

Chapter 18: The Promises and Realities of Decolonization: 18-5c The Persian Gulf War
Book Title: The Earth and Its Peoples: A Global History 7th Edition Update, AP® Edition
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18-5c The Persian Gulf War

The Persian Gulf War was the first significant military conflict to occur after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. Iraq's ruler, Saddam Hussein, had borrowed a great deal of money from neighboring Kuwait and failed to get Kuwait's royal family to reduce this debt. He was also eager to control Kuwait's oil fields. Hussein believed that the smaller and militarily weaker nation could be quickly defeated, and he wrongly suspected that the United States would not react. Iraq then invaded Kuwait in August 1990.

The United States decided to use military force to roll back Iraq's invasion. Saudi Arabia, an important ally of the United States and a major oil producer, also supported intervention. With his intention to use force endorsed by the United Nations and with many Islamic nations supporting military action, President George H. W. Bush ordered an attack in early 1991. Iraq's military defeat was both quick and comprehensive, but Bush decided to leave Hussein in power. When his rule was challenged by a Shi'ite uprising just months after his defeat, Hussein crushed his opponents. The United States imposed various conditions on Iraq that kept tensions high, helping create the conditions for a new, larger war in 2003 (see Chapter 20).

Section Review

- The Cold War ended when growing unrest and criticism led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and allied socialist nations. Mikhail Gorbachev's reform policies accelerated this process.
- The rise of ethnic nationalism and effects of religious divisions led to war and genocide in Yugoslavia.
- After Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the United States and its allies defeated Iraq in the first Gulf War of 1990.

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