CONCLUSION
When Hafiz al-Assad came to power in Syria, he took over the reins of a state committed to revolutionary Arab nationalism and an intense revisionism. This was shaped by a quarter of a century's struggle with imperialism and Zionism in which Syrian national ambitions had largely been frustrated.

The gap between the goals of foreign policy, often conceived as the virtual overthrow of the regional state system and Syrian capabilities was wide. Syria's resource base was too slim and external constraints too powerful to sustain this messianic policy. Assad attempted to close the gap between the goals and capabilities. Policy objectives were greatly scaled down.

Ba'ath's messianic revolutionary activities were gradually abandoned and a period of realpolitik marked by limited goals was heralded. There was a marked toning down of Syrian demands, for instance, the call for the "liberation of Palestine" made way for a moderate demand for "Palestinian rights" and for the return of territories occupied by Israel in 1967.

Narrower, more immediate, interests began to shape policy more closely. Where they diverged, the interests of the Syrian state largely took precedence over pan-Arab visions. At the same time Assad also began expanding Syria's capabilities. A pragmatic diplomacy mobilized both Arab money and Soviet arms in an extraordinary expansion of Syrian military power. Subsequently, by 1973, Syria was acknowledged as the third powerful Arab state in the "Arab Triangle" of Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria.
In the period after 1973, this trend continued. Syria broke away from outright rejectionism as espoused by the Iraqi regime and began to look for diplomatic solutions. Thus came about the Syrian participation in the US-led peace process in 1974. The signing of the Golan Disengagement agreement in 1974, Syria's acceptance of a settlement to be formalized by a peace treaty, Syria's agreement with King Fahd's Arab League peace plan, all these were examples of Syria's acceptance of diplomacy as a tool to bring about solutions to the problems plaguing the region.

At the same time, Syria made evident its terms for entering negotiations - that it seeks a settlement based on UN Resolutions 242 and 338 and peace will be offered in exchange for Israel's total withdrawal to the pre-June 1967 lines.

The pre-condition of an Israeli withdrawal even before the talks began was also relaxed. The initial Syrian insistence that the Arab-Israeli negotiations should take place under UN sponsorship and should be multilateral was discarded. Syria came around to accept the arrangement of holding bilateral talks under a multilateral framework.

This change in the attitude can be traced in the decades of foreign policy making after 1970, when national interest overshadowed wider pan-Arab sentiments. The wars of 1973 and 1982 made it clear that it would be a near impossibility to defeat Israel militarily as long as the Israeli army would continue to be restocked by the US.
At the same time, Syria made it apparent that it favoured peace, but on its own terms, terms for which it was prepared to wait. It was made clear that Syria would begin negotiating with Israel after the former attains a position of strength, i.e. when it would reach strategic parity with Israel - a parity in military, technical and economic spheres. This position of strength would enable Syria to press Israel to make a peace satisfactory to Arabs. It maintained that there was no point in negotiating with Israel from a position of weakness since Israel would then be able to dictate the terms.

Therefore, Syria stayed away from the moderate Arab consensus which emerged after 1982. It was not smooth sailing for Syria in the 1980s. Its close ties with the Soviet Union and its support for Iran had strained relations with most of the Arab world and had left it diplomatically isolated. But, these did not deter Syria. There were a number of reasons for Syria to retain a hard-lined stand. To join the moderate Arab consensus would have left Syria with no bargaining cards to win an acceptable deal on the Golan. Losing the PLO and Jordan to peace would have exposed Syria's borders to Israel. Added to these were the domestic constraints. A capitulationist policy by the Syrian president would have generated adverse repercussions at home. Syria, the "beating heart of Arabism", could not politically afford to concede victory to Israel by negotiating with it in a position of weakness. Therefore, Assad's pragmatic assessment rested on what Syrians would be prepared to accept and what Syria could actually hope to achieve at that point of time. Moreover, there was no pressing reason why Syria should settle for less than the return of all of Golan or the occupied territories, a claim backed by International Law. Assad, a
pragmatist, also realised hat, in the 1980s, Washington was not politically capable of pressing Israel into agreeing to a peace acceptable to Arabs.

Syria continued o repeatedly voice its support for an international peace conference to be convened under UN auspices by the five permanent members of the Security Council, or by the two superpowers and attended by all the parties involved in the conflict. This stand, if juxtaposed against international consensus on how a comprehensive peace can be achieved and what a final settlement should look like, seemed correct. Till a conference of this kind could come about, Syria continued its quest to attain a strategic parity with Israel. The military expansion, which would enable the Syrian armed forces to stand alone as a counter to the Israeli Defence Forces continued till the late 1980s.

Assad's diplomacy has had some real achievements to its credit. It has played a vital role in keeping the Palestinian issue on the international agenda. He significantly increased Syria's world diplomatic stature and forced the Superpowers to recognise Syria as a key to peace in the Middle East.

Regarding Syria's relations with its Arab neighbours, Syria-Iraq relations progressively deteriorated in the decade of 1980s. The Iran-Iraq war saw Syria standing by Iran and against Iraq. In 1980 the Syrian embassy in Baghdad was stormed by Iraqi troops and in October Baghdad severed diplomatic relations with Damascus. In 1982 Syria closed the border with Iraq and blocked the Iraqi pipeline. As a retaliating action Iraq backed the forces of Michel Aoun against Syrians in
Lebanon. No improvement took place in the state of affairs in the following years of the decade. When Iraq invaded Kuwait in August 1990, the old wounds reopened. From the very beginning Assad tried to make Saddam see sense in a quick withdrawal. After calling in vain for an Iraqi withdrawal and an Arab solution, Syria chose to join the multinational coalition against Iraq. The reasons for this step were numerous - Syria needed to end the Lebanese imbroglio in its favour; it was anxious to establish cordial relations with the US, specially due to economic reasons; it was keen to have the Gulf states on its side; and, more importantly, Syria could not approve of the invasion of one Arab state by another. The war which followed could not be stalled or stopped by Syrian efforts. Syria's relationship with Jordan has undergone an acute level of fluctuation. The reasons for this were many. In both the states, power realities of the political system and the attitude of the key constituencies were important determinants of the domestic and foreign policy mix at any given time. Both President Assad and King Hussein have been at the helm of power for a long time, and they have survived against all odds. Both have been engaged in endemic strains with their domestic opponents. To survive, both had to keep the domestic elements satisfied, by adhering to issues of domestic, Arab and Islamic nature. Thus they have legitimized their long-spanned rule. In retrospect, we can say that they both have succeeded to a great extent in pursuit of their goals. Both the countries tried to maintain a correct bilateral diplomatic relationship but, in 1990, after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, both found themselves in opposing camps. King Hussein extended a tacit support to Iraq and the foremost worry in his mind may have been a very powerful neighbour in Syria in case of an Iraqi collapse.
By the dawn of the eighties, Syria and the PLO had drifted apart. Syria still blamed the latter for playing havoc in Lebanon and accused the Palestinians of helping the Muslim Brotherhood in forming operational cells which posed a threat to the Syrian political system. The PLO was also accused of training and arming the Muslim Brotherhood and of supporting pro-Iraqi groups in Tripoli against local pro-Syrian groups and the Alawite community.

The list of PLO grouses against Syria was not shorter. It accused Syria of passivity in the face of Israeli attacks on Palestinian targets in South Lebanon and it charged that Soviet arms meant for them were confiscated by Syria. But the PLO could not break with Syria because the Syria-Israeli stand-off was vital for its survival. The *quid pro quo* was the acceptance of Syrian dominance.

In 1982 the PLO was defeated and driven out of Beirut. Their bases in South Lebanon were smashed. These events reduced the PLO dependence on Syria and lessened Syrian control over the PLO, more so after the PLO headquarters were shifted to Tunis.

Syria was further antagonized when Arafat confabulated with King Hussein of Jordan on a peace plan with Israel based on the terms of the Reagan Peace Plan of September 1982. A peace plan on these lines could leave Syria out in the cold and the question of Golan Heights would remain unsettled. Therefore, Assad tried to contain the rising ascendency of Arafat. The ensuing years witnessed a struggle to have more influence over the Palestinian organizations, specially at the cost of Arafat. Syria, like
every other Arab state, has been accused of playing the Palestinian card for political motives. But what sets it apart from the rest of them is the genuine concern it feels for the cause and the sacrifices it made for the Palestinians.

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states did not like to break off relations with Syria despite its socialistic and pro-Soviet leanings. The Saudis were in favour of maintaining a correct and consistent relationship with Syria because after all the latter was a frontline Arab state in a state of war with Israel. Secondly, by alienating Syria, the Saudis did not want to push it more closer to the Soviets. Thirdly, being a moderate Arab state, they could not afford to create circumstances which would force Syria to become more radical.

This relationship was never allowed to cross the boundaries of unrescuable disagreements, i.e. no break was allowed. In 1990, when Saddam invaded and occupied Kuwait, Syria was one of those countries who were loud in their appeals to Iraq to withdraw. Finally, when it joined the coalition against Iraq, Syria stood vindicated. Seemingly, it protected the Gulf states from their erstwhile protector, Iraq. Syria opted to demand the return of Kuwaiti sovereignty and helped in the liberation of Kuwait.

Syrians feel that the security in, and stability of, the Gulf is essential for the industrialized world, essential for the developing world and therefore Syria wanted to have a share in ensuring its stability. Also, Syria maintained that Iraq had proved the former's contention that the perpetuation of the existing Iraqi regime was an obstacle.
to regional cooperation because of the nature of the regime. More fundamentally, Assad recognised that the conflict would lead to a fundamental realignment of political forces in the region and Syria should not be on the losing side. It was obvious that the balance of forces was on the side of the United States and the Gulf monarchies. For all these reasons, some 20,000 Syrian soldiers were sent to Saudi Arabia to join the US-led coalition.

Assad's diplomatic maneuvers of the 1980s culminated in 1989 in a rapprochement with Egypt. This was an effort by the Assad regime to reposition itself within the Middle East and it represented a historical geopolitical realignment within the Arab world. After a decade of efforts to isolate Egypt for signing the Camp David Accords, Damascus restored ties with Egypt. Since then, Syrian-Egyptian relations have become almost the centrepiece of Syria's Arab politics. Re-establishing ties with Egypt can be interpreted as Syria's abandoning of its tactical rejectionism and its willingness to consider new, peaceful approaches in solving the Arab Israeli disputes.

In the post-1990 period, the formation of an Egyptian-Syrian-Saudi axis at the centre of the Arab world resulted in the reformation of the 'Arab Triangle' which had successfully operated in the early 70s, prior to Sadat's betrayal. Syria's stand on the second Gulf war went a long way in improving its relations with the Gulf states. The Damascus Protocol of March 1992 established an exclusive intra-Arab alliance of the wealthiest and the strongest states in the Arab system. The intention of trading military support and protection for economic assistance was foremost in the Protocol.
Syria has benefited from substantial bilateral financial aid from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The money from Gulf states sustained infrastructural projects in Syria, viz. overhaul of the country's telephone network, the construction of new sewage systems for its cities, and, of course, for buying arms.

In Lebanon, the Syrian position has stabilised. There exists today an international acceptance of Syria's dominance in Lebanese affairs. A treaty of "Brotherhood, Cooperation and Coordination", between Lebanon and Syria was signed in May 1991, and a follow-up treaty on security has ensured a Syrian voice in Lebanese domestic and foreign policy matters.

The longevity of the Tehran-Damascus axis has continued to baffle many regional observers, especially those who have argued incessantly that the relationship would be a short-lived one. The Syrian agreement to negotiate with Israel did draw certain amount of flak from Iranian media. But the official reaction was different. The Iranian Foreign Minister, Ali Akbar Velayati, emphasised that bilateral relations would not be adversely affected if Syria made peace with Israel. He explained that "the absence of identical views between us and the Syrians on some foreign policy issues does not mean that the differences are great. On the contrary, there are still many major points of agreement."

Both the countries have enough reasons to continue their relationship. Friendship with Iran provides Syria a strong regional ally (in the absence of former patron USSR) needed to keep the Iraqi threat in check and also to enhance Syria's
position in the Gulf region by acting as a mediator between Iran and the oil-rich states.

For Iran, a cordial relationship with Syria helps to counter the resurgence of Iraqi power in the region, mitigate the erosion of Arab-Iranian relations and generate a continued access to the Lebanese-Shi'ite community. Thus, for the foreseeable future, these two countries would maintain their alliance.

While Syria's relationship with its Arab neighbours and Iran came to rest on an even keel, its relations with Turkey and Israel underwent tremendous changes. With Turkey, disagreements over water, Kurdish guerrillas and the disputed territory have continued. To add to a worsening situation, Turkey began a massive upgrading programme of its military capacity by the deployment of more mobile forces equipped with tanks, self-propelled artillery and helicopter gunships. Most of these were transported from other NATO countries under the terms of the Conventional Forces in Europe Treaty.

Turkey's military accord with Israel in 1996 set off warning bells in most Arab states, especially in Syria. The accord with Israel provided for joint training and manoeuvres and intelligence sharing. Turkey made it known that such a step was taken to secure its border with Syria and to counter the alleged harbouring by Syria of guerrillas of the Kurdistan Workers' Party. Turkey has also taken umbrage at Syria's alleged cosying up to Greece, Turkey's rival in the region.

With Israel the relationship underwent a massive militarisation process. The Syrian regime, during the 1980s, envisaged a military expansion which would enable
the armed forces to stand alone as a counter to the Israeli Defence Forces. Gradually the objective of strategic parity gave way to strategic deterrence. The aim now was to discourage an Israeli attack by threatening the Golan, control of which would give the IDF a run for their money during a war. Therefore, Syrian military expansion, especially of ground forces and strategic weaponry, continues. This upgrading was a minimal defensive measure in a hostile regional environment.

In the period under study, Syria's relationship with the two super-powers underwent a lot of changes. Throughout the 80s Assad faced many challenges from different quarters, e.g. domestic problems and facing a concerted diplomatic onslaught by US, UK, as well as the risk of military confrontation with Israel. Not much help came from the Soviet Union. Gorbachev did not live up to the Syrian expectation, rather he made clear to Assad both his reluctance to support Syria's goal of 'strategic parity' with Israel and his dissatisfaction with the continuing trend in Syrian-Palestinian and Syrian-Iraqi ties. This policy of Moscow was clearly put forward to Assad during his first meeting with Mikhail Gorbachev in June 1985, when Assad failed to obtain a Soviet agreement to support Damascus military needs. The outcome was the tried combination of vocal endorsement of the Syrian stand on the one hand and avoidance of clear and unequivocal commitment to Syria on the other.

Despite the official statements of both countries the Syrian-Soviet relationship till the 1990s was clearly cold and Assad realised that the Soviets were no more in a position to offer any concrete help. Yet Assad tried to keep relations with Moscow in
a good form; after all Moscow was a superpower and held veto power. But at the same time Assad was looking for an alternative to improve Syrian position in the region.

The collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf crisis led to a major re-evaluation of relations between Syria and the United States. The end of the Cold War, the loss of a superpower patron and the benefits of cooperating with the U.S. played an important role in the realignment of Syria's position vis-a-vis the U.S. The cornerstone of this realignment was when Syria threw in its lot with the multinational forces led by the U.S. against Iraq in 1990. In reality, the presence of the Syrian troops in a U.S.-led coalition carried a powerful symbolic importance. It blessed the coalition with the sanction of a radical anti-American regime. Syrian presence in the coalition made it difficult for Saddam Hussein to call the war an imperialist one. Finally, there was this hope that if Syria sided with the West, the U.S. would compel the Israelis to abide by UN Resolutions 242, 338 and 425 and withdraw from the land it had captured in the 1967 war.

Certain benefits have accrued to Syria as a stance of its role in the Gulf War. Growing contacts with the Gulf countries brought around certain incremental changes in Syrian domestic and foreign policies. Syria's role also opened the door for investment from the Gulf states in Syria. Saudi Arabia reportedly provided about $20 billion which the Syrians used to buy weapons on hard cash payment basis from Russia.
The lifting of the European arms embargo (imposed in 1986 after the El Al airliner episode) on Syria and the resumption of European aid in billions was yet another reward for Syria for joining the coalition.

The U.S. government acknowledged the role of Syria in the changed middle eastern environment and the result was a shift in the US perception of Assad. He was then seen as a pragmatist who understands the realities of the new world order. It was also conceded that Assad had "correctly" perceived Iraq as a threat to the regional status-quo. With the enhancement of its domestic and international position, Syria has been seeking to consolidate its gains through limited economic reforms and greater political liberalisation. In 1990 the government started reducing consumer subsidies, devalued the national currency, gave exporters greater freedom to use their foreign exchange income for imports of their choice, relaxed central control of agriculture and raised government procurement prices for agricultural products. In 1991, a new investment law was passed that broadened the sphere of economic liberalisation by allowing foreign investments in Syria without any restrictions and encouraging them through tax-breaks and far-reaching exemptions from customs and currency provisions. However, this process of economic restructuring has been gradual, ensuring government control of the process and its ability to cope with the expected difficulties and resistance.

Syria's participation in the peace talks initiated at Madrid represented a partial revision of its approach towards the Arab-Israeli conflict. Previously, the Syrian government had insisted that Arab-Israeli negotiations should take place under UN
sponsorship, and that they could only be multilateral, with a joint Arab delegation confronting the Israeli delegation. And also that Israel should withdraw from territories occupied since the 1967 war before the talks would begin. But by participating in the peace talks Syria compromised on the above positions. Syria pinned its hope on the U.S. bringing about an acceptable solution of the Arab-Israeli dispute. This participation indicated new flexibilities over procedural matters.

Although the peace process provided enormous opportunities towards negotiating a lasting peace, diplomacy cannot achieve much without a change of attitude on all sides. For Israel, to withdraw from occupied territories, it must believe that such a move would enhance, rather than threaten, its security. As things stand, most Israelis believe that their security is better-off by holding on to the occupied territories. For Syria, to recover the Golan Heights, it must offer Israel clear assurance of its peaceful intentions. But can Israel convince Syria to agree to demilitarization before Golan would be given back? Will Israel agree to a similar demilitarization? Israel must shed its lingering fears that Syria has irredentist goals extending far beyond the Golan Heights to the liberation of all of Palestine. If Syria is to abandon its advocacy of Arab nationalism, Israel also must give up its dreams of a Greater Israel and return Arab land it has occupied.

After the defeat of Iraq in the Gulf War, the United States of America was in a unique position to harness the international energies it had mobilised in the Gulf War to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all. There was an expectation that Washington, having become so deeply involved in the Middle East, would seize the
chance to address to the main source of regional instability. Never before have moderate Arab regimes held the upper hand in the region and been so willing to work openly with the U.S., despite the latter's continuing support for Israel. At the same time, it was also obvious that the U.S., which acted so quickly and decisively to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, was unwilling to use its power and influence to reverse the Israeli occupation of Arab lands.

The United States cannot afford to let the peace process fritter away. The existing fears and deeply felt grievances will continue to fuel a profligate arms race that has already made the Middle East the world's most heavily militarized, and perhaps most dangerous region.

Without an equitable settlement in which the legitimate interests of all parties are addressed, the possibility of military confrontation will grow. For instance, if Syria is unable to recoup the Golan Heights through peaceful means, it may eventually try to break the stalemate and resort to war. On the other hand, there could be a pre-emptive Israeli strike against Syria in the face of a perceived military threat. Another war would almost certainly be more destructive than any of the previous ones because of the proliferation of atomic, biological and chemical weapons in the region. Yet, hope abounds that such a war can be averted and peace can be heralded in.

First, and most important, the end of the Cold War has changed the strategic status-quo in the Middle East an area where the superpower rivalry had flourished in the post-World War II period. The zero-sum game has ended and with this the
capacity of the clients to exploit the superpower rivalry has also dwindled. Now chances are there for regional conflicts to be dealt on their own merits rather through the highly distorted perceptions of the superpowers.

The global climate for settling long-drawn out conflicts has vastly improved. For instance, the attitude of confrontation has given way to cooperation in resolving regional conflicts. If the powers of the world agree on cooperation to solve disputes, long-standing conflicts like the Arab-Israeli conflict will soon become a matter of the past.

In the changed regional and global environment President Assad's pragmatic approach in foreign policy has not only been vindicated but Syria's stature at the international arena has also improved. It is incumbent that the Syrian President is treated with respect and restraint and the olive branch which he has offered is properly cared for during his lifetime.