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THE GULF WAR:
AUSTRALIA'S ROLE AND ASIAN-PACIFIC RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the responses of Asian-Pacific countries to Australia’s role in the Gulf crisis and other related issues (such as the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era, the New World Order, and the prospects for collective security in the Asia-Pacific region) in order to gain an understanding of regional perceptions of Australia’s present and future role in the global and regional security regimes. It demonstrates that the response of Asian-Pacific countries to Australian military commitment in the Gulf War ranged from outright opposition (North Korea and Vietnam) to understanding (Indonesia, Malaysia, China and India) and wholehearted support (Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei, the South Pacific Forum states, South Korea, Japan and Sri Lanka).

In the initial stages of the crisis, Canberra’s hasty dispatch of warships following the US and British lead had the potential to undermine Australian attempts to project itself as an independent actor in the Asia-Pacific region. But the formation of a broad anti-Iraqi international coalition and prompt conclusion of the war seemed to vindicate the Australian position and rather enhanced its image in some Asian capitals. It can be argued that a long-drawn-out war or Israeli participation in the conflict would have exacerbated latent tensions and highlighted differences between Australian and Indonesian/Malaysian attitudes.

Though Australia’s role in the Gulf did not cause any rift between Australia and other Asian-Pacific countries, it once again highlighted their different perceptions. Most Asian-Pacific countries do not share the Bush-Hawke perception of the New World Order and are critical of the role of the United Nations during the Gulf crisis. Many Asian states do not believe that Gulf-style conflict management should serve as a model for coping with future regional conflicts.
*Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence* are a series of monograph publications which arise out of the work of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Research School of Pacific Studies, The Australian National University. Previous *Canberra Papers* have covered topics such as the relationship of the superpowers, arms control at both the superpower and South-east Asian regional level, regional strategic relationships and major aspects of Australian defence policy. For a list of those still available refer to the last pages of this volume.

Unless otherwise stated, publications of the Centre are presented without endorsement as contributions to the public record and debate. Authors are responsible for their own analysis and conclusions.
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J. Mohan Malik
August 1991
## ABBREVIATIONS

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AFP</td>
<td>Agence France-Presse</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANU</td>
<td>Australian National University</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANZUS</td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand and the United States (Pact)</td>
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<td>APEC</td>
<td>Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>CBMs</td>
<td>Confidence-Building Measures</td>
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<td>CCP</td>
<td>Chinese Communist Party</td>
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<td>ECW</td>
<td>Electronic Counter-Warfare</td>
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<td>GCC</td>
<td>Gulf Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>GNP</td>
<td>Gross National Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>MNFs</td>
<td>Multinational Forces</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>NICs</td>
<td>Newly Industrialising Countries</td>
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<td>NWO</td>
<td>New World Order</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIC</td>
<td>Organisation of the Islamic Conference</td>
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<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organisation of Petroleum-Exporting Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLO</td>
<td>Palestine Liberation Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>PNG</td>
<td>Papua New Guinea</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Pakistan People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>SAARC</td>
<td>South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation</td>
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<td>SDF</td>
<td>Self-Defense Force (Japan)</td>
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<td>UAE</td>
<td>United Arab Emirates</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNIKOM</td>
<td>United Nations Iraqi-Kuwait Observer Mission</td>
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<td>UNPKO</td>
<td>United Nations Peace-Keeping Operations</td>
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<td>US</td>
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION:
THE GULF CRISIS, AUSTRALIA AND THE
ASIA-PACIFIC REGION

In the plethora of comment on the Australian government’s decision to deploy warships in the Gulf and thereby to join the anti-Iraqi, US-led Multinational Forces (MNFs) in Saudi Arabia, scarcely a mention was made of the response of Asian-Pacific countries to this critical decision.

Since the early 1980s, a growing awareness of the political, strategic and economic importance of the Asia-Pacific and Australia’s geographic proximity to Asia has led Canberra to place greater emphasis on the region. Australia’s destiny, to quote Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, ‘is irretrievably associated with [this] region’. The Asia-Pacific region contains the world’s two most populous countries, an economic superpower and several Newly Industrialising Countries (NICs). It is a region of cultural diversity, of growing strategic importance, and of the fastest economic growth in the world. During the past decade, the erstwhile trans-Pacific orientation of Australian defence policy has been abandoned in favour of a more balanced approach, which also takes into account security threats emanating from the Indian Ocean region. Consequently, Australia appears to be gradually accepting a more active regional role in the Pacific as well as Indian Ocean regions. At the same time, however, Australia continues to identify its primary strategic interests as being identical with those of the Western alliance. There is no denying the fact that Australia’s defence capabilities make a significant contribution to regional security and to the maintenance of broad Western strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region.

Diplomatically, militarily and economically, Australia today is more closely integrated with the Asia-Pacific region than it has ever been. As Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, has said: ‘Our future lies, inevitably, in Australia becoming more and more closely integrated into the region of which we are geographically so

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inescapably a part’. To this end, Canberra has made special efforts in recent years to develop what Gareth Evans calls ‘habits of dialogue and cooperation’. That Canberra recognises the need to participate actively in the development of regional responses to changes in the strategic situation is evident in the government’s Regional Security Statement of December 1989. In this statement, Senator Evans emphasised the need for the development and widening of exchange and discussion, a web of dialogues at the bilateral, sub-regional and regional levels in order to develop a shared sense of strategic and security interests. Australia has already been actively involved in dialogue with the countries of Southeast Asia on issues such as Cambodia, US bases in the Philippines, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and regional security arrangements among ASEAN states. Similarly, Canberra has held periodic discussions with the South Asian states of India and Pakistan on chemical, nuclear and ballistic missile non-proliferation. In Northeast Asia, Australia encourages the process of arms control and confidence-building measures (CBMs) so as to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula and encourage improvement in Sino-Soviet and Sino-Japanese relations.

It is against this background that an analytical study of the Asian-Pacific reactions towards Australia’s response to the Gulf crisis acquires added significance. Many Asian countries, while critical of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, were reluctant to take tough retaliatory action for fear of undermining their own fragile economies and jeopardising the safety of hundreds of thousands of Asian workers in the Persian Gulf. Particularly noteworthy was the muted response of Indonesia and Malaysia, both predominantly Islamic countries, to the Gulf crisis, despite a personal appeal from the Saudi King Fahd. Similarly, the low-key and cautious response of other Asian powers like India, China and Japan stood in sharp contrast to that of Australia.

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4 ibid.
Introduction

On 10 August 1990, the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke - following his telephonic conversation with the United States President, George Bush - made public his government’s decision to dispatch two FFG-51 guided missile frigates - HMAS *Adelaide* and HMAS *Darwin* - and a support vessel to the Gulf. This decision of the Hawke Government generated considerable public commentary and controversy in the media and among the academic community, particularly after the allied attack against Iraq in mid-January 1991. While some commentators paid tribute to Bob Hawke for responding in a swift and unequivocal manner in order to uphold the rule of law over the rule of force, others portrayed him as taking Australia into a war as the result of a phone call from the White House.

The critics of Australia’s military commitment to the Gulf argued that the Hawke Government’s hasty decision to join the US-led multinational forces went against the general thrust of the 1986 Dibb Report, the Defence White Paper of March 1987 and the Regional Security Statement of December 1989. For these critics, Canberra’s swift support for the US role in the Middle East conjured up different associations and images. From their perspective, their country was involved, once again, in a war a long way from its shores at the behest of a larger power, and in a situation where Australian interests were only tenuously at stake. They contended that Australia’s approach to the Gulf War showed that it remained more committed to the United States and the West than to the Asia-Pacific region - an image which the Hawke Government had tried hard to cast off. Furthermore, there was some criticism of the precipitate nature of the decision to join the American-led alliance in the Gulf without consulting or informing Australia’s immediate neighbours, especially Muslim nations. This

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6 In addition to sending two guided missile frigates and a support vessel to the Gulf, the Australian-US joint facilities in Nurrungar and Pine Gap played an important role in the conduct of Gulf War by providing early warning of ballistic missile attack and intelligence data. See *Defense News*, 21 January 1991.


9 According to Professor Desmond Ball, Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, Canberra’s prompt dispatch of warships to the Gulf was seemingly in violation of the unilateral commitment made by Australia to consult and inform its Southeast Asian neighbours regarding all military decisions. See Greg Austin, *Gulf Role not in our Interests: Ball*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 February 1991, p.2.

Dr Robert Springborg, a Middle East expert from Macquarie University, was also critical of the Hawke Government’s decision to join the US-led MNFs without
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was interpreted to mean that the Hawke Government had been paying mere lip service to its regional commitments, its rhetoric about ‘comprehensive engagement’ and ‘constructive commitment’ notwithstanding.10

The supporters of the government’s military response to the Gulf crisis, on the other hand, argued that the military commitment decision was based on a combination of principle and self-interest.11 Acknowledging the self-interest motive of Australia’s military presence in the Gulf, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, said that developments in the Gulf would determine whether Australia had to ‘stand alone’ and ‘build up [its] military capabilities’ in a post-Cold War world or could rely on international action against regional aggressors. He added that Australia joined the war against Iraq to bolster the chances of the United States and the United Nations acting against aggressors in the Asia-Pacific region. He also argued that unless the idea of ‘collective security’ for all under the United Nations banner worked, the collapse of the Cold War could worsen, rather than improve, regional security.12 Since Australia’s general neighbourhood is full of potential trouble spots, the possibility remains that, with the end of the Cold War, conflicts that had been suppressed by the rivalry between East and West may erupt, in much the same way that gangsters run rampant when the police lack the power to check them. Thus the argument went that, by acting far afield to support the UN’s collective security potential, ‘Australia was supporting a precedent, and an

adequate consultation with its immediate neighbours. He thought that ‘our regional neighbours, and the Arabs themselves, will see Australia’s involvement in terms of the same sort of knee-jerk response that sent Australian troops into Korea and Vietnam’ (Bulletin, 19 February 1991, p.43).

10 See radio interview with Prime Minister Hawke in Foreign Broadcast Information Service - East Asia [hereafter FBIS-EAS], 6 February 1991, p.58.


Introduction

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approach to security, which will have very direct application in the Asia-Pacific region.13

As regards the critics’ contention that Australia’s Gulf commitment meant in some sense a departure from Australia’s regional security focus, the supporters of Australia’s military role pointed out that ‘security in the interdependent world was indivisible and that Australia could not simply confine its vision to the immediate neighbourhood and ignore what might be happening further afield’.14 The Australian government also argued that Australia’s willingness to participate in collective action beyond its region should have come as no surprise, because even the Regional Security Statement of December 1989 made it clear that Australia’s security interests were affected by many factors outside Southeast Asia and the South Pacific, particularly the security of the Persian Gulf.15 Furthermore, government ministers and officials sought to justify Australia’s military deployment decision on the grounds that the decision had strong community support, unqualified backing by the Federal Opposition and majority Labor Party endorsement and was in accordance with the United Nations Resolution 678, which authorised member states ‘to use all necessary means’ to liberate Kuwait from Iraq and asked ‘all States to provide appropriate support’ to achieve this.16

In addition, Australia’s participation in the Gulf War intensified the debate over the ‘Fortress Australia’ or ‘Defence Self-reliance’ or ‘Forward Defence’ strategies among the foreign and defence policy community.17 Australia’s military commitment to the Gulf War, though physically small, was believed to have marked the end of the Hawke Government’s much vaunted policy of defence self-

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13 ibid.
15 See paragraphs 45 and 49 of Evans, Australia’s Regional Security.
16 Australian, 26-27 January 1991. It should be noted that when the Australian government decided to send warships to the Gulf, the US-led military build-up did not have UN sanction and support.
17 For example, see Kirsty Cameron, ‘The Battle for a New Defence Strategy’, Australian, 2-3 February 1991, p.31.
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reliance, and a return to the prescriptions and premises which characterised Australia's earlier posture of forward defence.18

Before outlining in detail what this study is about, it will be useful to state at the outset what this study is not about. It is not a study about the pros and cons of the Hawke Government's decision to join the MNFs in the Gulf. Nor will it examine the implications of Australia's military role in the Gulf for the country's present and future defence strategy. Nor will there be any analysis of the decision-making processes as far as Australia's Gulf crisis decision making was concerned. On the contrary, this study confines itself specifically to the task of investigating the responses of the Asian-Pacific countries to the Gulf crisis/war in general and to Australia's role in particular. A basic underlying assumption here is that Australian policy on the Gulf crisis cannot and should not be pursued independently from Australia's relations with its Asian-Pacific neighbours. This is not to say that Asian-Pacific states should have some sort of veto over how Australia develops its Gulf policy or that Australia should simply follow policies of other Asian nations. Needless to say, foreign policy of each country, in the ultimate analysis, is determined by the national interests of that country. It simply reflects a recognition of the fact that Australia seeks to maintain a close and constructive relationship with its Asian-Pacific neighbours and it should therefore pay more attention to their views and concerns.

In short, this study involves a critical examination of the responses of Asian-Pacific countries to Australia's military commitment to the Gulf from August 1990 to March 1991 and other related issues involved in the Gulf crisis, such as the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era, perceptions of the New World Order19 and prospects for collective security in the Asia-Pacific region.

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19 In his speech of 16 January 1991, announcing hostilities with Iraq, President Bush described the opportunity for building a New World Order 'where the rule of law ... governs the conduct of nations', and 'in which a credible UN can use its peacekeeping role to fulfil the promise and the vision of the UN's founding
The primary focus of the research project is on the following questions: How did Asian-Pacific countries react to Canberra's prompt dispatch of the frigates HMAS Adelaide and HMAS Darwin to the Gulf to enforce an effective blockade of Iraq? What efforts did Australia make to persuade other Asian-Pacific countries to become involved? Was Australian diplomacy in the Asia-Pacific region adequate during the Gulf crisis? For example, did the Australian government hold any discussions with its allies and friends in the region regarding the Gulf crisis? Was Australian foreign policy out of sequence with the policies of other nations of the Asian region? Did Australia's decision to follow the US-British lead soon after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait adversely affect its image in the Asian-Pacific capitals? Or was Australia's action positively perceived in Asia, as showing a nation capable of acting with resolve? Do the Asian-Pacific countries share the Bush-Hawke perception of the New World Order and the role played by the United Nations in the Gulf crisis?

Last but not least, this study will consider the future implications of Australia's decision about military engagement in the Middle East for the countries of the Asia-Pacific region. It is being said that the gradual increase in the economic and military capabilities of regional powers like Japan, China and India, coupled with the decline in superpower military presence in the region, could lead to fresh regional rivalries and new flashpoints of conflict. Hence the ongoing foreign policy debates in Tokyo, Beijing and New Delhi, as well as the implications of evolving strategic policies of these three Asian regional powers, are also discussed at length. Does Australian commitment to regional security in the Middle East indicate Canberra's resolve to engage itself in similar regional conflicts of the future in South Asia, Southeast Asia or the South Pacific? For example, China's propensity to use military force to assert its claims in the Spratly Islands could have serious ramifications for Australia's role in maintaining regional security in its vicinity. Hence the reactions of Asian-Pacific neighbours to Australia's response to the Gulf crisis should be a matter of utmost concern to Australian foreign and defence policy makers. By focusing on the official as well as unofficial responses of Asian-Pacific countries to Australia's decision to join the anti-Iraqi alliance, this study can

provide an understanding of Asian-Pacific perceptions of Australia’s present and future role in the global and regional security regimes.

This study is based on a comprehensive survey of the national media of key Asian-Pacific countries, especially statements, articles and commentaries in newspapers. In addition, I had had the privilege of conducting interviews with the diplomatic personnel of several countries based in Canberra to elicit their views and comments on the subject and spoke informally to many Asian analysts. Partly in view of the reluctance of some Asia-Pacific countries to publicly comment on Australia’s role in the Gulf crisis and partly because of the relative insignificance of Australian involvement in the overall Multinational Forces, I have applied the method of logical deduction to deduce the possible reaction of some Asia-Pacific countries to Australia’s role from their general response to the allied action.20

Since the Asia-Pacific region consists of four sub-regions: South Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia and the South Pacific, this monograph is divided into four corresponding chapters, and a conclusion.

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20 The process of deduction involves going from the general to the specific and forming propositions about what we have seen as against what we have not seen but could expect on the basis of what we know. Deduction involves moving from premises, based on observations, to conclusions'. The method of logical deduction can thus be defined as 'a form of logic that begins with a general statement of observed characteristics and arrives at a specific statement derived from the general one'. See William B. Sanders and Thomas K. Pinhey, *The Conduct of Social Research* (CBS College Publishing and Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1983), pp.10-11,14,30.
CHAPTER 2
SOUTH ASIA

Geographically, South Asia, being an adjoining region of the Middle East, was located close to the theatre of conflict. This region includes a number of actual and potential conflict zones and disputes including the Gulf area, Afghanistan, the India-Pakistan and Sino-Indian disputes, internal strife in Sri Lanka and Burma. The strategic impact of events that occur in South Asia is a matter of concern to Australia insofar as they impinge upon Australian security and economic interests in Southeast Asia and in the more immediate Eastern Indian Ocean approaches, where Australia possesses significant island territories - 'an area of strategic interest' to Australia.1 Australia also maintains a national as well as Western alliance interest in an uninterrupted supply of the Persian Gulf oil and in the free flow of international shipping through the region. Economically, the countries hardest hit by the Gulf crisis were all located in South Asia: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka because of their dependence on the Middle East for oil and trade as well as the nature of their relations with the Gulf countries. Aside from bigger import bills for oil, the already weak economies of South Asian countries had to face the loss of remittances by nationals working in the Middle East, the cost of repatriating these nationals, and disruptions to export markets. Politically, South Asia, much like the Middle East, remains a volatile and conflict-prone region. And in religious terms, the region is home to more than 340 million Muslims, the largest concentration of Muslims anywhere in the world.

It is against this background that this chapter seeks to document and analyse the response of South Asian countries to the Gulf crisis in general and to the Australian involvement in particular.

Initial Reactions

Of all South Asian states, India, in particular, was caught between the proverbial rock and a hard place over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990. On the one hand, India was dependent on Iraq and Kuwait for 40 per cent of its annual oil imports, and in addition to a substantial trade relationship, an estimated 185,000 Indian workers were stranded in the area of hostilities. On the other hand, Iraq, a secular state, in a region dominated by Muslim fundamentalists and feudal monarchies, had been a traditional friend of India and had supported India's position on the Kashmir dispute, whereas Saudi Arabia, Iran, and most of the other Arab/Muslim countries had sided with Pakistan. Not surprisingly, then, New Delhi adopted an ambivalent stance in the initial stage of the Gulf crisis. While demanding the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, New Delhi took the view, like many other Asian countries, that Arab problems should be best solved by Arabs themselves.3

There was an external dimension to India's less than forthright condemnation of the Iraqi invasion. One day after Iraq occupied Kuwait came news of the US deployment of naval forces in the Gulf. Given India's antipathy to the involvement of extra-regional powers in regional conflicts, such a development was seen as 'ominous' by Indian foreign policy makers. The Gulf crisis erupted at a time when tensions between India and Pakistan were high over Kashmir and the ramifications of having a Western military presence close to South Asian shores could not be easily ignored. Indian policy makers' preoccupation with Pakistan further confounded their ability to make an objective assessment of the Gulf crisis. There was a fear in New Delhi that Pakistan might try to exploit the crisis to India's disadvantage.4

Pakistan, which enjoyed close ties with the Saudi Kingdom, had condemned the Iraqi invasion in unequivocal terms. Still, initially,

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2 A version of this section was published in article form; see J. Mohan Malik, 'India’s Response to the Gulf Crisis: Implications for Indian Foreign Policy', Asian Survey, Vol.XXXI, No.9, September 1991, pp.847-861.
3 Hindustan Times, 4 August 1990.
4 Interview with an Indian analyst, Canberra, February 1991.
Islamabad was reluctant to take a tough stand against Iraq by imposing sanctions or sending troops. The Bhutto Government made it clear that it would not impose economic sanctions, and a Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman stated on 4 August 1990 that Pakistan’s decision not to support the economic sanctions was based on its ‘principled’ stand of not supporting any sanctions against any Islamic or Arab country. He recalled that, when similar sanctions were proposed against Iran during the Iran-Iraq war, Pakistan had opposed the move. Islamabad also hoped that the Iraqi-Kuwaiti conflict would be resolved through the ‘traditional ways of the Arab world’. But soon after Bhutto’s dismissal from the premiership, reports emerged about the possible deployment of Pakistani troops.

On 13 August 1990, Islamabad made public its decision to join the US-led multinational forces in Saudi Arabia after a ‘special request’ from King Fahd of Saudi Arabia. It is noteworthy here that this decision had the full support of Pakistani Army Chief-of-Staff, General Mirza Aslam Beg, who categorically stated that Saddam Hussein had to go, if the Gulf crisis were to be resolved. Islamabad’s decision to send troops and abide by the United Nations sanctions against Iraq was interpreted in New Delhi as an attempt by Pakistan’s military-dominated interim regime to exploit the Gulf crisis to further its own objectives of acquiring economic and military support from the United States and other Arab countries. In New Delhi, it revived memories of Pakistan’s role during the Afghanistan conflict. Bangladesh was the second South Asian and predominantly Islamic country to announce its decision to abide by all UN resolutions and send troops to Saudi Arabia, ostensibly to defend the country’s holy cities. However, Bangladesh’s action was motivated primarily by the considerations of obtaining Western and Saudi aid and loans.

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5 Pakistan Times, 5 August 1990.
7 Pakistan Times, 14 August 1990. It should be noted here that from the beginning and through the war, Pakistan stated repeatedly that its small contingent in Saudi Arabia was there to protect the ‘holy places’ and not to fight the Iraqis. Therefore, Pakistani troops were stationed in the south, on the Saudi-Yemen border.
India's tendency to regard the Gulf crisis as 'just another' regional conflict, with a consequent need to keep extra-regional powers at bay, apparently shaped its response. New Delhi was piqued over the speed with which the US, Britain and Australia responded to the situation in the Gulf. India's primary concern, at this stage, was the safety and repatriation of its more than a million workers stranded in the Gulf region. To this end, India secured the UN sanctions committee's permission, at the end of August 1990, to sail a cargo vessel carrying 10,000 tonnes of grain to the Iraqi port of Basra for the Indian nationals. In addition, the government dispatched two passenger ships and sent Indian Air Force planes to evacuate Indians from the area. However, India's decision to send food shipments to the Iraqi port of Basra was seen in some Western capitals as a backdoor attempt to undermine the sanctions imposed against Iraq.

During the first two months of the crisis, India repeatedly called for the 'soonest possible withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait' and expressed its opposition to any 'unilateral action outside the framework of the UN', a clear reference to the military build-up by the United States, Britain and Australia. In his address to the UN General Assembly on 28 September 1990, Foreign Minister I.K. Gujral decried the 'foreign military presence' in the region and said that 'it would be to everyone's advantage if these are deinducted as soon as possible'. Apparently criticising the US for virtually 'steam-rolling' Security Council resolutions, Gujral warned that the UN must not become a forum for decision making by the big powers. He added: 'A cooperative relationship among the major powers is not a sufficient condition for true multilateralism. The latter requires full and equal participation of all nations, big and small, in the multilateral decision-making process'. He also expressed India's displeasure at 'the great issues of the day' being 'decided in the Capitals of a few major powers'.

11 'Good Gulf Grades', Far Eastern Economic Review, 8 November 1990, p.9. Much to the consternation of Baghdad, India off-loaded no more than a tenth of a grain shipment sent to Iraq, partly because by September most of the Indians were on their way to Jordan and partly because it did not want to be seen as undermining the UN-imposed sanctions against Iraq.
13 Indian Express, 29 September 1990.
Thus, it can be surmised that India was at first opposed to the deployment of Western forces in its vicinity, as this violated the principle of keeping the region free of external powers' involvement. From India’s general reaction to the Western deployment of forces in the Middle East, one can infer that Australia’s decision to join the US-led MNFs did not sit well with the Indian establishment. India’s initial reaction to the Gulf crisis gave the impression of being half-hearted in support of the international consensus, largely because of New Delhi’s tendency to extrapolate from India/Pakistan relations and its failure to take cognizance of the new realities of the post-Cold War era.

However, this did not mean that India’s apparent ‘softness’ towards Iraq and its anti-Western stance during the initial stage of the crisis had the broad support of its foreign policy community. On the contrary, there were signs of divisions within the foreign policy establishment, with prominent foreign policy analysts and commentators questioning the wisdom of applying old standards and paradigms to the first major crisis of the post-Cold War era. Air Commodore Jasjit Singh and K. Subrahmanyam of the government-run Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, argued that in spite of India’s friendly relations with Iraq, New Delhi must recognise that the ‘Iraqi’ invasion of Kuwait challenged the basis of the United Nations itself and the energy security and financial stability of the world’. They questioned the prevalent view that Arab problems were best solved by the Arabs themselves. Given the threat to international order and stability posed by the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, they argued that ‘it was unrealistic to think of dealing with it in the regional, intra-Arab context’. At the same time, they believed that ‘the problem could not be solved by NATO and its allies (such as Australia and Pakistan) alone’, but ‘only with the cooperation and collective efforts of all interested powers within the UN framework’.

Deriding the failure of Indian policy makers to anticipate the strong reaction of the Soviet Union and China to the Iraqi aggression, a former foreign secretary, Jagat S. Mehta, called for ‘erasing old mindsets originating from the wasted decades of the Cold War’ and whole-hearted support for the UN resolutions. He wrote: ‘When major

15 ibid. (italics added).
powers are uprooting old guide posts, we too should not hesitate to re-
examine seated [sic] old premises of policies', and warned that
otherwise 'we again risk[ed] playing into the hands of Pakistan and
elements in the West traditionally prejudiced against India'. Arguing
along similar lines, another prominent foreign affairs analyst,
Bhabani Sengupta, observed:

It has become almost a norm for India not to praise
anything American ... This Cold War mentality must
now be abandoned. The United States is no longer the
mega giant it once was; it is no longer feared by
nations. But it is the world’s premier power, and much
of what the post-Cold War world will or will not be
depends on the US.

Moreover, it was becoming increasingly clear that India’s perceived
softness towards Iraq and ambiguous response to the allied actions
had the potential to harm its trade and diplomatic relations, not only
with the Gulf region but also with the Western countries in the anti-
Iraq coalition.

Not surprisingly, then, a perceptible shift in Indian policy took
place sometime during late October and November - i.e., during the
last days of the V. P. Singh Government and the assumption of power
by Chandra Shekhar’s minority government, which required the
support of Rajiv Gandhi’s Congress(I) Party. Apparently, Indian
policy makers realised that non-alignment and military alliances had
been rendered irrelevant in the changing parameters of the
international strategic environment and the end of the Cold War. An
indication of this policy shift came in the Joint Declaration of the South
Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) issued on 23
November 1990 at the meeting in the Maldives capital of Male, which
was attended by Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar. The declaration

p.11.
[18] The director of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, however, denied
that there was any about-face as far as Indian policy on the Gulf crisis was
concerned. He cited the letter of appreciation sent by US Secretary of State, James
Baker, to the then Indian Foreign Minister, I.K. Gujral, as evidence of American
support for the Indian position in the initial stages of the crisis. Interview with Air
called on Iraq to leave Kuwait and to comply with all UN Security Council resolutions. A few days later, India supported UN Resolution 678, authorising the use of force if Iraq failed to withdraw from Kuwait by the Security Council-stipulated deadline of 15 January 1991. By the end of November 1990, New Delhi’s originally low-key condemnation of the Iraqi invasion had become stronger and explicit with its rejection of any linkage between the Kuwaiti and Palestinian issues.

Apparently, the United States, through a carrot and stick approach, played an important role in bringing about this change in Indian policy. New Delhi’s initial refusal to give the United States any advance assurance of its support if the UN were to approve military force against Iraq had created some doubts in the State Department when it began subtle diplomatic manoeuvring and lobbying to see how many nations would go along with the US if it were to succeed in pushing the authorisation of force through the Security Council in September.19 As Indian Foreign Secretary, Muchkund Dubey, later revealed, Washington had ‘made it [the policy on the Gulf crisis] virtually the test of friendship of other countries towards the US’, by saying it would be watching ‘very carefully the positions of other countries and will judge the nature of their relationship by this yardstick’.20

Despite its support for the Security Council Resolution 678, and its stronger condemnation of Iraq, India decided not to join the US-led MNFs in the Gulf. As India’s Ambassador to the United Nations, C.R. Gharekhan, explained, this decision was based on the fact that the US-led multinational force was ‘neither a UN force nor a peacekeeping one’.21 Externally, this position was in accordance with India’s status as a leader of non-aligned states and its insistence on the need for the United Nations to play a greater role in resolving the crisis. Internally, it was in line with Indian public opinion, which was overwhelmingly (according to one opinion poll, 71 per cent) in favour of India remaining neutral in the Gulf War.22

19 Though India was not a member of the UN Security Council at this stage, its public opposition to such a move could have undermined US efforts to project a broad international coalition against Iraq.
Reactions to War

Soon after the commencement of Operation Desert Storm on 17 January 1991, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar appealed to President Saddam Hussein to ‘announce the commencement of immediate withdrawal’ of troops from Kuwait unconditionally, in compliance with a dozen resolutions of the UN Security Council.23 Prime Minister Shekhar’s appeal and the statement by Foreign Minister V.C. Shukla in which he had spoken against any link between Iraq’s unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait and the Palestine issue were noted with appreciation by the US State Department. One US administration official hoped that with India’s entry to the Security Council (1 January 1991), ‘we will be able to work with India on the Council’.24 Stephen Solarz, chairman of the US House of Representatives’ Sub-Committee on Asia and the Pacific, also welcomed the Indian stand, which in the initial stages of the crisis had left room for doubt about where exactly India stood on the matter.25

Interestingly, in late January 1991 it was revealed that, since 9 January, India had allowed US military aircraft to use refuelling facilities at three airports in India en route from the Philippines to the Gulf. The Indian government defended granting the use of transit and refuelling facilities to US Air Force transport planes carrying ‘non-lethal supplies’ on the grounds that this was ‘in keeping with our friendly bilateral relations’ with the United States.26 This revelation became the cause of heated public controversy in India, which at one stage threatened the survival of the shaky minority government. According to some analysts, the American decision to refuel planes in India was dictated by political, not military needs. As Jasjit Singh pointed out:

26 Times of India, 29 January 1991. US officials reportedly met senior Foreign Ministry officials and succeeded in persuading them to grant the facility; Chandra Shekhar was informed and he did not object. See Times of India, 4 February 1991. India’s decision to allow the refuelling provoked sharp angry reaction from Iraq, see ‘Iraq Raps India’s Stand’, Hindustan Times, 30 January 1991, p. 1.
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The USAF could not have possibly needed to use Bombay as a staging post for military reasons alone, given the short flight time, about 45 minutes, from Bombay to the Gulf and the relatively small magnitude of the refuelling operation.27

It was argued that at least six alternatives were available to the US Air Force: the huge Diego Garcia base in the Indian Ocean, Dhaka, Colombo, Oman in the Gulf, Singapore, or one of the US aircraft carriers. Some commentators even claimed that the act of refuelling was meant to involve India publicly on the coalition’s side and demonstrate to the world who Washington’s allies were.28 While there may be an element of truth in this, the fact is that, from a military point of view, Bombay was the most appropriate site for refuelling operations. For example, using Bombay rather than Diego Garcia cut about 1,000 miles in flight distance, nor would it have been much less from Dhaka or Colombo. Similarly, Oman, Singapore, and aircraft carriers could also be ruled out for different reasons: Oman is near the end of the run; Singapore at the beginning; and large transport aircraft are not capable of carrier landings.29 Whatever the case, both New Delhi and Washington seemed to have underestimated the domestic reaction while signing the deal. India also permitted Australian aircraft to refuel at Bombay en route to the Gulf.

Not only that, New Delhi reportedly reached an agreement with Washington to share valuable military intelligence.30 The reliable Defense News also reported that India supplied the allied forces some intelligence on the interdiction tactics practiced by the [Soviet] MiG-23 Floggers, MiG-25 Foxbats, MiG-29 Fulcrums, Su-22 Fitters and Su-24 Fencers of the Iraqi Air Force’.31 There could be an element of truth in

28 Ibid.
29 Dhaka never offered refuelling facilities but could have been persuaded as it had already contributed forces to the anti-Iraqi coalition. In early February 1991, Sri Lanka offered the use of ports and airports to UN member states for conveying non-lethal material; see ‘Sri Lanka Supports Cause - Without Troops’, Australian, 8 February 1991, p.6.
30 Swaminathan S. A. Aiyar, ‘Weaning US from Pakistan: New Opportunities of the Gulf War’, Times of India, 4 February 1991, p.8. Aiyar refers to the exchange of defence intelligence information, ‘which would have been regarded as impossible a year earlier’.
this report because India, who along with the Soviets had trained Iraqi pilots, gunners and armoured officers, possessed the same weapon systems as Iraq. As regards motivation on India’s part, it can be argued that India had a vested interest in sharing the data about the actual combat performance of Iraqi MiG-29s vis-a-vis the American F-16s, which Pakistan has. The effectiveness of US Electronic Counter-Warfare (ECW) capabilities against Soviet-made weapons systems in the inventory of both Iraq and India could have been an additional motive for Indo-US military cooperation, as Pakistan also possesses US-supplied ECW equipment.32

The Gulf Crisis and India’s Foreign Policy Debate

The Gulf crisis acted as a catalyst in the ongoing public debate in India’s foreign policy community over the formulation of a foreign policy which would meet the challenges and the opportunities of the post-Cold War era. While some commentators paid tributes to Chandra Shekhar for his ‘bold’ and ‘pragmatic’ foreign policy decisions, others scorned his apparent ‘tilt’ towards the United States by allowing the aircraft refuelling and thus abandoning Indian foreign policy’s traditional elements of non-alignment and Third World solidarity. For the purposes of analysis, the protagonists of change can be described as ‘realists’ and those favouring the status quo as ‘traditionalists’. This turnabout in India’s approach to the Gulf crisis cannot be explained without an analysis of the economic and security imperatives of Indian foreign policy.

The ‘realists’ argued that, economically, India had as much interest as the West in the availability of reasonably priced oil imports from the Gulf region. Since an overwhelming majority of poor countries were oil importers, they stood to lose more by the cartelisation of oil. So the argument went that India would gain enormously from the end of the regime most likely to cartelise oil in the years ahead. Besides, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iran had been bigger donors to India than Iraq since the early 1980s. India’s total trade with Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia

was seven times more than with Iraq. It was also pointed out that Iraq had failed to pay India more than US\$4 billion it owed on construction contracts dating back to the early 1980s. In recent months, a repayment formula through Iraqi oil deliveries had been agreed upon, only to be wrecked by the UN trade embargo. As for remittances from the Gulf, there were usually only 20,000 Indian workers in Iraq against 1.3 million in other Gulf countries. In short, India had a direct interest, parallel to the interest of the major Western powers, in seeing that it continued to get reasonably priced oil imports from the Gulf region. Furthermore, New Delhi could also hope to develop a more mature relationship with Washington and derive substantial technological and economic advantages from it. The US decision to clear the sale of a second Cray supercomputer to India was cited as one example. And then, after a nod from Washington, on 19 January (two days after the outbreak of war), ‘the IMF approved US\$1.8 billion in credits in near-record time to tide India over a severe external payment crisis’.

From a strategic standpoint, a number of ‘realist’ political commentators pointed out that the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the Gulf War had created ‘unprecedented opportunities’ for India. One was the opportunity to wean the US away from its traditional ally, Pakistan, and thus effect a major strategic change in South Asia. Washington’s suspension of economic and military aid to Islamabad, announced on 1 October 1990, in view of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme, was cited as an indication of the US downgrading its strategic ties with Pakistan following the end of the Cold War. One analyst claimed that the upsurge of anti-US and pro-Iraq sentiment in Pakistan after the start of the Gulf War and the Pakistani military’s open support for Saddam Hussein, coupled with Iraq’s nuclear ambitions, further ruled out the possibility of Pakistan

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33 These figures are from Swaminathan S. A. Aiyar, ‘Gains of Stopping Saddam: India Needs Non-Cartelised Oil’, *Times of India*, 22 January 1991, p.8. Aiyar concluded that ‘India will have problems, perhaps serious ones, with the emerging Pax Americana. But this will be preferable to the Pax Saddam that would have resulted if the Iraqi President had succeeded in keeping Kuwait’, ibid.

acting as a ‘reliable and credible US ally against militant Islam’ in the post-Gulf War period.35

Arguing that foreign policy, in the ultimate analysis, is determined by national self-interest, another ‘realist’ analyst observed that ‘self-interest can be well served by developing a more mature, Pakistan-free relationship based on mutual economic gain and perhaps a commonality of security interests between the US and India in the region’.36 The ‘realist’ school argued that Indian policy planners must look beyond the current crisis and take steps to re-position India in its relations with the entire Middle East region. In short, a majority of strategic and foreign affairs analysts believe that in the interests of realpolitik and national self-interest, India ought to tune its foreign policy to the resonance of modern realities. The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) is seen as having served its purpose in the bipolar aligned world and is regarded as inadequate to help India meet the needs of a realigned unipolar world.37

Analysts belonging to the ‘traditionalist’ school view national interests the other way round. They hold that non-involvement in the Gulf conflict would have better served India’s interests. Such a stance would have helped maintain non-alignment as the foundation of India’s foreign policy and reaffirmed New Delhi’s position on peaceful resolution of intra-South conflicts. According to them, the exercise of weaning the US from Pakistan could even rebound on India, because Washington has no permanent friends or foes. The ‘traditionalists’ are also of the view that America has once again imposed its will upon the world, this time with cleverly manipulated UN backing and with a private agenda (i.e., ‘taking out Saddam’ and destroying Iraq as a military power) masked by a legitimate facade. They are critical of the Indian government’s decision to allow refuelling facilities to the US aircraft and India’s ‘good behaviour’ in the Security Council in return for International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans and aid. In the most vehement attack on India’s Gulf policy shift, one commentator compared the sacrifice of India’s traditional foreign policy ideals and

37 For example, see Dileep Padgaonkar, ‘Post-Gulf War Agenda: Neither Rhetoric nor Acquiescence’, *Times of India*, 4 March 1991, p.8.
friends in return for IMF loans with Judas’ betrayal of Jesus Christ for thirty pieces of silver.\(^\text{38}\) This line of thinking was challenged by several ‘realist’ commentators, who contended that acknowledging world realities and adjusting foreign policy accordingly could not be called selling out for pieces of silver.\(^\text{39}\)

Nonetheless, political opinion remained divided. Some major political parties, including Rajiv Gandhi’s Congress(l), took a stridently Third World position when they supported Cuba’s call for a cease-fire, demanding that as a member of the UN Security Council India should also ask for an immediate and unconditional cessation of hostilities.\(^\text{40}\) The political parties in India could not afford to ignore the sentiments of India’s large Muslim minority (more than 100 million) community, which was markedly pro-Iraq and anti-US. The refuelling controversy was kept alive by political parties merely to score petty debating points, but the prevailing anti-US feelings ultimately forced the Chandra Shekhar Government to withdraw refuelling permission in mid-February.\(^\text{41}\) In a game of one-upmanship, Rajiv Gandhi announced his ‘peace mission’ to Moscow and Teheran - an exercise aimed more at the domestic audience than at achieving a peaceful settlement of the Gulf conflict. Under pressure from its domestic critics and other NAM countries, the Indian government launched some belated and half-hearted peace initiatives to bring about a ceasefire, but these bore no fruit. New Delhi indicated its preference for the acceptance of Iraqi and Soviet peace proposals before the start of the ground offensive, which would have given Iraq an opportunity to save face.

Throughout the crisis, India failed to play a constructive role, and signals coming from New Delhi were confusing and contradictory. What is particularly striking is that India did virtually nothing substantive during the period August 1990 to March 1991 either to activate the NAM or to use New Delhi’s traditional access to Baghdad to engage Saddam in a meaningful dialogue. India’s belated


\(^{40}\) Washington fully understood that Gandhi’s anti-US rhetoric was meant for domestic consumption and motivated by the need to win over the support of India’s Muslim community in order to recapture political power in Delhi.

efforts to please both sides in the conflict appeared in the end to have pleased no one. The Iraqis and pro-Saddam Arabs accused India of being an American lackey for allowing the refuelling facilities to US planes. The Kuwaitis and anti-Iraq forces labelled India as a Saddam stooge, initially for failing to condemn unequivocally the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and then for stopping the refuelling.\textsuperscript{42} Unwilling to fight against Iraq alongside the United States and its coalition allies but unable also to broker peace, India, in the aftermath of the crisis, found itself sidelined on the international scene. It was feared that India was likely to get no more than crumbs out of the post-War reconstruction pie in Kuwait.

\textit{Indian Perceptions of the United Nations' Role, the New World Order, and Collective Security}

As regards the role of the United Nations and the New World Order, there is a wide divergence of perception between Canberra (and the West) and New Delhi. This is due in great measure to the divergent interests of a developing Third World country, which also happens to be a leader of the Non-Aligned Movement, and those of a developed country which identifies its interests broadly with the West. Many in Australia (and the West) have thought that because the UN has been effective in the Gulf, it is now on the way to performing (or being allowed to perform) according to its Charter: to provide peace and security through collective security.\textsuperscript{43} But in India, the role of the United Nations has come under strong criticism. To many Indian analysts - and here there seems to be broad agreement between 'realists' and 'traditionalists' - the Gulf crisis has signalled the marginalisation of the United Nations. As one commentator observed, 'a world body no longer able to mediate conflicts between countries or groups of countries effectively enough to avert a confrontation between them is undermining its \textit{raison d'être}'.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{42} 'India: Losing Out', \textit{India Today}, 15 April 1991, p.35.

\textsuperscript{43} For a typical Australian (or Western) viewpoint on the role of the UN in the post-Cold War era, see P.P. McGuinness, 'Reappraising our United Nations', \textit{Australian}, 12 February 1991, p.11. Also see the Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke's and Foreign Minister Gareth Evans' speeches in Parliament on 21 January 1991 in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, \textit{Backgrounder}, Vol.1, No.34, 8 February 1991, pp.3-8.

\textsuperscript{44} A. S. Abraham, 'Gulf War and the UN', \textit{Times of India}, 29 January 1991, p. 8.
Some critics saw the United States as observing the letter of the UN resolutions by steadily building up a global, UN-approved consensus, but violating their spirit by abandoning economic sanctions before giving them enough time to work, by deploying forces, and then by giving Iraq an ultimatum of a few weeks and widening its war objectives. They argued that the Security Council should have pinned the sheriff’s badge on the UN Secretary General, and not on George Bush, to hunt the Persian Gulf’s ‘most wanted man’, Saddam Hussein. A majority of Indian analysts and opinion makers thought, and this view was shared by the government, that the use of force was not entirely in consonance with Chapter 7 of the UN Charter. New Delhi refused to join the US-led MNFs on the grounds that they did not come under the control of the United Nations. The haste with which the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia deployed their forces in the Gulf was seen as ‘likely to erode consensus and generate its own paradigm of insecurity and vulnerabilities seen in the context of past military interventions by the great powers’. To many Indians, US war aims went well beyond Security Council Resolution 678, and the destruction of Iraq was seen as probably a more important motive than the liberation of Kuwait.

While agreeing that the UN Charter has even greater relevance in the changing landscape, Indian strategists emphasise the need for strengthening the United Nations and multilateral/bilateral political arrangements to manage peace and stability in an increasingly interdependent and multipolar world. In particular, India would like the UN structure, with its Security Council and General Assembly, to be reformed and strengthened to increase its effectiveness. While Western countries have been touting the united Germany and the economic giant, Japan - both rich states from the North - as new permanent members of the Security Council, Third World countries like India would like the Council’s membership to be broadened to

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47 Indian Foreign Minister Shukla expressed concern that the US-led MNFs' operations against Iraq had gone beyond the mandate of the Security Council resolution. See Statesman, 15 February 1991.
include some developing countries. However, the smaller states of South Asia might oppose such a move because this would further reduce the prospects of collective security (if one or more of the permanent members were party to a conflict and exercised their veto). They would like to do away with veto and put all resolutions to a vote in the General Assembly.

India claims to have always stood by the concept of collective security. This claim could be put to the test if a crisis were to erupt in South Asia, as India at the same time has always insisted on intra-regional resolution of disputes and on keeping the region free from the involvement of external powers. One could envisage a scenario in which Pakistan or Sri Lanka or Bangladesh was subjected to attack by its powerful neighbour, India - a situation that could give rise to calls for collective security. As the Gulf crisis demonstrated, Iraq's geography and economic situation were ideal for imposing sanctions and building a broad coalition of forces against it. But, given its geographical location and basic sufficiency in foodstuffs, it is doubtful if a similar framework of sanctions and forces could be put together against India. It should also be remembered that a critical factor bringing antagonistic countries like the United States and Syria together was the 'oil factor', on which the world economy is dependent. The bulk of the security problems the world is likely to face in the future will be region-specific and, unlike the Gulf crisis, many of these would not have an impact on the security and prosperity of states beyond the immediate region. Besides, it is obvious that though India regards Australia as a legitimate Indian Ocean power and a friendly state whose influence contributes to regional stability, it would not look favourably on Australia's active role in areas in India's vicinity or places close to what it considers its sphere of influence (e.g., the northern Indian Ocean region and Sri Lanka).

Finally, the feeling in the Indian foreign policy community seems to be that the collapse of the Soviet camp has removed a necessary restraining factor and that the world has moved into a unipolar era preceding a truly multipolar one. To many Indians, the US motive for going to war was not so much creating a New World

49 There is a broad consensus among Indian analysts that the Gulf crisis was a 'special case' and one which is unlikely to be repeated elsewhere in the world.
Order as defending an old one: to use First World intervention to secure Third World oil. And that touches a raw nerve in developing countries with a long history of anti-colonial struggle and big-power intervention. In spite of an improvement in Indo-US relations, India is still far from agreement with the US world view. Differences remain over India’s nuclear programme, development of long-range ballistic missiles, and economic liberalisation. That India’s ruling elite is finding it difficult to readjust to the changing realities of the global balance of power was evident from a front-page editorial in the Times of India, one day after the allied attack on Iraq. Headed ‘Pax Americana’, it asserted that:

Operation Desert Storm has underscored the Western grip over the United Nations and shredded to bits whatever remained of non-alignment, of the North-South dialogue, and not the least, of India’s claim that it could and did influence the course of post-colonial history ... Pax Americana can neither afflict nor comfort the afflicted.50

Another writer suggested despairingly that the most basic issue was ‘whether the West’s writ will hold unrestrained sway over the whole world or a countervailing force can exist at all’. He concluded that:

[t]he West’s dominance is already so great that, leave alone radical change, even the search for a ‘Third Way’ - a relatively autonomous, endogenous, self-reliant form of development that does not slavishly follow the Western or NIC model - has become extremely difficult. With a Western victory over Iraq, it will become altogether impossible.51

One commentator lamented the end of the Cold War because ‘to the non-aligned countries, bipolarity was not an unmixed curse [as] they were able to play one off against the other, had much room for manoeuvre and their support was avidly sought by both contenders’.52 In short, what India’s elite seems to be objecting to is not so much the

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destruction of Iraq by the world’s sole superpower as the possibility that the world is going to be re-made in the West’s image. The impotence of the Non-Aligned Movement in the changed global strategic environment and the lack of a countervailing force to the ‘Pax Americana’ are seen as dangerous developments by many in India.53

At the same time, Indian defence planners are pessimistic about the control of arms races in South Asia and the Middle East following the end of the Gulf War, particularly about the introduction of sophisticated weapons systems such as ballistic missiles and nuclear weapons. To many Indian analysts, the Gulf War has once again demonstrated the vulnerability of Third World countries when pitted against industrialised Western powers. This, in turn, is likely to strengthen the conviction in Third World countries of the need to acquire sophisticated, technologically superior weaponry, thus rekindling new arms races. In a sense, the allied victory over Iraq may have undermined India’s security doctrine and planning, based on relatively technologically backward weapons systems54, and provided an incentive for military technological development, particularly in the field of ballistic missiles.55 Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, director of India’s guided missile development programme, was quoted as saying that newly developed Indian missiles of all classes would play a key role in India’s security because ‘[t]he Gulf War proved the cost-effective utility of missile systems, which caused considerable damage to vital strategic installations’.56

Such an analysis goes a long way towards explaining the low-key, cautious, and sometimes contradictory response of India to the Gulf crisis - in sharp contrast to Australia’s high-profile and consistent stance. It can be surmised that in the initial stages New Delhi was not comfortable with the deployment of Western (including Australian)

54 One analyst noted with concern that ‘like Iraq, India’s potential for air combat and defence is based largely on Soviet equipment’; see Dilip Mukerjee, ‘India’s Defence Needs: Some Pointers from Gulf War’, Times of India, 8 March 1991, p.8.
forces in the Persian Gulf. But after some ‘arm twisting’ by the US and a change of regime in New Delhi - and as more governments joined the anti-Iraqi coalition - India reassessed its policy sometime in November-December 1990, made a U-turn, and eventually allowed US and Australian aircraft to refuel at facilities in India. There is no evidence of any consultations between New Delhi and Canberra at any stage of the conflict apart from the usual diplomatic exchanges. Australia’s decision to send warships to the Gulf did not surprise Indian policy makers, though one Indian analyst complained that Australia did not do anything to help South and Southeast Asian countries repatriate their workers from the Middle East. The decision to allow Australian aircraft refuelling facilities was made in the ‘spirit of friendly relations’ between Canberra and New Delhi.57 A calculation of costs and benefits revealed that the value of the Saddam regime to India was much less than was popularly believed. At the same time, India’s domestic political instability, large and vocal Muslim population, and economic crisis forced New Delhi to attempt to find some middle ground. India’s failure to play a more substantial role in the Gulf crisis can be attributed to its leadership’s preoccupation with the domestic situation, which made it difficult to focus on the crisis to assess its long-term impact and minimise its deleterious effects.

Whatever the final outcome of the foreign policy debate in India, the fact remains that the Gulf crisis called into question the basic premises and approaches underlying Indian foreign policy: the NAM, Third World solidarity, North-South dialogue, New International Economic Order, and so on. This was also the first time that the Indian government did not resort to any knee-jerk anti-Americanism. New Delhi appeared to have acknowledged a distinction between US interventions in the Caribbean and Central America, as well as India’s own forays into Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and Iraq’s annexation of a neighbour.58 Besides, given US economic problems, the growing economic strength of Germany and Japan, and the assertiveness of America’s allies, the Indian government ‘does not fear the emergence of an American world policeman’.59 Surprisingly, senior government officials do not share the concerns and apprehensions of Indian

57 Interviews with an Indian diplomat and a military analyst, Canberra, March 1991.
59 ibid.
strategists and academics who ‘tend to ignore the factors that mitigate against the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by an unchallenged United States’. For example, it is argued that the United States could not have sustained a military operation of the scale and duration of the Gulf War without the financial backing of the oil-rich Gulf states, Japan, and the West Europeans. In private conversations and interviews, Indians appear confident of being able to ‘manage successfully’ India’s relations with the West in an era of superpower detente. Indications are that the hard realities of economy and security will lead India to further improve its relations with the West. And this could be a good development from the viewpoint of Australian security and economic interests.

Pakistan and Bangladesh: To Join or Not to Join

As noted earlier, in contrast with India’s initial ambivalence, Baghdad’s invasion of Kuwait was met with strong condemnation in India’s neighbouring Islamic states of Pakistan and Bangladesh. Pakistan was the first South Asian Islamic country to dispatch troops to Saudi Arabia, followed by Bangladesh. For both governments, which faced long-term enemy India across hostile borders, the move was strategically appealing. Firstly, they saw the UN stand as worth endorsing as it coincided with their own self-interest. As the Pakistani Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, pointed out it was not in his country’s interest to flout the United Nations because the UN had consistently supported the Pakistani position on its dispute with India over Kashmir. Another reason advanced in support of the presence of Pakistani troops in the Gulf was Saudi Arabia’s strong sympathy and support for Pakistan during the 1965 and 1971 wars with India. In sharp contrast, Iraq had been cool on all Islamic and other issues of direct concern to Pakistan. In addition, the Pakistani military also saw the Gulf crisis as an opportunity to further national interests, just as it had used the Afghan War. Economically, both Islamic states hoped to cash in on their support once the Gulf crisis was over. However, Islamabad as well as Dhaka had seriously underestimated

60 Private conversations with government officials.
61 ibid.
the widespread opposition to the war within their countries. As the scales tipped towards war, much of Pakistan's and Bangladesh's overwhelming Muslim majority saw Saddam as a hero because of his stand against America and Israel. In the weeks preceding the war, thousands of Pakistanis and Bangladeshis - mostly right-wing fundamentalist Islamic Jamaitis - signed up to fight for Saddam Hussein, to the embarrassment of their governments.

To make matters worse, the Gulf crisis coincided with the US announcement on 1 October 1990 of suspension of US$573 million in economic and military aid to Pakistan in view of Islamabad's continuing efforts to develop nuclear weapons. This move was interpreted in Pakistan as an American/Israeli attempt to block the Muslim world's access to a nuclear weapons capability. As a result, the critics of the Pakistani government's pro-US Gulf policy seized upon this opportunity to call for the withdrawal of the 11,000-strong Pakistani contingent from Saudi Arabia and advocated a neutral position on the crisis. Even Pakistan Army Chief, General Mirza Aslam Beg, who had earlier supported the troop deployment decision, made a turnabout and voiced his opposition to any allied effort to destroy Iraq's military potential. To express its displeasure over the suspension of US aid, Pakistan now favoured the replacement of US forces in Saudi Arabia with a pan-Islamic force. Some hawks in the military argued that 'the country should test an atomic bomb to send a "hands off Pakistan" signal' to Washington.

The start of the war in mid-January 1991 witnessed the most intense outpouring of public sentiment in favour of Iraq and massive anti-American demonstrations throughout Pakistan, putting pressure on the government to reduce its support for the US-led coalition. In a broadcast to the nation on 20 January 1991, Prime Minister, Nawaz Sharif, called for an end to 'indiscriminate' bombing of Iraq as well as

64 In December 1990, the Pakistani government had increased the number of Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia from 5,000 to 11,000.
the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Realising that Islamic fervour ignited by the Gulf conflict might be exploited by his political opponents, Prime Minister Sharif embarked on a ‘peace mission’ to six Muslim capitals - Tehran, Ankara, Damascus, Amman, Cairo and Riyadh - on 22 January, seeking a ceasefire. However, Sharif’s ‘peace mission’, only to the countries of the anti-Iraqi coalition, failed to distance him from the allies in the eyes of many Pakistanis.

The war had apparently widened the rift between the Prime Minister, who generally supported the Saudi Arabian and allied view on Iraq, and the Pakistani military, which was opposed to the allied attack on Iraq. On 28 January, General Mirza Aslam Beg publicly said that the Gulf War was part of a ‘Zionist’ strategy and added that ‘the United Nations had allowed the allied forces to liberate Kuwait and not to destroy Iraq economically and politically’. A few days later, General Beg, bristling with hostility towards the Americans, again questioned the US war objectives when he said:

The Western powers provoked the Iraqi intervention in Kuwait, did not give peace a chance, and have now unleashed a war whose objectives are no longer the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait but the destruction of Iraq’s economic and military strength and its nuclear installations.

As the war intensified, the Army Chief made strong statements of sympathy for Saddam Hussein, called him a ‘natural ally’ and questioned the earlier decision to send troops to Saudi Arabia to join the anti-Iraq coalition.

Interestingly, the political imperative to capitalise on the prevailing anti-US sentiment led the opposition Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) of former Prime Minister, Benazir Bhutto, to join hands

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72 So extreme was the anti-American rhetoric that after the report of the destruction on Iraq’s nuclear installations, the US Information Service in Lahore had felt the need to issue an official denial that Pakistan’s nuclear sites were next. ibid.; see also Time, 18 February 1991, pp.26-27.
with her traditional arch-enemies, the religious right-wing parties and the military, which were responsible for her ouster a few days after the Gulf crisis erupted. It may be recalled here that one of the reasons for Bhutto’s dismissal was her reluctance to take a tough stand vis-à-vis Iraq, which was not to the liking of the Pakistani military.)

Faced with continuing anti-US demonstrations all over Pakistan and an upsurge of protests against coalition bombing of Iraqi targets, Prime Minister Sharif adopted a dual posture of supporting the UN Security Council resolutions on the liberation of Kuwait while at the same time grieving over the massacre of Muslims in the war zone. It was evident that the Pakistan government’s Gulf policy was out of tune with the increasingly volatile emotions of the majority of Pakistanis, but Islamabad’s belated efforts to adopt a dual posture in order to please both sides of the conflict appeared to have backfired.

The Gulf War became a very divisive issue in the military-dominated regimes of Pakistan and Bangladesh and threatened to bring down the Islamic Democratic Alliance government of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. These countries’ initial unconditional support for the US-led MNFs soon evaporated once their governments faced an Islamic backlash and the unexpected sympathy for Hussein and the Palestinian cause. The opposition parties in Islamabad and Dhaka criticised their countries’ military involvement in the Gulf and called for the withdrawal of both US and Iraqi troops. In Pakistan’s case, matters were made worse by the suspension of US aid, which prompted the Pakistan army to take a 180-degree turn on the Gulf crisis. This suspension of aid was interpreted as an indication of the United States’ downgrading of its relations with Pakistan in the post-Cold War period, and upgrading of relations with India, a country with far greater actual and potential influence in the South Asian region.

It would seem that in the initial stages of the crisis, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Australia took a more or less identical stand and were quick to dispatch forces to the Gulf. Australia’s Foreign Minister,

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73 The PPP took a position critical of the US - for a while - but Benazir Bhutto was more moderate in her comments in the United States.
75 It is worth noting that the anti-US line disappeared quickly after the war and, in a damage-limitation exercise, General Beg visited his troops in Saudi Arabia.
Gareth Evans, happened to be on an official visit to Pakistan when the Gulf crisis erupted, and both sides strongly condemned Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. However, the issue of troop deployment did not figure in Senator Evans’ talks with his Pakistani counterpart. After the start of the war, Islamabad took the view that the allied attack on Iraq exceeded its United Nations mandate. There was not much rejoicing that an American-led war machine was hammering a tyrannical aggressor. One commentator remarked that the United Nations had been reduced to ‘an outpost of the US State Department’.

There was, indeed, apprehension in Pakistan that an unambiguous victory for the United States would usher in an age of unbridled American power in which Washington would enforce its economic and strategic policies world-wide. Such a development was seen as detrimental to Muslim interests, particularly those of Pakistan, given US concerns over Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme and the recent pro-India tilt in Washington’s South Asia policy.

In the small states of South Asia, such as Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan, anxious about preserving their independence from an overbearing India, the story was different. There was more support for the allied action as they saw in collective security a guarantee for their own sovereignty and security. Nepal denounced the aggressor and called for collective action against Iraq, while Sri Lanka offered non-military support to the United States and allied forces. The ‘small state syndrome’ brought about an unequivocal condemnation of Iraqi aggression from the capitals of India’s smaller neighbours.

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CHAPTER 3
SOUTHEAST ASIA

Southeast Asia is an area of strategic and geopolitical importance to Australia and, to some extent, a problem area as far as policy making is concerned. The region is a vital link for sea and air transit between the Indian and Pacific oceans. It is a volatile region characterised by fluctuating relationships and the pervasive involvement of external powers. Southeast Asia has many potential sources of regional tensions, such as Sino-Vietnamese disputes over the South China Sea islets, the Malaysia-Philippines dispute over Sabah, and the islands of the South China Sea, and a satisfactory solution to the Cambodian problem is yet to be worked out. As well, the region is divided into two distinct camps: the six pro-Western ASEAN states and the three socialist states of Indochina. The region has also witnessed remarkable economic growth since the early eighties and four of the Newly Industrialising Countries (Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia) as well as the small oil-rich state of Brunei are situated there. According to *Australia's Regional Security*, the ministerial statement of December 1989, Canberra is committed to pursuing the policy of ‘comprehensive engagement’ with Southeast Asia, which is also an area of ‘broader strategic interest’ to Australia. Therefore, the response of Southeast Asian countries to Australian involvement in the Gulf crisis should be a matter of vital concern to Australian foreign and defence policy planners.

Of all Southeast Asian states, Indonesia is the largest and most populous state in the region. Although more than 80 per cent of Indonesians profess their faith in Islam, the state is a secular one. In contrast, Islam is the official religion in Malaysia. Indonesia and Malaysia together are home to about 180 million Muslims. Both share membership of the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) and the Non-Aligned Movement with Iraq and Kuwait. In addition, much like Iraq and Kuwait, Indonesia is a member of the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). Not surprisingly, then, these ties and domestic political compulsions underlay the ambiguous, and at times contradictory, response of these two states to the Gulf crisis.
Indonesia: Wait and Watch Policy

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait took Indonesia by surprise. Indonesia had maintained very cordial diplomatic and trade relations with both Kuwait and Iraq. The Gulf crisis put the Indonesians in a dilemma. It was some time before Jakarta reacted to the situation, and then it reacted in a manner which raised several eyebrows in and around the region. On 3 August 1990, a Foreign Ministry spokesman merely expressed ‘concern’ but did not condemn Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait. Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, was also seen as reluctant to condemn outright the Iraqi attack. He seemed opposed to the build-up of foreign forces in the Persian Gulf and made his preference for an Arab solution to an Arab problem without external interference very clear.1 Jakarta turned down a request from Saudi Arabia to send a military force to the Persian Gulf to shore up anti-Iraq coalition defences. President Suharto reportedly told a personal envoy of the Saudi King Fahd that he was not empowered by the constitution to send troops to fight overseas. However, this position was later modified by the Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, who said Indonesia could ‘only send troops under the United Nations flag as part of a peace-keeping operation’.2

Indonesia’s failure to take a clear-cut stand against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait caused some concern in the region. It prompted Singapore’s First Deputy Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, to compare Singapore’s strategic position with that of Kuwait. Goh said that Singapore could conceivably find itself one day in the same position as Kuwait.3 Jakarta’s delayed and ambiguous, or rather pro-Iraqi stance, was attributed by some analysts to Indonesia’s known ambivalence on questions of sovereignty and preference for the principle of non-interference in view of its own unresolved issues of territory and sovereignty in East Timor and Irian Jaya.4 To some, Jakarta apparently wanted to avoid a comparison with its own invasion and annexation of Portuguese East Timor in 1975-76. The other reason could be Indonesia’s known sympathy for the Palestinian demand for a

3 ibid.
4 ibid.
homeland. Public opinion in Indonesia strongly favoured a linkage between the Kuwaiti and the Palestinian problems and sympathised with the Iraqis, who were seen as standing up to the might of the strongest military superpower on earth.

Editorials and commentaries in the Indonesian press were critical of the presence of Western forces in the Gulf. Some sections of the ruling elite and Muslim intelligentsia demanded a stronger condemnation of the US troop deployment in the Middle East and argued that Indonesia’s national interests were better served by standing up to what they saw as American ‘hegemonic’ policies. A former Foreign Minister, Roeslan Abdulgani, was quoted as saying that ‘[w]e don’t agree to Iraq’s annexation of Kuwait, but the US presence in Saudi Arabia is not to be tolerated either’.5 Juwono Sudharsono, an international relations expert at the University of Indonesia, explained the reasons for Indonesians’ antipathy towards the involvement of external powers in the Gulf crisis in these terms: ‘It has a lot to do with our past experience, and ... the involvement of the big powers in our own affairs. There is the same feeling that our resources are also being exploited by the big powers’.6

However, it did not take long for policy makers in Jakarta to realise that Indonesia’s ambivalent position on the Gulf crisis had the potential to cause friction in relations with its Southeast Asian neighbours and was not conducive to the maintenance of friendly relations with the West. Keeping close friendly relations with the United States has been a cornerstone of Indonesian foreign policy. Its declaratory policy notwithstanding, Jakarta has tacitly supported the presence of foreign forces in its immediate neighbourhood. The Indonesian military would rather see the continuation of US bases in the Philippines as a regional security umbrella. Once it became clear that an overwhelming majority of nations, and the United Nations, were determined to see an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, Indonesia threw its lot behind the anti-Iraqi coalition. In his end-of-year statement on 3 January 1991, Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, spelt out the government’s view that Kuwait had been ‘annexed’ by Iraq, and that this set a dangerous precedent for developing countries.

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6 ibid.
Alatas confirmed Indonesia’s unequivocal backing for the UN resolution demanding Iraq’s withdrawal.7 By doing this, Jakarta also sought to allay the fears of its small neighbours, like Singapore or Brunei, regarding Indonesia’s intentions. Benny Murdani, the Indonesian Defence Minister, publicly denied Indonesia had any desire to swallow up its small neighbours.8 Nonetheless, Indonesia remained a reluctant supporter of Security Council Resolution 678 on the use of force if Iraq did not withdraw by 15 January 1991. In the months preceding the war, senior officials continued to appear ambivalent and reiterated that they did not think that force was the best way to solve the problem.

The outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf after the expiry of the UN deadline of 15 January once again highlighted the complexities of the Indonesian position on the Gulf crisis. While supporting the demand for an end to the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, Jakarta could not afford to see itself as a party to the destruction and humiliation of a fellow Islamic Third World state. Understandably then, the Indonesian government deplored the failure of the efforts to seek a peaceful settlement of the crisis and expressed ‘deep concern’ over the start of the war.9 Newspapers in Indonesia agreed in general that the war was inevitable, but hoped it would be short. The English-language jakarta Post predicted the war would last no more than two weeks, but warned that ‘the entire political context of the Gulf War would be drastically changed’ if Iraq were allowed to strike back and attack Israel.10 But the nationalist Merdeka daily carried a virulently anti-US editorial on 18 January, saying ‘the heart of every dignified human being is bound to be very wounded by the brutal and inhuman action’ of the United States, Britain and their allies. There was little sympathy for the oil-rich Gulf states, and dismay at what was seen by many as America’s heavy-handed response.11 Professor Juwono Sudarsono of the University of Indonesia summed up the popular sentiment in his country after the start of the war: ‘It’s like a rich man beating a thief in

the midst of poor people. They may blame the thief but the poor people mostly do not like the rich man’. In late February, Jakarta appeared concerned by the US intransigence (shown by US refusal to accept Iraqi and Soviet peace proposals) and voiced its opposition to the launching of the ground war against Iraq. Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, repeatedly reminded the United States and its allies that the purpose of the UN resolutions was Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait, and not the destruction of Iraq.

The Indonesian government chose not to comment publicly on the Australian decision to join the US-led MNFs in the Persian Gulf. Interestingly, however, in response to another question as to whether Australia’s action had been positively perceived in Asian capitals, the Indonesian Foreign Ministry replied that it was positively perceived in some Asian countries, but ‘at the same time there were also strong reactions towards the participation of Australia in the MNFs by certain Asian countries’, without naming these countries. One can also infer from Indonesia’s initial reaction that Jakarta did not look favourably on Canberra’s decision in this respect, particularly the manner in which it was made. It may be recalled here that the past few years had seen the process of multilateral and bilateral defence cooperation and military exchanges between Australia and ASEAN states gaining momentum. In March 1990, Indonesia and Australia agreed to increase existing military exchanges and explore new areas of cooperation. According to one analyst, Canberra’s prompt dispatch of warships to the Gulf was seemingly in violation of the unilateral commitment made by Australia to consult and inform its Southeast Asian neighbours regarding all military decisions. Even at the later stage, when Indonesia shed its earlier inhibitions and came out in support of

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17 According to Professor Desmond Ball, Head of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, ANU, the Hawke Government made an informal commitment to the effect that ‘no country would make a major military deployment decision without consulting its neighbours’ at a Foreign Ministers’ Conference in 1989. See Greg Austin, ‘Gulf Role Not in Our Interests: Ball’, Sydney Morning Herald, 1 February 1991, p.2.
all UN Security Council resolutions, Jakarta’s response to Canberra’s involvement in the Gulf crisis can, at best, be described as one of lukewarm support for the Australian action. As the director of the Jakarta-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Jusuf Wanandi, put it, Indonesia ‘did not have any problem with’ Australia’s role in the Gulf.\(^18\) Evidently, given the delicate nature of the relationship between Jakarta and Canberra, Australia seemed to have done nothing to persuade Indonesia either to take a tough stand vis-à-vis Iraq to allay the fears of its smaller neighbours or to accept the Saudi King’s request to join the US-led MNFs in the Gulf.\(^19\) However, after the start of the war, the Australian government dispatched the Secretary of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Richard Woolcott, to Jakarta on 16 February 1991 to hold discussions with the Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, and to apprise him of the Australian position on the Gulf War.

Indonesia particularly resented the fact that it was largely ignored in the efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the conflict at any stage despite its credentials as an Islamic state, an oil producer, and a member of various Third World groupings, such as the NAM.\(^20\) The predominant feeling in Indonesia was that the US war aims went well beyond Security Council Resolution 678. Some commentators objected to the allied attack on Iraq because the UN had only given the coalition a mandate to force Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait, not to attack Iraq.\(^21\)

Australia and Indonesia also differ a great deal in their perceptions of the New World Order and the role of the United Nations. Like other Third World states, Indonesia is concerned about the impact of the Gulf War on regional and global security structures.

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\(^{19}\) According to the Indonesian Embassy, ‘there was not any particular discussion conducted by [Canberra and Jakarta] during the Gulf crisis’. Personal communication, 9 April 1991, p. 1. Canberra’s failure to hold discussions with Jakarta or to involve the latter in the efforts to seek a peaceful solution contrasted sharply with the US which reportedly held ‘periodic discussions’ with the Indonesian government on the Gulf crisis. See Far Eastern Economic Review, 24 January 1991, pp.10-13.

\(^{20}\) ibid.

\(^{21}\) According to the Indonesian government, the wording ‘all necessary means’ used in the Operative Paragraph 2 of Resolution 678 was ‘too broad and too loose’ and Indonesia could not accept the destruction of either Kuwait or Iraq. Personal communication with the author, 9 April 1991, p.1.
The emergence of a unipolar world with the United States as the unchallenged superpower makes Indonesia cautious and wary of its American ally. Indonesia favours the creation of a New World Order that takes into account the legitimate interests of all states, not only those of the big and powerful. The role of the United Nations during the Gulf crisis, from Jakarta’s viewpoint, ‘was not adequate as the deed and the action of the United Nations were overwhelmingly influenced by the will of the great powers’.

Malaysia: Frets and Fumes

Unlike Indonesia, Malaysia was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council when the Gulf crisis erupted and had neither the time nor the option to decide on which side of the fence to sit. Malaysia co-sponsored the UN Security Council resolution condemning the Iraqi invasion. A Malaysian Foreign Ministry statement on 3 August 1990 said Malaysia was ‘deeply distressed over the use of force and invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi forces’. Malaysia’s initial support was in line with its foreign policy stance of following the Saudi Arabian lead on matters affecting the Middle East. But the fear of an outbreak of hostilities in the Middle East and the rabid anti-Iraq rhetoric made the Malaysians cautious of extending full support to the United States policy initiatives.

Thus, it soon became obvious that Kuala Lumpur’s support was far from unqualified. Malaysia was critical of the unilateral US naval blockade against Iraq, saying Washington should have first waited to see if the United Nations trade embargo worked. The Malaysian Ambassador to the United Nations also made it clear that any military action should be authorised by the UN and that the build-up in the Gulf was not a UN operation. Malaysia, along with China and the Soviet Union, applied brakes on the Bush Administration’s ambitions to sanction the use of force in enforcing an effective blockade of Iraq. They succeeded in toning down the original US draft

22 Personal communication, 9 April 1991, p.2 (emphasis added).
23 Ibid.
of the resolution and called for minimum use of force in implementing the UN trade embargo on Iraq. When Security Council Resolution 665 was adopted on 6 August 1990, authorising the use of military action to enforce the embargo on Iraq, Malaysia’s Ambassador to the United Nations, Datuk Razali Ismail, emphasised that this did not mean ‘an unbridled use of force’.26 He said he was glad that ‘certain members of the Security Council, particularly some permanent members [i.e., China and the Soviet Union] made it crystal clear that they were not going into the operations beyond very strict and well-delineated parameters’.27

In mid-August, the Saudi monarch dispatched a personal envoy to Kuala Lumpur to ask for Malaysian troop deployment in the Saudi Kingdom to counter an Iraqi threat. The Saudi request had put Malaysia in a diplomatic quandary. On the one hand, Malaysia was committed to adhere only to UN-backed actions. On the other hand, the ties of Islamic brotherhood and OIC membership complicated the decision-making. Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Mahathir Mohamad, took one week to consider the implications. Finally, on 24 August 1990, he politely turned down Saudi Arabia’s request for military assistance unless there was an ‘imminent danger’ to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. Mahathir also said that he understood the pressures that forced the Saudi government to look to the US for help. However, he regretted the fact that the Saudis ‘had to ask for assistance from a non-Islamic country ... [since] the UN could not move fast enough because it had to get the approval of member countries’.28 The Prime Minister believed that the United Nations should have come to the defence of Saudi Arabia. He gave an assurance, however, that Malaysia was prepared to send troops under a UN-sponsored peace-keeping mission.29 It was obvious that Malaysia wanted the UN to be in control of the situation and play a central role in seeking a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis.

By November 1990, there were signs that the US was becoming dissatisfied with the Malaysian stand on the Gulf crisis. Washington wanted to make sure that Kuala Lumpur would support the 28 November Security Council resolution authorising use of force
if Iraq failed to withdraw by a stipulated deadline. The Malaysian position, which was to steer away from taking a clear position in the Gulf crisis, became more compliant to the US position after President George Bush telephoned Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad. Soon after, Foreign Minister, Dato Abu Hassan Omar, flew to Los Angeles for an airport meeting with the US Secretary of State, James Baker, in late November. Then Dato Abu Hassan flew to New York and voted with the United States on UN Security Council Resolution 678. This shift in Malaysian policy was seen by some commentators as ‘a prelude to a formal defence arrangement between Malaysia and the United States’. It was reported that Washington had blandished the carrot of special security arrangements in order to interest Malaysia in an agreement like the one it signed in Tokyo in November with the then Singapore Prime Minister, Lee Kuan Yew. Whatever the case, Kuala Lumpur ceased insisting that the Palestine problem be discussed in tandem with the Gulf problem.

Nevertheless, the declaratory policy continued to distance Malaysia from the US strategic objectives in the Middle East. This policy was in tune with the prevailing popular sentiment of the dominant Muslim Malays, which was stridently anti-American. Kuala Lumpur hoped that war in the Middle East would somehow be averted by some last minute peace formula. The possibility of averting war was the subject of discussions between Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad and Chinese Premier Li Peng when the latter visited Kuala Lumpur in December 1990.

The start of the allied attack on Iraq after the deadline of 15 January 1991 had been passed once again found Prime Minister Mohamad trying to walk the line between support for the UN-backed action and wishing the war would end soon. A Foreign Ministry statement said that the Malaysian government remained committed to its stand on the Gulf conflict, expressed ‘deep sorrow’ over the outbreak of war and appealed to Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait ‘to avoid a catastrophe which will benefit no one’. Malaysia, where Islam is more directly linked with the Middle East than is the case in Indonesia, proved to be a fertile ground for the mushrooming of

31 ibid.
various Islamic fundamentalist groups, which voiced strong opposition to the war, depicting it as a struggle between East and West and a fight between Israel and Palestine. Muslim militants sought to portray the United States as anti-Islam and openly praised Iraqi President Hussein for his courage. It became increasingly evident that the Malaysian government’s support for the US-initiated move to resort to force had not gone down well with vast segments of the Malay Muslim population. According to one opinion poll, about 95 per cent of Malays were against ‘what the United States [was] doing in the Gulf War’. The opposition Parti Islam (Pas) led much of the criticism of the government’s backing for the UN initiatives. Its leadership even launched a campaign to recruit male volunteers to go to the Middle East for what it called humanitarian, non-combat roles in aid of Iraq in the Gulf conflict. Anwar Ibrahim, the Malaysian Education Minister, conceded that the Malaysian position in support of UN resolutions against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was ‘very unpopular among the Muslims’.

Political commentators in Malaysia were unanimous in their belief that the United States had demonstrated double standards by seeking to crush Iraq for its occupation of Kuwait but failing to show equal determination to force Israel to withdraw from occupied Arab lands and settle the Palestinian conflict in compliance with UN resolutions. Noordin Sopiee, director general of the Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Kuala Lumpur, said that to many Asian Muslims, the war ‘looks like a Muslim versus anti-Muslim conflict despite the fact that Iraq is not the epitome of Islam and attacked Kuwait, another Muslim country’. The media coverage of the conflict was also biased. While the Malay-language press was

33 Malaysia has long been a strong supporter of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, which maintains a diplomatic mission in Kuala Lumpur.
34 Reactions in Malaysia were polarised by race and religion. The pro-Saddam and politically dominant Malay Muslims make up half of the total population of 17.4 million. Malaysia’s non-Muslim population of ethnic Chinese and Indians was overwhelmingly in support of the allied attack on Iraq. ‘Mahathir under “Severe Criticism” for Gulf Stand’, FBIS-EAS, 30 January 1991, p.27.
35 ibid.
giving prominence to reported Iraqi ‘victories’, English-language newspapers carried the Western version of the allied bombing offensive. One Malaysian analyst observed that Malaya Muslims did not look at the problem in isolation, ‘but in terms of the history of Muslim humiliation at the hands of the West, and Western intervention in the Middle East and the Third World’. Apparently, the presence of some Muslim troops in the alliance failed to carry any weight with many Asian Muslims. Faced with growing domestic political pressures, Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, told a news conference on 23 January 1991 that his Government had voted in the UN Security Council for Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait, not for Iraq’s destruction. In late February, he criticised the United States for rejecting Iraq’s peace overtures and concluded that Washington ‘had no desire for peace’.

The Malaysian government, like its Indonesian counterpart, did not comment publicly on the Australian decision to join the US-led MNFs soon after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The Malaysian Minister for Primary Resources, Goh Cheng Teik, merely said that ‘Malaysia understood Australia’s involvement in the Gulf’. This could be interpreted to mean that, given Australia’s closer relations with the Western alliance, Kuala Lumpur understood the action Canberra took. However, one can argue, on the basis of Malaysian public policy responses to the Western build-up in early August, that Kuala Lumpur would not have approved of the manner in which the United States, later joined by Britain and Australia, embarked upon the military build-up in the Gulf because this action lacked UN sanction. The Malaysian Ambassador to the United Nations had made it clear that any military action must be authorised by the United Nations and that the build-up in the Gulf was not a UN operation. Malaysia also declined a Saudi request to join the US-led MNFs but promised to contribute to a UN-sponsored peacekeeping force.

43 The Malaysian High Commission in Canberra politely turned down a request for a formal interview and failed to provide answers to a list of questions.
That Malaysians thought the US war aims went well beyond the UN mandate was amply demonstrated when their Prime Minister publicly opposed what he called the ‘destruction of Iraq’. To Malay Muslims, the ‘relentless US bombing of Iraq’ was part of a wider agenda to weaken the Islamic world, while strengthening Israel. The Malaysian perceptions of the UN role in the Gulf and in the New World Order are closer to Indonesian than to Australian perceptions. Malaysian Foreign Ministry officials believe the unexpected collapse of the Soviet empire has left a power vacuum, with the US holding sway. They feel uneasy about the emerging international power structure and would like to develop a counterbalance to the US-dominated international system. A former Foreign Minister, Tan Sri Ghazali Shafie, voiced the predominant thinking of the ruling elite when he observed that an Asian organisation along the lines of the European Community and involving Japan, China, the six ASEAN countries, and India could help keep the balance in Asia and possibly act as a counterweight to the United States. The dangers of a unipolar world were driven home after Washington ignored efforts to find a negotiated peace, rejected the Iraqi withdrawal offer and Soviet peace initiative, issued its own ultimatum and finally launched the pre-planned ground offensive. This prompted Prime Minister Mohamad to express his concern that ‘one country [the US] had become so strong that ‘it does not heed the views of others’.

Thus, there were remarkable similarities in the Indonesian and Malaysian postures on the Gulf crisis, though Malaysia’s tone, given its strong Islamic credentials, was relatively more critical of the US. Both declined the Saudi request to send troops to the Gulf, both offered to contribute armed forces only for a UN peacekeeping force, and both saw the allied attack on Iraq as overstepping its original mandate. Whereas Indonesia refrained from taking a clear-cut stand on the issue in the beginning, and with the passage of time veered towards supporting the UN-backed allied action, Malaysia took a clear stand from the outset but soon became suspicious of the US motives and took steps to distance itself from being identified too closely with

the West. Domestic pressures in both countries forced their governments to ‘walk the political tightrope’ so as not to alienate their allies and friends, particularly the United States and Australia. Both countries took special care not to comment on the Australian decision to dispatch warships to the Gulf without informing or consulting its friends in the region. The pro-US, pro-West affiliations of the Indonesian and Malaysian armed forces might also have tempered the stance of their governments on the Gulf crisis. Nonetheless, the impotency of the Non-Aligned Movement in the changed global strategic environment and the lack of a countervailing force to the United States have caused concern in both Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur.

Thailand, The Philippines, Singapore and Brunei: Unequivocal Support

In sharp contrast to Indonesia and Malaysia, the four other members of ASEAN - Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei and Singapore - had little or no problem in joining the US-led MNFs or taking an unequivocal stand on the Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

Thailand, which has traditionally adopted a non-committal stance on major global conflicts, came out with a clear-cut stance on the Persian Gulf conflict. In keeping with its reputation as the closest and most trusted ally of the Western world in the region, Bangkok voiced its opposition to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and backed all Security Council resolutions demanding Iraq’s withdrawal. Thailand also abided by the economic sanctions, even though it meant losing a huge export market and labour contracts. Thai rice exports to Iraq were running at an annual 400,000 tonnes before the crisis. Bangkok also supported Resolution 678, which authorised the US-led MNFs to use force in evicting the Iraqi occupation army from Kuwait. During the months preceding the Gulf War, Thailand had allowed US military aircraft to land at the Thai airbase of U-tapao en route to the Gulf as a regular transit station.

However, the offer of Thai Foreign Minister, Arthit Urairat, to send teams of Thai doctors and nurses and technicians to service Saudi F-5 fighter aircraft during his official visit to Saudi Arabia in late December 1990 provoked controversy at home. The opposition parties’ criticism was based on the contention that Thai assistance to Saudi
Arabia would effectively draw the country into the anti-Iraq coalition and subject Thailand to a wave of Iraqi-sponsored Arab terrorism. In addition, it could have alienated the small but vocal Muslim minority in Thailand, whose sympathies were clearly with the Iraqis. One opposition leader also questioned Arthit's wisdom in undertaking a visit to Saudi Arabia before the tour of ASEAN states customary for a newly appointed foreign minister. Some commentators were critical of the manner in which government policy on the Gulf crisis had been conducted. One foreign affairs analyst contrasted Thailand's high-profile stance with 'bigger countries such as China and India [that] have chosen to adopt a low profile'. He argued that Thailand needed to coordinate its policy and reinforce closer ties with ASEAN neighbours such as Malaysia and Indonesia, which had greater leverage and were better placed to get involved in the matter, if they chose to, than Thailand. Thai Foreign Minister Arthit, however, contended that he had not carried out any 'new policy initiative' but was merely continuing the Government's policy of supporting the United Nations' position as reflected in the various resolutions on the issue. He defended his offer to send a medical team and technicians on the grounds that the United Nations had 'appealed to all member states to contribute whatever they can'. The government maintained that it was urgent and legitimate for Bangkok to warm ties with Saudi Arabia in order to secure Thai interests in the export of labour and trade, which had dropped drastically over the years. The controversy sparked by Arthit Urarit's offer to send teams of Thai doctors and nurses and technicians, however, soon died down once it became known that Saudi Arabia had politely turned it down. The start of the war on 16 January was described by the Thai media as 'Regrettable, but just and unavoidable'.

It can be surmised that though there was no consultation at any level between the two governments on how to respond to the Gulf crisis, Bangkok's decision to extend unqualified support to the anti-Iraq coalition could have gained a boost from Canberra's military

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49 'Bungled Diplomacy', Bangkok Post, 8 January 1991, p.4.
51 ibid.
52 'Arthit Defends his Mideast Initiative', Bangkok Post, 10 January 1991, p.3.
commitment to the Gulf. Thus, Thailand’s response to Australian involvement can be described as one of unequivocal support. Nonetheless, while both countries agreed more or less on the measures taken to force Iraq to quit Kuwait, they do have differing perspectives on the role of the United Nations and New World Order. Thai foreign affairs analysts and academics agree that their country needs to give serious thought to preserving Thai interests in the new geopolitical alignments of post-Cold War, post-Gulf War era. An international expert from Thammasat University expressed serious doubts about the North-dominated New World Order and believed that the United Nations could face the same fate as the League of Nations, if it failed to reform itself. The ineffectiveness of the United Nations resolutions in solving the Iraq-Kuwait problems in a peaceful manner is cited as a major reason which could bring into question the role of the United Nations itself in the aftermath of the war. Some Thai analysts see the Gulf crisis as marking the onset of a new era in international politics - one in which the old ideological East-West conflict would be replaced by the confrontation between the developing world and the highly industrialised nations of the West or the North.

The strongest backing for the US and Australian involvement in the Gulf crisis came from Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines. The President of the Philippines, Mrs. Aquino, and the Prime Minister of Singapore, Goh Chok Tong, supported the allied attack on Iraq ‘without reservations’. Similarly, a statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the oil-rich state of Brunei pointed out that Brunei had been consistent in supporting all UN resolutions and had condemned the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The island republic of Singapore sent a medical team comprising 35 Singapore Armed Forces personnel to an army hospital in Saudi Arabia on 18 January 1991. The Singaporean Ministry of Foreign Affairs justified this deployment as a humanitarian gesture in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 678, which

56 'Cost Squeeze Drags Reluctant Asian Nations into Conflict', Australian, 16-17 February 1991, p.16.
demanded Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. Singapore also served as a logistical hub in Southeast Asia for the US air and naval build-up in the Gulf since August 1990. For example, American 7th Fleet warships and the US Air Force’s Military Aircraft Command’s C-5 Galaxy and C-141 Starlifter strategic transports made use of Singapore’s Paya Lebar airport for refuelling. Australian warships en route to the Gulf also docked at Singapore ports. In addition, Singapore signed an agreement in Tokyo on 13 November 1990 giving United States naval and air force units increased use of military facilities in the republic. Malaysia and Indonesia, which were cool to the idea of an expanded US presence when Singapore first made its offer to Washington, later modified their position by saying that they had no objections as long as the bases were not permanent military facilities.

The Philippines played an important role in the US military build-up in the Persian Gulf following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. There were about 390,000 Filipinos in the area when the Gulf crisis erupted and the Philippine economy was one of the worst affected, due to fuel price rises. Still, Manila fulfilled its international obligations by sending a 300-strong medical team to Saudi Arabia and raising no objections to the use of Subic and Clark bases by American armed forces as staging posts. The Gulf crisis once again brought into sharp focus the importance of US bases in the Philippines for the United States’ overall forward-deployment military posture in the Pacific and Indian oceans.

In fact, the Gulf War reinforced the arguments of those Philippine leaders and officials, especially from the military, who reject a speedy dismantling of the US bases. The Defence Secretary, Fidel Ramos, and the new Armed Forces Chief, Lt. Gen. Rodolfo Biazon, argued that Manila was not ready to assume responsibility for its own defence in a region where security remained unsettled. Ramos said that there were ‘many potential flash points’ in East Asia, and that the Philippines did not yet have the capability to meet even its minimum needs for external security. He added that Philippine-US security relations should be maintained for some time to ‘ease the heavy

58 It was also reported that US officials were talking to Brunei about a somewhat less formal landing rights arrangement. See ‘Port in a Storm’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 22 November 1990, pp.10-11.
economic burden of defence spending'. In a similar vein, Vice-President, Salvador Laurel, warned that the Philippines might be left ‘strategically naked ... in a region that historically has been as volatile as the Middle East’.

Vietnam: ‘The Odd Man Out’

Vietnam was the only major country in Southeast Asia which strongly condemned the US military build-up and the allied attack on Iraq - and, by implication, Australian involvement in the Gulf crisis. On 2 February 1991, the Vietnamese Communist Party newspaper accused the United States of ‘going far beyond the limit set for the Gulf War by the UN Security Council’ and of trying to ‘bring Iraq to her knees and affirm the sole superpower role of the United States in the world, decide global security and put other nations in the US orbit’.

Though Vietnam achieved the distinction of being the only Southeast Asian state and the second Asian country after North Korea to express publicly its support for Iraq, its objections to the conduct of the war and comments on the alleged US motives were surprisingly similar to those which several other Asian countries had already expressed, albeit privately.

Australian Diplomacy

The Gulf crisis had provided Canberra with an excellent opportunity to demonstrate to its neighbours Australia’s commitment to developing ‘habits of dialogue and cooperation’ and ‘a shared sense of strategic and security interests’ in the region. It could, therefore, have taken a lead in evolving a joint response, with the Southeast Asian states, to the Gulf crisis. However, Australian diplomacy during the Gulf crisis left much to be desired. While the Minister for Foreign

Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, visited Europe, America and some Gulf countries immediately after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August and again in January before the 15 January deadline, he did not visit Australia’s friends and allies in the region either to discuss a common strategy or to persuade them to become actively involved. This diplomatic failure on Australia’s part prompted one Asian analyst to remark cynically: ‘Australia, after all, is a Western developed country, albeit located in the Asia-Pacific region. And developed countries do not have the habit of consulting Third World states when it comes to the weighty deliberations of international security and world order’. The later visits by officials of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and Department of Defence to some Southeast Asian capitals were primarily short briefing missions aimed at apprising them of the Australian position on the conflict.

Understandably, given the delicate nature of the relationship between Jakarta and Canberra and the constraints of Indonesia’s domestic politics, Australia decided not to persuade Indonesia either to take a tough stand vis-à-vis Iraq or to accept the Saudi King’s request to join the US-led MNFs in the Gulf. Likewise, there is no evidence of any exchange of views between Australia and Malaysia during the Gulf crisis. When Kuala Lumpur appeared ambivalent on the military option against Iraq, it was Washington, not Canberra, which persuaded Kuala Lumpur to cast its vote in favour of Security Council Resolution 678, authorising the use of force against Iraq after 15 January 1991.

Another reason for Canberra’s low-profile diplomacy in the region could be its desire not to be seen as acting at the behest of the United States. As noted earlier, the low-key response of Southeast Asian countries in the initial stages stood in sharp contrast with the speed with which Australia condemned the Iraqi invasion and dispatched warships to join the US-led MNFs, which lacked UN backing at that stage. That Prime Minister Hawke’s hasty action reinforced Australia’s image in some quarters as that of an American camp-follower - an image which successive Australian governments

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63 Private conversation with an Asian analyst in Canberra.
64 Faced with domestic criticism, the Malaysian Foreign Minister later admitted that ‘the decision [to support Resolution 678] was made by the government following request by some countries’, that is, the United States and Britain. See FBIS-EAS, 28 January 1991, p.45.
have tried hard to cast off - was evident from a private conversation with an Asian diplomat. Asked if his country was surprised at the speed with which Australia dispatched warships to the Gulf, he said, 'No, not at all'. He added that, 'On the contrary, we might have been surprised if Canberra had not reacted the way it did'. Conceivably, had Canberra attempted to persuade Indonesia and Malaysia to evolve a common strategy against Iraq in the later stages of the crisis, it would have lacked credibility and aroused the suspicion of its neighbours.

In short, Singapore, Brunei, the Philippines and Thailand were unequivocal in their condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, extended unqualified support to all UN resolutions and contributed to the US-led MNFs in the region. These countries were also supportive and appreciative of the role played by Australia in the Gulf crisis. However, the ambivalent and critical response of Indonesia and Malaysia to the Gulf crisis had more to do with domestic factors than anything else. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the Gulf War caused a vertical split among ASEAN countries as no other global crisis has. It also highlighted existing differences within ASEAN on security association with the West. Though publicly Indonesians and Malaysians may seek refuge behind phrases such as 'we understand Australia's action' or 'we do not have any problem with what Australia did', it is evident that their initial response to Australia's prompt dispatch of warships following the US and British lead can, at best, be described as lukewarm or marginal support. If there was any sense of grievance felt by Jakarta and/or Kuala Lumpur initially at the lack of consultation on the part of Canberra, it must have dissipated somewhat over time - as more governments joined the coalition and as the war proceeded to a fairly prompt conclusion. The diplomatic imperative of maintaining an even-handed stance and the need to maintain bilateral friendly relations with Australia also precluded any public criticism of Australia's role. It can be argued that a long-drawn-out war or Israeli participation or a more prominent role by Australia's armed forces in the conflict would have exacerbated

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66 Australia's role had been positively perceived in these countries. Personal communication, 9 April 1991 and interviews.
67 A prominent Malaysian strategic expert, Dr Zakaria H. Ahmad, also described Malaysia's response to Australian involvement in the Gulf as one of 'lukewarm support'. Personal communication, 18 March 1991.
latent tensions and highlighted differences between Australian and Malaysian/Indonesian attitudes towards the war.

**Role of the United Nations, New World Order and Collective Security**

At the same time, a short, quick allied victory over Iraq has raised new fears and apprehensions among Southeast Asian countries. Nowhere is the rift between the West (including Australia) and the Southeast Asian nations as evident as over the issues of the role of the United Nations, the New World Order and collective security.68

Analysts and opinion makers in Southeast Asian countries are sharply critical of the way the United Nations has been 'manipulated' by the United States during the Gulf crisis. It is claimed that billions of dollars in aid or loans were promised to gain the support of some countries for UN Security Council Resolution 678. Most notable examples cited are China, the Soviet Union, and some non-permanent members of the UN Security Council from Africa and India.69 To many Southeast Asians, the Gulf crisis has led to the marginalisation of the United Nations.70 For example, the Malaysian Ambassador to the US, Albert S. Talalla, expressed concern over the marginalisation of the UN role in conflict management and resolution and called for a 'reassertion of the UN central role in the crisis'.71

Further, there is criticism of the 'totally undemocratic and arbitrary powers' vested in the five permanent members of the UN Security Council, who are not answerable in any way to the wishes of other UN members. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, regretted the failure of developing countries to change the UN

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69 For example, Saudi Arabia offered a US$4 billion loan to the Soviet Union. The United States cleared the sale of supercomputers and IMF loans to India and China and China managed to end the diplomatic isolation imposed on it since the June 1989 Tiananmen massacre.


working mechanism that allowed the permanent members of the Security Council to block solution to a conflict through their veto powers.\textsuperscript{72} Apparently, the sudden shift of power from the General Assembly to the Security Council in the post-Cold War period has not gone down well with the majority of UN members.\textsuperscript{73} Thus, we might witness a campaign by the developing countries in the near future for an early democratisation of the UN decision-making processes, a greater role for the Secretary-General and General Assembly. It is argued that in a sensitive issue like war, which involves a lot of killing, economic dislocation and environmental damage on a massive scale, a mandate from the UN General Assembly should be sought.\textsuperscript{74} There is talk of either doing away with the veto powers of the Security Council members or electing them by secret ballot to make the international body more representative and sensitive to the wishes of all its members.\textsuperscript{75} Otherwise, as one Thai expert said, 'the United Nations could face the same fate as the League of Nations'.\textsuperscript{76}

The common perception is that the UN has been 'hijacked' by the US and that it does not protect the interests of the Third World and needs to be replaced by a more equitable and democratic institution. The ineffectiveness of the Non-Aligned Movement and the disappearance of the Soviet bloc as a countervailing force in international politics makes many Third World countries feel very vulnerable and insecure.

As regards the New World Order, with the notable exception of Singapore, and to some extent, the Philippines, all Southeast Asian countries are concerned over the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by the United States. The crushing defeat of a Third World state by the United States has served to revive long-dormant anti-colonial attitudes that still persist in many parts of the region. The

\textsuperscript{72} 'Foreign Minister Remarks on UN, Gulf Issues', FBIS-EAS, 11 February 1991, p. 43. A prominent Indonesian analyst, Yuwono Sudarsono, contended that the world order would remain unjust and unfair so long as a small number of superpowers enjoyed veto rights in the United Nations. See 'Government Urged Toward Higher Profile in World', FBIS-EAS, 20 February 1991, p.40. Similar concerns were expressed by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a communication with the author, 9 April 1991.

\textsuperscript{73} Crispin Hull, 'UN Shift of Power Needs to be Counterbalanced', Canberra Times, 9 November 1990, p.7.


\textsuperscript{75} Far Eastern Economic Review, 11 October 1990, p.7.

\textsuperscript{76} 'Gulf War Brings Govt Respite from Criticism', Bangkok Post, 24 January 1991, p.4.
emergence of a unipolar world with the United States calling the shots makes Indonesia and Malaysia wary of their American ally. The Gulf War also has had the effect of sharpening differences in Southeast Asia between countries like Malaysia and Indonesia - that want to reduce the region’s dependence on US protection - and other nations that want to maintain an American (and Western) military presence. Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta recently called on the Southeast Asian countries to take control of their own destiny while the United States and the Soviet Union are preoccupied with problems elsewhere. The Malaysian Foreign Minister, Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, called upon ASEAN nations to act with urgency to establish a regional order in which they could ‘play their role in the making of a new Southeast Asia’. The Indonesian Foreign Minister, Ali Alatas, said the strategy of seeking security through military alliances with major powers had proved to be counterproductive and ‘will indeed become increasingly irrelevant’. On the other hand, the demonstration of US resolve to drive Iraq from Kuwait strengthened convictions in Singapore, Brunei and the Philippines that a continued US military presence in Asia is needed to ensure a stable balance of power.

Finally, does Australian commitment to collective security in the Middle East indicate Canberra’s resolve to engage itself in similar regional conflicts of the future in Southeast Asia? Officially, most Southeast Asian nations claim to adhere to the concept of collective security which is the foundation of the United Nations system. However, the validity of this claim would be put to the test if a similar crisis were to erupt in the region. Rival claims to the Spratly Islands by the Philippines, China, Taiwan, Vietnam and Malaysia and an unresolved conflict situation in Cambodia support the contention of the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, made in Parliament on 21 August 1990, that it is not inconceivable that the conditions pertaining to the Gulf crisis ‘could arise in the Asia-Pacific region in the coming years’. The spectacle of five permanent members of the UN Security Council meeting to reassess Regional Security”.

77 ‘Southeast Asian Leaders “Keen To Reassess Regional Security”, Asian Defence Journal, November 1990, p.120.
79 ibid.
Council acting in concert has raised hopes, particularly in Australia, that, in the post-Cold War era, some kind of collective security system could be evolved to tackle regional conflicts. However, a cursory examination of the premise of a collective security system and the potential conflict situations in the Asia-Pacific region would belie any high hopes in this respect.

In the aftermath of the Gulf War, Asian countries would most likely take steps to reduce their dependence on the volatile Middle East for oil supplies and develop oil supplies closer to home. Thus, the contentious Spratly Islands, supposedly rich in oil, could become a major flashpoint of conflict. How would the Security Council react? The recent exercise in collective security demonstrated that it has its limits. If one of the five permanent members of the Security Council is directly involved - let alone a cause of a regional conflict - it is impossible for the Security Council to agree on a course of action like that taken in the Gulf. For example, in the case of the Spratly Islands dispute, collective security is unlikely to work because China is a party to the conflict and will veto any Security Council resolution in this respect. The only conceivable situation in Southeast Asia where collective security could possibly work is one in which either the prosperous city-state of Singapore or the little oil-rich country of Brunei was subjected to attack by one of its powerful neighbours. In such circumstances alone, Australia’s commitment to regional security could conceivably lead it to engage itself militarily with the backing of the United Nations Security Council.

Thus, with the exception of a conflict situation in Southeast Asia which does not involve a veto-holding permanent member of the UN Security Council, it is unlikely that Australia will ever be called upon to contribute forces in defence of collective security in its neighbourhood. Indonesia, for one, would like to see Australia acting with resolve before a similar conflict occurs in the Asia-Pacific rather than afterwards, as was the case with the Gulf crisis. Furthermore, indications are that in many Southeast Asian capitals the Gulf conflict resolution is seen as a deviant rather than the norm in international diplomacy, given the strategic and economic significance of the Middle East for the Western world.

82 Personal communication, 9 April 1991, p.2 (italics added).
To sum up, the response of Southeast Asian states to Australia's role in the Gulf crisis has ranged from outright opposition (Vietnam) to understanding (Indonesia, Malaysia) and unequivocal support (Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and the Philippines) for Canberra's action. Again, the 'small state syndrome' explains the unqualified support for the allied action by the small but relatively rich states of the Southeast Asian region. Evidently, in the initial stage of the crisis, Canberra's prompt dispatch of warships following the US and British lead had the potential to undermine Australian attempts to project itself as an independent actor in the region. But, fortunately for Canberra, the formation of a broad anti-Iraqi international coalition and a prompt conclusion of the war seemed to vindicate the Australian position and rather enhanced its image in some Southeast Asian states. At the same time, the Gulf crisis has also highlighted differences in perceptions between Australia and some of its Southeast Asian neighbours regarding the United Nations' role, the New World Order and collective security.
Chapter 4

Northeast Asia

The significance of the Northeast Asian region for Australian economic and security interests is well documented in the 1989 report by Ross Garnaut, *Australia and the Northeast Asian Ascendancy.* This region is home to China, Japan, the two Koreas, Taiwan and the Soviet Union. Economically, it is the most vibrant and fast-developing region. Politically, though, areas of tension remain as manifested in the instability on the Chinese mainland, the Taiwan-China reunification problem, the conflict between North and South Korea and disputes between Tokyo and Moscow over the Kurile Islands and between Tokyo and Beijing over the Diaoyutai Islands. This chapter examines the response of China (a military superpower and permanent member of the UN Security Council), Japan (a global economic giant), South Korea and Taiwan (two Newly Industrialising Countries) and North Korea (a hard-line communist state) to the Gulf crisis in general and Australian role in particular.

China: Support With Strings Attached

In contrast to the case in South and Southeast Asian countries, the Gulf crisis came as a boon to Chinese leaders and policy makers, who were feeling increasingly cold-shouldered in the post-Cold War era of US-Soviet detente. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait brought the Middle Kingdom back to the centre-stage of international politics, as both Western and pro- and anti-Iraq Gulf states started wooing Beijing to win its support for their respective positions on the crisis, largely because of China's veto power in the United Nations Security Council. The Chinese leaders, who had been shunned by Western countries

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2. The Soviet Union (Russia) is as much a Pacific power as the United States or Canada. However, the Soviet, or for that matter American, response to the Gulf crisis is outside the purview of this study.
58 The Gulf War: Australia's Role and Asian-Pacific Responses

since the Tiananmen massacre of June 1989, suddenly found themselves once again playing host to and being courted by them.

Conditional Support

The crisis situation in the Gulf provided Beijing with an opportunity to play its diplomatic cards deftly. Unlike the Soviets, China was anxious not to give the impression of abandoning its Iraqi ally - a major buyer of Chinese weaponry - by giving unqualified support to the US policy initiatives and intervention in the Middle East. Thus, the Chinese government's immediate reaction to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 was an expression of 'deep concern and worry'. A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also reflected Beijing's new-found love for Third World solidarity, a passion it reacquired when Western countries imposed sanctions on it following the Tiananmen massacre of June 1989. It said that both Iraq and Kuwait, friends of China, belonged to the Third World and that the Chinese government believed there was no 'fundamental conflict of interests among Third World countries'. Although China said that the two countries should not resort to force, it did not utter any condemnation of the aggressive Iraqi action.4 However, Iraq's act of naked aggression against a small neighbour provoked strong and immediate condemnation by the entire international community, including many Third World countries and Saudi Arabia, with whom China had established diplomatic relations only ten days before the Iraqi invasion. In order not to risk further international isolation or damage to its ties with other Middle Eastern states, China had to swiftly change its position. At an emergency session of the UN Security Council, Beijing voted in favour of Resolution 660, which demanded an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.5 On 6 August, China voted for Security Council Resolution 661, to impose economic sanctions - including an arms embargo - against Iraq and occupied Kuwait. To

5 Speaking at the UN Security Council meeting on 2 August 1990, Chinese Ambassador, Li Daoyu, expressed his 'shock and regret' over the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. The later version of the Xinhua report, however, omitted the word 'shock'. See Xinhua, 2 August 1990, in FBIS-China, 3 August 1990, p.4.
dispel rumours and misapprehensions about further Chinese arms sales to Iraq, a Foreign Ministry spokesman stated that since China had voted for the UN Security Council resolutions, 'it will, naturally, not sell arms to Iraq under [present] circumstances'.

At the same time, Beijing was also keen to maintain an even-handed stance on the Gulf crisis. China greeted the news of the deployment of US armed forces to the Persian Gulf the day after the Iraqi invasion with cynicism and concern. It soon turned critical of Western military deployment in the region, maintaining that it was an Arab problem and should be resolved by the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and between Iraq and Kuwait through peaceful means. The Chinese media accused the United States of unnecessarily fuelling tension in the Gulf. An article in Zhongguo Qingnian Bao, entitled 'America Pokes its Nose into the Gulf', accused the United States of taking every opportunity to split the Arab nations; to contain, isolate, and weaken Iraq; to safeguard its oil interests; to support pro-American Gulf countries; to reduce the pressure on Israel; and to further its global strategy. A day after Iraq announced its union with Kuwait, and one day before the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, announced his country's decision to join the US-led MNFs, China warned of the dangers of superpower intervention and repeated its view that the Gulf crisis would best be resolved by Arab nations themselves. 'We stand for the resolution of the Gulf crisis by


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Gulf and Arab countries. Outsiders, especially the superpowers, should not meddle ... Otherwise, it will intensify the Gulf crisis and further worsen the situation’, said a Foreign Ministry spokesman. A commentator in the pro-Communist Party Hong Kong daily *Wen Wei Po* saw the US attempt to involve other Western countries (Britain, Australia, Canada, etc.) on its side as an attempt ‘to cover up its intervention [and] to withstand the censure of world opinion’. Chinese Premier Li Peng, on an official visit to Indonesia, issued a similar warning against the United States getting involved militarily in the crisis. In the same breath, however, he added that, as a sovereign nation, Saudi Arabia had the right to appeal for outside help. China’s opposition to the use of force against Iraq and the foreign military presence in the Gulf, and its parallel endorsement of Saudi Arabia’s right to invite foreign troops (so as not to offend the Saudi Kingdom), were calculated to please all the players in the region. However, these contradictory positions also demonstrated the constraints on China’s policy makers.

Chinese policy at this stage was based on the belief that the Gulf crisis would sooner or later be resolved by the Arabs themselves. Accordingly, Beijing adopted a two-pronged strategy. One was to support Arab efforts to seek a peaceful solution while opposing superpower involvement. The other was to increase the pressure on Iraq to respond positively to such efforts by going along with other permanent Security Council members in passing resolutions aimed at tightening the noose around Saddam Hussein’s neck. This approach was evident from China’s support for Resolution 662, which declared Iraq’s annexation of Kuwait null and void, and Resolution 664, which demanded that Iraq free all detained foreigners, on 9 August and 18 August 1990 respectively. Explaining the reasons for China’s support

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10 Ibid.
12 China expressed its ‘respect and understanding’ for the defensive measures taken by Saudi Arabia in consideration of its own safety. See *Xinhua*, 17 August 1990, in *FBIS-China*, 20 August 1990, p.13; *Beijing Review*, No.35, 27 August-2 September 1990, pp.8-9. Interestingly, the Chinese position on the US involvement in the Gulf crisis was strikingly similar to the Malaysian stance. While regretting that the Saudis had to ask for US assistance, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Mahathir Mohamad, said that he understood the pressures that forced the Saudi government to look to the United States for help. Likewise, both favoured an Arab solution to the problem within the framework of UN resolutions. See *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 September 1990, pp.10-11.
for UN Security Council measures, Beijing’s UN ambassador, Li Daoyu, hoped the forthcoming Gulf Summit would yield positive results and reiterated his country’s view that ‘military involvement of big powers [is] not conducive to the settlement of the present crisis’.13 The subsequent failure of the Gulf Summit held on 10 August, Iraq’s intransigence, and the later vertical split in the GCC caused some disappointment in Beijing.

Furthermore, Chinese leaders were subjected to pressure and intense lobbying from both the West and the anti-Iraq Arab states to soften Beijing’s opposition to the Western military build-up and support the use of force to enforce an effective blockade of Iraq. US Assistant Secretary of State, Richard Solomon, and Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Jabir al-Sabah, visited Beijing in mid-August to this end, carrying with them assurances of economic aid, loans, and improved bilateral relations. After his talks with Chinese leaders in Beijing, the Kuwaiti foreign minister said that Li Peng promised that ‘China will vote neither for nor against’ a UN Security Council vote to give allied ships the right to use force to enforce a UN trade embargo against Iraq.14 There were also some other subtle changes in the Chinese position on the Gulf crisis. In an interview with the official newsagency, Xinhua, on 21 August 1990, China’s UN ambassador, Li Daoyu, made a statement which brought out four important elements of Beijing’s response to the Gulf crisis:

* ‘China firmly opposes Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait, and demands the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait immediately and unconditionally;

* China is in principle opposed to the military involvement by big powers;

* China supports the necessary measures taken by the Arab countries aimed at strengthening their defence capabilities; and

* China supports the efforts of the Arab countries to seek a political solution to the Gulf crisis by peaceful means. It also supports the full utilisation of existing UN

14 AFP, Hong Kong, 22 August 1990, in FBIS-China, 22 August 1990, p.11.
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mechanisms, the UN Security Council, and the UN Secretary-General in his role of conciliation and mediation.\(^\text{15}\)

Not surprisingly, then, Beijing’s initial low-key condemnation of the Iraqi invasion had now become stronger and more explicit. What is more, China now qualified its opposition to the US-led military build-up by saying that it was only ‘in principle’ opposed to it. In fact, Beijing seemed to be indirectly supporting the military involvement of external powers in the Gulf, just as it had turned a blind eye to the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific region before June 1989. The emphasis on the full utilisation of existing UN mechanisms to find a solution to the Gulf crisis indicated Beijing’s frustration with the failure of Arab organisations to bring about a satisfactory solution. Understandably, China then wanted the United Nations to be in charge of the overall situation to prevent the outbreak of hostilities in the Gulf.

However, the world by and large failed to discern the subtle changes in China’s Gulf policy in the heat of the crisis and continued to be swayed by the propagandistic posturing of the Chinese leadership. Otherwise, how does one explain China’s vote for Security Council Resolution 665, which permitted the use of force to enforce the economic embargo against Iraq and Kuwait on 25 August 1990; that is, three days after Premier Li Peng himself promised that ‘China will abstain’ on such a vote? China thus tried to outmanoeuvre its critics and supporters by reiterating publicly its opposition to military involvement by big powers and the use of force. It did this while it was privately considering supporting the use of military means in the UN’s name to enforce the blockade. Even after the 25 August passage of Resolution 665, authorising the use of force to enforce the blockade, the China’s UN ambassador, Li Daoyu, claimed rather disingenuously that ‘measures must be taken within the framework of Resolution 661 [adopted on 2 August], which does not provide for the use of force’.\(^\text{16}\) In order to curry favour with Iraq and to show the Third World its distinct approach to the Gulf crisis, Beijing made much of the fact China had succeeded in getting the phrase ‘minimum use of force’

deleted from the original US-proposed draft resolution and in getting it replaced with the phrase ‘use such measures commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary’ (to halt all inward and outward shipping) in order to ensure strict implementation of the trade sanctions against Iraq. This amendment, according to the Chinese, was in accordance with ‘the wishes of many Third World countries’. Furthermore, to preempt any Iraqi criticism, China’s UN ambassador claimed that the amended resolution did not ‘contain the concept of using force’ - an interpretation which was at variance not only with the view of the other members of the Security Council, but also with the Chinese media’s interpretation. For example, a commentary in *Ta Kung Pao*, the day after China voted for Resolution 665, noted that the phrase ‘to take measures appropriate to the actual circumstances in case of need’ implied the possibility of using force, and concluded that if the United States thought ‘it was "empowered" ... to use force ... a bloody clash is equally likely to occur’. Evidently, Beijing’s public posture on the ‘non-use of force’ in the enforcement of an effective blockade of Iraq even after the Security Council had passed Resolution 665 authorising the use of military action, albeit under ‘very strict and well-delineated parameters’, was meant to reassure Iraq of China’s friendship and to distance China from the US-Soviet stand on the Gulf crisis.

But why did Beijing vote for Resolution 665, thereby sanctioning the limited use of naval force to impose a trade embargo against Iraq? Apparently, the Chinese leadership concluded that the worsening turmoil in the Middle East provided a good opportunity for China to improve its strained links with the Western world. Chinese leaders were optimistic that the West would adopt a more conciliatory policy towards their country and mend its fences with the communist regime, in order to obtain China’s support for enforcing the embargo against Iraq. As one Chinese official put it, the crisis would help

18 Ibid. It should be noted that China was not alone in proposing this amendment. The Soviet Union and Malaysia played an equally important role in restraining the United States and Britain from resorting to force on a large scale in the early stages of the Gulf crisis. However, the Chinese media made no mention of the contribution of these two countries and gave all the credit to Chinese diplomacy.
21 *South China Morning Post* [Hong Kong], 27 August 1990, p.8.
mitigate the ‘current diplomatic difficulties’. He believed that China’s opposition to Iraq’s invasion, on the one hand, would improve its international image and, on the other hand, would lead the United States and other Western countries to relax controls over arms exports and loans to China. Thus, as the crisis deepened, China’s Gulf policy was a goodwill gesture to beat international isolation and was aimed at enticing Western countries to relax their sanctions against China. Not surprisingly, then, Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, went to the extent of describing Iraq’s invasion and annexation of Kuwait as a ‘total violation’ of the UN Charter and of international norms during his visit to Turkey.

Nevertheless, the Chinese were determined not to put all their eggs in one (Western) basket. After the passage of Resolution 665, Beijing immediately took steps to assuage Iraqi concerns. It dispatched its foreign minister to the Middle East to reassure Baghdad that Beijing’s position on the Gulf crisis was different to the American and Soviet positions. In a move that did not go down well in Washington, it agreed to receive Iraq’s First Deputy Prime Minister, Taha Yasin Ramadan, in Beijing that September for talks on ‘developments in the Gulf and the presence of foreign forces in Arab territory and waters’. Interestingly, in response to a request from the Iraqi leadership, Beijing also signalled that it might provide humanitarian aid to Iraq in the form of medicine and essential foodstuffs, categories that were excluded from the UN embargo. In his talks with Premier Li Peng

22 Chang Yuan-hsing, ‘China Believes that it is Hard to Avoid War in the Middle East’, *Tang Tai, [Hong Kong], No.41, 8 September 1990, in *FBIS-China*, 14 September 1990, pp.1-2.
23 Ibid. According to a reliable source, by the end of August 1990, the CCP Central Committee had reached a consensus on three points: one, the present Gulf crisis was a struggle between small and big hegemonists (i.e., Iraq versus the US); two, Iraq could not be overpowered and that was not on the US side; and three, the two parties would eventually settle the problem through negotiations. Based on these assumptions, Beijing adopted a policy of opposition to Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and to US military involvement. But keeping an eye on its long-term interests, Beijing decided not to unduly offend the US-led Western world. See Lo Ping, ‘The CPC Guiding Principle for the Middle East Crisis’, *Cheng Ming*, No.155, 1 September 1990, in *FBIS-China*, 5 September 1990, p.15.
and Vice-Premier Wu Xueqian, Ramadan reportedly asked the Chinese government to support Iraq in its ‘resistance against US imperialist aggression’. The Chinese leaders responded by rejecting the use of force to settle disputes.27

Privately, Chinese leaders and strategists were most unhappy with the US military buildup in the Gulf and saw it as another example of ‘US imperialism’. In fact, internal discussions in the National People’s Congress session used quite strong language in assessing the role of the United States. For example, Premier Li Peng equated Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait with the US military intervention in Panama in December 1989.28 In a meeting with the Soviet Foreign Minister in Harbin, Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, implicitly criticised the United States by saying that ‘a certain permanent member of the UN Security Council thought the issue would be resolved only through the use of minimum force’.29 A commentary in Renmin Ribao voiced the concern that, following the Gulf crisis, US military strategy would change from a ‘defensive’ to an ‘offensive’ one.30

Despite its long-term concerns about the US role, Beijing decided not to adopt a confrontational posture in order to reap the benefits offered by the Gulf crisis in improving its diplomatic situation. Seven World Bank loans, totalling US$780 million, had been postponed, along with the suspension of aid from the industrially advanced nations. Apparently, ‘the desire not to further annoy the United States and other Western countries, which might negatively influence the reconsideration of those, and other loans ... was bound to be uppermost’ in the minds of Chinese policy makers.31 In the first high-level contact between Washington and Beijing since June 1989, the Chinese Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, discussed bilateral relations with the US Secretary of State, James Baker, at the United

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27 Xinhua, 8 September 1990, in FBIS-China, 10 September 1990, p.2.
29 Kyodo [Tokyo], 1 September 1990, in FBIS-China, 4 September 1990, p.4.
Nations in early October. He also held discussions with Japanese, French and British representatives. After his meeting with the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, Qian confidently declared: 'The sanctions [against China] will be lifted sooner or later. One cannot maintain the sanctions forever'.

It was obvious that Chinese diplomacy had already started reaping dividends. At the Luxembourg foreign ministerial meeting, held at the end of October 1990, the twelve European Community countries decided to resume overall political, economic, and cultural relations with China. In late October, the German Parliament adopted a resolution calling for the restoration of development aid to China. In early November, Japan formally proclaimed the resumption of a development aid programme to China, followed by similar French and Swedish announcements.

And on 1 November, the World Bank announced a loan of US$275 million to China.

With the Gulf crisis showing no sign of being resolved peacefully and amidst growing talk of use of the military option, the United States decided in early November to send another 200,000 troops to Saudi Arabia. Beijing then announced that its foreign minister would visit Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iraq from 6-12 November, to gauge the reaction of the Middle Eastern states. During his tour of the region, Qian held talks with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, the exiled Kuwaiti Emir, Saudi Foreign Minister, Al-Faysal, and Jordan’s King Hussein. He also discussed the Gulf situation and bilateral relations with US Secretary of State, James Baker, at Cairo airport. In Baghdad, Qian met with PLO leader, Yassir Arafat, who insisted on linking the Palestinian issue with the Gulf crisis. Qian told Xinhua that he had ‘serious, earnest, and frank discussions’ with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

He, however, refused to answer questions on Beijing’s position if the UN Security Council voted on the use of force against Iraq. Chinese ambivalence on this issue was interpreted in Baghdad as an indication that Beijing would veto a resolution in the UN Security Council.

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35 Renmin Ribao, 10 November 1990, p.4.
proposing the use of force.36 This Iraqi view was confirmed by former New Zealand Premier, David Lange. After his meeting with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister, Taha Yasin Ramadan, Lange said the Iraqi leadership believed that ‘one of two countries - France or China - or both [would] veto’ any UN Security Council resolution endorsing the use of force to dislodge Iraq from Kuwait.37

The United States launched a diplomatic offensive in mid-November to rally support from all permanent members of the Security Council for a resolution authorising the use of force after 15 January 1991.38 Even after it became known that France would go along with the United States, China refused to give James Baker any advance assurance of its support and kept everyone guessing until the last moment. This prompted media speculation that Beijing was attempting to extract significant economic and diplomatic concessions from the West.39

When Resolution 678, authorising the ‘use of all necessary means’ - in essence, permitting the use of military force unless Iraq withdrew its forces from Kuwait before 15 January 1991 - was finally put to the vote on 28 November 1990, China abstained, with Cuba and Yemen voting against it. Explaining his move, Qian told the Security Council that authorising the use of force against Iraq ran ‘counter to [China’s] consistent position ... to try our utmost to seek a peaceful solution’.40 He also warned that the Gulf crisis was becoming increasingly tense and called on the United Nations to ‘act with great caution and avoid taking hasty actions on such a major question as authorising some member states take military actions against another member state’.41

41 ibid. Interview with Qian Qichen, Renmin Ribao, 17 December 1990, p.7. According to Qian, China did not vote for Resolution 678 because ‘the Chinese people still
By abstaining rather than vetoing the resolution, Beijing achieved several of its policy objectives. First, it allowed safe passage of the resolution, thus ingratiating itself to Washington. One day after the vote, Foreign Minister Qian met US President Bush in the White House, thereby fully ending the ban on high-level visits that Washington had imposed in the wake of the Tiananmen massacre of June 1989. Bush reportedly thanked Beijing for not vetoing the US-sponsored UN resolution allowing the use of force against Iraq after 15 January 1991. Chinese disclaimers notwithstanding, Beijing seemed to have extracted a promise of restoration of full diplomatic and economic relations with all Western countries, including Australia, in return for its abstention on Resolution 678. On 4 December 1990, a few days after the UN vote, the World Bank board of executives voted - with the United States abstaining - to extend a US$114.3 million loan to China.

The Bush administration further rewarded China by approving the sale of supercomputers and other high-tech exports to China. Apart from winning diplomatic and economic concessions, Beijing also succeeded in convincing Washington that, even after the Cold War, China, being a permanent member of the Security Council, was of strategic importance to the United States as far as the resolution of regional conflicts was concerned - be it in the Gulf or in Cambodia. In short, the Chinese communist regime transformed the Gulf crisis into a springboard for a dramatic plunge back into the pool of international diplomacy.

Second, the abstention was meant to demonstrate not only China’s independent foreign policy, but also highlight the fact that China remained the sole champion of Third World countries in the United Nations, due to the Soviet Union’s capitulation and ‘defection’ to the American camp. In an apparent reference to the Soviet Union, one commentator remarked that ‘compared to the change in stand of a

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42 Soon after Qian’s return from the United States, China called for a quick end to US economic and political sanctions. AFP, Hong Kong, 2 December 1990, in FBIS-China, 4 December 1990, p.10.
43 This was the World Bank’s first ‘non-basic human needs’ loan to China since the massacre. ‘Mutual Abstainers’, Far Eastern Economic Review, 13 December 1990, pp.10-11.
45 Fang Yueh, ‘China as Seen from the Gulf Crisis: Who Can Belittle This Giant?’ Tzu Ching, [Hong Kong], No.1, 1 October 1990, in FBIS-China, 3 October 1990, pp. 8-9.

remember that the Korean War was launched in the name of the United Nations. We favour the goals of Resolution 678, but not the means adopted by it’.

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certain country [i.e., the Soviet Union], China will never barter away important principles of world peace for its own private interests!46 By declining to be drawn into the alliance against Iraq and yet perfunctorily deploping the destruction of Kuwait, China tried to project the image of an impartial, neutral, and disinterested party to all Arab nations. Evidently, China’s UN diplomacy and rhetorical opposition to superpower involvement was directed at the vast majority of Third World states (including those who opposed Iraqi occupation of Kuwait) concerned with the long-term implications of the US military presence in the Gulf. By trumpeting its uniqueness, China sought to widen its diplomatic options, enhance its international profile, and present itself as a saviour of Third World interests.

Last but not least, by distancing itself from the joint US-Soviet strategy against Iraq, China preserved its relationship with Iraq, a major customer for its weapons, and improved China’s political leverage. Beijing’s game plan - to present itself as a champion of diplomatic means for resolving the Gulf conflict, as opposed to using military means - seemed to be succeeding.

Reactions to War

The allied attack on Iraq after the expiry of the UN-stipulated deadline of 15 January 1991 led the Chinese government to express its ‘deep anxiety and concern’ and appeal to the ‘two belligerent parties’ to exercise the ‘greatest restraint’.47 Apart from calling for moderation in the conflict and for peace, China did not take any effective measures to stop the war. For example, China seemed to drag its feet on the demand of many Third World nations for an urgent UN Security Council meeting to discuss a ceasefire. A Foreign Ministry spokesman, Li Zhaoxing, merely said that China was in favour of holding a UN Security Council meeting to discuss the Gulf War ‘at an appropriate time’.48 Earlier, China had given an ambiguous reply to Soviet President Gorbachev’s letter calling for joint efforts to end the conflict and to PLO leader Arafat’s appeal to Beijing to play a more active role

in seeking an end to the war. Similarly, Beijing maintained a discreet silence on the issue of linkage between Kuwait and the Palestinian problem.

While the government decided to keep a low profile and moved towards a more neutral position, Chinese media held the US ‘brutal interference’ responsible for the Gulf War, and criticised the methods and tactics employed by the United States to legitimise its intervention in Iraq. One commentary compared US intervention in the Gulf with earlier American military actions in Korea, Vietnam, and Panama. Many military strategists in China believed that the war would be a long and protracted one. The common view was that the United States did not give economic sanctions enough time to work and that the allied attack against Iraq exceeded its UN mandate. One commentator asked the US-led multinational forces to ‘act strictly within the limits defined by UN Security Council resolution’.52

Interestingly, the official posture of neutrality adopted by the Chinese government was out of tune with the Chinese people’s support for the US and its allies in the Gulf conflict. Many young Chinese reportedly approached the US Embassy to volunteer as conscripts. The popular support among Chinese for the United States prompted Beijing to warn its official media to give a low profile to reports on the Gulf War, apparently in an attempt to keep the US from appearing too strong.54

Evidently, China’s leadership had other concerns, too. By the end of January, there were indications that Beijing was beginning to fret about the ongoing war in the Gulf. A prolonged war in the Middle East had the potential to inflame the passions of the tens of millions of Muslims who lived in China’s western provinces, the scene of recurrent separatist unrest and violence. Though there were no

confirmed reports of massive pro- or anti-war demonstrations in China - as there were in many other Asian countries - Beijing's concern over the Gulf War's possible impact on the mainland's Muslim regions led it to put the armed forces stationed in Xinjiang on alert. Some reports in the Hong Kong media suggested frequent troop movements, which could have been caused by demonstrations or unrest.55

Second, though China was not seriously affected by the economic fallout of the Gulf crisis, a prolonged conflict could have seriously damaged China's overseas trade and investment. According to a Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations and Trade spokesman, the Gulf War was endangering China's US$2.7 billion trade and labour service contracts in the Gulf region.56 Besides, a global economic depression caused by the war would have impacted on China's economy as well as foreign investments in and loans to China.

Thirdly, China was concerned that an unambiguous US victory and the destruction of Iraq would result in the expansion of US influence in the Middle East. Beijing's suspicions about US aims were based on concerns that the United States would be the world's only superpower. China particularly resented the fact that it could not play the role of a mediator, due to Baghdad's and Washington's unwillingness to yield.

Finally, Beijing was also wary of Washington's attempts to involve Tokyo in the war effort, believing it could lead to the re-emergence of Japan as a military power. The Gulf crisis had coincided with a deterioration in Sino-Japanese relations, partly due to the eruption of a controversy over the disputed Diaoyutai [Senkaku] islands in the East China Sea. The controversy developed from the installation of navigational lights on Diaoyu Island by a Japanese right-wing group, which was seen in Beijing as a violation of Chinese sovereignty. The deterioration in relations was also caused in part by China's concerns over Japanese plans to contribute to the MNFs in some form. The Chinese media played up the theme of the danger of a revival of Japanese militarism.57 One commentator remarked that

57 As one analyst has noted: 'Much is made of Japan's third ranking in world defence spending, without noting the large gap between Japan and the superpowers in this
‘today Japan wants to send its forces to the Gulf, tomorrow it will dispatch troops to defend its sovereignty over Diaoyutai. This would set a bad precedent’.58 Many Chinese analysts deliberately downplayed the intense opposition within Japan to an active Japanese military role in the Gulf War and accused Japan of using the Gulf crisis as the pretext for a military build-up. The conclusion drawn was that ‘some people’ in Japan were trying to turn their country ‘from an economically strong nation into a politically and militarily strong country’ and cautioned Chinese and Asian people against lowering their guard.59 Chinese leaders urged Japan to be ‘prudent on the sensitive issue of sending Self-Defence Forces abroad’ .60 In short, China did not share the US and, to some extent, Australian enthusiasm for an active political-military role for Japan.

These considerations, coupled with one month of incessant allied bombing of its ally, Iraq, led Beijing to adopt a more critical stance vis-à-vis the United States and to launch new peace initiatives. In a classified analysis of the war, China’s leader, Deng Xiaoping, reportedly described the Gulf War not as a just war, but as an example of ‘big hegemonists [the United States] beating up small hegemonists [Iraq]’. Deng’s comments underscored the scepticism with which Chinese leaders regarded US aims in the conflict.61 The Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party was believed to have expressed its ‘resolute opposition’ to the MNFs’ military action against Iraq.62 In mid-February, Beijing dispatched Vice-Foreign Minister, Yang Fuchang, to Syria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Iran on a peace mission. Describing the Iraqi offer to withdraw from Kuwait (made on 15 February) as a ‘positive change’, China’s UN ambassador demanded the withdrawal of all foreign military forces from the Gulf...
region. Furthermore, in a meeting with Iraqi Deputy Prime
Minister, Saadoun Hammadi, in Beijing on 20 February, Prime
Minister, Li Peng, urged Iraq to avoid expanding the war by ‘seizing the opportunity’ to ‘withdraw its troops from Kuwait’. Li also reiterated China’s view that the Gulf crisis should be settled through political and diplomatic rather than military - means, and said that if Iraq wanted China’s help in getting an honourable settlement, Beijing was willing to do its part. Later, in an effort to deny Washington its absolute and ‘unambiguous victory’, Beijing publicly opposed the outbreak of the ground offensive and actively supported efforts by the Soviet Union and other countries to broker a ceasefire. In the final stages of the Gulf War, China appeared to have distanced itself from the allies so much so that some analysts predicted a serious rift between China and the West once the war was over. Anxious not to be left out of the post-Gulf War regional security structure, Chinese leaders started emphasising the need for the UN Security Council to play a greater role in the resolution of the region’s problems and demanding the withdrawal of ‘all foreign forces’ from the Gulf.

It is evident that, throughout the Gulf crisis, China had to do some ‘tight-rope walking’ in order not to give the impression of aligning with either anti- or pro-Iraqi forces. Beijing’s attempt to please both sides in the conflict cannot be explained without referring to the significance of the region in Chinese national security policy. Since the early 1980s, the Middle East has effectively replaced Africa as an area of emphasis in Chinese foreign policy, because of that region’s value as a source of economic loans, aid, and investment for the Chinese economy. In return, the Middle Eastern states have bought huge quantities of armaments, including ballistic missiles, from China. According to one estimate, China was supplying one-fourth of Iraqi arms before the Gulf crisis. In the case of Saudi Arabia, arms sales laid the groundwork for the establishment of diplomatic relations

63 Renmin Ribao, 16 February 1991, p.3.
74 The Gulf War: Australia's Role and Asian-Pacific Responses

between China and the Saudi Kingdom.68 The importance attached to the Middle East in Chinese policy was also evident from the fact that the first visit abroad by Chinese President Yang Shangkun, since the Tiananmen massacre, was to Egypt, Kuwait, the UAE and Oman in December 1989. Following the imposition of the arms embargo against Iraq, China also tried to offset the loss of the Iraqi market by gaining the Saudi and other Middle Eastern markets. That the Chinese foreign minister's 'peace mission' to the Middle East in September 1990 was also a search for new markets for Chinese weapons was evident from Qian Qichen's statement that 'China is ready to help its friends in the Gulf improve their defence capabilities'.69 It was apparent that China's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, its role as an arms supplier, and above all, its non-dependence on Middle East oil, provided Chinese policy makers with greater leverage and more room for manoeuvre during the Gulf crisis.

Chinese Perceptions of the Role of the United Nations and New World Order

Unlike the vast majority of the Third World countries concerned with the shift of power from the UN General Assembly to the Security Council in the post-Cold War era, Beijing seems to be quite happy with this development. This is understandable, because the UN Security Council is the only international forum where the power and perception of China - as a champion of the Third World - is magnified, compared with other largely ineffective organisations like the Non-Aligned Movement. As a result, China has come a long way since describing the United Nations as a 'dirty international political stock exchange in the grip of a few big powers', to now emphasising its central role in conflict management and resolution.70 Asked to comment on the UN role in the Gulf crisis, one Chinese diplomat remarked that, on balance, China was 'satisfied' with the 'positive role' the United Nations had played, a view at variance with that of many

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68 For details, see J. Mohan Malik, 'Missile Proliferation: China's Role', Current Affairs Bulletin, Vol.67, No.3, August 1990, pp.4-11.
70 For example, see Sa Benwang, 'A New Pattern Bearing the Brand of the Old', Shijie Zhishi, No. 22, 16 November 1990, in FBIS-China, 20 December 1990, pp.8-11.
developing countries of the Asia-Pacific.\textsuperscript{71} It may be noted here that an overwhelming majority of Third World states has expressed displeasure at the 'hijacking' and 'marginalisation' of the United Nations by the United States and called for the reform of the UN 'working mechanism' so as to 'reassert the UN's central role in conflict resolution'.\textsuperscript{72}

Chinese analysts maintain discreet silence when emerging regional powers like India and Indonesia demand reforms in the United Nations, such as by broadening the Security Council membership or doing away with the veto rights of the permanent members. Apparently, the status-conscious Chinese fear that such United Nations reforms might undermine China's 'big power status' and its claim to be the only representative of the Third World in that august body, the Security Council. Given China's diminished status in the strategic triangle, with the end of the Cold War, an important reason why China still ranks as a major power is its permanent membership of the Security Council. It was this membership that brought down the curtain on China's diplomatic isolation after Iraqi invaded Kuwait. Indeed, it offered Beijing the opportunity to project itself as the sole protector of Third World interests at a time when the Soviet Union had abandoned its clients and the Non-Aligned Movement had forfeited its legitimacy and credibility. Beijing also hopes that as long as the United States needs China's support in the resolution of regional conflicts, whether in the Gulf or in Indochina, it will turn a blind eye to China's human rights violations. Thus, China has not only become a \textit{status quo} power as far as the UN system is concerned, but its perceptions of the UN role in conflict management are also strikingly similar to those of the developed Western countries.

However, as far as China's role in the present and emerging distribution of power in the broader international system is concerned, Beijing is certainly not a \textit{status quo} power. In fact, in this realm, China shares the concerns of the developing Asia-Pacific countries over the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by an unchallenged superpower, the United States. Chinese analysts warn about Western attempts 'to replace the bipolar system of the United States and the

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with a Chinese diplomat, Canberra, April 1991.

\textsuperscript{72} For example, see Indonesian and Malaysian foreign ministers' criticism of the UN in \textit{FBIS-EAS}, 31 January 1991, p.38 and 11 February 1991, p.43.
Soviet Union with the tripolar system of the US, Europe, and Japan to establish a New World Order. From China's perspective, there cannot be a new order if the world continues to be dominated by the superpowers, a few big powers, or a 'rich-nation club' [i.e., US, Europe and Japan] to the exclusion of China. Beijing is concerned that the US-Soviet detente would marginalise its role on the international stage and some Chinese analysts advocate the formation of a new bloc - with China as its leader - to protect the interests of the Third World. The Chinese vision of a new international political order is one which will be based on the 'five principles of peaceful coexistence', and a new international economic order based on equality and mutual benefit.

Many Chinese analysts see three key objectives behind the US decision to go to war in the Gulf: first, to reestablish 'American hegemony' by controlling the world's economic artery - oil - in order to keep Europe and Japan under its thumb; second, to forewarn future military powers who may dare to challenge US security and economic interests in other parts of the world; and third, to make the US military presence in the Middle East legitimate and permanent at a time when the Soviet Union, racked by domestic crises and needing foreign economic assistance, had no stomach for conflict with the United States. The United States is thus seen - in sharp contrast with the late 1970s and early 1980s - as on the offensive and advancing, while the Soviet Union is seen as defensive and retreating. This assessment has buttressed the argument of hard-liners within the Chinese Communist Party who believe that China is being threatened by 'American hegemonism' or 'Pax Americana' and that, if not checked now, Washington will move next to 'tame' China.

75 The five principles are: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-intervention of internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. Wan Guang, 'What "New World Order" does the West Want to Establish?'.
77 Sa Benwang, 'A New Pattern Bearing the Brand of the Old'.
78 Willy Wo-lap Lam, 'Impact of War on Sino-US Relations', South China Morning Post, 27 February 1991, p.15
Others, particularly moderates, do not take such an alarmist view of the post-Cold War, post-Gulf War situation and caution against unnecessarily offending the West. Some even argue that the Cold War cannot be regarded as something of the past, because ‘many complicated and uncertain factors still exist in US-Soviet relations’. Since the ‘new partnership’ between the superpowers is not based on genuine equality, it is argued that it cannot be stable one. In addition, it is felt that the two sides hold opposite strategic objectives. The US strategy is viewed as aiming to reduce the Soviet Union to a second-class partnership in a Western structure headed by the United States. In contrast, the objective of Soviet domestic economic reform is seen as being to increase its comprehensive national strength to maintain its status as a superpower and as an equal of the United States in the long run. Proponents of this perspective also note that the Soviet Union’s domestic situation is far from settled and that the US and the Soviet Union are still military superpowers.79 There are yet others who are not as perturbed with the prospects of a ‘new world order’ as they are with the ‘new world disorder’. They see ‘dangerous trends’ manifested in racial tensions, religious differences, border disputes, struggles for territory and resources, the proliferation of high-tech weapons, and the rivalry for regional hegemony in many regions of the world at a time when the ‘old world order has been destroyed but the new world order has not yet been established’.80

Prospects for Collective Security in the Asia-Pacific Region

The lesson drawn by the Chinese is that their country is likely to face more such regional conflicts in the future. In the Cold War era, regional powers were constrained to some extent by the risks of provoking a superpower confrontation. Such powers now feel freer to flex their muscles, being aware that the superpowers are less able to influence the outcome of regional conflicts. Hence, new regional conflicts could appear in South Asia, Southeast Asia, Africa or Europe.81 So, the question arises of what the prospects are for collective security in the Asia-Pacific region. Like their counterparts in

79  Sa Benwang, ‘A New Pattern Bearing the Brand of the Old’.
81  Shih Chun-yu, ‘China’s Performance in Handling Gulf Crisis’. 
many Asian countries, Chinese analysts also remain pessimistic about the application of the collective security principle to resolving present or future regional conflicts in the Asia-Pacific, such as the Spratly or Diaoyutai Islands disputes. They believe that regional conflicts are likely to be ignored unless they involve the threatened use of weapons of mass destruction, or seriously threaten the economic and security interests of a major power. It is argued that the UN Security Council played an important role in the Gulf crisis only because it served the strategic interests of some big powers. It is likely that if the Security Council was seen as obstructing a veto-holding permanent member’s strategic interests, that member would cast the Security Council aside. Apparently to dash hopes if any of an enhanced Security Council role post-Gulf War, China’s Foreign Minister, Qian Qichen, categorically stated that the Gulf War could not be a precedent for settling international issues using force. Thus, like many other Asian-Pacific states, China also regards the Gulf crisis as a special case, rather than as a watershed.

China is not only pessimistic about the prospects of collective security in the region, it also does not pin much hope on arms reduction arrangements. Many Chinese analysts believe that the Gulf War has again demonstrated the vulnerability of Third World countries when pitted against industrialised Western powers. In turn, this is likely to strengthen the desire in the Middle East, South and Southeast Asia to acquire sophisticated, technologically superior weaponry (which only the West can supply), thus rekindling new regional arms races. According to this view, China (and the Soviet Union) might lose large chunks of their arms export markets to Western suppliers if they fail to provide state-of-the-art weapon systems, particularly ballistic missiles. Thus, it would not be surprising if the Chinese launched a major arms sales campaign in the post-Gulf War period to retain their arms markets.

82 Discussions with a Chinese diplomat and an analyst extracted the opinion that collective security is unlikely to work in the resolution of territorial disputes in the Asia-Pacific region. Interviews, April 1991, Canberra.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
In sum, for the Chinese communists, the Gulf crisis was a Marx-sent opportunity for hunting with the hounds and running with the hares. By voting for all the UN Security Council resolutions against Iraq, but abstaining on the resolution authorising the use of force, Beijing won back the Western support it had lost after 4 June 1989, while also managing to save its ties with Iraq. By not fully aligning itself with the West as Moscow did, Beijing retained some credibility with Arab opinion and in the Third World. Despite China’s opposition to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, Beijing remained critical of the Western arms build-up in the region and made its preference for diplomacy through the United Nations very clear.

The suspension of all direct government-to-government contacts between China and Australia since June 1989 ruled out the possibility of high-level dialogue on the Gulf crisis. Chinese officials refused to comment on Australia’s role in the Gulf crisis, describing it as a ‘sensitive’ issue, but discussions with a Chinese analyst extracted the opinion that ‘some of Australia’s foreign policy actions have hindered it from developing an equal and closer relationship with countries of the Asia-Pacific region’. China does not think that the example of the Gulf crisis will serve as a precedent for future exercises in conflict management. The swift and sharp international response to Saddam Hussein’s actions is seen by Beijing as the product of an unusual set of circumstances which is unlikely to repeated elsewhere.

Japan: Unequivocal Condemnation of Iraq but Ambivalence on its own Contribution

As the shock waves of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait reached Japanese shores, the Japanese government lost no time in unequivocally condemning Saddam Hussein’s naked aggression towards his small neighbour. Tokyo announced an economic blockade of Iraq on 5 August 1990, even before the United Nations called for

87 The first ministerial-level visit to Beijing took place from 1-7 September 1990. Dr Neal Blewett, Minister for Trade Negotiations, reportedly welcomed China’s support for UN Security Council resolutions. See Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Dr Blewett in China Talks’, The Monthly Record, September 1990, p. 662.

economic sanctions. Up to this point, the Japanese response was swift and strong; there was little domestic disagreement and no external criticism. Despite considerable concern over such issues as the threat to oil supplies and the fate of the Japanese ‘guests’ being held hostage, the Japanese government and the people felt that ‘Iraq’s action [constituted] blatant and unlawful aggression and that somehow or other the Iraqis must be made to withdraw’.89

However, when it came to the role Japan should be playing to achieve that objective, the world found the country and the leadership not only vacillating but also deeply divided. It soon became evident that the United States and its allies, who had contributed men and money to the Gulf, expected Tokyo to do more than verbally condemn the aggressor and to support UN initiatives. Announcing Australia’s decision to join the US-led MNFs on 10 August 1990, the Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, revealed that the prospect of Japan’s involvement had been raised during his conversation with US President Bush. He added that military involvement by Japan ‘was conceivable’ because ‘the defence of all nations is involved in ensuring that aggression is checked’.90 The West’s expectations of a more substantial Japanese contribution in meeting the Iraqi threat put the Japanese in a moral dilemma. Japanese public and political parties were shocked by the thought of Japanese military personnel serving and perhaps even fighting half-way around the world. Citing the war-renouncing Article 9 of the Japanese Constitution, ‘government officials declined to let the Self-Defense Forces participate in the [MNFs], saying only that they were studying “every possibility” to see what Japan could do’.91

Initial Response: ‘Chequebook Diplomacy’

Arguing that Japan’s military profile was constrained by constitutional and political restrictions on its defence forces and by an uneasiness, at home and abroad, about the legitimacy and acceptability of a stronger Japanese military role, Tokyo finally opted for the diplomacy of economic aid - a familiar Japanese response when

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confronted with international crises. During his visit to Turkey, Jordan, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, between 17 and 25 August 1990, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Taro Nakayama, made promises of financial support to these countries, and said that his country could also share the cost of the US-led military effort. Nearly three weeks after the invasion and after much deliberation and internal debate, on 29 August, the Japanese government eventually unveiled a package of aid measures for the Middle East. This package contained what Japanese Prime Minister, Toshiki Kaifu, described as the ‘maximum’ steps Japan could take within the framework of the constitution. Tokyo offered only US$1 billion in aid for the peacemaking efforts of the US-led MNFs!

Understandably, the Western reaction to the Japanese posture was highly critical. Americans in particular accused Japanese of acting in a cowardly and self-interested fashion. Critics compared the decision of Japan, against participating in the MNFs, despite its 70 per cent dependence on the Middle East for oil (expected to rise to 90 per cent within 10 years), with the position of Australia, 70 per cent oil sufficient and getting none of its oil from the Persian Gulf, and yet joining the international coalition against Iraq. Under intense American pressure for a bigger Japanese contribution, the Japanese government responded by increasing the scale of its financial commitment to US$4 billion on 14 September. The aid for the MNFs was doubled to US$2 billion, and the other US$2 billion was offered to Jordan, Egypt, and Turkey to offset the damage they were suffering from the embargo of Iraq. Still, many American officials and analysts described the Japanese response as ‘inadequate’ and ‘insufficient’ and refused to accept the view that Japan’s ultra-cautious response was dictated not only by the constitution but also by its concern about the apprehensions of Asian countries, such as China and South Korea, relating to Japan’s ‘remilitarisation’. To assuage the doubts of America and of some Gulf countries about Japanese commitment to the anti-Iraqi coalition, Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu visited the United States and the Middle Eastern states in October 1990.

95 Japan Echo, No.4, Winter 1990, pp.6-25.
and reaffirmed Japan’s financial and diplomatic support, but shied away from committing Japanese forces to the region, citing domestic opposition to the move.97

The Gulf crisis once again brought into sharp focus the contrast between Japan’s status as an economic superpower and its marginal role in the international diplomatic arena. It also acted as a catalyst in the ongoing public debate by Japan’s foreign policy community over the need to evolve a foreign policy in response to what Tokyo sees as a shifting, but still complex, security environment—a policy which would meet the challenges and the opportunities of the post-Cold War era. Tokyo was called upon to resolve the inherent contradiction in developing an active foreign policy commensurate with Japan’s global economic clout, but one which did not arouse the fear and suspicions of Japan’s Asian neighbours about the dreaded revival of Japanese militarism. Acknowledging that it was in Japan’s interest to contribute in some form to the MNFs, given the critical dependence of the Japanese economy on a steady supply of oil from the Persian Gulf, many Japanese analysts suggested that one way to get out of the political quagmire was to devise a formula under which non-combat personnel could be sent abroad to assist in UN peacekeeping operations without overtly violating the constitution.98 This proposal found ready acceptance in the higher echelons of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and Prime Minister Kaifu introduced the UN Peace Cooperation Bill in the Diet on 29 August 1990, when he unveiled the first package of aid measures.

The proposed UN Peace Cooperation Bill, if approved by the Diet, ‘would have marked an important departure from Tokyo’s past policy of non-involvement in military conflicts overseas’.99 It would have paved the way for the dispatch of Japanese Self-Defense Force (SDF) personnel to the Gulf as well as to future UN peacekeeping operations in non-combat roles. The government argued that sending personnel would be ‘collective security’ as authorised by the UN

Charter and not ‘collective defence’ as prohibited by the Constitution. Thus, the dispatch of troops overseas was not seen as a violation of the Constitution because the military action had the sanction of the United Nations. However, the public and the opposition parties were outraged by the move. Soon the nation was gripped in a heated debate over the wording of the Bill, debate not only between the political parties but also within the various branches of the Japanese government. According to an opinion poll, 78 per cent of those interviewed opposed the dispatch of the SDF abroad, and 58 per cent opposed the UN Peace Cooperation Bill, while only 21 per cent approved it. Strong opposition from the Japanese public and opposition parties, which controlled the Diet’s Upper House, defeated the proposal. On 7 November 1990, the Kaifu Government abandoned the UN Peace Cooperation Bill and began talks with the opposition on alternative legislation.

With the threat of war becoming much more real after the UN adoption of Resolution 678, authorising the use of military force against Iraq after 15 January 1991, Japanese public opinion overwhelmingly voiced its opposition to any Japanese participation in the conflict. Many Japanese thought that their country should avoid getting too deeply involved in the US-led military effort against Iraq and should instead pursue an independent foreign policy. They pointed out that Japan’s energy-efficient economy made it imperative for Tokyo to keep clear of events in the Gulf and pay whatever price might be asked for Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil. A small minority challenged this view, saying that fence-sitting would not work any longer because Japan’s own national interests were threatened by the Iraqi invasion, thus making Japan a party to the conflict.

Throughout the Gulf crisis, Japan was engaged in a seemingly endless debate on whether to adopt an ‘interventionist’ or a ‘pacifist’ posture. Japan’s failure to adopt a clear-cut policy caused much consternation and resentment in Washington. Some in the US Congress, not familiar with the domestic and regional constraints on Tokyo’s making an overseas military deployment, argued that Japan had squandered an opportunity to share in forging a post-Cold War

100 Asahi Shinbun, 6 November 1990.
world order and the much-vaulted US-Japan ‘global partnership’, and instead continued to see the Gulf crisis as a bilateral US-Japan problem which required them simply to seek to placate an angry US by doling out money.102 The domestic debate in Japan was seen as quibbling and Japanese policy makers were thought to be taking refuge behind the peace constitution and Article 9. Despite continuing differences over the scale and form of the Japanese contribution to the allied effort, the fact remains that Japan’s support for the UN resolutions against Iraq was unequivocal and unconditional.

Reactions to War

Japan also pledged ‘firm support’ to the allied attack against Iraq after the expiry of the UN deadline and promised additional financial assistance for the MNFs and ‘maximum possible’ assistance to refugees.103 In late January 1991, the Kaifu Government once again deliberated on the proposal for the Self-Defense Force aircraft mission to transport refugees ‘strictly on humanitarian grounds’ in response to a request from the Bush administration. However, the proposal never got off the ground largely because of the furious and adverse reaction from the Japanese media and public. An opinion poll conducted by the Kyodo News Service showed 58 per cent of Japanese opposing the plan to send planes to the Gulf, while 48 per cent were against extra financial aid to allied forces in the Gulf.104 Having failed to rally public support behind its moves to send SDF personnel to the war zone, the Japanese government decided, nonetheless, to contribute another US$9 billion in assistance to the allied war chest. This amount was in addition to the US$4 billion which Tokyo had already pledged in August-September 1990. Japan also offered US$638 million in development aid and loans to the Philippines to help it cope with the economic impact of the Gulf War.

The Australian and Japanese positions on the Gulf crisis were remarkably similar. Both Canberra and Tokyo did not mince words in

condemning the unprovoked Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and joined the economic embargo against Iraq. While Australia contributed men to the US-led MNFs, Japan offered financial aid to support the MNFs deployed in the Gulf. Asked to comment on his country’s position on Australia’s role in the Gulf crisis, one Japanese diplomat described it as one of ‘unequivocal support’.105 Interestingly, Japan was the only Asian country with which the Australian government carried out ‘extensive consultation and dialogue’ at the diplomatic and political levels during the crisis.106 Apparently, Canberra played an important role in persuading Tokyo to become more actively involved in the anti-Iraqi coalition. For example, during his visit to Japan in September 1990, Prime Minister Bob Hawke called for more Japanese involvement in the Gulf crisis.107 The issue of Japanese military involvement was also reportedly discussed during SDF Chief of Staff Ishikawa’s visit to Canberra in the middle of October 1990. As regards Canberra’s dispatch of warships to the Gulf, the general Japanese view was that it would have been ‘proper’ and ‘appropriate’ if Canberra had dispatched troops to the Gulf after some deliberation and consultation within and outside the region.108 Like Canberra, Tokyo did not think that the allied attack on Iraq exceeded its United Nations mandate. Both Hawke and Kaifu voiced ‘reservations’ about the Soviet and Iraqi peace plans and supported the launching of the ground offensive against Iraq.109

The US and Australian attempts to persuade Japan to contribute to the United Nations-backed allied forces in the region eventually succeeded - albeit after the end of the war. After a long and agonising domestic debate and, interestingly, during the visit of the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth

106 Ibid. Though he declined to reveal the details, a Japanese diplomat said that the dialogue was ‘more intensive than one could expect or imagine’.
107 In a speech in Tokyo, Prime Minister Bob Hawke remarked that ‘if indeed the new world order is to be peaceful and safe ... then ... Japan will have a critical contribution to make’. See Tony Wright, ‘Hawke Racks up Points in Japan’, Canberra Times, 29 September 1990.
Evans, to Japan, the Japanese government announced its decision to send six minesweepers to the Gulf to help clear waterways for trading vessels. The dispatch of naval ships will be Japan’s first overseas military foray since World War II. Reacting to the decision, Senator Evans expressed his ‘happiness’ and said Japan had a responsibility to contribute to UN-backed international operations. He said Australia believes ‘there is a role for Japan to play commensurate with its economic stature and its international responsibility generally. It is perfectly possible to establish that role in the UN context - peacekeeping, peace-enforcement - from a wider military role generally’. Tokyo’s belated move should be seen as a recognition by Japan’s mainstream political parties and general public that Japan will have to play a more proactive role in supporting the international order, and undertake international security responsibilities.

The Japanese decision could prove to be a watershed in post-war Japanese history and set a precedent for a possible Japanese role in future regional conflicts. Japan shares the growing international concern that conflicts that had been suppressed by the East-West rivalry may now erupt, in much the same way that gangsters run rampant when the police lack the power to check them. Iraq’s adventurism is seen as a case in point. It is also accepted that the US cannot be expected to provide the forces and the leadership every time a crisis erupts, given its decision to scale down overseas military commitments because of its economic and political difficulties. Hence, Japanese commentators favour the idea of amending the Japanese Constitution to facilitate Japan’s participation in UN peacekeeping operations of the future and a greater role for the United Nations in conflict management. One Japanese analyst, Takashi Inoguchi, suggested the revision of the UN Charter to give teeth to the UN Peace-Keeping Operations (UNPKO) and reactivate the Military Staff

110 It is understood that Japanese law allows for the dispatch of minesweepers; ‘Japan Sending Ships for Gulf Clean-up’, Australian, 22 April 1991, pp.1,5. Some Southeast Asian countries, such as Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia, have also indicated that they would welcome an active Japanese role in regional security issues. See M. Richardson, ‘Japan Moving Toward Regional Security Role’, Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter, May 1991, pp.18-19; Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Asia-Pacific Regional Security Dialogue’, Backgrounder, Vol.1, No.24, 7 September 1990.

Committee. Any Japanese participation under the UN flag, it is argued, would not only be acceptable to the Japanese public but would also allay the fears of the Asian-Pacific countries about the revival of Japanese militarism. In deference to the concerns of the developing world, Japan would like to see the role of the United Nations in conflict management and resolution strengthened. At the time of writing, the Japanese government was also considering introducing yet another bill that would legalise the deployment of Self-Defense Forces on future UN peacekeeping operations and humanitarian relief tasks.

Like Australia, Japan believes the United States presence is needed to guard against a possible increase in the number of regional conflicts following the end of the Cold War and the proliferation of nuclear and ballistic missile technologies coupled with long-standing territorial disputes in Northeast Asia. However, unlike Australia - which has publicly proposed discussions on regional security issues among ‘friendly’ Asian states - Japan’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs shies away from any collective approach to security issues. Nonetheless, neither Canberra nor Tokyo shares the concerns and apprehensions of the developing countries of the Asia-Pacific region regarding the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by the United States. They tend to see the continued US presence in the region as providing an ‘honest broker’ and balancer to ensure their own as well as the region’s security.

South Korea and North Korea: Disagreeing as Always

South Korea, a key American ally in the region like Japan, depended on the Middle East for 70 per cent of its oil supplies. In addition, South Korean construction contractors had about US$1.5 billion worth of unfinished projects in the region when the Gulf crisis paused

113 Ibid.; interviews; FBIS-EAS, 28 February 1991, p.1; Richardson, Japan Moving toward Regional Security Role.
114 Interview with a Japanese security analyst, March 1991.
117 Ibid.
erupted. Understandably, then, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was strongly condemned by the South Korean government. Following the visit to Seoul of US Treasury Secretary, Nicholas F. Brady, in early September 1990, President Roh Tae Woo announced his decision to make a financial contribution of US$100 million to the US-led military build-up in the Gulf in addition to sending supplies, such as gasmasks. President Roh also gave ‘full support’ to the US-led MNFs’ attack on Iraq after the expiry of the UN deadline and pledged US$220 million economic aid to frontline states such as Turkey and Egypt. In response to an American request, Seoul also dispatched a 154-person military medical team to Saudi Arabia. Following Japan’s decision to increase its financial share to US$9 billion, the South Korean government did not want to be seen to be doing less. On 30 January 1991, Seoul announced a new package of US$280 million in goods and cash, in a second contribution to the coalition forces. That brought Seoul’s total economic contributions to the Gulf War to US$600 million since September 1990. Roh also sought parliamentary approval to dispatch a 150-man air force contingent to run a fleet of five C-130 cargo aircraft for military transportation. Like Japan and Australia, South Korea supported the launching of the ground offensive against Iraq in late February, describing it as ‘inevitable’.

While South Koreans were generally seen to have done what they could, their northern neighbour, the hard-line communist regime of North Korea, achieved the distinction of being the only Northeast Asian state and the second Asian country after Vietnam to publicly oppose the allied offensive against Iraq.

Taiwan: Wanted To Help But No One Asked

While Washington was coercing and coaxing its European and Asian allies to open their purses to fund the war against Iraq, it was ironic that Taiwan - the ‘non-country’ wealthy state with foreign

exchange reserves worth US$73 billion, one of the world's largest accumulations of foreign exchange - was deliberately left out of the anti-Iraqi coalition despite its offers to contribute men and money. Apparently, the United States did not want to risk antagonising China, a veto-holding permanent member of the UN Security Council, which frowns on any international recognition of Taiwan. Nonetheless, Taiwan - given its own fears of forcible unification with mainland China and heavy reliance on imported oil - was unequivocal in its opposition to the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait and quickly made a modest contribution of US$30 million in cash and materials as humanitarian aid to Jordan, Turkey and Egypt to assist them in caring for refugees from Kuwait and Iraq.123 Taiwanese leaders made it clear that they were willing to make a bigger monetary and military contribution but were disappointed that they had not been approached formally for help, since Taipei did not have diplomatic links with Washington or any of the main players in the Gulf crisis.124

With the exception of North Korea, and to some extent China, the response of Northeast Asian countries (Japan, South Korea and Taiwan) to the Iraqi invasion and the allied attack against Iraq was, by and large, similar to the Australian response. There were, however, nuances of differences in approach. Compared with the Australians' sharp and swift response, the Japanese and South Koreans were slow to react, given their own domestic constraints. The Chinese were quick to exploit the crisis to achieve their own vital foreign policy goals while maintaining that they did not see Saddam's aggression as being on a scale sufficient to warrant a massive military response. Australia, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan are happy with the emerging unipolar world with the United States calling the shots, while China is not. At least on one issue there is a broad consensus among all Northeast Asian states and Australia: that is, the role of the United Nations during the Gulf crisis and in the post-Cold War era.

124 'Taiwan Left Out but Wants to Help', Australian, 1 February 1991, p. 5.
CHAPTER 5
SOUTH PACIFIC

Of all the regions in the Asia-Pacific area, the South Pacific region is of critical importance to Australia because the security of the Australian continent is inextricably linked to the security of its surrounding region. The South Pacific region includes Papua New Guinea, the other South Pacific Forum states, the remaining colonial possessions and New Zealand. According to the Regional Security Statement of December 1989, Canberra is committed to pursuing the strategy of ‘constructive commitment’ in this region, which was defined by the Defence White Paper in 1987, as constituting Australia’s ‘area of direct military interest’. Through its policy of ‘constructive commitment’, Australia ‘endeavours to maintain and develop sensitive and responsive partnerships with Pacific island countries to promote regional stability through economic development and the encouragement of shared perceptions of strategic and security interests’. This chapter examines the response of the South Pacific states to the Gulf Crisis in general and to Australia’s role in particular.

1 The term ‘South Pacific’ here refers to the states and entities and the intervening ocean in the area bounded by, but also including, Australia and Papua New Guinea to the west, French Polynesia to the east, New Zealand to the south, and Nauru and Kiribati to the north. In addition to Australia and New Zealand, the most populous states in the South Pacific armed with any military capability are Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Tonga. It should be noted that these three forces are oriented to internal security, and lack the capability to mount operations beyond their home territories. See Stephen Henningenham and Desmond Ball (eds), South Pacific Security: Issues and Perspectives (Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 72, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991), pp. 11-12.


3 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ‘Senator Evans’ visit to the South Pacific’, Backgrounder, Vol.1, No.33, 14 December 1990, p.5.
New Zealand: Unequivocal Condemnation of Iraq

Much like his counterpart in Australia, the New Zealand Prime Minister, Geoffrey Palmer, strongly condemned Iraq's 'naked act of aggression' against Kuwait. Describing the Iraqi action as 'jack-booted thuggery', Palmer urged the UN Security Council to order mandatory sanctions and promised New Zealand's support for 'any action' the United Nations might take against Iraq, including the use of force.4 When the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 661 on 6 August 1990, thereby imposing comprehensive trade sanctions against Iraq and occupied Kuwait, Wellington announced that it would abide by the Security Council decision, even though this meant losing dairy export orders from Iraq worth millions of dollars.5

The differences between the Australian and New Zealand responses to the Gulf crisis became evident once Canberra announced its decision to dispatch naval vessels to the Persian Gulf to join the US-led MNFs. The fact that the United States publicly invited Australia and ignored New Zealand was interpreted by the New Zealand media as a calculated 'snub' by the Bush administration, showing the US displeasure over New Zealand's anti-nuclear policies. Some analysts argued that New Zealand's nuclear-free laws, passed by the Labour government, made it 'illegal for New Zealand forces to cooperate with nuclear-capable powers'.6 Denying that the absence of an invitation to join the US-led forces had anything to do with Washington's displeasure over his country's anti-nuclear policies and that New Zealand's anti-nuclear laws meant it could not take part in Middle East operations, Prime Minister Geoffrey Palmer contended that his country lacked the military capability to contribute to the anti-Iraqi

5 AFP, 'UN Trade Sanctions on Iraq to be Implemented', FBIS-EAS, 7 August 1990, p.58. The implementation of the economic sanctions against Iraq hurt New Zealand's dairy exports to Iraq, which were worth $NZ19.3 million (US$11.3 million) during the first six months of this crisis. New Zealand, like Australia, did not buy oil from Kuwait or Iraq. See FBIS-EAS, 6 August 1990, p.58.
6 This was one interpretation of the nuclear-free laws, but it had never been tested in court. AFP, 'No Persian Gulf Role Yet: US "Snub" Denied', FBIS-EAS, 13 August 1990, p.60.
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coalition forces. He also emphasised that his country wanted ‘to see peace, not war’ in the Middle East.7

In fact, behind New Zealand’s reluctance to make a military commitment lay the common perception in government circles in Wellington that the US-led military build-up in the region was hasty and premature, as it lacked any United Nations sanction. It may be recalled here that the New Zealand Prime Minister had indicated his preference for an initiative against Iraq to be led and directed by the United Nations when he said:

_We want to see action through the United Nations ... If the UN decided that the use of force was appropriate, New Zealand would most certainly seriously consider making a contribution to that._8

The validity of this viewpoint is further corroborated by the New Zealand government’s rejection of the Kuwaiti Emir’s invitation, issued a few days later on 20 August 1990, to join military operations in the Middle East. Criticising the ‘lack of international coordination’, Palmer once again urged ‘the United Nations [to] get its act together and try and get some machinery for coordination established’.9 While refusing to commit armed forces, the New Zealand government decided to offer the United Nations the use of two air force transport aircraft and send a 30-strong medical team to be used by the Red Cross in Saudi Arabia. It also strongly condemned Iraq’s decision to detain New Zealanders in Iraq and Kuwait as ‘immoral and illegal’.10 Popular opinion in the country also appeared to have constrained the Palmer Government’s options. Public opinion polls taken in September 1990 indicated the majority of New Zealanders wanted no part of military involvement in the Gulf.11 Sources close to the Labour Cabinet revealed that the Cabinet vote against taking direct action in the conflict was 18-2. Still, the ‘pacifist’ stance of the Palmer

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7 It was pointed out that New Zealand had only four aging frigates, which were very vulnerable to Exocet missiles and lacked adequate defences; ibid.
Government was severely criticised by his domestic critics and external friends and allies.\textsuperscript{12}

Though shying away from making a military contribution, Wellington was much more forthcoming in carrying out humanitarian missions, such as evacuating Asian refugees stranded in the theatre of conflict. Two Royal New Zealand Air Force transport planes - Boeing 727 and C-130 Hercules - made more than a dozen trips from the Gulf carrying refugees to India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Philippines.\textsuperscript{13}

In the parliamentary elections held in October 1990, the Labour government was heavily defeated and the National Party led by Jim Bolger came to power. During his election campaign, Jim Bolger had hinted that, if elected, he might join the US-led multinational forces in the Gulf. This position contrasted with the Labour government’s policy of channelling all New Zealand assistance through the United Nations. In mid-November 1990, New Zealand’s new Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, and Foreign Affairs Minister, Don McKinnon, held talks with the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister.\textsuperscript{14} Soon after, in a major policy change, the National government announced New Zealand’s decision to take part in the military build-up in the Persian Gulf.\textsuperscript{15}

On 3 December 1990, a few days after the UN Security Council passed Resolution 678, authorising the use of force against Iraq after a UN-stipulated deadline, Prime Minister Bolger sent two Air Force Hercules aircraft and a military medical team to join the MNFs in the Persian Gulf. This move was not only a reversal of the previous

\textsuperscript{12} Opposition leader Jim Bolger claimed New Zealand was ‘incapable of mounting, in any order whatsoever, a military intervention of any consequence whatsoever’. He said that under the Labour government, New Zealand had become decidedly pacifist; see Michael Field, ‘Cabinet to Decide 20 August on Kuwaiti Request’, in \textit{FBIS-EAS}, 17 August 1990, p. 58. The Yankees also criticised the Kiwis for their pacifist self-doubt; see Malcolm Pullman, ‘Direct NZ Action in Gulf is Rumored’, \textit{Age}, 13 November 1990.


government's policy to avoid any military involvement in the US-led build-up but was also interpreted, correctly, as an attempt by the new government to re-establish ties with the Western alliance, ties severed when Wellington barred nuclear-armed ships from New Zealand waters, thereby effectively ending the tripartite Australia, New Zealand and the US (ANZUS) Pact. The new government, though, sought to justify the step as a demonstration of the fact that New Zealand could not afford to 'shirk [its] responsibilities' in a case of aggression and concerted UN action.

The allied attack on Iraq after the expiry of 15 January 1991 deadline was seen as 'inevitable' and 'justified' in Wellington. Even the leader of the opposition Labour Party came out in support of the allied attack and said that he was 'substantially in agreement' with the National government's stand on the Gulf conflict. A public opinion poll conducted by Television New Zealand showed that 72 per cent supported the US-led attack on Iraq while only 19 per cent opposed it and nine per cent were undecided. Apparently, bolstered by the public support, the National government at this stage even contemplated sending fighter-bombers to perform 'the kind of work that was going on', but later on decided against it, partly because Parliament rejected a direct military role for New Zealand in the Gulf War, and partly because this would have been 'too much for the public to live with' after it had been 'very much in a peace mode for a long time'. Instead, the government decided to send a second army medical team in addition to the two Air Force Hercules transport aircraft - a total of 112 personnel - to work with British and US troops. The United States rewarded New Zealand by lifting the curbs on intelligence sharing with the US imposed in 1985 after Wellington refused to let nuclear-powered and -armed warships call at its ports.

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16 'Two Air Force Planes to Join Forces in the Gulf', FBIS-EAS, 3 December 1990, p. 73.
20 ibid.
21 This was revealed by the New Zealand Foreign Minister, Don McKinnon, in an interview with Far Eastern Economic Review. See Colin James, 'Bolger's Balm', Far Eastern Economic Review, 28 March 1991, p.18.
22 ibid.
The swift conclusion of the Gulf War led the New Zealand Prime Minister, Jim Bolger, to phone President George Bush on 1 March to congratulate him on his success in evicting Iraq from Kuwait. The conversation between the two heads of government aroused much interest in the region, given the previously frosty climate of New Zealand-US security relations. On the one hand, it was seen as the latest in a series of positive signs that the bilateral relationship was on the mend.\(^{23}\) As noted earlier, soon after New Zealand contributed two medical teams and two transport aircraft to the Gulf War coalition effort, Washington eased its restrictions on sharing intelligence with New Zealand, although the information was to be limited to Gulf-related matters. Notwithstanding that restriction, Foreign Minister Don McKinnon had described the resumption of intelligence sharing as ‘a very good sign’.\(^{24}\) On the other hand, it meant the realisation of Bolger’s election promise to end the six-year defence stand-off between the two countries caused by the former Labour government’s refusal to accept visits of warships capable of carrying nuclear weapons, and Washington’s suspension of most but not all military assistance to the armed forces of New Zealand. According to Foreign Minister McKinnon, the ‘principal objective’ was to be ‘seen as a nation reasserting its bona fides in the Western alliance’.\(^{25}\) The Gulf War had provided New Zealand with an ample opportunity to do this.

The Iraqi invasion of a small and vulnerable but rich state like Kuwait also served to highlight the security problems of smaller states in other parts of the world. Thus, New Zealand’s desire to ‘rejoin the West’ through reestablishing close defence cooperation with Western nations (expressed by Foreign Minister Don McKinnon on 15 March 1991), its emphasis on collective security rather than a return to specific alliances, and its wish for a greater role for the United Nations were linked to its traditional concerns about ensuring the security of small states in an increasingly complex and shifting international strategic environment.\(^{26}\) Explaining the rationale behind his

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\(^{26}\) At the same time, he reiterated that his country would stay free of nuclear weapons; see AFP, ‘McKinnon Views Defence Cooperation with West’, FBIS-EAS, 15 March 1991, pp.73-4.
government's move to re-build defence ties with the West, Foreign Minister McKinnon said: 'It's patently obvious that the interests of small countries like New Zealand lie in the direction of collective security. So yes, we are rejoining the Western camp...'. He added that New Zealand could not 'afford to be isolationist or withdraw into a South Pacific cocoon'.

New Zealand clearly shares Australia's perception of the enhanced status of the United Nations following the Gulf crisis. Wellington hoped that 'the Gulf War would breathe new life into the UN's security role' and that future regional conflicts would 'see a greater role being played by that organisation'. Arguing that the Gulf War demonstrated the importance of a strong collective security arrangement for small states, like New Zealand, and the need to ensure that the voice of small nations can be heard loud and clear, Wellington announced its candidacy for a seat on the UN Security Council as a candidate from the 'Western European and others group', which has two seats on the council - one of which will become vacant at the end of 1991. In the South Pacific context, Wellington indicated its willingness to send police, military or administrative help to Papua New Guinea to help restore peace on the troubled island of Bougainville. With the improvement in New Zealand-US relations, the National government is confident of 'finding its place in Bush's New World Order'.

In short, in the initial stages of the Gulf crisis, the response of New Zealand's Labour government was understandably cautious and deliberate. Given its limited military capabilities and the rupture caused in the New Zealand-US relations by the anti-nuclear policies of Labour governments, Wellington appeared less than enthusiastic about joining the US-led military build-up in the Gulf, which lacked

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27 ibid.
28 ibid.
33 Discussions with a New Zealand analyst, May 1991.
UN backing in the early stages of the crisis. Under the Labour governments of Geoffrey Palmer and Michael Moore, the New Zealand Labour Party, torn by strong pacifist influences on its left-wing, was uncertain what to do in the Gulf, and eventually offered a civilian medical team to work with the Red Cross, and a plane for use by the United Nations on peacekeeping missions, and made its preference for a UN-led military action against Iraq abundantly clear. However, neither offer was taken up. It did not take long for the new National government of Jim Bolger to depart from its predecessor in its policy approach to the Gulf crisis, as it was keen to signal to the world that New Zealand had not retreated into the Southwest Pacific. The policy differences between Labour and National governments over New Zealand’s contribution to the allied war effort notwithstanding, the fact remains that New Zealand did not mince words in condemning Iraqi aggression, moved promptly to implement the UN sanctions, and actively supported all resolutions passed by the UN Security Council.

Throughout the Gulf crisis, Australia and New Zealand kept each other informed of their respective positions. The Australian Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, reportedly discussed with his New Zealand counterpart, Geoffrey Palmer, his decision to send two frigates to join the multinational naval blockade in the Gulf. A few days later, Prime Minister Palmer publicly expressed New Zealand’s ‘support and understanding’ of the actions taken by nations that had sent naval forces to the Gulf. Evidently, Canberra also lobbied Wellington to play a more substantial role in the conflict during the various stages of the Gulf crisis. The visit of Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, to New Zealand in November 1990 - which took place less than three weeks after the new National Party government came to office in Wellington but was planned much earlier - provided an opportunity for an early exchange of views with leading members of the new government on a range of international and bilateral issues of mutual interest, including the Gulf crisis. Not only that, the National

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36 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Backgrounder, Vol.1, No.33, 14 December 1990, p.5; see also the transcript of the joint press conference following the Australia/New Zealand Ministerial Foreign Policy talks in Speeches & Statements
government's decision to contribute transport aircraft and medical teams was taken after consulting Australia, Britain, Canada, and the United States, as all four countries had indicated such a contribution would be welcome.37

Papua New Guinea, Fiji and Other South Pacific States: Unequivocal Support for the Allied War Effort

For the tiny and vulnerable South Pacific states, the Gulf crisis struck close to home, notwithstanding their geographic distance from the events. The events triggered by Iraq's aggression starkly confirmed that they lived in an interdependent world where their interests were inextricably caught up with those of the wider international community. Understandably, then, these South Pacific states were also unequivocal in their condemnation of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, seeing it as the most flagrant case of an aggressor taking over and attempting to absorb a neighbouring, small, and inoffensive country. Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister supported the United Nations-authorised use of force to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait after the 15 January deadline. The PNG Foreign Minister, Sir Michael Somare, said Papua New Guinea would comply with the wishes of the United Nations and supported calls for an early peace.38 The Parliament of the Marshall Islands passed a resolution expressing support for the United States and the MNFs on their implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions.39

Fiji's interim government expressed concern and blamed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait for the worsening of the situation in the Middle East, where Fiji had 1,100 soldiers UN peacekeeping duties, mainly in Lebanon and the Sinai desert.40 In late February 1991, Fiji -

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37 AFP, 'Prime Minister Bolger Elaborates', FBIS-EAS, 3 December 1990, p. 73. For example, the United States indicated that a military medical team would be welcome to serve at a US fleet hospital on land in the region. See Woods, 'Gulf Crisis: New Zealand's Contribution'.


39 ibid.

40 AFP, 'Concern Expressed over Middle East Developments', FBIS-EAS, 10 August 1990, p.58.
which has long courted and enjoyed the international glamour and prestige of dispatching soldiers to join UN forces in Lebanon, Sinai, Afghanistan, and the former Rhodesia - also made known its willingness to join the UN peacekeeping force on the Iraq-Kuwait border. After the end of the Gulf War, Fiji's government accepted an invitation from the United Nations to join the UN Iraqi-Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM). The Fiji military forces contributed eight observers and diverted a 110-man battalion in the UN Interim Force in Lebanon to Kuwait.41

Attending a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Pacific Island Conference of Leaders in Honolulu in late January 1991, Prime Minister of the Cook Islands, Sir Geoffrey Henry, told President George Bush that the conference and its member nations supported the Gulf War to evict Iraq from Kuwait and hoped the war would come to an end soon.42 The South Pacific states of Vanuatu, Tonga, Niue, French Polynesia and the Republic of Marshall Islands reportedly expressed their appreciation of the role played by Australia in the Gulf crisis during the visit of Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Evans, to the South Pacific Forum countries from 18 to 25 November 1990.43

On balance, the South Pacific came out of the Gulf conflict more easily than other regions and nations. For example, in terms of trade and other Gulf-induced economic problems, the South Pacific emerged from the Gulf War relatively unscathed when compared with South and Southeast Asia. For the Pacific island states, the challenge is not to find and adjust their place in the US-dominated New World Order - that is already secure given their pro-Western orientations.44 The challenge is to make the region internally stable and peaceful. For Australia, having had the backing of all South Pacific states for its role in the Gulf crisis would have important implications if a similar crisis were to erupt closer to home.

43 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Backgrounder, Vol.1, No.33, 14 December 1990, p.5.
Collective Security or Common Security for the South Pacific

As noted earlier, the South Pacific is an area of primary strategic interest for Australia. The micro-states of the South Pacific, lacking the capability themselves to shape the strategic environment, are important to Australian security because their very vulnerability is a source of potential instability in the arc of the region vital to Australian security. Fiji has already seen two military coups. A secessionist war is being fought, at low intensity, in PNG - the country of greatest geopolitical significance to Australia. The Indonesian-PNG border will continue to be a focus of attention. It is in the South Pacific that perceptions of Australia’s role and power are magnified compared with perceptions of other small and weak states like Fiji, Western Samoa, Kiribati, etc.

Australia has a clear interest in promoting peace and stability in the region, in keeping the region free from destabilising activity by extra-regional powers, and in generally minimising tension there. In addition to the existing players, such as the United States and France, the South Pacific region is attracting increasing attention from new extra-regional powers such as Japan, China, Taiwan and the Soviet Union. Indonesia has shown signs of closer interest and Fiji is actively seeking to draw Malaysia into a closer relationship. The end of the Cold War is likely to reinforce this trend, as the broader Asia-Pacific region becomes even more multipolar in its strategic balance. As Stephen Henningham observes:

Compared with most of the other regions of the world, the South Pacific has been and is likely to remain relatively peaceful ... the use or the threatened use of armed force to help shape relations between states has been infrequent ... But conflicts within the region are likely to increase, because of bleak economic prospects


... demographic pressures, ethnic divisions and separatist tendencies.47

What then are the prospects for the evolution of some sort of regional security arrangement or collective security system in the South Pacific?

The talk of establishing a permanent South Pacific Forum peacekeeping force to tackle regional crises has been in the air for quite some time but the idea has failed to win sufficient support from the Forum member-states. Despite that, South Pacific defence analyst, Greg Fry, believes that recent events (such as the Bougainville crisis, the 1988 riot in Vanuatu and the Fiji coups) might have paved the way for the formation of *ad hoc* regional forces to deal with specific crises.48

If the proposal to create a regional force materialises, Australia could be called upon to play a major role. However, according to Greg Fry, the nature of peacekeeping operations in the South Pacific would differ a great deal from traditional peacekeeping operations. Whereas peacekeeping forces set up by the United Nations are neutral, invited in by both sides (usually to supervise an agreement), a regional peacekeeping force in the South Pacific would most likely be deployed in support of the government of the day against one section of a nation’s citizens without their consent. The peacekeepers would have to deal with urban riots, secessionist or separatist movements, military coups and major law and order problems, as evidenced in the Australian military assistance to Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu.49

Several reasons can be given for the peculiar nature of security operations a South Pacific regional force might undertake. First, of course, are the immutable facts of geography. With the exception of the land border between Papua New Guinea and Irian Jaya, all the international boundaries in the South Pacific are maritime. Second, and a related factor, is the lack of capability on the part of most of the small island states to mount offensive operations beyond their home territories. In the absence of military threats and because of their

47 In Henningham and Ball (eds), *South Pacific Security*, op. cit., p. 137.
49 Ibid.
economic weakness, the island states have spent very little on defence. Only PNG, Fiji and Tonga have armed forces. But even their forces are oriented to meet internal security threats. Third, 'in the absence of maritime or land border disputes, and with the countries of the region enjoying good relations with one another, force has mainly been used within states to contain or suppress internal unrest or, in the instance of Fiji, to overthrow a government.

Under the circumstances, the island states remain opposed to formal security alliances but continue to believe that Australia and/or New Zealand would come to their aid in a crisis. Australian armed forces have been placed on alert five times in the past four years for overseas deployment in regional crises, and have just participated in the Gulf War. In late January 1991, Australia was called upon to provide Hercules aircraft and Defence Force medical and engineering teams by the Papua New Guinea government to help with the restoration of services to Bougainville. Australian defence planners also tend to agree that if Australian forces are to be deployed overseas, in the short-to-medium term, the South Pacific is the most likely site. In the Regional Security Statement of December 1989, Foreign Minister Senator Evans outlined the 'unusual and extreme' circumstances in which Australia might intervene. Acknowledging the sensitivities of

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50 The argument here relies heavily on Henningham and Ball (eds), *South Pacific Security*, pp. 17-19.
51 This is not to say that territorial or maritime disputes among the South Pacific states will not erupt in the future. In fact, the Bougainville secessionist conflict has already sparked differences between the governments of Papua New Guinea and Solomon Islands.
52 Henningham and Ball (eds), *South Pacific Security*.
54 Canberra agreed to consider PNG requests for military help favourably, see ‘PNG ‘to Ask Aust Military’ for Help’, *Canberra Times*, 31 January 1991. Some analysts argue that the South Pacific Forum countries have a duty to help heal the dangerous rift between Papua New Guinea and Bougainville. Vanuatu, Fiji and Solomon Islands have also indicated their willingness to contribute to an international supervisory team; see Robert Keith-Reid, ‘Region has Bougainville Role’, *Islands Business Pacific*, March 1991, p.9.
56 The cumulative criteria include the invitation of recognised domestic authorities and/or a direct threat to Australian security interests; and conditions include a finite time frame, clear and achievable operational objectives and cooperation with other states in the region. The support offered to Father Walter Lini in Vanuatu through equipment supplied to the mobile force in 1988 fits such criteria well.
the nations involved and the potential risks of frequent military engagement decisions, the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade of the Australian Parliament, in its 1989 report, expressed its preference for involving other nations in any direct intervention.\(^{57}\) It is argued that the legitimacy of a multi-country force, or even a regional force endorsed by the South Pacific Forum, would be more difficult to question than a single force from the region’s big power.\(^{58}\)

Whether the South Pacific states set up a regional force to resolve the region’s crises of the future or Australia and/or New Zealand continue to act in their individual capacity remains to be seen. What is obvious is that, given the nature of crisis situations in the South Pacific, common security rather than collective security is the most likely framework to resolve the regional conflicts. Common security seeks to achieve security with others, not against them, whereas collective security, as in the Gulf War, ensures there would be an effective and joint response by several states against one or more states committing aggression.\(^{59}\)

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58 Garrett, ‘Peacekeeping or Sabre Rattling’.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS

The Gulf War erupted at a turning point in the history of the post-World War II international system. The Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait took place at a time when the threat of superpower confrontation had faded and old equations of superpower competition and conflict involving client states had become a thing of the past. In the short-lived post-Cold War, pre-Gulf crisis era, it was being argued that economic strength rather than military capability; a country's Gross National Product (GNP) and per capita income rather than its number of nuclear-armed missiles and men under arms, would be the dominant themes of international relations of the nineties and beyond. In other words, the 'high politics' of diplomacy and security would give way to 'low politics' of economy and trade.

However, the Gulf crisis seemed to challenge these assumptions. Above all, it shattered the illusion that, with the end of the Cold War, the world would enter a new era of peace and stability. Saddam Hussein's misadventure in Kuwait was a cruel reminder to the world that the post-Cold War world may be more anarchic and more violence-prone than the world was in the preceding era. Conflicts that had been suppressed by the rivalry between East and West may now erupt, in much the same way that gangsters run rampant when the police lack the power to check them. Whereas in the Cold War era, regional powers were constrained to some extent by the risks of provoking a superpower confrontation, they might now feel freer to flex their muscles, aware of the decline in the ability of the superpowers to influence the outcome of regional conflicts. According to the Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, Australia joined the Gulf War against Iraq partly to ensure regional stability and security in the Asia-Pacific region in the post-Cold War period and partly to bolster the chances of the United States and the United Nations acting against future aggressors in this part of the world.1

Though Australia's decision to join the US-led multinational forces in the Gulf became the subject of heated controversy at home, it did not evoke any public comment or response from its neighbours in the Asian-Pacific region. This study has recorded the reactions of the Asian-Pacific countries - official as well as unofficial - to the Gulf crisis in general and to Australia's role in particular, from August 1990 to March 1991.

It demonstrates that the attitudes of the Asian-Pacific states to Australia's role in the Gulf crisis were, at best, mixed, and to some extent negative. The Asian-Pacific responses to Australia's military commitment in the Gulf War have ranged from outright opposition (North Korea and Vietnam) to understanding (India, Indonesia, Malaysia and China), and wholehearted support (Sri Lanka, Singapore, Brunei, Thailand, the Philippines, New Zealand, South Korea and Japan) for Canberra's action. The ambivalent and contradictory responses of India, China, Indonesia and Malaysia to the Gulf crisis had more to do with domestic factors than anything else. Likewise, the 'small state syndrome' explains the unqualified support for the allied action by the small but relatively rich states of Southeast Asia and the South Pacific. Given their own security concerns vis-à-vis their large, powerful neighbours, the small and vulnerable states of the Asia-Pacific region saw in collective security a guarantee for their own sovereignty and security.

There was also a divergence of views between Australia, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Singapore and New Zealand on the one hand, and the rest of the Asian countries on the other, with regard to US war objectives and the conduct of the war. For example, Australia, Japan, Singapore and New Zealand did not see the allied attack on Iraq as overstepping the UN mandate and they backed the launching of the ground offensive. But in some Asian countries with large Muslim populations, the destruction of Iraq was seen as probably a more important motive than the liberation of Kuwait.

This study also shows that Canberra failed to take advantage of the opportunity provided by the Gulf crisis to demonstrate to its neighbours Australia's commitment to developing 'habits of dialogue and cooperation' and 'a shared sense of strategic and security interests'
in the region. The so-called ‘public diplomacy’ of Senator Evans - a shorthand term for trying to shape the attitudes of opinion makers, and the wider public, in neighbouring countries in ways favourable to Australia’s interests - was nowhere to be seen during Australia’s Gulf crisis decision-making. Canberra neither took a lead in evolving a regional consensus on how to respond to the Gulf crisis nor dispatched its Foreign Minister to visit Australia’s friends and allies in the region to hold consultations with them, not necessarily for their authorisation or even endorsement, but to seek mutual understanding. The only exceptions in this respect were Japan and New Zealand.

Evidently, in the initial stages of the crisis, Canberra’s prompt dispatch of warships following the US and British lead - which lacked UN backing at that stage - had the potential to undermine Australian attempts to project itself as an independent actor in the Asia-Pacific region. Prime Minister Bob Hawke’s hasty action reinforced Australia’s image in some quarters as that of an American camp-follower - an image which successive Australian governments have tried hard to cast off. Since Australia appeared to have acted on Great Power stimuli rather than displayed a considered, consultative regional view, critics could argue that ‘Australia’s regional policy was a declaratory and not an operational principle’.2

But fortunately for Canberra, the formation of a broad anti-Iraqi international coalition and swift conclusion of the war seemed to vindicate the Australian position and rather enhanced its image in some Asian states. It can be argued that a long-drawn-out war or Israeli participation or a more substantial role by the Australian armed forces in the conflict would have exacerbated latent tensions and highlighted differences between Australian and Malaysian/ Indonesian attitudes towards the war.

II

Though Australia’s role in the Gulf crisis has not caused any rift between it and other Asian-Pacific countries, it has, nonetheless, once again highlighted differences in perception between Australia and its Asian neighbours regarding the role of the United Nations and collective security in the post-Cold War era and New World Order.

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Apparently, many Asian countries do not share the Bush-Hawke perception of the New World Order and the role played by the United Nations in the Gulf crisis.

In many South and Southeast Asian states, the role of the United Nations during the Gulf crisis came under strong criticism. The sudden shift of power from the General Assembly to the Security Council - which had remained deadlocked during the East-West divide - in the post-Cold War period has not pleased many Third World member-states of the United Nations, particularly middle-ranking powers like India, Indonesia and Malaysia. These Asian states would like a greater role for the General Assembly and the UN Secretary-General, in order to make the United Nations a more representative and democratic body. The irrelevance of the Non-Aligned Movement in the changed strategic environment and the disappearance of the Soviet bloc as a countervailing force in international politics has made many Third World countries feel vulnerable and insecure.

Perceptions of the New World Order, and what role the United Nations will play in it, vary greatly.\(^3\) With the notable exceptions of Australia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, all Asian countries are concerned - albeit to varying degrees - about the emergence of a unipolar world dominated, at least in the short term, by the United States. The fact that the interests of the developing Third World countries are different from those of developed countries, like Australia and Japan, which identify their interests broadly with the Western alliance, largely explains this divergence of perceptions. In a sense, these differences are also a reflection of the cleavage between the developed countries, like Australia, Japan, Singapore and South Korea, and those of the vast majority of developing countries, in Asia. Australian foreign policy makers would do well to keep these divergent perceptions among Asian countries in mind when formulating policy responses to future regional and global issues.

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This study has also analysed the likely scenarios if similar conflicts were to occur closer to home or conditions similar to those that precipitated the Gulf crisis arose in the Asia-Pacific region in the near future. The spectacle of five permanent members of the UN Security Council acting in concert has raised hopes in the West, particularly in Australia, that, in the post-Cold War era, a collective security system might be effective in tackling regional conflicts. However, an analysis of the premises underlying collective security, and the nature of potential conflict situations in the Asia-Pacific region, belies these high expectations. The swift and sharp international response to Saddam Hussein’s actions is seen in Asian capitals as the product of an unusual set of circumstances unlikely to be repeated elsewhere.

Firstly, it is argued that the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, because of their veto, would never agree to any operation which goes against their interests. In the Gulf crisis, superpower consensus became possible largely because the Soviet Union, racked by domestic crises and needing foreign economic assistance, had no stomach for conflict with the United States. Similarly, China, though wary of superpower military action, sought to entice the Western countries to relax the sanctions imposed against it since the Tiananmen massacre. The United Nations cannot expect this sort of luck twice.

Secondly, in the Gulf crisis, Iraq’s geography and economic situation were ideal for imposing sanctions and building a broad coalition of forces against it. But given the geographical location and basic sufficiency in foodstuffs, it is doubtful if a similar framework of sanctions and forces could be put together against India, China or Indonesia if one or more of these countries were to follow in the footsteps of Saddam Hussein’s Iraq.

Thirdly, a critical factor in bringing antagonistic countries like the US and Syria together was the ‘oil factor’, as the world economy is dependent on oil. The bulk of the security problems the world is likely to face in the future would be region-specific. But unlike the Gulf crisis, many of these issues, for example a South or Southeast Asian
crisis, would not have any impact on the security and prosperity of states beyond the immediate region.

Finally, the key element in the Gulf crisis was American leadership. One should not count on being able to repeat this pattern in the future. Nor should one ignore the fact that the American economy cannot indefinitely sustain a policy of unilateral global interventionism. During the Gulf crisis alone, the United States had to seek a foreign subsidy of at least US$50 billion to sustain the military operations from its allies, particularly Japan and West European countries. According to Henry Kissinger, ‘the United States will not be able to supply the vast preponderance of military force for security missions far from its shores’ in the future. Therefore, neither the US nor other nations should treat the concept of the New World Order as an institutionalisation of recent practices. The conflict management in the Gulf cannot serve as a precedent for future exercises in conflict management.

This is not to say that the Gulf conflict management does not contain seeds for future peacekeeping missions. It does, but we are unlikely to see this scale of UN military operation again. Even if it becomes routine for the United Nations to take the lead in responding to aggression, ‘it will have to get along, most of the time with small forces, grudgingly contributed by member states and adequate only to enforce trade embargoes’.

In short, with the exception of a conflict situation in South Asia or Southeast Asia which does not involve a veto-holding permanent member of the UN Security Council, it is unlikely that Australia will ever be called upon to contribute forces in defence of collective security in the Asian region. As regards Northeast Asia, the presence and involvement of two veto-holding permanent members of the Security Council - the Soviet Union and China - would rule out an exercise in collective security over the Kurile Islands and the Korean Peninsula disputes. There is evidence that the world in general and the Asian-Pacific countries in particular tend to see the formation of a

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5 ibid.
broad international coalition against Iraq as an exception in international diplomacy, and as not serving as a model for coping with future regional conflicts. The world response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was a special case because of the oil stakes involved. No such international unanimity could be expected if, for example, India invaded Pakistan or Sri Lanka, China occupied the Spratly Islands, North Korea attacked South Korea, or Malaysia invaded Singapore. In effect, this first test of the post-Cold War security structure was a relatively uncomplicated one.

IV

Last but not least, the Gulf crisis either set off a debate or acted as a catalyst in the ongoing debates in many Asian-Pacific countries over the formulation of a foreign policy which would meet the challenges and the opportunities of the post-Cold War, post-Gulf War era. All countries in the Asia-Pacific region are reassessing their security outlooks and the basic assumptions underlying their foreign policy approaches. In addition, the prospects of arms reduction and the control of weapons of mass destruction in the foreseeable future do not look bright at all. If anything, the Gulf War threatens to re-kindle fresh arms races as armed forces and governments in the conflict-prone regions of the Asia-Pacific draw their own conclusions from the military operations of the Gulf War. Regional and global strategic trends indicate that the security environment is becoming increasingly complex, potentially troublesome, and unpredictable. The reduction in the superpower presence, the growth of major regional powers, the availability of greater economic resources, the quest for advanced technology, the withdrawal of superpower security guarantees, unresolved territorial and resource disputes, will all continue to push regional military expenditures upwards.
APPENDIX*

ASIAN-PACIFIC NATIONS’ RESPONSES TO THE GULF WAR: A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

Pro-Iraq

North Korea opposed and condemned the US-led military deployment and the allied attack on Iraq on 17 January.

Vietnam strongly condemned the launching of Operation Desert Storm to forcibly evict Iraq from Kuwait.

In Between

China abstained in UN Security Council vote authorising use of force; expressed regret at the start of the war; called for peace talks; fully exploited the crisis to its own diplomatic advantage.

India initially was critical of the Western deployment of forces; later on permitted refuelling facilities to US and Australian aircraft en route to the Gulf; provided the Coalition with intelligence information in return for economic aid and other benefits; was critical of the US war objectives and Iraq’s destruction.

Indonesia initially was ambivalent; later condemned the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait but turned down Saudi and US requests for military support; offered to mediate; was critical of the UN’s role in the crisis.

Malaysia voted for UN Security Council resolutions as a Council member in 1990 but rejected a Saudi appeal to send troops outside the UN framework; was under domestic pressure to support Iraq; was critical of the Coalition’s war goals and the UN’s handling of the crisis.

Australia provided 2 frigates, a supply ship, Navy divers and hospital staff; Australia/US joint facilities were used to support Desert Storm.

Bangladesh sent ground forces but the government was under intense domestic pressure to support Iraq.

Canada sent fighter aircraft, naval forces and medical support but ruled out sending ground forces.

Japan contributed a total of US$13 billion to the allied war effort but ruled out sending Self-Defense Forces except to airlift refugees; sent minesweepers after the end of the war.

Nepal was supportive of the UN’s role in the Gulf crisis.

New Zealand provided medical teams and transport aircraft.

Pakistan joined the Coalition with a 10,000-strong infantry force, but was under strong domestic pressure to support Saddam Hussein.

Papua New Guinea supported the use of force to end the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Philippines sent a 300-strong medical team to Saudi Arabia; allowed the use of Subic and Clark bases to support US forces in the Gulf.

Singapore provided a medical team and supported the Coalition.

South Korea dispatched a 154-person medical team and cargo aircraft to Saudi Arabia; contributed US$500 million to the allied forces.

Soviet Union voted in favour of all UN Security Council resolutions; supported the use of force against Iraq; made no material contribution to the Coalition but provided intelligence information.

Sri Lanka offered the use of airports and bases to US forces.

Taiwan pledged US$30 million in humanitarian aid to Jordan, Turkey and Egypt; was disappointed at not being formally approached by the West for help.
Thailand allowed US military aircraft to land at Thai bases \textit{en route} to the Gulf.
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This study examines the responses of Asian-Pacific countries to Australia's role in the Gulf crisis and other related issues (such as the role of the United Nations in the post-Cold War era, the New World Order, and the prospects for collective security in the Asia-Pacific region) in order to gain an understanding of regional perceptions of Australia's present and future role in the global and regional security regimes. It demonstrates that the response of Asian-Pacific countries to Australian military commitment in the Gulf War ranged from outright opposition (North Korea and Vietnam) to understanding (Indonesia, Malaysia, China and India) and wholehearted support (Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Brunei, the South Pacific Forum states, South Korea, Japan and Sri Lanka).

In the initial stages of the crisis, Canberra's hasty dispatch of warships following the US and British lead had the potential to undermine Australian attempts to project itself as an independent actor in the Asia-Pacific region. But the formation of a broad anti-Iraqi international coalition and prompt conclusion of the war seemed to vindicate the Australian position and rather enhanced its image in some Asian capitals. It can be argued that a long-drawn-out war or Israeli participation in the conflict would have exacerbated latent tensions and highlighted differences between Australian and Indonesian/Malaysian attitudes.

Though Australia's role in the Gulf did not cause any rift between Australia and other Asian-Pacific countries, it once again highlighted their different perceptions. Most Asian-Pacific countries do not share the Bush-Hawke perception of the New World Order and are critical of the role of the United Nations during the Gulf crisis. Many Asian states do not believe that Gulf-style conflict management should serve as a model for coping with future regional conflicts.