A B S T R A C T

The region of the Persian Gulf has strategically an important place in the World. President Eisenhower of the USA described it in 1951 as the world's most strategically important area. Since the close of the 1970s, the security and sovereignty of the Arab Gulf states had been under increasing threats for various reasons. Especially after the oil crisis in 1973, the region emerged as a dynamic economic and political force in the international arena. The year 1979 was the turning point in the threat perceptions and defence of these states. This led to intensified efforts by governments for coordination and cooperation in various fields, including internal security and defending borders.

The Persian Gulf has become the world's most important centre of economic activity because of its immense oil resources and oil revenues. Even the major powers, who produce oil, are interested in the control of oil resources of this region to maintain their supremacy and preserve their own limited resources for the future. The geopolitical, economic and strategic importance of the region drew the attention of the major powers rivalry. Further regional conflicts and continuous domestic turmoil
increasingly contributed to the complexity of the situation. The security of the region was thus threatened both from external and internal threats.

For the Arab States of the Gulf the close of the 1970's began a period of apprehension. The situation prior to 1971 and through much of the seventies was relatively safe. Till the British presence in the Gulf, the Arab governments did not fear of external threats. Even the Iraqi claims on Kuwait in the sixties were deterred in part by a continued British security umbrella. However, there was no significant deterioration in security even after British withdrawal in 1971. The smaller Gulf States eased into independence smoothly and even Iraq moved from confrontation to co-existence. It is, however, important to mention that even though the Gulf governments prior to 1971, had little concern for external threats, talk of a security pact among the eight Gulf littoral states had been circulating since the early 1970's. Such a pact, it was argued, would provide a joint defence network against external threats, help prevent disputes from flaring into hostilities, and probably constitute an initial step towards turning the Gulf into a zone of peace.

The year 1979 marked a watershed in the security and threat perceptions of Arab Gulf States. There were at least
four important developments that shock the entire area: 
(1) the Soviet Union invasion of Afghanistan, (2) the 
Islamic Revolution in Iran, (3) the Iran-Iraq war and,

In the wake of these developments, the other Arab 
Gulf States intensified their consultation on coordination 
of internal security and defence matters.

Security is bound to be high on the agenda of 
Persian Gulf countries through out the 1990s as it is the 
central problem of Persian Gulf States. In the Persian 
Gulf, security of Regime (ruling elite) and not the 
security of the state appears to be important.

After the second world war, Persian Gulf region 
played a crucial role in the overall global strategy of 
major Global powers. Persian Gulf region assumed tremendous 
strategic significance in the wake of cold war rivalries 
between US and USSR.

In the Persian Gulf region, Iran and Iraq responded 
positively to US overtures in early 1950s. The fall of the 
Shah of Iran and advent of the Islamic revolution in Iran 
in the early 1979, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 
December 1979, proved a turning point in the US global 
strategic posture in general, and its policy towards Persian 
Gulf in particular.
As regard Persian Gulf region, US policy was strictly governed by national interests and to keep the region out of the Soviet sphere of influence. Unqualified support to Israel and help build it up as a powerful regional military power served as a pressure tactic to impress upon other Arab and Gulf regimes, the need for relying on Washington.

Persian Gulf was most vital to the Soviets as the land and waters of the region were the hostile military platform for aerial and naval attack against her. The Soviet Union picked up the most sensitive political issue, namely the Arab-Israeli conflict to establish a foothold in the region. It become easy for the Soviet Union to gate crash into the Arab world because of the US support for Israel.

After the end of cold war and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, its influence in the Persian Gulf vanished. Persian Gulf region continues to be considered vital to American interests.

Very often the GCC states have been able to send positive signals to the countries regarded as common threats: Iran and Iraq. The main objective of the policy of the smaller state is to placate the hostile power and offset the Saudi paternalism. This indicates that they do
not consider the existing mechanism of regional cooperation a foot proof safety-valve against national security threats. Infact, they have evolved their policy towards security in the backdrop of their relation with Iran and Iraq.

After the withdrawal of British forces from the region, the super powers have become more interested in the Persian Gulf. The conflicting and diverse interests of the super powers encouraged political instability in the Persian Gulf region and created volatile security environment.

The Iranian revolution, Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, outbreak of Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf Crisis of 1991 these events of international importance took place in and around the Persian Gulf. These events of course changed the balance of power in the Persian Gulf region.

US will find it impossible to maintain a large military presence in the area due to domestic pressure in the post Gulf crisis 1991. Some kind of collective security arrangement would be necessary for the region. The Gulf war has left the US with the problem of protecting its security interest in the Persian Gulf.

The security perceptions of the rulers of the GCC states reflect not simply their views on the nature of most pressing threats, but also their recent experience, as well as their capabilities. In the Persian Gulf, following the
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 and have felt the need to keep their distance from Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia considers both Iran and Iraq to be rivals.

If Iran 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.

It is thus obvious that, as far as the Gulf Countries are themself concerned, there is hardly any consensus about the threat perceptions or security arrangements. The ongoing potential rivalries are too much of the stumbling blocs in the way of any regional approach to national security.