

**SECURITY OF THE PERSIAN GULF AND
THE CARTER DOCTRINE**

Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the award of the Degree of
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

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1990

D E D I C A T E D

T O

M Y P A R E N T S



CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL POLITICS,
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July 20, 1990.

C E R T I F I C A T E

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled, "SECURITY OF THE PERSIAN GULF AND THE CARTER DOCTRINE" being submitted by Mr. BIDYA NATH JHA, in partial fulfilment of requirement for the award of the Degree of MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY in this University, is a record of the student's own work, carried out by him under my supervision and guidance.

It is hereby certified that this work has not been presented for the award of any other Degree or Diploma.

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PREFACE

Security and stability have been the most obsessive concerns of the mankind in the post war era and the most elusive goals. It is more so in the case of a volatile region like the Persian Gulf where Revolutions and upheavals and not the peaceful and orderly change is the rule. The various schism like Shia-sunni divide, periodic resurgence of Islam, border disputes, tribal rules and family rule provide the area the nature of mosaic. These schisms combined with the developmental tensions and problems of transition give rise to various types of conflicts. But at the same time, its volatility is matched by its strategic importance. Region's vast oil reserves, without which the economies of the Western Europe and Japan might collapse, and the scrambling for access to it, thrust the regional problems in to the global arena.

The Persian Gulf is an old contest area among the major powers. The decade of the Seventies of the present century was a watershed in the history of the region in the way it witnessed gaining of independence by smaller Gulf

Seikhdoms, unprecedented social and economic change and the British withdrawal from the area. The last of these developments created a politico-military "Vaccum" in the Region and forced the US to take up active involvement in the security of the region. The result was the "Nixon Doctrine" translated into "Twin Pillar" policy for the Persian Gulf. It lasted till 1979 when Iranian Revolution, hostages crisis and Soviet intervention in Afganistan alarmed the US. The response to these developments was the Carter Doctrine which committed the US to military defense of the region.

Chapter I being introductory in nature analyses the strategic and economic importance of the Persian Gulf and the US interests and role in it. Chapter II deals with the components of Gulf Security. Chapter III is an attempt to briefly trace the evolution of the US Policy in the Gulf. It is meant to serve as a backgrounder to the Chapter on Carter Doctrine. Chapter IV studies the Carter Doctrine, its military component (RDF) and its implications for the Region. It also analyses the events leading to the Carter Doctrine. *chapter V attempts to draw some conclusions.*

I express my deep sense of gratitude to my Supervisor, Dr. K.S. Jawatkar, for his painstaking effort to raise the standard of my work by clearing my doubts. I am also thankful to Chairperson, Prof. Sumitra Chisti, and other teachers of my Centre.

I am indebted to Prof. Chetkar Jha, my relation and former teacher at Patna University, who has been a source of inspiration to me. I am thankful to Prof. M.P. Singh (Delhi University), whose insatiable thirst for knowledge and dialogue has exerted tremendous influence on me as a student of Politics.

I also feel indebted to my uncle, Dr. Ganga Nath Jha (SIS, JNU), and his family members for taking care of my spirit as well as appetite all through the present venture.

I owe much to my brother Amar and friends - Seema, Sharad, Indra Mohan, Rabindra, Ambika, Ajoy and others, who by encouraging and assisting me contributed a great deal to finish this work.

Thanks are also due to the Staff of various Libraries that I have consulted, especially the Social

Science Library at JNU; the American Centre Library, and the
Indian Council of World Affairs Library.

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Date: 20.7.1990
NEW DELHI.

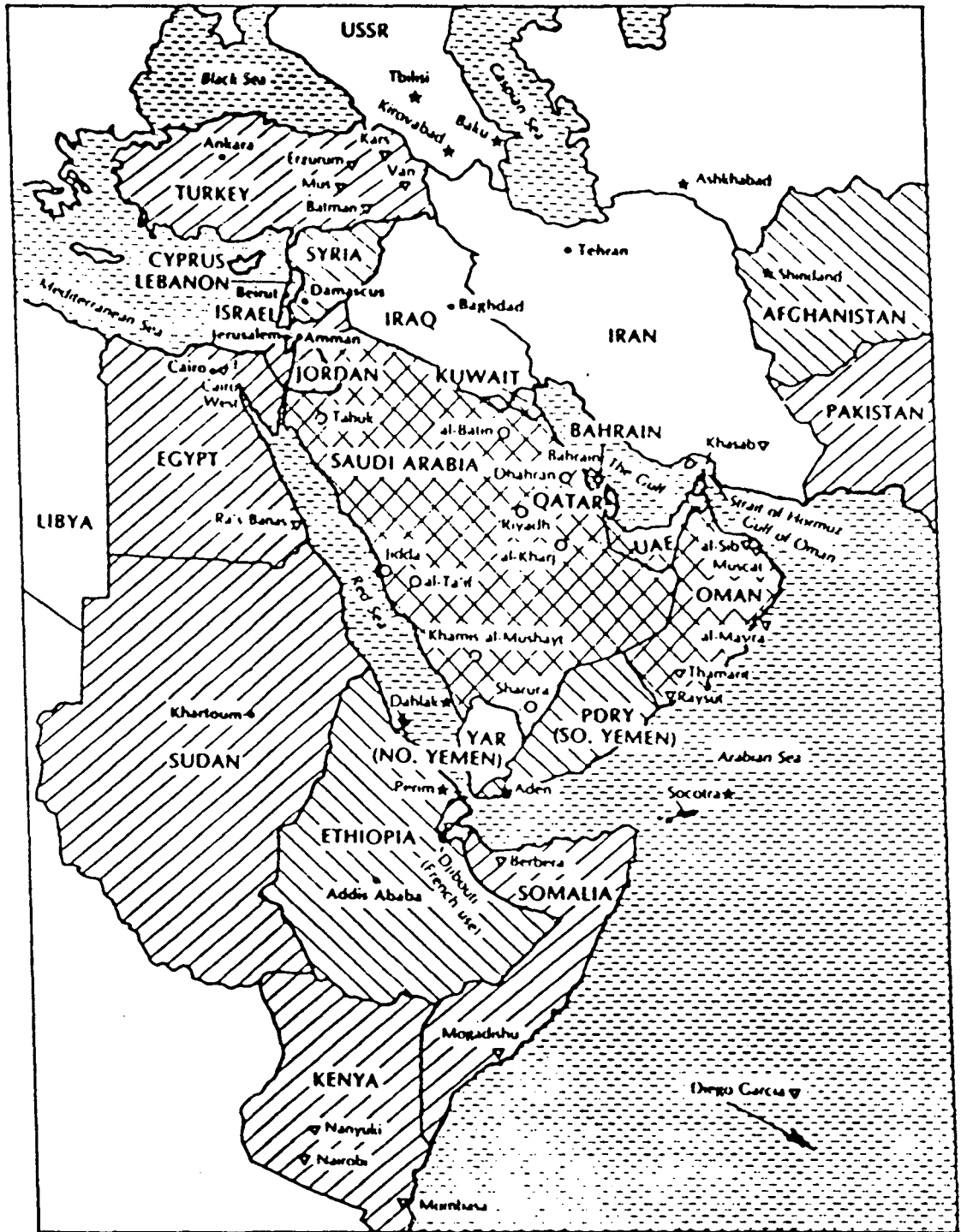
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Map 1: The Gulf and Surrounding Region



- | | | | |
|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| Countries Friendly to USSR |  | Soviet Bases and Possible Facilities | ★ |
| Countries Friendly to US |  | US Bases and Possible Facilities | ▽ |
| GCC Members |  | Saudi Arabian Military Installations | ○ |

Source : J.E. Peterson, DEFENDING ARABIA
(KENT , 1986)

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

PERSIAN GULF IN THE GLOBAL SETTING

Persian Gulf Region, the nerve centre of the Indian Ocean region, is a peculiarly complex part of the Middle East. No arm of the sea has been or is of greater interest alike to the geologist and archeologist, the historian, the geographer, the merchant, the statesman and the students of strategy, than the inland water known as Persian Gulf. Indeed, the Gulf has a place in the written history of mankind older than any other inland sea.

In 1951, President Eisenhower described the Persian Gulf as the most strategically important area in the world. Thirty years, and two oil embargoes, a major revolution and raging war later, there cannot be a more apt description of this most volatile and turbulent area. But he could not foresee that thirty years later despite America's awesome power, the value of Washington's friendship would be in such disdain and its ability to influence events in the Gulf so limited.

For the overthrow of shah of Iran in 1979 also demonstrated Washington's abandonment of its long term ally. Close on the heels of this development came the hostages crisis - capture of US Embassy Staffs by the Iranian Radicals - which also showed the singular ineffectiveness of the US power in the Gulf. In the face of these developments, Washington's friends, while keeping a safe diplomatic distance scrambled for cover and demanded increasing security guarantees against encroaching radicalism and the possibilities of direct and indirect aggression by the Soviet Union. Since the Afghan invasion, the threat suddenly seemed real¹.

Although, it is impossible to isolate the Gulf from the rest of the Region - politically, economically and strategically - the geographical characteristics of the Gulf can be examined separately. The countries comprising the area are : three relatively large ones: Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and five small ones: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Oman. Seven of the eight are Arab while the eighth i.e. Iran which is by far the largest is a non-Arab state.

1. Hossein Amirsadeghi (ed), Introduction, the Security of the Persian Gulf" (London, 1981) p.1

The area of the inland mass of Gulf water is about 92,500 square miles. Its length is about 615 miles and the width varies from a minimum of 210 miles to a minimum of 35 miles at the strait of Hormuz². In between the Gulf and the open sea lies the Gulf of Oman. The Arabian coast of the Gulf from Iraq to Musadam Peninsula is some 1,300 miles. On either side of the Inland water is the great plateau of Iran and Arabia. Then, there is the mountain chains with a minimum height of 4,000 feet. The Gulf is a "stretch of shallow water mass". From about 8- Fathom at the straits of Hormuz, the floor of the Gulf at its deepest is 1,800 fathoms at Muscat. On the whole it is deeper near the Iran's coast³ than on the northern and southern shores .

The area is bordered by Afghanistan in the East, the Soviet Union in the North, the Red sea in the West, and the Arabian sea and the Indian ocean in the South. The region is mostly desert with oil as the main natural resource. Indeed, it is because of oil that this region has acquired its international significance. Of the eight

2. ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA, (Chicago, 1977), Vol. 14, p. 106

3. M.S. Agwani, Politics in the Gulf (New Delhi, 1978), p.1

countries, only Iraq and Iran are potentially self-sufficient in agriculture. However, the entire region suffers from limited water resources⁴.

Gulf states are all Muslim oil-rich states which have developing economies and relatively sparse populations. Although the Arab states possess a similar cultural heritage, in terms of racial origin, religious affiliation, and social configurations, their population are often vastly dissimilar. Barring Iraq and Iran, other states, although rich in capital, have had to rely on thousands of foreign workers. This shows the lack of trained indigenous manpower, and the presence of large nonindigenous minorities. It has unmistakable political fall-out.

Another social factor of significance in the Persian Gulf is, of course, religion. Although all Gulf states adhere to the Islamic faith, and although all of them, other than Iran, are ruled by Sunni Muslims, their perception of the role of Islam in the affairs of the state varies significantly from state to state. Saudi Arabia and

4. Emile E. Nakhleh, The Persian Gulf and American Policy, Prager, New York, 1982), p.4

Iran are ranked on the top of the scale of adherence to Islam as a guide to government. Secularism in this context is only a matter of degree and in no way conveys the meaning⁵ associated with the term in western political systems.

Over 50 per cent of Iraq's population is of the Shia faith, which is the same faith that a vast majority of the Iranian people adheres to. Accordingly, the Shia-Sunni tension has been a serious factor in Inter and Intra-Gulf relations. Historically, it has always had political overtones.⁶ The normative imperatives of Islam tend to bestow legitimacy on the centralized structure of political systems in the Peninsula.

The Gulf region is a mosaic of ethnically differentiated people. Most of them are of Arab or Iranian origin falling within the ratio of 2:3. Among the Arabs, the emigrated Palestinians constitute a large,⁷ mobile population, numbering about half a million and have

5. NAKHLEH, n. 4, p.6

6. The Shi'ites make up 30% of the Kuwaiti population 40% of Iraq's, more than 70% of Bahrain, 30% in Dubai, 20% in Qatar and around 50% in Oman

7. John Andrews, "Security in the Gulf" Middle East International, (London), no. 113, Nov. '79, p. 8

outnumbered the original local citizens of three Gulf countries - Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE. Given their radical propensities, the Palestinians are possible source of destabilisation.

Modernization is another area that must be examined as a part of the general setting of Persian Gulf societies. Modernisation has affected the entire political, economic and social fabric of these societies. It has been accomplished by governmental policies supported by the ruling families, implemented by a bureaucratic cadre of technocrats and pushed forward by the wealthy entrepreneurs and businessmen. While social and economic institutions have supported Modernization policies, the political system lag somewhat behind. The political structure continues to be pyramidal and hierarchical power flows from a ruling family.

These countries have exhibited an astounding range of governmental forms from absolute monarchy to considerable chaos, with most of the regimes falling in the category of authoritarian centralized government. The Saudi Arabian

8. NAKHLEH, n.4, p. 8

and Iranian political system function according to the dictates of Islam. Iraq differs from the others in the sources of its authoritarianism. The Iraqi socialist regime derives its authority to rule from the Ba'th party. The other small states, while different in the actual exercise of power, are solidly based on tribalism as expressed in family centred rule.

Kuwait, the first of the Gulf emirates to become independent in 1961, is ruled by al-sabah family in a authoritarian but semi-open fashion. Saudi Arabia is a monarchy. Bahrain also dissolved its national assembly in 1975. The United Arab Emirates established its own form of federal structure in late 1971. The six original emirates (Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sarja, Um-al-Qaywayn, Ajman, and Fujayca) were joined by Ra's-al-Khayma in 1972. The federation is still ruled by Shaikh Zayed of Abu Dhabi which is the richest and most populous of the emirates.

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE PERSIAN GULF

The Gulf had long been labelled as strategically important by contending great powers^e for elementary reasons

of geography. This region lay athwart major routes from Europe to the Far-east and from Asia to Africa. It is on Russia's doorstep a possible launching point for hostile action against Russia or a prime target of Russian expansion. It contained important resources of oil. Domination or control of particular parts of Gulf region could give a power a decisive military advantage in case of war. Accordingly, no contending power wanted to risk an unfavourable shift of the balance in times of peace.

This area acquired centrality in world affairs - far different from the position it had in the recent past. Economically, the oil of the Persian Gulf is a crucial and coveted resource. Politically, Khomeini's revolution in Iran and USSR's military takeover of Afghanistan transformed the geopolitics and outlooks of all regional actors and further aggravated U.S. - Soviet rivalry. Strategically as the superpowers sustain their military build-ups, one purpose of which is to project power in this vital region, so the various regional actors intensify their acquisition of modern weaponry, and militarily. Arab-Iran hostility have been sowing the seeds of unrest and insecurity.

9. Amirsadegi, n.1, p.2

10. ALVIN Z. RUBINSTEIN Ed., The Great Game: Rivalry in the Persian Gulf and South Asia, (New York) 1983, p. vii

It is the oil which has elevated the Gulf to an unimaginable heights of importance. Today, rich and poor, developed and underdevelopd countries - all depend on the Gulf which is virtually floating on a sea of oil. Without access to its vast oil reserves, the economies of Western Europe and Japan might collapse.¹¹ Until the discovery of oil in Iran in 1908 people of the region were mainly engaged in fishing, pearling, the building of Dhows, sail-cloth, camel breeding, date growing and production of toehr minor products such as red ochre. But, today, the arid land supporting the population is a thing of the past. Today, Gulf countries produce approximately thirty one per cent of the world's oil production. It has also sixty three per cent of the world's proven oil reserves in contrast to seven per cent of the United States and estimated fourteen per cent of the Soviet Union.¹² Three Gulf countries - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE - have larger oil reserves than that of the United States of

11. R.K. Ramzani, "Security in the Persian Gulf" Foreign Affairs, (Spring 1979), pp. 821-35

12. Valerie Yorke, The Gulf in the 1980s (London, 1980), pp. 76-77

America.¹³ They are virtually controlling the world trade - in oil and have a big say in international financial position. According to the former U.S. Under Secretary of State for political affairs, Joseph J. Sisco, "The littoral states of the Gulf are aware that they set on what is probably the world's most valuable asset valued at something over \$ 4.5 billion at today's oil and gas prices."¹⁴

The Gulf producers also enjoy some added advantage on account of low-cost of oil production. Further, it is the only region in the world, where the ratio of reserves to current production has been sustained.

In the light of two oil crisis in the past : one in 1973 and another in 1975 and continuing energy crisis, the importance of oil is vital not only a strategic commodity used in war but also for the existence of human civilization at large. Keeping in view the fact that 60% of

13. R.M. Burrell, The Persian Gulf. (Washington, 1972), p.2

14. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives Sub-Committee on International Relations. The Persian Gulf, 1975 : The Continuing debate on Arms Sales (Washington D.C., 1976), p. 9

the world's imported oil come from this region¹⁵ and also that we are yet to develop viable commercial alternative energy, the dependency on Gulf oil will continue for quite sometime.

Another temptation to ^{the}teh great powers came in the form of opening of Suez which further increased geostrategic significance of the Gulf. The Gulf today is one of the great channels of international air communication between Europe and South Asia and between the Soviet Union and the Indian ocean. Beautiful and sophisticated airports in the region with overflight facilities link the nations of the world. Besides the narrow mouth of the Gulf (at the strait of Hormuz) is a choke point, which due to its economic, commercial and strategic importance, was called by Shah of Iran "Jugular Vein" of Western Civilization. About seventy per cent of the world's trade flows from this strait.

The early seventies witnessed the development of modern and sophisticated weapon systems such as Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs). It catapulted the sea

15. Department of State Bulletin (Washington, D.C.) Vol. 80, no. 2038, May, 1980, p. 63 16.

lanes into great prominence. Modern missiles and submarines of sea warfare have magnified military importance of the sea-lanes in the Gulf .

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The fragile, conservative political structures coupled with immense strategic and economic importance of the region have made the Gulf an area of superpower rivalry. The proximity of the Soviet Union has made it vulnerable and at the same time it has made the region all the important to the United States. Besides, it is an area where a spectacular transition - both structural and ideological are underway.

THE US SECURITY INTERESTS IN THE GULF:

For over three decades, Persian Gulf has occupied a key place in American strategic formulations although relative importance of the area in American strategic thinking have varied. Political objectives of foreign policy are based on US national interest, which may be defined as political, economic or strategic concerns that are of some

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16. For a detailed study of the growing importance of Indian ocean see K.R. Singh, The Indian Ocean : Big power presence and local response (New Delhi, 1977) Chapters 1 and 3

importance to the United States. Fundamental categories of national interests are the survival of the US and the defense of the US territory, the maintenance or enhancement of the US standard of living and the promotion of a stable world sympathetic to American values.¹⁷ Although the US is virtually invulnerable to a conventional invasion of its territory, its survival is threatened by the vast nuclear arsenal of the Soviet Union as a global naval power and the shock of the invasion of Afghanistan led to concern that potentially the region could be the strategic arena in which the mutual policy of conflict avoidance might collapse¹⁸ either through miscalculation or accident.

The US security interests in the Gulf basically emanate from its economic interest i.e. dependency of the U.S. and its allies on Gulf oil. Presently, the US imports forty five per cent of its oil, twenty to twenty five per

17. Donald E. Neuchterleine, National Interest and Presidential Leadership : The Setting of Priorities, (Boulder, 1978), pp. 1-18

18. Colonel Keith A. Barlow, "Introduction" in Shirin Tahir-Kheli (ed.), U.S. Strategic Interest in Southwest Asia (New York, 1982) pp. 14-15

cent of which comes from the Gulf.¹⁹ The U.S. till 1967 self sufficient in oil, has witnessed increasing dependence on the Gulf oil through the seventies and early 80s. The United States' insatiable thirst for oil continued with the European and Japanese dependence on the Gulf oil has made it obligatory for the U.S. to ensure the continued and unhindered supply of oil. A possible scenario of Soviets controlling the area can render the West vulnerable to the threats of world politics. Thus, the State Department defines the American interest in terms of continued access to the Gulf oil supplies "at reasonable price and in sufficient quantities".²⁰

Apart from this the immense importance of the Gulf region as a huge market for goods, services and investment renders it valuable for the US. One of the aims of American Foreign Policy relate to safeguarding the interests of American oil companies in the Gulf.

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19. N. entessar, "The Gulf after the Shah", Third World Quarterly, Vol. 10, October 1988, pp. 1430-31 .
 20. U.S. Congress, House of Representatives hearings before the sub-committee on the Ner-east and South Asia, New Perspectives on Persian Gulf, 93rd Congress, First session (Washington D.C., 1973) p. 7

TABLE I

Dependence on Persian Gulf Oil: Estimates and Projections (1979 and 1985)

	The US		Japan		Western Europe	
	1979	1985	1979	1985	1979	1985
Oil (imports mbd *)	7.8	8	5.6	6	12.8	13.0
Imports from Persian Gulf (mbd)	2.4	3	4.1	5	8.0	8.0
Per cent of Gulf Persian imports to total imports	31	34	73	73	63	62

* million barrels per day

Source: U.S. Interests in, and Policies toward the Persian Gulf; Hearings before the sub-committee on Europe and the middle-east of the Committee as Foreign Affairs, House of Representatives, 96th, 2nd Session : Washington, D.C. GPO, 1980), p. 218

TABLE II

US DEPENDENCE ON OPEC

	Per cent of	
	Net Petroleum imports	Petroleum consumption
1960	81.3	13.4
1965	64.7	12.8
1970	42.5	9.1
1975	61.6	22.0
1977	72.3	33.6
1980	67.4	25.2
1981	61.4	20.6
1982	49.7	14.0
1983	42.7	12.1
1984	43.7	12.8

Source: US Department of Energy, Energy information Administration, Annual Energy Review, 1984 (April 1985), p. 101

Notwithstanding this vast array of compelling economic interests involved in the Gulf, it is not till the late 60s that the US decided to give up its erstwhile low profile policy in the Gulf. The reasons responsible for this low profile policy are not too far to seek. For one thing, the United States in the aftermath of the Second World War was near self-sufficient in oil. Also, the significance of geostrategic zones of West Europe and the Far east at that time weighed more in US Foreign policy.²¹ Although, with the formulation of Eisenhower doctrine' to contain communism, regional alliances like Baghdad Pact and the Central Treaty Organization were formed in the 50s where Iran, Turkey and Pakistan were the key members. But it was Great Britain which was considered to be best able to safeguard the western interest. Except for maintaining a modest Naval unit under Middle East Force Agreement (MIDEASTFOR) with Bahrain concluded in 1949 and an air base at Dahrán in Saudi Arabia which was later relinquished in 1962 at Saudi request the US had no military teeth in the region. In fact, during those twenty one years from 1949 to

21. John C. Campbell, "The Gulf Region in Global Setting" in H. Amirsadeghi (ed), The Security of the Persian Gulf (London, 1981) p.2

1968, the United States only indulged in adhoc arrangements to insulate the Gulf from Soviet influence and to promote good operational aveues for the Western Oil Companies.

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THE BRITISH ROLE

The British connection with the Gulf originated with trading links established in the early 17th century over the next three hundred years. British interests multiplied and intensified to the point that British supermacy in the Gulf was clearly recognized by the 1920s. Britain had its own imperial, territorial, and maritime interests in the region. In order to fulfill the Britain beat bac the external challenges - Russian, French, German - to is supermacy By the end of World War I, Gulf had for all interests and purposes become a British "Lake".

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There were several factors responsible for making the Gulf strategically "vital" for Britain. The first of these arose out of the development of Imperial routes, with

22. John C. Campbell, n. 21, p. 4

23. Peterson "Defending Arabia", ORBIS, FALL 1984, p. 467

the Gulf providing one of the earliest links in the London-India route. But, the more important and permanent factor was the growing dependence on Gulf oil. After the discovery of oil at Masjid-e-Suluman in 1908 in Iran's Khuzistan province, Britain let it be known to all that it was their 'legitimate' sphere of influence. Britain protected its interests by exercising political control over almost all states in the region. It was also protected by effective maritime policing. Besides, local security was maintained in some areas by armed forces established, trained and officered by the British.

While the era of 'Pax Britannica' in the Gulf can be said to have existed for a century or more, complete and effective British control over external access to the Gulf and internal politics in most of the littoral states was more ephemeral, lasting only a few short decades. World War II marked a significant turning point and the beginning of the end of British Imperial standing.

The slowly emerging American penetration of the Peninsula occurred simultaneously with a gradual British retrenchment from positions in the Gulf and the Middle East.

In 1968, Britain announced its withdrawal from the East of Suez. British departure in 1971 had more psychological than political impact on the Gulf affairs. For, Britain had served as Judge, arbiter, administrator and of course protector, of this littoral for well over a century.²⁴

THE US ROLE:

The seeming US inaction concerning the Gulf at this time was not the consequence of indifference. Also, Gulf's role in the looming Global oil crisis was not generally appreciated at the outset of the 1970s. In addition to an indifferent approach, unfamiliarity with the Gulf and compulsions of her involvement in Vietnam, the US also faced a radically changed situation from the pre-war era of British predominance. No longer was the Gulf characterized by minor possessions and quasi-dependencies of an empire. Instead, independent states, fully integrated with International System, had appeared. Besides, the East-West rivalry and the supermacy of the US and the Soviet Union in a bipolar system represented a far more direct

24. Peterson, n. 23, p. 473

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challenge than those of the previous years. Also, the US was inexperienced in its role as guardian of the Gulf.

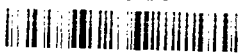
Briefly, American policy in the Gulf since 1971 falls into two distinct periods: 1971 to 1979 and 1979 to present. While the first was characterized by benign inaction, the second tended towards over reaction. During the first period, American policy was predicated on the Nixon Doctrine, first enunciated on Guam in 1969, which minimised the role of the US as a world Policeman. Consequent upon America's disillusionment over the war in vietnam the doctrine was aimed at "military retrenchment without political disengagement". Consequently, the search was instituted for surrogates.

Here was the origin of the so-called "Twin pillars" policy, whereby the US pledged to assist Iran and Saudi Arabia in their military development in order to protect common security interests in the region.

But a series of events in the region around 1979 seemed to mark a watershed in US regional policy. These

25. J.B. Kelley. Arabia, the Gulf and the West, (LONDON, 1980), p. 137

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included: the emergence of a Marxist Regime in Ethiopia, fighting in Ogaden the downfall of Shah's Regime in Iran and Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. The Iranian Revolution in itself posed a threat to Gulf security. Moreover, there could be an surrogate policy without military linchpin and Saudi Arabia was not able to take over that role. It rendered Gulf region even more fragile and vulnerable in the face of overall deterioration in Soviet-American Relations.

Now, the broader Gulf region was characterized as an "arc" or "crescent of crisis", and simmering plans for a more direct and stronger American role in the region were put on the front burner.²⁶

The resultant policy was the "Carter Doctrine" - a resolve on the part of the US to "go it alone".

Other major developments (mentioned above) of 1979 combined with the Soviet Intervention in Afghanistan in the end of 1979 finally drove President Carter to charge Moscow with betrayal and made him to reverse American approach of the past decade in a rhetorical reaction. The combination

26. On the growing climate of alarm, see Zbigniew Brzezinski's comments in Time, January, 15, 1979

of these developments was interpreted widely as either parts of the 'grand design' or as symptoms of a chronic instability. The Administration's growing conviction that, at the very least the Soviet Union could easily exploit these upheavals, and probably had a hand in their development, led to promulgation of the *Carter Doctrine* as announced in Carter's State of the Union Address of 23 January, 1980.

'Any attempt by any outside forces to gain control of the Persian Gulf Region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the US, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.'

This radical shift in the US policy had several implications and objectives. In practical terms, this policy hurried the creation of a Rapid Deployment Force (RDF), as well as emphasized increased reliance on military cooperation with and Arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The Reagan Administration upheld the thrust of the Carter Doctrine building up RDF capabilities even as it expanded

27. Presidential papers of the Presidents of the US, Washington D.C., 1980

28. J.E. Peterson, DEFENDING ARABIA, (KENT, 1986) p.126.

the American warning to Moscow to expect counter-attack for any Gulf invasion at a time, place and manner of American choosing. Robert Tucker held that Carter's "go it alone" resolve was also aimed at reviving the declining public support for the President.²⁹

In spite of having similar aims and objectives in the Persian Gulf Region, the Carter and Reagan administration differed in that whereas, Carter had embraced a symmetrical approach to containment, by limiting US response to a Soviet invasion of the Gulf to counterattack in the Gulf, the Reagan Administration altered the emphasis in favour of an asymmetrical approach.³⁰ Thus, the stakes implicitly were raised and Washington was relieved of its publicly committed reliance solely on a force that might not be capable of confronting Soviet attack in the Gulf, let alone deterring it.

Even within the first few years of Reagan's term, this established framework witnessed a shift of Policy. With Secretary of State Alexander Haig as the architect, the

29. Robert W. Tucker, "American power and the Persian Gulf", Commentary, November 1980, pp. 25-41

30. Peterson, n. 28, p. 147

adminsitration at first embraced the idea of "strategic consensus" between the US and all its friends in the Region as a bulwork against Soviet penetration. The new administration did not realise the impossibility of such a consensus in the face of deep divisions existing between Israel and Arab states friendly to the US. But the idea was soon scrapped and was followed by a relatively low-profile emphasis on improvement of the RDF, acceptance and approaval of the newly formed Gulf co-operation council, and emerging concern over the direction of Iran-Iraq War.

* * *

CHAPTER II
PARAMETERS OF THE GULF SECURITY

CHAPTER II

PARAMETERS OF THE GULF SECURITY

Concern over the security and military defense of the Persian Gulf have steadily intensified over the course of the twentieth century. At the same time, the actors assuming (or proclaiming) responsibility for the security of the Peninsula have also changed. Furthermore, as perceived threats to the security of this area have changed, so have the means - and thus the strategies - to defend the Peninsula. Consequently, any viable strategy concerning the security of the Gulf must not only take into account external threats to Gulf security, but must also deal with social, political and economic conditions in the Gulf¹ itself, past and present.

The three actors or groups concerned with the Gulf security in this century have been Britain, the United States and the six states now comprising the Gulf cooperation council (GCC) : Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qàtar, the

1. J.E. Peterson, Defending Arabia, (Kent, 1986), p.128

United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. Britain exercised primary responsibility for the security of this region because of its predominant position in the Gulf through World War II, and it continued to be directly concerned with the area until final withdrawal in 1971. It was not ~~only~~ after 1971, that the United States (hereafter referred to as 'The US'), ^{became} directly concerned with the defense of the region and the western interests there. The perception of security concerns by the Arab littoral states was also late in emerging primarily due to nature of British influence and legal responsibility for defense of these states.

The year 1971 also marked a watershed in the way many of the littoral states viewed the security of the Gulf. The centuries of British shield had been removed and by default new responsibilities for self defense and regional policing fell to newly emerging nation-states.² After having experienced a brief period of internal growth and reduced external threat, the situation for them, by the end of the decade had begun to change for the worse. Four

2. Michael Sterner, "Perceptions and Policies of the Gulf States towards Regional Security and Superpower Rivalry" in Alvin Z. Rubenstein (ed), The Greatgame : Rivalry in the Persian Gulf & South Asia (New York. 1983), p. 31

events - the Iranian Revolution - the fall of Shah, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, the seize of the Grand Mosque in Mecca by Islamic Radicals and, the Iran-Iraq war - exposed the vulnerability of the Gulf regimes in the face of external and internal pressures.³ Thus sudden deterioration in the immediate environment was compounded by new strains in intra-Arab Relations because of Camp David and a cooling of Arab Relations with the United States as American⁴ diplomacy on the Arab-Israeli problem began to flag with the fall of Shah of Iran, who seemed to assure Gulf security in the wake of withdrawal of Union Jack from the east of Suez, security in the area fell apart: The Soviets invaded Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq war broke out, US hostages were seized, US prestige and credibility plummeted and hit its Nadir with the abortive raid to release the hostages.

Today, the Region is a vast, vulnerable vacuum filled with intraregional political, cultural and religious strife. The area lacks unifying regional leadership, fears dominate and to the West, it appears vulnerable to Soviet

3. Cristopher S. Raj, "A Vulnerable Region", World Focus, Sept. 1982, V 3, n. 9, pp. 8-10

4. Michael Sterner, n.2, pp. 32-33

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opportunism. It is against this backdrop that we may now proceed towards an analysis of the ingredients of security - factors, external as well as internal, affecting the stability and security of the Persian Gulf.

Gulf Security : A Conceptual Profile

Security is a notoriously difficult concept to pin down. Arnold Wolfers labelled it an "ambiguous symbol" and argued that "it may not have any precise meaning at all".⁶ This ambiguity identifies it as what W.B. Gallie calls it an "essentially contested concept". Concepts like security define areas of concern more than they define absolute conditions. Security is a universal concept but it has no universal rule of application.⁷ Contradictions exist interalia between individual security and national security, between national security, and between violent means and peaceful means.

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5. Keith A. Barlow, "Introduction" in Shirin Tahir Kheli (ed), U.S. Strategic Interests in South West Asia, New York, Praeger, 1982) p. 5
 6. Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration (Baltimore : Hopkins Press, 1962). p. 147
 7. Barry Buzan, "Regional Security as a Policy Objective : the case of South. Southwest Asia", in Alvin Z. Rubenstein (ed .) n. 2, p. 239

The concept of security applies to many sectors. Political security makes just as much sense as military security and neither is unrelated to security and neither is unrelated to security in economic and social sectors. The social tension, as a result of clash between tradition and modernity, partly underlies a pervasive, political insecurity that arises from weakly founded governments fearful of both internal opposition and external meddling and subversion.⁸

Military security is a pervasive problem in the area at several levels. It is a problem within the local states as their armies apply force to the segments of their own population, as in Oman, Iran, Iraq etc. It is a problem among local states as they juggle military threats against each other and all too frequently resort to war. And it is a problem because of the increasingly military flavour of superpower rivalry in the area.

So, the question of security of the Gulf needs to be studied in all its diverse facets viz. the security of the regime, of the system, of national sovereignty and

8. Ibid, p. 241

territorial integrity, and finally of regional peace,
prosperity and stability.⁹ National sovereignty and
territorial integrity are threatened by three main forces
either singly or in conjunction - centrifugal forces within
a state like Tribalism, the problem of minorities, and
intervention by the big and superpowers.

Gulf stability is dependent upon a variety
of external and internal factors and events. Externally, the
threat is said to stem mainly from Israel and from the
Soviet Union. The later threat could take the form of
direct intervention or through pro-Soviet Arab states such
as Libya, Syria, South Yemen. It could materialise through
subversion. Iran and South Yemen percieve a threat of U.S.
intervention. The other Gulf states which, having close
relations with the US cannot overlook or be indifferent to
the US statements that essentially hold out the threat of
intervention in case the Gulf states adopt the policies
which hurt the US interests.¹⁰ Other external threats
emanate from islamic fundamentalism, territorial disputes,

9. K.R. Singh, "Arms and Security in the Gulf" in Surendra
Bhutani (ed.) Contemporary Gulf pp. 13-15

10. Cristopher S. Raj, n. 3, pp. 8-10

Arab-Israel dispute and the superpower competition in the region.

The governments of the Gulf countries more often see the threat not as the Russian bear, which the US must cope with, but as instability within their own countries or intra regional threats from others in the area.¹¹ The internal threats to security range from tensions and pace of modernization, extremely unstable and repressive Gulf regimes who fail to cope with these tensions, political strife caused by military coups and revolutions, Shia-sunni divide to insurgency movements such as Dhofar Rebellion. These tensions when interacting with external factors, and exploited by the outside powers, create explosive situation in the Gulf.

It is against this backdrop that we may undertake an analysis of Gulf states' perception of security threats.

11. Keith A. Barlow, "Introduction", in Shirin Tahir-Kheli (eds) n. 5, p. 6

Gulf States' Perception of Security Threats

The Gulf states, except Iran and Oman, are nascent national entities still heavily preoccupied with the task of Nation-building. They are basically inward looking and inclined to see much of the problem in terms of problems affecting their own stability.¹² A failure to recognize this has often caused gaps in perception between the US and the Gulf States : Washington wonders why they are not more concerned by the Soviet threat while the Gulf states still see Afghanistan as far away.

For the Arab Gulf to which such an external threat has the potential to strike responsive chords within their own societies. Their judgement has always been that, in this sense, the Soviets have a few direct assets in their countries.¹³

Revolutionary Iran and The Arabs

The Gulf Arab states, though not very happy with Iran's immensely growing power, had anyhow acomodated

12. Michael Sterner, n.2, p. 29

13. Ibid, p. 30

themselves to this fact. They did not much like the Shah's personal style but they recognized that his policies were compatible with and even supportive of their own interests. The Shah had weakened the radical nationalist forces which had tried to destabilise the ruling houses in the region.

The collapse of Shah's regime, therefore, came as an unpleasant shock, particularly as it brought to power a leader who had proclaimed the incompatibility of Islam with monarchical forms of rule. Two dangers immediately presented. The first was that an Iran under hostile leadership either in the name of Iranian nationalism or a fundamentalist Islamic Jihad, might attempt to bring the small Gulf states under Iranian domination. The second was that the idea of an "Islamic Revolution", whether or not actively promoted by Teheran, might spread to the Arab side of the Gulf.¹⁴ Incidents occurring in Saudi Arabia shortly after the Revolution in Iran - the take over of Grand Mosque in Mecca and disturbances on two occasions among the Shittes in the eastern province of al-nasa, as also the disturbances in Bahrain - seemed to be troubling manifestations of either one or both of these possibilities.

14. The Washington Post, Sept 23, 1981

Of all the dangers facing the gulf regimes, it has become almost a cliché to single out the so-called Islamic revival, aided by the Islamic Republic of Iran, as the one force which inevitably would lead to the disintegration of the present political orders of the Gulf.¹⁵

Many Muslims saw the Iranian Revolution and other related activities, such as the take-over of American embassy as the first Muslim victory over non-Muslims since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. To the mass Muslim public, the victories of the Ayatollahs during 1979 and 1980, over the "enemies of Islam" manifested by the West and its "enfeebled lackeys" in the Muslim world represented the advent of a new heroic age of Islamic assertion and power. For Muslims suffering for centuries under Western intellectual, technological and military superiority, the eclipse of the Shah's, and by definition the West's might in Iran simply emphasised that it is through Islam, rather than nationalism, westernization and other such modern concepts

15. Adeed Dawisha, "The Stability of the Gulf: Domestic sources and External threats". in Rubenstein (eds.) n.2, p.2

that the Muslim world could defeat the Western
"Imperialists".¹⁶ In this the Gulf rulers were at a
disadvantage as many were allied with what Tehran called
"American Satan".

The Arab Context

The Arab world is the primary interstate framework within which the Arab Gulf states see their future evolving. It is within the Arab arena that much of the Gulf Arab's search for security is directed, but it is also from within this arena that some of the most serious threats of their security have emerged. The factors falling within this category range from regime security, territorial disputes among the Gulf states, insurgency movements to local conflicts and wars.

The experience of the 1950s and early 1960s is still vivid in the minds of Peninsular Arab particularly the Saudis. As revolutions swept monarchies away in Egypt and Iraq. "Nasserism" and "Bathism" became doctrines of widespread appeal through much of the Arab world.¹⁷ The

16. Adeed Dawisha, n.2, p.2

17. Michael Sterner, n.2, pp. 32-33

period was particularly traumatic for the Saudis but Kuwait and Oman as well faced threats from Arab neighbours. Upon Kuwait's independence in 1961, Iraq immediately asserted a claim to Kuwait. Baghdad was forced to back off when British troops, subsequently replaced by an Arab League force supported Kuwait's independence. A decade later the fragile beginnings of statehood for the middle Gulf principalities were made more difficult by Iraq's effort to establish influence throughout the Gulf. At about the same time Oman was subjected to an insurgency promoted by its pro-Soviet neighbour, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen.

Most Gulf states have unrepresentative, repressive regimes whose ability to cope with domestic tensions is uncertain. Possibility of political strife is buttressed by the fact that in the Gulf military coups and revolutions are the norms. Ethnic or linguistic minorities, sectarian schism and large number of foreign immigrants give these states the appearance of a mosaic overlapping population also constitute potential problem as cover for secessionist movement or as objects of political irredenta by

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neighbouring states or as source of domestic opposition.

Territorial Disputes:

A major component of the regional dynamics of these states remains the intrplay between their territorial and theri dynastic rivalries.¹⁹ With the arrival of the British in the Gulf, these conflicts subsided but did not disappear. At the root of much of the conflict has been a quest for control of the region's limited economic resources. The more important territorial disputes outstanding most of which have involved outside powers in support of one or more of the parties to the conflict - remains those of:

1. Iraq and Kuwait over their common frontier and the question of control over Warbah and Bubiyan two strategic islands lying in their offshore waters.

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18. S. Chubin, "Security in the Persian glf : Role of the outside powers" (England, IISS, 1982) p. 30
 19. John Duke Anthony "The Persian Gulf in Regional and International Politics" in H. Amir Sadeghi (ed) The Security of the Persian Gulf (London 1981) pp. 170-72

2. Of Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawan Islands group located in their offshore waters.
3. Of Sarjah and Iran over offshore waters in which petroleum was discovered in 1972 near Abu Musa Island
4. Of Sarjah and Fujayrah over their respective land boundaries a dispute which re-erupted in 1972
5. Of Dubai and Sarjah over territory being commercially developed between them
6. Of Oman and Saudi Arabia over Ummzamul

To this list may be added 'more examples of the problematic nature of the islands in the Gulf. Such as dispute between Iran and Sarjah over Abu Musa and Tunb islands (which Iran seized in 1971), and the historic dispute between Saudi-Arabia and Oman over Buriami oasis.

The Arab-Israeli Conflict:

The regional linkage between the Gulf states and the fertile crescent (confrontation) states involved in the Arab-Israeli dispute occurs essentially within three different contexts.²⁰ One of these is in the realm of

specific events that occasionally occur in one of the areas, such as the sabotage of an installation in Syria or Lebanon, that had a direct impact on developments in the other area. The second is in the context of interrelationships between particular states with interests in both areas as for example, between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran or Israel and Iran. The third context of interrelationships between particular states with interests in both areas as for example, between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Iran or Israel and Iran. The third context is the extent to which the countries most directly involved in the Arab-Israeli conflict perceive the mineral and monetary might of the Arab oil producing states in the Gulf to be a political or economic arm of the conflict.²¹

During the 1950s and early 1960s, the Gulf Arabs paid little attention to the Arab-Israeli problem. At that time, they viewed it as far away and though recognized the injustice done to the Palestinians, yet they held corrupt Arab leadership responsible for it. A sharp change in

20. John Duke Anthony, n. 19, pp. 180-81

21. Ibid, pp. 180-81

perception occurred in 1967 when the catastrophic defeat of Arab Arms brought a new sense of menace from Israeli "expansionism".²² The Palestinians, for the first time, began to organize themselves as a political and paramilitary force. In Kuwait, an estimated 25 per cent of the population is Palestinian. In Saudi Arabia, and the UAE their number is significant.

To the Gulf Arabs, the Arab-Israeli issue presents a host of worrisome and frustrating problems. Their deepest concern has centred round the fear that the continued denial of Palestinian rights would radicalize them and also that they might one day make a common cause with the Islamic fundamentalists. They also view the dispute as the main vehicle of Soviet expansionism in the area and it also frustrates their close relationship with the United States.

Local Perceptions about the Superpowers:

The Soviet Union :

The traditional societies of the Gulf based on adherence to Islam, a strong property sense. little

22. Michael Sterner, n. 2, pp. 34-35

historical experience of exploited urban classes, and their own unique form of tribal leadership offer fundamentally inhospitable ground for the doctrine of communism.²³ Virtually untouched by the anti-colonial ferment of 1940s and 1950s which created the ground for the germination of leftist ideologies there, most of the Gulf rulers see communism as inimical and distasteful doctrine. Soviet alignments with the authoritarian regimes in the region like Cairo and Damascus and their activities prejudicial to Saudi and other monarchies, reinforced this antagonism.²⁴

Relations between the USSR and the various Gulf states cover a wide range, reflecting differing historical experience and internal political make up. Kuwait is the only Arab Gulf state that has diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. At the opposite end of the spectrum is Oman which experienced a Soviet supported insurgency. In between are Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain.

23. Donald Hawley, The Trucial States (London; Allen and Unwin, 1970). p. 164

24. Ronald G. Wolfe (eds.), The U.S. ; The Arabia and the Gulf (Washington D.C., CCAF, 1980. p. 2

The Gulf states perceptions of the Soviet threat and the superpower rivalry have gone through several phases since the 1950s:

- * The period of 1954-67 - characterized by expanding Soviet presence in the key Arab states and the Soviets making definite gains vis-a-vis the West.
- * The decade of 1967-76 witnessed marked decline in the Soviet clients coupled with enhancement of the US prestige because of its involvement in the Arab-Israeli negotiations. The period being one of Detente relationship between the superpowers also evinced a renewed confidence on the part of conservative Arab regimes in their ability to survive.
- * The post 1976 era is characterised by resurgent Soviet activity and gains with Soviet intrusions into Angola and Horn of Africa, the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the collapse of the Shah's rule in Iran and the outbreak of Iran-Iraq war. This is also the time for a declining US role in world affairs during

25. New York Times, September 23, 1982

the post-vietnam period and then onset of renewed US - Soviet Rivalry in the wake of Soviet intervention in Afghanistan.

This renewed Soviet activism coupled with the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan increased the Arab perceptions to the Soviet threat and it also showed to them that the Soviets were not only prepared to act through proxies but also they could occupy a Muslim country with its own forces. It also convinced them that the Arab factor convinced them that the Arab factor weighed less in Soviet calculus. The Saudis and the other Gulf states condemned Soviet intervention in Afghanistan yet it could not cause any fundamental shift in Gulf states' postures towards the superpowers. Instead, it has sharpened the debate within the Gulf governments as to whether the best way to deal with the Soviets is to continue to have nothing to do with them or to begin dealing with them in a limited way.²⁶

The US

Except Saudi Arabia, the smaller states of the Gulf had no historical experience of close association with

26. Ronald G. Wolfe (eds.) n. 24. p. 3

the US. Besides, save Oman, almost all of them got rid of British tutelage and turned into free states with sizable communities of Palestinians, Egyptians, Syrians and other Arabs who had brought with them concepts of Arab nationalism and nonalignment. Though the rulers of these states wanted US recognition and access to US Arms and Technology. they, fearing resultant external and internal pressures, were in no mood to have much closer relationship with the US.

The Saudi experience was fundamentally different. The US had been a close partner in blossoming of Saudi Arabia into nationhood. Beginning in 1930s when the US oil companies got concessions, the US advanced loans to Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the World War II. But a number of factors brought about a fundamental shift in attitude over past thirty years.

The Saudis discovered during 1950s and 1960s that although their security link with the US could be useful as protection against external threat. it could do very little to help Saudi Arabia protect itself against internal threats. The Arab-Israeli problem and US policy towards has been another source of irritant which was compounded by little US support to Nasser.

Compared with the Soviet policy, the US policy over the past decade has struck the Saudis and the Gulf Arab as unsteady and undependable. They welcomed the Carter doctrine but noted that the United States did nothing, in fact, to save its friend, the Shah.

Threat Perceptions Differ:

Apart from the divergence of external threats to region among the Gulf states which is best demonstrated by Kuwait and Oman and already discussed earlier, there is a lot of divergence of views regarding threats to security between - the US on the one hand - the US on the one hand and its allies and other states on the other. It pertains to divergence of perception over Arab-Israeli dispute, the Soviet threat and the question of regional security as a whole. Last but not least is the context of nonalignment, which has historical roots and receive nominal adherence.

To begin with the Arab-Israeli problem and the US policy towards it has been filled with contradictions. Muslims from Pakistan to Morocco are concerned first with the solution of Arab-Israeli equation: not only Israeli's yielding up of territory it has occupied since the 1967 war,

but also adjudication of the sovereign rights of several millions disenfranchised Palestinians.²⁷ There have been four instances of open warfare between the confrontation states and Israel. The Gulf states view the problem as central to regional peace and stability and have found it difficult to be very closely identified with the US.

The United States has been Israel's principal ally and arms supplier, and American policy makers have had the unenviable task of trying to reconcile this position with their extensive relations with the Arab states fiercely opposed to Israel, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the small gulf states. American support for Israel does not fit well with its other interests in the area (oil and containment) and also it cannot be subsumed under its general anti-Soviet and anti-communist stance. The Soviet Union has exploited this American dilemma to the utmost, and has used support against Israel as its entry point into Arab Politics.²⁸

27. Wolf P. Gross, "Twin Dilemmas : The Arabian Peninsula and American Security" in S. Tahir-Keli (ed.) n.5. p.195

28. Bary Buzan. n. 2, p. 256

Throughout the area there remains in varying degrees a mistrust of "exploitative" western interests reinforced by firstly, the fear that outside military forces, no matter how benign and well intentioned are focussed on siezure of the region's oil. secondly. concerns emanating from an evolving US - Israeli strategic cooperation, thirdly. their own vulnerabilities to immediate pressures from neighbours and from internal opposition, fourthly, apprehensions over the consistency and staying power of American support in times of real crisis. ("abondonment" of Shah is cited here. fifthfly. the desire to avoid great power rivalries and in some states, to substitute Islamic and nonaligned ties for close association with the US or the Soviet Union, and lastly a cultural pride and ethno-centrism which reinfroces a desire to progress within value systems often at variance with those of the industrialized world. All these negative forces combined with US role in Arab-Israeli conflict work to the detriment of the US interests.

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28. Barry Buzan, n. 2, p. 256

29. Woolf P. Gross, n. 5, p. 197

Regional Security:

There is hardly a Gulf state which has not declared its aim of greater independence and freedom from the military presence of outside powers. Since, 1970s, following British withdrawal from the East of Suez the Gulf states have shown active interests in proposals for greater cooperation among themselves to enhance their mutual security. They have seen such schemes as conferring a number of benefits : making it clear to the outside powers that the security of the Gulf is first and foremost the responsibility of the Gulf states themselves, strengthening the capability of the weakest among them to resist threats from more powerful neighbours and ameliorating rivalries among themselves by requiring them to think cooperatively about their mutual security.³⁰

Early proposals for Gulf regional security groupings tended to founder for two reasons. In the first place, given the great asymmetry in power and political policies of these states, it was difficult to find a

30. Maxwell D. Taylor, Precarious Security, (New York : Norton, 1976), p. 17

collective framework which could encompass it. The second problem pertained to differing perceptions of Gulf states to regional security. At the one end of the spectrum was Kuwait which tended to follow, non-aligned policies in relation to the superpowers and saw security in terms of having good relations with the Gulf states, particularly Iraq. At the other end was Oman which sought US protection as a replacement for British power and which had a close security relations with Iran. Through the 1970s, the Saudis and the remaining Arab states of the Gulf attempted to bridge this gap, but without success.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the Iranian Revolution, particularly the latter, changed the political topography of the Gulf and opened the way for a regional grouping of the Gulf states. With Iran no longer in an unquestioned pre-eminent position in the Gulf, the Gulf and the other Arab states began to formulate alternatives for security and stability of the area.³¹ The formal vehicle for this closer relationship on security matters has been

31. Ann. B. Radwan, "Iran-Iraq and the Gulf" in S. Tahir-Keli (eds), n. 5, p. 165

the Gulf cooperation council (GCC), established in 1981 among Saudi Arabia, Oman, The UAE, Qatar Bahrain, and Kuwait.

The formation of the GCC might have coaxed the Gulf rulers to think in terms of defending the Gulf through military means. The tendency thus far has been to oversimplify the problem. The main issue has been evaded. First, the Gulf states do not have enough trained manpower to support a deterrent fighting force even if they can muster the political will to create one; second, the major military targets in the region namely, the oilfields, refineries and terminals are too exposed to be militarily defensible in the event of a war.

Thus, any security system in the Gulf region, whether linked to outside powers or limited to local states must overcome or neutralise the sources of local conflict if it is to be effective. there is no way of preventing all conflict among Gulf states in view of the many historical territorial disputes, which we have discussed earlier in this chapter. This is compounded by threats to internal stability like unrest and rebellion within states, rapid modernization, religious fanaticism and others. The interlocking of regional conflicts with the superpower

competition maximises the dangers for all concerned: it encourages local states to look outside the region for support against their neighbours, it encourages outside powers to play on local disputes.

CHAPTER III

PERSIAN GULF IN AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

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Since the World War II the United States (hereafter referred to as the US) has consistently shown her interests in the Persian Gulf region. For over three decades, the Persian Gulf and the Southwest Asia¹ as a whole have occupied a key place in US strategy, although the nature and relative importance of the US interests in the area have varied. The significance of the region has tended to increase as the industrial democracies - not to mention the oil procuring areas of the third world - have become increasingly dependent on its petroleum resources.

The US Relations with the Region have been multifaceted. However, the focus of these relations have been on oil, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and containment of

1. SouthWest Asia as a geostrategic region includes countries - from Turkey, Iran, Iraq, other Gulf/Arab countries to 'Afghanistan'.

Soviet expansionism . These three issues are interrelated. and have remained constant in US-Persian Gulf relations and have shown differing priorities depending upon the crisis, the period, location and the causes. Beginning with a token American presence in the 1950s, the region witnessed a marked activism in US Foreign Policy in the region in the aftermath of British withdrawal. It takes a little analytical effort to discern the sudden transformation in US perceptions of the Persian Gulf and policies toward it, especially, if one makes a review of presidential statements in the period between President Nixon's first State of the Union message in January 1969 and President Carter's last in January 1980. The magnitude of such a change ranged from Nixon's benign praise of the Shah's social "White Revolution" in Iran³ to Carter's declaration of the Gulf as a part of Washington's vital interest. In military terms, the US connection moved from a 'three-ship Command Middle East Force fleet to a Rapid Deployment Force of 100,000 troops whose task was to repel any serious threat to Gulf security.

2. EMILE A. NAKHLEH, THE PERSIAN Gulf and AMERICAN POLICY, (Prager, 1982), p. 95.

3. Ibid, p. 102

Thus, US involvement in the security of Persian Gulf has been continuous since World War II and the onset of the cold war. In order to promote and protect country's interests, the successive US Administrations defined complementary objectives and some of them can be identified as basic⁴ throughout the period 1945 to the present. These include :

- * Containing Soviet expansionism through collective security
- * Maintaining uninterrupted access to the Region's Oil Resources
- * Preserving the independence of Regional States, especially Israel
- * Preventing the spread of Communism and other radical/extremist doctrines
- * Deterring Intra-regional conflict
- * Enhancing US economic and commercial interests, and
- * Avoiding War with the Soviet Union

4. Department of State Bulletin 69 (July 2, 1973): 30-31.
New Perspectives on the Persian Gulf

EVOLUTION OF US POLICY IN THE GULF

The evolution of US Policy in the Gulf may be divided into two distinct stages: 1947 to 1972 and 1972 to 1980. In the pre-1972 period, Washington's Persian Gulf Policy, being a part of its general middle-east policy, focussed on region's stability, Soviet threats and need to contain it and need for the Gulf oil. It has led to several major policy pronouncemet on the part of the US Presidents. Four such statements/Doctrines⁵ have been advanced with varying degrees of clarity. The Truman Doctrine (March 12, 1947). The Eisenhower Doctrine (January 5, 1957). The Nixon Doctrine (February 18, 1970) and the the Carter Doctrine (Janauary 23, 1980) The Truman Doctrine, marking the assumption of the US role as World Power and champion of the "Free World" was implemented successfully in Greece and Turkey through US economic and military aid. The first, second and fourth doctrines focussed directly on "Communist" threats to the states and regimes in the area. All four doctrines committed the US to respond directly or through local states

5. For Doctrines, see "Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Washington, DC, Govt. Printing Office, 1947, 1957, 1970, 1980

if any threat, presumably Communist, were to occur or if the US were invited to respond by any state in the area⁶. The Eisenhower and the Carter Doctrines prescribed a direct US involvement, whereas the Nixon doctrine called for action by local states using US weapons but not US soldiers.

THE POST WAR CONTAINMENT PERIOD AND AFTER

The major hallmarks of US Policy during the period of the cold war included the Truman doctrine, the containment policy, and a broad pursuit of a policy of collective security. Central to the policy as applied to the Region was Turkey's incorporation in NATO in 1952, creation of Baghdad Pact in 1955, which became the CENTRAL TREATY ORGANISATION (CENTO) following the overthrow of the Hashemite monarchy in Iraq and the establishment of the Ba'thist Regime in 1959, and the conclusion of identical bilateral security treaties with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in 1959. The first articles of these agreements, by reference to the Eisenhower Doctrine^{the} resolution of 1957 made it clear that security cooperation

6. EMILE A. Nakhleh, "An Overview", n.2, p. 47

"including the use of Armed Force" was to be directed against the threats from "states controlled by International Communism".

Despite the withdrawal of Iraq from the Baghdad Pact in 1959, the loss of British bases there and the growing dissatisfaction of the regional members with the lack of support from the US and Britain in regional disputes, the essential security purposes of the alliance were achieved and Cooperation for Development (RCD, consisting of Regional CENTO members, was framed in 1964.

One major difference between the cold war and the late 1960's and the early 1970's was the lower degree of direct US involvement in regional security that marked the latter period. Even at the peak of US involvement in the middle 1950's, US interests were primarily secured through political means rather than by a military presence⁷. In this period, US had never deployed anything but token military forces into the region, notably the small fourship Flotilla (MIDEASTFOR) home ported at Bahrain since 1949. After,

7. Richard P. Cronin, "US interests, objectives and Policy Options in South West Asia", in S. Tahir - Kheli (eds.), US Strategic interests in SouthWest Asia (Prager, New York, 1982), p. 46

Bahrain became independent in 1971, the naval facilities agreement (known as Juffair agreement) was concluded between the US and Bahrain directly. Indeed MIDEASTFOR, or Command Middle-East Force was the vehicle through which a continuing US Naval presence was provided in the gulf in the period.

The two major issues that preoccupied President Lynden Johnson were Vietnam in foreign policy and the building of the "Great society" domestically. The middle-east was thrust upon President Johnson in 1967 with the June War. The Arab-Israele conflict underwent a transformation from Israel versus the Arab states to Israelis versus Palestians. The 1967 war contributed to the drastic increase of Soviet influence in the area - the very thing US had ben trying to prevent. It also demonstrated the failure of Global powers to control regional events in a bipolar World. Regional conflict posed serious escalation problems .

In sum, the Gulf security situation at the time might best be turned an Anglo-American condominium. Between 1948 and 1968, the US treated the Gulf as a British domain

8. Ishaq Ghanayem & Alden H. Voth, The Kissinger Legacy, (Prager, New York, 1984) p. 24

and relied on the British military and political presence to maintain the region "East of Suez" relatively stable and free of Soviet influence.

THE WINDS OF CHANGE:

By the Mid 1960's, the U.S. had become preoccupied with the conflict in South East Asia and began to cut back its direct involvement in Regional Security. The "Vietnam Syndrome" generated a force debate on the role of the US in World affairs which, in the face of mounting public pressure led to a sharp cut in US overseas military commitment. This trend was hastened by the emergence of basic differences in the objectives of the US and those of some of its Regional clients.

However, towards the end of the 1960's American attitudes altered drastically as a result of three developments : the withdrawal of the British military presence; the increased US demand for the oil resources of the Persian Gulf and the evolving Soviet military and political role in the region . In turn, the US response to changes in

9. GARY SICK, "The evolution of US Strategy toward the Indian Ocean and PG Regions", in Alvin Z, Rubenstein (ed .). The great game. (Prager, 1983, New York), p. 50

the strategic environment involved a mix of several different policy instruments : the direct application of US military presence, political and military arrangements with friendly regional states, diplomatic and economic association and some efforts at regional arms control.

NIXON DOCTRINE AND BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

In January 1968, the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, declared the historic "east of Suez" policy to withdraw from the Gulf Region. This declaration precipitated certain changes in the Gulf scenario which prompted the American Policy makers to change the US Role in the Region. Whether the subsequent British withdrawal in December, 1971 created a "vacuum" in the Gulf is a separate question, but it certainly geared up the superpower activities to safeguard their respective interests directly. At the same time, the newly acquired oil wealth had boosted the morale of the local states. To attain some degree of self-reliance, they wanted to build their own armed forces and did not like external intervention. Besides, the new ideas of pan-Arabism, republicanism and Revolution emanating from Cairo, Damascus

Baghdad and Aden, the disruptive of oil wealth on the life styles of tribal societies, and the growing incongruity of paternalistic political structure changed considerably the political landscape of the Gulf¹⁰.

It has been argued by many that the ultimate British withdrawal created a "power vacuum" in the Gulf which necessitated the involvement of the US to shoulder its own responsibility. But the fact is that long before the final withdrawal of Britain in 1971 the US had already made its presence felt in the Region through various political and economic security agreements with Iran and Saudi Arabia in 1950's and 1960's. Britain was not only eager to free itself from the mark of colonialism but its crisis in balance of payment and dissolution of the special relations with Washington might have prompted the Labour Government to take such crucial question of withdrawal. Nevertheless, the British withdrawal had its immense psychological impact especially on the lower Gulf Seikhdoms. The manner of announcing the withdrawal, the absence of previous consultations with the Gulf states, and its hast

10. M.S. Agwani, Politics in the Gulf, (New Delhi, 1978), p.51

implementation' - all emancipated the political weakness of
the southern Gulf¹¹ .

THE TWIN PILLAR POLICY

When the Nixon administration took office in 1969, it immediately initiated a major review of US policy in the region focussing first on the Persian Gulf. In the same year, Nixon announced at Guam, his Doctrine known as 'Nixon Doctrine'. It was understood that the policy review was to consider how this doctrine of US support for and increased reliance on regional powers could best be applied to the situation in the Gulf. In explaining the Nixon Doctrine, the President said:

Its central thesis is that the US will participate in the defence and development of allies and friends, but that America cannot and will not conceive all plans, design all the programmes, execute all the decisions and undertake all the defence of the free nations of the World. We will help where it makes a real difference and it is considered in our
interests¹² .

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11. David Hudson, "The Persian Gulf : After the British Raj", Foreign Affairs (New York), Vol. 49, No. 4, July 1971
 12. Quoted in Michael J. Brenner, "The Problem of innovation and Nixon kissinger Foreign Policy", International Studies Quarterly (September, 1973), p. 264

Nixon doctrine had on two premises. First, it assumed American Interventionism would be less essential in the era of Detente. Rather than relying on overt military intervention, Nixon and Kissinger, (the later his National Security Adviser, and later on his Secretary of State also) shifted the emphasis to covert operations (eg. in Chile), arms transfer (eg. Iran), and proxy actions (eg. Israil) to preserve the American regional predominance in the Third World¹³. Second, the doctrine assumed regional challenges could be met by Regional allies through the mobilisation of their forces equipped with US supplied weapons. In sum, the doctrine sought to come to grips with an era of changed balance of power and of polycentric Communism.

With the eventual British withdrawal in 1971, the regional countries, especially ambitious Iran, tried to fill the vacuum by some sort of regional joint security system. Being uniquely privileged with oil wealth and a large population, he dreamt of building a strong, powerful "pax persiana" which would be a proper substitute for "pax Britannica". But he was politely rebuffed by Iraq, Saudi

13. Ishaq Ghanyems Voth, The Kissinger Legacy, (Prager, 1984), pp. 6-7

Arabia and the other Gulf countries. Based on these appreciations of the Gulf situation, the US concluded a major review of its interests and policy options in the Gulf and opted for a low profile policy placing primary reliance on "Regional influentials". This policy coincided with a general public aversion to overseas military involvements and with the formalization of Detente with the Soviet Union.

Because the abovesaid policy relied so heavily on the two key states of Iran and Saudi Arabia, it quickly became known as the "Twin pillar" policy. It had four key elements: first, to promote cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia as a desirable basis for maintaining stability in the Gulf, while recognizing Iran as the preponderant power. Second, it was decided to maintain a tiny US Naval presence without change, although there was great sensitivity to the growing opposition in the Gulf, particularly on the part of the Shah of Iran, Third, it was decided to expand the US diplomatic representation in the Gulf and to promote US Technical assistance. And fourth, to encourage the local Gulf states to look primarily to the UK for their security needs by¹⁴ restraining US sale of arms in that area .

14. Gary Sick, n. 9, p. 58

The US relationship with the Shah of Iran formed the centrepiece of the regional security system that evolved during the early 1970's. The US-Iran relationship grew in importance in the 1960s and early 1970s as Iran moved from being a recipient of US military assistance to a major cash-purchaser of first line equipment. The dream of Shah to become the dominant power in the Gulf and the growth of the resources needed to realize the goal, coincided with the US preoccupation disengaging from the conflict in South-east Asia .

Saudi Arabia with its small population base, a practically non existent navy and a limited military force was clearly the subordinate partner in the envisioned Washington - Teheran Riyadh axis . The inclusion of Saudi Arabia in this partnership was partly intended to give the Arab states of Persian Gulf a feeling of equality with non-Arab Iran whose intentions and views were viewed with suspicion by many Arab states . Moreover, Washington was aware of Saudi Arabia's

15. Richard P. Cronin, "US objectives, interests and Policy Options in South West Asia", in G. Tahirkheli (ed.) US Strategic interests in Southwest Asia (Prager, New York, 1982), p. 48
16. NADER ENTERSSAR, "The Gulf after the Shah : Superpowers and Persian Gulf Security", THIRD WORLD Quarterly, Vol. 10 (4), October 1988, pp. 1430-31
17. Ibid, n. 20, p. 1431

petroleum and financial power. While Saudis were militarily incapable and diplomatically uncomfortable with the prospect of becoming a US "Surrogate", the Shah was interested in assuming the role of the gendarme of the Persian Gulf¹⁸. Accordingly, the US began arming the twin pillars - Saudi Arabia and Iran. This policy continued till 1979 when one of the two pillars - Iran underwent an Islamic Revolution and the Shah was overthrown.

18. Entessar, n. 20, p. 1432

THE ARAB ISRAELI WAR IMPACT OF
OIL CRISIS ON US POLICY IN THE GULF

Several events during 1973-74 caused US policy makers to begin to rethink the basis of US Security Policy in the Region. The 1973 Arab-Israeli war and the OPEC embargo led the US to deploy a carrier task force into the Western Indian Ocean from regular duty with the Pacific fleet. Later, the Soviet acquisition of a logistical facility at Berbera, Somalia, its military involvement in Ethiopia and a steady increase in Soviet ships in the Indian ocean caused the US to begin to build up the facility at Diego Garcia that had been leased from Britain in 1965¹⁹.

The Arab-Israeli War of October 1973, intensified the Arab suspicion and anger on the American role vis-a-vis the Arab interests. The War, regardless of its outcome, clearly demonstrated that oil and Politics could no longer be separated in the Persian Gulf Region. In the 1950s and 1960s the Arab-Israeli conflict was essentially limited to Israel

19. Richard P. Cronin, n. 7, p. 49

and the Arab States. Israel won whenever the conflict erupted into open warfare. Palestinian nationalism was dormant and oil was available. But now Palestinian nationalism emerged as an international factor²⁰, oil companies were replaced as policy makers by the producing states through OPEC.

As a reaction to the US role in the conflict, Saudi and other Arab states, participating actively in the embargo, used oil as a "political weapon" against the US and its allies. Iran did not participate in this "oil embargo", so its leverage in the eyes of the US grew significantly. But Iran's attitude towards Egypt and Saudi Arabia, during the War, showed as if the Shah's effort was to form a Cairo-Riyadh-Teheran axis to safeguard Regional interests even to the detriment to that of the US.

But whatever may be the role of Iran, the 1973 "Oil Crisis" i.e., Cartellisation of oil and Skyrocketing oil prices and "oil embargo", came as the greatest shock to the Western world since the World War II. Especially it revived the Soviet hopes in the region. The Soviet Union got tremendous strategic and economic advantages while the US suffered set-backs.

20. Emile Nakhleh, n. 2, p. 19

To meet this devastating shock of 'oil crisis' two options were available to the US: either to occupy the oil fields by force or to make the best of the adversity i.e., to accommodate the Arab pressures and to gain access to the gulf oil at acceptable prices. But it was the option of using force or military intervention in the Gulf oil fields which won the immediate issue in the post oil crisis consumer²¹ producer relationship .

In January 1974 the American secretary of Defence James Schelsinger warned that the Arabs states would run the risk of violence if they used control over oil supplies "to cripple the larger masses of the Industrial World"²² . In the late 1974, a US carrier suddenly broke off from a CENTO exercise and entered the Gulf - first visit by an American Carrier in 25 years.

But it was Henry Kissinger, the Secretary of State, whose reported threat regarding the possibility of US intervention in the oil field created a storm and panic in the

21. Shafaquet Ali Shah, "The US and the crescent of crisis", Strategic Digest (New Delhi), Vol. 10, no. 3, March 1980, p. 106

22. Cristian Science Monitor (Boston), 26 November, 1974

Gulf countries. Asked in an interview with the magazine "Business Week" about the possibility of military intervention, he described it as "a very dangerous course" and added.

"I am not saying that there is no circumstance where we would not use force - but it is one thing to use it in the case of a dispute over price, it is another where there is some actual strangulation of the Industrial World"²³ .

But, in reality such a military adventure had many drawbacks such as the physical impossibility of conducting such operations without the damage to the oil fields and the risk of international isolation as well. Besides, the degree of response of the US allies - Western Europe and Japan was at best lukewarm.

23. Peter Mangold, Superpower Intervention in the Middle east, (London, 1978), p. 72

STRENGTHENING OF PILLARS
THROUGH ARMS SALES

The oil bonanza brought new fortunes to the Gulf countries. The US considered it an opportunity to exploit the immense oil wealth to its own advantage. The best way was to strengthen the defense capability of its friendly countries in the Gulf. The process of building the "Two pillars" (Iran and Saudi Arabia) into the viable forces had already started. Time had come to accelerate the process. The US found that only the expensive weapons and military hardwares could recycle the petrodollars best and keep the armaments industry on the run²⁴.

Thus, by 1977, despite the area experts warnings against the distabilising effects of arms sales on local politics, American military commitment to the Gulf Region, specially to Iran and Saudi Arabia increased to a great content. The new Carter administration followed a more or less the same policy. The top priority shown to "Twin Pillars" is demonstrated by the fact that, in 1977 Iran and Saudi Arabia were sold arms worth \$ 6 billion and \$ 2 billion respectively.

24. A.T. Schulz, "Arms aid and the US presence in the middle East", "Current History" (Philadilphia), July/August, 1979, p. 14

Thus, the US flooded the Gulf region with its own weaponry and advisors so that the clients could not come out of the viscous circle of dependency on the US. But it complicated the process of political cooperation among the Gulf states, who became apprehensive of Iran as well as the US. It also made them liable to military destabilisation, as one author²⁵ commented that Gulf could develop into another Vietnam.

The Muscat conference in 1976 demonstrated how diverse the interests of the Gulf countries were. At the same time, some political developments in the Persian Gulf as well as in the adjacent areas made the US more concerned for its security interests in the Gulf Region. In the neighbouring Afghanistan after the "Saur Revolution" 1978, a more pro-Soviet Tاراکی Government came to power. In the Horn of Africa, the Soviet Union found its ally in Ethiopia. In the Arab Peninsula itself, the growing crisis in two Yemens signalled the impending era of instability. Above all, the growing momentum of the great popular revolution against the Shah of Iran and his top most ally, the US, necessitated serious Foreign Policy reappraisal.

25. T.N. Kaul in Surendra Bhutani (eds), Contemporary Gulf, (New Delhi, 1980), p.2

THE CARTER ERA

The years immediately following the vietnam war were marked by growing dissension over the course American foreign policy should take. This breakdown in the consensus was compounded by the effects of watergate. A distracted then paralyzed, President Nixon was followed by an appointed President (Jimmy Carter) whose powers in foreign affairs were substantially circumscribed by Congress. It rendered Presidential leadership so difficult that some analysts suggested that the "Imperial Presidency" had been replaced by a "imperilled Presidency"²⁶ .

Carter came to office with a new and different World view - blending idealism and realism. As President Carter said, "It is a new World, but America should not fear it. It is a new World and we should help shape it. It is a new World that calls for a New American Foreign Policy". Internationalism was the new international reality and neither

26. Dilyls Hill S Phil Williams, Introduction" in Abernathy, Hills Williams (eds.), The Carter Years (London, 1984), p. 5

the US nor the Soviet Union could control World's destiny. The salient features of such a foreign policy were, as Moore suggests, "Human Rights and Democracy, normalisation and improvement of relations, the resolution of conflict in Africa and the middle-east armed control etc"²⁷ .

During the first years of the Carter Administration, the basic policies of the Nixon and Ford Administration in the Persian Gulf, which had by that time become fully institutionalized were remained virtually unchallenged. The construction on Diego Garcia, the structure and the modus operandi of the middle east command, and the Triannual task force deployment in the pacific fleet were continued without change. The twin-pillar policy in the Persian Gulf was reviewed and was retained in the form that had evolved in practice since 1970.

Throughout 1978, US policy in the Region was dominated by two events. The Arab-Israeli Developments, leading to the Camp David Accords of September and negotiations of the Egypt-Israeli Peace Treaty of March

27. Raymond A. Moore, "The Carter Presidency and Foreign Policy", n. 26, pp. 54-55

1979, and the explosion of the Iranian Revolution resulting ultimately in the collapse of monarchy in February 1979 and its replacement by a Islamic Fundamentalist Regime dominated by the fiercely anti-Western Ayatollah Khomeini.

There was a growing awareness that the policy of the preceding decade had steadily placed more and more reliance on Iran, to the extent that when Shah's regime collapsed, the US was left strategically naked with no safety net. The sense of urgent concern was magnified in February 1979 by reports of an incipient invasion of North Yemen by its avowedly Marxist neighbour to the South. Moreover, this event coming in the wake of the Marxist coup in Afghanistan in April 1978, the conclusion of an Ethiopian-Soviet treaty in November 1978, the assassination of the US ambassador Adolph Dubbs in Kabul in February 1979, together with the fall of the Shah risked creating the impression in the Region and elsewhere that America had lost all capacity to influence Regional events²⁸.

Almost simultaneously with these events came other development which in combination with the preceding ones

28. GARY Sick, "Evolution of US Strategy toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf", in Rubenstein (ed.), n. 9, p.72

marked transformation of the strategic environment in the Region - that was the quiet demise of the Central Treaty organization (CENTO) as Turkey and Iran withdraw from the pact.

By the end of 1979, well before the Soviet intervention in Afganistan, the outlines of a "Security framework" which was the result of examination of US Persian Gulf Policy at Cabinet level in April 1979, had been sketched. It included ²⁹ initial identification of US forces for a rapid development, increased US military presence and approaching OMAN, Kenya, Somalia about possible use of some facilities. Events such as the seizure of the great mosque at Mecca by Shia elements burning of the US Embassy and Cultural Centres in Pakistan and the serious fears that the hostages were in danger of being killed - all raised the spectre of the complete collapse of the American presence in the Region. But what took the Western World by storm and surprised the US was the Soviet intervention in Afganistan - an event which ended the patience of the Carter Administration.

29. GARY Sick, n. 9, p. 74

The resultant new approach, a complete reversal of Carter's policy of dialogue and accomodation, was the State of the Union, Address of January 23, 1980, which committed the US to military defence of the Persian Gulf region. The Persian Gulf region was equated with the vital interests of the US and the outside forces were warned against assaulting it. "vital interests" is an abstract subjective term and so were the derived political objectives such as deterrrence, coercion and support. The means to this as seen by the US was to establish a strong military presence in the Gulf to protect oil supplies and to minimise the political and Islamic repercussions of the Khomeini Revolution. Thus, Saudi Arabia which was to fill part of the vaccum left by the Shah, assumed greater importance than ever before in the eyes of the US Policy makers .

30. Surendra Bhutani, "RDF as Guardian" World Focus, 1982, p.20

CHAPTER IV
THE CARTER DOCTRINE AND
US DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE
PERSIAN GULF

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THE CARTER DOCTRINE AND US DIRECT INVOLVEMENT IN THE PERSIAN GULF

The year 1979 was a traumatic one for US policy toward the oil rich Persian Gulf Region. At the beginning, Iran's Revolution utterly destroyed the foundations of US security policy in the area, which had relied heavily on the Shah, his forces and his bases. At the year end, the Soviet intervention in Afganistan brought Soviet forces closer to the strait of Hormuz and raised serious concern for a similar military move into Iran. The other event of 1979, which plummeted US fortune in the region, was taking of American hostages in Teheran on November 4. In reaction to the Iranian Revolution, the hostage crises and the Soviet intervention in Afganistan, President Jimmy Carter, in his state of the Union address of January 23, 1980, committed the US to the military defense of the Gulf from "external" threats and in established the Rapid Deployment Joint Task force (RDJTF) - now US Central Command (or USCENTCOM). The US also launched a series of diplomatic missions aimed at

acquiring bases in the regions to support the projection of US forces.

IMPACT OF THE IRANIAN REVOLUTION ON US SECURITY

The fall of the "peacock throne" in early 1979 in Iran inflicted a heavy blow to the US security interests in the Gulf and had the most effect in forcing a radical alteration of American policy. For one thing, the Iranian revolution in itself posed a threat to Gulf security. Secondly there could be no surrogate policy without a military linchpin and Saudi Arabia was not able to take over that role even if it had been willing¹. Thirdly, the Carter Administration became convinced that the entire region was prey to increasing instability - which led Brzezinski the National Security Advisor to the President, to characterize the area as the "arc of crisis". Fourthly, the way the administration came to view the Gulf and its periphery - as an exceedingly vulnerable and fragile area upon which vital US interests depended - was paralleled by the overall deterioration in Soviet - American relations which also signalled the end of detente.

1. J.E. Peterson, "Defending Arabia", ORBIS, Fall 1984, p. 477

President Carter's ambivalent stand in the Iranian crisis raised serious questions about the credibility of his administration in crisis management. Its preoccupation with unsolved domestic problems and entanglement with vital International issues like SALT, opening to China, the Sino-Vietnamese conflict, and the Arab-Israeli problem undoubtedly distracted attention from the quickly changing events in the region.² Apparently, the US policy makers tried to explain the situation from a narrow military-strategic perspective while missing the real depth and mobilizable thrust of the anti Shah feelings in Iran.

The Iranian Revolution produced a lesson for the US that pumping the military aid and building of a sophisticated and powerful armed forces would not guarantee any security.³ The reasons for the failure of US trained Armed forces in protecting the Shah were not too far to seek⁴ firstly, the rapid expansion of the Iranian armed forces

2. J.E. PETERSON, n.1, p. 478

3. Albert Wohlstetter, "Meeting the threat in the Persian Gulf", Survey, spring 1980, pp. 128-88

4. The Iranian armed forces expanded from 161,000 in 1970 to 413,000 in 1978. See K.R. Singh, Iran: Quest for Security (New Delhi, 1980), p. 382

inducted a large number of young Iranians from lower and middle classes who had acquired a relatively higher education and were more politicised. This group served as the articulator of anti-shah feeling in the forces. Secondly, Iranian Army, being a conscript army reflected sharply the growing discontent of the masses. Also, the commitment of the Carter administration to Human Rights as a major determinant of Foreign Policy was conveniently exploited by the Liberal-Democratic groups in Iran to the detriment of the Shah⁵. The US had no option but to weigh its national interests higher than that of the Shah.

After having suffered the greatest set-back in Iran since World War II the US tried to keep the morales of its allies in the Gulf high by promising all types of help, including military help, in times of emergencies. The administration's reactions to the upheavals in Iran, Afganistan and Soviet threat in the Persian Gulf left US friends in the region bewildered and unsure of Washington's resolve to resist Soviet intervention and of its

5. Kissinger quoted in INTERNAL Herald Tribute (Pares), 6 February, 1979

determination to defend US interests ⁶ . Though Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Oman lost a good friend in the Shah, for various reasons, almost all of the Gulf countries, including these three were happy that "an arrogant dictator who flaunted Iran's military might should finally pay the price of its megalomania ⁷ . Nevertheless, the Arab Gulf states ruled by Sunni leadership were worried regarding the impact of Shite revolution of Iran on them. Thus, the US policymakers deemed it as a categorical imperative as well as a duty to give psychological boost to its allies.

In persuance of this objective, the Carter administration began to devise both long and short term strategies. Projecting Saudi Arabia, one of the "Twin pillars" as its best ally, the US began strengthening this pillar and also started displaying military might. A debate ensued whether or not to open a permanent Naval facility (Fifth fleet) somewhere in the Region. The negotiation for "base" and "access" facilities were also intensified.

6. EMILE A. NAKHLEH, The Persian Gulf and American Policy, (New York, Praeger, 1982), p. 19
7. John Andrews "Security and the Gulf", Middle East International (London), no. 113, 23 November, 1979, pp. 8-10

Doubling the number of their naval vessels, the US dispatched a task force composed of the aircraft carrier, "The Constellation" to the Indian ocean area. It was also suggested to permanently station an Indian ocean task force based probably at Diego Garcia.

But the crux of the problem was that the NATO allies and Japan might oppose the build up of the naval task force by withdrawing some ships from the 6th and 7th fleets. Also the Congress might not sanction such a heavy amount to start such a programme. In June 1979, the administration undertook to make the new policies more explicit. At two meetings of the Cabinet's policy review committee the question for the US military posture in West and South Asia was closely examined. The President eventually approved three key recommendations⁸ of the committee. These were:

1. The US navy contingent at Bahrain, placed there since the second World War, would be augmented.
2. The number of visits of aircraft carrier flotilla to the Indian Ocean should be increased.

8. Joel Laurus, "The end of Naval Detente in the Indian Ocean" World Today (London), Vol. 36, No. 4, April 1980, p. 130

3. The air force was given the green signal to carry out a programme of "demonstration visits" to select Arab countries, particularly to Oman and several other Seikhdoms.

The US urgency for security in the Region again faced an uphill task when Saudi Arabia turned down US defense secretary Harold Brown's proposal to turn a Saudi sea-port into a US naval-air installation. Saudi Arabia wanted the US power to be placed close but not so closely as to be placed on its own territory. It did not want to emulate Shah in this regard. Also, the fundamentalist challenge to Saudi regime was not as close and vehement as it was to the Western oriented Shah regime. Above all, the Camp David agreement and the subsequent Egypt Israeli Treaty were enough for Saudi Arabia and other Arab states to adopt a hardline approach not only to check President Sadat's influence but also to dissociate themselves from their earlier images as American "Surrogates". So, the US design of making Cairo-Riyadh-Tel-Aviv-Washington axis as the cornerstone of a new security system "back-fired" and the American pursuit of a "pax-Americana" came a "full circle" .

9. Valerie Yorke, "The US, the Gulf and the 1980's Middle East International, no. 120, 14 March 1980, p. 9

Thus, in the aftermath of the Iranian revolution, Saudi-American Relations showed a low-profile, which was seen by some in the US as the further sign of danger. Being cold shouldered by the Saudis, a high level US naval delegation approached Oman for port facilities in June 1979. But, as the Omani "Protection of the Water Plan" revealed, how Oman was averse to noninclusion of Iran as well as the Western powers in a joint security plan to defend the Strait of Hormuz through which 86% of the Western World's oil supply passes. After having neglected the Omani plan, the concerned foreign ministers of the Gulf states met at Taif to discuss the alternatives. They mooted the concept of self reliant Gulf cooperation Council together with the increasing coordination of International security forces.

The sentiments of the Taif Secret meeting were later on echoed by the Iraqi president Saddam Hussein's eight point declaration for Intra-Arab Relations and Collective security known as "The National Declaration" of 8th February 1980¹⁰. Its Central theme was not only joint

10. For details see Iraq Today (Baghdad), Vol. V, no. 106, 1-15 Feb. 1980

Arab action against outside interference but also the total rejection of presence of Foreign armies and military bases in any form. But the unprecedented "hostage crisis" in November 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afganistan towards the end of December of the same year surprised the World as well as the Gulf Rulers. Against this backdrop, any kind of security arrangement minus the US was deemed to be unthinkable for the American policy makers. The "hostage crisis" dramatized the perpetual dilemma of the inadequacy of military power alone to influence internal political events in regional states¹¹. From now onward the US began to give a serious thought to the possibility of direct intervention in the region to safeguard its vital interests.

AFGANISTAN CRISIS AND THE CARTER DOCTRINE

Although the presence of oil had given the US reason enough to be more concerned with the Persian Gulf perse, the Soviet intervention in Afganistan pulled the rug from under the carter Administration's belief in detente and demonstrated even further the type of threats that could

11. GARYSICK, "The evolution of US Strategy toward the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf Regions" in Alvin Z. Rubenstein ed., The Great Game, New York, 1983, p. 71

jeopardise the oil supplies . It also signaled the demise of detente and the onset of the second Cold War because neither the United States nor its allies and the Muslim World accepted Afghanistan to be either in the Soviet sphere of influence or its zone of control. Also, these events convinced the Carter administration to develop a more unilateral capability to defend US interests in the region.

Thus, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in late December 1979 set off a series of US actions and reformulation of US interests in the region, that had, in many cases, been under consideration for a year or more. The Secretary of Defense, Harold Brown, reformulating and restating the US interests in the Persian Gulf said:

US interests related to the Persian Gulf-southwest Asian Region, certainly in the short term, focus on the safe and speedy release of Americans hostages in Tehran. For the longer term, our interests can be stated quite simply;

12. WM J. Olson, "An alternative strategy for South West Asia", in Olson ed., US Strategic interests in the Gulf Region (Westview, 1987), p. 206

- To insure access to adequate oil supplies;
- To resist Soviet expansion
- To promote stability in the Region; and
- To advance the Middle East peace process, while insuring the continued security of the state of Israel.

We seek to make clear that there will be major risks and penalties associated with aggression ¹³ .

Indeed, the proximity of the Russian tanks to the Gulf was too much for the President and his advisers to digest. On January 23, 1980, in his state of the Union message to the Congress, the President Jimmy Carter asserted how the American interests were threatened due to the stationing of Soviet military forces close to the straits of Hormuz. He said:

"This situation demands careful thought, steady nerves and resolute action not only for this year but many years to come. It demands collective efforts to meet this new threat to security in the Persian Gulf and South West

13. Department of State Bulletin, May 1980, pp. 63-67

Asia. Let our position be absolutely clear. An attempt by any foutside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interets of the US and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary including military force."¹⁴

The statement known as the "Carter Doctrine", signalled to the Soviet Union the willingness of the US to use force in the Gulf to protect its vital interests. It was to be backed up with the new West military option, the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF). The primary drafter of this formulation was Brzezinski, who in a little noticed speech in Montreal on December 5, 1979 descried the framework of the so called Carter Doctrine and summarized the steps that had been taken to implement it during its first year¹⁵. He termed the Persian Gulf as the "Third Strategic Zone" in addition to West Europe and the Far-east.

The CARTER DOCTRINE was a clear departure from "Nixon" or "Guam Doctrine" of 1969 which opposed the direct

14. Emphasis added. For the text of the message see, Altantic Community (Washington) Spring 1980, pp. 6-9. Also see New York Times, 24 January, 1980 Guardian Weekly, (manchester), February 3, 1980

15. Gary Sick, n. 11, p. 74

US involvement outside the NATO sphere. Earlier, during the days of the cold war in the '50s "Eisenhower Doctrine" prescribed the use of force to curb the Communist advances. But the difference between the above two pronouncements lies in fact that carter years, to begin with, were the time of detente between the superpowers - an era marked by relaxation of tensions on the global level, a time for "managed" U.S - Soviet rivalry"¹⁶ and creation of cordial atmosphere for Arms control talks leading to SALT process. Indeed, President Carter's belief in detente mechanism (a Nixon - Kissinger legacy based on the assumption of creation of linkages in US - Soviet behaviour and dialogue) was so profound that his statement took the politico - military arena in International politics by storm. So, it is important to analyse and understand the factors which might have prompted the President to take such a volatile and risky stand. To put the Carter Doctrine in proper perspecive, it is also imperative to unveil the real or perceived intentions of the Soviet Union behind its intervention in Afganistan. An examination of the plans and

16. George, Alaxender L (ed), Managing US - Soviet Rivlary : Problems of Crisis Prevention (Boulder : Westview Press, 1983), pp. 11-12

strategies which the US proposed to take to fulfill its declared objectives vis-a-vis the Persian Gulf and South West Asia, is also called for.

The President admitted that he had learned more about Soviet behaviour in two weeks (after Intervention) than he had in the previous two and half years. He said that the "Soviet invasion of Afganistan could pose the most serious threat to peace since the 2nd World War"¹⁷ .

His National Security Adviser Brezezinski stated that two features characterizing the Soviet thrust into Afganistan gave it a historically unprecedented character. The first was that it occurred in an International setting that could be defined as one of at best strategic parity between the US and the USSR. It was also unique because no acceptable fallback positions existed in the case of a major setback¹⁸ .

17. Raymond A. Moore, "The Carter Presidency and Foreign Policy", in M. Abernathy, D. Hill and Williams eds. The Carter Years (London, 1984) p. 57 .

18. Zbigniew Brzezinski, Inquest of National Security, edited by Martin Strmecki, (Westview, London, 1988), p. 177

A diverse and complex array of interpretations were put forward by the US policy makers and Intellectuals to explain the Soviet intervention. It ranged from characterizing Moscow's action as defensive (as Kennan suggested) to its alleged march to the Persian Gulf oil fields¹⁹. It was argued that the real motive behind Soviet intervention lay in its desire to have access to "warm water Port" - a legacy from the days of Peter the Great. A powerful section of the US policy makers believed that the existing facilities of the Soviet Union for access to Indian Ocean were both risky and time taking keeping in view the distances traversed and also the presence of hostile Western navies. Secondly, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was seen as a move to control the sources of supply of oil against the prospective Soviet dependence on it.

Holsti provides a long list of historical, geostrategic and economic interets and objectives which might have prompted the Soviet Intervention²⁰. These

19. Selig Harrison, "The Soviet Union in Afganistan" in Hafeez Malik ed. International Security in South-West Asia, New York, 1984, p. 15

20. K.J. Hoisti, "Foreign Policy Objectives", International Politics : A framework of analysis, 3rd ed. (Printice-Hall, 1977), pp. 138-163

include, Afghanistan as a bufferzone to defend against US/British expansion and instability of "arc of crises", access to ports in the Indian Ocean/Persian Gulf, outflanking PRC, access to South-West Asian resources etc.

Another school of thought was of the view that both the panick shown by the US as well as the intensity and radicalism of the Carter Doctrine were unwarranted. The US probably overvalued the Soviet presence in Afganistan and the threats emanating from it to the oil supply. Senator MacGovern of South Dakota, the 1972 Democratic Presidential Candidate was one of the protagonists of this view. He held that Moscow, besides fearing a global war in the case of cutting of oil supply to the West, did not aim at grabbing the Gulf oil also because such an action was bound to forewarn the Gulf states in particular and a number of Islamic and non-aligned states in general with whom it had good relations .

Apart from having various strategic and physical limitations such as speedy reinforcements of large forces in

21. B.K. Srivastava, "The US and Recent Developments in Afganistan", in K.P. Mishra ed. Afganistan in Crisis (New Delhi, 1981) p. 71

to Gulf , it is difficult to accept the warm water port theory on its face value. 19th century Russia might be longing for a warm water port, but these days, one can find a substantial physical presence of the Soviet union in the Indian Ocean. Besides, in this era of Ballistic missiles, it is not a pressing necessity to control the warm water ports. Thus, Soviet presence in Afganistan did not necessarily lead to endangering the safety of the oil lanes, nor did it seriously alter the strategic balance in the area as the US believed it to be.

Whatever may be the real motive of Soviet thrust into Afghanistan - a defensive action to avoid another Islamic fundamentalist regime on its border²³ or offensive for scoring strategic leverage in the region - it was argued that American vital interets in the Gulf would be better served by an extended Soviet embroilment with Afghanistan. The US could take this opportunity to ostractize the USSR

22. Michael Gettler, International Herald Tribune, 14 August 1980

23. For details of this view see Leslie H. Gelb Sulman, "Keeping Cool at Khyber pass", Foreign Policy (New York), Spring 1980, pp. 3-18

from the Region. The Soviet action certainly provided the US with an opportunity to substantially increase its military presence in the region without much fuss. It also restored, to some extent, the US image in the Gulf.

Notwithstanding the circulation of such a vast array of thoughts and opinions about the intentions of the Soviet Intervention, it was the "activists" School in the US decision making machinery which finally prevailed. The outcome was the making of a tough strategy intended at both reassuring the pro-Western Governments of the American commitment to their independence and also displaying a willingness to remain a formidable power in the region. Such strategy was also possibly aimed at deterring some Gulf countries from adopting extreme policies²⁴.

RAPID DEPLOYMENT FORCE (RDF):
ORIGIN, COMPONENTS AND IMPEDEMENTS

After the Shah's downfall, the defense Planners in Pentagon came out with a scenario which they called

24. The Secretary of Defense Harold Brown quoted in The Observer, February 25, 1979

"horizontal escalation of a war in the Gulf. Should the Soviets attack Iran, the US would threaten to attack say Cuba or South Yemen. At the same time, they planned to have an effective deterrent to Soviet attackly setting up a conventional force in the Gulf area²⁵. Thus the Rapid Deployment Force (RDF) concept was born. The establishment of the RDF was announced in December 1979²⁶.

In early 1977, the National Security Council conducted a strategic appraisal of US policy. This resulted in the promulgation in August 1977 of Presidential Directive (PD) 18. The said dicetive recognized the need for the US to maintain a "rapid deployment force which could be used in Persian Gulf, Middle East or elsewhere". This was essentially the birth of RDF. The Joint Chief of Staffs established the Rapid Deployment Joint task force (RDJTF) as a seperate subordinate element of US readiness command at Macdill AFB, Florida²⁷.

25. Surendra Bhutani ed. Contemporary Gulf, New Delhi, 1981 p.p. 17-18

26. Charles G. MacDonald, "US Policy and Gulf Securiyt", in Robert G. Darius, Amos II, Magnus eds. Gulf Security into the 1980s (Hoover Press, Stanford, 1984), p. 100

27. Maxwell Orme Johnson, "Rapid Deployment and the Regional Military Challenge", in Olson ed. n. 12, p.136

RDF was designed to fill what US defense-planners saw as a strategic vacuum in the US military structure. What they wanted to show that West had enough force to rapidly recharge any deteriorating situation in the middle-east. Further, the theory of the RDF was that it would most likely land in a "benign environment" at the request of a friendly regime in trouble but one still in control of its port and air facilities. Its very presence would keep the crisis from escalating.

The RDF was not a new idea. The concept was debated and rejected by Congress under the Johnson Administration in 1965²⁸. First, it was thought that this force would be a Foreign policy liability, or that it would project a negative image of US intentions around the World. Second, it would tend to increase the dependence of the allies all over the World on the US to straighten out anything that went wrong anywhere. But the scenario in Iran and Afganistan changed this thinking.

28. Surendra Bhutani, "United States, RDF as Guardian", World Focus, Vol. 9, September 1982, p. 22

Thus, with much fanfare, the \$ 11 billion RDF project²⁹ was inaugurated by Hrold Brown at his headquarters at Tampa (Florida) under the command of Lt. General P.X. Kelly, Marine Deputy Chief of Staff for the programme, and the commander of the last marine combat regiment to leave Vietnam. It was designed to be the quickest and hard hitting expeditionary force ever mounted by the US. If a crisis called for the use of force, the RDF would be airlifted to designated areas, joined with prepositioned sea-based and land-based equipment and be ready for combat in a minimum amount of time.

The Carter Adminsitration drew up plans to spend some \$ 20 billion on the force by 1985³⁰. A somewhat improvised presence in the Gulf was hammered out, its main features were:

1. The US fleet in the Indian Ocean, consisting of two aircraft - carrier battlegroups.

29. John, J. Fialka, "The Rapid Deploymnet Force", Strategic Digest, Vol. 9, no. 8, August 1980, p. 552, reproduced from the Washington Star, 7-10 April, 1980

30. Surendra Bhutani, n. 27, p. 24

2. Seven merchant ships with enough equipment, fuel and watersupply to support a massive amphibious brigade of some 12,000 men and to sustain 12 American airforce fighter squadrons. The equipment included more than 50 tanks, 95³¹ armoured amphibious vehicles and nearly 600 trucks

3. The negotiated facilities or bases for the fleet and for future US forces in the Gulf.

The backbone of the RDF was the 82nd Airborne division. It included the veterans of the Vietnam cammpaign, who as the members of the US readiness command were also trained to control the Road and mountains terrain north of the Gulf. It had a "Strategic Protection force" equipped with 35 B-52 Bombers, Tankers, reconnaissance and spy planes for possible action in the West Asia.

The US strategy had several components³². The first primarily involved the naval forces which provided

31. Richard Halloran, "Poised for the Persian Gulf", New York Times Magazine, April, 1984, pp. 38-40

32. H. Brown, "Protecting US interests in the Persian Gulf Region, Department of State Bulletin, Vol. 80, no. 2038, pp. 63-67

immediate tactical air capability. Two carriers permanently stationed in the Indian Ocean could let loose 150 fighter planes over the area at a moments notice.

Positioning of the equipment was the vital second ingredient. The US had already started such a programme to avoid excess dependency on large, permanent US bases overseas in the sensitive areas. So, as a close option, the US had stationed seven cargo ships loaded with equipment for a marine amphibious brigade of about 12,000 men near Diego Garcia.

Thirdly, mobility i.e. air and sea lift capability was the most crucial ingredient for the success of any rapid operation. The US had already procured KC-10 aerial tankers and "CX" transport aircraft and high speed civilian ships with immediate military sea-lift potential. The first land based tactical aircraft could be in the Region in a matter of hours and the significant units backed by AWACS in a few days .

33. Maxwell ORME Johnson, The military as an instrument of US Policy in South West Asia : The RDF, 1979 - 82 (Westview, 1983), p. 40

The last ingredient of the RDF strategy was to have "access" and "transit" rights in friendly countries. This aspect will be discussed later separately.

In a nutshell, the aim of the RDF was to have enough combat equipment afloat in the Indian ocean by the late 1980s to support at least a 45,000 amphibious force³⁴. It was the infrastructure over which Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF) was based and which led to its evolution into a separate unified command - the United States Central Command (UNCENTCOM) in 1983.

Impediments against RDF:-

Almost from the outset, there was a considerable skepticism about the true capability of the RDF. Some may have been justified some may not. The major focus of this criticism was on deficiencies in strategic mobility and logistic support ability: the means to move the RDF units to the Gulf in a timely manner and the means to sustain them there³⁵.

34. News week, (New York), 27 October, 1980, p. 5

35. Maxwell Johnson, "Rapid Deployment and the Regional military Challenge", in WM J Wilson ed. n. 12, p. 136

Getting troops to the Gulf is one thing and sustaining them, once they are there is another. The military history of involvement of any powerful Foreign forces like that of the US shows that the host country has all the infrastructural facilities like air controller, traffic management people etc. to supplement the foreign troops but such elements called the "tail" of the army were absent in the primitive backward region of Gulf. Starting from the Fuel to Water which is vital to guard long pipelines - to get them was a formidable task. Even in this oil rich zone it may so happen that fuel may not be available due to the sabotage of oil fields or mining of the Strait of Hormuz.

Harsh climatic conditions are not confined to land. During monsoon, visibility in the Arabian sea is poor, thereby, impeding Naval air operations.

Perhaps the most sweeping criticism of the RDF came from Jeffery Record³⁶. He found its flaws:

36. Jeffery Record, the Rapid Deployment force - and US military Intervention in the Gulf, (Massachusetts, 1981) pp. 54-56

Attributable in part to the inherrent political obstacles to successful intervention in the Gulf and in part to the structural, Technological and Doctrinal unsuitability of Rapidly deployable US Forces for the likely combat environments they would confront in the Region.

A Pentagon study stated that the ability to deploy forces rapidly into the region and to sustain them for th first weeks depended mainly on long range military air transports composed of 70 C-5 A, and 234 C-141 aircraft. The C-5 A was the only military air tarnsport capable of carrying outsize equipment. But unfortunately it could carry only one of the tanks at a time and required for landing more than 3,000 to 5,000 feet long runways currently available in the Gulf.

Apart from few other hardware problems, software problems like the computer system and programming to unify all the various commands among the Four Services that would have to contribute manpower transportation and supplies to the RDF were also vital. This problem, however, was overcome with the formation of USCENCOM in 1983 and much advanced communication facilities at Diego Garcia.

In an attempt to resolve some of these deficiencies, the Near Term prepositioning ships (NTPS) programme was established in February 1980. The NTPS Flotilla, later called simply the NTPS was assembled to carry the equipment and supplies to the region for the 12,500 men 7th marine Amphibious Brigade (7th MAB)³⁷. These ships were stationed at Diego Garcia. It was meant to sustain the Zargos mountain strategy which called for 7th MAB to be airlifted to the region. The marine would be landed at a benign port in the crisis area or would make a forcible entry. They would be followed by Army units which would be deployed to and take up defensive positions in the Zargos mountains in Iran as a counter to the Soviet invasion of Iran.

Then, there was the question of role of the politician on whom deployment or employment of force depends. A choice of wrong place and wrong time in sending the RDF could cause serious havoc to the entire humanity at large.

A study of the RDF by the staff members of "Congress for peace through Law" also highlighted that

37. Maxwell Johnson, n. 35, p. 137

without the allied help and when the US supply system falters" the RDF would become a hostage for a larger and long term US commitment.

Despite these sweeping criticism made against the RDF and the deficiencies facing the Rapid Deployment and also inspite of galloping inflation at home the American War Merchants with active support from the politicians went ahead spending thousands of billions of Dollars to make the RDF Plan a success.

Search for "BASE" Facilities

The RDF was closely associated with the "over the Horizon" fleet concept, but still depended on access to air bases and port facilities. The success of RDF demanded that the US must seek "bases" and "transit" facilities in the Gulf Region and the areas adjacent to it³⁸. In 1980, it reached agreements with Kenya (April), Oman (June) and Somalia (August), but not with Egypt or Saudi Arabia. Egypt offered the use of facilities on a temporary basis, however, the two states reached an arrangement (informal) to use

38. Charles G. MacDonald n. 26, p. 101

facilities on the Ras Banas peninsula. Egypt had balked at
any US base on Egyptian soil. Similarly, Saudi Arabia
would not permit US combat forces in Saudi Arabia. So,
Washington planned to expand US facilities at Deigo Garcia
for RDF use.

Next to Diego Garcia - the strategic paradise of
the US - the Sultanate of Oman occupied the place of pride
in the US military designs. As the Saudis refused, the
focus was turned on Masirah Island - the ports of Muscat and
Salalah⁴⁰. Muscat being only 400 miles from the Strait of
Hormuz could be very much useful due to its first class
airports. It was also assumed that, during crises Oman's
airfields and port facilities would play a crucial role as a
staging area for combat forces. So, the US concluded an
agreement with Oman, seeking greater air and naval
facilities and a modernisation programme at the cost of \$
800 million was undertaken.

The former Soviet naval base at Berbera in Somalia
became important after the Soviets were expelled from

39. Charles G. MacDonald n. 26, p. 102

40. New York Times, 12 March 1981

Somalia in 1977. This Gulf of Aden base is nearer to the Strait of Hormuz than that of Diego Garcia. The US naval facilities here could notably checkmate the activities of the Soviet Union at Ethiopian Dhaulak Naval base.

There were some important facilities adjacent to the Gulf of Oman which could be developed in the important naval base by the US. The Pakistani port at Gwadar in Baluchistan could provide a convenient facility outside the Hormuz.

The Karachi airfield and sea port proved to be of immense help during MIDLINK exercises under CENTO when Pakistan was still a member. The gigantic air base at Peshawar, now, was being taken up for development into a combined US - Pak air base to maintain surveillance on the Soviet activities.

But all this depended on the extent to which Pakistan was willing to identify itself with the US. In 1973-74 the Bhutto Regime, had offered the US base facilities in return for lifting of the US Arms embargo on Pakistan which was imposed in the wake of Indo-Pak war. But

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the offer was not seriously considered by the US . With the inauguration of Carter era, the US made friendly overtures to India and Pakistan became dormant in the US priority. But with changed circumstances in the Gulf and in the wake of Afghanistan crisis. The US offered to restore US economic and military assistance to Pakistan. But, President Zia of Pakistan refused American military aid of \$ 400 million offered to him and termed it as "Pea-nuts". But with President Reagan in office, Pakistan was sought to be made Kingpin in US military strategy for South-West Asia. Accordingly, a US-Pakistan agreement covering \$ 2.5 billion as military aid spread over the Five year period was concluded. The present policy makers identified Pakistan as a South West Asian country, which was seen as a replacement for the loss of Iran.

Keeping in view, the mounting opposition among the Arab Gulf countries against Egypt and Israel and American rapprochement on the Palestine issue, the US feared the growth of radicalism and occurrence of Khomeini type

41. Richard B. Remnek, "US interests, Objectives and Policy Options in South West Asia", in S. Tahir Kheli ed. US Strategic interests in South West Asia, (New York, 1982), p. 73

revolution in the Gulf. So, it tried to strengthen the military facilities in Egypt and Israel and developed a port as military base at Ras Banas in Egypt.

A question which may intrigue an analyst at this point is why the US was finding it difficult to get any base facilities in the heart of the Gulf, while none of the Arab countries, barring Iran and Iraq, were openly hostile to the US. They did not also have any special relationship with the Soviet Union. In fact, there were an array of tangible risks which the local countries genuinely apprehended. Not only the granting of "base" facilities amounted to the dilution of the "host" country's sovereignty but also it rendered vulnerable and made the "host" country target of military and political attack by the opponents. The most crucial factor was the "host" country's perception and positive belief in the ability and willingness of the "guest" power to provide security against the aggression as well as some measure of extra-protection⁴². On this score in the perception of the Gulf countries, the US was passing

42. T.H. Moorer and J.J. Cottrell, "The Search for US bases in the Indian Ocean : A Last Chance", Strategic Digest, Vol. 11, no. 1, January 1981, p. 35

through a period of self doubt after Vietnam, Angola and Afghanistan.

Against this backdrop of unenthusiastic response from the Gulf countries, the US attention now turned towards Diego Garcia which was the only dependable big naval base to safeguard the US interests.

Diego Garcia: Diego Garcia (formerly part of British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT) and established in 1966) is an Island in the Indian Ocean. It is one of the groups of Island in the Chagos archipelago which, in 1964 was detached from Mauritius by the British Government. In 1976, Britain granted the US the military use of the Island. A Naval support facility (NSF) was established and a six year construction programme initiated⁴³. The Pentagon planned to spend \$ 237 million for improving and upgrading this base. The result was

- * A Modern Communication Station
- * A 12,000 foot runway capable of handling all types of aircraft

43. Thomas L. Mcnangher, "Arms and Allies on the Arabian Peninsula", ORBIS 28 (Fall 1984) pp. 489-526

- * A deep water anchorage
- * Storage for fuel
- * A fuel receipt and delivery system
- * An Aircraft maintenance hanger and wash rack
- * Personal support buildings

Since the completion of initial construction programmes in 1982, there have been several improvements to the atoll facilities. Now aviation facilities can support the operation of B-52 eight engine long range Bombers carrying Nuclear Weapons and P-3 Patrol aircraft. It has developed into an advanced communication and recreation base for the US armed forces and marines.

As a "Support" facility, however, Diego Garcia is severely constrained. It is not a real fleet base. To add to its fragility, the atoll is 2,000 miles from Oman. So, base facilities on the mainland are indispensable for the US . But as the trend showed, some Gulf States were prepared to give "access" facilities but not any "base" facilities.

44. Michael Vlahos, "Force from the Sea : a modest Proposal", in Wm. J. Olson (eds) n. 12 p. 194

45. Ibid, p. 195

Regional Responses to the Carter Doctrine
and the Role of the Allies:

The Carter doctrine and the RDF brought loud outcries from the Gulf as well as sharp criticisms from the European allies. The Gulf states were highly suspicious and charged that the Carter doctrine was a pretext for intervention in the area. Saudi Arabia proved to be an exception, Their crown prince Fahd reportedly supported the thrust of the Carter Doctrine.⁴⁶

Furthermore, the Carter Administration failed to coordinate a practical and effective policy with the local leaders in the area to counteract the Soviet offensive. The administration also failed to develop a credible military policy of its own or with the European allies to demonstrate their commitment to resist Soviet aggression.

By way of illustration, Gulf Arab leaders viewed Carter's response to the Soviet intervention as being high on rhetoric but low on action. They believed then that an embargo on grain shipment to the Soviet Union and a boycott

46. MacDonald, n.26, p. 101

of olympics would be ineffective in forcing the Soviets out
of Afghanistan ⁴⁷ .

The Gulf states sometimes became suspicious that the US was after their oil and saw the RDF as a tool which would help the US control the oil fields. Furthermore, the US was seen as vacillating in its support even with those Governments it supported (eg. the Shah in Iran and Sadat in Egypt).⁴⁸

So, these reactions of the Gulf countries to the Carter Doctrine were factors to reckon with. Because it is believed that it is not only the Soviet threats alone but the behaviour or attitude of the Gulf states which prompted the US to take a tough stand since the oil crisis of 1973. It was also a fact that as long as the Palestine question remained unsolved the Gulf states could not be convinced that the Soviet threat was greater than the Arab - Israeli dispute Abdel Aziz, the Kuwait Minister of Cabinet Affairs echoed this view when he said, "...Jerusalem is much more

47. NAKHLEH, "An Overview", n. 9, p. 19

48. S. Tahirkheli, "Conclusion", n. 41, p. 219

sacred than Afganistan" . It should be remembered that Islamic anti-Sovietism springs from Islamic interests and not from their pro-Westernism.

European allies: The success of Carter Doctrine in the world characterised by multiple centres of power depended in large part upon the attitude and resilience of its (US) allies. So, the US asked its European allies to increase their military budget by atleast 3 per cent. Certainly, on the core issues like the potential Soviet threat and vital geopolitical importance of the Gulf, they were in agreement. But as the degree of dependability on the Gulf oil varies greatly⁵⁰ among the allies and as they questioned the incoherent policies and uncertain leadership of the US, there was much to be desired to project an unified front against the adversaries on the overall reactions and responses of the NATO allies to earnest desire of their senior partner the US.

49. Newsweek, 18 February, 1980, p. 11

50. Imported oil accounts for 45% of Europe's total energy and 70% of its oil in 1970's came from the Middle East dependence on Gulf Oil is - Three fifths for West Germany Two-Thirds for France, Three Quarters for Italy. See, Sahram Chubin, "Western European Percetions of Europe's Stake in Persian Gulf, Indian Ocean Security", in Rubenstein ed. n. 11, p. 119

The US barely acknowledging its allies contribution persisted in a policy of unilateralism. After 1967, it aligned itself increasingly with Israel. In 1973, it saw the issues primarily in East-West terms, while the European allies were concerned with the availability of oil and its price. They saw the US - Israeli connection as the problem and something they did not wish to identify with the provision of facilities and overflight rights.

European sensitivities were also evinced when their views on the American oil consumption were discussed. Whereas the Europeans felt that they were conserving energy they saw the US engaged in an oil orgy⁵¹.

The European states - primarily France and Britain, though unhappy with the US were not united vis-a-vis one another. Rivals first as colonial powers and later as traders each conditioned their responses according to their differently perceived needs and interests. One group - notably France - was responding favourably to the talk of "Third force". Due to their historic role in the Gulf and

51. While the US contains only 6% of the World's population it consumes 28% of all energy produced. For details see George E. Hudson, "The US - Soviet - OECD Triangle", in Tahirkheli ed. n. 41, p. 145

its adjacent areas their presence in the Region were seen as less disruptive and polarizing⁵². It was demonstrated in France's commitment to Iraq's call for neutralization of the Indian ocean and French aid to Iraq to build a Nuclear Reactor. In June Federal Republic of Germany offered to provide Saudi Arabia with training areas for its airforce.

So, sometimes, the "National interets" of the respective countries of the Western alliance were seen as paramount and over and above the collective interest of the "free world". The response to the Soviet intervention in Afganistan and "hostage crisis" are cases in point. When President Carter responded with an olympic boycott and a cut off in extra supplies of wheat to the Soviet Union, West Germany was reluctant to jeopardise its own ostpoltik with the Soviets, a tie that generated \$ 7.5 billion in trade in 1979 and continued to negotiate with the Soviets for Gas supplies. Similarly, Japan was reluctant to risk its 620,000 barrel a day of Iranian oil⁵³.

52. Hudson, n. 41, p. 146

53. Newsweek, 21 April 1980, pp. 10-12

Coming to the more specific question of Direct US involvement in the Gulf the allies although reluctantly approving of the formation of RDF to protect Western and Japanese interests in oil feared that through RDF's existence the US was out to use its military instrument at the expense of seeking diplomatic solutions to the problems endemic to the region. In other words, the US could blunder into a war which could destroy the oil fields.

But then, the allies also demonstrated that eventually, they were not in total disagreement with the US and that they could project solidarity when their very system was threatened. Thus, they undertook to shoulder more of NATO's military burden in Asia. So in the mid-1980's there was a massive "International naval force" concentration in the Gulf of Oman comprising the US, Britain, France, West Germany and Holland. Britain granted the US facilities in east mediterranean Island and West Germany, besides building warships, undertook to provide air-transport planes to help US troops from Europe to the Gulf in two weeks. France stationed more Naval vessels in the Indian ocean area.

Thus, the US faced immense political and

diplomatic problems in creating a congenial atmosphere and support base for the Carter Doctrine. Direct military involvement, as an option could be effective to some extent provided it applied to a country with stable Governance and legitimacy. Again, it depended a great deal on the degree of anti-American feeling being obtained in the area. And such feeling was not non-existent. How the talk of direct involvement could be distabilising was clear from the fact that during the "hostages crisis", the Gulf states were apprehensive lest, the Americans take the military action against Teheran. The American abortive bid to rescue the hostages created reverberations throughout the Gulf.

Perturbed by perpetual and sustained questioning about the viability of The Carter doctrine, a senior Pentagon official tried to paint a rosy and credible picture of it. He said that the US could put 25,000 men into the Gulf Region in about two weeks. Asked if the US might take resort to tactical Nuclear weapons to counter the superior Soviet might, the oficial said, "we are thinking about
54
threatre Nuclear option in areas other than NATO ". When

54. Washington Post, 7 September, 1980

some Congressmen expressed their doubts over the sincerity of the Carter administration in doing enough to defend the gulf, Harold Brown said:

"We can't assure you, we could win a war there, but to cast doubt on our ability to deter or bite effectively, is unnecessarily damaging the US Security"⁵⁵ .

After having gone through a diverse array of views over the pros and cons of the Carter doctrine, it may safely be stated that this doctrine, deliberately drafted to echo the words of the Truman Doctrine⁵⁶, remained more words than substance. Besides, both in wordings and instruments of the doctrine, there was nothing which could be regarded as unparalleled and unprecedented. In 1961, President Kennedy organized the "United States strike command" which had participated in the "operation Deelwara" involving Kharg Island of Iran. Even though in 1972, it was disbanded the "US readiness command" took its place which later, proved be

55. Brezezinski, "America's New Geostrategy", in In Quest of National Security, n. 18, p. 42

56. Charles G. MacDonald, n. 26, p. 102

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not so effective. So, with such a chequered history of any such force, the efficacy of the Carter Doctrine was put into serious doubt.

The crucial question was whether all such talks of "direct involvement", military bases, RDF and alliances with the Gulf countries were warranted and urgent? Though the upheavals in Iran and Afgan Crisis had changed the complexion of the Gulf, yet it was the oil question and Palistenian problem which were vital to people of the area. Also the increase in the size and sophistication of Gulf military forces exacerbated the conflict situation and complicated the process of political cooperation. It heightened their sense of insecurity as the local rulers might quickly become - targets of anti-American sentiment in the Region.

The United States still looked to Regional Partners to provide their own internal security and to defend against external attack while promising to intervene to stop Soviet aggression. The US did not turn to a new Regional partner to assume Iran's stabilizing role in the



⁵⁷
Gulf . Washington apparently considered Egypt but its
alientation from the Gulf because of its participation in the
Camp David process precluded such a possibility ⁵⁸ . Instead,
the US continued to rely on security assistance to bolster
friendly governments.

The Soviet Union responded to the increased US
activity in the area by proposing a "doctrine of peace and
security". On 10 December, 1980 Brezhnev called on the
world powers to agree not to set up bases or bring nuclear
weapons into the area. The following day a Joint Soviet -
Indian declaration was signed calling for dismantling of all
Foreign bases in the area including the US facility Diego
Garcia ⁵⁹ . Rejecting the plan, the US officials quickly
pointed to the presence of Soviet troops in Afganistan as
the principal threat to gulf security.

Regional Conflicts and the 'Carter Doctrine': The Iran-Iraq War

The Gulf War which broke out between Iraq and Iran
on 23rd September 1980 with Iraqi invasion of Iran in

57. MacDonald, n. 26, p. 102

58. Ibid

59. Washington Post 11 December, 1980

response to border skirmishes, further complicated the Gulf security scenario. It also demonstrated the occurrence and potential scope of Regional and local violence. It showed to the world and to the US as well that if defending the oil rich pensinsular seikhdoms was in the US interests - and this had certainly been the thrust of the enunciated US policy - this would appear to be a very hard task ⁶⁰ .

The war was a greatly expanded version of a pattern of intermittent fighting between the two states. This, in turn, was the product of a long - standing territorial dispute over demarcation of the border and right of access to Shatt-al-Arab, the estuary at the head of the Gulf strategically vital to the passage of Iraqi traffic. Both sides extended the starategic rivalry for control to the Gulf itself and made claims on the teritories of various Gulf states. The Iraqi decision to go to war was also attributed to the Iraqi dissatisfaction with the signing of 1975 agreement concerning the Shat-al-Arab (which Iraq claimed) between Shah and Saddam Hussein (The Iraqi

60. Thomas L. McNaugher, "The limits of Access" projecting US Forces to the Persian Gulf", in WM J. Oison (eds.), n. 12, p. 177

President). Saddam Hussein also believed that Iran posed an ideological threat to the legitimacy of this Regime⁶¹. It had also an Arab-Persian dimension.

The small conservative states of the Gulf Bahrain and Kuwait in particular because of their proximity, were alarmed by the possibility that the Gulf war could spill over in to their territories. This concern was further fueled by Iran's revolutionary image. During 1980, Iraq sought and created create an "Arab entente" of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and others to support Iraq against Iran. Iraq's rival, Syria, supported by Libya, sided with Iran⁶².

One result of the Gulf war was further disunity among the Arabs who opposed the Camp David accords. Another result was to open a new wound in the Mideast which drew attention, particularly of Iran - an ardent supporter of PLO - away from the Arab - Israeli dispute.

The war developed into a stalemate claiming thousands of lives. Military experts the world over were

61. R.K. Ramzani, "The Arab-IRanian Conflict : The ideological dimensions", in Hafeez Malik ed. n. 42, p.57

62. Robert G. Darius, "Khomeini's Policy toward the Mideast", in Darius, AMOS, Magnus (eds.) n. 26, p. 43

now assessing the cost of the futile war. The figures are frightening. At least a million people perished on both sides. There were at least five million refugees and millions wounded. The civilian and military losses would amount to \$ 524 billion⁶³. It also caused a greater disruption of oil supplies than the first and the second oil shock although it was not designated as the third oil shock largely because of the persistence of the so-called world-wide oil glut⁶⁴.

The warring parties claimed that the superpowers wished the war to continue. Iran blamed everything on the US including the charge of destroying the Islamic Revolution. The US pursued a two pronged strategy. It discouraged Saudi Arabia and Oman from becoming involved in war. It also refused to supply arms to any of the parties. The US also decided to bolster the Saudi air defense by sending and sailing four AWacs planes to Saudi Arabia. The demonstration of US power was further aided by the rapid build up of the Western warships in the vicinity of the

63. Washington Post, 22 September 1989

64. R.K. Ramzani, n. 27, p. 59

strait of Hormuz outside the Gulf. The US apparently demonstrated its neutrality in the war game thereby sticking to Muskie-Gromyko understanding of September 25, 1980 at the UN which stipulated a hands off policy for the both superpowers⁶⁵. Neverthelss, the fact was that the US, with no diplomatic relations with the warring countries - seemed to had little leverage for pacemaking.

After some initial victories for Iraq, the momentum shhifted to Iran. By 1983, rough parity emerged between the two comabatants. The continuing stlemate on the battlefield was repeatedly confirmed through 1984 and 1985. Given the military parity between the two comabatants and Iran's intransigence regarding negotiations except with conditions (payment of reparation to Iran, Saddam Hussein's resignation, revocation of 1975 treaty etc.) impossible for Iraq to accept, the war was simply lumbered on⁶⁶. The next phase in the war was those of "Tanker War" and "War of Cities", the former threatening to expand the area of war to

65. See Claudia Wright, "Implications of the Iran-Iraq War", Foreign Affairs (Winter 1980-81) ; 275 -.303

66. Richard Cottom, "The Iran - Iraq War", Current History, Vol. 83, no. 4898 (Jaunary, 1984), pp. 9-12, 40-41

the Arab littoral of the Gulf and possibly to hinder traffic through the strait of Hormuz. All efforts at mediation, including those by GCC, NAM and the UN failed to end the war and it was only in 1989 that both sides, compelled and crushed by the immense and incalculable loss of lives, property and oil agreed to end the ten years old war. The UN mediated and supervised ceasefire was, in no less measure, the result of recognition of a no win situation by both sides.

Political tradition has it in the US that a President has to take responsibility for the failures of his administration. President Carter had to bear the responsibility for the declining fortunes of America and he had to pay a heavy price for it in 1980 presidential elections. It is against this background that president Ronald Reagan came to Oval office. During the first years of the Reagan administration, policy with regard to Persian Gulf consisted almost entirely of a continuation and consolidation of the policies initiated by Carter administration. Reagan administration spoke of a "strategic consensus" for the region which meant security cooperation among Israel the US and its Arab allies. On the top of

Administration's agenda for the Persian Gulf was the release of the US hostages in Teheran. He succeeded in getting them released through the mediation of Algeria. The US, in return, released the impounded Iranian assets in the US Banks.

The new administration though reluctant to endorse Carter Doctrine as such, did not renounce its substance. In fact, President Reagan, in a Press Conference in October 1981, paraphrased it by stating: "There is no way that we could stand by and see (Saudi Oil resources) taken over by anyone that would shut off that oil". In the same news conference, he also offered what might be called the Reagan corollary to the Carter Doctrine; "We will not permit (Saudi Arabia) to be an Iran ⁶⁷" This implied an US emphasis on Saudi Arabia as the only remaining "pillar of US Gulf policy.

The change in administration also brought a reappraisal of the role and mission of the RDJTF. The major change that came from this reappraisal was designation of redesignation RDFTF, in 1983, as a unified command - the US

67. Gary Sick, n. 11, p. 77

central command (USCENTCOM). The objective of USCENTCOM, in the words of President Reagan was "to develop with our friends and allies a joint policy to deter the Soviets and their surrogates from further expansion and if necessary defend against it"⁶⁸ .

The USCENTCOM with its Headquarters at Mac Dill Air Force Base has deterrence as its principal mission. Its strategy is based on helping friendly nations defend themselves. This is done by formulating appropriate military contingency plans, conducting combined exercises administering security assistance training programmes and providing political and economic support⁶⁹ . To implement these efforts, between 1982 and 1985, Reagan administrations on USCENTCOM went from \$ 871 million to \$ 978 million⁷⁰ . Having no local bases, the strategic use of USCENTCOM in the Gulf does require considerable local assistance. The problem with the commands planning, however, is that current US Gulf policy expects too much from USCENTCOM.

68. Maxwell Johnson, "Rapid Deployment and the Regional military Challenge : The Persian Gulf Equation", in WM. J. Olson ed. n. 12, p. 139

69. Ibid, p. 141

70. Ibid

Against the backdrop of formulation of such an activist role for the US, the performance of Reagan administration in managing the affairs of the Gulf remained dismal. The US failed to have any leverage on the ongoing Iran-Iraq war. The administration was badly stung by the failure of American efforts to retrieve a significant victory from Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. International terrorism, increasingly indiscriminate and steadily more anti-American in focus, effectively distracted the US Government for long periods of time during 1985. The US failure in softening Israel's stance towards Palestine problem as well as failure of peace diplomacy in the middle East further alienated the US friends in the region. As a result by early 1986, the US felt compelled to assume more than a low profile diplomacy in the Persian Gulf.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSIONS

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It is no exaggeration to say that strategic importance of the Persian Gulf derives from its abundant reservoirs of oil. The global reduction in oil consumption and increase in non-opec production of oil in recent years (1980-87) have not diminished the strategic importance of this region, primarily, because of the fact that the Persian Gulf, a volatile and turbulent area in transition, still remains crucially dependent source of oil supply to the Western World.

Concern over the security of the Gulf was late in emerging. It took a oil boom, independence of small Gulf amirates and the British withdrawal from the region in the early 1970s, to provide the momentum to the idea of Gulf Security. Towards the end of the decade of Seventies, a series of Internal, Regional and extra regional developments occurred with jerking pace and meshed up the already convoluted and fluid situation in the Gulf. If the Gulf, had ever been the British 'Lake' during the hey day of British empire, it certainly could not be mistaken

as an American 'lake' in the 1970s or 1980s. Much had changed in the Gulf as well as in the outside world during the intervening half century.

Perceptions of threats to security vary in the Gulf area. American concept of 'Gulf security' is not the same as that of the Soviet Union. It also differs with those held by the local states. Arab leaders view the most pressing and immediate threat mainly in the framework of the spillover of the Arab-Israeli or Iraqi-Iranian disputes. Iran sees the principal threat in terms of super power intervention and the lack of legitimacy of the pro-Western Governments in the area. The US attempts to develop a strategic consensus centred on the primacy of the Soviet threat face opposition in most Gulf states, where threats from Iran type Revolution, Israel and the "encirclement" of the region by Soviet proxies are considered more immediate.

The US concern with the Gulf security started gaining momentum in the wake of British withdrawal in 1971. Upto that time Gulf security was the Anglo-American condominium. The US, preoccupied as it was with Europe and South East Asia, had been maintaining a token presence in the Gulf through Juffair agreement (with Bahrain) of 1949. Later, it relied on security alliances like CENTO, MEDO etc. But now, in the wake of growing oil interests of the Western World, nationalisation of oil

companies and increasing Soviet influence in the area amidst a growing politico-military vacuum, compelled the US to reformulate its policy regarding the Persian Gulf. But at the same time, American dilemma in Vietnam made direct involvement along the lines of British experience impossible. The consequence was the 'twin pillar' system.

The formulation of the Nixon Doctrine in 1969, spelled out the country's declining ability to unilaterally defend its interests by notifying US regional allies that they would have to shoulder more of the burden for their own defense. This led to such policies as the so called 'twin pillar' policy in which the US gave significant military assistance to Iran and Saudi Arabia so that they could defend common interests on their own. The fall of the Shah and the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, however, exposed the dangers in such a policy.

Earlier also, in the wake of Arab-Israeli war of 1973, the use of oil as "Political Weapon" against the US and its allies demonstrated to the US that its security interests were not totally identical with those of the Gulf States. No matter how anti-communist the Gulf states were.

Some Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and Oman did not want the US withdrawal completely. But states like Iraq and Kuwait did not want to go in for external participation in the

security arrangement.

The Revolution in Iran in 1979 and the Soviet intervention in Afganistan later that year sent shock waves throughout the Gulf and the Western World. The Arab Gulf states faced the reality of new revolutionary forces that had not only reached the Gulf, but had overthrown the heretofore most powerful leader in the region. The "island of stability" that the Shah's Iran appeared to the US, crumbled when it gave way to fundamentalist Islamic forces of the region. It also taught the US a lesson that how dangerous it was to fulfill the demands of an Individual autocrat ruler without properly assessing the wishes of the local people. The seizure of the American hostages in Iran and subsequent Iranian threat to kill them and also the seizure of Al-Asqua Mosque exposed the weaknesses of American Power. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979 brought home the reality of Soviet threat to Iran, and the Gulf. It also posed a direct and serious challenge to American supermacy. The US and its European allies faced a possible cut off of Gulf oil. Such a cut off could bring economic disaster to the West and fragment the Western alliance.

Now, the US decided to adopt a tough attitude to safegurard its strategic interest in this "greyzone". The result ws the 'Carter Doctrine' announced on 23 January 190 through

President Carter's Union of State address to Congress. It reflected an attempt to reverse the decline in US willingness to defend its interests by force if necessary since the Carter Doctrine identified the Soviets as the prime threat in the region, planning had to respond to the notion of possible Soviet invasion. The main element in this was the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). This became the planning base for US defense efforts in the Persian Gulf area and this force was further developed into an Unified Central Command (USCENTCOM) in 1983. The Reagan Administration accepted the imperatives of the Carter Doctrine and came to regard the security of the Persian Gulf as vital to the US interests. It expanded the idea to include other forms of military assistance to local states against other forms of aggression, like internal subversion or threats from regional powers such as Iran.

In the US perception security of the Persian Gulf was a problem which concerned both the Western World and the Regional states and all of them should be prepared to counter the Soviet threat in order to retain the safe passage of oil. Another aspect was the regime security of its local allies. But here Washington was caught in a dilemma : If Washington moved closer to the Arab states, it might push Iran towards the Soviet Union to balance the Superpower game. But, if it failed to assist the

Arabs defend themselves, it would lose credibility in the Arab World. The Gulf states reaction was to counter Washington's constant chatter about a Soviet threat with focussing the centrality of the Arab Israeli dispute and the danger to them of US support of Israel and the Camp David accords. They wanted a US presence in the region, but a discreet one. States like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia thought that too much identification with the US would be tantamount to regime insecurity as it would feed on the domestic and regional vulnerabilities. It partially explains why the US had so much difficulty in securing 'bases' and 'access' facilities in the Region.

The US worked out an unofficial military alliance between its crucial allies in the broader South West Asia - Turkey in the North, Pakistan in the East, Egypt in the West and Saudi Arabia in the heartland. This strategy of four pillars - plus lesser pillars such as Sudan, Somalia and Oman was coordinated. The US design was that each 'pillar' should offer whatever support it was best equipped to give - military manpower, money or strategic location to back up the RDF.

A credible deterrent is dependent upon a viable Rapid Deployment force. A credible RDF meant the US had the ability to engage the Soviet Union in the Gulf and counter a frontal assault - or at least disrupt the attack, thus, raising the risks and

costs to Moscow. But the feasibility conditions of RDF were not sufficient. As we have already seen, the allied and Regional Cooperation, which mattered so much for a viable RDF strategy, were not forthcoming. Another impediment to permanent stationing of US Forces in the region was the refusal of Gulf states to grant bases.

There were serious questions confronting the RDF such as the size of the force, coordination, logistical support, its air lift and sea-lift capabilities considerations of Topography, damage to oilfields and presence of an overall hostile environment made RDF unfit for a guerilla or Terrorist attacks. RDF could not be pressed into action to prevent local conflicts or prevent it from escalating into a war as the Iran-Iraq war amply demonstrated. During few years of its coming into being it was clear that RDF was neither rapid nor deployable. It could at best act like a strategic reserve force. It soon fell prey to Intra-Services squabbles.

Since, the prospect of Soviet invasion of the Gulf provided the principal impetus for RDF's creation. It is imperative to assess how real the Soviet threat was. The next question relates to the place of the Soviet Union in the Gulf security scenario. For a number of reasons a direct Soviet Union in the Gulf security scenario. For a number of reasons a direct

Soviet attack on the Gulf independent of general war with the US, appeared to be unlikely and it is yet to occur. Given the assumption that the Soviet Union desired at least the capability of denying Gulf oil to the West, if not overt control of that oil, indirect penetration through development aid, arms sales, acquiring clients etc. seemed to be rational course of action. But even if one is prepared to accept the American theory of Moscow pursuing a "grand design" aiming at control of Gulf oil fields, it is yet to materialise. The Soviet Union maintains diplomatic relations with only three of the eight states of this region. The presence of troops in Afganistan might have put the soviets so near to the Gulf in Geographic terms, yet not for many years had Moscow been so far from influencing events in that region.

Iran-Iraq war added yet another dimension to the already complex problem of Gulf security. A stalemated war which continued for ten years till its end in 1989, also demonstrated the superpowers' inability to influence regional events. A complex mix of factors contributed to the out break of full scale hostilities between Iran and Iraq. A contributing climate of antagonism may have stemmed from the long standing rivalry between the two "great powers" of the Gulf for dominance in the region. There have been an immense economic loss and damage to oil fields in both Iraq and Iran. Initially both superpowers

maintained a low profile and refused arms or aid to both the warring parties. The US warned Iran of military action when the war, following bombing of cities and oil installations, threatened to engulf the other Gulf states also. The US stationed naval ships to ensure the safe passage of oil tankers and to prevent the possible closure of the strait of Hormuz - through which more than sixty per cent of Western oil is supplied.

The *Carter Doctrine* and the Reagan Corollary to it can be regarded as overreaction to a problem whose solution lay somewhere else. It reflected the reactive nature of US policy in the Gulf. It also reminded one of the Middle Eastern domino theory of the 1950s. According to theory, the overthrow of any conservative regime in West Asia would result in a chain reaction in the Gulf and the establishment of a series of radical regimes in the oil producing areas which would be prone to Soviet influences if not controlled. But as we have already seen and as the developments of subsequent years have shown, it is far from true.

The local states viewed *Carter Doctrine* with suspicion and were not prepared to accept the thesis of possible Soviet occupation of the Gulf. Rather, they evinced more concern with Islamic cause and the Arab-Israel problem. The US did not see

any dichotomy between its commitment to Israel and its close relations with the Gulf states. On the other hand, the US military power was regarded as Israel's "strategic reserve" by the Gulf states and they saw Israel, and not the USSR as the main threat. So the Gulf states expected the US to pressure Israel and find a solution to the Palestinian problem. But Israeli attack on Iraq's Nuclear reactor and invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and subsequent American refusal to agree with the Arab demands for sanction against Israel exerted an adverse impact on US - Gulf relations. Though time has healed some wounds and most of the Arab states including the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) of Yassir Arafat have accepted the reality of Israel and a state of Palestine was announced to be established by Yasir Arafat in 1988. For the first time, after almost two decades the US agreed to talk to PLO and scores of nations gave their recognition to the State of Palestine.

The Gulf states response to the Iranian revolution, Afgan crisis and the increased US activism was also concretely manifested in the establishment of Gulf cooperation Council (GCC) on 25th May 1981. All the six states comprising the council formed a cohesive group and not only did they share a common mistrust of both Iran and Iraq and evidenced close ties to the West, but they also exhibited considerable similarities in their political, economic and social systems. Despite its short

history, the GCC has undertaken significant economic, political and security efforts with emphasis on military aspects have figured high on the GCC's list of priorities. They have signed Bilateral Security arrangements and have also conducted joint military exercises. In the last analysis, it is of course these states who bear the principal burden for their own security.

So what are the lessons that might be drawn by reviewing the US Policy in 1970s and the early 80s in the Persian Gulf. The first and foremost lesson is that although the US, as a superpower, has had the capacity to project its power in the Persian Gulf, yet Washington could not control the destiny of that region. Local forces and leaders often act independently with little regard for US concerns or desires. The US interests and policies toward the Persian Gulf cannot be viewed in isolation from the interests and concerns of the people and Governments of that area.

Secondly, there can no longer be a single dominant power in the Gulf. No Gulf actor, including Iran and Iraq possess overwhelming power. Primary responsibility for defending the Gulf belongs to the GCC and the US role can be no more than a 'back-up'. Since divergent perceptions between the US and the Gulf states of potential threats or challenges to Gulf security ultimately are inevitable, so the reluctance of the GCC states to

fall in with existing American plans for a build up of OS military capabilities in the region is neither capricious nor temporary. It is more so in view of the fact that these states see Israel and Israeli policies as posing a far more immediate threat to Regional security than Moscow. So whatever good the US does in this region, without a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict the US will be haunted by its deadly by-products.

Thridly, for Regional threats. military action and particularly US direct military intervention - should be regarded as the very last resort. In many ways the peninsula is naturally shielded from invasion by reason of Geography and historical circumstances. There is little the US can do to prevent or counter most internal threats to GCC regimes.

Events since 1981 have downplayed the concerns for military preparedness to protect US interests in maintaining the security of Gulf oil supplies and containing soviet expansion. The Soviets remained embroiled in Afganistan. The Iran-Iraq war became stalemated. There occured a oil glut. These factors combined with the fact that neither Iran became a Soviet satellite nor the Gulf states convulsed in upheaval many have silenced the shrill cries of alarm or hostility. But then, on the negative side, during the Ragan Adminstration oil glut got translatted into deterioriation in Arab Oil Producers' influence

in Washington while Israel's clout increased tremendously.

Security is a very complex and multidimensional concept involving political, economic, social and military aspects. These in turn depend upon the process of political and economic development and regional resilience. Any Security framework for the Gulf must grapple with the problems of Islamic factors like Shi'a - Sunni divide, a resurgent Islam as an ideological factor, tensions being generated in the process of rapid social change and modernization. Besides, it must be in consonance with the regional problems and wishes of the local states. The US must recognize this fact and promote regional cooperation. It is also imperative for the success of US policy in the region that the Arab-Israeli dispute is settled to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. The US must know that the RDF or any effort at direct involvement could be a minor element in a policy mix. It could not be a substitute for the efforts aimed at regional cohesion and cooperation. After all, the responsibility to defend the region ultimately belong to the Persian Gulf States.

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