The Intervention That Originated the Post-Cold War Order

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Abstract

The article retraces how the Soviet Union and the United States tried to establish a partnership in the wake of Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The international community strongly condemned the invasion, and the two

superpowers chose to cooperate in finding a solution to the crisis. However, their positions differed. Guided by Gorbachev's formula of "new political thinking" for the country and the world, the Soviet leadership was persistent in searching for a peaceful settlement. But the Bush administration, seeking to lay the grounds for U.S. dominance in a "new world order," opted for the use of force, which became Operation Desert Storm. Moscow opposed this, but cautiously, trying to persuade Iraq to concede, while avoiding an aggravation of relations with the U.S. This policy went nowhere, and the international crisis over the Iraqi invasion catalyzed the post-Cold-War U.S.-centric world order.

Keywords: Persian Gulf War, Soviet-U.S. relations, world order, foreign policy, Mikhail Gorbachev, George H. W. Bush.

The political era that is now coming to an end (or has already ended in some respects) lasted roughly three decades. It runs from the late 1980s, when developments in the Soviet Union ended the Cold War, to the early 2020s, when the Cold War was reincarnated in a new, more intense form. At first, the new period was commonly described in high-flown parlance. The Soviet leadership proclaimed a "new political thinking" for the country and the world, while the U.S. announced the advent of a "new world order." Initially, these seemed to be overlapping concepts. However, it soon became clear that the two sides meant very different things. While Mikhail Gorbachev and his entourage aspired to joint creation of a new international order, George H. W. Bush and his team did not envision any alternative to U.S. dominance. The international crisis, over Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990, served as a catalyst for framing the American vision of the post-Cold-War world.

Iraq's war with Iran had left it with huge debts[1] and undermined its material position. However, the risk of the Islamic Revolution

[1] In the late 1970s, Iraq had $35 billion in reserves, but by the end of the war it owed about $80 billion, about half of that to the Gulf monarchies. However, complete information on Iraqi debts is not available. The amounts and terms of many borrowings, especially from the Gulf monarchies, were never disclosed by Iraq or its creditors.

spreading had been eliminated, and Iran had lost much of its original strength. Saddam Hussein sought compensation from the Gulf monarchies for his geopolitical services. Hussein agreed to cooperate with Washington (although some circles in the U.S. sharply criticized him) but remained at odds with Britain and especially Israel. The dispute with Britain revolved around Kuwait (which traditionally relied on British patronage), against which Baghdad had many claims, both economic and territorial. Hussein eventually decided to take what he considered to be his by force, thereby improving his economic position and asserting himself politically. On August 2, 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait and deposed its Emir. Subsequent events, which climaxed in early 1991 with the U.S.-led Desert Storm, were the first manifestation of the "new world order." Amid today's dramatic events, it is useful to recall how the Soviet Union and the United States tried to become partners in shaping the then new—and now collapsing—U.S.-centric world order.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE UNITED STATES USE THE CRISIS FOR RAPPROCHEMENT

The Iraqi invasion occurred while the Soviet and U.S. foreign ministers, Eduard Shevardnadze and James Baker, were holding talks in Irkutsk. It was one of their many meetings that year, as they worked closely on several tracks: the Middle East, START-1 and the CFE Treaty, German unification, and various economic and political aspects of the Soviet domestic situation. Irkutsk was chosen as the venue that best matched Baker's schedule: later he was going to visit Mongolia. Shevardnadze and Baker had a brief discussion over whether it was a full-scale invasion or whether Iraq would only seize a few areas, and continued to work according to the original agenda. But at the moment they were shaking hands goodbye[2] it was already clear that a full-scale invasion was in progress, and Baker asked for a halt to Soviet military supplies to Iraq.

[2] An interesting detail: Baker contacted Bush and asked if he should cancel his visit to Mongolia (planned to last about twenty-four hours) and fly straight to Washington, but Bush replied that the visit to Mongolia was important—it was the first ever visit by a U.S. Secretary of State to Mongolia and should not be canceled.

Shortly thereafter a telling incident occurred at the UN headquarters in New York. Around midnight, a letter from U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering was delivered to the UN Secretary General, requesting an emergency meeting of the Security Council. Just a few minutes later, the Kuwaiti ambassador showed up, embarrassed to learn that he was submitting his request after the Americans (Safronchuk, 1996). A mild title for the agenda was agreed upon: "the Situation between Iraq and Kuwait." The Americans introduced a draft resolution co-authored with eight other members of the Security Council,[3] which was also worded rather cautiously: the "invasion" was condemned, Iraq was urged to withdraw its troops and return to the situation as of August 1, both sides were asked to negotiate, and support was expressed for all efforts, especially those by the League of Arab States (LAS) that would contribute to such talks. When the meeting began it was already known that the Emir's family had been evacuated to Saudi Arabia, Iraq had captured the whole of Kuwait (although some sporadic clashes were still continuing), and a Baghdad-friendly interim government had emerged.

The Security Council meeting began at 6 a.m. and lasted less than an hour. The representatives of Kuwait and Iraq were the first to take the floor.

In a lengthy statement (it took almost a quarter of the meeting), the Kuwaiti diplomat spoke of his country's good global reputation, underlined that Kuwait did not consider the pre-invasion negotiations to be over and expected them to continue, asked for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops, and especially emphasized that there had been no internal coup.

In contrast, the Iraqi representative was brief. His statement lasted three to four minutes. He said nothing about Iraq's previous claims against Kuwait, and instead insisted that, after an internal conflict there, the opposition had overthrown the Emir, formed a new government, and asked Baghdad to help ensure order during the transition period. The Iraqi representative promised that the troops would be pulled out

[3] Besides the U.S. itself, these were Britain, Canada, France, Finland, Colombia, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, and Malaysia.

in a few days (weeks at the most) and emphasized that the issue should not be considered by the UN Security Council, as the Kuwaiti people would determine their own domestic political system.

The U.S. representative dismissed the Iraqi version of the events, recalling that reports of a new Kuwaiti government emerged only after the Iraqi invasion. The representatives of Great Britain, Canada, and Finland harshly criticized the Iraqi "aggression." The other UNSC members argued that the events did not fundamentally differ from other conflicts, and a similar reaction was required. Common to all speeches was recognition of the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, and condemnation of Baghdad's actions. The U.S.-initiated draft resolution reflected such sentiment and was approved by 14 votes (the representative of Yemen, friendly to Iraq, did not vote). This is how Resolution 660 came into being.

In Moscow, at about the same time (the afternoon of August 2), two short statements were made (they were officially published the next day). One criticized Iraq: "No disputed issues excuse the use of force." It read that the situation in the Middle East was turning for the worse and Iraq's actions "contradict the positive trends towards improving international affairs." The Soviet government stated in mild terms that it favored a withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.[4] The other statement briefly mentioned the suspension of arms and military equipment supplies to Iraq (Pravda, 1990, p. 1).

Washington, on the same day, was drafting much stronger statements. In the morning, Bush signed an executive order that not only condemned the Iraqi aggression, but also froze all Iraqi assets in the United States (and Kuwaiti assets too, so that Iraq could not use them) and fully banned trade with Iraq. Bush feared that the Senate would take a still harder line. So it did. In the afternoon, the Senate passed a resolution (Resolution, 1990) incorporating the ideas that Iraq's critics in the Senate had been pressing for a whole year. There was a standard set of clichés about human rights violations and the

[4] Its wish was expressed in the subjunctive: "The Soviet Government is convinced that an immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwaiti territory would help to eliminate dangerous tensions in the Persian Gulf."

development of WMD and missile technology. Baghdad was portrayed as a menace to all its neighbors.

On August 3, the world learned the details of both the Soviet and U.S. statements, their tone being quite different. However, late in the evening of August 2, Moscow and Washington hurried to prepare a document that would become a sensation in less than 24 hours. These days, after so many joint statements signed by Russia and the United States in recent decades, it is hard to realize how unusual it was, even in 1990, for such a joint position of Moscow and Washington to be expressed regarding such a complex world problem. It is not known exactly how it all began or who came up with the idea. However, late in the evening of August 2, Shevardnadze informed Mikhail Gorbachev by telephone (Gorbachev was out of Moscow on vacation in Foros) about the idea of a joint Soviet-U.S. statement. Gorbachev instructed Shevardnadze to get the Politburo's agreement. Shevardnadze held a series of overnight consultations, overcoming the military and security establishment's wariness. In the morning it turned out, though, that the Americans did not like the Soviet draft, and had begun amending it. On August 3, Baker decided to fly to Moscow (from Ulan Bator, where his one-day visit was coming to an end) to make a joint statement with Shevardnadze. The finishing touches were completed mere minutes before the official announcement, and Shevardnadze got Gorbachev's approval by telephone.

In the afternoon of August 3, Shevardnadze and Baker finally disclosed the joint statement at Vnukovo-2 Airport. The Soviet position had clearly moved closer to the American one. From the outset, the statement condemned the Iraqi invasion (the wording of the UN Security Council resolution was used, but the Americans managed to squeeze the word "aggression"[5] in, too). There was a call for a troop pullout and the restoration of sovereignty, national independence, legitimate government, and territorial integrity. (Although the separate Soviet statement, published on the same day, did not mention

[5] The ending of the statement was phrased as follows: "Governments that engage in blatant aggression must know that the international community cannot and will not acquiesce in or facilitate aggression" (Statement on Iraq, 1990).

"legitimate government.") The statement expressed hope for mediation by the League of Arab States and the Non-Aligned Movement. But the main thing, which had required a whole day of discussion and coordination, was a call for joint action: "Today we (the USA and the USSR) take the unusual step of jointly calling on the rest of the international community to join with us in an international cut-off of all arms supplies to Iraq" (Statement on Iraq, 1990).

After the statement was read out, Shevardnadze and Baker answered questions from journalists. Some of them were fundamental: "How far are the superpowers ready to go together?"

Baker said Washington was considering "a number of different possibilities and options." However, Shevardnadze immediately expressed the hope that Iraq would withdraw its troops and "rid both its people and the world community of this unpleasant situation." He stressed that the Soviet Union had no plans for a military operation and added: "I understand the United States has no such plans at this time." (Diplomatichesky vestnik, 1990). Baker stayed silent.

IT TAKES WAR TO START A "NEW WORLD ORDER"

On August 3, Bush made it clear in a conversation with French President François Mitterrand that he had opted for a military solution. He said he had held talks with the leaders of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen. All of them spoke in favor of diplomacy, trying to persuade the U.S. president that it was still possible to achieve a peaceful withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. However, Bush told his French counterpart he did not believe that diplomacy or even economic sanctions[6] would work. Bush believed that it would come to military action, and he had already discussed that with the British and Turkish prime ministers. Bush informed Mitterrand that the U.S. would soon move troops into the Persian Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia (although the Saudis had not yet agreed to this, and the Americans had not yet explicitly stated this intent) (Excerpts, 2019). Bush spoke to

[6] At that point, the Americans had already contemplated moving a resolution to that effect through the UNSC, but Pickering would not begin consultations with the UNSC on the matter until the next day.

Mitterrand just 12 hours after Shevardnadze had said that the Kremlin was acting on the understanding that the Americans had no plans for a military solution to the crisis (and Baker had stayed silent). It was reliance on a military solution that determined Washington's further actions.

Iraq did not want war with the United States and tried to defuse the situation on its own terms. On August 3, the composition of the new Kuwaiti government was announced, and on August 5, the decision to withdraw most Iraqi troops was made. Hussein hoped that his conquest was a *fait accompli*: he would plant a controlled government in Kuwait and consider the crisis finished, implying that he would not take any further aggressive actions, but also that none would be taken against him. Many might have been convinced to accept this outcome and, as far as we can judge, Hussein seriously expected them to. He was certain of a conspiracy by Israel, Britain, and "some circles in the U.S.," but remained confident that President Bush wanted to do business with him (of which the Americans had convinced him for years).

However, Washington had already made up its mind that it would by no means accept Iraqi control of Kuwait. In the first 24 hours after the invasion, such an option remained on the table. At the very beginning of the National Security Council's meeting on August 3, Brent Scowcroft said that although there were some speculations on that score, such a decision was unacceptable for the U.S. He was strongly supported by Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney. In response to the latter's remark that such an attitude implied preparations for a serious armed conflict, Scowcroft warned against leaks to the press (Margaret Thatcher Foundation, 1990).

The Americans made out as if Hussein might attack Saudi Arabia as well, since he was contesting leadership, and not only regionally. If, in addition to one of the world's largest armies (with combat experience), he acquired a significant portion of the Middle East's oil,[7] he would be able to impose his will at a global level. On August 6, the Saudi

[7] Oil roduction in Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE together accounted for about 95% of all Gulf production and about 70% of OPEC production.

king received Cheney and General Norman Schwarzkopf in Riyadh. The Americans managed to obtain consent from King Fahd, who had hesitated for the past few days, for the deployment of U.S. troops onto Saudi soil. The Americans persuaded the Saudi monarch not only to accommodate their troops, but also to fully pay (together with the Emir of Kuwait) the associated costs. The deployment began at once (officially it was announced two days later). On the same day, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution on a complete economic blockade of Iraq.

Iraq, too, upped the ante. On August 8, the territory of Kuwait was annexed (formally in response to a request, from the new Kuwaiti government, to return to the homeland's fold). And on August 10, Hussein slammed the deployment of the U.S. contingent to Saudi Arabia as defilement of Muslim shrines, and called all Muslims to holy war. It should be borne in mind that in 1990, the massive deployment of Western forces in the Middle East was perceived as something quite extraordinary in the broad historical context. Foreign military presence was firmly associated with the colonial past. In a situation like this, it was imperative to convince the Arab world that the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Western soldiers was a vital need.

An LAS summit was convened in Cairo on August 10, where Iraq was to be condemned, and the invitation of foreign forces legitimized by dispatching Arab contingents for joint operations with them. But achieving that was easier said than done. At the summit, controversies flared up, with participants having very different understanding of events. Some wanted to focus entirely on Iraq's actions, while others placed what was happening in the broader context of world events and U.S. policies. The substantive disagreements went hand-in-hand with a procedural one: how to adopt a resolution dispatching Arab forces for joint operations with the U.S.? Some argued that it should be done on the condition of unanimity. Libya's leader Muamar Gaddafi was particularly insistent in this respect. Others believed that the resolution could be adopted by a simple majority. Eventually, the presiding officer, Hosni Mubarak, stopped the debate, loudly interrupting Gaddafi, and put the resolution to the vote. Twelve delegations voted in favor, and Mubarak

closed the meeting by declaring the resolution adopted by a simple majority. The United States, naturally, interpreted this in its favor. It was easy to create the impression that the Americans were not meddling in Arab affairs at all, but, on the contrary, the Arab countries were unable to resolve the crisis alone and had invited the United States to cooperate.

Two days later, on August 12, Iraq made another move, and a rather strong one. The essence of its statement (the Iraqis called it a peace plan) was that there were other cases of controversial occupation in the Middle East (Israel in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, Syria in Lebanon), for which reason the Kuwaiti issue could not be considered separately. Moreover, all problems should be resolved in chronological order, i.e. the Kuwaiti issue was the last in line. The Iraqis' tactical intent was clear: de-emphasize the issue, put it on the back burner, convert it into a long-term affair, and leave everything as it was for the time being. At the same time, it was impossible to completely dismiss the fundamental logic of the Iraqi proposal. Indeed, why did some problems remain suspended for decades? Especially that of the Palestinians' right to their own state?

Within just one month of August, the U.S. secured the adoption of five anti-Iraq resolutions. Even a full economic blockade was relatively easy to enforce. International sanctions for non-implementation of UNSC resolutions (and there were many instances of non-implementation) had never been imposed before. Some countries drew attention to this during the debates in the Security Council. Yemen and Cuba argued with the Americans; the Soviet Union and China did not like the idea at all. France was hesitant.

The crisis was actively discussed around the world. For example, Tunisia and Jordan suggested deploying UN peacekeepers instead of U.S. troops. However, no one wanted to be at odds with Washington. Moscow was active diplomatically. Soviet diplomats insisted that the introduction of the U.S. forces to the Middle East was temporary, and that they would be withdrawn after the crisis was resolved. (The Americans said they were going to do precisely that.) The Soviet Union proposed a peace conference on the Middle East. In general, the Soviet leadership was at the center of events. In the last days of

August, Gorbachev's foreign policy aide Anatoly Cherniayev wrote in his private diary: "In general, we are still there [on the Iraq issue] 'in a white jabot.' And we are keeping the new thinking." However, the Soviet leadership was already worried, as the reservation followed immediately: "But if Hussein does not backtrack, there will be a nightmare" (Cherniayev, 2008).

In early September, the Americans decided that their goal was not only the defense of Saudi Arabia and the liberation of Kuwait, but something more. It occurred to the U.S. that the Iraqi crisis and the means of its resolution were not a momentary Middle Eastern affair, but a matter of the world order that was replacing the Cold War. The United States aspired to act in the name, and behalf, of the world community; it fully identified its attitudes and practical interests with those of the whole world.

A year earlier, in September 1989, Francis Fukuyama's sensational article *The End of History?* had been published. Its author viewed world events through the lens of Hegelian idealism and dialectics: all alternatives to the Western path (democracy and free market economy) had failed, and the mechanism of historical process had ground to a halt. The historical process' essence was the clash between thesis (prevailing view) and antithesis (alternative). The synthesis of the two became the new thesis, and so on. But there is no alternative to the Western system and there will never be one: that is how Fukuyama described the dominant mood in the United States.

In the fall of 1990, it was important to the Americans that—not just theoretically, but practically—in their settlement of the Iraqi crisis no one opposed them or offered an alternative.

COOPERATION WITH THE UNITED STATES IS NO EASIER THAN CONFRONTATION

In early September, the Americans had not yet informed the Soviet leadership of their readiness to use force, fearing Gorbachev's reaction. When, on August 7, the Department of State informed Shevardnadze (first through the U.S. ambassador in Moscow; a telephone call from Baker followed later) that troops had begun to be airlifted to Saudi

Arabia, there was an annoyed and angry response from the Soviet Union's cooperation-minded foreign minister. Baker vowed that the troops were only needed to protect Saudi Arabia and would soon be pulled out, but Shevardnadze retorted that the Americans had been asked not to take military measures, especially unilateral ones, and if any military preparations were to be made, that should be done through the UN Military Staff Committee (Baker-Shevardnadze telcom, 1990). Shevardnadze's anger came as an unpleasant surprise to his U.S. counterpart. Now the Americans had to convey even more unpleasant information (which contradicted their recent assurances) while retaining Moscow's support.

On September 9, at a meeting in Helsinki, George H.W. Bush personally presented Gorbachev with the final version of the U.S. approach to the Iraqi crisis: for the sake of "this new world order," it was necessary to press for a complete renunciation of Iraq's position and, if necessary, to use force (Bush-Gorbachev memcon, 1990). Bush suggested sending Soviet troops to the Middle East and also promised that he would not keep the U.S. contingent there after the crisis. Gorbachev seized on the "new world order" concept, which seemed to him to echo his own "new political thinking". The Soviet leader believed that the main thing in forming a new world order was global unity, harmony, and cooperation, and that the Soviet Union had already accomplished a great deal to bring this about; now, he thought, it was the United States' turn to make its contribution.

In the case of the Iraqi crisis, Gorbachev's understanding of the situation was that the world community had united to condemn and pressure Iraq. If Baghdad attacked Saudi Arabia or anyone else, military action against Iraq would receive full support. But Iraq, Gorbachev argued, was not going to attack anyone else. (Which the Americans, in private, did not dispute.) A war against Iraq would shatter global consensus. Accordingly, Gorbachev urged diplomatic initiatives to resolve the crisis.

He thought that linking it to other Middle Eastern problems might even help. The Americans were strongly opposed to such linkages, seeing them as a chance for Hussein to gain time and retain control

of Kuwait. The Soviet president argued that Hussein would have to make concessions in Kuwait for the sake of solving other problems, the importance of which he himself emphasized. If he acted otherwise, Hussein would completely discredit his stance. Bush was determined to corner Hussein and show that no one could now act with impunity against the opinion of the international community (which the Americans completely identified with their own). Gorbachev parried: Hussein should not be cornered; he should be given a diplomatic way out, and everyone would be happy. The Americans stated that they were seriously considering a military option and were counting on Soviet support, even if Moscow disliked such a scenario. The Soviet Union made clear that it was not ready to support an immediate military operation against Iraq that was not provoked by any new circumstances, but at the same time recognized that, in principle, such a thing was a possibility.

Despite significant disagreements, Bush and Gorbachev preferred to avoid a dispute over Iraq and to remain in tandem (see Joint Statement, 1990). Although the Soviet Union's economic strength was waning, the country remained an international heavyweight, and it was crucial for the Americans to ensure that Moscow's alternative stance did not become a challenge. Gorbachev, on the other hand, believed in the philosophical component of "new political thinking" and sincerely wished to cooperate with the Americans.

In the following months, the parties worked hard on their preferred options for resolving the Iraqi crisis.

The U.S. prepared for war: by the end of 1990, a coalition of 37 countries had built up a major military force in the Persian Gulf monarchies: about 800,000 men, 225 ships, and 2,800 aircraft (Operation Desert Shield, 1991). The Americans also maintained an international political climate in which no one dared argue with them. The UN Security Council approved more resolutions, tightened sanctions, and imposed an air blockade. The United States raised the alarm about Iraq's alleged looting of Kuwait (major valuables were supposedly being taken out). An all-out propaganda campaign was conducted over "hostages" and foreign diplomats in Kuwait.

In the meantime, the Soviet Union was looking for a diplomatic solution. In early October, Yevgeny Primakov visited Iraq on a special mission (Primakov, 2016). Hussein looked determined, but was ready to negotiate. It was becoming clear that he might agree to leave Kuwait if the Emir made some territorial concessions, sanctions were lifted, the Americans withdrew their troops from the region, and the Palestinian problem began to be resolved. Hussein wished for the tightest linkage of all these issues, although the international mood was against this.

Soviet diplomats produced a set of proposals that came to be called the "invisible package"—it implied the coordination of a certain sequence of actions, but without formal linkage between them. The Americans gave the idea the cold shoulder. Officially, they did not reject contacts with Hussein, but their vision of a non-military solution was that the Soviet Union persuade him to comply with all UN Security Council resolutions. As for any obligations to act after Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, the Americans called them a reward for the aggressor. Britain's reaction to the Soviet proposals was still harsher. Margaret Thatcher made no attempts to cover her wish to defeat Iraq with standard clichés about the desirability of a diplomatic solution. In late October, Primakov visited Baghdad again. The Iraqi position had changed, but very insignificantly. Hussein demonstrated willingness to negotiate, while being set for tough bargaining.

The gist of Iraq's position suited many in the world. For example, on October 29, when Primakov was in Baghdad, Gorbachev and Mitterrand met in Paris, and the latter outlined the contours of a settlement. In the longer term, a solution to the Palestinian problem should be initiated, while in the short term, some of Iraq's material expectations should be met (including the cession of some Kuwaiti territories) and Kuwaiti sovereignty should be restored without the reinstatement of the Emir (Excerpts, 1990). Such parameters for a settlement met understanding in many countries. (Although there may have been disputes over the details, e.g., the Saudis did not object to Iraq taking some Kuwaiti territory but wished to see the Emir returned to power.) But, as Mitterrand recognized, the U.S. and Britain were firmly against.

No one was ready to escalate tensions with the Americans, and the only way to avoid a military scenario was to persuade Hussein to make substantial concessions. In that case, many (including Soviet diplomats) hoped the prevailing mood would not let the United States conduct a military operation, and there also would be an impetus to start solving the long-standing problems (Palestine, first of all) that kept generating crises in the Middle East. But Hussein was demanding formal guarantees. He kept saying that the Americans could not be trusted, and that they would use his withdrawal from Kuwait not to solve other issues, but to continue exerting pressure on him. There was a theoretical possibility of reaching an agreement and it was widely recognized. The parameters were also clear, but implementing them in practice was impossible.

Also, another paradox manifested itself. Attempts to persuade Hussein were functionally intimidation: he was told the Americans were ready to use force, and therefore it was better to give in. Starting from the beginning of November, the U.S. began to press for a UN Security Council resolution that looked rather like an ultimatum: Iraq was given a specific deadline for the implementation of all previous resolutions, primarily the liberation of Kuwait. Otherwise, the use of force would be authorized after the set date.

In conversations with the Soviet leadership, the Americans consciously manipulated the above paradox. Following the meetings in Moscow on November 8, Baker described his tactics. He kept telling Gorbachev that it was essential to demonstrate the unity of the world community and its determination. Then it would be easier for those trying to negotiate with Hussein to achieve concessions. At the same time, Baker invited the Soviet Union (the Americans repeated this offer several times during the autumn) to send a contingent to join the international coalition in the Middle East. Baker's idea was as follows: the U.S., together with the Soviet Union, would diplomatically pressure Hussein, but Moscow should not then refuse to support Washington in moving to a military solution, especially if the Kremlin did not want to send its troops. (If you refuse to participate yourself, at least do not interfere with others.) The Americans had already realized that, while

they were trying to "buy" Soviet support, the Soviet Union was ready to "pay" to be in tandem with the United States. Baker summarized the reasoning behind his negotiations with Gorbachev as follows: "My own sense is that in the end they will go with us. <…> I believe their stake in good relations and desire for partnership with us will lead them in the right direction. But it may take some time and effort to get there" (James Baker to President Bush, 1990).

The Soviet leadership did its best to tone down the language of the new resolution. Moscow was insisting that much more time was needed for negotiations. But the United States did not want to wait. The logic that had been outlined during the Helsinki talks in September was now beginning to materialize. The Americans insisted that if negotiations with Hussein failed, force should be used. On November 29, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 678, which authorized the use of all necessary means to liberate Kuwait after January 15. China abstained; Yemen and Cuba voted against. The Soviet Union supported the resolution.

In December and January, the Soviet Union attempted to persuade Washington to give diplomacy more time. However, there were no signals from Baghdad that it was ready to drop its hard line. The Americans remained adamant, too.

On January 16, the U.S.-led international coalition started bombing Iraq. At this stage, the Kremlin's main task was to prevent the Americans from completely defeating Iraq or conducting a ground operation. The Soviet Union argued that the anti-Iraqi coalition was exceeding the mandate of Resolution 678 by systematically destroying Iraq's infrastructure and economic facilities. Gorbachev's position, in his contacts with foreign leaders, was that Iraq had already been weakened enough, so now it was necessary to again seek concessions from it. On February 12, Primakov went to Baghdad again. The Iraqis were ready to compromise. The next ten days of intensive negotiations produced a plan for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait, with the U.S. position taken into account. But the Americans still did not agree with the final version of the peace plan. On February 24, they launched a ground operation. In the next few days Iraq still tried to bargain. But

on February 27, it agreed to withdraw from Kuwait and implement all resolutions. On February 28, the Americans halted military operations.

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Throughout the Iraqi crisis, the Soviet leadership tried to prevent the U.S. from using force but was unwilling to risk aggravating relations in the process. To the contrary, hoping to improve relations with Washington, Moscow sought concessions from Iraq—unsuccessfully. Gorbachev and his team were dissatisfied with the Americans, they sensed a fundamental shift in world politics and a change in the Soviet Union's international position, and they began to understand that the Americans were using the crisis as moral cover to act from a position of strength in their own interests. And yet, betting on the Americans was seen as the sole possible choice. At the end of the Iraqi crisis, Anatoly Cherniayev wrote in his diary: "We are doomed to be friends with America, whatever it may be doing; otherwise, there we will be in isolation again and everything will fall apart" (Cherniayev, 1991).

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