

*Government Orders*

Of course, Mr. Speaker, this is how the drafters of the United Nations charter wanted the organization to function. Now that the paralyzing effects of the cold war have subsided, a new world order where collective security would play a major role is becoming a distinct possibility.

• (1700)

The invasion of Kuwait has reminded us that despite considerable improvements in East-West relations, wars and armed conflict are still a fact of life in many parts of the world. More than any other area on this planet, the Middle East has tended to be a focus for this type of conflict. The history of the area is rife with dispute and controversy. Unfortunately, mediation in this part of the world has proved extremely difficult.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait is as easy to understand as it is unacceptable. What we have here is clearly a form of expansionism, a desire to gain supremacy over the entire area. A unanimous response on the part of the international community is the right way to deal with this kind of situation. The importance of the Middle East, where events have global repercussions, makes it necessary for us to be part of this joint response and thus for Canada to do its share.

I think most of us have a good idea of the major role events in the Middle East have played in the history of the world. For a long time, it was a meeting place of different cultures. The cradle of civilization was located between the Nile and the Euphrates. It was also the birthplace of three of the world's great religions. Our trading system is rooted in that area, not only because the great trading nations were born there but because it area is on the crossroads of trade routes linking Europe, Asia and Africa. As maritime trade developed, the waters in the area, first the Mediterranean and more recently the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, proved essential for the future development of international trade.

The area has a wealth of national resources. Water was a decisive factor, as it is in major river systems throughout the world. The Nile, the Tigris and the Euphrates fertilized the land. Today, however, another resource has become particularly important: oil. More than 50 per cent of the world's oil reserves are located here. As we have learned through experience, any interruption in the

delivery of oil from the Middle East would have an immediate and lasting impact on the world's economy.

Unfortunately, some of these aspects have made the region an area of endemic conflict. Its location, while giving birth to a whole civilization and trade, also attracted invasions and war, fire and bloodshed. Religious fanaticism lead to acts of violence and wars. In short, the area's tremendous wealth has been the object of everyone's desire. From now on, not only the reserves of oil might be at stake but also water which could become an increasingly rare commodity and therefore give rise to major conflicts in the area.

Nowadays, political and technological developments have made more complex the enduring features of that troubled region. The decolonization process was carried out more painfully than elsewhere, resulting in such problems as the fierce conflict between Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries.

Because of the superpowers' rivalry, the risk of regional conflicts turning into world wars is ever present. More recently, as a reaction against the West's culture and economic hegemony, Islam's fundamentalism introduced a new and volatile element in the policies of this region and even beyond.

Technological advancements, especially in the military field, have dramatically increased the risks of regional conflicts and greatly reduced the time the governments have to respond to critical situations. Political conflicts have now serious implications for the Southern flank of NATO—beginning with Turkey—as well as Africa, South West Asia and certain parts of the Soviet Union.

At a time when as a result of disarmament efforts the demilitarization of Europe is under way the Middle East is in the process of becoming the most heavily militarized region of the world. The outlook for the future is not at all encouraging because of the constant proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their delivery systems.

The current crisis in the Persian Gulf seems to have developed overnight, but appearances are deceiving the causes of the situation are to be found in the past. Since 1948, most of us have been inclined to focus our attention on the conflict between Israel and the Arab countries. It is essential, however, to remember that struggles between Arab countries also had a great impact on the modern history of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf.