CHAPTER - IV

THREAT PERCEPTIONS AND SECURITY FRAMEWORK
IN PERSIAN GULF

After the withdrawal of British forces from the Gulf region the US and (former) Soviet Union became progressively more interested in the Persian Gulf. Both US and the Soviet Union tried to seek access to the region's resources on privileged terms, denial of the area to the others's predominant influence and the use of strategic facilities in one form or another. The conflicting and diverse interests of the US and former Soviet Union encouraged political instability in the region and created volatile security environment. Consequently, in 1979 and 1980 some significant events viz., the Iranian Revolution, North and South Yemen War, Seizure of the Grand Mosque, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the outbreak of Iran-Iraq war and the recent 1991 Kuwait Crises (Gulf War), of international importance, took place in and around the Gulf. These events, of course, have changed the balance of power in the region. The security environment of the region has completely transformed and became susceptible. These developments greatly influenced the ruling elite of the Gulf Arab States, and veered their thinking. They viewed these developments as a threat to their regimes as well as
security of the region. They took the increasing interests of the internal powers in the region as the most imminent threat. The threat perceptions of the Gulf Arab States may be divided into two categories: (1) external threat, stemming from the diverse interests of the super powers (US and former-Soviet Union) in the Gulf region and (2) internal threat arising from the recent developments, local and regional, aims and policies of the Gulf States within and among themselves.

(1) External Threat.

The political, economic and strategic importance of the Gulf region had increased the superpowers rivalry in the region. They were giving massive economic and military aid to their friendly States in order to secure political domination as per their Strategic objectives, and were exploiting the regional conflicts and internal rivalries of these countries.

During and before the World War II the US interest and involvement was very little in the Gulf region. After the World War II the gradual erosion of the British supremacy prompted the US naval presence in the region. Prior to that the appearance of the US warships in the region was a rarity. US assumed global responsibilities after the II World War.¹
The US operated a communication station at Kagnew near Asmara in Ethiopia in 1943 which was leased from Britain. In 1947 in the light of Cold War US extended military and economic aid in the form of "Truman Doctrine" to Greece, Turkey and Iran. The US established a modest "Middle East Task Force" (MID EAST FOR) in January 1948 based at the British naval station in Bahrain. It was too small to give any significant military capability but it served an important diplomatic purpose by providing a tangible symbol of the US interests in the region. The US maintained a military Airlift Command base at Dhahran airfield in 1951. Ethiopia, Iran and Saudi Arabia, in addition to economic aid, received military advisers and training missions from US during 1950s. Later, CENTO and SEATO multilateral security arrangements were created which provided the US a better ground to maintain its presence in the northern littoral countries of the Indian Ocean.

In October 1963, after the successful test of Polaris A-3 missiles, both the State and Pentagon Departments of the US began to think of long term strategic requirements of the US in the Indian Ocean. The US, in agreement with Australian government in April 1967, established a powerful Very Low Frequency Communication (VLFC) station at Learmouth, South of North West Cape. It was an important link in US strategy of nuclear deterrence
under its new Undersea Longrange Ballistic Missile (ULMS) system.\textsuperscript{5}

The US naval task force entered into the Indian Ocean, apart from the routine exercises at the time of any Crisis. During the Bangladesh War in 1971 the US aircraft carrier Enterprise entered the Bay of Bengal. The US sent aircraft carrier Honcock during the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, followed by the carrier Oriskany into the western section of the Indian Ocean. The US aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk and later the largest US aircraft carrier US Constellation sailed up to the Persian Gulf in the spring of 1974. The primary purpose of this operation was to demonstrate the US naval strength in the approaches to the Gulf. The US navy took part in the largest CENTO naval exercise "Midlink 74", held in the Indian Ocean.\textsuperscript{6}

During mid 1950s the Soviet interests in the Indian Ocean began, and became dynamic a decade later.\textsuperscript{7} The circumstances that enabled the former Soviet Union to take interest in this region were many - the gradual ebb of West European empires, growing super powers interests in the Third world, Cold War, emerging nuclear weapons and more important the Soviet naval building that developed an effective surface naval presence capable of projecting itself to any quarter of the globe.\textsuperscript{8}
The former Soviet Union did not send any naval units in the Indian Ocean upto 1968. For the first time, the former Soviet Union deployed the naval ship in the region in March 1968. It is important to note that the former Soviet presence began only after the closing of the Suez Canal during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War. It is difficult to pinpoint what factor prompted the former Soviet Union for the naval deployment in the Indian Ocean. Two factors are often cited. Sometimes it is believed that following the announcement of Britain in January 1968, to withdrawal from the east of Suez was the beginning of the Soviet presence in the region. Another view is that the Soviet deployment in the Indian Ocean followed the British and US moves in the region particularly their plans to develop Diego Garcia as a central base in the Indian Ocean.

The question of whether the former Soviet Union maintained "bases" in the Indian Ocean area has been raised on many occasions and answered both in the affirmative or a negative manner. Even if the Soviet Union did not maintain any sovereign or treaty-secured naval or air base, it appears that Moscow was able to make solid arrangements with some friendly powers for the use of port facilities in certain harbours. A number of States had granted her varying degrees of access to their port facilities and a few had even allowed her the use of on-shore facilities.
(usually airfields for maritime surveillance operations). Major cases include Somalia (from 1972 to 1977), the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, Ethiopia and Iraq. The Soviet Navy had laid mooring buoys over a wide area off Malagasy, Mauritius, Seychelles and the east coast of Africa. In addition to them, there were reports that they had leased the Island of Socotra and built certain base facilities there. The Soviet ships visited the ports of Iraq, PDRY, Ethiopia and Mozambique. Regarding her interests it must be remembered that the Indian Ocean provides the only ice-free sea lane between the Soviet eastern and western parts particularly between Odessa and Vladivostok, that she needed to protect her crucial military-industrial complexes located in the central part of the vast Soviet Union but targetable from the Indian Ocean, and that she had sizeable economic links with some of the important littoral countries.

The Horn of Africa was of crucial important as the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden to the Soviet Union, lie in the ocean waterway linking Vladivostok in the east to Odessa in the Black Sea. In the Horn of Africa, Somalia is the first country where the Soviet Union enjoyed dominant influence and port facilities at Berbera upto 1977. In 1972 after the set back in Egypt and Sudan, Soviet interest in Somalia increased. The USSR and Somalia signed a Treaty of
Cooperation and Friendship in July 1974. It contained the Soviet promises of military and economic aid in exchange for certain docking rights. The Soviet Union constructed Kismayu and Berbera deep water ports and also trained and equipped the 25,000 strong Somalian Army.\textsuperscript{12}

An important event took place in the Horn of Africa in 1974-75. King Haile Selassie was overthrown and after a series of coups a marxist regime under Col. Mengistu Haile Mariam came to power in 1977. The Soviet Union tried to reconcile Somalia and the Eritreans with the new regime in Ethiopia but failed. This resulted in the Ogaden War in 1977-78. The Soviet Union supported the leftist regime in Ethiopia. Both by sea and air, the Soviets sent arms and equipments on a huge scale to Ethiopia. It is believed that two maritime routes were used - one from Vladivostok across the Indian Ocean and the other from the Black Sea via the eastern Mediterranean and the Suez Canal.\textsuperscript{13} Soviet influence increased in Ethiopia after Ogaden War and on November 20, 1978 both the governments signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation.\textsuperscript{14}

To crush the separatist movement in Eritrea the Soviet Union also supported Ethiopia in its efforts. There are Strategic reasons behind this Soviet move. Eritrea controlled the ports of Mitsiwa and Aseb. Its liberation would have meant the loss of those coastal ports. These
ports possess the capability of being converted into naval bases and could control the Babel-Mandeb Strait, and in an extreme crises afford the possibilities of closing the Suez Canal from the other end.\textsuperscript{15}

During the Ogaden War, the massive help of the Soviet Union to Ethiopia was the clearest demonstration of Moscow's Strategic interest in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea region. From here it could exercise influence in worth and East Africa and across the Red Sea in Arabia.

Until the end of the 1950s Africa was treated by the US as a low priority area. Africa had been regarded US as essentially a responsibility of the European powers. The US signed a 25 year economic and military aid agreement in 1953 with Ethiopia in return to naval communication and intelligence facilities at Kegnew near Asmara. During the 1950s and 1960s the importance of Kegnew grew gradually due to the cold war and evolution in weapon system. In 1970 when in Libya the wheelus base was evacuated some of its functions were transferred to Kegnew.\textsuperscript{16} The 1973 Arab-Israeli war and massive arms deliveries to Somalia by the Soviet Union increased the Strategic importance of the Kegnew for the US. In September 1974, the US lost its influence in Ethiopia and vital communication base at Kegnew after the deposition of Haile Sebassie. The State Department announced on July 26, 1977, plans to sell arms to
Somalia in order to build an alternative base. Negotiations started and finally an agreement was reached permitting the US to use the facilities in Somalia at Berbera for an annual payment of $40 million.\(^\text{17}\)

The Red Sea became a vast marine oil pipeline between the Gulf and Europe from the early part of this century. The politics and strategy of the Red Sea area became more complicated after the creation of Israel.\(^\text{18}\)

As early as the 1920s the Soviet interest in the Red Sea area began to develop. The Soviet Union and Yemen signed Treaty of Friendship and Commerce on November 1, 1928. The Soviet Union signed military and economic aid agreements with Yemen in 1957. Soviet aid to Yemen was substantially increased after the 1962 revolution. The Soviet Union took active part in the civil war of Yemen and its pilots flew combat missions against the Royalists, and the Republican regime was at times saved by massive Soviet shipments of tanks guns and other military equipments. After the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces in the wake of June war, the Soviet involvement in Yemen increased.\(^\text{19}\)

With the British withdrawal from the Aden in November 1967, the situation in the Red Sea significantly changed. A leftist regime was formed in South Yemen. Especially after the reconciliation between Saudi Arabia and North Yemen in 1970, the relations between the South
and North Yemens began to deteriorate. The Soviet links with South Yemen (now called Peoples Democratic Republic of Yemen) were strengthened when the more radical wing of the ruling National Liberation Front came to power in 1969. Thereafter, the PDRY became the focus of the Soviet activity in the area. Soviet experts are stationed in all the military installation in PDRY since 1971. Naval facilities were extended to the Soviet Union in Aden. The Soviet influence increased considerably, especially after the crucial intervention of the Russians and their former East German and Cuban allies in the struggle for ascendency in the PDYR. But on April 20, 1980 President Ismail resigned due to differences with Premier Ali Naseer Mohammad, who later became the President.

In the early 1970s Persian Gulf security system had been built by the US and UK by enlisting Iran and Saudi Arabia as two major, though unequal powers, and Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE and Oman as small states. Under the "Guam Doctrine" (or Nixon doctrine) the US sought to encourage the development of an indigenous security system in the Gulf. This meant support for local cooperation, but also included a large scale transfer of military resources, so as to provide Iran and Saudi Arabia with the capability to defend not only themselves, but also the neighbouring Sheikhdoms. Iran was assigned to look after the sea routes
in the Gulf and the Arabian Sea and Saudi Arabia to counsel and support the small Gulf States.  

US sold some 10.4 billion worth of arms to Iran between 1972 to 1978. Iranian defence expenditure outran that of Egypt and Israel combined in 1975. Just before the British withdrawal from the lower Gulf, the Iranian troops occupied the Strategic Island of Abu Musa, Greater and Lesser Tumbs. This gave Iran physical control over the entrance to the Strategic Hormuz Strait. Together with the acquisition of a full range of modern weaponry. Iran developed its airfield and post facilities - within the Gulf (Khorramshaur, the island of Kharg and Bushehr) and east and west of the Hormuz Strait. In the 1974-75 war Iran and US cooperated in providing covert support for the Kurds, whom the US saw as useful tool for weakening Iraqi regime which was allied with former Soviet Union.

Iran took a further step from the Persian Gulf to a more active role in the Arabian Sea after 1971 Indo-Pak War. The Shah decided to construct a big military base at Chah Bahar near the border of Pakistan on the Makaran coast with a view to extend naval activity in the Indian Ocean. Similarly in 1973 the Iranians began to provide operational support for the Sultan of Oman against Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman and the Arab Gulf (PFLOAG). Finally, the Dhofar insurgency was quelled towards the end of 1975.
However, the revolution in Iran changed the entire security system in the Gulf and the power balance in that part of the world.

Saudi Arabia is another important country in the Gulf. It stretches from the Gulf to the Red Sea. Its Gulf coast line extends over 296 miles, while its Red Sea coast is 1,020 miles long. Thus Saudi Arabia is both a Gulf power and a Red Sea power. In the mid 1970s Saudi Arabia emerged as a major force in both international and West Asian politics. The smaller Gulf States had come to accept Saudi Arabia as a major force for ensuring stability in Peninsula by the mid 1970, Saudi Arabia's mammoth foreign exchange surplus enabled it to purchase arms from the West mainly from the US, for pursuance of its policy objectives. During the period 1976-80, Saudi arms purchases amounted to $4950 million annually. The transfer of military resources into Saudi Arabia placed several thousand of US technicians in key posts in the Saudi forces, notably in communications logistics, intelligence and craft maintenance. This gave the US substantial control over the actions of their regional allies in case of crisis or conflict.

The Russians became indirectly involved in the Gulf and the Red Sea area both through Iraq, PDRY and the PFLOAG by 1972. However, they were among the first to accord recognition to Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE once they became
independent in 1971. Russian officials and delegations began to tour the Gulf in an effort to foster diplomatic, trade and cultural relations with the newly independent countries.\(^\text{30}\)

In 1972 after the erosion of their relation with Egypt, Iraq became the focus of the Russian interest in the Gulf. Under the Ba'ath party from 1968 Iraq was inclined towards them and concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in April 1972. Iraq received substantial military and economic aid from Russia. Oil fields and the port of Umm Qasr were developed with the Soviet assistance and the Soviet support played an important role when Iraq nationalized its oil in 1972 and fought against the Iranian-backed Kurds in 1974-75.\(^\text{31}\)

After the British withdrawal from the Gulf the Western policy makers persuaded the local states with compatible interests to assume responsibility for security. This was generalized in the Nixon doctrine enunciated in June 1969 in Guam. Both Iran and Saudi Arabia were identified to execute these responsibilities as "twin pillars" of local strength in the Gulf region. The issue of Gulf security gained further prominence with the dawning of energy crisis and growing dependency on the Gulf oil which was fully visible by mid 1973. The Nixon doctrine buried with fall of the Shah and twinpillar security era came to an
The intervention in Afghanistan in turn, opened up a variety of means for the extension of Soviet influence and perhaps power into the region. In January 1980 President Carter responding to these events declared: "An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the US. And such assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force." In combination the two events undermined the US military position in the region. The idea of a new force called the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) for contingencies in the Gulf gained ground. Defence Secretary Harold Brown outlined the purpose of the RDF as "...mobile, well-equipped and trained conventional forces are essential to assist allies and other friends should conditions to so dictate, and should our assistance be needed..."

The Soviet intervention and the Iranian Revolution had changed the geopolitical balance of the region. The need for maintaining supremacy and acting more firmly became imperative for US. To shore up the regional balance of power the US decided to increase its more direct role in the region. Accordingly, the US MID EAST FORCE Stationed in Bahrain was augmented and two destroyers were added. From occasional to permanent, the US also decided to increase naval deployments into the Indian Ocean. A decision was
made to recover the credibility by increasing ports visits and show the flag in friendly states more regularly. The creation of a new Middle Eastern Command integrating the Land-Sea Air component of US military power in the region was proposed. The possibility of joint exercises and contingency planning with local states was also on the card. In fact former Soviet presence in Afghanistan gave the US an opportunity and pretext to justify its militarization of the region.

Since 1970, the Soviet Union's interests in the Gulf increased and its political and military means of influence in the region have also shot up. Former Soviet political presence on the periphery of the Gulf - in Ethiopia and in South Yemen has broadened its strategic options and means for exerting pressure on the Gulf States. On the one hand, there has existed a close ideological affinity between the PDRY and Ethiopia and on the other former Soviets. These two countries have been following the socialist model for economic development, thereby increasing their dependence on Moscow for assistance. The military relationship between Soviet Union and the States on the Gulf periphery has increased. Former Soviet Union signed treaty of friendship and cooperation (Defence Cooperation) with Ethiopia, the PDRY, Afghanistan and Iraq.
In Ethiopia and PDRY, the Soviet power was comfortably established. These States were dependent and less able to expel Soviet advisers and military personnel. The Soviet Union succeeded in obtaining the use of Saudi Air pace for its aeroflot civil aircraft after revolution in Iran and concluded an agreement in this regard. It exerted pressure on the Gulf States to oppose Oman's proposal for cooperation on regional security matters and strongly criticised the potential of the RDF. The Soviet Union also projected the RDF as an instrument for pressuring the Gulf States to their oil policies particularly the oil price. He influence in the region considerably grew by capitalizing on Gulf States anxiety regarding the credibility of the West as an ally. During 1975-79 the Soviet military agreement with Iran, Iraq, Yemen and Syria were on the top and received 50 per cent and 35 per cent of the total among the four recipient. After the Iranian revolution with the growth of its military power its incipient oil dependency and the shrinking credibility of the West in the region. The Soviet success in Ethiopia, Yemen and Afghanistan established its image as a dependable ally. The USSR through bold steps at crucial juncture increased its own relevance as an important factor in the Gulf security.

The over militarization by the super powers (US and former Soviet Union) increased the instability and
vulnerability of the Gulf region. The Gulf Arab States perceived the superpowers rivalry as a potential threat to the security of the region.

(2) **Internal Threat:**

The regional conflicts and continuous domestic political turmoil increasingly contributed to the complexity of the situation. The security of the Gulf region was threatened by the developments which took place in 1979-1980 and recent Gulf war of 1991. These developments constitute the securities of internal threat.

(i) **Iranian Revolution:**

In the history of Iran, the year 1978 was a landmark. Iran witnessed the widespread unrest in the fall of that year and the 37 year old rule of the Shah was challenged by a thorough going revolution organized by the Islamic inspired opposition and left wing elements on the call of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Shah of Iran greatly tried to maintain his once unquestioned power by using all resources at hand. He failed to protect his regime despite diplomatic support and military power. Even his most trusted security force, SAVAK, failed to check anti-Shah wave in the country.
On January 15, 1979 continuous demonstrations and political violence compelled the Shah to leave the country. The hero of this victory was Ayatollah Khomeini who conducted his campaign from Paris. The major complaints against the Shah and his rule were: torture of dissidents and political opponents, misuse of public funds and assets, slaughtering demonstrators and killing suspects enemies, inspired decadence and secularization, misguided and mismanaged economic development, political dictatorship, overturning and corrupting traditional values and, handing control of the country over to the US.  

Under the revolutionary leadership the new government declared four major foreign policy objectives. They decided (1) to dissociate Iran from all military alliance with the US and its allies. It expelled all the foreign experts and personnel and decided to join non-aligned movement; (2) to cut down the oil production from 6mb/d to 3 mb/d; (3) to revaluate the oil prices, and (4) to give up the responsibility of protecting the oil traffic through the Strait of Hormuz.  

The anti-super power posture in Iran stimulated a fresh thinking in the Gulf Arab States. They felt that Iran's disengagement from all military alliances with the US did not pose threat to the former's security. The Iranian experience made the Gulf Arab States realize that purchase
of sophisticated arms was neither the guarantee for the stability of the regime nor the way to ensure dependency on the West.41

Iranian nationalism as advocated by Khomeini posed a great threat to the stability of the other regimes in the region. The successful Iranian Revolution greatly encouraged the Shi'ite population living in the other Gulf Arab States to rise against their regimes.42

In most of the Gulf States, violent demonstrations were held by the Shi'ite muslims in the later 1979 and early 1980. Anti-American slogans were raised and pictures of Ayatollah Khomeini were displayed openly during the demonstrations. Tehran radio started criticising the American involvement in the Gulf region and alleged oppressive style of the ruling elite of the Gulf Arab States against the Shi'i population.43 The conservative Sunni led governments in the Gulf were deeply offended by the revolutionary slogan of the Iranian government which was bent upon exporting its revolution.

Just after the Iranian revolution, Iraq was the first country where Shi'ites resurgence took place. In southern province of Iraq, Shi'ites are in majority particularly Najaf where Khomeini stayed for fourteen years (1964-1978) in exile. In mid 1979 Shi'ites of Najaf demonstrated against the Iraqi government inspired by
Khomeini success. However, the Iraqi government took firm stand and suppressed in Shi'ite resurgence.44

After the Iranian Revolution, Saudi Arabia also witnessed the Shi'ite demonstrations. The eastern Al-Hasa province generally known as oil province, comprises bulk of the Shi'ite population - representing more than 35 per cent of the total one million population witnessed the Shi'ite disturbance. Saudi government faced the Shi'ite demonstrations throughout the eastern province in November 1979. This alarmed the Saudi government and it decided to quell the Shi'ites demonstration with firm hand - Bloody clashes took place between the demonstrators and Saudi National Guard at various places resulting in many people being injured and arrest of six hundred.45

Another country where demonstrations were held by large numbers of Shi'ite muslims was Bahrain. Widespread Shi'ite demonstrations broke out in Bahrain in April 1980 after the execution of a leading Shi'i clergyman named Ayatollah Bakr al-Sadar in Iraq. Again rioting broke out in Manama in May 1980 and in a number of Shi'i's villages after the aborted US attempt to release its hostage and the use of Bahrain airfield by the US planes.46 Bahrain government arrested their leaders and expelled a Shi'i Shaikh who called himself the representative of Imam Khomeini.47
Tension between Shi'i and sunni Muslims in Qatar heightened after the out-break of the Iran-Iraq War. After the Iranian revolution less violent demonstrations were taken place in Kuwait, Oman and the UAE.48

During the course of the revolution and down fall of the Shah, the US actions and attitudes had a demoralizing effect on the ruling elite of the Gulf Arab States. The overwhelming feeling was that the US had not acted properly instead its policy led to the downfall of the Shah a strong ally of the former. It was widely felt by the Gulf rulers that close association with the US could lead to similar trouble in the region. There was a growing realization in the Gulf States that the US not a dependable power. The Gulf States saw the developments in Iran as yet another step in the decline of US power and a further Soviet advance in the region. In these circumstances it became very difficult for the Gulf rulers to pull all trust on the US which had so far been considered as dependable ally and responsible for their security.

(2) North and South Yemens War:

After a long tension, war broke out between North and South yemens on February 24, 1979. For the outbreak of the hostilities both the countries blamed each other. Being North Yemen's supporter and supplier of aid, Saudi Arabia
expressed concern at the outbreak of war. It alerted its armed forces and announced its intention to withdraw the 1200 strong Saudi contingent from the Arab deterrent force based in Lebanon. It would speed up delivery of arms package worth $540 million. The presence of Soviet and Cuban military advisors in the South Yemen was opposed by US. On March 16, 1979 ceasefire took place due to the efforts of the Arab League. Both the government signed a provisional agreement to unite their countries on March 30, 1979. However, the relations between the North Yemen and Saudi Arabia were affected by the unity talks. This resulted in the showing down of the US arms supplies to North Yemen. In these circumstances North-Yemen turned to Soviet Union and received arms and ammunition.  

The continued cooperation between the North and South Yemens and between North Yemen and the former Soviet Union, the possibility of resumed Somali-Soviet cooperation the presence of Cuban in Ethiopia and latter's commitment to spreading revolution and the presence of Soviet, Cuban and East European military personnel in the South Yemen were viewed by the Gulf Arab States as considerably increasing uncertainty about the security of the Gulf in general and that of the Strait of Hormuz in particular.
(iii) **Seizure of the Grand Mosque:**

Seizure of the "Grand Mosque" in 1979 exposed the weaknesses of the Saudi security. 200-300 armed persons occupied the Grand Mosque of Mecca and held for two weeks, on November 20, 1979 i.e., on the new Muslim century (15 AH). The mosque (Al-Haram) is the centre of the Muslim World and the most important centre of pilgrimage for Muslims.

It has been reported that the group had attempted to force the congregation in the mosque to recognize their leader Mohammad Ibn Abdullah al-Qahtani as "expected Mahdi" whose advent at beginning of the 15th(AH) century had been predicted. The occupiers of the mosque were believed to be members of Qahtani and Otayba tribes. A group calling itself the "Moslem Revolutionary Movement in the Arabian Peninsula" on November 27, 1979 claimed the responsibility for the seizure of the Grand Mosque. This group also disclosed that the action was directed against the royal family.

Union of people of the Arabian Peninsula the left wing underground organisation, also claimed the responsibility for the seizure of the Grand Mosque. But its leader Naseer al-Said later denial against such claims. He explained that his organisation had all the sympathy with
the action and considered it as a spontaneous reaction to social injustice under monarchy.53

The Saudi government maintained that the incident was an isolated sacrilege committed by "deviants from Islam". The Saudi authorities attributed the seizure to "purely religious" fanatics whom they termed "Khawarij". It may be said that the action represented a mixed religious-sociological and political protest against the royal family. There were widespread press reports of further unrest within the country.54 Some 20,000 troops had sealed off four major oil producing towns on the eastern (Gulf) coast following demonstrations by the Shi'i Muslim population on December 21, 1979.55 The British and US newspapers confirmed these news but Saudi Arabia's Ministry of the Interior consistently denied it.56

The event of the seizure of the Grand Mosque was extremely serious. After this event in Saudi Arabia some important developments took place. After the incident all the army security commanders were either forced to retire or replaced by new men. Prince Ibn Abdul Aziz Governor of Mecca, resigned on health ground. The Saudi government announced the preliminary details of the proposed third five-year plan with an investment of more than $200bn. Special emphasis on agriculture, mining and infrastructural facilities was given in the proposed plan.57
On November 21, 1979 the Saudi troops launched their assault on the rebels. They used plastic explosives and tried to avoid firing inside the Mosque. They faced heavy fire from the Otaybi's men. The Saudi government's response was confusing and disorganized. National Guard soldiers, regular army and other security officials combined together mounted attack on rebels. It was felt that it took two weeks to clear the Mosque because there was back of coordination between regular army and National guard. After putting two weeks of stiff resistance on December 4, 1979 Otaybi and his supporters surrendered.

It may be argued that the seizure of the Grand Mosque was a clear demonstration of a potentially powerful anti-government movement against the present monarchy in Saudi Arabia. As in Iran, this incident also shows that Islamic resurgence was also on the rise in Saudi Arabia. The most important aspect of this event was that it exposed the weaknesses of the Saudi armed forces and increased the vulnerability of the country's defence. The Ka'aba incident also revealed the fact that the Saudi government's efforts to train it forces from the US personnel had proved fruitless as the former could not efficiently deal with such a minor incident.
(iv) **Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan:**

The entire geo-political environment of the Persian Gulf region had changed after the former Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. After systematic build up the former Soviet troops crossed the Afghanistan border on December 27, 1979, and upto 60,000 former Soviet troops were said to have been involved. Under former deputy minister Babrak Karmal who replace Amin a new soviet backed regime was installed.60

The Soviet action in Afghanistan was internationally opposed and condemned. The event was deplored as an invasion of a sovereign country by the Soviet Union. To send troops under 1978 Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation the Soviet Union maintained that the Afghanistan government had invited it, in the face of threat arising from Afghanistan's external adversaries. Against the military interference of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of an independent sovereign state, the United States issued a strong protest to the Soviet Union. Causing a threat to a region of great instability it also accused the Soviet Union of crossing a 'new threshold" in military deployments.61

The implication of course, was a shift in the geo-political environment of the region. The Soviet presence brought its ground and air forces closer to the Indian Ocean.
and, the oil fields and oil transport routes of the Gulf. After intervention in Afghanistan the Soviet military frontier moved southward and placed its forces 300 miles nearer the Gulf. In the South from Shīnadād air base in Western Afghanistan some strategic area immediately came with in the reach of the former Soviet war planes, or airforce - the Strait of Hormuz only 500 miles, Socotra 1500 miles, Aden base 2000 miles and Red Sea Strait of Bad al-Maneb a little over 2000 miles. 62

On the Persian Gulf region the Soviet action in Afghanistan bore many ramifications. The conservative Arab States of the Gulf considered the development in Afghanistan as a first step towards greater Soviet presence in the Gulf region. The Gulf Arab States perceived that the next Soviet target would be the Baluchi dominated southern province of Iran for possible control of the Strait of Hormuz. They also viewed that Straits of Hormuz, a global choke point could be attacked directly by the Soviet air force stationed in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union would enjoy considerably leverage in the free flow of traffic through it. 63

The Soviet influence in the Persian Gulf region increased after the revolution of Iran and development in Afghanistan. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan took place at a time of instability in the region caused largely
by the events in Iran. It provided an opportunity to the Soviet Union to encourage the insurgency movements in both Pakistan and Iran - such as Baluchis and the Pakhtoons. There were unconfirmed reports that the Baluchi rebels on both sides of Iran-Afghan border had welcomed the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. The presence in Afghanistan had broadened Soviet Strategic options in the region and provided means for exerting pressure on Iran and other Gulf Arab States. The apprehensions of the Gulf Arab States further strengthen with the re-emergence of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party in Iran and the Shi'ite disturbances in Oman.

(v) Iran-Iraq War:

Iran-Iraq War was the most significant development which threatened the security of the Gulf region, usually referred to as the Gulf War. On September 20 1980 the Gulf War started with the launching of offensive by the Iraqi forces across the Iranian border. The aims of Iraqi advances were: (1) to clear the Shatt-al-Arab waterway; (2) to capture the oil ports of Khurramshahr and Abadan and; (3) to engage the remaining Iranian forces as far east of the frontier as possible. The advancing Iraqi forces succeeded in capturing Khurramshahr and virtual encirclement of Abadan site of a huge Iranian oil refinery in the initial stages of War. On account of the rising tension between
Iraq and Iran, the war broke out. Since the Ayotollah Khomeini came to power in Iran the tension had been building between the two countries. The war started unexpectedly but did not come as a complete surprise. Numerous border incident took place between Iran and Iraq, before the outbreak of war. The Iraqi President Saddam Hussein thought that Khomeini's achievement of power as both a threat and an opportunity. The possible threat was that millions Shi'ites of Iraq, who comprise a majority of Iraq's population could revolt against President Hussein after being encouraged by Khomeini success in Iran. Iraqi's leaders belonging to sunni sect, believed and looked on the intentions and moves of the Iranian government with suspicion. Both the countries launched hostile propaganda against each other. Tehran radio and Iranian press alleged that the Iraqi government had suppressed the Shi'ite protest and arrested 3,000 dissidents including Shi'ite Muslim leader Ayotollah Bakr al-Sadr. Iran accused many times Iraq's authorities of oppressing Shi'i Muslim. President Saddam feared that Khomeini, who had mobilized millions of Iranian Shi'ites against the Shah, could stir up religious strife in Iraq against his regime. The Iranian government on several occasions stridently called for the overthrow of Hussein which mounted the tension between two countries.
Iran and Iraq. The State run radio Tehran in its regular broadcasts incited Iraq's millions of Shi'ites to revolt against the government.68

Since 1940s there was a problem of Kurds in Iraq besides the threat of the Iranian revolutionary posture, who had long sought autonomy. During 1950s and 1960s the subsequent governments in Iraq either crushed or ignored the Kurdish demand for autonomy. The Shah of Iran agreed to provide arms and financial assistance to the Kurdish insurgency in January 1966. This gave new life to the Kurdish movement which in turn threatened Ba'ath regime in Iraq. The Shah through mediation efforts of President Houari Boumedienne of Algeria, made peace with Iraq in 1975 and decided to suspend the supply of weapons and financial assistance to the Kurdish rebellion against Iraq. Iraqi government had succeeded in crushing the long Kurdish revolt with the cooperation of the Shah in same year. After coming into power, Khomeini started supporting the Kurds in Iraq and there were reports of Iranian arms reaching to the Kurdish supporters.69

In the Persian Gulf region, some important developments took place which encouraged Saddam Hussein to wage war against Iran. Iraq and Saudi Arabia both showed signs of change in their relations. Saudi Arabia had considered the Ba'athist regime in Iraq as radical and
Soviet-aligned. In turn, Iraq accused the Saudi government as puppet of the US. After the developments in Iran this hostile attitude between the two countries began to change and conciliatory spirit developed between them. For their own reason leaders of the both the countries showed unhappiness with the developments in Iran and felt threatened by the Islamic government in Iran. They feared that the Iranian revolution could promote instability in the Gulf, and ultimately would provide a pretext for the Soviet intervention.  

Meanwhile, relation between Iraq and Soviet Union declined sharply and ties with the US improved with which it had no diplomatic ties since 1967. Iraq's changing pro-Russian posture was motivated by a number of factors. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan soon after the installation of a Marxist regime in Ethiopia alarmed the Iraqi leaders. The discovery of communist cells inside the Iraqi army further warned the country's leaders. The ruling Ba'ath party newspaper Al-Thawra strongly denounced Soviet's internal affairs and suggested the former to revise its West Asia policy. In Ethiopia and South Yemen activities of the Soviet Union were also criticised. Trade Relations between Iraq and US grew considerably during this period. Iraq's decision to go to war against Iran may be considered against these political and diplomatic
developments. There was a strong urge among the ruling elite of the country to make Iraq the acknowledged regional power. In the region, Saddam Hussein was also anxious to play the role of the Shah. These were the factors which prompted President Saddam Hussein to launch war against Iran.

Iraq denounced the 1975 peace treaty unilaterally soon after the attack. All the Gulf Arab States sided with Iraq and extended help. Saudi Arabia allowed Iraqi war planes to fly through their airspace to Oman for attacking Iranian bases across the Gulf and on three Iranian held island.72

Iranian government reacted sharply and launched air raids on oil installations of Kuwait and Qatar. Iranian war planes also entered the Saudi airspace in order to show that it might retaliate against any country aiding Iraq.73

The Iran-Iraq War increased the vulnerability of the Gulf region. The Gulf Arab States feared that the failure of the warring States to reach a peaceful solution to their conflict would facilitate a strong role of the super powers in the region. They contemplated the following threats:

(i) Iran-Iraq War might spillover to other parts of the region and ultimately jeopardize the oil export which is the life blood of their economies.
(II) Iran's victory might change the existing balance of power considerably within the region to its advantages.

(III) In case of Iraqi defeat, the whole region would come under the complete control of Iran. Iran's victory would encourage Shi'ites who comprise a considerable portion of the population in the region, to turn against the conservative government in the Gulf.

Under the guise of Iran-Iraq war the US and other Western powers, notably, Britain and France, got an opportunity to assemble an armada of ships near the Gulf to ensure the international shipping open and safe via the Strait of Hormuz.74

Gulf Crisis 1991:

The most important development which threatened the security of the Persian Gulf region is known as Gulf War 1991. The Gulf war started on January 17, 1991 with the biggest and most powerful air attack operation in history launched on Iraq and Iraqi-occupied Kuwait by the allied forces led by the United States. The war in the Persian Gulf ended only with the complete defeat of Iraq by the 28-nation Allied force. The crisis in the Persian Gulf, followed the Iraqi invasion, occupation and annexation of
Kuwait. It was the first crisis confronting the world in the post-cold war era. Ever since the Iraqi troops invaded the Gulf Sheikhdom in the early hours of August 2 1990, it received world wide attention, disapproval, condemnation and reprisals. The crisis also witnessed the largest deployment of foreign military forces in the Persian Gulf region since the end of World War II.75

Even, since 1973, when the Organisation of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC) had successfully raised the price of oil, the US and West European countries had been gravely concerned on this source. One of the many scenarios drawn up by a US Congressional Study at that time even envisaged the feasibility of military strikes to take ever specific oil-producing area in the Persian Gulf.

On August 2, 1990, when Iraq suddenly occupied and annexed Kuwait, President Saddam Hussein could claim that together with Iraq he was in control of 20 per cent of the world's known reserve oil. The threat that the subsequent massing of Iraqi troops on the Kuwait Saudi border posed was therefore, something that the US administration could not afford to ignore as Saudi Arabia accounts for a further 25 per cent of the world's oil reserves.76

President Saddam Hussein's claim that Kuwait belonged to Iraq, because when Iraq was part of Ottoman empire, Kuwait had been governed from Basra; did not held
water. These claim of Saddam over Kuwait dated back to 1961. Just six days after Kuwait gained independence on June 25, 1961, Iraqi Prime Minister Gen. Kaseem said that Kuwait is an integral part of Iraq. Gen. Kaseem argued that (1) Kuwait had been part of Basra province in the Ottoman Empire, and (II) that Britain and other powers had recognised Ottoman sovereignty over Kuwait both before and after the signature of the 1899 agreement under which Kuwait became a British protectorate. But Iraqi arguments were rejected by the Kuwait.

On February 3, 1963 the overthrow of Gen. Kaseem led to an easing of the friction between Iraq and Kuwait. On October 4, 1963, the new Iraqi regime under President Arif entered into an agreement with Kuwait under which Iraq inter alia "recognised the independence and complete sovereignty of the State of Kuwait." In fact Iraq had formally recognised the boundaries of Kuwait in 1974.

Iraq invaded Iran in September 1980. This was a major miscalculation on the part of President Saddam Hussein. In 1988 a ceasefire was finally agreed after an enervating war which lasted for eight long years. One of the first steps taken by Iraq when confronted by world opinion on the occupation and annexation of Kuwait was to conclude a hasty peace with Iran in the hope of building up an alliance. However, there was no reason whatsoever for
Iran to go to the aid of Iraq, particularly in view of the unprovoked war in which over a million Iranian had lost their lives.

The origins of the crisis caused by Iraq's occupation of Kuwait can be traced to the militarization which had taken place in Iraq in the context of the earlier war with Iran. A medium sized country with an area of 172,000 square miles and a population of 17 million people, Iraq had now a standing army of over 1 million, as against a quarter million in 1982. It was spending around 60 per cent of its GDP on military expenditure. With such a top heavy arrangement the pressure on President Saddam Hussein to find a new objective which would keep his forces from becoming restive had clearly led him to this adventure.

The temptation which President Saddam Hussein could not resist, namely to take over Kuwait stemmed not only from the need to keep his army occupied but also from his limitless ambition and the opportunity that Kuwait's enormous oil wealth provided for the reconstruction of Iraq, after the war with Iran. Iraq also needed higher oil prices to increase the revenues from her oil exports and felt that Kuwait, which favoured keeping oil prices down was working against her interests. The dispute over the Rumaila oil fields, therefore, gave a convenient handle to President Saddam Hussein to try and achieve both these objectives at
one stroke, particularly since Kuwait seemed to be ripe for the plucking with a small population and no defence force worth worrying about.

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States have never wanted Iraq to be a powerful State. These States were worried that Iraq would now be too powerful and that was considered a threat to them after the end of the Iran-Iraq war.79

The adamant rejection by Iraq of the dozen UN Security Council Resolutions passed since August 2, 1990, demanding Iraq's complete and unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait, backed up thereafter by a series of other measures, including the trade embargo, had inevitably led to the confrontationist situation. Perhaps it was the very delay of over 5 months in taking a clear-cut stand and laying down the deadline for the withdrawal which had led to Iraq's misreading of the mood of the international community, encouraging it in the belief that there was no real need to fear it.

The last-ditch effort by the UN Secretary General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, not only promised this but also assured Iraq that an International Conference would be convened under UN auspices to resolve the Palestinian issue, which would have made the Iraqi President a hero in Arab eyes. Presumably having concluded a hurried peace with
Iran after finding that the Kuwaiti adventure had misfired President Saddam Hussein was in no position to withdraw similarly from Kuwait without fatally damaging his standing amongst his own followers which came to an end in August 1988.

There were basically four scenarios related to a possible war in West Asia.

(1) Iraq offensive into Saudi Arabia or attack on Israel.

(2) US air strikes to destroy Iraqi air power and/or surgical strikes to eliminate Saddam Hussein.

(3) US land-air offensive to restore Kuwait sovereignty.

(4) Military face off without an armed conflict.\(^{80}\)

The outcome of the war was in no doubt, whatever may be the assessment concerning its duration, it will go in favour of the Allied Forces. Nonetheless, its consequences will haunt the world for a much longer time to come, both in Strategic term and by increasing the volatility of the region. The longer the conflict the more negative will be these consequences, besides the overall economic impact.

**Security Framework:**

In 1990 the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the subsequent crisis and the war that followed were dramatic developments
from which various parties drew various lessons. The resulting defence and security policies for the States of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) have been marked by a mixture of existing concern, of efforts to deal with the immediate effects of the War itself and of attempts to make the necessary adjustment to ensure that their countries do not have to face the situation again.

The United States will find it impossible to maintain a large military presence in the area due to domestic pressure after the Gulf War 1991. Some kind of collective security arrangement would be necessary for the region. The crisis in the Gulf, inter alia, was a testimony of the United States failure to ensure a viable security system for the region that has remained vital to its position as guardian of Western interest. The Gulf War has left the United States with the problem of protecting its security interest in the Persian Gulf for long term. These interests include the continued supply of oil at reasonable prices, the security of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) States and the prevention of a single power from gaining control over the bulk of the Gulf oil reserves and using the revenue to undermine the regional order.

The United States has suggested that several steps to be taken to promote stability in the region:
(1) The GCC States should improve their overall defensive capabilities and accelerate the integration of their plans and programmes for the defence of their territory.

(2) The US should strengthen its military ties with the GCC States and maintain a limited military presence on the Peninsula.

(3) The US should work with the GCC in developing a greater role for regional and extra regional actors, principally Egypt, Britain and France.\textsuperscript{52}

The Security of the Persian Gulf has been problematic since Britain's departure from the region since 1971. Regional efforts to replace Britain have failed, in part due to structural imbalances and mutual suspicion and rivalry. There is the question of prioritizing security needs. Earlier under 'Carter Doctrine', it became necessary that the United States has its own military presence in the region and US has already started making arrangements in this direction when the US decided to establish a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) in the region.\textsuperscript{53}

The involvement of Iran and Iraq in a regional security arrangement would be desirable as their interests and objectives will preclude a viable role for them for the foreseeable future. Iraq under Saddam Hussein is not a candidate for participation in such an arrangement, and
successor regimes are likely to maintain revanchist goals. The focus of Iran, little appetite for a security arrangement that might entangle it in new commitments. In Iran and Iraq circumstances may change and they and GCC may continue to lack the common threat perception, security interests and values necessary for an effective collective security effort.

On the part of the GCC States greater self-sufficiently is important to deterrence in the Gulf. Although the GCC States will remain unable to guarantee their own security, greater self-sufficiency might reduce the need for outside intervention in lesser contingencies and provide valuable time for the mobilization of outside assistance in more extreme situation.

The GCC States recognize the force of this agreement and have made a considerable effort to strengthen their defence capabilities. The GCC approved a $1 billion aid programme for Bahrain to subsidize modernization of its air base as early as 1982. In 1983, $1.8 billion was allocated to a 12-year programme for Oman to improve its ability to monitor the Strait of Hormuz. These programmes could not be fully funded, in part because of a drop in oil revenues.

Saudi Arabia and Oman conducted joint naval exercise during the mid-and late 1980s and even Bahrain and Qatar co-ordinated some training under Peninsula auspices.
In the wake of the Gulf war 1991, Oman, The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Saudi Arabia have been working with the US Central Command on an exercise schedule that will include bilateral and trilateral training.

A continued US military presence in Gulf comprised of prepositioned material, training missions and periodic deployments of military force will be crucial to the preservation of stability in the region. Even the pampering of Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War proved counter-productive for the US policy in the Gulf. Iraq was supported "because it acted as a useful buffer not only between Iran and oil-rich area in the Arabian Peninsula but also between Iran and Israel" during the war between Iran and Iraq.\(^8^5\) The US relations with Iraq continued to improve during the war in spite of the traditionally hostile relations between the two countries. Even when they had no formal diplomatic relations in February 1982, the Reagan Administration removed Iraq from the list of countries designated as "supporters of international terrorism".

With the end of Cold War and the disintegration of Soviet Union, United States has emerged as the undisputed power today. The United States cannot remain insensitive to the growing demands for democratic changes sweeping the world over. Security of a region will be ensured more by creating durable understanding and tolerant friendship among
the members of that region. It should not be based on a framework whereby one country is pitted against another. That would be a long-term guarantee for the Security of regions, including that of the Gulf. 86

For Iran, the end of Cold War and disintegration of Soviet Union has seen a potential military threat from a neighbour replaced with the prospect of wars and instability on its northern frontiers, and with the prospect of spillover effects as neighbouring States disintegrate along ethnic lines.

The obstacles between Iran and the Arabs were no less real for being less evident in 1960s and 1970s. Iran and Saudi Arabia were unable to agree on a regional security arrangement to replace Britain because of their rivalry for primacy in the region in 1970s. In the Gulf region problems were compounded when a revolutionary Islamic movement over threat the secular monarchy in Iran.

Early on, the smaller Arab States were aware that an Islamic Iran constituted a greater threat to their regimes than Bat'hist Iraq. Apart from the threat of a response in their own restive Shi'a communities there was Iran's revolutionary message declaring monarchy and Islam incompatible and criticizing the monarchies friendly ties with the West. 87
In mid 1982 Speaker of the Majlis Hashemi Rafsanjani explained Iran's view of security. The Western countries scream that "the security of the Persian Gulf is in danger". In fact, the security and stability of the region are endangered so long as the reactionary regimes of the region continue their subservience to the United States and (their) contempt for their (own) people.88 President Ali Khomeini also noted that Iran's victories would cut short the access of super powers (US and former Soviet Union) and guarantee the independence of the region's countries. He argued 'for we seriously believe - and are in favour of the independence of countries and we shall not allow enemies and aggressors to enter the region.89

When Iran insisted on the exclusion of outside powers in the interests of regional security, it was also clear that this would strengthen its own position, leaving it unmatched and unchecked. Iranian leaders tried to assuage fears about Iran's territorial ambitions. According to Rafsanjani, 'The small Arab countries should know that Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Dubai and rest of the emirates together are not as large as our province of Khuzestan...We have no need of you, your money or your oil.90

In theory, regional security can be safeguarded when at least two of the three major Gulf States are in agreement. In the 1970s, an objective similarity of interest
among Iran, Saudi Arabia and later Iraq was not enough to lead to cooperation on security matters. In the 1980s the case of Iraq and Saudi Arabia illustrated that even co-operation between two of three principal States was not enough without foreign involvement. Between 1988-90, a fixation on the threat from Iran distracted the Gulf States from Iraq's ambitions and this, too, could not be corrected without external assistance. The underlying issue remains whether the conditions for collective security will be any better in the coming decade.

President Rafsanjani's view of the collective security is gradualist and functionalist. According to this view, broad cultural, social and economic interests will stimulate lies, improve trust and create the conditions for security and the issue of continuing alliance with foreign government for arms, adviser or the provision of bases should not be an obstacle to cooperation among the littoral States. As Rafsanjai puts it, "real security rests on sincere cooperation among regional States; they should not be concerned by Iran's size and strength and Iran should not concern itself about their foreign links. Over time trust will foster co-operation after which 'security will come automatically to the region."\(^9\)

The Iranian President observed that internal disputes and lack of coordination between regional States
based on a failure to use the 'fundamental axis for all of us' - namely, Islam - was a contributing factor in reviewing the causes of the Iraqi aggression. He concluded that regional peace was the prime condition for excluding outside powers: without it, there would be an incentive for threatened local States to invite outside in for support and assistance.  

Iran does not disguise its aim to promote co-operation with the Persian Gulf States to block external intervention in the region. One of the Strategic reasons why the Islamic Republic emphasizes cooperation with the GCC members is to weaken the ground for any foreign presence.

There are several possible ways in which security in the Gulf region could be organised hegemony is one possibility. A second would be a functioning balance of power system, consciously sought by States and achieved more or less purposefully. This system, which would be loose and informal, would lead to adhoc alignments and shifts based on particular threat. A third possibility is collective security.

The preconditions for the development of collective security in the Persian Gulf as a means of assuring regional order have not yet been met. If security arrangements in the Gulf are to move in this direction, the littoral States
will have to begin to co-ordinate and harmonize their policies on a range of issues. Issues of common security that concern the region (e.g. the Hajj) could be co-ordinated or discussed in a regional forum. In some form of an expanded GCC that included Iran (leaving open the possibility of the later including Iraq), littoral States could establish norms of conduct that, if breached would serve as a catalyst for collective measures.

The littoral States could undertake steps to increase trust and build confidence in the security area. Since 'Desert Storm' many press illusions to the need for collective security, Iran has not outlined in any detail the kind of security role it would like a regional organisation to undertake - probably because it considers it premature. Hence, it has not indicated its preference, for example, between Oman's suggestion for an integrated standing force of 100,000 troops (first proposed in 1983 and received in 1991) and Saudi Arabia's preference for national forces earmarked to the regional organisation, but under striked national control.

In the immediate future, three areas of regional politics will test the potential for regional co-operation: the future of Iraq, arms purchases and oil policies. All are clearly areas that could benefit from regional co-operation.
In the Persian Gulf, following two wars and two interventions by external States, there is still no consensus on the nature of the security threats, whether external or internal. In the past two decades, both Iran and Iraq have been threatening. Other States including Oman, Kuwait and Yemen, have felt need to keep their distance from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia considers both Iran and Iraq to be rivals. It feels much the same way about Egypt and Syria, with whom it is unwilling to contemplate serious security cooperation. If this is the case with former allies and Arab brothers, consider the risks with Iran. A regional security organisation with any teeth would risk bringing in and legitimizing an Iranian voice (and involvement) in any and all issues affecting the Arabian Peninsula. It would undermine any Saudi claim to primacy among the smaller States. It might also deprive Saudi Arabia of the autonomy it needs to develop its oil policies in its own national interests (as opposed to policies in the interests of labour-rich and cash-hunry Iran and Iraq). It might also bring into formal cooperation a State whose policies are ambiguous and whose politics are volatile enough to be undependable. As the Iran-Iraq war, the Mecca episode of 1987 and the Kuwait episode of 1990-91 have all shown, the axis of Islam is an inadequate organising principle when Islam itself is divided Regional Co-operation as the primary
or exclusive means of assuring security, however, carries the risk that one of the region's more powerful States will breakout. Regional cooperation cannot yet be considered an alternative to security relations with outside powers.

Security cooperation in the region simply does not exist and may not be established soon. The Arab States, and especially Saudi Arabia, may make all the right noises to avoid offending Iran (and others) but they have no intention of taking meaningful steps.

If Iran truly wants an indigenous collective approach to Persian Gulf security it will have to recognize that the thrust of its policies in the wider region are bound to be judged as an indicator of overall intentions. A modification of policies indicating a real shift in the goal would be a true confidence-building Step vis-a-vis the Arab States of the Persian Gulf.
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