

AUSTRALIA AND THE UNITED STATES IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, to the Sydney Institute-Pacific Forum CSIS Conference on Challenges to Australia-American Relations After the Cold War, Sydney, 4 February 1991.

The Guardian Weekly remains just about my favourite regular current affairs reading. This is not only because it enables one to imply that one is keeping daily pace with *Le Monde* and the *Washington Post* - an indispensable requirement on the diplomatic circuit. Nor is it just because of the stimulating and timely quality of most of its journalism. It is also because - I have to admit - the nice soft, fuzzy left-liberalism that runs through a lot of the Guardian's own think-pieces affords a nice warm, nostalgic, comforting counterweight to all that hard-headed pragmatism we Labor Ministers these days have to demonstrate in our public ministerial duties - not least when addressing bodies like the Sydney Institute!

All that said, there are occasions when one comes across a piece of left-liberal orthodoxy that is so fuzzy one is obliged to reach, if not for a revolver, at least for one's dictaphone. Such a piece I found in last week's paper. It referred to the "new world order" that is now emerging as nothing so much as "a world in the hands of a single superpower with all its cold war military heritage available to impose its will across the globe"; moreover, the superpower in question was assisted by a "loyalty reflex" that ensured that "when Washington sounded the trumpet ... client states answered the call".

While the article in question, by Martin Walker, was in fact a little more sophisticated - though no less jaundiced - than these extracts suggest, this kind of imagery is nonetheless still very much alive and well among the world-wide legion of reflexively anti-American cynics and sceptics, and it needs from time to time to be answered head-on. This Conference - focusing as it does on Australia-US relations in the post-Cold War world - is as good an opportunity as any to make the case again, in an Australian context, that international affairs these days are not quite so easily rendered in the placard prose of the 1960s and 1970s.

So what is the United States's role and responsibility in the new dynamics of the post-Cold War era, and where does Australia's relationship with the United States fit within those new dynamics?

There are all sorts of ways of defining and describing what might be involved in a new

world order. And there are obviously economic and social dimensions to the concept as well as political and security ones. But my own preference, on balance, is to keep it simple: the essential defining characteristic of the new world order, as we have seen it evolve to date, has simply been, in my view, cooperation by the major powers in the containment and resolution of conflict under the umbrella of the United Nations and using its institutional processes. In this respect, Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, Namibia and Cambodia have been the warm-up rounds, with Kuwait now the breathtakingly tense and dangerous test case - on the resolution of which the whole future course of the post-Cold War world very much now depends.

Things worked very differently in the old world order of the Cold War decades, and not always necessarily for the worse. Whether we find it comfortable to acknowledge it or not - and wearing my Guardian Weekly readers's hat I don't! - the maintenance of two enormously powerful blocs facing each other across Europe and the North Atlantic since 1945 did operate to prevent the threat of global warfare from being realised. The opposing alliances did create a balance, with their huge

arsenals of nuclear weapons constituting a terrifying but effective mutual deterrent. And those blocs did promote a certain discipline which prevented tensions from boiling over in a way which might have occurred in the absence of such structures. It is almost certain, for example, that Iraq, in its Cold War days as a Soviet client, would not have dared to do as it did in Kuwait without active Soviet support.

But if stability was the main advantage of the post-1945 system, it was stability at a price. The most obvious cost was the terror of living with the knowledge that miscalculation by political leaders, or technical failure, could result in the annihilation of all humanity. There was too the enormous financial cost of the ever-spiralling arms race generated by the Cold War: hundreds of billions of dollars of resources which could have been put to more productive use both in the superpower economies themselves and in developing countries around the world.

There was also, above all, the price paid in negating the collective security functions of the United Nations. The UN has been able to perform some peace-related functions over the years - peace-making through the conciliatory good offices of the Secretary-General; peace-keeping in the sense of sending small-scale forces to monitor, supervise and verify settlements once reached; and acting as a forum for multilateral arms control and disarmament negotiations. But on the ultimate peace-enforcement role envisaged for it by its founding fathers, the UN was effectively impotent for 45 years.

From the 1940s to the 1980s many attempts were made to give the UN security teeth. With the exception of the UN forces in Korea - made possible more by procedural absent-mindedness by the Soviet Union than any superpower cooperation - those attempts failed,

and the United Nations became more often a forum for confrontation than for cooperation in the resolution of conflict. The United Nations was placed in an East-West straitjacket, with a Security Council veto by one side or other being the only certainty when the UN was called on to act.

The Cold War is now over - at least we all hope so - and a wholly new approach to guaranteeing global security is emerging. Superpower confrontation no longer supplies the organising principle around which global political and strategic issues are arranged. Regional conflicts are no longer defined as part of the twentieth century's grand ideological struggle, as test cases which neither side can afford to lose and which, as a consequence, become intractable. The way has been opened for cooperation to replace confrontation in the way the international community approaches regional and global security matters.

The concept of "common security", which seemed to so many naive and fanciful when it was first advanced by Olof Palme and others in the early 1980s, has become a commonplace. This is the notion that lasting security does not lie in an upwards spiral of arms development, fuelled by mutual suspicion, but in a commitment to joint survival, to taking into account the legitimate security anxieties of others, to building step-by-step military confidence between nations, to working to maximise the degree of interdependence between nations - to achieving security with others not against them.

If common security is both the objective and also a way of describing the confidence-building process by which that objective may be peacefully attained, then collective security is the ultimate guarantee that that process will not be blown off course by the aggressive behaviour of individual states, or that if it is, the international reaction will be swift.

The significance of the Gulf crisis is that the collective security system that the UN founders, including our own Dr Evatt, strove so hard to put in place in 1945 after the horrors of the 1930s and World War II, is now being tried and tested once again.

Central to the UN Charter is the principle that no nation should invade or annex another: that, in the exact words of the Charter, all members shall refrain from the threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state. There could have been no more obvious, no more blatant, no more contemptuous an infringement of that injunction than Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; and there could be no more clear a need for the international community to act to reverse that infringement. Had we hesitated and fumbled, contented ourselves with declarations that had no effect and resolutions that were not enforced, the negative demonstration effect would have been compelling: we would have been acknowledging yet again, as we were forced to think for the first 45 years of the UN's existence, that the Charter's principles were suited for some ideal world,

but not for the here and now. The new world order would have been a dead letter.

An essential element of the new approach had to be compelling compliance with the principles of the Charter. If at the end of the day force is not an option, then the aggressor simply has to sit it out. As Clausewitz told us, and pacifists have been forgetting ever since, the aggressor is always a man of peace - he wants nothing more than to march in unresisted. As Michael Walzer made the same point in an excellent recent article in *The New Republic*, at the end of the day "it is the victim and the victim's friends who must choose to fight".

Tremendous diplomatic and political pressure was applied as Iraq was arraigned before the supreme body of world opinion and, in an overwhelming demonstration of global opposition to the destruction of Kuwait's sovereignty, asked to reverse its occupation. Severe economic pressure was applied as the international community decided on, and rigorously applied, economic sanctions against Iraq - sanctions which effectively cut off Iraq's economy and began to reduce its wealth and production. But when it became clear, as it did, that sanctions would not achieve their purpose within any kind of realistic timeframe, the most extreme form of enforcement - force of arms - remained as the only way to uphold the principles and decisions of the United Nations.

In all of this the United States has behaved not as the "single superpower" of *Guardian Weekly* legend - imposing its will across the globe - but as a model international citizen. What we have seen over the last few months has been a remarkable feat not of unilateral intimidation, but of multilateral diplomacy. Under US leadership - and the US has borne a disproportionate share of both the diplomatic and the military burden - an international coalition unprecedented in size and diversity has been put together, and has held together, all within a carefully and deliberately constructed UN framework.

Central to that achievement, and to its continuation, has been the extraordinary level of understanding which has characterised the relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. From the beginning of this crisis, there has been a large measure of agreement between them on how the crisis should be managed. There has been no hint of an attempt to exploit the other side's discomfort; no attempt to rally "an anti-imperialist coalition"; and no use of the veto in the Security Council. Without that degree of understanding, without that carefully nurtured cooperation, unthinkable in the Cold War years, the task of gathering concerted international support to reverse Iraq's aggression would have been immeasurably more complicated, and may indeed have been beyond practical attainment.

The corollary of all this is of course that the new world order is fragile - it depends for its continuation on this kind of cooperation, and if the foreign policy orientation of the Soviet Union should swerve back in the unhappy direction of the past, then the new world order

will be very short-lived. We can do no more than hope that it will not be.

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Just as it is a caricature to describe the new world order as no more than the captive stage of a single superpower, so too is it to suggest that the response of the United States's traditional allies has been no more than the "loyalty reflex" of "client states" answering a Washington trumpet call.

While it is true that there has been a high degree of solidarity and support for the US action from its traditional allies in Europe and elsewhere - symbolised not least by the way in which in the northern Gulf the ships working most closely together are those of the US, UK, Australia and Canada - it is also of course the case that the response to the Gulf War has wholly transcended traditional alliance relationships.

Certainly so far as Australia's response to the Gulf crisis is concerned, it is absolutely not the case that our commitment was the product of any reflex acceptance of US positions, simply because they were US positions. We have our own traditions of good international citizenship, our own perceptions of what response was in our national interest and world's interest, and it was those that determined our response. We have had a strong and visible commitment to the United Nations and its collective security role since the days of Dr Evatt; we have played a role second to almost none in UN peace-keeping operations; we have been a world leader - long before the Gulf crisis - in the fight to limit and ultimately ban chemical weapons; we have strongly pursued human rights issues around the world; and we have been a key international player in the fight to liberalise international trade and to develop institutional means to enforce this. We have had a strong and longstanding commitment generally to internationalist solutions to problems, whether they be of an economic, social, political or security kind.

Certainly our perception of the impact of failure to reverse Saddam Hussein on the long-term security future of our own Asia-Pacific region was an important specific motivating factor in contributing as we have to the resolution of the Gulf crisis. But our very geographic distance from the Gulf was in itself part of the reason for acting as quickly as we did: we thought it important, given our internationalist perspective, to demonstrate just how widespread was the reaction to Saddam Hussein's regression: it was not just a North American reaction, or a European reaction, or a Gulf states reaction - it was a world-wide one.

All that said, Australia's relationship with the United States continues to be as important as any we have: it is warm, it is fruitful, and above all it is increasingly mature - embodying generally mutual interests, and clearly now recognising that alliance membership and an independent view of the world are not incompatible.

What Australia now has with the United States - and what we would hope and expect to maintain in the post-Cold War era - is not just a military alliance, but a relationship of real substance, embracing ties of history, commerce and culture, and a profound mutual interest in maintaining a strong American presence globally and within our region. That the alliance does give expression to mutual interests lies at the heart of its durability. These interests extend across security issues, economic issues and multilateral or global issues, and it is worth looking at each of these areas in turn to appreciate what both sides gain from the relationship and to understand the strength of the foundation we share in looking to the future.

First, security. For Australia, our alliance does not absolve us of the responsibility of defending ourselves, of pulling our own weight in our own protection or, as is clear from recent events, from making our own contribution to multilateral efforts to solve regional challenges to peace - as we are doing in the Gulf, and as we are also continuing to do with our efforts to secure peace in Cambodia. Our defence policy of self-reliance enables us to defend ourselves from within our own resources and provides us with a capacity to contribute to wider security tasks. But it is self-reliance within an alliance framework - and that framework is very important to our security, not only because of the deterrent value of the ANZUS alliance, but because without the exchange of intelligence, and the technology, resupply and training support that it involves, Australia would find it difficult to sustain a basic defence posture quite as self-reliant as we would like it to be.

The security value of the alliance flows in both directions. The United States has its own substantial security interests in the Asia Pacific region, and these are served through an alliance with a country in the unique geographic position of straddling both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans. We offer the United States access to our airfields and to ports in both oceans - access which is important in sustaining the US global role. And we make a distinctive contribution to the United States defence posture, and through that to global stability, by operating with the United States a number of joint facilities in Australia, most importantly those at Pine Gap and Nurrungar.

In the Asia-Pacific region moves are gradually occurring toward the building of a common security approach of the kind I earlier described, with countries working within various economic, political and military frameworks to build multi-dimensional linkages of mutual benefit and interdependence, between old adversaries as well as between old friends.

It is Australia's belief that as we move towards a common security approach in the Asia-Pacific region, the present framework of United States alliances in the region - with Japan and Australia as the northern and southern anchors respectively - can and should remain, for the foreseeable future, as a solid base for that transition. In the Asia Pacific, even more so than in Europe, countries need the reassurance of these established alliances as they

address the new policy questions. The need for fail-safe mechanisms is even greater in Asia than in Europe, because of the many questions and apprehensions that an uncontrolled movement to multipolarity would otherwise generate. I support Defence Secretary Dick Cheney's thought, expressed recently in Tokyo, that the US defence presence in Asia, supported by its various alliances, operates as a "balancing wheel" as regional countries gradually adjust to the changing security environment. And we in Australia are glad, as are other countries in Asia, that the foreshadowed reduction over time in the US military presence in Asia looks like being gradual, predictable, and subject to review as it proceeds.

Secondly - and much more briskly - on economic issues: our bilateral trade relationship with the United States continues to be vital for Australia. The United States is Australia's second largest trading partner, supplying over 20 per cent of our imports and taking over 10 per cent of our exports. The Australian market is less important to the United States, but not unimportant: in fact, we are the United States' tenth largest export market, and the US has a two to one balance in its favour in trade with Australia - something not to be dismissed lightly these days.

Thirdly, Australia and the United States work together effectively on an enormous range of multilateral issues - the list includes, but is not limited to, security efforts like control of nuclear and chemical weapons; multilateral economic efforts like the Uruguay Round of Multilateral Trade Negotiations and the establishment of the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process; work on human rights and the environment; and efforts to combat narcotics and to halt the ravages of underdevelopment, hunger and disease.

The overall relationship between Australia and the United States will be as relevant in the new world order as it was during the old. This is not because we have the identity of views that one might expect to exist as between a hegemonic power and its client. Indeed, Australia differs from the United States on quite a number of issues, which have over the years included (and certainly not been limited to) such matters as the South Pacific Nuclear Free Zone treaty and a variety of important trade questions covering commodities from sugar to steel. This Australian Government has never been inhibited in making our differences of view and perspective known to the United States, and in advancing our own national interests vigorously. Firmly acting in our own best interests does not mean, though, that we should be inhibited in acting in cooperation with the United States when we share common interests and objectives.

And we do have a common interest now in laying the foundation for a new world order - in which countries have greater guarantees of peace and security and are consequently more able to seek economic progress; a world order which allows the international community to tackle the remaining urgent global problems of hunger, disease and environmental degradation which plague humanity; a world order which comes closer to the values which lie at the basis of both Australian and American society - democracy,

human rights and the rule of law.

These shared values are more than just an accidental product of similar historical circumstances - they are a precious achievement; they represent a firm and unshakeable belief in the equality of individuals and in the right of men and women to conduct their affairs free of coercion, free of violence and free of arbitrary interference. They are values which, while rooted in the domestic political experience of liberal democracies, are international in their application. They are at the centre of the UN Charter and at the centre of the new world order.

The very essence of the democratic system of government is the requirement to accommodate a wide diversity of views. So too with the emerging approach to international affairs. It is abundantly clear that any new order must be capable of accommodating many different social systems and cultural values. And in that context it is not of course the case that the conflict in the Gulf is a war between Islam and the West, as its instigator tries to pretend: the international response, in which so many Islamic nations are now joined, is profoundly motivated by a concern to hold the line not against any ideology or religion, but against a crude reversion to the politics of the jungle.

There can be no underestimating the seriousness of the step the international community has taken to oppose Iraq by force of arms. I know that a great many people have felt alarm that we had come so far from conflict between the superpowers, only to be faced so soon with a nightmare in the Middle East. I can appreciate that sense of misgiving and disappointment - certainly more than I can appreciate the reflex anti-Americanism which has so often been at the origin of opposition to the Gulf commitment. But dreadful though the necessity might be, ours is a commitment which draws on a powerful justification - a determination to defend principles and values which will assure a more secure world, and a more peaceful and secure future for Australia.