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INDIA AND THE GULF CRISIS

INTRODUCTION

Iraq's invasion and annexation of its tiny, oil-rich neighbour, Kuwait, in August 1990, was received with dismay and consternation throughout the world. This Iraqi military blitzkrieg caused deep political fissures in the Arab world. Some Arab countries, such as Jordan, Sudan, Tunisia, Algeria, Libya and Yemen, as well as the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) demonstrated varying degrees of sympathy for Iraq, albeit short of supporting the military invasion and annexation of Kuwait. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Bahrain and Oman sought U. S. -led contingents eventually drawn from nearly 30 countries to evict Iraqi forces from Kuwait. Never since World War II has there been such swift international response to a military invasion. The U. N. Security Council passed more than a dozen resolutions in record time which imposed not only strong sanctions against Iraq but quickly mobilized world opinion against that country. Moreover, never before have the two superpowers achieved such a level of congruity in their thinking as on Iraq's culpability.

While international consensus was built up against Iraq's blatant military invasion of Kuwait, India as a major power in South Asia and a senior member of the Nonaligned Movement (NAM) was confronted

with a big challenge to its foreign policy. As in past instances — the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979) and the Iraq-Iran war (1980-1988) — it found itself on the horns of a dilemma, trying in vain to resolve its conflicting loyalties. During the latest crisis in the Gulf, its foreign policy makers were faced with some agonising choices. To a great extent, these were the result of India's own volition to sacrifice enduring moral principles, often proclaimed in various international fora, for some immediate tactical gains. As a result, it stood embarrassingly exposed, with its credentials in doubt and its credibility impaired.

Hereunder, after a historical overview of Indo-Iraqi relations we will trace the evolution of India's responses in detail as the Gulf crisis unfolded. Next, the rationalisation of India's decisions during the crisis will be analysed.

I. INDIA AND IRAQ : A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Modern Iraq is a comparatively recent creation; in 1922 Great Britain carved out a kingdom for Faisal, an Arab chieftain, and named it Iraq. Earlier, it was known as Mesopotamia, or the land between two rivers, i. e. the Euphrates and the Tigris.

Historically, contacts between India and present-day Iraq go back to the third millennium B. C. and were shaped by cross-currents of commercial and cultural interaction.¹ At that time, civilization in India flourished on the banks of the Indus while Arab culture blossomed along the Euphrates and the Nile. The Persian Gulf acted as a bridge through which India traded with the Western world while the Arabs had economic intercourse with the Eastern world, including India.

1. S. Maqbul Ahmad, *Indo-Arab Relations*, second ed. (New Delhi, Indian Council for Cultural Relations, 1978), p. 1.

These contacts continued till Islam came to the Subcontinent in the 7th century A. D. The period upto 10th century A. D. is often termed as "the golden age" of trade and cultural interaction between the Arab world and India. With the conquest of India by the Turks, and then the Afghans, and later the Mughals, this cultural exchange continued to flourish. However, in the later middle ages there was a perceptible decline in Indo-Arab relations as Indo-Persian relations began to expand. During the British period, the Indo-Arab relations received a setback as Great Britain signed peace treaties with the Gulf Sheikdoms in order to secure its trade routes. In the late 19th century, many European powers, such as France, Russia, Germany and Turkey, vied for supremacy in the region. By the beginning of the 20th century, the contacts between the two regions began to be restored with the rise of independence movements in both regions. After the partition of the Subcontinent, Indo-Gulf relations gained a new momentum and, especially after the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, these relations attained a new economic dimension with the fusion of Arab oil wealth and Indian migrant labour.

Post-World War II Political and Economic Interactions

The 1958 revolution which overthrew the Iraqi monarchy paved the way for an auspicious phase in Indo-Iraqi relations. The revolutionary changes in Iraq not only dealt a serious setback to the Western policy of military bloc network around the world but also proved a victory for forces of nonalignment and secularism of which the Nehruvian India then stood as an ardent exponent.

In December 1962, the two countries signed a major agreement according most-favoured-nation treatment to each other. Another trade protocol was signed in August 1968 which provided for an increase in trade volume from 5.4 million to 6.7 million pounds annually.² Then followed an agreement to establish the Kufa cement factory in

southwest Iraq with an Indian group of cement companies involving an investment of Rs. 36 million. The factory was stipulated to have an annual production of 200,000 tonnes of cement.³ Iraq, along with some other West Asian countries, became an important market for Indian tea, jute, textiles and spices.

On the political front a decisive shift took place when Iraq, in a statement issued in Cairo on February 20, 1966, abdicated its earlier pro-Pakistani stand on Kashmir largely because of president Nasser's influence over then Iraqi President Arif.⁴

Mutual relations received a symbolic fillip in February 1968 when Mr. Swaran Singh, then India's Foreign Minister, gifted a fighter aircraft to Baghdad.⁵ This was followed up by assurances of further training and assistance to Iraqis, especially their air force.⁶

Another watershed in the development of cordial relations between the two countries was the issue of the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 as a sovereign state when Iraq evinced a pro-India tilt. In its wake followed a high-level Iraqi delegation from the ruling Arab Ba'ath Socialist Party to India in October 1972. During its 12-day visit, it established party-to-party relationship with the then ruling Indian National Congress.⁷ Earlier, when the Iraqi government

2. *Asian Recorder*, New Delhi, September 30-October 6, 1968, p. 8553.

3. *Ibid.*, November 26-December 2, 1970, p. 9882.

4. See V. P. Dutt, *India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House Pvt. Ltd., 1984), p. 322. In this connection, also consult, *Asian Recorder*, March 26-April 1, 1966, p. 7002.

5. *The Indian Express*, February 10, 1968.

6. *The Patriot*, February 11, 1968.

7. *Ibid.*, October 14, 1972.

nationalized the Iraqi Petroleum Company, India was one of the first few countries to enter into a contract for crude supplies in defiance of the foreign monopolies' threat.⁸

In October 1972, Iraq agreed in principle to supply crude oil to India on a long-term credit. In April 1973, seven more agreements were signed, the most important being the one related to the supply of some 30 million tonnes of crude oil by Iraq to India over a 10-year period. Another notable agreement was between the Iraqi National Oil Company and the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) of India for "service contract" exploration of oil in an onshore concession in Iraq. An agreement between the Iraqi National Oil Company and the Indian Oil Corporation provided for an Iraqi credit of \$50 million for the supply of crude oil to the proposed refinery at Mathura; another provided for government guarantee of this credit; and yet another for exchange of consultancy services between the Engineers India Limited and Iraqi Petroleum Industry.⁹

The Iraqi credits were remarkably similar to the ones offered by Iran in February for the same period e. g., repayment in ten years with an initial grace period of five years and an interest rate of 2.5 per cent.¹⁰ Incidentally, both Iraq and Iran during this period were actively vying with each other for a regional power role in the Persian Gulf.

In return, India undertook to assist Iraq with a number of goods and services in such areas as railways, steel rolling mills, electrical and power transmission, ship building and repair facilities, supply of iron-

8. *Foreign Affairs Record*, New Delhi, October 1972, pp. 304-305.

9. See V. P. Dutt, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

10. *Asian Recorder*, April 16-22, 1974, p. 11963.

ore, manufacturing of engineering goods, fertilizers and aluminium projects, and natural gas plants, etc. The Iraqi exports, on the other hand, constituted petroleum products, urea and dates.

Close cooperation also followed in the construction industry (both public and private sectors) through lucrative Indian contracts. The various construction projects in Iraq covered a wide spectrum: housing and sewerage projects, roads, bridges and railways, irrigation projects, grain silos, and water and power development. Some noteworthy projects were, Baghdad University, the extension of Baghdad colour television station, and the construction of hotel buildings.¹¹

Saddam Hussein, then Iraqi Vice-President, visited India on March 25, 1974. His four-day official visit led to an agreement for an Iraqi loan of \$110 million to India for the import of crude. As a result of his visit, the two governments agreed to cooperate in the implementation of major irrigation and agricultural projects in Iraq. Besides, an agreement was reached whereby India decided to set up three technical institutes and polytechnics in Iraq on a turn-key basis, beside training Iraqi nationals in technical institutes and polytechnics in India. It also formalized the establishment of a permanent Joint Commission for economic and technical cooperation with the possibility of exploring new venues for cooperation in economic and cultural fields.¹² Mrs. Indira Gandhi, the Indian Premier, reciprocated the Iraqi leader's visit in 1975.

In March 1975, new areas of cooperation were agreed upon, such as, petroleum research, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, engineering

11. A. N. Jha, "Indo-Iraq Relation: 1947-1986: Need for Fresh Initiatives", *Foreign Affairs Reports*, New Delhi, Vol. XXXV, Nos. 6 and 7, June-July 1986, pp. 58-59.

12. *Asian Recorder*, April 16-22, 1974, p. 11963.

and space research,¹³ construction designs and materials research. In January 1976, an agreement was signed on education, science and technology, art, culture, sports, medicine and health, press, radio, television and films — making it the first comprehensive cultural agreement between the two countries.¹⁴

The Iraq-Iraq war, which started in September 1980 and lasted for about eight years, negatively affected India's economic interests in Iraq. According to an estimate, before the outbreak of the war, there were between 65,000 to 70,000 Indians in Iraq, including 2,000 experts, in various technical projects.¹⁵ By January 1983, their number had declined to 50,000.¹⁶ Further, the value of India's construction projects, which was about Rs. 849.6 million in 1981-82, plummeted to Rs. 430 million in 1984-85.¹⁷ During this war, India maintained an overall neutral posture, albeit with a pro-Iraqi bias. This led the then Kuwaiti Information Minister, Sheilh Nazir, an influential voice in the Sheikhdome, to remark: "after all, the Straits of Hormuz are closer to New Delhi than Colombo."¹⁸

The Indian policy came under heavy criticism in July 1987 when nearly 50 Indian members of parliament of all political orientations urged the then Indian Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, to take a fresh initiative to end the fratricidal conflict. They also castigated India's

13. *Ibid*, April 23-29, 1975, p. 12549.

14. *Ibid*, February 26-March 3, 1976, p. 13038.

15. A. N. Jha, *op. cit.*

16. *Ibid.*, p. 62.

17. *Ibid.*

18. "An Indian Role in Gulf", *The Sentinel*, Guwahati, September 26, 1987, p. 4.

ambiguous policy of appealing to both sides to end the war when it knew fully well that it was Iraq which had perpetrated aggression against Iran in the first place.¹⁹

II. INDIA'S RESPONSE TO IRAQI INVASION OF KUWAIT

The First Week (August 3-9, 1990)

When Iraq invaded Kuwait on August 2, 1990, the Indian government reserved its comment. An External Affairs Ministry spokesman said that India was in constant touch with its missions in Kuwait and Baghdad regarding the developments in the Gulf and was closely monitoring the situation.²⁰ At the same time, India expressed the hope that various consultations in multilateral forums, including the Nonaligned Movement (NAM), would facilitate the peace process. On August 3, an External Affairs Ministry spokesman recorded India's first official reaction to the invasion: "We sincerely hope that Iraq would soon withdraw its troops and have noted the Iraqi statements in this regard".²¹ The statement, moreover, regretted that the governments of Iraq and Kuwait had not been able to settle their differences in a peaceful manner and that the government of India was opposed to the use of force in any form in relations between states.²² More or less the same theme was reiterated on August 8 when the Indian External Affairs Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, hoped that better sense would prevail and the two countries would sort out their problems peacefully.²³ The next day in parliament he assured that the Indian government was doing "everything possible" to ensure the

19. "U. N. and Iran-Iraq War", *Mainstream*, New Delhi, Vol. XXV, No. 45, July 25, 1987, p. 10 and 28.

20. *The Hindu*, Madras, August 3, 1990.

21. *The Hindu*, August 4, 1990.

22. *Ibid.*

23. *The Hindu*, August 8, 1990.

safety and welfare of about 172,000 Indian nationals in Kuwait following Iraq's military action.²⁴ At the same time, a high official observed that India would encourage consultaion by regional powers to defuse the situation created in West Asia by the induction of American troops in Saudi Arabia.²⁵

India thus adopted a policy of extreme circumspection and avoided any condemnation of Iraq. Its policy response was conditioned by the following factors: a) its multi-faceted relations with Iraq, covering economic and political areas; b) its dependence on a sizable quantity of crude from Iraq; and c) the concern for the safety and welfare of some 172,000 Indian nationals in Kuwait.²⁶

Second Week (August 10- 16)

The Indian government was gravely concerned over the safety (and early return) of all its nationals trapped in Kuwait. In this connection, Mr. Gujral mentioned that the immediate plan was to transport the Indian citizens to the nearest safe point, most probably Jordan, before their repatriation to India.²⁷ The Congress (I) party and its allies staged a walkout in the Lok Sabha, the Lower House of India's Parliament, expressing dissatisfaction with the statement of Mr. Gujral about the safety of stranded Indians in Kuwait. According to some opposition members, such assurances had no meaning when New Delhi had "neither any policy nor any action plan" to bring them back.²⁸

24. *The Hindu*, August 9, 1990.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *The Hindu*, August 10, 1990.

27. *Ibid.*

28. *Ibid.*

The main political allies of the government, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Left Group, were as critical as the Congress (I). Their members repeatedly clashed with the Union Minister for Transport, Mr. K. P. Unni Krishnan, when he rose to clarify the government's position. They accused the government of lack of information, scant arrangements for the evacuation of the stranded Indians and for taking an ambiguous stand on the Iraqi invasion.²⁹

There were, however, some problems in arranging ships and aircraft for the speedy evacuation of these trapped persons. In this regard, the Union Energy Minister, Mr. Arif Muhammad Khan, was dispatched to the Gulf countries in order to make necessary contingency plans.³⁰

In his Independence Day message, Prime Minister V. P. Singh reiterated the Indian position against the use of force. He deprecated the "one-sided" decision to induct foreign troops in the area, without naming the U.S.³¹ Referring to the crisis he said that it had increased the burden of the state exchequer from Rs. 16 billion to Rs. 20 billion in foreign exchange. According to him, with one dollar increase in the price of crude oil, The burden on India would be to the tune of Rs. 4 billion.³²

The Indian diplomacy went into high gear on Mr. I. K. Gujral's visit to the Soviet Union, the U. S. A. and Iraq. In the course of his visit to the Soviet Union, both countries called for the initiation of a political dialogue between Kuwait and Iraq in order to resolve the crisis. They also expressed concern at the dangerous escalation in the

29. *The Hindu*, August 17, 1990.

30. *The Hindu*, August 14, 1990.

31. *The Hindu*, August 17, 1990.

32. *Ibid.*

area with the massive foreign buildup prompted by the use of force by one state against another.³³ On the Security Council Resolution 661/August 6 regarding imposition of sanctions against Iraq (invoked under Article 41 of the U.N. Charter), India held the view that the U.S. action amounted to a blockade (Article 42 of the U.N. Charter) which exceeded the U.N. mandate.³⁴ However, after his "rush visit" to the U.S., Gujral stated that India was "in step with world community on the gulf crisis" and was cooperating with the U.N. sanctions.³⁵

Third Week (August 17-23)

On August 20, the Indian contingency plan for the evacuation of its expatriates was completed. Gujral was one of the few foreign dignitaries who were able to visit occupied Kuwait, and meet President Saddam Hussain. While returning to India, he brought along with him the first batch of 200 stranded Indians in his special IAF Ilyushin-76 transporter.³⁶ The next day, he drew attention to the various strands of India's Gulf policy as follows:

1. Opposition to the use of force in dealings between states and the earliest possible withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait.
2. Deapproval of unilateral action outside the U.N. framework by any country to enforce the sanctions mandated by the world body.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *The Hindu*, August 17, 1990.

35. *The Hindu*, August 23, 1990.

36. *Ibid.*

3. Opposition to the presence or induction of foreign military forces.³⁷

Fourth Week (August 23-30)

While ruling out any "self-appointed" mediatory role till it had consulted more like-minded nations by "feeling the ground", India justified its "reasonable and low-profile" reaction to Iraq's annexation of Kuwait.³⁸ The External Affairs Minister stated that India stood for the unity of the Arab people with whom it had always maintained close relations and it did not wish to drive a wedge between them at a difficult period of history.³⁹

On being criticised by the opposition for lack of a coherent policy, he responded with the remark that foreign policy was "not a set of mantras". Continuing, he observed: "We are extremely alert and keeping our ears close to the ground."⁴⁰ Later, he remarked that "vituperation" and "apportioning blame did not work".⁴¹

On the charge of India condoning the Iraqi military action, he maintained that the government's low profile did not mean condonation. On the other hand, according to him, the Indian government continued to recognize the sovereignty of Kuwait and the functioning of the Kuwaiti embassy in New Delhi was enough proof. As far as the closure of the Indian embassy in Kuwait was concerned, there was no point in defying orders from Iraq and, in any case, the mission staff could not have functioned properly.⁴²

37. *The Hindu*, August 24, 1990.

38. *The Hindu*, August 28, 1990.

39. *Ibid.*

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

Fifth Week (August 31-September 6)

Although India had accepted the U.N. Security Council Resolution (661/August 6) on sanction, it wanted the supplies of foodstuffs and medicines to be exempted from the embargo, if only because Indians constituted the largest number of foreigners in Kuwait.⁴³ According to official thinking, the peace efforts needed to be more broad-based so as to include other countries which were also being affected by the crisis. Accordingly, Mr. I. K. Gujral wrote separate letters to the five permanent members of the Security Council urging the convening of a conference under the aegis of the U.N. in order to defuse the Gulf crisis.⁴⁴

India's stand on the Gulf crisis became somewhat clear when Dr. Rasheed Al-Ameeri, a Kuwaiti Minister, visited India and held talks with V. P. Singh and I. K. Gujral on September 5. India asserted that it did not recognize the annexation of Kuwait and stood for the restoration of the latter's sovereignty and the withdrawal of Iraqi troops.⁴⁵ It was opposed to the use of force in inter-state dealings and its diplomatic relations with Kuwait remained uninterrupted as borne out by the functioning of its embassy in New Delhi.⁴⁶ The Kuwaiti Minister, on his part, in a prepared statement was quite forthright when he stated: "We expect our good friend India to play a more positive role ... strongly condemn the brutal Iraqi regime's invasion and complete occupation of peaceful Kuwait, ... take part in

43. *Ibid.*

44. *The Hindu*, September 4, 1990.

45. K. K. Katyal, "India Reassures Kuwaiti Minister", *The Hindu*, September 6, 1990.

46. *Ibid.*

the attempts to isolate Iraq and exert pressure on it to abide by the Security Council Resolution".⁴⁷

The Kuwaiti leader was, however, not hopeful of the NAM's role since the highest world body, the U.N., had already pronounced its verdict. He also expressed his reservations about India's desire to send medicines and foodstuffs to its nationals in Kuwait for fear that these supplies may find their way into Iraq.⁴⁸

Sixth Week (September 7-13)

India stepped up its food diplomacy in view of the hardship faced by its nationals stranded in Iraq and Kuwait. This involved the following actions :

1. The Indian Prime Minister wrote to Mr. Bush and Mr. Gorbachev separately to pinpoint the difficulties faced by the Indians in Kuwait. He also reiterated India's position of settling the issue by peaceful means.
2. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. I. K. Gujral, communicated India's stand to his counterparts in Washington and Moscow who were going to meet in preparation for the Helsinki Summit.
3. The Indian permanent representative at the U. N. was directed to make a case for humanitarian relief and exemption of food supplies from the operation of sanctions.
4. India wrote separate letters to the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council regarding the problems faced by the stranded nationals and urged the broadening of the U.N. so as to include other nations severely affected by the crisis.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

5. Mr. Gujral decided to visit the Hague on his way to Belgrade to brief human rights agencies on the problems facing the Indians in Kuwait.⁴⁹

This line of action was necessitated by the stand taken by some maritime powers that food could not be allowed to be supplied to Kuwait while Iraq was insisting that evacuation of Indian nationals could only be possible if the ships or aircraft meant for their repatriation also brought in food. In view of this, it was felt that a concerted drive needed to be launched to rush humanitarian aid. However, there was an element of obscurity in the Indian government's statements insofar as it chose not to identify the U.S., the major actor behind the enforcement of these sanctions.

In the meantime, an Indian official spokesman said that 15 aircrafts (13 belonging to the two national airlines and two belonging to the Indian Air Force) had been pressed into service to airlift 3,000 people every day.⁵⁰ As India's first contingent of food and medicines for its nationals in Kuwait was intercepted by the U.S. navy, it formally objected to U.S. restrictions and applied for a clarification from the U.N. Security Council. India also accused the Western nations, which had chartered Iraqi aircraft on humanitarian grounds for the evacuation of their own nationals, of adopting "double standards" by preventing the evacuation of other people.⁵¹

The large influx of Asians (mostly Indians) in Jordan, while fleeing from Iraq and Kuwait, constituted a big human problem. The UNICEF sanctioned \$36,000 while the daily requirement in the camps was of the order of \$40,000. India decided to donate to Jordan

49. *The Hindu*, September 7, 1990.

50. *The Hindu*, September 9, 1990.

51. *The Hindu*, September 13, 1990.

31 tonnes of food a day for 15 days in order to help the stranded people. In addition, it donated nine tonnes of medicines.⁵²

India's reaction to the Helsinki Summit of the two superpowers on September 9 was distinctly lukewarm. This was because the Bush-Gorbachev joint statement did not address the economic problems of developing countries resulting from the Gulf crisis. On future security in the region, India rejected any attempts at imposition of any arrangement from above or from outside.⁵³ This was in sharp contrast to the warm reception accorded to the joint statement of the Summit in some major European capitals, Japan and Saudi Arabia.

Seventh Week (September 14-20)

India also launched the idea of a global fund to be created under Article 50 of the U. N. Charter to provide assistance to the developing countries, such as itself, adversely affected by the Gulf crisis. For this purpose, the NAM (represented by Yugoslavia, Algeria and India) and the European Community (represented by Italy, Luxemburg, and Ireland) met in New York on September 27. I. K. Gujral after his NAM meeting in Belgrade, also visited the Hague and Rome for bilateral talks as a follow-up.⁵⁴

India received clearance from the United Nations Sanctions Committee for sending a ship of foodstuffs for its needy expatriates in Kuwait and Iraq. The Committee acted to issue the authorisation after the Security Council adopted a six-nation resolution approving a general framework for providing humanitarian assistance.⁵⁵ Hence,

52. *The Hindu*, September 11, 1990.

53. *The Hindu*, September 12, 1990.

54. *The Hindu*, September 13, 1990.

55. *The Hindu*, September 15, 1990.

Indian ship, loaded with about 10,000 tonnes of food, medicines, and other essential items, set sail for Iraq and Kuwait. Some apprehensions were expressed by Western agencies that the food meant for Indians may be looted by Iraqi troops. Iraq, on its part, maintained that the distribution of relief supplies was a bilateral matter and any supervision or monitoring by outside powers was not acceptable.⁵⁶

In India's perception, the Security Council resolution on trade embargo against Iraq (Resolution 661/August 6) was pushed through with unseemly haste by an impulsive Security Council under pressure from the U.S. On the humanitarian issue regarding the hardships faced by Asian expatriates, especially Indians, India spearheaded an international diplomatic effort. Nearly 40-odd countries fully supported the Indian move "not as a confrontational attitude but to address the core of the problem to supply food to the stranded". The Western nations, on the other hand, had problems assessing the status of Kuwait and whether "humanitarian circumstances" did exist in that country for emergency supplies.

India's international carrier, Air India, did a notable job. It qualified for a world record by evacuating more than 50,000 people in five weeks in what came to be known as the biggest ever airlift conducted in the world.⁵⁷

When the Security Council passed Resolution 667/September 16, condemning the Iraqi attacks on diplomatic premises in Kuwait, Indian observers noted that this resolution had come with exceptional haste. Interestingly, in passing the earlier Resolution 666/September 13 on delivery of food supplies to Asian workers, the Security Council took

56. *The Hindu*, September 18, 1990.

57. *Ibid.*

more than ten days to finalize its wording, whereas Resolution 667 took only 36 hours. This, according to Indians, showed that in its reactions to Iraq the Security Council had allied itself with the club of the privileged, which catered to the rich nations instead of the Third World.⁵⁸

11th Week (October 12-18)

There was not much Indian response to the Gulf crisis from the third week of September to the first week of October. Iraq attempted to involve India in its sanctions busting mechanisms when it used India's late August request for the use of Iraqi Airways planes to bring back stranded citizens from Kuwait as a way to secure some food and medicines. However, this arrangement could not materialise.

During the evacuation exercise, Air India in association with Indian Airlines operated 477 special flights to airlift 1,09,388 stranded nationals through an "air bridge." In addition, 19,189 Indian nationals were flown home on flights chartered by the International Organization of Migrants. By Indian Air Force flights, some 4,935 reached Bombay from Basra or from Dubai.⁵⁹ In this evacuation exercise, initially six A-320s were pressed into service in addition to two B4s and two A-300 Airbus aircraft. Subsequently, another A-320 joined from France.⁶⁰

Twelfth Week (October 19-26)

The Indian External Affairs Minister visited the UAE on October 19-20. India has had strong economic relations with the UAE, which

58. F. J. Khergamwala, "The Two Faces of the World Body", *The Hindu*, September 18, 1990.

59. *The Hindu*, October 12, 1990.

60. *Ibid.*

hosts a work force of Indian migrants forming nearly 60 per cent of the UAE labour force, including managerial, skilled and unskilled.⁶¹ India is among the UAE's ten biggest trading partners. The largest number of tourists from the Gulf visiting India come from the UAE. India, moreover, runs the UAE's premier fertilizer plant, and the UAE has the largest number of Indian private sector ventures in West Asia.⁶²

India took a clear and apparently final position in the Gulf crisis during the Minister's visit to the UAE. In a prepared statement to the media, Gujral said : "We believe that states have the right to take steps that are necessary in order to defend themselves."⁶³ This, implicitly but succinctly, was an expression of understanding and support for the presence of the U.S.-led multinational force in the Gulf. While speaking in Dubai, Gujral added that India supported the "early convening" of an international conference on West Asia to resolve other outstanding issues. Although this formulation did not amount to acceptance of a direct linkage between the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and resolution of issues such as Palestine and Lebanon, it did concede the "linkage" principle at least sequentially. In other words, India did not agree with Iraq that its withdrawal from Kuwait should be conditional on the convening of an international conference. The wording of the statement, desiring an "early convening" of the conference, was the same as in Gujral's speech at the U. N. General Assembly in September, but its import lay in the rejection of direct linkage at a time when the "linkage" factor was very topical.

The second aspect was a veiled expression of concern and, for the first time, the implied assertion for the "immediate and unconditional"

61. *The Hindu*, October 17, 1990.

62. *Ibid.*

63. *The Hindu*, October 22, 1990.

release of foreign nationals in Iraqi hands. Equally significant was Gujral's statement that "while we recognize the complexities of the situation we hope that there will be a peaceful solution in the interest of all."⁶⁴ The "recognition of complexities" was a clear shift from India's earlier strong emphasis on a peaceful solution and suggested that should force become necessary, India would understand that it was the only way out of the impasse.

Of great significance was India's implied support for the Gulf countries to take "steps that are necessary" to defend themselves. Its import lay not just in the present crisis but as a precedent for future developments of this nature. The "steps" taken by the Gulf nations, namely, the invitation of foreign forces, were obviously militaristic. This was probably the first time that India had categorically supported militarization in and around the Indian Ocean and inferred that it was in India's interest. During the Iran-Iraq war, India accepted, but did not explicitly support, the presence of U. S. naval forces. But in these statements on the Kuwait crisis, there was the unstated feeling that the U.S. presence was of such magnitude and resolve that to oppose it would be an exercise in futility. There was, thus, a pragmatic realization that as the West needed the Gulf oil, likewise, there was an Indian need to ensure a substantial export market and a vital source of remittances and jobs.

Pre-War Developments (December 1990)

There was little response to the Gulf crisis from late October to the end of November as the Indian government was preoccupied with its own domestic problems. V. P. Singh's 11-month old government fell on November 7 and Chandra Shekhar assumed charge after a prolonged crisis. Meanwhile, the U. N. Security Council, through its

64. *Ibid.*

Resolution No. 678/Nov. 28, 1990 gave a final ultimatum to Iraq to withdraw its forces by January 15, 1991.

India welcomed President Bush's invitation to Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, to visit Washington for talks on the Gulf crisis. It also appreciated the decision to send Secretary of State, James Baker, to Baghdad for talks with the Iraqi President. At the same time, it expressed apprehensions of a war breaking out in the Gulf with "disastrous consequences" not only for the region but the whole world.⁶⁵ India, therefore, desired that the peace process be persisted with in real earnest.

A spokesman of the Indian Foreign Office said that India had supported all U.N. resolutions calling for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait. It had abided in "letter and spirit" in imposing sanctions against Iraq despite the economic burden that it had to bear as a consequence.⁶⁶ This support to the U. N. resolutions amply demonstrated that India had remained "in step with the international community."⁶⁷ It also mentioned the "traditional" friendly relations and close co-operation between India and the Gulf states and warned that "untold devastation" was likely in the event of an outbreak of war.⁶⁸ The Indian External Affairs Minister told the parliamentary committee of the Ministry of External Affairs that no Indian forces would be deployed in the Gulf under any circumstances and that India did not believe in the use of force for resolution of the crisis in the Gulf.⁶⁹

65. *The Statesman*, Calcutta, December 3, 1990.

66. *Ibid.*

67. *Ibid.*

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*

A national debate was conducted on the volatile situation in West Asia, in the course of which the Minister for petroleum and chemicals, M.S. Gurupadaswamy, said that the time-limit set by the aforementioned U.N. resolutions did not necessarily mean that Iraq would withdraw by the stipulated date.⁷¹ Romesh Bhandari, former Foreign Secretary, maintained that even if there was no war after the January 15 deadline, the "no peace no war" situation would be equally dangerous.⁷² While explaining India's stand, I. P. Khosla, Secretary, Ministry of External Affairs, said that whereas the Indian government had supported the U.N. Resolution No. 678, it did not agree that the resolution authorized the U.S. to use force.⁷² On the war rhetoric then raging between Iraq and the U.S., he observed that it only complicated the matter, adding that "We understand the emotions of some of the countries that used harsh and vituperative language (USA and Iraq), but we do not approve of that".⁷³

Chandra Shekhar, in his first formal meeting with the press after taking over as head of the government, described the developing Gulf situation as a "serious threat" to peace with grave repercussions for the Indian economy.⁷⁴ Hoping that the crisis would be resolved by mutual talks, he welcomed the announcement by President Bush to extend the D-Day for going to war with Iraq.⁷⁵ Replying to charges that "India was no longer speaking up at world forums on behalf of the neglected and the Third World," he said that India would continue to take suitable initiatives for solving the crisis by peaceful means and

70. *The Statesman*, December 18, 1990.

71. *Ibid.*

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. *The Statesman*, November 9, 1990.

75. *Ibid.*

that it would continue to speak for the poor and small nations after it takes its seat on the Security Council.⁷⁶

As the January 15 deadline approached, the Indians working in the Gulf countries other than Iraq and Kuwait did not evince much desire to leave for India. There were nearly 600,000 resident Indians in Qatar, the UAE, Bahrain and eastern parts of Saudi Arabia. About 3,000 in Iraq and another 8,000 in Kuwait decided to stay back despite being advised to leave in view of the worsening situation in the Gulf.⁷⁷

In the meantime, India offered its good offices to both the U.S. and Iraq for the peaceful settlement of the crisis. Replying to queries on the visit of a special envoy from Saddam Hussein, and Indian spokesman observed that India would "only offer its help" but there was "no suggestion for India's mediation from Iraqi side."⁷⁸ He said that the Iraqi special envoy had again offered oil in lieu of old outstanding debts, totalling about \$400 million, and proposals of joint ventures in both countries. However, the spokesman added, India would carefully weigh these suggestions strictly within the context of the Security Council resolutions and their interpretation by the U.N. Sanctions Committee.⁷⁹

On the prospects of extending help in its new capacity as an elected non-permanent member of the Security Council, India, the spokesman averred, would be guided by the Security Council Resolution 661 and its interpretation by the Sanctions Committee.⁸⁰

76. *The Statesman*, December 23, 1990.

77. *The Statesman*, January 1, 1991.

78. *The Statesman*, January 5, 1991.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

Expressing "deep concern" over the deteriorating conditions in the Gulf he hoped that both Iraq and the U. S. would meet across the table and that Iraq would vacate Kuwait.⁸¹ On the linkage between the Palestinian issue and the Iraqi military withdrawal from Kuwait, he added that "merely because there was no movement in regard to one issue, there was no reason to stall movement towards progress on the other."⁸²

The U. N. Secretary General, Xavier Perez de Cuellar, made a last-ditch effort to mediate in the Gulf crisis by visiting Baghdad on January 11. Earlier, the Indian government expressed its disappointment over the failure of the Baker-Aziz talks held in Geneva.⁸³ India, like other key NAM countries, supported the Secretary General's initiative and was also in touch with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Algeria, and some European capitals.⁸⁴ Meanwhile, following the breakdown of the talks in Geneva between the USA and Iraq, a sense of panic gripped the Indian expatriate community who started leaving the Gulf countries for home.⁸⁵

India drastically reduced its embassy staff in Baghdad in view of the worsening situation. Meanwhile, in a press statement in New Delhi, V. C. Shukla, Minister of External Affairs of India, asked for an urgent meeting of the U.N. Security Council to discuss comprehensively the Gulf situation, and stated that the January 15 deadline for Iraq was no "Rubicon".⁸⁶ He added that the Security

81. *Ibid.*

82. *Ibid.*

83. On these talks see. *The Statesman*, February 10, 1991.

84. *Ibid.*

85. *Ibid.*

86. *The Statesman*, January 14, 1991.

Council must give President Saddam Hussein more time and that there was a need that "Indian diplomacy must begin to work".⁸⁷

Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, while talking to journalists in Raj Bhavan, described the Gulf situation as "very critical" and lamented that there was "no hope of a negotiated settlement". However, he hoped that a war could somehow still be averted. Terming the linkage between the Palestinian issue and the Iraqi withdrawal as "untenable", he added: "these are two different issues and cannot be clubbed together" despite the fact that the Palestinian cause was very genuine and they should get justice.⁸⁸ The Indian representative at the U.N. also hoped that the caucus of the seven nonaligned countries (representing all tendencies within the Security Council) would be energized to work within the constraints of the forum to resolve the conflict.⁸⁹

On the expiry of the January 15 deadline, the Indian Prime Minister urged President Bush to give peace another chance while affirming India's unswerving commitment to the November 28 Security Council resolution.⁹⁰ He wrote similar letters to Soviet President and the Chairman of the NAM and President of Yugoslavia. The Congress president, Rajiv Gandhi, also issued a formal call to 17 world leaders just before the expiry of the U. N. deadline.⁹¹

While claiming to have launched a peace initiative on the Gulf as early as mid-October, Romesh Bhandari, convenor of the foreign affairs department of the Congress (I), said that the party had taken

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

89. *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, January 16, 1991.

90. *Ibid.*, January 17, 1991.

91. *The Statesman*, January 17, 1991.

care not to get "bound" by any of the package proposals that were emanating from all corners of the world.⁹² About the linkage of Iraqi withdrawal with the Palestinian issue, he observed somewhat elliptically : "these are issues that are not linked to each other, and yet cannot be seen in isolation."⁹³

The Outbreak of Hostilities (January 1991)

The Indian official opinion did not quite expect the outbreak of the Gulf war. When it did flare up with the massive U.S. aerial bombardment, the Indian Prime Minister, Chandra Shekhar, expressed his "profound distress" over the start of hostilities. He endorsed the peace proposal of Mikhail Gorbachev and called for the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, an end to hostilities, and a peaceful solution to the crisis in accordance with the U.N. Security Council resolution.⁹⁴ He also warned that India and other Asian nations "will (have to) bear the brunt of war in a big way".⁹⁵

The former Indian Prime Minister and the Congress (I) president, Rajiv Gandhi, wrote a sharply critical letter to Chandra Shekhar. Rajiv blamed the government for acting as a "hapless spectator" and described India's foreign policy as "unfortunate".⁹⁶ The Congress Working Committee (CWC), the party's highest policy-making body, in a separate meeting, also appealed to the Security Council to immediately initiate a peace process. Seven leading members of the

92. *Ibid.*

93. *Ibid.*

94. *Ibid.*, January 5, 1991.

95. As quoted in the editorial, "Wages of Folly", *The Statesman*, January 18, 1991.

96. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1991.

NAM suggested that India take a lead in resolving the crisis since it had now become a non-permanent member of the Security Council.⁹⁷

On the issue of foreign policy, Rajiv Gandhi tried to show that if he had been in power he would have followed a different line. He also sent a letter to the Prime Minister in which he proposed his four-point formula. The key ingredients of the Rajiv formula were: (1) immediate cessation of hostilities; (2) replacement of the multi-national force by a U.N. peacekeeping force; (3) withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait; and (4) a just, comprehensive and definitive settlement of the Palestinian question.⁹⁸

Another former Prime Minister and convenor of the National Front, Mr. V. P. Singh, had to cancel his Andhra Pradesh tour due to the outbreak of the Gulf war. After deploring the ill-effects of the war, he criticized the ruling Janata Dal(S) government for relegating the question of ceasefire and the cause of Palestinians to the background. Both the Janata Dal and the National Front, he added, wanted the Palestinian issue to be resolved along with that of Kuwait. Indirectly criticizing the new initiative launched by the ruling government, he lamented that the U.N. Security Council had not even met once since the start of the war. Some countries (meaning the U.S.) had arrogated to themselves the role of the U.N. Security Council.⁹⁹

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) suggested that as a non-permanent member of the Security Council India must take steps to promote the peace process and that as a party to the U.N. Resolution 678 it must continue to lend support until it was fully implemented.¹⁰⁰

97. *Ibid.*, January 18, 1991.

98. *Ibid.*, January 22, 1991.

99. *Ibid.*, January 24, 1991.

100. *Ibid.*, January 20, 1991.

One section of this party favoured support to Iraq because it felt that if Iraq was defeated, fundamentalist Iran could emerge as a major power in the area, thus posing danger to India.¹⁰¹

After some ambivalence, the Indian government proposed a three-point plan which envisaged: (1) commencement of immediate withdrawal by Iraq from Kuwait in keeping with the U.N. Security Council resolution; (2) suspension of hostilities; and (3) resumption of efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict, the modalities of which would be worked out by the Security Council.¹⁰² Interestingly, while enunciating this policy it proposed that "the [Indian] government will work jointly with the Soviet Union in the common endeavour for peace and co-operate with the nonaligned and other like-minded countries towards this end."¹⁰³

The Indian Prime Minister drew attention to the fact that India was consulting the other NAM members in a fresh bid to prevent escalation of war and to restore peace in the Gulf. In this connection, V. C. Shukla, the External Affairs Minister, visited Belgrade and had four rounds of talks with his counterpart, B. Loncar, while the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Digvijay Singh, went to Zimbabwe, Jordan and Algeria for consultations. Support was also enlisted from other members, such as Egypt and Iran, while the Soviet Union, France and Italy were informed of the NAM peace efforts.¹⁰⁴ In the United Nations, India's permanent representative, C.R. Gharekhan, confirmed that India would not join the U.S.-led multinational force in the Gulf as it was "neither a U.N. force nor a peacekeeping force."

101. *Ibid.*, January 21, 1991.

102. *Ibid.*.

103. *Ibid.*

104. *Ibid.*

105. *Ibid.*, January 23, 1991, January 24, 1991.

An External Affairs Ministry spokesman said that India would welcome a comprehensive peace plan on West Asia after the cessation of hostilities.¹⁰⁶ In this context, the Prime Minister's letters to the Presidents of the U.S., the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, suggesting the extension of the withdrawal timetable for a peaceful solution, were also mentioned. According to V. C. Shukla, India had made determined efforts for its diplomacy to succeed but unfortunately it could not prevent the outbreak of the war in the Gulf.¹⁰⁷

India was among the NAM countries which supported an Iranian proposal calling for the simultaneous pullout of Iraqi troops from Kuwait and the U. S. -led coalition forces from the Gulf region. Some other countries, including Egypt and Sri Lanka, pressed for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops before a ceasefire was declared.¹⁰⁸ Yugoslavia launched a four-point plan, namely, (1) withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait; (2) restoration of the legitimate government of Kuwait; (3) solution of the conflict by peaceful and political means; and (4) opening up of the peace process in the region devoted to resolving West Asia's problems, especially the Palestinian issue.¹⁰⁹

The NAM move to send a small team (including India) to Baghdad and Washington to seek an agreement of the two conflicting parties on two major points was welcomed by diplomatic observers in New Delhi. The first was an immediate cessation of hostilities with an unequivocal commitment to withdraw, while the second was that the process of withdrawal should start without delay as part of the time-frame for complete withdrawal.¹¹⁰

106. *Ibid.*, January 19, 1991.

107. *Ibid.*

108. *Ibid.*, February 13, 1991.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*, February 4, 1991.

The U.N. Security Council held a closed-door meeting at the request of Yemen, Cuba and the Maghreb states, who were also seeking a ceasefire in the Gulf war. In this, Yemen and Cuba voted against, while China, Ecuador, India and Zimbabwe abstained. The last time the Council had held a formal session behind closed doors was in 1975 while discussing the crisis in Western Sahara.¹¹¹ Explaining India's position, the Indian ambassador to the U.N., C. R. Gharekhan observed that any private discussions could have the "unintended effect of arousing doubt about the Council's functioning" and pleaded for open discussions.¹¹² Meanwhile, the External Affairs Minister, V. C. Shukla, on his return from Belgrade made a statement that the February 13 air raid on an Iraqi civilian shelter, together with extensive civilian casualties, clearly indicated that the operation of the allied forces had gone beyond the mandate given by the Security Council Resolution 678. He also urged the Security Council to meet more regularly to keep the matter under constant review.¹¹³

Baghdad's dramatic offer of February 15 to withdraw from Kuwait, which came in the wake of the visit to Iraq by the Soviet President's personal emissary, Mr. Primakov, was rejected by the U.S. India welcomed Iraq's readiness to pull out of Kuwait and appealed to the U.S. and Iraqi Presidents to find areas of agreement to end the Gulf crisis.¹¹⁴

Meanwhile, after prolonged accusations and an ultimatum given by the Congress (I) to withdraw its support to the Janata Dal(S) government, Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar reversed his earlier decision to allow refuelling facilities to U.S. aircraft.¹¹⁵ It was a

111. *Ibid.*, February 15, 1991.

112. *Ibid.*

113. *Ibid.*

114. *Ibid.*, February 16, 1991.

115. *Ibid.*, February 18, 1991.

decision that exposed India to the charge of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds.

On the outbreak of the U.S.-led ground war against Iraq, an Indian spokesman deeply regretted that the chance afforded by Gorbachev's proposals of February 21, allowing Iraq to withdraw its forces from Kuwait within 21 days of ceasefire, had been lost. Hence a ground war had commenced on a scale which was "unprecedented since the Second World War of which one shuddered to think of the consequences".¹¹⁶

Official sources disclosed that India had been active until the last minute to get the Security Council to play its legitimate role to reconcile the divergent positions of the USA and the Soviet Union, but to no avail. Moreover, it had also urged the Council to remain in "continuing emergency session in order to reconcile the USSR and U.S. proposals and produce an integrated plan as a basis for securing Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait and cessation of hostilities."¹¹⁷

Rajiv Gandhi, while leaving for Iran, called for an immediate meeting of the Security Council, "but not on camera", to take back full control of the Gulf situation. He regretted that Gorbachev's proposals, which contained "very substantial coverage of the U.N. resolutions", could not be availed.¹¹⁸

At one stage, the president of the Security Council considered requesting India, Austria and Ecuador to produce the draft of an integrated text. Unfortunately, some member countries held the view that, "at least for the present, the Security Council had no role to play".¹¹⁹

116. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1991.

117. *Ibid.*

118. *Ibid.*, February 25, 1991.

119. *Ibid.*

Mr. Chandra Shekhar, while addressing the Rajya Sabha the upper house of the Indian Parliament, lamented that India's efforts to reconvene the U. N. Security Council to try to hammer out a peaceful settlement based on the Soviet proposals had met with little response. He said that he had written separately to the Presidents of the U.S. the USSR and Yugoslavia (Chairman of the NAM) to try to postpone the exercise of a military option.¹²⁰ Later, he bemoaned that all the peace moves, namely, by the Arab countries, France, Iran and the Soviet Union had failed and India also "shared that helplessness".¹²¹ He also said that nonalignment was very much in place and still valid as a concept.

While Rajiv Gandhi embarked on his Gulf peace mission, India offered to host an emergency meeting of 16 nonaligned countries in New Delhi to work for an early restoration of peace. The four nonaligned nations team to Baghdad failed to land as scheduled on February 25 due to the start of land war.

The Ground Offensive (February 1991)

The Indian ambassador to the U. N. asserted that India and other members of the Security Council had a moral obligation to ask for an immediate ceasefire. He said that Washington should listen to New Delhi, Moscow and several other capitals for the simple reason that they are in the Security Council and the war was being waged in the name of the Security Council.¹²²

Countering criticism by opposition members in the Rajya Sabha about Indian "inaction" in the Gulf crisis, Chandra Shekhar remarked

120. *Ibid.*, February 26, 1991.

121. *Ibid.*

122. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1991.

that all Prime Ministers follow formal invitations and "we don't rush in like fools where angels fear to tread".¹²³ He later added that it was the prerogative of Yugoslavia as the Chairman of the NAM to call a meeting. Meanwhile, V. P. Singh appealed to the U.N. Secretary General to act immediately through the Security Council to prevent the allied forces from totally destroying Iraq.¹²⁴

On the allied military victory, the Indian government observed that while it welcomed the U.S. announcement of suspension of hostilities, it expected that it would be followed up by a formal ceasefire duly monitored by the U.N. This was because Iraq had formally and unconditionally accepted all the 12 Security Council resolutions. India also welcomed the restoration of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Kuwait. According to an official spokesman, it was taking urgent measures to re-establish its foreign mission in Kuwait and to play a role in the Kuwaiti reconstruction process. India also drew the attention of all concerned towards the need for starting relief measures.¹²⁵

On his return from a six-day visit to the Soviet Union, Iran, Dubai and Sharjah, Rajiv Gandhi observed that the Gulf war had shown that the UN as an organization had not been "unbiased and fair".¹²⁶ He recommended the restructuring of the U. N. Security Council and the General Assembly. He emphasized that both the governments of V. P. Singh and Chandra Shekhar had proved inept and India had no role to play in most of the U.N. resolutions which were passed between August and November 1990.¹²⁷ He also criticised the lack of initiative displayed by the NAM.

123. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1991.

124. *Ibid.*, February 28, 1991.

125. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1991.

126. *Ibid.*, March 1, 1991.

127. *Ibid.*

III. AN ASSESSMENT

Like other countries, Iraq's blitzkrieg against Kuwait caught India unaware. India's reaction was initially mild, equivocal, and coloured by many considerations: concern for the Indian community stranded in Iraq and Kuwait, traditional ties of friendship with Iraq, disinclination to annoy the U. S., fear of oil cutoff and apprehension over Pakistan's likely role. While India refrained from open condemnation, it did not condone Iraq's military invasion. There was a semblance of schizophrenic thinking afflicting its foreign policy: unhappiness over Kuwait's subjugation by Iraq's military might but also fear of incurring Saddam Hussein's displeasure, especially when he had been singularly supportive of India on the Kashmir issue. Because India stopped short of condemning the invasion, and did not openly take sides, it satisfied Iraq to some extent. At the same time, India called for the withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait which placated the U. S. up to a point.

Having realized that the Gulf conflict was a "big league affair" and that the U.S. was dead serious, India saw no point in open criticism. It, however, took a leading role in energizing the humanitarian relief for the stranded victims and carried out Operation Evacuation --- an operation described as the biggest since the Berlin blockade. Throughout this period, India sponsored and supported different initiatives for peace either through the U.N. or the NAM. The main aim was restoration of the *status quo ante* without driving Saddam Hussein to the wall. The V. P. Singh government's failure lay in embracing Saddam Hussein publicly and hastily shutting India's embassy in Kuwait. The hasty evacuation of its workers was also seen unfavourably by the Kuwaitis.

When the hostilities broke out in mid-January, there was no option left for India. It tried to retrieve the ground by sending its

External Affairs Minister, V. C. Shukla, to Belgrade but nothing came of it. Algeria and Venezuela were requested to join the initiative but they did not participate due to late invitation. The meeting in Belgrade was inconclusive. Shukla's visit to Tehran was also fruitless as it left India out of the mediation efforts it made along with Algeria, Yemen and France. Iran's interest in India's potential for mediation was flagged when it found New Delhi tilting towards the U.S. under the Chandra Shekhar government. This was seen in the refuelling facility granted to U. S. aircraft. The V. P. Singh government had originally allowed the U. S. military aircraft to overfly Indian territory, but the government of Chandra Shekhar extended refuelling facilities to them. It later withdrew the facility in the face of a storm of domestic opposition.

All in all, India's Gulf policy from the time of Iraq's invasion till the start of hostilities was dithering, half-hearted, ambiguous and even apologetic. The Indian governments, while in office, were, in fact, not in power. With their attention turned inwards on petty mutual squabbles, they could not attend single-mindedly to the grave complexities and implications of the ongoing Gulf crisis. In short, India's Gulf policy became a hostage to fast-changing events, sidelining the country to the role of a peripheral actor.

Post-War Security Council Resolutions

March 1991

India abstained from voting on the 13th Security Council resolution (686/March 2, 1991) authorising the U.S. and its Gulf allies to use force against Iraq if it failed to take steps for a "definitive end to the hostilities". It was approved by 11 out of the 15 members; Cuba opposed while India, China and Yemen abstained from voting. On India's role as a member of the Security Council and its abstention

from voting, its Foreign Secretary, M. Dubey, defended his government's action by saying that "any provision which keeps open the possibility of the resumption of hostilities, as is the case in the present resolution, cannot be accepted by my delegation".¹²⁸

However, Dubey appreciated the ongoing U.S. moves in the Security Council in which India would play its due role as a member of the Council.¹²⁹ Although India did not see a direct role for itself in the region, Dubey stated: "we will do what the U.N. wants us to do".¹³⁰

April 1991

The Security Council adopted its 14th Resolution (687/April 3, 1991) which laid down terms for a formal ceasefire with 12 votes in favour, one against (Cuba) and two abstentions (Yemen and Ecuador). India voted in favour of the resolution. This 21-page comprehensive and complex resolution, the longest in the U.N. history, set harsh conditions for a permanent ceasefire in the Gulf war that would lead to the withdrawal of U.S.-allied forces from southern Iraq.¹³¹ By setting out conditions, such as terms of ceasefire, stronger role for the U. N. in the implementation of the terms of ceasefire, enforcement of economic sanctions, Iraq's recognition of its border with Kuwait, deployment of a U.N. observer force, removal and destruction of chemical, biological and nuclear weapons, it intended to turn Iraq into a virtually demilitarized nation.¹³²

128. *The Nation*, Lahore, March 5, 1991.

129. *Ibid.*

130. *Ibid.*

131. For a complete text of the resolution see, *The Nation*, April 6, 1991.

132. *Ibid.*

Before the final vote was taken, the five permanent members rejected a number of amendments moved by nonaligned members, such as Cuba, Yemen, Zaire, Ivory Coast, Ecuador, Zimbabwe and India. These amendments were aimed at softening some of the resolution's provisions.

India played a notable role in drafting and adopting this lengthy document, what came to be called 'the mother of resolutions'. As an illustration, the emphasis on bringing to an end the military presence in Iraq was made by India and the paragraph in the resolution¹³³ adopted was sponsored by India. Besides, it was at India's instance that another paragraph was added whereby the Security Council decided that the U.N Secretary General would take into account "the requirements of the people of Iraq and in particular their humanitarian needs, Iraq's payment capacity as assessed in conjunction with the international financial institutions, taking into consideration the external debt service, and the needs of the Iraqi economy".¹³⁴

India also pressed and got the Security Council to adopt a measure whereby the prohibitions imposed against Iraq "shall not apply to foodstuffs and to materials and supplies for essential civilian needs as identified in the report of the Secretary General, and in any further findings of humanitarian need by the Sanctions Committee established by the Resolution 661 of 1990".¹³⁵

In its 15th Resolution (688/April 5, 1991), the Security Council asked Iraq to end "repression" of its civilian population, especially the Kurds, and allow immediate unhindered access to international humanitarian agencies throughout the country. The vote was ten to

133. *Ibid.*

134. *Ibid.*

135. *Ibid.*

three with two abstentions (China and India), Cuba, Yemen and Zimbabwe being the three to have cast the negative votes.¹³⁶ There were some differences between the U.S. and the U.N. over the interpretation of the said resolution. The U.S. thought that the said resolution gave the U.N. unimpeded access to refugees in Iraq and sufficient authority to cross the border from support bases in Turkey. In this interpretation, it seemingly drew strength from the 12-nation European Community (EC) which endorsed the U.S. interpretation of the resolution's military-backed relief operations.¹³⁷

India had some reservations against "the right to interfere" inside member states on humanitarian grounds. It suggested modifications to bring them more in line with the competence of the Council under the U.N. Charter. It wanted the Council to call upon Iraq to create necessary conditions which would permit the refugees to return to their homes in safety and dignity.

On other related issues too India took some initiatives. For example, it was one of the 21 countries which appealed to the Security Council requesting economic relief in view of the after-effects of the 8-month old U.N. sanctions imposed against Iraq. This relief was sought under Article 50 of the U.N. Charter. By its adherence to the U.N. sanctions against Iraq, the U.S. saw India as a "key to regional peace and stability".¹³⁸

Although India may not be assigned any role in the postwar security arrangement in the Gulf, it forms part of the 35-nation United

136. *Ibid.*, April 7, 1991.

137. *The Statesman*, April 20, 1991.

138. *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, April 12, 1991.

139. *The News*, Islamabad, April 14, 1991, also see *The Statesman*, April 11, 1991.

Nations Iraq Kuwait Observer Mission (UNIKOM) to patrol a demilitarized zone along the Iraq-Kuwait border after the U. S. military withdrawal.¹³⁹ It also envisages active participation in the monitoring commissions and teams meant to supervise Iraqi payment of compensation and elimination of weapons of destruction.

With its election as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the biennium 1991-1992, India perceive for itself a suitable role. In a debate in the Special Committee on the Peacekeeping Operations, the Indian ambassador to the U.N., Chinmaya Charekhan, said that his country's support was based on the principle of specific consent of the host countries, the support of the Security Council, and the respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned.¹⁴⁰

The Gulf crisis, in many ways, has also brought home the "political weightlessness" of India and the NAM.¹⁴¹ It is, therefore, seeking ways to enhance the representation of the NAM group in the Security Council.¹⁴²

IV. INDIA'S VACILLATION AND AMBIGUITY DURING THE GULF CRISIS : AN EXPOSE

India's politicians have advanced a number of justifications for its Gulf policy. Likewise, some foreign policy observers and intellectuals have been often at pains to offer convoluted rationalizations for its

140. For Indian and Pakistani perspectives on this issue see, *The Statesman*, May 12, 1991.

141. On this see, S. K. Singh, "An Unfortunate Phase in Foreign Policy", *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, March 26, 1991.

142. *The Statesman*, April 20, 1991 also see, I. K. Gujral, "Indian's Role in the New World", *The Hindustan Times*, New Delhi, April 7, 1991.

"malleable"¹⁴³ approach during the crisis. It does not, however, need a sophisticated analysis to discern the "deliberate ambiguity" inherent in India's Gulf policy. While on the one hand it was a pragmatic 'wait and see' response till things crystallized, on the other, it connoted a strong element of opportunism. Strategically, like other countries in the region, India did not deem it in its national interest to see the crisis escalate into open conflagration which could send ripples of instability into South Asia. Legally, it wanted to abide by the principle of national sovereignty and hence pleaded for repulsion of aggression by Iraq but without openly condemning it. Nationally, and on a humanitarian level, it was interested in the safety and well-being of its workers not only in Kuwait and Iraq but the entire Gulf. And diplomatically it wanted to sustain friendly and fruitful relations with all countries of West Asia.

India's pro-Iraq stance derives from its being the closest ally of Iraq in West Asia. Both India and Iraq were among the few Third World countries with whom the Soviet Union had concluded friendship and cooperation treaties. Moreover, Iraq had been one of the most steady trade partners of India. Ideologically, both countries were of the view that Arab monarchies and Sheikdoms were anachronisms which would soon fade away. Philosophically, Iraq's secular, socialist Ba'athist ideology was considered more akin to India's "secularism". No wonder, I. K. Gujral, on the occasion of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, hailed its soldiers as "liberators".¹⁴⁴

Secularism vs. Fundamentalism

According to some writers, such as K. M. Panniker, it is in India's interest to have and promote secular governments in West Asia. Even dictatorships, he argued, are considered "natural allies"

143. The term has been used by Seema Sirohi in her piece, "A New Pragmatism in Indo-U.S. Ties", *The Telegraph*, Calcutta, February 20, 1991.

144. *The Hindustan Times*, April 26, 1991.

over fundamentalist or pan-Islamic governments. That is why in his view India has always had closer ties with Egypt, Syria, Algeria and Iraq rather than with other Arab states.¹⁴⁵

This line of reasoning, however, conveniently overlooks the fact that Iraq's leadership under Saddam Hussein was more despotic and repressive than the leadership in Kuwait, which is among the more liberal Gulf states and where a democratic process was in the offing even before the Gulf crisis. Not only was Kuwait a munificent donor for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war but also for many Arab, African and Asian countries. It was, moreover, an ardent advocate of the Palestinian cause. The Palestinians, the wealthiest of all communities in Kuwait, numbered nearly 400,000 before the crisis, and their losses from cessation of income and businesses amounted to a sizeable \$11 billion.¹⁴⁷ Iraq not only trampled upon its tiny, oil-rich neighbour but also cynically used the Islamic symbol of "Jihad" by linking it with the Palestinian issue. This could not have come as music to the ears of Indian leadership. Iraq has also been accused of using chemical weapons against its minority Kurd population in March 1988 during the Iran-Iraq war. India, according to some reports, was supplying Iraq with thionyl chloride and other chemicals, used to make precursors of chemical weapons. This allegation is, of course, strongly denied by India.¹⁴⁸ In the U.S.-led coalition against Iraq, the two main countries, Egypt and Syria, have been known to follow secularist policies and have a record of repressing Islamic fundamentalism. Thus India's preference for secular autocracies/dictatorships over traditional autocracies is based on flimsy grounds.

145. As quoted in Ranjan Gupta, "Diplomacy Through Guns", *Gentleman*, New Delhi, No. 4, January 1988.

146. *The Hindustan Times*, August 3, 1990.

147. *The Nation*, March 3, 1991.

148. H. Chandola, "India's Silence Confuses Iraq", *The Indian Express*, New Delhi, December 15, 1990.

Imperatives of realpolitik also brought India closer to Iraq. For instance, on the issue of self-determination for Kashmir, a principle cherished equally by Pakistan and the U.N. but anathema to India, Iraq has remained a consistent supporter of India. Because of Iraq's opposition, the Kashmir issue could not be inscribed on the agenda of the last meeting of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), a grouping of 46 Islamic countries.¹⁴⁹

Calculated Ambiguity

By following a "grey zone" of ambiguity — neither condoning nor condemning the Iraqi military aggression — the Indian government justified its position by saying that "condemnation is not part of the Indian nature". Also, in its view, to remain silent is not cowardice but common sense.¹⁵⁰

By merely "regretting" the invasion, it did not win the gratitude of either party. On other occasions, it has been content to voice only platitudes. As an illustration, I. K. Gujral, the former External Affairs Minister said in a prepared statement in the UAE on October 31, 1990, "Even while we recognize the *complexities* we hope that a peaceful solution will be found in the interest of all of us. War would be disastrous not only for the region but also for the world. In our view, there should not be any military solution to the crisis" [emphasis added].¹⁵¹

This plea of the "complexities" of the issue is rather intriguing. For, in the first place, there was nothing very "complex" about the

149. *Ibid.*

150. As quoted in P. Lal, "Gujral's U.S. Mission", *The Sunday Statesman*, October 28, 1990.

151. F. J. Khergamwala, "Gulf Crisis: New Role for India Likely", *The Hindu*, Madras, November 23, 1990.

situation when Iraq perpetrated naked military aggression against its neighbouring Muslim country and thereafter annexed it as its 19th province in flagrant violation of all international norms. If other nonaligned nations could take a clear and forthright stand on the "complex" issue, why was it problematic for India to do so?

Violation of International Norms

Iraq's justification of its aggression against Kuwait on historical grounds could open a Pandora's box of similar claims by other nations on historical or economic grounds. There would, in that case, be no guarantee that any strong neighbour with an easy conscience would not march its troops against its small neighbours. Most of the nation states, as late entrants in the international political system, are small, weak nations. Many face problems of national integration. In order to guard themselves against the hegemony of bigger neighbours, there is a dire need to strengthen the U.N. system and the collective security mechanism. Thus, failure to condemn the Iraqi adventure could have set a bad precedent for the stability of the international system based on the right of national sovereignty and independence of nation-states.

Concern for Expatriates

India's reticence and lack of criticism was sometimes explained as a reflection of its concern for the safety of its work force in the Gulf. In fact, as many as 20 countries of the Third World had their expatriate labour force in the Gulf. Yet most of them did not choose to adopt a fence-sitting approach like India. This Indian concern was misplaced as the Indian workers were not the "honoured" ones in any way and were paid far less than Arabs and Europeans. Moreover, many Indians, trapped in Kuwait during the crisis, had even complained of harassment by Iraqi troops.

While other South Asian countries, such as Bangladesh and Pakistan, sent military contingents to the Gulf, India, leaning on its nonaligned policy, did not. Those who made a firm commitment to the Arabs against the Iraqi regime, have earned the approbation of most of the Arab League, the majority of whom chose to oppose the Iraqi aggression. India had cast in its lot with those Arabs who, in the post-Gulf war scenario, may not matter much, politically or economically. Thus, it may, in the process, stand to lose new opportunities for aid, trade and employment in countries like Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE who formed the core of the anti-Iraq coalition. According to an observer, India's "quiet diplomacy" did not ensure its interests and role in the Gulf. On the other hand, it could have staked a claim by sending its own forces.¹⁵² As of now, India does not seem to be heading for a major role in the postwar Gulf situation.

Failure to Take Initiatives

While the Indian government appeared to take pride in its "continuous efforts" to "keep in touch" with the parties concerned for a "peaceful settlement" of the issue, the fact is that it did not take any meaningful initiatives to avert the war in time. For instance, in August when Saddam Hussein offered to withdraw from Kuwait in return for Israeli pullout from Palestine, India could have supported the French initiative which would have provided the basis for negotiation for an international conference on Kuwait and the Palestinian problem. Even if Saddam's linkage issue was contrived or was a face saver, it was worth exploring. After all, the U.S. has also employed the linkage formula in its dealings with the Soviet Union to achieve detente.

Secondly, when the Security Council authorised use of force in its Resolution 678/November 29, 1990, against Iraq, India could have

152. R. Dayal, "India's Real Concerns in the Gulf", *Indian Express*, September 10, 1990.

taken an initiative to gain time and soften the rigid postures. Instead it chose to acquiesce and deliberately opted for a low profile, presumably for political reasons, among which U.S. political and moral support was the most important.¹⁵³

Its initiatives in the NAM were also too late to be credible. Apart from making righteous noises, it was unable to achieve anything to mobilize the NAM's eroded credibility. To be fair, India did take some initiatives in the drafting of Security Council resolutions related to the ceasefire and demilitarization of Iraq. But its role as a leading light of NAM and as a major power in South Asia left much to be desired.

Policy of Prudence or Lost Opportunities?

A typical Indian viewpoint is that by opting not to send its forces to the Gulf, India chose a path of prudence and a policy of neutrality. For one thing, the very idea of pitting its forces against its close and steady ally, Iraq, would have been anathema. For another, this would have meant propping the "archaic" structures of the "corrupt" Arab Sheikdoms and monarchies which went against the grain of "Indian democracy". However, this perception conflicted with the notion that it should keep in step with the U.N. and its initiatives to solve the crisis and not fall foul of the U.S. The Indians were also aware of the fact that their superpower ally, the Soviet Union, was also backing the U.S.-led coalition forces against the recalcitrance of Iraq. To this was added the concern that in the postwar situation, Iran could emerge as a "regional actor" with friendly links with Pakistan. Also, Pakistan could become a beneficiary of the left-over U.S. military equipment in Saudi Arabia and renewed Saudi economic aid after the cessation of

153. This thinking is espoused in Gautam Adhikhari, "In Defence of Idealism: India Must Face the World", *The Times of India*, New Delhi, March 11, 1991.

hostilities in the Gulf. In this connection, K. Subrahmanyam with his characteristic literary flourish described Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait as a "Muharram gift" to the present leadership of Pakistan just as the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan (December 1979) served as a "Christmas gift" to the Zia regime.¹⁵⁴ Another notable defence analyst speculates that Pakistan would most likely drive a hard bargain for its troops deployment after the end of hostilities because of U.S. concern for instability in West Asia.¹⁵⁵

Shifting Perspectives

Before the start of hostilities, India opposed the U.S.-envisaged new "regional security system" in the Gulf. It was of the view that there was a need for the creation of a "standing United Nations peacekeeping force"¹⁵⁶ since the CENTO, and the inert Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) had already been tried unsuccessfully. Hence in the newly-altered post-cold war strategic environment, the proposed system would become almost irrelevant. India desired a permanent multilateral security structure underpinned by the U.N. being near, if not in the immediate proximity to West Asia, it was concerned over arms and nuclear proliferation in the region. In the absence of bipolar restraints, arms race, in its opinion, could get out of control. A part of Indian strategy was to lie low during the Gulf crisis and secretly wish for the defeat of Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran, perceived inimical to its long-term interests. Pakistan ranks as a major country, which by its association with the oil-rich countries, acts as a major stumbling block to Indian ambition in the region.

Now, with the U.S. military presence likely to remain in the region for some time, India may have to compromise on its past

154. P. Pal, "Gujral's U. S. Mission", *op. cit.*

155. *The Hindu*, August 18, 1990.

156. *The Indian Express*, August 16, 1990.

opposition to the deployment of U. S. forces in the Indian Ocean and Diego Garcia. With the newly emerging realities, its perspectives have changed. An indication of this was provided by its provision of refuelling facilities to U. S. military aircraft during the Gulf war.

India's Impotence in the Nonaligned Movement

The Nonaligned Movement was never faced with a greater challenge than during the Gulf crisis. The first high-level appraisal by this body was carried out five weeks after the Iraqi invasion, i. e., on September 12. After their discussions in Belgrade, the foreign ministers of Yugoslavia (leader of NAM), India and Algeria came out with a flimsy proposal to explore the possibility of setting up a "catalyst group" to defuse the crisis. The NAM got to an inauspicious start when India blamed its leader, Yugoslavia,¹⁵⁷ for lack of interest in resolving the Gulf crisis because of its new West European orientation and growing domestic unrest. But Yugoslavia had been quite unequivocal in demanding the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait.¹⁵⁸ Although silent on the issue of use of force by the U.S., Yugoslavia did urge the "international community to take every action conducive to negotiations eliminating the causes and consequences of the aggression" and described the U.N. as the "right framework to express international solidarity."¹⁵⁹

There were some legitimate expectations from India, given its prominent status in the NAM. Since Egypt, a founding member of the NAM, had gone the other way, and with Yugoslavia faced with its own compulsions, the mantle of leadership had fallen on its another founding member, India. India, was, therefore, expected to take some

157. *The Indian Express*, September 30, 1990.

158. On Yugoslavia's efforts to deal with the crisis, see, *The Hindu*, September 1990.

159. *The Hindu*, September 11, 1990.

bold initiative. There were, after all, some precedents to support these expectations. It was, for example, India under Nehru which had denounced the Suez invasion of 1956 as "naked aggression" and even warned of "dire consequences".

The NAM seems to have lost its *raison d'être* in the post-cold war environment. In the past it acted as a moderating force between the two hostile camps. Today, it is a far cry from the body that took a united stand on issues such as apartheid, disarmament, North-South imbalance, and the need for a new international economic order. Its classic failure came when, during the Iran-Iraq war (between two nonaligned member-nations), it failed not only to stop the conflict but also to prevent major divisions within its ranks. Today, this 104-nation organization presents a sad spectacle of disunity and loss of direction and purpose, so much so that it was difficult to call a meeting of the NAM Heads of State before the Gulf war. The three nations that dominated the movement in the 1960s stood divided. While Egypt's neutrality had been compromised due to its close association with the U.S., Yugoslavia and India both have been beset with domestic problems. The nexus between domestic and foreign policies is very close and if there is disarray on the domestic scene it is reflected in a lack of cohesive and focused foreign policy. This failing has been frankly conceded in an interview by a former Indian Minister of State for External Affairs.¹⁶⁰ India thought that Yugoslavia had taken a "one-sided stand" whereas Yugoslavia's perception is that India had adopted a very tepid response to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

There was considerable acrimony in the NAM Foreign Ministers' February 12, 1990 meeting in Belgrade and its proposed peace mission to Baghdad was left high and dry in Tehran. The nonaligned

160. See e. g., interview with Natwar Singh, "U.N. has been marginalised", *Frontline*, Mardas, March 16-29, 1991.

members of the Security Council, such as Ecuador, Yemen, Cuba, the Ivory Coast and Zaire seemed at best unresponsive to India's moves or were non-committal. Its leadership, lately, had seemingly passed on to more assertive members like Iran.

India's pious image of nonalignment notwithstanding, it is not easy to gloss over the frequent transgressions of some of the high-sounding principles. As an illustration, it was Nehru the very apostle of the movement, who in the early 1950s allowed the recruitment of Indian Gurkha soldiers for fighting alongside the British against the Malaysian national liberation struggle. Later, following the Sino-Indian war of 1962, India accorded permission to the U.S. to install surveillance and monitoring stations on the Nandi Devi and Nanda Kot mountains near the China border in order to monitor Chinese atomic tests and rocket telemetry. During the Indira Gandhi administrations, U.S. funds were provided to undermine the ruling communist governments in West Bengal and Kerala. Later, during Rajiv Gandhi's government, India permitted docking and rest-and-recreation facility in Bombay to U.S. warships as a *quid pro quo* for the provision of dual-purpose American technology, e.g., Cray XMP 14 Supercomputer (instrumental in the development of the Indian intercontinental ballistic missiles, nuclear weapons and forecast of monsoons), the General Electric EG 504 engines for the production of light combat aircraft, marine engines and some military-related equipment. Then came the second sophisticated Supercomputer, Cray EMP-EA-132, an \$1.8 billion loan in January 1991, and more than 3,500 licenses for technology transfer.¹⁶¹ Finally, under Chandra Shekhar's Janata Dal(S) party, the government granted refuelling facilities to the U.S. air force during the Gulf war.¹⁶²

161. Z. A. Sheikh, "Refuelling of U. S. War Planes: Facade of Indian Nonalignment", *The Nation*, Lahore, February 17, 1991.

162. *Dawn*, Karachi, January 30, 1991.

All opposition groups, especially the single largest party in the parliament, the Congress(I), have been very vocal in criticising the ruling party's Gulf policies. Most of the criticism was not based on any principle but was meant to embarrass the government in power with any eye to winning the future elections.

All in all, India did not mobilize the NAM forum but instead was more preoccupied with the evacuation of its nationals from Kuwait and Iraq in order to avoid public outcry; when however it did bestir itself, it was too late. If the NAM had only lobbied with the USSR and China against the U. S. deadline of January 15, the situation may well have been different. India eventually found it expedient to shift the blame to the Soviet Union and China for not striving to abort the November 1990 resolution.¹⁶³

Summing up, India adopted escapist tactics by sailing in two boats at the same time. The Kuwait invasion was a moral issue demanding a "Yes or no" response. It could not be "partly right or partly wrong", as India tried to show to the world. This fudging around the issue did little to raise India's prestige either in the Arab lands or in the Third World as a whole.

163. V. P. Dutt, "Lessons of the Gulf war", *The Hindustan Times*, April 26, 1991.