

SHIFTING POWER BALANCE IN THE GULF: AN APPRAISAL OF THE MAJOR POWERS' MANOEUVRES

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Introduction

The post-World War II period witnessed at least three major reallocations of Global system - in terms of military balance, economic viability and international value system. The first phase lasted from 1949 to 1990; the second from 1990 to September 11, 2001 and the third started with the events of 9/11, 2001 and is expected to continue in the projected future. The era that we purpose to represent falls within the preview of the first phase of the post-Second World War. We would deal with a time-frame (1971-1979) in particular, as that was the moment where the nations of the Gulf region attained significance in the International monetary as well as security systems. The Gulf region emerged with a tremendous ability to influence the international markets as witnessed by the oil embargo of 1974, and the security related interests that outside powers expressed towards the developments of that region, became a focus of interest and investigation for the keen observers of the regional affairs. A stiff contest took place between the United States and the Soviet Union - the two super powers of the cold-war era. Both the powers struggled hard to enhance their respective sphere of

influence and the Gulf region in particular and the Middle East in general became a severe "battle ground" for these two major actors of the international system.

The developments that took place during that time-frame would help us to explain the global intricacies as well as convey a better understanding of the shifting of international power structure; regional dynamics of the Gulf as well as the changing priorities of the nation States.

During the cold war era, the United States and the Soviet Union maintained a fair deal of interest in the affairs of the various regions. These two nations had acquired the capability to "establish 'spheres of influence' over smaller powers in more than one or two distant regions of the world."¹ The adverse relations between the two nations originated from the series of disagreements with each other. According to Henry A. Kissinger, the factors responsible for rivalry were real and deep rooted. Henry Kissinger spells out the perpetuating components - ranging from ideological to military diversities, as follows:

We are ideological adversaries, and we will in all likelihood remain so far the foreseeable future. We are political and military competitors, and neither can be indifferent to advances by the other in either of these fields. We each have allies whose association we value and whose interests and activities impinge on those of the other at numerous points.

We each possess an awesome nuclear force created and designed to meet the threat implicit in the other's strength and aims.²

The interest in a particular region increases or declines with the developments occurring in a certain region. The response or desire of a regional country to involve a major power in order to strengthen its position in the area becomes an important factor for major power's involvement. Resultantly, in the given era, the smaller nations had acquired the capability to put pressures to alter the behavior of the big power\'.³ Another factor to reckon is, the capability of a major power to exercise desirous influences in a certain society or a region. For example, the United States began to ignore the Southeast Asia after the experience of reverses in the Vietnam War.⁴ - at least temporary. In ultimate analysis, the U.S. policy makers regained interest but with a different strategy. Now their interests are more diverted towards the ASEAN countries.

Taking the policy of the two powers towards the Middle East into consideration, we can argue that certain assumptions are to be taken into account. If by "policy" we mean, a clear cut strategy - systematically planned and executed, then Middle East region can not be bracketed in this category as far as the United States and Soviet Union were concerned. Policies depend on values and purposes, predictions and estimates and ought to be consistent as long as the compulsions of requirements do not demand a diversion. Regarding the involvement in the affairs of the Middle East and the Persian Gulf regions, there was a difference in degree between the two super powers, which varied from time to time and country to country.

The tensions between the two global powers in the 1950s and 1960s reinforced the ideological and political drive to

build support among the global actors in such areas as the Middle East. The competitive aspect of the international system, on occasions, became the arena for major powers' confrontations in the Middle East region. However this was partly due to the global strategy of the two big powers.

According to an assessment made by the authors of the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations:

The nature of Soviet regional interests... have been, since 1956: (1) to promote the erosion of influence exercised by former colonial powers and the United States; (2) to support the Arabs' cause in their confrontations with Israel as a means of extending Soviet influence and diminishing that of the United States; (3) to support 'national democratic' and 'anti-imperialist' regimes even when that support has meant, as in the case of Egypt, sacrificing local communist parties; (4) partly as a consequence of these previous objectives and partly as a program for realizing ancient Russian and Soviet ambitions, to move Soviet naval forces gradually, steadily, into the Mediterranean Sea and Indian Ocean; (5) to promote 'neither war nor peace' strategies by the Arab belligerent along the Gaza and Golan lines of demarcation, or along the borders separating Jordan and Lebanon from their Jewish adversaries.⁵

Judging from a different angle, we can say that the Soviet Union regarded the Middle East consisting of two parallel

belts of States - The inner, consisting of Turkey, Iran and Afghanistan, is an area with which Russia has had long and intimate contact, and the outer, comprising the Arab countries, being an area with which historically Russia has had very little to do.

The situation, however, changed following the establishment of the Baghdad Pact (CENTO) in 1955. The pact played a significant role in drawing the Soviets closer to the Arabs. Moreover, during the Arab-Israeli conflicts of 1948 and 1967,⁶ the U.S. support to Israel enabled the Soviet Union to solidify its contacts with such Arab countries as Egypt, Syria and later on with Libya. Following the 1955 Soviet-Egyptian arms deal and followed by the financing of the prestigious Aswan Dam, the Soviet Union built a position of power and influence in the region as it skillfully took advantage of a shared objective with the Arabs - the removal or reduction, of Western influence. The Soviet support is evident in a message sent to the British Prime Minister after the British -French and Israeli attack on Egypt in November, 1956. The part of the message reads as follows:

With deep anxiety over the development in the Near and Middle East, and guided by the interests of the maintenance of world peace, we think that the Government of the United Kingdom should listen to the voice of reason and put an end to the war in Egypt....The war in Egypt can spread to other countries and turn into a third world war....We are fully determined to crush the aggressors by the use

of force and to restore peace in the East. We hope that at this critical moment you will show due common sense and draw the appropriate conclusions.⁷

Trade contacts followed political relations as series of trade agreements took place between the Soviet Union and Egypt (March, 1954), Lebanon (April, 1954), and Syria (November, 1955). Similar contacts were followed by the Soviet allies in Eastern Europe. The trade relations, however, could not achieve a durable maturity as the western countries were able to offer better deal for the Arab goods.⁸

The Soviet perception of the development of events in the Middle East after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war saw a shift in emphasis. The Soviet according to William B. Quandt learnt the following lesson:

...The Soviet leadership learned from the 1967 Arab-Israeli war...that their clients were incapable, in the absence of Soviet help, of fighting Israel in a full-scale war without running serious risks. Thus, after 1967, Soviet policy was initially aimed at achieving a political settlement of the conflict, the essential ingredient of which would be the return of the territory captured by Israel in 1967. The Russians,...for their purposes, had little direct influence over the Israelis and could not hope to persuade them to withdraw for less than full peace. Nor could the

Russians press the Arabs to agree to 'full peace' before an Israeli commitment to withdraw from their territory.⁹

In July 1972, the Soviets suffered a serious set-back, when they were asked by President Sadat of Egypt to remove 15,000 to 20,000 technicians and advisers stationed in his country.¹⁰ Another opinion is that the Soviets left on their own account as they saw no practical utility in getting themselves involved in a conflict-situation in which they had little maneuvering capacity.¹¹ In spite of their strained relations, the Russians however, supplied arms to Egypt and Syria in 1973 Middle East war.¹² The decline in Soviet-Egyptian relations culminated in December 1975, when the Russians refused to "reschedule Egypt's military debts and to provide at least spare parts."¹³

The Kremlin even after losing Egypt was able to exercise its influence through Libya and Syria and officially it maintained that the Soviets are "far from indifferent to events that take place there (the Middle East)."¹⁴

The Middle East held little commercial or political interest for the United States prior to 1945.¹⁵ After the Second World War, the policy makers of U.S., in their desire to contain the Russians and the Chinese (Communist influence) took a number of actions. The Marshall Plan, announced in June 1947 was based on Truman Doctrine - a desire to contain the spread of communism through economic and financial help to the war-torn Western Europe. Another step to 'help' the Middle Eastern nations against the threat of communism was taken by creating

CENTO, as already mentioned.

Apart from CENTO there was little U.S. active involvement in the Middle East, i.e., prior to 1967 Arab-Israeli war. But as pointed out in the beginning of this paper, development of a "situation" does attract the attention of a Super power towards a certain region. This is exactly what happened after the Suez crisis of 1957. The American President, Eisenhower said that, "the existing vacuum in the Middle East must be filled by the United States before it is filled by Russia."¹⁶ The vacuum was being created by the exit of Britain and France from the Middle East. W.W. Rostow, while discussing the U.S. interests in the Middle East writes:

The Middle East Resolution (March 9, 1957 and signed by President Eisenhower) authorized American cooperation with assistance to any nation or group of nations in the Middle East' in the development of economic strength dedicated to the maintenance of national independence'. To that end, it authorized upon request program of military assistance and military aid against armed aggression from any nation 'controlled by inter national Communism.'¹⁷

The practical demonstration of the American intentions of March 9, 1957 was given on the morning of July 15, 1958, when the United States made a decision to intervene militarily in Lebanon.¹⁸

After 1967 Six-Day War, the U.S. involvement in the

Middle East region increased. The huge chunks of Egyptian, Syrian and Jordanian territory was taken by Israel and the Arab armed forces were crushed. In such a situation, the U.S. acquired the position of an 'intermediary' between the belligerents. President Johnson wrote:

The United States has mutual security agreement with none of the nations involved. Yet our old friendship with the Arab states, and our profound emotional attachment to Israel -together with our knowledge that this conflict could easily come to involve the major powers - has involved us deeply in the search for an enduring settlement.¹⁹

The United States was interested in a peace settlement which could guarantee the security of Israel. The tensions in the region according to President Nixon, "caused the disruption of normal U.S. relations with a number of Arab countries...(which) in turn...increased the...excessive Arab dependence on Soviet support, and therefore, their dangerous vulnerability to excessive Soviet influence."²⁰ In 1973 war, the Egyptian army crossed the Suez canal and gained a new confidence, thus helped in making the U.S. peace efforts a success (at least with Egypt). The Egyptian leadership defied the 1967 Arab states' Khartoum formula, 'No peace, no recognition, no negotiations.'²¹ On September 17, 1978, "Camp David Peace Accord" was signed between Egypt, Israel and the United States. Assistant Secretary of State, Harold Saunders of the Carter Administration in an interview gave his opinion as follows:

The incentive is peace, and this is extremely important to the people of Israel, as it is to the people of the Arab countries who have suffered so long. We all knew at Camp David that unless we could make progress on those issues dealing with the Palestinian problem, we probably would not be able to make progress on other major issues which could lead to peace between Israel and its neighbors.

Therefore while there will be negotiations going on between Egypt and Israel, there will be simultaneous negotiations going on to begin the process of dealing with the Palestinian dimensions of the problem. Each party is obligated by this agreement to proceed down that course and to do certain things within a certain time frame. So there's the legal and moral obligation to proceed, and I think there is, as I said, the large political realization that without a solution to this problem, there cannot be peace in the Middle East.²²

The U.S. policy in the shape of Camp David peace process could not stand the test of time. The Palestinian dimension, which is the "heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict", could not be solved thus creating a situation in which the United States failed to maintain its neutrality.

The two major powers in the seventies were dealing with

the Middle Eastern countries in an eventuality, which involved variety of developments. "The Arab struggle with Israel; the rise of a new generation of Arab radical leaders; Nasser's effort to encourage the rise of such leaders (notably, in Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Jordan) and the nationalist resistance to Nasser's domination; the Bedouin-Palestinian schism in Jordan; the Moslem-Christian schism in Lebanon; and the tensions between the Arabs and non-Arab Moslems in Turkey and Iran."²³

In fact the leaders of the United States and Soviet Union were dealing in a region which was undergoing a process of modernization and change. A unique characteristic of this region, however, remained that the regional objectives and national aspirations acquired a permanent and vital position. Referring to such a situation, F.S. Northedge has expressed his assumptions on foreign policy in these words:

...Such procedures as long-range planning will have less of a place in foreign than domestic policy; improvisation, adaptability, the capacity to take advantage of swiftly changing circumstances, will always have their weight. The difficulty about the long-range plan in matters of external policy is that it may fail for want of the co-operation of other states.... This does not mean that a state's foreign policy, reviewed over a period of years, does not exhibit a certain unity of purpose and direction; but to be true to the conditions in which it has to work, it will generally seek to combine stability of long-

term purpose with a certain flexibility, one might say opportunism, of method.²⁴

The major powers' genuine dilemma is to find out ways to tackle the circumstances arising as a result of the lack of logical decision making on the part of the Middle Eastern regimes. The "cost-benefit" considerations become unimportant in the desire "to injure (ones) enemy regardless of the greater injury they may bring upon themselves." ²⁵

The above discussion was based on our assumptions that the Persian Gulf region exists in various environments and that the Middle Eastern region because of its geographical affinity with the Persian Gulf region and other interests does impose influential impact on the Gulf nations.

U.S. and the Gulf Region

Far East region in general and Vietnam in particular occupied the energies, attention and preferences of the United States foreign policy in the 1960s and mid 1970s. The Gulf region was under the control of the British, governed by various treaties, i.e., during the period of the American involvement in the Vietnam war. Moreover the region had not strategically activated itself before the 'oil embargo' of 1973 to an extent, which demanded priority contemplation from the policy makers of the United States government. In fact the Gulf region before 1973 was a 'backyard' of the Middle Eastern region.

The United States possessed minimal economic interest in the shape of Aramco's activities in Saudi Arabia before the

Second World War. With the discovery of oil in thirties the U.S. cautiously pursued a policy of economic involvement in oil sector. Ibn Saud, the ruler of Saudi Arabia preferred the Americans although in 1937 Japan offered a "very advantageous offer."²⁶ The American company, Arabian Oil Company (ARAMCO), previously known as the Standard Oil Company of California, in 1933 was able to get "a sixty-year concession covering a huge area in the eastern part of the country."²⁷

After the British decision to withdraw from the Persian Gulf by 1971, the economic power in the shape of oil production passed on to the oil companies. It should be however, remembered that the gradual decline of the position-of-control of the oil companies had already begun even before the British decided to leave the region.

The respective governments of the oil producing nations curtailed the oil companies' activities progressively. The realization of the new era of nationalism combined with the compulsions of requiring additional revenues for the purposes of development became a major cause of conflict between the Persian Gulf nations and the oil companies. It is well affirmed by two observers of the Middle East economies when they write:

...(The position of the oil companies) had been weakened by the AIOC (Anglo-Iranian Oil Co.) agreement with Iran, by the Anglo-French misadventure at Suez in 1956, by Iraqi persistence in negotiations after 1958, by heightened Arab nationalism and resentment

of Israeli influence in Western capitals after the June 1967 war, and by the series of victories going to Libya (in getting vital concessions from the companies).²⁸

The Iraqi government nationalized the holding of IPC (Iraqi Petroleum Co.) in 1972. The French partner, CFP (Compagnie Francaise des Petroles) by early 1973 was made to accept such offers as giving a free hand to the Iraqi government in sale of oil-not only from North Rumaila, but also from the former IPC fields without any legal interference from the erstwhile IPC partners.²⁹

The decline of the oil companies ensconced the oil producing countries of the Persian Gulf in a commanding position and when the vital year of 1973 emerged, the governments of the Arab Gulf were in complete command of the situation. There were also other (external) factors which contributed to the strength of the oil producing Persian Gulf nations. The elements of strength were "the rapidly increasing world demand, the continued growth of the role of OPEC members in the world market, and warmer bonds among the producers."³⁰ Such was a situation, which the United States policy makers had to counter regarding the Persian Gulf in early as well as late 1970s, "the major Arab oil producing nations imposed an embargo on all petroleum shipments to the United States and the Netherlands during the two weeks following the meeting of OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) Ministers held in Kuwait on October 17, 1973"³¹ Such an action was taken to put pressures on the United States to find out a "satisfactory" settlement between the Arabs and the Israelis. To use oil as a political weapon was

also intended to protest against the United States' military and economic aid to Israel in October war. Table 1, depicts the chronology of the embargoes imposed in a series of cutbacks, varying from country to country.

The American public as well as the government recognized the absoluteness of the principle that the "increased interdependence implies increased vulnerability to disturbances from abroad",³² which in turn can cause dislocations in the American economy. Such developments in their ultimate analysis can pose serious security threats to a nation - even without engaging in war-like activities. An awareness of this unique development and its consequences enhanced the strategic position of the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf phenomenon gave evidence to the U.S. policy makers that the region does have the ability to influence the U.S. economic structure as well as the structure of its European allies and the industrial Japan. According to an opinion, "the oil crisis of 1973 made it obvious that developed countries were not independent of the efforts of decisions made by smaller, less developed nations."³³ The Arab oil producing countries since 1973 emerged as "considerable world financial power", which in future were ready to play a serious role in the affairs of the international monetary system.³⁴

The efforts of U.S. Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger ultimately led to the lifting of embargo on March 18, 1974 by the Arab states -Iraq being an exception.³⁵ The U.S. assured the Arabs that they would contribute efforts for long lasting peace in the Middle East.

In a broader context, the American interests towards the Persian Gulf regional set-up can be summed in the words of Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, Harold H. Saunders when he points out as follows:

Our interests in the region are longstanding, major, and interrelated. They take cognizance of:

- The area's strategic location and its significance to maintain a global strategic balance;
- The significance we place on the sovereignty and independence of these countries as part of a more stable world;
- The world's vital need for the region's oil; and
- The importance of these states in international finance and development and as markets for our goods and technology.

In the last decade our interests in the region have changed little in nature but have grown in importance:

We then spoke of the vital flow of Gulf oil to our NATO allies and our friends east of Suez. Now we ourselves have become excessively dependent upon Gulf oil.³⁶

TABLE 1

**CHRONOLOGY OF OIL
EMBARGOES-GULF COUNTRIES**

October 18 - November 2 , 1973

Date	Country	Production Cutback (%)	Embargoes U.S. Netherlands	Other Action
Oct.18	Saudi Arabia;	10	-----	--
	Qatar;	10	-----	
	Abu Dhabi		X	----
Oct 20	Bahrain	5	X	Cancellation 1971 US NAVY Base Agreement
	Saudi Arabia		X	
Oct 21	Kuwait, Dubai	10	X	
Oct 22	Iraq		Nationalised Royal Dutch Shell Interests in PBC	
Oct 23	Kuwait; Abu Dhabi		X	
Oct 24	Qatar		X	
Oct 25	Oman		X	X
Oct 30	Bahrain		X	
Nov 02	Saudi Arabia		X	

Source: U.S. Oil Companies and the Arab Oil Embargo: The International Allocation of Constricted Supplies, Op. Cit., p. 15.

What we gather from the official U.S. interest perception is that economic as well as strategic interests dominated the U.S. involvement in the Gulf region. The financial benefit received through the heavy investments of American based multinational corporations had become an important aspect of U.S. attention towards such countries as Iran and Saudi Arabia to a greater extent. The oil money had turned the societies of these countries with comparative big populations, into consumer-oriented market economies. Apart from the supply of sophisticated armaments, the U.S. also provided related technical assistance - in cash money and at expensive prices.

Strategically, the United States with the assistance of Iran - Saudi Arabia desired to create a "security net-work" which in turn could protect the vital sea-lanes passing through the narrow gap of Strait of Hormuz - providing a safe passage to oil tankers laden with oil for supply to the Western countries and Japan.

The above mentioned purposes of the United States could have been achieved if in the first place a "status quo" was maintained and secondly the Gulf nations responded to U.S. planning in a cordial manner. Positive response did come from Iran and Saudi Arabia along with Oman, while relations with Iraq could not be normalized to an extent the United States desired.³⁷

The indispensability of the Persian Gulf region for the U.S.

is described by Elliot Richardson, the former U.S. Secretary of Defence, in the following words: "Continuing access to those (oil) reserves by all consumer nations is a matter of great interest to us (and that).... the uninterrupted flow of energy sources particularly petroleum, is vital in this regard." He further added, "we look primarily to this end, we have security assistance programmes with selected countries, notably Iran and Saudi Arabia....In addition, the presence of a small U.S. Naval Force indicates a continuing U.S. interest in the area."³⁸ In fact the direct American military presence had been only symbolic as indicated by a few subsequently withdrawn.³⁹ But the American indirect military involvement, which included heavily arming client states with sophisticated weaponry indicated a strong commitment.⁴⁰ This commitment is so strong that while imparting a restraining capability, it could one day lead Washington even into direct confrontation.

The United States concluded several treaties and agreements with the Persian Gulf nations since early 1970s. A wide range of topics were covered by the United States which included:

Defence, Peace Corps, agricultural commodities, atomic energy, aviation, education, economic and technical cooperation, environmental cooperation, trade and commerce, publications, visas, judicial assistance, postal matters, telecommunications, investment guarantee, desalination, military missions, and even extradition.⁴¹

The majority of the above mentioned treaties were concluded with Iran and Saudi Arabia. Moreover, a great bulk of these treaties confined to such matters as military, economic, and technical assistance.⁴² The treaties concerning the Defence matters with the Gulf countries become significant given the U.S. policy interests in the Persian Gulf area. Table 2, reveals the nature of American security interests in the area.

As we have indicated above, the focus of attention for the U.S. policy makers remained Iran and Saudi Arabia to a greater extent. In the following pages we will concentrate our analyses on the mentioned countries, without losing sight of the other countries of the region.

The United States' interests in Iran were closely linked with that of the "total" support to the throne of the Shah of Iran. It was the American CIA which maneuvered a coup against anti-Shah regime of Prime Minister Musaddeq on August 19, 1953. The Shah of Iran was convinced that his decade-long friendship with the Americans had paid dividends and that "the United States helped him to save his throne."⁴³ The Shah paid back the U.S. favor in kind when in 1973, Iran did not join the other Gulf countries in oil embargo.

Since 1948 contacts were established between the United States and Iran in the shape of the U.S. selling noncombatant equipment along with light combat material worth U.S. \$26 million.⁴⁴ However, little progress was made between the relations of the two countries. For example, the Shah went to the U.S. in 1949 and hoped to

get a substantial amount of economic aid but muster only \$25 million from the export-Import Bank.⁴⁵

The Shah of Iran joined the American sponsored Baghdad Pact (later known as CENTO when Iraq left in 1958 after a military coup) in 1955 - thus establishing still closer ties with the United States. However, Iran was not fully satisfied with CENTO because of American absence from the organisation as a full member. The U.S. in order to dispel the Iranian fears about the American security commitment to Iran, signed in 1959, a bilateral security agreement with the Shah's regime.⁴⁶

In spite of the mentioned contacts of various natures, the Irano-American relations could not be categorized as smooth. "But, (the relations) survived the vicissitudes of Irano-American relations...(which) began to show a new vigor in 1968 that led to unprecedentedly close relations by 1973."⁴⁷

TABLE 2

**DEFENCE AGREEMENTS BETWEEN
THE UNITED STATES AND
CERTAIN GULF COUNTRIES
1951 - 1978**

Country	Agreement	Date
Bahrain	Agreement relating to the status of personnel in the administrative support unit in Bahrain	June 28, 1977

Iran	Memorandum concerning revisions of Foreign Military Sales' offers and acceptance between the United States and Iran (last agreement before the Shah left Iran)	Oct. 19, 1979
Iraq	Military Assistance Terminated	Dec. 3, 1955 July 21, 1959
Kuwait	Agreement concerning the procurement of defence articles and defense services by Kuwait and the establishment of a U.S. liaison office in Kuwait.	April 15, 1975
Saudi Arabia	Agreement relating to: Transfer of military supplies and equipment Military assistance advisory group Loan of F-86 Aircraft to Saudi Arabia Construction of Certain Military Facilities in Saudi Arabia Extended Transfer of F-86 Aircraft to Saudi Arabia Privileges and immunities of U.S. personnel engaged in maintenance and operations of F-15 Aircraft in Saudi Arabia Deposit by Saudi Arabia of 10 percent of Value of grant military assistance provided by the US Modernization programme of the Saudi Arabian National Guard Cooperation in the fields of economics, technology, industry and defence Technical Cooperation Extended Manpower Training and Development U.S. Military Training Mission in Saudi Arabia	June 18, 1951 June 27, 1953 Nov 13, 1962 June 5, 1965 Aug. 7, 1978 June 5, 1965 July 5, 1972 May 15, 1972 March 19, 1973 June 8, 1974 May 12, 1975 May 19, 1979 Aug. 6, 1976 Feb. 27, 1977
United Arab Emirates	Agreement Relating to the Sale of Defence Articles and Services	June 21, 1975

Source: *Treaties in Force: A List of Treaties and Other International*

Agreements of the United States in Force on January 1, 1981 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981), quoted in Emile A. Nakhleh, *The Persian Gulf and American Policy*, op. cit., pp. 108-109

After 1971, the U.S. strategists anticipating "security vacuum" in the Persian Gulf, started taking Iran more seriously in their global security planning. They began to prompt Iran as a regional power with economic as well as military muscles so as to: (a) be able to control anti-American insurgency movement in the area and (b) to maintain a degree of strategic stability thus preserving the status quo in the Gulf region. The U.S. perception of the expectations arising out of the new developments in the relationship were discussed in a U.S. Senate Committee report as follows:

It is commonly asserted by Iranians that the United States does not recognize or act upon its true national interest. The implication is that if the United States did recognize its own interests it would see that these coincided with Iran's. A corollary is that the United States does not appreciate adequately Iran's contribution to the defense of these common interests.

Moreover, these interests are at least as essential to the United States as the interests engaged in Western Europe, and Iran therefore must be accorded treatment equivalent to that accorded Western Europe. There is an Iranian perception that in the past, the United States has made its assistance

conditional on internal reforms in Iran which demonstrated America's complete misunderstanding of the Iranian situation and assumed a relationship other than one of equality between the United States and Iran which is no longer acceptable.

...(The) unwillingness of the United States to become deeply involved far from its shores and the associated U.S. policy of relying on regional powers in support of U.S. interests, it is incomprehensible to many Iranians that the U.S. Congress is apprehensive about arming Iran sufficiently to play the role which U.S. policy itself dictates. Related to the conviction that Iran must be sufficiently strong economically, politically and militarily to defend Iran's interests is the conviction that the United States is other than a totally reliable ally (witness the 1965 and 1972 Indo-Pakistani wars, Angola, Vietnam) and that, therefore, Iran must be prepared to defend its interests as it defines them.⁴⁸

The Shah of Iran opposed the United States to maintain a naval base in Bahrain. The logic presented is reflected in Shah's interview to the New York Times, when he said: "Do as the Russians do; show your flag; cruise in the Persian Gulf. But base your ships on those islands in the Indian Ocean - the Seychelles or Diego Garcia."⁴⁹ The Shah's intentions behind such policy was to make an attempt to discourage the Russians and other outside powers to intrude in the area on a permanent basis.⁵⁰

It would be appropriate to mention that the U.S. navy, under the December 23, 1971 agreement with Bahrain got "support facilities", which were already being used under the British. This does not imply that the U.S. navy was given a "military base". The agreement regulated "the status of (US) Middle East Force personnel when ashore in Bahrain in matters such as legal jurisdiction, Tax status, and import duties."⁵¹ Such a port facility for the U.S. navy meant that the Americans wanted to demonstrate their interest in the Gulf region.

Whatever, caution the Shah might have taken to keep away the U.S. ships and Air force from the ports of the Persian Gulf region; he wanted the Americans to play an active role in the area - but through a proxy - and that being the Shah himself. In this context the Iranian Monarch in October 1974 said that the American friendship to Iran was "absolutely vital."⁵² Again a few weeks after the first statement, he said "Iran belonged to the "free world" and added that "we do not want to see you collapse because we are going to collapse with you - along with you."⁵³

The Shah's regime in the estimation of the United States foreign policy makers was categorized as "stable" and thereby his role in the Persian Gulf region was to be accepted as that of the "policeman". Even President Carter, who normally advocated civil rights credentials while establishing close relations followed by economic and military aid, with foreign nations "was happy with the Shah's role" in the Gulf - though President Carter had reservations about the conditions of human rights in Iran.⁵⁴

According to Iranian estimation, the oil money and the building up of its Socio-economic and military infrastructures have put Iran in a position of strength. Amir Taheri, an Iranian scholar is of the view that post 1973 Iran has not only become an important actor at regional level, but even at global stage, after effect of its policy implications could be felt.⁵⁵ Taheri describes the growing Iranian response towards its foreign policy environment as follows:

By early 1975, Iran was committed to Asia in an unprecedented way. Australia and New Zealand were to become major sources of foodstuffs for Iran; India was to provide iron ore for Iran's growing steel industry; and large quantities of cement, sugar, tea and even certain manufactured goods were to be purchased from Pakistan, the Philippines, the two Koreas and Indonesia. Iranian teams were sent to Asia to recruit tens of thousands of skilled workers from South Korea, the Philippines, India and Pakistan. The latter two are to provide Iran with no less than 3,000 physicians and hundreds of nurses.

....A Persian proverb says that he who has a bigger roof shall have more snow. In terms of defense and security is bound to have larger military and diplomatic responsibilities as well.⁵⁶

It can be argued that Iran by accepting such a large sphere of responsibilities as portrayed in the above assessment of the Iranian role, was in fact over-stretching itself, i.e., in the

absence of inadequate capacity to absorb rapid developmental shocks.

President Nixon, while on a visit to Tehran in May 1972 through a "memorandum informed the bureaucracy of (his) decision...that, in general, future decisions on...requests for conventional weapons be made by the Government of Iran."⁵⁷ Such a Presidential action was unprecedented for a developing country. It was also unusual because the May 1972 decision removed all sorts of restrictions on any weapon systems sales to Iran. Moreover, the normal sales decision by the State as well as Defence Departments was not to be taken into account in the case of Iran.⁵⁸

The U.S. Senate's Committee report spoke of problems in the implementation of the President's decision. According to the findings of the report:

The State Department accepted the President's decision and proceeded to implement it. In practice this meant that Iranian arms requests received little or no scrutiny unless they involved highly classified technology, or co-production (licensed assembly and fabrication of some parts) in Iran. Detailed analysis of such factors as Iranian military requirements, absorptive capacity, and manpower availability was considered to be superfluous, given the sweeping nature of the President's decision.⁵⁹

It was suspected by the above mentioned U.S. Senate Committee Report that incorrect distribution of defence resources to Iran would be downgraded in "the operational effectiveness of its forces...with adverse effects upon the regional security posture."⁶⁰ The Iranian government no doubt was able to acquire whatever weapon it liked but in that respect it became increasingly dependent upon the "good graces of the U.S. Government."⁶¹

Higher dependency involved more U.S. military, Air force and Navy personnel in the Defence system of Iran. As estimation was made that by 1980, there would be at least 34,000 civilian defence-oriented U.S. communities in Iran (including dependents).⁶² Moreover by December 1977 there were more than 40 U.S. firms involved in military contacts in Iran. Table 3, gives a list of U.S. based firms and number of personnel employed.

Good relations between the two countries were accompanied by occasional pressures on the Shah of Iran to introduce reforms in the country - social as well as political. The American intention here was to pacify the Iranian public so that they could be kept away from serious agitations against the otherwise unpopular royal ruler and his companions. The pressures to introduce reforms in Iran increased during the Kennedy administration. But after the increase of oil revenues in early 1970s, the U.S. leverage on Iran in terms of U.S. financial aid diminished. In fact the crux of the American-Iran relations can be viewed "primarily in terms of their political and military dividends."⁶³ The U.S. consumer goods however remained a source of attraction for the Iranian government.

Iran's non-oil trade with the United States was always at a disadvantage. But the traditional imbalance seemed glaring in the 1970s as Iran's ambitious industrialization projects, its preference for U.S. commodities and services, its decreasing agricultural productivity, and its rising real income increased the imports of machinery, capital goods, food, and consumer goods. In spite of attempts at diversification of trade, the United States attained the rank of a major trade partner, after West Germany and Japan, and retained it until the fall of the Shah's regime.⁶⁴

The United States' involvement in Iranian affairs in terms of material and large number of its citizens could not guarantee the security and interests of the Iranian population. Moreover, even the American interests could not be safeguarded by "serving" the well being of the Shah's throne. Perhaps the U.S. leaders have not learned a pointed lesson in Vietnam, which is that the involvement in a country must be acceptable to the large portion of the masses as well. The people of Iran saw the American presence in Iran in negative terms and resented against the presence of its citizens in such a large number. As witnessed in 1979 Iranian revolution, the American security system could not sustain the strains of the domestic upheavals against the Shah, his regime and his alien supporters.

On the other hand, with the ceasing of the after-effects of the oil embargo, the Saudi-American contacts concentrated on the premises of defence-related relations. The economic involvement and oil matters did not however lose their importance. Tremendous arms and related material was

imported.

TABLE 3
U.S. FIRMS WITH CONTACTS
IN IRAN WITH NUMBER OF
PERSONNEL EMPLOYED OCTOBER 1975

Company & Major Field of Activity	Number of Personnel
AAI Corp., Aircraft Electronics	3
Agusta Bell, Aircraft Maintenance	10
Avco Corp/Lycoming, Aircraft Engine Maintenance	13
Bell Helicopter International, Flight Training	1424
Booz Allen & Hamilton, Program Management	7
Bowen-McLaughlin-York, Tank Rebuilding	35
Brown & Root E&C, Shipyard Construction	16
Cessna Aircraft Co., Aircraft	1
Collins Radio, Communications Electronics	4
Computer Sciences Corp., Computers Software	164
Emerson Electric, Armament Maintenance	1
Epsco Inc., Electronics	1
General Dynamics, Missiles	11
General Electric, Engines And Armament	15
General Motors/Allison, Aircraft Engine Maintenance	3
Grumman Aerospace Corp., Aircraft Maintenance	19
Hazeltine Corp., Electronics	1
Hughes Aircraft, Aircraft Electronics And Munitions	7
ITT, Communications Electronics	4
International Technical Product, Communications	85
Itek Corp., Electronics	3
Kaman Aerospace Corp., Aircraft Maintenance	3

Litton, Electronics	7
Lockheed, Aircraft, Maintenance	123
Logistics Support Corp., Aircraft Maintenance	160
Martin-Marietta, Electronics	4
McDonnell Douglas, Aircraft Maintenance	41
Northrop, Missiles/ Aircraft Maintenance	29
Page Communications, Communications	5
Philco-Ford, Electronics	35
Pratt-Whitney, Aircraft Engine Maintenance	4
Raytheon, Missiles	126
RCA Corp., Electronics	7
SDC, Air Defense Systems Training	4
Singer Co., Electronics	1
Stanwick, Shipyard Construction	107
Sylvania Corp., Electronics	3
Texas Instruments, Armament	2
Westinghouse, Electronics	140
Total:	2,728

Source: *United States Arms Policies in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea Areas: Past, Present, and Future*, op. cit., p. 145.

The U.S. commercial interests were served by the American companies, (as in the case of Iran) who directed their goods and services towards the newly developing Saudi society. In this manner, the U.S. balance of trade and balance of payment were adjusted favorably for the United States. It was in spite of the fact that oil was being purchased at a much higher price.⁶⁵

Henry Kissinger paid a visit to meet the Saudi leaders in November and December of 1973. The main agenda of the talks between the Saudis and the American representatives was to explore the possibility of finding a solution to the oil crisis and in return U.S. technological assistance was

offered. With the passage of time, the Americans got involved in a big way, committing themselves to acquire an important role in the construction of the infrastructures of the Desert Kingdom.⁶⁶

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia preferred the United States for joint ventures and the Americans topped the list, "in the total value of licensed joint ventures and construction contracts."⁶⁷ There were 271 ventures with about 3.7 billion U.S. dollars worth of capital involved by the end of 1984⁶⁸ - an indication of the gradual increase of U.S. economic involvement in Saudi Arabia. To further assess the importance of the American economic interests, we note that by 1983, the United States contractors were given one-fourth of the total awards, which amounted to more than U.S. \$4 billion.⁶⁹ The Deputy Minister for International Development Cooperation at the Ministry of Finance and National Economy of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia writing on the U.S. -Saudi economic relations says:

During much of the last decade (1970s), it has frequently been popular to refer to the relationship between industrial countries and oil-producing countries as a conflict relationship between producer and consumer. The United States and Saudi Arabia, as the main countries in these two groups, should epitomize that conflict. Yet, when we look closely at the economic policies and relations between the two countries, we see very little conflict. Instead we see a basic community of interests with large overlapping areas of common concerns. Both

countries have a strong desire to see a stable but growing international economy - and both countries participate in a multitude of institutions designed to support and facilitate that international economy. During the last decade, the United States has exported \$48 billion worth of goods to Saudi Arabia while importing \$73 billion worth of oil. The United States has by far the largest presence of any foreign country in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia has invested billions in the United States. Every year sees numerous Saudis vacationing in the United States and the Kingdom has sent thousands of its young men here to receive higher education or technical training. That is not a conflict scenario - it is an economic partnership.⁷⁰

The Saudi desire to have closer ties with the U.S. as observed in the above writings of the Deputy Minister necessitates (like Iran of 1971-1978) from the concerns to preserve the vitality of the regime, i.e., the royal family and the ability to downgrade any potential dissent movements. In order to achieve these goals, the Saudis needed arms and training of their National Guard as well as making their intelligence apparatus more efficient. Apart from the internal stability, the Saudis were also concerned during 1971-1978 about regional threats coming from Iran or even Iraq. The Saudi ruling family had been "reminding Washington of the continuing need to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict,"⁷¹ inclusive of the Palestinian settlement. In the contrary situation it is apprehended by the Saudi

regime that radical forces would become strong, thus threatening its leading position of political moderation in the Gulf as well as Middle Eastern region. In this regard Saudi Arabia supported the "creation of a Palestinian state and Israel's return to the 1967 boundaries" ⁷² in a forceful manner.

An observer of Gulf security points out some paradoxes between Saudi Arabia and the United States in the following words:

1. Only the U.S. can provide a balance (often psychological) to the Soviet threat but the physical presence of the U.S. could exacerbate regional problems of instability and U.S. over-reactions could stimulate Soviet responses.
2. Against regional threats, specific or ideological, the U.S. potential role is also important especially its reputation for reliability and commitment. A strong arms relationship is central for advertising Saudi Arabia's importance but an overt alliances is still impossible politically.
3. Against factors strengthening radicalism, the U.S. connection also has a role to play. For example, only the U.S. is in a position to defuse the political pressures that bear on Saudi Arabia from a 'no-war, no-peace' situation, by pushing a Middle Eastern settlement. Yet the path chosen to achieve that goal (Camp David) may itself exacerbate those pressures on Saudi Arabia in the short run.
4. In a period of sustained instability, the U.S. connection becomes a liability yet the option of cutting loose from the U.S. is limited by the lack of a

realistic alternative for security. Thus 'distancing' occurs to reduce the Kingdom's exposure.⁷³

Another scholar opines that there is enough evidence to prove that in May 1977, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia decided on a "secret informal military agreement."⁷⁴ It was agreed by the two governments that the U.S. would guarantee the security of Saudi Arabia and "the maintenance of its present regime against all threats from home and abroad."⁷⁵ The Saudis on their part agreed to invest their oil surpluses in the American economic system. Moreover, the Saudis, as it was reported gave an understanding that they would not raise the price of crude oil by more than 5 percent per year, at least till the end of 1984.⁷⁶

In real terms, the security myth for the Saudis was not more than a psychological gesture. In other words, there remains difficulties in the conduct of relations between the two nations, especially when it comes to such affairs as Arab-Israeli issue or the future of the Palestinian people.⁷⁷

According to American perception, the Saudis had by 1976 attained a position of vital importance in the Gulf region. The U.S. policy makers in all their estimation regarded the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as having become, "capable of exercising leadership and constituting a stabilizing influence...(which) increased manifold its perceived function as international banker, oil price regulator, and the world's most critical oil producer...."⁷⁸ President Carter while welcoming Prince Fahd of Saudi Arabia in U.S. (May, 1977) expressed the sentiments of cordiality and said that "there are no disturbing differences at all (between the two

countries).⁷⁹ When President Carter visited the Middle Eastern Region in 1978, Saudi Arabia was the only Arab nation, which was included on regional itinerary. There were no balances considered by stopping in other Arab states or Israel.⁸⁰

The United States had placed its confidence as far as the security of the Persian Gulf was concerned on what is termed as the "two-pillar system" (consisting of Saudi Arabia and Iran).⁸¹ It was assumed by the American policy makers that these two Gulf nations or in reality their regimes' strength could provide stability to the region and in that way the U.S. interests in the region could be served. Some U.S. officials did not agree with these policies of the American government. In the estimation of the former U.S. Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, James Akins, the U.S. was overestimating the capabilities and strength of the Saudi society and its ruling elite. According to the Ambassador:

The United States compensated for its previous underestimation of the Saudis by tending, after the oil embargo, to overestimate them -forgetting that it was dealing with a small country, circumscribed by very real limits and not in an overall position of strength.⁸²

The smaller states of the Gulf region were financially (oil money) and strategically (radical movements) placed in such a situation that Global power like the United States was compelled to prepare a definite policy towards them soon after their independence in 1971.

In 1971-72, the U.S. established diplomatic ties and opened up small missions in Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. The diplomatic activities with the mentioned states as well as other states like Qatar went into operation soon as U.S. recognized these states after independence. Bahrain was given recognition in August 15, 1971; Qatar in September 5, 1971; and the United Arab Emirates in July 1971. Kuwait had already gained an independent status in 1961.⁸³ By late 1973 expansion in the diplomatic status was recommended by the State Department in Washington, D.C.,⁸⁴ and in May 1974 Ambassadors were appointed and confirmed by the American Senate to Bahrain and UAE, while Qatar got its U.S. Ambassador in June of the same year.⁸⁵

As recognized by the U.S. policy makers, the U.S. interests in these states could be served by friendly regimes and not by puppet governments. The U.S. by 1973 had recognized the obstacles involved in getting too much entangled in tiny societies, the best course adopted by the U.S. was to exercise its influence in the region through two of its closer allies - Iran and Saudi Arabia for reasons already discussed. In June, 1975, Joseph J. Sisco, Under Secretary for Political Affairs gave the following statement before the U.S. House Committee on International Relations:

....In Iraq...there is the absence of diplomatic relations (but) we maintain a small U.S. Interests Section in the Belgian Embassy,⁸⁶ our relations with all the countries in this region are good. With many of these countries, the depth and variety of our

relationship have grown significantly in recent years (prior to 1975).

Except for Oman, which is faced with an active insurgency, weapons requirements for the lower Gulf States have been small. What little they have purchased from us has been mainly from commercial sources....Our foreign military sales to lower Gulf states have been limited thus far to training courses. These states have continued to meet their more limited requirements from other friendly sources.

While we are prepared to make available on a sales basis modest amounts of training or equipment as may be appropriate to their real internal security needs, we have no intention of encouraging an arms race among these smaller states. Instead, we have encouraged them to cooperate closely among themselves and to look for their security in a regional context by cooperating with their larger neighbors.⁸⁷

The official U.S. position has been that, "in each of the states of the Gulf, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar and Oman,"⁸⁸ the Americans have contributed towards the development of economic and social resources.⁸⁹ At the same instance, it is admitted by an American author that in the initial period of U.S. involvement (1970s) "apart from the oil companies - there was virtually no cadre of officials familiar with the region,"⁹⁰ and even for remotest information, the Iranian and Saudi sources were relied upon. Such compliance by the Americans was in harmony with the "two-pillar" policy.

In general, the American government remained worried about the possibility of internal threats to the prevailing political order in the Gulf States.⁹¹ The question involved was to see if the gulf societies could absorb the fruits of rapid economic development.

The Gulf States on their part are of the view that the Gulf region should be left alone by the foreign forces because the governments are aware of the fact that one action can lead to reaction from other side. UAE President Shaykh Zayid reflecting similar apprehension said:

Our concept of security in the Gulf is that the Gulf States should be left alone to live in security and stability without the help of foreign forces, without interference by the big powers or any other power to determine the fate of this area (Gulf), and without having this area viewed by anybody as their zone of influence.⁹²

Kuwait at that time-frame was more critical of the outside interference. The Kuwait Deputy Foreign Minister Rashid al-Rashid expressed his opinion as follows:

First, full neutrality toward this (superpower) conflict because we are not a party to it and because it concerns none of our interests. By logic, this calls for refraining from embarking on any kind of political or military alliances with any of the two parties to the conflict to set up any kind of military bases and for

denying either side military facilities that may motivate the other side to acquire the same thing in the area because such action will, in turn, accelerate the conflict which all are supposed to exert efforts to avoid.⁹³

Iraq completely severed diplomatic relations with the U.S. during the June 1967 Middle East war. The relations were restored partially, "when 'interests sections' (diplomatic missions lacking the full accreditation of an embassy) were established after the October 1973 war."⁹⁴ No major breakthrough was made after the 1973 progress although "annual discussions between the American secretary of state and the Iraqi foreign minister were conducted regularly at the United Nations during the latter half of the 1970s...."⁹⁵

Iraqi Baath regime posed itself as the champion of the Arab cause, disagreed with the Americans on Israeli-Arab conflict and remained suspicious of U.S. role in the Gulf region. In fact the suspicion was mutual and the relations between the two countries showed signs of little improvement till the end of 1978.

The Gulf and the Soviet Union

The Soviet Central Asia had a geographical proximity with the Gulf region through the Iranian territory. The shortest land route from the Russian territory to the Gulf was through Iran, which made Iran important factor in any Russian maneuver to strengthen its position in the Gulf region as well as the Middle East.⁹⁶ In the history of Russian expansion, the "...czars concentrated on

conquering the Persian Empire, which would (have given) them direct control over the Gulf."⁹⁷ In order to pursue their expansionist goals, the Russians engaged themselves in prolonged wars with the Persian Empire in 1804-13 and 1804-13. The occupation of Iran from 1909-11; 1914-1918 and 1941-1946 and dividing of Iran in 1907 into spheres of influence (with the British) however, increased British influence in the Gulf and discouraged the Russians of further expansion.

The Russian designs towards the Central Asia in the later half of the 19th century and subsequently its policies of imposing communist ideology created an atmosphere of insecurity in such adjacent Gulf States as Iran,⁹⁸ and as a result the effects of the remembrance of the "Russian experience" dominated the Soviet Gulf relations even in the 1970s.

The Soviet-Iranian conflicts are defined as follows:

...Iran's relations with the USSR have been scarred by the historic attempts on the part of the imperialist czarist Russians to engulf and absorb Iran's territories. For nearly 300 years, conflicts raged between Russia and Persia, particularly over the areas surrounding the Caspian Sea. The Russian annexation of what is today Azerbaijan, S.S.R., from Persia is an example. The Soviets also continued to create problems by instigating rebellions and insurgencies inside Iran. The Soviet-supported "republics" of Gilan, Azerbaijan,

and Mahabad are constant reminders to Iranians of Soviet ambitions and interests in this country.

The Azerbaijan crisis in Iran in 1945-46 was directed, aided, and abetted by Moscow. It was one of the most important post-World War II eruptions.. (demonstrating) the growing menace of Soviet expansionism.⁹⁹

As noted earlier, Soviet hegemonic designs towards Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran were enough to "turn American losses (in the Middle East as a result of pro-Israeli policy) into permanent gains for their position."¹⁰⁰ However, it must be accepted that the close American contacts with Israel, became an important dynamic" of whatever relations the Arabs had with the Soviets.¹⁰¹

The Middle Eastern States have regarded the Soviets as having a second place to the Americans as far as capability to confront the U.S. in the region is concerned. Even in their capacity to provide armament, the Soviets have never imprinted a positive impression over the Arab countries. A Kuwaiti newspapers' comments reflect such an impression when said that "the Soviet horse" always stumbled on Arab tracks, and had never won a race.¹⁰²

The Arabs by 1973 (October war) came to accept that:

They (Arabs)...cannot make war (Against Israel) without the Soviet Union, but they cannot make peace without the United States....Paradoxically, it was after the best

performance of Soviet aid, arms and doctrines in the Arab world that the Soviets lost the initiative which passed decisively and conspicuously into the hands of the Americans.¹⁰³

Historically speaking, except for Iran, the Soviets had nearly no contacts with the Gulf countries till at least mid-1950s. The Russians in 1920s unsuccessfully tried to develop trade and diplomatic relations with the newly established Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Soviet Union accorded *de jure* recognition to Ibn Sa'ud, when he declared himself king of all Arabia on January 28, 1927. The Russian involvement at that time can be described as follows:

A Soviet Consulate-General was established in Jiddah in 1927. This was raised to a Legation two years later, and the Karim Khan Khakimov became head of the Soviet Legation in Jiddah. The main concern of the Khakimov mission was to establish trade...as a wedge for Soviet influence in Arabia. But by 1938 no trade of any significance had been transacted, and Khakhimov and the whole Soviet staff operating in Arabia were recalled to Moscow.¹⁰⁴

The Iraqi government established close relations with the Soviet Union after the 1958 coup against the pro-western regime. "Since 1972, Iraq and the Soviet Union have enjoyed a treaty of friendship and cooperation intended to remain in force for 15 years."¹⁰⁵ The treaty recognized the

control of Iraq over its natural resources and "pledges contact and coordination between the two powers in the event of a threat to the peace of either."¹⁰⁶ John C. Campbell gives the following narrative of the Soviet strategies in the Gulf area:

Soviet efforts to exert influence among the Arab states of the Persian Gulf...were tied rather closely to the fortunes of the leaders of radical nationalism in their struggles with the traditional and generally conservative regimes....¹⁰⁷

In Iraq (After 1958) the regimes generally enjoyed the reputation of a radical outlook, but the above mentioned Soviet strategy could not fully succeed. "The Soviets found themselves unable to establish firm positions as local political developments were beyond their control."¹⁰⁸ Experience showed that treaty of 1972 had little impact on the Iraqi-Soviet relations. The relations between the two countries did develop in the 1970s but according to the wishes of the Iraqi government's perceptions of the local situations and politics.¹⁰⁹ Iraqi regime's dislike for the communists to play a political role in Iraq has been a sore point between the two countries. Moreover, the Soviets disliked the Iraqi opinion that the Gulf should be free of the influence of the outside powers.¹¹⁰ In foreign policy matters, the Iraqis had not followed the Soviet line whenever they so desired. For example the government of Iraq had supported Somalia and Eritrea, and had also been engaged in talks about the security of the Gulf with Iran, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.¹¹¹

In spite of the above-mentioned differences, the Soviet Union remained the biggest exporter of military hardware to Iraq during the "peak sales period of 1974-1978."¹¹² Iraq bought arms worth U.S. \$3.6 million, while the Russian worldwide sale during the same period was worth \$27.2 billion.¹¹³ Over 4,400 Iraqi military personnel were trained in the USSR and by the end of 1970s there were 1,000 Soviet-bloc military technicians in Iraq.¹¹⁴ The American CIA reported in October 1980 that:

Soviet military aid to Iraq has outrun economic aid nearly 15 to 1 and has made Baghdad the U.S.S.R's largest arms buyer. The Communist military supply program has transformed the Iraqi military from a counterinsurgency force after the July 1958 coup into a large, well-equipped military establishment capable of sizable modern military operations.¹¹⁵

The Soviet authorities tried several times to stop arms transfers to Iraq whenever the Iraqi government imposed harsh measures to Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). But were frustrated to see that when they applied arms embargo in July 1975, the ICP was once again suppressed. The Iraqis felt comfortable while encountering the Soviets because of the following reasons:

(After July 1975 Soviet embargo) Iraq had enough arms to sustain the end of the Kurdish war without Soviet resupply. Even so, Iraq immediately reacted to the embargo

by shifting to France as a major source of arms. In fact, by late 1975, Iraq had concluded arms sales agreements with France equal in value to any previous set of agreements with the USSR.¹¹⁶

Iran and Kuwait by 1976 were trying to establish some kind of relationship with the Soviet Union in terms of arms imports. "Moscow...certainly made various efforts (in mid 1970s)...not only to secure Kuwait's goodwill, notably by offers of arms, but also-as when the Kuwaiti Foreign Minister visited Moscow in December 1975-to get Kuwait to subscribe to the Soviet Union's own programme for the Gulf's political and military future, and noticeable to 'the liquidation of foreign war bases' there."¹¹⁷ Iran having a common border with the Soviet Union maintained a workable relationship with its northern neighbor. The Soviet economic investment in Iran was reasonable though far less than that of the U.S. and Western Europe's investments in the Iranian economy. The intentions of both the Gulf countries were to diversify at least some of their interests - away from the overwhelming U.S. involvement in the region.

By selling missiles and rockets of 50 million U.S. dollars (in cash) in 1977, to Kuwait, the Soviets "broke the Western arms supply monopoly in the conservative Persian Gulf states..."¹¹⁸ Such an action ascribed to the new confidence achieved by the oil producing countries in developing their societies to an extent that these countries could now take more active part in the politics of East-West relations with confidence.

Crown Prince Fahd bin Abdul Aziz, Deputy Minister of Saudi Arabia commenting on the stand taken by the Soviet Union on Arab issues said in June 1979 that:

We realise the importance of the role played by the Soviet Union in international issues and we are keen that this role will lead to justice for the Arabs. I do not believe that the absence of diplomatic representation should necessarily be taken as a proof of hostile relations. The matter of exchanging diplomatic representatives with the Soviet Union depends on the circumstances.¹¹⁹

TABLE 4
Rank Order of the Persian Gulf Countries Dependent
on USSR for Imports of Arms, 1963-1982
(in million constant 1972 US dollars)

RECIPIENT	ARMS IMPORTS FROM USSR	TOTAL ARMS IMPORTS	PERCENT ARMS FROM USSR
Iraq	6.856	11,714	58.5
Iran	1,006	11,344	8.9
Kuwait	44	765	5.8
Middle East	29,889	75,243	39.7

Source: Alexander J. Bennett, "Arms Transfer As An Instrument Of Soviet Policy", in *The Middle East*, op.cit., p. 752

(Table 4 reveals the Soviet arms export policy in the Gulf region)

Kuwait imported only 5.8 percent of armament from the

Soviet Union, while Iran received 8.9 percent during 1963-1982. Iraq is the only country in the Gulf region whose reliance on the Soviet armament accounts for more than 50 percent. But as indicated above, Iraq did not become, "subservient to Soviet power or even receptive to communist ideology."¹²⁰ The Kuwaitis wanted to demonstrate by importing arms from the Russians that they would like to be away from the super Power's rivalry,¹²¹ while the Iranian government wanted to send a message to the Americans that they have kept their options open and expected that the U.S. will not take them for granted. On the other hand Soviet Union was given the impression that Iran would like to maintain normal relations with its northern neighbor, hoping to muster more importance in the regional affairs.

The Soviets had no diplomatic relations with Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Oman and Saudi Arabia. In other words, out of the eight Gulf countries, the Soviets had diplomatic contacts with only three of them.

In spite of its weaker strategic presence in the Gulf region, Soviet Union maintains substantial military pressures on the Gulf because of its being in the vicinity of the region. They have deployed "about 80,000 - 90,000 troops...near the Iranian border, plus approximately seven motorized rifle divisions, five air assault brigades..."¹²² The Soviets' aircraft have capability to hit "many key targets in Iraq and Iran..., although targets in the southern Gulf would be beyond the range of most Soviet fighter types."¹²³

The naval strength of Soviet Union is permanently stationed in the Indian Ocean. The deployment averages 3

submarines, 7 surface combatants, and 18 support ships. Analysing in terms of strategic balance in the Indian Ocean, it is estimated that the U.S., British and French fleets exceed that of the Russians. Although the Russians have been making efforts to boost up their naval strength in the vicinity of the Gulf, but according to an estimate coming from the western source the Soviet power in the Indian Ocean remained weaker than the combined strength of the allies (U.S., Britain and France) naval force" in terms of tonnage, firepower, range, access to the sea, experience and seamanship."¹²⁴

By early seventies the events in the immediate environment of the Gulf developed in such a way that the Soviets began to believe that the political climate was going in their favor. In 1973 the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY or South Yemen) had become a hard-line self-professed Marxist - Leninist state. South Yemen received all kinds of aid from the Soviets,¹²⁵ and in return got port facilities for their navy. At the same time during the seventies Soviet Union suffered setbacks when the Egyptian government expelled the Russians from their country and Somalia did the same as a reaction to the Russian support of their adversary - Ethiopia. The Soviet Union's interests in the region ranged from the spreading of the communist philosophy in the Gulf societies, strengthening of the political ties, and most extreme of all to physically take control of the oil fields in the Gulf.¹²⁶ On the other hand, the Soviets had planned their strategy to prevent the Western countries from taking possession of the oil wells and thus taking enormous economic advantages which could go against the Soviet Union's

global strategic interests. Moreover, according to an opinion the following observations are worth taking note of:

Soviet warships in the Indian Ocean have been suspected of being there is potential readiness to interdict - in the eventuality of an armed conflict - enemy shipping, especially that transporting oil from the Persian Gulf to Europe, the United States, or Japan. The narrows through which such shipping has to pass, such as the Hormuz and Bab el Mandeb Straits, or the maritime corner around the Cape of Good Hope, have been mentioned as "choke-points" for such operations.¹²⁷

Concluding our arguments regarding the U.S. and Soviet Union's interests in the Gulf region as well as its vicinity, it suffices to say that:

1. The super powers have maintained keen interest in the region during 1971-1978. The United States had an edge over the Soviet Union as far as establishing close economic and military ties with the region were concerned. The Soviet Union, nevertheless, being a neighbor of Iran remained a powerful force to be reckoned with. The Russians were not interested in the Gulf oil for as they produced enough oil to fulfill their needs but were interested to discourage the western countries from taking advantages by dictating their own terms to the Gulf countries.

The British ambassador to one of the Gulf States was asked whether or not the Soviet Union needs Gulf oil since it had

surplus energy and had entered into long-term agreements with Western Europe for the supply of gas. His reply was as follows: "Being so close to the Gulf they can in times of trouble block oil going to the West, and that is the real problem."¹²⁸

When asked from the Russian ambassador whether or not they were interested in the Gulf oil, he replied: "We are rather interested in the Gulf. It is our southern border. We interpret the presence of western fleets...under the pretext of the protection of oil routes, as a western threat to our borders."¹²⁹

2- The Gulf countries were convinced that their relations with one super power should not entangle the other one and that they should not provide port facilities to either of the two. The regime in the area, "believed strongly that their interests could best be served by avoiding"¹³⁰ involvement in the global politics of the East-West conflict.

Conclusion

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Gulf region remains free of any serious competitiveness between the Super powers. This is contrary to the Cold War Era, where the Soviets tried hard to sustain some kind of power balance in the affairs of the Gulf region. The Russians continued to express interest in the region but occasionally. Their main focus remains in the regional security, political and economic affairs, which are reflected in expressing reservations on various dimensions of the American current policies. However, the marked difference, which can be noted, in comparison with the cold war era the

Russians policy lacks consistency in its approach as it focused more on short-term defense and ideological ties rather than establishing long-term strategies. It also requires aggressive pursuance like its adversary, the United States of America. The Russians continued to maintain close ties with Iran in the Post Cold War era and took advantage of the American animosity towards the largest State of the Gulf region. As a part of their policy they supplied technical assistance for its nuclear reprocessing plant/s.

In the post 9/11, 2001 global scenario, Russia tried to assert its policy stance towards the Gulf region, especially by expressing its concerns in the United Nations and other regional and international forums, on the American policy towards Iraq. Russia in its foreign policy pronouncements followed a vocal disagree with the style of the U.S. policy makers. The United States has skillfully used as well as influenced the United Nations and was able to convince its Europeans allies in particular to form an alliance on "War against Terrorism." The Russians, along with other States, like France, Germany and Canada tacitly expressed its concerns regarding the United Nations resolutions for weapon inspections in Iraq - which also includes any future policy options as an outcome of weapon inspections.

On January 29 2002, the American President Bush, in his State of the Union address declared two Gulf States as part of "the Axis of Evil" stating that,

"Iran aggressively pursues these weapons and export terror, while an unelected few repress Iranian people's hope for freedom.

Iraq continues to flaunt its hostility towards America and to support terror. The Iraqi regime has plotted to develop anthrax, and nerve gas, and nuclear weapons for over a decade. This is a regime that has already used poison gas to murder thousands of its own citizens - leaving the bodies of the mothers huddled over their dead children. This is a regime that agreed to international inspection - then kicked out the inspectors. This is a regime that has something to hide from the civilized world.

States like these, and their terrorist allies, constitute an axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world. By seeking weapons of mass destruction, these regimes pose a grave and growing danger. They could provide these arms to the terrorists, giving them the means to match their hatred. They could attack our allies or attempt to blackmail the United States. In any of these cases, the price of indifference would be catastrophic."¹³¹

United States views Iran as a potential threat to the American interests in the region, and its aggressive posture towards both Gulf States caused a concern at regional and international level. The American policy makers have showed their serious concerns against Iraq - stemming out as a result of the allegations that Iraq has biological, nuclear and chemical weapons of mass destruction as well as intends to use these weapons against the "civilized" world.

The Russian suspicion regarding the American policies in the region resulted in at least modifying the rigidity of the proposed American resolution in the Security Council. For over a month now, U.N. weapon inspectors are in Iraq looking for evidence to prove the suspicions of the United States and its allies. Iran is apprehensive regarding U.S. policies in the region, as being the next target after Iraq. On the one hand the hardliners in the American administration are exercising explicit as well as covert pressures on the Gulf nations and by announcing the deployment of more combat ready troops in the region. This military build up is creating uneasiness among the Gulf States, being the prime targets in any future conflict in the area. On the other hand, as opposed to cold war era, Russia has limited military and strategic capability and capacity to compete with the United States and maneuver the situation to create a balance of power in the region.

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