

Resentment to West growing

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Iraq's annexation of Kuwait, is unique in the history of post-war events. On several occasions in the past, big powers have used or threatened the use of force. Even middle and small powers have tried military means to settle political disputes. Invasions, interventions, invitation or toppling of existing governments and settling puppet regimes are by no means new. Tibet was annexed by China, parts of Kashmir by Pakistan, Northern Islands by the Soviet Union, The West Bank by Transjordan, then by Israel, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights by Israel, not to speak of Goa and Sikkim by India.

Unlike all these and such other instances, Iraqi action means the defacto elimination of Kuwait, a sovereign country which is a member-state of the UN. Iraq's improved action is a flagrant violation of the UN Charter. This action was unanimously condemned in the Security Council and economic sanctions were imposed. It also allowed military action to implement these sanctions. The deadline that was given to Iraq was 15 January 1991, to vacate the aggression. As Iraq refused to abide by the deadline, the multinational forces led by USA, Britain, France, Italy, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia attacked Iraq on the early morning of 17 January. The war is still on, with both sides making exaggerated claims.

The immediate reasons behind the West and an Arab reactions was the fear that if Saddam Hussein is allowed to go scot free with Kuwait, he may in future destabilize the other monarchs in the Gulf. Already with Kuwait, Saddam would control 20% of the world's oil resources and could easily dictate the price of oil to the West. He may then challenge the existing world order as maintained by the West. He is a force of change in the international system, challenging the supremacy of the West to be the international policeman. Ultimately, it is viewed by the West as a challenge to the Christian civilization posed from the Islamic world. Khomeini did it earlier, now Saddam. His recent utterance was when he asked the Muslims to rise in a Holy Crusade (Jihad) and to throw out the infidels from their holy land. This, to a large extent, has kept states like USSR, China, India and others, neutral for they have large Muslim minority populations.

On the other level, Saddam's strategy is Pan-Arab unity. This is as old as 1940-45 when the Ba'ath Party rose on the University campuses of Damascus and Cairo. Nasser of Egypt had a similar vision. And this is the reason why Saddam has played the master stroke of linking the Palestinian issue to his withdrawal from Kuwait.

By the way, in Kuwait there are a lot of Palestinians. This was also a way to gain

local support from the people. This issue has been and burning problem, a homeland for the Palestinians between the Arabs and the Israelis. It is in this context that Iraq is eager to attack Israel to draw her into the present war. This would bring an effective rift in the multinational forces especially Syria and Saudi Arabia's participation. But the Americans will not allow Saddam this satisfaction. It is evident that Americans are ready to go to any extent to keep Israel out of the present war. They have placed the patriot missiles to protect Israel from future Iraqi Scud missiles attacks.

The long-term repercussions would be several. Whether Saddam survives the war or not, he would go down as a martyr 'Shaheed' for the Arab people. He symbolises the leader who stood to the bully (USA) and fought bravely. Saddam himself has vowed not to give an easy victory to USA and her allies.

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Two, the war, after it is over, may cause a lot of soul-searching among the Gulf states. Political instability and coups may be the order.

Three, the West will gain its hold back of determining the price of oil, a vital energy resource.

Four, the war is being fought on the Gulf soil the reconstruction of these states may be a heavy cost to which again the Gulf will have to turn to the West.

Five, USA will be seen as an imperialist power, at least by the people of the Gulf, that any leader can exploit the anti-American sentiments and come to power.

Six, the Palestinian problem may be discussed by a solution to it, that of a homeland will still remain a distant dream. Finally, such defiance of the big powers may become more frequent, for Iraq has shown that it would keep a militarily much superior power away from victory for a long time. With the humiliation of Iraq, it leaves only

one Islamic state with nuclear capability, Pakistan.

In the final analysis, it is impossible to probe the mind of Saddam Hussein as to why he decided to invade Kuwait, immediately after the ceasefire of a long and weary war with Iran, where Iraq lost more than a million men. Was it short-term miscalculations or a long-term over-optimistic appraisal of the situation? Superpowers USA and USSR has rendered USA and the West relish a momentary victory. The withdrawal of the Soviet Union from international hegemony may be a shot in the arm for USA and her allies, which has shown them less intolerant to violations by regional powers which may disturb their balance of power. With USSR temporarily withdrawing from the role of an international policeman, this has left USA and her allies to do the policing alone.

Fears have been expressed in the Third World that there will be no balance, but a preponderance of power in an unipolar world. USA's won record in the post-Second World War period has been short-sighted and brutal. They have not batted an eyelid to support right dictators, created banana republics and dumped them like hot potatoes when their work was over. Henry Kissinger aptly said about American foreign policy, "America has no permanent friends, or interest, only temporary interests." One remembers the role of the CIA in the assassination of President Salvador Allende of Chile. All this is done in the name "Keeping the World safe for Democracy."

How safe is the world then, would depend on the unity of the Third World, which like the Arabs seems to be absolutely divided. But resentment to the West, especially USA has been growing in the Gulf, as the Iranian Revolution under Khomeini showed. This war has brought the issues that certain Gulf states like Iran and Iraq have shown a contempt for the western way of life, as one of "greed and decadence." With such a complex problem raving enormous dimensions, one would end with the felicitous words of the great British Parliamentarian Edmund Burke on what he said of the French Revolution.

The present war's long-term repercussions of the Arab world may be as serious as the French Revolution had to the evolution of Western civilisation. "An event has happened upon which it is difficult to speak and impossible to be silent." In quite another sense, this is the dilemma the war has put most of the nations other than the participants. There is no doubt that the present war, which ever way it may go, will have tremendous political, economic and religious repercussions in the world, especially in the Gulf and the Third World.