Chapter VIII

INTERNAL SECURITY: SEARCH FOR COMMON APPROACH AND POLICY

Given their narrow political base and feeble institutional structure, the ruling regimes in the GCC region have been vulnerable to internal security threats. Though the GCC states had disagreements with each other during the earlier decades, including in the area of demarcating their common borders, what is not appreciated is that they generally cooperated with one another while dealing with threats to their internal security which had common origins like disaffected Shias, radical groups striving for overthrow of monarchies, extremist Palestinian elements, Islamic Fundamentalists and so on. It would be in fact correct to say that excellent cooperation existed in the field of internal security among the GCC member states during the seventies.

Intelligence about subversive, radical groups was shared and exchanged among them; no GCC country ever allowed its territory to be exploited by opponents of the regime of a neighbouring country for carrying out subversive activities against it except for short periods during 1950s when Saudi Arabia had given refuge to members of the "Imamate Group" which was engaged in an armed confrontation with the Sultan of Oman. 1 Similarly, during that decade Saudi Arabia had

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1. Talib-Ibn-Ali, brother of Imam Ghalib, was allowed to set up his headquarters in Dammam from where he carried out propaganda against Sultan of Oman. See, Robert Geran Landen, Oman Since 1856 (New Jersey, USA, 1967), p.421.
tried to enlist the support of some members of Abu Dhabi's ruling family to bring about the downfall of its then ruler Shaikh Shakhbut.²

However, during the 1960s and especially during the 1970s, relations between the GCC members became extremely cordial and cooperation among them extended to the security field. No doubt the fact that the sources of danger to the Gulf monarchies were roughly identical must have facilitated intra-GCC security coordination. Perhaps such cooperation took place in an informal manner and without the benefit of an institutionalised framework but there is little doubt that it existed.

"In late 1978 the Saudi-initiated cooperative internal security and intelligence links between the conservative Gulf states were greatly strengthened."³

"Similarly, much of the Qatari Civil Service which employs something like a third of all native Qataris also has a direct or indirect role in controlling foreign labour and the Qataris are assisted in this task by the internal security forces of Saudi Arabia."⁴


4. Ibid., p.413.
The Saudi Minister of Interior stated in Kuwait on 26 November 1980 that Saudi Arabia intended to enter into bilateral security agreements with various Gulf states.\(^5\)

Earlier the Kuwaiti press had reported in August 1980\(^6\) that a bilateral security agreement was going to be signed between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia which would provide for extradition of criminals, measures to curb infiltration, exchange of intelligence on criminal elements and so on.

It is known that in 1979 when Shia riots had broken out in Bahrain, its ruler had turned to the Kingdom seeking assistance in the security field. Quoting from a well-known journal,\(^7\) "In the autumn of 1979 at the height of the crisis with Iran and dangerous riots of Manama and Al Mubarraq, the (Bahraini) ruler was compelled to accept security help from Saudi Arabia."

The best proof of the close links existing between the intelligence agencies of these states is provided by the manner in which they tackled and exposed the abortive coup planned in Bahrain late 1981. As is known, it was an immigration official in the UAE whose suspicions were aroused when he came across some forged Bahraini passports and his warnings

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helped the Bahraini authorities to apprehend the conspirators. Though the GCC was in existence then, not a single bilateral agreement on internal security had been entered into among the GCC members, nor a single meeting of GCC Interior Ministers held.

It is indeed difficult to say with certainty whether there existed any kind of broad consensus among the GCC rulers in the beginning as to the manner in which they envisaged intra-GCC cooperation in security manners to grow and develop. No doubt the GCC rulers were concerned over the threats to internal stability of their regimes arising from the Iranian revolution and the wide-spread Shia protests and disturbances which had occurred in its wake during 1979 and 1980 in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and to a smaller extent in Kuwait. Similarly, no doubt it was because of their fears and apprehensions over internal security that the first few GCC summits stressed the doctrine that preservation of internal stability of this region was the exclusive responsibility of its people.

On the other hand, article 4 of the GCC Constitution which lists the various areas of possible cooperation among these countries does not mention among them "internal security"; moreover, among the five standing committees of GCC Ministers constituted prior to the first summit to boost cooperation in

8. See the section dealing with events leading to creation of the GCC in Part I.
certain selected fields, there was no standing committee of Interior Ministers. This omission took place because perhaps no long-term threat to GCC's internal security was envisaged at least in the beginning and no need was felt to set up a permanent committee of Interior Ministers.

One naturally wonders as to what has been the role of the GCC in strengthening cooperation in the field of internal security among its members. Did this cooperation enter a new plateau and acquire dimensions and depth not found earlier? In the following pages an attempt to find answers to above questions has been made by reviewing the decisions taken during successive meetings of Interior Ministers. It has also been examined whether the GCC states adopted any unified measures to overcome the threats confronting them in the field of internal security.

The first meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers was held in Riyadh on 23/24 February 1982. This meeting was convened following a major coup attempt in Bahrain which took place on 13 December 1981 in which a group of 80 saboteurs reportedly trained in Iran (most of them were Gulf nationals) attempted to overthrow the Bahraini Government through violent means. 9

9. See the section dealing with first summit in Part I.
10. Al Qabas, Al Watan, 14/15 December 1981.
This meeting reviewed the recommendations of a committee of experts which had met earlier on 20/21 February 1982 and decided to sign a Comprehensive Joint Security Agreement. The meeting called on "specialists" in the member states to meet in order to prepare the draft agreement. 11

The communique issued at the end of this meeting expressed full support for Bahrain to preserve its safety, security, sovereignty and independence and affirmed that the responsibility of confronting aggression against any state was a collective responsibility to be shouldered by all the member states. 12

It would be relevant here to add that shortly before this meeting was convened, Saudi Arabia had entered into bilateral security agreements with Bahrain on 19 December 1981, 13 with Oman on 23 February 1982, 14 and with Qatar and the UAE on 21 February 1982. 15 The only country with which Saudi Arabia had not signed a bilateral security agreement was Kuwait. The bilateral agreements signed by Saudi Arabia with Oman, Bahrain, Qatar and the UAE were analogous and provided

for cooperation in security matters, extradition of criminals, consultation on matters pertaining to internal security, etc.  

The second meeting of the Interior Ministers was held in Riyadh in October 1982. A detailed draft pertaining to "Comprehensive Security Agreement" was prepared but was not agreed upon. The Saudi Interior Minister tersely informed the press that initiating of the Joint Security Agreement had been postponed "due to some remarks made during the discussions", adding that the proposed pact when finalised would be more comprehensive. He also expressed the hope that the outstanding problems standing in the way of the Pact would be overcome and in particular the extradition clause to which Kuwait was objecting. Subsequently, during the third GCC summit held in Manama on 11 November 1982, the above draft of the Joint Security Agreement was submitted to the Heads of State but in accordance with the recommendations of the Ministers of Interior, they decided to defer its adoption pending further study. Saudi Minister of Interior had commented that the Security Agreement would be studied by a committee of experts since such matters required careful study.

16. These bilateral security agreements signed by the Kingdom with the four GCC members were not identical. For instance, the agreement entered into with the UAE contained a "scorched-earth" clause applicable to a distance of 20 kms within the territory of either country. Arab Times, 29 January 1983. A similar proviso was not incorporated in the security pact signed between Oman and Saudi Arabia.

17. Arab News, 19 November 1982. See Appendix 29 for full text of the communique issued by the Interior Ministers.

18. See the section dealing with the third summit in Part I.

Kuwait's objections to the Security Agreement pertained to two clauses in it which were as follows:

i) Each signatory country was empowered to send its military/police personnel (in limited numbers and carrying light arms) into the territory of another signatory country while in "hot pursuit" of criminals fleeing the first country.\(^20\)

ii) Each signatory state was required to extradite nationals of any signatory state who had committed a crime there. Political crimes were specifically exempted.\(^21\)

It was Kuwait's contention that both these provisions of the Security Agreement conflicted with its constitution and its democratic traditions.

It was basically Kuwait's stand that the clause pertaining to extradition of criminals would be abused by other GCC members to further restrict any political activity in their countries which they found unacceptable. Kuwait could not accept this proviso as it was the only "democratic" GCC member which tolerated dissent and criticism of governmental policies to a far larger extent than was the case in other GCC states. Kuwait was also opposed to the proviso in this pact permitting forces of one member to enter the territory of any other member up to a distance of 20 kms on the ground that it impinged adversely on the sovereign rights of smaller GCC members.\(^22\)

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\(^{21}\) See Appendix 30 for a detailed discussion of the proposed text of this agreement.

\(^{22}\) Al Watan, 17 October 1982.
Perhaps trying to overcome Kuwait's reservations on this issue, Saudi Interior Minister clarified in a press interview "that it was the Kuwaitis who had requested that there should be an agreement to create a unified security for Gulf states." He added that "any agreement reached must be more substantial than those bilateral agreements currently existing between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states though not Kuwait." He also said that "Saudi Arabia did not object to Saudis being subjected to Kuwaiti justice or that of any of the six states, whatever the crime." 23

The third meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers was held in Riyadh on 28-29 November 1983. It was decided during this meeting that a committee of experts would be set up to make recommendations regarding the Unified Security Agreement. 24 The Saudi Interior Minister had commented at the end of the session that there were no obstacles but only differences of viewpoints. 25 According to press reports, Kuwait had reiterated during this session its objection to the principle of hot pursuit. 26

It was decided during this meeting that there should be a unified passport for nationals of the six GCC countries. 27

23. From Arab Times, 26 December 1982.
The Ministers also approved, according to press reports, recommendations concerning traffic regulations in member states. It was also decided to facilitate movement of GCC nationals among the member countries. Prince Nayaf, Saudi Interior Minister, declared at the conclusion of this meeting on 29 November 1983, according to Saudi Radio, that any citizen of the GCC can enter any member country of the GCC and stay there as long as he wants since residence permits for GCC citizens had been abolished.28

The fourth meeting of the Interior Ministers was held on 17-18 September 1985. This was again dominated by deliberations pertaining to adoption of the Joint Security Pact. In an interview with an Arabic Daily, Al Rai Al Aam, published from Kuwait, the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah, said that Kuwait continued to have reservations about this pact. He added further that Kuwait would be unable to sign any agreement which infringed on Kuwait's sovereignty.29

Following the fourth meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers, Kuwait's objections to signing of a Comprehensive Security Agreement were probably reviewed during the sixth GCC summit held in Muscat between 3-6 November 1985. The

28. From Keesing's Volume XXXI, p.33370.
communique issued at the end of this summit contained the following paragraph: "in order to maintain firmness on the external front as well as security and stability of the six members, the Council approved the objectives of the security strategy and urged immediate action to implement it." It is to be noted that the phrase "security strategy" was introduced for the first time in GCC parlance.

Subsequently, the fifth session of the GCC Interior Ministers was held on 21/22 October 1986. Prior to his departure to attend this meeting, the Kuwaiti Interior Minister said in an interview that the GCC Interior Ministers would work out the basic guidelines pertaining to security strategy in their forthcoming session. In the same interview the Minister added that the forthcoming meeting of Interior Ministers would discuss the joint security strategy first alluded to in the Muscat summit of 1985. He added that the meeting would also consider production of a unified Gulf passport.

Prince Nayef, the Saudi Interior Minister, said in a press interview after the conclusion of this meeting that good results had been achieved on the issues discussed and hoped that this would lead to the realisation of security integration.

30. See the section dealing with the sixth summit in Part I.
among the six member states. He added "we are proceeding on the right track and the things which have not been accomplished at this meeting will be realised in the coming meetings."

Replying to a question whether the conference had formulated clearcut concepts on security issues for forwarding to the forthcoming Seventh GCC summit, he replied that no special matter will be forwarded to the GCC summit. Prince Nayef added that among the decisions taken by the Ministers were those concerning unified rules to combat drugs and common traffic rules and regulations. Prince Nayef further said that the conference did not tackle the issue of terrorism but added that "though we did not discuss it we are against it." As regards adoption of a consolidated Gulf passport, he said that the issue was still under discussion.33

The Interior Minister decided during this meeting to entrust to a committee the task of evolving a security strategy. It may be added here that no communique was issued at the end of this meeting. Commenting on this meeting, a major Saudi daily commented editorially as follows:34 The resolutions made by the GCC Interior Ministers are right moves in the right direction in full consideration of the whole region. The resolutions have also covered traffic issues, anti-drug measures and other security


measures that are crucial to peace in the region. At the same time entrusting a preliminary committee with chalking out of a security strategy is another right step."

Ibrahim Subhe, GCC Assistant Secretary for Political Affairs, commented on this meeting as follows: On the subject of combating terrorism, he said that "there were no schemes with this end in view before the meeting and it was natural that this was dealt with inside GCC states." This statement is significant as only in June 1986 (e.g. a few months prior to this meeting) extensive damage had occurred to Kuwait's oil installations which was clearly an act of subversion and terrorism. Regarding unification of traffic rules in Gulf states, Ibrahim Subhe said that the matter would be entrusted to a committee.

On the conclusion of this fifth session, the Kuwaiti Interior Minister said in an interview that technical committees would meet in November 1986 to discuss the observations made about security strategy in the above session. The Minister added that it was decided to adopt a uniform stand for coping with attempts aimed at security and stability of this region.


Abdullah Bishara in a press conference during this session warned that the threat of terrorism was looming large over the region and terrorists motivated by bestiality did not discriminate between targets and nor were they fettered by (moral) constraints. They sought to inflict maximum damage and to cause maximum number of casualties and maximum chaos. He added that as terrorism goes up so would increase apprehensions which would lead to heightened instability. 38 He also said that the framework of a concept on the "security file" to be presented to GCC Heads of State was not yet clear. 39

The above fifth session of the Interior Ministers held in October 1986 was followed by the seventh GCC summit held on 2 November 1986.

The communique issued at the conclusion of this summit contained following observations on internal security, "The Council expressed its satisfaction with what has been achieved in defence and security cooperation and blessed intensive consultations between security apparatus in member states to strengthen and guarantee security and stability in the GCC." 40

Speaking in a press conference on 4 November 1986 while the seventh GCC summit was going on, Rashid Abdullah, the

40. See the section dealing with the seventh summit in Part I.
Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the UAE, denied existence of reservations among member states vis-a-vis the Security Pact. He added that the Security Agreement had already been discussed and passed by the GCC Interior Ministers and that the principles had been agreed upon.

The UAE Minister expressed irritation when a Saudi journalist asked him to define a freedom fighter, a terrorist and state terrorism. 41

Subsequently, a couple of months after this session, the Saudi Interior Minister in a press statement 42 called for a Joint Security Pact between the six GCC nations. He said "that the security strategy was not a substitute for a security accord." He added that, "a comprehensive GCC security agreement was the most important means of transferring goals of security strategy into a working formula." He affirmed "that bolstering potentials of cooperation was linked to approving a legal formula which would organise and coordinate relations among the GCC members." The Minister explained "that exchanging expertise and training courses would boost such action".

The sixth meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers was held in Riyadh on 15 February 1987. 43 This meeting was held in the aftermath of discovery of a major conspiracy in Kuwait.

42. Arab Times, 1 December 1986.
when a group of ten Shias, most of them Kuwaiti nationals, had planned to blow up many vital installations in that country to disrupt the Islamic Summit which was scheduled to be held in Kuwait during the last week of January 1987.44 On the eve of this meeting, in an interview published in an Omani daily, Prince Nayef, Saudi Interior Minister, categorically denied existence of any major differences among the member states regarding various clauses of the security strategy. He said that each state had put forward its opinion and "we always respect other's opinions and reach complete agreements to the benefit of all the six states."45

Sayyid Badr, Omani Interior Minister, in a press interview said that Oman would not be presenting any working paper during the forthcoming conference of Interior Ministers. He also expressed the hope that the Conference would ratify the security strategy. Sayyid Badr added that the strategy was based on a number of ideals and principles which brought together the countries of the region. It was founded on the Islamic Sharia which was characterised by tolerance, and the binding ties among the member countries.46

A communique issued after the meeting said that the Ministers had approved a security strategy after a detailed review of its various clauses.47 The communique expressed

46. Ibid.
47. Ibid., 16 February 1987.
absolute support for Kuwait and the measures that it took after the incidents. (This refers to the conspiracy discovered during January 1987). The communique reiterated the Council's unity and its determination to shoulder GCC security responsibilities together.

Sayyid Badr, Omani Interior Minister had commented as follows to a local newspaper at the conclusion of this meeting: 48 "The approval of the Joint Security Strategy would be a bold and firm step towards achieving a strong, solid and common security infrastructure. The strategy, he recalled, was the outcome of the GCC Supreme Council's sixth session in 1985. The six Heads of State during their meeting underlined the need for a common security umbrella to boost cooperation. A number of meetings at various levels were held following the Muscat summit which resulted in the security strategy draft in its present form. Following ratification by the Foreign Ministers, the drafts would be submitted to Supreme Council for final approval." Commenting on this meeting, a well-respected UAE daily had commented editorially as follows: 49

"We had recently applauded the swiftness with which AGCC trade Ministers had taken follow-up action to implement key economic decisions made at the Abu Dhabi summit in

48. Ibid.

November. Now the Interior Ministers at a meeting in Muscat on Sunday have endorsed a common plan for internal security which was conceived at the 1985 AGCC summit. If the flushing out of the joint security strategy has taken a little longer than action on the economic front, it is understandable considering the sensitive nature of the issues involved. Top officials had to hold several meetings before the outlines of the strategy were finalised in December, 1986. Obviously, it has been necessary to take into account the overall regional security situation which has become greatly unsettled in view of the unending Iraq-Iran war, with all its repercussions for the AGCC states' own stability."

Interestingly, Prince Nayef Bin Abdul Aziz, the Saudi Interior Minister, in a press interview denied existence of differences between the six GCC states on the draft security agreement and explained that there were different views stemming from individual local conditions which were being discussed objectively.

While elucidating the contents of the security strategy, Abdullah Bishara said as follows: "The (subject of) security strategy represents a giant step forward in cooperation among

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50. This was a reference to the meeting held by GCC Under Secretaries of Interior when the security strategy was finalised. This meeting was held in December 1986.


52. Al Gabas, 16 February 1987. This was the first time when the phrase "political security" was employed by a GCC dignitary, see next page.
the GCC countries in the security field. He added that the security strategy would unify security policies, security perspective and security philosophies. He elaborated that the security strategy would deal with issues connected with "political security" and was not concerned with ordinary crime. He added that the security strategy dealt with training of national cadres and replacing by them the expatriate personnel as well as strengthening the cohesion and communications among the security organs."

The Kuwaiti Minister of Interior elaborated the security strategy as follows:53 "The security strategy approved by the Interior Ministers was concerned with "political security" in these countries. He said that this security strategy would have impact on all countries of this region and would bring benefit to it. He said that there was a conviction among all that a security threat confronted all and not only Kuwait. This requires from us total understanding and commitment. He stressed the need for creating a suitable framework for implementing it and added that its implementation would require some time."

It is to be noted that in this interview the Kuwaiti Interior Minister had again used a new phrase "political security" which was coined a few days earlier by Abdulla Bishara in his interview with Al Qabas dated 16 February 1987.

It should be stressed here that this expression had not been used by GCC governments until this time.

Commenting on this security strategy, Tehran Times said:

"this pact (strategy) was 'specifically tailored' to get around reservations by Kuwait over issues such as the theoretical right of any GCC state to pursue criminals for an unspecified distance inside other member states. Kuwait has so far refused to sign a joint GCC Security Pact agreed to in 1982 saying that some clauses infringe on its sovereignty and territorial integrity."

A few days later, clarifying the objectives of the security strategy, Shaikh Nawaf, Kuwaiti Minister of Interior said as follows: "the security strategy covers all life facets, either in economic, social or security fields and this naturally realises much for the Gulf nationals. Besides containing specific rules to preserve the Gulf community and protect its security, the official indicated that the strategy would be complemented by security accords which we are now drafting and will undoubtedly be in the interest of our region." "Asked if approval of Gulf Security Strategy

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56. This indicated that the security strategy needed further revision.
represented a new stage in Gulf security coordination, Shaikh Nawaf recalled that such security coordination and cooperation was existent before the strategy and described it as close and stronger than any accord or strategy."  

A few days later, the Saudi Interior Minister Prince Nayef commented on this security strategy as follows: "The security strategy reflected the comprehensive cooperation existing between the member states in defence, education, information and cultural fields. He highlighted the significance of "intellectual security" and called on the media to extend their full cooperation to attain this goal. The Minister also announced that there was no border dispute between the Kingdom and its neighbours. However, he observed that there are some disputes among some brotherly states and we are trying our best to resolve them."

It may be noted that in this interview the Saudi Minister had introduced the concept of 'intellectual security'. As pointed out earlier, the Kuwaiti Interior Minister had referred to "political security" while commenting on this security strategy.

The security strategy was required to be endorsed by the Council of Foreign Ministers; this was not done during

the meeting of GCC Foreign Ministers held on 19 February 1987, e.g., only four days after the security strategy was adopted by the Interior Ministers. The GCC Foreign Ministers during their subsequent meeting held on 7-8 June 1987 agreed to forward the security strategy to the GCC Heads of State for ratification.

Despite the fact that the security strategy was approved by GCC Interior Ministers after intensive consultations, the Saudi Interior Minister a few months later emphasised the need for its further revision.

"A security agreement among the GCC countries was a vital tool for the implementation of the strategy and hoped that an accord would soon be completed." 60

The seventh meeting of GCC Interior Ministers was held in Abu Dhabi on 14 October 1987. 61 Earlier GCC Under Secretaries of Interior had met on 7 October 1987 to prepare the agenda for the meeting of their Ministers and among the issues to be presented for consideration to the Ministerial Session were: 62

59. See the section dealing with meetings of GCC Foreign Ministers in Part I.

60. From Arab News, 1 May 1987. It may be recalled that the Kuwaiti Interior Minister too had affirmed the need to complement the security strategy with security accords on 1 March 1987, e.g. after its adoption by GCC Interior Ministers. Kuwaiti Interior Minister's statement in this regard has been quoted earlier.


i) Crime detection and upgrading of security measures in member states.

ii) Unification of passport procedures.

iii) Upgrading the training programmes for security forces.

iv) Combating drug trafficking etc.

The period intervening between the sixth meeting of GCC Interior Ministers in February 1987 and the seventh meeting in October 1987 had witnessed the tragic Makkah riots as well as a number of incidents of arson in Kuwait.63

Abdulla Bishara, Secretary General of the GCC, while inaugurating the conference made a brief reference to the security strategy which was adopted earlier by the GCC Interior Ministers in February 1987 and mentioned that it would be submitted to the eighth GCC summit for ratification.64

The main points of the communique issued at the end of this meeting were as follows:

"The Ministers reviewed the security situation in the region including the dangers and threats directed against the Council's member states."

"The Ministers decided to intensify cooperation in the security field and agreed to give top priority to security requirements."

63. See the section dealing with evolution of GCC countries relations with Iran in Part I.

64. Riyadh Daily, 14 October 1987.
"The Ministers reaffirmed their support to measures that had been taken by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait to maintain their security and stability. They strongly condemned criminal acts witnessed by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait particularly the crime of some Iranians against the Grand Mosque of Makkah."

"The Ministers reasserted readiness of the GCC states to take all necessary measures to preserve their stability and security." 65

Among the noteworthy features of this meeting were:

i) It made only a passing reference to the security strategy which was adopted as seen earlier after prolonged deliberations.66

ii) There was no condemnation of Iran by name. In fact, GCC's Assistant Secretary General said in an interview that "severing relations with Iran is not easy and is not warranted either by GCC or Iran." 67

In a press interview, the Saudi Interior Minister Sheikh Nayef specifically said that the meeting had not sought to take any collective steps against the Iranians. 68

This statement acquires significance in view of the fact that


66. It is to be noted that the security strategy was referred to only in the inaugural address of Abdulla Bishara and not in the communique issued after the meeting.


the massacre of Makkah which had brought Saudi Arabia and Iran to the brink of war had taken place only two months before this meeting. Similarly, Kuwait had witnessed a series of acts of arson and terrorism during 1987 beginning with the discovery of a major armed conspiracy in the beginning of the year and these subversive incidents were attributed to pro-Iranian sympathizers in Kuwait.

To sum up, one can say that the seventh meeting of GCC Interior Ministers did not come up with any important decision. The papers which were submitted to it for consideration dealt with relatively routine issues like drug trafficking and unification of passport procedures. The meeting did not really consider whether any unified action could be taken to meet the threat of terrorism fomented by Iran. It is also noteworthy that the expression of solidarity and support for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia was lukewarm and lacked any special emphasis.

Subsequently, the security strategy as anticipated was submitted for ratification to the eighth GCC summit held in December 1987 when it was merely endorsed but not signed.69 The communique issued by this summit contained the following phrase pertaining to security strategy/security cooperation:

69. Khaleej Times, 9 November 1988
"It (the summit) endorses a comprehensive security strategy submitted by the Arab Interior Ministers and expresses satisfaction with the achievements accomplished in the security spheres." The security strategy was not finalised until the end of 1987 and it was further reviewed during a meeting of GCC Interior Under Secretaries held in March 1988. Following excerpt from a press statement made by the Omani Interior Minister would be relevant here:

"The joint security strategy is the framework of current cooperation in security matters among the GCC states. Whether the planned security agreement is concluded or not, there is good cooperation now. As to the security accord, it will be discussed by the Under Secretaries of Interior in Riyadh this month."

"Certain reservations have been expressed regarding the agreement by some of the members including Oman on the subject of handing over criminals. Security cooperation between GCC states will not be affected in any case."

The eighth meeting of GCC Interior Ministers was held in November 1988 which approved the recommendations made earlier by their under secretaries in October 1988. The statement issued at the end of this meeting merely reaffirmed

70. See the section dealing with the eighth summit in part I.
the need to intensify contacts among the member states in the security field.72

In the aftermath of this session, the Saudi Interior Minister indicated73 that the security strategy might be reviewed in early 1989. Subsequently, Sultan Qaboos referred to the possibility of ratification of this strategy during the ninth summit provided certain obstacles were removed.74 Earlier, the Bahraini Foreign Minister had stated that the question of ratification of this treaty by the ninth summit of GCC Heads of State was in the process of being resolved.75

The ninth GCC summit was held during the third week of December, 1988 when as far as is known the security strategy was not even discussed.76 The communiqué issued at its end had confined itself to expressing satisfaction with the level of intra-GCC cooperation achieved in the field of security. It did not, therefore, even address itself to the question of ratification of the security strategy.

It would be profitable at this stage to review briefly the main achievements of the eight meetings held by the GCC Interior Ministers until the end of 1988. During

75. Al Watan, 13 December 1988. The word "treaty" evidently referred to security strategy.
the first meeting held in February 1982 they had approved a Comprehensive Security Agreement and "specialists" from the member states were asked to prepare its draft.

During the second meeting of the Interior Ministers in October 1982, some difficulties arose at the last minute and a Committee of Experts was asked to study all aspects of the proposed agreement.

During the third meeting in November 1983, it was decided again that its further study by a Committee of Experts was called for.

It was also decided during this meeting that a common GCC passport would be issued and that a GCC national would be permitted to stay in any member country indefinitely without any restrictions. Both these decisions have not been implemented; the idea of a common GCC passport has definitely been dropped while the GCC nationals continue to need residence permits for long-term stay in other member countries, barring those belonging to certain professions like medicine.

No meeting of Interior Ministers was held in 1984. However, interestingly enough, Kuwait was rocked by acts of sabotage and terrorism of unprecedented magnitude in December 1983 e.g. after the third conference of Interior Ministers was convened.
The fourth meeting of Interior Ministers was held in September 1985 when again due to Kuwaiti reservations no decision on the Joint Security Agreement was reached. It may be recalled that during this year, the Amir of Kuwait had faced an assassination attempt (25 May 1985)\(^77\) and two violent explosions causing about 100 casualties had taken place in Kuwait (12 July 1985).\(^78\) In Saudi Arabia, an attempt was made to hijack a Saudi airliner to Tehran in March 1985;\(^79\) two bomb explosions had occurred in Riyadh in May 1985\(^80\) and there was a shoot-out in Saudi Defence Ministry in November 1985.\(^81\) In Qatar, an unsuccessful bid was made in May 1985\(^82\) to kidnap the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Qatari Armed Forces, Brig. Mohammed Abdulla.

Despite all these incidents, the fourth meeting of the GCC Interior Ministers remained embroiled in the controversy pertaining to those two objectionable clauses in the Security Agreement. More surprisingly perhaps, the subsequent sixth GCC summit in Muscat decided to drop the very idea of a Joint Security Pact being signed by the GCC countries and referred in its final communique to adoption of a "security strategy".

\(^77\) Al Watan, 26 May 1985.
\(^78\) Al Anbaa, 13 July 1985.
\(^81\) Arab News, 10 November 1985.
\(^82\) Gulf Times, 4/5 May, 1985.
The fifth session of the Interior Ministers was held in October 1986 when the question of approval of this security strategy was further considered. Finally, in December 1986 in a meeting of GCC Interior Under Secretaries, a broad framework of the security strategy was finalised and mutually agreed on. In their sixth session in February 1987, the Interior Ministers formally adopted the security strategy which was subsequently endorsed by the GCC Foreign Ministers during their meeting held in June, 1987.

The seventh and eighth sessions of the Interior Ministers held in November 1987 and November 1988 came up with no major step to promote intra-GCC links in the security field. The security strategy was not further considered during these meetings despite the well-acknowledged need for its further revision.

After the adoption of the security strategy by the GCC Interior Ministers in February 1987, a number of incidents of subversion and arson took place in Kuwait. It has been reported that as many as ten acts of terrorism were witnessed by Kuwait until November 1987. A major clash had taken place during the last week of July 1987 between Iranian Haj pilgrims and Saudi authorities causing the death of four hundred Iranians and this had led to unprecedented escalation of tension between the two countries. There were a number of...

incidents of subversion in Kuwait in April/May 1988.\textsuperscript{84} Despite these major acts of violence, the provisions of the security strategy were never invoked. Moreover, the seventh meeting of GCC interior ministers held in October, 1987 made only a passing reference to the "Security Strategy" while eighth session held in November 1988 did not even allude to it.

When one reviews the proceedings of the Interior Ministers' meetings, the overwhelming impression that one gets is that they did not really come to grip with the turbulent situation prevailing in these countries. The first three meetings of the Interior Ministers in 1982 and 1983 remained divided over the issue of signing the internal security pact though the existence of such differences was consistently denied. The last four meetings held in September 1985, October 1986, February 1987 and October 1987 never really considered how the threat of terrorism being faced by these countries and especially by Kuwait was to be tackled and overcome. Ibrahim Sobhi, then Assistant Secretary General of the GCC, went to the extent of openly declaring during the fifth meeting of Interior Ministers in October 1986 that no joint measures to combat terrorism were included for consideration in the meeting's agenda.

\textsuperscript{84} See the section dealing with evolution of Kuwait's relations with Iran in Part I.
It would be relevant at this stage to analyse the factors which prevented the GCC from endorsing the Internal Security Agreement which its Interior Ministers had approved in principle in their very first meeting in February 1982.

This Agreement could not be ratified because of Kuwaiti objections which were two-fold, and related to the following provisos:

i) The right enjoyed by police personnel of each member country to enter the territory of another member country with which it shared a common border up to a distance of 20 kms. while in pursuit of fugitives.

ii) The obligations of each member country to hand over the nationals of another member country to it who might have fled there after having committed a crime in their own country attracting imprisonment exceeding six months.

It may be recalled that the second meeting of GCC Interior Ministers held in October 1982 was supposed to approve the above-mentioned Security Agreement. The Interior Ministers did not do so due to Kuwaiti reservations and recommended that further studies needed to be carried out. This recommendation was endorsed during the third GCC summit held in Bahrain in November, 1982.

"Unofficial reports from the Conference (third summit) suggested that Kuwait was unwilling to approve the extradition clause of the proposed agreement."85

During the subsequent years many reports appeared in the Kuwaiti press expressing Kuwait's opposition to signing of this agreement on the ground of its containing the two above-mentioned provisions. Following a meeting of GCC Interior Ministers in September 1985, Kuwait's Foreign Minister categorically expressed in an interview with a local newspaper 'Al Rai Al Aam', Kuwait's opposition to signing any Security Agreement which infringed on its sovereignty.

It, however, appears extremely unlikely that these were the real causes behind Kuwait's refusal to enter into the joint security pact. What was intended behind collective signing of this pact was to promote cooperation among the GCC countries in watching, controlling and curbing the activities of potentially subversive elements in this region - whether national or foreign. Kuwait should have been as interested as other members of the GCC in maintenance of coordinated surveillance over the activities of radical, subversive groups.

Moreover, no instance is known in recent past when Saudi security personnel (Saudi Arabia alone has a common border with Kuwait in the GCC) needed to enter the Kuwaiti territory to arrest fugitives fleeing away from that country;

86. This meeting was held on 17/18 September 1985.
similarly, no instance is known of an Omani or a Bahraini or a Saudi Arabian having taken refuge in Kuwait after being involved in subversive activities in Oman or Bahrain or Saudi Arabia and whose extradition was refused by Kuwait. Thus it appears that even if Kuwait had signed this pact, the number of occasions when the two provisos to which it was objecting would have been invoked were going to be very, very few indeed.

If the situation was like this and if these provisos in question were such that they would be invoked very rarely, if at all, why were they not simply deleted from the text of the pact?

The real reason why these two clauses were incorporated in the pact was probably the Saudi desire to emphasise the new spirit of kinship, mutual trust and inter-dependence which had began to govern the relationship among the member countries of the GCC.

"Prince Nayef, Saudi Interior Minister, said that any agreement (on security) reached must be more substantial than those bilateral agreements currently existing between Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states though not Kuwait."88

Kuwait's refusal to adhere to the joint security agreement was, therefore, a clear signal that it did not wish to

88. From Arab News, 26 December 1982. Under the existing rules criminals are extradited between Kuwait and other GCC members in a routine way. There were 80 such cases in 1988. Al-Watan, 28 March 1989.
have security links with other GCC states, especially Saudi Arabia, which were of unusual nature and would fetter its sovereignty. Moreover, Kuwait may have been influenced by the fear of possible adverse Iranian reaction if it entered into a pan-GCC joint security pact. It is to be recalled that during the early years of the war, it was Saudi Arabia which was the principal supporter of Iraq and the champion of its cause within the GCC and it was Saudi Arabia against which Iranian tirades used to be mainly targeted.

"Kuwait and the UAE also came under intense pressure from Iran which steadily increased its threats to all the southern Gulf states after its victories over Iraq in the spring of 1982.... This pressure helped prevent Kuwait from joining the other GCC states in signing bilateral security agreements with Saudi Arabia following the coup attempt in Bahrain." 89

As has been noted earlier, it was some time in 1985 that the GCC countries finally decided to drop the idea of entering into a collective security pact and the 1985 Muscat summit referred for the first time to a GCC security strategy. Though the contents of this security strategy have not been divulged, it appears that it does not

incorporate the two clauses over which Kuwait had reservations.

"Informed sources, however, said that the plan (security strategy) was specifically tailored to get around reservations by Kuwait over issues such as the theoretical right of any GCC state to pursue criminals for an unspecified distance inside other member states."90

Leaving aside now this discussion pertaining to signing of a security pact and security strategy by the GCC states, to consider whether these countries were able to step up security coordination among them during recent years. Following the coup in Bahrain in 1982, Saudi Arabia entered into bilateral security agreements with all the GCC countries except Kuwait. One wonders as to the impact of these agreements in real life.

There is no evidence to indicate that these bilateral agreements resulted in strengthening security cooperation among the GCC members which had signed them (all except Kuwait).

Whatever aspect of possible security cooperation one considers such as common training programmes for employees of interior ministries, better coordination in exchange of intelligence, harmonisation of measures to promote internal

security - one finds that things remained more or less as they were. No common programmes for training of security personnel belonging to different GCC states was instituted; no progress was achieved towards establishing common data centres containing information about persons or groups under suspicion; there was no coordination in policies being pursued by various GCC states vis-a-vis issue of visas to foreigners or vis-a-vis security checks which expatriates had to undergo for residence within the GCC.

Taking all this into account, it can be concluded that the bilateral security agreements entered into by Saudi Arabia with various GCC states did not lead to any enhancement of intra-GCC security coordination.

In the period intervening between December 1983 and mid-1988 when the Iraq-Iran ceasefire went into effect, the state of Kuwait had been subjected to a series of violent, terrorist acts which imperilled its internal stability and among such major incidents of subversion were: bomb explosions in Embassies and oil installations in December, 1983; attempt to assassinate the Amir of Kuwait and bomb explosions in cafes in mid-1985; eruption of a major fire in Kuwait's Ahmadi refinery in June 1986; discovery of a

subversive conspiracy in January 1987 when a large cache of arms and explosives was also unearthed.

During 1987, more than ten incidents of fire, terrorism and arson were reported from Kuwait. During 1988, apart from hijacking of a Kuwaiti airliner in April 1988, bomb explosions occurred in Kuwait on 9 April 1988, 7 May 1988, and in the third week of May 1988.

One may naturally wonder as to the kind of succour received by Kuwait from its fellow members in the GCC while coping with these terrorist threats. One finds that not only Kuwait dealt with these threats on its own but even no attempt was made to gloss over the absence of any significant cooperation between Kuwait and other GCC members in the security field.

"On Kuwait's security situation following the arrest of a subversive network he assured that the situation is completely normal and stable...."

The Minister indicated that local authorities using their own means and following leads had been able to apprehend

a number of people responsible for last year's acts of sabotage and explosions in oil wells in January aimed at undermining Kuwait's security and stability. 100

In fact no less a personage than Kuwait's Foreign Minister himself had gone to the extent of describing acts of terrorism in Kuwait as its internal problem (and not of concern to the GCC).

Following eruption of a major fire in Kuwait's Ahmadi refinery in June 1986, he had commented as follows in a press interview to a local daily:

"Kuwait's Foreign Minister Shaikh Sabah has denied that his recent tour of the GCC countries was linked with the recent incidents in Kuwait. He told the Al Ittihad newspaper that the recent incidents in Kuwait were an internal matter of exclusive concern to Kuwaiti people and our brothers in the Gulf have nothing to do with it." 101

Quoting now from another press interview given by Kuwait's Prime Minister to the same daily:

"But Kuwait, despite a clear shortage in some centres, had succeeded in reducing the dangers of political crimes to a minimum. The great efforts of its securitymen had resulted

100. Arab Times, 1 March 1987. It is to be noted that this interview was given following the exposure of a major terrorist conspiracy in January 1987. Commenting on the conspirators, Arab Times had editorially queried on 1 February 1987 "what do these devils really want and for what evil side do they work".

in apprehending the criminals and referring them to the judiciary for just punishment. He reminded that everybody in Kuwait was in one ship and thus the basic aim must be to ensure the safety of the ship.” 102

The Interior Minister of Kuwait in an interview with the Egyptian newspapers Al Ahram in November 1987 said inter alia:

"Kuwait is proud of its securitymen and is confident of their efficiency and experience. Kuwait is not linked by security agreements to any country."

"We have full confidence in our own apparatus, whether in the interior or defence ministries." 103

In an interview with the Tunisian "Al Amal" newspaper in December 1987, he said inter alia:

"Kuwait was countering the Iranian threats by faith in the Almighty and by confidence in the country's wise leadership and the capability of those responsible for security of the land." 104

It is to be noted that all these statements were made during 1987 when as seen earlier - more than ten incidents of violence had taken place in Kuwait. What is noteworthy

103. Ibid., 14 November 1987.
is that in none of them any reference was made to the support received by Kuwait from other GCC members while coping with the terrorist menace.

To bolster its internal security, Kuwait took a number of measures and these included:

i) large-scale deportation of suspected expatriates, especially Palestinians, Iranians, etc. According to a report published in a highly respected newspaper, Kuwait had deported as many as 26,898 persons during 1986. The same report also mentioned that according to diplomats in Kuwait, 40,000 Palestinians were expelled by Kuwait during previous months. These actions taken by Kuwait against expatriates were in no way coordinated with other GCC members and most GCC countries did not undertake sustained drives to weed out and expel expatriates with doubtful antecedents.

ii) Laws governing entry and residence of foreigners in Kuwait remained as stringent as ever while they were liberalised in some GCC members like the UAE, Bahrain, etc.

iii) In order to prevent entry into Kuwait of illegal immigrants across the sea, Kuwait established a number of floating platforms close to its coast. Each of these


106. See the section dealing with movement, residence, and employment of GCC nationals in Part III.
floating platforms was equipped with radars, missiles, etc. and carried 40 armed personnel. 107

No such platforms were set up by other GCC states even though their coasts were also equally exposed to the danger of illegal infiltration.

Having thus reviewed the major developments pertaining to internal stability and security in the GCC region until the end of 1988, growth of security cooperation among its members since the inception of this body can be assessed. Following conclusions could be reached:

i) In the wake of the abortive coup in Bahrain in December 1981, Saudi Arabia signed bilateral security agreements with all GCC countries, except Kuwait. Subsequently, however, hardly any action was taken by these countries under the terms of these security accords.

ii) The GCC Interior Ministers until 1985 held intensive discussions regarding signing of a joint security pact which was not finally approved due to Kuwaiti reservations on two of its clauses pertaining to trans-border chase and extradition of criminals. GCC's failure to sign this pact was reflective of some fundamental differences among its members vis-a-vis the extent to which they were willing to cooperate

with each other in the security field, and the extent to which they were willing to forgo their freedom of decision making to achieve this end.

iii) The GCC Ministers of Interior approved the "security strategy" in February 1987. Though this was submitted to the eighth GCC summit in December 1987, the Heads of State did not ratify it by signing it. The security strategy is looked upon as a watered-down version of the "security agreement" which was unacceptable to Kuwait because of its reservation on two of its clauses mentioned earlier.

"Similarly, Kuwait has refused to give in to Riyadh's pressure to conclude a security agreement. The proposed agreement would have given the Saudi forces the right to hot pursuit up to 25 kms. inside the Kuwaiti territory to apprehend people committing offences in Saudi Arabia and to extradite the accused. Instead Kuwait and Saudi Arabia along with other Gulf Sheikdoms have saved face by opting for a common security strategy." 108

iv) Adoption of the security strategy by Interior Ministers has not been regarded as a development of great significance by the GCC dignitaries themselves. 109


109. This is clearly borne out by the fact that the 7th and 8th meetings of Interior Ministers held after the adoption of security strategy did not even refer to it.
Quoting from an interview given by Kuwait's Interior Minister to a Saudi newspaper:

"Asked if approval of the Gulf Security Strategy represents a new change in Gulf security coordination, Shaikh Nawaf recalled that such security coordination and cooperation was existent before the strategy and described it as close and stronger than any accord or strategy."\(^{110}\)

v) The security strategy could not be finalised in the two-year period from early 1987 when it was adopted by Interior Ministers to the middle of '89. It would need to be further reviewed, modified and supplemented by other accords.

vi) Though a number of statements about it were made by GCC dignitaries, it was not elaborated what it precisely incorporated. Further, it was never invoked in 1987 and 1988 even though Kuwait was subjected to a series of acts of terrorism during this period.

vii) Kuwait dealt with the menace posed to its internal security on its own; its intelligence agencies arrested the criminals hatching violent conspiracies against Kuwait without soliciting any assistance from fellow members of the GCC. Similarly, though Kuwait adopted a number of measures to strengthen its internal security, no coordination was attempted by it while evolving or implementing them with other GCC countries.

\(^{110}\) Riyadh Daily, 1 March 1987.
Having examined all these developments, we are now finally in a position to pass judgement on the role of the GCC in boosting collaboration among its members in the security field. One would not be unjustified in concluding that creation of the GCC did not contribute in any material way to strengthening the bonds of cooperation among these countries in the field of internal security. As seen earlier, security coordination to some extent existed among the GCC members during the seventies and creation of this body did not impart any particular impetus to it. In fact, the failure of the GCC to promote security links among its members was indirectly acknowledged by no less a personage than the Saudi Interior Minister when he admitted in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper in August 1987 that even the Interior Ministers of GCC states dealt with each other through their Foreign Ministers111 (and not directly).

It would be worth examining in the end as to why intra-GCC security coordination failed to make headway; the reasons behind this phenomenon are not difficult to fathom and are in many respects analogous to those which hampered intra-GCC defence cooperation, among which following may be mentioned:

1) Though in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution all the GCC countries had become apprehensive over the

possible threats to their internal stability, during the subsequent years these fears gradually evaporated and all these countries except Kuwait remained more or less free from the menace of terrorism. Barring the abortive coup in Bahrain in December 1981 and the Makkah riots of July 1987, no major terrorist activity took place in any GCC member except Kuwait. Apart from experiencing a series of acts of violence and subversion, Kuwait encountered the danger of alienation of its Shia community from the mainstream of national life and it was the growing Sunni-Shia schism in Kuwait (which again did not occur elsewhere) which constituted a major source of instability for Kuwait.

It would not be wrong to say that except Kuwait other GCC members were much less bothered about threats to their internal stability and this naturally removed the raison d'etre for boosting intra-GCC security links.

Moreover, these acts of terrorism were committed by pro-Iranian sympathizers opposed to Kuwaiti policy of aligning itself with Iraq. 112

"About a dozen bombs have exploded in Kuwait in the past year. The blasts were widely blamed on fundamentalists seeking an Iranian-style revolution and opposed to the Gulf

112. Other GCC members (with the exception of Saudi Arabia) had aligned themselves far less with Iraq. See the section on evolution of GCC's relations with Iran 1980 to mid-1988 in Part I.
State's support for Iraq in its war with Iran."113

Other GCC members, therefore, had no incentive to strengthen their security links with Kuwait and thus provoke Iran's antagonism.

ii) Kuwait had a certain degree of wariness against establishing too close a links with Saudi Arabia - and this no doubt hampered enhancement of security coordination.

iii) A large number of expatriates from various countries man senior intelligence posts in the intelligence agencies of the GCC and this again probably hampered security collaboration.

"This comes amid indications in recent weeks that some of the British-officered intelligence agencies in the Southern half of the Gulf were not cooperating with those of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and that some of them have had a working relationship with the Iranian intelligence and Iran-bound arms dealers."114

iv) Terrorist incidents in Kuwait were perpetrated by persons residing in Kuwait who included Shia Kuwaitis as well as some expatriates. It is difficult to envisage how

other GCC members could have helped Kuwait to overcome this threat especially as terrorists in Kuwait were in no way receiving any support from disaffected elements in other GCC countries.

v) It is significant that the GCC countries dropped the proposal pertaining to collective signing of the security pact in 1985 and the GCC summit held that year referred for the first time to the adoption of security strategy which was definitely less comprehensive than the security pact. It has been seen earlier that the year 1985 also marked a kind of turning point in intra-GCC defence cooperation which lost its earlier tempo from early 1986; no major pan GCC military manoeuvres were held in 1986 and 1987. Developments which took place in the Gulf region from early 1986 make it clear that Iran's hostility with the GCC was mainly directed against Kuwait and its relations with all other GCC members generally improved in 1986/87.¹¹⁵

It is conceivable, therefore, that the GCC members had started to feel from 1985 that their interests by and large were not identical with those of Kuwait and that they had nothing much to gain through pan-GCC collaboration, especially in the sensitive fields of defence and security. It is possible that considerations of this kind prompted the GCC countries to drop the idea of endorsing the collective security agreement in 1985.

¹¹⁵. See the section dealing with evolution of GCC's relations with Iran in Part I.