

## 30-11 Iraqi Aggression in Kuwait (1990)

George H. W. Bush

Speaking before the United Nations General Assembly as communism was collapsing in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, President George H. W. Bush (b. 1924) spoke of the promise of “a new international order” and the threat posed to that new world order by Iraqi aggression.

*Source:* From George Bush, “Aggression in the Gulf: A Partnership of Nations,” October 1, 1990.

The founding of the United Nations embodied our deepest hopes for a peaceful world. And during the past year, we've come closer than ever before to realizing those hopes. We've seen a century sundered by barbed threats and barbed wire, give way to a new era of peace and competition and freedom. . . .

Not since 1945 have we seen the real possibility of using the United Nations as it was designed, as a center for international collective security. . . .

Can we work together in a new partnership of nations? Can the collective strength of the world community expressed by the United Nations unite to deter and defeat aggression? Because the cold war's battle of ideas is not the last epic battle of this century.

Two months ago, in the waning weeks of one of history's most hopeful summers, the vast, still beauty of the peaceful Kuwaiti desert was fouled by the stench of diesel and the roar of steel tanks. And once again, the sound of distant thunder echoed across a cloudless sky. And once again, the world awoke to face the guns of August.

But this time, the world was ready. The United Nations Security Council's resolute response to Iraq's unprovoked aggression has been without precedent. Since the invasion on August 2, the Council has passed eight major resolutions setting the terms for a solution to the crisis. The Iraqi regime has yet to face the facts. But as I said last month, the annexation of Kuwait will not be permitted to stand. And this is not simply the view of the United States. It is the view of every Kuwaiti, the Arab League, the United Nations. Iraq's leaders should listen. It is Iraq against the world.

Let me take this opportunity to make the policy of my Government clear. The United States supports the use of sanctions to compel Iraq's leaders to withdraw immediately and without condition from Kuwait. We also support the provision of medicine and food for humanitarian purposes, so long as distribution can be properly monitored. Our quarrel is not with the people of Iraq. We do not wish for them to suffer. The world's quarrel is with the dictator who ordered that invasion.

Along with others, we have dispatched military forces to the region to enforce sanctions, to deter and if need be defend against further aggression. And we seek no advantage for ourselves, nor do we seek to maintain our military forces

in Saudi Arabia for one day longer than is necessary. U.S. forces were sent at the request of the Saudi Government.

The American people and this President want every single American soldier brought home as soon as this mission is completed.

Let me also emphasize that all of us here at the U.N. hope that military force will never be used. We seek a peaceful outcome, a diplomatic outcome. And one more thing: in the aftermath of Iraq's unconditional departure from Kuwait, I truly believe there may be opportunities for Iraq and Kuwait to settle their differences permanently, for the states of the gulf themselves to build new arrangements for stability and for all the states and the peoples of the region to settle the conflicts that divide the Arabs from Israel.

But the world's key task, now, first and always, must be to demonstrate that aggression will not be tolerated or rewarded. . . .

The United Nations can help bring about a new day—a day when these kinds of terrible weapons and the terrible despots who would use them, or both, were a thing of the past. It is in our hands to leave these dark machines behind, in the dark ages where they belong, and to press forward to cap a historic movement towards a new world order, and a long era of peace.

We have a vision of a new partnership of nations that transcends the cold war; a partnership based on consultation, cooperation and collective action, especially through international and regional organizations; a partnership united by principle and the rule of law and supported by an equitable sharing of both cost and commitment; a partnership whose goals are to increase democracy, increase prosperity, increase the peace and reduce arms. . . .

I see a world of open borders, open trade and, most importantly, open minds, a world that celebrates the common heritage that belongs to all the world's people, taking pride not just in hometown or homeland but in humanity itself. I see a world touched by a spirit like that of the Olympics, based not on competition that's driven by fear, but sought out of joy and exhilaration and a true quest for excellence.

And I see a world where democracy continues to win new friends and convert old foes, and where the Americas—North, Central and South—can provide a model for the

future of all humankind, the world's first completely democratic hemisphere. And I see a world building on the emerging new model of European unity, not just Europe, but the whole world whole and free.

This is precisely why the present aggression in the gulf is a menace not only to . . . one region's security, but to the en-

tire world's vision of our future. It threatens to turn the dream of a new international order into a grim nightmare of anarchy in which the law of the jungle supplants the law of nations. And that's why the United Nations reacted with such historic unity and resolve. And that's why this challenge is a test that we cannot afford to fail.

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### Questions

1. What role did Bush see the United Nations playing in the “new international order”?
2. Why, according to Bush, was Iraq's invasion of Kuwait a “menace” to “the dream of a new international order”?