

War in the Persian Gulf

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Review Essay

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Johnstone, Ian. *Aftermath of the Gulf War: An Assessment of UN Action*. International Peace Academy, Occasional Paper Series, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1994.

Miller, Ronnie. *Following the Americans to the Persian Gulf. Canada, Australia, and the Development of the New World Order*. Associated University Presses, 1994.

Ian Johnstone's work focuses on Security Council Resolution 687 (3 April 1991) the ceasefire resolution passed at the end of the UN -sponsored operation to force Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait. The resolution is a complex, precedent-setting and far-reaching document. Johnstone seeks to "provide a record of the drafting and implementation of Resolution 687, to assess that record, and to draw lessons for the future." The author certainly achieves this goal and in doing so provides readers with a careful, concise and informative background and analysis of the resolution and its implications. The section on the drafting of the resolution is particularly interesting. The author is able to draw on interviews with key players in the process and provides a much fuller picture than is available by reading press reports or other accounts.

The author, inter alia, draws two key lessons from the experience for future Security Council action. He suggests that the precedent set by using force to punish violations of 687 has "potentially far-reaching consequences." He proposes that in future, force should only be used when the violation or violations in question are in themselves a threat to international peace and security. Whenever possible, the use of force should be carried out by the UN but when it is delegated to other countries this should be specified in advance along with the mandate and when force will be considered.

Johnstone's discussion of the negotiating history of Resolution 687 reveals the degree to which decision-making on this issue was almost exclusively done by the permanent members of the Security Council, especially three of those members, in a very closed restrictive process. Resolution 687 came about in a fairly unusual time in international relations. To ensure continued consensus on these kinds of issues in future, the decision-making process needs to be much less restrictive and more transparent. Equally valuable is the discussion of the disarmament provisions of Resolution 687.

This work continues the tradition of well written and informative papers published by the International Peace Academy in this series. For anyone examining the nature of the UN's ceasefire provisions with respect to Iraq and Kuwait this will be very useful reading.

By contrast, Ronnie Miller's book on Canadian and Australian foreign policy during the Persian Gulf experience differs in approach and outlook. Miller's book seeks to analyze Canadian and Australian foreign policy decision-making at the time of their respective

decisions to contribute troops to the multinational force established to carry out UN Resolution 687. This purpose is achieved but only conditionally. Miller offers a good survey of the debate in both countries, drawing on the speeches and statements of the two prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs, and also covering the public debate as it was carried out in national newspapers. However, his analysis has a tendency to make conclusions without having laid the groundwork.

For example, Miller states that Canada and Australia were "obliged" to make a contribution to the multinational force because they were not in a position to say no to the US and they felt they must carve out a position for themselves in the new world order. Miller then argues that because of potential domestic problems with the decision, the two prime ministers ensured that the military contribution was only a token one. This conclusion is based on the statements of the leaders and the condition of the naval contribution. No consideration of other factors takes place. For example, in the Canadian case, the "symbolic" contribution may equally have been the result of military constraints which meant that Canada's ability to contribute was relatively limited anyway. But Miller does not consider and disprove such other factors. In the absence of corroborating evidence, such as internal documents, interviews or accounts by key players, this conclusion is difficult to accept at face value.

Students of Canadian foreign policy will be surprised by Miller's suggestion that multilateralism "suddenly" became an important element in Canadian and Australian foreign policy at this time. The failure to clearly define what he means by multilateralism in this instance contributes to confusion about this statement. Similarly, Miller contends that prior to the end of the Cold War, Canada and Australia "knew" that the United Nations was "impotent" but would not admit this because of fear of reprisal and the need to pursue economic interests. With the end of the Cold War "Canadian and Australian doctrines changed almost overnight." It is possible that this kind of argument about the nature of Canadian and Australian policy at the UN can be made but Miller offers no information or argumentation to back up these assertions.

In focusing so completely on the statements of the prime ministers and ministers of foreign affairs the analysis tends to miss some key elements of the policy situation at the time. Miller's analysis includes little discussion about the role of the UN in decision-making in these two countries, although he makes a number of conclusions about the two countries' attitudes toward the United Nations. This is an important omission since Canada was a member of the Security Council at this time. In particular, Miller has completely missed the fact that Canada's ambassador to the United Nations and the minister of foreign affairs worked very hard behind the scenes to ensure that the United States kept its actions within the framework of the United Nations at a time when the US was very prepared to act without UN authorization. While the UN resolution authorizing the operation against Iraq can be criticized from many angles, the very fact of its existence was a victory for Canadian foreign policy. This kind of information does not necessarily contradict the thrust of Miller's analysis, but its absence contributes to unease about some of his unsupported statements.

The book could have benefitted from more careful editing. In some cases single footnotes cover references in three or four paragraphs. In other instances quotes or references are not footnoted at all. Sub-titles would have been very useful, and more careful attention to the flow of ideas in single paragraphs might have avoided some confusion relating to apparent leaps in logic. In addition, the narrative sometimes drifts into tangential discussions of Middle East politics and there are often references to the pro- and anti - Israeli tilt of some of the Canadian or Australian leaders, although in the end this does not seem to be a factor in the author's conclusions.

In conjunction with the failure to fully substantiate or argue the conclusions, these problems of focus make this book a frustrating read for anyone seeking to use it as part of broader research into the subject. However, in spite of these problems, the coverage of public statements by the leaders and the discussion of the media debate make the book useful for those searching for an overview or introduction to the public debate in Australia and Canada.

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