

A NEW WORLD ORDER OF VIOLENCE PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH, VIOLENT INTERVENTION, AND THE END OF THE COLD WAR

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In 1991, United States President George H. W. Bush militarily intervened in Kuwait to force out an occupying Iraqi army, setting a precedent for the use of violence in a post-Cold War World. However, what at first appears to be a routine exercise in global power soon takes on different proportions as the extent of the decision to use violence to correct the international order takes shape. Emerging from the Cold War with the hope that power relations among the great powers had left behind the blood of the 20th century, it is worth considering the effort to which President H. W. Bush lead the United States toward consolidating legitimate, and illegitimate uses of violence. Beginning with the thoughts of Hannah Arendt in 'Reflections on Violence', this essay considers the decision-making of President H. W. Bush as he turned toward violence to confront the challenges emerging in the Persian Gulf in the wake of the Cold War. Beginning with the administration's first military intervention in Panama in December 1989, it is seen that violence gains a wider acceptance as a tool to solve international problems for President Bush as rules and requirements are codified to ensure that it is controlled and serves in the interests of the United States. The result is a political decision-making process that justifies the use of violence in the post-Cold War world.

"I view very seriously our determination to reverse out this aggression. And please believe me, there are an awful lot of countries that are in total accord with what I've just said...They are staunch friends and allies, and we will be working with that all for collective action. This will not stand. This will not stand, this aggression against Kuwait."

– George H. W. Bush, August 5, 1990

In 1969, Hannah Arendt, in *Reflections on Violence*, considered the relationship between violence and power. With the Vietnam War reaching its apex of popular disapproval and the Cold War rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union still edging nuclear apocalypse, Arendt's thoughts had a specific historical context. However, Arendt deconstructed violence down to its instrumental nature. For those who wielded power, or sought to wield more power, violence was a tool that could be used to alter the dynamic of a relationship irrevocably.¹ The implementation of violence broke the status quo through destructiveness. That is not to say that violence, according to Arendt, was the correct tool to break the spine of the status quo, as would a revolutionary, or to reinforce the restraints of the status quo, as would the tyrant. According to Arendt, the option of non-violent action was just as easily considered and "the distinction between violent and non-violent action is that the former is exclusively bent upon the destruction of the old and the latter chiefly concerned with the establishment of something new."² However, it could not be doubted that violence and power were intrinsically connected whether for the perceived betterment or detriment of humanity. *Reflections on Violence* deserves more consideration in light of the events that occurred during 1989-1991 when the international community found itself emerging from the shackles of the Cold War and there appeared to be hope for the beginning of something new. Indeed, the largely peaceful dissolution of the Soviet Union was contrary to the feared violent conclusion of the Cold War and in light of Arendt's understanding that non-violent action was concerned with the creation of something new, there was every hope that the violence of the 20th century had withered into irrelevance. The promise of a new, non-violent beginning was alluring. Francis Fukuyama still gushed lyrically about the end of history, and the triumph of liberal democracy, in 1992.³ It is, therefore, worth considering the actions of the United States as it emerged as the world's last remaining superpower, unrivalled in military, economic, and political power in 1989. It is especially worth considering the use of violence by this sole superpower by focusing on the Presidency of George H. W. Bush.

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- 1 Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Violence," *The New York Review of Books*, (February, 27, 1969). Available at <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/1969/feb/27/a-special-supplement-reflections-on-violence/> See also Hans J. Morgenthau on the role of violence in international relations. Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, Fifth Edition (Alfred A. Knopf, 1973).
 - 2 Hannah Arendt, 'Reflections on Violence.'
 - 3 Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and The Last Man* (Penguin Books, 1992).

In August 1990, United States President George H. W. Bush was confronted by the violent annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, just one part of an international order that was undergoing convulsions. In 1989, the fall of the Berlin wall would signal the Soviet Union's final death throes; all across the Eastern European bloc nationalist independence had exploded as the stranglehold of communism was weakened; demonstrations in the name of democracy blossomed in China, resulting in the violent repression of student activists in Tiananmen Square; and finally, many years after the end of World War II, Germany had made steps toward reunification, later going on to join the NATO alliance. Engulfed by the conflagration of international events, the newly elected President Bush was aware that his decisions would have unprecedented repercussions. Informed by the foreign policy team he had assembled, and through his own foreign policy experience, President Bush had to reconcile protecting the United States' strategic interests abroad with the responsibilities of an emerging post-Cold War international order, including the United States' newly found status as the only remaining global superpower. The result was a blend of old and new approaches to geo-political problems as President Bush, first, confronted a regional dictator who had threatened his domestic interests and then, confronted the violent annexation of Kuwait by Iraq. In the first case, the Bush administration established the parameters for the efficient use of violence to correct incongruities in their regional interests and proved the United States was beyond the limitations subconsciously imposed by the Vietnam War. Second, President Bush consolidated support through the United Nations Security Council for armed intervention to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, thereby lending a distinct post-Cold War legitimacy to the conduct of violence. By illustrating the invasion of Panama, and working through the decision-making process that led to the intervention in Kuwait, a process emerges that identifies some acts of violence as legitimate, despite that violence ostensibly being used to protect the United States' strategic interests.

Into Panama to Chase a Dictator

Coincidentally, President Bush had the credentials to deal with the foreign policy challenges that confronted his administration after having spent the majority of his political life in foreign policy positions. These included United States representative to the United Nations, director of the CIA, and vice president throughout the 80's. President Bush would also be the last of the Great War Generation presidents, having served as a naval pilot in the clos-

ing stages of World War II. These experiences informed President Bush's understanding of foreign policy, the United States' place in the world, and the ultimate costs of violent intervention.⁴ This would be influenced at a more practical level by General Colin Powell, a career military officer who agreed to become the Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff – the bridge between political and military leadership. General Powell, who had honed his military skill as a young soldier in Vietnam, carried the political and cultural baggage of a generation that had experienced, and in some circumstances distanced itself from, violent intervention. As a result, General Powell had developed a guiding ethos honed from his own experience as a soldier, now in a position in the hands of political leadership.⁵ As a military aide to former Secretary of State Caspar Weinberger,⁶ General Powell was entwined with the tenets of the, so-called, Weinberger Doctrine. The doctrine had emerged in the wake of the Vietnam War and stipulated, under the guise of lessons-learned, that only in situations where objectives were clearly defined, conflict definitively winnable, and overwhelming force guaranteed should military action be considered an option. Overall, the doctrine created a set of conditions that aimed to rectify the political failings in Vietnam, compelling politicians to commit to a military action by seeing it through successfully, just as the soldiers who were fighting were committed to following their orders. General Powell was the filter between the military and political hierarchies in the United States, and it would be General Powell who had an opportunity to influence not whether President Bush would use force, but when and how.⁷

The first example of armed intervention under the Bush administration was in the final months of 1989, when Operation Just Cause set out into Panama in order to capture and extradite the accused drug smuggler, and incidentally the leader of Panama, Manuel Noriega, on drug trafficking charges. Noriega was a dictator and had become increasingly erratic as a leader in the late 1980s. For President Bush, capturing and extraditing Noriega was a direct carry over from his years as vice president. Bush recalled visiting a crack house in 1988, and wrote about the people he had met

4 Jeffrey A. Engel, "A Better World...but Don't Get Carried Away: The Foreign Policy of George H. W. Bush Twenty Years On," *Diplomatic History* 34, No. 1 (2010): 29-30.

5 General Powell reflects on the Vietnam War from the perspective of a soldier, carefully criticising the political dimensions of the conflict that overtook the conduct of the war. The sense of comradeship and respect for the lives of American soldiers is evident in his memoirs, and help to interpret his actions as Joint Chief of Staff. See Colin Powell; Joseph E. Persico, *My American Journey* (New York: Random House, 1995) 103, 132, 145.

6 James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans* (Viking, 2004) 43-4.

7 Bob Woodward, *The Commanders*, (Simon and Schuster, 1991) 176-7.

who had “guts and courage and toughness to fight... It’s depressing and discouraging but it’s heroic...Thank God for those who turn in the cash and fight the drugs.”⁸ Alongside Bush’s personal revulsion of drugs in American society was his equal disgust at the alleged drug smuggling encouraged by Noriega in Panama, a stance exacerbated by President Ronald Reagan who had, in the final years of his presidency, chose to ignore two edicts that were issued in Miami for Noriega’s arrest for drug trafficking.⁹ Reagan had sought a diplomatic solution where, in exchange for Noriega stepping down from leadership in Panama, the United States would cease pursuing him for drug trafficking.¹⁰ Bush privately ruminated that “we’re going to devastate our law enforcement community; we’re going to send the wrong signal to the U.S. Attorneys all around; we’re going to say that you can drop indictments even without plea bargaining.”¹¹ This was in conjunction with a rumor that Reagan had ignored the edicts because Noriega had incriminating material concerning Bush.¹²

By the time Bush was elected president in 1989, the situation in Panama had deteriorated. Under the auspices of “democracy,” elections were held that resulted in an overwhelming loss for Noriega. In response, Noriega instituted martial law in the televised and visceral beating of his winning political opponents on the streets. Noriega soon announced that he was the Maximum Supreme Ruler of Panama and that they were at war with the United States of America.¹³ Noriega’s power grab presented a problem for Bush because of the 12,000 Americans stationed in Panama and the Panama Canal, scheduled to change into Panamanian hands in 2000.¹⁴ These cascading events enflamed anti-American sentiments in the Panamanian Defense Force and culminated in the death of an American naval serviceman who, along with some friends, had been stopped at a roadblock while on an evening out in Panama City. Compounding matters was the imprisonment and torture of another American serviceman and his partner who had witnessed the shooting.¹⁵ With the death of a member of the United States armed services, President Bush could no longer ignore the situation in Panama and immediately went on the offensive, stating:

8 George H. W. Bush, *All the Best, George Bush* (A Lisa Drew Book/Scribner, 1999) 387.

9 Timothy Naftali, *George H. W. Bush* (The American Presidents Series, Times Books, 2007) 56-7.

10 Bush, *All the Best, George Bush*, 386-8.

11 *Ibid.* 388.

12 *Ibid.* 387.

13 Woodward, *The Commanders*, 159.

14 *Ibid.* 83.

15 *Ibid.* 157-8.

As President, I have no higher obligation than to safeguard the lives of American citizens. And that is why I directed our Armed Forces to protect the lives of American citizens in Panama and to bring General Noriega to justice in the United States.¹⁶

It was of no surprise that President Bush would confront Noriega, as there was no love among the American people for the Panamanian dictator because of the accusations of drug smuggling. However, the death of an American at the hands of a foreign military meant that the nature of the response could not be limited in scope. Powell had an opportunity to influence the options for extraditing Manuel Noriega as he joined the conversation between Bush's foreign policy team. Extraditing Noriega would not be a simple police action, it would require a military response in order to establish order and confront any opposition. Given the freedom to incorporate some dimensions of the Weinberger Doctrine, Powell devised a military operation that utilized a military force of 24,000 armed service members that looked out of proportion for the simple objective of capturing Noriega and confronting a force of 15,000 Panamanian Defense Personnel, of which only 3,000 were combat ready.¹⁷ Asked why such a large and powerful military force would be necessary for such a small country as Panama, Powell replied "I'm always a great believer in making sure you get there with what you need to accomplish the mission and don't go in on the cheap side."¹⁸ In practice, Powell applied this thinking to every aspect of the operation, even expressing concern that "that they might be doing some things just for show. After preaching the importance of a sufficient force or 'mass' during the operation, the chairman was now looking for excesses. He spoke of reducing risks and damages."¹⁹ As a result, the operation quickly subdued the Panamanian Defense Force and reinstated the democratically elected leaders of Panama. However, the primary objective of capturing Noriega was initially unsuccessful. Chairman Powell, after preaching the necessity for clear and attainable military objectives, conceded that "We have not yet located the General... But, as a practical matter, we have decapitated him from the dictatorship of this country and he is now a fugitive and will be treated as such."²⁰ It would take weeks,

16 George H. W. Bush, Address to the nation announcing United States Military Action in Panama, December 20, 1989.

17 Woodward, *The Commanders*, 164.

18 *Ibid.* 194.

19 *Ibid.* 176.

20 *Ibid.* 188.

and a standoff outside the Vatican's Panamanian embassy, before Noriega would hand himself over to the United States, leading to a deceptively cold end to President Bush's first armed intervention. However, there were lessons for the administration. Military intervention would be supported so long as it was efficient, concise, and the United States was the victor. Riding on a wave of popular support, President Bush began his second year as President.

Disturbance in the Persian Gulf

The Persian Gulf had not been of any major domestic concern prior to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq. Throughout the 80's, relations between the United States and Iraq had been mutual while attention was focused on the traditional rivalries of the Cold War. Despite some opposition to Iraq's use of chemical weapons in the closing stages of the eight-year long Iran-Iraq War, the region was considered little more than a proxy battlefield for the interests of the Soviet Union and United States.²¹ In the United States, Iraq was considered an economic partner, one that would buy agricultural material through American companies floated by a convenient credit operation that subsidized American exports.²² Furthermore, the National Intelligence Estimate of 1989 assured President Bush that an exhausted and war-battered Iraq was in no position to follow through on any saber-rattling threats it might issue to other states in the region - such as the increasingly militant posture toward Kuwait.²³ At the beginning of 1990, Iraq's leader, Saddam Hussein, was not considered a major liability or threat to any interests in the region.

It was, therefore, a surprise to President Bush that Saddam annexed Kuwait on August 2, 1990.²⁴ With a lack of immediate options to respond to the invasion, President Bush froze Kuwaiti assets in the United States fearing that the Iraqi occupiers would steal all that they could. In the early hours of the morning on August 2, President Bush signed the executive order to

21 Early in the 1980s, Donald Rumsfeld (who would later, in 2000, become George W. Bush's Secretary of Defence) was part of a bi-partisan house committee sent to Iraq on an economic mission. His feedback was positive, after having met Saddam, and he reported that the region was ready for investment and full of potential. The picture of Rumsfeld shaking Saddam's hand in 1983 is worth a thousand words. James Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, 123-4.

22 Richard Haass, *War of Necessity, War of Choice*, (Simon and Schuster, 2009) p 29; 48-9.

23 *Ibid.* 46-7.

24 There was a potential warning regarding Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, but it was lost in the convoluted, ambiguous nature of diplomatic conduct. See United States Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, and her meeting with Saddam on the 25th July, 1990. Cable From Baghdad Embassy to State Department, "Saddam's Message of Friendship to President Bush," July 25, 1990.

do just that, executing the first move in identifying the annexation as illegitimate.²⁵ However, it was not until the following National Security Council session that the collective ignorance of what to do regarding Iraq's invasion of Kuwait became apparent. Powell said it clearly when telling General Norman Schwarzkopf during a briefing shortly before the session that "I'd think we'd go to war over Saudi Arabia, but I doubt we'd go to war over Kuwait."²⁶ Powell's thinking was shared by more than one person in the National Security Council, much to the frustration of National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft, who remarked that he "...was appalled at the undertone of the discussion, which suggested resignation to the invasion and even adaptation to a *fait accompli*. There was a huge gap between those who saw what was happening as the major crisis of our time and those who treated it as the crisis *du jour*."²⁷

President Bush, adhering to the advice of Scowcroft, could see that any response to the Iraqi invasion would require an effort to establish any military action as legitimate, and suggested that Congress should be compelled to pass a resolution that would impose unilateral sanctions, commend the United Nations for its actions, and support any position the Bush administration might take.²⁸ Unlike going after Noriega, President Bush had implicit domestic support or consensus he could utilize to execute a quick intervention in Kuwait against Iraq. And there were also strategic concerns. Iraq had a war-hardened army that was the fourth largest in the world, hardly the Panamanian Defense Force. Despite this, President Bush's first address on the Iraqi invasion left no doubt how the United States was going to respond. President Bush explained:

There is no place for this sort of naked aggression in today's world, and I've taken a number of steps to indicate the deep concern that I feel over the events that have taken place. Last night I instructed our ambassador at the United Nations, Tom Pickering, to work with Kuwait in convening an emergency meeting of the Security Council. It was convened, and I am grateful for that quick, overwhelming vote condemning the Iraqi action and calling for immediate and unconditional withdrawal.²⁹

25 George H.W. Bush; Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, (Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) 314.

26 Mann, *Rise of the Vulcans*, 184.

27 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 317.

28 *Ibid.* 317.

29 George H. W. Bush, Remarks and an exchange with reporters on the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait,

When asked if this meant military intervention was being considered, Bush responded, "...I'm not contemplating such action, and I...would not discuss it if I were."³⁰ However, Bush was clear in identifying the Iraqi invasion as "naked aggression" that would not be recognized and would be challenged, as acknowledged by the demand issued by the United Nations Security Council that Iraq withdraw immediately, and unconditionally.

Acknowledging the invasion of Kuwait as a threat to vital American interests, President Bush authorized the deployment of United States Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to create a defensive barrier against any further Iraqi expansion efforts. On August 8, President Bush explained to the nation, "Our country now imports nearly half the oil it consumes and could face a major threat to its economic independence"³¹ should Iraq expand into the oil fields to their west, into Saudi Arabia. However, President Bush was just as quick to assert that in some cases "appeasement does not work. As was the case in the 1930's, we see in Saddam Hussein an aggressive dictator threatening his neighbors."³² Leaning on the emotional, as well as strategic, rationalizations for sending American troops into the Saudi Arabian desert, it was obvious that President Bush was searching for the justification that would allow him more freedom to force Iraq from Kuwait. Strategically, President Bush was correct in acknowledging that an expanding Iraq threatened the resources in the region.³³ However, President Bush's comparison of Saddam Hussein with Hitler was against the advice of his foreign policy advisors and would later result in his public speeches being moderated in order to temper his rhetoric.³⁴ It was clear that in order to use military force to rectify the situation in the Persian Gulf there would have to be explicit justification for such an action, both domestically and diplomatically. According to President Bush, "we agree that this is not an American problem or a European problem or a Middle East problem: It's the world's problem."³⁵ Therefore, it would be the United Nations Security Council that would be seen to speak for the world.

August 2, 1990.

30 Ibid.

31 George H. W. Bush, Address to the Nation Announcing the Deployment of U.S. Armed Forces to Saudi Arabia, August 8, 1990.

32 Ibid.

33 Richard Nixon gave a realistic appraisal of the reasons America had to repel Iraq's expansion into Kuwait in an Opinion piece written in the *New York Times*, 1991. See Richard Nixon, "Why?", *The New York Times*, January 6, 1991.

34 Naftali, *George H. W. Bush*, 120-1.

35 Ibid.

Searching for Support

Despite the international dimension of the crisis in the Persian Gulf, Bush faced domestic opposition that manifested in Congress. This opposition was amplified in the fall of 1990 by a deepening budget crisis in which President Bush had to renege on an election promise not to raise taxes. It was not so much that his Democrat opposition in both the House of Representatives and the Senate wanted to bleed all they could from the unenviable reversal of his core election promises; members from the Republican Party were also against his economic agenda. Led by House minority whip Representative Newt Gingrich (R-GA), a group of disgruntled Republicans managed to single-handedly mutilate President Bush's personal approval rating by splitting his conservative base. This had the immediate effect of diminishing the implicit support President Bush had received for the steps he had already taken toward the crisis in the Persian Gulf.³⁶ When Bush spoke with Gingrich privately, he could only remark, "You are killing us."³⁷ Despite Gingrich's best efforts, Bush got approval from Congress for a budget, although it hardly represented the budget he had promised his Republican voters, and the partisanship it had created within Congress had a lasting effect on the administration's ability to press for consensus. It made a call for bi-partisanship by Bush in September 1990, before the budget crisis would hit its full peak, sound somewhat hopeful – "if there ever was a time to put country before self and patriotism before party, the time is now."³⁸ Now that Congress had comfortably challenged the president on the budget, and had won, representatives were soon questioning the purpose of American military forces in Saudi Arabia. Senator Sam Nunn (D-GA), Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, was singled out by Bush as potential opposition to any military action as the Senator might have "picked up on the compromise that some are offering – [that] there should be elections in Kuwait."³⁹ The compromise that worried Bush was part of a regional approach, dubbed the "Arab Solution," that allowed Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait and required the Kuwaiti government to undertake elections. The "Arab Solution," however, did not confront Iraq for its violent annexation of Kuwait. Bush's concerns were somewhat allayed by the first meeting on September

36 Ibid. 113-4; 116-7.

37 Ibid. 117.

38 George H. W. Bush, Address before a Joint Session of the Congress on the Persian Gulf Crisis and the Federal Budget Deficit, September 11, 1990.

39 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 358.

21 of the bi-partisan leadership committee concerning the United States response to the Iraqi invasion. At the meeting, it was agreed that Congress would support the administration's actions so far. However, warned the leaders, there was no consensus for support of any armed intervention.⁴⁰

Between the budget crisis and lackluster Congressional support, President Bush became jaded towards a domestic consensus that might equal the support that was emerging in the United Nations Security Council. Yet, it was important to Bush that there was a degree of domestic support for armed intervention in Iraq, similar to the support to confront Noriega. A part of the reason for the lack of support stemmed from the lack of explicit justification for an armed intervention in Kuwait. It was understood that there were interests in the region that were strategic to the United States, but that proved difficult to articulate at a domestic level. In the absence of justifications, President Bush wrote in his diaries, "the news is saying some members of Congress feel I might use a minor incident to go to war, and they may be right. We must get this over with. The longer it goes, the longer the erosion."⁴¹ Bush could see that without justification there would not be the quick and overwhelming strike that was necessary to achieve the stated objective of forcing Iraq from Kuwait. The impatience of the political impasse soon led to suggestions that Saddam Hussein could be drawn into attacking American forces, justifying retaliation. In particular, Bush considered identifying the embassy staff still in Kuwait as "hostages," for the purposes of immediately rescuing them.⁴² Understandably, Bush's suggestion for finding a provocation to expedite, and justify, an immediate military response did not find support among his advisors, or even United Kingdom Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who argued that any conflict had to be fought on the United States and United Kingdom's terms.⁴³ Once the dust had settled, and Congress adjourned at the end of October, the administration took stock of the political capital that had been expended over budgetary policy. In particular, it became increasingly obvious just how much support had wavered over the administration's posture toward the Persian Gulf crisis. The Democrat position was clear. They opposed any military action and argued that the president had a constitutional obligation to confer with Congress for a declaration of war before any such action could be made. House speaker Representative Tom Foley (D-WA), warned that "Unless there is a gross

40 Ibid. 372.

41 Ibid. 382.

42 Naftali, *George H. W. Bush*, 118-9.

43 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 343-4.

provocation you won't have public support."⁴⁴ Representative Les Aspin (D-WI), expressed that "there's no question [the country has] moved away from a more hawkish position within the last month. The budget battle pushed Iraq off the front page. The crisis lacks freshness and outrage. The public is less confident that the government knows what it is doing."⁴⁵ Although the Democrats appeared united in their opposition, Republicans still exhibited support for Bush. It was the Democrats, however, who held the majority in Congress.

Establishing an Ultimatum

Immediately after the meeting with the congressional team at the end of October, Bush and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft brought together the administration's foreign policy team to discuss what to do next. Secretary of State Jim Baker summarized the general feeling of the group by stating that he believed "sanctions will not get [Saddam] out in a time frame that we can accept."⁴⁶ But it was Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney who set the groundwork for an ultimatum. According to Cheney, "We could have an additional hundred and forty thousand [troops] in place by 15 January." Powell, supporting Cheney's recommendation, was careful to stress that a military intervention could not happen any sooner, despite the impatience around the room, and reminded the team, "The forces won't be in place before 15 of January."⁴⁷ All that was left was to enshrine the deadline in such a way as to justify the military action, and this required consolidating the support within both the United Nations Security Council and Congress. Publically, Bush was not subtle as to the changing posture of the military operation in Saudi Arabia, approving an increase in the number of troops there and shifting to an offensive posture. "Mr. President," he was asked at a news conference on November 8 discussing the Persian Gulf crisis, "it sounds like you're going to war. You have moved from a defensive position to an offensive position, and you have not said how many more troops you are sending or, really, why." President Bush replied, "Well, I've said why right now. And I hope it's been very clear to the American people... I would love to see a peaceful resolution to this question, and that's what I wanted."⁴⁸ Al-

44 Ibid. 391.

45 Ibid.

46 Ibid. 394.

47 Ibid. 395.

48 George H. W. Bush, The Presidents News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis, November 8, 1990

though the troop increase was a standard operational movement to prevent future encounters with logistical difficulties, it ignited a new round of indignation in Congress and across the American media.⁴⁹ However, Scowcroft was quick to point out that Congress did not appear concerned over the purpose for American troops in Saudi Arabia. Representatives rather appeared more concerned about “if military action was to be considered, who – the president or congress – had the authority to order it.”⁵⁰ It was the point of authority that had placed Congress on a collision course with the president.

Bush, however, left Congress to debate the constitutional rights of the executive branch in relation to matters of war and instead focused on the United Nations Security Council. In November, the United States held the presidency of the Security Council and was able to introduce a resolution that would consolidate the January 15 deadline. Secretary Baker coordinated the diplomatic approach of the United States towards securing the consensus of the Security Council, flitting between diplomatic channels throughout November and meeting with each of the Council’s foreign representatives. In Baker’s words, he “met personally with all [his] Security Council counterparts in an intricate process of cajoling, extracting, threatening, and occasionally buying votes. Such are the politics of diplomacy.”⁵¹ More importantly, this resolution allowed for the opportunity to legitimate violent intervention in the interests of the Security Council. This would be the first real test of the international order in a post-Cold War world. “I need your help,” Bush asked Soviet Union Chairman Mikhail Gorbachev at a conference in Paris, mid-November. “We need to get the UN to authorize force to convince Saddam Hussein to do what [it] demands.” Gorbachev replied, “let me say it rests on the two of us... in my heart, as yours I am sure, the preference is to solve this without blood... we need one resolution, but one which combines your idea and mine. The first part would contain a deadline for an ultimatum. The second part would state that ‘all necessary measures’ can be used.”⁵² On November 29, Secretary Baker chaired a session of the United Nations Security Council and introduced a vote on Resolution 678, asking all member states to authorize the use of any measures necessary to uphold and implement the resolutions concerning Iraq should Iraq fail to un-

49 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 396.

50 Ibid. 397.

51 James Baker, *The Politics of Diplomacy: Revolution, War & Peace, 1989-1992* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons) 305.

52 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*. 408-9.

conditionally withdraw from Kuwait by January 15, 1991.⁵³ This was done in order to restore peace and security to the Persian Gulf. The resolution was a success, with only Cuba and Yemen voting against it and China abstaining.⁵⁴ Even the Soviet Union had voted in favor of the resolution. For the first time in almost four decades the Security Council had consensus and Bush had a deadline to use as justification to militarily intervene in Kuwait.

Despite the United Nations Security Council resolution, Congress was insistent that sanctions be given more time to work before American troops were used in combat operations. In December, Bush warned against the Congressional opposition in a letter to Senator Robert Byrd (D-VA). Bush wrote:

“The U.N. Resolution must be fully complied with or else the new promise of the U.N. that we helped bring about will be ground into dust. Kuwait is still being brutalized. That Amnesty Int’l report is devastating. I want congress on board – fully. Saddam will only unconditionally pull out when he is convinced on two points about which he now has doubts: 1. that the united world will use force against him. 2. that is that force is used he will lose.”⁵⁵

The ultimatum issued by the Security Council was proving to be just enough justification to draw support from Congress for military action. It was imperative that Congress support the President so that any military action had the greatest chance at success. To bring in the New Year, Bush made a final bid for a unified Congress. Alongside an address to the nation outlining the objectives in the Persian Gulf, Bush sent a letter to House speaker Tom Foley on January 8, insisting, “I am determined to do whatever is necessary to protect America’s security. I ask Congress to join with me in this task. I can think of no better way than for congress to express its support for the President at this critical time.”⁵⁶ Four days later, two resolutions were introduced into the House of Representatives and Senate, asking for their support of the resolutions already pledged by the United Nations Security Council concerning the Persian Gulf crisis. This included adhering to the deadline of January 15.

53 United Nations Security Council Meeting, The Situation Between Iraq and Kuwait, S/PV.2963, 29 November 1990. Secretary Baker chaired a meeting of foreign ministers in the Security Council to push for a resolution that would approve the use of force to make Iraq leave Kuwait.

54 Ibid. 64-5.

55 Bush, *All the best*, George Bush, 495.

56 Ibid. 502.

Seven months since the initial invasion, and in an increasingly hostile political environment, Congress finally voted in support of using force against Iraq. The victory was not resounding, however. The vote passed through the House of Representatives 250-183 and by the merest of margins in the Senate by 52-47.⁵⁷ In light of the Congressional results, Bush was clear that he, alone, was responsible for the decision to use the military to force Iraq from Kuwait. "It is my decision," admitted President Bush in his diaries, "my decision to send these kids into battle, my decision that may affect the lives of innocence... it is my decision to step back and let sanctions work. Or to move forward [and] in my view, help establish the New World Order."⁵⁸ According to President Bush, the "New World Order" would have to distinguish between illegitimate and legitimate violence. The United Nations Security Council was one such way to confer the legitimacy of violent action. As such, the use of military power to correct the international order had been justified through the United Nations Security Council, and violence as a tool of power found a legitimate use in the post-Cold War world.

Wisdom from Experience

Mark Twain observed that there was an extent that decisions could be informed by history. Twain noted, "We should be careful to get out of an experience only the wisdom that is in it – and stop there; lest we be like the cat that sits down on a hot stove lid. She will never sit down on a hot stove lid again – and that is well; but also she will never sit down on a cold one."⁵⁹ The analogy can be attributed to President Bush's pursuit for legitimating an armed intervention into Kuwait to force out Iraq. For example, the wisdom that was derived from the Vietnam War was distilled into the guiding ethos of Colin Powell, who applied that wisdom into the experience of the incursion into Panama, and the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. However, the more astute observation turns back to Hannah Arendt, her *Reflections on Violence*, and the question of whether violence is inevitable and necessary for change.

The end of the Cold War provided the best opportunity to remodel power relations in a manner that did not reflect violence. Indeed, the disintegration of the Soviet Union and collapse of the Berlin Wall was a largely non-violent affair and provided hope that the 'New World Order' might just be different from the bipolarity of the 'Cold War Order' and the realpolitik of the 'Great

57 Bush; Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 446.

58 Bush, *All the Best*, George Bush, 503.

59 Quoted in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *War and American Presidency*, (Norton, 2004) 134-5.

War Order' that had preceded it. However, as Arendt notes, the power structure used by a government to pursue its political goals "outlasts all aims, so that power, far from being the means to an end, is actually the very condition that enables a group of people to think and act according to means and ends."⁶⁰ At the end of the Cold War, led by Bush, the United States was the world's last remaining superpower. This was unquestionable as the United States had been the beacon of the Western world since the conclusion of the Second World War and had stood firmly against the existential threat touted by Moscow-dominated communism. There was no doubt that the United States, and Bush, were now looked upon for leadership, as that had been an implicit objective of the Cold War. In this period of transition, from Cold War to post-Cold War, there was an opportunity to mold the existing power structures surrounding violence. Arendt is careful to note, "Violence needs justification and it can be justifiable, but its justification loses in plausibility the farther away its intended end recedes into the future. No one will question the use of violence in self-defense because the danger is not only clear but present, and the end to justify the means is immediate."⁶¹ In order for Bush to effectively lead, he would be required to decide to enact violence when necessary. Thus, the focus is returned to President Bush, Panama, and the Persian Gulf.

President Bush, and especially Powell, understood that violence wielded correctly and legitimately was a tool for achieving definable goals quickly. This was apparent from the incursion into Panama, and repeated in Kuwait. Powell micromanaged the level of violence necessary to guarantee a victory in Panama, sending an overwhelming American military force that quickly pacified any resistance. More importantly, the decisive and effective incursion helped Bush promote a brand of American war-fighting that was efficient and legitimate. In the Persian Gulf, from the first Iraqi troops moving into Kuwait, to the beginning of the United States bombing campaign just over six months later, and finally the ground war's conclusion after only 100 hours of combat, everything about the intervention was sharp and concise. In order to establish the legitimacy of the intervention, Bush carefully monitored and exerted his influence in both domestic and diplomatic circles to ensure the broadest acceptance of the recourse to violence. Therefore, the intervention built on the lessons of intervention in Panama, which was, in turn, crafted from the lessons of Vietnam. And it was as Arendt understood

60 Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Violence."

61 Ibid.

violence to be utilized. However, Arendt also understood the implications of resorting to violence, an observation that is relevant to Bush. Arendt warns:

The danger of the practice of violence, even if it moves consciously within a non-extremist framework of short-term goals, will always be that the means overwhelm the end. If goals are not achieved rapidly, the result will not merely be defeat but the introduction of the practice of violence into the whole body politic. Action is irreversible, and a return to the status quo in case of defeat is always unlikely. The practice of violence, like all action, changes the world, but the most probable change is a more violent world.⁶²

Although President Bush understood the necessity for using military force to evict Iraq from Kuwait, and Powell understood the reality of using military force in order to achieve success, there is no doubt that the act of legitimating violent intervention through the United Nations Security Council set a precedent for the conduct of violence as a mechanism for change in the post-Cold War world. Y