

**STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT  
WITH IRAQ: AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**

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## FOREWORD

War with Iraq will signal the beginning of a new era in American national security policy and alter strategic balances and relationships around the world. The specific effects of the war, though, will vary from region to region. In some, America's position will be strengthened. In others, it may degrade without serious and sustained efforts.

To assess this dynamic, the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) has developed a special series of monographs entitled *Strategic Effects of the Conflict with Iraq*. In each, the author has been asked to analyze four issues: the position that key states in their region are taking on U.S. military action against Iraq; the role of America in the region after the war with Iraq; the nature of security partnerships in the region after the war with Iraq; and the effect that war with Iraq will have on the war on terrorism in the region.

This monograph is one of the special series. SSI is pleased to offer it to assist the Department of Army and Department of Defense in crafting the most effective strategy possible for dealing with the many consequences of war with Iraq.

DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR.  
Director  
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## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

ANDREW SCOBELL was born and raised in Hong Kong. He joined the Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) in August 1999 and is SSI's expert on Asia. He taught at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, and Rutgers University, New Jersey. Since 1988 Dr. Scobell has published articles in such journals as *Armed Forces and Society*, *Asian Survey*, *China Quarterly*, *Comparative Politics*, *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, and *Political Science Quarterly*. Recent articles have focused on China-Taiwan relations and China's military modernization. Dr. Scobell holds a B.A. in History from Whitman College, an M.A. in International Studies from the University of Washington, and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Columbia University.

## **STRATEGIC EFFECTS OF THE CONFLICT WITH IRAQ: AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND**

### **Conclusions:**

Australia is one of the staunchest supporters of U.S.-led military action against Iraq. Canberra has been very willing to provide combat troops to fight alongside U.S. forces.

Australia supports the U.S. action with or without U.N. approval, although significant unease and dissent are also evident in the country.

Australia is confident about the strength of its security relationship with the United States.

New Zealand is one of the most circumspect countries in the world regarding the merits of a war with Iraq.

New Zealand is willing to contribute noncombat military and humanitarian support in the closing stages of a conflict or after a conflict only if the U.N. sanctions the war.

New Zealand remains ambivalent about its security ties with the United States.

This study considers the strategic consequences of U.S. and allied military action against Iraq for the countries of Australia and New Zealand and provides some policy recommendations. The prospect of imminent U.S. military action against Iraq is of enormous interest to both Australia and New Zealand.

## **AUSTRALIA**

Australian Prime Minister John Howard, aside from Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom, has been the staunchest supporter of a U.S.-led military action against Iraq. Moreover, Australia is one of the few countries that has been ready and willing to provide combat forces for a conflict with Iraq. In spite of this, the United States must be attuned to significant reservations among the political elite and popular opposition to Australia's participation in a conflict and the possible impact of this dissent on Canberra's security cooperation with Washington. In mid-February 2003 hundreds of thousands of anti-war protesters marched in Australian cities, and the Australian Senate gave Prime Minister Howard a vote of no confidence on his decision to send military forces to the Persian Gulf. Many of the factors identified below will have a considerable influence on Australian opinion and in turn either strengthen or weaken support for future Australian-U.S. security cooperation.

### **Duration of War.**

Australians would prefer a short war. A long war might test the limits of Australian support for military cooperation with the United States. Australian public resolve would be strengthened if the U.N. sanctioned the conflict.

### **Level of Destruction.**

Australia would prefer a low level of destruction and small number of casualties, especially among Australian troops and Iraqi civilians. The Australian public might react negatively to substantial losses of Australian forces and extensive civilian casualties. Either or both of these outcomes might put strong public pressure on Canberra to lessen its level of support for the United States.

**Use of Terror/WMD.**

Australia recognizes that the use of terrorism by groups supported by or sympathetic to Saddam Hussein is a distinct possibility. If this terrorism involved weapons of mass destruction (WMD) or if the Iraqi military itself used WMD, then Australians would be particularly outraged. Further, if Australians or Australia were targeted, then this would likely only strengthen the national resolve for continued security cooperation with the United States.

**Global Economy.**

Australia is concerned about the impact of a war on its economy, most directly through a disruption in the supply of oil and higher energy costs, which would lead more generally to an economic slowdown.

**Perception of U.S. Intent.**

Australians generally have a positive perception of U.S. intentions in the war on terrorism and tend to identify closely with these. Australia has been one of America's most steadfast allies for 75 years. Australian troops fought shoulder-to-shoulder with U.S. troops in Afghanistan and are prepared to do so again in Iraq. Intelligence sharing between the two nations is particularly important. Australia is a natural and effective partner for pursuing the war on terrorism in the Asia-Pacific, which is likely to be one of its major battlegrounds. Moreover, Australians have been the victims of terrorism. As many as 90 Australians died in the September 11, 2001, attack on the World Trade Center. Australia suffered a major terrorist attack of its own in October 2002 in Bali, Indonesia, when bombs detonated by Islamic extremists killed more than 100 vacationing citizens.

### **Size of Coalition.**

Australia would prefer as large a U.S.-led coalition as possible but would almost certainly stay the course no matter what the size of the coalition.

### **Nature of U.S. Post-War Presence and Activity.**

Australian support for security cooperation with the United States could shift based on the conduct and outcome of a war against Iraq. If the war is seen as successful, then this will strengthen the position of Prime Minister Howard and his policy of staunch support for the United States. If the war with Iraq is judged to be a failure, then this would weaken Howard's position and may even lead to the downfall of his government. Moreover, some Australians are sensitive to the perception that their country is a lap dog of the United States. This is evident from the furor caused several years ago by the widely (but inaccurately) reported remarks of Prime Minister Howard that Australia was best viewed as America's deputy sheriff.

## **NEW ZEALAND**

For New Zealand's Prime Minister Helen Clark, the key element of her country's approach to a war against Iraq is whether or not the conflict is U.N. sanctioned. Prime Minister Clark stated in February 2003 that, if the war has the U.N. imprimatur, then New Zealand, particularly in the "end stage" of a war or in the post-conflict period, stood ready to provide logistical or humanitarian assistance and specialized military forces such as medical, engineering, and mine clearance units.

### **Duration of War.**

New Zealand hopes the war is a short one. Prime Minister Clark told the New Zealand parliament in February 2003 that the Iraqi people were already suffering



greatly, and a war would only add to this suffering. Hence the longer the war, the greater would be the humanitarian catastrophe in Iraq.

### **Level of Destruction.**

New Zealand would prefer little destruction since this would limit the scale of human suffering for the people of Iraq.

### **Use of Terror/WMD.**

The use of terrorism by Iraq or groups sympathetic to Iraq would be viewed with great concern. Any use of WMD by the Iraqi military or terrorists would cause widespread outrage among New Zealanders. The country has a deeply held anti-nuclear policy that is largely responsible for its suspended security alliance with the United States.

### **Global Economy.**

As an island nation in the South Pacific, New Zealand relies heavily on international trade and imported oil. A long war, especially one that resulted in serious damage to oil fields in the Persian Gulf region, would have a severe impact on New Zealand's economy.

### **Perception of U.S. Intent.**

New Zealand is skeptical of U.S. intentions. While not necessarily opposed to U.S. goals in the war against terrorism, it is strongly opposed to some U.S. methods.

### **Size of Coalition.**

The U.N. imprimatur is much more important to New Zealand than the size of coalition, although, of course, the two are likely to go hand-in-hand.

## **Nature of U.S. Post-War Presence and Activity.**

New Zealanders have mixed feelings about the war on terrorism and the prospect of a war against Iraq. New Zealand has been a willing coalition partner in previous U.S.-led operations such as DESERT STORM (1991) and ENDURING FREEDOM in Afghanistan (2001). If the U.N. sanctions the war, then New Zealand is likely to participate in a post-war relief effort, just as New Zealand forces played a key role in the humanitarian intervention in East Timor several years ago.

If the war is brief, causes few casualties, limited destruction, and the cooperative experience is a positive one, it might lead to a serious rethinking of New Zealand attitudes toward security cooperation with the United States. If, however, the war does not have the U.N. imprimatur, is prolonged with widespread destruction and many Iraqi civilian casualties, then this will likely reinforce the critical attitudes among many New Zealanders towards the United States.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Focus on Australia's contribution to the war effort and on New Zealand's contribution to post-conflict Iraq.

Do not take Australia's support for granted. Be sure to express sincere thanks to Australia at the highest levels of government for its contribution. President Bush and other cabinet-level officials, including Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, should publicly express U.S. appreciation for Australia's contribution to the war against Iraq. A senior administration official or officials should visit Australia to reinforce the depth of U.S. appreciation for Australian support.

Enable Australian forces to return home promptly following the cessation of hostilities in Iraq. This will ease Canberra's heightened sense of vulnerability to

terrorism at home after the October 2002 Bali bombing.

Express appreciation for any New Zealand contribution in post-conflict Iraq.

Publicly express respect for the strongly held anti-nuclear views of New Zealand. Affirm that good friends and allies can still work together toward achieving common objectives (i.e., fighting terrorism), even if they disagree on other issues.

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**Major General Robert R. Ivany  
Commandant**

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