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THE GULF CRISIS : POLITICO-STRATEGIC AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS*

INTRODUCTION

The crisis in the Gulf arising over Iraq's annexation of Kuwait poses a great challenge for regional as well as global peace and stability. This has now been added to the list of other trouble spots in the region. As evidence suggests, the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq has been like a blitzkrieg. On 2 August 1990, the Iraqi forces invaded Kuwait toppling the government of Emir Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmed Al Sabah and rapidly consolidated their position in the occupied land with an army of more than 100,000 men.¹ The Iraqi government justified its invasion on the basis of a claim that a revolutionary group of young Kuwaitis sought Baghdad's military help to topple the present government and set up a new free government in Kuwait.² Later, on the basis of a "request" by the so-called provisional government of Kuwait that was formed after three days of the invasion the Iraqi government has finally annexed and incorporated Kuwait into Iraq. There was also a claim by Saddam that Kuwait was historically a part of Iraq and thus the merger is eternal³—an argument that may at any time question today the entire world political map. However, any explanation by the Iraqi Revolutionary Council led by Saddam

* An earlier version of the paper was presented at a seminar on the Gulf Crisis at BISS on 10 September 1990.

1. *The Bangladesh Times*, August 4, 1990.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Khaleej Times*, August, 9, 1990.

Hossain falls far short of any legal coverage to an act which has been an outright aggression in a militarily weak and geographically vulnerable neighbouring country—in contravention of the UN Charter and international norms.

The event has taken the entire world by surprise. Observers seem to have been perturbed by the incident for a number of reasons. *First*, the aggression negates the very spirit of the end of cold war at the global level out of which 'peace dividend' was being expected by each and every member of the global community. *Second*, the incident has cast a dark shadow on the new emerging pattern of Arab politics indicative of dialogue and cooperation between the countries who were once at odds with each other. The formation of the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) at the Arab heartland, the Maghreb Union in North Africa and the unification of Yemen are some of the recent events that did corroborate the willingness of the Arab countries to forge greater unity for their prosperity and development. Besides, in the Gulf region, Iran under a relatively moderate leadership was on a new policy to break its long isolation in international and regional politics. *Third*, the incident has taken place in an area, the politico-strategic and economic importance of which are obvious. The Strait of Hormuz, one of the main outlets from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean is located in this zone and uninterrupted oil traffic through this waterway is of vital concern to the West. Any threat to the status quo of the region becomes too ominous to the West necessitating their intervention in any possible manner.

For an assessment of the recent events, Saddam's claim as mentioned earlier seems to lack any clear evidence of a revolution in existence in Kuwait prior to the invasion. Rather, analysts and observers are of the opinion that the latest bickering over oil production and its price between Iraq and Kuwait, may have been the actual cause of Iraq's recent military adventurism. Leaving all these views aside, the paper is an attempt to study the deep-

rooted causes behind Iraq's annexation of Kuwait in a broader context of Iraq-Kuwait relations in particular and the Arab regional politics in general. What have been the most immediate factors inducing Saddam to take the move? What has been the politico-strategic and economic fall out of the crisis so far? Can the crisis be resolved diplomatically, if not, shall war remain the alternative option? These are some of the issues to be taken up in the paper.

IRAQ-KUWAIT RELATIONS –A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

In retrospect the relations between these two countries have remained uneasy on territorial as well as ideological grounds.⁴ Both these countries were a part of the Ottoman Empire, although in case of Kuwait Turkish control was nominal rather than effective.⁵ It may be mentioned here that several emigres from the famine-torn homeland in Central Arabia founded present day Kuwait in 1796.⁶ The Ottoman authorities preferred to treat Kuwait as a province of Basra – a status that the subsequent rulers of Kuwait declined to accept. Until the time of Mubarak, "the Great", the Turkish attempt to implement political control over Kuwait remained unchallenged. Later on, his ascendancy to power coincided with the rise of Great Britain as a significant maritime power in the Persian Gulf. The moment was opportune for Mubarak to seek British assistance to challenge the authority of the Ottoman Empire over the Sheikdom. Finally, Kuwait was carved out of the Governate of Basra in 1899 and Mubarak succeeded in expanding Kuwait rule to about twice its present size.⁷ Later on in 1922, the British

4. John Duke Anthony and John A. Hearty. "Eastern Arabian States : Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, The UAE and Oman" in David E. Long and Bernard Reich (eds), *The Government and Politics of the Middle East and North Africa*, (West View Press, Colorado, 1980), p. 136.

5. *Ibid.* p. 135

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

protectors negotiated half of the principality's enlarged territory back to the Saudis and to Iraq in the treaty of Uaqr. "The treaty also created the Saudi-Kuwait Neutral zone, the land ward side of which was split equally between the two parties in 1970".⁸

The independence of Kuwait from the British in 1961 faced a challenge from Iraq as the latter claimed sovereignty over the Emirate based on old Ottoman claims. The crisis subdued due to British intervention and finally in 1963 Kuwait became a member of UN with a concurrent recognition of its independence by Iraq. Despite this gesture, the subsequent history of Kuwait-Iraqi relations is marked by difficulties, ambiguities and crisis. Iraq's claim to the Kuwait islands of Warbah and Bubiyan⁹ that command the strategic approaches to the Iraqi naval base was in Kuwait's eye a sinister design. At one moment Iraq, virtually a landlocked country (with a narrow access to the Gulf) wanted to trade off its share of the strategic neutral zone for Bubiyan with Kuwait. The offer was rejected by Kuwait to Iraq's chagrin. In 1974 Iraq also made a border incursion into Kuwait and occupied the post of Samitah.¹⁰ The bitterness arising from the territorial claim was further compounded by the different ideological tenets shared by these two neighbouring countries. The Baathist ideology with its socialist underpinning and racial colour was a constant source of anxiety to the conservative rulers of Kuwait. The conclusion in 1972 of a fifteen year treaty of friendship between Iraq and the Soviet Union further fueled the suspicion and fear of Kuwait over Iraq's design in this area. By the same token, the pro-Western leaning of the Emirate was detestable to the Baathists of Iraq on politico-economic and social grounds.

It may be mentioned here that as a small city state in strategic area where the territories of three bigger neighbours—Saudi Arabia,

8. *Ibid.*

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Ibid.*

Iraq and Iran converge, Kuwait has been conscious of its relative weakness and geographical vulnerability. As a result, since gaining independence, Kuwait has rendered great efforts to win friends to offset this vulnerability. Its foreign policy was distinctively marked by a balanced approach to keep up good terms with both Moscow and Washington. In keeping with its non-aligned stance, it bought arms from both and from France and Britain as well. With the object of building a deterrent capability, it has been spending around \$ 1.5 billion a year on its defense.¹¹ Being aware of insufficient military and population capabilities to defend itself against such countries as Iraq, Kuwait has long used its oil revenues as its principal foreign policy instrument.¹² A Kuwait fund for Arab economic development had been set up to provide assistance out of surplus revenues to less affluent countries in the Arab world and beyond.¹³ Bangladesh has also been one of the beneficiaries of this fund. It was also through this instrument that the long adversarial relations between Kuwait and Iraq was patched up during the latter's war against Iran. During the war Kuwait provided a huge sum of \$ 15 billion to Iraq as interest free loan and allowed its territory to be used as an entrepot for supplying military and civil goods to Iraq.¹⁴ Even then the tiny Sheikhdom could not escape Saddam's growing appetite.

ARAB REGIONAL POLITICS—IRAQ IN PROMINENCE

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq was preceded by Iraq's prominence in Arab regional politics. The new position of political and military might that Iraq attained in recent times has been an outcome of several factors in Arab political equation.

11. *The times of India*, August 7, 1990.

12. John Duke Anthony and John A. Hearty, "Eastern Arabian States : Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Oman, *op. cit.* p. 140.

13. George Thomas Kurian, *Encyclopedia of The Third World*, Volume 11, (Mansell Publishing Ltd., London, 1982), p. 1006.

14. *Newsweek*, August 6, 1990.

An introspection of Arab politics in the fifties, sixties and seventies shows an absence of Iraq's political edge over countries like Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia. In the mid-fifties and throughout the sixties it was the political role of Egypt that had its sonorous effect on the regional Arab politics in general. Under Nasser the Egyptian policy attained a definitive course of action and an assertive position overshadowing virtually the policies and postures of other nations in the region. With a host of political ideas like Pan-Arabism, Arab nationalism, Arab socialism, Arab revolution, neutralism, and non-alignment Nasser sought to bring a radical transformation in Arab politics. Being successful in resolving its critical relations with Great Britain, Egypt felt free to concentrate on her new role in the region. During the tense days of cold war, Nasser tried to foment anti-west feeling among a number of Arab countries with monarchical regimes. At the initial stage of his foreign policy ventures, Nasser succeeded in preventing Jordan from joining the Baghdad pact, while at the same time the Western sponsored security arrangement supported by the Hashemites in Iraq evoked a sharp Egyptian reaction and criticism. As positive neutralism or non-alignment was the slogan of Nasser, the Iraqi stance gave Egypt an opportunity to discredit its arch rival, Iraq, in the Arab world. The adherents of radical nationalism and socialism were Nasser's favourites. Thus the emergence of the radical Arab Baath regime in Syria drew Egypt's rapt attention and finally their relations reached a watershed when Syria joined Egypt in an organic union to form the United Arab Republic (1958).¹⁵ Interestingly, Yemen joined the union too with little visualization of political or economic advantages for her. Concurrently with these developments, the issue of Palestine that Egypt was dealing with single handedly seemed to enhance further the political stature of Nasser in the region. All these diplomatic successes of Egypt

15. P. J. Vatikiotis, *Arab and Regional Politics in the Middle East*, (Croom Helm, London, 1984), p. 84.

were discomfoting to Iraq creating a feeling of fear and suspicion among the Iraqi leadership that had little power to contain the emergenc of Egyptian power.

The overthrow of the monarchy and restoration of a socialist government in Iraq after 1958 could not ease the uneasy relations between the two countries despite their mutual commitment to Arab unity, and opposition to imperialism, conservative and reactionary elements in the middle East. Iraq was rather under an illusion to compete with Egypt for a role of leadership in the region. However, Iraq's challenge to Egyptian leadership was perceived by Nasser as merely psychological and not political or military. Many factors unnerved Iraq from the beginning. It became critical about the growing military might of Egypt with unwavering Soviet economic and military assistance. Moreover, Egyptian pioneering role in handling many regional issues including the issue of Palestine made Iraq excessively jealous as she virtually had no political say on such matters in the early sixties. The Egyptian leadership backed by political, strategic, economic, cultural and social depth seemed to create a sense of inferiority in Iraq's feeling that it found difficult to overcome. Finally, what Iraq tried to do was to eat the "left over food" from the dining table of UAR when Syria severed ties with the UAR and re-established its independence. Since then Iraq and Syria sharing a common Baathist ideology had been trying to come closer to each other even to the point of a union between them. The aim was to humiliate Egypt and bring its prestige down. But many of the conflicting and critical economic issues amounting to open antagonism between Syria and Iraq acted as the impedimcnts on the way towards a union between them.¹⁶ Even the Baathist ideology of Syria had a different connotation to Iraqi leadership.¹⁷ Like Egypt, Iraq failed to initiate any

16. George Thomas Kurian, *Encyclopedia Of The Third World* Volume 111, *op. cit.*, p. 1696.

17. *Ibid.*

dramatic foreign policy venture in the region. As mentioned earlier, its claim to Kuwait (1961) elicited sharp reaction among the conservative Arab regimes. Excepting this claim, Iraq tried to refrain itself from undertaking any flagrant political action vis-a-vis these countries that could irritate them in any way. However, the Baathist behemoth in Iraq, was itself a source of irritation and anxiety to these monarchical states.

The Arab politics in the seventies ushered in a new configuration. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war was instrumental in bringing forth few developments that Iraq watched with dismay. In particular, the Egyptian move to come close to the US in a bid to resolve the Palestinian issue, a new constellation of forces in the Gulf due to oil diplomacy and the deployment of Syrian forces in Lebanon during the civil war became a matter of great concern to Iraq.

Following the war, Arab oil that was used as an economic and political weapon against the West allowed a weightier role on the basis of wealth for the conservative rulers of Arabia in inter-Arab affairs. While the oil weapon was used to back up the Palestinian resistance movement, the accumulation of astronomical revenues from oil gave some countries an opportunity to exert their influence in the region. It was Saudi Arabia that began to nurture a fresh idea of playing a hegemonial role in the regional politics. Through petro-dollar diplomacy led by Saudi Arabia, the countries of the Gulf had managed to bring about considerable changes in the pattern of inter-Arab alignments favourable to their own interests.¹⁸ With acquisition of sophisticated arms and ammunition from the West, the Saudi defense system was also modernized to a great extent. But in terms of other elements of national power like strategic depth, broad based resource system, population and size, Iran, another oil giant near Saudi periphery, had a political edge over the Kingdom. Although Saudi Arabia was not completely comfortable with the growing power of Iran,

18. P. J. Vatikotis, *op. cit.*, p. 99.

nevertheless, strong misgivings or disagreements did not persist among them. Besides, so far as fundamentals of regional security were concerned there was a large degree of commonalty of interest among these countries.¹⁹ At the same time, Iran's endeavour to strengthen her relations with the Arab world to a certain extent appeased the Saudis. At one stage the Arab-Iranian relations had improved to such a degree that an idea of a Cairo-Riyadh-Tehran axis in the Middle East was floated.²⁰ This development was viewed by Iraq as a move directed against her. Moreover, she was critical about Iran's role which was to check Iraq's growing power in the region. The rise of Iran as a gendarme in the Persian Gulf with US military assistance was too ominous a development for Iraq. Even with a sharp oil weapon in hand, Iraq's involvement in the internal Kurdish problem directly supported by Iran precluded any possibility of its political assertion in the region in the face of mighty Iran.

In the midst of a new constellation of forces that was in sight in the Middle East, Iraq despite her morbid fear of Iran (a traditional rival) as well of the new axis always sustained an ambition for a hegemonial role in the region. Later on, various political events notably the sequestration of Egypt from Arab politics and the Iranian revolution placed Iraq in a politically advantageous position over her traditional rivals like Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Iran. The new opportunities were reaped by Iraq one after another. *First*, Iraq played the leading role in initiating the 'front of steadfastness' to ostracize Egypt from Arab politics due to latter's Camp David agreement and peace treaty with Israel. As a result, a power vacuum in the Arab world seemed to exist which Iraq wanted to fill up promptly. Perhaps, this was for the first time that Iraq had been blessed with such an opportunity to challenge the leadership of Egypt

19. Shireen T. Hunter and Robert E. Hunter, "The Post-Camp David Arab World", in Robert O. Freedman, *The Middle East Since Camp David*, (ed), (Westview Press, London, 1984), p. 80.

20. *Ibid.*

quite openly. *Second*, the revolution in Iran resulting in internal political, economic and social instability of the country created an irresistible temptation for Iraq to try to establish its hegemony in the Gulf and its predominant influence in the Arab world.

By 1980, all outward indications were that Iraq was the upcoming power in the region. Despite many of the internal problems like Shia dissident movement and the Kurdish problem, Saddam Hossain with increased oil revenue expanded the scope of economic and military growth at home. At the diplomatic front he resorted to quite diplomacy to improve Iraq's relations with a number of Arab nations through economic assistance. In this connection, the new understanding in Iraq's relations with a number of Third World countries was a move that clearly reflected the breadth of Iraq's ambitions reaching far beyond the Arab world.²¹ Finally, it was the Gulf war that brought the political undercurrents of the Arab world in Iraq's favour.

During the Gulf war, Iraq was successful in cultivating the sentiments of a majority of Arab countries including Egypt and Jordan. Their support to Iraq in the war had not been only diplomatic but material as well. The threat of Iranian revolution was felt by the conservative Gulf states to the same degree as felt by Iraq herself. For a moment there appeared to be a convergence of common security perception among Iraq and these countries. As a result, the war also brought Iraq close to the Sheikdoms of the Gulf although such an understanding seemed to lack a solid basis. In their calculation, Iraq was a lesser evil than the new Iran which could be wooed through massive aid and assistance both during and after the war.

With the war approaching its end, the relations between Egypt, Jordan and Iraq grew closer and a new regional realignment in the form of an axis between these countries began to surface out.²² In

21. *Ibid.* p. 84.

22. Laurie Mylroie, "Iraq's Changing Role in the Persian Gulf", *Current History*, February 1989.

the backdrop of many rippling breakthroughs in their inter-state relations, Iraq, Egypt and Jordan felt the necessity of forging an alliance system between them at the earliest possible time. Later on, North Yemen was wooed by them to join the Arab Cooperation Council formed in 1989 with the objectives of political and economic integration between them. This was a counterweight to the Gulf Cooperation Council formed in 1981 institutionalizing Saudi leadership in the Gulf.

What is perhaps important to take notice of is the fact that in post-Gulf war period, the Iraqi policy seems to have been marked by a hasty preparedness to meet few unforeseen challenges, the threat from Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia. Such preparedness has been military in nature which Iraq claims is mainly for security reasons. But beneath this claim there probably lies a long term vision for a preponderant role that Iraq would like to play either in the Gulf or in the Arab world. In the Gulf sector, Iraq is, however, aware of its limitations. The war failed to fulfill Iraq's long list of goals—particularly physical occupation of few Iranian territories to be used as a bargaining card in future negotiation. "Iraq is perhaps convinced now that in strategic term Iran can hardly be defeated although in a skillful combination of military vigil and active diplomacy it is always possible to keep Iran at bay."²³ As a result, with the formidable arsenal acquired during the war coupled with a recent stockpile of few other deadly weapons, Iraq is now the Arab world's military superpower. At present Iraq is almost like a garrison state with one million battle tested army, 700 combat aircrafts, 6000 tanks and vast array of chemical weapons, missiles capable of delivering warheads upto 200 km.²⁴ Iraq is also believed to possess nuclear technology at present. While Iraq feels its defense build-up as a visceral need to face any future

23. M. Abdul Hafiz, "An Emerging Order in the Gulf", *BISS Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 1., 1990.

24. *Time*, June 11, 1990.

Iranian and Israeli threat, it is also a Iraqi posture to show its military muscle to other Gulf countries. In this connection, Saudi Arabia in recent times seemed to have shown sign of concern over the support of Arab countries to Iraq's military build-up. Thus some analysts have been right in their opinion that the formation of ACC which has institutionalized Iraq's emerging power in the region would be a threat to the GCC one day. The prediction that Iraq would show off its fang to the GCC countries at an opportune moment so that they may be cowed into acquiescence in its regional role is²⁵, perhaps, better testified by no other event than the latest annexation of tiny Kuwait by Iraq.

FACTORS LEADING TO THE RECENT INVASION OF KUWAIT

A question that looms large now is what are the factors that have motivated Saddam to initiate the current adventure in Kuwait. At home, he confronts a myriad of socio-economic and political problems which Iraq is striving hard to overcome. In the economic front, the country is passing through a critical phase of reconstructing the war ravaged economy. The repaying of debt amounting to about \$80 billion has become too much of a burden for the country.²⁶ Despite the economy being in desperate condition, Saddam's reconstruction programme also included armament boost up to keep the country's military strength on a strong footing. As a result, the general masses were remaining deprived of any tangible benefits of the oil revenue. Basic necessities of life including food and other consumer goods remained in short supply.²⁷ Added to this is an inherently unstable social landscape created by the peculiar demographic composition of the country. The population of Iraq is divided into several ethnic groups – the two largest are the Arabs who make

25. *Asiaweek*, April 27, 1990.

26. *Newsweek*, August 6, 1990.

27. *Ibid.*

up 75% and the Kurds who comprise 15 to 20%.²⁸ Although Iraq is predominantly an Arab country, in no way should this fact be equated with homogeneity. Differences among the Arabs and between them and the non-Arabs are pronounced. Of special concern to Saddam Hossain is the bitter memory of Kurdish separatist claims which he finally had to suppress with the use of chemical weapons. The aggrieved sentiments and resentment of this group of people is still perceived by the regime as a living threat with the possibility of exploding at any opportune moment. Besides, the Iraqi population is split along religious confessional lines as well. The Shias comprise about 52% of the population.²⁹ Their conservative outlook, ambivalent attitude towards the Sunni dominated government and bureaucracy, closer affinity with their co-religionists in Iran than with the Sunnis in Iraq seem to remain a permanent source of domestic threat to the Sunni-dominated regime of Saddam.

At the psychological front, most of the Iraqis seem to remain disenchanted with a 'self-proclaimed' victory by Iraqi regime over Iran in terms of the cost-effectiveness of the long eight year war. This phoney victory has, in particular, disgruntled the people in the barracks who fought a long war of attrition with no apparent gain for the country. Keeping the one million battle-hardened army in the barracks for long also posed a threat to Saddam's regime.

In such a domestic situation, in order to suppress any possible widespread dissent, Iraq's rubber stump parliament declared Saddam to be the President for life. To divert the attention of the disenchanted mass and to satisfy the people under arms, a more adventurous move was necessary on the part of Saddam. Perhaps, the invasion has been the outcome of Saddam's calculated game of finding another adversary in the region that would give the battle—

28. David E. Long and John A. Hearty, "Republic of Iraq" in David E. Long and Bernard Reich (eds), *op. cit.*, p. 117.

29. *Ibid.*, 118.

tested army an opportunity to remain bogged down in outside adventures as a placatory prelude to the total discontentment of the masses including the army.

However, to view the recent invasion as merely motivated by domestic compulsions would rather be too simplistic. Saddam's belligerent move may be looked upon more as an attempt to achieve few external gains for Iraq. It may be mentioned here that even prior to the invasion, the political row between these two countries over oil production and fixation of its price was in the process of settlement through diplomatic means. The tension appeared to subside when the shuttle diplomacy of Hosne Mubarak of Egypt brought the officials of both countries together in Jeddah. In fact, Iraq got its way through intimidation and force posture when the quota busters Kuwait and UAE promised to stay within their production quotas in the OPEC.³⁰ Saddam appeared to have won a battle without firing a shot when OPEC's new target price was agreed to be fixed at \$ 21 a barrel from the earlier price of \$ 18 a barrel.³¹ This already signalled a change in OPEC leadership from Saudi Arabia to Iraq. But Saddam's aims did not remain confined to this. He possesses greater ambitions of dominating the Middle East politically as well militarily. Perhaps, Saddam seeks to attain such a goal through any avenues ranging from diplomacy to overt military means. So he took no pain to scratch the feeling of brotherhood with a country that served as its indispensable entrepot through which Iraq brought in its weapons and supplies during the Gulf war. No parallel can be drawn between Iraq's recent invasion of Kuwait and its surprise attack on Iran a decade ago. In case of Iran, the move was primarily engineered by Saddam at a critical moment of Iranian internal turmoil to wrestle full control over Shatt-al-Arab waterway. None of his predecessors is known to have cherished such an idea. On the other hand, so far as the

30. *The Economist*, July 28, 1990.

31. *Newsweek*, August 6, 1990.

territorial dispute with Kuwait is concerned, no border talks or agreement could placate Iraq unless it gets physical control over the Bubiyan island that presents her greater waterfront to the Gulf. It seems the realization of such an aim has become imperative on the part of Iraq in recent times as its access to the Gulf has become constricted since the war choked up the Shatt-al-Arab water way with sunken tonnage. As indicated earlier, this claim was also made by Saddam's predecessors in early seventies. Thus, irrespective of the leadership in Baghdad, the politico-strategic and economic compulsions have always propelled Iraq to acquire greater access to the Gulf waters. What Saddam has done can be viewed as availing an opportunity most expeditiously at the cost of a weaker neighbour.

Besides, Saddam seems to have aimed at creating a psychological impact on her neighbours by posing itself as a regional bully. By flexing its muscles, it has sent a message across the Arab world about its future role of leadership in the Middle East.

POLITICAL AND STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

The current crisis in the Gulf is like boiling lava likely to erupt at any moment. With pouring of multinational forces and Western naval armada into the Gulf coupled with massive Iraqi deployment of forces in Iraq and Kuwait, the region seems to be like a fortress now. Although a full scale escalation of war has not yet taken place, an apprehension of a major conflict does persist. Until a war breaks out, the political polarization of the region, international reaction, new power constellation and alignment pattern are difficult to be foreseen with accuracy. Nonetheless, the crisis has caused noticeable changes in politico-strategic and economic scenario in the region and beyond. This section of the paper is an attempt to delve into the issue. Besides, some of Saddam's attempts to respond to the crisis will also be dealt with in this section.

At the international level, the crisis has caused sharp reaction and seems to have brought changes in old geo-political map of the world. The Security Council resolutions demonstrated a new found big power concert behind an unprecedented global consensus on the issue expressed also at forums like the Arab League, the NAM and the OIC.

The pertinent question now is why has the US initiated the move to deploy forces in the region instead of an attempt to seek UN forces? The answer probably lies in the fact that soon after the invasion of Kuwait, the focus of world attention seems to have centered around a likely invasion of Saudi Arabia by Iraq any time soon.³³ As a result, any further step by Iraq to upset the status quo in the region was totally unacceptable to the US as George Bush himself said, "the integrity of Saudi Arabia, its freedom is very important to the USA. My hands are not tied in terms of having to wait for somebody else in any way."³⁴ Thus, confronting Iraq soon became the main rubicon of the US. Acting upon a legitimacy that the US got its entry into Saudi Arabia at the request of the Saudi government (article 51 of the UN Charter), the unilateral action of the US has been propped up by other factors as well.³⁵

32. *The Sunday Statesman*, August 15, 1990.

33. The satellite intelligence showed that Iraq's forces were positioned to strike Saudi Arabia (*Time*, August 20, 1990).

34. Warren Urna, "World Facing Very Real Crisis", *The Sunday Statesman* August 5, 1990.

35. Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a member of the UN, until the Security Council has taken measures necessary to maintain international peace and security. Measures taken by Members in the exercise of this right of self-defence shall be immediately reported to the Security Council and shall not in any way affect the authority and responsibility of the Security Council under the present Charter to take at any time such action as it deems necessary in order to maintain or restore international peace and security.

First, the US justified the landing of US troops in Saudi Arabia on four counts : immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, restoration of Kuwait's legitimate government, safety and security of the Saudi government and protection of the US citizens in the region. In this connection, the aims of the US seem to have been in harmony with the emerging political opinion of the world community on the issue. Perhaps, Bush's calculation was a farsighted one. To keep the US above world criticism against its unilateral intervention in the area, his save the Saudis programme, code named 'Operation Desert Shield' later on expanded in its scope when multinational forces were invited to join the same. While the response of the US allies to such a move is not an unlikely gesture, the intention of few Arab and non-Arab countries to join the force further strengthened the US move.

Second, the moment has been opportune for the US to contain Saddam considered as another maverick like Gaddafi in international politics. Saddam's military muscle, grand ambition, audacity as well as unpredictable political behaviour have been a matter of great concern to the US. In particular, Saddam's overt threat to Israel with chemical weapons in recent times caused a great deal of anxiety in the US that led the Congress to impose an embargo on food supply to Iraq amounting to \$1 billion.³⁶ Perhaps, the US feels that the current crisis in the Gulf has arisen as there is a vacuum of deterrence in the region. In US perception, any feckless international response to Saddam's muscle flexing may further nourish his unknown ambition in the region. A credible deterrent force was, therefore, an urgent necessity in the region.

Third, the US now possesses a strategic flexibility which it did not have for decades. The passivity of the USSR reaction to the latest US move somehow indicates that the USSR is no longer

36. *Time*, June 11, 1990.

a strategic counterweight to Western interests in the region³⁷ While at one end Saddam has taken the advantage of a power vacuum in the region, on the other the US has reaped the same advantage out of a lack of deterrence at the global level in post-cold war period.

Fourth, the present crisis in the Gulf involving direct politico-strategic and economic interests of the US is the most serious international development that the Bush administration has confronted so far. His successful dealing with the developments in East Europe, military intervention in Panama and the election in Nicaragua have already added to the credibility of his leadership. The Gulf crisis is another test for Bush. If his strategy succeeds, he could establish himself as a 'world class' statesman. This would also give him an opportunity to dispel doubts and suspicion about his leadership at home arising over such domestic ills as the budget impasse, battle over abortion and Savings and Loans scandal.³⁸

Fifth, Bush seems to be confident of overcoming the susceptibility of the domestic public opinion to his action. The polls consistently show that Washington's commitment to Saudi Arabia has as much popular support as its commitment to Britain and slightly more than its commitment to Israel.³⁹

Sixth, an important psychological factor may have acted as a propellant to the US move—its show of power as the single super power in a new unipolar world. This, the US felt, would be a practical demonstration to the world to prove the USSR as an outcast super power in international politics. In such confidence building effort, the US, as it appears now, has very astutely rallied most of the world behind it.

37. *The Times of India*, August 10, 1990.

38. *The New Nation*, August 13, 1990.

39. Russell Warren Howe, "Bush's Panama Example for Saddam," *The Statesman*, August 15, 1990.

Last, and perhaps the most important factor that has induced the US to intervene physically in the area is its concern for oil. The annexation of Kuwait has brought Iraq's share of world reserves to 40%, giving it virtual control over 20% of OPEC's oil production with ability to influence its pricing and production as well.⁴⁰ Thus to deter the oil rich belt from being further occupied, and ensure a safe supply of oil to her Western allies and Japan, the US intervention in any manner was a likely consequence. In final calculation, the Middle East has always been an important focus of US foreign policy in view of certain considerations like (a) preservation of strategic access to the area (b) good relations with pro-West conservative Arab states (c) security of Israel and (d) preservation of peace and stability in the area.⁴¹ In this connection, it may be mentioned that ever since the end of British military withdrawal east of Suez in late 1960s, the successive US administrations sought for a permanent presence in the region to guarantee a secure and stable flow of oil for the industrialized West. In particular, the US policy after the Carter doctrine of 1980 (later on endorsed by Reagan) became increasingly committed to a proposition that "if necessary American force would be used to prevent any hostile domination of the Gulf".⁴²

The US initiative in undertaking a military move aside diplomacy has raised many questions. Some view the US propagation of a possible aggression in Saudi Arabia by Iraq as a figment of imagination only. By placing Saudi Arabia at the scaffold, the US action is felt to be one not as much out of love for Saudi Arabia as to realize few of its goals like (a) to overthrow Saddam as he is an inveterate enemy of Israel (b) to designate Saudi Arabia as a permanent US protectorate in the region (c) to humiliate the Arab

40. *Dialogue*, August 10, 1990.

41. Abul Kalam Azad, *Intifada—The New Dimension to Palestinian Struggle*, BISS Papers, 11, 1990.

42. *The Guardian*, August 26, 1990.

(d) to pollute the social atmosphere of Saudi Arabia, the sanctum of Islam (e) to have permanent control over the wealth of the region. In this context, an Arab solution to the problem would ideally have been the best possible option. However, like the US calculation there has also been a Saudi calculation dictated by few realities.

First, Saudi Arabia's threat perception is a matter of its own judgment as a sovereign and independent state. In the wake of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia could give little credibility to the non-aggression pact signed between the two countries in 1989.⁴³ The aggression in Kuwait was in Saudi eye a perfidious act as Iraq made the promise of not attacking Kuwait earlier. Thus, loss of faith in Saddam created a sense of vulnerability to Iraq which Saudi Arabia was unable to counter with its maginot line type defense, being just symbolic rather than effective. In such circumstances, the US, a trusted ally of the Kingdom was called in to protect her territorial integrity. So far as the legal aspect of Saudi act is concerned, it does not contradict any norm of international law. At a critical moment of its existence being threatened, the future consequences of its decision, perhaps, needed no immediate attention. Besides, the Saudi feeling might have been that since Iraq's invasion has been the root of all evils, the blame would ultimately be thrown on Iraq for such an eventuality.

Second, what credence could Saudi Arabia give to an Arab effort for resolving the crisis? Prior to the invasion the positive outcome of Mubarak's diplomacy to thaw down the bitterness between Iraq and Kuwait did last hardly a week. Finally, Kuwait has been invaded. In such pressing situation, the Saudi leadership could find no Arab country that has either the political weightage or military capability to face mighty Iraq. The time factor figured prominently in Saudi calculation and, thus, any help from Arab quarters to deter a likely Iraqi aggression at the shortest possible

43. Mansoor Akbar, "Regional Integration under the Arab Cooperation Council," *Strategic Studies*, Vol. XIII, Autumn, 1989.

time was a remote possibility. Experience also suggests that there can rarely be found an occasion of unanimity and consensus among the Arabs on issues that confronted them in recent times. As will be indicated later, the Arab League Summit at Cairo clearly reflected a divided opinion of the Arab world on the current crisis.

Third, this is not the first incident of inducting foreign troops in Saudi Arabia. If one recalls, in 1979 French paratroopers had to be called into Saudi Arabia to quash the insurrection in Mecca.⁴⁴ However, the difference lies in the fact that the foreign troops now have been stationed to save the Saudi Kingdom itself. The presence of troops from several Muslim countries seems to have given Islamic legitimacy to the multinational force. Apparently, this has kept Saudi Arabia on a safe footing diplomatically to counter any negative reaction from those who remain critical about it.

REACTION AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL

At the regional level too, the outcome of Arab League's diplomacy has been a decision to draw the circle tight around Iraq. The outcome of the summit bears testimony to the fact that the Arab World now is a divided house reflecting wide divergence to the means of a solution to the present crisis. Led by Egypt's Hosne Mubarak, the summit tried to gain the support of the Arab leaders on three important steps: (a) withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and a peaceful restoration of the previous government (b) supporting the UN diplomacy of sanctions against Iraq and (c) create a contingent of Arab forces to join the multinational force initiated by the US to defend Saudi Arabia from a likely Iraqi aggression.⁴⁵ In the face of vociferous opposition led by Iraq herself along with Libya and the PLO to Mubarak's move, the summit has, nonetheless, been able to manage the support of a majority of the

44. Mushahid Hussain, "Pakistan Joins America's Holy War," *Dialogue*, August 24, 1990.

45. *Khaleej Times*, August 14, 1990.

Arab countries including Syria. The divisions manifest in the summit are the anti-Iraq equation led by Egypt, the pro-Iraq equation led by Libya and some countries that tried to balance their position in between.

The Anti-Iraqi Equation : Egypt with other six members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Syria, Morocco, Somalia, Djibouti and Lebanon voted for a resolution condemning Iraq and to send a Pan-Arab force to Saudi Arabia. As a result of Egypt's sending of its troops to Saudi Arabia the most shocking blow has been inflicted to the newly established relations between Iraq and Egypt, that was institutionalized through the formation of the Arab Cooperation Council just a year back in 1989. Mubarak had to digest such invectives from his one time friend, Saddam, when he was dubbed as an 'obedient imperialist agent', and was required to provide a certificate of good conduct.⁴⁶ However, for an astute diplomat like Mubarak who felt cheated by Iraq's false promise of not attacking Kuwait, Saddam's wrath expressed is of little concern to him now. What he wants now is to stop the land grabbing policy of an imperious leader.

While Egypt's power potentialities is no match to Iraq, it does not necessarily mean that the joining with Iraq in the ACC gave Iraq a leeway to regional leadership through military means. Perhaps, one cannot remain oblivious of the fact that while Iraq's military muscle was bulging, Egypt got involved in intense diplomacy to reinstate its lost position in the Arab world. Egypt is no longer the menacing power it was from the 1950s through 1970s. "Nasser could make or break Arab regimes. Sadat was an international superstar. Mubarak does not have the same kind of power".⁴⁷ This has been a healthy development for Egyptian politics in recent times. With the most articulate diplomatic service in the Arab world, Egypt's

46. *The New Nation*, August 13, 1990.

47. *Newsweek*, May 29, 1989.

regional role has been pivotal in many ways. Egypt could well perceive from some of the latest developments that Saddam might show his fang to the Arab world at any opportune moment. In that case the only conceivable tool in Egyptian hand would be diplomacy. Now that it has failed, the alternative was to stop Saddam's military adventure through collective means. Besides, heavy dependence on aid, in particular from the US and the oil rich Gulf countries, may have created a dent in Egyptian mind not to antagonize these forces at the moment. Egypt does enjoy a special relationship with the USA that provides about \$2.4 billion in annual aid.⁴⁸ Of late the US expressed displeasure at Egypt's sluggish economic performance by freezing \$230 million cash grants.⁴⁹ While with the oil rich Gulf countries, the essence of Egyptian relationship is one of great depth, interpenetration and plenitude.

As it appears, for Syria to follow the Egyptian suit was primarily an outcome of three probable considerations. *First*, its historical enmity with Iraq due to ideological, political, border and oil route disputes. *Second*, Syria wanted to give credence to the new rapprochement with Egypt following Mubarak's visit to Syria in May 1990 after a 13 year estrangement since Camp David. *Third*, with a feeling of being ignored by the Soviet Union for a long time, Syria found the moment opportune one to come close to the West. Somalia and Djibouti with pro-West leaning and good relations with Egypt and a need of assistance from the oil rich countries could not, perhaps, remain indifferent to the Egyptian overture. The same goes in case of Morocco and Lebanon. The good relations with Egypt and the West might have propelled these countries to follow the Egyptian lead. In this connection, the fact that should not be overlooked is that the relations of Morocco, a non-aligned country, with the US is based on a treaty of friendship between the two coun-

48. *Ibid.*

49. *Ibid.*

tries in 1887—perhaps, the longest unbroken treaty of friendship in world history.⁵⁰

Pro-Iraq Equation : Included in this group are Libya and the PLO which have refused to conform to the peace moves outlined by the Arab summit. Libya, a country although at odds with Iraq for considerable period seems to have shown the gesture for one psychological reason—its unrelenting hostility to the US. Moreover, it gave Gaddafi, an unpredictable political character like Saddam, an opportunity to neutralize the bitter feelings of Saddam against him arising out of Libya's continued support to Iran. Libya also had differences with Iraq on many of the regional issues including the Palestinian problem. Another consideration may have been to outweigh Egypt diplomatically with which Libya has had a love-hate relationship. If we recall, it was Libya that expressed its vehement opposition to Egypt's entry into the Arab League at the Casablanca Arab summit in 1989.⁵¹

For Yasser Arafat, who now banks on intifada as the last tactical and strategic move for an independent homeland in the occupied territories of Gaza and West Bank, the recent incident has no doubt been a perturbing one. During the entire course of his struggle, both through diplomatic and military means, he experienced bitterly the benign indifference of a majority of the Arab countries to the Palestinian cause. Although, in recent times the overall Arab support to intifada has been qualitatively different than in the past, it was in Iraq's aggressive military and political gesture that Arafat found a flint of hope for the Palestinians, as Iraq virtually came to dominate the issue. Arafat was probably expecting some changes in the politics of the region under Saddam. Perhaps, one cannot rule out the possibility that Saddam's plan

50. George Thomas Kurian, *Encyclopedia Of The Third World*, Volume III, *op. cit.*, p. 1227

51. *Newsweek*, May 29, 1989.

for trading Kuwait with the occupied territories including Gaza and West Bank was known to Arafat beforehand. The overwhelming support that the Palestinians are rendering to Saddam's recent military action in Kuwait tends to corroborate such an argument. In any case Arafat has taken a teal risk in throwing all his weight against Gulf states, his main financial backer.

Countries in Quandary: Jordan, Sudan and Mauritania which have expressed reservations at the Arab summit resolution have been compelled by their own compulsions to do so. While the stance of Sudan and Mauritania enjoying cordial relations with Egypt and the West shows a somewhat neutral gesture, the position of Jordan, in particular, merits attention. The present crisis seems to have put King Hussain, an adroit politician, before a double-edged sword. Jordan, a small, vulnerable Kingdom surrounded by mighty neighbours, Israel to the west, Syria to the north and Iraq and Saudi Arabia to the east, was tied up with Iraq and Egypt in the Arab Cooperation Council. Some experts see a potential flash point in Jordan. Through the 1980s the forging of political alliance between Iraq and Jordan has encompassed military relations as well.⁵² Iraq and Jordan have their air defense integrated sharing common intelligence. In many ways, Jordanian defense is believed to be financed by Iraq as well. Since the end of the Gulf war, the volume of trade has significantly increased between the two countries. They have opted for a barter trade that enables Iraq to pay for Jordanian goods in oil meeting 90% of Jordan's oil requirement.⁵³ Besides, handling of Iraq's external trade cargo through Aqaba constitutes a major source of income for Jordan, which reportedly will loose \$2 million a day in case of a blockade of Iraq's trade through this port.⁵⁴

52. *Newsweek*, July 2, 1990.

53. Mansoor Akbar, *op. cit.*

54. *The Economist*, August 11, 1990.

Against this background of dependence, Jordanian leadership seems to be dealing with Iraq quite sensitively. On the other hand, being in close ties with the conservative monarchs and the US, Jordan, perhaps, took great pain in rejecting the Arab summit decision. Moreover, psychologically, the Jordanian Monarch must be feeling that the overthrow of a ruling monarch could represent a dangerous precedent that might hit him as well in future. As it appears, Jordan's acquiescence to Iraqi annexation which King Hussain described as 'justified' is not a sincere manifestation of his support for Saddam, but merely a pronouncement or a political stunt to assuage the Iraqi leader atleast for the moment. Jordan has a history of dealing with Iraq based on its geo-political compulsions. The case has proved to be true at this hour of the crisis too. *First*, Jordan is geographically vulnerable to Iraq and militarily too weak to withstand any Iraqi onslaught like Kuwait. *Second*, any Iraqi romp through Jordan would be a brazen challenge to Israel's security and existence. This would further vitiate the political atmosphere of the region as it would provoke the mighty war machine of Israel—another military superpower in the region. *Third*, going against Iraq would cause the King to lose favour among his people who appear overwhelmingly on the side of Saddam. The Muslim Brotherhood movement, the most powerful political group in the country at present is successfully cultivating the sentiments of the people in favour of Saddam who has called for a crusade against the US.⁵⁵ To this group, siding with the multinational force looks like accepting US imperialism in the region. As opposed to this, Saddam is upheld by them as the saviour of Pan-Arab nationalism. *Fourth*, Jordanian leadership cannot ignore the Palestinian factor in the country's politics. At least half of Jordan's 3 million people come from families that fled Palestine during wars with Israel.⁵⁶ King Hussain thus feels the necessity of performing a

55. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August 11, 1990.

56. *Ibid.*

constant balancing act to keep the allegiance of Palestinians who at present are in support of Saddam's recent move. Dictated by realpolitik, he has tried to keep the dictator appeased knowing well that at any convenient moment the door to the US will reopen again.

Although Jordan has expressed its reservation at the summit, its role seems to remain in mystery. Despite Jordan's pronounced intention to see the crisis solved peacefully through Arab diplomacy it does not appear to be critical about the deployment of US forces in Saudi Arabia as the King himself said, "Saudi Arabia is a sovereign state that can accept or seek any kind of assistance that it believes it needs."⁵⁷ By all accounts, Jordan's role now is one of caution arising out of a fear of Iraq's desperate military and political ambition.

Abstaining countries : Algeria with close ties with Egypt and most of the Arab countries and the West, and being in itself a prominent center of Arab diplomatic activities, perhaps, feels neutrality as the best possible avenue to keep herself in close touch with all the parties. For Yemen, the calculation seems to be otherwise. It is tied to both Egypt and Iraq in the ACC. Moreover, it cannot afford to antagonize its big neighbour, Saudi Arabia with which it has a love-hate relationship. The Yemenis also do benefit from the oil revenues of the Gulf countries. The presence of US naval vessels at Oman and the daily passage of a number of Western marine task forces along Bab al Mandeb are the facts that Yemen witnesses quite closely now. Being far off from Iraq geographically, Yemen does not feel the immediate threat. Thus, neutrality seems to have been its best option presently.

Beyond the Arab World : Outside the Arab world, two prominent Muslim countries near its periphery, Iran and Pakistan have resorted to different approaches to deal with the crisis. Of particular significance is the present role of Iran that draws maximum attention of

57. *Ibid.*, August 12, 1990.

the observers. Iran, itself bitten by Saddam's fang seems to have taken a vow to punish the aggressor in Kuwait. At the same time Iran vehemently opposes the West-sponsored multinational force and support for a resolution of the conflict at the regional level. Its anti-west legacy in foreign policy and a desire to play a role within a regional framework not an exclusive Arab one, may have been the factors prompting her present move. Iraq's offer of coming to terms with Iran for peace on the basis of the 1975 Algiers treaty put Iran in a dilemma. It is not yet clear whether Iran would throw its weight behind Iraq. For Pakistan, its decision to send troops to the multinational force is an outcome of its long and deep rooted friendship with the US and the Gulf countries. However, Pakistan's gesture has been with other calculations as well. Many analysts tend to think that it is an opportunity for Pakistani Generals to bring the US within the same 'strategic consensus' as developed during the Soviet presence in Afghanistan by showing loyalty once again to its trusted friend, the US. Besides, Saudi Arabia as the guardian of the Muslim holy places has been enjoying an enviable position of great stature among the Muslims in Pakistan. By rendering military assistance to Saudi Arabia at this critical juncture, the Pakistani leadership might have tried to keep up with the Islamic sentiment of the people which the democratic regime of Bhutto is blamed to have injured on many occasions. As an ardent and active member of the UN Bangladesh has categorically stated that it could not reconcile with the latest invasion despite its cordial relations with Iraq. In response to King Fahd's request Bangladesh has sent a token force to the Kingdom.⁵⁸

IRAQ'S RESPONSE TO THE CRISIS

So far Iraq's response to the Security Council resolutions and other diplomatic moves is one of intransigence. Remaining politi-

58. *Ibid.*, August 29, 1990.

cally isolated both regionally and internationally, Iraq has now become a pariah in international politics. Perhaps, the Iraqi demand for a replacement of foreign troops with the Arab troops under the UN auspices may have gained little credibility in the Arab world. But such a possibility has been offset by a concurrent Iraqi plan to link up Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait with the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon and the Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories of Palestine. This the analysts view as a mockery of normal diplomatic practice with no precedence in history and an insidious aim of Saddam to draw Israel into the fray to gain Arab support.⁵⁹

Most of the Arab countries in general do want an end to the occupation of Israeli in West Bank and Gaza strip. But equating an Islamic country's aggression in another Islamic country with Israel's aggression in Palestine seems to have made Saddam equally a criminal as the authority of Israel. "This has added legitimacy to the Israeli act of illegitimacy".⁶⁰ Moreover, the Arab political circles believe that the Palestinian issue can be resolved by a negotiation that recognizes Israel's legitimate fears as well as the Palestinian legitimate rights, and not by taking a third country as a hostage. With intifada remaining as a living political phenomenon in the occupied territories, the Arab political analysts believe that the Palestinians do still have a political card in their hand to press their demand for right of self-determination and independence.

Having realized the fact that the current crisis has battered the Palestinian issue and caused a blow to Arab unity and the newly formed ACC of which he was the pioneer, Saddam has engaged himself in a multi-pronged psychological strategy to rally Arab support around him.

59. *Asiaweek*, August 24, 1990.

60. M. Shahiduzzaman, "A Look at the US Military response", *Holiday*, August 31, 1990.

First, Saddam's attempt to project Iraq as the vanguard of Pan-Arabism or Arab unity at present has caused emotional wave in the Arab world among a section of people. They see the national boundaries of the Arab world as artificial constructs left by the Western rule that should be united to form a new world stretching from Iraq to Morocco.⁶¹

Second, Saddam's confrontation with the West has stirred strong pride among average Arabs bitter over generation of Arab humiliation and foreign interference. His populist message attacking the West against its continued support to the Zionist regime in Israel, rich emirs of the Sheikdoms and other pro-West forces in the region seems to be echoing in several quarters of the Arab world now. The Arabs are now being reminded afresh about their magnificent past and the current malaise caused by the West. In this connection, perhaps, one cannot deny the fact that thousands of people in Palestine, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Libya, Yemen and Jordan have portrayed Saddam as a messiah and new Saladin in the Arab world.⁶²

Third, an appealing element in Saddam's strategy is his support for the Arab have-nots. Since the invasion of Kuwait the Iraqi leader has courted the poor and the dispossessed Arabs with a promise to free them from the lopsided distribution of Arab wealth. Saddam is trying to project the Gulf countries as the instruments devised by the West to ensure safe and cheap supply of the region's oil. The emirs of the region, are in Saddam's eye a privileged section controlling the national income with no accountability to the masses. Whereas on the other hand, the destitutes of such have-not Arab countries like Sudan, Tunisia, Syria and Jordan are serving these rich countries as cheap labour. As a result of glaring disparities in development between the oil rich and the neighbouring poor countries, there is a feeling of resentment and

61. *Asiaweek*, August 24, 1990.

62. *Newsweek*, August 27, 1990.

class tensions among the people in the region. Moreover, the prosperity of the Arab region has come in an economic symbiosis with the industrialized West which is an anathema to most of the Arab countries. Saddam's new promise is a pledge to change the present economic status quo by sharing the oil of the region as a common Arab property.⁶³

Fourth, Saddam has taken a ripe opportunity to uncover an in-built muslim sentiment against the presence of non-Muslim forces in Saudi Arabia as unholy and un-Islamic. In particular, the feeling expressed in anti-US slogan is aimed at casting Saudi Arabia in the role of a betrayer of Islam. Perhaps, his calculation is that a split in the Muslim world on this count would deflect attention from his army's occupation of Kuwait. In this respect, he has been very calculative in touching at the core of Muslim sentiment who remain susceptible to such issues like : (a) the sanctity of the holy places of Mecca and Medina where people of other faith are forbidden to enter (b) a social pollution of Saudi Arabia that might affect the enviable position of the country as the custodian of Islam.

As it appears, there are now two schools of thought reacting differently to the psychological move of Saddam in the Arab political chess board. One group views this as a street slogan marked by noisy threats and traditional Arab rhetorics that would soon vanish with the end of Saddam's pervasive cult of personality. To them, Saddam lacks the vision, charisma, political clout and above all sincerity like Nasser in whose case the aim was not his alone but rather one widely held in Egypt itself. On the other hand, the second group of analysts view that the forces of historical tension, anti-Westernism, pan-Arabism and Islamic sentiment set in motion by Saddam would be harder to dispel even if Saddam is not in the political scene.

63. *Time*, August 27, 1990.

Whatever may be the motive of Saddam, the fact that perhaps cannot be denied is that there is a deep underlying psychological drive for unity in the Arab world on anti-Israeli and for that matter anti-US basis. Perhaps, the Arabs cannot overlook these factors in formulating their long-term strategy. Another point that should be borne in mind is that the region is a conflict ridden one marked by endemic political crises, intra-Arab feud, upheavals and legitimacy crisis of the regimes in power.⁶⁴ This adds relevance to a greater call for pan-Arab movement in future.

Many of the latest developments may indicate an apparent weakness of Iraq at present. In this connection, two factors may be counted in the equation. *First*, his peace offer to Iran and *second*, the use of hostage as a political card. So far as the resolution of the Iran-Iraq conflict is concerned, it can be viewed as a significant development in the region. But the circumstances in which the initiation has been taken lay open to various interpretations with regard to the intentions and motives of Baghdad leadership. At this critical hour of political isolation, several factors might have induced Saddam to make the breakthrough in Iraq-Iran relations. *First*, a peace with Iran would bring both the countries under one banner united by a common enmity towards the US and Saudi Arabia and a desire to drive up oil prices in international market.⁶⁵ *Second*, through a rapprochement with Iran, Saddam may have the chance to free upto 24 Iraqi divisions totaling more than 300,000 troops believed to be deployed along the border with Iran.⁶⁶ *Third*, in case of an international embargo, Iran would be the only option left as a back door through which the embargo could be breached.

64. A.K.M. Abdus Sabur, *Post Brezhnev Soviet Policy Towards the Third World*, BISS Papers, No. 8, 1988.

65. *Asiaweek*, August 24, 1990.

66. Christopher Bellany, *Military Balance in Gulf Showdown*, *Dialogue*, August 24, 1990.

However, much to Saddam's dismay, Iran despite being benefited by the peace offer, could not remain indifferent to a universally condemned Iraqi act of aggression. More frustrating to Saddam has been the Iranian gesture that it has no objection to the presence of foreign troops meant for pushing Iraq out of Kuwait. This indicates a tacit approval of the Western presence in the Gulf by the Iranian leadership, although in the long run such presence is unacceptable. Iranian President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani himself said, "One possibility is that they could put a stop to aggression which we don't mind. Any sort of help from anyone is acceptable."⁶⁷ Some probable factors in fostering an Iranian cool attitude towards Iraq are, *first*, Saddam is hardly trusted in Iran. Besides, his ambition is unknown to Iran as well. *Second*, Iran may want to see the crisis resolved through international rather than Arab efforts so that the Arab world is diplomatically cowed down. Anything Arab is an anathema to Iran. *Third*, Iran in view of its present moderate leadership may like to have an opening to the West.

In the face of deepening crisis in the Gulf, the use of hostage as a deterrent human shield seems to be the last card in Saddam's hand to keep the external threat of attack at bay. Iraqi leadership, perhaps, feels that the placing of Western nationals in Iraq and Kuwait at strategic and military sites and under a threat of starvation may deter military action and relax sanction measures as well.

The Current Scenario : Neither War Nor Diplomacy

As it appears, the Gulf crisis is drifting to a recourse to neither diplomacy nor war to resolve the crisis. The conflict now seems to centre around a personal vendetta between Bush and Saddam like the one between the latter and late Iman Khomeini during the Gulf war. The pertinent question is what measures and steps are

67. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August 26, 1990.

being taken by them to deal with the crisis. This entails an explanation of overall goal and strategy of both these leaders respectively. This section of the paper is an attempt to delve into the issue.

Any speculation about the actual motive behind Saddam's convoluted diplomatic move is difficult to be made at this moment. As mentioned, his earlier response to the regional and international diplomatic efforts was negative in sharp contradistinction to what the international community expects. One political analyst rightly remarked, "No intelligence service in the world can anticipate what Saddam will do. He is cornered and can do anything."⁶⁸ But an underestimation of Saddam's position would be a fallacy as well. While in case of Gulf war he lacked any political card to bargain with Iran, the situation is now different. He has now two important cards in his hand — the occupied land of Kuwait and the hostages. At present he appears to have adopted a time buying strategy to bring slowly the hostile undercurrents in Iraq's favour. This is once again a calculation of several factors.

First, Saddam at the moment seems to remain pacified with the annexation of Kuwait without any further adventure in Saudi Arabia or elsewhere in the region. The deterrent force that has contained Saddam's likely move into the area cannot, perhaps, mount an offensive attack on Iraq to force it to leave Kuwait at the moment. This would place Iraq in a favourable position internationally. Moreover, any such move would not be a *casus belli* for the multinational force which is deployed for defensive purpose only. As a result, Iraq now is avoiding any act of provocation that might incite a war.

Second, Saddam believes that with a foodstock that can feed the Iraqis for six months, his austerity measures and a resolve of the people to undergo sufferings and hunger, the immediate

68. *Time*, August 20, 1990.

69. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August 29, 1990.

effects of sanction can be overcome. Perhaps, in Saddam's calculation, sanction in the long run may not bite Iraq as is being expected. In this connection, it may be relevant to mention that many of the countries that have joined the international embargo against Iraq may not strictly apply sanctions once the crisis keeps on prolonging. Many economists believe that countries like Soviet Union, Germany and France may pull back once they find their interests being adversely affected to the detriment of their respective economy.⁷⁰ According to some sources, complete implementation of the blockade remains still a difficult undertaking. By now, Iraq has already set up a secret food supply network with active assistance from Libya, Jordan and Yemen and some businessmen from Lebanon. Through this network Iraq is getting food and medicine. According to some observers cutting food supply to a country like Iraq with thousands of kilometers of land border with six countries (Iran, Jordan, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Turkey) is virtually impossible.⁷¹ Iran has even signalled that it might break ranks with the West and supply medicine and food to Iraq as the UN resolution regarding the sanction excludes food and medicine on humanitarian ground.⁷²

Third, Saddam knows it well that unlike him, Bush is accountable to the Congress and the US citizens for any action with respect to the crisis. In particular, Saddam with nearly 3500 US citizens as hostages who are reported to have been housed in various militarily targeted installations, has ruled out the possibility of US military intervention in Iraq to topple his government.⁷³ Quite intelligently he is also aware about the fact that the Western force is not going to leave the Arab region soon. In the long run, this might give him a ground to court the Arab support against an

70. *The Daily Ittefaq*, August 30, 1990.

71. *Banglar Banl*, August 31, 1990.

72. The News is reported by the *Tehran Times* which is close to President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, *Quoted in The Bangladesh Observer*, September 7, 1990.

73. *Time*, August 27, 1990.

Anglo-American presence in the region. As indicated, some of the emotional forces that he unleashed earlier may get ripened in the process. If the crisis gets prolonged, it is likely that anti-American sentiment all over the Arab and the Islamic world might get accentuated.

Fourth, it is being speculated that in the long run Saddam would like to add terrorism as another potential weapon to his arsenal. According to some sources, leaders of some terrorist groups like Ahmed Gibrail, Muhammad Abul Abbas and Abu Nidal have already met Saddam in Baghdad. Thousands of Palestinians have also been recruited for taking part in terrorist activities. The West views this as one of the risks directed against Western interests overseas.⁷⁴

Fifth, there is also a far distant speculation that Saddam would like Israel to get involved in the present crisis so that there is the diversion of regional opinion in his favour and a possible change in world opinion as well. As it appears, Israel at the moment is pursuing a low profile and cautious policy towards the crisis.

In the final calculation, the reality around Saddam's present strategy is that Iraq now is in a position from which it is difficult for it to disengage. Popular opinion in the country, already disillusioned with Iraq's intangible victory in the Gulf war, economic hardships and social problems has now been whipped up to such an extent that any climbing down from the ceiling will affect the credibility of Saddam himself. For Saddam such a loss of credibility may mean a serious threat to his power. It would also mean an end to his controversial rule.

On the other hand, the expert opinion of the US on available options are divided. Henry Kissinger's advice that a short and sharp action would be more effective than long negotiation could

74. *Newsweek*, August 20, 1990.

75. *The Times of India*, August 10, 1990.

not influence Bush for the moment.⁷⁵ As a result, the US is engaged in a strategy, short of a war, to force Iraq to accede to the demand of UN the Security Council resolution. Before such an analysis is made, it is pertinent to address an important question why has not the US acted militarily so far.

As has been indicated earlier, in a rare show of unity among the big powers on the current crisis, the international community seems to have come under the US leadership to force Iraq out of Kuwait and enforce sanction against it. In terms of military strength also, the US sponsored multinational force has an edge over Iraqi war might. The rapid deployment of naval armada coupled with an estimated force of 250,000 in Saudi Arabia has already checkmated Saddam well. The difference in armament capability between the two sides in the words of K. Subrahmanyam, a noted Indian defense strategist, "is one of an asymmetry in technological capabilities."⁷⁶ However, the US calculations have been different.

First, any war in the region would be calamitous for all the parties involved. The use of sophisticated and deadly weapons in the war would cause an unprecedented loss of human lives that Bush would be accountable for both to his country and the Arab world.

Second, the US is not in favour of a long protracted war abroad that might cause it to loose patience and commitment to the region.

Third, unless provoked any attack against Iraq would put Saddam in a defensive position that could drastically improve his popularity in the Arab world.

Lastly, even a blitzkrieg type attack on Iraq is now out of question as his country is now a victim of Saddam's hostage threat.

76. K. Subrahmanyam, "Will there be war in the Gulf?," *The Times of India*, August 14, 1990.

As it appears now, the US seems to have scored a point in halting Saddam at Kuwait and deterring any further aggression in the vulnerable neighbouring countries. Many analysts are of the opinion that finally the US might even accept the Kuwait case as a *fait accompli* in future as it is too risky to deal with Saddam militarily and too futile an effort to subdue him politically. But like Saddam, Bush too is in a position from which he cannot retreat back. His compromise would mean a loss of credibility among his allies and a question mark against US leadership of the world, particularly at a time when there is no Soviet threat with Germany emerging as the colossus of Europe.⁷⁷ Thus short of a war, the focal points of US strategy at present are the following.

First, Bush is pinning his hope on effectiveness of sanctions against Iraq. He believes that 'no body can stand up forever to total economic deprivation'.⁷⁸ His optimism about the success of sanctions is influenced by several positive factors at the moment like: (i) In the present context of close relations between the US and the USSR, the 'black knight option' is no more possible. Since the end of World War II whenever a country faced sanction in the form of economic pressure like trade embargo, aid cut, freezing of assets etc. the nation to be squeezed could appeal to and often count on the other super power—a phenomenon which the economists term as 'black knight option'.⁷⁹ Now that this option is absent, many analysts are of the opinion that the effectiveness of economic sanctions may not remain in doubt. Even more so when this might be the first test of such resolve in the post cold war period. From the standpoint of public opinion as well, sanctions are preferable for being tougher than mere warnings and less drastic than war. (ii) The US feels that Iraq's circumstances are more favourable to the sanctioners. Unlike Rhodesia and South Africa which faced UN mandatory sanctions

77. *Ibid.*

78. *Time*, August 20, 1990.

79. *The Khaleej Times*, August 10, 1990.

earlier, Iraq lacks the industrial or agricultural base necessary to achieve a significant degree of self-sufficiency.⁸⁰ Iraq's economy is single-commodity-based, with oil accounting for 95% of its exports and earning 90% of national income. It is expected that the choking of oil exports from Kuwait and Iraq would virtually make Iraq economically weak in the long run. (iii) Iraq's vulnerable spot is food. Most of these food stuffs come from North America, Europe and Australia. Even if there is a clandestine attempt on the part of the businessmen of these countries to violate sanctions, the economists believe the business would not continue for long as Iraq would be without cash to pay for these stuffs. (iv) Lastly the US as per the UN Security Council resolution has now the legal military means to dispel any attempt to violate the sanctions.

Linked with the sanctions politics, there is also a long term US military calculation. It is being speculated that if economic hardships strangle Iraq, perhaps, rather than capitulate, Saddam might lash out militarily thereby giving the US a chance to respond to the act. However, till that time the US has to observe the behaviour of Iraq's military machinery, its threat to Western interests in the region and above all the treatment of Western hostages.

Second, another important point in US strategy is the overthrow of Saddam from within. Although publicly Bush speaks of restoring Kuwait's sovereignty and preserving Saudi Arabia's sovereignty, privately the US government recognizes that a satisfactory and enduring solution to the current crisis is possible only when some basic changes in Baghdad regime take place. The goal suggests either an assassination or overthrow of Saddam. In US calculation, it is too dangerous to keep Saddam whose threat to the regime is backed by huge army, and a gas-missile-nuclear complex. Thus, within a few days of the invasion, Bush ordered the government to begin planning an effort to destabilize and eventually remove Saddam

80. *Time*, August 20, 1990.

from power.⁸¹ But such a possibility seems to be remote at the moment as there is no organized opposition or a dissident movement in the country. Besides, there is no guarantee that a successor to Saddam would refrain from perpetuating the same act as a legacy of the past regime. Nonetheless, Bush banks on a hope that the miseries and sufferings of the people caused by sanctions would ultimately create a widespread anti-Saddam movement out of desperation. This would ultimately topple Saddam from power. By the same token, crippling economy of the country may spark a coup from within his own army.⁸²

Third, there is also the US calculation that a prolonged Western presence in the region would be a discomfoting phenomenon to Saddam in future which he would like to get rid of. This may compel Saddam to come to a dialogue with the international community in a normal diplomatic manner.

ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS

The current Gulf crisis has begun to manifest its negative impact on the world economy in different ways. Oil still provides the world with 38% of its primary energy and the sharp rise in its price will severely affect all, particularly the non-oil producing nations. As immediate repercussions, share prices significantly dropped and gold prices were up. Depositors in the Gulf area in their panic reaction rushed to withdraw funds from their bank deposits and began converting local currency holdings into hard currency—US dollar and Pound Sterling. However, in spite of heavy rush to buy dollars in the Gulf area, US currency does not, however, appear to qualify as a very safe investment vehicle due to slackening economic growth in the US. The ominous developments in the Middle East has accelerated the fear of recession in the US. But, among the international currencies likely to benefit from the current situation

81. *The Guardian*, August 26, 1990.

82. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, August 13, 1990.

are Deutch Mark and Japanese Yen. Although Japan and Germany are now facing an increase of about \$600 million and \$300 million a month respectively in their oil import bill,⁸³ their economies are not likely to receive a severe jolt due to their inherent economic strength based on an efficient technology-oriented industrial base. Japan particularly has also substantially reduced its oil consumption through conservation measure and economising on energy needs. The current crisis will reinforce the option of conservation and looking for fuel like nuclear energy and other renewable sources.

Oil producing nations : In the wake of the Gulf crisis OPEC is deeply split over how to respond to the rapid rise in oil prices following a cut of exports from Iraq and Kuwait. Earlier, OPEC officially ignored the 8-year war between its members, Iran and Iraq. Although Iraq broke its OPEC quota with the tacit backing of the Gulf countries, the war never came to dominate OPEC deliberation. This time, however, OPEC is at the heart of the crisis that threatens its very survival.

Iraq has threatened all OPEC members that a move to increase production would be an act of aggression. Iraq's aim is to keep oil prices as high as possible in order to put economic pressure on the West. Among others, Iran, Algeria and Indonesia are also against the increase in oil production. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, Venezuela and to some extent Nigeria favoured to make up the shortfall of Iraq-Kuwait oil which supplied about 9% of the world's oil requirements through increased production. After the latest meeting of OPEC in Geneva, Saudi Arabia began to bring its spare capacity of upto 2 million b/d into production. But most of the other OPEC nations do not have spare production capacity.

Non-OPEC oil production for some years now is far more than OPEC's—28.8 million b/d as against OPEC's agreed 22.5 million b/d.⁸⁴ But the capacity of non-OPEC oil states is stated to be

83. *The Guardian*, August 22, 1990.

84. *Dawn*, August 11, 1990.

limited. No large new oil find has been reported in any one of them in recent years.

Table

Oil producers, Millions b/d, 1989

USSR and East Europe	12.9	(20.3%)
West Europe	4.0	(6.3)
North America	10.9	(17.1)
Total Middle East	16.6	(26.1)
Saudi Arabia	5.3	
Iran	2.9	
Iraq	2.8	
Kuwait	1.6	
UAE	1.6	
Latin America	7.0	(11.0)
Asia and Australasia	6.3	(9.9)
Africa	5.9	(9.3)
Total	63.6	100.0

Source : *The Guardian*, 24 August 1990

The increase in oil price would help the oil exporters, other than Iraq and Kuwait, to increase their foreign exchange earnings. Higher oil prices will particularly benefit the exporters outside the Gulf region—Mexico, Venezuela, Nigeria and Indonesia which don't have to shoulder an additional defense burden.

Heavily Indebted and Developing Countries : Although detailed analyses are yet to be made on the likely impact of the crisis on the heavily indebted countries and poor LDCs, the crisis involving slowdown of economic activities in the Gulf and increase in oil prices will seriously affect the balance of payments difficulties of these nations. It is a veritable horror for the heavily indebted countries like Brazil and Argentina. The Western banks may raise interest rates to beat off the anticipated inflation with its inevitable impact on the Third World borrowers as well. Along with oil price

rise will follow sharp increase in prices of most the Third World imports particularly manufactures, and even more those with large oil content. If recession hits countries like the US because of high price of oil, the exports of developing countries to the North will suffer and they will face a more critical balance of payments problem.

The hardest hit will be the labour exporting and oil importing developing countries. Expatriate workers in Iraq and Kuwait including a large number of Bangladeshis, who were earning precious foreign exchange have already started moving out en-masse and their remittance loss would have adverse effects on the foreign exchange position of these countries. The problem of unemployment will also be multiplied with all its consequences in these countries. Moreover, these countries are facing an added burden in meeting up expenses to repatriate thousands of workers from the Gulf trouble spots.

Increase in oil price and manufactures would greatly increase the import bills of these countries and naturally they will call for additional external financial support. The LDCs already presented their predicament at the LDC Conference in Paris where UN agencies pledged their total support.

In such discouraging scenario, unless countries like Japan and Germany which will be less adversely affected by the present crisis come forward with increased assistance to the poorer countries, the plight of these countries will be multiplied. The oil producing countries which would earn more foreign exchange through increase in oil price have also a moral duty towards their less fortunate fellow developing countries and they may consider allocating a portion of additional income as suggested by some,⁸⁵ towards allevi-

85. Ashrafuzzaman, "Leading Stock Exchanges Already Affected", *Dialogue*, August 24, 1990.

ating the distress of the low-income countries. However, a real war in the Middle East would swiftly cut oil deliveries from Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries, reducing supplies even after the war is over. The shortages would severely exacerbate already startling run-up in oil prices, increase unemployment and inflation all over. This would cause recession and even negative growth with no winners around.

IN LIEU OF A CONCLUSION

As the crisis remains on a precarious balance between war and diplomacy, it is obvious that diplomacy is preferred to avoid a destructive war. The politico-strategic and economic scenario brought in by the developments so far has been dealt with in the preceding sections, the last section of the paper is an attempt to deal with few talked about politico-strategic scenario based mostly on speculation of the analysts and observers.

First, on the core issue of Kuwait, the US seems to face a dilemma at present. The US feels that its successful containment of Iraq's aggression beyond Kuwait does not necessitate any more US action in the region to achieve expulsion of Iraq from Kuwait. Such a venture may cost the US quite high in terms of both money and human lives which the American public would not pay for the restoration of the Emir of Kuwait to his throne.⁸⁶ Until such time, the supply of oil, the main US imperative, is further threatened, the liberation of Kuwait may remain to be the responsibility of the international community.⁸⁷ Perhaps, Brzezinski's advice that "safeguard the oil—Kuwait can wait"⁸⁸ may now take precedence over Kissinger's advice mentioned earlier in the paper.

86. *The Guardian*, August 26, 1990.

87. *Ibid.*

88. *Ibid.*

Second, assuming a situation where diplomacy becomes the tool to resolve the crisis, certain considerations earlier discarded as mere 'wishful thinking' may gain ground afresh. In particular, the map of Kuwait may not remain as before. With some rectifications in border and shared oil deposits, Saddam may be kept appeased for the moment diplomatically. But such an outcome is expected to bring a new political equation in the region as well, like (a) an increased strategic cooperation between the US and her Arab allies in the region (b) an acceleration in US military aid to Israel (c) an armament race in the region (d) a permanent and less costly US presence in the Gulf. In such eventualities, Saddam may be expected to play the political game in the region with the same anti-West card as is being used now. As a counter measure to Iraq's possible radicalization of Arab politics, terrorism and toppling pro-West governments, the US may initiate structural changes in the region through democratization involving people's decision making. This would, in the opinion of many, be a new search for legitimacy to be based on something more than vague tribal claims to rule.⁸⁹ In this connection, the West's long term strategy will be to gain support from the forces sharing its political and moral values. More optimistic eventuality is a breakthrough in US policy vis-a-vis the Palestine issue. As the most significant party to the issue, the US may show evenhandedness in pressurizing Israel to come to a dialogue with the PLO. In that event, Washington stands to gain appreciation in the Arab world.

Interestingly, the division of the Arab world coupled with few other political developments has also led a number of analysts to think in terms of few possible scenario in the form of regional axis.

Iran-Iraq-Libya-PLO Axis: One group of analysts hold that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait may usher in a new alliance in the Persian

89. Amir Tehri, "West Asia's Ticking Time Bomb", *The Statesman*, August 14, 1990.

90. *Time*, September 3, 1990.

Gulf in which Iraq, Iran, PLO, Libya may join hands to subdue the oil rich emirates of the region and Saudi Arabia. The common factor of unity would be their enmity with the US and to challenge the US in its core zone of interest in the Arab world. This group believes that the Iraqi invasion has taken place in an Arab environment that became hostile to American policies because of continued US support to Israel.⁹¹

Saudi-Iran-Pakistan Axis : This school of thought holds the view that to restore balance of power in the Gulf a rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran midwifed by Pakistan as the common friend of both can be possible in the current context. As a corollary, an accommodation between Iran and the US to be helped by Pakistan is a probable calculation. This group of analysts is in favour of such an axis to counter a possible Indo-Iraq nexus that might block Islamic revivalism by advocating secularism.⁹²

Saudi-Syria-Egypt Axis : In the opinion of few analysts this axis seems to be in the offing in the wake of recent crisis in the Gulf. In particular Syria's realignment with moderate Egypt may clear the way for Syria to come to a close understanding with Saudi Arabia and the US.⁹³

A New GCC : Lastly, in the long run a possible resurrection of GCC in a new and mightier form has not remained beyond the speculation of the observers. A crucial element in this connection is the merger of tiny Arab states into a larger unit for political and military unification with linkage to the West and moderate Arab states.⁹⁴

There is also the speculation of the analysts on a possible new power configuration in present international order to be borne of

91. *The Times of India*, August 6, 1990.

92. *The Muslim*, August 5, 1990.

93. *The Bangladesh Observer*, August 24, 1990.

94. Amir Tehri, *op. cit.*

this crisis. The world community seems to have taken the crisis as the first experiment to prove whether the future power equation will be a uni-polar or a multi-polar one. While it is natural for the observers and analysts to look at the crisis from different angles and perspectives, their speculation, apprehension and skepticism bear little relevance unless events are there to testify them.

The paper is concluded with a deep note of anxiety on two pressing questions (1) what would be the security guarantee of the smaller countries against the regional bullies like Iraq? (2) if Saddam's annexation of Kuwait on the basis of a historical claim succeeds, would it not unfold a chain reaction to redraw the world map ?