

## GLOBAL AND REGIONAL SECURITY AFTER THE GULF

Address by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, Senator Gareth Evans, to the Williamsburg Conference XIX, Sydney, 24 February 1991.

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All too many conferences, if they have any claims to significance at all, crawl along the frontiers of knowledge with a magnifying glass. But that certainly cannot be said of the Williamsburg Conference. Your ambition this year is typically expansive: your field of vision is as wide-ranging as it has ever been, stretching from global security to the command economies, from the Gulf conflict to our own Asia Pacific region, and taking in Australia's contribution and role. I wish you well in the discussions to take place over the next three days and look forward to contributing to the fullest extent that my commitments allow.

Your conference comes at a critical time - a time of great demand for sober thought and well-informed judgments. As recently as a year ago, we could reasonably have entertained a good deal of optimism that change in Europe - the crumbling of the Cold War barriers - would open up the prospect of international cooperation to tackle systematically the huge global problems that remained on the international agenda: problems of overpopulation, hunger, and environmental degradation, as well as the many regional disputes that continued to take lives and threaten peace.

That optimism, however, was always properly tempered with a little caution: with a now all too well justified wariness as to whether the habits of millenia - greed, violence, the unbridled quest for dominance and power - had really in fact been overcome. Iraq's aggression last August was a powerful reminder that a benign international order would not automatically spring up to take over where superpower competition left off. The savagery of the invasion reminded us that, at least as far as international affairs is concerned, order is not a force of nature which will assert itself when other constraints are lifted.

That is not a cause for pessimism; far less is it a cause for passivity and inaction. We still have the opportunity to determine how the future will take shape. If the bridging of the strategic fault-line in Europe was an historic watershed, I believe that we are now entering an equally decisive period of history. The challenge before us is no less than to fashion new security approaches which will provide for greater levels of confidence between countries, and a greater degree of security both globally and regionally.

A New Global Security Environment

It is important that the Gulf, and Saddam Hussein, not detract from what has been achieved. The process of democratisation in Eastern Europe is being consolidated, as is the admittedly painful effort to refurbish the economies of Eastern European countries. Despite the clouds now forming over CFE and START, there has been progress on arms control between the United States and the Soviet Union - progress, it should be remembered, which would have been beyond any reasonable expectation just a few years ago.

Superpower confrontation is no longer the organising principle around which global political and strategic issues are arranged. Regional conflicts are no longer defined as part of the twentieth century's grand ideological struggle, as intractable test cases which neither side can afford to lose. As a consequence, we have witnessed cooperation by the major powers, under the umbrella of the United Nations and using its institutional processes, over Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq, Namibia, Cambodia, and now of course in putting together the international coalition, unprecedented in its size and diversity, to reverse Iraq's aggression in Kuwait.

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

The corollary is of course that further progress on regional disputes, using the mechanisms of the United Nations and particularly the Security Council, will depend on continued cooperation between the major powers and, crucially, on the maintenance of the present foreign policy orientation of the Soviet Union. We can do no more than hope that, for all the turmoil and fragmentation now evident in the Soviet Union, the benefits of taking a constructive international role remain clearly in view in Moscow.

There is a good chance that that perspective will prevail. It is now very widely perceived that the benefits of a cooperative approach to security do not accrue to just one group of nations to the detriment of another group. We are now able, in fact, to envisage the realisation of a mutually advantageous approach to security - "common security", a concept which seemed to so many naive and fanciful when it was first advanced by Olof Palme and others in the early 1980s.

The concept is straightforward enough - lasting security does not lie in an upward spiral of arms development, fuelled by mutual suspicion, but in a commitment to joint survival, to taking into account the legitimate security anxieties of others, to building step-by-step military confidence between nations, to working to maximise the degree of interdependence between nations - to achieving security with others not against them.

To an extent, common security implies that the ambitions of participants are limited to safeguarding their own security, and that they have no predatory intentions towards their neighbours. Clearly we simply can not afford to assume that that is always going to be the case. So while the concept of common security is both the objective and also a way of describing the confidence-building process by which that objective may be peacefully attained, then a necessary complementary concept is provided by collective security, which guarantees that the process will not be blown off course by the aggressive behaviour of individual states, or that if it is, the international reaction will be swift.

The significance of the Gulf crisis is that the collective security system that the UN founders, including Australia's Dr Herbert Vere Evatt, strove so hard to put in place in 1945 is now being tried and tested. The Gulf provides an opportunity for the international community to demonstrate that collective security works. The removal of the strait-jacket of superpower competition, which rendered the United Nations impotent for most of its first 45 years, opens the prospect of the international community now being able to enforce collective security and so provide multilateral reassurance to countries wishing to adopt a cooperative approach to their security needs.

### The Asia Pacific Security Environment

There can be absolutely no doubt that the easing of superpower competition has had great effect in our own Asia Pacific region; nor can there be doubt that new approaches to security now opening up have direct application in the region. Most obviously, the global relaxation of tension has removed at least one significant layer of antagonism from sub-regional disputes as varied as Cambodia, the Korean peninsula and the Indian sub-continent.

But strategically, the situation in our region is much more fluid and complex than that in the Europe-North Atlantic theatre where the benefits of the passing of the Cold War have been most dramatic. Asia is a diverse and non-homogenous region, with little sense of common cultural identity. There are many different issues of contention and many different "fronts", unlike Europe where there has been an overwhelming East-West confrontation. And despite the prospect, and indeed the reality, of superpower cooperation in our region, each of those fronts has its own background of conflict and its own dynamic

of confrontation, independent, at least to a degree, of the changing pattern of superpower relations.

This is not to deny or underestimate the many positive moves in the patterns of international relations in the region. After having withdrawn from Afghanistan, the Soviet Union has in more recent times drawn down its forces at Cam Ranh Bay, reduced its troops along the Sino-Soviet border, and recognised the Republic of Korea. China has normalised relations with the Soviet Union, restored diplomatic relations with Indonesia and established relations with Singapore. The Republic of Korea and the DPRK have been talking to each other at Prime Ministerial level. Vietnam has sought to develop economic and political relations with neighbouring non-socialist countries after years of isolation and hostility.

These developments open the way for a relaxation in some of the particular tensions within the region, but considerable uncertainty remains - not only about the outcome of sub-regional disputes, but about the whole future regional security framework. As US-Soviet bipolar competition eases in the region, the intentions and military capabilities of other major regional actors become more prominent. The shape of Japan's strategic profile is a matter of continuing debate both within and outside Japan. The roles and capabilities of China and India are of close interest to other regional countries. There is concern that new uncertainties might give rise to the sort of precautionary worst-case thinking which so often characterises strategic planning, and that in turn could eventually generate destabilising arms races within the region - the very reverse of common security.

And despite the positive developments, our region is far from formulating a common view of the future or indeed from developing the tentative, exploratory web of contacts which is being built up in Europe. Much of that is simply because of the differences between the two continents - Asia's diversity and heterogeneity will mean that continent-wide links will develop very loosely and gradually, if at all. It is not easy to even imagine applying the security architecture of the new Europe - as now encapsulated in the CSCE - to Asia or the Asia Pacific. But the uncertainty which characterises regional thinking about our strategic future should lead us not to retreat into a defensive intellectual shell, but rather to think positively and creatively about how developments might be influenced in a favourable direction.

In Australia's thinking, there are two considerations which will particularly influence our regional security environment in the medium term ahead: the role played by the United States in the region, and the extent to which habits of common security outlook and collective security response gradually catch hold.

So far as the United States is concerned, let me leave no one in any doubt that Australia believes that the US does have a central and indeed decisive role to play in the region's

security future - not only because of the vital interests it has in the Asia Pacific, but also because regional states want the United States to remain committed to the region. The present framework of United States alliances - with Japan and Australia as the northern and southern anchors, respectively, on the Western Pacific rim - can and should remain. They provide an element of certainty and predictability, and a solid basis on which to build a positive security environment. The United States defence presence in the region, supported by its various alliances, operates as a "balancing wheel" - as Dick Cheney put it recently - as regional countries gradually adjust to the changing security environment. Australia is glad, as are other countries in the region, that the foreshadowed reductions over time in the US military presence look like being gradual, predictable, and subject to review as they proceed.

The second important element which will affect the region's security environment - as well as the wider global security framework - is the extent to which habits of common security outlook and collective security response become entrenched. The Gulf crisis, again, has the crucial force of precedent in the post-Cold War world. Its outcome will show either that aggression by strong countries against weaker neighbours is rewarded with acquisition of territory and wealth, or it will show that the international community has sufficient resolve to set the limits to adventurism. It will introduce a post-Cold War security approach based on power and brutality, or it will demonstrate that, while maintaining our own national and regional security arrangements, we can also look to build on the principles of the peaceful conduct of relations between states embodied in the UN Charter.

I believe - without being either naively optimistic or naively pessimistic - that in the aftermath of the Gulf war the international community in general, and the regional community in particular, will come to accept new ways of behaving. Those new ways should be better but they could be worse; they should provide more reassurance, but they could cause more uncertainty. They will certainly tell Australia and our regional neighbours that unless we can count on regional security arrangements supplemented by the prospect of concerted international support, we stand alone and had consequently better build up our military capabilities.

### Australia's Response to its Security Environment

It is not least because the Gulf does bear powerfully, even if indirectly, on our security and on the security of our region generally that Australia has made an appropriate and effective practical contribution to the international effort to enforce the principles of the UN Charter.

Some commentators have suggested that Australia's Gulf commitment is in some sense a departure from our regional security focus. But that is simply to propose a false dichotomy

between global security and regional security. Implicit in all that I have been saying is the proposition that security in our highly interdependent world is indivisible; that we cannot simply confine our vision to our immediate neighbourhood and ignore what might be happening further afield. By acting far afield to support the UN's collective security potential, Australia is supporting a precedent, and an approach to security, which will have very direct application in the Asia Pacific region.

Our willingness to participate - on an appropriate scale - in collective action beyond our region should come as no surprise. In the major parliamentary statement on Australia's Regional Security which I presented in December 1989, I very deliberately said that Australia's security interests are affected by many factors outside South East Asia and the South Pacific. I specifically mentioned the security of the Persian Gulf in that context, and pointed to the need to develop policy responses accordingly. (To the sceptics I recommend paragraphs 45 and 49 of that statement.) And the watershed Defence White Paper of March 1987, which laid the foundations and blueprinted the structure for a new Australian policy of defence self-reliance, similarly notes that the type of force structure required to protect our interests in our area of military interest entails substantial capabilities for operations further afield.

I do not want to be taken by this as implying - by opinion makers all too ready to seize on simple formulae - that Australia now intends to spread its military and diplomatic energies thinly across the globe. Far from it. We will maintain our regional focus. But we will be ready to contribute beyond the region when it is appropriate, in our interests, and within our capabilities to do so.

The suggestion that we have diluted our regional focus is peculiar not only because it indicates a very parochial perception of security but also because it underestimates the enormous efforts Australia has made, and continues to make, in playing a constructive role in the region's affairs.

Our arms-control initiatives have been a conspicuous achievement - all the more worthwhile and reassuring as events in the Gulf demonstrate the clear dangers of the absence of such controls. We have established with our South Pacific neighbours, under the Treaty of Raratonga, a South Pacific Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (albeit not one that denies the right of passage or port access to nuclear capable vessels). We have sought to ensure that the region is kept free of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction by a regional chemical weapons initiative, which (based as it is on the foundation of high-profile work we have been doing for some time on CW disarmament in Paris, Geneva and elsewhere) seeks to develop a solid regional consensus for the early conclusion of a global CW convention and to prepare for its implementation. It may not be too far-fetched - and would indeed demonstrate the global application of models and precedents - to suggest that these two successful initiatives may hold relevance for Middle East security arrangements after the Gulf crisis.

Australia has also of course been intimately involved for a number of years in attempts to resolve the region's most long-standing area of open conflict - Cambodia. In particular, our ideas for a UN-based settlement, which we first suggested in November 1989 and then followed up with some energetic and persistent shuttle diplomacy and detailed policy development, have been reflected in UN General Assembly resolutions and now the draft settlement text agreed by the Permanent Five Members of the Security Council currently the basis of extensive international consultation. Given the necessary political will - which is still in evidence, but needs to be constantly reinforced by sensitive diplomacy from the Permanent Five and others - a comprehensive settlement is in sight, and must be pursued without distraction by other international events. Australia's view is that it is now time to reconvene the Paris Conference, at least at official level: the remaining obstacles are few enough, and manageable enough, to be capable of negotiation to finality in a round table context.

Our engagement in the region has had an important economic aspect - vital both for our national economic interests and as a strand of the web of linkages that underpin our national security interests. Here again, Australia has not waited for things to happen of their own accord, but has endeavoured to take an active and innovative approach. Two and a half decades of statesmanlike rhetoric on the need for greater regional economic cooperation was at last followed by action with Australia's initiative in January 1989 calling for a regional economic forum and articulating its objectives. Within a year the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) process was born, and two years later is thoroughly well established. Having achieved broad consensus on basic principles at two Ministerial-level meetings - with a third now planned for Seoul in October this year - APEC is becoming increasingly well-equipped to meet the challenges before it: ensuring early progress and practical results from the specific data gathering and sectoral work projects which have been set up, and beginning the discussion of non-discriminatory regional trade liberalisation.

Cooperation, engagement, building a web of linkages: none of this should be taken to imply an absolute identity of views between Australia and our regional neighbours. Like any set of neighbours, we will have our misunderstandings and disagreements from time to time.

Certainly there is no sense in biting off arguments needlessly. And as a Government, we do seek to encourage Australian community and media understanding of the values of our neighbours, respect for their unique ways of living, and appreciation of the very real sensitivities of other countries with different cultural traditions - as well as an understanding of the importance of our relations with the region.

But while we do accept that all the societies in a region have their own distinctive

characteristics and values, at the same time we do not believe we should be trapped into embracing crude cultural relativism. We make no apology for raising such issues as human rights, and we expect others to acknowledge the integrity of our values, such as freedom of the media. Making our views known - albeit usually quietly and courteously rather than stridently and aggressively - is far from amounting to condescension or interference in another country's internal affairs. It is simply projecting a set of values that the international community is increasingly coming to accept as universally applicable standards for the treatment of its citizens; and indeed, a set of values that Australians expect their governments to advance internationally.

The results of all our efforts toward regional integration are increasingly evident as Australia is coming more to be regarded as a natural and central participant in the councils and forums of the region - a participant with different values and a particular cultural and historical inheritance, but these days (as Dick Woolcott has nicely put it) no longer the odd man out, but the odd man in. Australia values its membership of the South Pacific Forum, a successful institution which provides a focus for economic and political cooperation in the South Pacific. We value too our access to the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the opportunity for dialogue at the ASEAN Post Ministerial Conference - a dialogue which last year was directed in part, for the first time, to a frank discussion of security issues.

We do acknowledge that, compared with the process of dialogue in Europe in recent years, there is little in the way of free-flowing exchanges on security issues between countries in the Asia Pacific. But it is only through such processes of dialogue that mistrust can be broken down, different interests better understood and accommodated, constructive patterns of reassurance developed, and a beginning made on establishing common security as the prevailing security perception in our region. Australia is working hard to develop these habits of consultation and exchange in the hope that a strengthening of the web of dialogue at the bilateral and sub-regional level will lead to an understanding of shared security interests in the region, and a realisation that as a region we have much more in common than we have to separate us.

The Gulf conflict is convincing testimony to the danger, after the Cold War, of a reversion to the politics of the jungle. It is convincing testimony, too, of the costs involved in reversing aggression and correcting a precarious security environment once it has degenerated past the point of no-return. By contrast, and by absorbing the lessons and precedents of the Gulf conflict, the Asia Pacific region has an unparalleled opportunity to build habits of cooperation and webs of contacts which will enable us to see our security and our prosperity, not as selfish interests achieved at the expense of others, but as inextricably connected with the security and well-being of our neighbours: security and economic growth with our neighbours, and not against them.

But the Gulf warns against standing back and allowing things to happen - events may not

turn out as we would want them to. Our challenge is to identify existing and emerging irritants and to work purposefully and cooperatively to solve them. As a region, we have achieved some progress, and conditions are generally favourable. There is room for some optimism, but there is no room for inaction: in security, as in economics, the game is never won, but is always in progress.

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