

This crisis is not about the defence of democracy. Kuwait has been a semi-feudal state, although it was moving towards democracy. But this is no argument for inaction. The principles of international law and the Charter of the United Nations are universal in their application. Protection against aggression can never be a privilege of those people lucky enough to live in democracies.

And this crisis is not about oil. Certainly, oil was a factor in Saddam Hussein's calculus of aggression. That aggression has had an impact on oil prices, positively devastating for developing countries and the new democracies of Eastern Europe. And, if Iraq withdraws from Kuwait, negotiations between those two countries over oil may follow. Finally, the prospect of 40 per cent of the world's oil being in the hands of Saddam Hussein could give comfort to no one. So oil is a factor but it is not a principle. The United Nations did not become so mobilized for the sake of a few cents a litre on the price of gasoline.

And -- to deal with that most durable Canadian myth -- this crisis is not about supporting Washington. This is Iraq versus the world. That is why the forces arrayed against Iraq are from Senegal and Bangladesh and Czechoslovakia and Argentina and Australia and Bulgaria and 22 other countries. That is why sanctions are being respected with such extraordinary determination. If this is not global consensus, what is? To say that all these countries -- East and West, North and South, Arab and non-Arab, Muslim and non-Muslim -- have arrived at their positions at the behest of Washington is to display a paranoia verging on the pathological.

So this crisis is not about oil, or defending democracy or dancing to tunes written elsewhere. What, then, is it about?

The principle at issue is simple and straightforward: the defence and construction of an international order where aggression is rejected. That principle has been at the heart of our policy from the beginning.

Forty-six years ago the nations of the world formed an organization -- the United Nations -- whose primary purpose was to be the maintenance of international peace and security. The designers of that organization were determined to prevent what they had just experienced -- two World Wars in barely two decades, conflicts of such dimensions and destruction that they resolved never to allow them to happen again. These men and women were not idealists. They were realists, worn by war, steeped in suffering. They had seen the futility of rules without a capacity to enforce them. They knew that as in societies everywhere, rules will only be obeyed if they are enforced and that if they are not enforced, rules become