

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Parliament reconvenes and considers the government's response to the crisis in the Gulf, Canadians deserve a more sober and informed airing of the issues than we have had so far. The events of the past six weeks represent nothing less than a basic crossroads in the evolution of international order; it is thus vital to separate the essential points in the case at hand from a lot of other polemical "noise".

The invasion of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein's overwhelming forces was unprovoked and illegal aggression, in blatant contravention of international law and the UN Charter. But it was also a gigantic blunder on the part of Hussein, who chose a time for his invasion when the Cold War had ceased to polarize and paralyse the world community.

His misfortune is the world's historic opportunity. If this fragile new post-Cold War order succeeds in responding with legitimate and effective action under the rules of international law and the procedures of the United Nations, a historic precedent will have been set; even superpowers and great powers will be far less free in the future to intervene unilaterally.

US Action

The mobilization and deployment of American military might have frightening aspects, and the "war talk" from some American quarters has deepened concern. However, with one possible exception, American actions since August 2 have been in full conformity with the letter and spirit of international law, the UN Charter and the unprecedented series of Security Council resolutions that are binding on all member-nations. The possible exception was in Washington's declaration of 12 August that it would enforce a naval blockade to ensure the efficacy of sanctions, prior to the passage of Resolution 665 on 25 August authorizing such actions.