

RECENZJE

Michael Mc-Kinley (ed.), *The Gulf War: Critical Perspectives*, Canberra, 1994, 201 pp.

The Gulf of 1991 has produced a mountain of books and every worthwhile department of international relations, strategy or West Asian—Middle Eastern Studies has brought out a book or monograph to interpret the events that led to the Gulf War, the course of the war and its aftermath. If the Polish departments have failed to bring out any worthwhile study, seven Australian, including one of Indian origin, have been tremendously successful in presenting some critical essays on the Gulf War partly from Australian point of view. It is indeed heartening to find that a country of 18 million people, which has hitherto remained an academic island, suddenly brought out a first rate presentation on the Gulf War. The editor has thoroughly navigated his contributors to a well-chalked route map. The flight is almost smooth though few pressure-pockets do make bumps which is natural on a long distance journey. The message which clearly comes out is similar to what was Ernest Hemingway's admonishment: "Never think that war, no matter how necessary, nor how justified, is not a crime". But irony was that the mood of a world (as created by US media) which could count itself exceedingly fortunate to have escaped nuclear war since 1945, seemed enthusiastic in its murderous intent to avenge the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in January 1991.

The opening chapter of David Campbell "Washed in Shades of Grey. The Persian Gulf War in Context" is a comprehensive piece in itself. It reflects a sound history of US involvement in building up Iraqi army during Iran-Iraq War of 1980s. As far back as March 1985 it was clear to the Pentagon that Iraq's interest in acquiring nuclear capability meant there was 'a real possibility' that US technology would be diverted to those ends. ("New York Times", 5th July 1992). Between 1985 and 1990, 771 export licences to Iraq for dual use technology worth of \$ 1,5 bn were approved by the United States. Campbell also highlights the point how Kuwait deliberately provoked Iraq with its aggressive policy aimed at increasing its share of OPEC-mandated production quotas and this alone cost \$ 7 bn to Iraq as the

oil prices had gone down in the global market. Kuwait and other Gulf states at the prompting of the United States were trying to bring down or contain Iraq in a manner similar to that which they had successfully exercised against Iran during its war with Iraq (p. 27). The ruling Āl Ṣabāḥ family of Kuwait became more and more intransigent and was unprepared to strike any deal with Iraq. Whenever pressed by Iraq for financial help the Kuwaiti response was to raise the issue of demarcating the border between the two countries. The United States had in actuality never recognized a legally binding border separating Iraq and Kuwait, because no officially ratified delineation agreement was ever deposited with the United Nations. It was no wonder when US Ambassador Ms. April Glaspie told President Ṣaddām Ḥusayn on 25 July 1990 (a week before the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait) that her country had no military obligations to defend Kuwait. Introspect this was the ploy which the Bush Administration successfully tried to 'fix' Ṣaddām Ḥusayn by inducing him to invade Kuwait. Once Ṣaddām was dragged into the quagmire, US diplomacy in the crisis had little concern for anything other than marshalling of multilateral support for military action. Bush and company pretended to give diplomacy a chance, but purposely scuttled each and every move for a peace solution made either by the Arabs or the Soviet Union. As a matter of act, President Bush was determined to break the back of Iraq's military and industrial capacity. He was also keen to get reelected and he wanted to boost up his image in the United States (though he failed in his bid November 1992).

Kim Nossal's essay surveys the Gulf debates in Australia and Canada to demonstrate the dynamics of convergence and divergence in political discourse in two states facing similar circumstances in foreign policy. Both premier Robert Hawke of Australia and Premier Paul Mulroney of Canada came out openly to be 'stroked' by the powerful Bush. The common criticism was that Hawke and Mulroney was 'just fawning or toadying' to the US. The analogy of choice on both sides of the Pacific was the servile care both the prime ministers often referred as lap dogs, puppy dogs, or presidential poodles (p. 56). Both had betrayed the sound legacies of Robert Menzies and Lester Pearson respectively who in their times behaved more as peace-makers during the crises in the 1950s.

Where Nossal left, James Richardson picked up the thread of narration when he elucidated the concept of Australian political culture. Australia is best regarded as an ordinary modern industrial society, but nonetheless a society which has shown a capacity for rapid self-transformation from an except ironically racist, provincial and intolerant of diversity, to one whose multiculturalism provides the foundation for a new all-round tolerance and a

cosmopolitan outlook. *Prima facie*, the manner Hawke's committing three workshops to join the international blockade to enforce economic sanctions against Iraq, three hours after a telephone call from Bush, suggested that Australia reverting to the role of compliant ally of its great and powerful proctor. "With one phone call to his old golfing buddy, Hawke. Bush was able to draw a promise of participation by the smallest and most remote nation involved in the conflict—a rueful triumph for golf course diplomacy" (p. 78). Nonetheless the aftermath of the Gulf War demonstrated the need for a thorough rethinking and redefinition of Australia's international role if its response of international crises is to amount to more than improvisation and it showed that, despite tendencies towards cosmopolitanism and greater sophistication there can be relapses into narrow provincialism.

In the fourth essay Richard Leaver has explained the meaning of economic sanctions and military solutions in the context of Australian middle power internationalism and the costs of its instant gratification. The author is eager to know even in 1994 what pay-off had come to the Australian government by charting an historically consistent course on the agenda world order politics. Leaver denounces the western double standards and calls it "a virtual conspiracy of silence" on the issue of continuing economic sanctions against Iraq. "For most of their life span, sanctions have been applied on a society where the infrastructure of everyday life has been severely weakened by the general ravages of war" (p. 100). The whole affair looks like the politics of revulsion. So far the gap between sanctions that squeeze and sanctions that strangle have not offered a crucial opening for diplomacy. The resistance of the Iraqi people even under a despot, has not collapsed after seven years.

In the next essay Graeme Cheeseman talks about Australian defence and the Gulf War and poses some relevant questions. "Was the Gulf deployment simply a temporary diversion from Australia's evolving defence thinking or did it presage a fundamental change and if so, in what direction? Did Australia's Gulf deployment represent an extension of its 'liberated' thinking on foreign and defence issues or a return to the comforts of past dependencies and security relationships?" Answers to these questions have partly been made by the essayist himself and the other part will reveal itself in future. Basic thing is that the provincialism of Australia's leaders stem from their deeply held fear that Australia remains isolated, alone, vulnerable to attack by regional Asian powers and thus they are always in need of a protector and who can be a better protector than the United States.

Mohan Malik articulates impressively the issues of Australia's role and Asia-Pacific responses during the Gulf War. At the outset of his essay he

openly says. "Diplomatically militarily and economically, Australia today is more closely integrated with the Asia-Pacific region than it has ever been". Canberra's prompt dispatch of warships to the Gulf was seemingly violation of unilateral commitment made by Australia to consult and inform its Southeast Asian neighbours regarding all military decisions. To some, it was a clear case of Australia opting for 'good western citizenship' in preference to the 'good international citizenship' which it publically espoused. As compared to Australian near total support, some Asian countries, China, India, Indonesia and Malaysia took the view that Arab problems should best be solved by Arabs themselves (p. 150). Yet when the time came India gave refuelling facilities to Australian ships on their way to war theatre in the Gulf.

While enumerating the effects of the Gulf War the author maintains. 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 in New Delhi. Beijing is concerned that American hegemonism or Pax Americana, if not checked, will move next to 'tame' China (p. 110). The Chinese were also worried about the the Soviet Union with the tripolar system of the U.S. Europe and Japan (rich-nation club) to establish a New World Order. What Australia is going to do in this projected scenario, remains to be seen! After all bulk of the security problems the world is likely to face in the near future would be region-specific. Nonetheless, Malik maintained that Australian image had been enhanced in some Asian countries after the war thought the differences of perceptions between Australia and some of its Asian neighbours with regard to the role of the United Nations and nature of the New World Order remained.

The masterpiece of the book is written by the editor himself. His essay "The Bitterness of Being Right: Reflections on Australian Alliance Orthodoxy, the Gulf War and the New World Order" reveals the depth of superb understanding of the subject. His presentation is so impressive that he should be regarded as a political philosopher. He introduces the readers with the nuances of literature, with the flair of philosophy and above all with the technical details of contemporary politics. No wonder he comes out as a friend, philosopher and guide for sensitive students of international politics. Right in the beginning of his essay he termed that Bush had become a symbol of the pornography of mono-superpower triumphalism during the war, the war which was essentially cruel, merciless and vengeful and the so-called concept of New World Order was no different from an imperial vision (p. 167). "There was no claim whatsoever that universal peace was ever anticipated on the dissolution of the Cold War, but Cold War's dissolution

allowed for an elusion of the more opportunistic and coercive reflexes of superpower politics in favour of negotiations and compromise until such time as the utility of such an approach is clearly exhausted" (p. 168). He is totally opposed to war and comes out against alliance system when he quotes John Vasquiez's words:

It is now clear that alliances do not produce peace but lead to war. Alliance making is an indicator that there is a danger of war in the near future... This means that the attempt to balance power is itself part of very behaviour that leads to war.

To him the United States is basically a war-prone country because it is a country made by war. Plus war is the permanent mid-wife of Great Power birth and American strategy is based on the annihilation of the self-created enemy (pp. 181-183). Later on, he qualifies his point when he says: "War proneness and a certain propensity for coercion and intervention do not of themselves disqualify the US as the appropriate ally if it is the case that the country was acting out of necessity, or perhaps, legally. But evidence is not favourable to this hypothesis on either ground". This has been the pattern of US involvement in the post-World War II period and in general and the Gulf War in particular. Even Madeline Albright observed in early 1990 when she said: "In the Middle East, neither the Reagan nor the Bush Administrations have been able to argue comprehensively what it is the US wants from whom, or how it might be able to archive its objectives in order to solve some of the root causes of that region's seemingly perpetual tendency towards conflict".

In other words to control a chaotic region the US went berserk and started believing that large military forces long for an excuse to justify their existence:

The old saying applied to brains, sexual performance, and diesel engines, if you don't use it, you will loose it—that is, they deteriorate when not being used—is relevant to military behaviour.

The Bush Administration was determined to impose its will on the region and it overlooked the violations of human rights in Israel, Syria, Turkey and even in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. It selected Iraq and destroyed it as a functioning state by imposing no war zones both in Kurdish area and in southern area, close to the Kuwaiti border. The Gulf War has estimated to cost the region to the tune of 600 bn USD and the United States alone has

made 60 bn USD in return. And of course, the Allied Commander Norman Schwarzkopf has made 50,000 USD per speech to explain the details of a hammer killing a fly and to establish his “military genius” among US audiences.

More than a hundred thousand Iraqis were killed, majority of them were civilians, without a trace in history. Such were the blueprints of a new world order. Great victories are achieved against great adversaries, not against an isolated, demoralized, strikingly badly led, shell-shocked, strategically bankrupt and tactically bereft rabble. Will the American elite ever try to reeducate itself? Will it realize that victory has to be sought over any nation or people-but over ignorance, poverty, disease, and human degradation where ever they may be found. If the American elite does not change its perception, the Third World will see many more wars *à la* Gulf in the years to come

Surender K. Bhutani

Mohamed Heikal, *Secret Channels. The Inside Story of the Arab-Israeli Peace Negotiations*, Harper Collins Publishers, London 1996, 572 pp.

This reviewed book has already been translated into Arabic and published by Alsaqi Books (London) in three volumes:

– *Al-Mufāwaḍāt as-sirriyya bayna al-‘Arab wa Isrā’īl. Al-Uṣṭūra wa-āl-imbirāṭuriyya wa-ād-dawla al-yahūdiyya*;

– *Al-Mufāwaḍāt as-sirriyya bayna al-‘Arab wa Isrā’īl. ‘Awāṣif al-ḥarb wa-‘awāṣif as-salām*;

– *Al-Mufāwaḍāt as-sirriyya bayna al-‘Arab wa-Isrā’īl. Salām al-awhām. Oslo, mā qablahā wa-mā ba‘dahā*.

The author, Mohamed Heikal, is one of the most famous journalists of the Arab world. He was a close friend and advisor of the Egyptian leader Ḡamāl ‘Abd an-Nāṣir (1918-1970), and was said to have been closely involved in the writing of *The Philosophy of the Revolution*.¹ Heikal was the editor-in-chief of “Al-Ahrām” daily from 1957 until 1974. After the death of President ‘Abd an-Nāṣir he remained also in close touch with President As-Sādāt, contributing often to crucial decision-making. He disagreed on matters of principle with As-Sādāt, particularly over the handling of the October 1973 war

¹ Peter Wood, *Nasser*, Longman, London-New York 1992, p. 157.