

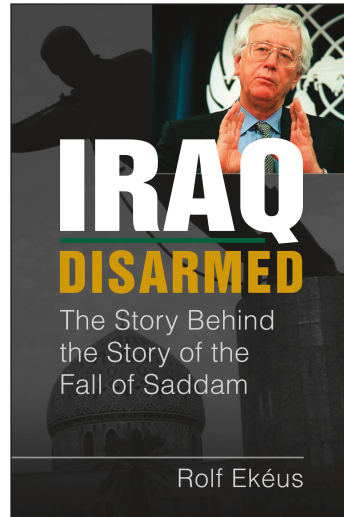
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**Iraq Disarmed:
The Story Behind
the Story of
the Fall of Saddam**

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1

Iraq: Revolution, Oil, and War

THE ISLAMIC REVOLUTION IN IRAN IN 1979, THE EXPULSION OF THE shah of Iran, and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran put into motion dramatic developments in the Gulf region and the Middle East as a whole. Until 1979, the Iranian regime under the shah had in many respects been a partner and ally of the United States. It had maintained stability and security in the region and balanced and countered the Soviet Union's efforts to expand its influence in the Middle East, which holds the world's largest oil and gas deposits. Iran was abruptly transformed, however, from a conservative Western-friendly monarchy into a strictly religious Shiite state with extensive expansionary power ambitions. Consequently, the Islamic Revolution had a direct and tangible influence on the strategy of the United States and its allies in Europe and Asia.

For the majority of the Arab states, the advent of the Islamic Republic came as something of a shock, not least for Saudi Arabia, which had previously lived without conflict alongside traditional Iran as an Islamic state. The new Iranian regime's radical Shiite political ideas and its attempt to export its revolution were a challenge to Saudi Arabia and the Sunni Muslim royal family. Moreover, the new Iran deemed Saudi Arabia an unworthy guardian of Islam's two holiest places: Mecca and Medina.

Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, in turn saw the Iranian Revolution's highly radical Shiite dimensions as a serious challenge to the policy he was pursuing of maintaining order in Iraq based on the secular

Baath Party (the Renaissance Party). This served to keep the country's Shiite Muslim majority in check and to secure a balancing influence for the Sunni tribes in the west and northwest that formed one of his primary power bases. Furthermore, he noted with satisfaction the negative international reactions to revolutionary Iran from the United States and other Western countries, as well as from other Arab states with predominantly Sunni Muslim populations. All of this seemed to provide an opportunity on which Saddam did not want to miss out.

In 1980, Iraq's armed forces under Saddam Hussein's command launched a widespread attack on Iran, whose army, although numerically superior, was in complete disarray after the revolution a year earlier. Even more provident for this new war was that Iran's political isolation and growing unpopularity meant that Iraq, in its war efforts, could count on the sympathy, understanding, and support of large parts of the international community.

Consequently, the United States provided satellite-based military intelligence data to Iraq. Several Western European states also provided military technology. The Soviet Union sent military equipment, especially large quantities of Scud-type medium-range missiles. The Soviet Union's allies in the Warsaw Pact also sold various kinds of weapons to Iraq. The Arab states under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait mobilized financial aid in the form of a solidarity fund designed to stabilize Iraq's economy and strengthen its military capabilities.

There was only one state that did not stand on Iraq's side (Ronald Reagan's bizarre Iran-contra deal aside). Israel provided Iran with special military technology as an expression of its previous strategic thinking, namely, that Iran could be regarded as a potential and natural strategic partner in their dealings with the (Arab) Middle East.

Widespread international support, as well as Iraq's frequent and large-scale violation of international law through the use of chemical weapons, outweighed Iran's military numerical superiority. In retrospect, it seems bizarre that the international community did not protest or even respond to Iraq's chemical weapons use.

The war lasted eight years. It ended in 1988 without noticeable gain for either of the warring parties. But in political and diplomatic terms, Saddam Hussein was stronger, having received extensive support from the United States and the Soviet Union, despite the still ongoing Cold War, and from the Arab world.

With his newly won international status, Saddam Hussein felt he had room to maneuver as he pleased. He now turned his gaze to another Iraqi neighbor, Kuwait. Despite serving as president of the Arab Solidarity

Fund in support of Iraq in the war against Iran, Kuwait had been systematically pumping oil from their common oil source below the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border against Iraq's protests. On August 2, 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered his army to attack, invade, and occupy Kuwait. This action not only took the outside world by surprise, but it was received with dismay and anger. All those who'd supported Iraq in the war against Iran—the United States, the rest of the West, the Soviet Union and its allies, and the Arab states, especially the Gulf states with Saudi Arabia at their head—reacted strongly to Iraq's violation of the UN Charter and its rules against aggression. Saddam's calculation that the international community would tolerate the attack on Kuwait turned out to be a serious misjudgment. Already on the day of the attack, August 2, the UN Security Council met and adopted Resolution 660 condemning the invasion, demanding that Iraq immediately and unconditionally withdraw its troops to the positions held the day before the attack.

Iraq in the Middle East

Before delving into the Kuwait War and its consequences, I will briefly describe Iraq's role as a security, political, and economic player in the early 1990s. Iraq, first and foremost, is and has been a geostrategic factor of central importance in the Middle East as it borders Iran, Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. The area has been traversed for millennia by armies and traders seeking refuge in the Middle East and those migrating across the Persian plains to Central Asia. What happens in Iraq has a decisive influence on the situation in the Persian Gulf and Syria. But it also impacts the development of Arab-Palestinian-Israeli relations, Turkey (and thus NATO), Saudi Arabia, and, of course, Iran. Iraq has the world's second-largest oil reserves (after Saudi Arabia), some even say the largest. But Iraq is more than geopolitics and oil. It has long been a center of civilization and education: from Sumer in southern Babylon 3,000 years before the birth of Christ, where for the first time in the history of humanity people could read and write, to the Abbasids, who harvested that knowledge, reinforcing it and passing it on to future cultures and to us. The people around the Euphrates and Tigris have been enriched by trade flows and armies that, through the centuries, passed through the river valleys and created contemporary civilization. At present, too much of that heritage has come to serve destructive purposes.

In early 1970, overflowing with oil revenue, Iraq initiated one of the largest national armaments buildups of its time. By 1990, with only

17 million inhabitants, Iraq had built an army of over a million men, equipped with 5,700 tanks, 3,800 artillery pieces, and over 800 fighter aircraft. Just to support this huge war machine, over half a million people were employed by the Iraqi Military Industrialization Commission (MIC), where, among other things, it produced a hundred different types of weapons, including long-range missiles and weapons of mass destruction and components. As early as the mid-1970s, Iraq launched its own nuclear weapons program revolving around a reactor, Osirak, which Israel destroyed during an air strike in 1981. That did not prevent Iraq from continuing its clandestine work to try to develop and build nuclear weapons. The fact that Iraq devoted so much of its resources to armaments illustrates how difficult it had become for the international community to handle this relatively small and underdeveloped country.

The first major war launched by Saddam Hussein against Iran (1980–1988) cost at least 450,000 lives and racked up an international debt of \$80 billion for Iraq. Even the relatively brief and limited invasion of Kuwait cost the country \$20–\$30 billion. Saddam's decision to destroy hundreds of oil wells in Kuwait during the war in 1991, whereby millions of barrels of oil were wasted, added more havoc. Of course, Saddam Hussein did not only settle for war against the outside world. In 1989, he waged an aggressive campaign against the Kurdish-populated Anfal area in northwestern Iraq that destroyed nearly 2,000 villages, and he launched a multiyear military campaign against internal opposition in southern Iraq that also damaged that area's ecosystem.

Kuwait War, 1991

On November 29, 1990, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 678, a US and Arab initiative. The resolution required Iraq to comply with Resolution 660 and withdraw its troops from Kuwait. It also imposed financial sanctions against Iraq (including an embargo on its oil exports) and authorized UN member states, in cooperation with the Kuwaiti government, to take all necessary measures for the liberation of Kuwait.

A broad international military coalition was created to impose the resolution's mandate on the liberation of Kuwait. UN Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar in meetings with Saddam Hussein and Iraqi foreign minister Tariq Aziz tried to persuade them to accept Resolution 678 but to no avail. On January 15, 1991, the international coalition commenced military operations against Iraq, mainly with US air strikes. They were followed by ground military operations beginning on February 24.

The operations were jointly led by General Norman Schwarzkopf, with an army of over 500,000 US soldiers, and Saudi Arabian Prince Khalid bin Sultan, with 200,000 men from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Morocco. The international coalition defeated the Iraqi army, and Kuwait was liberated. The action ended on February 28, only one hundred hours after the coalition's ground operations had begun. The Iraqi forces were forced to withdraw from Kuwait. This was confirmed in a primary cease-fire agreement signed on March 3, 1991.

At that point, the Arab members of the coalition were unwilling to continue the war against Iraq. For the UN Security Council, the question now arose as to how to regulate the political and military situation that emerged as a result of the termination of the Iraqi aggression. For the US administration and President George H. W. Bush, the central strategy was to create stability in the economically important Gulf region, the crucial part of which was to restore a security balance between the key players to prevent Iran from extending its influence geographically and politically by exploiting a weakened Iraq. An important component of the policy, therefore, was to leave Iraq's citizens to decide their future political order for themselves. Admittedly, the Security Council's sanctions in response to the invasion of Kuwait would remain in effect for a time, but Iraq would be allowed to retain its institutions and resources with one important reservation: it would be prohibited from possessing or procuring any weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear, chemical, and biological, and the missile systems for the delivery of such weapons, including missiles with a range exceeding 150 kilometers.

The Bush administration at this stage was not tempted by the idea of a regime change, which would have meant dissolving the secular regime that prevailed in Iraq and threatening the balance between the Shiite majority and Sunni minority. The country was at the time ruled by the dominant secular socialist Baath Party led by Saddam Hussein, himself a Sunni Muslim. Saddam Hussein was a brutal dictator who fought hard against all political opposition, especially against the rebellious Kurds in northern Iraq, but he skillfully avoided confrontations between Shia and Sunni Muslims. In this manner, he was able to safeguard the country from religion-based political antagonism, which could have opened the doors to emerging terrorism in the region.

In order to maintain a regional security balance, the disarmament requirement did not put any limits on Iraq's conventional armed forces. The terms, in principle, were not unreasonable, given that Iraq was already prohibited from owning some weapons in accordance with

international law. By accepting the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), Iraq agreed not to possess or procure nuclear weapons. Iraq had also signed the Convention on the Prohibition of Biological Weapons (albeit without ratifying it). In regard to chemical weapons, Iraq had acceded to the 1925 Geneva Protocol that prohibited chemical and biological weapons use.

It is interesting to note that the Security Council had already addressed the issue of Iraq's possession of chemical weapons. During the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988, Iran had made well-founded allegations against Iraq over the repeated use of chemical weapons. However, the Security Council chose not to take any action at the time, so as not to upset Iraq.

During that war, Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar took the initiative to send an expert group to the area. The group was able to confirm that Iraq had in fact used chemical weapons against civilian and military targets, in violation of the Geneva Protocol. Several victims of chemical weapon attacks were sent to Sweden for treatment, where further analysis identified the chemicals used.

Notably, no chemical or biological weapons were used against the coalition in the Kuwait War, which may be attributed to a warning from President Bush in a letter presented by US secretary of state James Baker at a meeting in Geneva on January 8, 1991, to Iraq's deputy prime minister (and former foreign minister) Tariq Aziz, who was asked to pass it along to Saddam Hussein. In the letter, President Bush stated that use of chemical weapons against the coalition would lead Saddam and Iraq to pay a terrible price. Tariq Aziz later told me that he returned the original letter to Baker, saying that its tone did not match the expected level of communication with a head of state. Aziz explained to me that he interpreted the threat in the letter to mean that the United States would respond to Iraq's use of chemical weapons—in the event it resorted to their use—with nuclear weapons, a concern he conveyed to Saddam Hussein in Baghdad. The US hard-line position regarding Iraq's potential use of chemical weapons against the coalition can be traced to the fact that US forces had access to only 150,000 antidotes, while the total US forces in the coalition amounted to 500,000 troops. The other allies were even less protected.

Cease-Fire

US postwar posture was translated into concrete terms by Security Council Resolution 687 (1991) adopted on April 3, 1991. The resolution

was drafted in New York under the leadership of the US ambassador to the UN Thomas R. Pickering, with significant assistance from the British UN delegation.

Another key player in the process was the US diplomat Robert Gallucci, deputy head of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs at the US State Department. The details of the resolution were drawn up during lengthy negotiations between the permanent members of the Security Council, where, according to Tom Pickering, the Soviet Union gave strong support to achieve a resolution with the best possible backing of the council members.

Council Resolution 687, by its very nature, became something of a formal, quasicontractual cease-fire, ending the conflict between Iraq and the coalition for Kuwait's liberation. It was not an agreement between Iraq and the UN, which has often been argued. The main components of this arrangement were that Iraq's weapons of mass destruction and related capabilities were to be eliminated and that Iraq was to unconditionally undertake not to procure any of these banned weapons. Furthermore, in part, the ban on imports from Iraq, that is, the oil embargo put in place by the Security Council (Resolution 678), would cease when the council determined that Iraq had carried out all the commitments and obligations that the disarmament entailed.

Paragraph 22 of the resolution, which linked the arms issue to the oil embargo, became a central element of the political drama that would play out in the years that followed until 1999. Resolution 687 concluded, "When Iraq officially declares that it accepts the terms of the resolution, a formal cease-fire shall occur between Iraq and Kuwait and the member states that cooperated with Kuwait in accordance with Resolution 678," that is, the resolution that authorized Kuwait's liberation by military means. Only a few days after Resolution 687 was adopted, Iraq issued such a declaration. Thus, on April 11, 1991, a formal cease-fire in the Kuwait War took effect. The cease-fire resolution expressed the following regarding the weapons issue (paragraphs 8 to 13):

Iraq will unconditionally accept, under international supervision, the destruction, removal and disarmament of: (a) all chemical and biological weapons, all related chemical stocks and subsystems and all research, development, support and production facilities; (b) all ballistic missiles with a range of more than 150 kilometers and their components, as well as repair and production facilities; (c) all nuclear weapons or nuclear material applicable materials, and all subsystems, components and related research, development, support or production facilities. Furthermore, within 15 days of the resolution's adoption,

Iraq will deliver to the Secretary-General a declaration on the placements and quantities of all the substances concerned, as well as the types involved and allow urgent international on-site inspections. Furthermore, Iraq will unconditionally undertake not to use, develop, construct, or procure any of the aforementioned objects or substances.

UNSCOM and the IAEA

In the cease-fire resolution, the Security Council decided to establish a special unit, the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM), to implement the disarmament and monitoring tasks. This commission was to conduct immediate on-site inspections of the biological, chemical, and missile capabilities declared by Iraq, as well as the facilities and equipment identified by the commission. It was tasked with disposing of all prohibited weapons and equipment and destroying or disarming them. The commission was to further develop a plan for future control and verification of Iraq's compliance with its obligations under the resolution, a plan that would be delivered to the Security Council for approval within 120 days after the adoption of the resolution.

There was only one precedent for UNSCOM: the Inter-Allied Control Commission (IACC), created by the Treaty of Versailles in 1918, which established peace after World War I. The IACC's function was to devote itself fully to the disarmament of Germany.

It was natural in 1918 to make disarmament a central postwar component since many thought the war had been caused by the massive armament programs carried out from the turn of the century until 1914 by the great powers of the European continent—the German and Habsburg empires, the Russian empire, and secular France.

World War II, on the other hand, was judged by many to have been made possible by the disarmament policy and armament control that led to a weakening of Europe's democratic states throughout the 1920s and 1930s. As a consequence of this, the UN Charter, which established the international order after World War II, did not contain a word about disarmament.

The new commission was to be led by a chairman with full executive responsibility. It was noteworthy, therefore, that the executive chairman was not, as usual, in the UN system, subordinate to the UN Secretary-General. Instead, the commission and its executive chairman would report directly to the Security Council, a unique case in UN history.

Regarding the nuclear dimension, the director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Hans Blix, with UNSCOM's

assistance, was instructed to immediately carry out on-site inspections of Iraq's self-declared nuclear-related facilities and materials, as well as to oversee and monitor their capabilities. However, with regard to undeclared nuclear facilities and capabilities, it was up to UNSCOM's executive chairman to identify them and decide on inspections and destruction. Like UNSCOM, the IAEA was also tasked to develop a plan for future control and verification of nuclear-related capabilities, subject to the Security Council's approval.

In the consultations preceding adoption of the resolution in the Security Council, the US pressed for the Special Commission to take full responsibility for the nuclear weapons inspections and the elimination of Iraq's possible nuclear capabilities. This was based on the IAEA's complete failure before the war to identify any prohibited activity in its inspections in Iraq in accordance with the NPT, as well as its great (and unearned) praise for Iraq's "exemplary" implementation of its obligations under the NPT, when Iraq had in fact not only deceived the IAEA's inspectors but, as shown later, had continued working on a clandestine, well-developed nuclear weapons program.

However, after French and British insistence, the United States did accept a role for the IAEA. In a compromise agreement, the task of conducting the verifications and drawing up plans for continued control and monitoring of Iraq's nuclear programs and activities fell to the IAEA director general rather than to the IAEA institution. This circumvented, among other things, the IAEA's two policymaking bodies, the Board of Governors and the General Conference, both of which exhibited a predilection against intrusive inspections, thereby keeping them from gaining decisive influence over the implementation of the cease-fire resolution. Of course, it was impossible for Director General Blix to personally carry out any control functions. Instead, in conjunction with the IAEA headquarters in Vienna, a group of experts, known as the Action Team, was formed to carry out the mission, which was done with UNSCOM's assistance. At the same time, UNSCOM was responsible for all financing and operational activities (transportation and equipment) for this group.

The Security Council required that UNSCOM and the IAEA cooperate closely, designating UNSCOM as the general coordinator with many support functions in the areas of security, administration, transportation, and financing. The IAEA was tasked with reviewing and verifying Iraq's declarations of its nuclear capabilities.

But the politically important dimension of the mission, especially initially, fell to UNSCOM, or rather its executive chairman, to be solely

responsible for identifying and analyzing nuclear weapons–related facilities and inspecting places that Iraq had not declared and kept secret. UNSCOM was also the main recipient of relevant intelligence and other information shared by the member states in support of the elimination of Iraq’s banned capabilities. IAEA’s indisputable expertise in nuclear materials, in particular fissile material, as well as its knowledge of Iraq’s declared activities, inspection experience, and methods, complemented UNSCOM’s weapons expertise.

At first, UNSCOM and the IAEA shared the workload of the technical inspection process, but in retrospect, it ended up practically entirely in the hands of the IAEA Action Team in Vienna, led by Maurizio Zifferero, an Italian national who had worked with Iraq on its civilian nuclear program for more than a decade. Blix saw that experience, along with Zifferero’s earlier employment with the Italian Atomic Energy Commission, as an advantage when he appointed him. Zifferero’s extensive involvement in the construction of the Iraqi nuclear program was later questioned in the media, which accused him of being biased—an opinion I did not share.

Zifferero’s closest colleagues included David Kay (a US citizen) and Dimitri Perricos (a Greek national who would succeed Blix in 2003 as head of UNSCOM’s successor organization). Kay, who bravely and almost aggressively led two successful initial nuclear weapons inspections, did not become a longtime member of the IAEA Action Team; his intrusive inspection style was strongly opposed in IAEA circles in Vienna. Following the initial crises, UNSCOM’s own Nuclear Weapons Group, tasked with finding undeclared nuclear weapons–related material, was relegated to a more advisory role on substance issues after Iraq’s secret nuclear weapons programs had been identified and eliminated.

Operatively, however, UNSCOM’s role remained central to issues of finance, transport, communication, and air surveillance in support of nuclear weapons–related inspections.

Between Two Wars

UNSCOM’s operations extended over four distinct periods between the first and second Iraq wars. The first period, which began in April 1991, was characterized by the Iraqis’ absolute denial of the allegations, misleading information regarding the possession of prohibited capabilities, and physical resistance to the inspectors’ operations. At

the same time, the Security Council increased pressure on Iraq to comply with UNSCOM.

The second period, which began in early 1992, marked a year of cooperation as Iraq courteously demonstrated its possession of chemical weapons and missiles. UNSCOM was able to initiate a three-year process for the destruction of Iraq's vast quantities of these weapon capabilities, but continued cases of resistance by Iraq led to US air strikes in January 1993 against Baghdad.

The third period began in 1993. On the one hand, it marked the development of UNSCOM's and IAEA's surveillance program to monitor Iraq's various dual-use research and production facilities. But for UNSCOM it also constituted the beginning of an intensifying search for the biological weapons, the possession of which Iraq continued to deny.

When the fourth period began in the fall of 1995, a final account of the prohibited weapons was being completed and the monitoring program was fully implemented. At the same time, in dialogue with the Iraqi leadership, amid war threats, I developed special arrangements for conducting intrusive search operations. However, a political split emerged over the issue of sanctions relief that divided the five permanent members of the Security Council into two factions (Russia, France, China in favor and the United States and the United Kingdom opposed).

UNSCOM's inspections ceased in December 1998, when Iraq blocked inspectors' access, and a fragmented Security Council could not be united to support UNSCOM. In December 1999, UNSCOM was replaced by a new organization, the United Nations Monitoring, Verification, and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC), which was operational for only about four months at the end of 2002 and beginning of 2003 before the Second Iraq War broke out.

That war and the US occupation of Iraq led to the dissolution of the Iraqi social order under Saddam Hussein's secular dictatorship, followed by severe sectarian confrontations in Iraq. In their wake, external forces such as al-Qaeda, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guard, emerged and spread in a fragmented Iraq. The second and "unnecessary" war led to the rise of Sunni Muslim terrorism and, as a result, the Islamic State (IS) or Daesh.

It was a development that had far-reaching consequences for the Middle East and the entire world.

