anxious to see the Americans and their allies wrap their luggage up and get back home, so that they would be left free to concentrate on what was turning out to be the most serious threat to the regime – a threat coming from within.

The danger for Saddam and his inner circle had become evident in Basra during the last phases of the Gulf War. As the Baghdad regime lost control over the area due to the Coalition offensive from the West, a series of riots broke out, and soon grew to ignite a massive popular rebellion against Saddam's rule. By early March 1991 the insurrection was spreading to the main urban centers in Shi'a-populated Southern Iraq: Nasiriyah, Karbala, Najaf and Amarah. The upheaval was the spontaneous manifestation of hostility toward the Saddam on the part of the country's Shi'as, who had constantly endured abuses by the Sunni-dominated Baghdad regime, and now, in the face of the outstanding defeat imposed on the dictator by coalition forces, felt emboldened to claim their right to get out of their

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Records, George Bush Presidential Library;

31   Norman H. Schwarzkopf with Peter Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero...* cit., p. 544; Colin Powell with Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey…*, cit., pp. 505-509; George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed...* cit., p. 489; James A. Baker III, *The Politics of Diplomacy…,* cit., pp. 435-436. Information Paper, "Desert Shield Mop-Up Operations; Phase Six", cit. Interestingly, the paper also emphasized the need for continued "aggressive psyops [psychological operations] and public diplomacy efforts, as a "Foundation of "New World Order" rhetoric" and a "Deterrent" against "short term reattack from seventeen million angry Iraqis."

condition of political submission. The riots were soon joined by a great many elements of the regular Army itself, deluded and frustrated at the idea of having been cynically sacrificed in the pursuit of Saddam's megalomaniac ambitions.[32] Within a few days unrest, and then a second major insurrection, broke out in the Kurdish areas of northern Iraq as well. Once again the it appeared that the main cause of the upheaval was spontaneous popular anger, although the Kurdish rebellion gradually assumed a more defined direction, thanks to increasing coordination by leaders of the local movements that had traditionally fought for greater autonomy of the Kurdish community.[33]

Hence, paradoxically, the insurrections provided Saddam too with new powerful incentives to comply with the coalition's demands, in order to speed-up the withdrawal of foreign forces and be left free to brutally crack down on the insurgents, while the sectarian and centrifugal character of the unrest encouraged military leaders to rally once again around Baghdad's strongman, now the most reliable guarantee of their survival.[34] Caught in the middle of two insurgencies, Saddam and his inner circle hurried to accept Resolution 686 and the ceasefire talks, and to commit to full compliance with UN demands concerning the rescinding the annexation of Kuwait, the release of prisoners and Kuwaiti nationals, and the responsibility for destruction and looting during the occupation.[35]

As soon as Saddam and his inner circle made sure that the most immediate threat to the regime came not from the Coalition but from the Iraqi people, they reorganized what remained of the Iraqi armed forces to crack down on the rebels. The dictator gave priority to the Shi'as in the south and resorted to his traditional approach that combined shallow cooptation and bloody repression. A few loyal Shi'as were appointed to government posts and reforms in the direction of greater autonomy were promised. Meanwhile, Saddam's most famously brutal

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32   Faleh A. Jabar, "Why the Uprising Failed", in Sifri and Cerf, *The Iraq War Reader*, pp. 105-106; Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp. 255-256. For the record, according to Saddam the "elements" participating in the uprisings were a mixture of thieves, rebels, and "those from Iran." National Security Archive, "Saddam Hussein Talks to the FBI", Interview Session Number 114, March 13, 2004, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB279/15.pdf .
33   Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp. 256-257; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, pp. 410-411.
34   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 195-197.
35   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 418; UN Security Council, Resolution 686, March 2, 1991, cit.

collaborators – such as Ali Hassan al-Majid, dubbed "Chemical Ali" after having directed the 1988 al-Anfal campaign in which chemical weapons had been used to suppress a Kurdish revolt – were assigned the task of dealing with the insurrection.[36] Lacking leadership, coordination, and external support or protection, the Shi'a insurgents became an easy prey of the Baghdad regime, which among other things could employ those Republican Guard armored units that had escaped destruction or had been intentionally deployed away from the Kuwaiti theater as well as the military helicopters the coalition had allowed it to fly. As a result, within a couple of weeks the southern insurgency was repressed in a bloodbath.[37]

By mid-March 1991 Saddam was thus in a position to redirect his struggle for survival against the Kurds in the north, and deliver them a powerful warning of what would be the fate of those who tried to stand up against his regime.[38] The new offensive unfolded along the lines of the crackdown in the south, and by March 19 Baghdad forces seized back Kirkuk, one of the most important cities in Iraq's Kurdistan.[39] The fate of the Kurds, however, turned out to be partially different from that of the deeply ill-fated Shi'as. As Saddam's forces closed in, terrified masses began to flee from the cities in order to escape the killing, and gradually amassed on the mountain areas further north, along the border with Turkey and Iran.[40] Soon the inflow of refugees rose to daunting proportions. By early April 1991 around one million Kurds packed in a cold and desolated area, and the numbers were expected to grow within one month.[41] Baghdad's repression was creating a major humanitarian emergency that, contrary to what had happened in the south, caught the attention of both neighboring countries and the world media. Images of Kurdish refugees starving and freezing began to show on TV screens,

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36   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 419.
37   Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, p. 256.
38   Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp. 256-257; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 420.
39   Tripp, *A History of Iraq*, pp. 257-257.
40   Cable, "Turkey Asking for UNSC to be Convened on Iraqi Refugee Problems", 4/2/91, OA/ID CF01077-015, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. A significant number of Kurdish refugees also headed toward Iran, though that flow received less attention from the West. Sadako Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade. Confronting the Refugee Crises of the 1990s* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2005), p. 34.
41   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 420; Lawrence Freedman and David Boren, " 'Safe Havens' for the Kurds in post-war Iraq", Nigel S. Rodley, *To Loose the Boands of Wickedness. International Intervention in Defence of Human Rights* (London: Brasseys, 1992), pp. 48-49.

with a strong impact on public opinion.

In Washington, however, policy makers were focusing on capitalizing on Iraq's defeat in order to secure a new framework of stability in the Gulf. As noted above, the achievement of a settlement was considered a critical element in the making of a new and favorable configuration of the regional balance of power. In spite of the military triumph marked by Desert Storm, however, critical elements of the political side of Washington's design had not yet fallen into place. The most important but controversial issue still open was the need to find an acceptable long term solution to the "problem of Saddam." How to deal with Baghdad's strongman had been a constant and controversial feature of the management of the Gulf crisis, as testified by the number of statements suggesting an analogy between Saddam and Hitler and a "good versus evil" rhetoric opposed to official commitments to the fulfillment of the UN mandate; or by the flow of public and private calls for the downgrading of Iraq's offensive military potential – calls which were nonetheless constantly coupled by the acknowledgement of the need to preserve Iraq's role as a regional balance to Iran.

Confronted by this puzzling challenge, a feeling had developed within the Bush team that the only outcome that would guarantee a long term settlement at a reasonable cost would be Saddam's overthrow from within. Indeed, the whole process of military planning for Desert Storm had been ambivalent about the issue of how to address the "problem of Kuwait" and the "problem of Saddam." Although the strategy served the purpose of achieving the explicit objective of liberating Kuwait, both the air and ground campaign were geared at addressing a number of problems that had a strategic value of their own, such as the destruction of Iraq's unconventional arsenal or its command and control infrastructure (and from this point of view Saddam himself, as the supreme commander of the Iraqi forces, was "fair game"); or the destruction of the Republican Guard, which was considered to be one of the pillars upon which Saddam's domestic power was based.[42] In short, several elements of the US-led Coalition's strategy had been

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[42] Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 369-370, 444; Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-91*, pp. 312-329; Cable from AmEmbassy Riyadh to SECSTATE 12/30/90 "US and Coalition War Aims…", cit.; "'Il faut naturellement détruire le potentiel militaro-industriel de l'Irak' déclare François Mitterrand", cit.; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 410-411, 420-421.

expected to contribute indirectly to the undermining of the Baghdad regime, and as the conflict progressed, and particularly after the beginning of the war, the belief that Saddam couldn't survive a blatant military defeat came to dominate the expectations of many key members of the Bush team.[43] On February 15, 1991 Bush himself had made a sibylline call on "the Iraqi military and the Iraqi people to take matters into their own hands -- to force Saddam Hussein, the dictator, to step aside, and to comply with the United Nations resolutions and then rejoin the family of peace-loving nations."[44]

What turned out not to have been considered by the White House strategists was the possibility that instead than from the Iraqi military, the challenge to Saddam's rule may indeed come from the Iraqi people. That unexpected development further complicated the settlement in the Gulf.[45] This kind of ethno-sectarian rebellions – lacking coordination and unity of leadership and purpose – pointed to that risk of fragmentation of Iraq that in the eyes of the Bush foreign policy staff would have had tremendous geopolitical implications for the whole Persian Gulf region, namely a power vacuum and the ignition of a new wave of conflict among the local powers – with Iran in the forefront – aimed at assuming control or influence on the territory of the collapsing Iraqi state.[46] As suggested by the exchange between Powell and Scowcroft during the August 3, 1990 NSC meeting, short of a sound replacement, the Administration judged the risks of Saddam's demise too high.[47] In

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43   Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.; Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman…, cit.; Author's conversation with Ambassador Roman Popadiuk , cit. As James Baker observed in retrospect: "There was reason to hope that an emotionally battered armed forces leadership would rise against the man responsible for the Kuwaiti debacle. In fact, precisely the reverse occurred"; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 438.

44   "Remarks to the American Association for the Advancement of Science", February 15, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush,* http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2709&year=1991&month=2 .

45   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 136.

46   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am"… cit.; Paper, "Immediate post-War Requirements in the Gulf", 01/21/91, OA/ID CF01584-020, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 435, 440-441; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 512-513.

47   Minutes "National Security Council meeting, August 3, 1990, 9:10 – 10:15 am"… cit. As noted in Chapter Two, Powell wondered whether a better replacement for Saddam did exist, and Scowcroft warned that, deprived of a strongman at the top, Iraq might fall apart. According to Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor, as the insurgencies broke out, some junior members of the Bush Cabinet, such as Paul Wolfowitz, made the case for supporting the rebels, especially the Shi'as, on the ground that their "Arab" identity would prove stronger

addition, American leaders were determined not to get bogged down into a civil war.[48] As many members of the Administration later recalled, intervening in such a situation might have implied a de facto American takeover of the country and an open-ended and   expensive - in both blood and treasure – commitment to the remaking of the Iraqi state.[49]

As a result, despite the brutality of the repression, the outlook of the major Coalition powers didn't change immediately. In mid-March Coalition forces did shot down two Iraqi aircrafts engaged in the repression campaign, but such a reaction was driven by the determination to ensure compliance with the ceasefire agreement, rather than by a desire to influence the outcome of the insurrection.[50] As Brent Scowcroft wrote to his French counterpart, Adm. Jacques Lanxade, the Administration's priority was "to remove our ground forces and make the transition from wartime to post-war security arrangements as quickly as can be arranged."[51] A few days after the shooting down of the two Iraqi airplanes, Gen. Powell publicly stated that the Coalition would continue to abide by the commitment to allow Iraqi military helicopters to operate, despite increasing evidence that they were being used mostly as a tool to wage Saddam's repression of the insurgency.[52]

The growing humanitarian emergency in the north, however, gradually forced Bush and his advisers to reconsider their approach. The plight of the Kurds was receiving wide media coverage, and was generating serious concerns for the Turkish government, since a massive inflow of Kurds from Iraq could threaten

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than the faith they shared with the Iranians. Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, p. 451.

48   Telcon, "Telcon with President Ozal of Turkey, April 20, 1991, 9:42-9:49 a.m.", OA/ID CF01584-002, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

49   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 441; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 512-513; Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.; Author's conversation with Ambassador Charles W. Freeman…, cit.; Author's conversation with Ambassador Roman Popadiuk , cit. Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, January 22, 2010,

50   Freedman and Boren, " 'Safe Havens' for the Kurds in post-war Iraq", p. 48. Incidentally, in an interview with this author Scowcroft recalled, without specific reference to any single episode, that the pressure the Bush Administration was exercising on Saddam in the aftermath of *Desert Storm* was intended to ensure the dictator's compliance, not his overthrow. Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, cit. As this chapter suggests, it is open to question whether that was indeed the ultimate desire of the Administration as a whole.

51   Letter, Brent [Scowcroft] to Admiral Jacques Lanxade, "[Progress in Iraq]", 3/11/91, OA/ID CF01585-019, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

52   Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict 1990-1991*, p. 420.

Turkey's own domestic stability.[53] These new developments forced the US and its allies to change their attitudes and adapt their policies. The emergency in northern Iraq no longer appeared as a mere humanitarian issue: there was now the risk that it would become a geopolitical one. Regional stability, especially the stability of an important NATO member and US partner such as Turkey, appeared under threat.[54] As already noted, however, there was, an even more important immediate concern for the White House, and for Washington's partners as well: the problem of ensuring the proper disarmament/military downgrade of Iraq. These concerns were eventually codified by two new and groundbreaking UN resolutions - 687 and 688 - adopted by the Security Council on April 3 and 5, 1991.

Resolution 687 – the longest UN Resolution to that date – listed the terms of a settlement of the Gulf conflict. If it wanted to have the embargo and other sanctions lifted, and eventually have a chance to normalize its relations with the international community, the Baghdad regime had to recognize Kuwait's legitimate government and its borders, and to commit to pay reparations for the damage related to the invasion. Iraq, moreover, had to restate its commitment to abide by the provisions of all major arms control treaties it had signed, particularly those concerning chemical and biological weapons, as well as the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty. Even more importantly, Baghdad was required to disclose and destroy as soon as possible its WMD arsenals and facilities. Reflecting an American concern that had grown during the war, a very intrusive international weapons inspections regime (UNSCOM) was to be established in order to monitor and certify the timely dismantlement of Iraq's unconventional arsenals, ballistic capabilities and related facilities.[55]

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53   Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, cit; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 218-234; Freedman and David Boren, " 'Safe Havens' for the Kurds in post-war Iraq", p. 49. The Turkish government apparently believed that Saddam was deliberately trying to push the Iraqi Kurds into Turkey in order to expel them for good. Cable from US Mission USUN, 04/03/1991 "Turks call for immediate Security Council meeting on refugees in northern Iraq", OA/ID CF01077-015, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Memorandum/Reuters press release, "Quotes from UN Ambassadors on Iraqi refugees" 04/05/1991, OA/ID CF01077-014, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

54   Briefing Paper, "Humanitarian Efforts for Iraqi refugees", n.d., OA/ID CF01077-014, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

55   UN Security Council Resolution 687 (1991), of 3 April 1991, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/23/IMG/NR059623.pdf?OpenElement . Resolution 678 instructed the International Atomic Energy Agency to "develop a plan for

Resolution 688 addressed the problem of the humanitarian emergency in northern Iraq: it condemned the repression conducted by the Baghdad regime and stated that it represented a threat to international peace and security in the region, called for an international relief effort and demanded Iraq's cooperation in its implementation.[56] As noted by a few commentators at the time, the language of Resolution 688 affirmed principles with enormous implications for international law and the understanding of international security. It introduced the concept that a massive humanitarian emergency within one country, and the lack of will or capability on the part of that country's government to ease it, may legitimate intervention within the domestic affairs by the international community, and sanctioned the UN Security Council's authority to certify that condition and decide on how to address it.[57] As former US Ambassador to the UN, Thomas Pickering observed in a conversation with this author, although it was adopted with specific reference to the situation in northern Iraq, the resolution represented a key precedent for the emergence of the concept of "Responsibility to Protect" that later became a pillar of the doctrine of humanitarian intervention.[58]

The immediate effect of the resolution was to create the legal framework for the establishment of a massive humanitarian intervention in northern Iraq. European countries, France and Britain in particular, had been showing a certain eagerness to do something to ease the suffering of the Kurds. On April 8, 1991, following a British initiative, the governments of the member states of the EC agreed to

submission to the Council within forty-five days calling for the destruction, removal or rendering harmless as appropriate" of all nuclear weapons and related facilities, and "to carry out the plan within forty-five days following approval by the Council." Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Duration of the Sanctions Regime Under UNSCR", 5/23/91, OA/ID CF01585-020, , Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. As an NSC study during the war suggested, an intrusive weapons inspection regime might be needed to ensure the dismantlement of Iraq's WMD programs and arsenals, and such an intrusive regime "could require continued sanctions as a means of forcing Iraq's acceptance." Paper, "Arms Control After the War", 02/08/91, OA/ID CF01584-006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

56   UN Security Council Resolution 688 (1991), of 5 April 1991, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement .
According to former US Ambassador to the UN Thomas Pickering, Resolution 688 was the result of a French initiative then supported by the US. Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.

57   Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 74-75.

58   Author's conversation with Ambassador Thomas R. Pickering... cit.

develop a coordinated effort to deliver humanitarian aid, and to deploy military contingents to create "safe havens" – UN-protected enclaves the Kurdish refugees might move to in order to escape the terrible conditions they were facing in the mountain areas while avoiding to fall within the crosshairs of Saddam's troops.[59] Bush and his staff had been wary of getting entangled in the civil war, and had openly stated their unwillingness to commit large amounts of the American taxpayer's money to post-war Iraq.[60] The humanitarian emergency, however, was creating political pressures in Washington too.[61] Thus, the European initiative acted as a spur on the Bush Administration, which eventually resolved that the US should take the lead in the implementation of a rather large-scale humanitarian effort.

On April 10, 1991, the US Government instructed the Iraqi Government not to send military forces north of the 36th parallel (thus establishing the first "no-fly zone" over Iraq), and then, on April 16, building on the provisions of Resolution 688, the US took the lead in the launching of Operation Provide Comfort a multinational military effort joined by eight NATO countries to reestablish the security conditions necessary to allow the return of Kurdish refugees to their homes.[62] *Provide Comfort* created the conditions for an agreement between the UN and the Iraqi Government which guaranteed free passage for the personnel of humanitarian organizations engaged in the delivery of aid to the refugees.[63]

The White House's wariness about getting bogged down into a quagmire, however, remained high, and the dual concern to avoid entanglement in Iraq's internal struggle and establish a clear exit strategy strongly conditioned the implementation of the humanitarian mission. As the Americans made clear to the

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59   Freedman and Boren, " 'Safe Havens' for the Kurds in post-war Iraq", pp. 52-53.

60   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Conflict", March 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2755&year=1991&month=3 . Memo, J. Stapleton Roy to Brent Scowcroft, "Providing Humanitarian Aid to Iraq", 3/27/91, OA/ID CF01584-018, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

61   Memorandum for the Record, "International Humanitarian Response in the Wake of the Gulf War", 4/4/91, OA/ID CF01077-015, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

62   Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 65-66; Freedman and Boren, " 'Safe Havens' for the Kurds in post-war Iraq", pp. 53-54. As Freedman and Boren note, the choice of the 36th parallel implied that the oil city of Kirkuk would remain under firm control of the Baghdad government, a deterrent to Kurdish separatism, a source of trouble for Turkey and other neighboring countries.

63   Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 67; Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, p. 46.

Iraqis, the US and its allies were intervening in northern Iraq on purely humanitarian grounds; they were committed to the preservation of Iraq's territorial integrity, and determined to withdraw as soon as the humanitarian emergency was over.[64] US forces would not intervene in the ongoing civil war, but they were ready to take offensive measure should Iraqi forces engage them, or violate the "no-fly-area" that had been established above the 36th Parallel.[65] The agreement between the US and its partners was that Iraq's violations of the "no-fly-area" should be punished by resorting to the Coalition's airpower, and that responsibility for humanitarian operations should be handed over to the UN as soon as possible.[66] During conversations with UN Secretary General Perez De Cuellar, Bush repeatedly maintained that the objective of the US-led intervention in northern Iraq was the return of Kurdish refugees to their homes. The President acknowledged the fact that the intervention could be perceived by the Baghdad regime as well as by members of the Security Council as a violation of Iraq's sovereignty, and stressed that the US-led deployment to Northern Iraq had been driven by the necessity of intervening as soon as possible.[67] "I don't want to put US troops there," Bush explained, "but for this humanitarian purpose I will join with the UK and others to

64   Briefing Paper, "Humanitarian Efforts for Iraqi refugees", cit; Cable, "U.S. Military Operation in Support of Iraqi refugees – Message to Iraq", 4/26/91, OA/ID CF01077-014, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Summary, "Sumary of Conclusions of DC Meeting on Iraqi Refugees", 4/29/91, OA/ID CF01077-015, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, "US Urges Iraq to Cooperate on UN", 5/11/91, OA/ID CF01077-019, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library

65   Cable, CJCS Washington DC to USCINCEUR, "Talking Points for 19 April U.S.-Iraq Military To Military Meeting", 4/19/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Memcon, "Memorandum of Telephone Conversation between POTUS and Francois Mitterrand", 04/11/91, OA/ID CF01077-013, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

66   Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Perm Three Approach to The SYG On Kurdish Refugees", 4/23/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Cable, SECSTATe to AmEmbassy London, "Consulting Key Allies II: Withdrawal from Northern Iraq", 6/14/91, OA/ID CF01585-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

67   Iraqi representatives to the UN were indeed comlaining that the intervention represented a violation of Iraq's sovereignty. Memo, US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Iraqi Response to Military Demarche", 4/23/91, OA/ID CF01077-023, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

provide forces."[68] The determination not to meddle with the civil war was communicated to the Soviets as well. As Bush wrote to Gorbachev, the decision to intervene in Iraq's Kurdistan had been taken after consultation with France, Britain, Turkey and the UN, and had been driven by purely humanitarian reasons. "We view this initiative as temporary and solely humanitarian." Bush wrote. "We intend to transfer responsibility for administering and protecting these centers to the UN as soon as possible."[69]

At any rate, in the ultimate analysis Operation Provide Comfort did achieve its strict objective of creating the conditions for the safe return of Kurdish refugees to their homes and prevent the humanitarian crisis from escalating on a regional level or from turning into a political crisis involving Kurdish calls for nationhood.[70] The operation was then followed by Provide Comfort II, a new multinational effort which covered some areas in Turkey too, and eventually ensured the end of the humanitarian emergency and of threats to regional stability.[71]

Although any international initiative related to the settlement of the Gulf conflict and the humanitarian emergency acknowledged Iraq's sovereignty and the will not to interfere in the country's domestic affairs, the very intrusive provisions contained in Resolution 687 and 688 signaled the continuing reluctance on the part of coalition leaders, and especially the Bush Administration, to accept that Saddam remained in power in Iraq. Bush made this point during a phone conversation with UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar on April 25, 1991:

> Our goal is to transfer the relief operation to you as soon as possible. Until
> you are ready, the only way to do the job, the only way to provide for the

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68   Telcon, "Telcon with Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN SecGen, April 16, 1991, 12:45-1:10 p.m.", OA/ID CF01584-001, Talking Points, "Updated Talking Points for Telephone Call to Perez de Cuellar", 4/20/91, CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Perm Three Approach to The SYG On Kurdish Refugees", 4/23/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Memcon, "Meeting with Secretary General Javier Oerez de Cuellar of the UN, May 9, 1991, 11:35 am – 12:00 noon", OA/ID CF01585-020, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
69   Cable, "SECSTATE to AmEmbassy Moscow, "Letter from POTUS to President Gorbachev", 4/17/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
70   Ogata, *The Turbulent Decade*, pp. 48-49.
71   Dannreuther, *The Gulf Conflict*, p. 67.

refugees, is through the coalition […] The Iraqi people have to get him [Saddam Hussein] out. I guarantee we won't have normal relations with Iraq while he is there, and we will encourage others to have the same policy[…] I'd like to get rid of Saddam Hussein – that is, I hope his people will. That is the Bush view.[72]

Margaret Tutwiler, the State Department's spokeswoman publicly expressed the same view on May 22, 1991 when she stated that the US government was not ready to normalize its relations with Iraq as long as Saddam remained in power.[73] Essentially, as Bush had remarked at the beginning of the crisis, as long as Saddam remained in power, no one could be sure that "he would not do it again", yet it was still judged that the only feasible policy was a continuation of external and indirect pressure on the Baghdad regime, in order to ensure its compliance with international demands, or "something more." As Richard Haass, a member of the NSC, put it after a meeting with Turkey's President Ozal, the US and its allies should make it clear to the Iraqi people that the cost of keeping Saddam in power was "too high to bear." The Coalition's policy should be intended at weakening Saddam in order to get genuine compliance with the disarmament Resolution, and no sense of normalization with Iraq should be conveyed.[74]

By that time a complicated dynamic begun to dominate the relationship between the Bush Administration and Saddam. On the one hand, Washington and Baghdad turned out to share an interest in the withdrawal of American and other coalition

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72   Telcon "Telcon with Javier Perez de Cuellar, UN Secretary General, on April 25, 1991, 3 :35-3 :45 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01584-002, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Memo, Brent Scowcroft to POTUS, "Telephone Call to UN Secretary General Perez de Cuellar, Tuesday, April 24, 1991", OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Bush restated that conviction to the Perez's successor, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished. A US-UN Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999), pp. 23-25.

73   USIS, European Wireless File, State Department Report, May 21 (Iraq), May 22, 1991, Freedman Collection, Box 38, File 7, Liddell Hart Center for Military Archives, King's College, London. Analyzing in retrospect US policy toward the Persian Gulf in the aftermath of the Gulf War, James Baker observed: "Much of our planning in this regard was predicated on the assumption that Saddam would not survive. When he consolidated his authority in the months after the end of hostilities, most of our agenda's rationale was undermined." Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 414.

74   Cable, AmEmbassy Ankara to SECSTATE, "NSC Sr. Director Haass' Meeting With President Ozal", 6/12/91, OA/ID CF01585-004, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

troops from the country as soon as possible; the former out of a concern to get involved in what looked like a civil war, the latter in order to have free hand in the brutal repression of the insurgents. On the other hand, as the external military threat to his regime eased, Saddam began to lose interest in complying with the invasive international measures to ensure Iraq's disarmament. The Baghdad regime soon complained that the activities of US troops were unjustifiable, and that Resolution 687 implied a double standard: while Iraq was being obliged to dismantle its military might – and especially its unconventional weapons – other states in the region in a similar position, particularly Israel, were not subjected to a similar requirement.[75]

The mission of UN inspectors appeared to be a complicated one, and as an NSC study prepared during the war observed: "the Iraq-intrusive WMD regime is probably only achievable in the unlikely event that a non-hostile, cooperative regime emerged in Baghdad after the war."[76] To the dismay of the international community – and especially of the White House – the situation was even more frightening than suggested by any pre-war intelligence assessment. The first report about the state of Iraq's WMD program under the UNSCOM regime came on April 19, 1991, and, to the astonishment of many observers and international leaders, it soon turned out that a large part of the country's non-conventional arsenal was still intact and that Saddam was much closer to the achievement of a nuclear bomb than it had been expected by the international intelligence community.[77] The importance Saddam attributed to the achievement of a nuclear deterrent as part of his plans for regional hegemony was well known. Iraq, moreover, was a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and therefore the International Atomic Energy Agency, the world nuclear watchdog, was aware that the country had a civil nuclear program and was subjecting it to regular routine inspections. The frightening truth nuclear inspectors discovered, however, was that in spite of the international

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75   Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Iraqi Response to Military Demarche", 4/21/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, USMission USVienna to SECSTATE, "Iraqi Declaration Pursuant UNSC – Resolution 687", 4/18/91, OA/ID CF01584-001, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
76   Paper, "Arms Control After the War", 02/08/91, cit.
77   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 252-253; Gordon and Trainor, *The Generals' War*, pp. 457-459.

control regime Saddam had clandestinely established his own "Manhattan project" – as former chief weapons inspector Hans Blix wrote.[78] As it was found out, prior to the Gulf crisis the Iraqi dictator had been pursuing his quest for a nuclear bomb by resorting to obsolescent technology. Yet the very low-tech method adopted had the upside of being relatively accessible and unlikely to catch the attention of international experts.[79]

The Baghdad government soon began to oppose the inspections regime by creating any possible obstacle to the work of the inspectors. The first episode of tension between international inspectors and Iraqi authorities determined to obstruct their work happened in June 1991, and on the UN level it soon appeared that despite the magnitude of the challenge that Saddam was posing to the Security Council, devising a bold internationally-coordinated response was not an easy job.[80] It appeared increasingly evident that if, as originally intended, the dismantlement of Iraq's WMD arsenals and capabilities was to be achieved in the short term, bolder measures were required. UN inspectors should be "more aggressive" in the pursuit of surprise inspections.[81] Military measures were considered at the White House, though the Joint Chiefs of Staff judged that, although the US technically had the authority to take military countermeasures in response to Iraq's violations of Resolution 687, military intervention may turn out to bee too costly in terms of preserving the cohesion of the multinational coalition the US had built during the conflict.[82] Political unity around American leadership

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78 ; Hans Blix, "Verification of Nuclear Nonproliferation: The Lessons of Iraq," *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Autumn 1992), p. 58; Cable, Paper On Iraqi Violations of UNSCRS 687 and 707", 9/29/91, OA/ID CF01585-008, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

79 Richard Rhodes, *The Twilight of the Bomb. Recent Challenges, New Dangers, and the Prospects for a World Without Nuclear Weapons* (New York: Knopf, 2010), pp. 59-80.

80 Rhodes, *The Twilight of the Bomb*, pp. 60-62. Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 255-257; Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "Security Council President Issues Statement Condemning Iraqi Authorities For Denying Access to Inspection Teams", 6/29/91, OA/ID CF01585-003, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable US Mission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "RE: Security Council, Nuclear Issue and Sanctions on Iraq", 7/26/91, OA/ID CF01585-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

81 Minutes, "Meeting of the NSC Committee, July 19, 1991, 11:00-12:00 pm, RE: Iraq", OA/ID CF01585-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

82 Memo, LtGen. E.S. Leland to the Special Assistant to POTUS and Director of Near East and South Asia, "Comments on NSC 20 July 1991 Paper on UNSCR687, 8/5/91, OA/ID CF01585-

on the issue was indeed beginning to come under strain because of the failure to bring about a settlement in the Gulf. In April 1991 Iraq asked for permission to resume in part its oil exports, and in late July 1991 the French delegation to the UN proposed a Security Council resolution intended to allow Iraq to sell a limited amount of oil in order to purchase food. The idea was supported by Sadruddin Aga Kan, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Bush Administration was opposed to this kind of requests, on the ground that "approving a request of this magnitude could undercut the effectiveness of the sanctions regime […] which is designed to keep pressure on Iraq to comply fully with its provisions." There was special concern about the fact that Iraq was providing the IAEA with unsatisfying information concerning its WMD program.[83] The Iraqi dictator was appearing more resilient than originally expected, but the Administration resolved that it would still be important for Washington and its closest allies to preserve a cohesive multinational coalition and keep pressure on Iraq "both to influence regime behavior (especially towards its internal opponents) and to bring about its departure."[84] By late July 1991, however, the US mission to the UN lamented a loss of momentum concerning the standoff with Saddam Hussein, and argued that the US Government needed to work within the mandate of the existing Security Council resolutions to assert its leadership and keep pressure on Saddam to comply with the disarmament provisions. Saddam's defiance was challenging the principle of collective security, "one of the cornerstones of the new world order."[85]

On August 15, 1991, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 707, which condemned Iraq's obstruction of the activities of weapons inspectors as a "material

006, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

83   Cable, USUN New York to Amman, "Sanctions: Iraqi Request to Export Oil", 04/17/91, OA/ID CF01077-022, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, SECSTATE to AmEmbassy London, "French Security Council Initiatives On Iraq", 7/30,/91, OA/ID CF01585-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, pp. 208-210.

84   Cable, SECSTATE to AmEmbassy London, "Consulting Key Allies on Keeping Pressure on Saddam Hussein", 6/7/91, OA/ID CF01585-004, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

85   Cable, USMission USUN New York to SECSTATE, "The Security Council, Nuclear Issue, And Sanctions on Iraq", 7/26/91, OA/ID CF01585-005, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

breach" of UNSCR 687 and demanded Iraq's cooperation with UN personnel.[86] Saddam, however, appeared undeterred. In September 1991 tension rose to critical levels when a UNSCOM inspectors team discovered a huge cache of documents related to Iraq's nuclear weapons program that had been hidden in an office building located in downtown Baghdad.[87] The US government seriously discussed with its French and British counterpart the issue of an airstrike in retaliation for Iraq's non-compliance with Resolution 687. By that time Bush appeared in fact more interested in forcing Saddam to comply with the disarmament provisions than in removing him, and he and his French and British counterparts agreed on the idea of airstrikes on suspected WMD sites, "and maybe another target," in order to "teach him [Saddam Hussein] a lesson." The mounting crisis in Yugoslavia, however, diverted the attention of the international community and the Security Council, and momentum toward the airstrikes was lost.[88] At any rate, as noted in an NSC paper, a new scenario appeared to be unfolding: "In this scenario, there's no obvious or dramatic trigger; rather, what we are likely to see is 'creeping non-compliance.'"[89]

It was suggested that efforts should be stepped up to increase the pressure of international opinion against Saddam on the humanitarian issue," but the unexpected, frustrating trend continued in 1992.[90] The Iraqi authorities repeatedly obstructed the working of UNSCOM inspectors, who nonetheless dug out increasing evidence of the magnitude and military character of Saddam's nuclear program. Iraqi violations were repeatedly condemned by the UN Security

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86   UN Security Council, Resolution 707, August 15, 1991, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/43/IMG/NR059643.pdf?OpenElement .

87   Chronology "Agriculture Ministry Standoff Chronology", n.d., OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

88   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 255-257; Telcon "Telephone conversation with President Mitterrand of France, September 25, 1991, 14:55 [sic]- 13:05 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01585-008 Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Telcon "Telephone Conversation with PM Major of Britain, September 25, 1991, 16:45-17:00 pm", n.d., OA/ID CF01585-008 Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;

89   Paper "Responding to Iraqi non-compliance with UNSCR687", n.d., OA/ID CF01585-008 Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;

90   Draft Paper, "[summary of conclusions from November 16, 1991 Small Group meeting]", OA/ID CF01585-011, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

Council, although representatives from Third World countries appeared less hawkish than their western counterparts.[91] The Iraqis also persistently conducted military flights along the limits of the "no-fly zone," in defiance of Resolution 688.[92]

This dynamic of Iraqi "creeping non-compliance" surpassed a new threshold in July 1992, when the Baghdad authorities denied UNSCOM inspectors access to the Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture. In what was later known as the "parking lot incident", UN inspectors were blocked outside the Ministry and eventually denied access.[93] Meanwhile, as a coincidence, a UN convoy in northern Iraq came under attack by Iraqi forces.[94] "Baghdad's defiance of UN authority is across the board and uniformly bold," Bush remarked in a message to Mitterrand. "We are not sure whether this is because Saddam thinks we are distracted by Yugoslavia and domestic concerns or if it has something to do with his domestic position after the failed coup plotting." The President added, thus acknowledging that the emergence of other security challenges was posing new obstacles to US and allied plans for the Gulf. "But this pattern of behavior," Bush continued,

> is so flagrant and widespread that we are led to the conclusion that Saddam will continue to defy the UN in unacceptable ways and that we may need to undertake military action to demonstrate again our resolve to defend the UN's authority and the principles which led us to reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

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91   Report, "Iraq – Compliance with UN Security Council Resolution 687", 4/3/92, OA/ID CF01473-030, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Memorandum, "March 11 PM Security Council Meeting With Iraqis", 3/12/92, OA/ID CF01473-031, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Note with Attachment, From Winston Wiley, "Iraqi Responses to UN Resolutions", 7/27/92, OA/ID CF01473-030, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

92   Cable, "Demarche On Iraqi Military Flights South of 36th Parallel", 4/6/92, OA/ID CF01585-016, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

93   Chronology, "Agriculture Ministry UNSCOM Standoff Chronology", n.d., OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, "UNSCOM Standoff – Next Steps", 7/14/92, OA/ID CF01473-030, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

94   The parking lot incident was defined by the UN Security Council as a "material breach" of Resolution 678. Incidentally, among the people attacked in northern Iraq was Danielle Mitterrand, the Frech President's wife; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 305-307.

Saddam's survival, however, was not Bush's greatest concern. "Perhaps most worrisome is Saddam's continued refusal to divulge fully the extent of Iraq's WMD programs." As the message argued, "If Iraq is able to preserve its WMDs, much of what we worked and fought for will be undermined."[95] Once again military action was considered but then rejected in Washington, this time due to media speculations that the President was planning to strike at Iraq in order to look bolder at the incoming Republican Convention.[96]

Despite the failure to react to this specific episode, the "parking lot incident" was a watershed in the attitude of the Bush Administration and its closest allies towards Iraq. A couple of months earlier, the CIA had issued a National Intelligence Estimate that argued that Saddam was likely to hang on to power for at least another year, and by around the same time the outlook at the State Department was that although Saddam was defiant, he was prepared to back down when he perceived that the coalition was ready to use force to enforce aspects of the UN-endorsed regime imposed on Iraq.[97] On August 6, 1992 a meeting of senior diplomats from the US, Britain and France was held in Washington to discuss a "coordinated approach to Iraq's systematic violations of UNSC resolutions."[98] As a number of talking points prepared for the meeting suggest, the Americans judged that Saddam was "winning the peace" by successfully violating "every UNSC resolution passed since August 1990." It now appeared that focusing exclusively on the enforcement of the provisions on disarmament of Resolution 687 was leaving

95   Cable, White House to Elysee Palace, "Message from POTUS to President Mitterrand", 7/25/92, OA/ID CF01585-008, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Telcon, "Telephone Conversation with PM Major of Great Britain, September 25, 1991, 16:46-17:00 pm", OA/ID CF01585-008, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
96   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 319-322; Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, pp. 150-152.
97   CIA, "Saddam Husayn: Likely To Hang On", *National Intelligence Estimate*, June 1992, http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp?pageNumber=1&freqReqRecord=nic_geo_nesa.txt ; Cable SECSTATE to Ambassador "UNSCOM Standoff – Next Steps", 7/14/92, OA/ID CF01585-026, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;
98   Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 316-319;Cable, Department of State to London, Paris, "August 6 PERM-3 Consultations On Iraq", 8/6/92, OA/ID CF01585-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Cable, Department of State to distro list "RE: Perm-3 Game Plan on Iraq", 8/10/92, OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library;

Saddam the initiative, and was putting him in a position to "cheat and retreat." Thus, the Americans argued that it would be possible, and legally feasible, to switch to a more comprehensive approach to keep pressure on the Iraqi dictator.[99] Military pressure should be expanded to cover violations of the humanitarian provisions of Resolution 688, a move that was expected to generate wider support by domestic and international opinion. As for the effort to dismantle the Iraqi nuclear arsenal, it was suggested that UN inspectors should be encouraged to declare Iraq to be in "material breach" of resolution 687, in order to make it possible for Washington and its allies to invoke authority to enforce militarily the will of the Security Council.[100] Then, military intervention could follow on terms, scope and timing of Washington's and its allies' choosing.[101] (Following an American initiative, a couple of likely scenarios were later identified concerning possible Iraqi violations of the provisions of resolution 687 and 688, and subsequent coordinated responses by the "Perm-3" ranging from reports to the UN Security Council to the threat and actual resort to military force in retaliation to Saddam's violations.)[102] Among other things, at the meeting it was decided to propose the establishment of a second "no-fly zone" below the 32nd parallel, both to protect the Shi'a populations from Baghdad's continuing repression campaigns and to ensure additional availability of Coalition airpower to keep pressure on the Iraqi regime.[103] The idea of a new "no-fly-zone" and of keeping military pressure on Saddam was shared with the Russians as well as Washington's regional partners,

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99   It was recognized that "legal authority for such an approach is less clear-cut than with 687 violations, but is nonetheless adequate when combined with the clearcut humanitarian rationale."

100   Interestingly, it was argued that, "While we will justify any threat or use of force on UN resolutions, our generally sense is that it would be counterproductive to seek additional authority from the council, or even to use the council to debate related issues, unless absolutely necessary." As another report notes, the French were uneasy about that approach, but eventually acquiesced. Memo, Bruce O. Riedel to Brent Scowcroft, "Consultations with the U.K. and France on Iraq", 8/6/92, OA/ID CF01585-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

101   Talking Points, "[consultations with coalition re:Iraq]", 8/4/92, OA/ID CF01585-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

102   Cable Department of State to distro list "RE: Perm-3 Game Plan on Iraq", cit.

103   Cable SECSTATE to NSC WASHDC "RE: P-3 Consultations – Elements of a Southern Zone", 8/9/92, OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Paper, "Next teps on Iraq: Options for Enfocement Of UNSCRs 687 & 688", 8/3/92, OA/ID CF01585-027, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

which appeared supportive.[104] The southern no-fly zone was then declared by the US, British and French governments in August 1992.[105]

By late August a feeling was developing at the NSC that "Iraq is unlikely to counter the coalition directly but can be expected to continue actions consistent with its overall objectives," which were supposed to be a reduction the UN presence in Iraq; the rebuilding military forces; the erosion the US-led coalition; and the continued isolation of the Kurds in the North and the Shi'a in the South. Harassment of UN personnel on the part of the Iraqis was expected. "One dilemma," it was argued "will be to determine an appropriate escalation of pressure on Iraq to comply with UNSCR 688 absent major provocation." It was suggested that "the coalition could either issue an ultimatum or push for a new UN resolution making certain demands on Iraq."[106] It was becoming clear that the much expected coup which would have toppled Saddam and replaced him with a more friendly regime would not happen in the foreseeable future, yet the Bush Administration's aversion for taking directly on Saddam remained high. There was now a strong perception that pushing too explicitly for the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, or for its trial by an international war crimes tribunal, would have little impact on his domestic stability, and might actually have negative regional repercussions in terms of the stability of other regimes that were friendly toward the US but had a human rights record comparable to that of Iraq. Such an approach, it was estimated, could also reduce Washington's freedom of maneuver towards other crises such as the one that had erupted in Yugoslavia.[107]

Thus, from Summer 1992 onward, the provisions of resolution 687 and 688, which had been originally conceived as temporary measures to ensure Iraq's

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104   Cable, "Perm-3 Game Plan on Iraq", 8/10/92, cit.; Cable, Department of State to distro list, "Implementing A No-Fly zone", 8/13/92, OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

105   Kenneth Pollack, *The Threatening Storm. The Case for Invading Iraq* (New York: Random House, 2002), p. 59. France withdrew from the joint patrols over Iraq in 1996. Martin S. Alexander and John F.V. Keiger, "Limiting Arms, Enforcing Limits: International Inspections and the Challenges of Compellence in Germany post-1919, Iraq post-1991", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, p. 363.

106   Draft Information Paper, "Coalition Strategy for the South: Next Steps", 8/25/92, OA/ID CF01585-025, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

107   Memo, "[potential Iraqi and regional downside]", 9/28/92, OA/ID CF01585-028, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

immediate compliance with UN requests, and possibly create those conditions inside Iraq to determine a change of the country's position in the balance of power of the Gulf region, began to crystallize into a long term system intended to "keep Saddam in a box" – in other words into a sort of containment regime for Iraq.[108]

The problem of engineering an acceptable long term settlement of the Gulf crisis had sucked an enormous amount of the Bush Administration's energy and attention, at the expenses of the pursuit of the comprehensive grand design for the Middle East that had been widely debated during the crisis and the war.[109] As noted above, some within the Administration had been flirting with the idea of exploiting the crisis as the basis for a rapprochement with Iran, and, as recent recollections by Brent Scowcroft and Richard Haass suggest, the Bush Administration was tentatively interested in opening a dialogue with Tehran, and went so far as proposing the Iranian a meeting. The Iranians, however, apparently rejected the offer, and in any case it is not clear what the Americans were ready to discuss.[110]

Removing any visible American military presence from the Gulf, moreover, now appeared unwise, given the widely assumed unpredictability of Saddam's future intentions. Hence, it became necessary to station a sizeable amount of troops in the area, especially in Saudi Arabia, whose religious and traditionalist society strongly resented the prospect of an open-ended presence of Western troops.[111]

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108   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, pp. 142, 150-152. As argued in a cable dating January 1992, the US judged to have "a strong interest in preventing the Iraqi regime from reconstructing national infrastructure, insofar as that infrastructure facilitates Iraq's resurrection of WMD facilities and other activities that are subject to UNSC resolutions."Cable, "Iraqi Sanctions: Maintaining Support", 1/3/92, OA/ID CF01473-029, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

109   As James Baker acknowledged in his memoirs: "Much of our planning in this regard [post-war Persian Gulf/Middle East] was predicated on the assumption that Saddam would not survive in power. When he consolidated his authority in the months after the end of hostilities, most of the agenda's rationale was undermined." Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy,* p. 414.

110   Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 149; Zbigniew Brzezinski and Brent Scowcroft with David Ignatius, *America and the World. Conversations on the Future of American Foreign Policy* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), p. 68.

111   Author's conversation with Amb. Charles W. Freeman, cit. Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 239-245354, 374-375, 407. Alfonsi argues that this decision played a critical role in the extreme radicalization of Arab Islamist groups and the rise of Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network, al Qaida, and was a decisive root cause of the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. As far as this author is concerned, the decisions of spring 1992 can only partially explain the rise and plans of bin Laden and his network. Such a direct causal link seems to overlook other important factors which are not directly dependent on US policies, such as the extremist ideology at the basis of bin Laden's network, or the impact of the

More importantly, the massive diplomatic endeavor which had led to the building of the coalition against Saddam was expected to be a useful tool to promote a favorable settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The conflict had reached dramatic levels of violence and desperation by the late 1980s, as Palestinians living in the territories occupied by Israel had spontaneously revolted in what became known as the Intifada. The American-led response to Saddam's invasion of Kuwait, however, had favored the emergence of encouraging developments. On the one hand, the close relationship between the Iraqi dictator and Yasser Arafat had discredited the OLP leader, who was seen by both the Americans and the Israelis as an obstacle to an acceptable settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian question.[112] On the other hand, Israel's restraint in the face of Saddam's provocative SCUD attacks had partially rehabilitated the credibility of the government led by Yitzhak Shamir, a controversial political leader with a record of participation in political groups connected with terrorist activities and an open unwillingness to make concessions to the Arabs.[113] In addition, the end of the Cold War and the display of American power and restraint during the conflict had significantly boosted Washington's international standing, while American diplomacy had managed to forge a strong political consensus among a broad and inclusive multinational grouping that included major powers – such as the Soviet Union or Syria – that had previously represented an obstacle to the implementation of negotiations based on a platform acceptable to the US.[114]

By the end of the Gulf War, the Americans concluded that the best way to promote reconciliation between the Arabs and the Israelis was through a two-track

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persistent sense of oppression and injustice that characterizes Arab and Muslim societies. In retrospect, though, Alfonsi's remarks seem relatively well-grounded. Incidentally, during a meeting in March 1991, Soviet Foreign Minister Bessmertnykh made the case against American Presence in the Gulf, on the ground that it would convey the idea that Washington was aspiring to establish a "Pax Americana" that would in the long run backfire, but Baker dismissed such an idea as excessive alarmism, and cited the eventual success in the Gulf War as a demonstration that the US approach and US leadership were accepted on the regional level. Cable, USDEL Soviet Union to SECSTATE "Memorandum for POTUS", 3/16/91, OA/ID CF01585-019, Haass, Richard N., Files, Working Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

112 Lawrence Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies. America Confronts the Middle East* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), p. 267. Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace. The Inside Story of the Fight for Middle East Peace* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2004), pp. 48-49.

113 Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall. Israel and the Arab World* (London: Penguin, 2001), pp.463-465; Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, pp. 256-257.

114 Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, p. 267.

approach – a system of parallel talks between the Israelis and reliable Palestinian representatives (selected not from the PLO leadership, but rather from the occupied territories) on the one hand, and between Israel and its Arab neighbors on the other.[115] Thus, Baker left once again for the Middle East in early March 1991. King Fahd expressed his support for the two-track approach, and thanks to Saudi backing the principle was endorsed by the rest of the Gulf states as well as by Egypt and Syria.[116] After his tour of the Middle East, Baker traveled to the USSR, where on March 14, 1991, he met his counterpart Alexander Bessmertnykh. As Baker reported, there was a momentum in the region in favor of a major diplomatic initiative on the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Soviet Foreign Minister, in turn, was very interested in cooperating on the initiative.[117]

Despite the encouraging start, however, working out a viable framework for a comprehensive peace conference proved to be a demanding task that kept the American negotiators busy throughout the Summer of 1991. Leaders in the two most critical powers, Israel and Syria, were weary to make concessions that would bear an heavy cost in terms of domestic politics, and the issue of devising a formula that would both give representation to the Palestinians and be acceptable to the Shamir government required a great effort on the part of the American brokers, as well as the eventual acceptance on the part of the Palestinians to participate in the conference as part of the Jordanian delegation.[118] Eventually, despite the huge difficulties, the conference, formally promoted by the US and co-sponsored by the USSR, was indeed convened in Madrid, Spain, between October 30 and November 2, 1991.[119] Palestinian leaders selected from the occupied territories and with no ties with the PLO proved to be moderate, pragmatic and credible negotiators, in

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115   Dennis Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp. 65, 71; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 490-491. As Ross reports, a PLO delegation would be unacceptable to the Shamir government, thus the Americans adopted a selection criterion intended to "fence out the PLO," by requiring Palestinian representatives to express their acceptance to Israel's right to exist, and their support for a two-track and incremental approach toward an Israeli-Palestinian settlement.

116   Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp. 68-69.

117   Cable, USDEL Soviet Union to SECSTATE "Memorandum for POTUS", 3/16/91, cit.

118   Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp.73-76, 77-78; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 455-487.

119   As President George H.W. Bush observed in his memoirs: "The conference was particularly gratifying to me because was one of the fruits of the Gulf War. Without the successful prosecution of that conflict and our coalition building with our Arab allies, such a meeting would have been impossible." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 548.

contrast to the reluctant Shamir, who seemed out of touch even with Israeli public opinion. A viable mechanism was worked out for Israel to engage in bilateral negotiations with its Arab neighbors.[120] Despite these remarkable results, however, a comprehensive settlement was not achieved. As Dennis Ross, who served as the US chief negotiator, observes, the Madrid conference did achieve the critically important result of creating a framework for direct negotiations between the Arabs and Israel on the basis of the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338, but that success was still mainly symbolic.[121] As Ross argues, "Madrid was designed to launch a process, not to conclude it," and soon after the end of the event the actual talks stalled.[122] The Americans explored the chances for another major event, to be held in Washington, in the Summer of 1992, and negotiations between the Israelis and the Arabs continued, although no breakthrough was achieved.[123]

As Bush and his staff had foreseen, the successful political and diplomatic efforts to build a large multinational coalition and achieve the blessing of the UN that had followed the invasion of Kuwait, as well as the awesome display of American power – and restraint – during Operation Desert Storm, produced an enormous capital of global leadership and authority that could be reinvested in the solution of the many other conflicts undermining the stability of the Persian Gulf region and of the Middle East as a whole. Importantly, however, the Administration had decided that a favorable settlement concerning Iraq should be the keystone of a new regional equilibrium favorable to American interests. Saddam's rule in

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120   Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 484-492. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 416. Freedman, *A Choice of Enemies*, pp. 267-270.
121   Resolution 242, adopted by the UN Security Council in the aftermath of the 1967 Six-Day War, established the principle of "land for peace," according to which Israel should withdraw "from territories" it had conquered during the war in return for peace with its Arab neighbors. Resolution 338, passed in the aftermath of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, specified that Resolution 242 was to be implemented "in all of its parts." UN Security Council, Resolution 242, November 22, 1967, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/240/94/IMG/NR024094.pdf?OpenElement ; UN Security Council, Resolution 338, October 22, 1973, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/288/65/IMG/NR028865.pdf?OpenElement .
122   Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp. 80-82.
123   Ross, *The Missing Peace*, pp. 86-87; Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 503-512. A major breakthrough in the peace process – the mutual recognition between the Israeli Government and the OLP – was achieved in 1993, through secret negotiations brokered by Norway. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, pp. 512-523.

Baghdad was judged to be the main obstacle to the final attainment of that favorable settlement, yet the President and his advisers felt that the explicit pursuit of a policy of regime change toward Iraq would be too risky from both a military and geopolitical point of view. Although the expectation that a blatant defeat would foster Saddam's overthrow from within had widely spread within the Bush Cabinet and among the leaders of America's closest allies, the Iraqi dictator – helped by unexpected developments in his country – shattered Washington's hopes by finding a way to hold on to power. The White House, unwilling to recognize the dismal reality that the ultimate strategic objective it had set out to reach could not be achieved with the means it was ready to employ, resolved to cling on an half-hearted policy of indirect pressure. Saddam's continued resilience, however, forced the Bush Administration to divert an increasing amount of time, attention, and resources from the pursuit of its grand design for the Middle East to the implementation of that frustrating policy toward Iraq, which eventually crystallized into an ambiguous regime of "containment." By the time new objective of "keeping Saddam in a box" was finally acknowledged, the chances to promote a wider regional settlement had significantly diminished. By that time, moreover, the the attention in America was beginning to concentrate on the incoming presidential election, while the international community as a whole was beginning to confront with the dark side of the end of the Cold War.

Chapter 6

Epilogue

The Challenges of the Post-Cold War Era and the Legacies of the Gulf War Experience

"In Desert Storm I hope we set positive precedents for future responses to international crises, forging coalitions, properly using the United Nations, and carefully cultivating support at home and abroad for US objectives"
President George H.W. Bush[1]

In the aftermath of Operation Desert Storm – and in part as a consequence of the US-led military intervention – the unexpected conundrum caused by the collapse of state authority and the ensuing humanitarian emergency in northern Iraq challenged the Bush Administration's quest for a favorable and sustainable balance of power in the Gulf. The Bush team reacted by trying to meet that challenge in a way consistent with the vision of a "new world order" expressed by the President since September 1990. Soon after the end of the Gulf War, however, it begun to become clearer that the Iraqi case was not isolated, and that the geopolitical and ideological revolution that had started in Europe in 1989 and had then spread globally also had a dark side.

The end of the superpower confrontation – accompanied by the discredit of Communist ideology and the waning of Soviet power – created a vacuum of power and authority with global repercussions, and the events in the Balkans and in the Horn of Africa from Summer 1991 onward, demonstrated to leaders in Washington and all over the world that the problem of regional conflicts and humanitarian

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1   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 565. As Scowcroft told Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, "One of the underlying premises of the Gulf War, I wouldn't say for everybody in the Administration but for the president and me, probably for Baker, was to conduct this whole thing in a way that would set a useful pattern for the way to deal with crises in an area of cooperation […] Use the United Nations, don't go farther than the mandate of the United Nations, operate in a way that you earned the trust of the smaller countries of the world... That was fundamentally what we were thinking." Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars. From 11/9 to 9/11* (New York: Public Affairs, 2008), p. 11.

emergencies would be a central feature of the "post-Cold War" era. On the one hand, the Yugoslav war of dissolution and the crisis in Somalia presented many analogies with the Iraq-Kuwait crisis – aggression – and even more with the Kurdish crisis – humanitarian emergency. On the other hand, however, the two crises were far more complex: conflicts appeared to develop on an intra-state, ethnic or tribal level, and the two regions lacked the strategic and economic significance that had commanded prompt and decisive action in the Gulf. Bush and his advisers fully grasped these differences, yet America was now the only remaining superpower. Because of both domestic pressures and the implications of global leadership, it proved impossible for the White House to remain completely aloof from these two post-Cold War tragedies. As it plunged into the Yugoslav and Somali crises, the Bush Administration opted for the approach based on calculations of national interest and support for multilateral solutions that had consolidated throughout the presidency.

The people of Yugoslavia had experienced episodes of extreme ethnic violence in the past, but since the end of the Second World War, the federal and Communist regime established by Josip Broz – "Tito" – had proved capable to guarantee peaceful coexistence, and even integration, among the different ethnic groups, thanks in part to Western support to the country's indigenous variant of Communism, which was deeply at odds with Moscow's orthodoxy and thus perceived as an asset by the US and its allies.[2] Tito's death, in 1981, the decline and fall of Communist ideology under pressure from democratic principles and practices and unsuccessful attempts to reform the country's economy and adapt the federal system to the challenges coming from both domestic pressures and the changing international system, inexorably eroded that equilibrium throughout the 1980s.[3] The cumulative effect of these developments was to dry up the flow of foreign assistance – thus exacerbating the country's economic crisis – and to

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2   Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe. Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers – America's Last Ambassador Tells what Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1996), pp. VII, 6-7; James Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will. International Diplomacy and the Yugoslav War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 25

3   Susan L. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy. Chaos and Dissolution After the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 47-81; Joze Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave. 1991-1999* (Torino, Einaudi, 2001), pp. 20-34; Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 26-27.

change the framework of reference of domestic political legitimacy, depriving local leaders of both resources and a traditional justification for their power. Given the discredit of the universalist principle the federation was based upon, leaders in the Republics increasingly found that appealing to the centrifugal sentiment of national identity could help them remain at the top of political power in their respective Republic. That turned out to be particularly evident in the case of Serbia, which represented the greatest unit in the federation, and exercised some sort of influence over a conspicuous ethnic community scattered within the rest of the territory and institutions of the federation. Serbian leaders, especially the ambitious Slobodan Milosevic, were thus increasingly tempted to exploit their position of relative clout and connections with in the federal Army to pursue a political project aimed at maximizing their dominance in the name of a new "Greater Serbia," or a smaller version of the federation.[4]

By Spring 1991, it was becoming evident that centrifugal tendencies and harsh nationalist rhetoric on the part of leaders in the Republics threatened to sink Yugoslavia into a spiral of fragmentation that would likely lead to violence in some areas. Western leaders, and especially some of the Bush Administration's top officials, such as Brent Scowcroft and Lawrence Eagleburger, were well aware of the complexities and the potential dangers that characterized the situation in the Balkans.[5] There was, however, scarce interest in taking a strong, and potentially costly commitment to the stability of a region whose strategic importance had decreased over the years. The priority in Western capitals, and especially in Washington, appeared rather to prevent the sudden and uncontrolled break-down of Yugoslavia from setting a precedent for analogous tendencies in the now increasingly shaky Soviet Union.[6] Secretary of State Baker made a trip to Belgrade

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4   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 31-33. Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, pp. 39-40, 83-84;Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), p. 163; David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace. Bush, Clinton and the Generals* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), p. 77.

5   Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe.*, pp. 64-65; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 155; David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 24-30, 79-80.

6   Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 164. Bush apparently tried to send an indirect message to Yugosalv leaders during a speech in Ukraine that Summer. The President argued that freedom was not "the same as independence," and that Americans would neither support "those who seek independence in order to replace a far-off tyranny with a local despotism," nor "aid those who promote a suicidal nationalism based upon ethnic hatred." Remarks to the Supreme Soviet

in June 1991 in order to urge the leaders of the local Republics to refrain from premature secessions, yet soon after he flew back to the US Slovenia and Croatia declared their secession, igniting a conflict that foreshadowed the violent breakdown of the rest of Yugoslavia.[7] Slovenia was the most ethnically-homogeneous Republic, and its authorities were capable of mounting a surprisingly effective military resistance that offset federal forces under Belgrade's control. Thus, after a brief stalemate, military confrontation subsided, and Slovenia de facto secured its newly-established independence.[8] The fate of Croatia was rather different. Serbian enclaves in that country called for federal protection and broke away from the Republic. Bloody and protracted military clashes ensued.[9]

Baker's unsuccessful trip had contributed to the Administration's conviction that American involvement in the Balkan crisis should be minimized, hence the White House was eager to let Western European leaders claim a major role for the EC in the management of the Yugoslav conflict.[10] EC leaders, adamant to assert the Community's ambitions as an international actor, did engage in a diplomatic initiative. The result of the European mediation was an agreement, signed on the Brioni island in Croatia, that established a ceasefire and partially slowed down the process of secession of the the two breakaway Republics from the federal system centered on Belgrade. As it would soon and painfully became clear, however, the Brioni agreement failed to deter further conflict and fragmentation.[11] As it had been

of the Republic of the Ukraine in Kiev, Soviet Union", August 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*,
http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=3267&year=1991&month=8 .
Author's conversation with Amb. Roman Popadiuk, cit; Scowcroft recalled that the objective of the speech was to warn the Ukrainians not to break up the way of Yugoslavia. Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft, cit. The speech, awkwardly held before an Ukrainian audience yearning for independence from the Soviet Union, was famously recalled as the "Chiken Kiev" speech.

7   Warren Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe. Yugoslavia and Its Destroyers – America's Last Ambassador Tells what Happened and Why* (New York: Random House, 1996), pp. 133-137.

8   Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, pp. 144-146, Joze Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, pp. 35-59.

9   Zimmerman, *Origins of a Catastrophe*, pp. 145-146;

10   Author's conversation with Brent Scowcroft… cit.; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 636; David Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace. Bush, Clinton and the Generals* (New York: Touchstone, 2002), pp. 45-46. Allegedly, Baker's assessment was: "We don't have a dog in this fight."

11   Misha Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia. The Third Balkan War* (London: Penguin, 1996); pp. 100-101; Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 32-36; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, pp. 168.169; Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, pp. 56-59.

the case in previous instances of internal conflicts, the Bush Cabinet remained reluctant to become directly involved, especially to undertake military commitments. Powell was skeptical about the willingness of Washington politicians to face the potential implication of a direct military intervention in the Balkans. The US military estimated that intervention might trigger an escalation, and when Powell confronted Bush and his advisers with the eventuality that, once launched, a US military operation might need to escalate up to a major commitment of troops and resources, he saw that politicians tended to back off.[12] As far as Baker recalls, it was judged that the conflict in Yugoslavia didn't pose a threat to US vital national interests, and that the Western Europeans were in a position to manage the crisis on their own, as they were indeed claiming.[13] The President and his advisers judged Serbia to be the critical actor, and the most likely great troublemaker, in the crisis, and there was a widespread concern within the Cabinet that a major regional crisis could break out if the Belgrade authorities decided to exploit the conflict to mount a violent crackdown on the Albanian populations of the Serbian province of Kosovo. A policy of political pressure in concert with other major powers – including the Soviet Union – was thus considered vital to deter Serbian leaders from taking measures that might escalate the conflict on a regional level.[14]

International intervention in the Yugoslav crisis thus began to be structured around parallel efforts on the part of the EC and the UN. On September 25, 1991, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 713, which established an arms embargo concerning the territory of Yugoslavia, and in November the UN managed to broker a new ceasefire between Croatian forces and the Yugoslav federal government.[15] Despite the apparent assertiveness and activism of EC leaders, the

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12   Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 34-36. That pattern, Halberstam notes would be repeated during the first years of the Clinton Administration.

13   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 636.

14   Talking Points, "Message for the Serbian leadership", OA/ID CF01306-004, Gompert, David C. Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Outline, "Issues paper", n.d., OA/ID CF01301-002, Gompert, David C. Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

15   William Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil. Peacekeepers, Warlords and a World of Endless Conflict* (New York: Touchstone, 2000), pp. 63-64;Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 180; UN Security Council, Resolution 713, September 25, 1991, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/49/IMG/NR059649.pdf?OpenElement . The embargo, however, had the perverse effect of freezing a situation of military advantage for

major European powers were indeed divided on the crucial issue of whether to oppose Yugoslavia's dissolution or try to manage it. As their American counterparts, moreover, European leaders shared a marked reluctance to undertake significant military commitments – such as sizeable force deployments – that might have a deterrent effect on the spread of violence.[16] The EC eventually decided to buy time by establishing an ad hoc commission of jurists – chaired by the French Robert Badinter – tasked to evaluate whether each of the individual republics possessed the basic requirements for the establishment of a democratic state.[17] The workings of the commission, however, were irremediably undermined in late December 1991 by the decision to recognize Slovenia's and Croatia's independence on the part of Germany – in the name of that right to self-determination that had justified the country's unification.[18] As a result in early January 1992 the EC as a whole recognized the two countries, setting a critical precedent for Bosnia, the most ethnically mixed republic, and the potentially greatest theater of conflict.

Given the increasing danger of an enlargement of the conflict, the UN Security Council began to consider the idea of deploying a peacekeeping contingent. There were signals that such a deployment would be opposed by Belgrade and ethnic Serbian leaders, but a number of European delegations with a sit in the Council supported the idea of a UN force, on the ground that it could foster a positive "division of labor" between the UN and the EC, by which the EC would take advantage of the UN presence to pursue a political solution.[19] Although Bush and his staff had already concluded that the US should pursue an "hands-off" approach, there was some openness to the idea of some form of contribution on purely humanitarian grounds, and the idea of a peacekeeping effort led by the UN and the European was supported.[20] In February 1992, the UN Security Council established

extremists in the Serbian enclaves in Croatia and Bosnia, who were in a position to enjoy assistance from their sympathizers in Belgrade and in the federal army while other parties – especially government authorities in landlocked Bosnia – were cut off from external military support. Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 37-39.

16   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will,* pp. 158-166, 174-182.

17   Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, pp. 181-184;

18   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will,* pp. 166-174, 321; Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, pp. 184-185.

19   Cable, From US Mission, USUN to Secretary of State et. al., "Security Council and Yugoslavia", 1/28/92, OA/ID CF01424-010, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

20   Paper, "Background Paper", 11/19/91, OA/ID CF01306-005, Gompert, David C. Files,

UNPROFOR, a peacekeeping force tasked to monitor the respect of the ceasefire in Croatia.[21]

Significantly, UNPROFOR's headquarters had originally been set up in Sarajevo, Bosnia's capital.[22] Bosnia was indeed becoming the new epicenter of violence in the Balkans. Following Croatia's and Slovenia's secessions, leaders in Sarajevo concluded that their Republic too should escape from a federation that would now be dominated by Serbia. They resolved to let the people decide in a referendum, which was a critical requirement the Badinter Commission had indicated as a condition for Bosnia's request for international recognition to be considered.[23] Bosnia's population was highly heterogeneous in terms of ethnic composition, with a Muslim community which represented the largest group followed by Serbs and Croats. None of the groups, however, enjoyed absolute majority, and in many areas ethnic groups were so intermingled that no clear majority could be discerned.[24] The referendum was held between February 29 and March 1, 1992, and the results showed an overwhelming preference for independence, that in turn was recognized within one month by the rest of the international community. Bosnia's Serbs, however, radicalized by the ongoing climate of conflict, boycotted the referendum and refused to accept its results.[25] Then, Bosnian Serb militias, who turned out to have inherited caches of weapons from the withdrawing federal army and then received support from paramilitary, criminal groups from Serbia proper, began to engage in what would soon become the widespread and grimly famous practice of "ethnic cleansing" – massive acts of violence intended to force the other ethnic groups that populated the country to leave their homes, in order to establish and expand ethnically homogeneous

Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Talking Points, "Meeting on UNPROFOR", 6/18/92, OA/ID CF01475-027, Holl, Jane E., Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

21   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 102; UN Security Council, Resolution 743, February 21, 1992, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/02/IMG/NR001102.pdf?OpenElement .

22   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will,* p. 108.

23   Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 194; Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, p. 131.

24   Muslims, Serbs and Croats made up respectively around 41%, 31%, and 17% of Bosnia's population. Woodward, *Balkan Tragedy*, p. 172.

25   Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, p.134, 145-146; Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, p. 90;von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 130-131; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 66-67.

enclaves.[26] By that time UNPROFOR's deployment had already been extended to Bosnia, yet UN peacekeepers on the ground were far too few and light armed to ensure stability, and soon proved to be inadequate to contain the tide of violence that was rising in the country.[27] By late April 1992 the capital, Sarajevo, came under siege. Serbian militias surrounded the city with heavy weapons, and began to bomb it, turning a place that had used to be a paragon of ethnic integration into a paragon of fear, suspicion, and hatred.[28] As the dramatic situation in the capital caught the attention of world public opinion, pressure for bolder forms of intervention rose. Thus the UN security Council decided to give UNPROFOR the task of escorting humanitarian convoys to Sarajevo and called for efforts to disarm the militias – missions that, given the opposition to increase force levels on the part of the major powers involved, could hardly be expected to bring about pacification.[29]

Despite rising pressures, Bush and his advisers remained opposed to direct intervention in the crisis. The US wanted to deny the Belgrade regime representation at the UN as a form of pressure to stop ethnic cleansing practices by Serbian groups in neighboring newly-independent states.[30] As archival evidence suggests, moreover, as the Security Council discussed the idea of mounting an operation to reopen the access to Sarajevo and secure the delivery of humanitarian aid to the city the Bush Administration considered the idea of taking part in operations of that kind. Yet, as Kofi Annan, then director of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, reported, the Bosnian Serb leaders maintained that the Bosnian Serb population would react very negatively to direct US participation, which would be interpreted as pro-Muslim. The Serbs claimed to be concerned that

26   Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, p. 122-124; Cable, From American Embassy, Belgrade to Secretary of State, "Letter", 6/8/92, OA/ID CF01424-011, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library

27   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 108-118; von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 136; Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, pp. 68-69

28   ; Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 122-123; Pirjevec, *Le guerre jugoslave*, pp. 146-150, 158-161.

29   UN Security Council, Resolution 752, May 15, 1992, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/11/IMG/NR001111.pdf?OpenElement ; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished.*, pp. 39-40;

30   Baker with De Frank, the Politics of Diplomacy, p. 646; Cable, From Department of State to Beijing et al., "Serbia-Montenegro", 6/26/92, OA/ID CF01424-006, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 646.

US personnel at the airport would be viewed as the leading element in a larger intervention force. Gen Mackenzie, the Canadian UNPROFOR commander in the Sarajevo sector, supported that view.[31] The UN airlift was finally launched in June 1992, but, although it did temporarily ease pressure on the capital, it soon proved not to be a viable long term solution.[32] Meanwhile, Baker and his staff at the State Department tried to promote a "Game Plan" to ensure an adequate flow of humanitarian supplies to Sarajevo. According to Baker, the plan proposed to move a US aircraft carrier to the Adriatic Sea, to impose a multilateral naval blockade, to step up sanctions enforcement by closing an oil pipeline running from Romania to Serbia, and to issue a credible threat of using airpower to ensure the protection of humanitarian relief. Although Baker and his staff judged that the Game Plan would not imply an open-ended US military commitment, other members of the Administration, especially Cheney and Powell, remained skeptical about it, and no consensus developed in favor of the implementation of the plan.[33]

In the event, the Bush Cabinet's priority toward the Balkans appeared to be the containment of the crisis.[34] The Administration remained supportive of initiatives taken by other major powers to find a solution – such as the establishment in August 1992 of the International Commission of Former Yugoslavia (ICFY), co-chaired by former US Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, on behalf of the UN, and Lord David Owen, representing the EC.[35] The President and his advisers, however, were neither prepared to make a substantial and comprehensive direct commitment to the solution of the crisis, nor to support measures that sounded reasonable in principle but implied the danger of an escalation of the violence and of the humanitarian emergency, such as lifting the arms embargo that covered the whole of former Yugoslavia's territory.[36]

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31   Cable, From U.S. Mission UN to Secretary of State, "UNPROFOR", 6/25/92, OA/ID CF01424-007, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library

32   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will,* pp. 109-110.

33   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 648-650.

34   David Owen, *Balkan Odyssey* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1997), p. 91.

35   Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will,* pp. 224-232; Cable, From President Bush to Prime Minister Major, "Bosnia", 8/24/92, OA/ID CF01301-002, Gompert, David C. Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Outline, "Week program for the next several weeks", 9/25/92, OA/ID CF01301-001, Gompert, David C. Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

36   As Bush wrote Bosnia's president Alja Izetbegovich in November 1992: "We sincerely

As it had been the case in the aftermath of Desert Storm, the Bush Cabinet was unwilling to undertake major commitments toward a complex internal conflict with no major threat to US vital interests and no favorable solution in sight. The president and his advisers, however, confirmed their sensitivity toward the risks that such a conflict might expand and escalate on a regional level. Thus, the Administration concluded that the US should not refrain from taking bold action to prevent the eruption of a conflict over Kosovo. "If conflict occurs in Kosovo," a list of talking points prepared for a NATO meeting in November 1992 read, "there is a grave danger that it will be extremely violent and cost thousands of innocent lives. It could also spread, carried by a new wave of refugees flowing into neighboring states. Who themselves may feel threatened and under pressure to act."[37] As Bush made clear in messages to other leaders with stakes in the Balkan crises, and particularly to his French, British, and Russian counterparts, the Administration judged that it was necessary to give Milosevic a "stern warning" to refrain from taking repressive actions against the Kosovars, and to be prepared to "back that warning up," and, in parallel, to urge Kosovo's Albanian leaders to abstain from provocative calls for independence.[38] "Because violence in Kosovo could spark a

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believe that lifting the embargo, completely or partially, will only increase the level of violence and also greatly reduce the international community's ability to deliver the critically-needed humanitarian relief supplies this winter." Letter, From President Bush to President Izetbegovic, "Support for Bosnia-Herzegovina", 11/21/92, OA/ID CF01747-003, Holl, Jane E., Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. See also, Letter, From President Izetbegovic to President Bush, "Help for Bosnia-Herzegovina", 11/3/92, OA/ID CF01747-003, Holl, Jane E., Files, Subject Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. In an op-ed published by the *New York Times*, Powell strongly criticized the constant calls for limited forms of engagement such as "surgical strikes" as a means to deal with the Balkan crises, since they represented in his opinion a dangerous military commitment in a political vacuum. "The solution," he wrote, "must ultimately be a political one. Deeper military involvement beyond humanitarian purposes requires great care and a full examination of possible outcomes." Colin B. Powell, "Why Generals Get Nervous", *The New York Times*, October 8, 1992, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CEFD8163BF93BA35753C1A964958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted .

37   Cable, From Secretary of State to U.S. Mission, NATO, "Briefing", 11/23/92, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

38   Talking Points, "Presidential phone call to Prime Minister Major", 12/92, OA/ID CF01747-005, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Letter, From POTUS to Prime Minister Demirel, "Potential for violence in Kosovo", 11/18(92, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Letter, From POTUS to Prime Minister Mitsotakis, "Potential for violence in Kosovo", 11/18(92, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Letter, From

wider war, affecting our interests and our allies," Bush wrote to French President Mitterrand, "the United States will consider the use of force in the context of an international response if ethnic cleansing or Serbian-sponsored violence occurs in Kosovo."[39] As a result of this attitude, in December 1992 Bush strongly warned Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic not to undertake violent initiatives against Kosovo's Albanian population. "The outbreak of violence in the Kosovo could threaten international peace and security in this region and affect American interests." A list of talking points prepared for a message to Milosevic read. "We hold you responsible for the behavior of all Serbian forces in the Kosovo."[40]

Though on a smaller extent, similar considerations applied Macedonia. The highly varied ethnic composition of that Yugoslav Republic, located at an important crossroads with neighboring countries, made it appear to be another potential Balkan hotspot. Thus, the US promptly supported the preventive deployment of a UN force to Macedonia, which was implemented in early 1993 and contributed to protect the local population from violence, although the country's path to independence was slowed down by tension with neighboring countries.[41]

The Bush Administration's "hands-off" policy toward the Balkan crises had a price. Besides creating disappointment and pressure in terms of public opinion and

POTUS to Chancellor Kohl, Amato and Mulroney, "Potential for violence in Kosovo", 11/18(92, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. As Bush wrote to Russia's President Boris Yeltsin: "I am well aware of how controversial the entire Yugoslavia crisis is in Russia and that some there might deem the Kosovo an internal Serbian matter." However, he continued, "Russia's voice will be critical, whether directly with Belgrade or in the Security Council. Indeed, Russia is in a strong position to help avoid both a dangerous expansion of the Yugoslav conflict and the serious consequences such an expansion could have for Serbia itself. Your standing and our partnership will be especially important if we are to avert a greater tragedy and a challenge to the broader democratic Euro-Atlantic order you and I are committed to foster." Letter from POTUS to Boris Yeltsin, "Potential for Violence in Kosovo" November 18, 1992, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library

39   Letter, From POTUS to Francois Mitterrand, "Potential for violence in Kosovo", 11/18/92, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.

40   Talking Points, "Kosovo", 1992, OA/ID CF01747-019, Holl, Jane E. Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Importantly, another point read: "For our part we will urge restraint among the Kosovo Albanians."

41   Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished. A US-UN Saga* (New York: Random House, 1999), p. 50; Gow, *Triumph of the Lack of Will*, pp. 118-125. A critical obstacle to the final settlement on Macedonia's independence was Greece's refusal to the country adopting that name. Macedonia thus finally was recognized as the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM).

domestic politics, it was putting the legitimacy of America's global leadership under question. Washington's inaction with regard to Bosnia, where the Muslim community was undergoing tremendous and large-scale abuses perpetrated by the Serb militias, was eroding America's standing vis-à-vis other important Muslim countries, including such a critical strategic ally as Saudi Arabia.[42] Reluctance to intervene in the Balkans starkly contrasted with the overwhelming military and diplomatic effort mounted by the US in the Persian Gulf, and this kind of global and long term consideration played an important role in influencing the Bush Administration's outlook toward the other great humanitarian crisis that had caught the attention of the world in the dawn of the post-Cold War era – Somalia.

Somalia – like Yugoslavia, but on a smaller scale – had enjoyed some degree of strategic relevance during the Cold War, especially after the collapse of détente.[43] That had favored the rise to power in the midst of the country's traditionally clan-based political system of a local military leader, Mohamed Siad Barre, and eventually allowed him to establish his own one-man rule. As it had happened in Yugoslavia, the end of the bipolar confrontation deprived Somalia of its geopolitical relevance, and by implication of superpower financial and military assistance, thus undermining Barre's rule, and eventually favoring the fall of his regime under pressure from opposition groups and some of his own military leaders.[44] Barre's fall, however, ignited a process that brought about the collapse of Somalia's entire state structure, and precipitated the country in a situation of lawless civil war, in which local warlords and their militias emerged as the dominant political actors on the ground.[45]

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42   In June 1992 King Fahd of Saudi Arabia wrote to Bush to press him to use American influence within the UN Security Council to take the necessary steps to stop atrocities against the Muslim population of Bosnia. Letter, From King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to POTUS, "Bosnia-Hercegovina (English translation), 6/7/92, OA/ID CF01424-008, Dyke, Nancy Bearg Files, Subject File, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, pp. 296-300.

43   John Hirsh and Robert Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope. Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), p. 6; Donna R. Jackson, "The Carter Administration and Somalia", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 31, No. 4 (September 2007), pp. 703-721.

44   Robert F. Bauman and Lawrence A. Yates with Versalle F. Washington, *"My Clan Against the World". US and Coalition Forces in Somalia 1992-1994* (Fort Leavenworth, KA: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2004), pp. 16-17; Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 56-54.

45   Bauman and Yates with Washington, *"My Clan Against the World"*, p. 17; Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 56-54.

By the early 1990s, the material and social devastation caused by the civil war had created a situation of famine, compounded by the constant pillage of humanitarian aid coming from abroad by the warlords, who used it as a form of revenue and a means to advance their local power.[46] As efforts to bring about reconciliation and a settlement failed and the famine worsened, the crisis in Somalia began to catch the attention of an increasingly larger international audience, and eventually of the UN Security Council, which in January 1992 established an arms embargo and called for a ceasefire.[47] Although a ceasefire was indeed established and an international mediation effort launched, the mood among the parties on the ground remained tense and confrontational, and the emergency caused by the famine and the growing number of refugees reached dramatic levels, which were extensively covered by the international media.[48] As the emergency mounted, on April 24, 1992, UN Security Council adopted resolution 751, which established UNOSOM, a peacekeeping mission tasked with dealing with the Somali humanitarian crisis.[49]

Somalia too was understood as a chaotic civil war in a remote place, yet by Summer 1992 Bush and his staff began to seriously consider the idea of undertaking some kind of commitment, and in mid August the Administration offered to help transport the newly established UN peacekeeping contingent (consisting of 500 Pakistani soldiers) and announced its intention to give a substantial contribution to an immediate airlift of food supplies.[50] By Autumn, however, it became evident that UNOSOM was numerically and qualitatively inadequate to the gravity of the situation in Somalia, given the lack of progress in the UN mediation efforts and the fact that the warlords on the ground were still in a

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46   Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, p. 86; von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 59; Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace: United Nations Peace Operations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006), pp. 147-148.
47   Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, p. 15; UN Security Council, Resolution 733, January 23, 1992, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/010/92/IMG/NR001092.pdf?OpenElement .
48   Shawcross, *Deliver Us from Evil*, p. 86; Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 59.
49   UN Security Council, Resolution 751, April 24, 1992, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/011/10/IMG/NR001110.pdf?OpenElement .
50   James L. Woods, "US Government Decisionmaking Process during Humanitarian Operations in Somalia", in Walter Clarke and Jeffrey Herbst (eds.), *Learning from Somalia. The Lessons of Armed Humanitarian Intervention* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997), p. 155; Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp. 24-25.

position to seize humanitarian supplies continue to use them to their advantage, instead of easing the famine.[51]

By mid-November 1992, Bush and his advisers began to evaluate the idea of a military intervention in Somalia. The main concern, however, was to keep the mission limited, and ensure that troops could be pulled out as soon as possible. CENTOCM had apparently developed a concept for a mission intended to protect the delivery of humanitarian aid. As Adm. David Jeremiah, Powell's representative at the Deputies Committee maintained, the US military could "do the job." Thus, by late November, Bush eventually decided that the US would take the lead in a major humanitarian military operation in Somalia.[52]

The Administration's decision created the conditions for the adoption by the UN Security Council of Resolution 794, which authorized member states to use "all necessary means to establish as soon as possible a secure environment for humanitarian relief operations in Somalia."[53] On December 4, 1992, on the same day Resolution 794 was passed, President Bush publicly announced the launch of Operation Restore Hope.[54] The planning and conception for the mission in Somalia followed in many ways the pattern that had been developing since the Panama intervention in 1989. Even more important, it reflected the experience of Desert Storm and the ensuing humanitarian intervention in northern Iraq. An overwhelming force led by the US would be deployed within a multinational framework under the aegis of the UN. Only the southern half of Somalia – the so-called "famine belt" – would be affected. The "mission of the coalition," as Bush wrote to UN Secretary General Boutros-Ghali, was "limited and specific: to create the security conditions which will permit the feeding of the starving Somali people

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51   Bauman and Yates with Washington, *"My Clan Against the World"*, pp. 18-19; Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp. 25-33; Woods, "US Government Decisionmaking Process during Humanitarian Operations in Somalia", p. 157; Paper, "Humanitarian relief Efforts", n.d., OA/ID 21366-050, Howe, Rear Admiral Jonathan, Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library.
52   John Hirsh and Robert Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope. Reflections on Peacemaking and Peacekeeping* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1995), pp. 41-43; Powell with Persico, My American Journey, pp. 550-551.
53   UN Security Council, Resolution 794, December 4, 1992, http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N92/772/11/PDF/N9277211.pdf?OpenElement .
54   "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia", December 4, 1992, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=5100&year=1992&month=12 .

and allow the transfer of this security function to the UN peacekeeping force." The military objective of the US-led United Task Force (UNITAF) was to "secure ports, airports and delivery routes, and to protect storage and distribution of humanitarian supplies and relief workers." The White House made it clear that the US was not taking sides in the ongoing civil war. The US-led coalition would leave Somalia as soon as these objectives would be met. Then, after the conclusion of the humanitarian effort, the responsibility to address the political causes of the conflict, and to find a sustainable settlement would lay with the UN.[55]

Driving this shift in attitude there were of course humanitarian considerations.[56] However, as Brent Scowcroft observed in a conversation with this author, from a certain point of view intervention in Somalia also had an important political dimension for the US. As Scowcroft recalled, at the time there was a growing feeling within the UN – particularly among Third World countries and within the office of the Secretary General – that the Organization was being reduced to a tool for the West, and that the UN was too concerned with problems in the developed world while too little attention was paid to crises in other areas. From this standpoint, intervention in Somalia also represented an opportunity for the US to show its commitment to the proper functioning of the UN as well as Washington's consideration of the problems of the Third World, of Africa and of the Islamic world.[57]

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55   Letter from President Bush to UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, December 4, 1992, OA/ID CF01437, Nancy B. Dyke Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library; Memorandum for Brent Scowcroft, "Message to King Hussein of Jordan Concerning Somalia", December 3, 1992, OA/ID CF01726, Richard Haass Files, Bush Presidential Records, George Bush Presidential Library. "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Somalia", December 4, 1992, cit.; Joseph Hoar, "Humanitarian Assistance Operations Challenges: The CENTCOM Perspective on Somalia", *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Vol. 1 No. 2, November 1993, pp. 56-63; Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp. XVIII, 46-47,102-106; von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, p. 62. Bauman and Yates with Washington, *"My Clan Against the World"*, pp. 25-27.
56   Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp. XVIII; von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 55-56; Author's conversation with Amb. Roman Popadiuk… cit. It seems important to consider that as even some former American diplomats acknowledged, the Bush Administration's defeat in the November 1992 Presidential election may have prompted Bush to endorse more light-heartedly a humanitarian intervention he may have hesitated to launch if he had known he would have been in charge of terminating it. Author's conversation with Amb. Thomas R. Pickering, cit…
57   Author's conversation with Gen. Brent Scowcroft… cit. As Reporter David Halberstam put it, intervening in Somalia was a way to do something "humanitarian" while minimizing American political commitments. Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 251-252.

By the time Restore Hope was launched the Bush era was over. In four years Bush and his staff had indeed led their country and the world "right through into a room called tomorrow," as the President had promised in his inaugural speech. Under the Bush Administration's watch the Cold War had ended peacefully and in terms overwhelmingly favorable. The US had emerged as the only remaining superpower in an international system dominated by the ideas of democracy and free market, central features of the American political mind.

Facing the challenges of the post-Cold War world, however, Bush and his Cabinet appeared shy and conservative, rather than imaginative and forward-leaning. In the aftermath of the sudden and radical global transformation that had occurred between 1989 and 1992, their conception of "tomorrow" – in terms of both domestic and foreign policy – in fact appeared at best a revival of the traditional themes of "yesterday." That lack of vision, compounded by division and disorientation within the conservative camp in the US, fatally weakened Bush and his team in the run for reelection. Thus, the 1992 Presidential contest was won by William J. Clinton, the young and bright Democratic candidate, with insignificant foreign affairs experience but an appealing liberal outlook that linked the foreign policy goal of strengthening America's global standing to the domestic plan of renewing the country's economy and society.[58]

In spite of the enormous improvements in terms of America's global ascendancy and geopolitical clout which had characterized their government activity, the strategic outlook and foreign policy framework Bush and his staff left to the new, "post-Cold War" generation of American policymakers was not actually clear in terms of guidelines about how to deal with the new world. As political scientists Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier report, the picture of the world some of the top diplomats had come up with in the late days of the Bush Administration was that of a new international system of increasing complexity compared with the old Cold War bipolar world. The challenges of the post-Cold War era, acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and his staff argued, would come from an increasingly

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58   Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, 27-28; Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 14.17. "Excerpts From Clinton's Speech on Foreign Policy Leadership", *The New York Times*, August 14, 1992, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CEFDF1E3CF937A2575BC0A964958260 &sec=&spon=&pagewanted .

interdependent and competitive global economy, from transnational issues such as epidemics and the environment, or the spread of nationalism and religious fundamentalism. Security would be threatened by the collapse of weak states or by the spread of Weapons of Mass Destruction. From this point of view, Eagleburger and his aides suggested, to remain secure and maintain its position of leadership the US needed to build up on new concepts, such as humanitarian intervention, to increase cooperation on the international level, especially within the UN.[59] The need make sense of complexity an elaborate on new concepts, however, arose skepticism among other influential members of the Bush Cabinet, especially those at the Pentagon, as a famous memo leaked in March 1992 to the New York Times reported. The end of the Cold War, Cheney, Paul Wolfowitz and their aides agreed, had favored the emergence of a "US-led system of collective security and the creation of a democratic 'zone of peace.'" America's great achievement had been the integration within that US-led system of major powers and former rivals such as Germany and Japan, and the main concern for Washington in the post-Cold War era should be to make sure that no new challenger would emerge, especially in key strategic such as Europe, East Asia or the Middle East. The US, senior defense officials argued, was going to be surrounded by competitors and potential challengers, even among its allies, and to ensure an adequate protection of its interests and security, it should preserve its position of global leadership by relying on its own power, especially military power, and its capability to deal with threats on its own terms.[60]

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59   Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, pp. 47-52. In late 1992 Eagleburger took over the post of Secretary of State from James Baker, who was appointed to manage Bush's campaign for re-election.

60   Patrick E. Tyler "U.S. Strategy Plan Calls for Insuring No Rivals Develop", *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/us-strategy-plan-calls-for-insuring-no-rivals-develop.html ; "Excerpts From Pentagon's Plan: 'Prevent the Re-Emergence of a New Rival", *The New York Times*, March 8, 1992, http://www.nytimes.com/1992/03/08/world/excerpts-from-pentagon-s-plan-prevent-the-re-emergence-of-a-new-rival.html ; see also: National Security Archive, "Prevent the Reemergence of a New Rival" The Making of the Cheney Regional Defense Strategy, 1991-1992, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb245/index.htm . See also: "Defense Strategy for the 1990s: The Regional Defense Strategy", Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, January 1993, http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/nukevault/ebb245/doc15.pdf . These ideas turned out to be highly appealing to some branches of American conservatism in the post-Cold War era. They became indeed the staple of the neo-conservative ideology shared by many influential members of the Administration of George W. Bush. Mann, *The Rise of the Vulcans*, pp. 198-215. See also: Zalmay Khalizad, "Losing the Moment? The United States and the

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From a more practical an immediate point of view, the Bush Administration had left its successors an "hands-off" policy toward what appeared as an highly dangerous situation in former Yugoslavia, and a short term humanitarian commitment in Somalia. On the one hand, the situation was thus apparently orderly, and a discrete margin of maneuver for policy-makers existed. On the other hand, however, the commitments undertaken – or dodged – by Bush and his staff were affected by a significant ambiguity in terms of long term purposes and strategic thinking.[61] By early 1993 Operation Restore Hope was succeeding at easing the famine and promoting some form of order in the country, and UNITAF was about to withdraw as scheduled. The main long term factors that had brought the crisis about, however, were still in place. UNITAF had focused on ensuring the delivery of food, not on addressing directly issues such as the need to promote lasting settlement among the warlords, or the disarmament of their militias.[62] That approach had upset Boutros-Ghali at the UN, who had long been arguing for bolder forms of US participation to increase the UN chances to succeed in settling the crisis.[63] By the same time, America had taken no direct commitment in the

World After the Cold War", *The Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (Spring 1995), pp. 85-107; *Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and resources for a New Century*, Project for a New American Century, September 2000, http://www.newamericancentury.org/RebuildingAmericasDefenses.pdf ; *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, Washington DC, 2002, http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/nsc/nss/2002/ .

61   As Chollet and Goldgeier note, during its last days in office the Bush Cabinet didn't refrain from initiating and pursuing foreign policy initiatives whose continuation and termination would inevitably fall within the responsibility of the new Administration. "In the three months between Clinton's election in November 1992 and his inauguration in January 1993," Chollet and Goldgeier write, "George H.W. Bush had sent troops to Somalia, bombed Iraq, issued a warning to Serbia over Kosovo, tried to finalize the Uruguay Round of trade talks, and signed the START II treaty, NAFTA, and a chemical weapons treaty." Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, p. 306.

62   Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp, 81-84; Bauman and Yates with Washington, *"My Clan Against the World"*, pp. 61-94.

63   Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, p. 60, 101; Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, pp. 46-47, 102-103. It should be noted that Boutros-Ghali's reservations didn't simply reflect a pragmatic attitude toward the Somali crisis, but also his own personal – and perhaps questionable – conceptual understanding of the post-Cold War era and the role of the UN – and of the UN Secretary General. As he repeatedly remarked in op-eds, essays and official UN documents, it was crucial to acknowledge that the post-Cold War era would be characterized by interdependence and challenges that transcended traditional state borders. States and national leaders, Boutros-Ghali argued, would have to rethink their conception of sovereignty, and recognize that the new challenges could only be effectively dealt with by strengthening the roles of institutions of international cooperation, particularly the UN. Boutros-Ghali's approach in other words called for some form of transfer of power and authority from the UN member states to the Organization – especially to the office of the Secretary General he was

Yugoslav crisis, but the basic understanding of the Balkan conflict which had developed in the US – and had not been explicitly questioned by the Bush Administration – was that the crisis was the product of aggression, especially on the part of rapacious Serb leaders such as Milosevic, and that the Bosnian Muslims were the main victims of this aggression. Bush's foreign policy record had indeed been harshly attacked by Clinton during the 1992 presidential campaign for his alleged failure to devise a bolder policy approach capable of bringing about a just settlement in Bosnia.[64] The unchallenged conventional military capabilities demonstrated in Operation Desert Storm, despite being so useful in protecting American interests and security vis-à-vis great powers and potential major regional competitors (to the point of adding a new dimension to US deterrent capabilities, as an influential commentator argued), did not provide any appealing policy option concerning the ongoing crises in the Balkans or in Africa.[65]

On August 4, 1993, President Clinton's National Security Advisor, Anthony Lake, received a letter from his predecessor, Brent Scowcroft, now a private citizen. "Dear Tony," Scowcroft wrote, "I left office on January 20th with a sense of satisfaction about my record of public service, but also with a strong desire to continue to contribute to the public policy debate." The letter was indeed meant to promote a foreign policy forum recently founded by Scowcroft, but the former

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heading. In practical terms, his most immediate demand was for bolder multilateral action and greater authority for his office in the direction and implementation of peacekeeping missions, even forms of control over forces chartered to this expanding filed from other security organizations such as NATO. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Empowering the United Nations. Historic Opportunities to Strenghten the Wolrd Body", Foreign Affairs, (Winter 1993); UN, "An Agenda for Peace. Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacekeeping", Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to the statement adopted by the Summit Meeting of the Security Council on 31 January 1992, 17 June 1992, http://www.un.org/Docs/SG/agpeace.html ; Boutros Boutros-Ghali, "Don't Make the UN's Hard Job Harder", *The New York Times*, August 20, 1993, p. A29 http://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/20/opinion/don-t-make-the-un-s-hard-job-harder.html ; Boutros-Ghali, *Unvanquished*, pp. 83-84.

64 Richard Holbrooke *To End a War* (New York: The Modern Library, 1999), p. 41; Gwen Ifill, "Clinton Says Bush Failed Leadership Tests Abroad"*The New York Times*, August 14, 1992, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CE2D9163FF937A2575BC0A964958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted ; "Excerpts From Clinton's Speech on Foreign Policy Leadership", *The New York Times*, August 14, 1992, http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E0CEFDF1E3CF937A2575BC0A964958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted ;

65 William J. Perry, "Desert Storm and Deterrence", *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 70, No. 4 (Fall 1991), pp. 66-82. Perry would become Clinton's Defense Secretary from February 1994 until January 1997.

close aide of George W.H. Bush was eager to share his broader reflections with Lake. "There has never been a better opportunity to help mold a world order that reflects our values and serves our interests," he wrote. "However," he continued, "if we fail to seize this opportunity, we will face a world that grows increasingly inhospitable to our values, to our economic health and, ultimately, to our national security." America, Scowcroft argued, needed to promote "a world order which encourages political and economic freedom and the peaceful settlement of disputes." Equally important, American political, economic and military leadership was "essential to shaping such a world."[66]

The letter indeed reflected the mixed feelings that dominated the outgoing Bush foreign policy team – on the one hand, an exhilaration for the remarkable results achieved during their tenure and a conviction that enormous opportunities were laying within America's reach; on the other hand, a sense of anxiety and concern that the country might lose those opportunities, that its global leadership might erode, and that America might eventually find itself surrounded and threatened by an hostile world of chaos and conflict. By the time Lake received Scowcroft's letter, Clinton and his advisers were indeed facing some of the critical dilemmas left open by their predecessors, and were about to take important decisions concerning the role they wanted America to assume in the post-Cold War era.[67]

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66   Letter from Gen. Brent Scowcroft to the Honorable Anthony Lake, August 4, 1993, The Papers of Anthony Lake, Box 22, Folder 7 (Correspondence, 1993 "Sci-Se"), Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

67   By August 1993 the crisis in Somalia had assumed the character of a conflict between the UN peacekeeping contingent and Gen. Mohammed Farrah Aidid, Mogadishu's most powerful warlord. That month Powell agreed to deploy US rangers and special operation forces tasked with the mission to capture Aidid, as requested by the UN Special Representative to Somalia, US Adm. Jonathan Howe. The escalation would culminate in the death of 19 US soldiers during an attempt to catch the warlord, in October. The shock of the failed raid, which received extensive media coverage, eventually led to the abrupt disengagement on the part of the US, to the abortion of the UN mission to Somalia, and to the beginning of a phase of inexorable decline in the American commitment toward the UN. Halberstam, *War in a Time of Peace*, pp. 257-259, 261-262; Hirsh and Oakley, *Somalia and Operation Restore Hope*, p. 120; Powell with Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 570-571; Von Hippel, *Democracy by Force*, pp. 60-61. The episode famously became the subject of a breath-taking account by reporter Mark Bowden, as well of a movie based on his book. Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down. A Story of Modern War* (London and New York: Penguin, 1999).

Conclusions

Power, and Opportunities

"We were suddenly in a unique position, without experience, without precedent, and standing alone at the height of power. It was, it is, an unparalleled situation in history, one which presents us with the rarest opportunity to shape the world, and the deepest responsibility to do so wisely for the benefit of not just the US but all nations."
Brent Scowcroft[1]

"Any international moral order must rest on some hegemony of power. But this hegemony […] is in itself a challenge to those who do not share it; and it must, if it is to survive, contain an element of give and take, of self-sacrifice on the part of those who have, which will render it tolerable to the other members of the world community."
Edward H. Carr.[2]

During a press conference in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War, the president was asked by a reporter: "do you envision a new era now of using U.S. military forces around the world for different conflicts that arise?" "No" Bush replied,

> I think because of what has happened, we won't have to use U.S. forces around the world […] I say that what our troops have done over there will not only enhance the peace but reduce the risk that their successors have to go into battle someplace.[3]

Bush's words reflected an aspiration that would have been shared by President Wilson and President Roosevelt, yet history was to prove once again that these hopes could not be fulfilled.

The decisions made in Washington between 1989 and 1992 had a dramatic influence on the transformation of international affairs that marked the transition

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1   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, p. 564.
2   Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*, pp. 151-152.
3   "The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Conflict", March 1, 1991, *Public Papers of President George H.W. Bush*, http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/research/public_papers.php?id=2755&year=1991&month=3 .

from the Cold War to our world, as well as on the way security challenges are conceived and understood in the "post-Cold War" era.[4] The Bush team didn't expect the Cold War, and especially the bipolar configuration of global power, to erode so quickly. Indeed, as their own admissions and the archival record concerning the "pause of 1989" suggest, the President and his closest advisers were loath to think about how to overcome the bipolar confrontation. Yet once they found themselves in the middle of such an epochal transformation in international affairs, Bush and his staff seized the opportunities with cautious and shrewd diplomacy, demonstrated a superb understanding of the logic of power and geopolitics, and secured most of the foreign policy goals they had identified as "vital" American security interests, such as German unification and the establishment of a new order in Europe according to their own terms. In addition, they magnified America's global standing in leading the response to Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, and defeated the Iraqi dictator " in a textbook case of diplomatic and military skill," to use the words of James Baker.[5] In spite of these terrific achievements, however, the unimaginative but pragmatic approach of the George H.W. Bush Administration failed to secure a new, post-Cold War order of peace and stability. On the contrary, and in contrast to the President's wishes, the Bush Administration's response to the security challenges of the post-Cold War era marked the beginning of a phase of increasing American military engagement overseas, and persistent frustration.

In judging the foreign policy record of the George H.W. Bush Administration, it seems critically important to acknowledge the revolutionary and sudden character of the transformation of international affairs between 1989 and 1992. Bush and his staff reacted to events whose meaning none of the statesman of their era had the time and capability to grasp in full, and from this point of view their achievements are unquestionably remarkable – especially in comparison with the performances of their successors at the White House. Yet the analysis of such a defining event as the

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4   As Derek Chollet and James Goldgeier wrote in 2008: "From the day Saddam's army rumbled into Kuwait in August 1990, through the present, the history of America's tangle with Iraq represents both the soaring hopes and tragic flaws in the debate about new global threats and the ideas about US power after the Cold War." Chollet and Goldgeier, *America Between the Wars*, pp. 208-209.

5   Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, p. 442.

Gulf crisis has persuaded this author that there were blots in the foreign policy approach of the first Bush team which crucially undermined the success of their effort to create a new international order of peace, democracy, and openness they and their predecessors – and their successors as well – appear to have been dreaming of. Those shortcomings, this author maintains, were in part the product of the President's and his staff political outlook, and in part the reflection of a certain kind of mentality that dominated the worldview of Bush and his staff, and that some scholars would recognize as a constant or recurrent feature of American leaders. The Gulf crisis, this author suggests, magnified the relevance of those mental schemes, and left a critical legacy which conditioned the quest for an American grand strategy in the post-Cold War era.

The vortex of actions and reactions taken by leaders in Washington and Baghdad that characterized the very first days in the aftermath of the invasion of Kuwait played a crucial role in setting with virtually no escape the US and Iraq on a collision course. As the record of the NSC meetings held in the very first days of the crisis suggests, in Washington, the Bush Administration saw Saddam's challenge through the prism of the traditional American geopolitical paradygm that had been popular among national security officials during the Cold War. According to this view, the US had had to fight two major wars in the Twentieth Century to prevent hostile powers from achieving hegemony over regions of critical strategic and economic importance to American interests. Now, on the eve of a new era in international affairs, a madman once again menaced to be in a position to dominate such an important area as the Persian Gulf – with its enormous oil reserves – and to jeopardize US interests even beyond that area, in the broader Middle East.[6] From this point of view, as argued by some scholars, with his action Saddam challenged America's willingness to protect what President Carter had defined a "vital interest" of the United States, and Bush and his staff concluded that such a threat was unacceptable, and that they should make good on Carter's words.[7] On his part,

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6   Seen under this light, the Hitler-Saddam analogy acquires a perhaps clearer meaning.
7   Rose, *How Wars End*, pp. 200-202, 280-281. For a critical view on the relevance of the Carter Doctrine to American national security policy, both toward the Persian Gulf and in broader terms, see: Michael T. Klare, *Blood and Oil. The Dangers and Consequences of America's Growing Dependency on Imported Petroleum* (New York: Holt, 2004), pp. 45-50; Michael T.

Saddam apparently underestimated the relevance of the Gulf's balance of power to the conception of national security of American leaders, or rather concluded that any American reaction would be a lesser evil than being overwhelmed by external pressures and the increasingly untenable crisis his regime faced at home after years of disastrous military adventures.

From those first days onward, the interaction between the Bush Administration and the Baghdad regime appears to have followed the dynamics of misperception described by Robert Jervis. On the one hand, Saddam persisted in its defiant and uncompromising stance in spite of the increasing military buildup along his borders and the repeated public statements by American officials concerning the seriousness of their intentions, since the perspective of successfully calling an American bluff or keeping Kuwait (or at least part of it), or even of sustaining the costs of fighting the US-led coalition to a stalemate, were judged to be a better option than admitting the responsibility of his criminal conduct before his people or making the concessions required to avoid war. On the other end, Bush and his advisers, having made their mind about the long term threat posed by Saddam's Iraq, assumed a "pessimist" attitude on the chances of a politico-diplomatic solution of the crisis, and dismissed all evidence that Saddam might be looking for a compromise.[8] In addition, having come to see it as necessary, the President and his staff also came to believe that their policy could succeed in full, assumed an "optimist" assessment of the chances of a military solution to succeed, and interpreted the information available in a way consistent with their wishes and expectations.[9]

As far as this author is concerned, it is important to keep in mind that in spite of the symmetries in their approaches to the management of the Gulf crisis, the Bush Administration and Saddam Hussein were antithetic in terms of the principles and the vision of international relations they promoted throughout the crisis. Although

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Klare, "Oil, Iraq and American Foreign Policy: The Continued Salience of the Carter Doctrine", *International Journal*, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Winter 2006/2007), pp. 31-42.

8   Some members of the Bush Cabined candidly recalled their aversion to a political solution. As Brent Scowcroft commented in his memoirs with reference to the Geneva meeting between Baker and Aziz, "There was always the danger that Saddam would say okay. In my opinion we were at the point where it would be a disaster to take "yes" for an answer, but this was the best option available." Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 474-475.

9   Robert Jervis, "War and Misperception", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History,* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Spring 1988), pp. 676, 678, 693.

the frequent analogies with Hitler were an imprudent exaggeration – especially when made by political leaders – Saddam was indeed the quintessential brutal dictator. Even more importantly in terms of relevance to the analysis of international affairs, his conduct since August 2, 1990, resulted in a succession of egregious violations of the basic principles of international law underpinning the modern conception of peaceful coexistence among states. His invasion of Kuwait was a textbook case of aggression, and was unanimously condemned by the UN Security Council. Equally unacceptable for the UN – and arguably for the international community as a whole – were Iraq's annexation of Kuwait and the policies launched by the Baghdad regime to change the demographic composition of the Gulf monarchy in order to make that territorial conquest an irreversible fait accompli.[10] From this point of view, the uncompromising line promoted on the UN level by the Bush Administration – its insistence that nothing but a full and unconditional Iraqi withdrawal was to be accepted, and that militarily enforcing the demands of the UN Security Council was a better option than renegotiating the Council's will and grant Saddam a "save-face" – turned out to be very persuading, both because of the effectiveness of the American diplomatic effort and because the case for standing firm against aggression and upholding the international rule of law, as well as the role of the UN, was particularly compelling in the wake of the Cold War and on the eve of a new era. It is also to be acknowledged that at every crucial step on the road to war – most famously during the Geneva meeting between Baker and Aziz of early January 1991 – the Baghdad regime was constantly reminded that it could avoid a military showdown with the US-led coalition by abiding by the provisions of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions, and was given explicit assurances that if it complied with UN demands no offensive military action would be conducted against the Iraqi Army. It is a fact that Saddam deliberately rejected all requests to withdraw and persisted in his defiant and criminal conduct, thus confirming the Bush Administration's contention that the crisis in the Gulf was not a conflict between Iraq and the US, but rather a

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10 As Ken Matthews argued, the one act that brought Iraq and the UN into inevitable conflict was not so much the invasion itself but Iraq's annexation of Kuwait. The implications of UN acquiescence to that act would have been the loss of any meaningful role in the settlement of disputes between states. Ken Matthews, *The Gulf Conflict and International Relations* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 76.

conflict between Saddam Hussein and the rest of the international community.[11]

Evidence examined within the framework of this research, however, strongly supports the view that fulfilling the mandate to uphold international law – what has been described as an international police action in these pages – was not the only priority of the Bush Cabinet. It is in this respect, as far as this author is concerned, that the assessment of the Administration's foreign policy approach – especially of the consistency of its plans and actions with the vision of world order it promoted in public – becomes more controversial. As both the exchange of messages between the Administration and US diplomatic posts and the record of conversations and correspondence between Bush and the leaders of America's major partners during the crisis show, the liberation of Kuwait was only the "explicit" objective Washington and its allies were aiming at. There was an additional list of "implicit" objectives – such as the destruction of Iraq's WMDs, the downgrading of the country's conventional military capabilities, and the neutralization of the security threat Iraq posed to its oil-producing Gulf Arab neighbors – that far exceeded the mandate of restoring the status quo ante, and implied the pursuit of a much more expansive agenda of geopolitical transformation in the Persian Gulf centered on Iraq – and that in the ultimate analysis could be achieved in full only through the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the replacement of a new and friendlier regime in Baghdad.[12] The pursuit of that implicit agenda stretched to the limit the interpretation of the very principles the Bush Administration had evoked in its bid to lead the international response to the Gulf crisis, and posed a critical dilemma about the ultimate objective of the American-led coalition. There was a feeling that the position of global leadership the US was enjoying as a result of the multilateral legitimization of its response

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11   Richard Haass observed – somewhat cynically – that "it helps when one has an adversary as blind and as stubborn as was Saddam"; Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, p. 104.

12   As a matter of fact, the analysis of archival evidence conducted by this author shows that the closer the foreign partner the Bush Administration debated its objectives with, the greater the focus on, and the anxiety to attain, the implicit objectives was. In exchages with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, for instance, Bush tended to repeat the arguments he resorted to in his public diplomacy efforts, such as the idea that Saddam could not be trusted and that the demands of the UN Security Council should not be renegotiated lest the authority of the UN in the post-Cold War era be undermined. In contrast, when Bush talked to his British or Middle Eastern counterparts, the UN theme was virtually absent, while the need to go beyond the mere restoration of the *status quo ante*, and especially the need to destroy Iraq's WMD capabilities was constantly stressed.

was a critical strategic asset to be preserved in the post-Cold War era, and some of the President's senior advisers appeared to be ready to pursue the "implicit" agenda only to a small extent. Yet the Administration as a whole was determined to achieve more than the mere restoration of Kuwait, and ended up trying to circumvent those dilemmas through the resort to a military strategy that appeared to be capable of achieving the implicit goals in a way that made them justifiable as instrumental to the pursuit of the objectives of liberating Kuwait and minimize casualties. As noted above, that approach was supported by the adoption of an "optimistic" mindset concerning the chances of a major military victory to ignite a series of favorable political side effects, such as Saddam's overthrow from within.[13]

Hence, the dynamic of misperception dominated the Gulf crisis until the very last phases of Operation Desert Storm. It was only when he faced the reality of his army's collapse under the pressure of US and allied ground troops and saw his very political – and arguably physical – survival at stake that Saddam resolved to retract his "peace proposal" of August 1990, drop any "linkage" with the Palestinian cause, and withdraw – in the hope (that later proved to be well grounded) to manage to remain in power. It was only when they saw Kuwait liberated before the completion of the "left hook" that would destroy the Republican Guard and the rest of Iraqi armor that Bush and his advisers realized that that the use of force could not achieve both the "explicit" – and universally endorsed – objective and the "implicit" – and much more controversial – objective of stabilizing the Gulf on their own terms. By the end of February 1991 President Bush and his top advisers found themselves emerging from an outstanding military success blessed with a remarkable, unprecedented recognition of US global leadership and the opportunity to capitalize on these results in order to establish a framework of international concert that could be used to achieve a more stable and favorable new equilibrium in the Gulf. At the same time, they were confronted with the prospect of seeing the delicate balance of power in the region collapse and of being sucked in an internal war in Iraq that could expand into a chaotic regional conflict. In other words, the long-term preference for regime change in Baghdad – that would have required a risky direct US commitment – was now clearly at odds with the other long-term

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13   As argued by Gideon Rose, the Administration "decided that hope could be a plan." Rose, *How Wars End*, p. 218.

objective of establishing a new pattern of international (and particularly great power) cooperation that was considered necessary to manage developments in the Persian Gulf, and also the broader transition from the Cold War world to a new, stable and favorable post-Cold War era. In the event, the George H.W. Bush Administration seems to have opted for short-term restraint and the prospect of a durable "framework of concert" favorable to US interests – an approach that John Ikenberry defined as "strategic restraint."[14]

What is open to question, however, concerns what was the ultimate objective of the Bush Administration's "strategic restraint." As suggested by the comparisons between Saddam and Hitler, or President Bush's calls on the Iraqis to get rid of Saddam during the war, and then by the US refusal to normalize relations with Saddam's regime in the aftermath of Desert Storm, restraint was neither a totally satisfying nor a totally coherent decision. It reflected a pragmatic consensus view within the Administration that incorporated a complex series of assessments and prioritizations concerning global political trends and immediate contingencies. Importantly, at least in the eyes of those in the White House, this decision seemed not to rule out the possibility of dealing with the problem of Saddam another day and from a position of increased strength. After all, as noted by Jeffrey Engel, the end of the Cold War and the settlement of the German question in Europe had established a widespread perception that the tide of history was on America's side.[15]

In sum, in its management of the Gulf crisis the Bush Administration was never prepared to abandon the idea that it could have everything it wanted on its own terms. In the ultimate analysis, however, given the strategic outlook, the priorities, and the operational codes of the first Bush Administration, the achievement of a completely satisfying settlement of the crisis was in fact dependent upon factors beyond the Administration's control, such as the attitudes of the Iraqi military establishment, or Saddam's sensitivity for the suffering of his people and

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14   "Framework of concert" is an expression used by Brent Scowcroft in his memoirs. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 399-400. John Ikenberry, "Institutions, Strategic Restraint and the Persistence of American Postwar Order", *International Security*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (Winter 1998-1999), pp. 43-78; Ikenberry, *After Victory*, passim.
15   Jeffrey A. Engel, "A Better World... but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On", *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (January 2010) p. 30.

willingness to reintegrate Iraq in the regional balance or in the post-Cold War order, or the chances of continued cooperation with other major powers in terms as favorable to the US as those of 1989-91. Given the Administration's success in dealing with unexpected events and the encouraging developments in global affairs that had occurred by early 1991, it seems possible to argue that those calculations were not totally unreasonable. They were nonetheless very optimistic – excessively optimistic, as later events demonstrated. Soon after the Gulf crisis was over the pace of transformation of the international system further accelerated, and by the time of the "parking lot incident" of Summer 1992 many of the pillars of the "new world order" envisioned just one year before were no longer in place. After the collapse of the Soviet Union great power cooperation in crisis management became more difficult than expected, a problem compounded by the fact that the end of bipolarity unleashed fragmentation dynamics in many areas of the world that posed new challenges on the UN collective security system. While in 1991 President Bush assumed that the military and diplomatic success of Desert Storm would reduce the need to commit American troops abroad, one year later the US found itself as the only remaining superpower provided with the means to ensure some form of stability and cooperation in the post-Cold War era, and the price in terms of global leadership of a selective attitude toward overseas commitment was now much higher.

Seeing events in retrospect, from the privileged vantage point of those who know how the story ended, exposes scholars to the often irresistible temptation of speculating that different specific decisions at crucial points would have led to radically different and much more favorable – if not ideal – outcomes. Since the ultimate outcome of the Gulf War was so frustrating, scholarship concerning the crisis features plenty of such a kind of speculations. The decision to end the Gulf War on February 27, 1991 has been often criticized on the ground that it turned out to be a missed opportunity to get rid of Saddam Hussein, and that poor management of the Gulf War endgame created the conditions for prolonged conflict in the Gulf.[16] This kind of retrospective analysis is in many ways interesting, and

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16   Thomas G. Mahnken, "A Squandered Opportunity? The Decision to End the Gulf War",

even members of the George H.W. Bush foreign policy staff, and the President himself, have contributed to enriching the debate, suggesting a range of informative second thoughts in defense of their decision, that incidentally also help examine and understand some of the root causes and implications of the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003.[17] As far as this author is concerned, however, if the objective is to understand the meaning and long term implications of the Gulf War experience, and its relevance to the understanding of post-Cold War American foreign policy, this kind of debate misses the point. Politicians in the White House – in 1990-91 or in whatever other phase in history – were not omniscient or omnipotent. The men and to (be honest, very few) women at the center of decision-making during the Gulf crisis had to operate in the midst of pressure from multiple – domestic and foreign – sources, and later in the midst of the "fog of war."[18] They had limited time to devise policies that would inevitably lead to a series of disparate local and global developments. Their basic dilemmas revolved around the problem of how to deal with a brutal dictator while upholding universal principles. That was by no means an easy task, and it seems fair to acknowledge that a perfect solution to this problem was perhaps beyond the capabilities of any statesmen, no matter how skilled. The dramatic spiral of chaos, violence, and conflict that followed the 2003 invasion of Iraq and the overthrow of Saddam Hussein under the watch of Bush fils (and a bunch of veterans of the Administration of Bush père), validates this point, and confirms that many of the key concerns that persuaded policy-makers to adopt a policy of restraint in 1991 were indeed well grounded. From this standpoint, even if in retrospect a great many miscalculations can be identified, it seems fair to argue that decisions concerning the military conduct or

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Andrew Bacevich and Efraim Inbar (ed.), *The Gulf War of 1991 Reconsidered* (London and Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2002), pp. 121-148; Pollack, *The Threatening Storm*, p. 55; Alfonsi, *Circle in the Sand*, p. 407. For a contrasting opinion see: Lawrence E. Cline, "Defending the End: Decision-making in terminating the Persian Gulf War", *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 17, No. 4, pp. 363-380.

17   Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, pp. 464, 489-491; Baker with De Frank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, pp. 441-442; Powell and Persico, *My American Journey*, pp. 512-513; Schwarzkopf with Petre, *It Doesn't Take a Hero*, pp. 578-585; Richard B. Cheney, "The Gulf War: A First Assessment", Keynote Speech at the Soref Symposium, 1991, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC07.php?CID=55 .

18   Steven Hurst argues that economic recession and an assertive Congress played a critical role in constraining the Bush Administration's freedom of maneuver in the realm of foreign policy. Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bush Administration*, pp. 6-8, 236-237.

the end of the Gulf War, and the making of a policy approach in the conflict's aftermath as well, reflected in large part an assessment that, though highly personal, was not so implausible given the information available.

The point that, according to this author, must be stressed is that the decisions made and the policies adopted during and after the crisis were not the only options available. They were rather chosen among different kinds of possible approaches because they conformed to the personal worldviews of the key members of Bush Administration, to the conservative ideology they shared, and to their foreign policy outlook and conception of America's national security.[19] It is in this respect that the events of 1990-91 have exercised their most enduring influence in shaping the making of US grand strategy in the post-Cold War era. In his authoritative study of American grand strategy during the Cold War, John Lewis Gaddis argues that "there exist for presidential administrations certain 'strategic' or 'geopolitical' codes, assumptions about American interests in the world, potential threats to them, and feasible responses, that tend to be formed either before or just after an administration takes office, and barring very unusual circumstances tend not to change much thereafter."[20] The same observation is valid with reference to the George H.W. Bush Administration, which after all was America's last Cold War Administration. Bush and his staff started their office as conservative cold warriors, and in many ways remained conservative cold warriors in their hearts until the end of their service in government, despite the enormous global geopolitical and ideological revolutions they witnessed. As an Administration, they never fully overcome neither the decades-long sense of suspicion toward the Soviet Union, nor the deep-seated conviction that the West could be safe only under unchallenged direction by the US. In the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall, and especially during the Gulf crisis, they felt they were realizing the cold warrior's dream of "negotiating from a position of strength" – they set the terms under which

19   Althought this is a piece of historical research, scholars of theories of international relations may note that the analytical approach adopted on this point is consistent with the neoclassical realist paradigm of analysis of foreign policy. See: Gideon Rose, "Neoclassical Realism and Theories of Foreign Policy", *World Politics*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Oct. 1998), pp. 114-172; Nicholas Kitchen, "Systemic pressures and domestic ideas: a neoclassical realist model of grand strategy formation", *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan. 2010), pp. 117-143.
20   John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment. A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. IX.

international disputes should be settled, and the rest of the world's major powers appeared prepared to either follow their lead or at least to acquiesce with only a few and irrelevant objections. As far as research conducted within the framework of this dissertation suggests, the Bush Administration's main failures seem to have been a consequence of this "negotiating-from-a-position-of-strength mentality," which led to a certain lack of sensitivity or an incomplete understanding of the emerging trends in international relations.[21] What the Bush Administration failed to realize in full was that the legitimacy of American leadership, and the related benefits for the country's national security, didn't simply stem from America's unchallenged power – military power, to be precise – but rather from Washington's capability to understand, interpret, and articulate the emerging consensus and the demand for justice and equality among the members of the international community. Foreign leaders, even former enemies or emerging powers, agreed on the need to solve the problem of Kuwait – that is, to uphold the basic principles of international law and prevent force and aggression from becoming legitimate instruments in international relations – and they were ready to recognize and support Washington's lead in fulfilling that mission. They were not prepared, however, to recognize to the US a privileged position within the international system, or to let Washington politicians decide what foreign leader or regime represented a legitimate member of the international community or a "renegade." Similarly, foreign leaders – Western or not – appeared eager to follow America's lead in the conduct of major humanitarian operations to stabilize areas which were spiraling into chaos and conflict due to the collapse of state authority, and looked at the US as an authoritative broker in the pursuit of new and sustainable regional settlements, that would prevent instability deriving from the overthrow of local balances of power associated with the old bipolar confrontation. They were much more ambivalent, however, in their attitudes concerning Washington policies aimed at changing the internal nature of foreign regimes, or Washington's eagerness to establish permanent military presences overseas in order to ensure the persistent

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21   As noted by Michael Cox, "if Americans do conclude that they did indeed win the Cold War, and that hardly nobody else counted at the time, then this is likely to encourage the strategically dangerous notion that the US is not only bound to lead, but effectively has a right to." Michael Cox"Who won the Cold War in Europe? A historiographical overview", in Bozo, Rey, Ludlow, and Nuti (eds.), *Europe and the end of the Cold War*, pp. 17-18.

submission of rising regional powers and potential rivals.

Bush and his staff were not totally insensitive to that reality. It seems important to note that they constantly assured the Saudis and their other Arab partners that the military buildup that followed the invasion of Kuwait was only intended to create the conditions for the favorable resolution of the Gulf crisis, and that as soon as the Gulf War was won a chief concern at the White House was indeed to smooth the withdrawal of American forces. The very decision to halt Operation Desert Storm as soon as Kuwait was liberated was in large part driven by the acknowledgment that had American forces marched to Baghdad, they would have lost the global political support they had gathered during the crisis. Yet the Bush Administration's understanding of that limit appears to have been crucially undermined by the widespread confidence in the potential of American military power, and the related expectation that the use of the awesome and unchallenged military machine they disposed of could somewhat create the realities they were wishing for, and spare them from confronting unpleasant political and strategic dilemmas. Even after it became clear that the actual use of military power had its limits, Bush and his staff still remained unprepared to downsize their aspirations to shape global or regional balances of power. Instead, they preferred to renegotiate their pledges not to seek permanent footholds overseas, on the assumption that America's ascendancy would allow such a recant at a small cost, and eventually let the US obtain what it wanted in its own way.

An immediate implication of such an attitude was the Administration's frustrating and increasingly unpopular determination to foster the emergence of conditions that would, in the mind of Washington politicians, eventually induce the replacement of Saddam's regime with a more friendly one, possibly guided by a military strongmen. (Not a very nice prospect for the Iraqi people, to be fair.) As it had happened to Woodrow Wilson with regard to Germany in the aftermath of World War I, Bush and his staff were not capable of finding a compromise between the need for some form of reconciliation which is inherent to any settlement, and what they saw as their moral superiority and right to impose an intrusive process of rehabilitation on the defeated adversary. The result, in an analogy with the aftermath of the Great War, was the establishment of a complex legal framework

intended to keep Iraq in the position of an international outcast until Washington decided it could be "reintegrated."[22] Such a proposition could hardly be endorsed by other major powers or the international community as a whole, and as the story of the conflict between the US and Iraq between 1991 and 2003 shows, could hardly be sustained in the long term. Stubbornly and yet tentatively focused on their policy of isolating Iraq internationally and making the survival of Saddam's regime increasingly painful to the Iraqis, Bush and his staff lost interest in, and commitment to, the great opportunity to exploit their enormous power and authority to try to promote an acceptable and comprehensive regional compromise that might have made the Gulf a more stable an cooperative region, and might perhaps even have created the conditions for the reintegration of Washington's regional nemesis – Iran – which after all shared an interest in neutralizing the threat from Iraq, and had even started advocating a policy of regime change in Iraq far earlier that the US.[23] Seen from this point of view, the foreign policy approach of the George H.W. Bush Administration was realist in terms of tactics, of "grammar," but in terms of "logic," of grand strategic ambitions, it was idealist indeed. The "negotiate-from-a-position-of-strenght" mentality induced the President and his staff to believe naively that the careful application of force and the mere fact of American primacy would allow the US to get everything it wanted, and prevented them from undertaking a comprehensive effort aimed at understanding how American primacy could help the promotion of a sustainable and comprehensive post-Cold War settlement based on a combination of legitimacy and equilibrium, as Henry Kissinger would say.[24] From a more general point of view, moreover, their conservative political orientation made them inclined to adopt a very narrow understanding of the transitional historical moment they were living in. Their economic perspective on world order was essentially limited to the objective of

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22 Martin Alexander and John Krieger provide an insightful comparative analysis of the problems inherent to the implementation of the arms control regimes imposed on Germany in the aftermath of the First World War and on Iraq in the aftermath of the Gulf War.Martin S. Alexander and John F.V. Keiger, "Limiting Arms, Enforcing Limits: International Inspections and the Challenges of Compellance in Germany post-1919, Iraq post-1991", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 2, pp. 345-394.
23   As former UN Secretary General Javier Perez De Cuellar noted in his memoirs, Iran expressed his desire see the fall of Saddam's regime since the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. Perez De Cuellar, *Pilgrimage of Peace*, pp. 177-178.
24 Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, p. 811.

increasing access to foreign markets for American business. The Bush team indeed pushed intensely and successfully for the promotion of several free trade agreements on both the inter-American and global level.[25] Yet it didn't see the crises of 1989-1992 as opportunities to advance a comprehensive plan for the advancement of social and economic justice on a global level, as for example FDR had done.[26] In political and strategic terms, the establishment of a truly cooperative and inclusive international system was actually subordinated to the focus on removing urgent threats to the national interest on terms strictly defined in Washington. In sum, the overall conception of "new world order" articulated by the Bush Administration eventually amounted simply to a system of collective security/burden-sharing responsive to selective stimuli on the part of the US.[27]

The mentality that lay at the basis of this flawed outlook, this author maintains, in one of the most enduring, and yet the most damaging, legacies of the Gulf War experience to the making of American foreign policy in the post Cold War era. Since the Cold War endgame, and especially in the aftermath of the Gulf War, leaders in Washington – ambivalently followed by their foreign counterparts – devoted disproportionate resources in the pursuit of policies aimed at enforcing the submission of what were perceived as "renegade regimes" armed with "advanced weaponry," "weapon states," as Charles Krauthammer called them in an influential essay, such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq.[28] In the mean time, however, US and Western troops on the ground were forced to struggle to keep order and restore stability in remote areas of the world where state authority had collapsed, such as northern Iraq. (And then Somalia and the Balkans.) Twenty years later, the situation is disturbingly similar. American troops – ambivalently followed by their foreign

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25   Hurst, *The Foreign Policy of the Bsuh Administration*, pp. 170-192.

26   As a matter of fact, the Bush Administration didn't appear to be interested in the promotion of social and economic justice on the domestic level as well, arguably a good reason to vote for Clinton in 1992.

27   As former British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd observed in restrospect in an interview with Mary Elise Sarotte, "you could argue that if they had been geniuses, George Bush and Jim Baker would have sat down in 1990 and said the whole game is coming into our hands." they would have concluded that we've got now an opportunity, which may not recur, to remake the world, update everything, the UN, everything. And maybe if they had been Churchill and Roosevelt, you know, they might have done that." But, "they weren't that kind of person, neither of them. George Bush had famously said he didn't do the vision thing. […] they weren't visionaries, and nor were we." Sarotte, *1989*, p. 4.

28   "Remarks at the United States Coast Guard Academy Commencement Ceremony in New London, Connecticut", May 24, 1989, cit.; Krauthammer, "The Unipolar Moment", pp. 30-33.

counterparts – are deeply engaged in tireless and bloody efforts to resume some sort of sustainable order and stability in Afghanistan and Iraq, and at the same time leaders in Washington and other western capitals are at pains to contain the spread of "Weapons of Mass Destruction," and especially to prevent "rogue regimes" – such as Iran, in the Persian Gulf – from acquiring them. William J. Clinton's and George W. Bush's foreign and security policies were very different, both in comparison to each other and in comparison with the foreign policy pursued by the George H.W. Bush Administration. The first three post-Cold War American presidents expressed different interpretations of America's role in international affairs, and adopted different operational styles. Their outlook concerning the implications of the end of the Cold War on America's capability to shape the global environment, was nonetheless fundamentally similar, and deeply reflected the feelings of the George H.W. Bush Administration's officials in the aftermath of Desert Storm. Albeit to different extents, each of them was prepared to embrace the idea that American foreign policy should fulfill an universalist mission of transformation, with little eagerness to acknowledge the possibility that the pursuit of specific US national interests could be at odds with the legitimate concerns of other major international actors. They all considered the perpetuation of American primacy as an indispensable requirement for the advancement of that mission and the preservation of a world order compatible with their country's values and national interests. They all saw America's unchallenged military power as the most effective instrument in dealing with the security challenges of the post-Cold War era, although they were not ready to acknowledge in full the implications and risks of its use. They all eventually came to believe, to the point of deluding themselves, that the actual employment of that awesome tool could spare them from confronting with difficult political and strategic dilemmas.

It is finally time to deliver on the proposition made in the introduction, and to give a new answer to the question that gives this dissertation its title. "Who can harness history?" The reader may guess that this author's response to that question is different from the one given by one of President George H.W. Bush's closest aides in 1993. As it was repeatedly demonstrated during the Twentieth Century –

and confirmed by the review of the policies of the Administration of George H.W. Bush – in spite of its awesome power, the US cannot "harness history" on its own. No single state, no matter how powerful, can create a peaceful, democratic and open world. Even more importantly, as the story of the Gulf War suggests, such a world cannot grow just out of the barrel of a gun. As far as this author is concerned, the task of creating the world envisioned by American leaders is a task that can only be fulfilled by humankind as a whole. This may sound dismal to statesman finding themselves "standing alone at the height of power," but the story of great power and unfulfilled hopes that has been told in these pages inexorably leads to this conclusion. The very failure to recognize the limits of American power, this review of the Gulf crisis suggests, can indeed jeopardize the ultimate achievement of the world Washington leaders sincerely appear to stand for. On balance, it is important to recognize, the US is indeed the country that contributed the most to the advancement on a global scale of peace, democracy and an equitable social and economic development. That remarkable record, however, has been the result not only of American military power, but also, and principally, of the power and appeal of the ideas and values that lay at the basis of American society.
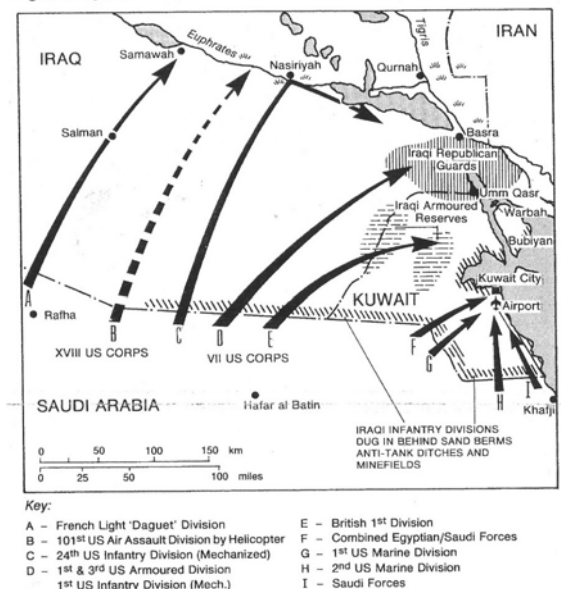
Maps

The Middle East region and the Gulf War

Figure 1: *Operation Desert Sabre*

Key:
A – French Light 'Daguet' Division   E – British 1st Division
B – 101st US Air Assault Division by Helicopter   F – Combined Egyptian/Saudi Forces
C – 24th US Infantry Division (Mechanized)   G – 1st US Marine Division
D – 1st & 3rd US Armoured Division   H – 2nd US Marine Division
    1st US Infantry Division (Mech.)   I – Saudi Forces

Somalia and Operation Restore Hope

Source: CIA, The World Factbook, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/so.html
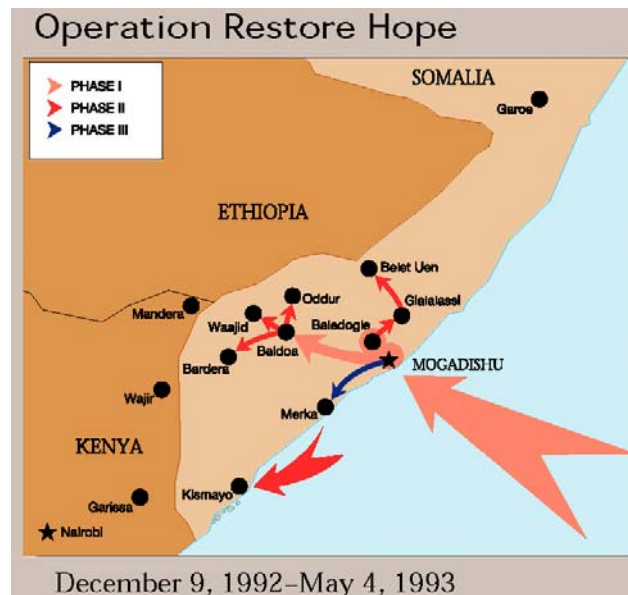
Source: Global Security, http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/ops/restore_hope.htm

Former Yugoslavia

Borders and ethnic composition prior to the outbreak of the wars of dissolution

Source: Le Monde Diplomatique, http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/cartes/yougoslaviemdv49

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