Chapter I

GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL: CONTEXT AND GENESIS

A regional organization grows out of the interplay of socio-economic, political and security considerations. It does not arise spontaneously; on the contrary it is promoted and groomed with specific purpose and objectives determined by the configuration of the circumstances as well as by the structural context of the region. To understand the dynamics of interstate relations in a framework of regional organizations, it would be essential to look into the domestic determinants of its members, the regional factor and the global environment as well as interaction among themselves. The integrative output of the organization grows out of it but is not the sum total of it because the organization itself influences the aggregation of regional interest. The desire to boost relations among the developing countries is not a recent phenomenon. However, most of the regional organizations of the developing countries have not been able to attain their objectives. Yet they have been able to survive. The failure or success of these organizations is a reflection of the nature of elite interaction at the regional level, their threat perception, values, ideological orientation, structural homogeneity and above all their placement in the global context.

hierarchy. A regional grouping may be formed with a view to acquire regional autonomy, or merely to aggregate the regional interest to maintain the status quo or it may even lead to furthering of the subordination of the region.

An appraisal of the events leading to creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council would thus provide the context which necessitated its birth and shaped its evolution.

The first half of the nineteen-seventies began in a favourable manner for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The sharp rise in the price of oil following the 1973 Arab-Israeli conflict had brought unprecedented prosperity to this region. A number of developments had taken place in the Arab world which could have been expected to strengthen the forces of stability and continuity in this region. Iraq's Baathist Party which from 1969 onwards had engaged in a continuous propaganda warfare against pro-US Arab monarchies had distinctly changed its policies and was adopting a more conciliatory posture reflected in the 1975 agreement with Iran over the Shatt-Al-Arab. The uneasy stalemate between Egypt and Israel which had continued since 1967 was broken and the war of 1973 had put an end to the uneasy no-war-no-peace situation which had persisted earlier. What is more important, Egypt had almost totally broken off its links with the Soviet Union with which it was earlier closely associated and this was

highly pleasing to some Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia. Oman had managed to successfully cope with the insurgency movement in its southern Dhofar province; further the regime of Sultan Qaboos had well established itself and had won recognition both in the Arab world as well as internationally. The UAE had got over the initial difficulties faced by it in nation-building and was able to function as one country belying the speculation of many observers that this federation was bound to collapse.

The events of the next five years, i.e., from 1975-1980, however, were to prove that the Gulf countries were destined to face challenges and threats of unprecedented magnitude which surpassed anything encountered by them since their existence as modern states began. The dangers faced by the Gulf countries encompassed a wide gamut from the threats of Soviet encroachment and Soviet-sponsored aggression to prospects of internal upheavals sparked by the forces of anti-monarchical, militant Shiism generated by the Iranian Revolution. The Gulf countries adopted


far-reaching measures, both in their external and internal policies, to cope with these challenges threatening their very survival and one of the steps taken by them to strengthen themselves was to come together under the umbrella of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

**Threat Perception of the Gulf Regimes**

**The Soviet Factor**

One of the most ominous developments was the so-called threat of Soviet encroachment, either through direct aggression or through one of their proxy regimes such as in South Yemen. The Soviet Union had started to 'flex its muscles' more aggressively in this part of the world since 1975 when Cuban troops were sent to Angola to help establishment of a Marxist Government there.\(^7\) When in 1977 war broke out between Ethiopia and Somalia over the Ogaden province, the Soviet Union notwithstanding its eternal friendship treaty with Somalia rushed 20,000 Cuban troops to Ethiopia and supplied it with arms worth \$2 billion.\(^8\) The Somali troops were forced to withdraw from Ogaden and Somalia itself was threatened by Ethiopian counter-offensive in January, 1978. The Gulf countries had backed Somalia and had given it financial assistance. What was more worrying was the fact that the Communist government of PDRY

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8. Ibid. The USSR began to back Ethiopia so massively because a marxist-dominated regime had come to power there. Russell Warren Howe, ed., n.2.
had placed its ports and airfields at the disposal of Ethiopia though it claimed to be officially neutral in this war. This naturally increased the apprehensions of the Gulf countries especially as the PDRY controlled transit through the crucial Bab-Al-Mandab waterway through which a part of Gulf oil exports pass. The Saudis were so concerned with the pro-Ethiopian stance of the PDRY that there was mutual withdrawal of Ambassadors between Saudi Arabia and PDRY in November, 1977. It may be mentioned that diplomatic relations between the two countries were established for the first time in 1976 after a prolonged period of deep mistrust and hostilities.

Following the war in the Horn of Africa between Somalia and Ethiopia, trouble erupted in South Yemen when a leftist-oriented pro-Soviet coup took place on 26.6.1978 in which the South Yemeni President was killed. It may be recalled that on 24 June 1978, e.g., two days prior to this coup, the President of North Yemen was killed in a bomb explosion which was carried in the bag of a South Yemeni emissary meeting him. In the sixties there was continuous warfare between South Yemen and Saudi Arabia and South Yemen was a major source of instability for Saudi Arabia. South Yemen had also given large-scale assistance as well as sanctuaries to the insurgents trying to

9. This development took place on 25.11.1977. See Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.289.

10. Saudi-PDRY relations were established on 10.3.76, ibid., p.285.
overthrow the government of Sultan Qaboos. Obviously, a more pro-Marxist government in the PDRY must have been looked upon with a great deal of displeasure by the Gulf monarchies.

After the coup in South Yemen, the Saudi government put its armed forces on alert and tried to whip up support for itself from the tribes of North Yemen who were traditionally hostile to the PDRY. During this period, relations between the two Yemens aggravated further and open warfare broke out between them by mid-February, 1979.

Apprehending a threat to its security, the Kingdom strengthened its forces facing the two Yemens and withdrew its contingent deployed with the Arab League in Lebanon. In the mean time, following a Saudi request, 12 unarmed F.15 Eagles of the US air force had been sent to Saudi Arabia on 15 January 1979 as a show of support while on 5 March 1979, President Carter ordered a carrier task force to sail into the Arabian Sea. On 6 March 1979, he offered to send F.15s duly armed to Saudi Arabia but they requested for stationing of 2 AWACS aircraft to monitor the airspace on their South Yemeni border. Two days later, the

11. John Townsend, n.4, p.95.
13. Ibid., p.292.
15. Ibid.
Carter Administration agreed in accordance with the Saudi request to supply emergency arms aid to North Yemen and this was done by bypassing the normal regulation of congressional approval.

Events in South Yemen were found especially disturbing by Oman considering the history of tense relations between these two countries; propaganda war in Omani press against South Yemeni Communist government and its so-called aggressive and expansionist intentions was stepped up. In September, 1980, the Omani Government officially expressed apprehensions that South Yemen may attack Oman and its Under Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that despite there being a change in the government the attitude of the Yemeni government was unchanged and it was bent upon creating internal disturbances.\textsuperscript{16} Subsequently, on 29.11.1980, according to a press report, Moscow and Aden concluded an agreement on military cooperation which went far beyond the provisions of the treaty of friendship and cooperation existing between them.\textsuperscript{17} This agreement reportedly allowed the Soviets to use the PDRY facilities for their land, air and naval forces in return for a Soviet pledge to protect the Aden regime.

The most disturbing event as far as Gulf countries were concerned was the entry of Soviet troops numbering more than 100,000 into Afghanistan in December, 1979, which resulted in death of the Afghan President Hafizullah Amin and bringing into

\textsuperscript{16} Oman Observer, 10 September 1980.
\textsuperscript{17} See Saudi Weekly, Al Majala, 1-7 December 1980.
power of the Perchan faction of the Communist Party under Babrak Karmal.\textsuperscript{18} It is to be noted that a pro-Communist coup had earlier taken place in Afghanistan in April, 1978 when President Doud's regime was toppled and the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan which was very much influenced by the USSR had come into power.

The coup of 1978 was itself found highly disturbing by many Arab countries. The Iraqi government which had then excellent relations with the USSR became alarmed as to the real Soviet motives after the pro-Communist coup in April, 1978 in Kabul. A purge of Iraqi army officers was then carried out and 20 officers suspected of having sympathies for Marxism were arrested and summarily executed in May, 1978.\textsuperscript{19} Another factor which aggravated the relations between Iraq and the USSR was the tension between the ruling Baathist party and the Iraqi Communist party which was accused of spreading Marxist ideology within the Iraqi army.\textsuperscript{20} Subsequently, Iraq's relations with their other erstwhile ally, the PDRY, deteriorated so much that in July 1979 the PDRY had threatened to storm the Iraqi Embassy in Aden and had also threatened to direct artillery fire towards it. Consequently, Iraq's diplomatic relations with PDRY were


\textsuperscript{19} Christine Moss Helms, ed., n.2, pp. 78, 79.

\textsuperscript{20} APS Diplomat, 14.11.1988, vol.16, no.5, p.28. This deterioration in relations between the USSR and Iraq was symptomatic of the suspicions being harboured vis-a-vis the Soviet Union by other states in the region including the GCC members.
The entry of Soviet troops in massive numbers backed by heavy weaponry in December 1979 was obviously perceived in the Gulf countries as a part of a long-term pincer movement by the Soviets to throttle and encircle the Gulf from the east through Afghanistan and from the west through Yemen and Ethiopia. It was no doubt being recalled that the Soviet Union had since long coveted an all-weather port on the Arabian Gulf and from Afghanistan the Soviets could have marched towards the Arabian Gulf either through Pakistan or Iran with the distance separating them from these waters being less than 200 miles. The Gulf countries no doubt became highly perturbed as a result of these developments and the government-controlled media in these countries unleashed a propaganda barrage advocating withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan and denouncing it for invading an Islamic country from where more than 3 million people were forced to flee as a result of Soviet oppression. Though the Gulf governments for obvious reasons forebore generally from issuing official statements denouncing the Soviet Union, they often did express their fears quite openly and in January 1981, in a press interview, the Foreign Minister of Bahrain said that the Soviet invasion of

21. This was a direct result of the close links between the PDRY and Ethiopia which were allied with the USSR. Ethiopia was engaged in war with Somalia over the Ogaden province in 1978 and Somalia enjoyed the support of most Arab countries including Iraq. Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.272. Al Thawara, 1978, 1979.

22. Richard Nixon, n.7, Hilter had proposed to the USSR during the early phase of the second World War that Russia's boundaries should be expanded so as to include the Persian Gulf and even India. Times of India, 16 May 1989.

Afghanistan was in his view "the most important event of the era as it represents a return to the old imperialist policy known as gun-boat policy which was major countries occupying the smaller ones by force of arms, imposing the persons on regimes as they want."\(^{24}\)

In an earlier interview given to a Manama daily, *Akhbar Al Khaleej*, the Bahraini Foreign Minister had said that "the Russian aggression in Afghanistan had ushered in a new colonial era and opened the door for any strong state to overthrow weaker states". He also said that "there is much concern over the Soviet strategy to approach closer to the oil producing areas not through internationally-accepted methods of discussion but by naked aggression.\(^ {25}\)

Sultan Qaboos in an interview with *Far Eastern Economic Review* expressed the concern of his government over the new situation arising from Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and its involvement in South Yemen. He mentioned that Oman was acquiring modern weapons to be able to meet any threat by the allies of the Russians. Sultan Qaboos also expressed the hope that the US would help Oman if called upon to do so in an emergency.\(^ {26}\)

\(^{24}\) *Saudi Weekly Al Mawakaf*, 1-7 January 1981


\(^{26}\) *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 7-14 April 1980.
The Saudi Oil Minister in April, 1980 said that "Iraq, Iran and Kurdistan were the prime Soviet targets which had the ultimate aim of subjugating the Gulf and binding it as a satellite region. He recalled the statement of Nikita Khrushchov that Iran is like a white hare which would fall into Soviet lap". 27

Following the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia among the Gulf countries took the lead in denouncing and condemning the Soviet Union. In the extra-ordinary meeting of Islamic Foreign Ministers held in Islamabad on 27 December 1980, representatives of one Gulf country after another took the opportunity to strongly denounce the Soviet Union and to call for withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan. 28 Later Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with Afghanistan on 7 April 1980 in accordance with the resolution adopted by this meeting. Reports started appearing in the Gulf press from the early months of 1980 regarding the financial assistance being given by the Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Oman to the Afghan insurgents based in Pakistan. 29

The extent of unacceptability to the Gulf states of the Soviet presence in Afghanistan can be gauged from their reaction to a proposal made in December, 1980 by the then Soviet President Breznev in New Delhi in December 1980 for neutralising the Gulf. 27. Arab News, 20 April 1980.
Abdulla Bishara, Secretary General of the GCC, commented on this proposal: "the neutrality of the Gulf cannot be separated from the neutrality of the adjacent areas, the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Red Sea. It would be futile to neutralise the Gulf while the Soviet troops are in Afghanistan and Soviet naval forces cruise the Indian Ocean or the Arabian Sea or maintain facilities in various Red Sea and Arabian Sea ports. Had the Soviet proposal covered the neutrality of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea as well as the neutrality of the Arabian Gulf, and had the proposal involved the withdrawal of Soviet troops from adjacent areas including Afghanistan, then it would have sounded attractive."³⁰

Iranian Revolution

Another highly destabilising development which occurred in this region during this period was the Iranian revolution. It will not be incorrect to say that perhaps more than the developments in Yemen and entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan, it was the Iranian revolution which sent tremors of uneasiness throughout the Gulf countries and literally shook these regimes to their very foundation.

There are several reasons as to why the Gulf monarchies became extremely perturbed and apprehensive due to the Islamic revolution in Iran. Though the new Iranian regime did not claim to speak only in the name of Shias and in fact tried to portray

³⁰ Robert G.Darius, et al, n.18, p.27. It was earlier believed in some circles that the GCC was formed at the behest of the USA and was described as an "American tool". This was reflective of the anti-Soviet stance of the GCC following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. See R.K.Ramazani, Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis (Virginia, 1988), p.1.
itself as a representative of all Muslims, both Sunnis and Shias, it undoubtedly represented resurgence of militant Shiism. All the GCC countries with the exception of Oman and the UAE have sizable Shia minorities which have always faced considerable discrimination and curbs on their religious freedom.

The rancour of Shia-Suni animosity is deep-rooted in the Islamic history and it is well known that the Wahabis had raided and desecrated the shrine of Imam Hussain in Karbala in 1801 when they had massacred 5000 people. Subsequently, it was decreed by the Saudi Ulema in 1927 that the Shias in the provinces of Hasa and Qatif (in eastern Saudi Arabia) should not be allowed to perform their religious rituals while Iraqi Shias were to be denied access to the grazing lands in the Kingdom. A considerable degree of discrimination continued to be practiced against the Shias in the GCC region in the modern era. Apart from economic backwardness, they suffered from many curbs on their religious freedoms like restrictions on import of Shi'ite religious books, ban on teaching of Shi'ite history, prohibiting Shi'ite women from teaching in schools, etc. According to Shia in Saudi Arabia, "In the Sunni eyes, first there are Sunnis, below there are Christians and below the Christians are the Jews, we are below the Jews". Shias in the GCC countries are usually

31. Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.11.
32. Ibid., p.50.
precluded from occupying senior and responsible position whether in the government or in the armed forces. In Bahrain though the Shias are in a majority, they are ruled by a Sunni monarchy and the number of Shia Ministers in the Bahraini Cabinet is quite small and totally disproportionate to the size of the Shia population. Moreover, a large segment of the Bahraini Shias belong to the poorer strata of the society and are employed in low-paid manual sector. In Saudi Arabia, the Shias mostly live in the eastern province where large Saudi oil fields exist. However, the development of the eastern region has until recent times been much less than other parts of Saudi Arabia. There is deep-rooted tension between 200000 Saudi Shias living in the eastern province and their Sunni rulers from the West; this tension is exacerbated by the fact that the Shias in eastern province live in relative poverty compared to the Saudis in other parts of the Kingdom. "The Shias actually carry out much of the manual work in the Saudi oilfields - they make up to 40 per cent of Aramco's workforce - and their fate, producing the Kingdom's wealth but scarcely enjoying it, symbolizes the imbalance of which many easterners complain. During the disorders in November and December, 1979, a daring cartoon showed a vast camel standing across Saudi Arabia; it was feeding in the east, it was being milked by a mercantile character in the west, and the milk was being handed to a slothful character sitting in the middle, just where Riyadh is. The brand-new places, ministries, highways and hospitals of the capital are built with money from
the east, but the east itself has nothing so grand to boast of."  

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No doubt the fear that the relatively unprivileged Shia communities in the Gulf might indulge in anti-governmental activities taking cue from the achievements of their coreligionists across the Straits of Hormuz must have dominated the thinking of Gulf monarchies. 35 Apart from this what probably caused them more worry was the central doctrine of Shiism which refuses to acknowledge legality of temporal authority. 36

There was also a continuous spate of propaganda in the Iranian media, newspapers as well as the Radio and TV, portraying the Gulf monarchs as oppressive, tyrannical and un-Islamic and the people of the Gulf were incited to overthrow their illegitimate monarchies. 37 No doubt the Iranian invectives were mostly directed towards the 'Kafir' regime of Iraq but the message was clear and it had obvious implications for the Gulf monarchies. Apart from all this, during the Iranian revolution Khomeini and other Shia leaders made numerous speeches abusing Shah in the vilest possible manner. It was done purposely to demystify the monarch and show the illiterate masses that even the King of Kings could be dragged into the mud with impunity.

The open vilification of the Iranian monarchy in the crudest possible manner prior to the Islamic revolution, denunciation of Gulf monarchies as un-Islamic and tyrannical, repeated calls for spread of Islamic revolution, rise to power of Shiism whose central doctrine rejects the concept of a temporal authority, whether monarchical or not, and the display of unprecedented courage, unity of action and self-sacrifice including martyrdom by the Shias of Iran who were looked down upon and regarded almost as non-Islamic communities—all this was bound to create shock waves of deep apprehension among the Gulf monarchies which derived their legitimacy from Islam as well as from their dynastic lineage.

On the political front, the fall of Shah demonstrated as nothing else could have the unwillingness of Americans to come to the rescue of their closest ally in survival of whose regime they had tremendous stakes even when he was in deep trouble. The conclusion was obvious—the Americans had shown themselves incapable of protecting the monarchies in this part of the world from their domestic opponents.38 The Shah's Government was followed by the government of Bazargan in February 1979

38. R.K. Ramazani, n.30, p.190
and there was still some expectation that the new regime would maintain relations with the United States. The power of the clergy in the new Iranian regime did not become immediately evident. However, the seizure of the US Embassy in Tehran by militant Iranian students on 4.11.79 and taking of hostages of US diplomats gave an unmistakable proof not only of the total eclipse of US influence in Iran but also of the fact that the new Iranian Government was being run by a group of virulently anti-American Ayatollahs. This could hardly be regarded as a comforting development by the Gulf rulers many of whom were distinctly pro-western in their inclinations and policies.

"The Revolution of Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan sent shock waves throughout the Gulf and around the world. The Arab Gulf states faced the reality of new revolutionary forces that had not only reached the Gulf but had overthrown the hereto foremost powerful leader in the region. The 'Island of Stability' that the Shah's Iran appeared to be crumbled when the Shah's authority gave way to the fundamentalist Islamic forces that coopted the clergies of Iranian nationalism and swept away the US policy of relying on the shah to ensure stability in the region." 39

Apart from all this, there were certain other developments in Iran which had the effect of heightening suspicion

about the long-term objectives of the Iranian government among the Gulf rulers.

It may be recalled that Iran had for long put forward a claim to Bahrain and Bahrain's status as a sovereign independent state was accepted by Iran only in 1970.\footnote{40} This irredentist claim was again revived by some leading clergies of Iran. Ayatollah Rouhani said on 15 June 1979 that Bahrain was technically a part of Iran and the relinquishment of that claim in 1970 by the Iranian Parliament was without authority.\footnote{41} Subsequently, the same Ayatollah in an interview published in the Iranian newspaper Al Thawara Al Jamhuriyah said on 16.6.1979 that the Amir of Bahrain was being most tyrannical towards his people and that he did not also heed Islam. Ayatollah Khukhli proposed in June 1979 that the Arabian Gulf should be called "Islamic Gulf".

During this period, for the first time, Iranian aircraft bombarded Kuwait's Abdali checkpost bordering with Iraq, included neighbouring oil installations, on two occasions on 12th and 26th November 1980.\footnote{42} It is easy to see that the Iranian air aggression against Kuwait must have caused tremendous apprehensions among

\footnote{40} P.V.S.Namboodri, et al, Intervention in the Indian Ocean (New Delhi,1982), p.\& The Iranian "Majlis" accepted on 11th May 1970 the report of the UN fact-finding mission which had concluded that a vast majority of Bahrainis desired it to be an independent Arab state.

\footnote{41} Teheran Times; 16 June 1979.

\footnote{42} Al-Watan, 13th and 27th November 1980.
these countries. This was especially so as centres of population as well as vital oil fields of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, etc. and are situated on the Arabian Gulf, they were, therefore, very much exposed to random Iranian air attacks.

To worsen the situation still further, during the latter half of 1980 certain sporadic acts of internal violence took place in the Gulf. These included explosion of three bombs in the premises of an Arabic newspaper Al-Rai Al-Aam in Kuwait in August 1980, 43 bomb blasts in the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait on 4 June 1980, 44 death of an Iraqi diplomat in a bomb explosion in his apartment in the UAE in October 1980. 45

The Iranian revolution of 1979 was followed by eruption of the Iran-Iraq conflict on 22 September 1980 when Iraq launched a massive attack on Iran. Though Iraq then was expected to win an easy victory it was apprehended that this conflict might create chaotic conditions in Iran which in desperation might turn to terrorism to hit back at the pro-Iraqi Gulf countries. Further, the possibility of sporadic Iranian attacks on highly vulnerable Gulf oil installations could not be foreclosed. Hence though initially the Gulf countries proclaimed strict

43. Al-Rai Al-Aam, August 1980.
44. Al-Watan, 5 June 1980.
45. Khaleej Times, 20 October 1980. No doubt these incidents of terrorism caused only limited damage but they represented a highly unusual occurrence in these countries where during the seventies hardly any serious breach of law and order had been reported.
neutrality in the Iraq-Iran conflict, the fear of Iranian retaliation could not have been far from the minds of their rulers.\(^46\)

It may be mentioned here that Iraqi-Syrian relations deteriorated in the latter half of 1980 and the entente between them which had started from 1978 came to an end. No doubt this development gave a further cause for concern to the GCC rulers.

Concomitant with the civil war in Yemen, establishment of a Communist-backed regime in Kabul, overthrow of the Shah and his replacement by a vehemently anti-American, anti-monarchical, clergy-dominated regime, occurred a series of demonstrations and agitations in the Gulf organised by the Shias. These demonstrations were looked upon as presaging the beginning of a Shia revolt especially in Bahrain where the Shias constitute the majority. The Shia demonstrations in the Gulf during 1979 and 1980 were an unprecedented phenomenon in this part of the world where even a public meeting was unheard of. Expression of dissent through a demonstration in normal circumstances would have invited instant arrest and imprisonment in these countries.

Significantly, there was a rise in Shia militancy during the above period (the latter half of the seventies) in Iraq and Lebanon where the Shias constitute a sizeable segment of the population. Violent anti-government protests broke out in Shia

\(^{46}\) Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.354.
revered cities of Karbala and Najef in February 1977. In Lebanon Imam Mousa Sadr formed a militia called "al-Amal" among the Shias of Southern Lebanon and organized them to fight for their rights. Links were also developing between militant Shia groups and Communist parties in different Gulf countries where such parties were of course banned officially. It is due to all these reasons that street demonstrations by a large number of Shias and open expression of anti-government sentiments by them in Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and to a smaller extent in the UAE further added to the feelings of uncertainty and insecurity of the Gulf monarchies.

In Bahrain major Shia demonstrations took place on 23rd February 1980, 25-26 April 1980, 11th May 1980 and August 1980, in which 2000-10,000 people participated (a very large number for a country like Bahrain with a total population of 3,00,000) and during which slogans like 'down with the tyrant government of Khaleefa' were chanted while simultaneously support for Khomeini and Arafat was voiced.

This was a period when Iran began to interfere in a blatant manner in the internal affairs of Bahrain. Ayatollah Rouhini in an interview with an Iranian newspaper stated that

47. Christine Moss Helms, n.2, p.152.


50. Ibid.
he had written to the Amir of Bahrain and had called upon him to abide by Islamic principles, and if not, Iran would pursue its claim to Bahrain.\textsuperscript{51} He described the Amir of Bahrain as being tyrannical and un-Islamic. Hussein Montazeri, President of the Iranian Council of Constitutional Experts asked Bahrain on 29th August for the release of one Momen Khaddam Modareesi who was described as a local representative of Ayatollah Khomeini. This statement was strongly objected to by the Bahraini Information Minister and described as a direct interference in the Bahraini affairs by Iran.\textsuperscript{52}

A memorandum was submitted by twelve Shia Mullahs on 7th July 1979 to the Amir of Bahrain and this memorandum which was circulated openly in Bahrain contained among others following demands: (i) Bahrain should be described as Islamic Arab Republic of Bahrain in all official correspondence; (ii) Islamic shariah should be the basis for Bahraini jurisprudence; (iii) introduction of complete segregation among sexes in hospitals and schools; (iv) enforcement of strict prohibition. (It is to be noted that Bahrain is the only country in the GCC where liquor is freely served in hotels); (v) to ensure that mass media conform to Islamic principles and traditions in their

\textsuperscript{51} Al Thawra Al Jamhuriya, 16 February 1979.
\textsuperscript{52} Teheran Times, 30 August 1979.
coverage; (vi) to make it obligatory for ladies to wear long
dresses; (vii) to ban playing of music in public places.53

In Kuwait a rally was organised by Kuwaiti national
students union on 20 February 1979 voicing support for the
Iranian revolution.54 Shia Mullahs began delivering sermons
in mosques commending Khomeini and praising the Iranian
revolution. A major clash among pro- and anti-Khomeini demo­

nstrators took place outside the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait in
March 1979 coinciding with the national referendum on adoption
of an Islamic constitution which was being held in Iran.55 In
September 1979, one Ahmed Abbas Muhri, a nephew of Khomeini who
was a Kuwaiti national and regarded as the representative of
Khomeini in Kuwait, was stripped of his nationality and expelled
from Kuwait along with eighteen members of his family for making
a seditious speech in a mosque.56 The Kuwaiti Prime Minister
had then warned that any attempt to disturb peace in Kuwait
would be dealt with severely,57 and the Kuwaiti armed forces had
also staged a show of force. During this period, Ayatollah
Hussein Ali Montazeri, a leading clergy of Iran, sent a note to
the Kuwaiti ruler emphasizing that rulers of the Gulf countries

55. Ibid, 10 March 1979.
should learn a lesson from what happened to the Shah of Iran.\textsuperscript{58} Earlier in July 1979 a delegation of notable Kuwaiti Shias had gone to Teheran to congratulate Imam Khomeini.\textsuperscript{59} Amir of Kuwait had responded to these developments by putting further restrictions on press freedom and expelling a large number of Iranian Shias.\textsuperscript{60} In the neighbouring UAE, pamphlets had began to circulate expressing pro-Khomeini sentiments.

In Saudi Arabia on 27th November 1979, a massive procession of Shias was organised in its eastern province of Qatif on the occasion of martyrdom of Imam Hussein. Despite the fact that the Kingdom had prohibited holding of processions to commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussein, the Shias in the Eastern province tried to organize a big rally which was dispersed by the Saudi authorities with a great deal of force. This led to riots in the eastern province and angry Shias burnt and looted shops and buses; the Saudi National Guard was called out to restore public order and at least eleven persons got killed.\textsuperscript{61}

A few days earlier on 20 November 1979 another event of catastrophic dimensions had taken place in Islam's holiest shrine.

\textsuperscript{58} \textit{Teheran Times}, September 1979.
\textsuperscript{59} Dilip Hero, n.\textsuperscript{48}, p.335.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid.
the Mosque of Mekkah - which almost sounded death knell of the Al Saud dynasty. A group of well-armed Islamic zealots managed to secure control over the Holy mosque and announced to the whole stunned world outside that a new "Mehdi" or a "Messiah" had emerged who would rid Saudi Arabia of the oppressive and corrupt Saudi rulers. 62

The Saudi authorities were initially totally confounded by this unprecedented challenge to their authority and were at first not sure whether they could use force in Mekkah (where any kind of violence is totally forbidden by Islam) to subdue this armed group of Islamic zealots. However, they sent in troops after obtaining permission from religious scholars and after bloody battles lasting more than a month all members of this gang were liquidated or arrested. 63

The Saudi ruling family derives its raison'detre from its role as guardian of Islam's holy places; that a group of Muslims could succeed not only in establishing control over the Holy Mosque of Mekkah but could openly proclaim that the Saudi rulers were un-Islamic - what could be a greater challenge to the authority of Al Sauds which rested more than anything else on their commitment to Islam. This incident also exposed the grave deficiencies in Saudi internal security system and there

62. Ibid.
was a widespread feeling that this development in some way was connected with what was happening in neighbouring Iran.

Thus, during the short span of three to four years from 1977 to 1980 situation in the Gulf arena underwent a radical transformation throwing up challenges and threats of unprecedented magnitude for the Gulf monarchies. On the external front, these dangers were posed by the presence of a large number of Soviet troops within striking distance of the Gulf countries, rise to power of a more pro-Marxist regime in the PDRY, growing military cooperation between the PDRY, Ethiopia and the USSR. The fall of Shah of Iran removed a major bastion of American support and created the distinct possibility of a pro-Soviet regime coming into power in that strategically-vital country in view of the intense anti-American feeling which was then dominating the Iranian clergy. It would also be pertinent to recall here that during the latter half of the seventies, there was intense speculation about the possibility of a major oil crisis erupting as a result of then expected slow-down after 1985 in the Soviet oil production. It was held well within the realm of the possible that the USSR might be interested in a military adventure in the Gulf during late eighties to seize control of

64. Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.272. The PDRY, Libya and Ethiopia entered into an anti-imperialist alliance on 18 November 1981.

65. "In the long term the problem in this area is the Soviet Union. The Soviets may need access to Middle East oil themselves during the 1980s." See Richard Nixon, n.7, p.94. This speculation was based on CIA reports which envisaged that the USSR will begin to import oil in 1980s. See, Russell Warren Howe, Weapons, (London, 1980), p.666.
their oil fields.\textsuperscript{66} It was against this scenario that the large-scale presence of Soviet troops in Afghanistan had caused so much anxiety to the Gulf rulers.\textsuperscript{67} The outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war, possibility of forces of Islamic fundamentalism and, especially of resurgent Shiism, gaining ascendancy among the Gulf populace, and palpable inability of the mighty USA even to rescue its own diplomats from Iranian clutches further deepened anxieties of the Gulf rulers. On the internal front, large-scale Shia disturbances, occupation of the Holy Mosque of Mekkahah by Islamic zealots, and the unending Iranian media attacks on the Gulf monarchies, as well as the sporadic acts of internal violence in this region - all these were developments which caused much nervousness bordering on panic among the Gulf rulers.

The Gulf rulers adopted a series of far-reaching measures to cope with these threats and challenges. They entered into new alignments, both at the regional level as well as international to fortify their own authority; internal security was tightened and modernisation as well as expansion of armed forces undertaken. The regimes began to stress their commitment to Islam and simultaneously they began to attempt more "democratization" of the monarchies.

\textsuperscript{66} Richard Nixon, n.\textsuperscript{7}, pp.\textsuperscript{70-95}.

\textsuperscript{67} It was long believed in the west that the USSR had hegemonic aspirations in the Gulf region. It may be recalled that during the nineteenth and the first half at this century the USSR had tried to extend its influence into Afghanistan and Iran. The Soviet interest in this region was expressed by its former foreign minister Molotov as follows: "The area South of Batum and Baku in the general direction of the Persian Gulf... the centre at aspirations of the Soviet Union." After the second world war the Middle East became of crucial importance to the USSR. "Russia's biggest Weapons-diplomacy effort has been in the Middle East", see Russell Warren Howe, n.\textsuperscript{65}, p.\textsuperscript{639}. 

In response to these developments the GCC members began to improve their relations with their erstwhile bete noire "Iraq" which in turn was more than willing to reciprocate. As noted earlier Iraq from 1975 had began to follow a more flexible and pragmatic foreign policy abandoning rigid adherence to Baathist dogmas.

An agreement in the sensitive field of interior security was entered into between Iraq and Saudi Arabia on 9th February 1979.68 Subsequently, Iraqi President visited Saudi Arabia in August, 1980 marking the first visit to that country by an Iraqi President in more than two decades.69

An agreement on economic cooperation was signed between Qatar and Iraq on 2 December 1979.70 As regards Kuwait a kind of entente between them had already developed in June-July, 1977 when Iraqis had agreed to withdraw their troops from the Kuwaiti territory and an agreement was reached to promote joint economic ventures between the two countries.71

Subsequently, Iraqi Defence Minister had visited Kuwait and Bahrain on 22 September 1979 when he assured them that "Iraq would not allow any 'external party' to harm Arab sovereignty, the people or land anywhere in the Gulf and they

could call upon Iraqi help any time to the degree they need it and to the degree they allowed it." On 8 February 1980, Iraq announced its 8-point charter calling for pan-Arab solidarity to confront any aggression and rejecting any foreign military presence on the Arab soil. This charter clearly represented an undisguised attempt by Iraq to assert its leadership of the Arab world especially because it came shortly after the successful Baghdad Summit of 1979 in which Iraq had played a leading role in mobilising the Arab governments against Egypt for signing the Camp David accords.

It was endorsed by most GCC countries except Oman and Saudi Arabia; the latter maintained diplomatic silence on this issue. That most GCC members should openly proclaim their acceptance of the charter was a clear pointer to the newly-emerging Iraq-GCC axis. Subsequently, Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Quaiser Abdul Zawawi, visited Iraq in May 1980 and discussed the possibility of improvement of relations between the two countries. This visit obviously had great significance in view of the intense antipathy which existed previously between Iraq and Oman. Iraq used to give substantial assistance to the Popular Front for Liberation of Oman (PFLO) which aimed to overthrow Sultan Qaboos's

72. Ibid., p.356.
75. Iraq's 8-point charter was regarded as a move to counter an earlier Omani proposal calling for protection of the Gulf of Hormuz with Western help. This Omani proposal was dubbed by Iraq's official Al-Thawra newspaper as a new "imperialist alliance". Ramazani, n.30, p.5.
regime; apart from this Iraqi media used to denounce Omani government as feudal and reactionary even during the latter half of 1970s when their ties with other Gulf countries were on the mend.

The improving bilateral relations between Iraq and the GCC countries were well reflected in the following statement made by the Prime Minister of Bahrain: "President Saddam Hussein had played a major role in strengthening and expanding relations with other Arab countries". Describing Bahraini-Iraqi relations as unique and based on good neighbourliness and historical ties, he added "we appreciate Iraq's staunch stand and what we find unique in its policy towards Arab people and the area." 76

During this period the process of consolidation of intra-GCC economic ties began. During the latter half of 1978, most of the GCC countries signed bilateral agreements providing for extensive economic cooperation among themselves which envisaged exemption of national products from custom duties, promotion of joint industrial ventures, removing restrictions on movement of nationals of GCC members from one country to another and so on. 77

During the last week of September 1979, Saudis had sent two army bridges to Bahrain at the latter's request when the Iranian Navy had began a six-day manoeuvre in the Gulf. 78

76. From an interview given to Iraqi magazine Al Anbaa in July 1980.
days later on 3 December 1979, the Saudis announced their
decision which was under consideration since 1965 of building
a causeway to link the kingdom to Bahrain. On 26 November
1980, shortly after the Iranian air attacks on Kuwait, Saudi
Arabia expressed its willingness to enter into a series of
bilateral security agreements with all the Gulf states as a
first step towards a unified Gulf Security Agreement. Earlier
Saudi Arabia had organised a major military manoeuvre for the
first time in the history of the Gulf countries on 27 June 1979
in Khamis Mushat near the North Yemeni border (in order not to
offend Iraq or Iran) which was attended by all the GCC rulers
except Oman. During this meeting the Saudi Monarch reportedly
made a solemn promise "to use the Saudi military prowess and its
human, material and military resources in support of any
fraternal Gulf State facing a threat against its sovereignty
and independence."80

Finally, after the Iran-Iraq war broke out, the richer
Gulf countries began to extend massive financial assistance to
Iraq which reached the staggering figure of $30 billion by the
end of 1982. The first loan to Iraq was given by Saudi Arabia
in April 1981 amounting to $4 billion while Kuwait had given a
loan of $2 billion.

80. Ibid., p. 355.
While thus enhancing their stability and security through regional alliances, the GCC countries also took many steps to tighten up their internal security. Drives were launched in most of the GCC countries to detect and deport illegal immigrants; strict compliance with emigration rules for foreigners was insisted on. The Saudi Interior Ministry awarded a contract worth $215 million in February 1979 for keeping a better record of foreigners in the kingdom. Following the Makkah incident, a special anti-terrorist squad equipped with helicopters, armoured personnel carriers and similar heavy weapons under the Ministry of Interior was set up and the French were contracted to equip and train this force. It was also decided that a new security training city would be set up.

The Saudi allocation for internal security steeply went up from 7714 million Saudi Rials in 1976-77 (about $2 billion) to 20,958 million Saudi Rials (about $7 billion) in 1981-82, reflecting the growing Saudi uneasiness about their internal security.

Concomitant with these measures the GCC countries stepped up their acquisition of sophisticated weapons and began to enhance the capabilities of their armed forces. The Saudi defence expenditure, for example, went up from SRs 23,725 million

83. Ibid., p.422, Table 14.
in 1975-76 (38 billion) to SRs 59,366 (320 billion) in 1980-81.\textsuperscript{84} It was during this period that an agreement was signed between Saudi Arabia and the USA for supply of a massive package of military equipment including five E-3A Sentry AWACS aircraft, 18 related Ground Radar Installations, six KC-707 AIM-9L air-to-air missiles with an all-aspect guidance and control system - this package carried the staggering price tag of 8.5 billion dollars.\textsuperscript{85} In February 1980, Saudi Arabia signed an agreement with Pakistan for stationing of two divisions of Pakistani troops in Saudi Arabia against a substantial annual payment.\textsuperscript{86}

Earlier, on 10 June 1977, Saudi Arabia had decided to build a huge military city called "King Khalid Military City" at "Al Batin" near the Iraqi-Kuwait border. This complex was designed to house a large number of troops apart from providing all the necessary infrastructural facilities to the Saudi army and airforce.\textsuperscript{87}

To get over the problem of acute manpower shortage being faced by Saudi armed forces, it was announced by the Saudi Defence Minister in April, 1980 that a new recruitment policy was being drawn up which provided for compulsory military service.\textsuperscript{88}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{84} Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Statistical Year Books, 1975-1980.
\item \textsuperscript{85} Nadav Saffran, n.3, p.436.
\item \textsuperscript{86} Ibid., p.363.
\item \textsuperscript{87} This city was inaugurated by King Fahd on 6 April 1985 and the cost of its construction was estimated at 5 billion dollars. See Kuwait Times, 7 April 1985.
\item \textsuperscript{88} Arab News, 9 April 1980.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
In Kuwait, apart from acquisition of modern weapons, steps were taken to expand the armed forces. An Amiri decree was issued on 5 October 1980 laying down that all the Kuwaitis between the age of 18-30 were liable to be called for registration for military service and the Defence Minister armed himself with extensive powers for calling in reserves and putting the defence personnel in a state of alert. It was also earlier announced by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Interior on 6 January 1980 that the passports of Kuwaiti youths between the ages of 18 and 30 would be withdrawn unless they had obtained the relevant special transfer permits from their recruitment centres.

Bahrain renewed its facilities for the American Navy which were terminated in 1977 and Bahraini Defence Minister announced in March 1981 plans for acquiring jet aircraft. Oman entered into an agreement with the USA in June 1980, granting facilities to American forces in strategic places such as Muscat, the Masira Island, the Musandam peninsula overlooking the Gulf of Hormuz, and Thumrait in the Salalah region in Southern Oman, etc.

Newspaper reports began to appear about the possibility of establishment of a joint arms industry by the Gulf countries and it was said that the defunct Arab Organisation for Industrialisation (AOI) was likely to be revived. It was said that

89. Al Watan, 6 October 1980.
90. Al Qabas, 7 January 1980.
91. MEED, 6 June, 1980; 9 May 1980. Subsequently, the US agreed to modernize these facilities at a cost of 320 million dollars. MEED, 10 May 1984.
cooperation between the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar was envisaged, with these three countries undertaking joint production of armaments with investment of as much as $4 billion.92

During this period both Abu Dhabi and Dubai embarked on a major programme to modernize their armed forces, especially in the field of air defence. The UAE had asked the US in August 1980 to carry out a study as to how its air defence capabilities could be improved.93 Subsequently, it showed interest in buying Hawk surface-to-air missiles and other related equipment at a cost of more than 2 billion dollars.94 It ordered Hawk trainer aircraft in April 1981.95 Dubai took delivery of 30/40 tanks and was also desirous of acquiring trainer/ground attack aircraft.96 It was also reported that Dubai was going to acquire RBS-70 Swedish mobile missile system.97

Saudi Arabia and Qatar initiated moves to modernize and expand their navies in a big way. The Kingdom signed on 14 October 1980 a deal with France carrying a price tag of $3.4 billion which was then regarded as one of the largest military contracts in the history. Under the terms of this deal France

92. MEED, 15 August, 1980.
93. MEED, November 1981, Special Report on the UAE.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., 24 April 1981
96. Ibid., 1 May 1981
97. Ibid., 16 May 1980.
agreed to supply Saudi Arabia with a wide range of sophisticated naval equipment. France had signed two weeks earlier e.g., in the last week of September, 1980, an agreement at an estimated value of $360 million for supply of three 200-ton fast-patrol boats, equipped with surface-to-surface Exocet missiles, to Qatar.

To reduce the dependence on the Gulf of Hormuz through which all the oil exports of the GCC countries used to pass, (except for Oman) Saudi Arabians decided in 1978 to build an oil pipeline connecting its oil fields on the Gulf coast with Red Sea ports and this pipeline which was to be more than 1200 kms. long was to cost $1.6 billion. It was envisaged that this would have annual pumping capacity of 3.7 million barrels. The Saudis also began to consider building of a strategic oil reservoir on their western coast and the estimated cost of this project was $2.3 billion.

The Gulf of Hormuz which links the Arabian Gulf with the Sea of Oman is a narrow waterway and is overlooked by Iran from its eastern flank. Disturbances in Iran created the possibility that maritime traffic through this vital waterway may be disrupted and it was to forestall this danger that the Saudi Arabians decided to link their eastern oil fields with the Western oil terminals despite the huge cost involved and

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98. MEED, 24 October 1980.
99. Ibid.
began to toy with the idea of building a huge oil reservoir in the western region. 101

To counter the Iranian propaganda that the Gulf Governments were un-Islamic, a number of steps were taken by these regimes to emphasise their commitment to Islam. In Bahrain restrictions on serving of liquor were placed from 10 March 1979; 102 sale of pork products was banned from 15 February 1980 (earlier Bahrain's annual import of pork was in the neighbourhood of 7000 tonnes); 103 in Abu Dhabi it was proposed to the Executive Council that a complete ban on alcohol should be imposed by the UAE Government; serving of alcohol in public places was restricted by Dubai with effect from 1 June 1979. 104

In March 1979, Kuwait appointed a committee to formulate new regulations for import of frozen meat to ensure that the animals had been slaughtered in accordance with Islamic sharia. 105 In Saudi Arabia instructions were issued in March 1979 prohibiting bathing by women at public swimming pools and patronizing of same tailoring establishments by men and women. 106 It was also decreed that women should wear long dresses while in public places and that school buses used by girls' schools should have

101. The Saudis during the next few years managed to establish a "floating" reserve of fifty million barrels outside the Persian Gulf. R.K.Ramazani, n.30, p.104.


one-way glasses which would prevent outsiders from seeing inside. 107 In June 1979 other restrictions were announced such as a ban on displaying of Christian crosses; playing of loud western music in public places; use of gold as ornament by the Saudi youth; embossing of verses from the Holy Quran on pandals, lockets, etc. 108 Similarly, the Saudi Government banned single girls from going abroad for study on government scholarships from May 1980. 109 Also, more and more programmes on Islam began to be screened on TV networks in these countries and even a relatively liberal country like Bahrain became more intolerant towards the religious freedoms which earlier non-Muslims used to enjoy there.

To counter the Iranian propaganda that the Gulf monarchs were tyrannical and isolated from the people, efforts were made to promote people's participation in the government as well as to increase contacts between the rulers and the people. King Khalid of Saudi Arabia undertook an extensive tour of desert areas of his Kingdom in January 1979. 110 Sultan Qaboos visited many interior areas of Oman during the same month. 111 Statements began to be made in all the Gulf countries about the possibility of setting up Consultative Councils.

107. Ibid.
110. This tour was undertaken in January 1979. See *Arab News*, January 1979.
111. *Oman Observer*, 5 January 1979. Sultan was accompanied by a large entourage of senior officials during this tour. The local press gave extensive publicity to the meetings being held by the Sultan with ordinary people in interior areas. This event was then regarded as unusual in Oman as the Sultan until then had rarely embarked on such visits. During the subsequent years Sultan Qaboos undertook such tours almost on an annual basis.
assemblies to promote more public participation in the Government. A decree was issued by Qatar in August 1979 enhancing the powers of the Advisory Council which already existed and as a result of these enhanced powers the Advisory Council was empowered to review and debate all matters of state policy referred to it. Crown Prince Fahd said in January 1980 that a Consultative Council consisting of fifty to seventy members would be set up in the next two months as a complement to the Council of Ministers and a 7-man committee was set up in March 1980 to draw up plans for setting up of such a Consultative Council. In April 1980 the Saudi Interior Minister said that there was likely to be more devolution of powers to the provinces by the Saudi monarchy. In Oman steps began to be taken to create a Consultative Assembly which was inaugurated in October 1981 and during the inauguration, Sultan Qaboos said "the Council has been formed in fulfilment of his promise and in pursuance of a policy which aims at allowing a measure of participation of the people". Kuwaiti dignitaries began promising a return to democratic rule which was suspended in 1976. In an interview in April 1979 the Kuwaiti Prime Minister denied that "this kind of talk of restoration of the parliamentary system in Kuwait was connected with the Iranian developments." In May 1979

114. Ibid., 10 March 1980.
116. This interview was given on 25 April 1979. See Al-Watan 26 April 1979.
the Amir of Kuwait invited former speakers of the dissolved National Assembly to hold consultations on this issue. The Amir of Kuwait issued a decree on 10 February 1980 appointing a Committee consisting of lawyers, academicians, journalists etc. to review the Kuwaiti Constitution and to suggest measures towards revival of the democratic system. Finally, the Amir decided on 24 August 1980 that a new Kuwaiti National Assembly would be elected by the end of February 1981. Reports also appeared in the Kuwaiti press to the effect that the Government was also considering creation of an Advisory Council to be called the Council of Elites as a body supplementary to the National Assembly. The Bahraini Interior Minister in an interview given to the Kuwaiti press on 20 May 1979 spoke of the possibility of democracy being established in Bahrain and the Bahraini Foreign Minister spoke on the same lines with the Kuwaiti press in April 1980. In Abu Dhabi more and more people began to advocate strengthening the Federal Government as a means of coping with the new challenges confronting the UAE. Al-Itti\text{had}, Arabic official daily in the UAE said in an editorial in early January 1979 that a thorough study of the factors which led to the current situation in Iran should be carried out and

117. \textit{Al Qabas}, 7 May 1979.
120. \textit{Al-Watan}, 20 September 1980.
122. Ibid, 10 April 1980.
appropriate lessons drawn. It added that one of the causes of the Iranian revolution was the wide class difference in the Iranian society resulting from absence of democracy. An Arabic daily Al-Fajr in an editorial in February 1979 called for a "Cabinet of Technocrats" who could address themselves competently to the problems facing the country at this critical juncture.

The Speaker of the Federal National Council advocated in June 1980 through the semi-official newspaper Al-Khaleej introduction of local bodies, strengthening of the UAE federation and adopting a permanent constitution for it. The Federal National Council in a memorandum expressed its desire for unification of UAE armed and security forces, for better coordination and control of immigration, for more equitable distribution of wealth and for a permanent constitution.

It is evident that the GCC countries must have decided some time during this turbulent period that it was essential for them to further strengthen the already close relations binding them and to put them in a more institutionalised framework. Numerous statements were made by various dignitaries in the Gulf stressing their desire for some kind of a federation or an

125. Al-Khaleej, 10 June 1980.
126. MEED, September 1980.
alliance among the six Gulf countries and this was later to fructify in the shape of the GCC.

In a letter to the UAE President in April 1979, the Amir of Kuwait reportedly mooted the idea of merger of the UAE and Qatar and Bahrain. Speaking on this Kuwaiti proposition, Bahraini Information Minister told the press that Bahrain would adopt a positive attitude towards this idea. He, however, added that this group should include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Oman. The Amir of Kuwait in an interview to a local newspaper mentioned "that the responsibility of maintenance of the Gulf Security rested on the Gulf governments in view of the critical period which this region was facing". It will be elaborated subsequently that the central GCC doctrine that Gulf security was the exclusive responsibility of its citizens was an outgrowth of these early thoughts.

The UAE President in an interview to the Chief Editor of a Qatari daily declared that conditions for a Gulf federation were suitable and the situation then existing in the Arab world necessitated the establishment of Gulf unity. In reply to a question as to whether the concept of self-defence of the region would be achieved through coordination among the Gulf

129. Gulf Times, 5 April 1979. The credit for evolving the concept of unification among these six states is sometimes given to Kuwait; its Prime Minister in May 1976, had called "for the establishment of a Gulf Union with the object of realizing cooperation in all fields... to serve the interests and stability of the peoples of the region." R.K. Ramzani, n.30, p.3.
countries or required a declaration of a military unity, the President replied that the Gulf states were always in dire need of coordination and solidarity. The Saudi Minister of Industry and Electricity voiced in early 1980 his support for creation of a Gulf Common Market on the pattern of the EEC. The Bahraini Information Minister had called for a Federation among the six Gulf countries which were later to constitute the GCC. The Amir of Bahrain in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper stressed the need for more meetings at all levels among the Gulf countries to confront the dangers threatening this region and its people. The Bahraini Prime Minister in an interview to a Kuwaiti newspaper said that what was required was a single joint security platform for the Gulf to guarantee its security. The Qatari Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, H.E. Sheikh Ahmed Al Thani, in an interview with an Omani magazine Al Aqida declared that the "security of the Gulf had to be maintained by the sons of the area themselves and that the Gulf area could be made neutral through understanding among its members so that the great powers which had ambitions in the wealth of the area would not find a gap to aggravate any conflict."


133. Al-Rai Al-Aam, 25 April 1980. This was the first time that security cooperation exclusively among the six GCC members began to be mooted. During the seventies there were half-hearted proposals to boost security links among Iraq, Iran as well as GCC countries. See, R.K.Ramazani, n.30, p.4.
Aims and Objectives

From the preceding section, it becomes clear that objective conditions were ripe enough for formation of a close union among the six oil-rich states of Oman, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia emerged in the late seventies. This union known as the "Gulf Cooperation Council" came into existence in May, 1981 following the ratification of its charter by the Heads of State of the above-mentioned countries. The creation of the GCC was in no way an unusual phenomenon in the Arab world which had known many such unions; but most of them had proved short-lived and unsuccessful, often disintegrating with a legacy of mutual hostility and animosity. However, there were certain factors which made it highly likely that the GCC would be able to function more effectively and successfully than the other alliances or confederations established earlier in this part of the world. These could be identified as follows:

(a) The degree of homogeneity, similarity and resemblance among the GCC countries was far more than that existing among other groups of Arab countries which had made bids at unity earlier like Egypt and Syria, Egypt and Sudan, Libya and Egypt, Libya and Morocco, and so on. While no doubt common religion and language were a link between the above Arab states, they differed from each other as far as their historical backgrounds, culture, ethnic origins, forms of government, economic development, etc.
were concerned. The GCC states, on the other hand, had no such differences among them.

Turning now to early history of these states, it is to be recalled that all these states (except Saudi Arabia) had extremely close links with Great Britain and India during the first half of this century and the last century. They had acknowledged (excluding Saudi Arabia) Great Britain as the "paramount power" which was responsible for matters connected with their defence and external relations. Prior to the dawn of the oil era, all these states were dependent on India for obtaining their basic requirements of food, clothing, timber, etc.

During the last three or four decades all the GCC states generally had progressive, enlightened rulers who used their oil revenues for the upliftment of their nationals. All these monarchies while wedded to Islam and ancient tribal customs tried to bring about modernisation and endeavoured to keep their nationals happy and contented. The GCC monarchs had much in common as far as their outlook, political beliefs and economic philosophy was concerned. In their social life, customs and cultural ethos again there was a striking degree of similarity


among these countries; in fact, it would have been difficult to distinguish a Kuwaiti Bedouin from his counterpart in Saudi Arabia or the UAE, in terms of social habits, cultural traits, mode of dressing or any other factor. 136

During the pre-oil era major occupations in these countries were identical and consisted of pearl collection, fishing, petty trading etc. During the latter half of this century they all had the unique experience of reaching the pinnacle of prosperity from depths of abject poverty within a short span of two, three decades in a more or less synchronised manner.

Moreover, there was much tribal and ethnic affinity among the inhabitants of these states; the ruling families of Kuwait and Bahrain trace their origin to the same tribal group. 137 These linkages were further strengthened as a result of inter-marriages as well as migrations which took place in this region during the nineteenth and the early part of this century.

It is evident, therefore, that the GCC members had much in common with each other, whether in terms of their history, culture or tribal roots; they shared the common experience of undergoing economic transformation more or less simultaneously

and their rulers were inspired by the same vision for the future of these countries - all this no doubt provided an ideal framework and environment for cooperation.

(b) The second important factor unique to the GCC countries was that they did not come up with any grandiose and over-ambitious scheme like total merger of the member states and establishment of a unified government for the region as a whole, as had happened elsewhere in the Arab world. While they envisaged integration as the ultimate goal in the economic field, they fixed no deadline for realizing it. In conformity with this cautious and pragmatic attitude, they decided to retain their constitutions, national structures, institutions, etc. and each member country preserved in full its independence, sovereignty and freedom of action, whether in the field of foreign affairs, defence or economic relations. They focussed instead on coordination and cooperation in various field and evolving analogous rules, legislation in different spheres.

Organisational Structure

The founders of the GCC had taken elaborate care to draw up a fairly detailed set of rules and regulations to govern the functioning of this body. These rules and regulations consisted of following three parts:
i) The GCC charter

ii) Rules of procedure of the Supreme Council (Heads of state).

iii) Rules of procedure of the Ministerial Council (Foreign ministers)

(The full texts of the above are given in appendices I, II and III.)

The Supreme Council consisting of the Heads of State is expected to lay down the overall policy of the GCC and to take final decisions on all matters pertaining to its functioning. This body is supposed to meet once a year and decisions on all substantive issues are to be on the basis of unanimity. The main responsibilities of the Supreme Council as mentioned in the GCC charter are the following (see Appendix I):

"i) Lay down the higher policy for the Cooperation Council and the basic line it should follow

ii) Review recommendations, reports, studies and common projects submitted by the Ministerial Council for approval.

iii) Approve the basis for dealing with other states and international organisations."

The Ministerial Council consists of all the GCC Foreign Ministers. This body is expected to take appropriate measures for fostering intra-GCC cooperation in various fields and to make suitable recommendations to the concerned ministries in
the member states. It is scheduled to meet once every three months and its decisions on substantive issues are required to be reached on the basis of unanimity among its members. The Ministerial Council is in a way the executive arm of the Supreme Council and is entrusted with ensuring that decisions taken by the Supreme Council are duly implemented. The Ministerial Council is also required to submit proposals, recommendations etc. to the Supreme Council for ratification whenever necessary. The main functions of the Ministerial Council as incorporated in the charter are as follows:

i) Propose policies, prepare recommendations, studies and projects aimed at developing cooperation and coordination between member states in the various fields and adopt required resolutions or recommendations concerning thereof.

ii) Endeavour to encourage, develop and coordinate activities existing between member states in all fields.

iii) Submit recommendations to the Ministers concerned to formulate policies whereby the Cooperation Council's resolutions may be put into action.

iv) Encourage means of cooperation and coordination between the various private sector activities, develop the existing cooperation between the member states' chambers of commerce and industry, and encourage the flow of working citizens of the member states among them (see Appendix I)."
General Secretariat

This body is expected to help the Supreme Council and the Ministerial Council in discharge of their responsibilities. The General Secretariat has the discretion to initiate on its own studies, project reports, etc. pertaining to growth of cooperation among the member states. It is expected to review and to take necessary follow-up action on the resolutions and recommendations adopted by the Supreme Council and the Ministerial Council. The main function of this Secretariat as mentioned in the GCC Charter are (see Appendix I).

"i) Prepare studies related to cooperation and coordination and to integrated plans and programmes for member states' common action.

ii) Prepare periodic reports on cooperation Council's work.

iii) Follow up the execution by the member states of the resolutions and recommendations of the Supreme Council and the Ministerial Council.

iv) Prepare reports, studies, etc. ordered by the Supreme Council for the Ministerial Council." [138]

138. Though there is much similarity between the EEC and the GCC, the organizational structures of the two differ in some crucial areas such as: (i) Decisions of the Supreme Council as well as of the Ministerial Council on substantive issues require a consensus while in the EEC a simple majority usually suffices on most issues. (This has been the position during recent years). (ii) All constituents of the GCC are deemed as equal; in the EEC the bigger countries like France, West Germany carry more votes than smaller ones. (iii) There is no supranational institution in the GCC like the European Court of Justice or the European Parliament. Resolutions of the Supreme Council or the Ministerial Council tend to be in the nature of recommendations which the member states have
As far as aims and objectives of the GCC were concerned, it can be said that it aimed at harmony and concerted action in the fields of commerce and economy; it envisaged close linkage among the member states in the areas of defence and internal security. The GCC accepted the goal of economic unity among its constituents as its ultimate objective though it evidently recognised that progress towards it would be slow and gradual.

The aspirations of the GCC were eloquently expressed by its foreign ministers in their first meeting held on 4 February 1981 as follows:

Each of the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Kuwait have become aware of the special ties and common traits which bind them and these arise from shared faith, similarity of regimes, commonality of heritage, similarity of political, social and demographic structures, as well as analogue in culture and civilization. Impelled by the aspirations to strengthen and develop cooperation and harmonisation between them which would bring stability, welfare and progress for their people, the Foreign Ministers concurred on creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council.\(^{139}\)

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The main objective of the GCC can be categorized in three fields as follows:

i) Economic and commercial cooperation

ii) Defence and security cooperation

iii) Political cooperation.

As far as economic and commercial cooperation was concerned, there is no doubt that this was one of the foremost objectives of the GCC. This becomes clear from article four of the GCC charter which spoke of "coordination, integration and interconnection between the member states in all fields in order to achieve unity between them". (See Appendix I). The Unified Economic Agreement endorsed in November 1981 visualized extremely high level of cooperation in the fields of oil, monetary affairs, commerce, trade, industry etc. among the member states.

However, important the goal of economic cooperation might have been, it was evidently not the sole purpose for which the GCC was constituted. The GCC was formed when this entire region was passing through a turbulent period and when the GCC governments had every reason to be apprehensive about the future of their regimes.

Upon launching of the GCC, while members stressed its economic role, western observers tended to focus on its significance in the security area. This was an understandable reaction. Within the Gulf and beyond it had always been understood that security in the broadest sense - that is, the creation of a more stable strategic environment in the region - was much of what the quest for Gulf cooperation was all about.  

\[\text{140. See John A. Sandwick, ed., The Gulf Cooperation Council, (Boulder, 1987), p.36. See also Nadav Safran, n.3, p.431.}\]
The GCC states had understood the importance of cooperation among them in the fields of defence and security long before this body was formed. Shaikh Jabar, present Amir of Kuwait, had advocated in 1976 creation of a Gulf union "to preserve the region's security and stability in the face of political, economic and security challenges threatening this strategic area." 141

Subsequently, after the Iranian revolution, Saudi Arabia had rushed two army brigades to Bahrain in September 1979 when Iranian navy was holding manoeuvres close to that island. Earlier in June 1979, following a major military exercise organized by the Kingdom which was attended by all GCC rulers (except Sultan Qaboos), the Saudis issued a solemn pledge, avowing to use all their "human, material and military resources in support of any fraternal (Gulf) state facing a threat against its sovereignty and independence". 142

Though the GCC charter 143 did not mention security and defence as one of the areas for intra-GCC cooperation, there is little doubt that this factor must have weighed heavily on the minds of the GCC rulers. The very first communique issued by them after their first summit in May 1981 enunciated the doctrine

143. Promotion of economic/commercial cooperation has been specifically mentioned both in the GCC charter as well as among the responsibilities of the Ministerial Council. (See Appendix I).
that "security and stability of this region was the exclusive responsibility of its people". This communique also stressed GCC's opposition to military presence of foreign powers in this region. It was thus clear that from the very beginning the GCC countries collectively had decided to share the burden of ensuring their security and stability, both against internal as well as external threats.

Subsequently, a number of developments which occurred during the second half of 1981 made the GCC states acutely aware of the need to boost cooperation among them in the fields of defence and security and among such developments mention may be made of: reverses suffered by Iraqi forces from late 1981; abortive coup in Bahrain in December 1981; dismissal of Bani Sadr in June 1981 who sought a rapprochement with Saudi Arabia. In the following years as the Iraq-Iran conflict escalated the theme of cooperation in the fields of defence and security was to increasingly preoccupy the GCC.

Turning now to intra-GCC political cooperation, one finds that the GCC dignitaries had only on a few occasions spoken of realizing harmonization in the political sphere. The GCC charter in its all-important article 4 did not mention alignment of foreign policies of these countries as one of the goals of this body while it called for formulation of analogous regulations in various fields, including "economic and commercial affairs;
commerce, customs and communications; education and culture; social and health affairs, information and tourism, and legislation and administrative affairs." 144 To give another instance, the statement issued in Riyadh following the first conference of the GCC foreign ministers in February 1981 while emphasizing various areas of intra-GCC cooperation scrupulously shunned allusion to foreign affairs. It said "that the GCC was set up to deepen and consolidate ties, links and cooperation between its member countries as well as to achieve maximum degree of integration, complementarity and harmonization in various fields. The statement added that the GCC would aim towards creation of similar structures in the fields of economy, finance, education, culture, health, communication, passport and nationality, travel and transportation, commerce, customs, movement of goods as well as law and legislation." 145

The only explicit reference to the objective of achieving intra-GCC political coordination comes in the list of functions assigned to the supreme council which included "Approve the bases for dealing with other states and international organizations" (see Appendix I).

144. See article 4 of GCC charter in Appendix I.

There is no doubt, however, that the GCC members did envisage adoption of a common stand on major international issues. During the first GCC summit held in May 1981 the GCC states had adopted an important document called "working paper on collective Gulf action" which said interalia:

The talk about vacuum of power in the region and of wealth which has no masters would end for ever if the people of this region play their collective role with firm and strong determination.

The nations of the GCC together will have a voice, both at the regional level as well as international, which would echo their real standing in the international economy. This voice will be respected and listened to in the East and the West, in the North and the South and would carry weight on issues concerning the Arab world.\footnote{146}

There can be no two opinions over the fact that close political understanding among the GCC states was the absolute sine qua non for achieving the kind of unity and integration envisaged at the time of GCC's inception.

The essence of the association (i.e., GCC) among the six is neither economic nor security measures but a broader, somewhat tangible thing which we might call political cooperation. This is both the real goal of the Council and the context in which specific economic or defence steps are possible. The main events of the GCC are the meetings of the Ministerial Council, the Foreign Ministers, and the Supreme Council, the Heads of states. These are the fora for broad consultation on a range of issues affecting the welfare of the six and for hammering out common positions with which to face the world beyond.\footnote{147}

\footnote{146. See the section dealing with the first summit in Part I.}

\footnote{147. John A. Sandwick, n.140, p.40.}
References to the theme of adopting a coordinated foreign policy, though rare, were made by GCC dignitaries from time to time. The Saudi Interior Minister, Prince Najif, mentioned in February 1981 that the GCC's objective was to achieve complete cooperation in all fields, including political. The fourth GCC summit held in Doha in November 1983 had spoken about "regular consultations (among GCC members) to adopt unified stands on the international level."

In the subsequent chapters of this part, agenda and the resolutions adopted by the GCC Supreme Council and the Ministerial Council in their meetings held until May 1989 have been analysed. It has also been critically examined whether the GCC states succeeded in adopting a common policy vis-a-vis the portentous developments which took place in the Gulf region during this decade.

148. Significantly, this statement was made in an interview with a Saudi newspaper on 14 February 1981, e.g., the day when the GCC was founded.