CONCLUSION
The "developing areas" - third world in popular parlance - have always posed a challenge to Marxist thinkers and statesmen. Marx himself was basically a European thinker who wrote about these countries only rarely. In his economically and materially determined scheme of history the Asian societies would first have to go through the "capitalist stage" (which he equated with "Europeanization") before they could advance to socialism. However, while talking about Russia, which Marx considered an "Oriental Despotism" like the Asian countries, he did concede the possibility of bypassing the "capitalist stage" under some circumstances.

Lenin, on the other hand, was the native of a country that was itself half way between Europe and Asia. Moreover Tsarist Russia had a substantial Asian population. Hence he had a better grasp of the problems of these "colonial areas". Also, as a practical revolutionary and strategist, he understood the significance of the colonies, the backbone of Western capitalism in his view, in fighting and weakening the capitalist order. Thus he came out with the slogan of "national self-determination" for the colonies. He also supported the "national liberation movements", even those led by
the bourgeoisie nationalist leadership in the colonies. The strategy of supporting the national liberation movements, with occasional modifications, became the cornerstone of Soviet policy towards the developing countries. Lenin also conceded the possibility of a "non-capitalist path of development" for the backward areas.

Joseph Stalin who was Commissar for Nationalities and Lenin's chief advisor on the colonial question, slightly modified the policy of supporting the bourgeoisie led national liberation movements. Under him the Communist International decided to organise communist parties in the colonies which can take the leadership of the liberation movements. Due to the rise of Fascism in Europe the policy was once again revised during the mid 1930s to include all anti-Fascist forces into a "popular front". When Nazi Germany attacked Soviet Russia in 1942, the Communist International which coordinated the communist policy and activity in the colonies was disbanded to please the "allied" powers. In the post world war period Stalin grew cold towards the newly independent countries and of Asia. He dismissed their independence/neutralitry as sham. Thus Stalin and to an extent Lenin himself, set the trend of subordinating ideological commitments to the needs of Soviet state interest.
Under Stalin's successor Nikita Khrushchev, Soviet thinking and approach to international relations was thoroughly revised. The basic theme of Khrushchev's foreign policy was "peaceful coexistence" between states with different social systems which in practice meant the possibility of peace and even cooperation with the capitalist system. Khrushchev also supported peaceful settlement of disputes and disarmament. Regarding the developing countries Khrushchev acknowledged their independence and neutral policy which came to be known as non-alignment. The cause of national liberation movements was vigorously espoused. The possibility of non-capitalist path of development and peaceful transition to socialism was conceded. This policy went a long way in improving Soviet image and standing among the newly independent countries of the Third World. Soviet Union's anti-imperialist policy as well as its impressive achievements in the socio-economic sphere were also appreciated by the leadership in these countries.

Brezhnev continued with most of the formulations and policies of the earlier period. However, the paradox was that while the Soviet Union became a truly global power and achieved military strategic parity with the West during this period, some of its lustre and appeal
among the developing countries' faded. One reason was Soviet Union's "pragmatic" - termed by others as "selfish and opportunistic" - policies towards the Third World countries. Soviet Union was so much engrossed in its global rivalry with the capitalist world that all other causes became subservient. Soviet Union's own failures on the economy and technology fronts coupled with the dismal performance of the so-called "socialist oriented countries" further dented the Soviet image.

When Gorbachev assumed the Soviet leadership, the country was already in the midst of socio-economic crisis. Gorbachev initiated far-reaching changes, under his "Perestroika" (restructuring) programme to overhaul Soviet economy, polity and society. For this he needed enormous resources and respite from the all-consuming global rivalry with the West. He revived Khrushchev's concept of "peaceful coexistence" but sans class struggle. Gorbachev even wanted cooperation with the developed countries in economic and technological fields. Towards the developing countries he adopted a policy of disengagement from regional conflicts like Afghanistan and from economically burdensome allies like Vietnam and Cuba. Thus he wanted mutually and economically beneficial relations with the Third World countries.
He de-ideologised international relations and tried to improve relations with all the countries particularly those which were economically or/and technologically strong.

Coming to the Soviet policy towards the Gulf, the region's geo-strategic as well as economic importance (with more than 60 per cent of the world's total oil reserves) should be kept in mind. The Gulf lies in close proximity of the Soviet Union and borders its proverbial "soft underbelly" - the Central Asian Republics which have a large muslim population having religious, ethnic, linguistic and cultural ties with some of the countries of the Gulf. Because of these reasons the Soviet Union had legitimate interest in the region. Its concern was compounded due to the West's overwhelming dependence on Gulf oil and the generally pro-West policies of the majority of the Gulf states.

Soviet objectives in the Gulf have often been described as "traditional" - the so called search for warm water ports since the days of Peter the Great. While the Tsarist Russia did have some territorial ambitions in Central Asia and even parts of northern Iran, it would
be too far fetched to say that it desired some outlet in the Gulf or the Indian Ocean. The old rivalry with Britain was certainly one reason for Russia to take interest in the affairs of the Gulf. This rivalry was transformed into an ideological and political contest between two social systems - capitalism and socialism—after the October Revolution of 1917. In the post-Second World War period when Soviet Union emerged as a super power, the contest became global under a new name the "cold war".

One constant dilemma for the Soviet foreign policy makers has been their commitment to proletarian internationalism and world revolution vis-a-vis the needs of Soviet state interest. In the Third World in general and a strategically important area like Gulf in particular the Soviet Union was faced with difficult choices: whether to promote revolution, either directly or through proxies, to attempt to weaken the existing governments through other means, and to cooperate with forces of regional instability (in the process further pushing the conservative regimes closer to the United States), or to woo these "reactionaries" to persuade them not to become
an instrument the hands of the "imperialists" out to destroy the socialist system.

Moscow's choice between these two policy lines (or its decision to use both at once) had been determined largely by local conditions, but whatever tactics have been used, they have been intended to promote a constant set of Soviet interests in the Gulf and its surrounding region. The most important of these was the need to reduce Western influence and presence in the Gulf, in particular the US military presence. This need had both a "defensive" and "offensive" angle. Foremost in the "defensive" category was the desire to prevent this contiguous region from being used as a launching platform for an attack on the USSR. Moscow's "offensive" consideration was the recognition of the vital role Gulf oil played in the economies of the industrialized countries and the leverage that it might provide to them in their global contest with the capitalist countries. There might also have been some material considerations like desire to obtain Gulf oil at concessionary rates in order to tackle future difficulties in supplying oil to Eastern Europe.

Finally, the Soviet desire to see Western presence and influence reduced was matched by their
desire to increase Soviet influence and presence in the region. The Soviets approached the Third World politics with a marked desire for super power status. Following former foreign minister Gromyko's oft cited dictum that no question can be decided without Soviet input, Moscow indicated its resolve to participate in regional politics across the globe. The Gulf being in their immediate neighbourhood, and far away from the United States, the Soviet Union felt that in order to demonstrate super power equality they must be able to influence events in this region.

With the above framework and foundation in mind one can better grasp Soviet perception and policy towards the Third World, Gulf in our case. However, there was no uniform Soviet policy towards all the countries of the Gulf. At least three main strands can be discerned in Soviet approach to the states of the region. The first of these strands was represented by and manifested in Soviet relations with Iran. Iran was the only Gulf state which had a common border with the Soviet Union. This coupled with the fact that it was the largest and most populous state in the region occupying the whole of the west coast of Gulf made it
the most significant state in Soviet perception
In the past Iran bore the brunt of the Tsar's expansionist policies and hence had bitter memoirs and distrust of its powerful neighbour.

The Bolsheviks who came to power in 1917 had an ambivalent attitude towards Iran, while they abrogated the unequal Tsarist treaties and concluded a friendship treaty with Iran in 1921, they also at times supported local rebels like Kuchuk Khan in 1920 and the short lived Kurdish and Azeri republics in 1945. Their attitude towards the Iranian Communist Party (Tudeh after 1941) best represented their ambivalence. While giving it tacit support, they hesitated when the crunch came in early 1950s during the Mossadeg crisis and Tudeh got a chance to make a serious bid for power. After this the Shah's regime forged close military ties with the West and joined the Western sponsored regional pacts to contain the Soviet power. However soon both the Shah and the Soviets realized that it was not in the security interest of either of them to maintain the high pitch of antagonism. Beginning with 1962 the two side forged some sort of a working relationship with regular high level meetings and a substantial economic component. And this despite Shah's
continued membership of the Western alliance. The Soviet Union considerably decreased its support for the Tudeh party and instead praised the "progressive" social and economic policies of the Shah. This trend was to continue till the very end of the Shah's regime.

Soviet Union reacted very cautiously to the Islamic revolution of 1979. It did not criticize the Shah's regime till it became abundantly clear that its days were numbered. However once the new Islamic regime came to power, Soviet Union extended whole hearted support to it, particularly in view of its rabidly anti-West stance. The new regime also gave relative freedom to political groups including the Tudeh. The initial bonhomie in Soviet relations with the Islamic regime was soon replaced by acrimony and distrust. The main reason was the regimes ingrained antipathy for the "godless" communism. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, a muslim country and an immediate neighbour, proved to be the proverbial last straw. The Ayatollah condemned the Soviets as the other "satan" (US being the first one). After this Iran provided moral as well as material support to the Mujahideen groups, especially the Shiite, fighting against the Soviet backed Kabul regime.
The start of the Iran-Iraq war created fresh problems for the Soviet Union. While Iraq was an old ally with whom the Soviet Union had a friendship treaty, Iran was much more important to them. The Soviets while not openly condemning the Iraqi action withheld arms supply to it in the hope that this would induce the Islamic regime to normalise its relations with them and drop its opposition to the Kabul regime. When this did not come about Moscow resumed its arms supply to Iraq. This naturally created bitterness in Tehran. One manifestation of its anger was the persecution of the Tudeh Party members and increased support for the Afghan rebels. The Soviet press responded by bitterly criticising the Islamic regime. The relations remained strained for the next three years. It was only during the later half of the 1980s that Iran realized that its enmity with both the super powers was costing it dearly in the Gulf war. From then onwards it initiated contacts with Moscow. The Soviet Union on its part had never burnt all its bridges with Tehran. With its tacit approval two of its allies Libya and Syria had been supplying arms to Iran. In response to the new Iranian overtures the Soviets opposed all moves in the Security Council to impose sanctions against Iran for its failure to implement the Security Council resolution 598 requiring immediate ceasefire in the Gulf war.
After the end of the Gulf war the Soviet Union felt free to pursue its relations with Iran without being accused of taking sides. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan removed another hurdle in Soviet-Iranian relations. Iran needed Soviet help to come out of its international isolation and to rebuild its war revaged economy. The Soviets on the other hand apart from the obvious importance of Iran, also wanted its help for the successful implementation of the Geneva accords on Afghanistan. They also felt that good relations with Iran would be helpful in tackling the problem of muslim resurgence in Soviet Central Asia. All this led to Iranian leader Hashemi Rafsanjani's June 1989 Moscow visit marking the final rapprochement in Soviet-Iranian relations.

Soviet policy towards Iraq represented the second strand of Soviet Gulf policy. Iraq was the most populous and powerful Arab country in the Gulf. Additionally since the revolution of 1958 it was mostly ruled by radical anti-imperialist and anti-West regimes. This provided a common ground for both the countries to come together. Iraq's main motive in improving relations with the Soviet Union was its need for Soviet weapons vis-a-vis Iran. This resulted in the Friendship Treaty of 1972. However, once Iraq concluded agreement with Iran in 1975, it drifted away from Moscow. The Soviet Iraqi relations reached its nadir in 1980
when Iraq adopted anti Soviet stand on issues like Afghanistan.

With the start of the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, the Iraq once again tried to forge close military ties with Moscow. The Soviet Union was not forthcoming till the end of 1982 when it resumed arms supply to Baghdad. Soviet stand on the Iran-Iraq dispute was influenced by the objectively greater importance the Soviet Union ascribed to developing relations with Iran rather than Iraq, as a country with larger territory and population and also bordered on the Soviet Union.

Despite the fluctuations in Soviet-Iraqi relations from Ba'th's assumption of power in 1968 to the end of Iran-Iraq war in 1988, as a rule Soviet Union remained the first great power in Iraq's foreign relations at military and political levels. However, Iraq's place in Soviet policy was secondary. This was not only because Arab East as a whole played a secondary role in the Soviet global policy, but also because of the fact that even in this region the prime state in Soviet strategy at the end of 1960s until the mid 1970s was Egypt and from then on throughout the 1980s was Syria. This was because both of them were directly involved in the Arab Israel dispute, which was the main conflict in the region.
The other factor which influenced Moscow's relations with Baghdad was the Iraqi Communist Party and to a lesser extent the Kurdish problem. Notwithstanding the significant weight USSR attributed to the issue of ICP and the Kurdish problem, mainly during the first three years of Ba'th rule, the issue of the Iraqi Communists did not on the whole determine the development of Soviet Iraqi relations. The case was rather the reverse: fluctuations in Soviet-Iraqi ties were reflected in the state of relations between the Ba'th and the Communists. The Ba'th accommodated the communists only when it had good relations with USSR (e.g. 1972-73).

The third strand of Soviet policy in Gulf concerned Soviet relations with the Gulf Arab monarchies - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. The Soviet Union first evinced interest in the region during 1920s when they gave diplomatic recognition to the newly established kingdom of Abd-al-Aziz who was fighting the British in the region. However, when Aziz normalised his relations with the British and also because of Soviet pre-occupation with events in Europe, Stalin withdrew Soviet diplomatic personnel from Saudi Arabia. This clearly showed the low priority that Stalin assigned to these areas.

When Kuwait became independent in 1961 Soviet Union did not give it diplomatic recognition and also blocked its
entry into the United Nations arguing that due to its treaty with the Great Britain it remained a "British Colony". Finally relations were established in 1963. Beginning with the later half of 1960s and through 1970s and 1980s Soviet Kuwaiti relations evolved into a unique and special case. Soviet-Kuwaiti ties cannot be compared to Soviet relations either with Iran or Iraq. Soviet-Iranian relations as we know had a history of mistrust and hostility, while with Iraq, Soviet ties alternated between periods of close alliance and disenchantment.

Soviet relations with Kuwait on the other hand were maintained on a generally even keel. It never took the shape of an alliance but was cordial. While maintaining close ties with the US and the West, like the other Gulf monarchies, Kuwait tried to follow a more independent and non-aligned course by forging ties with the East bloc nations also. Kuwait calculated that having good relation with Moscow would induce the Soviets to restrain its external enemies (e.g. Iraq) as well as discourage the leftist opposition groups within the country. Indeed, Kuwait faced no security threat from Moscow supported insurgency groups. The usefulness of having good relations with the Soviets can also be ascertained from the fact that during the 1973 Iraq-Kuwait crisis Moscow is said to have pressurized Iraq to settle
its dispute with Kuwait.

The Soviet Union also assigned great importance to its "good neighbourly ties" with Kuwait as a successful demonstration of "peaceful coexistence" between a socialist state and an Arab monarchy, to encourage the newly independent Gulf states to establish relations with it. Indeed during the mid seventies it seemed that Bahrain and UAE would follow the Kuwaiti example. But reportedly due to Saudi opposition they back tracked.

Throughout the seventies and the first half of eighties Soviet Union could not establish formal relations with the Gulf monarchies other than Kuwait. There were times when the relation between the Gulf Arabs and the West were estranged, because of the latter's support for Israel in the Arab-Israel conflict or because of US reluctance to sell some crucial armaments (e.g. F-15s or AWACS) to Saudi Arabia. However even the widespread distrust and anger at the US policies in the Middle East could not make the Soviets more attractive. To the long standing ties between Gulf elites and to distrust of the Soviets for their support of revolutionaries, was added the inability of the USSR to provide the high technology and consumer goods desired by the newly wealthy societies and the fact that the Soviets did not have a commercial need for Gulf oil.
As regards Soviet support for revolutionaries, the most important being PFLOAG (Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and Arabian Gulf), one can only say that it was limited, indirect and never official. But it was enough to annoy the existing regimes in the Gulf. After 1975 the Soviet support for revolutionary groups markedly decreased.

Several other developments during the eighties combined to make the Gulf rulers less fearful of the Soviet Union, although Soviet invasion of Afghanistan still dissuaded them from restoring ties with the Soviet Union. By the end of seventies the Gulf rulers acknowledged the fact of Soviet power. The threat posed by the Islamic revolution in Iran and the subsequent Iran-Iraq war to Gulf security further underlined the need to come to terms with USSR. The Arabs also appreciated Soviet support for their cause against Israel and its resumption of arms supplies to Iraq. On the other hand, they were fearful of a Soviet-Iranian rapprochement. These factors induced Oman and UAE to establish formal relations with USSR in 1985. It was followed by Qatari announcement in 1988. Saudi Arabia, though increased its contacts with the Soviets during eighties, still vacillated. Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan removed
another hurdle. But it was the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the threat it posed to Saudi Arabia that finally convinced the monarchy to solicit Soviet support to solve the crisis generated by the Iraqi action. Finally in September 1990 Saudi Arabia and Bahrain declared diplomatic ties with USSR.