

President George H. W. Bush

1989-1993

Background



George H.W. Bush

- came from a wealthy, political family;
- served with distinction on WW II;
- served as Vice President under President Reagan;
- in 1988 successfully campaigned on a promise to continue Reagan's policies;



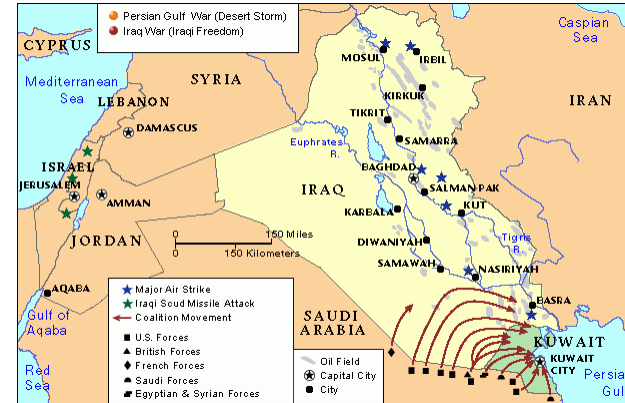
Foreign Policy

- **The Persian Gulf War (1990).**

The Gulf war was George H.W. Bush's **greatest foreign policy success**. Iraqi dictator **Saddam Hussein** ordered his army to **invade Kuwait**, capturing Kuwait's vast oil wealth. Hussein refused a UN demand to withdraw.

When all attempts at negotiating a peaceful solution failed.

American and United Nations coalition forces launched **air attacks** against Iraq. In early 1991, **coalition ground forces invaded Kuwait** and **forced Hussein's troops back into Iraq**. Hussein agreed to pay damages to Kuwait, and President Bush declared a cease-fire.



The Gulf War



Effects of the Gulf War

Advanced Warfare. US prestige increased as the world marveled at American technology – computer controlled, laser guided missiles hit buildings with pinpoint accuracy.

Rebuilding Kuwait. Kuwait's cities were damaged, its people were terrorized and their oil wells had been set afire by retreating Iraqi troops. Kuwait repaid US help by awarding most of the rebuilding work to American companies.

World Cooperation. The war proved that the nations of the world, when faced with a common danger, could cooperate in a military action under UN authorization.

Foreign Policy cont.

- **The End of the Cold War.** Within two years of the Bush presidency, **Eastern Europe moved from communism to democracy, the Berlin Wall was torn down and Germany reunited.**

In addition, democratic changes swept through the Soviet Union and these changes eventually led to **the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991.**

Domestic Policies

Bush's experience had mainly been in the area of foreign policy.

Some critics believed that President Bush should have paid more attention to domestic matters like the economy.

- **Recession:** Bush's greatest challenge was to reduce the **growing budget debt**, which was costing taxpayers billions in interest payments. The economy went into a **recession by 1990**. Many companies went bankrupt and thousands of workers lost their jobs.

Civil Rights and Civil Unrest

- Bush promoted civil rights when he signed into law the **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990**, guaranteeing rights and accessibility to **disabled Americans**.
- **Racial tensions** boiled over into **riots in Los Angeles and other cities** when a jury found 4 policemen not guilty of wrongfully beating Rodney King, an African-American, even though the incident had been videotaped by a bystander.