CONFLICT AND COOPERATION IN THE PERSIAN GULF SINCE 1973

ABSTRACT

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Under the Supervision of

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ABSTRACT

Conflict and Cooperation in Persian Gulf is the best possible and the most apt illustration of regional and international politics in the Persian Gulf. This holds true to politics in, of and about the region since the emergence of this region as an international sub-system, i.e. at the latest after the withdrawal of the British forces east of Suez in 1971 and the imposition of oil embargo in 1973.

The British withdrawal set in motion the above two currents. As many as seven Shiekhdoms decided to merge into a single sovereign unit. But at the same time two shiekhdoms viz., Qatar and Bahrain, who participated in the negotiation to coalesce into a single state, opted out—the reason which underlined their exit was that traditional rivalries between the two prevented them from reconciling to each other's staus in the power-sharing arrangement. Thus conflict and cooperation have been the hallmark of regional politics in the Persian Gulf ever since its emergence as an international sub-system.

Conflict and cooperation are complementary to each other, rather than being opposites. Issues pertaining to cooperation have in themselves been the cause of strains in relations between two or more states, in the Arab Peninsular region. At the same time, the need to confront a common threat jointly, has diminished mutual rivalries.

This is why most conflicts in the region are among member states of the GCC. These are mainly boundary disputes. Yet, the countries forming the GCC have exhibited cooperation in most sustainable manners. For, they have all been vulnerable to external threats. Hence, there is an ever existing compulsion to cooperate amongst themselves.

Common history, the Arab character, religious bonds and similarity of political systems have bound the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf into a cooperating unit. At the same time the vicissitudes and compulsions of modern day inter-state politics have militated against the unifying role of traditional forces.

No less strong are the 20th century compulsions of maintaining peaceful bilateral relations, which, in turn, act as the forces of inter-state cooperation. This has prevented the militarization of regional disputes. Of course, the region has witnessed two of the most important wars—the first being the longest of the century and the latest, most devastating. The latter can be aptly called a World War in terms of the number of the participating countries. Yet, one notes that a majority of the countless disputes, in the region have fallen short of turning into full-fledged wars.

Interestingly, conflicts in the region have stimulated cooperation. The Iran-Iraq war, which was the major stimulant for the formation of the GCC, is an example in point. Similarly, cooperations have not been able to end conflicts in the region. That the GCC member-states have not devised a mechanism to resolve disputes among themselves once and for all being a vivid example.
Conflicts and cooperation in the Persian Gulf are typically regional in nature. Superpowers deliberately stayed away from influencing the course of border disputes, particularly in the Arab peninsula region. On the other hand, they tried yet failed to influence the course of the Iran-Iraq war and later the Persian Gulf crisis. However in the case of the former, they succeeded in using the situation thrown up by the war to make adjustments in their policies vis-a-vis different actors in the region. The two also succeeded in coordinating their policies toward the war in order to avoid mutual confrontation.

But the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait caused a shift in US policy toward Persian Gulf conflicts. The invasion translated into a war between the US and its allies on one side and Iraq on the other. But this could happen only when US failed to force Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait using intimidatory tactics. Thus the Persian Gulf war too was an example of a superpower's failure to influence the course of a regional crisis.

As far as Cooperation is concerned, Superpowers, and for that matter any extra regional power, could not become part of any organisation in the region. As a matter of fact, GCC, the only significant forum of regional cooperation, aims to shroud any obvious cooperation with the US, with a view to preempt domestic opposition to it.

It is the afore-mention perspective which forms, implicitly as well explicitly, the major theme of this research work.

Chapter I gives an overview of regional conflicts. In particular, it deals in detail with all the boundary disputes in the region. This issue may not have been adequately discussed in the following chapters.

The latter, concentrate on specific instances of conflicts and cooperation. Chapter I also discusses ideological and political conflicts in the region which may not have been grave enough to turn into military confrontations. But these conflicts did contribute to the few full-fledged wars that occurred in the region. At the same time, these conflicts have also been down-played by protagonists in the regional drama for the sake of political expediency. This aspect of Persian Gulf conflict has been dealt with in the chapter.

Chapter II tries to locate the superpowers' interests, roles and strategies in Persian Gulf conflicts as well as their policies towards each other in a regional conflict. The chapter seeks to study the implications of a regional conflict on superpower policies and vice versa. The chapter also assesses the superpowers' policy of ending, managing and controlling a regional conflict and the amount of success achieved in doing so.

Chapter III gives a detailed description of the Iran-Iraq war from different angles. It specifically tries to re-examine the accepted and established perception of the causes of the war, the attitude of the neutral Persian Gulf states and that of distant neighbours towards the war and the scope of the superpowers' Persian Gulf policy during the war. It also assesses the implications of the War on the belligerents, and regional and extra-regional states who were directly or indirectly affected by the war.
Chapter IV endeavours to analyse various facets of the cooperation among the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf under the aegis of the GCC. It also makes an attempt to specify the nature of the cooperation among the countries in question before the inception of the GCC. The chapter looks into factors that led to the formation of GCC and places them in descending order of importance.

Chapter V attempts to examine if the Persian Gulf crisis was precipitated by events which occurred immediately before the Iraqi invasion or whether it was a pre-conceived plan.

This chapter attempts to make a distinction between the “events” leading to the invasion and the “causes” behind it. The chapter also delves into a number of other issues, such as whether the US prompted Iraq to invade Kuwait to take on it later?, whether the regional countries gave in to US pressure or whether they really wanted US intervention?, whether the UN played an impartial role in the Gulf crisis or if it was piggybacked by the US? and whether Iraq’s defeat served the purposes of the US and its allies in and outside the region.

Last but not the least, this work hopes to stimulate further researches on the subject-matter, analysing the political dynamics of the Persian Gulf region from conflict-cooperation angle with a view to analyse how do the two forces shape regional politics and not the other way round.
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This is to certify that the thesis entitled "Conflict and Cooperation in the Persian Gulf Since 1973" is the original work of the candidate, Mr. Mohammad Sayeed Alam, and is suitable for submission for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh. The candidate has fulfilled the requirements of attendance etc.

(PROF. AKHTAR MAJEED)
Supervisor
Dedicated to

Grand-father

Janab Ghazanfar Hussain Saheb
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ALIGARH

(MOHAMMAD SAYEED ALAM)
INTRODUCTION

Conflict and Cooperation in Persian Gulf is not, as a matter of fact, one of the several aspects of the regional and international politics in this region. Rather, it is the best possible and the most succinct illustration of these. Since the emergence of this region into an international sub-system, i.e. after the withdrawal of the British forces east of Suez in 1971 and with the imposition of oil embargo in 1973, politics in, of and about the region can conveniently be described as that of conflict and cooperation.

It was in fact, the British withdrawal which set in motion these two forces. As many as seven sheikhdoms decided to unite into a single sovereign unit, but not without two sheikhdoms viz., Qatar and Bahrain, backtracking from the process of the integration of the smaller sheikhdoms. If those who are now the constituents of the UAE set aside border disputes and dynastic-cum-tribal rivalries among themselves in an appreciable display of cooperation, Qatar and Bahrain opted out of it mainly because they could not overcome these very traditional rivalries that existed between them.

The British presence may have not laid the foundation of intra-regional cooperation but it did prevent innumerable disputes among its protectorates from escalating, beside thwarting an Iraqi attempt to occupy Kuwait or parts of it. There existed the Iran-Iraq boundary dispute and the one over fomenting of internal discontentment in each other’s territories while the two countries were independent of British influence in the region. But these were typically bilateral issues as the rest of the region remained insulated from them. Needless to point out, these very disputes had a far wider implications for other regional countries after the British withdrawal. Beside, the British withdrawal was followed by the Iranian occupation of three islands of the UAE, which was not only the first major case of regional conflict so far as it set in the big power-small power dichotomy in the region, but it was also an indication of conflagration of the regional disputes which were by and large low keyed till then.

However, regional cooperation was not entirely missing in the years immediately following the British withdrawal. What probably distinguishes the Persian Gulf from other regions is that conflict and cooperation have gone hand in hand there. Imposing the 1973 oil embargo, regional countries displayed that the unity on common issues comes into force transcending existing disputes. Even Iran, which did not join the countries who had imposed arms embargo, led them from the front to see the oil prices quadruple.

Thus, common history, the Arab character, religious bonds and similarity of political systems have bound the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf into a cooperating unit. But these have not turned the region into a conflict-free zone either, at various occasions the vicissitudes and compulsions of modern day inter-state politics have diminished the unifying role of traditional forces. This is what is the paradox of conflict and cooperation which the region is beset and blessed with.

As the traditional unifying forces have begun diminishing, the 20th century compulsions of maintaining peaceful bilateral relations have come in as the factors behind inter-state cooperation, that at least
prevents the militrization of the regional disputes. Of course, the region has witnessed the two most important wars—one being the longest in the ensuing century and the later the most devastating as well as more aptly called a World War in terms of the number of the participating countries—yet one can note that most of the disputes, which are countless, in the region have not turned into full fledged wars. Utmost, the disputes among those Arab Peninsular countries who are the part of the Persian Gulf region, have turned into border skirmishes that too few and far in between.

Interestingly, the expediency to act as group particularly to deal with the common regional threat and the outside world has given birth to regional and institutionalized cooperation— the GCC. To an extent, regional cooperation preceded the formation of the GCC. It existed in an uninstitutionalised form in spheres of commerce, communication, oil, technology, education etc. in the 70s and paved the way for the formation of this regional organization. Also, the GCC is not the only platform for regional cooperation. The member-state of the GCC have formed a cartel in OPEC as well in OAPEC.

GCC has not enforced an ideal state of cooperation among the member states. But no other regional organizations, more so the international organizations, have succeeded in achieving the utopia. This because none of these happen to be supranational. Therefore, when the national interest come in direct clash with regional interests, the former prevails. Be it noted that the national interest of each country is the main determinant in the setting up of a regional organization by the concerned countries. So giving it precedence over regional interests is the obvious choice to a member-state.

Thus the importance of the GCC as a successful instrument of regional cooperation must be seen in whatever little it has achieved and not in its failures. Does not the GCC represent the finest example, and probably the first, of politico-military protectionism, albeit with external help if the EEC is an example of economic protectionism?

Yet, the cooperation in the region has not been able to end the conflicts in the region. Thus, the GCC member-states have not found out a mechanism to resolve disputes among themselves for once and all. They have not made even a single serious effort in this direction. Of a few disputes, the GCC has succeeded in resolving, were brought to it only when they threatened to go out of control, endangering regional security as well as the existence of the GCC. This makes one conclude that there is a lack of will to resolve the existing disputes. This, also points to the fact that there exists no understanding to prevent the disputes among the member states from turning into a crisis.

Conflicts in the Persian Gulf are typically regional. The need to mention this point arises out of the fact that in their penchant for examining every Third World conflict from the prism of Superpower confrontation learned scholars (not all of them), have overlooked this phenomenon. Thus if the superpowers deliberately stayed away from influencing the course of border disputes, particularly in the Arab peninsula region, they tried and failed to influence the course of the Iran-Iraq war or the Persian Gulf crisis. They simply managed to read just their
policies towards the neutral countries, the belligrents and each other vis-a-vis the situation created by the Iran-Iraq war. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait turned into a war between the US and its allies on one side and Iraq on the other only when the latter could not force Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait, yet another example of a superpower’s failure to influence the course of a crisis. It is held that US wanted to wage a war against Iraq from day one to an extent that it had indirectly prodded Saddam to invade Kuwait. But was not Saddam’s refusal to withdraw more the result of sheer miscalculation than the success of the US strategy to lure him into fighting a war?

The conflicts in the Persian Gulf have been very much regional in nature not only because the superpowers played absolutely no role in their eruption and a limited role in ending them but also because these disputes have stemmed from a combination of the regional history, geography (physical set up) and ideologies. The wars in particular in the region have been the results of regional ambitions of the aggressor country.

It is in this perspective this research work is being carried out. It tries to identify the causes and the characteristics of regional disputes/war, the nature and extent of the superpowers involvement in these and the undercurrents of regional cooperation. Frankly, it must be admitted that this work does not qualify to be called a ‘research’ in so far as it does not look into the issues pertaining to the regional cooperation and conflict from a new angle. It claims to be a research work on the basis that it reviews the existing literature on the subject matter and infers some conclusions which substantiate some of the existing perceptions on the subject matter and beg to differ from some of these.

Nor is this work a ‘micro-research’, which a true research work must be. The topic of this work and the period covered make it imperative to discuss such a large variety of issues that a ‘micro research’ could be conducted only by ignoring some vital issues. Part of the reason in not conducting a micro-research lies in the fact that such a work, as the researcher has observed, tends to become more enumerative than analytical. However, the researcher does not intend to take recourse in the above-mentioned argument to shroud his shortcomings, if any, of not enumerating an event.

The researcher has often indulged in repetition of a particular fact and argument in more than one chapter. When each chapter in a research work is treated as a single unit while all of them are inter-linked, the repetitions are bound to occur. However, undue repetitions, if any, is entirely the fault of the researcher.

Last but not the least, if history is actually the autobiography of historians, a research work in political science, particularly in the branch of international politics, is also the reflection of the researcher’s personality. Thus, like the Behaviouralists, this researcher does not claim to have produced a value-free study.
CHAPTER I
CONFLICTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF: AN OVERVIEW

As regards the regional conflicts, the Persian Gulf is distinct from other regions of the world, less in terms of their seemingly endless number and more due to their varying patterns and intensity-level.

History, coupled with the topography of the region, has given birth to a number of territorial disputes. As the cradle of world’s two conflicting civilizations Arab and Persian each confined to separate territorial boundaries, the region is the center stage of the conflict between the two oriental ideologies. While some countries still stick to centuries old Islamic conservatism, the grassroots of their socio-political system, while a few other have embraced 19-20th centuries’ Socialism, of course with added Arab-Islamic characteristics. This has given birth to inter-state radicalism vs. Islamic conservatism in the region. With the emergence, or re-emergence of Islamic radicalism during the last one and a half decades, the region is afflicted with Islamic conservatism versus Islamic radicalism rivalry. The Arab peninsular countries representing Islamic conservatism are embroiled in ideological rivalry with both the radical right (Islam), represented by Iran, and the radical left, represented by Iraq. No less antagonistic are the radical right and the radical left, although this conflict has been overshadowed by territorial, Arab-Persian and Shia-Sunni rivalries between Iran and Iraq, the countries representing, respectively, the abovementioned radical streams.

It is in this perspective that this study endeavors to a detailed and analytical account of regional conflicts in the Persian Gulf(1).

TERRITORIAL DISPUTES

A) BOUNDARY DISPUTES:

1) THE SHATT-AL-ARAB DISPUTE:

This dispute is between Iran and Iraq. It is over the an 80km of the estuary of the river Shatt-Al-Arab, which divides the land boundaries of the two countries (2). A tributary of the rivers Euphrates and Tigris, the Shatt-Al-Arab, 205 km long with an avg. breadth of 548 meter, has historically been under Arab control, except those few occasions when the Persian empire was in control of the same and the land adjacent to it(3).

The demarcation of boundaries being an unknown practice during ancient and medieval times, the possession of the Shatt shifted alternately between Arab rule and Persian empire with the migration of people and or due to the shifting loyalties of the people, inhabiting the delta
of the river, from one power to the other one. Therefore, there are little on record about the
dates of the "shifts" in, and the duration of control over, the Shatt. Given the practice of non
relinquishment of claim from the Shatt by one of the disputants even when it happened
to lose it, the authenticity of the historical accounts and official records, except those of
relatively modern period, cannot be considered authentic.

However, there is a fundamental difference between the nature of conflict over the Shatt
during the medieval days and that of present times. Earlier the Shatt was part of dispute over
the entire landmass east of it, while in the 20th century, rather the 2nd half of this century to
be more precise, the Shatt alone is the major source of conflict.

This change has taken place due to growing strategic importance of the river after the
discovery of oil in Iraq coupled with the expansion of trade between Iraq and the countries
linked to it by sea routes. The river's eastern side is Iraq's chief oil export outlet to the Persian
Gulf waters. Laying overland pipelines through Syria and Turkey and constructing commercial
port at Umm-e-Qasr, Iraq reduced its dependence on the Shatt route by half. Yet, the oil shipped
through the Shatt estuary constitutes the mainstay of Iraqi economy(4). Besides, to Iraq the
Shatt is a permanent route for the supply of oil, while the pipelines carry the threat of closure
by the countries these pass through. Interestingly, both Turkey and Syria closed down the Iraqi
pipelines passing through their territories.

To Iran, the Shatt waterways facilitate direct access to the ports of Khorremshaher and
the industrial complex around Ahwaz. However, for Iran the commercial and economic
importance of the Shatt reduced when the port Bandar Abbas and Kharag island were developed
as the chief sources of its oil's outlet(5). The river is important to Iran for denying Iraq the
control over it given the latter's dependence on it. It also enables Iran to supervise the Iraqi
navigation through it.

Iraq claims that not only has the Shatt been historically the part of Arab rule but since
the time of the beginning of the practice of boundary demarcation between Ottoman and Persian
empires, its sovereignty over it (the Shatt) has always been acknowledged by Persia in exchange
for Arab recognition to its control over the adjacent landmass.

Iran rejects Iraqi claim on two counts. First, Iraq is not the successor state of the
Ottoman empire. Therefore it is not entitled to extend any claim over the former Ottoman
territories. Second, the old treaties, which recognized the Ottoman's empire's control over the
Shatt, now stand illegal for not being in accordance with the existing international law.

The successive Iranian governments swear by the international legal principles of the
midline of the river channel constituting the natural boundary of two states separated by a river.
The Iranian side further claims that after signing in 1975 the Algiers agreement to this effect,
Iraq is under the international obligation to abide by the 'Thalweg' principle.

As against this, Iraq's position has been that since according to international law obligations
under a treaty are not unilateral, therefore it was justified in abrogating the Algiers treaty in
1980 when Iran indulged in the violation of those clauses of the treaty which provided for the return of three border villages in Khurramshahar regions to Iraq by Iran.

Amid claims and counterclaims, occasionally escalating into border conflagrations(6), the Shatt-Al-Arab dispute has quite a good number of times been negotiated over. These negotiations culminated at least into four major treaties(7).

THE PEACE TREATY OF 1639: This treaty was signed, following the Turkish conquest of Basra, in 1639 between the representatives of the Ottoman and the Persian empires. Under this treaty, Persia accepted the Turkish suzerainty over the Shatt and some areas peopled by the Arabs on its eastern side. The Persian empire retained the freedom of navigation and right of economic exploitation of the river(8).

THE SECOND Eruzurum Treaty: This treaty was concluded under the good offices of Great Britain and Russia on May 31, 1947 in the Turkish city of Erzerum. Under this treaty: a) the Turkish empire ceded to Persia the city and harbor anchorage of Muhammara and the island of Khizr (now Abadan) and Persia ceded some territories in the province of Sulaimaneyah and Zubabeb; and, b) the Ottoman empire was allowed to retain control over the Shatt’s width up to the deep water marker of the eastern shore, sans the territories of Muhammarah and the island of Khizr.

The treaty was, however, later rejected by the both the parties. The Ottoman empire held that the treaty did not extend the Arab sphere of control to the eastern shores of the river. Following the refusal, Britain and Russia recognized Ottoman sovereignty over the whole of the river in an ‘explanatory note’ (9). Taking strong exception to the ‘explanatory note’, Persia retrogradely annulled its assent to the treaty. With this the boundary commission, set up under the treaty to fix the boundaries, was also dismantled.

THE CASTANTINOPLE PROTOCOL 1913: The Constantinople Protocol was signed among Russia, Great Britain, Persian and Turkish empire (10). This treaty re-established Turkish control over the entire width of the Shatt and around the waters of Muhammara and Khizr. The middle of the river channel was fixed as the boundary.

THE TREATY OF 1937: The heralding of Pahlavi rule under Reza Shah in 1921 put the 1913 treaty and the earlier ones in jeopardy as the Shah refused to abide by any one of them. He did not recognize the Basra port Directorate, established by Iraq to supervise negotiations on the Shatt according to the 1913 treaty. The rejection of the treaty resulted in border skirmishes between Iran and Iraq (11). The Shah also refused to give recognition to Iraq in resentment against ‘Iraq’s control over the Shatt (12).

The matter was brought to the notice of the League of Nations on Nov. 29, 1934. The League appointed a rapporteur, an Italian diplomat, to mediate between the two parties to find a negotiated settlement to the dispute. In part due to the efforts of the rapporteur and in part as a result of the Middle East pact, initiated in 1935 by Britain and Russia to resolve the boundary disputes, an Iran-Iraq border treaty was signed on July 4, 1937 in Tehran. The treaty
Iraqi jurisdiction over the east of the Shatt and save the areas around the Iranian port of Muhammara and Abadan the border ran along the Thalweg. In addition to this, Iran was granted four miles anchorage zone of Abadan. Principle of freedom of navigation was established. The transit fee was to be used for the maintenance and expansion of shipping lanes and a provision was made for the conclusion of a convention for joint administration of the Shatt shipping and related activities within two years of the signing of the agreement.

DISPUTE IN THE 1960S: The following two decades after the signing of the 1937 treaty marked a relative calm on the Shatt front. The two countries turned friends by joining the CENTO in 1955. In 1959, the Shah, however, reiterated Iranian claim over the eastern side of the Shatt, accusing Iraq of not adhering to the Thalweg principle. In response, the then ruler of Iraq, Gen. Qasim, renewed his claim over Abadan, Muhammara and other Arab territories under Iranian control as per the 1937 treaty. In 1959, the Shah unilaterally abrogated the treaty of 1937 (13). Frequent outbursts of border clashes during the late 1950s and early 1960s were reported. Iran continued accusing Iraq of backtracking from setting up the convention of the joint administration of the Shatt as agreed upon under the 1937 treaty, misappropriating the transit fee and using it in the construction of hotels and airport and not paying the dues (14).

It would be too far-fetched to conclude that Iran began abetting Kurdish rebellion in the first half of the 70s to bargain a favorable settlement on the Shatt. For to keep Iraq preoccupied with its internal affairs might have stemmed as well from the Iranian strategy to neutralize Iraqi threat on its own borders, to weaken Iraq internally and to intimidate the Arab powers from forming an anti-Iranian strategic consensus in collusion with Baghdad.

However, this did help Iran in reinforcing a link between the Kurdish problem and the Shatt issue as Iraq offered to cede the estuary to Iran in return of Iranian assurance to stop supporting the Kurdish rebels. Following a green signal from Iraq, the Algerian president who was hosting OPEC's annual summit being attended by the Shah and the then Iraqi vice-president Saddam Hussien mediated between the two. The, Algerian efforts led to the signing of the Algiers Agreement. The treaty provided for the establishment of the boundaries along the Thalweg and the Iranian side was called upon to keep its hand off from the Kurdish rebellion (16).

The Algiers treaty had a major drawback. It was a political agreement instead of a border settlement in the true sense of the term. Hence, its sanctity and durability were doubted that too in view of the fact that it was signed by Iraq under compulsion and by Iran from the position of strength.

Thus on Sept. 19, 1980, Iraq unilaterally abrogated the treaty with its President Saddam Hussein torn the text of the treaty apart in Algeria. Both the venue, the same place where Iraq
was subjected to sign the humiliating treaty, and the time—by then, it is said, the decision to
attack Iran on the 22nd of the same month was already taken—confirm that the tearing of the
treaty was an exhibition of Iraqi decision to settle the issue on battleground beside meeting other
objectives(17).

THE IRAQ-KUWAIT DISPUTE :

Next to the Shatt, the most outstanding dispute in the region is the one between Iraq and
Kuwait over the two islands of Bubiyan and Warbah. The whole of Kuwait in itself is disputed
due to Iraq’s claim that this country has historically been the part of Basra region under Ottoman
rule. Iraq did not forego its claim over Kuwait in exchange for massive Kuwaiti financial support
during the Iran-Iraq War. Nor has it done so until now despite being battered in the Persian Gulf
War. The official map of Iraq shows Kuwait as its 17th province and there have been repeated
Iraqi incursions in the Kuwaiti territory in scant disregard to the latest demarcation of Iraqi-
Kuwait boundaries by the UN Boundary demarcation Commission.

Barely a week after the independence of Kuwait, Iraq began contemplating the takeover
of the whole country through the use of force. It had also begun amassing troops on the
international borders(18). However, the British and Saudi threats to resort to force to protect
the independence of Kuwait prevailed upon Iraq to drop the idea.

Before invading Kuwait on Aug. 2, 1990, Iraq might have made little efforts to regain
Kuwait, but it continued to eye Bubiyan and Warbah. On times, it proposed to relinquish its
claim on the whole of Kuwait if the latter returned the two Islands, even on lease.

Bubiyan and Warbah are close to the junction of Kuwait and Iraq. Bubiyan lies within
one mile of Kuwait shore and within five miles of Iraq’s. Warbah is approximately two miles
from the Kuwaiti shore and less than a mile away from Iraq. The two islands are strategically
vital to the disputants. They command a narrow strip of water which the Iraqi ships must pass
through to arrive at the port of Umm-i-Qasr. They contain huge deposits of oil. And Iraq’s
control over them would extend its Maritime boundaries to a far larger area of the Gulf sea-bead
underneath which lies oil in abundance.

Iraq has stuck to coercive diplomacy on the islands issue. It occupied the island twice
in 1970-71 and built a road through the Kuwaiti dessert territory of the Persian Gulf in 1972
and made limited military forays in 1977. Kuwaiti sovereignty over the two island is recognized
under a bilateral agreement with Ottoman empire in 1932, whereby Iraq accepted Kuwait’s
suzerainty over them.

Amid military hiatus in early 70s, there also came a phase when the two countries tried
to settle the issue amicably. In the mid-70s, Saudi Arabia mediated to work out a mutually
agreeable solution. The settlement of this crisis came in sight when the Arab states exerted
pressure on Kuwait to lease half of the Bubiyan to Iraq and withdraw its claim over Warbah.
However, Kuwaiti government’s opposition to this plan eluded the solution. Kuwait was agreed
to lease both of the islands to Iraq for ninety nine years(19).

THE OMAN-UAE DISPUTE:
The dispute between Oman and the UAE is on a 10 mile long coastal strip along the borders. The border between the UAE and Oman in the Al-Khaki region are still undemarcated and, therefore, contain the seeds of the eruption of a dispute in future (20).

Oman dates its sovereignty over the coastal strip back to mid 19th century saying that it has traditionally been used by one of its tribes as grazing land. The dispute over the area in question erupted when the oil was discovered there. The UAE started oil exploration in the area in 1974 which which Oman opposed by claiming the region as its territory. In 1977, oil was for the first time extracted off shore in the area (21). Kuwait ignited the dispute further by helping Ras-al-Khaima establish an oil refinery in the disputed area. Oman demands a land corridor connection between its mainland and Musandam Peninsula through Al Fujairah and Sharjah (22).

DISPUTES AMONG THE UAE SHEIKHDOMS:

Disputes within the UAE, which is a single political unit, bear all the characteristics of the ones between two or more states (23). The seven Sheikhdoms which constitute the UAE are tied up in a lose confederation with each of them maintaining a sort of sovereignty over its boundaries. There lacks a central authority to decide about the boundary disputes and demarcate the boundaries among themselves. The member-Sheikhdoms have entered into boundary demarcation treaties with other states of the region in sovereign capacity.

The dispute between Sharjah and Dubai is over a portion of land situated five km inside the latter's territory where Sharjah has constructed a large shopping and business center there. This conflict reached alarming proportions in the late 70s, and an armed conflict looked, even the breakup of the confederation, inevitable. This crisis was averted due to President Sheikh Ziyad’s intervention who managed to persuade the disputants to refer the case to a panel of European lawyers.

The Musandan peninsula is another disputed territory, involving Ummal Qaiwain and Fujairah as well as the UAE as a whole and Oman, the most peculiar of existing border conflicts in the world. A valley dividing Ras-Al-Khaima and Saharjah is also a under dispute between them. The disputed territory is reported to have huge deposits of phosphate (24). Sharjah and Fujairah have also fought over the boundary demarcation issue. In one of such battles in 1972 about two dozen soldiers from both the sides were killed (25).

THE SAUDI-IRAQ DISPUTE:

Though far from being finally settled, the Saudi-Iraq boundary dispute has remained subsided due to an agreement reached between the two countries to consider the disputed land as neutral zone. This agreement was signed by the two governments on July 2, 1975. However, the dispute is vulnerable to being exploited as a pretext to launch military aggression by one of them against the other. In other words, the state of political relations between Iraq and Saudi Arabia shall determine the intensity of this dispute.

DISPUTE OVER THE BURAIMI OASIS:
The dispute over the Buraimi Oasis is between the UAE and Saudi Arabia on one hand, and Abu Dhabi and the UAE on the other. The Oasis, divided between Oman and the UAE, is a few hundred kms inside the southern corner of the Persian Gulf. It consists of nine villages inhabited by a population of mixed tribal origin. The dispute has arisen due to the absence of the practice of boundary demarcation in the past and the changing loyalties of the inhabitants between the contenders(26).

The dispute has been a bone of contention following its increasing strategic importance in the wake of changing political and economic scenario in the region after the First World War. The Buraimi oasis, via Wadi-Al-Jazzi, controls access to the coast of Dhahran and Interim Oman. the oasis is also the primary water resource for Abu Dhabi and contains a substantial deposit of oil. This conflict came to the fore for the first time in 1933 when the Saudi government awarded oil concession to ARAMCO in the region lying between the eastern and the western extents of Abu Dhabi.

Britain which was then representing Oman’s and sheikhdoms’ interests challenged the Saudi authority to grant concession, on the basis ofAnglo-Ottoman conventiuon in 1913 and Anglo Turkish convention in 1914, which described the territory as the part of Oman and the Sheikhdoms.

This dispute was almost settled in 1936 as the parties to the dispute acceded to a proposal by Britain to demarcate the oasis among themselves. However, the outbreak of the Second World War prevented a formal agreement to this effect.

The issue was raked up again by the Saudi government in 1949 in a note to Britain in which “the sovereignty over the greater part of the territory lying between the base of the Qatar peninsula and the South eastern corner of the Persian Gulf” was claimed(27). The Buraimi constituted a major portion of the territories claimed by the Saudi government.

The oasis was occupied by Saudi Arabia in 1952. The British Protectorate also recognized the Saudi occupation so long an agreement could not be reached at between the disputants. The negotiations between Oman and Saudi Arabia over the Buraimi issue began in 1954. They agreed to hold negotiations in the presence of a third party in Geneva. These talks took place in in 1955 but nothing tangible could come out of it also. The failure of Geneva talks was followed by the expulsion of Saudi forces, stationed since 1952, from Buraimi in the same year. An attempt by the UN in 1953 to resolve the dispute by sending a fact-finding mission under Herbert de Pibbibng also failed(28).

It was not before the beginning of the 70s did the possibility of settlement arise. In the first quarter of the 70s the disputants showed the willingness to resolve it through negotiations. As a result, Saudi Arabia and the UAE signed a border agreement on July 29, 1974. Under this agreement:

1) Saudi Arabia renounced its claim over Buraimi in exchange for a corridor to the Gulf in Khor-Al-Udaid and also a triangular strip of land on Abu Dhabi’s eastern border near Qatar.
2) Rich Zararah (Sabah) oil field was divided between the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
3) Oman was given three and Abu Dhabi six of Buraimi villages (29).

(B) OFFSHORE DISPUTES:

IRAN’S CLAIM OVER BAHRAIN:

Iran’s claim over Bahrain, a group of 33 islands situated between Qatar and Saudi Arabian coast, (30) dates back to the 19th century. Though the islands did not constitute the part of the Persian empire for most of the times, it never recognized Bahrain as a country nor its protectorate, the Great Britain (31). However, this conflict too, as did the other ones, accentuated following the discovery of oil in Bahrain in the 1920s (32).

Iran stakes claim over Bahrain on the basis of the latter having been the part of the Persian empire from a period preceding the advent of Islam in Arabia til the Portuguese occupation of the island in 1507(33). Bahrain was a Portuguese colony far about a period of hundred years before returning to Persia’s sovereignty from 1602 to 1782.

Since 1702, Bahrain has been ruled by Arabs and from 1862 by the British power. However, the Iranian side claims that Britain never established its sovereignty over Bahrain and in principle recognized Persia as the legitimate sovereign(34).

The Iranian claim is disputed. The treaties signed between Britain and the ruler of Bahrain refer Bahrain to as an “independent country” with British jurisdiction on its foreign affairs.

Iran raised the issue following the Britain’s decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf in 1968. It opposed negotiations among nine trucial Sheikhdoms, which included Bahrain, for a confederation. It, instead, demanded the return of the island to Iran.

Interestingly, after the British withdrawal the crisis made a headway towards the solution against all expectations. During 1968-69, Saudi Arabia used it good offices to convince Bahrain and Iran to settle the issue peacefully. The Shah’s visit to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait broke the ice, paving the way for an announcement by the Shah on Jan. 4, 1969 that “Iran would forgo its claim over Bahrain if the people of Bahrain do not want to join my country”.

The two countries also decided to refer the issue to the UN. The then General Secretary, U Thant, appointed Vittorio Winas Peare Guicciardi, the then Director General of the UN office in Geneva, as his personal representative to head a fact-finding mission. The mission visited Bahrain between March 30 and April 18, 1970. In its report the mission maintained that people of Bahrain wished for an independent state. Subsequently, the UN passed a resolution on May 11 1970 declaring Bahrain as an independent country. The resolution was accepted by the Shah.
THE IRAN-UAE DISPUTE:

The dispute between Iran and the UAE is over Abu Musa and two Tunb islands, lying midway between the two countries. This dispute is the result of the overlapping of the territorial claims. Abu Musa is situated at 43 miles from Iran and 35 miles from the coast of Shrajah. The greater and lesser Tunbs are situated about 20 miles from the Iranian island of Qeshm.

The area became a source of potential crisis after the discovery of oil in the Persian Gulf region. However, until the British withdrawal (by then these islands had become strategically significant too) the dispute was limited to staking of the claims and counter claims. The dispute virtually started in 1969 when Iran objected to the granting of oil concession to Occidental Petroleum in Abu Musa and an area three miles under the its territorial sea limits by Umm-Al Qaiwain on Nov. 16, 1969. Sharjah followed the suit by granting concession on Dec. 20, 1969 to ‘Butte Gas and Oil’ in the island and on its territorial waters. Sharjah also extended its sovereignty over Abu Musa by a royal decree, dated Sept. 19, 1969.

The islands are vital for Iran and the UAE for different reasons. These are important to the UAE as they contain vast deposits of oil. For Iran the islands are important from political and security point of views than the economic. Iran possesses enough oil reservoirs to be allured by the oil underneath the islands. But a physical control over them can immensely reinforce Iran’s position in the Strait of Hurmuz. Though the importance of the islands to Iran has not receded as such with the passage of time, it was certainly greater on the eve of the British pullout, which provided Iran an opportunity to indulge in a muscle-flexing exercise by virtue of its geographical, military and demographic preponderance over the Arab Sheikhdoms awaiting independence.

Iran occupied the islands on Nov. 30 1971, a day before the British withdrawal. Encouraged in part by Britain’s reluctance to restore the islands to their rightful owner and in part by the UAE’s helplessness, the Shah was able to negotiate a favorable agreement with the latter. According to this agreement, the UAE recognised Iran’s military control over the islands.

However, the agreement, which is still relevant, is not the final settlement as both Iran and the UAE regard it a temporary measure and each of the two, as a matter of principle, considers them an integral part of their territories. A Memorandum of Understanding signed between the two countries two days after the Iranian occupation read “neither Iran nor Sharjah will give up its claim to Abu Musa nor recognize the other party’s claim”.

The Islamic regime did not abandon the Shah’s occupation of the islands, instead decided to retain it which was a manifestation, as an observer views, of continuing with the Shah’s national security policy in connection to the islands.

THE OMAN-IRAN DISPUTE:

This dispute now stands settled. The area under question was a narrow strip of water, 21 nautical miles wide between Iranian islands of Jazirat Larak and the Omani islet of great Qioin. Of 21 nautical miles of this waterway, a 6 nautical mile stretch falls under the
Iran and Oman signed a treaty on July 25, 1974 which divided the common boundaries into respective territorial waters on the Thalweg principle. However, even then some points of demarcation do not strictly conform to this principle. For instance, the 21st demarcation point is 4.40 nautical miles closer to Oman than Iran.

The full-fledged demarcation of the offshore boundaries between these countries is also subjected to the delimitation of the offshore boundaries between Oman and Ras-Al Khaymah as well as between Oman and Sharjah.

The absence of delimitation of boundaries between Oman and the two UAE Sheikhdoms carries a threat that any concession by the former to the latter two in delineating their offshore boundaries shall tamper with the Oman-Iran agreement of 1974.

THE DISPUTE BETWEEN KUWAIT AND SAUDI ARABIA:

The dispute between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait is regarding the neutral zone which consists of small islands of Umma-Al Maradim and Qaru in the upper part of the Persian Gulf. These islands are situated 16 and 25 miles off the costs of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait respectively.

The dispute over the two islands started over the granting of the oil rights when the oil was discovered in the region. However, a settlement, though temporary, prevented the escalation of the dispute. The two countries under the treaty of Uqair of 1922 decided to consider the islands as 'neutral zone'. Since then the dispute is limited to the difference of interpretations over the terms and conditions of the 'would be final settlement'.

Kuwait wants to regain its sovereignty over the islands while Saudi Arabia has proposed for co-sovereignty, meaning the partition of the neutral zone by half between them.

Although a permanent solution remains elusive since 1922, the issue has never escalated into a serious political or military crisis.

THE BAHRAIN-QATAR DISPUTE:

The dispute between Bahrain and Qatar is over the Hower islands. Sixteen in number, Hower being the largest of them, these islands are barren. Located over the village of Zubarah of Qatar in the Bay of Salwa in the south-east corner of the Persian Gulf, Hower islands are scantily one mile off from the Qatar peninsula from where it can be reached by foot at low tide. Bahrain's claim over the islands is based on it being the traditional home to the ruling family.

In the wake of the dwindling oil resources in Bahrain and Qatar, the Hower islands are increasingly becoming vital for the two countries because of vast reservoir of oil these possess.

However, the dispute has so far not turned into a major political, diplomatic or military
hiatus between the two countries. It is, rather, confined to occasional reiteration of claim over the islands by each party, and accusing the other of conducting military maneuvers (43).

**THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN DISPUTE:**

The Saudi Arabia-Iran dispute was over Al-Arbiyah and Al Farsiyeh islands and the area between the two islands. The two countries resolved the issue in 1968. Under an agreement, the boundaries were divided into three main segments. The median line between the opposite coasts constituted the boundaries in the southern segment. Saudi Arabia retained rights over Al-Arbiyah and Iran over Al Farsiyeh (44). The median line principle is also applied in the demarcation of boundaries in the northern segment with the island of Kharag placed under Iranian jurisdiction on the condition that the non-oil deposits will be shared by Iran with Saudi Arabia(45).

**THE IRAN-KUWAIT DISPUTE:**

The dispute between Iran and Kuwait pertains to the delimitation of boundary in the upper part of the Persian Gulf waters. They have failed to resolve it through negotiations. Instead, by granting oil concessions and carrying out other activities in the region in question both Iran and Kuwait have maintained a semblance of control over the upper Gulf.

Also, Kuwait has refused to recognize Iran's sovereignty over the Kharag island, 209 miles off the Kuwaiti mainland. Iran dismisses Kuwaiti sovereignty over the Faylakh island, 15 miles from the Iranian mainland.

**THE IRAN-QATAR DISPUTE:**

According to a bilateral agreement signed on Sept. 20, 1969, Iran and Qatar have demarcated their offshore boundaries “in accordance with international Law and the Law of sovereignty”. The two countries, however, have yet not decided about the status of a number of islands lying on the either side of the boundary delimitation mark. Beside this, the northern terminal point is still undemarcated, pending the delimitation of Qatar-Bubiyan offshore boundaries.

**SAUDI ARAB-OMAN:**

Saudi Arab and Oman extend conflicting claims over the water whole of the Umm Zammul and the surrounding territory in the undemarcated border area covering the northwest riches of the Rub-Al Khali region.

**IDEOLOGICAL CONFLICTS**

The Persian Gulf region is the hotbed of a variety of ideological conflicts. These range from the geo-cultural ones, such as Persianism vs. Arabism, to the one between an indigenous and the alien ideologies, such as Left Radicalism vs. Arab Conservatism, to intra ideological ones, such as Sheism vs. Sunnism or Radical Islam vs. Conservative, or Puritanical, Islam.

**PERSIANISM VERSUS ARABISM:**

Separated by the Persian Gulf waters, Iran and the Arab countries represent Persian and
Arab ideologies respectively. Each of the two ideologies denotes to a distinct language, culture and ethnicity.

Even Islam, the common religion of the peoples on both sides, has failed to blur the differences and animosity between these two ideologies. In fact, Persia was the only defeated power which did not give up its pre-Islamic cultural ethos and the traditional language for the ones represented by the conquering Islamic forces from the Arab region. This happened despite the fact that the people of Persia embraced Islam in overwhelming number, and a large majority of them willingly.

Newly converted Muslims of Persia saw to it that they retained their language and culture by reducing the sphere of Arabic language and Islam to religious aspects of their lives only (46). The Arab Muslims and their Iranian counterparts are since then culturally and ethnically apart (47).

As against the case of Iran, Islamic conquests in Iraq and Syria and Egypt led to the replacement of the latter's traditional Aramaic and Coptic languages respectively by Arabic. Even Arabic became one of the principle languages beside Greek and Latin, Roman and Byzantine empires following the Islamic conquests there (48).

The Arab rule in Persia did not, however, last long enough to have been able to replace an ancient nationalism with Arabism. After regaining the control from Arabs, The Persian rulers revived Persian nationalism and thrived on its animosity to Arabism over successive centuries in order not to let the Islamic concept of transnationalism, based on the unity of 'Ummah' (the Muslim community the world over), under 'Khilafat' rule influence people of Persia.

The geo-political factors have played a significant role in abating the Arab-Persian rivalry. Each national ideologies grew in different geographical settings, segregated by a fairly large body of sea water, with well defined political boundaries.

However, the post World War II, rivalry between Iran and Arab countries are more territorial than cultural in nature. The Arabism of Nasserite variety in the 60s espoused the concept Arab as 'One Nation' stretching from Atlantic to the Persian Gulf. The Saddamite variety espouses revival of the 7th century Arab empire which included today's Iran conquered in 638 A.D. in the battle of Qadisiya. Saddam described the Iran-Iraq war as the replica of the battle of Qadisiya and portrayed his country as the defender of Arab nationalism against the "Persian racism" (49).

The Shah of Iran in the 70s re-claimed the UAE, Bahrain and parts of Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia on the basis of the erstwhile Persian rule of these regions. If the Shah attempted to establish physical control over Arab territory, the Islamic government, which replaced the Shah, is said to have tried to expand the boundaries indirectly, by aspiring for Iran-like revolutionary changes in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf and subsequently subordinating the new governments to its central authority on the principle of "Islam knows no boundaries" (50).
During the 70s, both Saddam Hussein and the Shah projected themselves as the mirror-image of Arab and Persian heroes, respectively. Saddam portrayed himself as Nebuchadnezzar and the Shah as Cyrus, the founder of the Persian empire.

However, ideological rivalry between Iran and the Arab countries is not real but has been evoked to give substance to the typical 20th century inter-state aspirations for domination, influence or national defense. That is why when these interests are served in maintaining peaceful relations, these ideologically antagonistic countries become friendly. For instance, the Shah mend ties with the Arab monarchies and Iraq (with the latter since 1975 by signing Algiers Agreement) in the 70s.

In other words, the ideological rivalry has been evoked when the relations between the two sides have deteriorated. This has not initiated the deterioration of relations as the case would have been.

During the 50s, 60s and much of the 70s, factors other than the Arab-Persian rivalry dominated the relations between Iran and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. In the 50s, Iraq and Iran enjoyed very friendly relations by virtue of being the members of CENTO. So were the relations between Iran and the Arab countries in the 70s, except for a couple of years in the beginning of that decade, strengthened further by their common orientation towards the US. Iran rescinded its claim over Bahrain in 1972. It helped Oman to quell Dohfar resurgence. Saudi Arabia agreed to take up the responsibility of “policing” the Gulf along with Iran even though it largely mistrusted and envied the latter. Despite being apprehensive of the Shah’s hagemonic designs, the smaller states looked to it as their protector against the threats from the Soviet Union and radical Iraq, a co-Arab viewed with a lot more skepticism than Iran. Iran was amused by the imposition of 1973 oil embargo against the US and other allies of Israel and led the Arab countries from the front in the subsequent quadrupling of the oil prices.

Thus the Soviet threat, common affinity with the US, threats from radical powers of the region and the oil took much of the sting out of the ideological rivalry between Arab countries and Iran in that decade.

In the 80s, the advent of Islamic government to power in Iran and its bid to export Islamic revolution to the Arab countries were interpreted by the latter as a manifestation of Persianism, linking the Iranian designs to Tehran’s historical claims over the Arab World.

However, in reality the Persian-Arab ideological rivalry had by and large diminished after the Shah’s departure. Imam Khomeini’s rhetorical pronouncements on export of revolution did not smack of territorial expansion. Nor did they accompany the threat of an armed attack to overthrow monarchical governments.

The Islamic Iran’s policy towards its Arab neighbors during the Iran-Iraq War can not be dubbed as a militant expression of Persianism. If Iraq tried its best to color the war as a rivalry between Arab and Persian ideologies, Iran saw to it that Iraq did not succeed in its effort. Iran described the war as ‘Jihad’, the term which also applies to the the defeat of Persia at the hands
of Arabs in 638 A.D. The portraying of the war in terms of Arab-Persian rivalry was not in the interests of Iran as one of its war objectives was to win over the Arab masses in the name of Islamic brotherhood so that they could rise in revolt against their own governments in an expression of religious solidarity with Persian people.

The Arab states’ support to Iraq stemmed from realpolitik than ideological considerations, such as the espousal of Arab cause by Baghdad. In such a scenario, the ideologically driven non-belligerent Arab states would have sought total humiliation of Iran. On the contrary, once the chances of the spreading of the war to their territories receded, they preferred a stalemate between Iran and Iraq or the end of the war in a draw with both the belligerents returning exhausted and militarily weak. The Arab states also wanted that from the war Iraq emerged as a docile and humble power, obliged for their financial assistance to it, and not as a military giant turning to settle its territorial scores with them. The glorification of Arabism did not certainly call for such a policy.

The Arab states outside the Persian Gulf region did not define their positions in the war on the basis of Arab-Persian rivalry. This is illustrated by the fact that barring Egypt and Jordan, most of the non-Persian Gulf Arab countries, from PDRY to Algeria, supported the Non-Arab Iran.

That the Iran-Iraq war was the very epitome of an ideological rivalry is further invalidated by the fact that a considerable section of the the Arab population of Iran supported the country they were the citizens of and thousands of Iranians residing in Arab countries did not sympathise with Iran's war. Given a large scale settlements of Arab people in Iran and the Iranians' in Arab lands, the ethnicity and ideology based support of these peoples to the belligerents must have cut across the national and regional boundaries.

At present, The Arab-Persian rivalry is not all that overt in nature. However, It has not entirely disappeared. The Islamic government has not abandoned Iran's historical claims over Arab territories, as borne out by the raking up of the Abu Musa and Tunbs issue by it with the UAE in mid-1992. On quite a few occasions, the Iranian clerics have claimed to be the spiritual leader of the people of Bahrain and the UAE as well as the people of Iranian origin live in these countries. This can hasten one to conclude that the Persianism in the guise of Islam or the vice-versa continues to be an important foreign policy agenda of Iran.

The controversy over the name of the region is the most vivid example of Arab-Persian rivalry in the 1990s. The Islamic government of Iran is not even ready to name it as ‘Islamic Gulf’ a proposal that is acceptable to the Arab states. Whereas, the Arab governments have since the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war ceaselessly called it as ‘Arab Gulf’ in total disregard to the fact that it has been referred to as ‘Persian Gulf’ in historical and official Arabic language records. The Iranian media refer to the GCC as (P)GCC. It is surprising that the GCC member states have not responded by putting the prefix ‘Arab’ before the word ‘GCC’.

The fact that the Arab countries and Iran are predominantly peopled by Sunnis and Shias respectively has created an impression that the Arab-Persian animosity has sectarian connota-
tions. This prognosis is a largely untested logic. Going by this logic, the Arab Shias should have identified themselves with the Persianism practiced by the people of the same sect in Iran. So have done the Iranian Sunnis vis-a-vis the Arabism. In other words, the Arab-Persian rivalry can acquire a sectarian dimension only by repudiating its very basis.

Also, Sheism is not an anti-Arab creed since it was the official creed of the Persian empire and later of Iran and the largest concentration of its followers is in Iran. As a matter of fact, Sheism took birth in the Arab land as a result of differences over the succession after the death Prophet Mohammed, an Arab. Needless to say, Hazrat Ali, whom the Shias, the word Shia literally meaning his ‘sympathizers’, claim as the true successor of the Prophet and who is held in the highest esteem among the revered Islamic figures by them, was also an Arab.

**IRAN’S ISLAMIC RADICALISM VS. IRAQ’S BAATHIST RADICALISM:**

This ideological conflict has a definite geographical character being confined to Iran and Iraq only. Iran is the only proponent of the radical Islam in the Persian Gulf and none other than Iraq practices Baathism in that region.

As Iran has acquired the reputation of an Islamic state and Iraq as the only follower of Baathism, roughly the Arab replica of Socialism if not exactly the Marxism Leninism, this rivalry is principally the one between a religious ideology and a secular one. Yet, when the Baathism confronts the Iranian Islamism, it too takes recourse in Islam. The Arab ethnicity of the prophet, the revelation of the Holy Quran in Arabic, a recognition to this language’s superiority over the non-Arab languages, and the introduction of Islam in the Arab region so that the brave, adventurous and enlightened Arabs could spread it all thorough the world are used by Iraq as Arab challenge to Iran’s self-proclaimed role of the champion of Islamic cause in the 20th century.

The very secular nature of Baathist doctrine comes in the handy for Iran to dub Iraq’s ruling regime as “infidel”. Iran is doubly compelled to launch religious propaganda against Iraq as it conforms to its broader strategy of instigating the Sunnis, beside the the Shia population, of Iraq against Saddam regime.

It is not possible to dissociate this stream of ideological rivalry from the Iran-Iraq War and the historical antagonism between the two states. Had there been no war between them, they would have cshed in on their rivalry in their quest for regional dominance, in interfering in each other’s internal affairs particularly in the context of Kurdish rebellion, which has been spearheaded by both the secular and the Islamic groups in Iraq as well as in Iran, and in legitimizing their respective stands on the boundary disputes.

This ideological rivalry has not always been incompatible. This is borne out by the fact that the Baathist government of Iraq granted fifteen years asylum to Imam Khomeini, more so it extended support to his struggle against the Shah and offered him to use Shia religious centers, Najaf and Karbala, in Iraq as the base for the same. However, it can not be denied that the Baathist support to Imam Khomeini’s Islamic struggle stemmed from “enemy’s enemy is friend” logic than from any ideological solidarity.
But, the Baathist support to Islamic struggle in the pre revolution days points to the fact that the Baathist-Islamic radicalism rivalry can at times be subordinated to the existing patterns of inter-state relations and internal (both in Iran and Iraq) and external environment.

This is further reinforced by the fact notwithstanding the conflicting nature of two doctrines, Iran avoided demeaning the Baathism as a whole so as not to displease the war ally, Syria, the other Baathist state in the Arab world. Interestingly, In its defamation campaign against Iraq, Iran has targeted the ruling regime of Iraq more than the Baathism.

ISLAMIC RADICALISM VS. ISLAMIC CONSERVATISM:
This conflict is of immense academic interests as it centers around the issues concerning Islamic state and government, political rights of people under Islam, mode of political change, and the Islamic economy.

Iran's Islamic radicalism quotes from the Holy Quran and other Islamic sources to dub the Arab monarchies as "un-Islamic" and prove that Islam provides for a government by a religious personality "able to rule" and "supported by the people" (52).

The Persian Gulf monarchies maintain that the Holy Quran's concept of state calls for the establishment of a "welfare state" and not a particular form of government or state.

Islamic radicalism of Iran exhorts people to uproot an unpopular government as this is their Islamic duty while the Arab conservatism quotes Quranic verses, asking the people to remain faithful to their country and government.

Islamic radicalism of Iran highlights people's right under Islam to participate in the public affairs while the Arab conservatism considers people rights are confined to being properly looked after by their government and provided basic necessities of life.

similarly, the Iran's Islamic radicalism is for equal distribution of state's resources and income among people and describes the government as custodian of these resources while the Islamic conservatism of the Arab countries interprets that the state's total control over the means of economic production is the logical extension of the government's right to act as the custodian.

Taking a leaf from Islamic principles, the Iranian government describes the conservative regimes as 'un-Islamic' because of these being unpopular and ruled by non-religious personalities, deriving the source of their power from the tribal setup than from the people as single unit of the political system.

As against this, the Arab regimes accuse the Iranian government of being sectarian and racial, aiming at creating a wedge within the Islamic community of the world, creating instability in neighboring Muslim countries, and involved in a large-scale oppression of people of Islamic
subsects other than the Shia and Non-Muslim minorities inside the country.

Interestingly, the two ideologies bear a few similarities too. For instance, both the ideologies do not support Westminster model of democracy. Nor do they maintain that the Quranic concept of an able and popular government necessitates periodical elections (53), the party system and a constitutionally recognized opposition.

On the question of rights of women, non-Muslims and aliens, the two camps practice the policy of "denial" in violation of the Islamic principles in this regard.

This ideological conflict veers around political and to a limited extent social and economic issues. The Shia-Sunni differences over 'Fiqh' (Islamic jurisprudence), such as the interpretation of the Quran and the Sunnah or the performing and the timing of prayers, have not cropped up.

This conflict is an ideological conflict in the true sense of the term and not an inter-state rivalry in the guise of an ideological conflict: Although it is widely held in the case of Iran that behind the veneer of "export of ideology", there lies inherent its territorial ambitions in the region.

This perception can be discounted on the ground that Iran's high profile campaign for "export of ideology", aiming at overthrowing the un-Islamic governments, is not matched by its little role in fomenting, sponsoring and sustaining the rebel forces, many of whom are also inspired by the Islamic revolution, in the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. Undergoing a process of political chaos and instability soon after coming to the power and later entangled in a war with Iraq, the Iranian government was hardly in a position to and capable of doing so. Thus, it deliberately limited its campaign to a great deal to rhetorics only in the hope that the Arab people on their own would succeed in toppling the monarchical governments. Only in a few cases, such as in 1980 coup attempt in Bahrain and strikes in Shia-dominated areas of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in the aftermath of the success of the Islamic revolution, could the Iranian involvement, that too latent, be established.

A full-blooded Iranian involvement would have resulted into the eruption of a large scale rebellion spreaded all through the region, instead of the stray cases of politically motivated violence confined to a few countries and few places in the each of them.

Throughout the war, Iran relentlessly propagated for the export of revolution through press, broadcasts, and speeches of clerics and other leaders (54). But on the other hand it refrained from expanding the war to the non-belligerent Persian Gulf countries even when provoked by Iraq to do so. Iran even decided not to retaliate against the shooting down of its four aircrafts by Saudi Arabia in 1984. Its attack on the ships of Arab countries in 1987 was more symbolic than real. This proves that Iran's rehetorics about the export of revolution was not matched by an aggeressive stand agaisnt the Arab allies of Iraq in the region.

After the end of the Iran-Iraq War, particularly in the 1990s, the relations between Iran and its conservative neighbors have improved with Iran having almost abandoned its export of
revolution policy.

Principally, Iran still regards the conservative socio-political system of the Arab Gulf states as un-Islamic but does not give vent to its feeling through radio broadcasts or in policy pronouncements. In this decade the most contentious aspect of the ideological rivalry between Iran and the Persian Gulf monarchies is the issue of the status of Mecca and Madina, where the two holiest of Islamic shrines are situated.

Considering the twin cities as belonging to the Muslim the World over, Iran refuses to recognize Saudi sovereignty over them. It has urged the Saudi government to hand the administration of the shrines to a confederation of all the Muslim states. Iran also has the desire to keep the ideological conflict alive, not with a view to antagonise the Arab neighbors but public consumption and to retain its claim as the only Islamic state in the world.

ARAB RADICALISM VS. ARAB CONSERVATISM:

Iraq and South Yemen represent the Arab radicalism and the monarchical Arab governments of the Saudi peninsula the Arab conservativism. Form South Yemen's side, this dispute reflected in its opposition to the independence of trucial states after the British withdrawal and their membership to the Arab League. It also got manifesated in South Yamen's military and financial support to the Dohfar rebellion in Oman.

South Yemen pursued its boundary disputes with Oman and Saudi Arabia in the cloak of ideological rivalry instead of adopting military postures or indulging in direct confrontation. This is why it never asked for Soviet Union's help, available in the form the latter's military presence on its ports, with a view to establish its control over the disputed regions.

Beside giving unflinching support to the Dohfar rebellion, spearheaded by the 'Popular Front for Liberation of Oman (PFLO), later named as the 'Popular Front for the Liberation of Occupied Gulf(PFLOG), the National Front government of South Yemen described the Dohfar movement as the extension of its revolutionary struggle in the Persian Gulf.

However, following the suppression of the Dohfar movement in 1975, South Yemen deviated from its radicalism in favor of entering into formal relations with the monarchical governments. Saudi Arabia-South Yemen diplomatic relations were established in 1976. In the late 70s, South Yemen established diplomatic relations with Qatar and Bahrain and in 1982 with Oman too. With Kuwait and the UAE, which had diplomatic ties with South Yemen since late 60s and the early 70s respectively, South Yamen closed ranks on political and economic fronts (55). These two countries became Aden's largest trading patterns and principal aid givers in the Persian Gulf region.

In fact, Before 1975, the Arab-Israeli War and the oil embargo had paved the way for rapprochement between South Yemen and the Gulf kingdoms. But this was overshadowed by Yemen's total support to the Dohfar movement. The defeat of the movement let pragmatism take
precedence over ideology. South Yemen found the conservative regimes as a source of economic aid and diplomatic entree in the Persian Gulf politics.

The radical threat to the Arab neighbors from the Baathist Iraq always persisted in some form or other but remained subsided in the two decades preceding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Both the rivals used to verbally criticize each other’s ideology but neither did Iraq resort to helping radical forces within the monarchical states nor did the monarchical governments utilize their financial clout to help the Kurdish rebellion inside Iraq.

In fact, the conservative states were more concerned at the dangers of Iraqi expansionism, basically a Pre-Baathist characteristic, than at an covert or overt attempt on Iraq’s part to create internal instability (56). The incidences of Iraq’s direct military actions against neighbor Arabs are far more than those of supporting leftist movements or rebellion in these countries.

This proves that Iraqi military invasions or threats were based on the objectives other than the ideological ones. These objectives can be summarized as the control over oil resources and the expansion of national frontiers by Iraq. Otherwise, had the occupation of Kuwait had an ideological connotation only, Saddam Hussein would have pulled his forces out of it after installing a pro-Iraq democratic government instead of annexing it.

The Geo-strategic dimension, bereft of any ideological flavor, of Iraqi confrontation with the Arab states is further highlighted by the contrast in Iraqi objectives of attacking Iran in 1980 and Kuwait ten years later. The nature of Iraqi attack against Iran, particularly the deployment of force and the limited number of battalions used in initial days, show that Iraq’s main aim was not to occupy Iran but to create political chaos, leading to the removal of the Islamic government.

Even Iraq did not officially announce the annexing of the Iranian territories it conquered during the war, although liberation of the Khuzestan, peopled by Arabs and claimed to be the part of Iraq under Turkish rule, was one of Baghdad’s official war objectives.

On a number of occasions the relations between the Iraq and its Arab neighbors were de-ideologised. The relations in the 70s can be described as friendly and in the 80s as very close. There were irritants and constraints but none amounted to the deterioration in the relations.

Commonalty of interests, including the realisation fact that they belong to the same ideological camp in Arabi-Iran rivalry, overcame the ideological constraints in the bilateral relations. Iraq was courted by the conservative states to contain the Shah in the same way as the latter was used to checkmate the Baathist threat.

On the Arab-Israeli issue and that of the oil embargo, Iraq joined hands with the conservative regimes and after the Egypt’s ouster from the Arab fold, Iraq tired to win over these regimes to prop it up as the new leader of the Arab world.

The Islamic revolution and the outbreaking of the Iran-Iraq War followed in quick succession. The threat these events posed to Iraq as well its Arab neighbors brought them
closer, with the conservative states providing financial support to Iraq to the tune of $50 billion and
Baghdad claiming to have fought the war on behalf of all the Arab countries of the region.

The relations between Iraq and the conservative Arab states since the former’s invasion of Kuwait remain severed and soured. As a result, the ideological rivalry has again cropped up, but in a changed form if not the substance.

Saddam Hussein’s tirade against monarchical governments is now more on Islamic lines than the Baathist. However, it would be too early to presume that Saddam Huseein has finally
shunned the Baathism at least in the sphere of his relations with the neighbor Arabs. But what can be said with a measure of authority that at present the ideological rivalry is a reminiscent of the 1980s’ Islamic conservatism vs. Islamic radicalism between Arab states and Iran and not a reflection of the Iraqi radicalism vs. Arab conservatism.

**DYNASTIC RIVALRY**

The Persian Gulf is the arena of another form of conflict also, that is among the rulers of Arabian peninsula. This conflict lacks the "personality cult" as is found in the one between Hafiz-Al-Assad and Saddam Hussein. Rather it is a continuation of age-old dynastic rivalries.

The conflict over the Buraimi Oasis between Saudi Arabia and Oman is inter-linked with the dynastic rivalry between the rulers of the two countries. For King Fahad the oasis is the matter of ancestral pride. For Sheikh Ziyad it is the symbol of pride too as it has been his ancestral home and the place where he spent his formative years.

In the case of Sheikh Ziyad of Abu Dhabi and Sheikh Rasheed of Dubai, the dynastic conflict between them revolves around the issue of the respective claims to the post of the head of the state of the UAE. Ziyad extended his claim for and secured the top slot on the ground the Rashid’s family occupied second position in the tribal hierarchy before it moved out from Abu Dhabi for Dubai and settled there in the early 19th century. Sheikh Saqar bridles at being contended with a lower niche in comparison to the rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai.

Both Qatar and Bahrain opted out from the negotiations on the proposed federation of nine trucial states at the eve of the British withdrawal mainly because Al-Khalifa of Bahrain and al Thani of Qatar were not prepared for a position lower in rank to that of the other one’s in the power arrangement.

**CAUSES OF CONFLICTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF**

The causes of the various conflicts in the Persian Gulf are rooted in the history, politics and geo-strategy of the region.

**HISTORY:**

History, both distant and the recent, is described as the major source of the outbreak and continuance of both ideological and territorial conflicts in the region.

The boundaries of present states have always been in a state of flux in the past, hence overlapping claims over a particular portion of land and islands by two countries and in some cases more than that. The Ottoman empire stretched, in the Persian Gulf region, over today’s Kuwait, parts of Iraq and Iran. The Persian empire, which Iran represents, included the UAE, Bahrain and a number of islands presently under Kuwait’s and Saudi Arabia’s control. As a result, Iraq extends its claims over both Kuwait and the areas adjacent to the Shatt’s estuary.
Iran, on the other hand, justifies its claim over the UAE and Bahrain.

The territorial disputes in the region are the continuation of those existing since long. The Shatt dispute, fought over by the Ottoman and Persian empires over hundreds of years, is the most notable among these.

Changing loyalties of the people of the disputed area from one disputant state to another and the human occupation in an area shifting from the people of one ethnicity in a particular period to the people of some other ethnicity in the other periods have given birth to contentious claims.

Came the European powers and they divided the region in “spheres of influence” in total disregard to the historical, ethnic and geographic realities. These “spheres of influence” emerged as sovereign states after the British withdrawal. But the withdrawal also led the mother countries to revive their claims on these newly independent states as these happened to be the part of their historical boundaries.

TERRITORIAL NATIONALISM:

One of the negative effects of the Arabs’ contact with the European powers has been the inculcation of a strong sense of territorial nationalism among the former. In the pre-colonial days, this practice was limited to Ottoman and Persian empires. The Saudi peninsula was by and large ignorant of territorial nationalism of the western kind. But the growing consciousness of statehood has interlocked the peninsular states into rivalries which did not exist in the past; for example, disputes on sovereignty over the continental shelf bed and territorial water. The national consciousness prevented the small Sheikhdoms from coalescing into a single political unit and even ensued conflicts among various constituents of a state, for instance, the UAE.

POLITICAL SYSTEM:

Since most of the regional countries are not democracies, people, the media, interest groups and armed forces do not keep a check on their government’s territorial designs. It is not to deny that the boundary disputes do not exist between two democracies, but the possibility of the flaring up of these disputes into full-fledged conflicts is remote in the case of two democracies.

In fact, the non-democratic countries have glorified wars to establish political legitimacy. In some cases the ruling regimes have deliberately stayed away from finding a peaceful solution to their disputes out of the fear that granting some concessions to the opponent power during the peace process may lead to a public revolt. This was one of the underlying reasons behind Iraq’s refusal to pull out of Kuwait when the war with allies and the likely defeat had become inevitable. A meek surrender than a valiant defeat at the hands of a far stronger military power ran a greater risk.

GEOGRAPHY:

The intricate geo-structure of the Persian Gulf region is alone the cause of many a
conflict. Iraq would have had hardly any objection to demarcate its boundaries with Iran along the Shatt through the Thalweg method had the access of this oil exporting country to the sea-lanes not passed through the neighbor's side of the Thalweg.

Most of the islands in Persian Gulf waters fall within the 12 nautical territorial water limits of more than one state. Persian Gulf is shallow with its average depth being 40 meters. Because of these reasons all of the seabed is the continental shelf is subjected, according to the contemporary international law, to economic exploitation by almost all the countries of the region. The width of the Persian Gulf is far less than the prescribed limit of 200 nautical miles. The result: overlapping of rights over resources underneath the waters.

The western side of the Persian Gulf is more shallow. This results into the formation of a large number of islands that lie within the territorial jurisdiction of the majority of the coastal states on the western side and are, therefore, subject to multilateral disputes.

It is relatively deeper on the Iranian side. Therefore, there are fewer islands on this side. This compells Iran to eye on all those islands on the western side coast which fall well within Tehran’s territorial limits. The problem is further compounded due to the fact that an island constitutes the part of land territory of a country, extending, thereby, its territorial water limits farther.

The Thalweg method of the settlement of a particular dispute does not suit to the Persian Gulf’s typical geo-physical conditions. The employing of this method implies physically dividing a number of islands. Added to this is the problem that from where the medianline be measured, the coastline of the main territory of a country or the coastline of the islands that that country possesses.

The oil factor further complicates the issue. The parties to a territorial dispute are not prepared to relinquish their claims over islands falling under their sovereign jurisdiction as these islands and the seabed over 12 nautical miles all around it contain a large oil reservoirs (Bubiyan, Warbah and Huwar, Abu Musa and Tunbs) (59).

Accords pertaining to island disputes do not qualify as ideal and permanent settlements. There lies inherent the possibility of violation, annulment and varying interpretation of these accords by either of or both the states. Both Iran and the UAE describe Abu Musa and Tunbs as the integral part of their territories although they have already signed an agreement according to which the former enjoys military control of them and the later the economic and the administrative control.

The signing of treaties on the Shatt and their abrogations have followed one after the other since the 17th century. A number of agreements on boundary disputes are half-baked. They at best have frozen a dispute for the time being instead of providing a permanent solution (Saudi Arab-Kuwait agreement on Neutral Zone).
Yawning asymmetries in size and military strength between the disputants is one of the main causes behind the boundary disputes assuming the form of military conflagrations.

Interestingly, the large-sized states' mindset is that they are not prepared to recognize their tiny neighbors as a state of equal status in the international community. The military prowess of these countries induces them to undo what they consider an injustice done to them by the British powers. This approach underlines Iraq's behavior towards Kuwait and that of Iran towards the UAE or Bahrain.

The stronger powers' urge for regional supremacy is the by-product of the above-mentioned asymmetries. The Shah occupied the UAE's islands knowing that the UAE did not have the capability to withstand the Iranian assault. The same force worked behind Iraqi designs in Kuwait. The annexation Kuwait would project Iraq as a formidable land-sea power vis-a-vis other Arab states of the region and Iran was an important part of Saddam Hussein's over all strategy behind invading Kuwait.

The regional motives, however, have been the source of conflict between the two symmetrical powers also. Saudi Arabia and Iran under the Shah, despite maintaining friendly relations, were reluctant in co-sharing the role of the regional policeman. Saudi Arabia thoroughly opposed Iranian intervention in Oman to suppress the Dohfar movement though it in itself was threatened considerably by the likelihood of Dohfars' victory. Saudi Arabia also expressed reservations to the American decision to bestow the responsibility of policing the Persian Gulf on the Shah.

A replica of Iran-Saudi Arabia relations was those between Iraq and Saudi Arabia during the Iran-Iraq War. Saudi Arabia never liked the prospects of an outright victory of Iraq. And one of its objectives to help Iraq financially was to neutralize Iraqi claim of defending the Arab world all alone.

Among enemies, Iran and Iraq have competed for this status by containing each other's influence among the Arab peninsular countries, through entering an arms race and trying to outmaneuver each other on regional issues.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSIAN GULF CONFLICTS

AN OUTGROWTH OF HISTORICAL CONFLICTS:

This prognosis, although true to a large extent, needs to be re-examined as history may not be the both a factor in all the conflicts and not a factor at all in some specific conflicts.

In most of the cases of territorial disputes in the region the causes of their origin is found in the history. This approach is wittingly or unwittingly influenced by the historical rights the disputant states advance to the territory in question. For example, the reasons behind these disputes are generally stated to be the absence of the practice of boundary demarcation, shifting tribal loyalties and human migration from and to a disputed area. But these very factors at a same
time deny the historicity of a dispute due to following reasons.

First, since the boundary demarcations were not common in the past and those carried out by the imperialist powers were arbitrary, the modern nation-states in the Persian gulf are not the legal and typical case of successor states. Second, if the human migration was a continuous phenomenon in the past, a portion of land which a state claims on the basis that it was the part of the territory of its mother state during a particular period might have been the part of the mother state of the other state during some other period(s).

Also, in the past the disputes in the region were tribal not the territorial. The wars in those days were fought not for the extension of boundaries but for conquering tribe or tribes by another tribe. The possession of land the defeated tribe inhabited was, therefore, the result not the factor behind the outbreak of those wars. The territorial jurisdiction of a state were determined by the loyalty it received from tribes. Thus, the territorial boundaries of a state were not necessarily contiguous as is the case with modern nation states. Thus, the intra-tribal wars of the old days are not a precursor of present territorial disputes in the Persian Gulf. The only dispute which fits into the description of a historical dispute is that over the Shatt between Iran and Iraq.

Most of the territorial disputes in the region are the outcome of the geo-strategic factors. These have erupted after the discovery of oil or as a result of eco-strategic requirements of a 20th century nation-state (60), while a dispute of historical magnitude generally happens to be an ever persisting phenomenon. But in the case of the disputes in the Persian Gulf region it seems that their historical antecedents have been re-discovered by the disputants to give sustenance to their claims. This is further substantiated by the fact that the territories which are strategically and economically not important have not been the bone of contention between the two states. Although in a region undemarcated in the past, each portion of land can be a subject of dispute.

As matter of fact, the boundary disputes in the region are the product of a recent history, the unnatural demarcation of the states and carving out of a web of small states on the western shore of the Persian Gulf by the colonial powers. With tribal loyalties being the main determinant of the territorial boundaries of Arab peninsular states during the pre-colonial days, some tribes have not reconciled to the fact that a tribe dominated by it in the past is now the part of another state following the arbitrary demarcation of the region in the 18th, 19th and the early 20th centuries. The coming up of small states on the western shore of the narrow body of Gulf waters has created the disputes over the demarcation of the territorial water and right over the continental shelf among themselves and with Iran on the other side.

THE SUPERPOWERS RIVALRY:

Of the Third World conflicts those in the Persian gulf region were hardly an extension of superpowers rivalry. All the disputes preceded superpowers rivalry in general and their rivalry in the Persian Gulf, which started after the British withdrawal except in Iran's case, in particular.
These are local in nature and they had not involved the superpowers on the opposite sides. All the conflicts in the Arab Peninsula are between the countries which belong to the US bloc. Thus the US practiced neutrality and either of the disputant sides did not generally seek Soviet support, leaving, therefore, a little room for the superpowers’ involvement.

The dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, the one involving the countries of opposite global power blocs was a low-profile dispute when the cold war was in its hey day. Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait took place when the Soviet Union had almost retired from global politics. Although the war between Iraq and Iran was fought when the New cold war was in full swing, but partly due to Iran’s antagonism vis-a-vis the superpowers and partly due to the fact that the threat of Iran emerging, if it happened to win the war, into a regional power independent of superpowers domination, the two superpowers sided with Iraq.

The US has not shown any interests in resolving the boundary disputes among its allies. It did not consider these disputes detrimental to its policy of containment of the Soviet Union as the chances of either of the parties to the dispute turning to the Soviet Union for support were almost unlikely.

The role of the superpowers in the conflict prevention has been negligible. They did not make any endeavor jointly or separately to resolve any of these imbroglios, except once while cooperating to assure the adopting of the Security Council Resolution 598 which turned out to be the basis of the end of the Iran-Iraq War. But, the acceptance of the resolution 598 by Iran was an independent decision and not a result of any external pressure. In the termination of the Iran-Iraq war, therefore, the role of the superpowers was confined to facilitating the adopting of the resolution 598.

The superpowers did play the role of the conflict-manager directly as well as indirectly. Common bond with the US restrain the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf from escalating their boundary disputes. Both the superpowers perceived the regional conflicts as issues of local significance, therefore refrained from using these in their global confrontation. This way they prevented the internationalization of these conflicts (61).

LARGELY NON-VIOLENT:
Majority of the conflicts in the Persian Gulf have been non-violent. Only four of them viz., the Iranian occupation of Abu Musa and Tunbs, the Iran-Iraq dispute over the Shatt in the 70s, the Iran-Iraq War, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent Persian Gulf War fall in the category of violent disputes.

The territorial dispute, in particular, has strictly been a diplomatic duel, with a few of them occasionally escalating into border skirmishes such as the one between Oman and Saudi Arabia in 1955, Iran and Iraq during the 70s over the Shatt and Saudi Arabia and Qatar in September 1992.

The Iran-Iraq War and the Iraqi aggression of Kuwait look on the face of it a war over boundary disputes but actually the issues behind the outbreak of these crises were other than
what normally do not constitute the part of a territorial dispute. As regards the Iran-Iraq war, it started immediately a day after Iraq abrogated the 1975 Algiers agreement, while the side which started the war was Iraq not Iran. The issues which prompted military action were Iraq's aim to topple the Islamic Revolution, to pre-empt an internal resurgence by the Shiie population and to emerge as the leader of the Arab World by defeating its traditional enemy Iran, which after the revolution had begun to look dangerous to the internal stability of each of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was not an outburst of the brewing up of the tension over contentious Bubiyan and Warbah islands, an issue which, otherwise, did not rake up throughout the Iran-Iraq War and two years after its end. A boundary dispute with a potential to culminate into an invasion or a war must have hardly been a subsided one in the preceding decade.

That the conflicts in the Persian Gulf have not turned volatile is explained in the very nature of these conflicts. The territorial conflicts are more technical than political which entail a negotiated settlement than a military solution. Some of the conflicts are under the process of settlement and, therefore, by and large subsided. As far as the conflicts over the exploitation of natural resources and extension of territorial jurisdiction are concerned, the parties know that the use of force to realize their objectives would not give legitimacy to their claim.

The settlements of these conflicts through the use of force is harmful in cost-benefit calculations also. As far as the Arabian peninsular countries are concerned, they run the risk of rupturing security ties and economic and political cooperation among themselves by doing so.

The smaller countries with a limited manpower and an underdeveloped economic base are vulnerable to a long war. Recognizing their relatively weaker military strength and the lack of strategic depth, they ensure it that they do not provide the stronger power an excuse for starting a war(62). In a few cases, these conflicts could not flare up due to the militarily weaker states' passive reaction to a stronger power's aggrandizement. The UAE did not resist Iranian occupation of its islands. In 1977, Saudi Arabia allegedly occupied some of the disputed islands in the neutral zone between it and Kuwait but the latter decided not to retaliate. In the wake of Saudi attack on its military post in September 1992, Qatar did not offer any resistance. It, instead, used political means, such as threatening to withdraw from the GCC, to avert the crisis. Before the Iraqi invasion the Kuwaiti government tried to use diplomatic means and financial resources, to an extent of agreeing to give in to Iraqi demand of oil price hike and waiving off its debts to it, to avert it. The UAE, whose three islands Iran had occupied, maintained most cordial relation with Tehran in the Iran-Iraq war.

In the perception of the Arab peninsular countries the security threats to them emanated from outside powers viz., Iran, Iraq, Israel and the Soviet Union. The common threat perception restrained them from blowing up the intra-regional dispute in order to exhibit unity and solidarity among themselves to extra regional threats.
THE IRAN-IRAQ AND THE PERSIAN GULF WARS — AN EXCEPTION:

The Iran-Iraq War questioned the merit of generalizing the Third World wars. Experts have held that a war between the two Third World countries tends to become a swift and short affair on two counts viz., possession of highly sophisticated weapons by them and economic inability to sustain a long war. Contrary to this, the Iran-Iraq war was the longest war of this century fought between the two countries possessing sophisticated weapons. Their economies underwent a decline but not to the extent of persuading them to end the war. Instead, they managed their economic affairs in a way that these provided sustenance to the war. Iran did it by developing a self-reliant economy based on optimum use of its industrial base and manpower strength and Iraq with the help of foreign assistance and by imposing economic austerity.

As regards the Persian Gulf War, Iraq saw its invasion of Kuwait as a quick fix to its economic woes. The economic embargo did not force it to withdraw from Kuwait when the war with the allied forces had become inevitable and the invasion of Kuwait begun to look an economic misadventure. Four years of the imposing of the economic embargo, which has severely bitten it particularly the poor section, has yet not dampened Iraq’s resolve to exhibit that it can withstand such hardships.

This particular case bring home two lessons. First, economic constraints still do not happen to be a factor influencing a Third World leader’s war-making decision howsoever ‘real’ these might be. Second, a Third World country has an inbuilt economic strength to fund a war and its people an understanding that the economic deterioration resulting from the war is not an abnormal development.

These full-fledged wars in the Persian Gulf underline a major difference between a Third World War and the one in the Industrialised World. That difference is in attitudes of the two peoples towards the war. In Industrialised World the people are haunted by the would be disastrous effects of a war on their economic well being as well as the security of their lives, particularly of the armed forces personnel. They, therefore, prefer that the war is avoided. In the Third World, the patriotic zeal and in some cases religious fervor have developed a pro-war attitude among the people. In the Iran-Iraq war, local populace constituted a major chunk of the Iranian army (63). In the Persian Gulf War, people voluntarily joined the Iraqi army. Third World People’s unfailing support to their government even though defeated further substantiates this hypothesis. After Iraqi defeat popularity of Saddam Hussein has remained more or less intact, barring the aberration of about a fortnight-long revolt by Kurds and the Shia people of marshland. But they had resorted to rebellion to cash in on to defeat their political opponent. It was not a rebellion stemming from an anguish against a government which brought humiliation to the country.

The case of victorious America was altogether different. After a few months of euphoria and despite the fact that the US army did not suffer even one tenth of the expected casualties, people began to question the American rationale behind fighting some one else’s war. The defeat of the hero of the war, George Bush, in the presidential election created an impression
that not a grand victory but its negative effects determined American people’s attitude towards the war.

The above-mentioned wars have re-started the process of Islamization of War (64). The approach to war of the Iranian army against Iraq in the Iran-Iraq War and that of the Iraqi army against the Multinational Forces is marked for religious fanaticism, indifference to death and a cult of martyrdom (65). These two wars also invalidate British Historian John Keeqen’s theory of “abolition of battle” which visualizes that due to modern weapons’ capacity to over-kill and kill brutally, there would grow a disillusionment with the war among soldiers (66). However, in the case of the two wars, patriotism, loyalty to the government, religious zeal, and sacrificial urge offset the fear of modern weapons brutality and increased soldiers’ enthusiasm for a war.

However, the Iran-Iraq war substantiates the contention that modern wars, even those involving a Third World country on each side, can not be won. Both Iran and Iraq did not meet their primary war objectives. Yet the realization of this failure during the course of the war did not let them stop the war. The short-term gains, a few major military breakthroughs, some positive effects of the war on internal front — social cohesion and political consolidation — and the fear of people’s backlash in case the war was stopped, kept them proceeding ahead.

The Persian Gulf War reaffirmed the contention that there is no one-to-one correspondence between a victory and the objectives of a starting a war. The US victory in the Persian Gulf War was total, yet not all its war objectives were materialized. On one hand, the US succeeded in liberating Kuwait, refurbishing its dominance over the regional states, the United Nations, European allies and the world as a whole for that matter, but, on the other, it failed to oust Saddam, decimate Iraqi military strength and turning it into a docile power.

**ARMS AND CONFLICTS IN PERSIAN GULF:**

Persian Gulf is the world’s largest arms recipient according to the region-wise breakup. This tends one to draw a link between arms acquisition and the eruption and escalation of various disputes and the conflicts in the region. But this, in most of the cases, does not hold true. As regards the boundary disputes, the disputants’ arms spree and the resultant strengthening of their defense network have not prodded them to settle their scores through the use of force. The Persian Gulf countries launched a massive arms acquisition drive in the 70s, but they, in the same decade, settled most of their disputes also. Arms played a role in the Iran-Iraq War and the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait in 1990. However, in both the cases arms (purchases and arms race) were not the cause of the war but an instrument to carry this on.

The arms acquisition has not generally caused a spurt in regional disputes mainly because it has been defense oriented. Militarily stronger powers have played the role of regional policemen (Iran and Saudi Arabia in the 70s), protecting smaller states’ security, with whom they happen to be in dispute with on territorial issues. The sources of arms supply have been either common or those from the same bloc, who have, in turn, ensured that regional allies do not use these arms to fight among themselves. In addition, arms race in the region has proved to be a deterrence also.
THE PERSIAN GULF COUNTRIES AND THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL SYSTEMS:

Most of the Persian Gulf conflicts have failed to influence the regional and international systems with the Iran-Iraq War and the Persian Gulf War being an exception. The disputes within the Arabian peninsula did not change the political landscape of the region, disrupt friendly ties among the disputants, lead to their division into Soviet and American power blocs and prevent the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

As against this, as far as the regional system is concerned, the Iran-Iraq war established the preponderance of regional threat (from Iran) over the external one (from the USSR), stimulated the rapprochement between Iraq and other Arab countries of the region, led to the formation of a common security system and political and economic union, the GCC. As regards the International system, the Iran-Iraq war became the first such case where the USSR and the US were not seen pitted against each other. The war was a non-issue in the starting or the whipping up of the Second Cold War. It was indeed a prelude to its end.

The Persian Gulf War altered the International system by checkmating the evolution of a multi-polar world order in favour of a unipolar one headed by the US, arresting the drifting of the center of gravity from the hands military power to economic powers and preventing the breaking up of the West Europe-US alliance following retrenchment of the Soviet Union from an active role in international politics.

COMMON BONDS AND CONFLICTS IN PERSIAN GULF:

Conflicts among the Arab peninsular countries are subordinated to the commonalty of political and economic interests. With monarchy being the common form of the government throughout the region, these governments are not engaged in abetting and fomenting internal strife in one another countries. For, they hold that any radical or revolutionary political change in one country will have a far-reaching cross-border implications. Instead, these governments have in establishing the GCC evolved a regional mechanism of quelling internal dissension by sharing intelligence information and pledging not to allow radical elements any facilities in one’s territory.

The oil is another source of regional cooperation among the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. More or less common impact on them of the energy scenario in the industrialized world has struck a great deal of policy coordination on price and production of oil, leading to the formation of a cartel within the OPEC. The smaller oil producers have some resentment against Saudi-price moderation and over-production policy, but they have not let their resentment grow out of proportions.

Saudi Arabia, which has the potential to become the destabilising power to the regional system owing to its geographical, economic and military superiority over neighboring countries, has acted as ‘patron’ and not as a confrontationist. It has sought to evolve a system of regional cooperation to carve out the niche of a regional power for itself. In addition, the common regional threats, either Iran or Iraq or Israel, have expedited Saudi Arabia to bring the
rest of the countries of the peninsula together. In the process, Saudi Arabia has either settled its disputes with others or has not let them to remain an irritant in its relationship with the latter.

THE GCC AND THE SETTLEMENTS AND SUBSIDING OF DISPUTES:

GCC’s formation ensued the settlements of a few conflicts at least. This regional body has been instrumental in the resolving disputes between Qatar and Bahrain on Huwar island in March 1982 and Fash-Al-Dibal in 1986, and between Oman and PDRY (in 1986). However, more than resolving disputes among the member states (67), the GCC has arrested the process of the eruption of conflicts as the member-states avoid giving publicity to these lest they impinge on the existence and the functioning of the organization.

TERRITORIAL DISPUTES ARE DEVOID OF EXPANSIONIST DESIGNS:

A good number of disputes in the region do not carry the seeds of expansionist designs. This is borne out by their “give and take basis” settlement. For instance, according to the Saudi Arabia-Bahrain agreement 1958, Bahrain relinquished its sovereignty over Abu Safah island in exchange for the Saudi offer to share the revenues with the former. Under Saudi Arabia-Iran agreement on offshore boundary agreements, the two countries distributed among themselves the Firaydun and Marjan oil fields and gave half effect to Kharag island with each agreeing to have an equal share in oil and other offshore exploitation (68). Abu Dhabi and Qatar settled their dispute over Bundaq oilfield by agreeing to establish common sovereignty (69) over it.

THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE RECURRENCE OF THE REGIONAL DISPUTES:

The recurrence of majority of the regional disputes is by and large an improbability, but in the present circumstances only. Since most of them are far from being settled or are vaguely settled, their recurrence can not be ruled out if and when the regional scenario undergoes a drastic change.

The Saudi case offers an interesting example. Saudi Arabia is involved in the largest number of boundary disputes. But it has underplayed them for the sake of maintaining a ‘father figure’ position among smaller states. What if a country or most of them reject Saudi ‘paternalism’. Saudi Arabia, then, would re-enact these disputes to intimidate its erstwhile friends so as to maintain its regional power status.

Importance of Bubiyan and Warbah islands has heightened to Iraq with the transfer of its port Umm-E-Qasar to Kuwait by the UN Boundary Commission. It is now more pressed more than ever not to relinquish its claim and on these islands.

The dispute over the Shatt has since last many centuries kept on recurring mainly because the agreements on them have been signed by one of the parties under duress. Therefore, the moment situation changes in favor of the party at the receiving end, it deviates from its commitment. Saddam gifted the Shatt to Iran during the Gulf War but that decision was purely circumsunetional. He might have regretted his decision after the end of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. With the Umm-E-Qasr port having been given to Kuwait and Iraqi access to sea has quenched further, the revival of the Shatt dispute would sooner or later constitute a major policy objective of Iraq.
Most of the boundary settlements are incomplete. The northern terminal point and a few islands between Iran and Qatar are still left undemarcated despite the fact that this issue settled as per a boundary agreement between the two countries in 1969. In the case of Iran-Bahrain, Makhilu, Jabrin and Muharraq are left unsettled in the 1971 boundary settlement between them. A few terminal points were not delimited under Iran-Oman boundary agreement in 1974. These may be the fresh source of conflicts in the future.

REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES

1. The dispute in the region have for the sake of convinience been divided as territorial ideological disputes etc. However, the afore-mentioned categorization is not a genuine one given the many-dimensional nature of a conflict in the region. The Persian Gulf war was both an intra-regional territorial dispute as well as the one between aregional and extra regional powers, rthe latter depending upon whom one considers as the two main parties to this war. Similarly, the war between Iran and Iraq can be described as both the territorial and ideological disputes or even none of them if one comes up with the argument that neither had the underlying ideological rivalry nor the territorial dispute between the two countries reached such alarming proportions that the war had become inevitable. Rather, that war was an outcome of the Saddam Hussein’s comparative assessment of the existing state of political conditions in and military prowess of, the two countries, if one looks at the factors leading to the war from a micro and (agianst Iraq) angle.


4. Closure of the Shatt during the Iran-Iraq War reduced Iraqi oil exports by 50 percent.


6. The researcher does not consider the Shatt-Al-Arab dispute as one of the causes of the Iran-Iraq war. A detailed description substantiating this viewpoint is given in the chapter on the Iran-Iraq War.


9. Persia later accepted the ‘explanatory note’ on Aug. 15, 1912 under Russian pressure.

10. In 1907, Persia was divided into three zones—Russian sphere of influence in north, the British in south, and a neutral zone in the middle.


12. Iran recognized Iraq in 1929.

13. The reasons behind the abrogation of the treaty by the Shah can be attributed to his fear that the Baathist regime of Iraq, that had come to power by uprooting the Iran-friendly government of Gen. Qasim, would make maximum use of the Shatt estuary to expand its influence among other Arab powers in the name of Arabism, the corner-stone of the Baathist ideology. Another reason lies in the Shah’s hagemonic design in the Persian Gulf following the British announcement of withdrawal from the east of Suez in 1967. Unrestricted navigation to Iranian port of in the Persian Gulf was the key to this strategy.


16. It may be noted that the treaty did not make a direct reference to Iranian support to Kurdish rebellion. Rather it enjoined upon the two states to refrain from interfering in each other’s internal affairs.

17. The dispute over the Shatt during 80s and after is dealt with in the chapter on the Iran-Iraq War.


22. Eilts, Fredrick Hermann, N.18, p. 32.

23. The UAE consists of seven trucial Sheikhdoms. In 1971, after the British withdrawal from the region, they decided to merge into a federation. Ras-Al Khaima joined the federation in 1972. The seven UAE Sheikhdoms are Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ummul Qaiwan, Fujirah and Ras Al Khaima.


25. Ibid, P. 152

26. In the first quarter of the present century the oasis remained independent of the control of any of the disputants states.


32. Bahrain is rich in oil, generates moderate sized revenue from oil exports, has an oil refinery and is a leading commercial center in the Persian Gulf region.

33. The Iranian claim is disputed because after the advent of Islam Bahrain, as happened to other Arab peninsular countries, was occupied by the Arab-Islamic forces.


35. These islands are within 12 nautical miles territorial limits of both the countries. Abu Musa dispute is between Iran and Sharjah and the two Tunbs between Iran and Ras Al Khaima.

37. The agreement was signed between Iran and Sharjah on Nov. 29, 1969. It stipulated joint occupation of the island and joint sharing of revenues. Iran also agreed to let the Butta Gas Oil Company, which was awarded the concession by Sharjah, continue exploring the oil. See “Iranian offer to Buy Three Gulf Island Reported” Middle East Economic Survey (Beirut) Dec. 15, 1971.


41. The reports of Saudi occupation of these islands in 1977 by some sources is not substantiated by relevant evidences.

42. Alsadur, Drysdale & Blake, Gerald H, N. 5., P. 4.

43. For instance, a Qatari ministerial statement in 1976 described Hower as integral part of Qatar and condemned Bahraini military exercises. Similarly, Bahrain in 1978 criticized the presence of Qatari warships in the waters around the Howars.

44. For the text see US Department of State, “Continental Boundary: Bahrain -Saudi Arabia” International Boundary Study, March 10, 1970.

45. The agreement over the Kharag island could be finalised with most difficulty. Initially, Iran wanted that the median line be measured from the Kharag island. Saudi Arabia wanted a median line existing between the main islands of the two countries. In 1965, Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to establish a boundary line existing at an equidistance from the two proposed median lines. later, Iran rejected this when it realized that this would extend Saudi control over the offshore oil discovered by the Iranian concessionaire. Saudi Arabia gave a sympathetic consideration to Iran’s position and proposed division of Boundaries in such a way that oil resources were equitably shared. Given the Saudi concession, Iran also dropped its insistence on retaining its full control of the Kharag and the measurement of the median line from the 12 nautical miles off the island.

46. It was a remarkable achievement in view of the fact that Islam is a religion which provides a whole set of code of conducts in social and cultural realms of the life of a faithful.


49. Hunter, Shireen, N. 47, P. 68.


52. The Iranian Radio Arabic broadcast begins with a Quranic verse, “kings dispoil a county when they enter it and make the nobles of its people its means”.

53. It may be noted that in Iran the head of the government—the president—is directly elected but the head of the state—the spiritual leader—who is vested with supreme executive powers and the power to exercise veto over the executive orders and legislations of the government, is not elected but appointed by a body of clerics. Some Arab monarchies have established representative political institutions. But these bodies are not elected on the basis of universal adult franchise, have limited powers, consist of a fairly large number of nominated representatives and are subject to dissolution by the King at his will.

54. Western sources say that due to Iran’s preoccupation with Iraq, the fervor behind export of revolution dampened. But this inference is not logical as the western sources relate it to a sharp decline in Iran’s visible involvement in fomenting internal dissension in the Arab countries, without evaluating whether was there really any marked decline in Iran’s export of revolution propaganda also. Iran’s export of revolution policy was confined to rhetorics in the pre-war period. So did it remain so after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War. Hence, there was hardly any “noticeable” or sharp decline in the Iranian attempt to export the revolution.


56. Iraq refrained from supporting subversive elements in the Arab Gulf largely because the left-oriented forces were week, lacked popular support, and were more Nasserite than Baathist. Iraq had little track with the other streams of rebels, the Islamists. During the Persian Gulf crisis and the war, Iraq received sympathy from the Islamic resistance groups but this did not graduate into their identification with Iraq. After the Iraqi defeat, they moved further away from Iraq, which now lacks both the will and the clout to strike a nexus with the latter. Iraq has never been in a sound position to influence the Arab armed forces, the intelligence and the internal security personnel despite the fact that they, given their modern outlook, seem more responsive to a secular ideology. A close monitoring of these elements by the ruling regimes, their unconditional loyalty to the establishment and the American influence on them have lessened the chances of military takeover or coup encouraged by a foreign power in the countries of Arab monarchies in
the Persian Gulf.


60. For example, the Shah’s main intention behind occupying the islands of Abu Musa and two Tunbs was to flank the Persian Gulf from both the sides, see Eilts, Hermann Frederick., N. 18, Pp. 26-27.


66. Harkavy, Robert G., N. 64, P. 18.

67. Most of the boundary disputes among the member states still exist. Nor have most of them been brought before the GCC for settlement.

68. Sweraingen, Will D., N. 21, P. 329.

69. Ibid, P. 329.
CHAPTER II

SUPERPOWERS AND THE PERSIAN GULF CONFLICTS

Conflicts in the Persian Gulf haven’t been the replica of the Cold War as the most of Third World ones during the 70s and the 80s are described as and understood to be. The superpowers, or either of the two, played, directly or indirectly, a limited role in abetting a conflict in the Persian Gulf crisis being an exception. More than confronting each other, the superpowers cooperated during the two major wars which have been fought in the region since the 1970 and did not always end up supporting the rival sides.

But this does not mean that the superpowers and their relations remained unaffected by the conflicts in the Persian Gulf region. These conflicts told upon their respective policies towards the region as well as their bilateral relations.

This chapter looks into the various facets of the respective policies of the superpowers on regional conflicts.

THE UNITED STATES AND THE REGIONAL CONFLICTS

The United States’ approach to the regional conflicts has been pegged to its overall policy objectives in the region. Thus the containment of the Soviet Union, consolidation of political and strategic leverage in the region, security of and stability of the allies, the security of Israel, the national security and the oil have constituted the main undercurrents and contours of US policy.

THE POLICY

CONSOLIDATION OF LEVERAGE:

This explains the United States pre-occupation with the regional crises. On the one hand, regional conflicts threatened to restrict US political influence, if the Soviet Union exploited the opportunity to come to the rescue of either of the sides at disputes or if these resulted into the emergence of regional power. On the other hand, these crises came as an opportunity to the US to demonstrate itself as a credible, reliable and a long-term security partner of the allies (1). This is why on every such occasion, the United States has taken it as its unilateral duty to protect its allies. However, the scope to play this role has been dependent on the magnitude of the threat to the allies and US interests in the region.

In the case of the Iran-Iraq War, since the Persian Gulf States were not directly involved and the US did not want that any of its actions caused Iran to attack them militarily-weaker states of the Arabian Peninsula, the US limited its role to guarantee an 'over-the-horizon' security to the allies, to shore up their military build-up and to intimidate Iran of grave consequences if it tried to drag its the allies into the war.
However, the Persian Gulf crisis did not only threaten the annihilation of one of the US allies, Kuwait, and Iraqi control over the 50 percent of the world oil reserves, but it erupted at a time when the US, in the absence of the Soviet challenge, could exploit the situation to establish its hegemony throughout the world. Thus, unlike as in the Iran-Iraq war, the US took part in the Persian Gulf crisis. The Iraqi defeat at its hands was seen to serve US domination of the region too. The prospect of defeating Iraq could have replaced the Saddam regime by a Pro-American one. At least, it would have subverted a regional threat and turned it into a docile power.

In the 1980s, the US responses to the Persian Gulf crises by and large met its objectives. The Arab allies came to tune their foreign policies to the US interests in the region, reflected in the eschewing of their opposition to the US policy of Israel during the Iran-Iraq War, uninterrupted flow of oil at palatable price to the US and its Western allies from the region and a discreet approval to the US naval deployment beside some strategic facilities.

However, the US hegemony was not absolute. The Arab allies were less receptive to those US interests which clashed with their interests. This was reflected in the allies’ giving inactive support to the US Middle East peace attempts, their unwillingness, to an extent the refusal, not give the US the strategic access the way the latter wished and expressing their worries about the US naval presence in the Persian Gulf (2).

In the post-Persian Gulf war era, the US geo-political presence in the region is far more formidable than ever. The allies now do not have any inhibition in providing the US strategic facilities. Nor do they rebuke an overt security cooperation, as they did in the 80s, with the US. This is, of course, a different matter that incidentally the US now may not be interested in forming a formal strategic grouping in the region due to the fact that the rationale behind such a security grouping is serves no purpose nowadays as there is no global and regional power to contain or compete with(3).

The Persian Gulf allies have welcomed the PLO-Israeli Accord which is being supported and supervised by the US, despite vehemently opposing a peace proposal—Camp David Agreement—of similar nature not long ago and despite the fact that one of the signatories to the accord—the PLO—had turned an enemy to them for its support to Iraq during the Persian Gulf crisis. Thus, among the many factors responsible for the change in these countries’ perception of the Middle East Peace, the most discernible one is their compulsion to accommodate US interests in gratitude to its role in liberating Kuwait and stalling the possible escalation of the Iraqi invasion.

With the Soviet Union no more on the scene not only as an adversary but also as a country and its successor, Russia’s, unwillingness and incapability to challenge the US in the region, the US hegemony in the region is for the time being firmly established. This factor has also deprived the regional allies of the clout over the US i.e. playing one superpower against the other.

How long would the US hegemony last in the region is a matter of debate. The crushing
defeat of Iraq by the US can restrain the powers, like Iran, from aspiring for regional supremacy. But the case may be exactly opposite also. The irony is that the defeat of Iraq did not culminate into the toppling of the Saddam regime and its substitution by a pro-American regime. Even it did not reduce Iraq to a docile power. Charles William Maynes sums up the US dilemma as “Iraq will still be located where it is, will still possess its large oil resources and will still harbor the regional aspirations that recent Iraqi government has developed. If Iraq is destroyed, Iran and Syria will become more serious security problems”(4).

One may point out that if Iraq continues to remain a regional threat to the US allies it would serve the US interests by containing the tendency among their allies to become independent of the US on security Issues. However, the point to be pondered here is that would the US repeat what it did about three and half years ago if a similar crisis recurs in the Persian Gulf region. Getting financially squeezed day by day, the US treasury will not permit Washington to play such role. And the erstwhile allies might not be always willing to support and finance the next American military adventure. There may be little domestic support for another outsized and expensive American crusade.

THE AMERICAN SECURITY:

Ensuring the security of the allies during a regional conflict has been directly related to the American security(5). For any extraordinary regional development resulting from US recklessness is bound to diminish Washington’s political influence, which constitutes an integral part of the its security in the region, and can, probably, lead to the dismantling of the strategic facilities it enjoys in the region.

Giving its security a precedence over all other considerations, the US has not discounted even taking on its allies. This was demonstrated when the US officially threatened to take military action in case of the “strangulation” the oil supplies to it during the 1973 oil embargo. The unofficial calls to use force was even at an upbeat (6).

The US reaction to the two Persian Gulf wars was guided by the security factor as much as by the other factors. Though apparently the US regional security doctrine, called “Strategy Consensus”, floated in Spring 1981, aimed at constituting a geo-political grouping to contain the Soviet Union, it must have been mooted by the US on the presumption that in the wake of the Iranian threats the regional states would welcome it (7). During the Iran-Iraq War, the US aim was to intensify the military cooperation with the Persian Gulf allies. Accordingly, the US received from Qatar storage facilities for weapons, lubricants, jet Fuel and medicine. Bahrain provided it port call and naval mooring facilities. Exchange of information with Saudi Arabia increased and Kuwait went for additional arms purchases from it(8).

During the Persian Gulf War II, the US sole objective was to destroy Iraq militarily and economically. The economic embargo against that country was imposed considering that 95 percent of its foreign exchange came through the oil exports. The outlet of Iraqi oil exports could easily be stopped by the US by blockading oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz or and through Jordan while its two allies, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, were there to close down the oil.
pipelines from Iraq. Even then, the US was pre-determined to fight Iraq. For, it knew, sanction could erode Iraq economically and the quality of its military. But the possibility of Iraq continuing as a regional heavy-weight, a chemical weapon power and a country on nuclear threshold, could have always existed. Thus, the war with Iraq, which was destined to serve a number of other important objectives as well — destruction of its military strength, its dismemberment and the removal of Saddam Hussein — was viewed as better option in the interests of the US global security.

That the US has decided to continue economic embargo against Iraq and it has activated the UN to dismantle Iraqi nuclear and chemical weapons facilities demonstrates that the single most important objective at work is to reduce the Iraqi determination and ability to defy US security in the region.

The US policy towards the wars in the Persian Gulf region has not served all of its security interests. The ‘Strategic Consensus’ proposal was rejected by the allies. Though faced with the Soviet threat, the US allies could not be persuaded to cooperate with two main constituents of the proposed consensus; Egypt — with which they had severed diplomatic ties — and Israel — with which they were officially at war. As regards the US-Persian Gulf military cooperation, the facilities the US was extended fell short of US aspirations and was no match to its commitment to the allies security.

The US military action against Iraq served its security interests not only bruising Iraq but also as a warning to the others in the region, particularly Iran. But it has also made it obligatory upon the US to resort to similar action in the region and elsewhere to punish an aggressor in the future. Failure on this count would give a big jolt to the US control over the regional security system. It is hardly expected that the US will always be in a position to send 5,00,000 troops to stop an aggression.

SECURITY OF THE ALLIES:

The security of allies has been the key to the US policy towards the regional conflicts. During the Iran-Iraq War the security of Saudi Arabia — which was envisioned by the US as a substitute for the fallen Shah and a bulwark against Soviet expansion and ambitions in the region — became paramount to the US, as writes Perlmutter Amos “Saudi Arabia has become a key Gulf state in the vision that passes for the US Middle East policy. Like Berlin, it has taken on aspects of piece of US real estate; like Berlin the US will defend Riyadh”(9).

Thus the Reagan administration removed all barriers, put up by Carter, in the way of the US arms supplies to the region. The sale of the AWACs to Saudi Arabia in June 1984 was aimed more at intimidating Iran from spreading the war than deterring the Soviet Union(10).

The US official neutrality towards the Iran-Iraq War did not indicate any lack of commitment towards the allies’ security. In Fact, the US commitment worked as deterrence on Iran that by engaging the Arab Gulf states in the war it should not risk to pitch itself against a far stronger power with a formidable navel force in the region, the US(11). Throughout the war,
the US maintained a high-profile presence in the Persian Gulf waters which with the receding of the Soviet threat came to be directed against Iran. The US even encouraged the Persian Gulf states to repulse Iranian attack when and if it came, assuring them of its direct involvement in such a scenario. Thus, when Kuwait, in 1986, requested for the protection of its ships from the Iranian attack, the US agreed to though a little bit belatedly. A short of war conflict that subsequently got underway between the US and Iran showed that the former was never indifferent to take on Iran for the sake of the allies’ security.

Needless to say that the security of allies was one of the underlying factors behind the US decision to go to a war against Iraq. This can be gauged from the fact that not only was the liberation of Kuwait the major objective of the US but it wanted to restore the Al-Sabah family to power as no regime other than Sabhas in that country would have been totally beholden to it. The US resolve to bring back Sabahs to power was in sharp contrast to US inconsistency in other cases. It has not insisted that the former Cambodian government must return to power. It has also not insisted that the Afghan government, which the Soviets overthrew, be re-installed.

THE SECURITY OF ISRAEL:

The regional conflicts have come in handy for Washington to defuse Arab opposition to its Israeli Policy. The US has used the arms supplies and its security commitments to the allies as an instrument to diminish the latter’s opposition to the US-Israeli relations. An eight-year war in the region and the resultant increase in the dependence of the regional Arab countries on the US caused a proportionate decline in their ability to influence US policy on Arab-Israeli issue.

This is not to say that the US support to allies in the conflicts was reciprocated in form of the latter’s support to the US Middle East peace policy. The US success on this front, in fact, was that the differences over the Palestinian issue did not mar Washington’s close military, political and economic cooperation with the Arab States of the Persian Gulf. The two actors reached an understanding on not to let their conflicting perceptions of the Palestinian Issue becoming an irritant in their bilateral relations.

But this was done not without the US accommodating Arab concerns. It chose Saudi Arabia and not Israel as the regional policeman after the downfall of the Shah although Israel was more reliable, politically stable, and militarily stronger ally in comparison to Saudi Arabia to clinch this role. The US policy makers held that Israel as a regional policeman would be unacceptable to Arab Gulf states all and sundry. The US pressure on the allies to accept Israel in the role of the policeman of the Persian Gulf could have stirred internal rebellion against the Persian Gulf monarchies(12).

The US also adopted a balanced stand on the Palestinian Problem, such as advocating for Palestinian autonomy within Israel. Compared to the US view of the future of Palestine in the preceding three decades, the US proposal for Palestinian autonomy under the Camp David agreement, 1978, marked a pro-Palestinians change in US policy although it was seen throughout the Arab world as just opposite.
However, in the Persian Gulf crisis the US exploited Arab dependence on it to foil Saddam’s ploy to link Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait to that of Israel from the occupied territories (13). In fact, the security of Israel was one of the objectives of US war against Iraq (14) in so far as the American objective to destroy Iraqi chemical and nuclear facilities aimed at preventing Iraq from emerging into another nuclear power, beside Israel, in West Asia (15).

OIL:

The ‘oil’ has consistently determined the US policy towards regional conflicts. When the Iran-Iraq war began in 1980, the US had all the reasons to take interests in the war as it had threatened to ensue the ‘Third Oil Shock’, which could have been caused by the stoppage of oil supplies from the combatants as well as the non-combatants in the region (16).

However, since the oil supplies, as expected, were not disrupted as the world-wide recession accentuated and, as a result, from 1981 the oil imports from Arab countries reduced remarkably, for instance from 31 percent in 1973 to 7 percent in 1983 in US total imports (17), the Iran-Iraq War only marginally affected the US (18). Dangers to the supply of the little amount of oil the US imported, also diminished as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran became a distant possibility after the latter was told to face US retaliation in such an eventuality. Iran also lacked the means to launch air strike on a scale necessary to cause extensive damage to Saudi and Kuwaiti oil installations (19).

Yet, the oil continued to figure as an important factor in the US policy of preventing the Iranian victory. The US administration noted that an Iranian victory would give Tehran a commanding position in the Persian Gulf, enabling it to intimidate Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to stick to price and production discipline. Furthermore, despite the decline in oil imports from the Persian Gulf region, the US still required access to Persian Gulf oil. The Persian Gulf states were an export market worth tens of billions of dollars. It was, therefore, in the interest of the US and other industrialized countries that the Persian Gulf governments handled their considerable foreign exchange holdings in a manner that will not disrupt currency markets. For this a constant flow of oil in whatever amount became essential.

The fear of long term disruptions, and resultant panic-buying, skyrocketing of prices in spot markets also retained US interests in the war as it was not ready see the complacency of the 1975-78 period repeated. Such a scenario was inevitable in the case of total disruption of oil supplies from the Persian Gulf region. For this would have increased the burden on the non-OPEC sources where oil production was costlier, and caused depletion in the oil stockpiled (20). Europe’s and Japan’s vulnerability to the Persian Gulf oil reduced marginally only in comparison to that of the US during the war. Thus, a disruption in Persian Gulf oil flow to these regions was bound to affect negatively the economies of the US key trade partners. The US disinterest in the Persian Gulf oil, while West Europe’s continued dependence on it would have put the NATO solidarity in jeopardy.
As far as the Persian Gulf crisis is concerned, "many commentators believed", in the words of Maynes, "the simply mentioning the word "oil" was enough to explain American deployment in the Gulf"(21). That area contains more than the two-thirds of the worlds' known petroleum reserves and it is in the interests of the US and the oil consuming states from West Europe that no single state gains control of the whole area. This strategy was central to the US decision to go to war against Iraq. The purpose was partly met in the early days of the crisis when the US deployed enough force to deter an Iraqi invasion of Saudi Arabia. Yet, Iraq's control of Kuwaiti oil and the absence of those two countries' oil from the international market caused extraordinary price hike. To leave Kuwait in Iraqi possession would have meant that the then oil-prices would not stabilize at a time the Persian Gulf oil would regain eminence in the global supply. Thus US decided to eject the Iraqi Kuwait out of Kuwait through military action, even though an threat to price and supply of oil tended to come true as a result very war the US was threatening to unleash to abort Iraqi occupation of a huge amount of oil reserves and the daily production in Kuwait. The Iraqis had mined the Kuwaiti oil wells and if faced with the prospects of defeat, they were to blow it off. Iraq was expected to destroy Saudi and other Persian Gulf States' oil facilities by missile or air attack also(22).

However, it is difficult to asses that whether Iraq's will to intimidate the neighboring oil producing states has dampened or not after its defeat. But, its military strength is still a threat to reckon with to Saudi Arabia and more so to smaller states. So the liberation of Kuwait would have brought the oil market back to normalcy but the virtual threat—a regional state's control of and influence on the price and supply of oil—has not ceased to exist.

The United States vested interests lies in preventing Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Iran from acquiring enough military strength to pose a serious threat to the international oil market. This needs constructive control on arms shipment to the area. The USA has failed on this count. It was the largest arms supplier to region in previous two years. Its arms supplies to the region in the last couple of years surpass all the previous record. So would be the case as the arms deals bound to take place in the coming years materialise. Even if the US wants to check arms proliferation in the region, it can not do it all alone. There would be China, France, Brazil and Germany who, allured by the prospects of vast commercial benefits, would readily agree to fill the vacuum.

THE SOVIET FACTOR:

In the 70s, the United States was in an advantageous position vis-a-vis the Soviet Union in the Persian Gulf. For the threat from the other superpower was limited to its ability to aid and abet radical movements in the Arabian peninsula, which, except in Oman, were not that awesome. Whereas Iraq, the only pro-Soviet Union state in the region, was not a potential source of undermining US position in the Persian Gulf given its Iraq's relatively far weaker military prowess than that of its adversary and the US most formidable ally, Iran.

However, the situation changed dramatically at the fag end of the 70s. The success of Islamic revolution in Iran, as perceived the policy makers in the US, stimulated the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan(23). As says Harris, "the December 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghani-
Stan was a venture which probably could have not occurred before the Iranian revolution” (24).

Then came the Iran-Iraq War. It was seen by the US policy makers as an opportunity to the Soviet Union to expand southward to gain control of the oil by extending military support to Iran against its own ally, Iraq. It was also presumed that the Persian Gulf states would instead of resisting the USSR cooperate with it. The Soviet threat was real. Its troops and planes in Afghanistan, which could be stationed in southern Afghanistan to bring the Strait of Hormuz within the striking range, its fleet in the Indian Ocean and its foothold in South Yemen and Ethiopia vested the USSR with the capability to execute such plan(25).

Thus the US responded to the Iran-Iraq War through the Soviet prism. The Carter doctrine, proclaimed on January 23, 1980 in the President’s State of Union message, which threatened to repel an outside military aggression in the Persian Gulf region through military action if necessary(26), was meant against the Soviet movement into the area on behalf of Iran. Creation of Rapid Deployment Force, the proposing of Strategic consensus plan (27), supply of AWACs and other equipment to Saudi Arabia were the logical extension of the Carter doctrine and were pegged to the Soviet as well as the Iranian threats, the former to the US and the latter to its allies(28).

It was only by threatening Soviet union of dire consequences if it participated in the war alongside Iran, the US entered a dialogue with the Soviet Union on practicing neutrality in the war by both of them. Also, the US did not want to provoke the Soviet Union until it was engaged in securing release of its diplomatic officials held as hostages by Iran(29). During those days the US strategy was to minimize the Soviet influence in Iraq. Although US did not have diplomatic relations with Iraq it used the network of French, German and Japanese ties and commercial connections with Iraq to wean Baghdad away from Moscow. The US, therefore, is said to have specially told the its West European allies to provide arms and ammunition Iraq needed to fight the war.

According to some observers the Soviet threat led the US to appease Iran in the initial years of the war. In case of the war with the USSR the logistic support from Iran would have been of immense help. The US administration wanted that Iran, at least, remained neutral in such a war(30).

That the Islamic Republic of Iran did not join the Soviet bloc came as relief to the US. The US did not make any attempt to topple the Khoemeini regime and install a US-friendly government to regain its influence in a country bordering the USSR (31). Washington also opposed Iran’s dismemberment resulting from an Iraqi victory and indicated that it will not tolerate Iraq’s permanent retention of Iranian territories. The US policy makers thought that in these circumstances the Soviet Union would try to come closer to Iraq shedding its differences with that country. After all, this would be not be a difficult task for the USSR as the two countries were tied by treaty of Friendship and cooperation, the US policy makers viewed.

The USSR would have taken the political change in Iran as a net loss to it by rendering a sensitive and exposed sector of the Soviet periphery less secured. At this juncture the USSR
could come to the rescue of Iran, who would have welcome it as the only way out to save itself from Iraq. The US military officials also did not discount that in such an eventuality the Soviet might have intervened in the name of the Soviet-Iranian Friendship Treaty of 1923, which was considered valid by the USSR despite its rejection by Iran.

Well, the US did directly intervene in the war on behalf of Kuwait by reflagging its ships endangered by Iran's Silkworm missile attack. The Soviet factor was central in prompting the US to come to Kuwait's rescue. Washington had initially vacillated when Kuwait approached it. It decided to entertain the Kuwaiti request only when it was known that Soviet Union had leased three tankers to Kuwait sailing under Red flag and guarded by the Soviet navy. Fearing, thereby, political encroachment in its sphere of influence by the USSR, the US administration quickly moved and in March of 1987 placed eleven Kuwaiti tankers under US Navy's escort.

The US agreed to escort the Kuwaiti ships as by doing so the chances of a direct confrontation with the USSR were unlikely as the latter had itself agreed to protect the Kuwait Ships against Iran. In the ensuing skirmishes with Iran, the US did not try to spread its military operation to the Iranian lands in these circumstance these security concerns could have forced the USSR to abandon its 'neutrality' to US-Iran clashes.

The United States viewed the toppling of the conservative Arab regimes as the main objective of the Soviet activism in the Middle East. In the light of this, the US evolved its relations with the Persian Gulf countries, avoiding to look too close to them lest it brew resentment among the people of the region, opening the gate for greater activism on the part of the USSR.

Later on, the USSR withdrew its support from the weak and unorganized political movements and moved to establish government-to-government level relations with the regional countries. But this did not end the US ordeal as this move of the Soviet Union was interpreted as an encroachment in its sphere of influence. The US took a series of steps to outmaneuver the Soviet Union. These steps included large scale economic and military assistance to, and increasing intelligence, information and propaganda activities in, the region.

How far the US succeeded is difficult to assess. It prevented the Soviet Union from expanding southward, it is said. But did the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan intend so. Most probably it did not. First of all, the Soviet Union knew that expansion beyond Afghanistan would result into a direct confrontation with the US, given the vital geo-strategic importance of the region to the latter. Therefore, whether the Carter doctrine would have been invoked or not or the Iran-Iraq War would have taken place or not, the Soviet Union could not commit the mistake of getting entangled into a direct and nuclear war with the US by extending beyond Afghanistan. Second, the Persian Gulf oil was not vital to the Soviet Union to meet its domestic requirements of oil and denying the US access to it. It was later proved that Soviet Union was self-sufficient in oil. It might have needed the Persian Gulf oil to use it for itself and sell domestically produced oil, which was costlier, to the oil importing countries. But this policy did not require seizure of the Persian Gulf oil. Instead the USSR could buy the needed amount of oil from the Persian
Gulf countries who were not averse to selling oil to it to shore up their declining revenue. In fact, the US administration’s exaggerated reaction to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was based on a CIA report which claimed that by the year 1985, the Soviet Union would become a net exporter of oil. Statistical information, however, did not substantiate that claim. The report was, therefore, politically motivated.

As regards the Iran-Iraq War, the Soviet Union did not enjoy that much clout with Iran to have intervened in the war on behalf of it. Nor did an Iranian victory look to serve Soviet interests. The USSR could not have liked the defeat of Iraq, the only Soviet ally in the region. The Iranian victory was bound to encourage Islamic resurgence in the Central Asian republics. It would have also emboldened Iran to aid the rebellion in that region.

The US succeeded in not letting the USSR to make inroads in its influence in the region. But, at the same time, in the normalization of relations between Arab monarchies and the USSR, the US lost a source, the Soviet specter, of gaining leverage in the region.

Lastly, one can point out the “mellowing” of Soviet power since mid-1980 as the proof of the US success. But this happened due to the developments whose occurrence was not influenced by the US Persian Gulf policy. The death of three aging/sick Soviet leaders in quick succession, Gorbachev’s accession to the power, who, forced by economic problems, initiated his country’s disengagement from regional conflicts, western policies on Euro-missile deployment, technology trade and Soviet immigration created incentive for significant changes in Moscow’s policy in the Persian Gulf and other parts of the globe.

THE STRATEGY

To meet its objectives at stake in a conflict in the Persian Gulf, the US has adopted different strategies, from non-intervention and covert intervention to direct intervention and maintenance of military presence in and around the region with a view to avoid the intervention as well as to intervene quickly if the need to do so becomes inevitable.

NON-INTERVENTION:

The US responded to the British withdrawal from the region by refraining from taking direct responsibility for the security of the region, let alone assume Britain’s role. Despite the fact the US had already taken the first step towards playing a direct role in the region as early as in the 1940s by establishing close working relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia, it did not have a military base in the region to fill the vacuum created by the British withdrawal. American air facilities at Dhahran had been abandoned in the 1960s and only the small MIDEASTFOR remained to represent the American security commitments in the region. Washington’s perception of events and situation in the region were filtered through Iran and Saudi Arabia and the American dilemma in Vietnam tended to discourage direct involvement. The consequence was the “twin pillar” strategy, enunciated in the Nixon doctrine, propounded
in 1969 to minimize the role of the US as the world policeman by delegating the same responsibility to regional powers viz., Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was chosen for this role because of it possessing the world’s largest oil fields and its influence over the smaller states. Iran was perceived by the US as a military partner in this arrangement who would intervene in regional crises destabilising to the US interests in the region. Thus Iran directly intervened in Oman to repulse the Duhfar rebellion. As many as 5,000 Iranian troops were engaged on Duhfari battlefield at any one time in the mid 70s and the US made F-5 Phantoms and destroyers in the Iranian inventory were used to curb the nationalist-turned-Marxist rebellion (36).

Iran’s military build up in the 70s meant the extension of her security parameter to the approaches of the Persian Gulf. The supply of F-14s with Phonics by the US to Iran missile ware aimed at giving the latter a stand-off capability to engage the enemy outside Iran’s airspace (37). The nature of military cooperation between Iran and the US, the complimentarity of the two countries’ weapon systems, the degree of the US military assistance and the identical policies pursued by the two countries in the region portended that in times of crisis, demanding direct intervention on the part of the US, the Iranian facilities would be available for unrestricted use.

US MILITARY PRESENCE:

After 1979 i.e., after the collapse of one of the pillars—and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War, the US did not abandon its non-interventionist approach to regional conflicts. It, instead, adopted the policy of threatening to intervene and building up a capability to intervene in the region at short notice if the situation so demanded (38). This policy was the part of the strategy to deter regional enemy’s design to deny the oil to the US (39) on one hand and to win the confidence of the allies against the regional threat on the other. Of course, the Soviet threat was given precedence to the threat from a regional power. And often US found the suspicion aroused by Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan than the Iran-Iraq war as the basis of the deployment of the RDF and the obtaining of the strategic facilities in the region (40).

The US military presence signaled that its neutrality in the Iran-Iraq war did not stem from an inability to intervene. The US navy was ordered to open to fire at any target whose actions were of threatening nature. The capability to carry out such an aggressive plan against the regional countries kept on being enhanced through out the 80s—from creating the MIDEASTFOR and the RDF to the CENTCOM. The last military command structure encompassed 19 African and Asian countries. Routine military exercises were carried out to practice the seizure and retention of oil bearing areas by landing troops with naval and air support. The American fleet in the Persian Gulf included the Constellation aircraft carrier, several cruisers, destroyers and frigates and the Guadalcanal landing helicopter carrier. The US deployed more than 20 large ships in the area which was the “largest naval group assembled by the USA since the Vietnam War” (41). On the top of all, the Diego Garcia, although 2,200 miles from Harms, was an indispensable naval support base as staging area for P-3 reconnaissance aircraft and alter for B-52 bombers.
The US also won several strategic rights from the friendly governments. These included the stocking of pre-positioned equipment, the building of intelligence facilities, the acquisition of over flight and landing permission and docking rights. Sale of AWACs to Saudi Arabia aimed at entrenching the US in the region as the US administration saw the requirement of a long-term US technical forces support for the AWACs as a means to expand American military presence in Saudi Arabia. The United States liked to possess naval and air bases in the region to deter a regional enemy from creating a situation that could have necessitated direct intervention by it.

However, securing strategic facilities in the region proved hard to come by due to the allies’ reluctance, to an extent of total refusal in the case of some countries mainly Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia was emphatically against the presence of US troops on its land. Even it pressurized the smaller states not to accede to the US demand for bases. For example, Sultan Qabus was offered $2.1 billion by Saudi Arabia in exchange for denying basing rights to the RDF. The amount was equal to what the US proposed to give to Oman. Saudi Arabia also prevailed upon Bahrain to restrict US access to its bases.

The Persian Gulf states viewed any land basing and substantial presence of the US in the area as a source of instability in the region. Moreover, the “we will seize the oil if we need it” rhetoric of the US made the Persian Gulf allies fear that the US land based presence could one day become a threat to their own security. US Congressional opposition to arms sales to the regional countries had caused a mistrust in the minds of the regional allies about the US sincerity. The mistrust reached new proportions in 1984 when the Democratic party opposed the over-committing of its forces in the Persian Gulf, even in the event of an crisis there, by the US.

The US naval deployment was aimed at meeting the Soviet threat while the regional allies considered the Soviet invasion of the Persian Gulf an unlikely scenario. The regional governments, in fact, opined that the granting permanent strategic facilities to the US by them could indeed make the USSR apprehensive of their moves.

However, these states welcomed the US ‘over-the-horizon’ presence which made a deterring effect on the regional threats. The total absence of the US military presence in and around the region would, the allies viewed, encourage hostile powers to commit aggression, an event these countries wanted to prevent by denying the US direct presence in the region.

The US policy of non-intervention was more strictly followed in tackling Iranian terrorism. The US refrained from using its military might to deal with the hostage crisis. Nor did it threaten Iran of military action on this issue. A covert military operation was unsuccessfully made to rescue the hostages. But the nature of this operation underlined the US policy of not exposing the lives of its nationals in reprimanding an enemy.

DIRECT INTERVENTION:
Avoidance not the renunciation of direct intervention has been the US strategy towards the regional conflicts. Direct military intervention has been considered a priority in situations where stakes are high enough to warrant such action. These situations may be the need to achieve narrowly defined objectives that can be accomplished rapidly and decisively with relatively small or large force and to prevent the hostile regional powers from interpreting its policy of non-intervention as incompetence. This is why despite deploying its naval forces, adequate enough to tackle a regional threat, the US brought in ground forces to punish Iraq in the Persian Gulf crisis and deployed land base aircrafts, in form of AWACs, in Saudi Arabia as these actions were the more formidable means to increase operational capabilities than was the deployment of the naval forces.

Thus, when inaction on its part could have lent credence to the allies’ doubts about clandestine connection between the US and Iran following the revelation of Iran-Contra arms deal(44), the US decided to escort Kuwaiti tankers. It went on to do so even expecting that its fall-out could be in the form of Iranian attacks on the US ships. Iranian missiles set fire an American owned tanker the re-flagged tanker anchored in Kuwaiti water on October 15 and 16, respectively. Not only did the US retaliate but it went on broadening the rules of the engagement of its force to permit assistance to all neutral ships.

Similarly, while calling for a diplomatic solution to the crisis started by Iraq by threatening to occupy Kuwait in July 1990, the US also indicated that it would not hesitate to take military action against Iraq if it attacked Kuwait. The US state department noted: “we do not have any defense treaties with Kuwait .... but we also remain committed to supporting the individual and collective self-defense of our friends in Gulf” (45). Before the Iraqi Invasion, the US deployed a naval task force in the region. Before the Persian Gulf states could decide whether to invite the foreign forces or not, the US, it is reported, had begun exerting pressure on Saudi Arabia to allow its force to land on its territories. A few days after the Iraqi invasion, Bush reiterated his country’s commitment to the security and stability of the Persian Gulf (46). The statement coincided with the arrival of the US troops in the region which showed that the Bush’s statement was not a mere verbal exercise to pressurize Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait but it was a prelude to the despatching of its armed forces. The US forces swell to the strength of 2,000,000 by the end of Oct. 1990, these possessed all the modern and sophisticated weapons. By Oct., the US counted on the possibility of Iraqi withdrawal under international political, diplomatic and economic pressure combined with its coercive diplomacy. In early November, Bush declared that he was increasing the number of American troops in the Persian Gulf by 150,000 and had begun to seek support for a UN Security Council Resolution to permit it to use force against Iraq. It would not be out of place to mention that even Bush did not bother that he had to seek Congressional approval to wage a war. In fact, by continuously sending the country’s armed forces to the Persian Gulf region and sticking to his decision to fight a war, Bush was trying to leave the Congress with no option but to give its assent.

The US approach to the Persian Gulf crisis points to the fact that subjugating a regional threat to its security or that of its allies constituted the basic objective of the US policy and it
did not hesitate to intervene even directly, if only that way this objective could be achieved.

The Iran-Iraq war and the Persian Gulf war examples show that the nature of threat determines the US reaction to a regional conflicts. Iran's attack on neutral ships in 1987 looked to disrupt the supply of oil only, the US, therefore, confined its clashes with the Iran in the Gulf waters. It did not wage a full-fledged war against Iran. As against this, the Iraqi threat was many-dimensional. The US feared that if the Iraqi aggression was not repulsed Iraq would establish a permanent control over Kuwait and its oil, become a permanent source of danger to Saudi security and other smaller countries as well, and emerge into a military and political giant in the Persian Gulf region. The US response was also proportionate to the potentiality of the threat. It decided to go whole-hog against Iraq.

However, it is difficult to establish how far has the US policy of direct intervention been effective in relation to the US regional interests. The US ability to deter a regional threat by using force or threatening to use it is captive to the targeted power's response. Two instances can be cited here. The US undertook only a covert operation to free its nationals held as hostages by Iran. The US could have had little difficulty in applying full military power against Iran but, it refrained from doing this because of doubt that the resolute Ayatollah Khomeini would not budge even if Iranian petroleum industry was destroyed, Iranian ports blockaded, Iranian armed forces decimated, Iranian holy places targeted, and if his own life (Imam Khomeini) and the life of thousands of Iranians jeopardized. Similarly, the US-Iraq War in a sense underlined the failure of US coercive diplomacy in kneeling down Saddam. Here one may argue that US attack on Iraq was not the last resort. Rather, it was the choicest option as the US did not want mere Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. True, but did not the presence of one of the world's most-trained armed forces next door that too all set to wage a war fail to compel a Third World power to retreat? Well, Iraq could not avoid the war because of fear of a popular backlash or a military coup, but this drives home a point that Iraq gave the internal threat a precedence over the one from the world's largest military power.

The US limited intervention, such as the one against Iran in 1987, and the full-fledged one, the one against Iraq about three and a quarter years ago, carries some weaknesses. Limited intervention helps achieve short-term objectives only, which may be disproportionate to military and economic cost of the military operation and the international criticism such action invites. A full-fledged intervention pins hope among the allies and the fear among opponents of the repetition of that performance. But in the changing national interests perceptions, the intervention may not remain a ready-made choice to tackle a similar situation later. The inaction in those circumstances would put the erstwhile interventionist power's reputation in great jeopardy among the allies and enemies alike.

US POLICY OF CRISIS PREVENTION

The nature of a particular crisis, the implications of its resolution or continuation for the US interests and the US leverage with the parties to dispute determine US policy of crisis prevention in the Persian Gulf.
US did not want the Iran-Iraq war ending with Iranian victory or, for that matter, that of Iraq. It was, therefore, interested in the continuation of the war. Yet, it in order to prevent the Soviet Union from wresting the initiative repeatedly called upon the belligerents to terminate the hostilities. Thus, the main objective of the US crisis prevention during the war was to deny the USSR an opportunity to act as arbiter than to bring about peace(47). The prospect of hijacking of peace initiatives by the Soviet Union in the region was extremely harmful to the US interests as this could have rectified Soviet Union’s post-Afghan intervention image in the eyes of the Arab Gulf monarchies.

At the beginning of the Iran-Iraq War, the US main aim was to prevent the spreading of the war and the Soviet involvement in it. Lacking total leverage over both the belligerents, who did not even have diplomatic relations with the US, the US was not in position to dictate peace. Thus, owing to its inability to play the role of a peace broker, the US directed its efforts to preventing the escalation of the war.

During initial days of the war, the US was preoccupied with securing the release of its nationals held as hostages by Iran. The war came as an opportunity to criticize Iraq, to win the Iranian goodwill and to get its nationals freed in exchange for weapons and spare parts to Iran.

Even a few years after the outbreak of the war, the US interests in its continuance remained unchanged for a number of reasons. First, since Iran dominated the war, a settlement would have, very likely, been on Iranian terms. Second, the end of the war could have vindicated Iran’s position. Third, the oil supplies from the region continued uninterruptedly, not warranting the need of an urgent peace. Fourth, the Iranian threat came in handy to the US to increase its leverage with the Persian Gulf countries. Fifth, the US naval deployment was sufficient to meet any untoward situation, such as the blockade of the the Strait of Hormuz by Iran. Sixth, any concession to Iran for seeking a peaceful end to the war would have annoyed the Persian Gulf allies.

In the decade preceding the outbreak Iran-Iraq war, the US strategy was to stay away from resolving regional conflicts. The Persian Gulf region was beset with the conflicts which were mainly the territorial disputes in nature. The Carter administration as well as the previous ones found that these did not pose any major threat to the US interests, with Washington believing that the Persian Gulf was an area of economic and commercial activity only. With the Arab-Israeli issue being the matter of primary concern to the US, it kept itself aloof from next door conflicts (48).

The US crisis prevention lacks objectivity. The UNSCR 598, which was virtually the handiwork of the US, did call on both Iran and Iraq to cease-fire and withdraw their forces to international boundaries. But, since at that time Iran was in control of a vast Iraqi territory, the resolution in effect called for the withdrawal of the Iranian forces.

Coercion was the main instrument of the US crisis prevention in the Persian Gulf crisis. The little time it lost in deploying its forces in Saudi Arabia, the way it activated the UN to pass
resolutions, including the one authorizing it to take military action, and the manner it paid no heed to regional and international efforts for a peaceful end to the crisis indicate that the US was in a hurry to resort to war.

An active policy of crisis resolution or prevention by the US has been beset with certain constraints also. The GCC, for example, has restricted the scope of the US mediation in the crisis erupting among the member-states. The understanding that has evolved among the GCC-states is that they should not refer to their disputes to a third party and take them to international forums, like the UN in whose peace-seeking campaign the US plays the most influential role.

The US diplomacy in the Persian Gulf has suffered from its preoccupation with the Arab-Israeli issue. The US role in ending the Lebanon crisis and the Iran-Iraq war offer a good contrast. In the Iran-Iraq war, the US policy focused on preventing it from spreading. Whereas, in the Lebanon crisis, Reagan administration launched a high-profile diplomatic initiative soon after Syria moved its missile in Lebanon and the Israeli bombing of PLO headquarters in July 1981. It called Philip Habib, distinguished American diplomat of Lebanese-American background, out of retirement. Habib arranged a PLO-Israeli cease-fire along the Lebanese-Israeli border. The US was instrumental in the terminating the hostilities between Israel and the PLO, lifting of the Israeli siege on Beirut, negotiating and arranging the withdrawal of the PLO from Beirut and being the main constituent of the Multinational Force that arrived in Lebanon in August that year to assure the evacuation of the PLO (49).

After the termination of hostilities the US came out with a comprehensive peace plan, known as the Reagan Plan(50). Thus the US obsession continued with Arab-Israeli issue although the Iran-Iraq war at the eve of 1982 posed a more serious threat to the US interests as Iran had begun to dominate the war.

THE FORMER SOVIET UNION AND REGIONAL CONFLICTS

THE POLICY

The USSR’s policy towards the Persian Gulf conflicts were guided by two elements viz., ideology and realpolitik, their application being subjected to which of two served the Soviet foreign policy goals most in the given circumstances.

IDEOLOGY

In the 70s, The USSR was placed in a suitable situation to pursue its policy towards the inter-state and intra-state conflicts in the Persian Gulf in keeping with its Leninist-Marxist foreign policy. The US withdrawal from Vietnam, the cleavages in the NATO and its (USSR's) increased conventional and military capabilities led the USSR to proclaim that it would render, when it was necessary, military support to the people subjected to military aggression (51), as illustrated in Breznev’s report to the 24th Party Congress in March 1971 (52).

It was reported that the Soviet Union shipped arms, through PDRY, to the Duhefar
resurgents in their war of national liberation against the Sultan of Oman. But, later on, with the waning of the struggle, the Soviet Union became cautious in its commitment to that movement.

Though data are not available to ascertain that whether the Soviet arms supplies to PDRY meant to be passed on to resurgents or not, the USSR did not assist the Duhfars during their suppression by Oman with the help of Iran. Seeing that the liberation movements in the region lacked the needed infrastructure and popular base to bring about radical political changes, the Soviet Union embarked on the second policy option; reconciliation with the non-socialist regimes. This almost abandoned Soviet link with the Marxist movements in the region.

In fact, the Soviet Union made the revolutionary state and not the movement as the main subject of its ideology-bound foreign policy. The PDRY, where a radical movement came to power in November 1967, was then the automatic choice. Strategically, South Yemen’s offer of extending USSR anchorage off the Island of Socotra and access to the port and airport at the Aden was considered vital by the Soviet Union for gaining a foothold in the Indian Ocean. South Yemen was an entry point to the Arabian peninsula for the Soviet forces landing from the east. The USSR also hoped that PDRY would be also be helpful in spreading Marxist revolution in the heart of the peninsula and the Persian Gulf. In addition, PDRY was useful as a surrogate state particularly in the situation where the USSR wanted to shroud its involvement.

The other regional state which was extended support by the USSR in its struggle with the pro-US states was Iraq. However, the Soviet support to Iraq was not always unqualified and unwavering. Since Iran was a greater strategic prize, the USSR’s did not want to ruin its ties with it inspite of whatever little influence it had had on the Shah and later on the Khomeini regime. During the time of the Shah, the Soviet Union did not hold a pro-Iraqi view on the question of Baghdad’s border dispute with Iraq. When the Iran-Iraq war began, the USSR adopted a volte face, an approach very unlikely of a superpower towards its ally. It publicly opposed Iraq. It assured Iran that it had no intention to disfavor it for Iraq. It went on imposing arms embargo on Iraq. Beside, the deterioration in Soviet-Iraq relations, the main reason behind the Soviet Union pursuing this course at the beginning of the war till the next two years was the fear that an outright defeat of Iran would lead to the collapsing of the Khomeini regime and its replacement by a pro-Western government.

It was only when Iran refused to join the Soviet bloc and the possibility of a not-too-friendly Iran defeating its only ally in the region arose did the USSR tilt back to Iraq, most notably by resuming arms supply to it. In later years, the Soviet Union supplied to Iraq weapons like Scud missiles which were instrumental in turning the tide of war in favor of Iraq after a gap of about five years.

When the Persian Gulf crisis started, the Soviet Union had already abandoned the ideological foundation of its foreign policy. Though the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Iraq was very much in vogue, the Soviet Union’s commitments to it or any other ally for that matter had turned moribund after the end of the Cold War. Only a few glimpses of the USSR’s cold war foreign policy were seen, such as its decision not to participate under the US banner in a war against its ally and its refusal to call back its military advisors from Iraq.
The Soviet realpolitik in the regional conflicts was based on the objective of repairing its relations with the side opponent to its ally in a conflict, even if it amounted to a deviation from the Leninist-Marxist foreign policy principles. Thus, despite helping South Yemen indirectly in its 1979 war against YAR, the USSR also embarked on a policy of rapprochement with the Sana to take the advantage of the Yemenis' unhappiness over Saudi domination of them and over the US policy of not directly supplying them arms.

The USSR signed a major arms deal with YAR. It rescheduled and partly wrote off YAR’s debts and tried to wean the latter away from Saudi Arabia and the US.

The Soviet Support to the national liberation movements in the Persian Gulf region waned gradually. The most notable example of this was Soviet indecision to help the Duhfaris out when they were being suppressed at the hands of the Iranian forces and the British advisers in the mid-70s. Since the USSR's assistance to the Duhfaris was channeled through the PDRY, the Soviet role in sustaining the movement got contained when the PDRY accepted, in March 1976, Saudi financial assistance in return for normalization of relations with Oman. In the 80s, a major shift in the Soviet policy appeared with the Soviet Union preferring state-to-state relations with all of the non-Marxist countries with an aim to limit the US role in these countries.

As regards the Iran-Iraq War, the realization that it was neither the result of imperialist designs in the region nor did the class struggle play any role in the origin and conduct of the war, rather nationalism, traditions and religion determined the course of events, made the Soviet Union not to define its role in the war on the basis of its old policy formulations vis-a-vis the Third World conflicts. The Soviet policy towards the war was dictated by the vicissitudes of its relations with the US only. It, therefore, at the outbreak of the war clarified that it would not brook an Iranian defeat even at the hands of its own ally—Iraq. This position was altered in favor of Iraq later to cash in on the re-integration of Iraq to the Persian Gulf politics. Support to Iraq increased the possibility of expanding its influence in the region.

In fact, marginalisation of American influence was the main goal of Soviet involvement in regional conflicts. In order to achieve this, the USSR did not hesitate in deviating from its commitment to its ally. For instance, when Iraq seized a narrow strip of Kuwaiti territory in March 1973, Moscow asked it in clear terms to retreat.

Contrary to the claims of Hawks in the US, the oil did not constitute a central element in the Soviet Policy towards Persian Gulf conflicts. The Soviet tilt in favor of Iran in 1980-82 was seen as a Soviet design to intervene in the war and subsequently seize the oil fields in the region. In fact, most of such apprehensions were made on the assumption that the Soviet Union would soon become dependent on the Persian Gulf oil.

These assumptions were embarrassingly inaccurate. The Soviet Union was averse to resort to this option. It had calculated that aggression in the Persian Gulf would lead to the superpower confrontation. The Soviet Union had, as early as 1980, tried to remove such doubts.
by proposing in December that year a five-point formula to establish peace in the Persian Gulf region (64).

It is true that from the early 1980s the USSR launched a drive to conserve energy and told its East European allies that it could not increase its oil exports to them above the 1980 level, but to interpret this as oil crisis in the USSR of such magnitude that the seizure of oil resources in the Persian Gulf had become imminent is a pure fantasy. Nor is it any less illogical to think that the USSR, who had told its allies to go elsewhere for oil, would suddenly for their sake invade the Oil-rich countries of the Persian Gulf and risk a world war. Even the possibility of an alliance between the USSR and the oil-rich countries to deny the oil to the West, as feared the policy makers in the US, did not exist. The Arabs saw the USSR as a competitor in the world oil market, often working at cross purposes as demonstrated by the Soviet Union when it assured, during the 1973 embargo, the US and Europe to supply them the oil and in 1982 when it played a major role in bringing down the oil prices.

THE US FACTOR

The Soviet Union saw most of the conflicts in the Persian Gulf as either instigated by the US or used by the latter as a pretext to encircle it and eliminate its influence in an area of enormous strategic importance to it (65).

The Soviet Union was more apprehensive on this count in the case of the Iran-Iraq War as it heralded the era of massive US naval deployment in the region and coincided with the ensuing of the Second Cold war. The Soviet leaders repeatedly described this war as senseless and fratricidal for having served the interests of the US provided it a pretext to consolidate its military presence in the region (66).

The Soviet reactions to the Persian Gulf conflicts, in the context of its relations with the US, were, therefore, to resist the US on one hand and cut into the US influence on the other. This strategy culminated into a policy of competition with the US without escalating it to the point of a direct confrontation. Thus in the Iran-Iraq War, the USSR’s official stand was the ‘neutrality’ so as not to allow the US a chance to directly intervene in the war. The USSR also readily agreed to the US proposal for mutual non-involvement in the war. The USSR, in addition, was for a join effort by them to resolve the crisis (67).

Thus the USSR preferred moderate means and moderate targets to serve its interests in the region, influencing the course of the war in such a way that the US was denied of establishing a foothold in Iran, a strategic prize for the USSR after the Shah’s ouster. Beside this, other Soviet objectives were preventing Iraq from joining the US bloc and using Iraq as an instrument to improve relations with the Arab Gulf countries to reduce US leverages with them.

The US factor determined the Soviet shifts in the Iran-Iraq war. It decided to side with Iran in the early stages of the war in order to prevent the US from seizing the same opportunity by supplying arms and ammunition to Iran. USSR’s tilt towards Iraq later was aimed at stemming the growing US and the Western influence in that country. It resumed its arms supplies to Iraq to lessen Iraqi dependence on the Western arms. The Soviet move also stemmed
from its perception of US limitations in the region. The Soviet Union knew that its support to Iraq could not be countered by the US by changing sides. Nor was there even a remote possibility of Iran joining the US to counterbalance the Soviet support to Iraq.

THE STRATEGY: FROM NON-INTERVENTION TO DISENGAGEMENT

The USSR's role in the Persian Gulf conflicts was non-interventionist. During the Yemen war, during PDRY-Oman crisis and in respect of national liberation movements, the USSR resigned itself to merely providing military wherewithal to the party it supported. Even the nature of Soviet support to national liberation movements was quite low profile. It supported these movements from behind; through the surrogate states.

The risk of military collision with the United States was the single most persuasive factor determining Soviet Union's this particular attitude. In most of the regional conflicts either both of the superpowers were on the opposite side of the spectrum (PDRY-YAR wars and PDRY-Oman conflict) with, moreover, Washington showing a high level of interests. This reminded the USSR of the risk of a conflict if it intervened militarily to help out the party it was supporting(68). The fading away of the 'detente' and the arrival of Reagan increased the the danger of superpowers confrontation, forcing the Soviet leadership to reassess the wisdom of taking an expansionist course. By that time, the dangers of Intervention had outmatched the benefits of the expansion of its Third World empire.

The decision not to intervene on behalf of the Socialist regimes and allies was also caused by a shift in the USSR policy i.e. cultivating oil rich capitalist-oriented states in place of weak Marxist-Leninist regimes(69). Then, of course, there were conflicts in the region, such as the Iran-Iraq war, which did not fit in the class war model, a pretext used by the USSR to intervene in Afghanistan, that would have necessitated Soviet intervention.

To see that its retreat did not signal to the US its weakness, the USSR opted for maintaining an ability to intervene if the need arose. Thus it deployed a strong fleet in the Indian Ocean, troops and planes in Afghanistan and established strategic and political footholds in South Yemen and Ethiopia. While, at a same time, the USSR also saw to it that its unwillingness to intervene from allies' side did not cause an erosion in its political influence in the region. It continued to supply arms and send military advisors, both technical and combat personnel, to the friendly countries in the conflict zone(70).

Faced with severe economic constraints, the USSR began from the mid-80s a dramatic retreat from the Third World conflicts, reflected in its total disengagement from the revolutionary processes in the Third World (71) to greater emphasis on the state-to-state relations with the non-socialist states, and cooperation with the US on the Third World conflicts.

The Soviet Union could hardly sustain its activism, particularly in the spheres of arming its allies and matching the US military deployment (72). In 1989, i.e., on the eve of Malta Summit, Gorbachev slashed naval deployment in the Mediterranean by more than half which left
Moscow with a handful of warships, one or two submarines and a few auxiliaries. Gorbachev did not try to improve poor facilities in South Yemen and Syria. The USSR also offered the US to negotiate on naval confidence-building measures and proposed strategic and conventional arms control.

The deteriorating economy also diverted the attention of policy makers in the USSR to internal issues and formulation of a foreign policy which would permit their government to address their domestic woes more effectively. Economic restructuring enhanced the need of access to the western technologies and expertises. This, in the first place, demanded reduction of tension with the US by abandoning all sorts of military and political competition with it.

The mess in Afghanistan brought home the point that military activism was politically erroneous and economically costly to have compliant governments. Enhancement of good neighborly relations with the bordering states like Iran and close ties with non-socialist and the pro-US states in the Arabian peninsula was regarded as equally effective in strategy achieving this objective.

Growing unrest in the Central Asian republics also explains Moscow's policy to shun confrontational attitude towards the Arab governments and Iran. Being the Muslim states these countries could in retaliation exploit the potential for instability and separatism in the Central Asian region (73).

Throughout the Iran-Iraq War, the USSR tried to disengage itself from it by maintaining a sort of neutrality. At the beginning of the war, it imposed arms embargo against Iraq with which it was tied up in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation. After the mid 80s, the Soviet Union's neutrality turned pro-Iraq as it emerged Iraq's main supplier of arms (74). However, alongside arming Iraq the USSR tried to rebuild its relations with Iran. This process included a visit by the then foreign minister, Eduard Sheverdandze, to that country. Sheverdandze was the only dignitary from the Superpower countries who was granted a meeting with the Iranian spiritual leader, Ayotallah Khomeini.

The Soviet Union's involvement in the escorting of the Kuwaiti tankers in 1987 marked a little aberration in its policy of disengagement. But the Soviet involvement in the escort operation does not qualify to be an act of military activism compared to the nature and objectives of its previous engagements in and outside the region. It was a low-profile engagement. The Soviet Union deployed only small frigates, lightly armed minesweepers, and supply ships in the operation. The USSR's involvement remained a non-violent activity although its own ships in the Persian Gulf waters came to be attacked by Iran. On May 6, 1987, Iranian gunboats damaged a Soviet Fighter en-route to Saudi Arabia. On May 17, one of the tankers of the USSR had leased to Kuwait hit a mine. But on both the occasions the Soviet Union did not retaliate, even it did not increase the level of its force in the Persian Gulf.

The Soviet Union gave the crisis prevention central emphasis in its foreign policy agenda for the Persian Gulf region, provided it served it in competing with the US for influence. The
crisis-prevention became an effective means in the region for the USSR to allay the fears of "Soviet threat" among the Arab peninsular countries. It also helped the Soviet Union create the image of a genuine peace broker in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The centrality of crisis prevention in the Soviet policy became visible in the 1980s. However, if in the first half of this decade the Soviet policy of crisis prevention aimed at competing with the US in the second half of that decade it was an outcome of its retreat from the competition. In other words, form the april and parcel of its activism in the Persian Gulf in the early 80s, the crisis prevention policy in later 80s turned into a reflection of Gorbachev’s disillusionment with the Soviet globalism(75).

Particularly, Gorbachev maintained that the policy of crisis escalation through military expansionism and political activism in the crises-prone pockets in the region threatened to boomerang. For, the resultant competition with the US was a bigger threat to the Soviet security and interests. This hypothesis directed Gorbachev’s focus on de-stabilizing the potential of Third World conflicts(76).

The main thrust of the Soviet crisis-prevention was the creation of a peace and stability in the region leading to the withdrawal of the US naval deployment from the region. This aim was central to all of the Soviet peace proposals : from the one by Breznev at the Indian parliament in 1980, which called for undertaking by the superpowers not to intervene in Persian Gulf conflicts, to the one by Gorbachev for the creation of nuclear free zone in the region and the gradual withdrawal of foreign bases and fleet.

The Soviet Union either tried carved out for itself the role of an equal partner in a multilateral solution to a crisis or it advocated a bilateral solution to a conflict with both the superpowers abstaining from playing a direct role in the peace processes.

Right from the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq hostilities, the Soviet Union’s position was that the war was harmful to the interests of both sides. It was interested in an early end of the war because it feared that the weakening and the toppling of the Khomeini regime would result into the re-establishment of American military presence in Iran. Later, when Iran persisted with prosecuting the war, the Soviet Union opposed it because the Iranian threat had caused the Persian Gulf states to seek closer military ties with the United states.

Although an end of the war implied that both the countries would flood the market with oil, causing downward pressure on the oil prices (77), but the link between continued fighting and the growing US political and military domination of the region was more harmful to the Soviet interests than the perceived threat of the loss of Soviet oil revenues.

USSR ensured the adopting of the UN resolution 598 of 1987, which called for the end of hostilities, even though it opposed imposing the sanctions on Iran so as not to antagonize Iran. The Soviet Union also helped in resolving the post-war differences between Iran and Iraq. In 1990, it proposed a meeting of the Soviet, Iranian and Iraqi foreign ministers in the USSR for this purpose(78).

Barring those US sponsored peace efforts in which the USSR played the second fiddle, the Soviet crisis prevention diplomacy failed. For, its peace proposals were more often than not directed against the US and, therefore, were rejected by the latter. Breznev’s peace plan
bypassed Afghanistan entirely while calling for the removal of foreign military bases from the
Persian Gulf region and "Adjacent islands". Breznev plan in essence indicated that the Soviet
Union would remain in Afghanistan, but the US should get out of the Persian Gulf and Diego
Garcia (79). Then, with the Cold War at its peak, it was doubtful that even Soviet proposal to
negotiate with the US on Afghan issue would have been successful. The US would have not
agreed to link Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan to reduction of its naval forces in the Indian
Ocean and the Soviet Union could not be expected of offering anything more generous than this.

Beside this, the Soviet Union came out with only a few peace proposals during the Iran-Iraq War
and talked more about peace in policy statements etc. which were more an 'image-building'
exercises than a serious effort towards the settlements of regional disputes.

US-SOVIET RELATIONS AND PERSIAN GULF CONFLICTS

Mutual relationship was the major determinant in the superpowers involvement in the
Persian Gulf conflicts. Thus, following were the aims and objectives of their policies towards
each other vis-a-vis regional conflict. --avoiding the development of situations in which the risk
of direct confrontation might have become significant. --avoidance of appearing defeated by the
actions of rival and --appearing successful in the defense of clients.

COMPETITION

Outdoing each other was the main thrust of their actions and interactions in the regional
conflicts. But, it was in all respects a peaceful competition with one superpower altering its
position if it looked to prove dangerous enough to provoke the other one. Thus in other words
competition without confrontation was the end of their policies. To quote Janice Grosstein
"Both are struggling to avoid direct confrontation which might grow out of the escalation of the
regional war... and in their struggle they are partners as well as adversaries" (80).

The competition was directed not to concede anything to the adversary in one's own
sphere of action (81). Hence, this urge resulted into a mutual misperception of each other's
moves despite an understanding to avoid direct confrontation. When the Iran-Iran War broke
out, the US feared that the Soviet Union had the capability to intervene militarily on behalf of
Iran to influence the outcome of the fighting against it (US). It, therefore, reminded the USSR
that the Carter Doctrine would apply to a Soviet intervention in Iran too. Whereas, the Soviet
Union cast doubts on the US neutrality in the war, fearing that in order to get American hostages
released, Washington might switch from neutrality to an open support to Iran.

This shows that despite the fact that both of the superpowers had declared neutrality in
the war and were concerned with the security of Iran in the early phase of the war, they because
of their prejudicial interpretation of each other's motives confronted than cooperated.

COOPERATION

In some respects the interests of the superpowers in the case of conflicts in the Persian
Gulf were common. For example, both of them wanted that the border disputes in the region did
not flare up. Or both of them wanted that the Iran-Iraq War did not spread to the Arab Gulf
countries. In that war both agreed to maintain a neutral stand. Then, they, since 1982-83, began
backing Iraq and helped its defense build-up (82). In the wake of repeated Iranian attacks on
Kuwaiti tankers both the superpowers provided Kuwait naval escort and they finally cooperated
with each other in the United Nations to pass the Security Council Resolution 598 which called
for the end of the war.
In the Iran-Iraq War, the superpowers cooperation in part emanated from the fact that one of the combatants, Iran, was not associated with either of the two power blocs (83). As a result, the superpowers ended up supporting the same side as they did while criticizing Iraq for starting the war in the early stages of the war and thereafter backing it against Iran.

But more than that, their cooperation was caused by Iran's hostile attitude towards both the superpowers. The Iranian victory against a Soviet ally could not be an automatic gain for the US. Nor would have this been so for the Soviet Union. On the other hand, the prospects of Iranian victory threatened to be the mutual loss. For the US, it was bound to lead to the emergence of a regional power and the rise of Islamic as well as She'i fundamentalism (84). For, the USSR, the Iranian victory could have been the source of encouragement to the rising Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asian republics and a moral victory for the rebel Mujahideens in Afghanistan. To quote Kaw Marita's words:

“For such conflicts they may be said to stand on the same side of the mirror. In sum, bipolar rivalry had not necessarily locked the United States and the Soviet Union in a tit-for-tat action-reaction cycle”. (85)

SUPERPOWERS' CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Superpowers' role in resolution of conflicts in the Persian was limited. For instance, in the Iran-Iraq War, the OIC, the Arab League, Algeria and to some an extent the UN and the NAM figured as major actors involved in seeking an end to the war than the US or the USSR (86). They (the superpowers) at best tried to manage instead of preventing the regional conflicts. Of larger interest to them was that a particular conflict did not escalate to a point that a nuclear war between themselves could have became inevitable.

The end of the Iran-Iraq war is said to be a consequence of the de-escalation of superpowers' rivalry. It holds true so far as the reduction of the tension between the two superpowers saved the UNSCR resolution 598, which turned out to be the basis of the end of the war, from being vetoed. But the question arises did the resolution play any role in ending the war? As soon as the resolution was passed, Iran categorically rejected it. Iran accepted it as a face-saving when in the wake of Iraqi victories and its war-weariness the specter of defeat had begun haunting it (87). So the end of the war was not due to fact that the superpowers had come out with a proposal acceptable to both the belligerents.

Even the 'new detente' and the end of the Iran-Iraq war can not be interlinked as the latter was not a proxy war. In this war each belligerent was independent of superpowers' influence in taking crucial decisions including the one to terminate the hostilities.

The superpowers peace proposals, mooted separately, by and large failed. These were designed to secure ally's interests and, as a result, faced rejection by the other party to the
dispute. Whereas, the objective of securing a peace-arrangement between the disputants sides by a superpower which did not serve the interests of the adversary diminished the chances of joint effort.

LIMITED ROLE

In fact, the Persian Gulf conflicts were unique in the sense that they were not pegged to the superpowers confrontation(88). As a logical consequence to this, the superpowers’ role in these was limited. The wars and conflicts erupted without being instigated by the superpowers. The regional actors were at best influenced not directed by the superpowers in managing their conflicts. The conflicts in the region usually erupted for the reasons which bore little significance to superpowers confrontation. Very often the parties to conflict themselves tried to keep a distance from the superpowers as their collusion with the latter was used to be domestically unwelcome (89). This ingratitude on the part of the clients coupled with the rise of regional powers, suspicious and restful of extra-regional penetration, further marginalised the superpowers’ involvement in the conflicts in the region.

THE SUPERPOWERS AND THE BORDER DISPUTES

In dealing with regional conflicts, the preceding discussion covers only those that have turned into full-fledged wars. The low-profile border disputes have automatically gone un-mentioned. The reason for this is that the superpowers approach to them was not similar to their approach towards those of the first category of conflicts.

UNITED STATES APPROACH

As for the US is concerned, its policy has been to see that the border disputes, most of which are among the GCC member countries, do not flare up. Since, all the GCC-member states together make the major trading partner and strategic and political ally of the US, the latter does not want instability, arising out of territorial disputes, in the region which might force it to side with one of the party to the dispute and hence worsen its political and trade ties with the country it sides against. Successive US administrations feared that the USSR, which enjoyed diplomatic relations with at least three of the eight states of the Arab peninsula, would make most out of such situation.

THE USSR’s APPROACH

The Soviet Union’s approach differed from one conflict to another. In the Arab peninsular region, it liked the surfacing of border disputes among the US allies forcing the US to take side and, in turn, giving it a chance to throw its support to the other party. But, since such an opportunity did not arise, the Soviet Union pursued an altogether different policy. It devised the Asian Formula in the 70s which aimed at the substitution of the existing military political groupings with a regional one excluding the outside powers. The Asian formula stipulated cooperation among the regional states revolving around the renunciation of force, respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs and the development of intra-
As regards the Iran-Iraq border disputes, the USSR almost skipped over this issue in its relations with both of the disputants. Careful to nurture close ties with both Iran and Iraq these countries, it decided not to support either of them on border question.

The soviet Union did not alter its policy when the Shah’s military build up and his intransigence against Iraq on the question of border dispute increased. Rather than taking sides the USSR counseled restraints and called for a negotiated settlement. Caution characterized USSR’s policy of arms transfer to Iraq during those days, lest it led to the outbreak of a war. It maintained that its arms sales to Iraq were linked to that country’s internal security problems.

More or less same was the USSR’s approach to Iran’s dispute with the UAE over three islands. On this question, the USSR did not adopt an official position although its allies Libya and Iraq condemned the Iranian action as an invasion of the Arab land. As a matter of fact, the Soviet encyclopedia identified the disputed islands as Iranian. The USSR at that time had attached considerable importance to maintain friendly ties with Iran after the Shah’s assurance that it would not let Iran to become a military base against the USSR(90).

In the case of boundary dispute between Iraq and Kuwait, the USSR adopted an impartial stance. It again refrained from supporting its ally in this dispute in exchange for the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kuwait(91).

Thus it can be said that although one of the parties to many a dispute in the region were the camp follower of the USSR, the latter did not come forward to support them in their conflicts with the pro-US states. Instead, the USSR tired to win the goodwill of both the parties.

To sum up, the superpowers had a little role to play in border disputes. These disputes never reached an alarming proportions also to have invited superpowers’ involvement. Some of the disputes were settled through regional mechanism—the GCC—. There existed an understanding of sort among the regional countries to avoid to seek superpowers help in settling their disputes. Some of the states settled their territorial disputes in their own favor by using their superior power, while the weaker powers reconciled with it, instead of approaching to the superpowers for redressal. In the 1960s and the 1970s, Saudi Arabia secured territorial concessions from Abu Dhabi, Qatar and Oman. In 1971 the Shah of Iran seized greater and lesser Tunbs and forced the ruler of the Shahrjah to acquiesce in to the Iranian occupation of the Island of Abu Musa in return for a financial settlement. But, in none of these cases the countries at the receiving tried to involve either of the superpowers for restoring the status quo.
REFERENCES & FOOTNOTES


3. Talks about US-Persian Gulf security cooperation is little heard now than during and a few months after the Persian Gulf crisis.


7. As told by the then US Secretary of State, Alexander Haig, to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the Strategic Consensus was to "establish a consensus in the strategic-regional sense among the states of the area, stretching from Pakistan in the east to Egypt in the west, including Turkey, Israel and other threatened states", cited in Reich, Bernard, "United States Middle East Policy in the Carter and Reagan Administrations", The Middle East Journal, Winter 1984-85, Pp. 15, 16.


14. In the United States the Jewish lobby and Israel's supporters campaigned for a war to dismantle Iraq's military capability. They held that Israel was no less endangered by Iraq


16. The combined total of the US, West Europe and Japan’s oil imports cost $275 b in 1980 from $145 b in 1978.


20. Hollen, Christopher Von, N. 1, P. 1068.


22. However, the Iraqi air force lacked sufficient strength and the Iraqi missiles lacked sufficient precision. The oil facilities in Saudi Arabia were, therefore, least vulnerable to sabotage during the war.

23. This was because the overthrow of the Shah and US-Iran crisis, that resulted from it, barred the United States from using Iran as a base against the Soviet Union. See Kazemzadeh Firuz, “Hints of the Future Hidden in the Past”, Far Eastern Economic Review, September 5, 1980, P. 26.


27. However, critics to the “Strategic Consensus” idea argue, and reasonably so, that it was oblivious to the reality of local conflicts in the area. In the case of Iran-Iraq War, the US
allies could not agree to cooperate with Israel to coerce Iran. Such a tie-up would have sharpened the local people's resentment against the monarchical governments which, in turn, could have been capitalized by Iran to foment internal disturbances there. Moreover, this was bound to strain the relations between Iraq and other Arab Gulf states as Iraq was avowedly anti-Israel and was smarting from the Israeli attack on its nuclear reactor, Osirak, in 1982. This situation would have not served Iraq's purpose too, as it would have caused the termination of financial and logistic support of the Arab Gulf countries to Iraq and the latter abandoning of its role to defend the Arab Gulf states against Iran. In consequence, Iran would have been emboldened to take on the Arab states of the Persian Gulf.


32. About a couple of months before Kuwait sought protection of its ships, Iran had test-fired Silkworm Surface-to-Surface missile, purchased from China, in the Qeshem Island in the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranians had also test-fired two such missiles from the Faw peninsula at the head of the Persian Gulf. These missiles were capable of hitting the Kuwaiti capital and most of that country's oil installations.


38. This policy was for the first time outlined in 1976 by the then US Secretary of Defence, Harold Brown, who stated that the US "should be ready to fight simultaneously one and a half wars, one large scale war, most likely in the NATO responsibility zone and a limited

39. Washington also resorted to the diversification and substitution of energy resources and other contingent arrangements as an intensive to hedge against such denial. See also Ravenal, Earl C., “The Case for Adjustment” Foreign Policy, No. 81, Winter 1990-91, P. 9.


43. Even the enemy states took full advantage of the US preferring to protect the lives of its nationals held as hostages by the enemy country than taking military action against the erring power. When Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah hijacked TWA flight 847 in April 1986 and made five American nationals hostages for securing the release of the prisoners, held by Israel, the US Secretary of State, George Shultz, issued a warning to Iran that if any harm was done to five American hostages, the US would retaliate against Iran. Tehran responded immediately not by denying its connection with the terrorists but threatening a larger hostage seizure. See for detail, Bernstein, Alvin H., “Iran’s Low-Intensity War against the United States”, Orbis Vol. 30, No. 1, Spring 1986, Pp. 19-67.


45. Reich Bernard, N. 7., P. 42.


50. The Reagan plan envisaged a self-governing West Bank associated with Jordan under Palestinian control, status of Jerusalem as a united city but subject to future negotiation between the parties to the dispute. The Plan was rejected by Israel, PLO, Jordan and the Arab countries.


59. The Soviet writings pointed out that since the roots of the war were inherent in the territorial disputes that pre-dated the imperialism, the outbreak of the war was not a handiwork of the US or the Western countries.


61. Despite abrupt reversals in the Iran-USSR relations, Iran was considered by the Soviet Union as one if its main supporters in the region and a geographical base for establishing a wider presence in the region. See Chubin, Shahram, N. 32, P. 27.


63. Doubts on this issue were raised by the CIA in its highly publicized study in April 1977 which stated that the Soviet oil production would reach its highest level in the early 1980s. In the mid-1908s, the USSR would be forced to import more than 23.5 million barrels oil per day.

64. The proposal, which was presented by Breznev before Indian parliament, included mutual commitment not to establish military bases in the area, not to use and threaten the use of force against the countries of Persian Gulf, to respect the non-aligned status chosen by the Persian Gulf states, to respect the sovereign rights of states of the states to their natural resources, not to raise any obstacle or threat to normal trade
exchange and the use of sea lanes linking the states of the region with other

countries of the world.


71. This distinct change was expressed in documents of the New Party Program published in October 1985, and the report of the General Secretary, Micheal Gorbachev, to the 27th Party Congress. The program referred to that the “USSR had profound sympathy for the aspirations of the peoples who experienced the heavy and demeaning yoke of colonial servitude”—“a tepid phrase”, says Fukuyama Francis, “used repeatedly by both Gorbachev and his predecessor, Yuri Andropove to signal the limit of Soviet support for the Third World clients”. Gorbachev’s speech omitted a separate discussion on the Third World altogether, did not mention a single Soviet client by name and accorded no special status to the “socialist oriented countries”. This, it may be said, was the total rejection of Breznev’s legacy that began with the joint Soviet-Cuban intervention in Angola in 1975, continued through the Joint Soviet-Cuban involvement on behalf of Ethiopia in 1977-78 and culminated in the Soviet Union’s invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979. See Fukoyama Francis, N. 59. P. 715.


74. Nearly one-third of the arms delivered to the principals in the Iran-Iraq war, since fighting began in 1980, came from the Soviet Union. West European share in the combatants’ arms acquisitions was about 25 percent and that of China 15 percent.


78. Iran and Iraq welcomed the initiative but did make any attempt to hold such a meeting.

79. However, at the 26th Soviet Communist Party Congress in February, he acknowledged that Afghanistan’s international aspects might be discussed in connection with Persian Gulf Security, however, rejecting any considerations of internal Afghan affairs.


81. Details pertaining to this are elaborated elsewhere in this chapter. See also, Luard Evan, "Superpowers and Regional Conflicts", Foreign Affairs, Vol. 64, No. 5, Summer 1986, Pp. 1007-25.

82. Bakhash, Shaul, N. 19, P. 608-610.

84. The Fundamentalist threat was more ominous as it had a sociological dimension also. It had become a class phenomenon as a "movement of the oppressed" as Imam Khomeini coined it.


88. Some analysts have, however, argued that there existed a close connection between regional conflicts and global competition. See Chubin, Shahram, Security in the Persian Gulf: The Role of Outside Powers, Totowa, NJ Allenheld, Osmun for the IISS, 1981. However, this hypothesis has been influenced by the trend to look at the regional conflicts from the cold war angle.


90. Chubin, Shahram, N. 37, Pp. 18-22.
91. Rubinstein, Alvin Z., N. 57, P. 447.
CHAPTER III

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR

The Iran-Iraq war — the most sanguinary one of the 20th century — broke out on 20 September 1980 as Iraqi aircrafts and army mounted a full scale assault inside Iran. But, according to Iraqi claims the war had actually started around a fortnight ago when the Iranian ground forces crossed the international border on September 4 the same year to launch an attack on Iraq.

Notwithstanding the conflicting claims of the two countries on the actual date of the outbreak of the war, the nature and intensity of the armed bouts between the two armies prior to 20th September Iraqi attack were at best the border skerimishes. The invioablity of the international border was for the first time transgressed on 20th September only, as Iraqi aircrafts made deep penetration inside Iranian territory. Thus, in legal sense, the war started on that day only.

THE ORIGIN

The origin of the war should be not traced beyond its immediate past. A good number of writings, however, attribute the origin of the war to the centuries-old sectarian and ideological rivalry between the two countries (1). They date it back to historical developments, like the victory of the Arab Islamic forces over the Persian empire in the battle of Qadisya in 637 AD (2), the spreading of Islam and the Arab culture in Persia (637 to 750 AD) (3), the starting of cultural and lingual antagonism and the territorial disputes during the medieval period when today’s Iraq ad Iran were being ruled by the Ottomans and Pahalvis, respectively.

However, it is superfluous to see a symbiosis between the Arab-persian rivalry and the Iran-Iraq war. Ideologically, the Post-Islamic revolution Iran did not represent the monarchiesof Persian empire. The Islamic revolution was the first ever event in the history of Iran towards the abandoning of ‘Persianism’ for a broader goal; assumption of the mantle of the leadership of Islamic ‘Ummah’ which cuts across geographical, racial, sectarian and lingual limitations. The ‘Bathist’ Iraq, did revel in espousing the cause of Arabism, but it too did not represent the contours of Arabism of early medival and medival periods.

It would be equally errornous to describe the war as a manifestation of age-old boundry disputes between Iran and Iraq. Historically, the two countries never fought a full-scale war on the boundry disputes. These disputes cropped up to dangerous proportion a number of times in the past but each time these were settled through diplomatic means(4). In other words, the history of border disputes bewtween the two countries belies the outbreaking of a war.

Their past has undoubtedly been conflict-raven but it can not be described as the main factor behind the war bewtween Iran and Iraq. For, the war is not an evolutionary process. It is, as a matter of fact, an instrument which is resorted to when pacific means to settle disputes
exhaust or both or one of disputants find launching a war more rewarding to their/its national
interests.

Had the historical rivalry been the cause of the Iran-Iraq war, wars could have been a
regular phenomenon between the two countries as they have more often than not been hostile
to each other. A war would have certainly broken out during the Shah’s time when the relations
between the two countries were strained no less than what these were after the accession of the
Islamic government to the power in Iran. The war erupted in the aftermath of the seizure of
power in Iran by the Islamic revolutionaries and the resultant developments inside Iran and
throughout the Persian Gulf region. Thus these developments would have been more important
a factor behind the war.

THE CAUSES OF THE WAR

1) THE PERCEIVED THREAT PROGNOSIS:

It is commonly held that the foremost objective behind the Iraqi aggression was to
forestall the chances of the spreading of Iran’s Islamic revolution over to Iraq where Shias
constituted the majority and were inclind towards the spiritual leader of their community, Imam
Khomeini. In the event of the success of revolution, led by the Shia clergy next door, the fear
of insurrection of Shi’i resurgence loomed large. In addition, Ayotollah Khomeini was, those
days, exhorting the people in Iraq to unseat Saddam Hussein whom he described “an enemy
of Islam and all Mulsims” (5).

The Shi’e upsurge in Iraq got a new lease of life in the aftermath of the victory of the
Islamic revolution. The She’i organisation “Al-Dawa’ Al-Islamiyah”, founded in 1968 by Sayid
Musheer Al-Hakim Al Tabatabai in Najaf, and “Al Mujahideen, founded in Baghdad in 1979,
carried out a series of bomb blasts and other subversive activities in the late 1979 and the early
1980.

Yet, it is doubtful that the perceived fear of the spread of Islamic revolution was really
as a factor potential enough to have necessitated a pre-emptive action on the part of the Iraqi
government. First, the Shie uprising was not a new phenomenon for the Saddam government.
It surfaced as early as the Baathist regime came to power in 1968. Shias of Iraq resented, many
time violently, their suppression and the undermining of the authority of Shi’e clergy by the
Baathist government (6).

Second, The success of Islamic revolution in Iran did not alter the nature and course of
the She’i opposition into a nation-wide armed revolt. The pro-Iran Shi’e resurgence in 1979-
80 was confined to She’i religious centers in Iraq. It had not acquired a popular character either.
At best, Ayotollah Khomeini’s call to the Iraqi people to rise to revolt against the Saddam
regime had inspired Shias of Najaf, which is the most-coveted place for Shia community the
world over and where Ayotollah Khomeini had spent 14 years of his exile and was revered as
spiritual leader by the local people (6b). Otherwise, the Arabic-speaking Shias, scattered all
over Iraq, were not much amused by his call.

Third, the She’i resurgence had not turned militant. It, by and large, was a feeble,
localised and semi-militant movement.

Fourth, by the time Saddam attacked Iran he had already succeeded in quelling the Shi’ite resurgence. Many of the ‘Al Dawa’ leaders, activists and their supporters were executed in early 1980. People of Iranian origin, numbering about 15,368, were expelled from the country.

Fifth, Saddam Hussain could ill-afford to launch an aggression against a neighbour had the country internally been strife-stricken.

Sixth, Khomeini’s vow to export his revolution to Iraq was rhetorical. There is little evidence to suggest that the Iranian government fomented the Shi’ite resurgence by giving training in subversive activities to the rebels or providing them any financial and military assistance.

Seventh, Khomeini’s call did not have any special sectarian appeal or was not targeted at a particular country. An overview of his speeches and writings suggest that he called upon the Muslim ‘Ummah’ as a whole to topple the anti-Islamic and puppet governments in all the Muslim countries and not only in Iraq. Nor did he specifically address the Shi’ite people of Iraq.

Last but not the least, Iran after revolution was undergoing a period of internal chaos and disorder. It had inherited a weak industrial base and a disarrayed administrative set up from the Shah. The armed forces were used to be considered loyal to the ousted Shah. Thus the internal condition in Iran were hardly conducive to enable its government to divert its resources and energy towards abetting cross-border terrorism. Notwithstanding the appeal of the Islamic revolution in Iraq, the Iranian government policy towards Iraq lacked the aggressiveness that characterised Shah’s policy towards Iraq.

2) THE PERCEIVED OPPORTUNITY PROGNOSIS:

It was not the ‘perceived threat’ from Iran but the ‘perceived opportunity’ that the ouster of the Shah and Islamic Iran’s internal condition presented to Iraq explains Saddam’s September 20 act. The prevailing regional scenario coupled with developments in Iran was the right moment to materialize the long held Baathist dream of playing the role of revolutionary vanguard of the region.

Subjugating Iran, then a threat to the monarchical regimes of the Arab World, Saddam Hussain could fill the leadership void created by the exit of Egypt. Also, Iraq, which was on the forefront of the movement to oust Egypt from the Arab fold and had buried its hatchet with Saudi Arabia, Syria and Libya, badly wanted to give a military dimension to its newly found political role in the region.

A swift victory over the demoralised and disarrayed armed forces of Iran would have,
in one stroke, turned Iraq into the saviour of the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, established its military superiority in the region and reaffirmed the importance of Iraq's location as the gateway to the Arab world security from the East(16).

Saddam's decision to attack Iran would have been influenced by the then state of affairs in Iran. The military prowess of Iran took a nosedive as a direct consequence of the success of Islamic revolution. The armed forces were disorganised following the large scale purging of the pro-Shah elements from it. Some 10,000 senior officers were sacked and the conscription of a lot more was reduced(17). In the place of sacked armed forces personnel, who were experienced and well-trained, the young people, without any previous experience, were being recruited. The defence preparedness received further jolt with the cancellation of worth $ 12 b arms deal with the erstwhile ally, the US. The weapons in the Iranian inventory had become sitting ducks in the wake of the shortage of spare parts (18). Over and above, the military concentration on the Iran-Iraq border was reduced by half so as to increase the deployment in Kurd-domianted areas in the north and the areas adjacent to the former Soviet Union (19). The revolution had altered the Iran-Iraq military balance of power as "rather than a strong Iran facing a week and isolated Iraq as earlier, a strong Iraq appeared to face a week and divided Iran"(20).

Politically, Iran was undergoing a transitional phase. The Islamic forces were consolidating control over the strings of government and administration by eliminating the Pro-Shah elements and isolating the one-time revolutionary allies such as the Tudeh Party and the Mujahideen-E- Khalq, who, in turn, were envious of clergy's rise to power. In the aforementioned circumstances, a military attack from Saddam was bound to receive support from the dissidents. It would have also led to the staging of a military coup by the dissidents, supported by the Iraqi government.

Not the strength and capabilities of the enemy country alone but the confidence in one's own strength to achieve a decisive victory determines the outbreak of a pre-planned war. Iraq, as stated above, was politically and economically stable and militarily strong. Tariq Aziz, Iraq's war Foreign Minister, writes in his book that the Iraqi government decided to go to war only after calculating that Iraq was in perfect position on all counts to win it(21). Over and above, Saddam Hussein was also confident of absence of an opposition to his attack from the superpowers, not to talk of any attempt by the superpowers and the regional countries to force Iraq to stop the war(22).

3) THE TERRITORIAL DISPUTES:

The long-standing dispute over the sovereignty over the river 'Shatt-Al-Arab'(23) and Iraqi territorial claims over Iran's Khuzestan province (24) were someway or other an issue behind the war. The war preceded the renewal of Iraqi claim over the entire Shatt and the Khuzestan province. Saddam Hussein went to the extent of unilaterally abrogating the the 1975 Algiers agreement between the two countries, which established 'mid-water' as the demarcating line between the two countries' boundaries, three days before attacking Iran. Since the
boundry dispute is the Iraqi version of the cause of the war, it must not be taken as it is. A cross-
examination of the Iraqi contention proves that the boundry dispute was more a 'pretext' than
a 'cause'.

To begin with, the boundry issue was not a bone of contention between the two countries
during most the time between the installation of the Islamic government and the outbreak of the
war. When the Islamic government came to power, Saddam Hussein assured it that it would
abide by the Algires agreement on the question of boundry demarcation. It was as late as
September 7, 1980 the Iranian Charge 'D' Affairs was given a notice that either Iran should hand
over the territories claimed by Iraq or face an Iraqi military attack(26). On 17th of the same
month, Saddam abrogated the traety. Thus a boundry dispute could not in a span of a fortnight
ripe to an extent that a war had become imminent.

Also, as against the past, the Iraqi government did not make any effort to resolve the
issue through negotiations(26). Had the war preceded unsuccessful negotiations, then only the
waging of war to settle the dispute could have been justified. The boundry dispute was not also
an issue of grave concern to the Iraqi government. It was propped up only in retaliation to the
alleged Iranian involvment in Iraq. So says Tariq Aziz in his book “but when Iran attempts to
overthrow the revolutionary nationalist system in Iraq.... then the pursit of the issues of
territories, the Shat-al-Arab even that Arabistsn will not be wrong attitude from political point
of view”(27).

THE GENISIS OF THE WAR

The Iran-Iraq war is described as the war of two nationalist ideologies, the Arab and the
Persian (28). This rivalry has ethinic and lingual connotations as Iraqis are Arabs and the
Iranians are Aryans,. The teo peoples respectively speak Arabic and Persian. But, the war in
question could hardly have been a war of ideologies because of the fact that one of the the
warring countries i.e. Iran, had in part to come out of Shah legacy and in part to carve out a
larger role for the country in the regional affairs, disfavoured its Persian character for a supra-
national character by indentifying itself with Islam.(28)

The Islamic government criticised the Shah’s policy of indentifying Iranians as Arayans.
Imam Khomeini, instead, traced an Iranian’s identity to the religion he or she followed and to
the advent of Islam in the country than its thousands of years old racial connection.

Even Iraq’s did project the war as as a struggle for re-establishing Arab supremacy over
‘Ajam’(non Arab) races. But this policy stemmed more out expediency than any ideological
compulsion. The Arab sentiments were exploited to muster the support of Arabic-speaking
Shias, the Arabic speaking Kurds and the Arabs in Iran, to justify Iraq’s historical claim over
the Khuzestan province of Iran, to win the support of Arabs and to project Iraq as the protector
and the defender of the Arab World.

This war can not be termed as a Shia-Sunni war either. Like its Persian character, the
Islamic government of Iran also downplayed its She’i identity. With a view to establish among
Mulsum Ummah, pre-dominantly Sunni, of its Islamic credentials, the Iranain government aspired for Shia-Sunni unity. Ayotollah Khomeini had indeed taken a few bold steps in this regard. As the spiritual leaders of the Shia community of the world, he asked the Shias to shed their differences with the Sunnis. For instance, he allowed that Shia could say Namaz in Sunni mosque and perform it the way Sunnis performed it, even behind a Sunni Imam (the prayer leader).

Ayatollah Khomeini also differed from Shia Ulema (religious scholars) in many ways.

In his speeches and works he referred excessively to the teachings and sayings of Prophet Mohammed than those of the fourth Caliph, Ali, and 12 Shia Imams, contrary to the general practice among the Shia Ulema. The Islamic revolution was also a departure from the Shia clergy’s preference to the policy of non-interference in the state of affairs of a despot. Otherwise the Shi’e clergy’s stand was that only Imam Mehndi, who is seclusion since many centuries, would would by appearing again, eradicate injustice and supresssion from the world.

The war was not a manifestation of the Shia-Sunni rivalry because the Shia population of Iraq remained loyal to its government. So were the Sunnis of Iran to their government (29). To quote Selernee Micheal, “loyalty to the present states and governments has proved stronger than the religious affinity and distinct ethnic identity”(30).

**ARMECL CLASHES PRIOR TO THE WAR**

The full-scale Iran-Iraq war preceded a series of border skerimishes, starting from April 1980. According to the Iraqi claim the seeds of war were sown by Iran on 1st April 1980 when its agents among Iraqis hurled bomb at the Iraqi deputy prime minsiter Tariq Aziz in Baghdad University (31). On April 5 bombs was hurled at the funeral procession of those killed in April 1 incident. The Iraqi embassy at Tehran was also attacked during the summer 1980(32). The consualte of the Iraq was attacked on October 11 and 26 and November 1 and 7 in 1979 (33). According to Iraqi sources, in a span of six months, i.e. between 1979’s winter and the 1980’s summer there took place 249 cases of violation of Iraqi airspace by the Iranian aircrafts, and 244 cases of firing across the border and on the border posts and an equal number of artillery shelligns by the Iranian armed forces(34).

The Iranian sources date back the Iraqi aggression to May 4, 1979 when in a major assault on Iranian villages scores of people were killed and around 6,000 rendered homeless. On November 30 1979, parts of Bosinir and Abadan towns were attacked. Iraq mounted another attack on Nafashah in March 1980. There was heavy artelliary shelling on Kirmanshah on April 4 the same year. On April 12, the Iranian town Qasar-e Shirin was attacked.

On september 4, Iranian armed forces fired artillery shells at the Iraqi city Khanqan and Mandlai from the disputed border area of Al-Quas (35) in retaliation to the rocket attacks on the city of Meharan. Heavy exchange of fire was reported on September 10 and September 14. This also resulted into the occupation of Zainul Qyas by the Iraqi forces. The last round of the border skerimishes was fought on 19th September, a day beofere the full fledge war started.
1) THE FIRST PHASE: IRAQ LAYS THE SEIGE OF IRAN:

War of attrition along the border apart, the full-fledge war between Iran and Iraq started on 20-21 September with Iraq launching a broad-front offensive across the Shatt-Al-Arab at four points.

(1) In the north between Qasr-E-Shirin and Naft-E-Shah with a division strength of 10,000.

(2) The further south at Mehran with a strength of 3,000.
(3) Towards Dezful.
(4) Around the oil ports of Khurremshaher and Abadan in the Persian Gulf.

It was a full-scale war in terms of the areas covered. Yet, Iraq did not deploy as large a force as warranted. This was probably due to the fact that Iraq had not discounted the possibility ofretreating in the wake of either superpower’s opposition to the Iraqi attack, leading them to militarily intervene, or an Israeli attack in the West or Syria, a long time Baathist foe, joining the war from the Iranian side.

Iran retaliated by carrying out air raids into Iraqi territories. Iran amassed a large ground forces comprising the Revolutionary Guards, the Mustazfeen, regular army personnel and the border tribal militia, equipped with light medium weapons and small artillery. F-4 Phantoms, F-5Es Cobra Helicopters were used by Iran to make low-level interdiction raids on major Iraqi cities viz., Baghdad, Mosul and Kirkuk. Strangely, Iran did not use its air power to bomb the invading armies of Iraq. It also did not provide enough air cover to its own army stranded on borders. The main objective behind the Iranian strategy to make deep raids into Iraq was to target vital economic installations therein as well as block the supply line to Iraqi forces fighting in Iran.

A state of stalemate followed after a few days of the starting of war. The Iraqi strategy to launch a broad front offensive did not pay off due to the failure to commit a sufficiently large army on the war front. The Iraqi army failed to capture vital strategic positions, including the cities of Dezful, Ahwaz and Khorramshaher, in Iran.

This phase of the war was distinct in many ways to the course the war undertook afterwards. The war in this phase was almost directionless. Despite succeeding oft and on in overcoming Iranian resistance, the Iraqi army showed self-restraint in advancing further and preferred to confine to border areas only. This shows that Iraq aimed at achieving limited victory only instead of overrunning the whole of Iran. Iraq’s limited objectives were to create internal chaos in Iran, cause the collapse of the Islamic government, occupy the Arab-dominated Khuzestan province of Iran and establish control over the river Shatt.

THE SECOND PHASE (September 1981 - 1984): IRAN FIGHTS BACK:

The Second phase of the war began with Iran bouncing back. It re-captured the
territories it had lost to Iraqi forces and forced them to retreat, which was the first major Iraqi reversal in the war. Long and frequent halts in Iraqi attacks during the 1981 summers gave Iran needed time to regroup its armed forces and increase their numerical strength to outnumber the invading army. Since Iran had failed to deploy a large army in the first year of war, which was being re-constituted, it suffered a considerable loss of lives at the hands of Iraqi forces.

In December 1981, the Iranian army captured key crossroads linking Iraq's entire southern borders. Iraq made a month long effort to recapture the junction but failed. Another major breakthrough was achieved during early and mid 1982. In February-March 1982, the Iranian army regained control over Dezful-Shouz sector. Khorremshaher was also regained in 1982. Finally, the Paasdanaan, largely the teen-aged boys, called "human waves", managed to cross the international border in June 1982. The Iranian government decision to take the war into Iraq aimed primarily at unseating Saddam Hussein from power and also abetting Shia resurgence in Iraq.

Till 1984, Iran continued launching several "human wave" offensives in Iraq. However, the Iranian army failed in breaking into Iraqi defenses. It made an abortive attempt to the seize the port of Basra and failed to move into the northern oil fields near Mosul and cut the Basra town from the rest of Iraq. The Iranian bid at Basra cost thousands of casualties. In the Majnoon sector alone the Iranian army suffered 15,000 to 20,000 casualties.

However, the human wave assaults did not leave Iraq without the fear of losing a considerable portion of border areas to the Iranian army. Thus, Saddam offered unilateral ceasefire which Tehran obviously rejected. But, the ill-equipped, ill-trained and inexperienced army failed to enter Baghdad. It could not penetrate the strong defense line of Iraq, spread through 180 km border. The Iranian army— over-zealous, spirited but poorly coordinated — made a number of miscalculated attempts. Iraq put up a stiff resistance owing to its superiority in weapon system. The Iranian army also lacked in planning the battle field strategy. For instance, Iraqis foiled the Iranian grand offensive at Majnoon sector by diverting the water from river Tigris and Huwarza through a canal to create an air field lake around the Majnoon islands. When in March 1984 the Iranian troops wade through the Marshland in a planned quick push through a gap in the Iraqi third and fourth armies, the swampy battlefield deterred their progress and made hundreds of them sitting ducks to Iraqi fighters.

At the end of the year 1984, it appeared that both the armies were at disadvantage when invading and good in defense. Writes Christopher S. Raj of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, "if at first Iraq had miscalculated in launching an invasion of Iranian territory, it now seemed Iran had equally badly miscalculated in taking the war across the Iraqi territory."}

THE THIRD PHASE: THE WAR OF ECONOMIC ATTRITION:
The war of economic attrition was started by Iran instead of Iraq as is generally believed. This phase of war is said to have begun with Iraqi attack on Iran’s Kharag oil terminal in
spring 1984. However, Iran had launched the war of economic attrition as soon as the war broke out. It resorted to it again in 1983 also by launching Va-Fajr -4 air attack around Kurdish mountain near the Iraqi town of Punjwan on October 20 that year. The main Iranian objectives underlying this attack were to damage the Iraq-Turkey-Mediterranean pipeline through which passed much of Iraq’s export bound oil and to render its Kirkuk oil field ineffective (52). In response to Iranian attack, Iraq bombed the Iranian town of Dezful, Marzed, Suleiman and Behbehian.

Beside bombing Iranian oil facilities, Iraqis also laid down mines at the approaches to the Iranian port of Bandar Khomeini, 80 km east of the river Shatt) and damaged the unfinished Iranian-Japanese joint Petro-Chemical ventures a the same place.

The Iraqi attack on the Kharag turned the Iran-Iraq battle from a ground affair into an air war. However, Iran, like Iraq, did not switch over to air warfare. It conducted at least three of its “human waves offensives” between 1985 and 1987. None of them translated into major breakthroughs. The only success of these offensives was that Iraqi army was encircled in its own land and denied of a chance to intrude into Iran.

It was the diminishing possibility of re-entering Iran that led Iraq to make a strategic shift i.e. the launching of the war of economic attrition through missile attacks and air raids. The Iraqi strategy was to damage the Iranian oil facilities which facilitated 90 percent of Iranian oil exports and earned Iran 80 percent of its revenues. In such an eventuality Iran could have been unable to meet its defense-civil expenditure and settled for peace on Iraqi terms, the Iraqi government planned.

THE TANKER WAR : THE GULF IS ENGULFED:

Failing to wreck enough damage to the Iranian oil installations, Iraq did not spare Iranian oil tankers and cargo ships. These attacks started from May 7 1984 (53). Iran followed the suit. In early months of the 1984 summer, the Iranian jets attacked as many as five ships bound for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia(54). In the ensuing war the tankers of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Panama and Greece were also hit. Iraqi missiles also hit, unwittingly, the tankers of the friendly Persian Gulf states (55). A total number of 67 tankers ships got attacked in the year 1984 alone(56). While the total number of the tankers/ships hit during the tanker war period mounted to as much as 150 (57).

In 1985, more Iranian ships and oil installations were targeted. Since Iran could not give Iraq the taste of its own medicine as due to the closure of the river Shatt the Iraqi oil tankers did not show up in the Persian Gulf waters, it retaliated by launching yet another ground offensive in March 1985.

Tehran succeeded to cut Basra-Baghdad highway (58). The airlift of arms from Egypt renewed Iraqi forces’ firepower to enable it to push the Iranian army back to borders. By this time Baghdad had also begun using chemical weapons against the Iranian army. In February 1986, Iran made the most successful ground offensive. The Iranian army comprising 10,000
revolutionary guards crossed the Shatt Al-Arab, in small boats, into the Fao peninsula which was captured in less than the twenty-four hours (59).

Later, reorganizing its army and deploying added numbers of arms brigade, Iraq halted Iranian advancement towards Basra. The two armies laid idle face-to-face for the next two months before Iraq decided to drop the move to lay siege of the Iranian army and diverted its thrust to Iran’s economic targets once again. In July-August the same year, Iraqi missiles repeatedly attacked Iranian refineries at Shiraz, Isfahan and Tabriz with the Kharag terminal being hit more than hundred times (60). Air/missile raids were also made at Tanker terminals at Siri Island, situated south of the Persian Gulf, and Larak Island in the Strait of Hormuz (61).

The Soviet missiles as well as Exocet missiles, the latter supplied by France and were the latest weapons inducted into Iraqi armory, enhanced Iraqi capability to extend the range of its operation to aforementioned targets (62).

The Tanker War entered its most crucial phase after Iran’s January 6-8 assault—the Kerbela 5 offensive on Basra. Although this offensive incurred a human toll of 40,000 to Iran, it was the second major victory for Iran after the one at Fao in 1986. 20,000 Iraqi soldiers also lost their lives while defending the city. Though the casualties on Iraqi side was half to those suffered by the Iranian army, it was quite a big loss for a country whose population was only one-fourth of Iran’s. The Iranian army also forced half of Basra’s 1,000,000 population to flee (63).

But the event of most far-reaching significance during the Tanker War was, probably, the US acceptance of Kuwaiti request to protect its oil tankers from Iran’s indiscriminate firings in the Persian Gulf waters. Kuwait approached the US to re-flag its oil tankers on January 17, 1987 (64). The US decided to escort 11 Kuwaiti tankers on July 22, 1987. On July 24, US-flagged Kuwaiti super tanker struck a mine (65). On Aug. 24, two Iranian vessels were fired by a US destroyer, Kidd (66). On the night of October 8, an Iranian boat fired on American petrol helicopters (67). In retaliation, the American helicopters fired and sank three Iranian petrol boats 15 miles south west of Farsi Island (68). On October 16, the US-Flagged Kuwait ship “Sea Isle City” was hit by an Iranian missile while it was in Kuwaiti territorial waters (69). The US navy destroyers retaliated on October 19 by gutting an Iranian derelict oil rig. Iran responded by firing missiles in Kuwait’s island terminals on October 22 (70).

The Iran-US brinkmanship was a turning point in the war. The US entry internationalized the war. Besides US, Netherlands, Britain, France and Belgium also took part in the actions by deploying their naval forces at the US services. The Persian Gulf countries provided the US the naval facilities (71).

The US-Iran hostilities were the beginning of the end of the war. Threatened by the prospects of the US going whole-hog, Iran resorted to reconciliation. It signaled its willingness by giving a second thought to the UN resolution 598, which it had opposed tooth and nail till then.
THE WAR OF CITIES: THE WAR EXTENDS BEYOND BATTLE FIELDS:

Barring a pause of first four years of the beginning of the war, the cities of the two countries were pounced by missiles and subjected to repeated air raids. This was despite the fact that the two countries refrained from attacking civilian targets. They had also signed an agreement to this effect, brokered by the UN, on June 12, 1984(72).

The attacks on cities began in 1985 when ground engagements reached a state of stalemate. It was started by Iran with artillery attacks on southern Iraqi cities of Basra, Baghdad, Kirkuk, Mandali, and Khanaqin. In return, the Iraqi air force bombed the partially constructed nuclear plants at Bushehr and a steel plant in Ahwaz, beside heavily pounding Tehran and 40 other Iranian cities.

The air superiority and the possession of chemical weapons facilitated Iraq's regular raids on Iranian cities. Iran's strategy in the war of cities was to offset the cumulative cost of the Human Waves offensives (73). However, the casualties on the Iranian side in the war of cities were no less. Also, the air offensives on Iraqi cities proved counter productive in the sense that these affected Iraqi Shias too, eroding the sympathy that they had for the country ruled by their sect. Iran could also not withstand Iraq's superiority in air.

THE LAST PHASE:

The 'war of cities' re-erupted in early 1988. This time it was started by Iraq. Iraq took the advantage of the low morale of Iran. Iranian ground forces had despite lying siege around Basra for the last two years or so failed to conquer the city. Domestic discontentment against an unfruitful war had begun appearing. The moderate elements in Iranian politics were wary of carrying on an endless war at the cost economic dislocation, international isolation, human losses (74).

Iraq's strike capability had increased tremendously after fresh supply of arms from the West European sources at the behest of the US, and also from the Soviet Union. Iran's military prowess was depleting. However, despite all these odds, Iran made a last-ditch effort north of Iraq in the autumn of 1987-88. Iraq, in turn, fired 150 Scud-B missiles (modified by East Germans by extending it range and reducing the payload)(75). Iraq also used SSMs and Soviet fighter aircrafts in pounding at civil and economic facilities in Iran. A total number 10 to 11 thousands deaths were reported on the Iranian side (76).

Iran's autumn offensive boomeranged. Iraq sprayed chemical weapons on Halabja town as the Iranian forces entered the city. Hundreds of Iranian armymen died and twice as much were injured. The Iranian army began retreating. The autumn fiasco followed the loss of Fao peninsula by Iran on April 16-17 1988. After Fao the Iraqi army also recaptured Shalamheh, Meharan and Majnoon from Iran.

Although the Iraqi army was only able to regain the control of its own territories, the setback suffered by Iran culminated into its acceptance of UN Security Council Resolution 598. On June Ayatollah Khomeini appeared on national TV to announce the end of hostilities from
Iran's side, a decision which to him was like quaffing the bitter drink of poison (77).

However, Iran's face-saving should not be read as an outright victory for Iraq because none of the Iraqi military objectives came to be met at the end of the war. Iraq could not occupy even an inch of the Iranian land, not to speak of Arabic-speaking Khuzestan. Iraq only regained the territories it had lost to Iranian army a couple of years ago. In this respect, Iranian performance was relatively better. Not only did Iran liberate its territory overrun by the Iraqi army's soon after the outbreak of the war, but it intruded into the Iraqi territories along the border and retained them under its control for over five years.

The logic that there was a qualitative difference between the Iranian military gains throughout the war and that of Iraq at the eve of the end of the war since the latter forced Iran to cease hostilities does not sound authentic. First, a direct linkage between Iran's acceptance of ceasefire and the Iraqi victory can not be established. Despite Iraqi victories on the homeground, the chances of fresh Iraqi moves inside Iran leading to the occupation of whole or parts of Iran and the toppling of the Islamic government did not really exist. Recognizing its weakness to fight a war inside Iran, Iraq was not prepared to risk its success back home. Second, on several occasions during the war Iraq had also offered to end the hostility in the same way Iran did.

Iraq's political objectives could also not materialize. From the throes of war the Islamic Government emerged stronger. The opposition to the new government took a back seat. Iranian people threw their total support behind the Islamic government. Iraqi Pre-occupation with the war told on its leadership urge as it turned a country financially and morally indebted to the Arab countries and isolated from regional the affairs.

However, compared to Iraq, Iran was more embarrassed. Ayatollah Khomeini had to undergo the trauma of accepting a proposal which he had rejected as "discriminatory" and resolved to defy it "until victory". The war also turned out to be a 'volte face' for Iran. After having occupied Iraqi territories during much of the latter half of the 80s, Iran had to content with withdrawing from there unceremoniously, leaving thousands of its soldiers consumed by the chemical weapons and many more rendered physically disabled and detained.

There general perception of the reasons behind Iran's defeat needs to be re-examined. The yawning gap in the military capabilities of the two countries is described as one of such reasons (79). At the end of the war Iraq was reportedly enjoying 4:1 superiority in tank, 3:1 in artillery and 10:1 in aircraft.

But, at the same time, it must be borne in mind that Iraqi military superiority never really helped Iraq. For instance, when Iraq was at the receiving end in the war it maintained military superiority but to no avail. Had the military superiority determined the course of the war, Iraq would have won it much earlier.

Lack of coordination between the regular army and the revolutionary guards as well as
logistical difficulties, such as shortage of arms and spare parts, were also not a factor in the defeat of Iran for the reason stated above. These were the problems which Iran faced since the very beginning of the war, yet it was able to push back the Iraqi army from its territory and then overpower the Iraqi defense on the Iraqi side of the international border. These mattered in Iran’s inability to tread Iraq’s inner defense around Baghdad and Basra.

Internal political and economic instability is also advocated to be one of the causes of Iranian defeat. It is difficult to gauge the intensity of political and economic turmoil in Iran at the eve of the end of the war. But one may anticipate that in case there prevailed political and economic uncertainties in Iran, there would have been a widespread protest against the government’s sudden decision to end a war after shedding so much of the blood of the people. But that nothing of that sort happened certifies that economic hardship, human agony and the war-weariness had not resulted into resentment and disillusionment. Even People’s approval of their government’s decision to end the war stemmed from their commitment to state and the government.

The Iranian economy was also not in a topsy-turvey condition. All through the annals of war Iran’s economy had been very resilient. In the year of the end of the war, the economy had improved a bit also. The Iraqi attacks on Iranian tankers, cities and economic installation had scaled down, enabling Iran to export more oil than in the previous years.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR AND THE SUPERPOWERS

THE UNITED STATES:

The major objectives of the United states with respect to the Iran-Iraq war remained unchanged, no matter the war continued for eight years and during this period the office of the president in the US was held by three incumbents. These major policy objectives were; the security of oil supplies, the containment of the Soviet Union and the denial of victory to Iran.

The policy US adopted to pursue the afore-mentioned objectives was, however, subjected to significant changes in tune with the changing fortunes of the war—the changing oil demand and supply pattern and the U turn in Soviet-US relations at the fag end of the war.

Interestingly, each combatant accused the US of launching an Imperialist-Zionist war against it through its proxy, the other combatant. However hard this argument is stretched, the role of the US in the outbreak of the war can not be even slightly established. It did not have any leverage with either of the belligerents; the post-Shah government in Iran being in total enmity with it and Iraq being a Soviet ally. Furthermore, destability in the region was further harmful to the US which had very recently lost a trusted ally in the Shah, was contemplating ‘second oil shock’ and was also pre-occupied with the specter of Soviet Union’s southward expansion after the latter’s occupation of Afghanistan.

THE EARLY NEUTRALITY:
In view of these reasons, the US instant response to the war was that of ‘neutrality’. It hoped that its ‘neutrality’ will also deny the Soviet Union an alibi to take side in the war.(81). The US was also made to adopt a neutral stand by the belligerent states as they showed an unwillingness to involve it. Neither of the two sought arms assistance, economic aid and political support from the US.

However, The US ‘impartiality’ in the war did not mean “inaction” or “disinterest”. Thus clarified the US Secretary of State, Muskie. “to be impartial is not be inactive : to declare that we will not take side is not to declare that we have no interest at stake” (82). Rather, US took keen interests in finding a solution to the war but at the same time it was also aware of its limitations as manifested in the US Administration’s official statement, “the war between Iran and Iraq is one of the few conflicts where we do not have any ally or at least friend we can lean on”(83).

The US did not show any panic as the war broke out. It did not increase the military presence in the region. No more naval fleet was sent to Arabian waters. Nor was any wherewithal added to solitary American naval fleet, then consisting of two carrier battle groups, in the Arabian sea (84). The US think-tank was also divided over the issue of providing military assistance to the Persian Gulf allies which were under the threat of being dragged in the war.

THE SHIFT TOWARDS IRAN:

Strangely, a pro-Iran shift was witnessed in American neutrality about a month of the beginning of the war. The US expressed its opposition to an Iraqi victory which led to the dismemberment of Iran as this would have resulted into the emergence of a Soviet ally as a regional power. The US did not want to take any action which would have irked Iran which had held its diplomatic staff as hostages. The US overtly expressed its opposition to Iraq. President Carter exclaimed, “Iraqi force had exceeded the war objectives, which was to take control of the Shatt-al-Arab waterway and not the Iranian territory” (85) The US opposition to Iraqi attempt to occupy parts of Iran grew to an extent that the State Department warned that the seizure of Khuzestan “would not be condoned”.

The Deputy Secretary of the state Warren Christopher clarified that US ‘neutrality’ would not come in way of an attempt to dismember Iran. “We certainly would be strongly opposed to any dismemberment of Iran”, he added. The then US Secretary of State also described the Iraqi attack on Iran as “invasion”.

With getting the hostages being the main concern of the US, the Carter Administration offered military assistance to Iran which is known as “arms for hostage deal”. President Carter declared that “if the hostages are released safely we would make delivery of those items which Iran owns— which they have bought and paid for”(86). Even, the Carter Administration remained stuck to the deal in all seriousness despite opposition from the West Asian allies (87) and from the Congress back home (88).
The US also tried to help Iran by offering spare parts the latter badly needed to sustain its American war machine. Advisors of Carter had told him to supply arms and ammunition to Iran to keep the arms race with the Soviet Union, which was then the largest arms supplier to Iraq alive(89), alive.

**THE PRO-IRAQ POLICY**

The US debunked its neutrality or what is described above as ‘a pro-Iran shift’ in favor of a pro-Iraq policy in the event of Iraqi reverses in the war. If an Iraqi victory was not in the interests of the US, the threat the prospects of an Iranian victory posed were greater. In adopting a thorough anti-Iran posture, the US was also encouraged by the the Soviet failure to break ice with Iran. The US government realized soon that not only had Iran not made any positive gestures towards the Soviet Union but it had also given a lukewarm response to Moscow’s advances in this regard.

The efforts to improve relations with Iraq took off as early as March 1981 on the then US Secretary of State Alexander Haig’s initiatives (90). In March 1981, the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Morris Draper toured Baghdad to brief Saddam of the US policy in the region. The US allies in the region, with whom Iraq had by that time developed close relations, played an important role in bringing the US on the Iraqi side. The US also wanted to cash in on the deteriorated Soviet-Iraq relations (91).

However, the Israeli attack on Iraq’s nuclear reactor in June that year put a brake on the progress in Iraq-US relations. The Iraqi government alleged that the US knew of the Israeli design (92). The US government placated Iraqi anguish by condemning Israeli aggression and voting against Israel in this issue in the Security Council beside suspending delivery of four F-16 fighter bombers to Israel as a sign of its displeasure. However, before Iranian recoveries in late 1981, the US bid for a rapprochement with Iraq was confined to improve relations at diplomatic and economic levels with an aim to cut into Soviet influence in that country. Once the war swung back to Iran’s favor, the US began supporting Iraq and asked its western allies to provide Iraq with adequate military equipment.

A major development in US-Iraq relations took place in 1983. US reportedly instigated Iraq to engage Iran in land war so that it could not turn to blockade the Strait of Hormuz (93). The US support to Iraq became overt by 1984 with President Reagan announcing “that a defeat of Iraq would be contrary to the US interests in the region” (94). The diplomatic ties between the two countries were restored in 1984. After that the US support to Iraq came in form of military and economic assistance also. On military front, Iraq and the US shared intelligence reports (95).

The US also asked its West European allies to pump sophisticated arms in Iraq and provide related assistance, such as helping Iraq in its nuclear and indigenous arms production programs. Beside, the US also sold arms directly to Iraq, though not frequently. It supplied to Iraq over 74 45 Model 214ST Helicopters in 1985, 30 Model 300c helicopters in 11’83 and 24 Model 531 MG Helicopters in 1985. Reports also suggest that the US had proposed to place
its troops under the Iraqi command to revert Iranian aggression of Fao in 1985.

The US also provided Iraq over $10 billion in credit each year to meet the cost of its huge arms acquisition (96). On political plank, the US stopped condemning Iraq for starting the war. The Iraqi war was officially described as the one waged by Iraq in self-defense. The responsibility for the continuance of the war was squarely blamed on Iran as reflects the following statement of the US government on the belligerents Iraq.

"Unlike Iraq, Iran is adamantly opposed to negotiations, or mediated end of the conflict" (97).

The US did adopt a pro-Iraq stance but assured itself that it would not intervene in the war. The US choice to intervene in the war always remained captive to the Soviet presence in Afghanistan. Though the US intervened in the war on behalf of Kuwait in 1987, its decision to come to Kuwait's help was influenced by the Soviet factor. Kuwait requested the US to come to its rescue in the month of Sept. 1986 and formally in January the following year. But the US turned a deaf ear to the Kuwaiti request for a period no less than six months. In March 1987 it decided to rush to Kuwait's help when it learnt about a clandestine deal between Kuwait and the Soviet Union according to which the latter had agreed to escort Kuwaiti oil tankers (98).

THE SECURITY OF THE OIL SUPPLIES:
'Oil' was probably the most important factor in shaping the US Iran-Iraq war policy. This war was being fought between the countries adjacent to the world's most busy oil trade sea routes and the region which possesses the largest reserves of the world oil. Also, the combatant countries together were the second largest producer of oil in West Asia. A reduction in oil exports of the two countries would have had shot up the price of oil which had become stable recently only.

The crude oil exports from the Persian Gulf in 1980, the year the war began, was recorded at 16.9 (99) mbpd which constituted as much as one third of the world's demand for the crude oil, which was 47.5 mbpd (100). In these circumstances, the US did not want to see that the war spilled over to other oil-producing countries of the region also. The US also needed that non-combatant countries of the region increase their output so that the decline in oil production and exports from Iran and Iraq could be offset. Henceforth, the US prevailed upon Saudi Arabia to increase its oil production to 10,400 bpd from the mid-Oct. 1980 from 9500 mbpd in the pre-war period. The oil production of Kuwait also increased from 1350 mbpd to 2300 mbpd in the same period.

Although due to the decrease in global demand which, in turn was caused by the recession in the West, the need of an added supply of oil from the Persian Gulf region had abetted, the importance of the safety of oil trade routes and that of the oil producers remained as it was. The US, its Western allies and Japan remained dependent on the Persian Gulf oil, albeit for relatively low quantity. The decreased volume of oil the consumer states needed from the Persian Gulf could, if denied, have been a heavy burden on the limited and fast-depleting reserves in other oil producing regions of the world.
The US was equally concerned about the likelihood of a spiral increase in the oil prices. However, it did not succeed in arresting the price-hike trend as a result of the war. The oil prices went up from $21.67 pb in 1979 to $33.8 at the end of 1980. Afterwards, the oil prices came down or remained static but these never returned to 1979 level (101). It was in 1986 only that the oil prices slumped to $14.57 pb, an all time low during that decade.

The security of oil supplies brought about a major change in the US policy. Instead of trying to hammer out a solution to the war, as it tried to do in the beginning, the US counted on its increased military presence in the region to ensure that any attempt on the part of either of the combatants to strangulate the oil supply would be petered out (102). The Carter Doctrine, which declared that the US would use military option in case the oil supplies from the Gulf were stifled by external powers, was a manifestation of this policy. The RDF was deployed in the Arabian waters in 1985. Earlier, the US naval task force stationed in the Arabian Sea was put on alert, and AWACs Planes were sent to Saudi Arabia with a view to monitor Iran’s preparation for a surprise military attack on the US naval force or those of its European allies. Military hardware were also despatched to the regional allies to enable them to tackle a possible Iranian attack so long the US forces did not arrive to their defense (103).

Once the war ceased to be a threat to the security of the oil supplies and the ‘price stability’(104), the US found its interests served in the continuance of war, although a low-intensity one and confined to the belligerent states only. The political benefits the continuance of the war brought in to the US happened to divert its attention from the damages the war posed to its economic interests (105). Moreover, the war was an ‘stimulant’ to the US arms transfers in the region.

Some scholars have misconstrued the relief the US showed after the war did not remain a threat to the security of the oil supplies as US disinterest in the war. Even some of them have described this war as a ‘forgotten war’, stating that the US evinced interests in this war only when it posed a threat to the US oil interests.

But, on the contrary, the downfall in the US and its allies oil intake from the Persian Gulf region, did not reduce their dependence on the West Asian oil. Had the reduced amount of oil the West was still buying been interrupted, they could not overcome the loss by exploring the same amount of oil from other oil producing regions. This is why when in the later half of the 1980s only a meager 6 to 9 million barrel per day was traded through the Strait of Hormuz and the US share in that was merely 0.5 mbpd, the US kept on warning Iran that any attempt to disrupt the oil supplies would not be militarily tolerated by it.

THE SECURITY OF THE ALLIES:

The security of allies weighed uppermost in the US scheme of things during the war. The victory of an anti-monarchical Islamic revolution in Iran, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and finally the war came one after another in a short span of one and half years to have exposed the US regional allies to twin-security threats, internal and external. Though Saudi Arabia had favored a war aimed at bruising Iran, the latter’s vow to teach a lesson for contributing to Iraq war efforts exacerbated the security vulnerability of the most powerful peninsular country.
Of the factors which made the US abandon to its neutrality, the continuous pressure from the allies was a significant one. It was on July 4, 1980 a ‘White Statement’ formally declared US total commitment to the security and the integrity of the regional allies. Carter was personally in favour of despatching Saudi Arabia the AWACs, the demand for which was made after six days of the beginning of the war, despite Secretary of State Muskie’s opposition (106). Beside Carter, the National Security Advisor, Brezeinski, was of the view that the US should sell the AWACs to Saudi Arabia and also enter into defense agreements with the regional allies(107).

INCREASED MILITARY PRESENCE:

Another significant step the US took in the interest of the security of the allies was to increase its sense of belongingness with them by entering defacto strategic alliances. American warships escorted the oil tankers of the friendly states, its jumbo jets flew regularly into the airports of allied Persian Gulf states and it shared with them all the intelligence informations gathered by Saudi Arab based AWACs, which were supervised by American personnel(108).

Also, in order to deter both of the combatants (later Iran only) from scuttling the oil supplies or spreading the war into the Persian Gulf waters or over to the littoral countries, the US started policing the Gulf from the very beginning. Not merely did it increase it own military presence, but also prevailed upon its West European allies to follow the suit. The number of allied warships of the US, the UK and Australia doubled from 30 to 60 by the end of 1981 (109).

After the assumption of presidentship of the US by Reagan American militrization of the Persian Gulf intensified(110). He concluded an agreement to use airforce facilities at naval facilities at Peshawar with Pakistan, which In the US strategic thinking constituted an integral part of the security of the Persian Gulf region(111). The RDF military units became operational in 1981 and 1982. And by the time the Iran-Iraq war was half way through, the US had deployed its largest ever naval force in the Arabian Sea waters.

However, the expansion of the US naval presence was not promted by the Iran-Iraq war alone. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was an equally important factor. This is substantiated by the fact that the US naval strength in the Persian Gulf during the 80s was more than enough to tackle a regional challenge. The threats to oil supplies from Iran were few and far in between that did not need to compel the US to station such a large force in the Persian Gulf. As against this, the Soviet threat to the oil supplies was imminent and of a permanent nature(112).

AN ACTIVE BUT NON-COMBATANT ROLE:

The US refrained from entering the war on behalf of Iraq. One of the reasons behind doing so was that the US intervention would have hastened the end of the war. This, in turn, would have reduced the dependency of the regional allies on the US, who welcomed the American military presence and extended strategic facilities to it to deter the Iranian threat. Otherwise, out of the fear of Soviet Union’s retaliation, the regional states had earlier given a cold-shouldered response to US bid to acquire base facilities in the Persian Gulf.
Notwithstanding Iran's vehement opposition to the US, it never became a regional threat to the US interests. Nor was it ever poised to win the war despite maintaining an upperhand. Hence, there hardly arose a situation in which US military intervention could have become urgent. The US Persian Gulf allies were also not in favor of its direct involvement in the war. For, the regional states feared that the US involvement would precipitate internal resurgence. They, therefore, reserved this option as the last resort. The US military intervention would have been sought only in the case of an Iranian attack on them. But Iran, anticipating the negative effects of the internationalization of the war, did not actually mean what it repeatedly used to say, that it would take the war to the Arab countries.

However, the US presence in the Persian Gulf can be described as covert military intervention. The US naval fleet and an array of strategic bases in the Persian Gulf were virtually an insurmountable barrier for Iran in spreading the war.

To make a bird's eyeview of the US military presence, an anti-aircraft carrier, Kitty Hawk, with support ships manned the Gulf of Oman. There were American warships in the Indian Ocean just outside the Arabian Sea area. The aero-naval base at Diego Garcia, though at a distance of 200 miles from the arena of the conflict, stationed 15 large cargo ships and 1500 sailors beside B-52 bombers, could be thrust into war zone at short notice.

A string of strategic facilities from Morocco to Oman enabled the RDF to come into action swiftly. In Morocco the US had access to the airport at Sidi Salman as wayside station. So much so it had access to military airport outside Cairo. In Oman a direct access was available at Seib and Thumrait bases. The Island of Mersah off the Oman coast was a major US base and also a strategic point where from equipment could be transshipped to other bases in the region. The Bahrain island had the facilities to accommodate the US weapons and American personnel. The Saudi Arabian bases, well equipped, large and deploying the most sophisticated American weapons and thousands of US military advisors, could be used in an emergency situation. Fearing an internal backlash, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf did not officially grant base rights to the US, but for all practical purposes the US controlled these.

As mentioned above, the decision to get directly involved in the war by agreeing to escort the Kuwaiti oil tankers, which sparked off the US-Iran military hostilities, was an expedient move. Having come to know about the Soviet intention to protect the Kuwaiti oil tankers, the US was left with no other option except either to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity or to let it play the role of a regional policeman. By heeding to the Kuwaiti request the US also tried to project its anti-Iran credentials to regain allies' whose confidence in it had shattered to a considerable extent following the revelation of US-Iran secret arms deal. It may be noted that the security of oil supplies was not the actual reason, as it is generally made out to be, behind the US move to escort Kuwaiti tankers. This is because the oil supplied remained by and large unaffected in the wake of the Tanker War as even less than one percent of the ships, carrying oil, were hit.

THE ANTI-IRANINAISM:
The US anti-Iraniansim increased with Reagan taking the charge of the office of the President. During his election campaign he had expressed an avowedly anti-Iranian stand, condemned Carter’s arms-for-hostage deal and ruled out the possibility of entering into any arms deal with the Iranian government in case he became the president (118).

The US anti-Iranianism stood, as stated above, for preventing Iran from winning instead of engineering its defeat. Henceforth, needless to repeat, its did not indulge into an armed hostility with Iran except once. Instead, the main feature of the US anti-Iranianism was to deny Iran Western arms. For, an increased military prowess to Iran would have in the wake of its control of the areas close to Baghdad, abridged the difference between Iranian war gains and the total victory. This is also stated by the fact the shortage of spare parts and standby aircrafts incapacitated Iran air power, which consisted of F-14, F-5 and F-5 warplanes covering Iraq’s entire airspace, to break into Iraqi defense and neutralize the Iraqi army’s strength in ground defense.

‘Threat to use force’ was another characteristic of the US anti-Iranianism. The US reminded Iran of severe reprisals in case it tried to mine strait of Hurmuz, blockade it or attacked its allies or even sought direct military help from the USSR (119).
FOR STALEMATE:

Both, the US limited support to Iraq and its non-militant anti-Iranianism also proved that Washington was interested in the status quo, the continuance of war.

Since the war had, contrary to apprehensions, not negatively affected the smooth flow of oil and its reasonably moderate price, nor did it spread over to the aligned countries in the region, the US had no stake left in the end of the war. The stalemate, on the other hand, was in the national interests. The war had tremendously increased the US clout with the regional countries, paved the way for the stepping up of its military presence in the region and taken much of the sting out of the oil weapon, enabling it, thereby, to adopt a bold pro-Israeli stand on the Palestine question.

The US also succeeded to strike a balance of sorts between the two seemingly contradictory objectives i.e. to prevent Iran from spreading the war to the Arab countries of the region, and, to let the war continue as well. What illustrates this policy most plausibly is its military exercises against Iran in 1987. On one hand, these meant to force Iran to stop attacking oil tankers in, and mining the Persian Gulf lanes, whereas, on the other, the US contented itself with launching a low-intensity war so that it did not pave the way for the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

THE IRAN-CONTRA DEAL:

The disclosures on clandestine arms deals, referred to as Iran-Contra deal, between Iran and the US were the most embarrassing moments for the US. The revelation of this secret arrangement, which facilitated the shiploads of arms and spare parts to Iran in exchange for American hostages in Lebanon, upset, to quote a Soviet scholar, "all preceding declarations about the US desire to see the war ended and settled by political means" (120).

More so, the contents and the timing of the deals reveal to one's amazement that their judicious use would have drawn Iran nearer to victory. The US sent these arms through Israel on a Danish ship in September 1985 and September and October 1986. These coincided with Iranian victories in ground offensives, with one of them also resulting into the seizure of Fao peninsula (121).

The Reagan administration had supplied 2008 Tom Hawk anti-tank missiles and Sidewinder air Maverick missiles, 235 Flank anti aircraft missiles, spare parts for helicopters and fighter planes worth $ 60 million. This gave enough fire power to the Iranian air force to shell Iraqi town falling within the range of these missiles and fighter planes. However, it is difficult to speculate as to what was the main intention behind the US arms supplies to Iran when a lot more related to the this deal is yet to be revealed (122).

THE SOVIET UNION:

Although in the war involved one of its allies, Iraq (123), the Soviet Union did not tempt to take sides. It instead adopted the wait and watch approach. The then Foreign Minister of the USSR declared his country's neutrality as soon as the war broke out (124). The Soviet union also assured the US that it would not intervene in the war under any commitment to either of
the combatant states.

What guided the Soviet Union to maintain neutrality than to help Iraq out was the fear that its support to Iraq could result into the defeat of Iran leading to the dismemberment of that country or/and the overthrow of the Islamic government. In addition, the deteriorating relations with Iraq, the pre-occupation with Afghanistan and the fear of US backlash also determined the Soviet Union’s aloofness.

The USSR also projected itself as the broker of peace in the region (125). It invited the US, both during Carter’s and Reagan’s times, for a joint bid to find a solution to the conflict (126). Also, the Soviet peace proposals were described as one aiming at “crisis management” than the “crisis prevention”.

With the war having threatened to cause dislocation in the West’s oil supplies from the region, its prolongation served Soviet interests also. The Soviet Union also wanted to capitalize Iran’s international isolation for bringing Iran, whose strategic importance had increased by leaps and bounds to Moscow after its invasion of Afghanistan, to its fold. Though Iran had given a lukewarm response to Soviet Union’s goodwill gestures before the outbreak of the war, the Soviet policy makers were under an impression that under the duress of war the former would ultimately turn to it for help and assistance.

This is why the Soviet Union showed a slight tilt against Iraq in the beginning. It described Iraq as aggressor (127). It refused to supply Iraq arms and ammunition in full disregard of a provision to this effect in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation it had signed with the latter. The Soviet government justified it on the ground that the Soviet-Iraq treaty was “the treaty of peace, not of war” (128).

The breakdown in Iraq-Soviet relations played a major role in determining the USSR’s attitude towards Iraq in the war. The bilateral relations had started getting strained after the execution of 21 leading members of the Iraqi Communist Party by Saddam’s government in 1978. The Iraqi government had also withdrawn its military officers receiving training in Moscow on the charge that they were being indoctrinated by the Soviet Union. The two countries also had differences over a number of issues concerning bilateral military and economic cooperation. Also, the Soviet Union did not like Iraq’s openings to the US and the West for trade, technology and military equipment (129).

Iraq lashed out at the USSR for occupying Afghanistan and worked against the Soviet interests in Ethiopia and the PDRY (130). The Soviet Union was sore over not being consulted by Iraq before its attack on Iran and resented Iraq’s rapprochement with the neighboring pro-US Arab states who were pressurising Iraq to downplay its association with the communist bloc (131). Iraq did not welcome USSR’s policy of getting closer to its enemy Iran (132). Reportedly, the Soviet Union had informed Iran in advance about the Iraqi aggressive designs.

Over the question of Soviet invasion of a fellow Muslim state, Afghanistan, the relations
between the USSR and the Persian Gulf countries had turned sour (133). Thus in establishing a close rapport with Iran, the Soviet Union was not threatened with the possibility of losing Persian Gulf’s Arab countries’ goodwill.

The importance of Iran to the Soviet Union was inherent in the former being the buffer zone between it and the US military presence in the Persian Gulf region (134). A strong Iran, capable of withstanding US design north of it, was a precursor to consolidation of Soviet presence in Afghanistan.

Breznev spoke high of the Iranian revolution at the CPSU’s Congress that held soon after the war broke out. The joint communique, issued at the end of the signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Syria in 1981, lauded Iranian resistance to Iraqi aggrandizement. It declared that Moscow and Damascus “support the inalienable right of Iran to decide its destiny independently, without any interference from outside” (135). The USSR’s also agreed to give Iran arms through the surrogate-countries (136).

But by the end of year 1982, the Soviet Union-Iran honeymoon came to an abrupt end. The USSR turned back to its ally, Iraq. Iran was not satisfied with the USSR’s cautious support to it. It accused the Soviet Union of maintaining neutrality despite “flagrant Iraqi aggression against Iran” (137), and supplying military hardware to Iraq through proxies (138).

Iran’s spiritual leader Ayatollah Khomeini unequivocally condemned the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, asking the Iranian government to send its troops to help Muslim fighters resisting the Soviet forces (139). Against all expectations of the USSR, Iran continued to club the former with the US by calling both of them “aggressor” and “plunderer” and charged it with instigating the Tudeh party to bring down the Islamic government.

Over and above, Iran arrested 70 Tudeh members in February 1983 on the charge of spying for the USSR and expelled 17 members of the Soviet diplomatic staff in Theran, accusing them of conniving with the arrested communists.

Until the end of 1982, the Soviet Union used to overlook Iranian criticism of its Afghanistan’s policy and denunciation of its communist ideology for the sake of not spoiling the opportunities of a close bilateral relations. Even the USSR reacted mildly to the annihilation of communist party at the hands of the Islamic government.

The Soviet union redefined its policy towards Iran when the latter came close to trounce Iraq in military invasions inside the Iraqi territory in late 1982. The communist government drove home the point that a victorious Islamic Iran would be more harmful to its West Asian policy than what a victorious Iraq could be, that too when it had forfeited all chances to bring Iran in the communist bloc. Besides, the defeat of Iraq would have cost the USSR its only ally in the Persian Gulf region. Also, the Soviet policy makers concluded that it would be far more difficult to have any leverage with a victorious Iran. Instead, Iran’s victory would make a stimulating effect on the Afghan combatants fighting against the Soviet occupation.

The return to Iraq would have become a strenuous task had the USSR not maintained
workable relationship with the same in the years it had tilted to Iran. The arrangement of arms supplies through proxies was the most important factor in saving the total breakdown in the Soviet-Iraq ties (140).

Yet, the Soviet support to Iraq was not unflinching. It kept the hope of improving relations with Iran alive (141). The Soviet Union's pro-Iraq policy was restricted to arms supplies via third parties and directly only after 1984 (142). However, the Soviet weapons, most apparently the Scud-B missiles, proved a watershed for Iraq in the war. Only after getting armed with some of the most sophisticated Soviet weapons, Iraq re-asserted itself in early 1988. The series of Iraqi victories made a telling impact on the Iranian morale to continue fighting, forcing it to seek end of the war (143).

However, it must not be inferred that the Soviet Union had provided weapons to let Iraq finally score the victory. For, the range of the original Scud-B missiles did not cover the crucial Iranian target from any given point in Iraq. The Soviet Union had advised Iraq against shelling the Iranian cities, using chemical weapons and subjecting the civilian population and targets to attack.

Like the US, the Soviet Union was also not vulnerable to the war. Rather, the end of the war with Iranian or Iraqi victory was unfavorable to the Soviet Union for a number of reasons. The Iranian victory could have caused the overthrow of the Baathist regime and destabilized Soviet position in Afghanistan in the Persian Gulf region and in the Muslim-dominated republics.

Similarly, the Iraqi victory would have unseated the Islamic government and there had installed in its place a pro-US one, making Iran once again a US ally. In an eventuality of Iran plunging to the US way in the aftermath of an Iraqi victory, some of the analysts of the Soviet policy did not rule out Soviet intervention in Iran in the name of the defence of the Islamic government (144).

In a limited sense, compared to the US and its western allies the USSR was more at ease with the war in view of its non-reliance on a commodity like 'oil'. The war was also used as an instrument of arms transfers in the region, particularly to the US allies. Obsessed with their security, the US recipient embarked on a policy of multiple-sources arms supplies. The Soviet Union, which was an arms supplier equivalent to US, was automatically sourced by these countries particularly by Kuwait and Jordan.

The war also helped the Soviet Union de-ideologize its foreign policy and as a result improve relations with strategically important though ideologically opponent countries like Iran (145). At the same time, the Soviet Union also succeeded in not antagonising its traditional client, Iraq. The importance of the Soviet Union as the arms supplier compelled Iraq not to bid farewell to its master in its bid to get closer to the US, the West and the pro-US states in the region.
The war also proved a ready-made instrument to let the US down on the Arab-Israeli issue.

The USSR described the war as the part of an Imperialist-Zionist conspiracy to divide the Muslim World by keeping these countries involved in intra-regional issue.

Last but not the least, despite prominent role of the US in protecting the Gulf countries, the Soviet Union had also got its image enhanced in the eyes of these countries as a power sustaining the Iraqi war machine (146).

THE WAR AND THE COLD WAR:

The Iran-Iraq made a sobering effect on the superpowers’ rivalry. Unlike the Third World crises of those days, in this war the interests of the superpowers coincided, leading them to back the same side. Both were averse to an Iraqi victory in the beginning and sympathized with Iran. Both of them offered to enhance Iran’s defense by giving it new arms and ammunition. But once Iran began to dominate the war and looked in a commanding position, both of the superpowers swung away from it and helped its adversary.

In some respects the commonality of interests setted from mutual confrontation. The US saw in the victory of Iraq—a Soviet ally—during the initial years of the war as a major gain to the other superpower. It visualised the dismemberment of Iran as a consequence of Iraqi victory which would have encouraged the soviet Union to occupy the northern Iran in pursuance to its warm water drive (147). To the Soviet Union, the Iraqi victory would have meant the replacement of the anti-US Islamic government of Iran by a non revolutionary one, close to the US.

The superpowers’ identical perceptions of an Iranian conquest was also imbedded in mutual rivalry. The Soviet Union was wary of it mainly because of the positive influence it would have made on the US backed Muslim resurgence in Afghanistan. Also with the Iranian victory and the resultant removal of the Baathist government in Iraq, the Soviet Union would have lost a strategic as well as an ideological ally.

Thus, in the context of the Iran-Iraq war the superpowers’ policies towards each other was that of ‘collaborative competition’. They understood stakes involved and tried to minimize confrontation between them.

Thus despite persuasion and temptation they stayed away from directly intervening in the war. The US did fight a protracted war against Iran but did not take it further as it would have forced in an otherwise passive Soviet Union to protect Iran in defense of its south-east region and Afghanistan.

On its part, the USSR did not interpret the US-Iran military confrontation as a precursor to the American policy of expanding its sphere of action to its peripheries. Both of them unwittingly collaborated in supplying arms and ammunition to Iraq, sharing intelligence data with it and furnishing high-tech assistance to its nuclear program. They literally collaborated in the UN while ensuring the adopting of the UN security Council Resolution 598 (148).
The 'competition' part of their relationship got reflected in their will to optimize the war for increasing influence in the region at the cost of each other. They charged each other with instigating the war, sustaining it and blocking the peace process.

The Iran-Iran war was not a proxy war. The superpowers only partially influenced the course of the war. Although both of the superpowers had prior information of Iraq aggression, they did not prompt it to do so. In fact, they failed in preventing the outbreak of the war despite the fact this was not in their interests.

Frequent halts and cease-fires during the war were not arranged by the superpowers. They were also not instrumental in ending the war. The argument that the US-Iran military entanglements in 1987 reversed Iranian supremacy in the war is a weak one. Even after being bashed up by the US, Iran launched the last Human Wave military thrust. The US offensive was limited in terms of the area it covered. It was a low-intensity war and was short-lived. This, therefore, did not dampen the Iranian morale.

Hardly likely did the war come to an end in effect of superpowers-sponsored Security Council Resolution 598. For many months after its being adopted, the resolution 598 remained operationally ineffective due to its outright rejection by Iran. The resolution did not accompany the threat of the imposition of the economic embargo or military action in case of an incompliance with it by any of the two belligerents. So it hardly carried enough punch and force to compel the fighting countries to end the war. The resolution was accepted by Iran as a face-saving device. It was never accepted by Iran as a blueprint of a just solution to the war.

At best the superpowers played the role of crisis manager, but in a limited sense only. They ensured that the war did not spread. The US saw that the oil exports from the Persian Gulf remained unaffected by the war. Apart from these, the superpowers' role as the 'crisis manager' was non-existent. They could not manage to de-escalate the war, to shorten it and to end it.

Iran-Iraq War contributed to the making of 'New Detente' between the superpowers. This might have driven home the point that there were areas and issues where there interests coincided and a collaborative than collision course served their interests better. However, if the war contributed in the easing of tension between the superpowers, it did so to a limited extent only. The evolution of 'New Detente' between the superpowers was the culmination of a host of factors and developments in the regions other than the Persian Gulf. If Europe was the region where the Detente began, the West Asia is also said to be the region where the process began very late (149).

**THE ATTITUDE OF ARAB STATES**

On the face of it, the regional countries declared neutrality. However, their neutrality was, at best, military than political. They assured Saddam of their support before he invaded Iran and then welcomed the Iraqi attack (150). King Khalid, in particular, had reportedly blessed Saddam the success when the latter visited Saudi Arabia a month before attacking Iran.
Other littoral countries were approached by Saddam a few days before the commencement of the war. He is supposed to have sought their support and not the advice as in the case of Saudi Arabia. The disclosure of the decision to attack Iran by Saddam would have been a matter of concern to smaller states. But, at the same time, they had to contend with the inevitability of the war and their inability to prevail upon Saddam Hussein to desist from it in the interest of their security.

They had also realised that in one respect the war tended to benefit them. They hoped that the Islamic Government of Iran would collapse under the pressure of Iraqi onslaught, ending, thereby, the threat of 'export of a revolution' which was appealing to masses in these countries (151).

THE 'EXPORT OF REVOLUTION' THREAT:

The 'exportability of Islamic revolution' threatened the 'regime's security' than the 'national security' of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. Ayatollah Khomeini's call, through all means of communication, for the overthrow the imperialist and un-Islamic regimes had begun appealing the rebel elements. The Shi'ite resurgence had raised its head in Saudi Arabia (152), the UAE, Oman and Bahrain. In Kuwait the pro-Iran Shi'ite party "Al Dawa" stepped up terrorist activities. Politically deprived and socio-economically discriminated, the Shia populace was the potential target of the appeal from across the Persian Gulf. The anti-imperialist, anti-monarchical nature of the Iranian exhortations also aroused the sentiments of other distressed and dispossessed sections of society as well as those of the immigrants from South Asian and Eastern Mediterranean countries, particularly the Palestinians (153).

The Saudi government was anticipating a mass-based anti-monarchical revolt as a consequence of Khomeini's call than Shia resurgence as Shias constituted merely 2 percent of the total population. So were the countries like Kuwait and Qatar where Shias made up of roughly 17 percent of the total population. Bahrain, where Shias numbered half of the country's population, was most vulnerable to a Shi'ite backlash.

The 'national security' of these countries was also slightly endangered. The countries who have already settled their boundary disputes with the Shah feared that the new government would in its antipathy to the former regime abrogate previous treaties and agreements. They also did not rule out the possibility of the disputes being used as a plea by Iran to attack their vital economic facilities and the oil shipment in the Persian Gulf waterways.

Kuwait can be singled out as the country whose 'national security' than the regime's was more under the clouds of Iranian threat. It was geographically closest to Iran and was within the range of Iranian missiles and aircrafts it fired and operated from the places close to Iran-Iraq border. The Shi'ite resentment, on the other hand, lacked popular support and was not, therefore, a potential threat to the Al-Sabah rule as such (154).
Though in the beginning the Persian Gulf countries expected a quick victory by Iraq, they, as the war began showing clear signs of getting escalated, also adjusted their policies to its changing fortunes. In Iran's engagement in a war with they found that their security was inherent. The Iranian Government's commitment to export revolution had got relegated to secondary importance due to the trivialities of the war.

THE EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES:

In the Eastern Mediterranean sector, Egypt and Jordan took Iraq's side. Egypt's support to Iraq is more startling a case in point. Irked over Iraq-led move for Egypt's ouster from the Arab bloc, President Sadat described the Iraqi attack as "recklessness of a blood thirsty boy like Saddam Hussein". But, very soon Egypt realized that the war had come as a good omen for the end its isolation. Supporting Arabs against Iran Egypt could prove its Arab credentials to the fellow countries. Relying on its huge inventory, Egypt presented itself to Iraq as the supplier of military wherewithal. In order to tide over the Soviet arms embargo Iraq was looking for a source which could supply it the Soviet made weapons(155).

Unlike Egypt, Jordan supported Iraq right from the day first. King Hussein of Jordan toured Baghdad during October 4-5, 1980. This was only the first of his countless visits to Iraq during the war years. Each of his visits culminated into the signing of agreements with Iraq, aimed at strengthening of Iraq-Jordan military cooperation. Jordan also broke off diplomatic relations with Iran. It provided Iraq access to port of Aqba to receive outside military supplies. It proposed to Iraq to form a joint battle force, named 'Ymahuk'(156), against Iran.

Iraq received "enemy's enemy is freind" type of support from Jordan. The principal aim of King Hussein was to help Iraq win the race for the regional power role over its adversary, Syria, a common enemy. Also, the war was a solitary chance for King Hussein to establish, for the first time, relations with Iraq at equal level. In the past, being dependent on Iraq for aid and political support on its Palestine policy, Jordan had interacted with Iraq from the position of weakness.

IRAQ-NEIGHBOURING ARAB COUNTRIES RAPPROCHMENT:

The war brought Arab states and Iraq closer. Earlier, Arab states were interlocked in an ideological rivalry with the Baathist Iraq and considered Iraq as an expansionist power and a backer of internal discontentments.

The process of rapprochement was mooted by the neighboring Arab states. They rushed to revive diplomatic relations with Iraq and elevated it to the position of the protector of territorial integrity of the Arab land (157). They left the task of defending their security with Iraq for two reasons. In the first Place, they knew that Iraq was the only power among them who could take on the Iranian threat. In the second place, they had found that Iraq had taken it upon itself to trounce Iran at a time when they wanted Iran to be battered but were not prepared and ready.
However, the improvement of relations was an expedient move rather than a sincere attempt towards establishing conflict-free relations for the future. No effort was made to settle the issues pertaining to frontier delimitations, the neutral zone, tribal migration and cross border smuggling. The one with Kuwait over two islands, Bubiyan and Warbah, was also not addressed to despite all the time great relations between the two countries.

Thus, Iraq-neighboring Arabs relations were limited to security and financial matters while the age old contentious issues were altogether ignored. To a limited extent, Iraq took some diplomatic initiatives, giving an impression that it had shed its aggressiveness on the boundary issues. But more than this, Iraq highlighted to the hilt the Arab-Iranian divide to coalesce it and the Arab countries into a single political and ethnic unit.

ARAB COUNTRIES’ SUPPORT TO IRAN:

Iran was not left unfriendly in the war either. Among the Arab countries of the Middle East, notably Syria, South Yemen and Libya extended their support to Iran. The Baathist Syria’s support to Iran was an interesting case. Ideologically, the Islamic Iran was as much at variance with the Syrian Baathism as it was with the Iraqi one. More interesting is the fact that Syria associated itself with Iran in the war solely because of the intra-ideological rivalry with the co-Baathist Iraq.

Syria was the leading supplier of arms, notably anti-aircraft guns, anti tank missiles and rocket propelled guards, to Iran. It also sent troops at Iranian forces’ disposal. It weakened economic mainstay of Iraq by cutting Iraq’s main oil pipeline to the Mediterranean. It also overtly aided and abated Kurd movements and other internal rebellions inside Iraq. The Syrian support to Iran had strategic dimension also. Siding with Iran it managed to counter-balance the “hostility ring, made up of Jordan, Iraq, and Lebanese phalanghists, surrounding it”.

The degradation in Syria-Iran relations was witnessed around 1987. Compelled by oil-price slump coupled with Syria’s failure to pay over $ 2 billion for imports of oil to it, Iran in 1987 reduced oil shipment to Syria. In addition to this, Iran continued supporting the Hizullahs of Lebanon and did not use its influence to persuade them them to support Syria’s Lebanese policy.

Libya was the first Arab country which declared its support to Iran. It did so in order to give vent to its avowed hatred of the US. It also called upon other Arab states to stop backing Saddam. Col. Qaddafi decried purchase of AWACS by Saudi Arabia and condemned the Persian Gulf countries for aiding US in the latter’s efforts to militarize the region. Libya was one of the main arms suppliers to Iran.

The PLO played a low-profile role in the war. Dependent on the Arab assistance and not wanting to lose Iran’s first-ever support to the Palestinian cause, the PLO maintained ‘equidistance’. In this bid of it, the PLO was also helped by the combatant countries who wanted...
to maintain friendly relations with it to establish their anti-Israeli credentials. Beside, the combatants did not stand to gain anything substantial, both militarily and economically, in trying to wean the PLO away from each other.

Worried over the degradation of the Palestinian issue, the PLO was most sincere among all regional powers for an early end to the war. But, it lacked leverage with either of the belligerents to play any meaningful role in ending the war.

Algeria’s support to Iran was mainly vocal. It stemmed from Algeria’s annoyance with Iraq over the latter’s support to Morocco on the Polisaric Issue(163). Algeria held Iraq responsible for the degradation of the Palestinian issue and shifting of international focus from the Mediterranean region to the Persian Gulf, the region far from Algeria’s sphere of action.

Israel looked at the Iran-Iraq war from the angle of its national security. Apprehensive of the emergence of Iraq as the fountain-head of the Arab military prowess if it happened to trounce Iran, Israel envied Iraqi victory most. As a result, it implicitly supported Iran brushing aside the latter’s rejection of Israel as a sovereign state(164). The Iranian rhetoric were not a security threat as were the prospects of Iraqi victory. Also, the ouster of friendly regime of the Shah and its replacement by hard-line Islamic government did not undermine Israel’s security as these tumultuous events had taken place in a country farthest from it among the Muslim countries of the region.

Thus, fully obsessed with its territorial security, Israel viewed the growing anti-Khomeinism among the Arab countries as the formation of a political and strategic Arab alliance including the erstwhile Arab leader and the principal enemy, Egypt.

The ‘Arab fear’ would have, among other things, prompted Israel to send clandestine arms supplies to Iran. In connivance with the US Israel supplied Iran spare parts it badly needed to sustain its American armory. Reports also claim that Israel was supplying arms to Iran through out during the outbreak of the war and the revelation of the secret deals.

In contrast to the US, the Arab states and the Soviet Union, Israel was poised to reaping maximum benefits in the eventuality of Iran’s victory. The Iranian victory, viewed the Israeli policy makers, would break up the emerging military demon, Iraq, into a Sheite, Kurdish and Sunni states with Turkey “taking upper northern provinces, Iran taking Sheite south and Syria West Iraq” (165).

The continuing standoff between Iran and Iraq was also in the interests of Israel. It, as said above, degraded the Palestinian issue, gave Israel more freedom to crush Palestinian uprising and take on the Lebanon’s Hazeboflahs. Thus, when the whole of West Asia was directly or indirectly involved in the war, Israel invaded Lebanon after getting assured that its move will not escalate into an Arab-Israeli war as the two most militarily powerful states of the region were embroiled in a war being fought between themselves.

It was a matter of relief for Israel that the two most powerful of the regional countries—
Iraq and Iran — were exhausting their military strength against each other. The Iran-Iraq war, which re-established West Asia’s prestige as an unstable and strife-torn region, reinforced Israel’s importance as the most reliable and stable state to the US in the region (166).

The war came as a ‘blessing in disguise’ for Israel as it militarily exhausted and economically weakened Iran which, as a matter of fact, must have for the first time participated in any Arab war against Israel (167). The war also minimized the chances of Iran and Iraq ganging against Israel in the foreseeable future.

The war also helped Israel to convince the US that the dangers to the security of oil stemmed not from Arab-Israeli issue but from intra-Muslim countries rivalries. Hence, the US, the Israeli leadership used to point out, needed not to snub Israel for its repression of Palestinians and placate the oil producing countries of the region at the cost of friendly and durable relations with Israel.

PERSIAN GULF STATES’ POLICIES TOWARDS THE WAR:

Back to the Persian Gulf states’ policies towards the war, none of these conformed to ‘genuine neutrality’. For, being the principal aid giver to Iraq they were passive participants in the war. It seemed that as if there was some sort of understanding between Iraq and the rest of the Persian Gulf countries on their respective roles. The Persian Gulf countries pumped into Iraq as much as $50 billion during the war to enable it to meet the cost of defense preparedness and pay back the debts it owed to the Western countries (168). They began cutting down economic assistance to Iraq after 1985. But, this development did not mean any lack in Arab commitment to Iraq. The austerity on the part of the Arabs was the result of a perceptible decline in their national incomes and the compulsion for providing monetary assistance to other aspirants, such as Egypt and the Palestinians.

Although the Arab assistance to Iraq began declining after 1985, its usefulness increased. The Arab assistance after 1984 came when the economy of Iraq was in shambles and its defense expenditure had skyrocketed (169). The withholding of assistance at this stage, when the war from the viewpoint of Iraq was in most cubical stage, could have crippled Iraq’s military might and economic strength. The Persian Gulf states shipped Iraqi oil through their tankers after the closure of the Shatt-al-Arab, Iraq’s only access to the sea, and that of Iraqi oil pipelines passing through Syria and Turkey.

If the support to Iraq from the Persian Gulf countries came mainly in form of the economic assistance, Egypt and Jordan contributed to Iraqi war efforts through furnishing military hardware. Moreover, these countries also helped Iraq by sending contingents of their armed forces to it. Egyptian pilots flew Iraq’s Soviet made aircrafts. Jordan’s armed contingent participated in the war under the command of the Iraqi forces (170).

Yet, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf countries viewed the possibility of an Iraqi victory with anxiety and suspicion. The fear that after its victory Iraq might become bold enough to settle issues with Persian Gulf countries on its own terms or the victory would have given
a fillip to its regional ambitions was haunting these countries. Hence, the Persian Gulf countries became interested in an unending war as this would have meant Iraq’s dependence on the constant inflow of economic assistance from them. They knew that their assistance to Iraq would at the stage when the latter was not doing well, only help it to hold Iran out than to overrun it.

A few scholars even hold the view that the Persian Gulf countries wanted an unending war right from the beginning. But this argument carries little weight. First, the neighbors had given prior approval to Saddam on the account of their perception that the war would be a few days affair, leading to the collapse of the Islamic government of Iran. Second, the financial and logistical support the Persian Gulf countries extended to Iraq at least until in the first one and a half years of the war, when Iraq was dominating the scene, would have meant to contribute towards an early end of the war in Iraq’s favour than a stalemate.

There also came a moment when these countries realized that Iran could not be defeated in this war and, therefore, it would always remain an important actor in the Persian Gulf politics as a radical Islamic state. At this juncture, these countries tried to improve their relations with Iran at diplomatic and economic levels (171). Also, whenever a spill-over of the war threatened the Persian Gulf countries they resorted to a two-pronged strategy. They increased military and economic assistance to Iraq and intensified the effort to find a peaceful solution to the problem. On such occasion came in 1983. They discussed prospects of peace at the GCC summits and even once came up with a proposal which among other things envisaged Saddam stepping down from the power and taking a back seat in Baghdad to accommodate Ayatollah Khomeini’s condition for the end of the war (172).

On a similar occasion in 1986, when in the wake Iranian seizure of Fao peninsula the Iranian army had reached very close to Kuwaiti territory and the oil facilities of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were under the danger of an Iranian attack, both of these states pleaded with Iran not to take the war across Iraq (173).

The prolongation of war came as a blessing in disguise as it kept two most powerful regional powers interlocked with each other. Peace would have come into force as a result of the victory of either of the belligerents, emboldening it to fulfill its other regional ambitions at one go and that too against the relatively weaker enemies.

The continuance of the war served the interests of the regional powers in another respect also. Due to the prevailing security scenario, the regional countries were offered sophisticated weapons the supplier needed to deploy in the vicinity of the war-zone.

For economic reasons, the continuation of war, which reduced the belligerents’ oil exports by 25 to 40 percent, helped Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to maintain their huge quota of oil production and supply irrespective of the sluggishness in the world oil demand (174).

Among all, the prevention of widening of the war assumed top priority in the Persian Gulf
countries' agenda. To this effect, they, firstly and foremostly, decided to refrain from participating in the war from the Iraqi side. The logistical and financial support to Iraq stemmed from this policy-objective. It was used as an alternative. The Arab countries overlooked Iraqi call to join the war with it. They opposed Saddam's proposal for a military coalition of anti-Iran powers (175) and even criticized the Iraqi attacks on Iranian ships in the Strait of Hurmuz as it would have invoked Iranian retaliation on the oil ships of the Persian Gulf countries in the absence of those from Iraq(176).

The Persian Gulf's Arab countries gave financial and logistical support to Iraq with assurance that it would not invite anything more than some protest from Iran. For, fearing internationalization of the war with the US entering the fray from its Arab allies' side, Iran could ill-afford to react violently to the Arab countries non-military support tio Iraq. The proximity of the whole of Kuwait and oil facilities of Saudi Arabia to the war zone and that of the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain to Iran was the geo-strategic reason behind the Perasian Gul's Arab countries policy of non-involvement (177).

The military options theses countries resorted to were absolutely non-combatant, may it be the strengthening of their defense, the evolution of common defence system and their clandestine military cooperation with the US. The main objective behind these move was to deter Iran from widening the war(178). The shooting down of the Iranian F-14s fighter planes by Saudi F-15s was the solitary instance of any of the Arab Persian Gulf countries' direct involvement in the war. Also, this particular development, as says R. K. Ramazani, "did not show Saudi political resolve and a willingness to use military force to defend its territory"(179).

The Persian Gulf's Arab countries' gave a mixed response to Iran's repeated threat to strangulate the Strait of Hurmuz. During the deliberations at the GCC summits and on some other occasions a majority of them preferred to use diplomatic efforts to persuade Iran from blocking the strait. They regarded joint military action under the GCC umbrella as the least likely option. It is noteworthy in this connection that the GCC countries were capable of protecting the Kuwaiti oil tanker. Even the Saudi forces with AWACs and F-15s at thier disposal were not lagging technically in protecting the Gulf oil lanes from a possible Iranian attack. But despite all these, Kuwait turned to the USSR and the US and Saudi Arabia never came forward to ensure protection to its ships.

The war put the regional countries in the state of dilemma over the issue of the Us military presence in the region. They could not ward off an Iranian attack unless the US forces came to their rescue at an early stage of the crisis. This could have been possible only if the US maintained a sufficient force in the region with full facility at the nearby bases. At the same time, a slight miscalculation about the US presence in the region might have provoked Iran to attack these countries. The littoral states' tackling of this issue was, however, cautious and remarkable. They did not invite US to maintain a physical presence in the region. They also told the US to refrain from intervening in the war unless requested to do so(180). They denied base and landing rights to the RDF and the US aircrafts and did not enter into any defense agreements with the
latter(181). Another reason behind their policy to avoid military cooperation with the US was not to let Iran exploit Arab people’s anti-American and anti-Israeli sentiments and, as a result, engineer popular revolt.

Otherwise, the Persian Gulf allies of the US banked totally on its over-the-horizon presence in the region(182). They sought the same weapon system from the US which was with the RDF and the CENTCOM to form a coherent defense system. The RDF was linked to the C-3 system and the AWACs Saudi Arabia possessed.

Always in doubts about their capability to deal with war-experienced, relatively heavily populated and big-sized Iran, the smaller and geographically vulnerable Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, such as Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, did not, of course, enter into open military cooperation with the US in order not to antagonize Iran, but they were also pre-decided to move in for the US help instead of invoking GCC-led joint military action in an eventuality of Iranian invasion. This is borne out by the fact that none of the GCC countries opposed the US over-the-horizon presence in the region. Kuwait, which had persistently advocated for pursuing a non-aligned course in the war for the Arab countries, went in quickly for US and also Soviet help for the protection of its oil tankers from Iranian attacks in 1987 (183).

Although no permanent base rights were extended to the US, but it was given right to access so as to deploy equipment and ammunition essential to sustain the US forces for a 90-day intensive war with a regional power. Oman, in fact, granted base facilities to the US at Misirah, Sib Thumarit and at strategically important Kasab which overlooks the Strait of Hormuz. The Sib was a shelter for the US fighter planes and Misirah accommodated US personnel.

The whole of Bahrain was virtually a US base, despite the denial of this by both the countries. Saudi Arabia, unlike the smaller countries of the Arabian peninsula, was least integrated to the US regional defense system, yet its bases were modernized by the US in a way that they looked more appropriate for US military requirements than those of Saudi Arabia. AWACs, which were central to the RDF military strategy, were provided to Saudi Arabia only when the latter conceded joint handling of the same.

The Iran-Iraq War heightened the need and importance of maintaining a war-oriented national security system. To this effect, the regional countries viewed modernization of their respective armories an essential task. Arms acquisitions by them doubled. Qualitatively, one of the most sophisticated weapons were purchased, such as AWACs and the F-15s. The supplier were allured to be provided oil at lower price in exchange for sophisticated weapons. Beside procuring advanced arms, the regional countries also took interest in modernizing their military bases and imparting rigorous training to their armed forces particularly in handling and operating modern weapon system.

Creation of a military bloc against external threat might have not been one of the reasons behind the inception of the GCC. But with a war being fought next door, the member-states could...
not overlook the need to form a common defense system. The idea, mooted by Saudi Arabia in mid-November 1980, aimed at creation of Gulf-RDF joint strike force, holding of regular military exercises, creation of unified air defense system, a common military weapon and standardization program and a GCC arms industry (184).

Truly speaking, no progress could virtually be achieved on this front. The idea received a setback as Kuwait at the very outset refused to be the part of any such system. The GCC defense system proved out to be an exercise in formality, limited to holding of joint exercises and maintaining a 7,000-strong armed force, unmatched in all aspects to the military strength of both Iran and Iraq. The failure to come up with a viable defense network can be attributed to the division among the member states on the efficacy and implications of common defense system, with Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar maintaining that this would only antagonize Iran.

The common defense system was suffered the member states’ lack of faith in it. Even in the wake of Iranian attacks they did not take courage to invoke it. It eventually proved out to be a symbol of Saudi leadership of the GCC as smaller neighbors were dependent upon Saudi AWACs for their air defense system(185).

It is difficult to speculate that how long was the idea of the formation of a regional organization in air, but it is undoubtedly clear that the GCC came into existence (186) as a direct consequence of two regional developments, the Islamic Revolution and the Iran-Iraq War. These developments realized the peninsular countries of their common identity, particularly to the outside world, that is said to be the most pressing reason behind the formation of a regional grouping(187).

The GCC was a Saudi Arabian brain-child. The war provided a fine opportunity to Saudi Arabia to form a group of the Persian Gulf countries which excluded both Iraq and Iran. Otherwise, in a move to establish a regional organization, Saudi Arabia could not afford to drop Iraq because not only was it the part of the same geographical region i.e. Persian Gulf, but an Arab state also. Vulnerable to the spreading of war and aggravation of anti-monarchical internal discontent, the smaller Gulf countries favored a greater level of cooperation among the regional states. Thus, they seconded the Saudi idea of regional grouping(188). In relation to the Iran-Iraq war, the GCC was posed as an Arab non-aligned grouping, a power bloc not in alliance with either of the combatants but a platform to jointly work for the settlement of the Iran-Iraq dispute.

The war, at the very outset, was the result of Iraqi regime’s miscalculations: First, Saddam Hussein exaggerated the weakening of Iranian military strength following the large-scale purging in the Iranian army and taking over of the responsibility of the national defense by the untrained Revolutionary Guards after the revolution. Thinking in these terms, Saddam overlooked the factors, like the numerical superiority of the Iranian forces and Iran’s geo-strategic depth, with Tehran and other political and economic centers being far off for a ground invasion.

Second, Saddam Hussein looked at the negative and purely military aspects of the
repercussion of the revolution on the Iranian armed forces. He failed to comprehend that the revolution had instilled a new sense of confidence, sacrifice and commitment among the Iranian armed forces personnel to the national integrity of the country. The Iranian army did consist of untrained Revolutionary Guards but they were instrumental in the success of the revolution and would have labored doubly hard to protect the country in order to protect the revolution’s success.

Third, Saddam Hussein misunderstood administrative, economic and political problems a country undergoes during the transition of power as internal chaos. He did not gauge the amount of public support behind the new regime and the strength of internal discontent in Iran. Instead of stirring up internal instability, which was of administrative and procedural in nature, the war at this moment was bound to weaken the existing opposition, consolidate the new government’s stronghold over the people, prepare the people to bear hardships for the sake of war and most importantly unite people of different factions, religious sects and regions in the name of a national crisis affecting all and sundry.

THE COMBATANTS WERE EQUALLY POISED:

One of the most startling characteristics of the war was that both of the belligerents were equally balanced but, interestingly, not in same department. In other words one’s strength was the other one’s weakness. Iraq enjoyed logistical superiority. It had access to sophisticated weapons of as many as 32 countries including both the superpowers (189). In 1984 Iraq possessed 2.5 to 1 superiority in tanks and 4 to 1 in aircrafts, APC, infantry and artillery. In 1988, the Iraqi superiority further widened to 4 to 1 in tanks and 10 to 1 in aircrafts(190). However, in artillery it reversed to 3 to 1 in Iran’s favor. Iraq’s defense expenditure was almost double to that of Iran during the war years(191) Over-fed with arms an ammunition, Iraq’s logistical capability was much more than the need and requirements of its armed forces.

On the contrary, from being the region’s most adequately furnished one, the Iranian armory began shrinking with the outbreak of the war as the weapons Iran lost could not be replenished due to an all round arms embargo against it. Iran secured its defense related needs from the Third World countries and black markets. But the arms from these sources fell short of world standard and were costlier.

If in logistical capability Iraq excelled it lagged behind in the number game. Heavily populated, Iran maintained a 4 to 1 edge over Iraq as far as the numerical strength of the armed forces was concerned. The Iranian government was also able to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people to join the war and. The comparatively smaller population of the country was a stumbling block before the Iraqi government to mobilize people to join the war as this would have caused manpower shortage in civilian and economic sectors.

In the spheres of ‘training’, the Iraqi army had distinct advantage over that of Iran. The Iraqi army was experienced and trained by the Soviet personnel, based on typical hierarchical set up and discipline. Consisting of young Pasdaran ( REVolutionay Guards) and villagers from the war-prone areas, the Iranian army was by and large untrained but in the handling of small weapons. This is why the Iranian army was found lacking in military acumen, strike capability.
the laying of siege and foraying into the opponent’s defense.

Religious dedication and high moral was the kernel stone of the Iranian armed forces’ strength. They were told by their government that they were not merely defending the territorial integrity of the country but fighting a ‘Jihad’ to save revolution and Islam from the infidels (192). The religious duty to struggle and sacrifice imbued the Iranian army with determination to fight and suffer unto victory (193).

IRAQ ADEQUATELY ARMED BUT WEEK IN STRATEGIES:

The Iran-Iraq war would go down in history as the one in which the militarily stronger side was at the receiving end most of the time, except between September 1980 to mid-81 and then again during the last six months of the war. Iraq’s ruling regime’s military and political short-sightedness underlines this. Iraq erred in not trying to occupy the Iranian mainland in order to achieve its main war objective, i.e. the toppling of the Islamic government, when it was maintaining an upperhand. It made a half-hearted offensives, confined to the peripheries of Iran and without the needed air support. Massive air raids were the only way out to break into the Iranian defense lines as the Iraqi ground forces into Iran had already been outnumbered.

The number handicap always failed the Iraqi military thrusts. For instance, not in a position to bear heavy human losses, the Iraqiforces could not make an all out assault against the Iranian army, essential to break the stalemate the ground battles had generally resulted into (194).

Then there were internal constraints. Iraq was more prone to political destabilization and economic dislocations. It could not automatically mobilize Iraqi people, who in majority were Shias, against a Shi country. Even, there was a threat inherent in recruiting local people in the war. This would have swelled the number of Shias in the army, turning it into a potential threat to the Sunni regime (195).

Military analysts have pointed out that Iraqi military thrusts were poorly conceived and badly coordinated (196). The Soviet training of the Iraqi forces was found inadequate. The Iraqi aircrafts flew at a very high altitude affecting the accurate targeting.

The Iraqi forces were well-trained and experienced enough in comparison to those of Iran but not so by the world standard. Its performances in the 1973 war and against Kurdish rebellion were poor. Against Iran these weaknesses came to fore again. Senior army officers were found hesitant to widen the area of operation. Too much emphasis was laid on the objective of destroying Iran’s economic targets, while the Iranian military installations were spared. Even the Iranian economic targets were repeatedly attacked unnecessarily (197).

THE IRANIAN ARMED FORCES’ STRENGTH AND WEAKNESSES:

The Iran-Iraq War derives home the point to a student of Military Science that ‘human factor’ is as important as the ‘technology factor’ in a 20th century war, particularly the one between the two Third World countries. Despite lagging behind the Iraqi forces in tactical capability, it were the Iranian forces which held the sway most of the time. With comparatively
larger armed forces and the availability of the manpower together made it possible for Iran to launch "grand offensives" into Iraq repeatedly, unmindful of human losses. This, in turn, enabled Iran to lay siege around the Iraqi defense, which lessened the chances of Iraqi intrusions into its own territory.

Iran soon overcame the lean period its armed forces underwent following the sacking of a large number of regular military personnel. Except creating some problems in initial stages the step largely helped Iran. The new army was more dedicated to the revolution and, therefore, to the government. There was smooth coordination between the government and the army. The Revolutionary Guards and the regular army were closely knit.

Iraq's geo-strategic disadvantages offset the Iranian armed forces' tactical inferiority. With most of the Iraqi targets being at short-distances, the Iranian aircrafts reached the targets within 5 to 10 minutes and could fly low so as to attack with precision and accuracy. This is why the Iranian government used its air power quite effectively in driving the Iraqis out of its territory in 1982.

However, Iran's diminishing armory cost it dearly. It made a real difference between the Iranian forces' success in occupying Iraqi border towns and its failure to capture central towns of Baghdad and Basra. Iran, which had in the first few years of the war made most of the use of its air-power, could not utilize it to disrupt the Iraqi defense in the later years as with the passage of time its air prowess declined sharply due to the lack of spare parts supply. As its weapon system was West-oriented, Iran's resort to the non-Western arms suppliers in the wake of the snapping of relations with the erstwhile suppliers after the revolution did not help Iran much. Not merely the weapons it procured from the Soviet Union's clients and the black market were qualitatively inferior but the Iranian army was not trained in operating these arms. Nor could Iran hire the services of the military personnel of the supplier countries.

The Iranian army personnel constituting the 'human waves' happened to be armed with Soviet made Ak-47s, RPG-7s and anti tank weapons, which were unmatched to the Iraqi firepower. On top of this, Iran's 3 to 1 advantage in manpower also declined at the eve of the end of the war. Heavy casualties in grand offensives dampened not only the moral of the Iranian army but that of the civilians also, enthusiastically participating in the war earlier. In the last year of the war, the Iranian armed forces strength got reduced to 100,000, equal to that of Iraq's.

IRAQ NOT IRAN WANTED TO REGIONALISE THE WAR:

Contrary to the common perception, it was Iraq, instead Iran, which wanted to spread the war to the Arabian peninsula. The primary Iraqi objective behind attacks on the Iranian oil ships in the Persian Gulf waters was to provoke Iran to hit, in the absence of of Iraqi ships, the oil tankers of the Iraq-friendly states. The importance of regionalisation/internationalization of the war grew to Iraq when it found itself incapable of defeating Iran on its own. Iraq also thought that the direct involvement of the US and the Arab states would be the most effective means to divert Iran's attention from the Iraqi land into the Gulf waters or force Iran to seek peace with Iraq.

Iran did create specter of the spill over of the war among the Persian Gulf countries. But, it was a deterrence only, aiming at preventing Arab countries from joining the war and entering into defense pacts and security agreements with the US. Otherwise, the widening of war was
suicidal for Iran as this would have brought in the US a far superior enemy than Iraq, directly against it. In addition, Iranian onslaught was bound to dub Iran as an "aggressor" which would have had far-reaching implications, from withdrawal of support from some of the Arab and non-aligned countries to imposition of UN economic and military sanctions. Economic reasons alone did not warrant the expansion of the war. An Iran-Arab war had to be fought in the Persian Gulf waters, leading to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz and, therefore, the stoppage of oil supplies. Such a situation would have amounted to a self-imposed oil embargo at a time when Iran was exporting oil beyond its OPEC-fixed quota to meet the expenses of war.

**THE LONGEST WAR OF THE 20TH CENTURY:**

It was the longest war of this century. None of other wars have been fought over a period which is even half of the Iran-Iraq war's duration. The two other wars which occupy second and third place in the list of the longest wars of this century were no ordinary wars. These were World War I and World War II. Unlike the two world wars, the Iran-Iraq war was fought in an era of technological revolution in warfare, that is said to have increased the chances of an early end of a war.

This makes one ponder that as to what were the main factors which delayed its end for no less than eight years. First, the war continued stretching as both the belligerents were evenly balanced in the sense that both were incapable of defeating each other (200). Second, there did not come a stage in the war when both of the combatants would have desired peace together. The balance of war kept on tilting from one side to the another and therefore when the losing side tried for peace the other side put forward humiliating and unacceptable terms and conditions for peace.

For instance, Iran considered relinquishment of power by Saddam as the precondition for any peace talks with Iraq. While Saddam Hussein stuck to the transfer of its sovereignty over Shatt-Al-Arab and Khuzestan province by Iran to Iraq. Third, both of the states possessed an inbuilt economic capability to sustain the war. Iraqi war efforts were funded by the Arab powers. Although, financial assistance to Iraq came largely in form of debt, but their regular supply lessened the burden of war on Iraq's domestic budget. As regards Iran, its expenses on the war were comparatively low while its economy was in a better state of condition. It is not intended to prove here that the war did not weaken the two countries' economies, but it weakened their economy from flourishing ones into a stagnant one. Fourth, there were numerous de-escalation and stalemates during the war. Generally each bout followed a long spell of peace.

**IMPLICATIONS OF THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR**

The Iran-Iraq War was one of its own kind as far as its implications on the combatants, the regional powers and outside actors are concerned. Succinctly speaking, each of them benefited from it and suffered equally.

IRAN

That the war ravaged Iranian economy is a misconception. For, the graph of the Iranian
economy shows an upward trend with the progress of the war, instead the contrary. The Iranian economy was undergoing a lean period on economic front in the early years of the war. But, it was the after-effect of the overthrow of the Shah and the resultant snapping of economic relations with the US, Iran’s largest trading partner. Had the war been a factor in the 1980-82 Iran’s economic deterioration, it would have aggravated further instead of improving after the outbreak of the war. For example, Iranian oil exports declined to 1.1 bpd in 1980 and 0.8 in 1981 from 4.5 in 1978, but from then onwards these started picking up, reaching 1.6 bpd in 1982 to 2.2 in 1983 (201). Since 1983 till the end of the war Iran produced oil and exported above its OPEC -quota.

The Iraqi attacks on its oil tankers and installations, it is said, brought considerable damages to the Iranian economy. But, on the contrary, despite Iraqi attacks Iran kept on producing and exporting oil in the earmarked quantity each year. From Kharag, Iran’s main island terminal and the target of intensive Iraqi air and missile raids, Iran succeeded in taking oil consignment to the mouth of the Persian Gulf by charting 20 to 25 tankers with each tanker carrying 3.7 million barrel oil (202).

The decline in the Iranian exports and sagging national income was caused by the decline in the global demand of oil. This is why the percentage of the reduction in Iranian oil exports in the 80s corresponds to the percentage-decline in oil exports from other principal suppliers and the decline in the global oil demand. The worldwide recession and Islamic government’s stress on the development of small scale and artisan industries and not the war were the factors behind the stagnation the heavy-industries, particularly steel and petrochemicals, suffered during the war.

Despite the war the Iranian government pursued a self-reliant industrial development and achieved considerable success. This helped the growth of Iranian economy in the second half of the war. The trade relations with the West also picked up during the war. Iranian imports from the US in monetry terms increased from $0.02m in 1980 to $0.30m in 1981 to $2 b in 1983. And in comparison to 1983 the US-Iran trade relations in 1988 had increased six-fold. The war-time military expenditure also did not eat much into the civilian expenditure. Iranian military expenditure during war happened to be much lower than those whopping ones in Shah’s time.

Purchasing of arms from the black markets, the Third World and East Europe did not incur any additional expenditure. Since the arms procured from the black market were of low quality the purchase value of these was many times less that the high cost qualitative weapons. The arms Iran acquired from rest of the sources mentioned above were also cheaper than the West-made weapons of similar category.

The war, as a matter of fact, indirectly contributed the growth of the Iranian economy. For example, to reduce its military-expenditure the Iranian government established arms exports substitution industries for the manufacturing of small arms and ammunition, tanks and spare parts. Although, these did not generate additional income but proved cost-effective (203). An array of agriculture based and small scale industries mushroomed in Iran which gave
employment to a large section of people, arrested the trend of urbanization and created new sources of national income.

The Iranian government tried to evolve a ‘mechanism’ to withstand the economic pressure of the war. The government launched an ambitious five year development program in 1983 with a targeted growth of 7 percent. Throughout the war the GDP remained consistently at 5 percent, a remarkable growth rate for a country beset with a war. The development of non-oil economy paid-off. The non-oil sector contributed as much as 70 percent to the total GNP of Iran.

Iran’s trade relations with the Soviet bloc and the Third World increased many-fold during the war and in comparison to the 70s. The Iranian oil was being bought by Japan, India, North Korea, South Korea, Pakistan, Singapore in Asia, all of the East European countries, and Tansierre Leone, Madagaskar, Burundi and Nicaragua in Latin America.

Iran’s agriculture sector, which contributed 30 percent of the GDP and employed thousands of people, remained unaffected by the war. Even the recruitment of people to army did not create manpower shortage in the agriculture sector.

One of the most discerning losses Iran suffered in the war was human casualties (204). Around 5,00,000 Iranians were killed, one million wounded and nearly 3 million displaced. By 1984, the death toll on the Iranian side had already crossed 2,00,000 mark. In addition, around 6,00,000 people were injured and 8,000 taken as prisoners. Casualties shot up in Iraqi missile and chemical weapons attacks before the end of the war. In February-March 1988 alone 1,000 Iranians were killed in Iraqi missile firings (205). About 5,000 people, who included Kursds and Iran’s Revolutionary Guards’, were killed when Iraq sprayed chemical weapons on Halabja (206).

The human fatalities Iran suffered represent a callous loss in terms of number only. Its effects were not fatal both on the morale of civilians and the army. Islamic fervor coupled with the glorification of martyrdom in the She‘i sect of Islam prevented a sense of detachment from the war among the people out of the fear of death. The Iranian government also glorified those killed as martyrs describing them as the companions of Imam Hassan, one of the most revered figures in She‘i Islam who, according to the tradition, martyred along with his 72 companions in the War of Karbala. The families of the deceased, injured and prisoners were given generous payment, provided jobs and other facilities, such as houses.

A few writings on the Iran-Iraq war misconstrue the contribution of the success of the Islamic Revolution towards social cohesion in Iran. They describe this as a result of the Iran-Iraq war. It was actually the ‘Islamic’ dimension of the Anti-Shah revolution which blurred the Shia-Sunni, ethnic and class divide in Iran. It was the achievement of the Islamic revolution that an “overwhelming majority of Iranians without any regard to ethnic identity, clear of sectarian orientation, appeared to have coalesced in what is an essence of national effort to defend the
homeland”(207). Similarly, much of the groundwork for the political stability was provided by the revolution and not the war.

The Iranian clergy had come to power with full backing from the people. The opposition movements were weak and lacked political legitimacy even before the outbreak of the war. And there was no squabble for power between various political factions in true sense of the term. Rather, there was total eradication of political opponents by the new government, accomplished finally by spring 1981 with the ouster of the then President Bani Sadar(208).

The war gave political stability to Iran not by establishing clergy rule in the country but by increasing its credentials as a strong and the best government, successful in foiling the Iraqi invasion and what they called the US imperialist onslaught.

The war did not hinder the democratization of Iran. When the war had broken out, it was speculated that taking the advantage of emergency situation the new government would renege on its promise to set up an Islamic system based on Westminster model. However, it was amid war that the Iranian constitution was adopted, the post of president and prime minister institutionalized and parliament was elected, which kept on functioning without fail from then onwards, and the bureaucratic set up was reorganized.

The war played the role of the cementing force between the Iranian army, the people and the government. After the revolution, both people and the new government has developed a distaste for the army for its oppressive activities during Shah’s rule. This distaste was reflected in the grooming of ‘Pasdaran’ as the alternative army. However, the war not only increased in the eyes of the government the importance of a regular armed force but gave a chance to the latter to re-establish its commitment to the nation and the new government.

As far as the negative impacts of war are concerned, it accentuated Iran’s international isolation. The revolution followed by the seizure of American Embassy by the Iranians had deteriorated the Iran-US relations only. But, at the same time, it had improved the chances of normalization of Soviet Union-Iran relations.

But, Iran’s war with one of its allies forced the Soviet Union not to go great guns despite immense strategic importance of an anti-US Iran to it. In the initial stages the ‘war’ resulted in a change of heart as far as the US was concerned, but Iran did not reciprocate. Once, the chances of Iranian victory began looking a destabilizing factor to the US regional interests, the Iran-US relations reached the flash point of distrust.

But, it is sheer exaggeration to describe Iran’s isolation as international. Iran maintained diplomatic relations with one of the superpowers, namely the Soviet Union. Iran found a number of takers of its stand against Iraq in the Third World countries, particularly the Middle Eastern ones. The relations with Iraqi supporters were by and large sour. However, there never prevailed a state of war between these countries and Iran. Diplomatic ties were maintained, and both the parties took additional precaution in not provoking each other.

The war indeed brought a few countries closer to Iran, Syria and Libya being the example. Iran’s isolation was not permanent either. The relations with the Soviet Union
fluctuated between normal to worse. When the war was in its last phase, the relations between the two countries improved, resulting into exchange of emissaries, who, among others included Sheverdandze, the then Soviet Foreign Minister.

Iran was indeed absolutely isolated by the US but if the clandestine deals between the two countries are treated as the part of bilateral relationship, then Iran and the US, who exchanged arms for hostages in Lebanon deal (disclosed in 1986), were in good terms for an unknown period of time.

IRAQ

Unlike Iran, the war directly impinged on Iraq's economy. Due to the closure of the Shatt-Al-Arab, Iraqi oil exports fell drastically from 2.4 bpd in 1980 to 0.7 mbpd in 1981. With this, Iraqi oil revenues fell down to $ 10.4 billion in 1981 from $ 26.2 in 1980. The problem accentuated when Syria closed down the Iraqi oil pipeline passing through its territory in April 1982. The Iraqi exports declined to mere 650,000 bd in 1982 and the oil revenue slashed to S 9.5 billion the same year(209).

The war cost a slur on Iraqi foreign exchange. It began drying up at a fast pace. For instance, within a span of four years i.e. 1979-83 period, Iraq's foreign exchange reserves slumped to $ 3 to 4 billion from $ 35 to 40 billion(210). Iraq's external debt rose, by the time the war came to an end, to US $ 50 billion (211), mostly owed to oil-rich countries of the Arabian peninsula.

With the defense sector being developed to the hilt, the burnt of war were borne heavily by the civilian sector of Iraq. Resorting to a strict 'gun and butter' policy, Iraq took several austerity steps which affected the civilian sector. Imports were slashed by half, development projects, particularly those related to irrigation, reclamation, railways, automobiles, were pared down and the salaries of the government officials were reduced.

The war charged heavily from the Iraqi manpower. Pitted against a country with a population five times over than that of its own, Iraq drew a major chunk of newly recruited armed forces personnel from the civilian sector. Around 65 percent of the people employed in the civilian sector were asked to join the armed forces. The workforce in factories, state and non-government organizations got reduced to half, as a result. The filling in gap strategy of employing foreign labors (212) proved a poor substitution. The foreign workers could be employed in construction and service sectors only. The manpower shortage in the agriculture sector remained unchanged. The agricultural production declined. A country which used to export food items turned a net importer of them. This can be gauged from the statistics that at the end of the first year of the war Iraq's food import bill was around $ 13 million and this amount almost doubled at the end of the next fiscal year.

Maintenance of foreign workers was an additional burden. The depletion of foreign exchange fastened. Any attempt to cutback the amount of remittances resulted into reverse migration by the foreign workforce. With their lives and security in danger, the foreign workers could be allured to stay by being offered an attractive salary and remittance facilities only.
The war did weaken the Iraqi economy but the state of economic condition did not weaken the Saddam regime's resolve to carry on the war. Iraq, like Iran, also succeeded to manage its economy in a manner that the conduct of the war could have been sufficiently funded.

The foreign aid and assistance played a crucial role in sustaining the economic cost of the war. In the second half of the war the Iraqi economy improved a bit, enabling it to increase its defense expenditure. The marginal economic progress was attributed to an a continuous increase in Iraqi oil exports and growing trade with the West (213). The increased trade with the West was the fallout of the war only. It was the war which brought West closer to a country -Iraq-, which being a Soviet ally could in peaceful situation, and that too during the cold war years, not imagine of getting so much politically and economically closer to the former. This holds true for the close economic relations between Iraq and its Arab neighbors too.

The war constraints made Iraq pursue a more reasonable economic policy. It stopped wasting resources on lavish and prestigious projects. The postponement of the the Non-Aligned summit in Baghdad due to the War should have certainly been a political loss to the country and a personal one to ambitious Saddam Hussein, but it saved a lot more money from being squandered on a project which had already consumed US $7 billion (214).

The Iraqi government concentrated on projects helpful to expand Iraqi exports. For example, refineries were overhauled, the export of refined products increased, the construction of a major refinery and petro-chemical complex was taken up and completed soon. The economy was liberalized to attract private companies and individuals' participation, particularly in the service sector.

The war consolidated Saddam's rule. Iraqi people did not try to de-stabilize his government but supported his political moves out of the fear that in effect of a political change the country will fall to the Iranian army, which most of the time laid siege around the main political and administrative centers of the country. Though not as popular and charismatic as his counterpart, Imam Khomeini, Saddam had the backing of its people to keep on fighting. The undercurrent of Iraqi people's attitude to Iraqi government during war years is adequately summed up by The Washington Post as;

"the people do not want a war to go on, and some even blame Saddam for it, but they do not want revolution of Iran to happen here" (215)

A war being fought between a Sunni regime ruling over Shias constituting 55 percent of the country's total population against a Shi' country, must have instigaed Iraqi Shias to revolt. The chances of a revolt in the army were even greater as the Shia personnel could have not liked the idea of killing the brethren of their sect at the behest of a Sunni regime. But nothing of that sort happened. The most important factor behind this was the fact that as per the long Arab tradition the Iraqi people gave ethnic-cum-nationalistic fervor precedence over their religious identity (216). Beside, Saddam very shrewdly kept the Shia population loyal to the country and
the government by offering various incentives to them, directing the army to protect the Shia religious pilgrimages in the country and entering into political deals with the prominent Shia leaders.

It was not by the people as a whole or the Shei among them was Saddam's government threatened during the war. The regime security threats came mainly from within the ruling elite. A number of aborted coups took place and attempts to assassinate Saddam were made. The most serious was the one in Oct. 1983 when the government foiled a coup attempt by Saddam's brother-in-law and 11 other senior military officers.

However, the above-mentioned rebellions were ruthlessly suppressed, with the main activists being executed and others involved jailed and stripped off their services. The sporadic coup and assassination attempts did not point to political instability in Iraq during the war days as these had come from above, with the general public being aloof from the these developments.

Interestingly, the war subsided the Kurdish rebellion in Iraq(217). Like Shia people, the Kurdish people too were placated. Realizing the necessity of normalization of situation in Kurd dominated areas so that the Iranian army could concentrate in south-east, Saddam Hussein offered to to Kurd leaders peace packages, accepting a majority of the Kurdish demands. Thus in 1984, Saddam Hussein signed an agreement with the Kurd representatives. The treaty provided for free and democratic elections in the Kurdistan, leading to the constituting of a legislative assembly and economic council for Kurds, and a pledge by the Iraqi government to protect Kurdistan from foreign invasion by the Iraqi government(218). The agreement also included a commitment on the part of the Kurdish leaders, particularly Jalal-Al Talbani and those belonging to Patriotic Union Of Kurdistan, to cease hostility and join instead the Iraqi force against Iran.

The deal did not work for long as the Democratic Party of Kurdistan, which had a large following among the Kurds, opposed it. Later relations between Saddam and Jalal-Al-Talbani also cooled off. Between 1985 and 1988, Kurds rose their heads again, but their defiance of Iraqi authority was feeble, disorganized and beset with internal factionalism while the Iraqi government unleashed state terrorism, manifested most discernibly in chemical weapons attack on civilian people of Halabja town, to suppress the Kurds.

The Iran-Iraq war took away 6,5000 Iraqi lives and left 3,00,000 wounded. Beside, 60,000 Iraqi soldiers were taken as prisoners of war, the Heaviest toll Iraq suffered in any of the wars it fought in its history. Lacking religious motivation and revolutionary zeal, as was the case with the Iranian people, Iraqis reflected anguish (but did not express it publicly) over the deaths of their relatives and friends. The Iraqi government tried to minimize people's passive resentment by giving facilities to the families of armymen killed in the war. The widow of those killed were given land, attractive house, a grant of US $ 7,000 and loans repayable over 25 years and pension(219).

The Iraqi foreign policy underwent a significant transformation. Its attitude towards the Arab monarchies moderated. The territorial claims over these countries were dropped at least
temporarily, and support to rebels were withdrawn. It modestly expressed its opposition to the Formation of the GCC and its exclusion from it. The differences over the low-profile Arab support to it was also expressed with utmost care and caution.

Most revolutionary change in Iraqi foreign policy was the attitude towards Egypt, whose ouster from the Arab world was earlier orchestrated by Iraq. Later Egypt became the largest supplier of arms and spare parts to Iraq among the Arab countries. Iraq inexchange promised to campaign for its re-entry to the Arab fold. In 1984 Iraqi Vice Prime Minister Taha Ramadan stated publically, “Iraq—government and party—considers Egypt’s return to Arab nations as Iraq’s primary Pan-Arab objective and regard its relationship with Israeli as its internal affairs,” (220).

Surprisingly, Iraqi attitude towards Israel also pacified. In Arab league Conference in Sept. 1982, Saddam Hussein was reported as saying the security of the Israel was a pre-condition to the solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz went to the extent of saying that “Iraq was not opposed to a peacefull settlement of the problem and therefore negotiations with Israel”(221). This volte face in Iraqi policy towards Israel was an amazing development because it had all along described the war as Zionist-Imperialist conspiracy and accused Iran playing in the hands of the these forces. However, it be noted, the friendly attitude towards Israel was the West and the US oriented so as to project Iraq as a regional country not opposed to the latter’s interests in the region, particularly the one pertaining to the integrity and the security of Israel.
REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES


2. The battle of Qadisiya was fought between Arab and Zorastrian forces.

3. Though Zorastrians embraced Islam after the battle of Qadisyay, they soon adopted She‘i sect of Islam as against their Arab co-religionists who belonged to the Sunni sect. This gave birth to the Shia-Sunni controversy with each sect being represented by two different nationalities. For detail see Lawrence Ziring, "The Middle East Political Dictionary," Santa Barbara ABC Cilo, 1984, Pp. 74-77, 79-83.


6B. Aziz Tariq, Who Started the War, P. 101.


9. The total strength of the people of Iranian origin was 35,000.


12. In fact, "export of revolution" drive was essentially for home consumption. That was to consolidate power in the post-revolution period by keeping people loyal to the revolution and the government. See "Neutral or Neutralised: Iran-Iraq and the Super powers" in Shirin Tahir kheli and Shaheen Ayubi (eds.), Iran Iraq War, New York Preager, 1983, P. 176.


15. Syria and Iraq, competitors for the role of the leadership of the Baath movement, had, however, at that time got closer to each other by setting up 'Joint Political Command' which stressed the need to de-escalate tension between themselves.


22. The regional states were in ‘catch 22’ position. They feared an spillover yet relished the prospects of Iran, which was a potential source to internal instability in these countries, being bashed and the radical Islamic government disposed from power. So were the superpowers as Iran was not the client state of either of the two to have persuaded them to come to its rescue.

23. The river Shatt-Al-Arab, Iraq’s only outlet to the Persian Gulf waters, constitutes the common boundary between Iran and Iraq. It is a wide navigable water which originates from the city of Qurna at the confluence of rivers Tigris and Euphrates in Iraq and extends to the city of Al-Faw on the Persian Gulf. See for more detail Edger ‘O’ Balance N. 6 P. 574.

24. Khuzestan is Iran’s South-West province bordering Iraq. It is inhabited by Arabs. Earlier, the part of the Basra province of Ottoman empire, Khuzestan was ceded to Iran by Britain under a treaty (1925) signed with the then Iranian king, Reza Shah.

25. Aziz Tariq, N. 6b, P. 11


28. The Arab nationalism is mistaken as representing Islam on the basis of the fact the Arab land is the birthplace of Islam and from here this religion spread all over the world. Saddam Hussein also drew an analogy between the Iran-Iraq war and the battle of Qadisyia, in which Persia was conquered by the Arab-Islamic forces, describing Iran as “coward who tries to avenge Qadisyia”.


33. Ibid, P. 167

34. Ibid, P. 167


36. Dezful is strategically vital city of Iran as it accommodates an air base, a hydro-electric station and pumping station for the pipeline linking Iran’s southern oil fields to its capital, Tehran.


38. Local people’s resistance saved these Iranian cities from falling to the Iraqi army.


40. Iraq knew about dangers inherent in occupying a country larger in size and manpower. The occupation of Iran, populated pre-dominantly by Shias, would have changed the demographic character of Iraq where the Shias were already in majority.

42. In order to avoid human casualities Iraq refrained from making regular invasions inside Iran.

43. “Dangers of Iran-Iraq War”, Link, (India), June 24, 1984, P. 244.


48. The Iran-Iraq War coincided with the stoppage of US arms transfers to Iran. Teharan cancelled arms deals worth millions of dollars. Arms supplies from other western source also halted. An unusual increase in Iranian armed forces’ numerical strength further aggravated the shortage crisis.

49. Kumar Shashi, N. 47, P. 51.

50. The war of economic attrition was first of its kind since the Second World War in which Allied Forces carried out systematic attacks on Germany’s and Japan’s economic installations. Economic targets were also attacked during the Indo-Pak Wars. But, in the afore-mentioned wars mainly the military establishments were also attacked, while in the Iran-Iraq War belligerants’ missile attacks and air raids mainly concentrated on economic facilities.


52. Christopher, Raj S., N. 45, P. 255.

53. Link, N. 43, P. 72.


55. For instance, Iraqi missile damaged Saudi supertanker “Al-Ahood”. See also Link, N. 43, P. 27.

56. Kumar Sashi, N. 47, P. 51.

58. Miller Judith & Mylroi Laurie, Saddam Hussein and the Crisis in the Persian Gulf; P. 120.

59. Fao is an uninhabited peninsula. However, given its proximity with Basra, Iraq’s second largest city, it is a strategically vital post.

60. The Economist, January 3 1987.


63. Miller Judith & Mylroi Laurie, N. 58, P. 122.

64. However, the formal request by Kuwait to this effect was made four months ago (in September 1986) in the wake of Iranian attacks on its ships in 1986 summers. See for detail Ramzani R. K. N. 61, Pp. 60-64.

65 Ibid, P. 86.

66. Ibid, P. 86.

67. Ibid, P. 86.

68. Ibid, P. 86

69. Ibid, P. 86

70. Ibid, P. 87

71. The US Navy P-3 petrol aircrafts operated from Masirah Island of Oman. AWACS deployed at Saudi Arabian forces were used by the US personnel to man Iranian military moves in the Persian Gulf.


73. Chubin Shahram, N. 17, P. 317.

74. This viewpoint was held by none other than the present Iranian President, Hashemi Rafsanjani, who then was the commander-in-chief of the Iranian armed forces and the most trusted Lt. of Ayatollah Khomeini. See Chubin and Tripp, Iran and Iraq at War, Pp. 73-74.

With the changes in the international and regional political scenario, the US policy objectives also replaced one another in order of priority. For instance, the objective of the containment of the Soviet Union got in the second half of the war relegated to insignificance due to the subsiding of the cold war from an objective of primary concern in the first half of the war. Similarly, the recession in the West and the accompanying glut reduced the vitality of oil factor a bit.

Within a few days of the start of the war the then US Secretary of State, Edmund Muskie met the his Soviet counterpart Andrei Goromyko in New York. In the meeting between the two, the Muskie maintained that the two superpowers must adopt a non-confrontationist approach vis-a-vis each other in the war. See Gordon Murrey, N. 19, P. 160.

Some of the observers held that US military presence in the the region was inadequate to and ill equipped to counter any Iranian attack.


Washington Post 29 Oct. 1980. Carter referred to the worth $240 million arms supply ordered by the Shah. The supply was withheld after his ouster.

Asopa, Sheel K., N. 8, P. 86.

Gordon Murrey, N. 18, P. 163.


Carter’s National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brezeniski, was also for an improvement in the US-Iraqi relations. See Barryn Rnbins, United starters-Iraq Relations : A Spring Thaw in Tim Niblock Iraq : The Contemporary State, 1983 , P. 119

New York Times, 13 December 1981, See also Adeed Dawisha “Iraq : The West’s

92. Rubin, Barryn, N. 89b, P. 119.

93. Al-Ezhary M.S. The Iran-Iraq War: A Historical, Economic and Political Analysis, D.K. Private Agencies Ltd, New Delhi, India, 1984, P. 129


95. Chubin Shahram, N. 76, P. 12.


98. The Washington Post, March 24, 1987. Explaining the reason behind the US readiness to help Kuwait the then US Secretary of the Defence, Casper Weinberger said. " the American refusal would have created a vaccum in the Gulf in which the Soviet Union would have shortly been projected".


102. Jasjit Singh, "Iran-Iraq War" Strategic Analyses, August 1985, P. 547. The Carter Doctrine read, "any attempt by any outside force to gain control over the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interest of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force"

103. It is debatable that whether really the US wanted to strengthen the allies' security, despite Iran's unwillingness to escalate the war, by supplying them sophisticated arms in huge quantity or its unrestrained arms transfer policy to the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf stemmed from traditional considerations, such as recycling of petrodollors.

104. The oil prices started climbing down from $26.9 in 1985 to $14.7, $16, $17 per barrel in the years 1986, 1987, and 1988 respectively. The price-crash was caused by the global economic recession and the resultant reduced share of oil in energy consumption.

105. The war came for the US as a 'blessing in disguise' which forced its allies to redefine their dependence, who, particularly Kuwait, had embarked on a policy of reapproachment with the USSR, on it. In this context, the Iran-Iraq War started at a right moment as it gave a setback to Moscow's move to make inroads in the US sphere of action.
106. Muskie held that the supply of the AWACS to Saudi Arabia would come in a handy for the Soviet Union to throw its support behind Iran while to prevent Tehran from joining the the Soviet bloc was the main objectives of the US.

107. However, the war was not the only factor behind the US arms sales to its allies in the region during 1980s. Arms were also sold to place them in the vicinity of a region where the US had deployed its naval force. Arms began to turn into a commercial commodity in the wake of increased buying capacity of the recipients and the suppliers' urge to sell them to earn hard currency. It is also doubtful that the US arms supplies to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and other Persian Gulf countries were meant for preparing them to take on Iran. For, they had shown an unwillingness to enter into a war with Iran and banked on, as did Kuwait, the US to come to their rescue in the eventuality of Iranian attack. Small, inexperienced and ill-trained armed forces of these countries were not capable of handling world's one of the most modern weapons being shipped to them by the US. Thus the US had, taken upon itself the protection of its allies by increasing its military presence and forming strategic alliance with the allies to acquire bases which housed some of the most sophisticated American weapons. For example the weapons such as AWACS, F-15, F-16, Sidewinder air-to-air missile, Hawk missile batteries, which the US sold to its regional allies, could have been utilised by the US in a joint naval-aerial operation. See for details Alam, Sayeed M., Towards the Persian Gulf War : Arms Proliferation in West Asia, Causeway Publishers, New Delhi, India, Pp. 62-8.

108. The US naval task force included a total number of 18 combat ships, 13 support ships, headed by aircraft carriers Midway and Eisenhower.


110. Ahrari, Mohammed E., N. 11, P. 54.


112. That Iran was a small threat to the US in comparision to the one that stemmed from the Soviet Union is borne out by the fact that the US only needed fire-power to batter Iran during its protracted battle with the same in 1987.


114. Both the US and Bahrain denied that Bahrain was an American military base.

115. See Newsweek, 23 April, 1984.


119. The then US Secretary of State declared "there would be no military equipment provided to the government of Iran under earlier obligation and contractual agreements", The Washington Post. January 19, 1981.


120. Link, "Iran-Iraq Conflict : Soviet View", Link, November 15, 1987, P. 2

121. This endangered the Kuwaiti security as the Fao peninsula is close to Umm-e-Qasr, then an Iraqi port adjacent to the Kuwaiti boundaries.

122. This issue came to fore again in the latest presidential elections in the US.

123. Iraq was also tied up with the USSR in the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation, signed by them in 1972.


125. The Soviet Union was interested in an early end to the war in view of the fact that this would have reduced the possibility of punitive action by the US against Iran, the country adjacent to the Soviet Union, and also stalled the militarization of the Persian Gulf by the US.

126. Such a proposal was putforward by Breznev in a speech in the Indian parliament (New York Times, Oct 1 1980) and at 26th CPSU Congress(New York Times, February 24, 1981). But the choice of the 'venues' point out that the Soviet Union did not directly approached to the US. Also, speeches from the above-mentioned platforms have always smelled of rhetoricism. The international fora, like the UN, would have been the right kind of venue but therein the Soviet Union was conspicuous of not showing any "activism".


130. In the Ethiopian Civil War the USSR was on the side of the Marxist government, while Iraq supported Somalian and Eritreanresurgents.


133. The Soviet occupation halted the process of normalization of relations which was begun by the USSR in later 70s by exploiting regional powers growing disillusionment with the US over the latter masterminding the anti-Arab Camp David plan/accord. The Persian Gulf countries interperated the Soviet invansion of Afghanistan as the part of Moscow's strategy to advance to the Gulf and eventually to attack and subvert them. See Katz, Mark N., N. 109, P. 57.


137. This was told to the Soviet Amabssador in Tehran by the then Iranian Prime Minister, Mohammad Ali Rejai, in 1981. See The Washington Post, February 16 1981.


140. The Iraqi authorities had acknowledged that amrs supplies from the Soviet Union’s Europaen allies was mainly at the Soviet behest. See The Washingtonom Post, May 1981 and The Washington Post, April 19, 1981.

141. The soviet-Iran relations would have got damaged irreperably had the Soviet Union as perit promise to Kuwait escorted its oil ships. That could have engaged these two countries in an armed conflict. After the US wrested the initiative the Soviet Union tried to pacify the Iranian anguish over its decision to reflag Kuwaiti oil tankers. For instance, it did not protest the Iranian attack on its frigate vessel during Iran-US hostility. See The New York Times, May 9, 1987.

143. Roughly 1,000 Iranians were killed in missile attacks in Feb-March 1988. These missiles were the enhanced version of the Scuds provided by the Soviet Union.

144. Allison, Roy & Williams, Phill, N. 121, P.161.


146. However, in comparison to the US the Persian Gulf countries welcomed Soviet Union more in the role of a peace broker than of a military giant in the Persian Gulf.


151. The Persian Gulf countries also thought that the war would last a few days only and, therefore, the chances of its escalation were remote.

152. In December 1979, Shias in the oil-rich Eastern region of Saudi Arabia rose up in arms in protest against their treatment as second class citizens. In February 1980, Shia of Saudi Arabia openly celebrated the return of Imam Khomeini to Iran. From 1979 onwards at the occasion of Haj the situation inside Saudi Arabia turned quite tension-some. The Haj pilgrims from Iran and Ayotollah Khomeini’s messages politicised the event challenging the moanarchial house’s authority over the twin cities of Mecca and Madina.

154. Not surprisingly, the UAE, which had a long-standing dispute with Iran over three islands, was least affected by the Iranian aggrendizement. This happened due to the fact that in order not to be identified with the previous government, the Islamic government did not highlight the border dispute with the UAE. Instead, Iran's relations with the UAE were more peaceful than with any other Arab country of the Persian Gulf.

155. As early as 1981 did Egypt send first consignment of arms to Iraq.

156. It was named after the battle of "Yamhuk" in which Islamic forces conquered the whole of Persia.


160. The pipeline was closed on April 10, 1982. It passed through Syrian territory and terminated in Ras-al-Baniyan in the Mediterranean.

161. The Middle East Reporter, April 6, 1983.

162. Syria was also not alarmed by the Persian Gulf Arab countries' goodwill diplomacy aiming at weaning Syria war from Iran. Failing to erode Iran-Syrian solidarity, these states tried that Syria maintained an equidistance from both of the belligerents.

163. Rubinstein, Alvin Z., N. 51, P. 590.

164. Ayatollah Khomeini described existence of Israel as a blot to Muslim countries. He called upon the Muslims the world over to drown Israel into the Mediterranean.


168. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were the chief donors of economic assistance to Iraq.


172. Kumar, Shashi, N. 47, P. 53.


175. Link, N. 43.

176. Kuwait was only a few miles away from the war-zone and Saudi oilfields as well as those of the other regional countries could be attacked by Iranian planes within 10 minutes of their take off from bases.


180. Saudi Arab's Official stand was to oppose any military presence "from outside and of any size". The UAE Foreign Minister is said to have told the visiting British Prime Minister "any foreign presence, especially of superpowers would create tension rather than stability. We do not want to see any one point out our interest to us nor do we need any one to protect our region."


182. The Washington Post, May 5 1987 quotes one Kuwaiti official as saying that the Kuwaiti request was partly designed to test US commitment to protect the security of the Arab countries of the peninsula in the wake of the disclosure of secret arms deals between it and Iran. However, this theory is doubtful on account of the fact that Kuwait had reportedly approached the US for the first time in September 1986; about two months before the disclosure of the Iran-Contra deal.

184. The tenor and tone of Saudi regime on Gulf security issue reflected their leadership aspirations. Prince Nayef, the Interior Minister of that country said “the security of every state in the Arabian Gulf affects the security of the Saud Kingdom. We will not permit any threat to this security.”


188. Ahrari Mohammed E., N. 11, P. 54.


190. One of the reasons behind Iranian acceptance of the UN resolution 598 was its diminishing military prowess. The yawning gap between the defense preparedness of the two countries was said as one of the main the causes of Iranian retreat by the then Commander of Revolutionary Gurads. To quote him, “we were unarmed infantryman against the enemy’s cavelry. There are few instances in history of Islam of such a war”.


192. “Jihad” means struggle in the way of God. According to the Holy Quran, it is not necessarily a war between Muslims and infidels or war for territorial expansion as it is widely understood. The “jihad“ is essentially war against persecution and oppression and not necessarily through the use of force, always. In the light of the Quranic definition of ‘Jihad’, it is doubtful to call the Iran-Iraq war by this name as claimed by both the belligerents.

193. The young Iranians were swayed by the Islamic government’s call to fight a Jihad. There were numerous occasions when scores of these youths chanting ‘Kalimah’ stepped on landmines to clear the way for the regular army following them.


196. Cottam Richard, N.13, P. 10, Chubin, Shahram, N. 17, P. 317

& Rubin Barry, N. 41, P. 31.

197. For instance, between August-December 1988, Iraqi airforce bombed Khrag islands 77 times.

198. Mustafa Ghulam Mohammed, N. 105, P. 300.

199. Chubin, Shahram, N. 17, Pp. 311-313.


201. Mustafa Ghulam Mohammed, N. 105, P. 303

202. Destruction of the Iranian oil refineries and other facilities paved the way for their repairing with a view to modernise them and improve their capacity. Abadan refinery’s capacity increased after its reconstruction, and Esfahan became the second most important oil refinery of Iran after the Abadan refinery.


204. The Iran-Iraq War ranks sixth among most bloody war among the ones fought in the 20th century with as many as 1.2 million people killed from both sides.

Death toll  
9 Million  The World War 1 
16 Million  The World War 2 
2 Million  The Korean War 
1. 2 Million  The Vietnam war 1965-73 
1 Million  The Sino-Japanese War

205. Al-Ezhary, M.S. N. 89, P. 118.


207. Halabja is largely peopled by Kurds. It is a small town 40 kms inside Iran and roughly 200 km north-east of Baghdad.

208. Bani Sadar fled to Paris where he formed the Iranian government in exile.

209. The closure of the Shatt not the Iraq-Syria-Med pipeline made the telling effect on Iraqi oil exports. The Shatt accounted for at least 60 percent of the total oil exports of Iraq. Whereas the exports through the Pipelines, lay across Syria, constituted roughly 25 percent of the total. The rest of the oil was drained through the pipeline passing through Turkey.

211. Middle East Review, 10th Edition, P. 121. It may be noted that Iran’s external debt stood at US $ 4 billion.

212. The foreign work force in Iraq came mainly from India, Phillipines, North and South Korea.

213. In comparision to 1983, when the Iraqi oil exports hit a record low, the oil exports increased four-fold to 2.75 bpd in 1988, the last year of the war.

214. The 7th Non-Aligend summit held at New Delhi.


216. The Arab-Ajam (non Arab) animosity is far older than the Shia-Sunni one. It came to fore in 7th and 8th centuries only.

217. Khurdish people, inhabitants of the northern Iraq including the oil-rich town Mosul, demanded full autonomy, withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from all Kursdish areas and setting up of a separate kurdish army.


221. Ibid, P. 351
CHAPTER IV

THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL

Though a misnomer in the strict sense of the term, the Gulf Cooperation Council — consisting of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE — is the largest, the most comprehensive and relatively the most successful attempt towards multilateral cooperation in the history of the Persian Gulf region.

Yet, the GCC has, so far, not evolved into a regional grouping worth the name, particularly in terms of its objectives laid down in its charter and other blueprints. Nor is it worthy of being equated with other existing major regional organizations such as the NATO and the ASEAN which are known for their achievements, strengths and working.(1)

The level of cooperation among the GCC member-states has been of medium intensity and the pace a little above slow. Characteristically, it is not a grouping planted by, and formally aligned to, a major global power. Yet, either on its own or due to the interplay of regional and extra-regional developments it has heavily banked on the West, particularly the US for support and survival:

It is in this framework that a detailed study of the GCC has been attempted here.

INTRA-GULF COOPERATION IN 1970s AND EARLIER:

Historically, the urge for cooperation, in an institutionalized form, among the Persian Gulf countries has emanated from a ‘common threat’ posed by a country from amongst themselves. Before the advent of Islam, these were not the commonalty of languages, cultures and political systems but the Sassanid incursions which were the chief stimulant in driving the then tribal Sheikdoms to form a common defense system. Otherwise, they were always embroiled in perpetual and bloody inter-tribal conflicts.

But, with the gradual weakening of Khilafat institution, the central force that roped Arab tribes into a sort of federation, the tribe-state system re-emerged. ‘Islam’, common language and ethnicity were factors denoted to Arab tribal states cohesion into a distinct geographical unit.

From inside, perennial feuds among royal families coupled with an urge for territorial expansion denied the evolution of regional cooperation for centuries together. Or the levels of official cooperation, in the words of Christie John, “were so slight as to be of little effect and without lasting importance”(2).
Under almost 150 years of British control, there hardly existed a rationale and opportunity for regional cooperation as Britain itself supervised all the larger and wider issues concerning the region as a whole. British control over the rest of the Arabian peninsula did not leave for Saudi Arabia, which became independent in 1921, any room to drawing the smaller nations towards it till the date the British power announced to withdraw in 1969.

During this period, only a few attempts in regional cooperation were made by Saudi Arabia. The most notable of these were the signing of agreements on economic exchanges in 1953, on economic unity in 1957 and Arab Common Market in 1964(3).

However, it was Britain which laid the foundation stone of intra-Gulf cooperation, but only on the eve of its departure from the region. The British power encouraged seven trucial Sheikdoms of Abu Dhabi Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Ras-al-Khaima and Umm Al-Qwain to merge into a single state. It orchestrated the 1971 Dubai agreement, wherein the nine Sheikdoms, the rest two being Qatar and Bahrain, agreed to consider the formation of a federation or union.

In 1972, the Emirs and Sheiks of these states moved a step ahead and decided to form the United Arab Emirates (UAE). However, only after three years of this the UAE could come into existence. Not only this, Bahrain and Qatar later opted out. Historical animosity led them to disagree over power sharing in the proposed federation, prompting both of them to declare themselves as sovereign states.

Thus in the formation of the UAE in 1975 there reflected a lack of political unity among the regional states. The lack of unity was also exhibited on the security issue. In 1976 both Oman and Kuwait separately proposed the establishment of a common defense system but the move did not evoke enough enthusiasm (4).

In the same year, the Arab Gulf states rejected an Iranian proposal for mutual defense alliance, mooted at the first conference of the Gulf foreign ministers at Muscat. Iraq also did not find any taker of its proposal, which was presented in 1979, for an ‘Arab Gulf Security force’, loosely linked to the Arab League Joint Defense Pact’(5).

Even the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which created a sort of security chaos in the region, did not activate the Arab Gulf states to coordinate their defense policies by putting up a common defense system, albeit a loose one. Instead, each of them individually started to shore up its defense preparedness.

Saudi Arabia, which was most vocal against the Soviet invasion and probably the most vulnerable to the USSR’s expansionist ambitions Persian Gulf, tried to evolve a common voice of the Arab Gulf states in condemning the invasion. But this, at best, was a political and diplomatic move and could have been translated into a demonstration of regional unity had it been preceded or followed by a common stand on security issues at stake.

The Saudi policy statements on the invasion, particularly in regional and international
fora, were conspicuous by the absence of a reference to the need of forming a network of Arab (including the Arab states of the Eastern Mediterranean sector) or a Muslim front against the Soviet invasion of a next door neighbor of their region and more importantly a Muslim country(6).

As against a broad-based regional cooperation, endeavors on a limited scale were indeed made with some success during the 1975-80 period. The United Arab Shipping Company was established in 1975 by the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait Iraq and Qatar. In the same year, the UAE, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain Kuwait and Saudi Arabia established Gulf Ports Authority. In 1979, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq agreed to incorporate the Gulf Petrochemical Industries in order to establish petroleum by-products industries. The Arab Gulf University was established in 1980 to impart training for students in different scientific and professional fields, by the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar and Iraq.


The launching of such a large number of joint ventures in economic, communications, massmedia spheres was a distinct departure from the past. This is illustrated in the statistics that in the 1970s inter-Arab institutions grew one and a half times more than the number of those established in preceding two decades.

That same year the present Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad, discussed the issue of regional security at bilateral level with the heads of the states of the region barring Iraq.

COOPERATION ON OIL RELATED ISSUES:
The Persian Gulf states demonstrated a greater sense of unity in the 1970s. As a result, there appeared some sort of similarity in their approaches and objectives.

They were instrumental in strengthening the OPEC cartel. They backed Libya in challenging the Western Oil Companies’ monopoly over pricing and production of oil. They also played a central role in Tehran-Tripoli agreements (February and April 1971) for an increase in oil prices. OPEC’s oil prices increased from $3.0 pb to $5.1 pb during the 1973 Arab-Israeli War. In similar refrain, they masterminded the 1973 Oil Embargo on the US and Netherlands and the three-fold price hike, taking the new posted price to $11.65 pb (9).

The Persian Gulf countries also formed a cartel within the OPEC to counterbalance the radical Arab oil-producers on the one hand and Iran on the other. In the later half of the 70s, these states turned price-moderates, opposing Price Hawks, such as Iran, within the OPEC. As a matter of fact, on all issues pertaining to oil the Arabian peninsula countries towed a line of
action designed and dictated by Saudi Arabia, then the producer of the bulk of the OPEC and the Persian Gulf oil. Therefore the oil policy of one country looked an "image mirror" of others'.

COOPERATION ON POLITICAL ISSUES:

The oil embargo also set the pace of cooperation on political issues among the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. This was their first-ever action-oriented response to, and the most vivid demonstration of, unity of stand on the Palestine issue. The Persian Gulf Arab countries' policy reflected unanimity earlier too, but then these countries operated in the larger framework of Pan-Arabism, and when it smacked of Nasserite radicalism, which the Arab monarchies opposed, they resorted to Anti-Zionism.

But the qualitative difference this time was that after originally mooting and carrying out the oil embargo against Israel’s allies and sympathizers, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf looked at the Palestine issue as one demanding a joint strategy on action and policies among themselves as much as in concert with the Arab countries outside.

More so, the oil embargo was the first major concerted effort by the Arab conservatives to assert in the Arab politics on the strength of oil power, neutralizing their American connection and the relative remoteness from the Arab-Israeli War Zone. Following Egypt’s success in escaping from another defeat due to Arab monarchies action, PLO’s subsequent shift from radical states to Gulf monarchies in its bid to come out of former’s shadow and its yearning for finances the Palestine initiative slipped from the hands of “old guards” in favor of the new saviors.

In another sense, it was a unique case of regional (political) cooperation. Targeting the US, the Persian Gulf countries later evenly balanced their ties with the former. This, together with their immensely increased oil prowess, changed the region from hitherto a sub servient system of international politics to one of its sub-systems, capable of extricating itself from extraneous dependence or turning it into interdependence if the circumstances demanded and supported.

Though for a short while only, by imposing the oil embargo the US the Arab states of the Persian Gulf also de-emphasized their national interests for a larger cause. This was true of both a big nation like Saudi Arabia and a small country like Qatar. Doing this, Saudi Arabia also invited the chances of being attacked. Though the probability of such attack was remote due to a number of constraints yet it was communicated to Saudi Arabia by a person no less than Henry Kissinger and a strong group of ‘Attack Protagonists’, who had gathered around the then US president.

In view of this the chances of Saudi Arabia being stripped off the regional policeman status by the US were far less remote and denial of arms largesse and the scrapping of security commitments seemed the most probable likelihood(9).
Then, far more threatened would have been the smaller countries. Although their oil installations were not targeted, they feared that they might get involved due to the escalation of war or the eruption of superpowers conflict. More imminent and real was the danger of loosing in the US a guarantor of their security which had used its leverage over Iran to restrain it from territorial expansion into the Persian Gulf.

But, the regional states failed to maintain the momentum of cooperation. An important factor behind this was the short duration of the oil embargo. It did not present the Gulf states with enough time to consolidate, and properly rationalize the gains of oil embargo in the context of regional cooperation.

It took another five and a half years before the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf could show some glimpses of their solidarity on the Palestine issue. This occasion was the signing of Camp David Accord in 1978. It was vehemently condemned by the Persian Gulf countries who, both before and after the signing of the accord, did not give in to the US persuasion to follow the suit. But a marked difference is noticed in these Arab countries’ united resolve in 1973 Arab-Israeli War and on Camp David Accord.

First, one of them i.e. Oman, did not sever diplomatic relations with Egypt(10). Second, anti-Egypt move was embroiled in Pan-Arabism, encompassing a vast landmass, spread over two continents and a score of countries. Thus in view of these states’ distinct location, size, and geographical proximity with the country concerned and its internal and external political orientation and economic state of condition each pursued an anti-Egypt policy varying from the others’.

In fact, only Saudi Arabia, given its size, its involvement in intra-Arab affairs and its significance as the guardian of the holiest of Islamic shrines, and Iraq, given its newly found urge to seize the Egyptian opportunity, played an active role in ensuring Egypt’s’ ouster from the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Conference and the Organization of African Unity. Smaller countries backed the move but they certainly lacked that enthusiasm.

**COOPERATION IN PERSIAN GULF IN THE 70s : NON-SUBSTANTIVE, FUTILE:**

The regional cooperation during 70s can be marked out for its low-key nature. Scores of regional level institutions were established but none paved the way for, or culminated in, the formation of a broad and close-knit organization. In terms of number, their attempts represent a significant development in regional cooperation but qualitatively speaking these were a failure.

It was as early as 1976, that Kuwait had put forward the proposal of a Gulf Union, but it took a span of another five years before such an organization could come into existence.

Be it noted that the formation of the GCC was not a logical extension of Kuwaiti proposal. For, it was never in pipeline. Even its chief propounder Kuwait, failing to receive an encouraging response, dropped the idea and instead shifted its focus on improving relations
with the regional countries at bilateral level (11).

A host of other regional institutions could not take off. Those which could be established worked but worked barely in the desired manner in a region of geographically close-knit countries, economically inter-dependent, possessing identical socio-political and economic structure and linguistically, ethnically the same and with a common religion to follow.

In the 70s the Persian Gulf countries did not look inward. Saudi Arabia, which is the biggest power among the Arab peninsular countries, should have made some dexterous efforts to carve out a niche for itself across the Persian Gulf into the Eastern Mediterranean sector by cashing in on the Palestine issue and underplaying its relations with the US (12).

The Arab countries did show up as a sub-system in some of the intra-Arab affairs at the Arab and Islamic forums, such as the Arab League and the OIC. Mutual cynicism mainly prevented the formation of such a regional union. To Saudi Arabia the smaller countries acquiesced, but they were not prepared to embrace Saudi hegemony, which they found laying inherent in forming a regional grouping.

But if Saudi Arabia was feared to turn closes, Kuwait, which first presented the Gulf Union proposal, too was left alone for the fear of it assuming the leadership by virtue of being the wealthiest and the most developed.

However, more disturbing was the failure of the endeavor to form a sovereign state of nine shikhdoms. Firstly, it was the Iranian claim on the whole of Bahrain that led the rest of the nine to delay the process of reaching at a final agreement. However, once Iran withdrew its claim the urge to usher as a sovereign state prevailed upon the Bahraini ruler to desert the move. The traditional feud between the ruling families of Bahrain and Qatar marred the deliberations and negotiations on the formation of a single state of these states. In these circumstances it was in all respects preferable for both Bahrain and Qatar to emerge as sovereign states than to negotiate power sharing between them and or other seven Sheikhdoms.

Last but not the least, what really robbed them of establishing a regional organization was lack of a common threat of such an imminent nature that it could overshadow the factors obstructing the cooperation. The US threat to seize oil fields in case the Arab governments strangulated oil supply for long was such a threat, but it was short-lived. Also, it remained a matter of academic discussion in the US, and the idea did not accompany any US effort or intention to amass troops and forces in the vicinity of the region. Over and above, the criticism to this idea was vehement inside the US and this reduced the possibility of the execution of this plan to the minimum. Even, the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf did not panic.

Iran was the only threat at that time to reckon with. But as it had happily accepted the role of the "Gulf Policeman" jointly with Saudi Arabia the threats from it had proportionally receded. The Arab countries of Persian Gulf countries did not relish Iran amassing huge arms and ammunition from the US and its western allies in exchange for its role in the Gulf but were consoled by the fact that these were at least not directed against them.
Iraq too was not a potential threat, although it had not relinquished its claim over Kuwait and parts of Saudi territory. But, at a same time, these disputes did not figure high on Iraq's foreign policy agenda, due to its entanglement with Khurdish resurgence and pre-occupation with the Iranian threat on eastern border. At that time Iraq also needed to take a radical shift from its typical hostile approach towards these countries to capitalize on the Arab confidence, it had gained after masterminding Egypt's withdrawal, for the purpose of filling the post Camp David leadership slot in the Arab world. To minimize the Arab suspicion on its Soviet connection, Iraq was bound to demonstrate a greater level of good neighborliness vis-a-vis the regional Arab powers.

FACTORS BEHIND GCC's FORMATION:
Thus, little and restrained cooperation among the Persian Gulf countries, at least till 1978, did not have paved the way for the formation of the GCC. In fact, to locate the genesis of the GCC prior to 1978 tends one to overlook the catalyst years (1978-1981) of the GCC'S formation.

The Camp David Accord, the Iranian revolution, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War were major developments during 1978-1981 period which led to the formation of the GCC (13).

THE CAMP DAVID ACCORD:
From the viewpoint of regional cooperation, the Camp David Accord was not significant as this did not galvanize the Persian Gulf states into togetherness(14). But being the most vocal rejectionists of the accord and instrumental in ex-communicating Egypt from the Arab fold, the Persian Gulf countries shot into prominence once again in the Middle East politics.

This, in turn, re-established the Persian Gulf as a distinct geographical and geo-political entity—the rationale behind the formation of the GCC despite the presence of the Arab League and close lingual, religious and historical affinity with the rest of the Arab world.

By rejecting the Camp David accord brokered by the US, its Persian Gulf allies showed a willingness to undermine their association with the US on an issue of regional importance of major domestic implications. This exemplified the assertion of the Persian Gulf countries into an independent international sub-system than a superpower's exclusive area of action.

Protest against the Camp David accord helped Saudi Arabia graduate to the role of leadership in the Persian Gulf region. In adition, with none of the issues concerning the Persian Gulf region after 1973, succeeding in uniting the regional countries together, the Palestine issue after the Camp David at least, worked as a binding force before the events like the Islamic revolution and the Iran-Iraq war came to overshadow it as far as the inception of the GCC is concerned.

THE SOVIET INVASION IN AFGHANISTAN:
On 27th December 1979 Soviet troops occupied Afghanistan. Taken aback, the Persian
Gulf countries interpreted it as a part of a grand Soviet design to encircle the oil-rich Gulf. The uncertainties in Post-revolution Iran and Bluchistan reinforced their fear. This fear found expression in Persian Gulf states’ criticism of the Soviet invasion. Without exception the Arab countries adopted a united stand against Soviet invasion. All condemned the USSR in the UN General Assembly at the OIC conference. Yet, it is very unlikely that this development would have necessitated an increased cooperation among the regional states.

In fact, within one and a half months of the Soviet invasion, the Arab monarchies vetoed Iraqi proposal of An Arab National Charter which provided for prohibition of foreign power intervention in the Persian Gulf region. By accepting the Iraqi proposal the Arabian peninsular countries might have put at rest the fear of a combined Iraqi-Soviet invasion. But the disapproval of the same shows that the specter of the Soviet invasion and that of an increased level of intransigence from the Soviet allies in the region were not grave enough to the regional security.

Around the same time, Saudi foreign minister visited Kuwait and Pakistan and proposed a collective security plan to them as well as other regional countries. However, the plan did not seem to have been mooted in the backdrop of the Soviet invasion. Rather the plan accidentally coincided with it. For, it envisaged cooperation in internal security matters and not to deter external threats (16).

After initial outrage, the Gulf Arabs toned down their criticism of the Soviet Union. Saudi Arabia offered to establish diplomatic ties with the USSR provided the latter withdrew from Afghanistan. Kuwait publicly told that the USSR did not pose threat to the Gulf security despite the fact that the Soviet force were barely 350 miles away from the Strait of Harmuz and had by then demonstrated their capability to lift troops and equipment on short notice into Afghanistan and over to longer distances in the Gulf(17). Stephen Page holds the view that this very security threat had actually prompted the Gulf Arabs to seek accommodation with the USSR(18).

Oman was the only exception. It signed an agreement with the US allowing the latter’s forces access to the Masirah island airfield and other Omani military facilities. But, much to the satisfaction of the USSR, other Gulf states disapproved this deal. Kuwait’s foreign minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al Jabar Al Sabah visited Moscow at the end of the April 1981. His visit marked the lack of unanimity in the Arab monarchies’ opposition to the Soviet moves in Afghanistan and a rejection of the then US Secretary of State Alexander Haig’s proposal of an anti-Soviet “Strategic Consensus”, including the US and its Gulf Arab allies.

The likelihood of the formation of an anti-Soviet regional grouping diminished due to the USSR’s assurance to the Gulf countries that it had no intention to step into the region. “The USSR did not need oil and had never sought to dominate the Persian Gulf”, said a spokesman of the Soviet Union. The USSR also called, even if only for the matter of denying the US the advantage of gaining influence in the region by capitalizing the Soviet invasion, for “security of oil communications and equal commercial access to oil sources of the Persian Gulf region”. The USSR removed Gulf states’ doubt when Breznev in his official visit to India
proposed an international agreement on December 10, 1980 stipulated:
1) Not to create foreign military bases in the Arabian Gulf or on adjacent Island; not to deploy nuclear weapons of mass destruction there.

2) Not to sue force or threaten the use of force against Arabian Gulf countries, and not to interfere in their internal affairs.
3) To respect the non-aligned status chosen by the Arabian Gulf states, Not to draw them into military grouping to which the nuclear powers are party.
5) To respect the sovereign rights of the states of this region to their natural resources and:
6) Not to create any obstacle or threats to normal trade and the use of sea-lanes linking the countries of this region with other countries of the world.

THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION:
The overthrow of the Shah in January 1979 and subsequent seizure of power by the Islamic regime under the headship of Imam Khomeini beset the Arab Gulf with twin problems concerning their security. First, it exposed them to a kind of double-edged threat. First; it came from a regime (in control of region’s most advanced military machine), that had from the day first declared hostility towards the Arab monarchies and called upon its people to export the Islamic revolution across the Persian Gulf and urged the people of the Arab countries to cooperate. Second; it created ‘security vacuum’ in the region. This is illustrated as under:

1) The dimension of the threat the Iranian revolution posed can be gauged from the fact that it activated both the radical (anti-monarchy) Sunnis, and the Shia minority. Even the expatriates—the labor force—identified themselves with the Islamic regime or its struggle against Shah’s exploitation. It is reported that even during the days of revolution its representative were trying to proselytize the peoples of Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, the UAE and Saudi Arabia. If reports are to be believed then soon after coming to power the Khomeini regime had started supplying arms and giving training to the dissident Shias in the Persian Gulf countries.

Both in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia Shias staged demonstrations. They were said to have done so at Khomeini’s instigation. In Kuwait and the UAE the signs resentment among Shias were also noticed.

These developments, a few and far in between, were successfully crushed though they often erupted at local level. Their repeated occurrence perturbed the governments of these states to a great extent. They rushed to find a mechanism to cooperate on internal security. The exchange of intelligence was stepped up, Iraq’s help was acquired to feed intelligence and security data and the regional governments began taking pre-emptive action against opposition groups and “radical activists” before they could stir an agitation.

This experiment was probably the first case of living cooperation among the Persian Gulf states, making them discover the practicability of such a cooperation and vitality of practicing it in institutionalized manner and at a wider level. The Iran-Iraq war did the rest. And there the GCC was founded.
2) The Shah's departure created a security vacuum. Although unwillingly, the Arab countries had acquiesced to the Shah's domination of the Gulf. They had reconciled with Iranian occupation of three disputed islands—Abu Musa and two Tunbs—in 1971 when the latter began playing the role of a bulwark against the radical Iraq and the Soviet Union. Their military and manpower strength being no match to that of Iran further convinced them to remain friendly with the latter. While their membership to the US power-bloc brought them together on external security issues in the region.

The removal of the Shah shattered the existing Gulf security structure aggravating among the Gulf Arabs the need of evolving a new security system from among themselves.

THE US FACTOR:

That this runs as a major theme in the gulf states' scheme of things on the security plank must be seen in the light of the fact that they were not willing to fall back upon the US as a substitute of Iran. The US wanted control over the Gulf military bases and other strategic rights in exchange for guaranteeing security of the regional states. The Gulf states were, at that point of time, not willing to concede to the US terms and conditions. For the conditions of the US tended to give credence to the doubt that it was more interested in the seizure of oil fields than the defense of the Gulf.

Very recently in the shape of events in Iran they had experienced the extent of the adverse consequences of maintaining close association with the US. Following the Iran-US model of relationship they would have only given new source of strength to the internal (radical-Islamist) opposition, which emboldened by the success of the Iranian revolution had come to the fore very powerfully. Nor could it be a wise step if the Persian Gulf countries wanted to neutralize the Soviet threat and, more importantly, to avoid the superpowers confrontation in the Gulf theater. All was not well in respect of the relations between the US and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf. The near denial of F-15s and F-5s to Saudi Arabia and the differences over Camp David accord and the price of oil were the major irritants to a relationship conducive for forming a military bloc.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR:

The GCC was founded six months after the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq war. This was the time when Iran, after being put back on the wall for the first six months of the war, began to bounce back. This coincidence makes one specify as to whether the Iran-Iraq war or Iranian recoveries were catalyst to the formation of the GCC.

The war was started with a hope that a politically unsettled and militarily disarrayed Iran would soon be overrun by Iraq. At least this was the impression the Gulf States gathered from Saddam who visited some of the Arab capitals in the Persian Gulf, reportedly to secure latter's support and approval of his decision to wage a war against Iran. Though expressed neutrality and urged the two countries to end their war, the Gulf states had unofficially assured Saddam to help and support him, to an extent that King Khalid personally wished Iraq success against the "enemy of the Arab nation".
But, the Iraqi reverses forced the Gulf leaders to review their policies. Iranian retaliation threatened free flow of their oil exports. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have their major refineries and ports within the striking range of the Iranian air force. But it was the oil shipping which was more endangered than the oil installations. Of the Persian Gulf countries, only Saudi Arabia could divert its oil exports, through its pipeline, to the Red Sea. The rest of them needed a free passage through the Gulf waters and the Strait of Hormuz. The foreign ministers' meeting of the Arab Gulf states in Taif in February 1981, in which the decision to form the Gulf Cooperation Council was taken, was called in the background of this threat only.

Avoiding to indulge into a direct confrontation with Iran, the foreign ministers decided to evolve the GCC not as a regional security grouping, as opined by the Omani representative. Rather, the Kuwaiti version of the 1980 Saudi plan for the military cooperation was adopted. This meant to establish the GCC as a platform for providing financial help to Iraq and cooperating on internal security among themselves. Thus a shape officially neutral, indirectly pro-Iraq and non-confrontationist with Iran the GCC took at the time of its birth. This testifies that it was a logical corollary of the Iran-Iraq war.

Some experts on the subject matter say that the Iran-Iraq war was a catalyst in the formation of the GCC in an altogether different sense; that it was the first-ever opportunity to Arab Gulf states to put Iran and Iraq "out of play as partners to any joint Gulf enterprise"(24). True to a large extent, but an exaggeration of this viewpoint tends to downplay the importance of security threats emanating from the war in the formation of the GCC. For, had the war not impinged upon the territorial security and internal stability of the Arab nations these countries would have not come to form this organization merely on the ground that they had a chance to isolate both Iran and Iraq. Also, the aforementioned logic suggests that as if Iran and Iraq were the only obstacles in the Formation of a regional grouping. Had this been so, the Arab monarchies would have established a GCC like organization long before. But, when one looks back at the efforts towards regional cooperation in the 70s, two distinct trends belie this. First, the setting up of an exclusive regional organization remained elusive most importantly because of the unwillingness on the part of, and division of opinion over the nature and scope of the cooperation among, the conservative Arab states. Second, few of the pre-GCC efforts at cooperation included Iraq and excluded a few conservative states which now enjoy member-state status in the GCC.

Non-inclusion of Iraq in the GCC despite the latter's solidarity with the former in its war against Iran has led some analysts to wrongly conclude that the 'Iraqi threat' also loomed large in the minds of the Gulf rulers during the negotiations to set up a regional organization. They go on arguing that experiences with Iraq in the past, its territorial designs in the Persian Gulf and existing ideological antagonism between them was too much to be overlooked in the favor of recently-established and largely untested re-alignment. These analysts, however, fail to envision the indispensability of the Iraq-Arab Gulf re-approachement. The Iranian threat was imminent and grave to such an extent that they could not afford to feel mutually threatened.
Right from 1978, when Egypt signed Camp David Accord, there had begun a full-scale realignment between Iraq and Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia. In subsequent Baghdad conferences, called to reject the accords and admonish Egypt, they discovered areas of common interests and were led in close cooperation to build up a strong anti-Sadaat power bloc. After Imam Khomeini came to power and he threatened to export his revolution across the border the two decided to work closely to contain Khomeini's Islamic revolution.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan did not mar the improvement of ties between Iraq and its Persian Gulf neighbors. Iraq decided to downplay the event and Saudi Arabia worked hard to align Saddam in condemning Soviet invasion. This policy met an exemplary success. Saudi Arabia managed to secure Iraqi participation in OIC's foreign ministers' meeting on January 27 called to condemn the Soviet invasion. The conference adopted Iraqi resolution which alongside the USSR flayed the US and western powers for tampering with Afghanistan's situation. This newly found love was extended to an extent of the Gulf countries gave prior approval to Saddam's decision to attack Iran. Thus by the time of GCC's formation, Iraq had ceased to exist as a threat at least for the near future. What would have indeed persuaded the Gulf rulers to refrain from including in the GCC Iraq was the fear of Iraq's inevitable domination of the GCC given its military and economic supremacy.

**ABSENCE OF REGIONAL TENSION:**

It would be too simplistic to attribute the formation of the GCC only to political developments from 1978 to 1981 in the Persian Gulf region. The limited contribution of the decade-long, though low-key, tradition of regional cooperation should also be also recognized.

The agreements and understanding on everything from civil aviation to standardization of educational curricula: the exchange of information, the establishment of joint economic ventures, harmonization of development program so forth and so on contributed to the evolution of the GCC in the sense that the Arab countries discovered some common grounds among themselves. But more important than this, the cooperation in the 70s helped smaller states remove distrust towards richer and bigger states, like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia respectively, reduced to a considerable extent, enabling both the sides to overlook the dichotomy of wealth and size and join the GCC (25).

Though it was primarily an outcome of the growing threats to their external and internal stability, the GCC was not merely a security grouping. In order to stay away from the Iran-Iraq war, so as not to provide Iran an excuse to launch an attack, the member-states projected the GCC more as an economic union than a military bloc. The agreement on economic cooperation had drawn substance from, if it was not an outgrowth of, the pre-GCC economic cooperation.

It is not entirely true that the common threat in the form of Israel, Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iranian revolution and then the Iran-Iraq war led the regional states to subside intra-regional disputes and apprehensions for the cause of the much-needed solidarity. As a
matter of fact, during the 1976-1981 the Gulf states had achieved a measure of regional stability in isolation to these developments. Most significantly, Saudi Arabia had at least abandoned its territorial ambitions against the smaller Gulf states and had resolved by then most of its territorial disputes. The boundary disputes among other states existed as ever but these did not endanger regional stability because none of these states were capable of settling them through military means and were unwilling to reach at political solution to them for the fear of the possibility of conceding them or a portion of them to the other states and invite in return the ire of their people.

THE OIL FACTOR:

GCC's formation was also induced by the world energy balance and the resultant division along the line of surplus oil producers and deficit oil producing countries. The declining oil demands, the reducing share of the oil-rich states of the Persian Gulf in world's total supply and sagging prices accentuated the need of developing non-oil sector of respective economies. To avoid duplication and increase cost effectiveness, the concerned oil exporting states needed to cooperate in their developmental efforts.

The decline in the global oil demand coupled with the emergence of non-OPEC oil suppliers-mainly the UK and Mexico — had reduced the OPEC's share in total global supply of oil from 70 percent to 40 percent. This phenomenon forced the deficit oil states to gain maximum mileage out of oil prices before it declined further. Whereas the surplus oil states had stake in "oil retaining the central position in the world energy balance." The latter, represented by the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, joined each other to establish a cartel within the OPEC. The decline in oil exports underscored the importance of coordinating their oil policies outside the OPEC's purview. Over and above, with OPEC having not remained a reliable forum, as it was in the past, the importance of establishing an exclusive bloc of the surplus oil producing countries also increased. And this was materialised by forming the GCC.

SECURITY COORDINATION

THE EVOLUTION:

The evolution of security coordination among the GCC countries took place between May 1981 and May 1983. During this period the Chiefs of Staff of the member states met, under the chairmanship of Brig Yusuf Al-Madani, four times. In the first meeting on September 21, 1981 only organizational matters were covered. Coordination of defense efforts was the main agenda of the summit conference in November 1981. However, till then the GCC-states were reluctant to discuss it elaborately to pacify Iranian concerns.

But the aborted coup in Bahrain in December the same year, which was allegedly supported by Iran, prompted the need of entering into some kind of defense agreements in the January 1982 meeting of the defense ministers. On March 15, 1982 the chiefs of Military Staff had their second meeting in Saudi capital, Riyadh. In this meeting a decision to set up a
joint military force was taken. It was also decided to invest $1.8 billion in military purchases for Oman and Bahrain, and to acquire advanced aircrafts from Washington(31).

In November 1982, the defense ministers met for the second time. By this time Iran had started launching counter offensives against Iraq. In the light of this development the necessity and urgency of articulating a common defense policy increased. Iran was described as a common and primary threat and it was underlined that the projection of combined military strength was essential to deter hostile forces and to tackle them in the eventuality of a war.

At the third GCC summit, which was held in Bahrain in Nov. 1982, the heads of the state failed to reach at an agreement on a Common Defence Pact as recommended by the defense ministers. However, they issued a communiqué, in which they resolved to coordinate their defense policies. These countries avoided adopting the defense pact due to the Iranian opposition, conveyed to the UAE’s president Sheikh Ziyad in response to his offer to mediate between Iran and Iraq. The Iran categorically told that it would not brook any security arrangement in the Gulf which excluded it(32).

In the fourth Summit the heads of the member-states concentrated on evolving a cohesive system of communication techniques unison. Other issues which figured in the summit included the formation of Joint Military Academy and compulsory military training (33).

The undercurrents of the GCC security policies as evolved during the above-mentioned and subsequent meetings were:
1) Preservation of sovereignty and independence.
2) Enhancement of naval and air defense systems.
3) Security of oil facilities, from external, particularly Iranian, attack.
4) Defense against amphibious armored raids
5) Maintenance of internal security; and
6) development of capability to support the over-the-horizon reinforcement by the United states(34).

EXTERNAL THREATS TO THE GCC:
The GCC is threatened by a host of external threats, regional as well as extra-regional. Of the extra-regional threats the one emanating from a possible East-West confrontation has finally receded with the disintegration of the Soviet Union. But their eruption in, at least, early 80s was not entirely ruled out by the Gulf Arabs as in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the US threatened to use force, if necessary, if the Soviet Union moved further south onto the Arab Gulf region to hinder the supply of oil to it and its western allies. However, how far the specter of East-West confrontation contributed to the evolution of the GCC security is any body’s guess. For they would have realized that even in case of pooling all resources under joint command, the East-West confrontation could neither be prevented, nor controlled nor deterred. In such a scenario, the Gulf Arabs would have ended up taking US side or at best could mobilize diplomatic means to forestall the confrontation.
Next to the Soviet Union, the US itself constituted the most potential threat to the Gulf Arabs. The long-cherished strategic, economic and political relationship between them is, in fact, vulnerable to a single issue i.e. disruption of oil supply to the West. Of many options in the US scheme of things to meet such an eventuality, one is a forcible take over of the oil installations, either by the US alone or under a collective security action involving, beside the Western allies, Israel also.

To the West of the region, the potential threat was Ethiopia and South Yemen, the latter a close ally of the Soviet Union and a constant source of abetting internal dissension in Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Yet, PDRY could not be counted among potential threats to the external security of the GCC whose strategic targets were out of the reach of the PDRY’s air power.

The threat from north is represented by Israel. Its airpower interdiction capability covers all the strategic-economic targets of the Gulf, a proof of which was provided when Israeli aircraft flew over Saudi airspace during its raid on an Iraqi nuclear reactor in 1982. However, the GCC-countries have by intimidating the US of the use of oil-weapon in an eventuality of Israeli attack, neutralized the Israeli-threat. The ability to compel the US and its allies, West European countries and Japan as well, to harden their attitude towards Israel, as it happened during the 1973 war because of oil embargo, has strengthened their faith in the oil diplomacy as a means of restraining Israel. Beside this, by extending their support to the recently concluded accord between Israel and the PLO, these countries seem to have embarked on a policy of peaceful co-existence with Israel.

The threats to the GCC states, thus, comes from the east, Iran and Iraq. Both the countries are and have been militarily the most powerful regional states and pose radical threats of different variety to the conservative monarchies. Beside, Iraq and some GCC countries are entangled in boundary disputes. This is why at the expense of the exclusion of Iran and Iraq, a Gulf security arrangement is unlikely to succeed, unless the responsibility for the same is taken by the US. The strategic location of the region falls within the striking capability of these countries. Iraq has, moreover, made overland attacks against Kuwait and just refrained from doing the same against Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf crisis. Coming close to trounce Iraq, Iran in the 80s threatened to become an overland threat to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia (35). Iraq, is now no more a shield of the peninsula against the Iranian or any other threat from the east*. To Gulf Arabs, Iraq, given its historical territorial disputes with some GCC states and Saddam Hussein’s penchant for war, is in many ways a greater and perpetual threat.

**COOPERATION ON EXTERNAL SECURITY:**

The security cooperation among the GCC countries eludes an intensive and well-integrated multilateral arrangement. In fact, there has been a sort of unwillingness on the part of the member-states to evolve such an arrangement. Suspicious of the regional security system’s practicability and success, the smaller states do not want to invite the ire of their stronger and bigger neighbours, like Iran or Iraq, for the sake of a token presence in the name of regional security. As a part of the over all hostile security system, these smaller states can be
taken at par with the ‘latent enemies’ by the adversary power. Moreover, given their relatively weaker military position only these smaller states would be singled out for revenge by an adversary. An attempt by Iran to escalate its war with Iraq in the 80s would exposed the UAE, Qatar and Bahrain to an intensive air and naval attack due to their closer proximity with Iran than, say, Saudi Arabia. That is why the multilateral security setup, which was envisaged as early as in 1981, could come into effect by 1986. In addition, for their national security against a formidable enemy like Iran the smaller states preferred to bank on a major global power, like the US. Both the bigger and the smaller members of the GCC have not put to practice their high-profile security doctrine based on centralized military structure, common armed forces, weapons standardization, unified training system and common arms procurement.

Their different weapon systems, particularly in case of aircrafts, hindered the evolution of C-3 system. For instance, the French aircraft Kuwait possesses are incompatible to the American C-3 system. The Saudi AWACS are relevant more to the security structure of Qatar and Bahrain and less in the case of Oman or the UAE. These aircrafts do not cover the entire airspace of Saudi Arabia and a majority of the GCC countries. Obviously, then, the non-beneficial states are less inclined to integrate their national security to the AWACS-based regional security.

The common defense forces proposal incurred the contribution of a large chunk of their armed forces by the smaller states, which would have weakened their national defense, particularly against an internal threat.

The unified training system proposal (36) was eventually left aside as this was bound to amount to the abandoning of security contracts with the West, which is engaged in military training through its personnel in each country separately. Under this system the training to the requirements of the national defense system would have also suffered.

The idea of weapons standardization could not realize as it required dependence on a single and common source of supply. On the other hand, the weapons procurement policy of the each state in the region is directly linked with the interests pertaining to bilateral relations with the supplier, which, in turn, makes the replacing of more than one supplier with a single or a new one, or a group of suppliers with the other group, far difficult.

The common security system as it stands today is confined to a theoretical premise that attack on one member state would be regarded as an attack against all. This has served the purpose of political cohesiveness more than that of the security. This is why they exhibited political solidarity against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait very quickly but failed to militarily retaliate with equal swiftness. They showed up with only symbolic presence during the collective security operation against Iraq. This testifies their unwillingness to use force against an enemy, to deter or tackle a regional enemy through collective military actions.

The GCC is not like the NATO. The cooperation in enhancing the national defense of each country separately has turned to be one of the major objectives of the GCC. Oman and Bahrain have been financed by the rest of the GCC states in improving their military strength (37). On this basis, a few analysts advance the argument that the member states’ pre-occupation with the national defense is not an outcome of a disillusionment with the regional security rationale. That is why the frantic individual-level attempt to increase the defense prowess has not given birth to arms race, mutual suspicion and antagonism as it generally turns out to be. Not only this, but also under the GCC’s aegis counties like Bahrain and Oman have been funded in their defense enhancement programs (38).

Thus, in reality, what has emerged over the years and in the failures and successes of
numerous experiments with a common security is a symbolic regional security system. An example of which is the conducting of joint military exercises, code-named "Peninsula Shield", each year (39) and the creation of Riyadh based C-3 system. These are neither apt to, nor are intend to be so, to deter a threat although most of these exercises were held during the Iran-Iraq War. They are aimed at giving a demonstration of convergence of security interests, commonality of threats and a slight spanking to the enemy that if it tries to muddle with one of the GCC constituents, it may have to confront all of them.

COOPERATION ON INTERNAL SECURITY:

Internal security threats to the GCC come mainly from the minority tribal groups (40), the minority religious sects, mainly Shias scattered in all the GCC countries in significant numbers (ranging from 75 percent in Bahrain to 7 percent in Saudi Arabia), expatriate workers (41), and various social, Islamic and professional groups who include Beduins, Urban populace, technocrats, enterpreanures, armed forces and educated elites.

The forms of the threats range from protests, riots, terrorist attacks - which are carried out by tribals Shias and Islamic activists - covert grievances of the expatriates against the host country and political dissent from the professional groups.

As regards the threats from the local populace, expatriates and professional groups, the regional regimes have handled these on individual level through adopting various positive measures, which include political concessions, such as formation of representative bodies at local and national levels, facilitating greater participation in public affairs to professional groups, invoking Arab traditions of kinship and tribalism, and giving Islamic credence to their rule to preclude any demand for political change and modernization, channalising the oil wealth down to the lowest strata of people, though not necessarily on equitable basis, and providing a welfare state facilities.

At regional level, only the acts of militancy by the Islamic fundamentalists, tribal and sectarian minority groups and expatriate workers matter. To meet threats from these groups, the GCC countries have evolved an Internal Security Arrangement' (ISA) which includes exchange of data, surveillance information (currently stored in a data bank in Saudi Arabia) on the activities of political opponents. There is also a political understanding among the member-states not to extend any form of support to rebel elements. The ISA is a lose and vague regional mechanism being restricted to only exchange of data and other information and having been negotiated only bilaterally with each other. The pledge to refrain from assisting rebels is not a legally binding regional agreement. Rather, it has evolved and is strictly adhered to because any such activities in a particular are apprehended of having cross border repercussions.

In fact, any attempt to give regional dimension to ISA has met with failure. Saudi Arabia also mooted this idea in 1980. But, it could not materialize due to Kuwait's opposition to exceptional and extra-territorial powers it tended to give to Saudi Arabia, particularly the right to make cross border hot pursuits (42).
GCC's SECURITY SYSTEM AND THE US:

The GCC's security system is intricately linked with the United States policy to preserve the status quo in the region, to retain its clout on and credibility with the peninsular states and to use its military might to protect its interests in the region. That the GCC was an outcome of the regional states' resolve to marginalise their dependence on the US on security issues lest it become counter-productive by instigating an Iran-like situation, is an hastily conceived proposition. Indeed, the prevention of the eruption of an Iran-like revolution was one of the main objectives behind the formation of the GCC, but not at the expense of exclusion of the US from the regional security. The GCC's inception was actually to avoid an overt and direct security links with the US. In other spheres, such as arms supply, the "Over-the-Horizon" security of the region, particularly from the Soviet Union and the formidable regional enemies, like Iran, the GCC has exclusively relied on the US.

This is why the GCC welcomed the Carter Doctrine and the creation of the RapidDeployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF), which was later expanded into US Central Command (USCENTCOM)—"the most visible military step taken by the united states (in the region) since the signing of the Bhagdad pact in 1955"(43).

The US was offered base facilities in Oman and reportedly in Bahrain. The rest of the GCC countries did not press Oman and Bahrain hard to abandon their security ties with a foreign power. Kuwait directly approached the US, instead of trying to activate regional security mechanism, to protect its tankers from Iranian attacks in 1987. This move too was not opposed by other members of the GCC.

American arms are central to the regional security system and essential to achieve the task of weapon standardization, an important feature of the common security. Needless to mention, that the most effective symbol of the GCC's common security have been AWACS which cover a large portion of the combined strategic airspace and establish the C-3 system.

The GCC's invitation to the US forces on its soil during the Persian Gulf crisis creates an impression that seeking of direct help from the US would have always been on the cards earlier too had a similar situation arisen. The ease and urgency with which American help was sought to eject Iraq out of Kuwait is a more interesting case of the GCC's total reliance on the US. On August 9, 1990, that is barely a week after Iraqi attack, Saudi Arabia officially invited American forces. According to some reports, the US forces had begun arriving in Saudi Arabia even two days before this(44). Soon the other GCC members followed the suit. On August 19, the UAE became the second state to permit the Arab and "friendly" states to deploy their forces and to utilize other military facilities. So did Qatar on August 27. While Oman and Bahrain, wherein the multinational forces were not deployed, allowed the allied forces to use their military facilities(45).

CONSTRAINTS OF THE GCC SECURITY SYSTEM

A) THE PENINSULA SHIELD:
Joint land exercises by the member states of the GCC in 1983 in the UAE gave birth to the GCC Rapid Deployment Force. This was later code named as "Peninsula Shield" after much debate and differences over its name and mission. At present the force is stationed at King Khalid Military City (at Hafar-al-Batin near the Saudi-Kuwait Border) in Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Forces constitute the major part of this force followed by Kuwait. While the presence of armed contingent from other member-countries is mainly token.

The idea of having a common land force to repel any outside land aggression struck the Gulf leaders after the attempted Coup in Bahrain in December 1981. But it could not take practical shape due to the differences over its nature, mission and composition. The main objection was to the Saudi idea of dividing it into two nuclei—one at north-eastern border and the other at south-eastern border as they did not want to be engaged on the front (Saudi's southern eastern border) which lies much beyond their territories.

Even after inception the GCC-RDF has been marked for unenthusiastic participation by the member states. The UAE and Oman have had reservations about the idea of its expansion and the strengthening of its capabilities. For they feared that it would send a wrong signal to Iran, a preemptive air and land strike from whom the two countries could not repel.

The common land force does not even make up half of the strength of the land forces of the regional adversaries, Iran and Iraq. For instance, during the Iran-Iraq war, Iran could thrust into GCC territories a troop in tens of thousands in an attack from Southern Iraq which its force were then occupying. In such a scenario, the Persian Gulf region could not raise the required number of armed contingents even with the help of Egypt and Jordan. Both Egypt and Jordan have some difficulties fielding a force of a large size to such a distance from home. The limited numerical strength of the land forces of each country runs against the idea of contributing a large chunk of their armed forces to the Peninsula Shield so that the latter can look formidable. The matter is further complicated by the fact that about one-sixth of each armed force is made up of the foreign personnel, who might not like being the part of the common armed force which is weaker than that of the adversaries.

Also huge presence of foreigners in a joint task poses the problem of dependability. While, entrusting the task to protect the national security on foreigners and diverting the indigenous personnel to common land force poses the same problem. In fact, the only factor that neutralizes the inefficiency of the Peninsula Shield is the geographic advantage the Gulf countries have vis-a-vis a land aggression from the countries on the other side of the Persian Gulf. Sustained overland attacks from Iran or Iraq can be channeled only along the narrow access at the northern edges of the peninsula.

Beside this geographic equalizer, the Peninsula Shield is no match to armies of the hostile powers. At best, they are good in giving the armed forces common experience in interoperability and to develop a sense of cohesion among them. The Peninsula Shield looks to be a deterrent in so far as it demonstrate a political will of the countries who constituted it to jointly confront an outside threat.
B) JOINT AIR DEFENSE SYSTEM:

The idea of joint air defense system was mooted in November 1981. It could materialize in the last quarter of 1986 when in GCC summit conference in November the member-states agreed to establish the joint air force. The air defense system centers around the Airborne Warning a Control System aircrafts, stationed on the eastern coast of Saudi Arabia, and the land based anti-aircraft and marine missile network.

Yet, the AWAC aircrafts cover the entire air space of Saudi Arabia and that of others' partially only. The development of C-3I (control Command, Communication and Intelligence), which is understood to have been the rationale behind the integrated air defense system under AWACS, has been obstructed by the acquisition of different aircrafts (predominantly French in three states, American in two and British in one) by the regional countries. This militates against the inter-operability of the air forces. Particularly, the acquisition of French system by Kuwait is incompatible with that of the American system which Saudi Arabia possesses.

Even the AWACS-borne system does not give the regional countries air-superiority over Iran or Iraq. Here, geography puts the Arab Gulf countries in a disadvantageous position even if their air-defense system is relatively stronger than their naval and land defense systems. Situated along the western periphery of Persian Gulf the key strategic locations of the Arab countries fall well within the reach of Iranian and Iraqi warplanes.

Though highly sophisticated on paper, in practice the air defense system has not been worthy of it. Israeli aircrafts flew undetected and unchallenged across the Arabian Peninsula to destroy Iraqi Nuclear reactor at Osirak in 1982. Similarly, in 1983 a dissident Iranian pilot landed his Phantom Jet at Dhahran Airport without early detection.

The operation of AWACS in an armed conflict is subject to willingness of the country of its origin to cooperate. Although local air crews can fly these aircrafts, their operation requires a maintenance team, comprising technical personnel, of 450 men from the aircraft makers and technical assistance from a contingent of 21 uniformed men from the US air Force. Therefore, in an unexpected situation of termination of US-GCC security ties or the US tilt towards power against whom the GCC can use AWACS or domestic pressure on US administration to keep away from getting involved in regional dispute, the GCC countries would not be able to use the AWACS. Such a situation the GCC states would indeed face in a war against Israel.

C) WEAPON CONSTRAINTS:

For a number of times the GCC countries have principally agreed to standardize their weapon system, embark on a unified training and to procure arms from single or a particular set of sources. Yet, owing to strong unilateral approach to arms procurement, what exists in the region is a disintegrated weapon system which further reduces the scope of weapon standardization and restricts inter-operability of combined forces.

As early as at a ministerial meeting in January 1982 the idea of coordinated arms procurement policy was floated. But, Saudi Arabia expressed its reservations, pointing out that
this would make all the regional countries dependent on a single source of supply. This could also integrate the Gulf security to that of an external power in an explicit manner exacerbating internal dissension, accentuating the external power's dominance.

The diversification in GCC countries' arms procurements is seen most exposed in the field of fighter aircraft despite the fact that these countries are integrated under a common air defense system. In 1984, at least four countries—Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain—decided to make F-16 as their common aircraft. But this plan could not materialize due to restrictions imposed by the US fighter export policy. Then it seemed that the regional countries would opt European Tornado or French Mirage 2000. However, finally, Saudi Arabia and Oman favored Tornado, Bahrain went for F-14, the UAE placed orders for 38 Mirage 2000 and Qatar and Kuwait chose Mirage F-1s.

As regards the unified training system, it is hampered by training to armed forces by foreign experts from one country in one member-state to the another country in another member-state (There are about 20,000 foreign military personnel training some 200,000 indigenous armed forces in all six states). Obviously, as says Kechichian Joseph A. "since the background of these advisors is diverse their training reflects a definite 'cachet' which will accentuate different approaches" (54). Besides, the placing of the unified training in the hands of foreign experts itself counters the building up of an independent combined armed forces, the very objective of the unified training.

Common arms production policy seems an ideal far from the reality. In the 70s the Arab monarchies had embarked on an ambitious indigenous arms production program with cooperation from Egypt. But it met with an immature death after Egypt signed peace treaty with Israel in 1978 as it led to severance of its diplomatic ties with Arab countries. The GCC countries have since then moved to Pakistan which is in no way a suitable alternative. Even, the development of an industrial base in the GCC countries for arms production is still in its infancy (55). The slow progress on this front casts doubts on the sincerity of these countries to achieve their stated goal. In addition, the arms production is in no way going to reduce the dependence on the foreign supplier. For the weapons the GCC countries would be able to produce would in all likelihood be far inferior in technology and other aspects to those of the West which they really need, aspire for and are capable of buying.

THE VULNERABILITY OF THE GCC's SECURITY SYSTEM:

On the one hand, the evolution of the GCC's security system has not been adequate, while, on the other, its fragility has been further exposed by the presence of militarily stronger powers — Iran and Iraq — in the region. They are confronted with the possibilities of naval, air and land attacks, closure of the Strait of Hormuz, and political subversion backed by the two countries. To thwart these dangers the GCC countries have a combined strength of 100,000 insufficiently trained personnel against about 600,000 men in Iran and Iraq each (56). This makes them to rely exclusively on the US each time these threats become 'real'.

If Iran refrained from blocking the Strait of Hormuz or declaring a full-fledged war against the GCC-countries, it was because it visualized a direct confrontation with the US in
such a scenario. On their own, the GCC overlooked numerous short of war military intrusions by the

Iranian air force during its war with Iraq. Iranian aircrafts attacked Kuwaiti towns of Al-Abdali at Iraqi-Kuwait borders twice in November 1980. It damaged a Kuwaiti oil facility center in October 1981. In February 1986, Iranian troops penetrated as far as the Khwar Abdullah channel. Iranian silkworm missiles were launched against Kuwait in September 1987 and since spring 1984 Iranian aircrafts regularly retaliated the Iraqi attacks of Khrag Island by hitting merchant vessels bound for Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. But on each occasion, the GCC decided not to respond. Only Saudi Arabia once gunned down one F-4 Phantom of the Iranian air force on June 5, 1984. Combined strategy against Iran was limited to Saudi Arabia providing Kuwaiti air defenses along with the intelligence information gathered by the AWACS, despatching the GCC-RDF from Hafr-al-Batin to Kuwait on March 3, 1986 after Iran’s successful offensive on Faw Peninsula, and logistic support extended to US for reflagging the Kuwaiti tankers in 1987.

The Kuwaiti decision to seek the Soviet as well as the US help in reflagging its ships was a kind of recognition among the GCC member-states that even a combined GCC effort to accomplish the same would have been inadequate. On this occasion the GCC played the role of second-fiddle to Saudi Arabia by agreeing to enlarge Saudi AWACS surveillance to the south in order to cover the entire route of the escorted convoys, provide basic facilities (medical service, water and fuel), extend landing rights in case of emergency to the US forces and help the US in the mine-sweeping operations in the GCC’s territorial waters.

The varying perceptions of a regional threat and their military capability make these states to give combined strategy a low priority. Saudi Arabia is relatively less threatened because of its large size, and possession of a sizable fleet of modern F-15 fighters supported by AWACS radar aircrafts. This makes it more enthusiastic about the formation of a strong security system under its dominance(57).

But the countries, such as Kuwait and the UAE (58) —more exposed to threats from across the Persian Gulf— do not subscribe to a high-profile common defense system on the pretext that this would provoke the adversaries. Any alliance with Saudi Arabia, the governments of these countries think, would associate them to threats targeted otherwise, against Saudi Arabia only. The UAE is far away to be covered by AWACS based Saudi air defense system and lacks early warning or tactical air capability to repel an attack by Iran or Iraq(59). This underlines its unwillingness to involve the GCC in its row over Abu Musa and Tunbs Islands with Iran in the past as well as recently. A UAE Gulf Official told the press on April 15, 1992 that his country did not want to regionalise the issue adding “the UAE has told other Gulf states that it is a very serious situation but no one will take action unless it is requested by the UAE”(60). Qatar and Bahrain are in the same category and Oman, despite or because of being tied to the US in close strategic cooperation, has not very actively contributed to the making of the Gulf security system.

Notwithstanding that the Omani armed forces are one of the most professional and battle
experienced ones in the Persian Gulf region, they are, however, too small in numerical strength and under-equipped to tackle a threat from Iran or Iraq. Manpower shortages, coupled with lack of funds for defense expenditure, impose limitations on any Omani effort to increase its defense build up. Its involvement in military action against the afore-mentioned countries is bound to blockade the Strait of Hormuz, while the Omani naval forces, too, are capable of carrying out only 'run and hit' attacks, using speedboats. Even in case of laying mines or clearing mines, Oman would have to call for outside assistance (61).

All these factors have turned the GCC security system docile and meek as borne out by its remaining quiet on several occasions, a few of them pertaining to Iranian incursions having already been mentioned above. When the Persian Gulf Crisis got ensued their response initially lacked collectivism with only Saudi Arabia and Kuwait adopting strong postures and the rest of them favoring a peaceful solution. Their collectivism got restored only when the US forces landed on Saudi soil, giving them the confidence that any Iraqi attack against them could now be repelled. They did not even once harped on the idea of tackling the situation on their own and their participation in the war that followed was symbolic, eclipsed by even Egyptian and Syrian participation not to mention that of the US and its European allies.

**ECONOMIC COOPERATION WITHIN THE GCC**

On economic issues the Arab countries, sans Yemen, of the Persian Gulf bear more commonality than any other issue of common concern. The economic cooperation has gradually taken a back seat in favour of a more pressing issue— the security—, it preceded the inception of the GCC and the limited success on this front implicitly or explicitly encouraged the formation of this organisation.

The identical weaknesses—shortage of human resources, lack of industrial base, problems relating to assets in the foreign countries, uneven social and economic development— and the identical strengths—possession of nearly two thirds of the world's proven oil reserves and being major actors in world trade and international finance—of the GCC countries underlined the importance of coordination and integration of economic policies. A blueprint of economic cooperation titled "Unified Economic Agreement" was signed on June 8, 1981.

It called for;

- freedom for travel for the nationals of each member state,
- freedom of commerce between member states,
- the construction of common economic infrastructure,
- elimination of custom duties between the GCC states provided the goods satisfy a criterion of a minimum local value added content (set at four percent but open to go up as high as 20 percent),
- coordination of import and export policies and regulation,
- creation of collective negotiating force to strengthen the GCC's position vis-a-vis foreign suppliers,
- free movement of labour and capital,
-coordination of oil prices,
-coordination of industrial activities and standardization of industrial law,
-coordination of policies for technology, training and labour,
-collectiove approach to air transportation policies, and
-establishemtn of a unified investement strategy and coordination of financial monetry and banking policies including possible adoption of common currency.

Some other measures agreed upon by the GCC states in following agreements include;
-creation of communication network between all Gulf states,
-effective manpower utilisation,
-establishemnt og gulf infromation bank,
-exchange of expertise in all fields,
-unified media strategy,
-attraction of foreign investment, and
-establishement of a special fund for the the Gulf security(62).

A number of provisions was put into practice since 1982. The Gulf Investment Cooperation was established. It earmarked $2.1 b for economic development and industrialisation in the area and to facilitate joint economic projects in agriculture, commerce, minnig and general investment. The Gulf Standards Organisation was formed, which set a uniform standard of weights and measeures for the community. The GCC countries agreed to help Oman expand its marketing capabilities by building an industrial park in Oman. An agreement was reached to this effect with the member states decideing to promote among themselves the use of products from the GCC's basic industries so as to stimulate the local demand. Demonstrating this the member-states decided to to set up a tyre factory im Oman to fulfil each one's needs. In a meeting of finance ministers in March 1982, the GCC decided not to abolish the tariff totally by imposing a custom duty of four percent(63).

In 1983, the GCC embarked on a study to explore the possibilty of constructing a distribution supply netwrok for liquified natural gas to support its electricity production, desalination plants and basic industries. On Nov. 9, 1983, i.e.at the conclusion of the Doha Summit, it was agreed that Gulf citizens would be allowed to practise pharmacy, work in hotel and resteurants and trade in all six states.

By early 1984, the GCC brought out a list describing each member state's accomplish-ments in implemeting Economic Agreement provisions. For Instance, the UAE was credited with having lifted duties on agricultural and farm products originating in other member-states, accepted the transit regulation of the GCC, allowed the GCC citizens to practise medicine, law, accounting and engineering. Bahrain was reported having allowed the GCC citizens to invest in the country and permitted the practiseing of law and medicine by the GCC countries nationals.
not indicate that the GCC countries in the near or distant future would be able to meet the target. The diversification activities are beset with lack of physical and human resources, institutional bottlenecks, overcharging by foreign suppliers or contractors and expansionary domestic, monetary and fiscal policies.

The industrial development can, of course, that too in a limited way, reduce the GCC countries' imports but can not enhance exports. But, what they need is to find out an export oriented item equivalent of oil to maintain the economic growth rate under the oil economy. Says Anthony John Duke, "there is no way to avoid the fact that the expansion of non-oil sector will hinge largely on exports"(66). The member-states have not mooted any joint effort to become self-sufficient in the commodities they import heavily.

INVESTMENT:

The 'Gulf Investment Corporation' was set up in 1982 in Bahrain with the establishment of the 'Gulf Investment Fund' (GIF). It aims and objectives have been to contribute to the economic development, promote the development of financial resources, assist the diversification of the sources of income, and provide a commercially acceptable return to the share-holders among the member states(67).

It opened for business in May 1984 with a staff of three. Its treasurers are active in money market and foreign exchange. The marketing Securities division has started trading in fixed income and trading in floating rate notes. It is committed to a number of projects, involving a sum of $750 m (68).

TRADE:

The GCC's policy of trade is two-pronged i.e. promotion of intra-regional trade and representation as a group in trading with extra-regional countries and organisations. As a result, the member-states have made joint purchases of rice and other foodstuffs, imposed GCC-wide tax on several products, such as iron, steel, cement and food staples, to protect the local industries and negotiated as a single unit with multilateral institutions such as Arabsat, Amarsat, International Civil Aviation Organisation, GATT, SWIFT and other regional and international organisations, like EEC and other countries(69).

On the Intra-GCC trade front, the GCC states have moved towards duty-free trade and expansion of trade particularly in goods and services which can be acquired from amongst themselves.

The coordination of trade policies has met some successes. At least the GCC export has reached the "take off" point. More importantly, in their dialogues with the EEC and the USA—their largest trading partners—the GCC has utilised its togetherness in negotiating with the latter in favourable terms. They are noted for their joint criticism of US maintaining the position of dominant partner and it charging too high a price for supply of goods and services.

The intra-GCC trade has no doubt increased but not to the extent of diminishing their
dependence on extra-regional countries they are trading with. Constrained alike by a weak industrial base, the GCC countries can not trade in more than a few items, and can not do so at all in technology and services. Even the little trade among the member-states involves mostly the re-export of goods imported from abroad. In 1986 the GCC imported 12 percent of the total world exports. From 1975 onwards 75 percent of its requirement of goods, services and technology has been met by industrialised countries appropriating as much as $66 b in 1982 and $56 b in 1986(70). According to trade figures for 1985, the GCC imports comprised 42 percent capital goods, 34 percent industrial products and 12 percent foodstuffs. Europe provided 37 percent of the GCC's requirement, Japan 17 percent and the United States 11 percent. Add to these figures the trade with the former Communist bloc and developing countries, the volume of trade within GCC becomes negligible.

The only benefit the GCC states could gain from negotiating as a collective united force is to threaten to diversify their sources of supply. Thus they achieved a degree of independence on the matter of choice. Yet this freedom does not cover all the items the GCC imports from a particular country. Some of them can be provided by a single supplier or by a particular set of suppliers. Their exports do not seem to have carved out a niche in the world market. They are not only qualitatively inferior but include the items which are in surplus globally.

In addition, trade inflows within the countries of the GCC constitute only roughly 10 percent of the total exports from the region, even though this figure represents about 200 percent growth over the past 10 years(71). Thus more than being an independent economic unit in the world trade the GCC is integrated, in the capacity of a weaker partner, to the global economy.

STANDARDIZATION:

A breakthrough in the standardization of prices, weight and measures was made by establishing Weights and Measures Organisation. It calls for establishing a uniform system of industrial standards that would apply to the GCC member states as a whole. As far as the price standardization, the GCC countries have once, at least, demonstrated it by collectively purchasing bulk of rice in 1983. Electricity and telecommunication companies have also mitigated large gap between their prices. But these achievements are symbolic only in the sense that the prices of the two most important commodities Oil and Natural Gas have yet not been harmonized, mainly due to fluctuations in international prices of these resources.

ECONOMIC CITIZENSHIP:

In 1983 the member-states implemented article 8 of the Unified Economic Agreement provisions enjoining each state to accord one another's citizens the same rights and treatment which are granted to its own citizens. These rights include freedom of movement, work and resident right of ownership, freedom of exercising economic activities and free movement of capital in any of these states. From 1983 onwards a number of steps have been taken to broaden the sphere of article 8, including "equal treatment of any GCC citizen's investments in industry, agriculture, fisheries, natural resources, animal husbandry, contracting, hotel, restaurants, maintenance, commerce and real estate for personal use"(72). Equality is also awarded to professionals from other states, including accountants, physicians, pharmacists, engineers,
ASSETS:

This is a neglected area. They have not tried to expand the geographical base of their assets as most of them are in US and West European banks. They have also not been able to find out an alternative to transferring their surplus in foreign country despite the fact that the nominal value of the surplus has not increased in correspondence with the price increases in import bills, rather the purchasing power of these surplus has decreased owing to inflation and currency depreciations(73).

THE LIMITATIONS OF ECONOMIC COOPERATION: AN OVERVIEW:

The economic cooperation in the region is limited by many constraints which also seem unlikely to be overcome. These constraints are over-dependence on the export of crude oil, scarcity of human resources, which would become more acute with the expansion of industrial base in the region(74), scarcity of mineral resources other than the oil and hydrocarbon, lack of an indigenous technological base(75), and the slow progress of industrial development.

The GCC states exhibited a measure of cooperation only on the issues their national interests meet. The Issues on which they fail to agree are overlooked, the example being their differences over the price of oil, petrochemicals, liquefied gas, fertilizers and aluminium products.

The dependence on the West has not reduced. Consumption of goods technology and services has increased in the areas in which the GCC states have not made any stride. Moreover, the high level of consumption in the GCC region is unmatched to the limited production. The products of Gulf industries are export-oriented even though the outside market is flooded with these products. Coupled with this is the fact that inexperience in marketing industrial products militates against the member-states’ ability to make their presence felt in the international market(76). The reduction of the dependence on the West is slower than the reduction of West’s dependence on the Gulf oil.

Though both in its Charter and the Unified Economic Agreement the GCC appears to be a mirror-image of the EEC, it, however, is far behind and far inferior in every aspect to it despite ten years of its existence. The joint measures in the fields of trade, industry, investment and other aspects of economic interaction reflect economic cooperation among a few sovereign member states only in areas of common interests, while the regional integration of economies demands much more. The GCC mechanism does not have supra-national power as does the EEC, nor is it capable of practicing “protectionism”, because of having yet not reached a stage self-sufficiency as the EEC has.

The dichotomy in geographical sizes has also marred the economic integration. The smaller and less developed countries fear that they may be overwhelmed by the larger and more advanced economies like that of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. For instance, Qatar does not see
economic integration process as very beneficial as its economy lacks the base for an aggressive and sophisticated industrial development. A small country with sufficient reservoir of oil and gas, Qatar is not in need of much industrial development and, therefore, needs little or no investment of capital from its neighbors. In cost-benefit analysis dominance by neighboring powers is more dangerous to it than the slow industrial growth.

Oman also wants to go slow on integration for a different reason. Removal of tariffs and common production of some items threatens to weaken national industries. Also, Oman does not want to give up its control of such industries like fisheries, which may have a good prospect in the near future. Bahrain is, however, an exception. It has actively participated in regional economic integration and has in the process benefited from it. Most of the crude oil for its refinery comes from Saudi Arabia. Almost half of its oil-revenue comes from a field shared with the Saudis. It banking industry thrives on support from the regional financial powers — Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Its aluminum industry survives on Saudi and Kuwaiti participation in it. The island is the center for many intra-regional activities. It is the service center for the region, headquarters of the Gulf Air, and houses the Gulf University(77).

The GCC’s fiasco in economic integration lies not in the very rationale behind its formation but its slow progress. The member states need to intensify the existing level of cooperation, increase their sphere of activities in areas hitherto left uncovered, particularly those where their interests do not clash. The smaller countries, on their part, should shed perceived threat of domination. The institution can still give them a chance to participate beyond the region which they are incapable of doing by acting alone. Rationalization and coordination of industrial development can give them an opportunity to launch viable undertakings within their territories.

Given the limitations of a viable and intra-GCC cooperation, the organization can integrate its economies with the rest of the Arab states, Iran and Third World countries as a part of its strategy to lessen dependence on the West. Egypt and Syria can play an important role in providing the Arab Gulf states the manpower, both skilled and unskilled, services, goods and technology. So is true with the developing countries like India, China and those of the ASEAN. Their dependence for financial help on oil-rich GCC countries would bring about an interdependent relationship removing doubts about former's dominance(78). Also such a cooperation would help the GCC countries create a large market for the goods produced within the region (79).

COOPERATION IN OIL POLICY

Despite sharing the same goal of revenue maximization, the Arab Gulf countries sans Iraq did not coordinate their oil policies prior to 1981. However, during the course of the formation of the GCC, these countries included solidarity on oil issues as one of their political and economic objectives. Article 11 of the Unified Economic Agreement enjoins the member states “to endeavor to coordinate their policies with regard to all aspects of oil industry”(80), which includes exploration refining, marketing, industrialization, pricing, transport, utiliza-
tion of gas and development of energy sources. Here follows a detailed study of how far and to what extent the GCC countries have stuck to their commitment.

DECLINE IN WORLD OIL DEMAND AND THE GCC STRATEGY:

GCC’s formation and years that followed coincided with the sharp decline in the world oil demand, causing a massive erosion in the GCC’s share in a shrinking market. In 1980 it was providing 23.61 percent of the world oil which decreased to mere 10.34 percent in June 1985. The situation remained more or less the same throughout the 80s as not only the declining global demand of oil but the increase in Non-OPEC oil production and supply, demanded from them an uphill task to join hands to achieve stability in price (81) and increase their share in production and sales.

The GCC countries have not responded to the situation judiciously. Their approach to the crisis has shifted from contracting their production and exports to stabilize the price to acting as a swing producer to lower down the prices to cause reduction in Non-OPEC oil supplies.

For instance, Saudi Arabia reduced production to 2.4 million bpd in 1985 from 8.3 in 1978 which increased to 5.90 in July 1986 and came down to 3.70 in January 1987 (82).

Shifting of stances from one extreme to the other has cost the GCC, particularly Saudi Arabia, dearly. During the phase of expansion in production the prices have come down and the gains in terms of revenue have been disproportionate. On the other hand, acting as the swing producer they have also lost more revenue than non-Arab OPEC countries during the phase of production contraction (83). Their policy of lowering down the price, as in 1986 when by increasing the OPEC production by 4 million bpd from 16 million bpd the prices fell from around $30 to $8.75 per barrel, did increase their market share but not the revenues in the same proportion.

In fact, the GCC states are faced with a dilemma. They do not stand to extract much income from maintaining a constant output and allowing the prices to rise. Even to rise the world price in an era of declining oil demand by 10 percent would require a massive cut back by Saudi Arabia and others. Such a drastic cutback would cause a marked downfall in earnings due to the shrinking their share in the world oil market. It is said that even if Saudi Arabia reduces its production to zero level the price would not jump by even 50 percent.

COOPERATION BUT FLAWED:

The problem, therefore, lies in the inconsistent policies and in the lack of cooperation. Saudi Arabia has alone determined both the policy of increasing the production and contracting it. Others have extended their support to it. Statistics show that Kuwait, Qatar and UAE’s oil productions and exports have come down and increased with those of Saudi Arabia. The differences over the excess production by Saudi Arabia has, of course, been resented by other GCC states, but ultimately these states have given in and followed the Saudi example (84).

COOPERATION WITHIN OPEC:

Their cooperation within OPEC has been an undeniable factor. Possessing the largest and more-lasting reserves, sharing about 44 percent of OPEC’s total production and given their
low absorptive capacity in comparison to other OPEC member countries, the GCC carries the most important weight within the OPEC. Their combined strength has enabled them to act as cartel within the OPEC. They, in many respects, have played this role both in and against the interests of other OPEC members. Saudi Arabia has always counted on the support of Kuwait, the UAE and Bahrain in trying to act as swing producer within the OPEC.

The GCC-states have held meetings prior to each OPEC summit to work as a unit on the issues to come up. They worked against Iran and Iraq’s attempts to get their quota increased by the OPEC during the war. After the war when the erstwhile belligerent supported price-increase and cutback in production, the GCC, on the contrary, showed reluctance, compromising finally on $21 pb than $25 advocated by Iraq and Iran in the OPEC Summit immediately before the outbreak of the Persian Gulf crisis.

They have acted as a “conservative force” inside the OPEC (85) concerned with “health of the western economies” more than the well-being of the OPEC. This is reflected in their policy of awashing the West with oil, even when it ran contrary to the objectives of other OPEC members. The GCC’s economic policy in non-oil sector has compelled the member-states to adopt a pro-consumer stance on oil in OPEC deliberations. Given their weak technological base they heavily rely on collaboration with the multinationals from the West for industrial development. Meanwhile, their requirements of goods and services and arms and ammunition(86) are continue to be met by the West unless they achieve the targeted industrial development, which by all optimistic account is long long away. Then it is in the Western countries wherein lies a potential market for financial investment(87). These compulsions together make them to maintain stability in world oil market so as to bargain the Western help(88).

From time to time there have appeared chinks and fissures in GCC solidarity. In the mid-80s the UAE refused to adhere to quota system. Kuwait has since the end of the Persian Gulf War demanded freedom from quota system. While Saudi Arabia, as also the other GCC states, oppose Kuwait’s request on the ground that this would lead to a slump in price, affecting the income of all oil-exporting countries including Kuwait.

Though Kuwait has refrained from expressing its grudge in an extreme manner the issue has brought Saudi Arabia on the side of Iran who opposes the Kuwaiti proposal. Thus any disarray within the GCC ranks can bring about dangerous correlation of forces. Given this possibility the GCC cooperation within and outside OPEC can not be taken for granted. The cooperation is vulnerable to ever-changing political and economic landscape of the region.

The GCC’s cooperation within OPEC has caused the near-exclusion of Oman and Bahrain as they are not the member of this organization. This has harmed the GCC in two ways. First, the GCC looks to be a cartel of “four” only and it is commonly called so too. Second, being a non OPEC member, Oman holds scant respect for OPEC’s arrangements, largely determined by the fellow GCC states. During 1980-85 when the other OPEC members of the GCC had completed their major infrastructure projects, Oman, where oil was discovered in 1970, was making a beginning towards it. It, therefore, needed added revenue and turned down the GCC states’offer to coordinate with them in their policy of reducing production and
maintained a constant rise in its production (89).

Oman could be compelled to comply with the GCC's oil policy in 1986 only, but only after the fellow states duly recognized Oman's need to maintain a high production rate. It agreed in September 1986 to cut its production by 10 percent reducing its oil production to 550,000 bpd. In 1987 Oman announced further cuts that brought the its production down to 530,000 bpd. Oman's importance to other GCC's states increased with the need of laying a pipeline which could bring the oil to Indian Ocean directly, bypassing the danger zone of Strait of Hormuz(90).

THE PERSIAN GULF WAR AND AFTER:

In 1990s, the Persian Gulf crisis set the tone of the GCC's mutual cooperation. Compensating the loss of Kiwaiti\Iraqi oil from the market and maintaining their production level high at reasonable price, the GCC states did not only assure to keep the “International oil market away from any violent fluctuations”(91) but also tried to prevent the oil-consuming states from a frantic search for alternative source of energy as they did after the 1973 crisis.

The GCC states have launched campaign at international forums that the economic embargo against Bhagdad remains in force so that neither can it resume its oil exports nor can it acquire estimated $ 10 b to rebuild its oil infrastructure(92). This way they want that the oil prices do not crash unless the period of rise in world oil demand, particularly from the Persian Gulf region, ensues. In continuation of their policy in the Persian Gulf crisis/war, the Gulf states in near future would not like to disrupt Western access to their oil so as to wean them away from resorting to non-Arab sources, development of alternative source of energy and conservation methods when the period of high demand returns.

Then capitalizing on the West's dependence on their oil, they might move to the policy of gradual reduction in oil production and increase of prices. This is why Saudi Arabia has all along been trying to subvert the Iranian campaign for reduction in OPEC's production to allow the basket price reach $ 21 pb. It seems satisfied with the current price $ 18.50 pb. It seems that when the oil market tightens, probably from the mid-1990s, they would not repeat the mistake, of early 1970s, to let the price increasing so sharply that recession follows in the oil consuming states and as a result of this demands also reduce. Interestingly, the mistake of the 1970s resulted into counter mistake by the oil consuming states as they resorted to over-production from the sources with short-span reserves in the North Sea and Alaska. So, it is expected that when the GCC would let the price increase, the oil consuming states would be left with fewer options, falling, thereby, in the GCC trap.

THE CURRENT DILEMMA:

However at present, the GCC's dilemma continues. The increased output not only brings them disproportionate revenue but the depleting nature of oil reserves also means that each barrel of oil extracted today is reducing the number of barrels to be produced in future by an equivalent amount, resulting into reduction of the aggregate national capital stock for future flow of income. Even the expected rise in their current level of exports and their share in the global supply of oil is not all that rosy. It would further accentuate the depletion, probably at
a scale faster than human and physical capital is created to replace them (93). But at the same time, the reduction in output shall cause corresponding decline in national income and would therefore retard the economic development in non-oil sector.

Similarly, the slump in oil-price has eroded the GCC countries’ assets which is being drawn to maintain current-account surpluses. But they need to do so to generate alternative source of income through foreign investment and ultimately through domestic economic base. The utility of this move is tied to how fast and to what extent does it help these countries move away from an oil based economy.

CONSTRAINTS WITH GCC’s OIL POLICY:

The GCC’s emergence as a cartel within the OPEC is counter-productive to the latter. This seems to have divided the OPEC into two groups. The one with excess capacity and the other with little or no-excess capacity. The former one, mainly consisting of the GCC counties, even if it amounts to lower prices wants to increase its output to preserve a future market for its oil. The latter group wants the price-hike. Given its limited reserves and their depletion it does not have a long-run market outlook like the GCC. Iran and Iraq also have substantial oil reserves but at present they side with the non GCC-group as the rising cost of their economies and ambitious developmental projects undertaken by them in non-oil sector force them to favor price-rise.

The coordination in oil policies among the GCC states on various issues and on various occasions has been found missing too. This is because each country has a national policy of oil production and exports which is not always in line with their declared integrated approach. For example, compulsions like the need of excess income at a given point of time has forced a few countries to sell their crude oil below the posted price so that their export may rise. As a result, the oil importing countries have lifted their needs from that very country reducing the volume of oil supplies from other countries of the region. This was the situation faced by the UAE in the mid-80s. It was unable to sell its oil as Oman supplied the similar quality of oil at a lower price (94).

The link between a GCC country’s oil policy and its national interests also block the evolution of a uniform oil policy. Saudi Arabia has linked its production-exports policy to its security. Therefore, Saudi Arabia is for a policy of providing oil to its guarantor of its security, the US, and its allies in abundance and at a lower price. And since it is the swing producer the GCC member state follow the suit willingly or unwillingly.

An ideal situation to overcome the negative effect of individualism to integration of oil policies would be that the GCC establish a combined quota (of course each member having a separate share), within the OPEC. This is the highest and the most ideal stage of common oil policy. As this would prevent an increase GCC’s output and also unilateral production increase by one or two members resulting into an over-all decrease in oil price and in turn the reduced oil income to all the member states. But Saudi Arabia might not favor this strategy as this would imply a great deal reduction in its oil output and a little or negligible cut in the outputs of the smaller states.
They also cannot prevent individualism unless the GCC campaigns for Oman's inclusion in the OPEC. After this Oman can be expected to harmonize its oil policy with that of the GCC and the OPEC (95)

POLITICAL COOPERATION

As a forum for political cooperation the GCC's areas of activities are mainly confined to hammering out consensus on regional and extra-regional issues and resolving inter-state disputes (in case such a solution is not possible the GCC tries to minimise the spillover effects of these) (96), and safeguarding their political system from internal threats.

CONSENSUS ON REGIONAL AND ARAB ISSUES:

As regards the regional issues, the Iran-Iraq war and later on the Persian Gulf Crisis have been the major events which directly or indirectly involved the GCC countries. In both the events the member-states saw to it that their policies reflected a semblance of uniformity. These states, therefore, utilized the GCC forum in dealing with such situations. Particularly, with regard to their policy on Iran-Iraq war they projected the GCC as mediator and each member avoided to offer its good offices in individual capacity.

Beside, the GCC also became an institution for channelising the member-states' financial help to Iraq. During the Iran-Iraq war, during GCC summits the member states exhibited unanimity of approach in taking an anti-Iran side, although individually each of them, in particular the smaller states, did not adopt the same overt anti-Iraniansim.

During the Persian Gulf crisis, the GCC showed a greater sense of unity after the smaller states and Saudi Arabia and the Kuwaiti government in exile overcame initial differences on the nature of their reaction to the Iraqi invasion. Unlike the Iran-Iraq War, the smaller states soon toned down their reluctance in cooperating with Saudi policy of inviting foreign forces to wage a war against Iraq on their behalf. They later on decided to take part in it also. All their major decisions and actions during the Gulf crisis were taken from the GCC platform, although these were largely decided by Saudi Arabia and the Kuwaiti government in exile.

On the Palestine issue, the member-states evolved a common policy of providing aid and assistance to PLO and the Palestinian organizations waging the Intifadeh. Following the formation of the GCC, the member-states renewed their opposition to the Camp David Accord and Egypt-Israel peace treaty of 1979. They took an additional step by vetting the Fahad Plan on the settlement of Palestine issue, which became Arab position on the Middle East peace at Fez summit (97). Before extending their support to the August 1991 PLO-Israel Autonomy Plan their stand on Palestine issue was unanimous i.e. liberation of Palestine. The GCC states acted as a unit in the United Nations on the question of Palestinians rights and coordinated on freezing deposits for the World Bank projects they saw as as hostile to the Palestinian cause (98).

COOPERATION ON CONTAINING INTERNAL THREAT AND RETAINING MO-
NARCHICAL SYSTEM

The intra-GCC cooperation to contain and repulse internal threats, coming mainly from the Shia people, tribal groups and radical Islamic movements, has been security oriented such as sharing of data and commitment to non-interference in each other’s internal affairs.

On political front, these states have not evolved any mechanism. Their identical approach to handle internal threats can roughly be described as cooperation. The GCC-states have utilized traditional peninsular institutions such as Majlis, which is made up of people’s representatives, to give people an opportunity to participate in public affairs and to remain in close contact with them. Through this strategy the ruling regimes have also aimed at minimizing the rebel elements’ influence on local populace, who (rebels) are seeking to change the political institutions and governments(99). However, the extent to which these ruling regimes have allowed people’s participation in public affairs varies. In Kuwait, for example, the representative institutions have been fairly large in composition, and vested with some legislative powers. They are further entitled to comment and criticize the government’s policies. As against this, in Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Oman the likewise development of such an institution is yet to be realized.

All these states in similar refrain reject a full-fledged democratization of their political systems. They see periodic elections, existence of political parties and consultative and national councils’ exercising legislative and executive powers as disruptive. In confining these institutions to the status of “advisory bodies’ the ruling regimes have taken recourse to Islam. They have managed to hoodwink their peoples by saying that the Quran and Sharia are their constitution and the legal basis and the justification of their rule. They proclaim that the Holy Quran and Sunnah(l00) of the prophet do not provide for democracy as it is understood in today. Islam, according to them, stands for a stable and benevolent rule based on the principle of consultation with the people. So long a ruling government carry out its functions in the interests of people it need not be changed or undergo the periodic elections etc, they maintain(101).

The ruling regimes have provided a welfare state to the people (102)and expanded the base of oil wealth down to the common people. As a result, a major chunk of population in each country consists of the middle and upper middle class people comprising business families, technocrats and bureaucrats. The monarchical governments have delegated to the above mentioned classes some of their administrative powers (103). They, in turn, have become the sympathizer of the existing rule as their economic well-being and their urge to take part in the state administration is met by the present political and economic system in the GCC region.

In fact, unlike the pre-oil era, the economically well off elites seem to have renounced their right to participate in decision-making process in favor of participating in the state’s administration. The oil gave the ruling government direct access to the state revenues which they utilized to increase their popularity among the people. Earlier revenue had to be squeezed from the people through the merchants, who, in turn, exacted a political price or reward.
The ruling regimes have also adopted the policy of distributing their powers among the ruling families by incorporating almost all the members, who run into thousands, into different sectors of the state management, particularly in the bureaucracy\(^\text{104}\). This has served to satisfy the ruling family's sense of entitlement to power, prevent the total transfer of administrative power in the hand of bureaucrats and technocrats belonging to non-ruling families who are viewed as relatively less reliable\(^\text{105}\).

However, the GCC governments have not paid due attention to the need of a concerted effort to ensure that political development in each state moves in harmony with that of the other. Political/institutional development is in different stages in each state\(^\text{106}\). The level of political liberalization in Kuwait after its liberation is far ahead of political-institutional developments in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, the UAE and Bahrain. Saudi constitution is yet to materialize. So is Omani government's promise to give people a consultative assembly. Development in Kuwait can generate similar demands among the people in other countries, which the governments of these states are yet not ready to concede. In fact, these states have expressed their resentment to Kuwait in this regard.

The internal threats have not been fully eliminated. Nor can the possibility of expansion of mass base of political opponents be ruled out. The oil wealth and the resulting welfare state with its facilities to the people has by and large integrated them to the traditional political system. But this can not be taken for granted. In Jill Crystal's words "as welfare functions become the norm and services become legitimate claims on state and rights that the individuals as citizen can claim from the state"\(^\text{107}\). These trends can transform people's notions of rights obligations towards the state and the regime. Declining state revenues resulting into shrinking of welfare rights and unemployment may become a source of instability in future.

People in these circumstances would turn to the anti-status quoists as has been witnessed in Algeria and Egypt over the past five years or so. Radical Islamic movements are gradually establishing their foothold in the GCC countries. They have questioned the Islamic credentials of the Monarchy-rule, the very basis which kept people tied to the non-democratic political system in the region. The Islamic forces are promising an alternative political system advocating that Islam makes it obligatory upon a government to seek people's mandate. Therefore, these forces maintain, people's participation in the decision-making process through democratic institutions and periodic assessment of the government is in consonance with the Holy Quran and the Sunnah.

The grudge among people against American intervention, as always, still persists as a potential source of internal instability in the region. After the Persian Gulf War, people's resentment against the American intervention has constantly been on the rise. The Gulf states, therefore, need to reconsider their strategy for tackling internal threats. Not only this, but they also must work together to see that a particular state's approach on this issue does not vary from that of the other. Otherwise, the policy of political accommodation by one state and that of heavy-handedness by the other one would give birth to a new source of Intra-GCC tension.
GCC AS PEACE BROKER

The GCC’s has taken the role of a peacemaker in some major conflicts whether among its members or between a member state or some other country, such as the Persian Gulf Crisis, South Yemen-Oman conflict. It has also tried to mediate in conflicts between the regional countries such as the Iran-Iraq War.

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR:

Though largely under the impact of this war, the GCC was conspicuous by its absence from making any mediation efforts in the first year of the war. The member-states in individual capacity made verbal requests to warring countries to stop the war and subsequently settle their disputes through negotiation. They also threw their weight behind the efforts of the Organization of Islamic Conference to bring an end to the war(108). Retiring in favor of the OIC, the member-countries, it seems, were not willing to invoke the GCC as an arbiter in the war.

The GCC’s mediation efforts in the war began from 1982, when in its annual summit that year they supported Iraq’s June 10, 1982 proposal for a cease-fire, troops withdrawal to the internationally recognized borders and a negotiated settlement of the dispute on the Shatt. They also urged Iran to cease hostilities and accept the arbitration of the OIC, the NAM or the UN.

In 1983 the member-states held a special meeting in Abu Dhabi in which they urged Iran and Iraq to stop the war as it was threatening the regional security. They also appealed to neutral countries to seek an end to the war by devising some formula acceptable to the belligerents.

That same year foreign ministers of Kuwait and the UAE visited Tehran and Baghdad to persuade the two countries to limit their war activities. A peace plan, proposed after the end of the visit, called upon the two countries not to attack merchant ships of the Persian Gulf countries passing through the Strait of Hormuz and stop attacking each other’s cities and civilian populations and targets(109).

At the Doha summit during November 7-9 1983, the GCC countries supported the United Nations Security Council Resolution 540, which was adopted the same year, asking the warring countries to stop attacking against each other, particularly towns, economic targets and ports.

In September 1984, the GCC’s foreign ministers met in Saudi Arabia. In that meeting ministers reiterated that the Council would carry forward its efforts to seek a peaceful solution to the Iran-Iraq War.

During the Kuwait Summit in November 1984 the member-states requested the belligerents to end the war in the interests of Muslim peoples of the two countries and for the sake of stability and security of the region which was becoming exposed to superpowers intervention. In May 1985, Saudi foreign minister, Prince Saud-Al-Faisal, visited Tehran to offer mediation between Iran and Iraq.
The continuation of the war for eight years does not of course point to the GCC's inability to find a peaceful solution to it. For, the belligerents were adroit in not ending it (110). They did not take a serious note of the GCC's peace proposals and, for that matter, those from the United Nations, the NAM the OIC and Algeria. Yet, this does not shroud the fact that the GCC's efforts were largely non-serious, inactive, and partisan on various occasions.

The seriousness of the GCC to bring an end to the war can be doubted on two counts. First, the GCC's role as a honest peace-broker was diluted by its consistent logistic and financial support to Iraq during the war. This gives credence to doubt that the main aim of the GCC countries to project itself as peace broker was, in fact, aimed at offsetting their support to Iraq. Second, they abstained from making any active diplomatic effort to end the war when Iraq had the upper hand in the war. This, if associated with a combination of other factors—the Gulf states' approval to Iraqi attack on Iran and their interests in the defeat of Iran which had after revolution become a major threat to the security of the region, makes one to infer that the GCC countries favored a war that could result into the defeat of Iran than the peace which would have kept Iran military intact and the Islamic government firmly seated in power.

The GCC showed active interests in peace only when Iran bounced back with its armed forces entering Iraqi territory, a few hundred miles away from Kuwait. They adopted a conciliatory approach towards Iran, their support to Iraq cooled down a bit and they came up with solutions that could have made an honorable retreat of Iranian army from Iraqi territory.

GCC foreign ministers' 30-31 May 1982 peace proposal for bilateral withdrawal of the two forces to the internationally recognized border came when Iranian forces had entered Iraqi territories. It is reported that in the month of June that year, the GCC offered $10 to $25 b as reparations to Iran if it observed cease-fire along the front. The reports were denied by the GCC sources. Rather, it was officially stated that the GCC had proposed an 'International Reconstruction and Development Fund for the two countries if they ceased hostilities. Iranian sources also confirmed that such an offer was made and they had rejected as their country needed a sum not less than $150 b and that too if it was made through Iraq (111).

The Saudi Foreign minister's visit to Tehran to offer his country's good offices for the settlement of Iran-Iraq dispute came in the wake of Iranian search of merchant ships of the Arab Gulf countries plying the Strait of Harmuz. In other words, the GCC peace efforts were more for the prevention of spreading over of the war than its end. There were certain peace proposals which were specifically limited to this end.

But as soon as the possibility of the war spreading over to the whole region subsided, the non-combatant Persian Gulf countries began getting interested that the war lingered on as it detracted the two major regional powers away from the Arabian Peninsula and also gave Saudi Arabia an opportunity to advance its bid for regional leadership (112). It is, therefore, very unlikely that their repeated calls to the belligerents to cease hostilities would have really intended what these literally meant.
As a matter of fact, the GCC did not come up with a full-fledged peace plan, which, beside urging the belligerents to end the war, would have also provided a blueprint of solution to their dispute. Thus these were limited to proposals like withdrawal of the armed forces to internationally recognized borders and negotiated settlement of the Shatt dispute only.

Lack of GCC countries' political economic and military clout on either of the belligerents made them unable to influence the attitude of Iran and Iraq towards peace(113). Iraq did not heed to their requests to refrain from attacking neutral ships in the Gulf waters.

Iran adopted an unfriendly posture towards the non combatant Persian Gulf countries strictly on ideological grounds. So it was bound to reject their peace efforts. Also, Iran's independence from these countries for economic military assistance or political support meant that nothing could compell Iran to de-ideologise its relations with the GCC countries.

**IRAQ-KUWAIT DISPUTE:**

During the period between the end of the Iran-Iraq War and the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait, the GCC countries were taken aback by raking up of the boundary and oil disputes by Iraq with them. Having spent billions of dollars on Iraqi war efforts and endured Iranian retribution for supporting Iraq, Kuwait had thought to have bought off Iraq’s territorial claims on it. The GCC, therefore, during this period, did little to settle the vexed border issues between Iraq and Kuwait in the favor of the latter by cashing in on their assistance to Iraq during the war. But amazingly, the GCC also showed recklessness when the issue blew out. Kuwait, it is understood, expressed anguish over the member states’ inability to use the GCC as an institution to persuade Iraq from raising the issue(114).

Soon after the invasion all the GCC states expressed solidarity with Kuwait but they were slow in exercising pressure on Iraq to withdraw. The first GCC statement against the Iraqi invasion was issued after 36 hours of the beginning of the crisis during a meeting of the GCC foreign ministers at the Arab League and OIC meetings. From 3rd to 7th August 1990 there was no attempt to settle the issue. This was probably because of the GCC’s decision not to settle the issue peacefully and on its own but to invite Arab and US forces to expel Iraq from Kuwait. On GCC’s efforts to resolve the crisis one can only bank on some reports carried out by Arab media during those days that the matter was being negotiated by Kuwait and Iraq and Saudi Arabia had also tried to normalize relations between Iraq and Kuwait.

However, since the tabling of the first draft resolution at the UN Security Council which was adopted as the UNSC resolution no. 660, calling upon Iraq to withdraw immediately and unconditionally from Kuwait and restore its legitimacy, it seemed that the GCC countries were not interested in seeking a negotiation with Iraq on the Issue. They took a back seat in favor of UN’s resolutions on the crisis. At the GCC summit in Doha (Qatar) during December 22-24 1990, it was unanimously resolved that the GCC would not negotiate with Iraq till it withdrew its troops from Kuwait.

The GCC later officially maintained that it would only play an indirect role in reverting
the crisis. It refused to take part in US-Iraq dialogue over Kuwait. The position it maintained then was that it would remain constantly in touch with the US and the UN which were engaged in finding out a settlement of the crisis.

OMAN-SOUTH YEMEN DISPUTE:
The long standing conflict between Oman-South Yemen surfaced again during 1980-1982. This was marked by South Yemeni soldiers' crossing the frontier into Dohfar region, disputed between the two countries. Aden alleged that Omani military helicopters of having violated its airspace and Oman accused PDRY of pursuing an aggressive foreign policy towards its neighbors. By the spring of 1982 Oman began to construct a series of fortified positions along its south western border and deployed its best trained and best equipped troops behind the fortifications. As a result, tension between the two countries heightened. On behalf of the GCC, Kuwait mediated between the two governments in the first week of May and succeeded in getting a joint commitment signed by the hostile countries to refrain from launching attack against each other.

However, the decision to follow up the negotiation fell through when Aden refused to take part in it. The same month an Iranian delegation visited Aden. This gave rise to speculations that Aden will align itself with Iran, Syria and Libya against the GCC and the US allies in the region. This activated the GCC again. Saudi Arabia’s interior minister, Nayif Ibn Abdel Aziz, travelled to Aden and conferred with the its deputy prime minister. In that meeting Nayif offered a major amount of aid to PDRY if it negotiated a peace deal with Oman. PDRY responded favourably by declaring that it would participate in the proposed meeting with Omani representative in Kuwait in early July.

On July 8, the two governments signed a general agreement on outlines of a peace treaty which was eventually signed on October 10. There, consequently, followed the establishment of not only diplomatic relations between the PDRY and Oman but the chances of the creation of an anti-GCC political and military alliance in the Arab region also diminished. This in all respects was the most outstanding success of the GCC as a peace broker.

ARAB-ISRAELI CRISIS:
Having become pre-occupied with the Iran-Iraq War soon after its inception, the GCC’s did not pay enough attention to find a solution to the Arab-Israeli problem. The solitary exception to this policy was that the Council served as a forum for deliberation on the Fahad Plan, which with modifications became the agreed Arab position on the Middle East Peace at 1982 Fez Summit.

The chances of their playing any meaningful role in settling the Arab-Israeli Issue was also diminished by the Superpowers, more precisely by the US design to exclude any other country from the Middle East Peace process. The role the US gave to the Oil-rich countries in its Middle East Peace diplomacy was to act as “moderate Arab”. Having engineered Egypt’s ouster from the Arab-fold for playing this very role, the GCC states did not agree to cooperate with US in the said role. But at the same time, in order not to undermine their dependence on the US during the Iran-Iraq war, the GCC countries preferred to maintain a low-profile.

THE INTRA-GCC DISPUTES:
On this front, the GCC has been relatively successful. After its formation, there has
been some progress in resolving some of the many intra-state disputes which eluded settlement for quite a long time. These include the Saudi-Oman agreement after the 1990 GCC meeting to put the dispute over Burami Island to rest.

On a number of occasion the GCC just stopped a few disputes from getting translated into direct confrontation, such as the one between Qatar and Bahrain over Hawar island in 1986. Timely mediation by Saudi Arabia eased the tension. After the formation of the GCC, the member-countries have also exercised restraint in not raking up the border disputes in the interest of the unity and integrity of the organisation.

However, The number of conflicts the GCC has been able to resolve are fewer than what have yet not been addressed to. The GCC is found lacking in taking up one issue after other unless these flare up. Its approach has been limited to reducing the tension between the confronting states and not effecting a permanent settlement. Thus these disputes remain a serious threat to the cooperation among the council members.

GCC AND THE OUTSIDE WORLD

GCC AND THE UNITED STATES

1) POLITICAL AND SECURITY COOPERATION

The GCC has only officially not been an integral part of the US Persian Gulf security and economic policies. Otherwise, its dependence on the US for both evolving a self-reliant security system and by banking on its intervention to thwart a challenge they are inapt to meet, point to the contrary. For this reason the GCC “can be described as an extension of the US military involvement in the region rather than as an independent regional security arrangement”(115). Even the absence of formal security ties between the two actors is the part and parcel of their cooperation. Both the US and the GCC do not want to push their military relationship to an extent which fuels the very political instability, which they both want to prevent at all costs.

In the 80s, both the US and the GCC countries did not establish direct security link in order not to provoke Iran to attack the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf or to exploit this in abetting internal dissension there(116). And if this arrangement did not work out the GCC leaders knew well that fighters and aircrafts aboard just one US carrier in the Gulf waters would neutralize any Iranian attack.

Over the years the United States and the GCC countries have developed a system of security cooperation, according to which the former would enhance the latter’s ability to defend themselves, by arming them with sophisticated weapons, by deploying a large naval force in the vicinity of these countries and building air bases and other support facilities with a view to deploying its forces quickly.

Regional and extra regional threats necessitated the GCC countries to stay away from establishing direct security ties with the US and maintaining a covert alliance instead. During much of the 80s, danger of Iranian attack in varying degrees persisted. The threats from the
Soviet Union heightened due to its presence in Afghanistan and the renewal of the Cold War with West Asia being its main theater. Russia's political and strategic clout over the Countries of Horns of Africa was also perceived by the GCC states as potential threats.

Increasing strategic and political importance of the Persian Gulf Arab countries coupled with the US' increasing capability to move the required troops and logistics to the region in the 80s also facilitated a close GCC-US cooperation. Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the probability of Soviet expansion southward became an apparent threat because of which the region's oil assumed strategic importance despite its reduced share in the global supply. Consequently, the region became important for the US on two counts. First, for its protection from a Soviet advancement. Second, as the landmass to facilitate the logistic and other facilities to US naval maneuverings in the Arabian Sea.

The Iranian revolution threatened the internal instability of the region which had become of vital interest for the US. In effect, the US did not conceal its concern for the security and stability of the countries, thereby clearly stating that it would militarily intervene in an inevitable situation. This commitment can best be ascertained from then American President Ronald Reagan's statement, "USA would not allow Saudi Arabia to become another Iran". So said American President, George Bush, after Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. To quote him "Saudi Arabia's independence is of vital Interest to the US". So the US interests in the security and stability in the region had to be reciprocated. In fact, the GCC-states capitalized this for building up their defense and clinching an informal deal that the US would come to their rescue when asked for.

The only semblance of independence from the US the GCC states enjoy is, however, their ability to keep away the foreign forces from getting directly involved in the regional crisis unless approached. But this right coincides with the US policy to defer intervention so long its vital interests in the region are not directly threatened.

During the Persian Gulf crisis, the GCC and the US practiced what they had unofficially agreed with during the 80s. The US intervention to liberate Kuwait and forestall Iraq from attacking Saudi Arabia resembled its commitment to the NATO, which enjoys a formal security alliance with the US. It started in Saudi Arabia the largest military-build up since its involvement in Vietnam and went whole-hog in battering Iraq. During the crisis both the US and the GCC, particularly the former, mooted the idea of casting the GCC into NATO mould. On September 4, 1990, the then US Secretary of state, James Baker, indicated this in a testimony to the House Foreign Affairs Committee while stating "we need to work together with governments in the Gulf... to build a more durable order. "A global alliance", he said, "long term security and stability in the Persian Gulf in a way that builds on the unprecedented international consensus that has already been formed".

The idea, however, later did not find much favor with both the GCC and the US, largely because the GCC feared that it would disrupt their newly established cordial relations with Iran. The US toorealised that a formal allaince would ignite political turbulence in the region. And yet there are bilateral security agreements between the US and Saudi Arabia and the US and
Kuwait, which in a way amount to a formal security ties between them.

The two countries, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, are becoming surrogate states of the US. The new elements added to the US-GCC security cooperation in the 1990s are an increased US naval presence, improvement in US ability to reinforce its armed forces contingents in the region quickly by propositioning heavy equipment and strengthening of the military prowess of the regional countries through arms supplies and training of the local armed forces. Thus the US is contemplating the emergence of a GCC security system, with or without other Middle Eastern powers, like Syria and Egypt, which improves the regional states' capability to take on a regional threat but also enhances the dependence of the GCC states for arms, spare parts and its naval forces on it.

2) ECONOMIC TIES:

The 1980s witnessed a major decline in the GCC countries' oil exports to the West. But, the Oil exporting countries were more reliable sources to keep the US awashed with oil (121). Courting only them, particularly Saudi Arabia, the US could influence the oil policy of the whole OPEC, the biggest cartel of the oil supplier. Whatever little amount of oil was imported from the region it remained vital. For, the termination of the supplies would have increased the burden on the sources available with the non-GCC OPEC countries and those outside it, leading to an intense competition among the oil consuming states and increase in oil prices (122).

The GCC countries' industrial development program served the US interests. The US is the largest investor in the region (123). The development of the GCC common market boosted the US trade with the smaller states.

However, the industrialization has introduced an element of unprecedented competitiveness in US-GCC economic relations. Exports of petrochemicals as well as other products from these countries have met with competitive pressure from EEC's, US' and Japanese petrochemical and other commodities producers. In the mid-1980s, the US, like Japan and the EEC, introduced several measures to protect its domestic market from unexpected influx of refined products from the Persian Gulf. The US pressurized the Congress to introduce protectionists legislation. Since for the production of petrochemicals the GCC countries have been dependent on their collaborators—the multinationals from the US and other West European countries—the US has used this helplessness of the Persian Gulf countries as an instrument to prevent the autonomous growth of the this industry in the region.

As mentioned elsewhere in his chapter, the GCC countries have publicly complained that the US has not given up its old policy of treating them as an unequal trade partner even in the changed circumstance. Another complaint against the US trade behavior is that its firms charge too high a price for their goods and services and that the US technology transfer is not according to their expectations and it smacks of a US design to slow down their economic progress in non-oil sectors so as to prevent them from competing with the US in global market.

The differences over trade issues can take serious proportions after the GCC re-emerges as potential oil supplier to the US and its Western allies. The US then would need to increase
its imports to the region to maintain favorable balance of trade.

The compulsion to retain its imports to the region intact would also heighten in view of the US foreign exchange crunch. In a few years from now, it is estimated, it would require a foreign exchange of Over 100 b a year to finance its oil imports.

However, the perceived US dependence on the Gulf oil shall give the GCC countries bargaining power. To the US they may offer to bring the oil prices down in exchange for technology transfer from it for their industrial development.

3) COOPERATION ON ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE:

The GCC’s and the US perceptions on the Arab-Israeli differ. However, after the Persian Gulf war they both extended support to the PLO-Israel accord on Palestinian autonomy. Unlike many other countries, like Iraq, Iran and Syria, who advocate an aggressive policy towards Israel, the GCC-states have favored a peaceful solution to the Palestinian problem, leading to the establishment of an independent state of Palestine and existence of Israel within the borders as outlined in 1948 UN Partition Resolution.

Yet, the GCC countries have been slightly less than the “moderate Arabs” which the US wanted them to be on the Middle East Peace issue. For they have out rightly rejected US wish to enter into diplomatic relations with Israel. Nor have they “constructively”, from the US point of view, cooperated with the US in finding out a solution to this problem. So much so that these countries have complained to the US that it has been too soft on Israel.

But, the divergent perceptions on the Palestine issue were not an irritant to their otherwise trouble-free realations. It seems that there existed an agreement between the two. The US refrained from using its clout on the GCC in pressurizing it to cooperate with or follow the American line of action. On their part, the GCC reciprocated by not bringing the differences to the center-stage of their relations with the US.

They did not launch a tirade against America for its allegedly Pro-Israeli policy. Rather these countries have given a sympathetic hearing to American viewpoint at diplomatic levels even if as a matter of courtesy. They also, of course in order not to worsen their ties with the US on an extra regional issue, have virtually abdicated themselves from playing a high profile role in Arab-Israeli dispute and instead pursued the policy of quiet diplomacy. They also seemed content with Washington cooperating closely with them on security political and economic issues despite maintaining special strategic relationship with Israel. They also feel that the US maintains close relations with Israel, which is their enemy only because of being a non-Arab and non-Islamic entity, and not with the GCC’s real enemies. Also, they take solace in the fact that Israel happens to be situated not in the Persian Gulf region but rather on the Mediterranean side.

The US has the last say. For more than the GCC influencing the US policy of Arab-Israeli issue it has been the other way round. The USA’s leverage with the GCC countries after the Persian Gulf war would have influenced the latter’s decision to welcome the August Accord when similar ones were in the past vehemently criticized by them.
Also, signed by the Chairman of the PLO, Yasser Arafat, and the leader of a community which supported their arch enemy Iraq in the Persian Gulf war, the GCC countries, it was very likely, could have out of enmity opposed the Autonomy plan and castigated Yasser Arafat as the traitor of the Arab cause. Only a greater interest than to defile the Palestinians, PLO and Yasser Arafat seems to have prompted them to fall back upon the US line on the Arab-Israeli Accord.

It is premature to predict whether the US would now exercise its influence to normalize GCC-Israel relations so as to enhance its image of peace-maker in the region as well as the world. That the Arab people have not welcomed the accord is the major constraint before the US. It all depends upon whether the US considers its image-building a preferable choice over the perceived threat of the Arab people’s backlash against their governments or not. Nothing at this moment can be predicted with authority as neither the US nor the GCC countries have spelled out their policies in this regard.

GCC AND THE SOVIET UNION:
Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 was an added ‘irritant’ in the relations between the Arab countries of Persian Gulf and the Soviet Union. The GCC countries were not merely bitter over the Soviet invasion of an Islamic country, as they officially pronounced, but also took it is as a threat to their own security. The Soviet Union also did not welcome the formation of the GCC dubbing it as a military alliance between the member-states and the US (124). The Soviet Union also rejected the Gulf security project, which did not envisage a role for the US, placed by Kuwait on GCC’s agenda to allay the Soviet fear. Meanwhile, The USSR continued publically supporting the national liberation movements in the Arab Peninsular region.

But very soon they both realized the benefits of establishing cordial bilateral relations. Moscow’s diplomatic efforts to reassure the governments in the Gulf that it had no intention to move forward or interfere in their internal affairs gradually minimised the spectre of the Soviet threat. The improvement of contacts in the 80s with the Soviet Union, which eventually led to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the GCC countries and Moscow, was viewed by the GCC countries a better option that fitted well in their over all security scheme.

Such a policy, opined the GCC governments, was poised to serve many of their interests. It could have lessened their dependence on the US, improved their chances to play one superpower against the other and in the process a greater maneuverability vis-a-vis the US, demonstrated a non-aligned position more pronounceably, and contained popular opposition to the GCC-US link.

The USSR’s strategy was also moderated by increasing its influence among the GCC countries in order to counter the western influence and presence in the region. Threatened with the prospects that in an eventuality of direct confrontation with the US the airfields and the territorial waters of the GCC countries would be used as launching platform for an attack on it, the USSR realized the friendly relations with the former (GCC states) would restrained them
Positive steps taken by the Soviet Union in first few years after the formation of the GCC were seen in slackening support to the PFLO after Oman and South Yemen signed a peace treaty in 1982 even though Oman was moving closer to the US by conducting military exercises with the latter. Moreover, Moscow embarked on a diplomatic campaign to convince Saudi Arabia and other Arab states of the Persian Gulf that it would be advantageous for them to establish relations with it. It continued modest commercial initiatives in the region, resumed sales of weapons to Iraq shortly after the war began, showed a disinterest in a clear cut Iranian victory, and refrained from voicing opposition on a high-profile scale to the US arms sales to the region.

The Soviet Union also tried to make the most of US-GCC differences over the Arab-Israeli dispute. The US commitment of marines to Beirut from September 1982 until February 1984, which was criticised by the Persian Gulf countries as US support to Israeli aggression, provided such an opportunity. The USSR backed Arab countries of the Persian Gulf for assaulting the US-backed agreement between Israel and Lebanon. Before Mikhail Gorbachev came to power in March 1985, the Soviet Union, despite quick successions at the apex of its body politic following Breznev’ Andropove’s and Chernenko’ death, did make some noticeable moves towards rapprochement with the GCC countries. These, beside taking advantage of the US-GCC differences over the solution to the Lebanon Crisis, included support to the GCC-sponsored resolutions in the UN Security Council against Iranian attacks on the Persian Gulf ships and theoffer of arms, such as anti-air missiles to Kuwait. But America frustrated The USSR by promising to meet the Kuwaiti requirements.

The GCC countries’ response to the Soviet initiatives was reciprocal. Kuwait supported USSR’s policy on Lebanon and its Iran-Iraq policy. It bought arms from it. Oman, UAE, and Saudi Arabia also, toned down their criticism of the Soviet Union’s Persian Gulf policy. In the fall of 1984, contacts between Saudi and the UAE officials with their counterpart in the Moscow were reported. Surprisingly, by the end of 1984 the Gulf antagonism towards the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan also became muted. At the December 1984 OIC meeting Afghanistan was barely mentioned and the USSR’s connection to it was not at all referred to.

Oman in September 1985 and the UAE two months later established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. The Omani decision came as a surprise. It along with Saudi Arabia was the most vocal anti-Soviet state within the GCC. The same year official contacts between Bahrain and Saudi Arabia and the USSR increased, with Bahrain even advocating the GCC members to reconsider their poor relations with the USSR.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait provided an impetus to the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Saudi Arabia and the USSR and Bahrain. It ought to be noted that both Bahrain and Saudi Arabia had hitherto evaded the issue of entering into diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union despite having normalized relations long ago and approved Oman’s, the UAE’s and Qatar’s diplomatic ties with it in the mid 80s.
Cooling off of the Cold War, which until now prevented Saudi Arabia, mainly under American pressure, from establishing diplomatic relations with the USSR, along with the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and finally and most importantly Soviet opposition to its own ally’s occupation of Kuwait(128) paved the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and the USSR and Bahrain and USSR.

Also, the Saudi decision to this effect, taken soon after Saud Al Faisal’s visit to Moscow in September 1990, aimed at isolating Iraq and driving a wedge between the two countries. Bahrain’s decision to establish diplomatic relations with the USSR was announced on September 28 in Washington during a meeting between the two countries’ foreign ministers. The underlying factor behind Bahrain’s decision was to balance its heavy reliance on the western powers in the Persian Gulf crisis(129).

Undoubtedly, the Soviet-GCC relations kept on improving throughout the 80s and onward till the disintegration of the USSR. But they both failed to capitalise on congenial relations between them in realizing and accomplishing their respective objectives. The USSR could not do harm to any of the US interests in the region. It is hard to believe that the friendly ties with the USSR would have really mattered in denying the US strategic facilities in the eventuality of a US-USSR confrontation. Given their vulnerability to such a pressure from the US, the GCC countries would not have been been able to do so even if they wanted to.

As regards the GCC countries, what they could gain from ending their political hostility towards the USSR was an ability to play one superpower against the other when annoyed with one of the two. Otherwise, the nature of relationship with the USSR in security political and economic matters hardly matched that with the US. In other words, this means that the GCC states failed to minimise their heavy dependence on the US.

GCC-IRAN RELATIONS:
The Iranian revolution —particularly the attempt to export by urging the Sh’ie population in the GCC countries to rise against their Sunni overlords—, and the Iran-Iraq war—which in the GCC countries’ perception had the potential to spread over the entire region—determined the GCC-Iran relations in the 80s.

From Iran’s point of view the GCC states’ unstinted support to Iraq in the war and their role in bringing the US military forces in the region mainly to contain Teharan, impeded the chances of the establishment of normal relationship between the two.

However, their mutual relationship was not always all that hostile. Behind the veneer of an apparent and extremely antagonistic relations, there existed an understanding not to worsen the relations to the point of military confrontation. To offset their logistic and financial support to Iraq and to see that it did not provoke Iran to regard them as a party to the war, the member-states of the GCC made conciliatory moves towards Tehran.

Though limited in scope this move often included the holding of official level contacts with Iran, maintaining a modest economic relation with that country and refraining from
resorting to military means to deter Iranian attack on the Gulf ships (130). Moreover, the Iraqi reverses on the war front, increased their fear of an Iranian backlash, which compelled them to adopt a policy that neither of the two belligerents should win the war.

Iran’s threat to declare war against the Arab Gulf countries during the Iran-Iraq war was conditional to the latter’s direct participation in the war from the Iraqi side. The Iranian government also balanced its policy of deterrence by reassuring the Arab states through official statements that it had no designs against the GCC states. Instead, it was eager to establish a realtionship with these countris based on “friendship cooperation and co-existence”.

The Smaller Gulf states were inclined toward normalizing relations with Iran, for they found themselves in a disadvantageous position in case the war spread over. Qatar resented Saudi and Iraqi pressure to sever its contacts with Iran and maintained a semblance of good relations before and after the attempted September-October 1982 Coup, allegedly as an Iran-backed plot to destabilize Al-Thani rule.

Bahrain’s relations with Iran strained after the abortive Coup which the pro-Iran forces attempted in December 1981. But in August 1982, after about eight months of that event, Bahrain reestablished diplomatic relations with Iran.

The UAE maintained a very good relations with Tehran all through the Iran-Iraq war period. It adopted a “true neutrality” and urged the other members of the GCC to be soft on Iran.

After the Iran-Iraq war, the biggest impediment to the normalization of Iran-GCC relations was removed. Iranian foreign minister Ali Akber vilayet was instructed to attract friends for Iran in the Persian Gulf region and avoid any policy that will isolate the country.

The death of Imam Khomeini and Rafsanjani’s ascendance to power brought about a notable change in Iran’s foreign policy which aimed at ending Iran’s international Isolation. The new government finally abandoned Iran’s policy of exporting its revolution to the Arab nations and took the end of the war as an opportunity to shun previous hostility towards Persian Gulf neighbours. The Arab countries welcomed Iran’s acceptance of resolution 598 and conveyed to Iran that the event had thrown up an opportunity to usher in a new era of cooperation.

The Persian Gulf crisis established a thaw in Iran-GCC relations. Improvement of relations with Iran was most crucial objective in the Arab Gulf countries’ bid to isolate Iraq internationally as then Iraq was making unprecedented moves to court Iran by capitalizing on Iran’s enmity with the US and its opposition to the presence of foreign forces in the region. Iraq went to the extent of conceding the Shatt estuary to Iran for which it ostensibly had fought an eight Year war. The GCC tried to match this with by inviting Iranian foreign minister Vilayet to Qatar just before the start of Doha summit in December 1990. And the Iranian Ambassador to Qatar, Syed Mirzai, was invited to attend a session of the summit. Indications were given that Iran would be included in a comprehensive Gulf security system along with Egypt, Pakistan and Syria.
Iran expressed its disappointment to invitation to foreign forces by the Gulf Emirates but neither did it criticize them nor did it refuse to cooperate with them in the Gulf crisis. Iranian assurance to the GCC countries that it would not defy UN sanctions against Iraq came as a greater relief even though they regretted Iran’s refusal to take part in multi-forces operation against Iraq. While opposing the presence of Foreign forces in the region Iran agreed to be the part of any Persian Gulf politico-military -security system which excluded the US.

However, the goodwill created in Iran-GCC relations during the Persian Gulf crisis has, as expected even during those days, did not resulted in the establishment of perfect ties between these sides. Desperate to see that Iran remained neutral in the war, the GCC countries went all out to accommodate it. But after the end of the crisis they weighed the pros and cons of Iranian inclusion in the Gulf security arrangement and found that a direct Iranian role in any Gulf security system would be disadvantageous. The fear that the US would not allow this to happen and might sever the security ties with them if this really takes place is the single most important factor behind this. Then there is an added fear that any such security system would be dominated by Iran. Saudi Arabia would not like this prospect and the smaller states do not relish the idea of being placed under dual-domination, of Iran as well as of Saudi Arabia. Thus in Damascus summit the question of including Iran in the proposed security system was indeed discussed but it met with strong opposition from Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar.

For Iran, the Gulf crisis ended its diplomatic isolation in the region even though it failed to earn a place for itself in the new security arrangement. This meant that Iran failed to make a major breakthrough in the region in connection with its grand objective to outmaneuver the United States in the region and to emerge as a regional power after the Iraqi defeat and in the wake of Saudi Arabia’s inability to become an independent and strong military force in the region.

GCC AND IRAQ:

Iraq was excluded by fellow Arabs when the latter formed he GCC although its rationale lies in Pan-Arabism. The relations between Iraq and Arab Peninsula states at the eve of the GCC’s formation were by all accounts ‘friendly’, as reflected in their cooperation in ousting Egypt from the Arab-fold, common concern at the threats from Iranian revolution and Saddam Hussein’s consultation with Gulf Emirates on his plan to attack Iran.

But good relations with Iraq caused the GCC fear that the inclusion of Iraq would expose the council as a military alliance against Iran. Whereas, Iran had already warned to launch air strikes against Arab Gulf states if they helped Iraq in the war. Beside, despite the existing goodwill the would be member states were apprehensive of regional ambitions of Iraq. Hence Iraq’s inclusion in the council would have prepared a ground for Iraq for fulfilling such ambitions.

However, Iraqi exclusion from the organization did not hamper its existing friendly relations with the GCC states. Instead, the war gradually gave an impetus to, and strengthened, such ties. So long a swift and single-handed Iraqi victory seemed in the sight and the threat form Iranian revolution remained imminent the Arab countries of the Gulf supported Iraq in the war.
Following Iraqi reverses during March-May 1982 in the war, the GCC states became more outright in their support to Iraq by providing logistic and financial support. In adopting this policy they knew that they would become more exposed to an Iranian attack but they also knew that an Iranian victory in the war would render them more vulnerable either to an Iranian attack or to an internal rebellion backed by Teharan. To meet this paradoxical situation the Gulf states resorted to a policy of continuing support to Iraq and at the same time balancing it by projecting themselves as arbiter of peace in the Iran-Iraq war.

Both before and after its reverses in the war Iraq moved closer to the GCC by making the Arab affinity as its basis so that the Gulf assistance kept on coming. The most noticeable change in Iraqi behavior towards the GCC countries was the abandonment of its radicalism against these states. The long-heard Bathist polemics calling for the overthrow of reactionary Arab governments, describing the Arab states as stooges of Imperialism and aspiring for the unification of the Arab World under Baathist banner seemed to have become a forgotten history.

However, Iraqi government lacked an understanding of the GCC’s predicament for adopting ‘neutrality’ and refraining from expressing their solidarity with Iraq publicly. Saddam Hussein expressed anguish over these countries’ ambivalent approach towards Iraq even though “Iraq had thrown up a barrier before Iranian expansion in the Arab world in general and the Gulf in particular”(132). Otherwise, Iran would have occupied the whole Peninsula, Saddam Hussein warned the fellow Arab countries.

The 10 year-old honeymoon between Iraq and the GCC countries came to an abrupt end with the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Though relations had begun worsening two months before the Iraqi demand that Kuwait and Saudi Arabia should waive off Iraqi debt in recognition of its services in defending them from Iran, Saudis appeared to be willing to meet this demand after initial hesitations. Kuwait, however, was adament and refused to oblige Baghdad.

At a later stage, Kuwait agreed only to forego a paltry sum from the total amount due on Iraq. Following this Iraq accused Kuwait and the UAE for illegally extracting oil from Iraqi oilfields and deliberately over-producing oil to keep the OPEC oil-prices low which resulted in Iraq’s inability to generate the required for recovering from economic losses it suffered during a war fought to defend the Arabian peninsula. The GCC countries simply failed to foresee the serious proportions the controversy could assume. They regarded it as a tactical pressure on them to hike the prices. They, therefore, tried to settle the issue at OPEC forum by closely conceding to Iraqi demand for posting the oil prices to $ 25 per barrel. At the end of the OPEC summit, wherein the agreed price was determined as $ 21 per barrel, at Geneva the GCC states had thought that the crisis was over (133) with the UAE president going to an extent of saying that the OPEC summit was a great success.

Still counting on their support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war, they did not expect anything untoward from the latter. The GCC countries failed to take note of the Iraqi leader’s grievances that their support was not in proportion to the services Iraq had rendered in shielding the Arab peninsular countries from Iran by shedding “rivers of blood”.
However, the GCC, unlike its approach during the previous months, reacted against Iraqi invasion sharply; by not only denouncing Iraq but also adopting a tough posture on peaceful solution to the crisis. They refused to negotiate with Iraq unless it withdrew from Kuwait unconditionally. They also stepped aside the regional organizations—Arab league and the GCC—in seeking a pacific solution to end the crisis. They instead saw to it that such organizations, regional or international, support the UN’s recommendations for ending the crisis.

Their approach was virtually militant. In part due to US pressure and in part due to fear of a follow-up action by Iraq against Saudi Arabia and other smaller countries they hurried in inviting US forces on their soil to pressurize Iraq to retreat and if this failed then wage a war. This reflects in the following text of the speech given by King Fahad at Doha Summit (December 22-24)

"Brothers we have not made decision regarding a peace or war, but we have made a decision regarding the return of Kuwait if peace is possible or by war if there is no option but war.... we have not been afraid, hesitant, cowardly or languid (134)".

There has appeared no moderation in the GCC’s tough stance after about three years of the end of the Gulf crisis. Concerned more than the US with remaining military might of Iraq as it is still more than a match for them, the GCC countries have wholeheartedly supported the Post Gulf war UN resolutions for the destruction of Iraqi nuclear and chemical weapons, the continuing of embargo, the US military actions in Iraq and its policies first to remove Saddam and then to limit his rule by creating ‘No War Zones’, south and north of Iraq.

Iraq’s approach to the GCC was no less militant. It renewed Bathist slogans of the 70s, now disguised in Islamic ideology, by calling Arab people to uproot the monarchies, declining to withdraw from Kuwait and responding to the GCC’s move to force its withdrawal from Kuwait by taking such actions as annexing Kuwait and declaring it the 17th province of the country. During the war its army captured a Saudi port Al-Khafzi and launched Scud missile attacks on Dehran.

After the end of the war Iraqi Defiance continues. Kuwait is still shown as Iraqi territory in that country’s map. Iraq has rejected UN demarcation of its borders with Kuwait by virtue of which the Port of Umm-E-Qasar has been transferred to the former. And it has frequently made incursions into Kuwaiti territory.
REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES

1. Both the NATO and the ASEAN bear some similarities with the GCC in terms of the number of the members these consist of. The researcher avoids to compare the GCC with the OAU, the OAS and the Arab League as they are larger in size as well as possess a continental character. Unlike these, the GCC, as a matter of fact, is a Sub-regional organization as its member-states are strictly from the Arabian Peninsula even not the Persian Gulf.


4. In 1976 foreign ministers of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia met in Muscat to discuss the Omani proposal for adopting a common course of action on regional security. That same year the present Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad, discussed the issue of regional security at bilateral level with the heads of the states of the region barring Iraq.


10. Beside, Oman, Sudan and Somalia were the other Muslim countries which did not break-off the diplomatic relations with Egypt.

11. It is reported that Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman endorsed the concept of Gulf Union but since they did not negotiate on this issue even at bilateral level it may be inferred that their endorsement was mere formal.


13. In terms of its magnitude, the Soviet Union’s Afghanistan invasion can be placed last in the order among the facts behind the formation of the GCC. However, in this chapter, these factors have
been discussed in reverse order.


16. The plan presented by Saudi interior minister, Nayef, provided for: 1) collective efforts at internal security, 2) cooperation in response to the request of any state threatened by local or imported sabotage and in halting activities by international terrorists, 3) strengthening police cooperation and joint communication systems, 4) denial of entry or refugee status to all hostile elements, and, 5) other measures to ensure collective security.


19. Ibid, P. 156.


22. Within a few weeks after the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the US and USSR signaled each other of the possibility of direct confrontation in case of physical intrusion in their areas of interests in the Persian Gulf. The US invoked the Carter Doctrine in January 1980 which warned that it would apply force, if necessary, in response to any attempt by a foreign power to control the Persian Gulf region. Then came the Soviet reply what is known as Breznev Doctrine which resolved that the USSR would not allow the establishment of foreign military bases in the region. See Anthony, John Duke., N. 4, P. 41.


26. With most of Saudi oil ports and fields laying adjacent to the territories disputed with bordering states, Saudi Arabia always ran the risk exposing these to destruction in settling the boundary disputes militarily.

29. At organizational level the GCC has developed an ad-hoc structure. This structure comprise at bottom level a committee formed by the Chiefs-of-staff. This committee recommends its suggestions to ministers of defense who meet annually sometimes along with their foreign affairs colleagues. The Supreme Council is the apex body of the structure with whom rests the final decision. The military committee of the GCC’s General Secretariat which plays executive and supportive role. The military committee is assisted by these departments: 1) joint activities, 11) education and training, and 111) armed forces.


31. By September 1983 Washington had lifted its sales restriction of such weapons to Oman.


34. Saudi Arabia, the West and the Security of the Gulf.

35. Iran might re-emerge as a threat to the internal security of the peninsular countries with Islamic awakening gathering momentum in West Asia. Egypt, the most affected by the Islamic fundamentalism, has already alleged Iran’s role behind violent Islamic resurgence there. Most of the clandestine and overt Islamic movements owe allegiance to Iran and see it as a role model. In its quest for improving ties with the Gulf states and the US, Iran has dropped the ‘export of revolution’ content from its foreign policy towards the Gulf. But, if the a little bit de-ideologsied policy does not deliver the goods, the future scenario the region favors the success of Islamic resurgence and the hard-liner take over the power in Iran, Iran will return to the erstwhile Khomeinism. See also Kam Ephraim, “The Arab World and the Gulf Crisis” in The Middle East Military Balance 1990-91. According to an Indian scholar, Sreedhar, Iran’s revival of claim on Abu Musa in April 1992 could have been Iran’s “probing of the capacity of the GCC’s capabilities and intentions after their recent security arrangement with the US and its western allies”. See Sreedhar, “Iranian Action in Abu Musa” in Strategic Analysis, September 1992, P. 801.

36. To this end, it was agreed upon by the member-states to train their nationals in three military colleges: the King Colleague in Saudi Arabia, the Zeyad II College in the UAE and the Kuwait Military College.


38. The GCC’s $1.6 billion help to Oman is said to have brought Oman closer to a regional security set up. Earlier, it was in favor a US dominated regional security system and in the wake of the
rejection of its proposal it preferably maintained close strategic ties with the US in pursuance to
the
1980 Oman-US Agreement. Oman guaranteed facilities to the US forces. But since 1983 Oman
decided to downgrade its participation in joint US-Oman maneuvers and Washington reduced the
number of its won troops involved.

39. The first Peninsula Shield exercise was held in October 1983 for three weeks in which the ground
forces of all the six GCC states participated by conducting common maneuvers in the UAE. Abu
Dhabi air force supplied the air cover. Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait contributed two battalions of
about 1,000 personnel. Bahrain and Qatar contributed 400 personnel. The the host country’s
contribution was about 3,000 to 4,000 soldiers including the personnel necessary for the air cover.

40. Like Dohfars of Oman or the Utyaab, Qahtan and Harab Saudi tribes, several members of whom
took part in the occupation of Great Mosque in Mecca in 1979.

41. The expatriate workers in the region can be divided in four categories 1) non-Gulf Arabs (mainly
Egyptians, Jordanians and Palestinians, 2) Indo-Pakistanis, 3) South-East Asians and, 4) Western
ers.

Vol.7 No. 4 Oct. 1985, P. 855-56.


44. Pasha, A. K. “ GCC: Inadequate and Dependent ?

45. At the Doha summit of the GCC heads of states from DEC 22, the decision regarding GCC-multi
national forces joint military operation was taken.

46. No figures are available on the exact number of troops involved from different countries. In the
first maneuvers in Abu Dhabi, Oman, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait sent two battalions of About 1,000
soldiers. Bahrain and Qatar contributed about 400 men each and the host country’s unit were about
3000-4000 in number, including the personnel necessary for air cover.

Schwarz (eds.) World Politics : Structures Actors Perspectives Bonn, Germany, 1985.

48. Wayne, White E. “The Iran-Iraq War : A challenge to the Arab Gulf States in Crosscurrents in


8-14 1984, P. 36.


55. Among the member states Saudi Arabia is developing light equipment. Some joint ventures with Brazil, Turkey and Germany are also underway.


58. Kuwait is located at the northern end of the Persian Gulf. Iranian and Iraqi aircrafts can strike Kuwaiti targets swiftly and without crossing large international sea lanes. Kuwaiti air defenses are less cohesive, making it more difficult for the Kuwaitis to deal with surprise air-land attack from Iraq and air attack from Iran.


64. For detail see Mikdashi Zuhayer “Oil Exporting Countries and Oil Importing Countries: What Kind of Interdependence”, Millennium: Journal of International Studies, Vol. 9, No.1, P. 4.

For instance, the common delegation from the GCC has held high-level meetings on trade issues with the USA in December 1985 in Riyadh, in May 1986 in Washington, and in February 1987 in Bahrain. On the issue of exports of petrochemicals to the EEC, US, and Japan, the GCC Secretary General Dr. Bishara visited Europe several times. A senior Saudi Diplomat, Mamun Kurdi, was delegated as the GCC Chief Negotiator at the international level on the GCC's export of petrochemicals.


71. US Strategy in 1980s, P. 236.


74. The construction of giant petrochemicals plants and the establishment of other industries in the region have given a boost to the arrival of foreign companies, which, in turn, heightens the security fears.


76. Grijesh Pant C., N. 65, P. 82.


78. The Persian Gulf states are committed to granting Egypt $3 billion, they have canceled Egypt's debt and Saudi Arabia has agreed to establish a fund for $10 billion for them. See Kam Ephraim "The Arab World and the Gulf Crisis", P. 128.

Due to the twin factors of fall in price and decline in Gulf exports, the GCC oil revenue declined from $SD 145 billion in 1980 to $72 billion in 1983. In 1985 it further reduced to $45 billion. Gross Domestic Product contracted, government expenditures was cut in successive years and exports dropped well over 50 percent, of all the states.


Troxler, Nancy C., N. 49, P. 18.


Saudi peace shield program with the USA AND Al Yamama deal with Britain, according to which the two countries are to invests part of their income form arms sales into the Indigenous arms development and civilian development, include a commitment on the part of Saudi Arabia to the payment of the armaments by crude oil lifting.


In 1980, Oman ‘s oil production was 2,82,000 bpd. In 1983 it averaged 319,090. In June 1985 480,000 and on some occasions 500,000 per day. By early 1986 it averaged 540,000. See Story Josephl2. C., N. 82 Pp. 317-18.


98. International Relations in Contemporary Middle East, P. 239.


101. Actions and sayings of the prophet Mohammed which along with the Holy Quran constitutes as the guidelines for the an Islamic social political and economic system and must be strictly adhered to by the followers.

102. These include, free education, health care, subsidized goods and services and guarantee of jobs with handsome salary and other allowances.

103. For detail see Crystal Jill, “Coalition in Oil Monarchies: Kuwait and Qatar”, Comparative Politics, Vol. 21, No. 4, July 1989.

104. Ibid, P. 435.

105. Kuwait and the Gulf, P. 80.


109. Ashraf, Syed A. Mediation in Iran-Iraq War, Bhavana Parkashan, New Delhi, 1992, P.68.

110. Iran, in particular, rejected the peace moves by the GCC countries for their alleged role in supporting Iraq in the war. Iran criticised the GCC regimes for supporting Baathists who did not believe in the religion against the Islamic revolution of Iran. They also saw these countries as puppet of the US. Therefore, given its overt anti-US overtures Iran could have never been agreed to accept a peace proposal by the US allies. Even despite doling out logistic and financial backing to Iraq, the GCC countries did not have enough clout on it to compel it to agree to establish peace with Iran. Saddam thanked the GCC countries for their support but had some grudge against them for having officially siding on the Iraqi side. Iraq also resented the UAE’s Qatar’s and Oman’s reconciliatory approach towards Iran. Saddam Huseein is reported to have stated that if all Arab countries have firmly backed Iraq, Tehran “would have laid its arms long ago. For detail see Pasha A. K. Peace in the Gulf: GCC Perceptions, Strategic Analysis, December 1988. Pp. 1025-44.


114. Twinam, Joseph Wright N. 80, P. 118.


117. When the US in 1974 threatened to occupy the oil installations in the Persian Gulf in case oil supply to the West was stopped, many feared that the US did not not have the capability to deploy the required troops and logistics to the region and to sustain that pressure for any length of time. BY 1980, Diego was strengthened as a major US Naval base, the US task force was sent to the region and the RDF was structured. See Gopalan Sita “The Gulf Crisis and the Arab Unity “ Strategic Analysis, October 1991, P. 888


119. Ibid, N. 110, P. 176.

120. Ibid, N. 110, Pp. 176-77.

121. Not only was the US capable of bargaining the GCC’s countries' dependence on arms, ammunition and good and services from the West but it also intimidated them, indirectly, that in case of using oil and money power to undermine position and strength of the oil importing countries the GCC governments would be doing so by putting their nations at extreme risks. This is because a move to this effect by the GCC would have weaken the US and the West vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

122. Dastmaschi Babak and Askari Hossein, N. 83, P. 86.


124. Kuwait and the Gulf, P. 83.

125. Page Stephen, “The Soviet Union and the GCC States: A Search for Openings” in

126. The US defused the Gulf criticism of its pro-Israeli stance in the Lebanon crisis by agreeing to sell Stinger Aircrafts missiles to Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. The Congress, however, later did not approve the sale of stingers to Kuwait.


128. The Soviet Union described Iraqi action in Kuwait as “invasion” in its August 2 official statement on the crisis. It stopped arms supplies to Iraq. Its foreign minister Eduarde Sheverdandze issued a joint statement with James Baker, condemning the “naked and illegal aggression by the Iraqi forces” . The USSR also voted for all the Security Council resolutions on the Gulf crisis.

129. It is reported that GCC seats also doled out $ 4 b aid to Moscow during the Persian Gulf Crisis.

130. Kuwait sought superpowers’ help to relflag its ships against Iranian Invasion when these intensified. But inherent in this decision was the policy not to take on Iran directly and to avoid the continuous Iranian attacks of ships escalating into a war. For the threat of retaliation from the US could more effectively deter Iran from attacking neutral ships from the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.

131. For a detailed study of Iran-GCC relations and contacts during the Gulf crisis see Pasha A.K, N. 110.

132. Saddam Hussein Quoted in Pasha A. K., N. 110, P. 1033.
134. Pasha A. K., N. 44.
CHAPTER V

THE PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

No other conflict between the two Third World countries in the recent history proved a catalyst for wide-ranging changes on international politics as did the Persian Gulf crisis, caused by Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990. So much so, that it eclipsed the political and economic implications of two other contemporary historical events— the end of the cold war and the breakup of the Soviet Union.

Interestingly, in its nature, the crisis mirrored one of the numerous cases of invasions which have occurred from time to time in the post-Second World War era. However, the region of its origin, the countries involved in it, the countries it affected, turned it into an international war, fought between Iraq and the US-led global coalition of some 32 countries of the world.

A detailed and analytical account of the events that unfolded between August 2, 1990 and February 25, 1991, will be in order here.

EVENTS PRECEDING THE IRAQI INVASION

The stage for the Iraqi invasion was set on July 17, 1990, when in a public speech on the anniversary of 1958 and 1968 Baathist revolutions, the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein accused some of the Persian Gulf regimes of being involved in an “imperialist-Zionist” conspiracy to cut off Iraq’s livelihood by not keeping the oil prices abysmally low through over production, without any economic justification and against the interest of the OPEC as well as the Arab nations. He also complained that the Arab nations were working against the interests of Iraq instead of rewarding it for having protected them from Iran by fighting an eight-year war with it. He warned the Arab nations of Iraq’s retaliation to remedy the situation. To quote from his speech:

“If words can not provide its people with protection then, actions will have to be taken to restore matters to their normal course and regain the rights which have been usurped”.

Saddam’s speech had three distinct components, which marked a deviation in Iraq’s policy towards the Arab neighbors. First, the US was involved in a conspiracy against Iraq. Second, the neighboring Arab rulers had launched an economic war against Iraq. Third, Iraq could resort to the use of force to discipline the Arab regimes guilty of over-production.

The next day, Iraq called the accused countries by the names. In a formal letter to the Arab League on July 18, 1990, the Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, accused Kuwait and the UAE of causing a crash in oil prices. Kuwait was described as the main culprit. “As far as the Kuwaiti government is concerned, its attack on Iraq is double one. On the one hand, Kuwait is attacking Iraq and encroaching
upon our territory, oil fields and stealing our national wealth, such an action is tantamount to military aggression. On the other hand the government of Kuwait is determined to cause the collapse of Iraqi economy during this period when it is confronting the vicious imperialist-Zionist threat, which is an aggression no less serious than the military aggression", the letter read.

The letter also complained that Kuwait had erected oil installations on the southern part of Iraq's Rumailah oil field and had produced oil from it to the tune of $ 2.4 billion. The letter demanded that Iraq be paid by the Kuwaiti government an amount equal to the oil stolen by it and compensation for the damages the Iraqi economy had suffered due to the downfall in the oil prices.

The Kuwaiti government responded by mobilizing regional support against Iraq. It sent a troika of ministers to the Gulf Cooperation Council on the same day. The next day i.e. July 19, 1990, in a letter to the Arab League Secretary General, the Kuwaiti government denied as "falsification of facts" the Iraqi accusation of having encroached on the Iraqi lands. The letter also asserted that Kuwait had all the rights to pump oil from the southern Rumailah field as it constituted the part of Kuwaiti territory. "Hence Kuwait has produced oil from the wells within its territory, south of the Arab League liner and far away from the international borders to conform with international standards", read the Kuwaiti letter.

In another letter sent to the UN Secretary General, Perez De Culler, on July 19, 1990, the Kuwaiti government accused Iraq of threatening it. The Kuwaiti move infuriated the Iraqi government which subsequently sharpened its diatribe against Kuwait, criticizing it for internationalizing a bilateral issue on the US dictates. Kuwait denied this charge, asking Iraq to settle this disputes through Arab League’s mediation.

On July 23, 1990, the US satellite Intelligence reported that Iraq had moved about 30,000 troops to Iraqi-Kuwaiti border. Around this time, the US clarified its stand on the controversy with the State Department spokeswoman stating that “the US was determined to defend the principle of freedom of navigation and to ensure the free flow of oil through the Strait of Hurmuz”. The US also made it clear that it would defend its interests in the Persian Gulf region and use force if needed. The US also held a hastily arranged military exercises with the UAE’s armed forces.

The Arab League at this stage was inactive. However, the Egyptian President, Hosni Mubarak, visited Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia on July 24, 1990 to defuse the tension and succeeded in arranging a meeting between Iraq and Kuwait on July 28-29 in Jeddah. Then followed the two-day (July 26-27) OPEC ministerial meeting in Geneva. The decisions taken at the meeting redressed many of Iraqi grievances. It decided inter alia that:
- The minimum reference price for the OPEC crude basket is set at $ 21 per barrel.
- The ceiling for OPEC crude oil production for the second half of the 1990 is set at 22.49 million barrels daily. This compares with the previous 22.086 million barrel per day.
- The production quotas for all the 12 members remain unchanged the only adjustment being the UAE whose quota is raised from 1.095 million barrel per day to 1.5 million barrel per day. It is also specified that production form the neutral zone is included in the ceiling and quotas of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.

- The monitoring committee consisted of the Heads of the Delegation of all member countries who will monitor production and supply of oil by all member countries(1).

Iraq which had advocated for fixing the price at $25 pb in the OPEC summit, however, accepted the decision of the price being at $21 pb. The Iraqi Oil Minister, Islam-Al-Chalabi, said in an interview with the Middle East Economic Survey, "We never said that the price of $25 pb can be achieved today—to make a jump from $14 pb. Of course, it can not be achieved. This ($21) represents a very good and positive start towards attaining a price of $25pb and may be more (2)".

Meanwhile, the Iraq-Kuwait meeting which was scheduled to be held on July 28-29 was postponed to July 31. It is said that the period saved was utilized by the two sides to come to some broad understanding before the summit. Saudi Arabia, the PLO and Jordan mediated to settle the issue.

The meeting was held on the rescheduled date. But, it could not prove fruitful as Iraq refused to agree to Kuwait’s partial acceptance of its demands made at the Summit. Iraq demanded the ceding of the southern part of the Rumailah oil field. This was rejected by Kuwait. In response to Iraqi demand for $2.4 billion as compensation for the oil extracted by it from the Rumailha oil field, Kuwait reportedly agreed to pay about half of that amount, 1 billion. Kuwait also agreed to write off Iraqi debts and pay additional financial compensation for oil market losses during Iraq’s war with Iran, provided Iraq agreed to sign a favorable border treaty.

Pre-war developments point to the fact that these did not lead to war(3). Rather, these precipitated the matter to creating a ground for Iraq to invade Kuwait. First, Iraqi relations with Kuwait and other Arab countries of the region were not strained to have warranted all of a sudden a hard-hitting speech from Saddam Hussein on July 17, 1990. Second, Iraq threatened to use force from as early as it raised the controversy. The issues like alleged extraction of oil by Kuwait from Iraqi sites and Arab countries’ designs to stall Iraq’s economic progress could, in normal circumstances, have created strains in the relations at political and diplomatic levels than warranting an invasion. This is further substantiated by the fact that in the July 27-28 OPEC summit most of the Iraqi demands were met yet it invaded Kuwait within five days of the concluding of the summit. Last but not the least, the reported conversations between Saddam Hussein and the US ambassador to Iraq, during which the latter assured Iraq that the US did not want to intervene in a regional affair, must have emboldened Iraq to attack Kuwait(5).

CAUSES OF THE CRISIS
The alleged Kuwaiti encroachment, the petroleum quota question and the debt issue did not figure among Iraq's alibis of invading Kuwait. Instead, Iraq justified this act by describing it as a response to an appeal by Kuwaiti revolutionaries to assist them after they had ousted the Al-Sabah family and installed an interim government (6). But this excuse cannot be taken seriously by any stretch of imagination(7). This was only a ploy to attract the support of anti-monarchical elements in the Persian Gulf region and a bid to shroud its violations of Kuwaiti sovereignty by Iraq.

The objectives that actually prompted Iraq to invade Kuwait were, of course, the need of revitalizing its economy, establishing control over the strategic islands of Bubiyan and Warbah and turning itself into the strongest regional power.

**IRAQ'S DETERIORATING ECONOMY:**

The most plausible reason behind Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was the uncontrolled and deteriorating economy of Iraq. However one must not tend to believe that the invasion of Kuwait was the last option to Iraq to overcome its economic problems. Iraq could have ward off the economic pressures by trimming its costly military program and by tightening its belt. In addition, the Kuwaiti government's offer to pay $1 billion in compensation to Iraq the raising of oil prices to $21 pb by the OPEC could have put the Iraqi economy back on track (8).

But, this way the revitalization of Iraqi economy was bound to be a long drawn out affair. Annexation of Kuwait, on the other hand, was seen as quicker-fix for the all economic ills. Sharp increase in oil prices, resulting from the chaos accompanying the annexation, and the huge wealth of Kuwait, including its 100 billion foreign assets, could have reversed the downslide in Iraqi economy in one stroke (9). After annexing Kuwait, Iraq was destined to become the swing producer, replacing Saudi Arabia. With an additional quota of 4.6 million barrels per day, Iraq could have cleared its financial obligations as well as used the new oil wealth to maintain a huge standing army of one million and devoted a large amount from it to the chemical and nuclear weapons development program.

At the end of its war with Iran, Iraq was faced with serious economic crisis. Its external debt stood at $60 to 80 billion (10). The neighboring Arab powers, who had provided Iraq financial aid to the tune of the $500 million a month during the war, had no interests left in helping Iraq out during the peace time.

The eight-year war with Iran had created an acute resource-crunch. The reconstruction and the rehabilitation program had come to a standstill. Due to the neglect of non-oil sectors during the war, the Iraqi economy was heavily dependent on income from oil which constituted 90 percent of the governmental revenue. As a result, there began appearing a yawning gap between the government's earnings, which was estimated $17.12 billion annually with Iraq exporting 2.7 to 2.8 million barrel oil per day at the price of $18 pb, and its expenditure, which was estimated $56.1 billion in 1990. This is what prompted Iraq to lobby for the opting of oil price near the $25 pb mark. Iraqi official sources estimated that the decline of single dollar in oil price meant a loss of $1 billion annually to the country. During 1981-90, according to Iraqi
sources, the country had lost $89 billion on account of the decline in the oil prices.

The agriculture sector suffered badly during the war. In consequence, Iraq turned into a net importer of food at a time when its purchasing power had declined steeply. The policy of encouraging private sector did not make any significant breakthrough. Instead, it led to about 25 percent rise in prices of goods due to the declining imports. Political compulsions also added to Iraq’s economic woes, as says Pant Grijesh “Political imperatives of peace not only forced the Iraqiregime to mobilize finance but also undertake the task of rehabilitation and the reconstruction” (11). With political liberalization being a dangerous proposition to garner political legitimacy, the Iraqi government did not have any other alternative to acquire the same except keeping the people economically satisfied. The invasion of Kuwait was both the only political instrument to win popular solidarity and a short-cut to bring Iraq back to the economic prosperity.

THE LEADERSHIP URGE:

Since the exit of Egypt from the Arab camp, Iraq had put forward itself as the candidate for the leadership of the Arab world. Because of a number of political reasons, mainly the Syrian resistance and the Saudi Arabia’s reluctance, Iraqi move went largely unwelcome. The Iran-Iraq war hindered this process further. But, at the same time, the war turned Iraq into the region’s most militarily powerful country blessed with a huge arsenal and a large, battle hardened, well-trained and well-equipped armed forces. Learning from the past experience, both before and during the Iran-Iraq war, that the Arab countries would not invite it to take the mantle of the leadership, Iraq, decided to impose it on them. This explains the sudden and unexpected change in Iraq’s attitude towards the oil-rich countries, which had stood by it during the Iran-Iraq war(12). The strategy of Saddam Hussein was that if he could add to Iraqi military prowess the control over the greater part of the petroleum wealth of the Arab world he would be able to become the arbiter in one of the most important Geo-strategic regions of the world.

It can not be ruled out that Saddam would have dreamt of emerging as a sort of superpower. With the Soviet Union on the course of decline and the Eastern bloc having already collapsed, the Muslim bloc could on the basis of its numerical strength and its petroleum wealth qualify as the potential rival to the mighty US and the country leading it would have automatically become the USSR’s successor. Taking all these factors into account, it is easier to understand Saddam’s obliviousness from the possible reaction to his action, his arrogance, his self-confidence, his faith in his messianic role and his opposition to a peaceful end to the crisis (13).

A few more factors influenced Saddam’s decision to use force to realize his leadership urge. Saddam’s regime calculated that Arabpeople would, by and large, not regret the removal of Sabah family from the power. The Iraqi government thought that its move would be considered at home and elsewhere in the Arab world, as aright step towards rectifying a historical injustice done to Iraq by the British colonialists.

The international environment was undergoing a change. Moscow had almost neglected the Persian Gulf region as its attention was diverted to the pressing ethnic and economic
problems back home. Washington was involved in the restructuring of the East Europe and the Soviet Union. With the end of the superpowers confrontation, the field was left for indigenous nationalist leaders, like Saddam Hussein, to pursue their parochial interests. Thus Saddam assumed that in the changing international scenario the US would accept his move as a fait accompli.

Iran's humiliation in its war with Iraq and the gradual withdrawal of European and American naval forces from the Persian Gulf in 1988-89 had created a vacuum in the Persian Gulf region. Saddam Hussein's public warning to Israel and the neighboring Arab countries were downplayed as rhetoric. The Arab leaders sided with Iraq when it threatened that if Israel attacked Iraq it would "incinerate half of Israel". The Arabs were of the view that the Iraqi threat was provoked by fears that Israel might attack sites in Iraq where nuclear facilities were presumed to be in the process of construction.

Iraq did not fear retaliation from Arab countries. Egypt, the only country which matched Iraq's military strength, was considered a friendly power as it was the co-member of Arab Cooperation Council. There were over one million Egyptians employed in Iraq who sent remittances home. In addition, Egypt had not sent unit size military forces abroad since its involvement in the disastrous Yemeni civil war during 1962-67.

Syria was bogged down in the Lebanon. Saudi Arabia looked docile as despite being disturbed by the formation of the ACC, it signed the pact of non-aggression with Iraq and Kuwait and had offered Iraq to sign a similar pact. No Persian Gulf country could single handedly take on Iraq and the combined defense of the GCC was a 'non-entity' in comparison to the Iraqi military prowess. Given the popular Arab mood against the US intervention in the regional affairs the Arab Gulf countries would, Saddam Hussein calculated, not ask for foreign help in case he invaded Kuwait. Over and above, the Saddam regime could also count on total support from its people who had backed Iraq on the question of its claim on Kuwait from the days of the Hashmite monarchy.

**TERRITORIAL EXPANSION:**

To Iraq, Kuwait has been a strategic prize. The Islands of Warbah and Bubiyan are crucial for Iraq to widen its 15-mile long narrow access to the Persian Gulf waters. And the whole Kuwaiti territory provides connection to Iraq and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf through land, in the absence of which Iraq has been clubbed with either the Fertile Crescent countries or with Iran that is on the other side of the Persian Gulf.

Iraq's historical claims over the Kuwait are unjustified. The Turkish empire of which Iraq is said to be the successor state recognized Kuwaiti sovereignty in Anglo-Ottoman Draft convention on the Persian Gulf Area in 1913. According to this convention, the islands, Bubiyan Warbah and Falaka, were described as the part of Kuwaiti territory. On July 21, 1961, Kuwait was admitted as a sovereign country to the Arab League of which Iraq was also the member. On October 4, 1963, the Iraqi government formally announced its recognition of Kuwait. Even Saddam Hussein's claim that the British power had forcibly carved Kuwait out of the
territory of Basra ‘Vilayet’ of Ottoman empire does not sound logical in view of the facts that as his government as well as the preceding ones recognized Kuwait as sovereign state and entered into diplomatic relations with that country(17).

Beside this, the historical claims in the Persian Gulf can not be regarded genuine due to overlapping territorial changes there. Saddam Hussein’s claims are not different in nature to Jewish claims over Palestine. Moreover, going by Saddam Hussein’s logic Iraq itself becomes the part of Turkey, which claims itself to be the successor state of Ottoman empire. Both Syria and Lebanon can legitimately claim Palestine as it was also the part of the vilayet of Damascus and Beirut under Ottoman empire. And Saddam could have extended Iraq’s historical claim over entire Arabian peninsula as it constituted the part of ‘Hasa’ region, which was used to be administrated from Basra by the Ottomans(18).

RESPONSES TO THE GULF CRISIS/WAR

THE ARAB GULF COUNTRIES’ RESPONSE:
The Arab Gulf countries were shocked and dismayed at the turn of the events. The invasion of Kuwait looked to them a prelude to similar exercises against the rest of them. Their response to the crisis was, therefore, that of total solidarity with Kuwait and unanimous condemnation of Iraq. In the beginning, these countries sought a peaceful solution to the crisis leading to the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwaiti territory. But, faced with the specter of expansion of Iraqi invasion, which, they knew, they could not revert even jointly(19), the GCC countries, in a total volte face to their previous policy, invited the American troops to intervene.

Interestingly, the six-point statement which was adopted on Aug. 3 at the Ministerial Council meeting of the Arab League in Cairo after 36 hours of discussion, rejected any foreign intervention in Arab affairs. But the GCC’s Ministerial Council meeting, which was held the same day and at the same venue, was an exception to the Arab League’s resolution. The communique issued at the end of the GCC Ministerial Council summit emphasized that any collective UN action would not amount to foreign intervention. It was an indication that eventually foreign help would be sought.

At this time Saudi Arabia, along with the US, tried to impress that Iraq was planning to attack it (20). The US Secretary of Defense, Richard E. Chenny, visited Saudi Arabia on August 3. It is also reported that Saudi Arabia on August 6 invited “friendly countries” to help other regional countries in protecting their sovereignty. At the Arab Summit meeting, which was also held at Cairo, on August 10, the invitation to foreign forces was recommended.

Though initially an impression was given that the US forces were in Saudi Arabia to defend that country and not to take any military action against Iraq, on November 5, when King Fahad and James Baker met, Saudi Arabia conceded to the US pressure to give it the permission to launch an attack against Iraq when and if the need arose. Saudi Arabia, in return, secured the right to jointly command an attack inside Iraq. The veto power on allied attack against Iraq also rested with Saudi Arabia. It is reported that Saudi Arabia had invited the American forces within a few hours after the Iraqi invasion.
The Arab Gulf countries’ decision could spell dangers for the ruling regimes, more so for Saudi Arabia (which houses the holiest of Islamic shrines), as the presence of “unbelievers” on Saudi soil was always held as a mark of disrespect. The Islamic fundamentalists and the royal puritan family did not at first approve the move. The Saudi government tried to assuage people’s resentment and that of the religious elements by stating that the foreign forces were not gathered to carry out any military operation and would be leaving as soon as the Iraqi danger disappeared.

Even when war between an Arab power—Iraq—and the US became imminent the Arab governments proclaimed in order to pacify Arab peoples’ ire that their participation in the force was to liberate Kuwait and not to attack Iraq (21). As the war approached nearer, more than the Iraqi invasion Saddam’s resistance to the US became important for the general Arab public. As a result, they began supporting Saddam Hussein. Their was also a proportionate increase in Arabs’ disliking of the US as they perceived its resolve to destroy Iraq as the part of its post-cold war strategy to establish its hegemony in the entire Arab world (22).

On the foreign policy front, another perceptible change in the policy of the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf was the placating of Iran. Common perception of Iraqi threat brought the two sides to express similar concerns. Both viewed that after annexing Kuwait, Iraq will have a long coastline and would become a naval power. They also thought that Iraqi control of a large oil reserves would greatly disturb the regional balance of power. Thus both the sides condemned Iraqi invasion. Iran criticized the US presence in the region and was apprehensive of the shift of the balance of power in the region in favor of Saudi Arabia, yet instead of Saudi Arabia it criticized Iraq for being responsible for US presence in the region (23). In fact, the Iranian opposition to the foreign presence was toned down. The Iranian president, Hashemi Rafsanjani, said, at a Friday sermon in Tehran, “we have no objection to them obstructing aggression. However, it would have been better if the regional countries would have done not so” (24). The Kuwaiti foreign Minister paid a visit to Tehran where he expressed regrets over the “past mistakes” of his country towards Iran. A host of dignitaries from the GCC visited Iran. On September 29, the GCC foreign ministers met the Iranian Foreign Minister, Ail Akbar Vilayti, at the Iranian office at the UN headquarters in New York.

At the December 24-25 GCC Summit at Doha, Iranian ambassador to Qatar was invited as observer. The Joint Communique, issued after the meet read “the Council welcomes the Islamic Republic of Iran’s desire to enhance and develop its relations with the GCC countries. It reaffirms the importance of working seriously and realistically to solve differences between Iran and the member-states so that the area is able to invest its resources in an over all economic development. The council confirms its desire to establish relations with Iran based on good neighborliness, non-interference in internal affairs and respect of sovereignty and peaceful co-existence.” At a press conference in Doha, the Qatari foreign minister indicated that Iran could be involved in a regional security system. Similar indications came from the Secretary General of the GCC, Abdulla Bishara, who said that there were some countries interested in cooperating with the GCC in regional security and stability and they by virtue of their geographical position
would have an important role to play in any such system.

The GCC countries' gestures overwhelmed Iran. Its foreign minister, Ali Akbar Vilayeti, proposed seven-member GCC sessions (25). However, the GCC states were not prepared to go to that extent as they did not want to annoy the US. Also Iranian induction into the GCC carried the fear that this body would be dominated by Iran given its geo-political and geo-strategic preponderance in the region (26).

Once it became clear that Iraq would not withdraw from Kuwait through persuasion, the GCC countries came all out in favor of the use of force against it. They had the genuine fear that if Iraq was not severely punished the rest of them would also fall prey to its ambitions (27). Saudi Arabia feared the undermining of its predominance in the region. A conspiracy theory was also in the air. According to this theory, which was given credence by the Saudi government itself, the annexation of Kuwait was the part of a larger plan of Iraq, Yemen and Jordan to occupy Saudi Arabia with Iraq retaining Kuwait, Jordan the Hejaz area and Yemen parting away with territory over which it had dispute with Saudi Arabia (28).

All indications suggest that the GCC countries were strictly for a war against Iraq. The US troops invited by them in an overwhelming number were more than enough if the purpose was merely to defend Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries. The GCC countries were adamant on Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait as the pre-condition for a negotiation-based solution to the crisis. Their unyielding stand, and also those of Iraq and the US, caused a stalemate (29) the war ultimately became inevitable.

The Arab states of the Persian Gulf were, however, also in a sort of dilemma. They felt that Iraq's complete destruction would, on one hand, remove the Iraqi threat for ever, but, they feared that since Iraq was adequately prepared for such a war it would not be a cake walk for the multinational forces. Instead, it would turn out to be a prolonged war and spill over to Saudi Arabia, causing enormous loss of human lives and Arab wealth. There was an added fear that Iraq’s defeat would create a vacuum in the region tempting Israel and Iran to fill it (30).

They also had some doubts on US ability to fight a long drawn out war with Iraq at the cost of loss of hundreds of its soldiers. And what if Iraq dragged Israel into war, would, then, they continue to side with the US-Israeli-allied forces risking the chances of popular revolts all around. These were the questions which haunted the Arab governments.

This was one of the reasons behind the limited contribution, such as wherewithal and military personnel by the GCC countries to the Multinational Forces and their negligible participation in the war. An unofficial understanding had been reached between the US and the GCC countries that the latter would share the entire cost incurring to the allied forces in exchange for their token involvement in the military operation. For instance, Saudi Arabia bore
the entire expenditure of the maintaining of the US forces and construction of the infrastructure facilities. Beside this, Saudi Arabia and the UAE increased their oil output to compensate the absence of Iraqi oil (31). The increase in the oil production at the time when there was no oil glut in the market was supposed to increase the Saudi revenue by, it was estimated, $15 billion per annum. This could enable Saudi Arabia to meet the additional cost of maintaining foreign troops.

IRANIAN RESPONSE:

For Iran, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was its diplomatic victory over the US and the Arab countries who supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. For, it vindicated the Iranian claim that Iraq was an expansionist and aggressive county and had attacked Iran in 1980 for territorial gains and toppling the Islamic government. The invasion upheld Iran’s warning, during the late 80s, that Iraq would not spare the Persian Gulf countries either, using its added military prowess against the very countries whom it was indebted to for this.

Iran opposed the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait even though by that time the relations between the two countries had begun to improve. The Iraqi president had exchanged conciliatory letters with his Iranian counterpart and both the countries held common views on the question of oil prices and production during the emergency OPEC summit in July.

On August 2, the Iranian Foreign Minister issued a statement which read “Islamic Republic of Iran rejects any form of resort to force as a solution to regional problems. It considers Iraq’s military action against Kuwait contrary to the stability and security in the sensitive Persian Gulf region, and condemns it... Iran considers respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of other countries and non-interference in their internal affairs as absolute principle of international relations. Since Iraq’s military action contravenes the above principles and such actions would have serious effects on regional and national security and global peace and would pave the way for increased presence of a global military powers in the region, Iran calls for the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops to recognized international borders and a peaceful solution to the dispute”(32).

Thus, Iranian stand on the Kuwaiti crisis automatically brought it closer to the GCC countries. Iran declared that it would take unilateral military action if the two islands (Bubiyan and Warbah) were ceded by the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf to Iraq. However, the honeymoon between Iran and the GCC countries did not culminate into what Iran actually wanted, the membership of the GCC and a solution to the Kuwaiti crisis brokered by The GCC-Iran combine, denying, thereby, the US a chance to establish its foothold in the region. The GCC’s tilt towards the US, whom Iran could not side with, prevented Iran from playing a major role in the crisis. Even Saudi Arabia did not like the smaller Persian Gulf countries gestures to Iran. It prevailed upon the rest of the GCC members to defer the issue of Iranian admission until the Kuwaiti issue was resolved.

Iraq, like the GCC countries, was also trying to appease Iran. Iran’s apathy towards the US, whom Iraq had challenged, came to help Iraq mend its ties with Iran. The Iran-GCC reapproachment was also the cause of concern for Iraq. For these reasons Iraq made an unexpected move (33). on August 14, it unilaterally accepted the Iranian terms for a peace
the UNSCRs and used the good offices of Syrian President, Hafez-al Asad, a close friend of Iran. Hafez-al-Asad visited Iran during September 22-24 to assure it that the foreign troops would pull out of the region as soon as the liberation of Kuwait was achieved and there would come up, instead, an Arab-Islamic security system including Iran as its constituent.

**YEMEN’S RESPONSE:**

Yemen sided with Iraq and had a distinction of being all alone beside Cuba in opposing

the Security Council’s moves against Iraq(37). Strong Batist influence in North Yemen and South Yemen’s avowed anti-imperialist postures along with popular mood in favor of Iraq prevented Yemen from wilting under Saudi and American pressures.

Angry over Yemen’s close association with Iraq, the Saudi government called upon the Yemen’s northern tribes to revolt against the Sana government. It also expelled 8,00,000 Yemeni workers. While the US cancelled aid arrangements with Yemen, Iraqi oil delivery to Aden refinery was cut off. Saudi Arabia also tried to undermine the three-month old unity between the North and South Yemens.

**MEDITERRANEAN COUNTRIES’ RESPONSE:**

Unlike the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean countries were divided over the issue of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the subsequent events. Egypt, Syria and Morocco arrayed against Iraq, while Jordan, PLO, Algeria, Libya and Tunisia stood with it.

**EGYPT’S RESPONSE:**

When the Iraq-Kuwait crisis was brewing, Egypt tried to mediate between the two countries to resolve the issue. Saddam Hussein spoke to Egyptian President, Hossei Mubarak, and later sent his foreign minister, Tariq Aziz, to Cairo. Hossei Mubarak himself paraded between Kuwaiti and Iraqi capitals to arrange a meeting between the two countries. On his part, Saddam is said to have assured Mubarak that he would not attack Kuwait. Thus, the Iraqi invasion made Mubarak bitter as it had meant the failure of his diplomacy. Egypt, therefore, adopted an anti-Iraqi stand. It supported all the UNSCRs, voted for the Arab Summit resolution on the sending of an Arab force in Saudi Arabia, despatched its forces to join the allied forces and allowed US warships to use the Suez Canal.

The Egyptian government’s decision to join the multinational forces was taken against the public mood. However, in Egypt the popular support to Saddam Hussein was not as strong as in other countries. There was resentment among people also against Iraq over the plight of Egyptian workers were facing in Kuwait and Iraq after the invasion. There were reports of beatings and even murders of Egyptian workers in Iraq. Mubarak’s government also took stringent actions against protesters of Egyptian stand in the crisis.

The Ikhwanul Muslimeen, the Egyptian government’s main political opponent, did not put up any strong challenge to Mubarak on his government’s stand in the crisis. The Ikhwans were only mildly opposed to the US war against Iraq so as not to lose the financial assistance being provided to them by Saudi Arabia (38).
Despite being critical of the Iraqi invasion, Egypt in the initial stages was seeking an Arab solution to the crisis, a move which the US must have not appreciated. Egyptian government’s position changed during August 7-8, when the Bush administration threatened to stop US military and economic aid to Egypt if it did not support the US policy towards the crisis.

Later, Egypt was obliged to support the US as the latter waived off its military sales to Egypt worth $ 7 billion by converting it into grants-in-aid (39). The Arab foreign ministers in a meeting in Cairo on September 10 also decided to shift the headquarters of Arab League back to Cairo. Egypt solicited these generosities from the US and the Arab countries by increasing the level of its forces stationed in Saudi Arabia from 3,000 to 30,000.

SYRIA’S RESPONSE:

The condemnation of the Iraqi invasion by Syria, did not come as surpirse. What, however, deserves special mention is Syria’s active role in the drama that unfolded after August 2. This activism was dictated by benefits that Syria could garner in the form of economic reward and political recognition from the oil-rich Gulf states as well as the US (40). Thus Syria supported international action against Iraq, conveyed to the US that would not change side in an eventuality of Israeli involvement in the war and agreed, to quote the Syrian foreign minister, Farooq Al-Shara, “Israeli-Palestinian peace process should not be linked to the issue of Iraqi invasion of Kuwait” (41). Syria also sent troops to Saudi Arabia but decided that the mission of its forces in the wake of the war would be defensive only (42). Syria also lobbied for a vital place for itself in the post Gulf crisis regional security system.

Syrian people’s response was overwhelmingly pro-Iraq. Syrians, of course, did not approve the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait but they, at the same time, held that it was invited by the arrogant Kuwaiti government. Syrians were, by and large, stunned when their government decided to send its forces to help the multinational forces. There were widespread protests throughout Syria, particularly in the eastern part of the country around Deir-ez-Zor.

The Persian Gulf crisis provided an opportune monument for Syria to join ranks with the US. It saw no point in continuing its anti-US policy when the Soviet Union, Syrian guarantor against US-Israeli brinkmanship, was on the verge of forfeiting its superpower status and as a result the regional allies had become of little interests to it(43). The deterioration of relations with the USSR, with which Syria had signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation in 1980, also paved the way for the Syria-US reconciliation. The USSR had raised the issue of Syrian debts, which were about $ 25 billion. It had begun improving ties with Israel by allowing the Soviet Jews to migrate to that country and was showing hesitations to help Syria out in attaining strategic parity with Israel.

Syria was presented with a good chance to enter into a rapprochement with the US in a respectable manner as the latter was in need of an assurance from former that it would not enter the war from Iraq’s side if its arch rival somehow dragged Israel into the war. Syria was lured by the US to join the allied camp. It was promised to be given a free hand in Lebanese affairs. American patronage was withdrawn from Christian militias in Lebanon. The USA also established diplomatic relations with Syria. EEC de-released loans worth $ 193 million, earlier
held back on the ground that Syria was a terrorist state.

**JORDAN'S RESPONSE:**

Jordan, a staunch ally of the US in the region, mildly criticized Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Officially, Jordan opposed the occupation and annexation of Kuwait by Iraq, recognized Sabahs as the legitimate ruler of Kuwait and supported the sending of the Arab forces to secure Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. It also decided to comply with the UNSCRs adding, however, that it alone would decide how to do it(44). On the other hand, Jordan also opposed the presence of foreign troops in Arab land and the US led military actions against Iraq. King Hussein also supported the linking of the Kuwaiti issue with Arab-Israeli issue by Saddam Hussein.

To avoid a breakdown in its relations with the US, the West and the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf, Jordan assumed for itself the role of a peace broker. King Hussein went (August 14) to Washington, reportedly, to hand over a letter from Saddam Hussein to Bush. All of Jordanian peace plans fizzled out as the US refused to agree on any thing less than Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait. Jordan kept its peace mission alive even then as King Hussein went to Morocco and Algeria and met (September 20) their respective heads of the state. After meetings these leaders, King Hussein proposed a compromise peace plan which envisaged Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and that of the Foreign forces from the region, a referendum in Kuwait within six months of that deployment of the UN peace keeping forces in Kuwait and an Arab force in Saudi Arabia and an international conference on the Palestine issue. This move was also rejected.

Gradually, Jordan began supporting Iraq overtly. This was, among other things, caused by growing Saudi hostility towards it. When Jordan had adopted more or less a balanced stand—supporting Iraqi withdrawal and opposing the foreign presence—Saudi Arabia cut off its oil supply of 30,000 barrel per day to it (45). Jordanian people, including Palestinians(46), who overwhelmingly supported Iraq, influenced King Hussein's decision oppose an international coalition against Iraq.

There were huge public demonstrations in Amman against the US. Over 80,000 Jordanians had volunteered to fight along side the Iraqis(47). The rejection of popular mood in order to satisfy the US, could have been exploited by the Islamic fundamentalists who had already consolidated their position as the most significant bloc in Jordanian parliament(48).

Iraq's importance to Jordan also dissuaded it from siding with the US. The economic crisis had increased Jordan's dependence on Iraq which was providing Jordan oil at a considerable discount. Iraq was also a market for Jordan's agricultural exports. Transit trade from Iraq to the Red Sea port of Aqaba had become crucial to the port's rapid growth during the 1980s. Thousands of Jordanian workers were employed in Iraq. Jordan viewed Iraq as its strategic ally against Israel.

**PLO'S AND PALESTINIANS' RESPONSE:**

Like Jordan, the PLO and the Palestinians supported Iraq and were more outspoken in doing this. Thus Palestinians everywhere in the region—occupied territories, Jordan and
Persian Gulf countries—, were unanimous in their support for Iraq.

The PLO, unlike the Palestinian masses, initially tried to obfuscate its position. It declared that it wanted Iraqi evacuation of Kuwait. The PLO had also disapproved Iraqi invasion at the Arab League Summit. But, at the same time, it advocated an Arab solution to the crisis and condemned the “reckless US Intervention” and regretted that “some of the Arab countries had accepted it”. The PLO also tried to play the role of mediator. However, following the rejection of its peace plans by the US and its allies in West Asia and as the crisis escalated, the PLO came to identify itself with Iraq.

The PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat, visited Baghdad on August 19 and conferred with Saddam Hussein. In that meeting PLO’s support to Iraq might have been pledged. However, on official records Arafat proposed a peace plan to Iraq which envisaged withdrawal of the Iraqi forces from Kuwait, restoration of Sabah rule, subsequent establishment of firm border between Iraq and Kuwait and Kuwaiti compensation to Iraq for the revenues the latter had lost due to Kuwaiti oil policies.

PLO, frustrated by the failure of Intifadeh and continuing Jewish settlement in the occupied territories, and skeptical of US intention to resolve the Palestinian issue, saw in Iraq a savior which by annihilating Israel would pave the way for the establishment of a Palestinian state. It saw in Saddam a force to unite the Arab masses and take on Israel and America. PLO was sore with the Persian Gulf countries’ failure to fulfill their financial commitment towards the Palestinian cause.

The Palestinians whole-heartedly supported the linkage of the Kuwaiti and the Palestine issues and refused to regard it as Iraqi design to justify its occupation and annexation of Kuwait. They were rejoiced over Iraqi missile attacks on Israel which to them was the demonstration of a linkage between the Persian Gulf crisis and the Palestinian problem (49). Israeli discrimination to Palestinians in not providing them chemical war equipment during the war and an increase in Israeli forces atrocities those days further fanned Palestinians’ pro-Iraqi sentiments.

Saddam’s offer to Palestinians to settle down in Kuwait also strengthened Palestinians-Iraq bond. The Palestinians in Kuwait lent active support to Iraq in information gathering which facilitated Iraqi invasion and swift occupation of Kuwait.

LIBYAN RESPONSE :

The Qaddafi regime overlooked the Iraqi invasion and concentrated its tirade against the presence of US and British forces in Arab lands. At a news conference in mid-August, Qaddafi demanded that the USA be placed under international legal sanctions as Iraq had been, warning that failing this, Libya might leave the United Nations. Libya also called for the removal of naval blockade against Iraq and stated that it would not abide by the economic sanctions against Iraq as far as the supply of food and medicine to the latter was concerned. It together with PLO floated a peace plan which called for the mutual withdrawal of Iraqi and the Western forces and their replacement by an Arab-Islamic force in Saudi Arabia and by the UN forces in Kuwait,
ceeding of Warbah and Bubiyan islands to Iraq and a referendum in Kuwait allowing its people to decide about the nature of the political system of their country. The Libyan plan also proposed that there be adopted a common Arab oil policy. Following the rejection of this plan, Libya came out with another plan this time in conjunction with PLO, Jordan and Sudan. The second plan was also rejected.

However, by mid-September, the Libyan policy changed from an extremely anti-US to cautiously pro-Western. This change was brought about by Iraqi rejection of Libyan offer of material assistance. During his visit to Libya, the Egyptian president advised Qaddafi that his overt support to Saddam Hussein would invite US hostility once the Kuwaiti crisis was over. Libya, as a result, modified its policy. It even offered to send its troops to join allied forces. However, the Libyan offer was rejected by the US. It is said that the US did it in order not to be bound by any moral obligation when raising later the issue of Libyan involvement in the bombing of a Pan Am flight over the Scottish town of Lockerbie.

TUNISIA'S RESPONSES:
Tunisia opposed both the Iraqi annexation and US intervention in the crisis. At the Arab League Summit it expressed pessimism at the majority decision to invite the US forces in Arab land. The Tunisian president, Zine-i- Abdine ben Ali, described this as “lending an imaginary legitimacy to the Western presence in Saudi Arabia. The Tunisians government reluctantly accepted the UN sanctions against Iraq. The Arab states of the Persian Gulf took punitive action against the Tunisian government by withdrawing all financial support to it. US aid to Tunisia was cut back as well.

MOROCCO'S RESPONSE:
Morocco supported the US position in the Persian Gulf crisis. Dependent on the western economic aid for its survival, it had no other option. However, Morocco could not make any significant contribution to the multinational forces because it was bogged down in western Sahara. No reinforcement or heavy equipments were sent. The small sized force Morocco sent to Saudi Arabia did not participate in the Operation Desert Storm. There was a little change of heart when the war against Iraq started. Moroccan king told ‘Le Monde’, a French magazine, that Iraq’s complaints against Kuwait had some substances. This change was caused by Pro-Iraq demonstrations in Morocco.

ALGERIA'S RESPONSE:
The Algerian government tried to stay away from the crisis by opting to play the role of a peace broker. It distanced itself from directly opposing Iraq by abstaining from voting at the August 10 Arab League Summit. The Foreign Minister of Algeria, Ahmad Ghizali criticized the West’s decision to freeze Iraqi and Kuwaiti assets abroad.

Public protests, led by the Islamic fundamentalists, against US aggression played a significant role in Algerian government adopting a neutral stand. FIS (Islamic Salvation Front) leaders, despite Iraqi regime’s hostility to Islamic fundamentalism, visited Iraq to express their solidarity with that country. The FIS also warned that “any aggression against Iraq will be confronted by Muslims every where”.

TURKEY'S RESPONSE:

Turkey was not an active participant in the anti-Iraq coalition in the beginning. Though Turkey supported all the US-led actions against Iraq, it did not relish the prospect of suffering the loss of $300 million annually to be caused by closure of Iraqi pipelines carrying Iraqi oil to the Mediterranean sea.

Turkey was little embarrassed when Bush asked it to clarify its position and cut off Iraqi oil pipelines. Iraq helped Turkey to come out of its dilemma when it itself shut down one of the pipelines and reduced the flow of another by 30 percent (August 6) since because of the embargo none was lifting oil from Turkish terminal. Two days later, Turkey banned exports of Iraqi oil from its territory and froze all Iraqi assets. Later, the US Secretary of State, James Baker, visited Turkey offering it financial compensation for the loss of revenue, and military protection. In return, the US got an assurance from Turkey that in case of a war with Iraq it would provide its northern base for military operations to the US forces.

Initial reluctance was given up soon and by the time the war broke out, Turkey was not only an active participant in Anti-Iraq coalition but it also permitted the US to make sorties from its Laçlık base.

The decision of the Turkish government invited strong criticism from the leftists and the Islamic fundamentalists alike. Even part of the military establishment opposed the move, fearing that it would lead to Iraqi retaliation. Certain elements in the Turkish government also flayed the move, expressing their resentment through tendering resignation.

Turkish president Özal's decision was prompted by the prospects of Turkish admission into the European Community as the Turkish participation in the war against Iraq would have demonstrated the country's importance as a strategic location in the West's war with an Asian power. The Turkish government's move was also likely to establish its sensitiveness to issues concerning Europe, resulting into an enhanced level of economic and military assistance from that region and the US. Turkey was also seeking an entry into the Persian Gulf politics, mainly interested in taking part in Persian Gulf security system and improving economic relations with the oil-rich states.

ISRAELI RESPONSE:

Iraqi invasion of Kuwait if, on the one hand, turned the Iraqi saber-rattling against Israel into an imminent threat, it was also a welcome development being a pleasing diversion of the international attention from its suppression of the Intifadeh and the question of peaceful settlement of the Palestine issue. Saddam Hussein's invasion, accompanied by the threat to engage Israel into a war, was used as a pretext for avoiding a cut off in defense expenditure and securing military and economic aid from the West.

Yet, Iraq's move in Kuwait had all the elements to make Israel apprehensive. Iraq had already issued a warning to Israel that any other attack on Iraqi nuclear facilities would be answered by burning half of Israel. Israel did not dismiss this threat as a mere rhetoric. The
binary and chemical weapons Iraq possessed could accomplish this task. Instead, Iraqi clarification that such an option would be resorted to only in retaliation to an Israeli attack was, of course, dismissed by Israeli government as a ploy to divert Israeli attention from its security concerns.

At the same time, the Iraqi Invasion had in a way steered Iraqi attention from Israel. It relieved Israel that in case of such an attack the Arab countries, whom Iraq had alienated after occupying Kuwait, might not join Iraq. The US response to the Iraqi invasion also served the Israeli interests. That after its misadventure in Kuwait, collective security action against Iraq was inevitable came as a sigh of relief to Israel. Otherwise, Iraq's credibility to launch a war against Israel in future would have enhanced if Iraq was allowed to retain control over Kuwait, its oil reserves and its financial assets. Israel also feared that if Iraq came unscathed from its invasion of Kuwait then it would have to confront Iraq alone.

The Israeli government did not rule out an Iraqi-Israeli showdown during the war. The full support Saddam Hussein had been receiving from Palestinians in Jordan and Occupied territories convinced Israel that Iraq had both means and Arab (masses) backing to launch a full-fledged war against her.

Israel, however, shared the US concern that it should not get involved into a war even if provoked. The Israeli government knew that once the war would break out Iraq would not spare any effort to drag Israel into the war, leading a few Arab countries to breakaway from the Coalition.

Israel also visualized that the magnitude of Iraqi attack on it during the war could, however, scale down if Iraq were engaged in a fierce battle with the coalition forces. Israel also found the peaceful solution to Kuwaiti issue, as a result of which Iraq could have retained its military strength intact, unfavorable to it. Moreover, a peaceful solution, leading to Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, could have increased pressure on Israel to agree to a similar kind of solution on its occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza strip.

Israel prepared itself to deal with the inevitable. The armed forces beefed up their capability to counter an Iraqi attack. Among other security measures taken by the Israeli government was the distribution of gas masks among people for protection from chemical attacks. The US and Israel exchanged information on the Iraqi threat. Israel agreed to provide logistical and other support to the US led forces. Infrastructure was laid to secure communication between Israeli and the American defense authorities. Arrangement were made for provision to Israel of early warning on Iraqi missile attacks against Israel.

When the war started, the Israeli forces were stated to be well-prepared and alert to react to any Iraqi attack. As early as January 18, first Iraqi missile landed on Israeli cities. Two 'Patriot' surface-to-air missile batteries, ordered by Israel for delivery in Spring, 1992, were immediately sent to Israel. Another package of the US Patriot batteries was airlifted to Israel with their American crews. Shortly before the end of the War, an additional Dutch Patriot Battery
was also transported to Israel.

The Patriot batteries were deployed in Tel Aviv and Haifa, and became operational within hours of their arrival on site to intercept incoming 'Al-Hussein missiles. Their unimpressive track record in intercepting the Iraqi missile notwithstanding, Patriots proved extremely valuable in alleviating the population anxiety and in demonstrating the US commitment to the Israeli defense.

THE US AND THE PERSIAN GULF

The US in many ways helped Iraq acquire the awesome military capability by the end of the Iran-Iraq war as a result of which it had become a bullying state prepared to challenge even the might of the US.

From intelligence sharing Agreement with Iraq in 1982 to the resumption of diplomatic relations with it in 1984 and the loans and credits to it to the tune of $4.2 billion, which were mainly used by Iraq for nuclear and missile development programs and acquisition of the weapons from the western countries, the US pampered Iraq all along. Some political analysts even feel that in view of Saudi Arabia's inherent weakness to outdo Iranian challenge, The US was developing Iraq as the policeman of the region to safeguard its interests.

This hypothesis is reinforced by some sort of undercover and clandestine US assistance to the Iraqi nuclear program. The US helped Iraq boost its missile capability. The Saad 16—Iraq’s premier hi-tech complex for aircraft construction—missile design programs and also nuclear research received financial assistance from the US. Massive amount of sensitive equipment and technology were sold to Iraq by US firms. There were 6,000 licenses for $1.5 billion worth computers, machine tools, electronic equipment with military potential. There was no monitoring of their ultimate use.

Other American equipment which Saddam Hussein acquired from The US included $200 million worth of Bell helicopters, a machine tool plant capable of making weapons and a powder press suitable for the compaction of nuclear fuels. Beside this, two US computer firms built a giant petrochemicals plant near Bhagdad and a $4 billion ethylene facility.

The change in US attitude began appearing from the 1990 only when it realized that after battering a formidable enemy like Iran, Iraq was emboldened to assert itself in the Persian Gulf politics by hook or by crook. Then, the US became critical of Iraqi actions, expressed concern over Iraq’s defense-build up and alleged it of stealing American technology. This allegation was a good excuse to shroud its own involvement in and contribution to Iraq’s ambitious programs.

It is in this background of a little bit strained US-Iraqi relations that Iraq in July 1990 began threatening Kuwait and the UAE. Saddam Hussein had also taken up the cudgels against the US, accusing it of supporting Kuwait and the UAE in their "economic war against Iraq". Weigh against Iraq’s anti-US tirade, the US reaction to Iraqi moves was mild by all accounts.
This persuades one to infer that the US wanted that Iraq invaded Kuwait so that it could intervene on behalf of the aggrieved country to take on Iraq (55).

In a meeting with the US ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie, on July 25, Saddam Hussein had made his intention clear. He said to Glaspie “If we do not get what we want from Kuwait ...., we shall use force” (56). The Ambassador’s reply was “the US did not want to take sides in Intra-Arab disputes, like your border disagreement with Kuwait”. She even showed some sympathy for Iraq (57) while saying “I know you need funds. We understand that and our opinion is that you should have an opportunity to rebuild your country. She further stated that her country’s State Secretary had directed the US embassy officials in Baghdad to emphasize this instruction.

The content of Saddam-Glaspie discussion apart, the US did not forewarn its Arab and West European allies of Iraqi move. ‘Aviation Week and Space Technology’ reported that the US satellite intelligence had detected Iraqi tanks moving towards the Kuwaiti border on August 1. Though there was sufficient time to inform Kuwait about the move and to warn Iraq against attacking Kuwait, the US chose to remain silent. The CIA had also informed the administration about the possibility of Iraq invading Kuwait. Thus when the intelligence, the CIA, and media had reported about the developments that were likely to lead to Iraqi invasion (58), the US Administration’s contention that it failed to pre-empt Iraqi action because it relied on Arab allies’—Egypt, Saudi Arabia—reports that no such thing was going to take place sounds illogical.

On the day of invasion, when Bush was asked that whether he was taken by surprise, he replied “not totally by surprise, because we have good intelligence and our intelligence had informed me about what action might be taken” (59). On August 1st, Iraqi Ambassador to the US, Sadiq Al Mashat, was summoned by the State Department and told that Iraq must solve its dispute with Kuwait peacefully. But this too points to the mild nature of the US reaction to the situation preceding the invasion. By August 1st, Iraq had already made its intention clear and had moved a large portion of troops to Kuwaiti border, which was also detected by the US intelligence satellite. The US reaction to this situation, particularly when one of its allies was the targeted state, could have come in form of a warning, threatening Saddam of a reprisal. The summoning of Iraqi ambassador on the other hand looked like the part of routine diplomatic ritual.

As soon as Iraqis invaded Kuwait, the US administration’s statements and reactions turned, in stark contrast to the past week or month, harsh and unflinching. The US did not then try to mediate to settle the issue peacefully. Bush said that if Iraq withdrew “unconditionally” from Kuwait and the “legitimate” government of Kuwait was restored, the issue of settling the crisis peacefully would be taken up. Saddam Hussein’s invasion was linked to the actions of Adolf Hitler. And the US Secretary of Defense, Dick Cheney, was immediately sent to Saudi Arabia, following whose meeting with King Fahad, Saudi Arabia formally invited the US troops. This indicates that not only would have the US been requested to send its troops, but Cheney might have gone to Saudi Arabia to persuade it to seek the US military intervention. The Secretary of State would have been a better choice if the US wanted to confine its dialogue with
Saudi Arabia to political issues related to the crisis.

The US, which despite all evidences suggesting to an Iraqi attack on Kuwait, had pretended not to take the threat seriously, raised a new issue, with a measure of authority, that Saudi Arabia might be attacked by Iraq, though Saddam Hussein, unlike what he used to say before attacking Kuwait, categorically denied it. This was used as a pretext to send its troops in Saudi Arabia and take punitive actions against Iraq; “economic and otherwise”, as said Bush.

President Bush sent on 7 August troops, air power—utilizing an operational plan devised several years ago for possible use against the Soviet or Iranian military actions in the Persian Gulf region—, protect Saudi Arabian oil fields from possible Iraqi incursions on August 7, 1990. By November, the US forces numbered more than 2,30,000 army personnel and marines and more than 1,500 combat aircrafts of all types. US naval forces in the Persian Gulf were also augmented, additional air forces units were sent to Turkey and some were positioned in the UAE and Qatar.

A Central Command forward headquarter, under General Norman Schwarzkopf, was established in Saudi Arabia. On November 8th, Bush announced plan to deploy up to 200,000 additional troops to achieve what he termed as “an adequate offensive option”. At that time it was also agreed that the approval of Bush and King Fahad was required for any offensive action against Iraq. However, according to this agreement once the military action against Iraq was authorized by Saudi Arabia, the US forces would be free to operate exclusively under their own military commanders.

The logical conclusion of the US actions before and in the aftermath of Iraqi invasion can only be the fact that the US was pre-determined to wage a war against Iraq. The this took place only after about five and a half months of the arrival of the first batch of US forces in Arabian peninsula does not suggest that the US had opted war as the last resort, only if the economic embargo failed to achieve the stated goals. The economic embargo, in fact, was not used for this purpose (60). First, it at best could have secured Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, which, it is stated, was not the primary objective of the US. Instead, the US wanted to smash Iraq militarily and remove Saddam Hussein from power. Second, it had become clear within a few months that the embargo had not worked out, but the US waited for another few months to attack Iraq so that the numerical strength of the US forces turned out half a million (61). Thus, the embargo was used for buying the time for military preparedness. A war and not the embargo could serve all of the US interests; destruction of the military might of Iraq, removal of Iraqi threat to Saudi Arabia’s and Israel’s security, liberation of Kuwait and the emergence of a new international order with the US at its apex (62).

Beside attaining the required military strength several other reasons can be attributed to the US delaying the war. The US policy to give its military action a collective security sheen for the purpose of legitimizing it, was bound to take a considerable period of time. There was also tremendous public pressure in the beginning not to go for war. A section of US military analysts were against the war as they maintained that the US would incur heavy manpower loss and it did not have the required superiority to defeat a regional power on its (Iraq) home ground.
Instead, carrying out its war in the name of a collective security action gave its actions a semblance of 'legality'. It also helped the US to prevent the war being Americanized since its unilateral military adventures in the past against Libya or in Panama had invited sharp international criticism. The US forging a coalition with scores of other countries could also help to offset growing anti-war sentiments back home.

The other countries' involvement did not, as would apparently seem, signified the US weakness in accomplishing the task of the peace-keeping single-handedly. Instead, it established the US control over the UN and also pointed to the fact that “America leads the world in attempts to solve the conflict and others follow it as unequal partners” (63). Unlike the case of true multilateralism, as was the World War Big Three coalition, the US drama was “pseudo multilateralism: “A dominant great power acts essentially alone, but, embarrassed at the idea and still worshipping at the shrine of collective security, recruits a ship there, a brigade there, and blessing all around to give its unilateral actions a multilateral sheen” (64).

Of course, this time the US wanted, at least for placating the Public opinion, that the burnt of a war must be borne out by all the concerned countries; Arab Gulf states, Japan, Germany and other West European countries.

American people were dead against the waging of the war as Americans soldiers began to arrive in Saudi Arabia. The question that whether, it was morally permissible to sacrifice a single human life for the pursuance of an interest, even if legitimate one boggled the American public most.

They were haunted by the specter of thousands of dead bodies returning home after fighting "somebody else's " war. Americans, as stated above, were also perplexed as to why American soldiers be singularly made scapegoat when the interests of other countries around the world ware also at stake. They were equally concerned at the effects of war on nation's treasury as it was estimated and made public that it would cost one billion everyday to the US. Opinion surveys indicated that the majority of Americans did not favor war. Anti-war demonstrations by thousands of people became a routine affair for months. The Vietnam phobia and the fear of an spurt in “Islamic terrorism” were other aspects which contributed to the anti-war attitude of the people(65).

When the Operation Desert Storm was launched, public protests increased. However, with the stunning successes against Iraq at the cost of unexpectedly low casualties the national pride and jubilation overshadowed the initial dismay. Electronic media played the most significant role in transforming people’s attitude towards the war as it beamed the US victory live.

Thus, Bush finally managed to win popular support. However it did not last long. As soon as the euphoria of the victory died down, the negative effects of the war began to be felt by ordinary American. He held the war was by and large futile for common man. He reflected this disillusionment by defeating Bush, who, it was being unanimously said, would be elected unopposed for the second term.
As regards the US objectives behind unleashing a war against Iraq, the most important was to usher in the post cold war era as the undisputed monarch of the world. This emanated from both the opportunity the end of the cold war had provided and the danger the possibility of the emergence of multilateral world order posed. The US decline as the superpower was inherent in the vanishing of the Soviet Union. The West European countries did not need to rely on the awesome military might of the US to be protected against the Soviet power. They, mainly Germany, started asserting themselves as economic and technological superpower. China and Third World countries, with weapons of mass destruction, pretended to challenge the US military might in their respective regions if not worldwide.

The Gulf crisis came as an opportunity to the US to check its diminishing power status. It provided a chance to reinforce the centrality of military strength in the international politics. The US could demonstrate that the West had to fall in line with it to tackle a regional issue of immense importance to their security and economies. The US could emphasize that the economic well-being of West Europe would rest with the country which could assure an uninterrupted supply of oil from Persian Gulf to them. Most importantly, it could bring home the point to the Western European powers that they alone could not take up a Third World challenge to their economic interests.

For the Third World countries the tackling of the Persian Gulf crisis by the US was a reminder, that they were no match to the US military prowess. For a Third World country aspiring for a regional power status independent of the US it implied that the countries from their own regions preferred the US unilateralism over their regional supremacy.

The end of the cold war came as an opportunity to the US to impose unilateralism. The US could target the weaker Third World states without the fear of its move being deterred by the Soviet Union. It was far easier for the US to establish a master-client relations with West Europe as well as the allies in the Third World as their clout to play one superpower against other diminished.

All other important US objectives of war flowed from it. For instance, the oil was a central issue in this crisis not because its supply was endangered and the prices had begun shooting, for oil continued flowing from the region and the price hike that followed the Iraqi invasion was the result of panic. Some analysts have even gone to the extent of arguing that this panic was created by the US. The US had three months of reserves —nearly 600 million barrels—to avoid the panic. The inflated price justified increased exploration and exploitation in Alaska offshore and elsewhere. The additional revenue essentially was utilized in the conducting of the Operation Desert Storm.

What, therefore, was at the heart of the issue was the question as to who owned the oil, the users or the producers. In USA's view a Third World power could not sit over the largest reserves of oil in the world to deny the consumers the oil and influence the world oil price. In fact, Iraqi effort to increase oil prices to a reasonable level was not all that threatening to the US. What was unacceptable to US was the absence of the US influence in decision making.
process pertaining to the price and production of oil (70). Also, the US did not want that an
oil-rich country with an investment over 100 billion abroad was occupied by Iraq, who would deny
it a regular flow of Arab wealth in form of investment, assets and recycled petrodollars.

The oil was important in a few other aspects also. Once the war led to the liberation of
Kuwait it along with other US friendly oil producing countries would step up the production
to deluge the market. Thus the oil would remain cheaper in the 90s despite an increase in the
global demand of oil. This proves that the war was fought against Iraq not to set the turbulence
in oil market, resulting from Iraqi invasion, in order but in the interests of a long-term oil policy.

As stated above a strong Iraq had become a liability to the US after the end of Iran-Iraq
war and the cold war. With Iran still smarting from its defeat, Iraq had turned from a friend (being enemy’s enemy) into a potential threat to the US and its allies in the region. It was too
aggressive, too ruthless, too unpredictable, too untrustworthy and above all too independent
and ambitious. Therefore, it needed to be destroyed if their came a golden opportunity to realize
this goal.

This explains the US stubborn rejection of moves to find out a peaceful solution to the crisis.
Though apparently the US was right in maintaining that no peace without the aggressor country’s
withdrawal was morally justifiable, but its insistence on peace before withdrawal in the case of Israeli
occupation of Palestine underlines that the US is principally against such a peace formula. This
strengthens the doubt that the US wanted the settlement of the Iraq-Kuwait issue not before it
settled its scores with Iraq. The centrality of Iraqi military destruction in the US war objectives
got proved retrospectively. While Iraqi military destruction was only partly achieved during the
45-day war, the US did not relent as it activated the UN to complete the unfinished task. Thus
a host of resolutions were adopted at the Security Council which envisaged total dismantling
of Iraqi missile force and the weapons of mass destruction. The Security Council resolutions
also called for an international arms embargo on transfer of arms and military related technology
to Iraq.

Aware of Saddam’s ambitions, the US knew that mere destruction of Iraq would not do.
Removal of Saddam was equally necessary. Bush, it is reported, directed the CIA to destabilize
Iraq politically and get rid of Saddam by any possible means( 71). The economic embargo,
among other things, aimed at starving Iraq, leading to a popular upsurge against Saddam’s
regime.

Bush did not rule out an anti-Saddam coup during the war. He had also urged the Iraqi
military and the people to force Saddam to “step aside”. A large section of media persons,
particularly those belonging to Israeli lobby, held the view that the Kuwaiti crisis could not be
solved unless Saddam was removed. Les Aspin, the chairman of the powerful House Service
Committee wished that destruction of Iraqi military capability and the removal of Saddam went
hand-in-hand. This Congressman was willing to tolerate a million men army without Saddam
Hussein than the vice versa”(72).

Security, both internal and external, of Arab allies as well as Israel also prompted the US
to destroy Iraq. Once The US had already risked popular backlash in the Arab countries by
deploying its forces there, it had become incumbent upon it to decimate Iraq so that Arab
people’s morale could dim and the governments proved vindicated. It was also imperative upon
the US to destroy Iraq to the extent that it ceased to be a threat to Saudi Arabia.
Another US consideration was to “clip the wings” of Saddam Hussein before he brandished both chemical weapons and missiles against Israel. The disadvantages of leaving Iraq scot-free were numerous. Had Saddam Hussein’s military machine been left intact, Saudi Arabia would have become a long term security pre-occupation for the US, an obligation that would have been expensive and embarrassing. The added revenues provided by the utilization of production from Kuwait were destined to augment Saddam’s financial capability to develop of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. The US interests vis-a-vis the GCC allies could have become a hostage to Iraq’s growing influence in the region. The US wanted to resuscitate the NATO and retain it under its suzerainty. Both the desires could be met by activating the NATO against Iraq. The US was perturbed over the NATO being called as redundant after the end of the cold war to an extent that the USSR had agreed that the united Germany could belong to the NATO. The West European members also developed it into a new entity wherein defence considerations would be secondary. The NATO’s participation in the war, on the other hand, promised to reinforce its importance as principally a military organisation.

THE SOVIET UNION AND THE PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

Soviet Union’s involvement in the Persian Gulf crisis was a self-recognition of its reducing clout as a power of international stature. Thus it did not differ from the US on basic issues involved in the crisis.

At the same time, the crisis was seen by the Soviet policy makers as an opportunity to salvage its image. Thus the Soviet Union tried in vain to carve out for itself the role of peace broker. By refusing to participate in collective security actions, the decision to which effect had emanated from its inability to bear its cost in the prevailing economic condition, the Soviet Union made a last ditch effort to give an impression that it could still act independently.

As soon as Iraq invaded Kuwait, the USSR condemned the Iraqi Aggression, demanding unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. This followed the US Secretary of State’s visit to Moscow to confer with his Soviet counterpart, Eduarde Shverdandze. After that, the two countries issued a joint statement which condemned the Iraqi aggression and included an assurance from the Soviet Union to stop arms supplies to Iraq. The joint statement set the tone of Soviet policy towards the Persian Gulf crisis. It indicated that the Soviet Union was not looking at the crisis from the traditional master-allies relations angle. Rather, the USSR showed willingness to cooperate with the US in seeking an end to the crisis. Subsequent developments pertaining to the crisis brought some changes in Soviet attitude, but its policy remained more or less the same.

Soviet Union was expected to play the role of a moderator in the UN Security Council to soften the US-led international aggressiveness towards Iraq. However, the USSR did not only facilitate a smooth passage of the UNSCRs but also agreed to comply with them faithfully(73).

During the debate on UINSCR 660 (1990), envisaging economic embargo against Iraq the Soviet representative at the UN bseved“We do not advocate hasty decisions, but we must face the fact that the pace of the events taking place—the events which started with the sudden invasion of Iraqi forces of Kuwait—dictates that we take the necessary steps in accordance with
In the case of the resolutions permitted military action against Iraq, the Soviet Union adopted a little different line of action. The Soviet government maintained that it preferred a political solution and insisted that the war must be carried out under the auspices of the UN (75).

The USSR did not have any other option than voting in favor of the resolution authorizing the war. The Soviet veto could not stop the US from taking an action outside the scope of the UN. While, the consequence of such a drastic step by the Soviet Union meant its international isolation politically as well as economically. In fact, the war was not in the interests of the Soviet Union as it meant a red signal to Soviet peace efforts, the only instrument in the hand of that country to make its presence felt in the Persian Gulf crisis. The war was also not in the economic interests of the USSR.

The USSR adopted a three-pronged strategy. It did stay away from multilateral military build up in the Persian Gulf, dissuaded the US from attacking Iraq unless all peace efforts exhausted and expressed its objection to the war not being conducted under UN umbrella (77). Gen. Mikhail Moideyev, the Soviet chief of staff, went on warning that any military action in the Persian Gulf would lead to the Third World War. Gorbachev desperately tried to see that a peaceful solution to the crisis was found before the deadline finally ended. He sent Academician Primakvo to Baghdad as special envoy to persuade Iraq to withdraw at the last moment.

Soviet Union categorically refused to participate, even symbolically, in the war on January 17, the day the war started. Its opposition to the war sharpened as it openly criticized the Allied Forces bombing on civilians. On January 29, the USSR issued a joint statement with the US which said bombing would end if Iraq promised an unconditional withdrawal. The USSR also joined Iran and a few other countries in opposing the US wanton destruction of Iraqi military and civilian targets during the air raids (78).

WEST EUROPE’S, JAPAN’S RESPONSE TO THE GULF CRISIS

West European countries and Japan sided with the US. France can be figured out as the country which maintained a little distance from the US. So did Germany, albeit to a limited extent, by restricting its support to the US to financially contributions.

Commonality of interests with the US brought the allied powers together. Free flow of oil was more essential to West European countries, even more so for Japan, than the US. The answer can only be found in the unique concentration around the oil of the Persian Gulf.
Petroleum explains why international consensus and action have been achieved in this case—but not, for example, in the case of Palestinians.

Saddam also contributed to the US-West Europe-Japan solidarity by remaining obdurate on the question of withdrawal from Kuwait. Otherwise, France's search for a honorable settlement of the issue and Japan's preference for the avoidance of war could have caused chinks and fissures between them and the US which also determined to resolve the issue by the use of force against Iraq. After all the allies were more concerned with the issue of the uninterrupted supply of oil than the total destruction of Iraq or the removal of Saddam, the latter was the US's principal goal.

Saddam was also responsible for enraging France, a US ally not blindly toeing the line of action like the UK. France was looking for a peaceful solution to the issue. On September 14, Iraqi soldiers forcibly entered the French embassy in Kuwait. France condemned this as aggression and demanded the prosecution of the persons responsible for attacking its embassy. The French demands were rejected by Iraq. By then France had not decided to send its troops in the region to join those of the US and other countries. However, soon after the aforementioned incident, France changed its mind (79).

France also acknowledged a linkage between Kuwaiti crisis and Palestinian issue and urged the US to take up the latter one as soon as the Kuwaiti crisis was resolved. France also tried to convince Iraq on this count.

West Europe and Japan condemned the Iraqi aggression and froze the assets of Iraq and Kuwait. They also hailed the US-Saudi Arabia decision regarding the deployment of friendly states' forces in Saudi Arabia. These countries soon began sending their troops in the region. France, however, made only verbal commitment in this regard with the Mitrand government announcing that it would positively respond to a Saudi and Kuwaiti request for military and technical aid. It also decided to strengthen its naval and air presence in the Persian Gulf.

Later, France also sent its troops and announced that it would join an attack against Iraq if that was carried within the framework of collective Security action as envisaged in the UN Charter. Otherwise, the French government decided, it would take part in a military operation against Iraq only if that country attacked a third country, say Saudi Arabia or Israel (80).

France and the UK deployed modest-sized ground and air forces in Saudi Arabia and the UAE. France sent a troop of 9,000 men. It also deployed six destroyers and frigates, three support ships, one command ship, Mirage Jaguar fighter bombers and transport planes in the region (81).

Other European states despatched token forces. Japan decided to provide $ 6 billion aid to war efforts and Germany $ 1 billion. British and French naval forces also enforced the UN economic sanctions on Iraq by interdicting Petroleum and other shipments coming from Iraq.
The European countries confirmed their participation in the war on January 14, by deciding unanimously to abandon their peace initiatives.

Allies' participation was not as forthcoming as that of the US. The US also expressed resentment on the lack of support from them, resenting that this was despite the fact that their dependence upon the Gulf oil was far more acute than that of it. The total troops strength of the allied powers in the Persian Gulf was merely 50,000 as against the USA's 4,30,000.

UNITED NATIONS AND THE PERSIAN GULF CRISIS

The United Nations, which till the eve of the Iraqi invasion was beset with the problem of failing to respond to a crisis in time, lost no time to discuss the situation that followed the August 2 developments. During the debate, the Iraqi invasion was unanimously described as unacceptable and unbelievable. The Security Council passed a resolution which determined that breach of peace was committed by Iraq and asked it to withdraw unconditionally to the position as located before the invasion (82). This resolution was followed by many more which, taken together, called for restoration of Kuwait, imposition of economic sanctions on Iraq and the use of minimum force for the enforcement of such sanctions.

The Security Council Resolution 661 (1990) imposed economic sanctions on Iraq, “one of the broadest set of sanction ever put in place”. The resolution called upon all the states to prevent import, export and transshipment of all commodities and produce (including oil) to or from Iraq and Kuwait and stop the transfer of funds, military equipment and weapons to Iraq. The resolution, however, exempted foodstuff, medical goods under “humanitarian circumstances” from the items banned under the embargo. The international community was also requested to provide all possible assistance to the legitimate government of Kuwait and protect its assets. The said resolution also asked not to recognize any regime planted by Iraq in Kuwait. The resolution also constituted a committee of all the members of council to supervise the progress of the implementation of the sanctions.

The Security Council Resolution 665 (1990), which was voted in favor by all the members present with Cuba and Yemen abstaining, virtually allowed the naval blockade of Iraq(83). It called upon the maritime powers in the region “to use such measures that commensurate to the specific circumstances as may be necessary under the authority of the Security Council” to interdict all maritime shipping from and to Kuwait to inspect and verify their cargoes and destinations and to ensure strict implementation relating to economic sanctions against Iraq.

The UNSC adopted resolution 666 on September 14 (1990) which tried to resolve the intricate question of supply of food and medical items to Iraq and Kuwait under “humanitarian circumstances”. The strategy it evolved was to prevent uninterrupted flow of food items and medical goods (84) and deny the Iraqi government control over the supplies made under the humanitarian circumstances. The text, adopted by all the members with Cuba and Yemen voting
against it, directed the Security Council Committee to keep the situation regarding the supply of foodstuffs to Iraq under constant review. It requested the Secretary General to collect information from United Nations and other appropriate humanitarian agencies on the availability of food in Iraq and Kuwait. As and when the committee felt that the supply of foodstuffs be restored to it was required to report to the SC for appropriate action and authorization. After the authorization the foodstuffs were permitted to be distributed through UN agencies in cooperation with the humanitarian agencies in order to ensure that they reached the intended beneficiaries.

Passing 12 resolutions in a row the UN did not, as it has been advocated, get reinvigorated. Instead, it was a test-case of the US abduction of the same. For, its limited involvement in and clumsy reaction to other conflicts, which preceded and followed the Persian Gulf crisis, point to the fact that the UN’s collective security action over Iraq did not emanate from its conscience. Instead, it fell victim to the wishes and whims of a single power.

The hijacking of the UN by the US exposed the very irrationality of an undemocratic provision in the Charter, the establishment of the Security Council authorized to take executive actions with each of its member vested with a ‘veto power’. This, in effect, means that the UN can become captive to the wishes and whims of a single power. The Persian Gulf crisis exposed this to its hilt.

Also, the crisis questioned the efficacy of the “veto power”. The exercising of the veto, as was demonstrated time and again, is related by the veto bearing country to its national interests than the interests of the world community as a whole. If previously the over use of the veto prevented the UN to resolve any crisis. The absence of veto bearing voice in the Persian Gulf crisis led to the adopting of one resolution after another, not allowing the diplomatic efforts the required time to succeed in ending the crisis non-violently.

In other words, when a major global power is ruling the roost in international arena no power can prevent it from utilizing UN’s services in pursuit of its goals and objectives. This way the Persian Gulf crisis established that the US dominated this world body after the end of the cold war. The US behaved in such a dictatorial manner in the UN that it did not even consult the Secretary General and never took the matter to the General Assembly.

The US domination indicates the decline of this world body. This is because the UN might not be brought into scene in those crises whose solution does not serve the US interests (Bosnian crisis, for example), where the US does not need to invoke the UN to legitimize its involvement or where the US wants to take the credit all alone (Palestine accord).

In addition, in order to take punitive action the UN would always look to the US, for only it can make such a large contribution to the UN’s peace-keeping operations and influence other member countries to do the same. The problems such as the composition of UN forces, command and control of the UN-sponsored operations and, most importantly, the financing of such operations will be a grave obstacle to a UN collective security action not supported by the US.
The UN's authorization of war against Iraq raises a moot point. That is whether the UN's military actions under its international obligation to establish and protect peace and security are morally justified. The sufferings Iraqis have undergone due to economic embargo, the number of civilian Iraqi casualties during the allied forces' carpet bombings and damage done to the properties for civilian use suggest that they are not. The blame the UN must shoulder for the sufferings the Iraqi civilians are exposed to can not be transferred to Saddam Hussein accusing him of being responsible for all this. People of an undemocratic political system should not be made to suffer from a punitive action taken against their governments as they do not influence its decisions.

The cruelty inherent in the undertaking of UN's moral obligation by another state on behalf of it can only be mitigated if the UN instead of authorizing a concerned states to carry out military operation under the collective security action itself takes the charge and in the course of the proceedings sees that laws of the war particularly those pertaining to the protection of civilian (and their properties) of the targeted country are strictly adhered to.

The UN can't be said to have rejuvenated due to its role in a crisis in which its charter was blatantly violated (85). First, The collective security action was not undertaken under the UN command.

Second, the UNSCRs called for liberation of Kuwait and not the attack on Iraq. Actions inside the country targeted to be punished can be taken under extraordinary circumstances, For example the one in which without destroying the occupying power, the withdrawal can not be secured. But in case of the task of liberating Kuwait could be accomplished by the allied forces by landing their troops in Kuwait with adequate air cover to throw the Iraqi forces out from there (86).

EFFORTS TO BRING PEACE

The Persian Gulf crisis can be marked for the mooting of numerous peace plans in its short duration of four months, yet none yielding the desired results.

The first of these proposals came from Iraq itself only on August 2, 1990. The three-point Iraqi peace proposal demanded the resolution of all the West Asian problems simultaneously and on the same principle and basis as set by the UN Security Council, immediate withdrawal of the US forces and its replacement by an Arab force with its size and area of deployment as decided by the UN Secretary General and the constituents of the force by Iraq and Saudi Arabia in consultation with each other, and the exclusion of Egyptian force as they "are in the US plot against Iraq".

On August 25, the PLO Chairman, Yasser Arafat, announced a three-stage peace plan which stipulated the freezing of military build up in the Persian Gulf, withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and the international forces from Saudi Arabia and its replacement by both UN and
Arab Peace Keeping forces, and setting up of a committee chosen by the Arab League to discuss the territorial aspect of the conflict.

The PLO plan was presented in a modified version as the PLO-Jordan Plan on August 28. Beside envisaging the Iraqi and Foreign forces’ withdrawal, the plan proposed an agreement between the Kuwaiti government and that of Iraq on the latter having administrative control over some parts of Kuwait followed by plebiscite in Kuwait.

PLO came out with another Peace Plan on September 4. This plan was disclosed by Arafat’s deputy in the Al-Fatah organization of the PLO in an interview with French newspaper “Liberation”. A four-point plan, it called for a guarantee from the US that it would not attack Iraq’s chemical plants and nuclear facilities, Iraqi withdrawal from all of Kuwait except Bubiyan so that Iraq could have an access to sea, establishment of Iraqi-Kuwait border with Iraq possessing the Al-Rumeilah oil field, and plebiscite in Kuwait. This plan also maintained that Emir of Kuwait be bared from returning to Kuwait, unless the Plebiscite was held.

On August 31, the Arab League Proposed a five-point Peace Plan. This envisaged immediate release of hostages by Iraq, a guarantee from Iraq on the safety of Arab laborers in Kuwait, return of royal family to Kuwait and a guarantee from Iraqi government that it would not mishandle the Kuwaiti assets. The Proposal also condemned Iraqi invasion and refused to recognize its annexation of Kuwait.

In the month of September, Libya mooted a peace plan whose provisions included withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait and its replacement by a UN force, withdrawal of US troops and its replacement by an Arab or Muslim force, lifting of economic embargo on Iraq, Kuwaiti surrender of two islands and the Rumeilah field to Iraq, political self-determination for Kuwait people, a unified Arab Oil Policy, and immediate negotiations on debt repayment by and compensation to Iraq.

ON January 14, 1991, the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) appealed to Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait and thus avoid war in the interests of Muslims of his country and those of the other Persian Gulf countries.

Outside the Arab world, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) also tried to seek a political solution to the crisis. In a meeting of NAM foreign ministers on October 4, 1990, the federal secretary of Foreign Affairs of Yugoslavia, the then chairman of the NAM, was authorized to evolve NAM’s position on the crisis and use his good offices to resolve it. The minister thereafter visited a host of countries including Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. During his visit to Saudi Arabia the minister also met the dethroned ruler of Kuwait.

Beside the Arab countries, he visited France, Soviet Union, the US and the EEC headquarters. He also met the UN Secretary General during his world tour. NAM sought unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait as the pre-condition for any peace talks. However, it also maintained that after the Iraqi withdrawal the foreign troops must also pull out from the Persian Gulf region followed by an Iraqi-Kuwaiti negotiation on border
dispute issues. The NAM was also for a guarantee to Iraq that it would not be attacked. It was for the establishment of a regional security set up in the Persian Gulf sans any link with the outside military powers. It contended that immediately after the Iraqi withdrawal the whole complex of Middle Eastern Question be addressed, possibly by convening an international conference (87).

France was the only country from West Europe active in peace efforts. In an address to the UN General Assembly on September 24, 1990 the French president said that if Iraq agreed to withdraw, all the Middle East problems could be negotiated. It was a four-phase plan which envisaged in first place the withdrawal of Iraqi forces, restoration of the sovereignty of Kuwait and determining "the democratic will of the people of Kuwait" in the second stage, convening of an international conference on issues like presence of foreign troops in Lebanon, Palestinians' rights for self-determination and the right of Israel to live in security in the third stage, and formulation of an Arab agenda on arms control and intra-regional cooperation in the last stage.

The Soviet Union was also engaged in finding out a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Soviet President sent his special advisor, Yevgene Primakov, to Bhagdad and Washington. After his meeting with Saddam Hussein, Primakov declared that the latter had wished to withdraw provided he was allowed to retain the Bubiyan island and the Rumeilah oil field. Though the Soviet Union did not make any comment on Iraqi offer, Primakov's statement that he was not pessimistic about the prospect of a political solution to the crisis, indicated Soviet Union's implicit support to the afore-mentioned Iraqi position(88).

Primakov went to Bhagdad again during the war (February 12, 1991) and declared in his subsequent visit to Iran that he saw "rays of light" in Iraqi position. Gorbachev presented a peace proposal on February 19, which called for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait and negotiation of the Palestine problem. On February 21, the Soviet Union also announced that Iraq had agreed to withdraw unconditionally. On February 22, Moscow said that Iraq accepted the Gorbachev proposal.

The US, which maintained that no peace was possible unless Iraq withdrew immediately, unconditionally and completely from Kuwait(89), also resorted to diplomatic means in the end of November. On 30th of that month, the US President made a dramatic announcement that he was sending the Secretary of State, James Baker, to Geneva to confer with Iraqi Foreign Minister, Tariq Aziz, and invited Tariq Aziz to Washington for direct negotiations. Iraq agreed to send Tariq Aziz for Geneva negotiations scheduled to be held on January 9. On January 5, Bush said in a message to nation that in the meeting Baker would reiterate the US position that Iraq should withdraw immediately unconditionally and completely from Kuwait. On January 9, the two officials met for seven hours. The talks failed. Baker said that during the meeting he did not find Iraq willing to withdraw from Kuwait.

Before the war broke out, the UN Secretary General, Perez de Cuellar, visited Bhagdad in his last ditch effort to see that the issue was settled without the war being made. During his
meeting with Saddam Hussies, Cuellar tried to convince him that in case Iraq withdrew, it would not be attacked. There will be subsequent lifting of the embargo followed by the withdrawal of foreign forces and the convening of an international conference on the Palestine issue.

All of the above-mentioned peace plans proved futile. Much of the explanation behind this lies in the biased character of the plans. These were clearly tilted in favor of either of the sides. The PLO Plan or the one it proposed in union with Jordan was totally biased in Iraq's favor. In fact, one can gauge the growing liaison between PLO and Iraq in the latter's peace plans. The one it proposed on August 25 was quite impartial as it asked for the simultaneous withdrawal of both the Iraqi and foreign forces. But within two days of it, the PLO along with Jordan came out with a new plan which called for holding of plebiscite in Kuwait also. The one PLO proposed on September 4, went a step ahead by proposing that Kuwaiti Emir be not allowed to return before the holding of the plebiscite.

Qaddafi's insincerity in trying to find out a peaceful solution to the crisis reflected in his peace plans as these were more or less an endorsement of Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. For, these advocated that Iraq be permitted to retain two Kuwaiti islands and people be accorded the right of political self-determination, meaning thereby Iraq could retain Kuwait if its people wished so.

The Arab League plan did not even ask for a simultaneous or post-Iraqi evacuation withdrawal of the foreign forces. It was accordingly rejected by Iraq's sympathizers in the League and, therefore, turned out to be a non-starter (90).

The OIC, where Saudi Arabia wielded much influence cashed in on Islam to call for a unilateral withdrawal of Iraq, evading all other related questions such as the Palestine issue and the withdrawal of foreign troops.

The NAM set the Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait as pre-condition for the settlement of any other West Asian problem. France's proposal was more or less the same. But the reference to the restoration of "democratic will of the people" drew much interests. It could mean either of the two; to grant people the right to determine their future political system and Sabah's family's return to power.

The USSR claimed to have broken the ice twice i.e. persuading Iraq to accept the Security Council resolution which firstly and formostly demanded Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait; However, no sooner than the USSR made these claims Iraq denied it. The US also rejected Soviet peace proposals. Thus the shuttling between Baghdad and Washington by Primakov by and large proved a futile exercise.

Even the US proposal to hold negotiations with Iraq was a political move. A number of factors suggest that it aimed at buying time. The situations before January 15 i.e the pre-monsoon session in Arabia, were not ideal for war as heavy rains were expected which were poised to turn a good portion of land on Iraq-Kuwait border into marshland, restricting the movement of tanks and APC's. Till then public opinion was not mobilized in favor of war. The West European allies, barring the UK, were skeptical of the utility of military action. So were
the Arab nations, with Syria, Egypt and even Saudi Arabia having yet not been able to decide that whether they would take part in any assault on Iraq.

However, once the pre-monsoon period came to an end, the US-Arab countries-Western allies evolved a consensus on the question of war, the US began harping on that it would not agree for anything less than an Iraqi withdrawal during Baker-Aziz meeting at Geneva. No such statement was made by Bush when he offered Saddam Hussein the olive branch.

The possibility of peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf crisis became a casualty to US and Iraq's uncompromising and confrontationist positions. The US stood for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal and Iraqi insisted on linking his withdrawal to that of Israel from the occupied territories.

In view of the fact the US was more interested in destroying Iraq and the linking of two West Asian issues by the latter was a political ploy, it was hardly likely that the US could agree to simultaneous resolution of both the issues on Iraq to the solution of the two crisis one by one, though both the options were well-meaning and attainable.

In the initial stages, Saddam's tough posture eluded peace. In response to French Proposal of September 4, Saddam put withdrawal of western forces and the lifting of economic embargo as pre-conditions. He also declared that he had no intention to withdraw from Kuwait (91). While at the eve of and during the war the same rigid attitude was exhibited by the US. Bush ensured himself that January 9 Baker-Aziz meeting did not succeed by stating that the talks would be used to ask Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally.

Despite the Soviet contention on February 23 that Iraq was ready to withdraw, which was also not denied by Iraq, Bush said that it did not go far enough and went ahead launching land war on February 24. Since Iraq had partially accepted the US conditions, diplomacy should have been given one more chance by deferring the land war for a few days.

In fact, as the January 15 deadline approached nearer the US toughened its stand on peace. At the beginning of the crisis Bush was reported as saying that a mere statement of intent on the part of Saddam to withdraw would be enough, but when the war started with US nearly getting closer to its main objective of destroying Iraq, it rejected to announce cease-fire even though Iraqi President ordered a pull out from Kuwait (92).

US was also against an “Arab Solution” to the Kuwaiti issue which reflected in its cajoling Saudi Arabia into inviting American forces. US reportedly persuaded King Fahad not to attend Algerian president Shadli Ben Jedid who was to visit Saudi Arabia to arrange a meeting between Saddam Hussein and the King on their border.

THE COURSE OF WAR
It does not sound logical to say that the military action against Iraq was launched as a last resort before which the United States waited for economic sanctions to make desired effect on Iraq or diplomatic means to succeed. It had become clear much before January 17 that the economic sanctions had failed to dampen Iraqi resoluteness. Various diplomatic initiatives also failed in the face of US as well Iraq's uncompromising stands.

This may lead one to believe that the war was inevitable. To launch it on January 17 was a strategic decision. The deployment of around 400,000 troops by the US could be completed only towards the end or the beginning of December, 1990. The allied forces camping in Saudi Arabia also needed two to three months to get acclimatise with the geo-climatic conditions of the Arabian desert.

The US military strategists had warned their government that a Panama-like surgical strike was not possible against Iraq. It was, therefore, advised to enter the war after full preparation. Back home, during the first few weeks following the Iraqi invasion the public mood was also not in favor of the war. Americans and Europeans were of the view that oil—the main concern of the US—was coming from the Persian Gulf region without interruption. In view of this, the American public opinion held, it would be unreasonable to start a war which was going to cause about 50,000 deaths on the side of the allied forces alone.

Since the cost of the maintenance of the presence of the US-led Allied Forces was being borne by Saudi Arabia, there was no economic compulsion to return soon. Uncertainties regarding the participation of the Arab forces in an attack against Iraq, the Arab response if somehow Israel entered the war, the use of chemical weapons by Iraq and human casualties also persuaded US to defer the launching of an attack for an appropriate time.

During the debate before adopting the UNSC resolution which was meant to authorize collective security action against Iraq, January 15 was set as the deadline. This was also a strategic decision. For the period between January 1 and 15 happens to be the beginning of Monsoon session, therefore one or two heavy rains were not ruled out. In such a scenario, the US could not have been able launch at least the ground battle as the movement of heavy weapons like tanks, APCs would not have been possible in the marshy land on Iraq-Kuwait border.

When the war started the US led multinational forces (MNF) were about 550,000 in number. 250,000 of them were brought in the months of December and January alone. The MNF was armed with the laser guided smart bombs, heat-seeking missiles, electronic warfare measures to suffocate all communication of the enemy and an array of front-line aircrafts capable of dropping conventional as well as nuclear explosives. The attack was launched on a completely dark night of 17th January optimizing the effectiveness of precision bombs. The bombing began with the air force flying 2,000 to 3,000 sorties per day and cruise missile striking strategic targets including command and control centers and facilities producing chemical and biological weapons of Iraq.

The air strike tried to gain mastery over Iraqi skies by attacking air defense suite air strips and Iraqi aircrafts. The US also bombed refineries, power stations, political targets like
That how long the US would continue to bomb Iraq was kept close. Bush assured that it would be a six-day affair. This led many an analyst to believe that the US was for a quick victory. For, it wanted to avoid Israel being sucked into war and Iraq destroying oil wells in Saudi Arabia. However, a few other military analysts disagreed with this proposition. For, Iraq could be destroyed totally only in a long drawn out war. And if to kill Saddam was also one of the objectives of the MNF then the end of the war depended entirely upon the accomplishing of this task for which no time limit could be stipulated. Also, knowing the Iraqi strength at ground, the US did not want to start it before the morale of the Iraqi government and the army was destroyed (93).

Within a few days of the aerial attacks allies’ air strikes spread over civilian targets as well. This was partially the result of the allied forces’ failure to destroy Iraqi military infrastructure in full. Iraq managed to safe its military strength from total destruction displaying the art of surprise and deception. Iraq strewed countryside with plywood Scud missile launchers with artificial fire emitting heat from energy decoys. In addition, Iraq deployed full-sized plastic inflatable tanks purchased from the West. Use of these dummies enabled Iraqis to achieve tactical surprise, especially during the air campaign. They also dug themselves deep inside the ground, with the Republican Guard in concrete underground shelter to prevent casualties in enemy’s air attack (94).

Iraq attacked Israel with Scud missiles as soon as the war started. The Iraqi action was to provoke Israel to jump into the war so that the Arab forces particularly the one from Syria could withdraw themselves from the war. It was politically motivated more than military-oriented.

Firstly, the missile attacks were not regular. When Israel with the help of Patriots started neutralizing Iraqi missiles in mid-air Iraq had an option to increase the frequency of attacks and hurl not one but 25 missiles or so in a single attack. Israel did not posses required number of Patriots to counter Iraqi missiles attacks on such a large scale.

Fear of a nuclear attack from Israel, which would have been a logical option for Israel had it been exposed to the threat of total destruction from Iraq, served as deterrent to Iraq. Although Iraqi move against Israel was welcomed by Arab people, it failed to drive a wedge between the Arab and the rest of the allied forces. The USA dealt with the situation quite reasonably as it literally bribed Israel, in form of giving it financial assistance, to keep it away from the war. Saddam Hussein also erred in attacking Saudi Arabia simultaneously. This act of him gave the Arab governments an excuse to say that they would not part with the coalition forces even if Israel entered the war. They pointed out that Iraqi attacks did not look to be an extension of Arab-Israeli conflict as they themselves were being meted out same treatment from Iraq as was Israel.

The US scored a major success by completely jamming Iraqi air surveillance capability enabling it moving huge quantities of weapons, equipment and other support materials over
sparse lines of communications. This in turn helped the US to outmaneuver Iraqi force deployment. 100,000 sorties dropping 88,500 tons of bombs in 40 days destroyed Iraqi command and control facilities and restricted the flow of maintenance commodities to Kuwait to 2,000 tones a day from the requirement of 20,000 tones per day.

On February 24, President Bush ordered the Gulf command to eject Iraqi out of Kuwait. Allied forces struck into Kuwait and Iraq beforedawn on that day. There was light resistance from Iraq as a large number of troops surrendered.

Iraq had deployed nearly 170,000 troops consisting of four armored and six infantry divisions inside Kuwait and 2,50,000 in southern part of the country which adjoins Kuwait on border with Saudi Arabia. 1,05,000 Republican Guards were held as reserves, some around Bhagdad but mostly (100, 000) in southern part of the country in general area of Basra in two groups; one immediately north of Kuwait city and other Around Basra. Iraqis had constructed well fortified defenses all along the front, relying on a network of deep minefields and earth beams razor wires. Trenches had been dugged and filled with oil, to be ignited at the time of allied forces’ attack. Tanks and other support weapons were hidden inside strong points from where firing position could be taken on beams to engage attacking troops. A total number of, 50,000 mines had been laid all along the front line. The weapons Iraqi army was equipped with were not only of the most sophisticated quality, but were used in the eight-year long war with Iran, meaning that Iraqi army was quite efficient in employing them under desert conditions. Iraqi anti-aircraft defense was very formidable, it included hundreds of Soviet-built surface-to-air missiles and around 4,000 modern anti-aircraft guns. The Iraqi army was also aclamatized to the desert warfare.

According to some accounts, both the US and Iraq were not contemplating a land war. The US perception was that Iraq will not be able to survive its military machine after massive air offensive. Whereas, Saddam Hussein was under impression that aware of his country’s edge in land warfare with the specter of loosening thousands of lives and resultant domestic and international criticism in addition, Bush would like to avoid it.

But, when Saddam showed no sign to give up despite being bruised in about the month long aerial attack, the US planned a perfect air-land battle. It adopted an air-land battle strategy which implied air attacks on the rear areas to cut off supplying lines, destroy command and control centers and strike Republican Guard units toisolate it from the battle front. Air attacks was to be followed by rapid forays through enemy defenses by ground troops with the help of artillery, close air support and armored attacks, throwing the enemy off balance spreading fear, confusion and dismay in opposite’s camp.

General Schwarzkopf planned to move the allied forces swiftly to surround the Iraqis and pound them. The air power was to be used to break the will of the enemy to fight. The date for the ground offensive was fixed on 21 February (97). However, due to USSR’s efforts to negotiate Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait, it was postponed for February 24.

A day before the commencement of the ground offensive, the focus of the allied forces
shifted to the front, attacking tanks, troops minefields and artillery emplacements. The allied forces' used 15,000 pound bombs known as Daisey Cutters. These destroyed every thing in 300 foot diameter. The allied forces' decided not to concentrate on bombing the Republican Guards inside concrete bunkers and other units dug inside the ground. Instead, the strategy was to damage about 30 percent of the artillery of the enemy.

On February 24, the US 18th Corps comprising 82nd Airborne Assault and 24th Mechanised Infantry divisions along with the Third Armored Cavalry Regiment launched the extreme western hook with heavy French armored brigade of the French Dagnet Division protecting its western flank. The 101st Airborne Western division leaping from 400 helicopters established a logistic base.

On the morning of February 25, about the same time as 101st was cutting highway 8 further west, the 24th Infantry Division established itself on the Euphrates river near Al-Nasirriyah, achieving complete tactical surprise and taking the Iraqis aback. As a result thousand of Iraqisoldiers surrendered. The US forces also destroyed bunkers full of munitions, weapons and other stocks between Talil and Jalibaah airfield.

When 18th Corps offensive neared Basra, The Hmammurabi Armored Division of Iraq was forced 30 km west of Basra to give the battle ground to the arriving troops. The US forces were able to destroy at least six Hammuravbi battalions with artillery and ground support helicopters. At 3.30 a.m. on February 27, the Iraqi division broke contact and fled from the battle field.

The 7th Corps launched the shorter hook aiming for reserves held north of Kuwait city. The corps moving on a front of 90 km and ably supported by scout helicopters, were able to cover a distance about 200 kms, first going north and then turning east to entrap the Iraqi reserves.

The Saddam line was nothing more than a 10 foot high sand wall and without any troop defending it. The much talked about Iraqi defenses were pierced easily with earth beams being breached. The Iraqi army was expected to give spirited battle from its prepared defenses and inflict heavy casualties on the attacking forces. But without any worthwhile surveillance capability, close air support and a will to resist, the Iraqis decided against sacrificing themselves needlessly or fighting a lost battle.

Saddam Hussein, who was oblivious of the actual ground conditions in the main defenses, finally budged under massive onslaught by the allied forces and ordered the withdrawal of his forces from Kuwait. The withdrawing troops were caught defenseless on the Kuwaiti-Basra border. Their weapons and equipment was destroyed from the air. Even after the a cease-fire was declared, the allied forces' aircrafts kept pounding the retreating Iraqi forces. It was only on February 28, a presidential decree ended the carnage.

Iraq's 4000 out of 4280 tanks, 1856 out of 2750 APCs, 2140 out of 3110 artillery pieces were destroyed in 100 hours of ground offensive. Besides, 450 out of 650 aircrafts were lost in the war. over 100,000 Iraqi soldiers were captured as POWs and over 1,00,000 killed and wounded. The allies' casualties were relatively light, being 311 dead, 66 missing, 13 captured as POWs and 45 planes and 15 helicopters lost in action (98).
The war was a one-sided affair. The only consolation Iraq derived from it was that it managed to sustain enormous loss of men and material for about 44 days. While the most disastrous aspect of Iraqi performance was that it did not put up any resistance where it was expected to be the strongest. Iraq’s miserable performance in the war can be attributed to a number of factors. Saddam became the prisoner of his own defense strategy. The Iraqi army had turned Kuwait and south of it into a fortress by building powerful fortification along the Kuwait-Saudi border and as well as along the coast and laying extensive minefields. Because of this very reason, the Iraqi forces were easily cut off and encircled by troops advancing over undefended or poorly defended Iraqi territory in the direction of Nasiriyah and Basra. So says Babic Manojlo, “history has shown that ever since war became mobile maneuvering wars, no fortification produced the desired results” (99).

Topography the region also played its role in the defeat of Iraq. The Iraqi forces had only one route -- Aramaic to Basra -- open for their retreat. Between Nasiriyah Amarah and Basra there are vast marshes which exposed almost entire remaining Iraqi motorized units to air attacks along that single road. Herein comes the importance of air support factor. Being attacked from air while returning and without adequate anti-aircraft defenses as well as air protection, the Iraqi army had no chance to disengage and deploy. Shortly after the arrival of coalition troops in Saudi Arabia, most of Iraqis aircrafts were pulled back from air bases in southern Iraq and deployed further north out of easy range of opposing strike aircraft in the region. Hardly any Iraqi aircraft took to air, leaving the allied forces enjoy unhampered air supremacy. The allied forces could attack Iraqi forces at their will and prevent surveillance of their activities.

US space and electronic medium played an important role in Iraq’s defeat. These jammed Iraqi air surveillance, making it easier for the allied forces to move unmonitored on the one hand and expose the Iraqi incapability to match and neutralize US superiority in the field of precision guidance. Absence of foreign advisors and shortage of spare parts also had a telling effect on Iraqi fortunes in the war.

Another tactical mistake the Iraqis committed was to spread themselves all along the 240 km Kuwait-Iraq border, thus the entire length of defenses was held very thinly. The result was, what Von Clauswits had warned much before, “one who tries to hold up every ground thinly ends up holding nothing”.

Last but not the least, Saddam Hussein’s underestimation of enemy’s strength was largely responsible for the Iraqi defeat. Had he asked for counsel from his own intellectuals, those at the foreign office and military experts, there might have come advises to prepare a defense plan taking into consideration one’s weaknesses vis-a-vis the strong points of enemy’s defense preparedness and power to strike (100).

IMPLICATIONS OF THE WAR

THE VICTORIOUS: THE UNITED STATES:

From its victory over Iraq, the US emerged bestriding the narrow world like colossus with all others having been dwarfed before its might. Rusians lying low, Germans lost on their post unification reconstruction efforts, Third World, particularly the Arab countries, willingly
submitting themselves to the US suzerainty and Iraq being told to line up or face the ignominy of being whipped.

Though over a "second-rate power" (101) the US victory led to the establishment of the American hegemony over the existing international system. For, coinciding with the end of the cold war, the US victory meant that in the absence of a global power of its standing, America had the capability to punish the ambitious powers who were trying to fill the vacuum left by the Soviet Union's retreat. No less was it a lesson to the countries of the North which could use their newly gained economic strength for dominating the international political system. The Persian Gulf war highlighted their inability to protect their economic interests from a Third World Power and their compulsion to align their foreign policy behind that of the United States for their economic survival.

The US victory established that neither was the multi-polarisation of the world nor the restructuring of the international order on economic plank was in offing as the logical consequence of the end of the Cold War. In other words, the scenario that emerged from the end of the Persian Gulf crisis was that the country with a combination of military, economic, diplomatic and political assets would remain to be the leader of the world. The other contenders lagged far behind the US in this respect. Hardly, as the Persian Gulf war plausibly demonstrated, any other country was capable of being a decisive player in any conflict anywhere in the world.

The US victory over a small-sized country, with few million population armed with aging Soviet weapons and battle-hardened only against a regional enemy (Iran), can not undo the great advantages the US had reaped from it. This was the first war the US won after Second World War. The US fought stalemate in Korea and returned defeated from Vietnam. But the war against Iraq brought to focus that now equipped with laser guided bombs, spy satellites, world's most sophisticated aircrafts and an army capable of successfully conducting its military operations in far flung areas and alienated environment, the US was an indefatigable military power(102).

However, the US led 'New World Order' does not look to be a 'fixed' phenomenon. The role of the leadership of the world the US assumed during and after the Persian Gulf war needs repeated demonstrations. US intervention in a regional conflict may be blocked in the future by the yawing gap between the declining domestic resources and global strategic commitments.

The US involvement in the Persian Gulf crisis was the result of a combination of circumstances. The crisis of the magnitude of Iraqi invasion may continue to erupt but changing circumstances may dissuade the US from intervening in each and every crisis.

This is not merely presumption. For instance, the economic recession that followed and was ensued by the Persian Gulf war and the defeat of Bush are pointer to the fact that after overcoming the Vietnam syndrome (103), thanks to the victory against Iraq, the people of the US are under the spell of Persian Gulf War syndrome. They do not want US to play the role of global policeman when one's own house is not in order. The US intellectuals are divided
between the internationalists, who are for an unbound America defending its interests and its lofty ideas, like export of democracy everywhere in the world, and the isolationists or non-interventionists who maintain that America must avoid needless external engagements misusing the country’s power and strength to right very wrong in the world.

There are only a few flash points in the Persian Gulf where Western Europe might be tempted to line up with the US. In some other conflicts, they prefer from isolation to limited support to the US to pursue an independent policy. Thus the US leadership of the North in each and every sphere can not be taken for granted.

Of course, no other country of the world matches the combination of assets the US possesses. But its continuing decline as an economic power to reckon with will have its toll on the US foreign policy. The North dissociates its total submission to the US on security issues from its difference with the US on the latter’s global economic interests. They shall lend their support to the US if a common threat haunts both of them. But they, at the same time, are unlikely to yield to the US on the issues of economic interests. Over and above, the US can not contain West Europe’s economic hostility by threatening to use force (104).

The US victory over Iraq only accentuated its economic problems. The recession-hit economy, faring not up to its reputation in global economic competition and vibrant technological innovation in civilian sector (105), is going to affect adversely the added pressure of retaining the mantle of the only supper power status it acquired after defeating Iraq(106).

The threat to the US from the Third World countries, particularly those with the weapons of mass destruction, ceased at least for a short after its overwhelming victory over one such power, Iraq. But these countries have not ceased to exist as the powers possessing the weapons of mass destruction. They are, in addition, resisting to their best the US diplomatic pressure to dismantle their weapons. This brings home the point that once the Persian Gulf war recedes into history, the assertion by regional bullies can not be discounted. And what about the defiant powers like Iran or Ukraine, which is reluctant to dismantle its nuclear weapons and is the third largest nuclear power (107) in the world?. Their defiance of the US, that too at a time when it is ruling the roosts, coupled with their strategic decision to confront the US politically only, unlike Iraq, is the source of a bigger embarrassment for the US.

Beside this, growing antagonism towards the US among the Third World people, a logical corollary of US indiscriminate use of force against Iraq, is a cause of concern to the US policy makers, no matter most of the Third World governments are its allies. Since radical and revolutionary political/popular changes are always in store in this region, its people’s disillusionment with the US is a potential threat.

The Persian Gulf war might have become a license to the US military and political adventures abroad. But, at the same time, it has returned the course of the US foreign policy towards a domestic-economic agenda. There are greater pressures to reform its economy, end mitigate the budget and trade deficits, increase investment in education and infrastructure
and regain export competitiveness. Though directed towards regaining its economic superiority on global level, this also demands a little dissociation from political activism.

As far as the implications of the US victory for its West Asian policy are concerned, the US has succeeded in arresting its waning influence in the Persian Gulf, and West Asia as a whole. The Iraqi invasion made up the loss of clout the US was about to undergo due to the end of the Soviet threat to the regional countries. Now, the regional powers know that the US support is equally, rather more crucial, to combat a hostile from among themselves.

In fact, the Persian Gulf countries were never directly exposed to the Soviet threat, even not when the USSR invaded Afghanistan. The Soviet Union also tried to befriend the US allies. This gave them a bargaining power vis-a-vis the US. But the Iraqi threat was real and imminent. For the first time these countries realized the importance of the US to them. The fact that Iraq has not been written off by the US allies in the region is also going in favor of the US.

The US can rely on a long-standing and total dependence of West Asian countries on it. On political front, the US has roped in Syria as one of its regional allies. On diplomatic front, it has for the first time succeeded in mitigating the US-Arab differences on the Palestine issue. The security of the supply of oil has been ensured. To quote Sreedhar “in fact some argue that the US has in effect become an OPEC member”. (108) And a sort of informal security alliance with the oil-rich states exists. The West Asian partners of this alliance are well disposed to provide it with all the strategic facilities as well as finance its military adventures.

THE VICTORIOUS : ARAB STATES OF THE PERSIAN GULF:

The Persian Gulf crisis exposed the fragility of the regional security structure of the GCC, to an extent that its member-states have shed their policy of not entering into an apparent security alliance with the US. Their rejection of a regional security structure including Syria and Egypt to fill the void where they lack in, has reinforced their confidence in US/Western defense umbrella. They have evolved a more organized pattern of the US presence in the region. Bahrain has consented to become the headquarters of the US Central Command in the Persian Gulf. Kuwait has been regularly holding joint military exercises with the US (109). So have been the other GCC member-states. The Persian Gulf states have not stopped seeing Iraq as a threat. Iran continues to remain an untested regional power, and Islamic fundamentalism is a new and fast-emerging threat (110). They find the existing regional security system a mis-match to contain these threats and knowing that these are the matter of concern for the US as well, they find in US an ally and a far better alternative to rely upon.

On the issue of beefing up the GCC security, the member-states have entered into bilateral agreements and have also decided to give hi-tech weaponry teeth to their organization and raising a 100,000 strong armed-force to avoid a Kuwait type invasion (111). Yet these efforts are no match to the kinds of threat they are faced with. Bilateral security alliance, it does not seem, would come into force when one of the partners would weigh its commitment to come to the defense of the other one in terms of the likely repercussions of it on its national security and integrity. It has been proved time and again that by the mere possession of hi-tech weapons in the absence of a well-trained armed force can not deter a regional or external threat. And the
raising of a strong army of 100,000 men can not materialize given the fact that such a plan would call for a huge cut down in the size of its armed forces by each country. Thus the regional security through this method tends to weaken the national security of the GCC member-states.

The Persian Gulf crisis has weakened the GCC, although to a limited extent. There is an urge among the smaller states to come out of the shadow of the Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has emerged victorious from the war at the cost of undergoing a decline of its predominance in the region. Its image among the Arab masses and governments of the peninsular states is that of a meek power, unable to defend itself despite its large size and huge military infrastructure. After inviting mercenaries from Christian world, Saudis Arabia's image as the custodian of the holiest of Islamic shrines has also suffered a blow. Thus, in these circumstances the smaller states can be expected to come out of the yoke of Saudi Paternalism.

The crisis has served a useful purpose in bringing home a point to them that their securities are also at stake in a crisis centering around Saudi Arabia. They have reacted to this revelation in different manners. While some states, like Oman and Qatar, advocate inclusion of Iran into a regional security and political system the others, like Qatar, do not approve a confrontationist attitude towards Iraq.

The GCC solidarity, in fact, came under a serious threat when Qatar threatened to pull out from it in retaliation to Saudi intrusions in its territory in 1992, preceded by a row between the two countries over the border issue. During his visit to Iran the Deputy Foreign Minister of Qatar Sheikh Thani was reported as saying “the Arabs should unite with Iran against certain Western Powers, which are seeking their own interests in the strategic Persian Gulf region”. This is a pointer to a scenario in which Iran can either be successful in pulling one or two member out of the GCC or using them as its advocates in seeking the membership of the GCC.

The Persian Gulf crisis gave a new dimension to intra-Arab rivalry. There were a few re-alignments. Syria joining the Conservative or the Pro-West Arab fold. However, the breaking of old alignments was more apparent. The long and solid links between Riyadh And Amman, two of the West Asian premier monarchies, almost raptured. Saudi-YAR relations also turned hostile due to YAR’s support to Iraq.

The relations between PLO/Palestinians and the conservative Arab regimes, —the latter were the main financer of their struggle against Israel beside being a host to thousands of Palestinian workkers — got strained. The Saudi government took repressive actions against the Palestinian residents for their support to Iraq. The Kuwaiti government deported 350,000 to 750, 000 Palestinian residents when it was restored to power. Those who escaped the Sabahs' ire are earning 40 percent less than what they used to get prior to Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Other Gulf countries also took repressive actions against Palestinians. The UAE and Qatar ousted Palestinian workers, the PLO diplomats and expelled the Palestinians holding key positions in government and oil companies (112).

Like the Palestinians and the PLO the Palestinian issue, however, was not the casualty
of the Gulf crisis. Its internationalization by Iraq persuaded the US, desperate for salvaging its image as aggressor, to initiate along with the USSR Arab-Israeli Peace talks which although in the begging proceeded slow and in uncertain manner due to the intransigent attitude of Israel under the Likud Government of Yitzhak Rabin but later catched the momentum after the change of guard in Israel (113).

The Persian Gulf crisis paved the way for the PLO-Israel self-rule Accord last year in the sense that it altered the radical position of the PLO on the Arab-Israeli issue so demonstratively exhibited by it not long ago in supporting Iraq against Saudi Arabia-Kuwait-US alliance.

The defeat of Iraq convinced PLO that it was not left with any other taker of its cause in West Asia. The conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf region, who supported PLO’s radical position on the issue, withdrew their support that used to come in form of financial assistance and political backing, from it. They after Palestinians’ betrayal were willingly gave in, for the first time, to the US perception of Middle East Peace.

Egypt was already among the so-called pragmatists, Syria seemed to shed its hostility to the US stand on Arab-Israeli issue. Jordan, which had come closer to Palestinians in the wake of its support to Iraq, began to return to its former pragmatist position (114).

Thus the PLO, like Jordan, embarked on the policy of repairing some of the damages caused in its relations with the US and the Oil rich states by signaling to the US that it was prepared for a settlement short of an independent state of Palestine.

As regards the implications of the Persian Gulf crisis for the GCC countries, there began the process of limited democratization, or political reforms, in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. This was in response to Arab people questioning the legitimacy and credibility of their countries’ governments: The resentment against the Kuwaiti government for fleeing the country in the hour of crisis, leaving the ordinary Kuwaitis behind, and against the Saudi government for inviting “infidels” in the land of Mecca and Madina, was the major factor behind introducing some reforms.

After about a year of the end of the war, Saudi Arabia announced the creation of a consultative council (Majlis As Shoorah) adopting of a constitution based on the Shariah (the Islamic code of conduct). Kuwaiti government promised the parliamentary election which were held on October 2, 1992, (115) after a gap of seven years. Kuwait was also pressurised by the US government for this where people were questioning the rationale behind destroying one undemocratic regime and saving the other.

However, after the elections were held severe limitations were imposed by the Sabah regime on the newly elected National Assembly’s prospects of participating in the governmental process. The Kuwaiti government invoked the constitution of 1962 which did not empower the National Assembly with appointing the Prime Minister and other ministers. The Crown Prince Sa’ad Bin Abdullah was appointed as the Prime Minister who then on his decoration appointed
10 to 12 ministers into cabinet from outside the National Assembly. The Kuwaiti government also clipped the wings of the National Assembly as 35 out of the 38 seats were won by the opposition.

Against all expectations Arabs’ resentment against their governments for funding a war launched by Allied armies from Islamic lands against a Arab and Muslim country did not burst into an Arab-Islamic resurgence. But that the gap between the ruling elites and the masses has widened is visible and poses to be a potential threat for the future. For it is feared that if any time the Islamists consolidate their position, the support of the Arab masses to them would automatically become overt. Growing public consciousness, people’s disillusionment with ruling elites, which were not used to be noticed on such a scale prior to the Persian Gulf crisis, will be additional factors in their support inclination towards rebels as and when their movement catches momentum. So says Singh K. R. “It should not be forgotten that while President Sadat was assassinated only by a handful of extremists, his funeral was boycotted by the masses, who, by their action, put a seal of approval on the action of the extremists” (116).

On the other hand, in Iraq the rebels have failed to cash in upon Saddam’s defeat. Saddam has demonstrated to them how public opinion can be moulded in favor of the government by arousing general anguish over foreign intervention and external hegemony.

In the Arabian Peninsular countries the resentment against the local governments is manifested not only in general masses alienation but also in the frustration expressed by intellectuals and technocrats. A Large section of Arab Intellectuals publicly calls for the removal of Royal families and princely dynasties. Press is growing critical of these governments’ policies. And technocrats, have demanded greater participation in the public affairs (117).

Iran has benefited most from the Persian Gulf crisis. The destruction of Iraq has left a vacuum which has made room for Iran to step in. It has restarted its large scale military build up by augmenting its air force, navy, surface-to-surface missile program, and non conventional warfare capabilities. Since the US presence in the region would not facilitate Iran to fulfill its regional aspirations by intimidating other regional countries, it has presently embarked on a policy of non confrontation in the region eyeing on a role in the Persian Gulf security system.

From Iraq too, Iran has secured concessions of wide-ranging importance. All the Iranian territory and the POWs have been returned by Iraq and its claim to half of the river Shatt waterway has been recognized (118).

For the first time, since the dawn Iran of Islamic revolution Iran finds itself being sought after in the regional and international politics. The only untoward development being the raising of its border dispute with the UAE in April 1992. Iranian action would have been precipitated under extra regional-prompting. Iran wanted to probe the GCC states’ “capabilities and intentions after recent security arrangements with the US and its Western allies” (119). The relations with Saudi Arabia have constantly improved. All the Hajj seasons since the end of the Persian Gulf crisis have passed off peacefully. In 1992, Iranian spiritual leader Ayatollah
Kahminie issued a Fatwa that stated that performance of any ritual by Shias, which created discords among the Muslims or weakened Islam, was Haram. This was an indication to Iranian Haj pilgrims to stop holding political demonstrations in Riyadh during the Haj. The relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and Iran and the UAE have strengthened on economic front too. The trade between Iran and Arab countries of the Persian Gulf has doubled.

For Egypt, the Persian Gulf crisis paved the way for its re-entry into the Arab fold. Since then it is being acknowledged as diplomatic heavyweight in the region. Western assistance, both economic and military, have reinforced its position in the Arab world.

However, on economic front, Egypt suffered from the crisis. Expulsion of workers from Iraq cut down Egyptian earnings from remittances (120). Added to it was the problem of the rehabilitation of the returnees. Economic embargo against Iraq has caused a decline of traffic to Suez and tourism. The reduction of tanker traffic is estimated to have reduced the revenue by 16 percent. Loss of revenue door to the decline in tourists arrival was estimated to be at $29 million as against the projected revenue of $600 million (121).

The price-hike in the wake of the Persian Gulf crisis, however, increased the Egyptian earnings from oil from $3 million a day to $5 million. The US waived off its debt over Egypt amounting to $7 billion. In addition, the USA signed five grant agreements of $2789 million on August 21st 1990 with Egypt to “strengthen the infrastructure base of the country” (122). These helped Egypt not to crumble under economic pressures caused by loss of remittances, reduction of traffic to Suez, tourism and stopping of trade with Iraq and Kuwait.

The Persian Gulf crisis abetted the financial problem Jordan was facing prior to its reputation. According to official estimates, Jordan was to incur worth $12.4 billion loss due to the loss of exports, transit fees, subsidized oil, remittances, debt repayment and aid (123). Non-official sources put this loss at $3.5 billion only. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were the main financial backers of Jordan’s economy and the main source of remittances. Iraq was the largest customer of its foods and industrial goods. Hundreds of Jordanians were expelled from Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia also decided to cut off the oil supply to Jordan to some 33,000 barrels a day.

Beside economy, Jordan’s external relations also suffered in a big way. Relations with Syria and Saudi Arabia, who also happened to be its strategic partners against Israel, were eroded and its links with the West were almost snapped. The only consolation to Jordan was that it managed to preserve it internal unity. This also helped Jordan in moderating the radical atmosphere and reducing the political influence of Islamic groups.

However, after the war, relations of Jordan with the West got repaired as the latter preferred the survival and stability of the Hashmite in view of rising Islamic fundamentalism in that country. The West has come to understand that denial of economic assistance to Jordan can hamper its ability to cope with economic problems, the continuation of which might increase,
in turn, the popularity of the Islamic movement among the Jordanians. But the rehabilitation of relations with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait has yet not taken off, thus the chances of receiving aid from these countries so as to overcome its economic problems are still remote.

Syria was one of the few regional countries which benefited economically from the Persian Gulf crisis as Saudi Arabia and Kuwait pumped in $ 1.5 billion. The West European governments promised Syria economic aid, removed the sanctions imposed on it because of it being branded as a terrorist state. On politico-diplomatic front, Syrian success is equally impressive. It has enhanced its ability to influence regional developments. Its main rival has been defeated, its relations with Egypt and Saudi Arabia have become friendly. The Syrian administration indicated that it was willing to participate in the West Asian peace process which, the Syrian government assumes, would prompt the US to get it back the Golan Hights, an issue hitherto ignored by the US. Syria has also used its enhanced position to consolidate its position over Lebanon.

THE VANQUISHED: IRAQ

Iraq met the fate of those powers who launch a war of conquest and without being able to envisage the possibility of a defeat and its after-effects. Putting up a miserable show Iraq, lost the credibility it held in the eyes of the US as a threat to its supremacy. The US has after its victory treated Iraq in a most barbaric manner, by continuing economic sanctions against Iraq, abetting Shie and Kurdish revolts, publicly befriending anti-Saddam internal opposition, restricting Iraq's sovereignty on its own lands, keeping on decimating Iraq's military strength in the guise of the United Nations and carrying out military attacks against it whenever it pretends to be stubborn.

Saddam's hope to emerge as the leader of Arabs through unleashing force and with the help of coercion have been dashed to the wall. Failing which it tried to bring Arab countries on its side by attacking Israel during the war, but it too failed to pay off. So did Saddam's diplomacy as his linkage theory did not find any taker among Arab governments. Arab peoples remained sympathetic to Iraq but were not swayed by his call to rise and revolt against the puppet and pro-West governments.

Arab powers, who were tilted towards Iraq during the war cooled off their relations after the latter's dismal performance. The PLO and Jordan turned away from it and got involved rapprochement with the US. After securing half of the Shatt, its territories and its soldiers held as POWs by Iraq, Iran condemned it for being responsible for doing irreparable damage to the world of Islam. It, in addition, also retained Iraqi front-line aircrafts and took an open part in the Shie revolt inside Iraq.

Thus after the war Iraq was left isolated, regionally and internationally. Relations with the other Arab powers of the Persian Gulf region emmibittered over the question of massive war reparations and US-UN imposed boundary demarcation between it and Kuwait.

The only edge over the neighboring Persian Gulf countries Iraq has managed to retain
is that it continues to be a regional threat for four factors: Saddam is still in power, Iraq possesses a formidable arsenal, deadlier than those of the many Arab Gulf countries and an strong army, more experienced, trained than rest of the Arab countries’ in the Persian Gulf, the regional security system is relatively weaker and shall remain so unless Iran or Israel or both are included into it, which is remotest of the possibilities.

THE VANQUISHED : THE THIRD WORLD

Apparently, one of the Third World countries—Kuwait—won the war and another—Iraq—suffered humiliation. But, in fact, for the Third world as a whole, the Persian Gulf crisis was not a good omen. It set a precedent for international intervention in the Third World. For the first time since the inception of the UN all the five major powers acted in concert. Far more significant for the future, however, is the endorsement by all five nations of resolution 687 on April 4, 1990, which requires Iraq to accept UN controls in violation of its rights as sovereign nation” (124).

The war comes as a reminder to the Third World countries that they can not dare to oppose the US and its western allies due to their far weaker position in the area of arms technology, as reflected in one of Bush statements “this war would be the last war as no nation will be allowed to challenge the might of the US”. Moreover, the absence of a Soviet Union from the international scene means that now the US would not face a formidable opposition to its policy interfering in a Third World Conflict. Thus it would be free to exacerbate, or prevent from occurring, a conflict between the two Third World countries.

OIL:

Due to the Gulf crisis, 4.2 million barrels (125) per day of oil, which accounted for 7.8 percent of the global supply, was withdrawn from the world oil market. This resulted into price-hike, caused mainly by panic buying on the presumption that in the eventuality of seizure of Saudi oil fields the world oil market would be deprived of about 20 percent of its total supply (126). Thus the oil prices reached the $30 per barrel mark. Following the landing of the US forces in Saudi Arabia, these began to come down as with this the chances of Iraqi seizure of Saudi Oil fields had receded.

The oil consuming states from the West expected Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and other OPEC countries to step up the production to meet the supply gap. It was estimated that Saudi Arabia could alone meet 2 million barrels per day, the UAE 600, 000 to 700,00 barrel, Venezuela 500, 000, Nigeria 280,000 and possibly Libya 200, 000 to 300, 000 barrels

The Persian Gulf crisis did not aggravate oil crisis in the way as it was made out to be. The crisis that ensued was manageable. With 100 million barrel of crude in commercial stock and 900 million barrel (only US and Japan) in strategic stock, the OECD countries had enough oil to ward off the oil shortages for a considerable period of time. Thus the main issue of concern to the western economies was not the immediate shortage of the oil (127) but the specter of Iraq sitting on the world’s largest reserves of a commodity which was poised for regaining its significance in the global energy consumption from the mid-1990s. In long term, it would have
meant Iraq replacing Saudi Arabia as swing producer, unconcerned to the health of the Western economies and calling the shot in the matters of price and production when the OECD countries would be importing 65 percent of their consumption and the bulk of which would come from the Persian Gulf. Moreover, oil imports accounted for 50 percent of trade deficit of the US and other oil importers of the west. The hike in oil prices would have further accentuated the deficit.

However, the end of the Persian Gulf crisis restored the pre-crisis price (June 1990) despite the continuing absence of Iraqi and Kuwaiti oil from the market(128). Even due to the ‘oil glut’ caused by stepping up of production by Saudi Arabia and other OPEC countries coupled with the on-going recession supply overawed the demand. The prices have kept on slumping. The OPEC has of late tried to evolve a unanimous policy on each member state capping its production so that price can become reasonable. Yet, no tangible results have occurred so far. Kuwaiti re-entry has again flooded the market. Its plea that it be spared from the quota system has caused embarrassment to other OPEC countries. Once the sanctions are withdrawn from Iraq, the prices shall climb down further. Thus, there is no oil crisis at present as far as the oil consuming states are concerned.

After three years of the end of the war, the oil producing and oil consuming nations are interlocked in a conflict of interests. Saudi Arabia, the swing producer and a moderate among the OPEC countries, has, despite being obliged to the US, looks in favor of price-rise, and keeping the supply proportionate to the demand. Whereas, the more the West is envisaging an increase in its dependence on oil, particularly the Persian Gulf oil, after 1995, the more it is interested in a a scenario of supply exceeding the demand.

The Inter-OPEC rivalry has not subsided. The member-states have not tried to manage their production in a way that their supplies commensurate with the demand. Instead, capitalising on the disappearance of Iraqi and Kuwaiti crude they increased production to maximize their oil revenues. This created tension between Saudi Arabia, which doubled its production since 1990, and Iran which after seeing that the former was not to amend its policies declared that it would no longer observe the OPEC quota.

The oil shall remain an contentious issue between the regional countries, sometimes conflagrating into war when some of the countries richest in oil happen to be militarily weaker than their neighbors relatively poorer in oil resource but a covetous, overbearing militant power.
REFERENCES AND FOOTNOTES


2. Sreedhar, N.1, P. 16.

3. This is why the Sub-title goes as “events preceding the invasion”, than “events leading to the war”.

4. No major military or political actions threatening the Iraqi integrity were taken on the part of Kuwait. That Kuwait had made encroachments on Iraqi lands, as the Saddam government alleged, is not reported to have actually occurred.

5. The US ambassador’s message to Iraq that her country was against interfering in regional issues is considered as US green-signal to Iraq. However, having conducted military exercises with the UAE and through public statements soon after the US ambassador-Saddam Hussein met, the US had clarified that it would not brook an interruption in oil supplies from the region. Iraq did not relent even then. It indicates that Iraq was prepared to invade Kuwait even if it had to take on the US also.


7. The Kuwaiti opposition groups, including those which were outlawed, opposed the Iraqi Invasion.


10. To clear its debt Iraq wanted that the Arab Gulf countries should waive off their loans (estimated to be $ 50 billion) and provide it an additional amount of $ 30 billion ($10 billion each by Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE).


12. The Arab countries refused to induct Iraq into the GCC. The membership to the GCC eluded Iraq even after the end of the Iran-Iraq War which Iraq claimed to have fought to defend, and on behalf of, the GCC countries. See Dietl, Gulshan, “Strategic Implications for the Gulf Region” in Abidi A.H.H. and Singh K. R., The Gulf Crisis, Lancer Books, 1991, P. 218.


15. The reference is to Israeli attack of Iraq’s Osirak Nuclear reactor in 1981.

16. The agreement signed between Iraq and Kuwait on this occasion read “Iraq recognizes the independence and complete Sovereignty of Kuwait”.


19. The GCC defense network was totally inadequate to confront Iraq. At August 3 Arab League meeting, the member states rejected Kuwaiti proposal for the formation of a joint Arab force to face Iraqi army. The American strategists held Saudi Arab forces would not be able to withstand an Iraqi invasion. This is why the US lost no time in persuading Saudi Arabia to allow it to send its forces on the Saudi soil.

20. Iraqi ambassador to the US, Mohammed Sadiq Mashat, however clarified on August 5 that Iraq would not attack Saudi Arabia. He also denied the charge that Iraq had mobilized its forces near Saudi border. The next day Iraqi President, Saddam Hussein, reiterated the denial in an interview with the US Charge ‘d’ Affairs.


25. Vilayeti said this in an interview with the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) after returning from a tour to the GCC countries.

27. Kam Ephraim, "The Gulf Crisis and the Arab Arena" War in the Gulf: Implications for Israel

28. King Hussain is the direct descendant of Prophet Mohammed and his forefather have traditionally been the custodian of the Islamic sites in Mecca and Madina (in Hejaz province).

29. However, those moves could not take off as Saddam was adamant for a simultaneous solution to the Palestinian issue. Given the US strict opposition to the same, the Arab countries were finding themselves unable to support the linking of the two regional issues.


31. As against 5.2 billion per day at the eve of Iraqi invasion, the Saudi oil production increased to 7.5 billion per day in October. As a result, the oil prices also stabilized around $25-26 per barrel.

32. SWB, ME/0834, A/5, 4 August, 1990.

33. Another Iraqi objective in accepting the Iranian terms for peace was to divert its forces deployed on the eastern front to the war zone, the south-west.

34. Iraq also send its foreign minister Tariq Aziz to Tehran on September 9, 1990 on a confidence building mission. Iran reciprocated by sending its Deputy foreign minister to Baghdad.

35. Quandt, William B., N. 9, P. 63.


37. Yemen was the chairman of the Security Council during much of the Persian Gulf crisis.


39. The writing off the military sales came at the most telling time. The Egypt was dithering under inflationary pressure and was very near the point of defaulting of debt repayments to the United states, which could have cost it dearly in terms of future aid flows.

40. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait gave $1 billion and $50 million respectively to Syria.


42. To assuage the Public resentment which was anti-US, the Syrian President declared that sending of his country's troops to Saudi Arabia was "an Arab national duty" and would essentially be a peace-keeping mission. He emphasized that Syrian troops would not take part in assault against
Iraq and in case of Iraqi attack of Saudi Arabia they would only interpose themselves as buffer. Assad also reiterated that Syria was not in the US camp.


44. In reality, Jordan continued permitting the movement of commodities to and from Iraq through the port of Aqba.

45. It is said that the Saudi punishment of Jordan was a reaction to the adopting of the title of “Sharif Hussein” by King Hussein on August 14. Sharif Hussein was the great grandfather of King Hussein who ruled the holy cities of the Mecca and Madina before his ouster by Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud, father of King Fahad. Thus adorning himself with that title, King Hussein, it was viewed by the Saudi House, was establishing Jordan’s territorial claim over Saudi Arabia in the vane of history. Rumors also floated that Iraq, Yemen and Iraq had entered into clandestine agreement that the combined armies of these countries would attack Saudi Arabia and divide the country among themselves in the case of the latter’s defeat.

46. Palestinians, including refugees, comprised roughly 70 percent of Jordan’s 3.2 million population. The estinians in Jordan had regarded Saddam Hussein as the saviour of their national interests in future.


48. Some of members of Jordanian Parliament from the Islamic fundamentalist groups visited Iraq in a gesture of support for Saddam Hussein.


50. Morocco has long been a US ally. It is said to have influenced Anwar Sadat to take part in Camp David talks in 1978. It also facilitated strategic rights to the US navy and air force in the 80s.

51. Turkey hoped that a good amount of debt it owed to the US would be written off by the latter.

52. Emerging as a a militarily stronger power from its war with the Iran, Iraq did not need to allay the Israeli security fears anymore. Instead, the urge for leadership of the Arab world pressed it to adopt a militant posture against Israel. Therefore, Iraq engaged Israel in a war of words with its president Saddam Hussein threatening to “make fire eat up half of Israel” if the latter tried to repeat its 1982 adventure. Before this Iraq had held joint military exercises with Jordan and conducted planes reconnaissance flights over Jordanian territory, apparently targeting the Dijon nuclear center in Israel.

53. Economic and Political Weekly, N. 6, P. 1676.

55. This theory is described as trap theory. Another interpretation, called ‘conspiracy theory’, is that Iraq and the US conspired to accomplish the CENTCOM. However, this theory is not substantiated by sound arguments. Therefore, it is largely believed that USA used Kuwait and Iraq for the pursuance of its interests in the Persian Gulf.


58. A day before the Iraqi invasion, Kremlin got a CIA alert that the attack was imminent, Newseweek, September 17, 1990.

59. Cited in Shrivastva, B.K., N. 8, P. 44

60. The US official position was that the embargo would be enough to force Iraq to withdraw. The US administration also ruled out first strike in the Persian Gulf.


67. It was in this context a strong Iraq, which acted as a useful buffer during 80s, had become a liability for the US. Iraq threatened western interests in three main areas, its development of long range missiles and chemical weapons, its threat to the security of the Israel and its threat to the security of the oil rich states and the supply of oil. See Singh K. R. “Power without Greatness”, Seminar, No. 381, May 1991, P. 33.

68. The West does not need oil cheaper either. The prices of the oil must be reasonable so that their own oil industry is not hurt. For example, when in 1987 the oil prices began to fluctuate between $12 to 15 per barrel, Reagan send vice-president George Bush to ask them to curtail their oil
production because it had badly hurt the state economies of Texas and Louisiana.


71. During the course of war even the making assassination-bid on Saddam was permissible, The US government publicly ordered its forces to target Saddam’s would be hideouts.


73. The Soviet deputy prime minister in an interview with the Izvesta, referred to by International Herald Tribune, August 8, 1990.


77. The Soviet Union did not agree to contribute to the allied force’s military build-up in the Persian Gulf despite being persuaded to this effect by Bush at the September 9 Helsinki Summit 1990.


79. Iraq, however, later tendered apology but it was too late to to repair the damage already done.

80. In January 1991 French foreign minister, Pirre Chevenement, resigned in protest against his government’s deviation from it stand that it would participate so long the War was limited to Kuwait.

81. The Hindustan Times, “For the US, the Cheapest with the Largest Windfall” February 9, 1991.

82. The 8-power draft was adopted as Security Council Resolution 660 (1990). Out of the 15 Security Council members, 14 voted in favor while Yemen, the only Arab country representing the council, and the then Chairman of the Security Council also, abstained from voting.

83. The draft resolution also sought to permit the maritime powers in the Persian Gulf to apply maximum force to enforce the sanctions. However, due to Chinese and Soviet opposition the phrase was dropped.
It may be noted that in violation of the resolution 661 the United States and some of its allies decided to interdict all ships bound for Kuwait or Iraq and refused the permission to proceed to those ships were loaded with foodstuffs.


Shrivastav, B.K., N. 49. P. 57.

US Secretary of State James Baker’s reply to the Soviet president’s special Envoy Primakov statement that Iraq could withdraw on the condition that it was allowed to retain Bubiyan and Rumeliha Oil field in Kuwait.

Job Cvijeto, “There can be neither Peace nor Better International Relations with Aggression” Review of International Affairs, Vol. xlii No. 973, October 20, 1990, P. 10


Hussein Mushahid, N.26.

Kahenna Prem, The War, Seminar 381, May 1991, P. 45

Iraqi total military force strength consisted of 550,000 troops, 4280 tanks, 2750 armored cards, 33190 artillery pieces and 650 operational aircraft.

Basra bring an important rail-road communication center and the main administrative base supporting all troops in Kuwait, was logistically the vital place to be attacked by the allied forces so as to strangulate the troops located inside Kuwait.

As Conveyed to President Bush by Dick Chenny, General Collin l Powell and General Schwarzkopf after their meeting in the second week of February.


105. Even in the military forced American dependence on imported critical elements from Japan is growing.

106. However, this brings the US West European allies at par with the US only. For, to quote Vanaik Achin. "After all if the Us can not translate its political military assets into commensurate economic gains, German and Japan can not do the opposite either", See Vanaik Achin US Capacity to shape the World, Mainstream May 11, 1991.


108, Sreedhar, N. 1.

109. Kuwait-US held "Eager-Mace 92.93" and "Native Fury 1992" from 3rd to 19the August 1992, "Intrinsic Action 92-1", which ended on September 22, 1992, and "Intrinsic Action 93-1" which took place from 26th October to 20th December 1992. These exercises were conducted to demonstrate the Unites d States commitment to the security and stability of the Gulf region".


114. Ephraim Kam, N. 25, P. 86.
Only 7 percent of the country's population was eligible for voting. Seven Political groups, ranging from secularized, nationalist Pan arab to fundamentalist Muslims contested the elections for 38m open seats out of the 50 in the National assembly.


Eilts, Herman Fredrick, N. 13, P. 19.


Remittances due to the expulsion of about 100,000 Egyptians from Iraq and Kuwait Iraq was expected to be slashed by 50 percent. Remittances account for about 47 percent of Egypt's foreign exchange earning. For detail see Pant C Grijesh, N. 11. P. 192.

Ibid., p. 193

Ibid., p. 194

Ibid., 189


2.8 million barrels per day from Iraq and 1.6 million barrels per day from Kuwait was lost.

In 1990 OPEC share in global supply was 38.8 percent. Pant, Grijesh C., N.11.

For instance Oil supply from Kuwait and Iraq accounted for the US$6.3 percent of imports 3.2 percent in case of Europe.

Immediately before the starting of the war the oil process again sky rocketed, this time also due to the apprehension that supply would come to stop in the eventuality of the war which was expected to be a long drawn out affair. The Crisis then reached $40 per barrel. However the porches crashed in the wake of smooth transition of oil tankers from the Persian Gulf waters during the 40 day long war.
CONCLUSION

Conflict and cooperation have come to stay as permanent dynamics in the Persian Gulf region. Both of these are, in fact, complementary to each other than opposites. Issues concerning cooperation have been the source of new differences, causing strains in the relations between two states or more. For instance, the smaller states have always been apprehensive of Saudi domination, both political and economic, through the GCC. Hence, their enthusiasm to participate in the grouping has been marked with caution.

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

UAE did not try to score points at Iran’s cost over the three disputed islands by extending full support to Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. It was the Arab country Iran had the best relations with, during the war. Iran’s relations Saudi Arabia and other actors in the GCC were rather hostile in constrast.

The call to induct Iran or Iraq into the GCC has also come from the smaller member-states of the region. Qatar advocated for the induction of Iran into the post-Persian Gulf war security set up. Qatar was also the first country to have decided to normalize relations with Iraq after the latter’s withdrawal from the region. The latter issue invited severe criticism from Saudi and Kuwaiti governments. Border skirmishes with Saudi Arabia in 1992, prompted Qatar to threaten to withdraw from the GCC. The disenchantment with Saudi Arabia before the border skirmishes started would have also directly or indirectly determined Qatar government’s decision or indecision to bid farewell to the GCC.

However, conflicts amongst member countries themselves and those with countries outside the GCC have also spurred cooperation. ‘Common threat perception’ has been the most important factor in convincing the Arab states of the Persian Gulf to freeze the disputes among themselves if not to settle it once and for all. Without going into the details whether the GCC was the direct corollary of the Iran-Iraq war or not, one cannot deny the fact that the War helped the GCC grow. It at least turned the GCC into a security grouping even if not as formidable as warranted. In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait the member-states decided to give it more teeth by both, strengthening the common defense network and seeking to involve Egypt and Syria (also Iran by some countries) into it.

If the cooperation in the region has been only a little more than half-hearted, conflicts in the region have, by and large been little less than of threatening dimensions. This may sound strange but given the fact that only two of the scores of regional disputes have graduated into a war, one might feel to approve this contention. The Iran-Iraq and the Persian Gulf wars, the former due to its longevity and the latter because of its implication for region, tend to give an impression that the region as a whole has been conflict-prone.
This is true to some an extent. But an important aspect of regional politics should not go unrecognized. That is, part of the Arab peninsular region which is included in the Persian Gulf region has remained peaceful particularly in view of the fact that there are several conflicts still existing to be resolved. The Iran-Iraq war was a factor contributing to the subsiding of inter-state conflicts in that region. In the Persian Gulf crisis the Arab peninsular countries were the party to the dispute. But at the same time, the Iraqi invasion is said to have prevented the eruption of various boundary disputes which was feared to have taken place in the aftermath of the end of the Iran-Iraq war.

The coming to the fore of Qatari-Saudi dispute after about a year of the defeat of Iraq substantiates this contention. Cracks have even begun appearing in the relationship between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait over the issue of oil quota. The latter demands that since it is a special case, it should not be subjected to the production quota regulations. Saudi Arabia, which had led the Arab opposition to Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, does not sympathise with the Kuwaiti government's plea. Moreover the democratization in Kuwait has also been resented by Saudi Arabia as it fears that it would indeed have a spill over effect. It would not be out of place to mention that the differences over political reforms in Kuwait have come up in the background of the demonstration of an extraordinary cooperation in preserving the oneness of their political systems by the GCC countries in the 80s.

The extent of the role of external powers in abetting as well as resolving conflicts and their contribution to the process of cooperation in the region have been less than what was expected. This must not be confused with their involvement with a particular state or a group of states in ordinary circumstances. For, 'bilateralism' has determined the superpowers' active involvement in the region in ordinary circumstances. But, the conflicts and cooperation in the Persian Gulf have been the outcome of interplay of typically regional forces. For instance, the border disputes in the Persian Gulf are entrenched in the historical and geographical dynamics of that area. The intricacies involved in these disputes limited the superpowers' scope in preventing their eruption or in their resolution. For instance, the US allies in the region can not compromise the issues which are directly related to their sovereignty on the excuse that they belong to same power bloc. The US at best can get itself assured that it would use its leverage to let these disputes remain subsided. Similarly, Iraq did not pay heed to the Soviet Union's advice to refrain from attacking Iran and invading Kuwait. This was because the objective behind Iraqi attempts was purely regional i.e. the regional ambitions. So much so, that Saddam became blind to the international reaction.

Cooperation in the Persian Gulf has been an attempt to avoid total identification with a superpower ally if not to lessen dependence on it. the GCC countries' dependence on the US is, as far as the security issues are concerned, almost total, yet that organization can not be termed a brainchild of the US as was the case with CENTO. It is not all true that the US itself avoids becoming part of a regional grouping in Persian Gulf. It tried to establish an informal group, known as strategic consensus, of allies under its leadership. It would not be averse to have a similar one in the present circumstances. After fighting from the Arab soil a war against an Arab country the fears of an anti-US backlash from the Arab people in case of US over
The way the US is consolidating its strategic presence in the region after the end of the Persian Gulf war and the way it has coaxed its allies to give their stamp of approval to Israel-PLO accord further shows that it has finally discounted that fear. Yet the US also did not figure in the GCC countries’ aborted bid to form a West Asia wide security organization after the Persian Gulf war. Even in economic spheres, the protectionist tendencies are increasing in the GCC countries. Faced with the prospects of the exhaustion of oil, they are demanding technology transfer from the US and the West in exchange for oil. It seems that the oil rich Arab countries of the Persian Gulf shall not provide oil at a price as palatable as in the past, except in the interests of national security in a crisis period, in order to capitalize on the increasing demand of the Persian Gulf oil in the near future and in their drive to earn maximum from oil before it exhausts.

As far as the future of the conflicts and cooperation in the Persian Gulf is concerned, it is safer to refrain from predicting. The defeat of Iraq will discourage the ambitious regional states from repeating Saddam’s folly. But this self-restraint will be practiced so long as the US continues to maintain a unipolar world order (would it be able to do so and how long if so is very unlikely to predict). Once and if multipolarism sets in, the regional countries may flare up those very unresolved disputes which have formed the alibis in previous battles fought for regional domination. Thus, the greatest danger to peace and stability in the Persian Gulf are unsettled disputes. The acquisition of weapons of mass destruction by Iran, and Iraq having not ceased to be a threat to the regional countries barring Iran, and Saudi Arabia also trying to join the bandwagon by importing CSS-II missiles from China, a ‘War for Domination’ may take the stage in the region sooner than later.

The chances of cooperation involving all the regional countries are remote. Of course, the GCC is not at all threatened from within, though the pace of the cooperation may remain slow and achievements a few only, but it seem to continue to be a misnomer as neither the member-states would want both Iran and Iraq or either of the two inducted into it, nor can the two countries join one regional organization or tolerate either’s presence in the the GCC.


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