A political commentator recently compared the behaviour patterns of Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic, saying that each manages to keep the international community at bay by "doing three bad things and then backing down on one of them," thus forestalling actions on the part of international forces while perpetuating the crisis and maintaining power. Despite Saddam Hussein's defeat in the 1990 Persian Gulf War, the continuing international economic sanctions, and the recent 70-hour air attack by the United States and Britain, Iraq's dictator still hangs on to power. At the same time, his chief international opponent, U.S. President Bill Clinton, faces a different attack on his own power base. For news watchers, it has been a surreal time in terms of international political events. (Start : 1:41; Length:14:23)
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-Indonesia: Year of Living Dangerously
### Introduction

Washington DC, December 16, 1998. It is the day before the U.S. House of Representatives meets to vote on the impeachment of President Bill Clinton, and the American and international media prepare to devote extensive coverage to this historic political event. But that afternoon, Clinton unexpectedly issues orders for military strikes to begin against Iraq. As media representatives in the U.S. capital scramble to cover two major breaking stories at the same time, world attention is again focused on Baghdad, the Iraqi capital, where the bombs are falling. To some, the simultaneous occurrence of these two events appears more than coincidental, and Clinton’s motives for ordering the attack are quickly called into question.

Clinton’s decision to mount the combined air and naval assault, code-named Operation Desert Fox, is taken in concert with Britain, whose Prime Minister, Tony Blair, strongly endorses the move. For some time prior to the launching of the attack, the weapons inspection teams of UNSCOM (United Nations Special Commission) had been reporting that their access to sites where Iraq might be manufacturing "weapons of mass destruction," possibly including chemical and bacteriological arms, was being restricted. One day before Clinton issued his orders, the head of UNSCOM, Richard Butler, delivered a report to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, detailing the lack of co-operation his agency had received from Iraqi government and military officials, most notably the country’s President himself, Saddam Hussein. After Butler’s report was made public, it was clear it was only a matter of time before some kind of military action would be taken. Just a month before, Clinton had called off a similar strike at the last minute after Saddam indicated he was willing to permit UNSCOM to do its work. Clinton had warned then that this was to be the Iraqi leader’s last chance.

Reacting quickly to this surprising and sudden turn of events, the Republican majority in the House decided to delay the vote on impeachment. Opponents of the President, including senior Republicans like Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott publicly questioned Clinton’s timing of the operation, suggesting it might have been deliberately designed to deflect attention from the looming impeachment vote. For their part, however, Clinton supporters like Vice-President Al Gore rallied to the defence, accusing the critics of impugning the President’s motives, giving aid and comfort to the enemy, and letting U.S. armed forces down at a time of "national crisis" in their zeal to press ahead with the vote. Meanwhile, two top officials in the Clinton administration, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Defence Secretary William Cohen, took to the airwaves, issuing strong statements justifying the action against Iraq. U.S. military leaders briefed the assembled media on the success of the bombing, replete with charts and photographs of alleged weapons sites and other strategic targets that had been hit.

The most striking difference between the 1991 and 1998 U.S.-led attacks on Iraq is surely the position of the U.S. leader who ordered the strikes in the first place. Unlike George Bush in 1991, Bill Clinton is a wounded president who has to endure the ignominy of
being the first elected U.S. chief executive to be impeached by the House of Representatives. As Operation Desert Fox wound down shortly before the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, Clinton and his advisors began to prepare for the impeachment trial that began in the U.S. Senate in January. As for Iraq, its leader vowed that UNSCOM inspectors would not set foot inside the country again for a long time.
Like many stories from the United State's political arena, this one in many ways seems tailor-made for Hollywood; but is also a screenwriter’s nightmare in that there are two stories in one, each interrelated and of great significance and substance. Media coverage of the impeachment vote and Operation Desert Fox during mid-December 1998 was intense and sometimes confusing. And because of the major interconnections between the two unfolding events, it was practically impossible to present them separately in news broadcasts. The way in which the media covered this two-sided crisis in U.S. domestic and foreign affairs became itself an important part of the story. With memories of the recent Hollywood motion picture *Wag the Dog* fresh in their minds, commentators drew parallels between the film’s bizarre plot and the real events taking place in Washington and the Middle East.

In the film, an American president facing a serious sex scandal conspires with an aide to have a sympathetic Hollywood producer help the White House manufacture a contrived war against a little-known country in order to distract the public from his affair and to rally patriotic support behind him. Their plot is wildly successful as the public quickly forgets about the scandal and swings massively behind the president. Many observers were asking whether Bill Clinton had any of this in mind when he ordered the strikes against Iraq just one day before the House of Representatives prepared to vote on the articles of impeachment drawn up against him. History alone will be able to make this judgment, but the double-sided nature of this story is certainly an important aspect of the events. As you study this news story, try to keep the impeachment vote and Operation Desert Fox as separate as possible in your mind in order to assess the events as objectively as possible.

**Two Narratives, Two Crises**

1. Many news events have a narrative quality to them. They tell stories. The scenario or storyline is the fundamental element of a film from which all other elements—action, sets, costumes—take their cue. While you view this *News in Review* report, take note of details in two separate lists: details that explain the sequence of events that led to Operation Desert Fox and details that led to the impeachment trial of the President of the United States. (Separate groups or individuals may be assigned each task.)

2. A dramatic story involves conflict, and that conflict usually reaches crisis proportions. After presenting your separate narrative lists, discuss as a class why each has led to a crisis. What is a crisis? What is the nature of these two crises? How does this *News in Review* video report depict the crises in this story?

3. Finally, suggest events, details, or facts that, in your opinion, inevitably link these two news stories. Why is it necessary to understand that news events can be separate as well as related?
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Indicates material appropriate or adaptable for younger viewers.
Again, keeping the two sides of this story as separate as possible, consider the implications of the following information that is relevant to this story.

1. Impeachment means the removal of an elected public official from office prior to the end of his term. In the United States, a president can be impeached by a majority vote in the House of Representatives, the lower house of Congress. In your opinion, what does this say about the democratic process in the United States?

2. If the House votes to impeach Clinton, he must face a trial before the U.S. Senate over the charges contained in the articles of impeachment. In this case, these relate to accusations that Clinton lied under oath about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky and then tried to cover it up. In your opinion, what is the significance of a president of the United States being tried before the Senate?

3. Republican Congressman Bob Barr said that Clinton was running the risk of having a "more cynical view of his behaviour." He was referring to the fact that some Americans might think that Clinton deliberately ordered the strikes one day before the House impeachment vote in order to turn attention away from his problems and even delay the vote. What is cynicism? How would you describe the nature and effect of this feeling? Why is it so important in this story?

4. Democratic Congressman Richard Gephart went on record several times saying "That is wrong." Gephart was referring to his claim that it was wrong for Congress to be holding an impeachment vote against Clinton while American troops were engaged in Operation Desert Fox. In what ways might Gephart's position suggest an essential dilemma of this news story?

5. The debate and vote over Clinton's impeachment quickly became a partisan affair, with Democrats lining up solidly on the President's side, while Republicans opposed him. How might this contribute to a cynical attitude in public opinion?

6. Tom Campbell, a Republican Congressman spoke out publicly against Clinton, and David Bonior and Martin Frost, two Democrats, defended him. Given that the president of the United States is considered to be the most powerful person on the planet, what might be the implications for these three people of their public statements?

7. Two of the four articles of impeachment against Clinton were passed. Clinton vowed that he would continue to work for the American people until the end of his term of office in January 2001. If this news story were a fictional drama, how would these two events effect the action of the play?
8. The House passed two articles of impeachment alleging that Clinton had obstructed justice and committed perjury about his sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky. Two other articles charging Clinton with having committed perjury in the Paula Jones sexual harassment suit and of having abused his presidential powers were rejected. When accusations are made about a person's alleged guilt, why are charges that are "dismissed" not necessarily a victory for the accused?

9. Robert Livingston, the Republican speaker-designate of the House of Representatives, resigned after details of several adulterous affairs involving him were made public. Livingston hoped that Clinton would follow his example and resign from the presidency. How does this element of the story suggest that Clinton's alleged misdeeds touch the core of U.S. society?

10. The United States and Britain participated jointly in Operation Desert Fox. As reasons for the attack, they cited the fact that Iraq had broken its commitment to co-operate with UNSCOM arms inspectors operating inside the country. In terms of the international community, why might this partnership gain support from other countries?

11. U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen wanted the U.S. to weaken Iraq's capacity to manufacture and use weapons of mass destruction, possibly including chemical and biological weapons. He wanted to diminish Saddam Hussein's ability to launch any future wars against neighbouring countries in the Middle East and teach him a lesson for flouting his international obligations. Explain why this amounts to "degrading" Saddam Hussein. Suggest a precise meaning for this verb.

12. Targets inside Iraq included the barracks of Saddam Hussein's elite Republican Guard, Iraq's military intelligence headquarters, air defences in Basra, and military and industrial installations around Baghdad. Saddam Hussein himself was not a target. The goal was to undercut Iraq's ability to make and use weapons of mass destruction. Regardless of one's view of this very serious conflict, in what ways is the word "target" a deceptively simple one?

13. Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz accused Britain and the U.S. of attacking civilian targets, such as Iraq's radio and television broadcasting facilities. Discuss the importance of this accusation.

14. The Iraqi people are still facing severe economic hardship as a result of UN sanctions that make it very difficult for them to obtain food and medicine and that cripple their country's oil exports. How does this fact alone tell us that we must not become immune to conflict situations because we see them reported frequently and in great detail on television?
Every element of this story is important and potentially has a divisive effect not only on the people of the U.S. but on the international community. This is the second time since News in Review began production that we have examined a military action against Iraq. For many people around the world, it is also a disturbing "rerun" of history. While reading the information below, consider why this is such an important international story.

Although it was of much shorter duration, Operation Desert Fox in 1998 bore some similarities with Operation Desert Storm, the massive U.S.-led air and ground attack that drove Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait early in 1991. But there were also significant differences between the two military operations. The Persian Gulf War had been fought with a definite goal, and had received the full support of a number of countries, including Canada. The operation was led by a strong U.S. president, George Bush, and had gained the backing of a large majority of the American public. This time, however, the President was at the same time enduring the ignominy of being the first elected U.S. chief executive to be impeached by the House of Representatives. And the reasons for the attack on Iraq seemed murky, the objectives far from clear. There was no strong support for the action among Western states, with only the United States and Britain participating directly, while a handful of other countries, including Canada, offered only lukewarm endorsement from the sidelines. Some leaders, like French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, who was visiting Canada at the time, publicly criticized the Anglo-American action.

**Follow-up Discussion**

As a class, use the following questions, which are fundamental to this story, as a means of gaining an understanding of the scope and complexity of the 1998 military action against Iraq.

1. Do you think there is any truth to the theory that President Clinton's decision to launch Operation Desert Fox against Iraq was linked to the upcoming impeachment vote he was facing in the House of Representatives?

2. Do you agree with the reasons President Clinton and Prime Minister Tony Blair offered as justifications for launching Operation Desert Fox?

3. Do you think that the House of Representatives was right to impeach Clinton?

4. Do you think that Operation Desert Fox achieved its military and strategic goals?

5. Do you think that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was seriously weakened by the military action the U.S. and Britain took against him?
6. Do you think the economic sanctions against the people of Iraq are justified? Every element of this story is important and potentially has a divisive effect not only on the people of the U.S. but on the international community. This is the second time since News in Review began production that we have examined a military action against Iraq. For many people around the world, it is also a disturbing "rerun" of history. While reading the information below, consider why this is such an important international story.

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*Indicates material appropriate or adaptable for younger viewers.*
DESERT FOX: DEGRADING SADDAM HUSSEIN?

Contextual Analysis

The Conjuror

In Arabic, his name (Saddam) literally means "the one who confronts or shocks." To his people, he is known as "the Victor of God," but to his many enemies around the world he is frequently referred to as "the butcher of Baghdad." Former U.S. president George Bush even went so far as to claim during the events leading to the Persian Gulf War of 1991 that he was an incarnation of Adolf Hitler. Whatever one may think of him, it is undeniable that Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein has gained notoriety and a place on the world stage during the last 10 years.

There are many countries around the globe whose people have the misfortune to be ruled by violent military dictators. But Iraq and its unpredictable President have occupied the attention of policy makers in major world capitals for most of the past decade. His actions continue to infuriate and frustrate the great powers, especially the United States. Despite continual harassment and threats, and the near-destruction of his country by a U.S.-led coalition during the 1991 war, Saddam Hussein continues to hold power in Baghdad. His opposition at home is terrorized and demoralized, and divided abroad. Any early end to his brutal regime appears unlikely.

Prior to his decision to invade his neighbour, Kuwait, in August 1990, the event that triggered the Persian Gulf War, Saddam Hussein was relatively unknown outside the Middle East region, and his name was certainly very far from being the derogatory household term it was to become after that conflict. But by 1990, Saddam had already held the reins of power in Baghdad for two decades, serving for half of that time as his country's president. Like other military leaders in the Middle East and elsewhere, he had gained power through a combination of deceit, manipulation, strategic alliances, and violence. Since consolidating his authority over Iraq in 1979, he has never hesitated to employ brutal and heavy-handed measures to help him preserve it for himself and a favoured coterie of family members and close allies.

For Consideration

1. What ideas or thoughts come to mind when you hear the name "Saddam Hussein?" From where do you think these ideas have come?

2. Why do you think Saddam was so little-known in the Western world prior to the invasion of Kuwait in 1990?

Dictatorial Roots

Saddam Hussein was born in 1937 into a peasant family in Tikrit, a small town on the banks of the Tigris River just north of the capital city of Baghdad. An unwanted child who had arrived shortly after his father's death, Saddam was frequently beaten by his stepfather, and found refuge in the house of his uncle, whose daughter he would one day
marry. After showing some promise in school, he was sent to the capital in the early 1950s to continue his education. It was there that he began the political career that would one day elevate him to the pinnacle of power in his country.

At this time, Iraq was independent of Britain, which had held it as a League of Nations mandate following the First World War. But the country was ruled by a king, Faisal, whom the British had imported from Saudi Arabia and installed on the Iraqi throne, much to the dismay of the people. In addition, a small group of pro-Western landowners, businesspeople, and professionals effectively ran the country, and all nationalist political groups were banned. Attracted to politics, and resentful of the elite's domination, Saddam joined the underground Ba'ath Party, a movement that promoted pan-Arab unity and opposition to Western control.

In 1958, a revolution led by reformers in the military overthrew the monarchy. King Faisal and his family were executed as they sought to flee to safety in neighbouring Iran. The aftermath of this revolution saw a brutal power struggle between the nationalist Ba'ath Party and its bitter rival, the Iraqi Communist Party. In 1959, Saddam Hussein was part of a small group that unsuccessfully attempted to assassinate the pro-communist Iraqi president, Abd al-Karim Qasim. Saddam fled to Egypt, but returned in 1963 after the Ba'ath Party finally ousted and killed Qasim, showing his dead body on live television in order to convince the Iraqi people that he was indeed overthrown. By this time, Saddam's dedication to the party's cause had attracted the favourable attention of its Syrian-born founder, Michel Aflaq, who named him leader of its civilian wing. He also cultivated his family connections with General Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr, a prominent military Ba'athist who seized power in 1968, in order to curry favour with the army commanders.

Saddam used every opportunity to ally himself with people upon whose loyalty he could rely, especially those from his own Tikrit region. By 1969 he had risen to become assistant secretary-general of the party and Vice-President of Iraq. He single-handedly organized and trained an elite military force within the Iraqi army, the Republican Guard, whose duty was to protect the president and other high government officials. To this day, the Republican Guard forms the cornerstone of Saddam's ruthless grip on power in Baghdad, a force he has used on many occasions to crush any incipient opposition to his rule.

Seeking allies in the Middle East as a counterweight to the pro-American regime of the Shah of Iran, the Soviet Union cultivated a closer relationship with Iraq during the 1970s. The Soviets ordered the Iraqi Communist Party to end its feud with the governing Ba'athists, and sent engineers and petroleum experts to assist Iraq in the development of its potentially rich southern oil fields on the border with Kuwait. The government took over the operations of the lucrative Iraq Petroleum Company, enabling Saddam and his entourage to access the country's burgeoning oil revenues for their personal enrichment. It was during this time that he developed the taste for luxurious living that now permits him to choose from the dozens of palaces he has had built for himself and his entourage, while the Iraqi people suffer extreme economic hardship.

Saddam adroitly neutralized any internal opposition to his growing control over the country during the 1970s. The Kurds, an ethnic minority in the northern part of Iraq who had been clamouring for self-government since the end of the First World War, were suppressed after he negotiated a deal with the Shah of Iran in 1975 that closed that country's borders to Kurdish guerrillas seeking sanctuary there. Meanwhile, Saddam divested himself of his reluctant and by now unnecessary alliance with the Iraqi Communist Party, launching a brutal campaign of repression against its members and decimating its leadership.

For Consideration

1. Explain the importance of the following: Tikrit, King Faisal, revolution of 1958, Ba'ath Party, Michel Aflaq, Republican Guard, Soviet Union, Iraq Petroleum Company, Iraqi Communist Party.
2. In what ways did Saddam Hussein demonstrate the qualities of ruthlessness, manipulation, and violence during the period prior to his takeover of power in Iraq?

**Seizing Power**

By 1979, Saddam Hussein felt confident enough to make a bid for complete power in Iraq. He sidelined al-Bakr and assumed the position of President for himself, taking the opportunity to purge the ruling Ba'ath Party's Revolutionary Command Council of any suspected rivals. Countless Iraqi government officials were condemned as traitors at widely televised show trials, and were later executed before the horrified eyes of the nation. Within a year of taking power, he launched an ambitious bid for control of the entire Persian Gulf region by attacking Iran, a country now under the rule of an Islamic fundamentalist regime headed by the Ayatollah Khomeini.

At issue was control over the strategic Shatt al Arab waterway at the mouth of the Tigris-Euphrates river system, and the nearby oil fields on the Iran-Iraq border. The Iran-Iraq conflict was also influenced by religious differences. Although the vast majority of the people of both countries are Muslims, the Sunni branch of the Islamic faith is predominant in Iraq, while most Iranians belong to the Shiite denomination. Saddam deeply distrusted the Shiite minority in his own country, whom he accused of being secret supporters of Iran and its new Shiite leaders.

Backed by both the Soviet Union and Western nations fearful of the revolutionary Islamic regime in Teheran, Saddam's forces enjoyed initial military successes before being driven back by a relentless Iranian counterattack spearheaded by young Revolutionary Guards who staged massive "human wave" assaults on well-fortified Iraqi positions. The war that began in the autumn of 1980 was to drag on until 1988 and resulted in over half a million casualties and horrific destruction on both sides. During this time, he used chemical weapons against both his Iranian foes and the rebellious Kurds within his own country, a war crime that was later to earn him great condemnation from the United States and other nations. However, at the time he committed these atrocities, he was still regarded as an ally of the West, and they were passed over in silence in media and government circles.

During the war with Iran, Saddam began to promote a cult of personality among his Iraqi followers that glorified him as a military and political genius. Despite the fact that the conflict ended in a bloody stalemate, he emerged from the struggle with his domestic power base strengthened and his regional and global profile enhanced. Western nations viewed him as a useful Arab counterweight to the radical Islamic government in Iran, and he enjoyed even greater U.S. support as the Soviet Union began to unravel by the late 1980s.

Western companies also made huge profits in lucrative arms sales to Iraq and signed multimillion dollar contracts for the reconstruction of its vast oil reserves destroyed during the war with Iran. Despite his notorious human rights violations, including the massacre of over 100,000 Kurds and the forced exile to Iran of tens of thousands of Shiite Muslims from southern Iraq, Saddam Hussein remained a Western favourite in the region until he made the fateful decision to occupy Kuwait in the summer of 1990.

**For Consideration**

1. Explain the importance of the following: Ayatollah Khomeini, Sunni and Shiite Muslims, Iran-Iraq War, Kurds, chemical weapons, "cult of personality."

2. How was Saddam Hussein able to keep the support of both the Western nations and the Soviet Union during the 1980s?

**Desert Storm**

Convinced that the Emir of Kuwait had deceived him over oil price negotiations, and angry over his refusal to grant shared control over some strategic territory bordering the two
countries, Saddam ordered his forces into action on August 2, 1990. He had been assured by the U.S. ambassador a few days before the invasion that the United States would regard the Iraq-Kuwait dispute as a purely regional matter, and was surprised to discover that his aggression was met with outrage and opposition from the U.S. and other major Western powers. Within weeks of the occupation, the United Nations Security Council had imposed harsh economic sanctions against Iraq and was threatening armed intervention unless he withdrew his forces from Kuwait.

Saddam's refusal to withdraw unconditionally was to unleash Operation Desert Storm, a full-scale military assault on Iraqi forces in Kuwait, which was authorized by the United Nations and led by the United States, beginning in January 1991. The Iraqi army, chiefly composed of poorly trained and ill-equipped conscripts, was overwhelmed in a matter of days and was driven back across the border with Kuwait after suffering huge casualties. Meanwhile, Iraq was subjected to relentless rounds of punishing air strikes, ostensibly targeting strategic and military sites inside the country.

In reality, however, many thousands of Iraqi civilians were killed or injured during the bombing campaign, in which more tonnes of munitions were dropped than in all of the Second World War. Iraq's infrastructure of roads, utilities, hospitals, and other facilities was severely damaged, and its once prosperous oil industry was crippled. The Iraqi people, who had previously enjoyed a standard of living that was the envy of most of their Arab neighbours, saw their country literally bombed back to the Stone Age. The conflict that Saddam had dubbed "the Mother of Battles" as he confidently predicted victory at the outset had instead resulted in a devastating and humiliating defeat for his country.

For Consideration

1. Form groups to discuss what you recall or have heard about the Persian Gulf War of 1991 and compare the reactions you had to it at the time with what you now know about it and the events that have followed it. (News in Review has several stories that give a comprehensive account of this war. See the index at the end of this resource guide for details.)

More Storm Warnings

In the immediate aftermath of the Persian Gulf War, the Kurds in the north and the Shiite minority in the southern part of Iraq struck for independence and an end to Saddam Hussein's brutal regime. The rebels confidently expected that the U.S. and other Western powers that had defeated him in Operation Desert Storm would now come to their aid. In this they were mistaken. As the victorious coalition forces watched passively on the border, Saddam deployed with brutal effect his unscathed Republican Guard units, which had been held in reserve during Desert Storm, against the rebel Shiites and Kurds. For their part, the long-suffering Iraqi people who had endured the brunt of the air strikes now had to face the effects of crippling economic sanctions that the United Nations imposed upon Saddam's regime as a means of forcing him to comply with its demands for access to his weapons sites for the inspection and monitoring of his surviving military capability.

In the years since the catastrophic defeat his forces incurred in 1991, Saddam Hussein has continued to confound the experts by maintaining his iron grip on power despite punitive sanctions, military setbacks, and the continuing hostility of the world's greatest military power, the United States. He has defied repeated warnings to permit the international weapons inspection team known as UNSCOM to obtain unlimited access to Iraq's remaining military sites, where he is alleged to be manufacturing "weapons of mass destruction," including chemical and bacteriological weapons or even possibly a nuclear bomb.

A series of limited military strikes has been launched against himmost recently the joint British-U.S. assault known as Operation Desert Fox in December 1998. But sanctions, diplomatic isolation, and his opponents' repeated resort to arms have all failed thus far to
deter or intimidate him. Although he can claim few friends among the leaders of other Middle Eastern states, he nonetheless remains a hero to millions of ordinary Arab people who regard him as a courageous champion who defies the power of the United States and Israel, the U.S.'s chief ally and proxy in the region.

It is very difficult for outsiders to determine the true feelings of the Iraqi people about the man who has forced them to endure so much suffering during the past decade. Saddam Hussein's Iraq is a closed totalitarian society where no one dares speak freely and where the slightest criticism of the leader is met with instant reprisals, often death. There is scarcely any viable opposition left operating inside Iraq, while the scattered anti-Saddam groups in other Arab states and the West differ widely over political objectives and strategies. Whatever support they may be able to attract from the United States and other Western nations in their bid to topple Saddam, their chances of actually succeeding in removing the Iraqi dictator from power in the near future are considered to be slim to none.

For Consideration

1. Why is it so difficult for outsiders to gain a clear picture of what the people of Iraq really think about Saddam Hussein and his regime? How does this differ from the ways in which Canadians reveal their attitudes toward their political leaders?

2. Do you think that the aftermath of the Persian Gulf War represented a Western betrayal of the forces in Iraq who were opposed to Saddam Hussein? Why or why not?

Saddam DÉjà Vu

To many people in the Western world, Saddam Hussein is the incarnation of irrationality and evil, a monster whom politicians and the media portray as unique in the world for the sheer scope of his cruelty and malice. Some say that this is a simplistic and misleading view of the Iraqi leader but that it served a useful propaganda purpose during the Persian Gulf War, and furthermore is often recycled for public consumption when the United States prepares for yet another round of air strikes against the country. But for anyone seeking to gain a clear understanding of Saddam's character and motivation, it is important to see beyond the caricature and come to terms with the acute realities of the man himself, the political culture of the country he rules, and the region in which he operates.

First of all, as a brutal dictator, Saddam Hussein is hardly unique in today's world. There are many other leaders in recent history whose atrocities, committed either against their own people or their near neighbours, have equalled or even far exceeded his. Indonesia's former president Suharto, to cite just one example, was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people during his many years in power, and never received one word of condemnation from the United States or other Western nations for his crimes against humanity. This was because his policies were aligned with those of the West, and did not challenge but instead promoted the West's economic and strategic interests in his part of the world. As we have seen, the same held true for Saddam prior to his invasion of Kuwait.

Second, it is crucial for us in the Western world to recognize the fact that many people in the Middle East identify with Saddam and his long-suffering people, despite their acknowledgement of the cruelty and despotism of his regime. Unlike most other Arab leaders in the region, Saddam has stood up to U.S. and Western military might and remains defiantly in power despite military assaults against him. His own propagandistic comparisons of himself with other Middle Eastern and Islamic heroes of the past, such as the fabled Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar or the great Saladdin, who battled the Crusaders, do not entirely fall on deaf ears, either in Iraq or elsewhere in the region.

His launching of scattered Scud missile attacks on Israel during the Persian Gulf War, although relatively insignificant from a military point of view, held great symbolic value for
many Arabs who resent both Israel's perceived mistreatment of and unwillingness to deal seriously with the Palestinians, and the United States's unswerving support for it. The people of Iraq have paid a heavy price for their leader's refusal to respect United Nations resolutions imposed since 1991, whereas Israel has been in continuous violation of United Nations resolutions ordering it to withdraw from the occupied territories since 1967 and has yet to suffer any punitive consequences from the United States or other Western nations. It is this kind of double standard that is deeply resented by many in the Middle East; and for all his many other failings, Saddam is the one Arab leader who does not hesitate to denounce it and take action.

Despite all this, it is undeniable that Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq is a terrible example of oppression in a world that has seen more than its share of such brutal governments. Analysts suggest, however, that as long as the United States and the rest of the Western world persist in vilifying him but at the same time giving him more opportunities to reap moral and propaganda victories from military defeats, his status within the Arab world will no doubt continue to grow. Hopes for an early demise of his regime from within appear to be dim. Any proposed U.S.-led military invasion designed to oust him would probably cost thousands of American lives and billions of dollars, in all likelihood too high a price for public opinion in the U.S. to tolerate.

Most significantly, as long as the economic sanctions remain in place, the suffering of the Iraqi people, who are in the end the worst victims of Saddam Hussein's rule, will drag on without relief. It is estimated that since the end of the Persian Gulf War, over half a million Iraqi children have died as a result of shortages of food and medicine in the country. For all these reasons, it seems depressingly likely that the real "desert fox" of the Middle East"the one who confronts or shocks"is likely to do so for some time to come.

For Consideration

1. Explain how it is possible for Saddam Hussein to be viewed as a villain by people living in Western countries but as a hero to many in the Arab world.

2. What are the main features of the caricature of Saddam Hussein as often seen in Western media? In what ways is a caricature of this human being as a "monster" appropriate or inappropriate?
DESERT FOX: DEGRADING SADDAM HUSSEIN?

Justification

How is the general public to assess what really has happened in any major world event, especially one in which considerable military might has been used? This too is a key question in this news story. Keeping this in mind, read the following material and highlight words and phrases that express this important challenge to public awareness.

Accounting

Below you will find two sharply contrasting views of the reasons why Operation Desert Fox occurred.

1. One of the best alternative news story sites available on the Internet is the one provided by the American progressive magazine Mother Jones. Known as the "MOJO Wire," this site provides short articles on current issues such as the Iraq-United States confrontation from a non-establishment viewpoint that is rarely heard on the mainstream media. It can be found at www.motherjones.com/mustreads/index.html.

In response to President Clinton's decision to initiate Operation Desert Fox, the MOJO Wire carried two relevant and critical commentaries. One was by the well-known Palestinian-American literary and cultural critic, Edward W. Said, whose writings on the Middle East and Western perceptions of Arabs and Islam have been very influential. The other was a direct reply to Clinton's December 16, 1998, speech to the nation, in which he stated his reasons for ordering the military strikes against Iraq. It was written by U.S. historian Howard Zinn, a professor at Boston University, author of A People's History of the United States, and an outspoken critic of U.S. foreign policy since the days of the Vietnam War.

In his open letter to the readers of the MOJO Wire, Zinn accused Clinton of lying about the issues behind his decision to bomb Iraq. Unlike his deceptions over his relationship with Monica Lewinsky, which Zinn dismissed as trivial, these falsehoods were certain to involve the deaths of many innocent Iraqi civilians. For this reason, Zinn argued that they were far more serious than the sex scandal and impeachment controversy currently obsessing Washington and the U.S. media. Zinn made several points to back up his criticism of Clinton's actions. Among them were: (a) Clinton's claim that Iraq is the only country to have used chemical weapons is false. The United States has provided allies like Turkey, Israel, and Indonesia with such weapons, and they have been used against civilians. For its part, the U.S. itself has the greatest stockpile of "weapons of mass destruction" in the world, and is the only country to have ever dropped a nuclear bomb, against the Japanese in 1945. Since then, the U.S. has used awesome firepower in Korea and Vietnam, with devastating results; (b) The U.S.-instigated economic sanctions against the people of Iraq should also be considered a deadly "weapon of mass destruction." Unlike any weapons remaining in Saddam Hussein's arsenal, that have yet to be deployed, the U.S. is actually conducting an economic war against Iraq that has resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths; (c) Despite Clinton's claim that Saddam represents a
"clear and present danger" to the Middle East, the real danger to the peace of the world is the U.S. itself, because of its campaign of economic and military warfare against the people of Iraq.

Zinn concludes his impassioned commentary with this observation: "We are living in times of madness, when men in suits and ties, and yes, a woman secretary of state, can solemnly defend the use, in the present, of indiscriminate violence . . . against a tyrant who may use violence in the future. The phrase clear and present danger’ has therefore lost its meaning. The phrase weapons of mass destruction' too has lost its meaning when a nation which possesses more such weapons, and has used them more than any other, uses these words to justify the killing of civilians."

Zinn closes his remarks with a general appeal to the readers of the MOJO Wire to take action in protest against the "demented leaders" who have authorized Operation Desert Fox.

2. The following account is taken from Clinton's speech itself.

Earlier today, I ordered America's armed forces to strike military and security targets in Iraq. They are joined by British forces. Their mission is to attack Iraq's nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs and its military capacity to threaten its neighbours. Their purpose is to protect the national interests of the United States, and indeed the interests of people throughout the Middle East and around the world. Saddam Hussein must not be allowed to threaten his neighbours or the world with nuclear arms, poison gas, or biological weapons.

I want to explain why I have decided . . . to use force in Iraq; why we have acted now, and what we aim to accomplish. . . .

First, without a strong inspection system, Iraq would be free to retain and begin to rebuild its chemical, biological, and nuclear-weapons programs in months, not years.

Second, if Saddam can cripple the weapons inspection system and get away with it, he would conclude that the international communityled by the United States has simply lost its will. He will surmise that he has free rein to rebuild his arsenal of destruction, and someday make no mistake he will use it again as he has in the past.

Third, in halting our air strikes in November, I gave Saddam a chance, not a licence. If we turn our backs on his defiance, the credibility of U.S. power as a check against Saddam will be destroyed. . . .

The hard fact is that so long as Saddam remains in power, he threatens the well-being of his people, the peace of the region, the security of the world.

The best way to end that threat once and for all is with a new Iraqi government ready to live in peace with its neighbours, a government that respects the rights of its people. Bringing change in Baghdad will take time and effort. We will strengthen our engagement with the full range of Iraqi opposition forces and work with them effectively and prudently.

The decision to use force is never cost-free. Whenever American forces are placed in harm's way, we risk the loss of life. And while our strikes are focused on Iraq's military capabilities, there will be unintended Iraqi casualties . . . We must be prepared for these realities. At the same time, Saddam should have no doubt that if he lashes out at his neighbours, we will respond forcefully. . . .

Let me close by addressing one other issue. Saddam Hussein and the other enemies of peace may have thought that the serious debate currently before the House of Representatives would distract Americans or weaken our resolve to face him down.
But once more, the United States has proven that although we are never eager to use force, when we must act in America’s vital interests, we will do so.

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Indicates material appropriate or adaptable for younger viewers.
## Discussion, Research and Essay Questions

1. Using an almanac, encyclopedia, or atlas, prepare in chart form a summary of information about Iraq using the following headings: Geography (capital city, area, coastline, climate, environment, terrain, land use, location); People (population, nationality, population growth rate, ethnic groups, languages spoken, religions, birth and death rates, infant mortality, life expectancy at birth, number of doctors, literacy); Government (leaders, type of government, administrative divisions, date of independence, national holidays); Economy (overview, GDP, industries, labour force, agriculture, natural resources); Finance and Trade (currency, external debt, imports and exports); Communications and Transportation (daily newspapers, televisions, radios, telephones, motor vehicles, roads, railways, air traffic, airports). More information about Iraq may be obtained from the Embassy of the Republic of Iraq, 215 McLeod St., Ottawa, ON, K2P 0Z8, Tel: (613) 236-9177, Fax: (613) 567-1101.

2. Operation Desert Fox was ordered halted on the eve of the major Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Find out more about the religious significance of this holiday to Muslims around the world, how it is observed, and why.

3. Research the background to the ancient civilization of Mesopotamia, which developed in the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in present-day Iraq over 4000 years ago. In what ways might it be considered one of the world's oldest civilizations?


6. Watch the recent Hollywood film *Wag the Dog* (New Line Productions, Barry Levinson,
director, 1998; based on the novel *American Hero*) and discuss the extent to which you think the events depicted in it can be compared to President Clinton’s actions regarding Iraq.

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