The last time Americans became deeply absorbed in a matter of foreign relations was December 1990, when no less than 90% of the public told the Gallup Organization that they were “very closely” or “fairly closely” following the situation in the Persian Gulf.

The previous August, Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein had ordered the invasion and occupation of oil-rich neighbor Kuwait and declared it a province of Iraq. A series of escalating measures, including economic sanctions, a UN-imposed January 15 ultimatum for Iraqi withdrawal, and the movement of some 700,000 troops, including over half a million Americans, to Saudi Arabia, failed to force the end of the occupation. The U.S. and its allies prepared for war. For Americans, this meant the sundering of military families, the display of yellow ribbons, and a nearly obsessive attention to every development reported by the media. A bare majority still held out hope for peace.

But that hope dwindled as the holidays approached. At Christmastime 1990, editorial cartoons without captions depicted a shining star of Bethlehem suspended over troops amassed in a desert far away. And by January 1991, the nights in the Middle East would be silent no longer.

— Lisa Ferraro Parmelee

**Lines in the Sand**

**Question:** All in all, is the current situation in the Middle East worth going to war over, or not?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey by the Gallup Organization, December 6-9, 1990.

**Question:** Please indicate whether you strongly agree, moderately agree, moderately disagree, or strongly disagree... The issues in the Middle East are so important that I would be willing to see my own children go fight there against Iraq.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Moderately agree</th>
<th>Moderately disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>25%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey by Gordon S. Black Corporation for USA Today, December 29-30, 1990.

**Commander in Chief**

**Question:** Do you think President Bush is doing enough, doing too much or not doing enough to avoid a war with Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Doing enough</th>
<th>Not doing enough</th>
<th>Don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>53%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** Survey by Gordon S. Black Corporation for USA Today, December 29-30, 1990.

**Question:** Do you think President Bush should or should not be required to receive approval from Congress before taking offensive military action against Iraq?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Should</th>
<th>Should not</th>
<th>Not sure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>71%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Asked of registered voters.

**Source:** Survey by NBC News/Wall Street Journal, December 8-11, 1990.
Weighing the Costs

Question: Which of the following three statements comes closest to your opinion...? The United States should withdraw its troops from Saudi Arabia, the US should continue to enforce sanctions/seek some form of peaceful solution to the crisis, no matter how long it takes, the US should initiate a war to drive Iraq out of Kuwait if Iraq does not change its position within the next several months...?

- US should seek peaceful solution: 45%
- US should initiate a war: 43%
- US should withdraw troops: 9%
- Don't know/Refused: 4%


Young Blood

Question: Would you favor or oppose reinstating the draft if the United States goes to war in the Persian Gulf?

- Favor reinstating the draft: 58%
- Oppose: 38%
- Don't know/Not sure: 4%

Note: Asked of registered voters.

Best Intentions

Question: If war breaks out, should we fight the war until Saddam Hussein agrees to withdraw from Kuwait or should we continue fighting to remove Hussein from power?

- Fight until Hussein agrees to withdraw: 34%
- Continue fighting to remove from power: 60%
- Don't know/Refused: 6%


Dona Nobis Pacem

Question: Please tell me whether you agree or disagree... War in the Middle East now seems to be unavoidable.

- Agree, war in the Middle East is unavoidable: 46%
- Disagree: 51%
- Don't know: 3%

Source: Survey by the Chevron Corporation, December 13-17, 1990.

Keep the Home Fires Burning

Question: Do you know anybody in the military or National Guard who is currently serving in Saudi Arabia or who is likely to serve in Saudi Arabia if there is a war?

- Yes, know someone currently serving in Saudi Arabia: 26%
- No/Don't know/Refused: 74%