

Security Building Priorities in Persian Gulf: An Approach to National Security Policy of Iran*

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Abstract: Security in the Persian Gulf has been a major international, regional and national issue for the littoral states, principally for Iran. Iran depends largely on crude oil export revenues and imports of industrial commodities. It has the longest shoreline along the waterway. It also plays pointer role of the scale in ensuring regional stability and security, so much so that its national security is indivisible from that of the region. On the other hand, the historical studies suggest that during almost two centuries, first the Britain and then the United States have continued to claim on the region's security. Thus, they have dictated their regional security strategies over the Persian

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Gulf region. The region has witnessed four devastating wars over the past three decades. The disastrous occupation of Iraq also serves as further proof that the presence of foreign forces only exacerbates the region's security situation. For the same reasons the Persian Gulf is in dire need of new security arrangements and the present research work seeks to explicate the same necessity.

The results of the current research work suggest that defense-security, economic, socio-cultural and political factors are top priorities when it comes to regional "security building". To this end, the most appropriate mechanism to establish regional convergence is the expansion of relations between Islamic Republic of Iran and other regional states. A perfect solution as such could further facilitate formation of all-inclusive local organizations and a "security partnership system" based on native values.

Introduction

The security of Persian Gulf, especially since the discovery of oil resources in this region, has always been a pressing issue among the regional states, the international community and the industrial world.

Over the past two decades, the regional states have had inconsequential role in the region's much needed security. England saw itself as responsible for ensuring the region's security, its vast oil reserves and the flow of free trade until the World War II. In the early 1970s, after the withdrawal of British troops and escalation of the cold war, the United States was the next in line to claim responsibility for the Persian Gulf security and order as a matter of its national security. From another hand, to set forth a regional security arrangement by the independent states, nationalistic movements and pro-eastern bloc radical groups challenged the traditional structure and colonial rule and order in the Persian Gulf waterway. To fix this security dilemma, under the Nixon doctrine and in order to secure its interest, the US government instated the Pahlavi regime as the gendarme of region.

The following developments: Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iraqi imposed war on Iran and its extension to the Persian Gulf waters that threatened shipping lines, plus Iraq's invasion of Kuwait undermined the efficacy of any idea for regional security including the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC). Military operations to

liberate Kuwait increased the presence of non-regional powers. The collapse of the former Soviet Union paved the way for formation of the first neoliberal wave of “security building” throughout the region.

After the 9/11 terrorist attacks in 2001, which challenged US national security, the White House invaded and occupied Iraq under the pretext of fighting the global terrorism and the slogan of “democratization” based on the neo-liberalism and establishment of “American empire”. (Mottaghi, 2006: 21)

In the face of their failed agenda in Iraq, the US neoconservatives used media propaganda and psychological warfare plus numerous UN Security Council resolutions against Iran’s peaceful nuclear program. The new development further aggravated the regional security situation. Nevertheless, Iraq’s occupation cannot last forever. In addition, opportunities are there for extensive cooperation in economic, political and cultural fields. Therefore, the littoral states must gear themselves up for achieving a sustainable security arrangement.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said on the New Year eve of 2007: “Since the victory of Islamic Revolution in 1979, Iran has always been stretching its hands of friendship towards its neighbors. It believes that the security of such an important region has to be ensured through cooperation among the Persian Gulf littoral states and without foreign interference. To this end, the littoral states of Persian Gulf must have a joint defense treaty in place.” (www.leader.ir)

The Importance and Attributes of Persian Gulf Geopolitics

The Middle East is the center of ancient world, at the heart of which lies the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf, as the ‘innermost center’, is considered the Achilles’ hill of the ancient continent as any havoc in the region that is created by outside forces could have impact throughout the Asian, European and African continents. (Von Le Hausen, 1996: 46)

The Persian Gulf was known as ‘Sinus Persicus’ in ancient times. The region comprises nations with different cultures. However,

they have political, strategic and economic commonalities and homogeneity. The region has had immense geopolitical importance to Iran since the ancient times, encompassing Pakistan and Afghanistan. Iran has a pivotal position in this particular place and has never had any territorial claims over any neighbor since the early 1970s. The revolutionary values and standards of Islamic Revolution have been and still are focused on Islamic unity, with no territorial claims or military threats against any regional country. (Mojtahedzadeh, 2001:41)

However, for various reasons the region has been engulfed in political-security and even economic tensions. These will be discussed after the initial assessments. Some of the main geopolitical indices and features of the region are:

1- Highest volume of fossil fuel exports to the world: Proven crude oil reserves of the Persian Gulf stand at around 715 billion barrels – around 66 percent of world's total oil reserves. The region's natural gas reserves stand at around 2,462 trillion cubic feet – around 45 percent of world's total gas reserves. The area produces around 23 million barrels of crude oil per day or 32 percent of world's total crude production. Japan imports 80 percent of its oil from the Persian Gulf, followed by the Eastern Europe and the United States with 40 and 30 percent respectively.

2- The Persian Gulf is the most polluted waterway in the world because of its huge oil extraction operations, giant oil tankers, oil industries as well as major regional wars. This has slashed the volume of its fishery reserves to a great extent.

3- An effective geo-strategic center in international system: Its role in generating religious and political thoughts; Iran's geographical position between Russia and the newly-established republics and their link to the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean; Saudi Arabia's access to the strategic waterways of the Sea of Oman, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean; stretching to the Suez Canal and the European continent through the Strait of Bab-ol-Mandab.

4- The gap in the cultural structure and the nature of political systems; and the cradle of extremist, revolutionary and nationalistic movements.

5- The perennial instability and its disparate security arrangement entangled with “illusionary perception of threat” and lacking a comprehensive regional organization.

Persian Gulf Security Configuration

Security in the Persian Gulf, especially after the discovery of oil reserves, has always been a hot topic of discussion among the regional and industrialized nations. Historically speaking, especially over the past one hundred years or so, the regional states have never been in charge of ensuring the Persian Gulf security. The British Empire used to view itself as the sole provider of security to the region for almost two hundred years until after the World War II. It was also in charge of protecting the region’s oil reserves, oil exports and free trade.

The rise of cold war brought up different views on global/regional security in which the Persian Gulf did have a special place. Following global developments in the 1970s, nations realized the importance of oil and for that reason the security of Persian Gulf also became a focal point. (Sadeghi, 2004:133)

On the other hand, after the withdrawal of British troops, considering the cold war exigencies, the United States started to play the role of guardian for the Persian Gulf and this region became a US national security interest. Consequently, Washington came up with two-tier security plans of Nixon-Kissinger: Using local forces i.e., using Iran’s military prowess and Saudi Arabia’s economic strength. Shah’s regime in Iran was chosen as the region’s gendarme. However, after the 1979 victory of Islamic Revolution, the security pillar of this plan collapsed as the new revolutionary system in Iran was against the US hegemony. This was a major blow to the Nixon doctrine.

After the Saddam invasion of Iran in 1980, the region had to deal with a new face of insecurity. The consequent developments such as the spread of war across the Persian Gulf, the tanker wars, and the

Iraqi invasion and occupation of Kuwait were the last nail in the coffin of any security idea for the Persian Gulf, especially arrangement as the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC).

Following the liberation of Kuwait, Washington increased its military presence by setting up its fifth naval fleet in Bahrain in 1995. The aim was to put into operation a unipolar system. To this end, the majority of PGCC states (except Saudi Arabia) signed defense treaties with the US and other western powers and purchased advanced military hardware, consequently triggering an arms race.

As a sign of protest to such policy, in 1995 and 1996 the American forces came under two terrorist attacks in Saudi Arabia. This was an indication of extremism in the region and following the terrorist attacks and the Taliban regime's control over Afghanistan - which was a consequence of mistaken calculation on the part of ruling coalitions in the region - the anti-Americanism under the leadership of Osama Bin Laden reached to its peak by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The global reactions to the incident fundamentally changed the international security concepts, the role of global security players and alignments, triggering a "hegemonic war" in which the US wanted to dominate its own established order. After the US invasion of Afghanistan and its occupation by the coalition forces, Washington adopted a much more radical strategy for the Persian Gulf. (Boyer, 2001: 49) For instance, it came up with the so-called "axis of evil" rhetoric and unilaterally invaded Iraq as a gateway to the Arab world - without getting the UN approval and amid protests from other major powers. The plan was to exercise hard power to pave the way for political changes and then use soft power in economic and cultural domains to prepare the region for a major agenda to dominate the world. (Cox, 2004: 299)

Although the US Army managed to oust the Ba'athist regime in Iraq in a matter of three weeks, the prolonged occupation failed to deliver the expected results for Washington. The security issues came to the surface right after the early days of occupation gradually eroding the US military machine and making them vulnerable on this part of planet. Reports suggest that the US forces are able to defeat countries such as Iraq but they are unable to restore security after

dictators have been removed. (Thompson, 2003: 39) There is an atmosphere of uncertainty in the region in the face of such developments as well as the presence of other forces from the UK, France, Australia, Canada, Italy etc. This has undermined the overall political and security relations in this volatile part of the world. After five years of occupation and exacerbated security crisis, the Pentagon is trying to find ways to increase the number of US troops so much as that President Bush has made it clear that the region is "vital" for the American strategic interests. During his speech at a naval graduation ceremony he said the difference between Iraq and Vietnam is that "they did not have the capacities to attack us at home. Since we don't want to fight them at our doorsteps, we must fight them at their homes (Iraq)." (Bush (2007, 20 Feb), CNN)

On the other hand, the US wants to symbolically pull out its troops from Iraq after coming under multilateral pressures from all directions. The main concern for the present and future administration at the White House is that they must get to the bottom of this particular paradox. Therefore, the American media has launched a new wave of distrust and baseless allegations against Islamic Republic of Iran in collaboration with some Arab regimes. At the same time, they are seeking talks with Iran to help them get out of the Iraqi mire in one piece. (Burns, 2007, p7) The outcome of mentioned factors has complicated Iraqi situation and periled the regional security conditions.

Iran's National Security Approach towards Security Developments

Changes in international security strategies have paved the way for transformation of form, nature and security behavioral patterns of other players. This has also changed the structure, function and discourse of Iran's security policies. In the early years of Islamic Revolution, there were signs of an extensive security discourse in Iran which was developed to a more compromising and pragmatic behavioral patterns in foreign policy and national security during the Iraqi imposed war on Iran (1980-88). (Dehshiri, 2001: 377) In post-cold war era, while the emergence of neo-liberalism across the globe set

security-building on the basis of a mixture of state-oriented and community indices, Iran's national security patterns were inclined towards making compromises towards participation and collaboration. As a consequence, during the tenure of former president Mohammad Khatami, the discourse of constructive engagement and new indicative of security building prevailed. The new approach was in alignment with changes in global security strategies. However, the neo-conservatives take over in US administration in Washington who tried to design their security strategies based on a hegemonic order, encountered Iran's constructive engagement with hostility. Such an approach paved the ground for changes in Iran's national security policy to a new agenda as "constructive resistance" whose discourse was based upon some traits of "efficient interaction". Such a policy has been fashioned within the framework of security-oriented strategies. Then again, such tendency towards resistance has to have a resourceful and multilateral nature. (Mottaghi, 2006: 21)

Under the circumstances, it could be presumed that challenges faced by neocons in Washington due to the US occupation of Iraq will lead to different security developments in the American strategy, especially after the 2008 US presidential election and its focus would be the Persian Gulf. When US military fervent subsides, security building measures will come to the surface in the form of soft power. Bearing that in mind, the national security of Islamic Republic of Iran should take into consideration the different aspects of the national security in the regional and international levels of analysis. Indeed, the development of regional and international interactions along with principles of economic, political and cultural development has amalgamated the country's internal and external security. However, Iran's surrounding environment is unique in terms of geo-economic and the different views of the Persian Gulf littoral states on extra-regional powers as well as their double-standard positions offer both opportunities and requirements, necessary for the country's new security policies. The development of Iranian-Saudi bilateral ties could be an example in this respect. Former minister of defense, Ali Shamkhani announced that the Iranian officials had convinced the

Saudi military officials to purchase defense warfare from Iran. Iran had also encouraged the Saudis to take part in research projects and military factories. Both sides announced that they had inked an MOU on security and had even signed an agreement that did not include US presence in the region. (Shamkhani, 2004: 13)

However, the subsequent trends led to competition and even an imminent conflict in the absence of implementation mechanisms as well as different attitude of the two countries' officials, once again, resulting in Iran's regional siege. This was because of the Arab regimes' concerns since 2004, over the changing balance in the region. They were demanding the support for the pro-American authoritarian governments instead of promotion of the so-called "democracy" in the region. Since these countries are in no way ready for the theory of "democratization", they view this as a factor for instability. Since July 2006, we can witness widespread contradictions in the British and American regional policies against Iran. Generally speaking, from one hand, the Arab states try to coordinate their actions with Iran, and on the other, view their political future as guaranteed by the US. Therefore, they got prepared for regional cooperation in line with the American objectives and interests and numerous regional trips taken by US or other Western officials. e.g. Condoleezza Rice, Dick Cheney, Angela Merkel, Nancy Pelosi could be seen as signs and indications of organized threat against Iran aiming to smooth the progress of Iran's security and strategic siege, simply because Western/UN resolutions alone have not been able to strategically restrict Iran. There is a duty for the country's diplomatic structure to organize new requirements for national security within the framework of soft power, regional cooperation and Islamic unity. Indeed, solely under such circumstances will it be possible to destabilize the calculated American-Arab alliance. (Mottaghi, 2007: 2)

After facing the Iraq realities on the ground, Washington changed its policy of "democratization" into "security building". At the same time, it has been trying to challenge and isolate Islamic Republic of Iran. Of course, the US confrontation against Iran is a main obstacle in the way of regional prosperity and convergence. Iran's positive role guarantees peace, security and progress for the

region. The victory of Islamic Revolution was in the cold war era – during which the bipolar world collapsed. After the neocons took power in Washington, they needed a made-up adversary to put into service their aggressive policies and justify their next moves. To this end, the US blamed Iran for regional troubles and even came up with the rhetoric of ‘Shiite Crescent’ among other unfounded accusations. Washington is trying to isolate Tehran through economic sanctions and even military strikes. Nonetheless, it has overlooked the fact that any threat to Iran’s security will also be a threat to its geopolitical surrounding areas. Iran’s cultural influence across the region dates back to 2000 years ago and such accusations are not going to win US support among the regional states and nations forever. (Mojtahedzadeh, 2006)

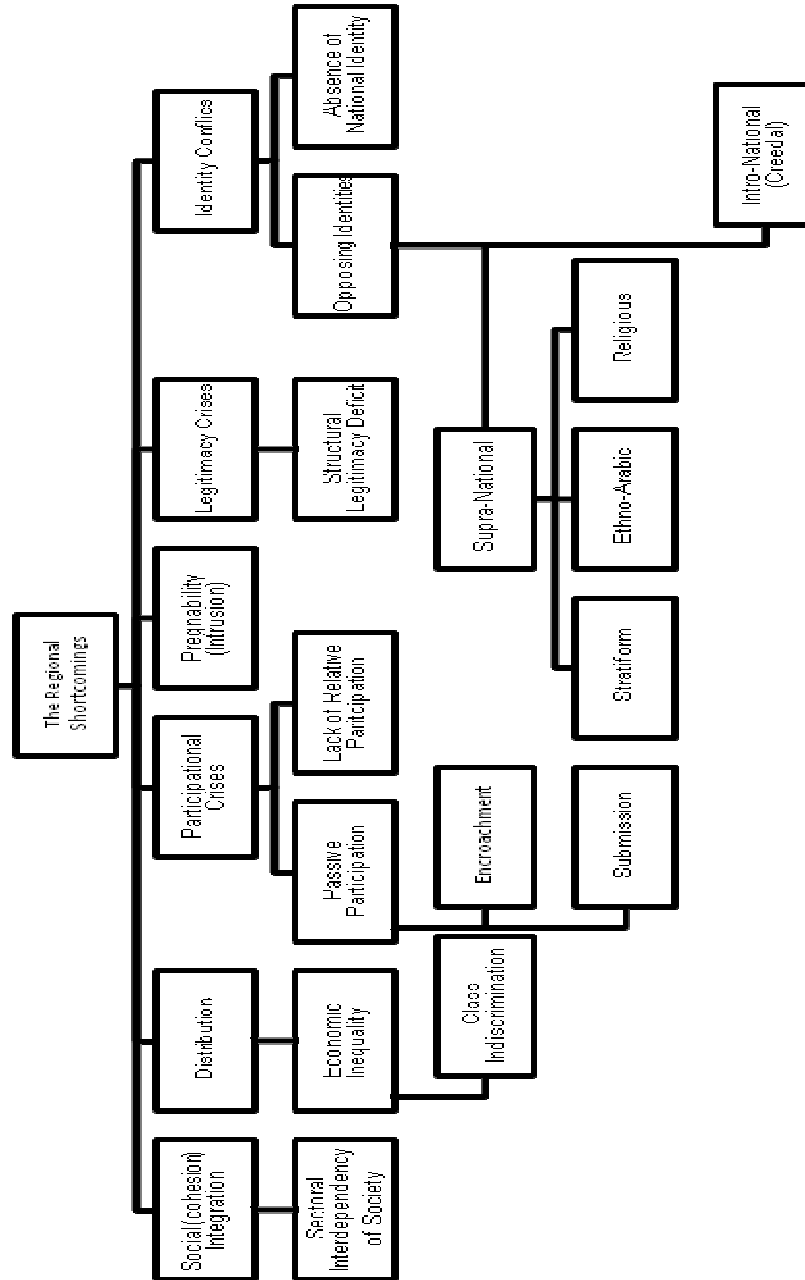
Tension and Crisis Making Factors in Persian Gulf Security Arrangement

Any given regional system from one hand is linked to the internal affairs of its players and on the other it is being affected by the outside environment. Therefore, a regional system gets its critical inputs from these two environments. Under the Patrick M. Morgan analytical method, crisis creating factors are divided into three domestic, regional and non-regional or international levels as follows:

A. Effective Intra-regional Crisis Factors

Regional political systems are closed systems that function on a hereditary basis. Except for Iran which is based on Islamic republicanism, the rest of regional states follow a central and monolithic system without real and helpful political participation or inclusion. In the absence of accountability, the officialdoms are free to make decisions for the three branches of government. In general, the most important elements in domestic political structures of these countries are the constant internal crises. Lucien Paye has divided these crises into six main groups: Identity crisis in the absence of common group identity; legality crisis in the absence of public

support for power structures and political foundations; political participation crisis which depends on the level of individual restrictions in determining one's own fate; efficiency or influence crisis which is based on the ability of the ruling government to adjust itself with the surrounding developments; distribution crisis that largely refers to the way justice is served and/or economic discontent is expressed; and solidarity crisis which is the outcome of other sort of crises and it is a direct consequence of the lack of interdependency among social classes. (Graph 1) The effect of each and every one of these crises or all of them could go beyond national borders and challenge the regional system. (Roshandel, Seifzadeh, 2003: 45)



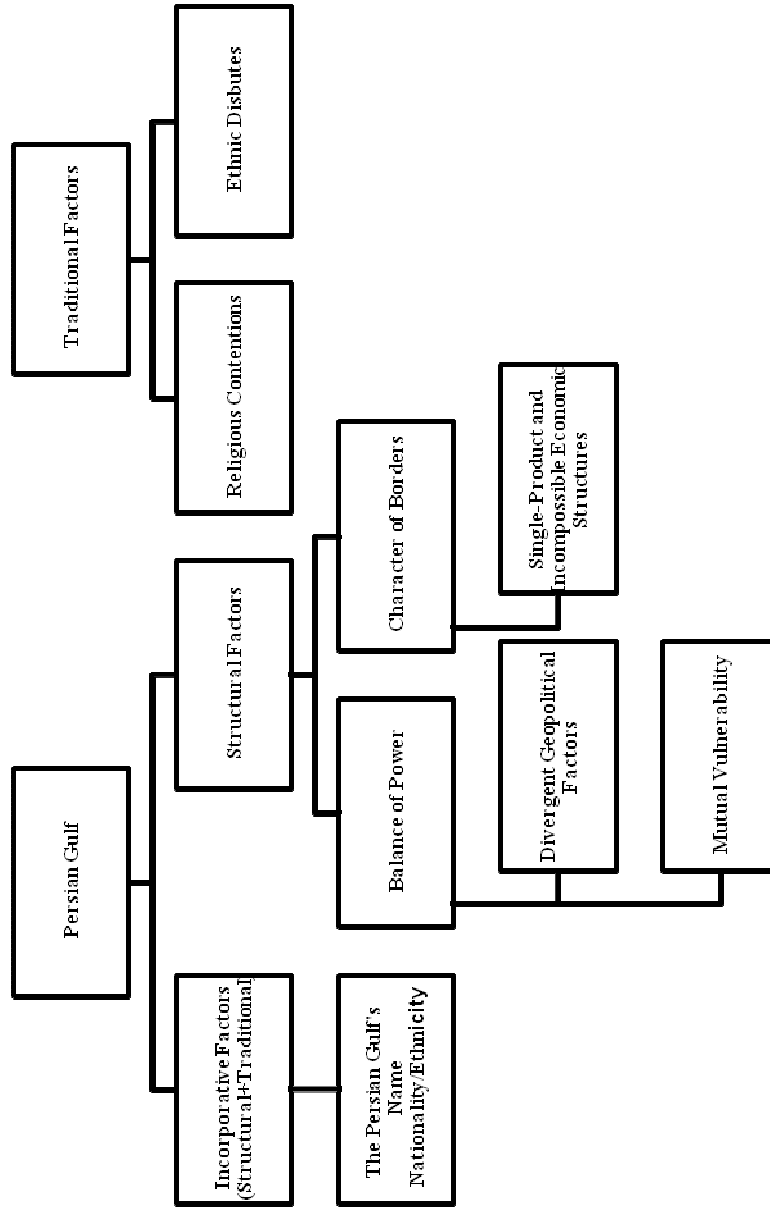
B. Major Regional Crisis Factors

Interactions among the Persian Gulf littoral states play a key role in their bilateral as well as regional and even international strategic policies. Some of the most important incompatibilities which could create tensions in the region are (Graph 2):

1-Traditional-historical factors: These are cultural factors which have traditionally been part of the region since the ancient times. Based on social and historical studies, these include ethnic-national aggressions, religious differences, clashes between national Iranian-Arab sentiments and religious clashes between the Shiite and Sunni groups.

2-Structural factors: These include territorial disputes, economic competitions and a lopsided power structure in regional governments (Roshandel, Seifzadeh, 2003: 23)

3-Multi-faceted factors: These factors lead to inconsistent directions in foreign policy, unhealthy economic competitions, territorial and border disputes, distrust and cynicism, dependence on zero-sum game strategies, absence of constructive dialogue and interactions, arms race and in due course conflict and war.



C. Major Extra-Regional Crisis Factors

Crises stemming from power structure and dominant order in international system would affect the regional players in this or other way. As mentioned earlier, The United States applies the domineering hegemonic system to secure its vital interests through interference in Persian Gulf affairs, mainly because of its huge energy resources. At the end of the Cold War, the region first became the main ground for introducing of the new world order and after the 9/11 attacks it turned into a place for the hegemonic order and imperialistic objectives of the Washington neocons.

It goes without saying that American interferences are among the most important obstacles in the way of having a national/regional security arrangement in Persian Gulf. In addition, the internal weaknesses of Arab states as well as differences and disputes among them play a key role in this respect. Still, it is hard to predict what could happen to the region once foreign powers decide to leave. More importantly, over the past three decades, Israel has been the main winner of wars in the Persian Gulf. The regime is trying to win the support of tiny states such as Oman and Qatar in order to prevent a possible Arab-Islamic coalition against Tel Aviv. To this end, Israel is doing all it can to force the United States to stop the resurgence of a great regional power such as Iran.

As for the European Union, at first some experts used to assume that the Persian Gulf is a region that Europe had chosen to fight against the US "hegemonic order". However, they had ignored the fact that the west is generally an integrated concept and the subsequent developments demonstrated the fact that Europeans had an economic approach towards the region but after the US occupation of Iraq, they have further adjusted themselves with the US military-security agenda. (Brownlie, 2006: 48) When it comes to the Asian countries such as China and Japan, it must be noted that they are not in a position to play a significant and alternative role in the formation of regional policies.

D. Regional Players' Incongruous Security Visions

Absence of consensus among the regional states on a "security" definition gives way to dissimilar views on security policies in the region. From the Arab states' point of view, security has its own special features in the Persian Gulf.

First: It is a threatening environment for the regional countries; Second: incompetent defense capabilities of the regional states including quantitative and qualitative human resource shortages, weak armed forces and their arms dependence; Third: The nature of regional regimes and the capacities and capabilities of political systems when it comes to dealing with internal and regional issues. Therefore, these states from one hand, spend billions of dollars to purchase modern foreign weaponries in order to serve their security, at the same time, they symbolically voice support for a regional arrangement in the form of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC). Despite the emphasis of its leaders, the council has never been practically capable of protecting the regional stability and security and such a contradiction has always been a matter of disagreement between Iran and the PGCC.

Another ramification of such a militaristic strategy is the arms race in the region, especially because such a policy is not seen as a source of prestige or gaining importance among other nations; rather, the Arab officialdoms find no alternative but to pursue such an American-imposed strategy to have their grip on power. In the words of Kuwaiti intellectual Sayyed Al-Salim, the biggest paradox is that: "In national/regional Arab mindset, Iran dreams of breaking the security chain of Arabs, whereas the Iranian mindset has focused on the fact that the regional Arabs are trying to ignore Iran's interest in the concept of collective security out of US umbrella in the Persian Gulf." (Angelder, 2005: 184)

The Elements of Integration and the Need for Change in the Persian Gulf

Regional states should acknowledge that they are bound geographically to coexist despite disputes and differences, given the

fact that they have common religion and historical links. Therefore a coordinated and trust-building formula needs a mechanism based on motives and commonalities. Joseph S. Nye believes that the cultural factor along with economic and political interactions is important in this respect. He says: "If associated with substance and shared ideologies, integration could have stronger foundations." (Seifzadeh, 2005: 400) According to his view, once a country's foreign policy succeeds in promoting favorable values using cultural elements, it could create significant soft power on international levels. Therefore, although there are different views on the role of cultural element, the religion and values derived from it are the most important commonalities among the regional states and that's the way it could be considered to bring security. This is because all religious affiliations in the region have their roots in Islam. Islam is religion of peace, security and coexistence based on mutual respect, and those who are still skeptic are in fact not familiar with the principles and definitions of Islamic culture. This is because the main faith in Islam is peace and security and they are extremely precious indeed. (Amid Zanjani, 2006:43)

Making optimum use of regional potentials for convergence needs to concoct and implement certain plans and this is so important that in his message to the 17th International Conference on the Persian Gulf, held in IPIS in May 2007, President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad underscored Iran's complete preparedness to participate in all arrangements aiming at confidence building and security measures for the region. He then laid emphasis on the importance of integrative patterns in directing the equations of the new regional security. Therefore there is requirement for a combined aggregate throughout the region to devise sensible strategies for confidence building and coordinating all measures taken by the regional states for this purpose. This could put forth the preliminary plans for confidence building and consolidate activities in realistic issues; highlight the use of non-military and military force and the importance of reducing distrusts; as well as the use of neutral consolation and selecting observers from different regional states for establishing a supervisory system while at the same time protecting their independence. To

realize all these goals a range of measures could be taken which will be discussed later.

Adaptive Pattern of Convergence and Participatory Security Measures

The members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) are working together based on a different compilation of norms. The similarity of original elements of ASEAN and Persian Gulf makes it a proper role model for modern regional unions and fora. The ASEAN's particular procedure lays emphasis on informal mechanisms, intense negotiations for reaching a decision that is based on political consensus and minimized bureaucratic procedures which happens to be totally different from the Western models. Consensus could be reached through negotiations and consists of a wider area, and if the majority reaches an agreement on any particular issue, others will keep their silence.

The road to ASEAN passes through the growing socialization of superior norms and long-term interactions. The organization is authorized to deal with three subject matters: Building confidence, preventive diplomacy, and resolving disputes. The organization has been most successful in its confidence building measures. Some of these could include voluntary sharing on allocation of defense budgets, growing number of dialogues with regards to different security matters, plus the increase in the number of contacts between military structures. (Kai Chan, 2006: 7)

Just like its Asian model, a comprehensive participatory modern security assemblage will be on top of the security structure comprising balancing realities between the policies of major international powers and regional states. On the other hand, the US presence in the Persian Gulf is much more overwrought than in Asia. This is because some regional states are severely dependent on the US for their security. At the same time, they need to symbolically reduce such reliance for political reasons.

The successful experience of ASEAN can offer useful guidelines for setting up a new assemblage both in form and in contents.

Conclusion of Preliminary Analysis on National, Regional and Extra-Regional Levels

One of the palpable traits of the Persian Gulf is its short-lived but copious dominant variables that have restricted and dissimilar effects. Therefore, given such reality, the following points of the research work could be concluded.

A. Crisis Signs and Indices in the Persian Gulf

- (1) Heterogeneous political structures in regional states;
- (2) All eight regional states are involved in territorial and border disputes and because of artificial borders - as a direct consequence of colonialism and lack of conformity between political and geopolitical/geographical borders - tensions and challenges can quickly resurface by foreign provocation;
- (3) The regional states are developing and accordingly face particular and transitional crises;
- (4) The Persian Gulf Arab leaders and authorities have dissimilar attitudes with less or lacking self-restraint which results in hasty political conducts;
- (5) In light of incongruent cultural/educational milieu, the elite, officials and army chiefs also have dissimilar visions and tendencies. This could have adverse impacts on group decision-making processes;
- (6) In light of intellectual differences coming from inadequate interactions, the press, media people, political parties, political/scientific elite and religious leaders always create rift;
- (7) The majority of regional states don't have an efficient approach to attain regional goals. Involvement in current affairs stops them from paying attention to much more strategic programs;
- (8) Unequal balance of power among the regional states;

(9)The regional states don't have incorporated foreign policies. In most cases their positions are against regional interests and they have different declared and practical policies;

(10)The dysfunctional relations between Islamic Republic of Iran and the Western world from one hand and the strengthening ties between the Arab states and foreign powers on the other, have given the upper hand for foreign powers in the region;

(11)Less attention has been given to Iran's hydro-political potentials when it comes to ensuring regional security or resolving water shortage;

(12)The majority of media outlets in littoral states are either inefficient and uncoordinated or under direct control of foreigners. This is one of the main obstacles in the way of forming a widespread strategic culture;

(13)Trade exchanges among the littoral states are limited as the majority of their economic ties are with the Western world – a factor per se for dependence on foreigners and regional divergence;

(14)Measures taken by the regional states towards detente and confidence building have not been institutionalized yet. They fail to fulfill expected results and therefore are interrupted and practically ineffective;

(15) Due to imbalance of resources and lack of coordination between the regional states, in most cases oil has only created troubles and brought up deep-seated challenges and reliance on imported technologies;

(16) Security is viewed quite differently and most often contradictive among the political elite and regional nations. Foreign implications and interferences aggravate the volatile security of the Persian Gulf. This has become a chronic disease short of a prescribed treatment;

(17) The numerous measures taken by the littoral states over the past 50 years or so to reach collective security have gone nowhere except for an inefficient structure in the form of Persian Gulf Cooperation Council that only includes the littoral states of southern shores and is embroiled with internal disputes and has never been resourceful despite its dynamic charter of association;

(18) Founding the Military bases, permanent presence of US forces in the region, and occupation of Iraq are aimed at realizing hegemonic objectives that go beyond access to the region's rich energy resources. The reasons are:

(A) Widespread and coordinated Western media propaganda and their pretension of Iran's nuclear power program as a threat;

(B) Installment of missile defense shield in Czech Republic and Poland under the pretext of defense against Iranian perceived missile threats which has been vigorously protested by Moscow;

(C) Efforts to make compromise or isolate, sanction and even strike Iran as the only independent regional state;

(D) To consider Persian Gulf as vital for its interests, and the prolonged occupation of Iraq seen as a means to grasp the vital resources;

(19) Iraq's essential issues and their adverse consequences for the Persian Gulf are:

(A) Domestic Issues: Structural problems, deep-seated ethno-religious disputes, weakness of national unity, and conflicts in formation of national identity;

(B) Regional Issues: Geopolitical dilemmas, seeing Iraq as the gateway to the Arab world, getting the region involved in four wars in less than three decades, domestic instability and unrest and their devastating consequences on the security of regional states, plus their competitive interests and differences and its effects on Iraq's internal affairs;

(C) Extra-Regional Issues: Over the centuries, Iraq has been the main battleground for competition among major powers such as the Ottoman and British empires and Russia. Now the US has occupied

the country to guarantee its world hegemony and put a ceiling on the influence of other major powers. The biggest challenge for the US now is democratization and security building;

(D) Given Iraq's geopolitics, any form of security system in the region could have different effects on the security of Persian Gulf littoral states. For that reason, they are sensitive towards the new political structure in Iraq, thus, interfering in its internal affairs.

B. Convergence Indices and Common Factors in the Persian Gulf

There are great potentials for littoral states to reach convergence and security arrangement in the Persian Gulf. Of course, most of these potentials could have either negative or positive aspects. Therefore, the first step to defuse the negative points is confidence building and setting up an all-inclusive regional organization at least in one economic, political or cultural sphere. This can virtually help resolve the disputes and reach an agreement. In general, some of the most important convergence indices are:

- 1- Closer formal/informal ties between the leaders of regional states;
- 2- Establishing political bodies to resolve territorial/border disputes and avert likely crises;
- 3- Laying emphasis on precautionary diplomacy to resolve deep-rooted, acute or chronic hostilities;
- 4- Applying the experiences of Iran in its religious democracy and its promotion into other regional states as a soft power element to boost their internal security;
- 5- Taking confidence-building measures, building security, creating an atmosphere of political trust, and paving the way for collective collaboration;
- 6- Incessant interaction and dialogue among politicians and political elite and closer contacts between politico-security officials;
- 7- Taking measures to coordinate media activities;

- 8- Setting up private sectors for closer communication between political elite, intellectuals and military commanders;
- 9- Development of tourism, pilgrimage/sightseeing trips and sportive activities;
- 10- Scientific and research coordination/partnership between regional strategic research centers;
- 11- Setting up joint cultural institutes to publish and promote cultural/religious works and programs;
- 12- Taking advantage of cultural commonalities between Iran and Iraq to arrange cultural activities between northern and southern shores;
- 13- Development of free regional trade exchanges;
- 14- Cooperation in exploitation of over-ground and underground resources;
- 15- Taking advantage of Iran's hydro-political potentials to resolve the region's water shortage;
- 16- Collaboration and coordination in production, supply and transportation of energy at fair prices;
- 17- Forming free trade zones and absorbing private investment in hotel, tourism and services sectors;
- 18- Exchange and organizing of technical/administrative taskforce to develop technocratic collaborations;
- 19- Development of sea, air and possibly land and rail transportation routes/sectors;
- 20- To extend Security Memoranda of Understanding that are already been inked between Iran and several Arab states to fight against terrorism, organized crime, and drugs trafficking. This could be extended to include other security areas such as: Forming a joint coastguard organization, border patrols, inviting representatives to supervise war games and arms control for confidence building and security;
- 21- Exchange of military delegates, organizing training tours and initiate from low-level military cooperation;
- 22- Collaborating in economic, political and socio-cultural aspects to guarantee security in defense fields.

Data Analysis and Theory Confirmation

To prove the hypotheses of the present research work and after the data analysis, all important indices in political, economic, cultural and military works and their variables - with a special view on two important US and Iraq factors - have been classified and reckoned.

Then, there is a questionnaire which includes hypotheses' conceptions. After the pre-test and collecting the opinions of a number of university scholars and elites and making the necessary modifications, the final form of questionnaire is distributed among the selected polling group. The results were then analyzed and assessed using statistical methods. The Chi-2 test was applied to all questions and the results' validity were confirmed and conclusive as most of the answers are based on the table results and make sense, indicating that well over %95 of the answers were intentional. (Here is a look at the economic factor analysis as an example)

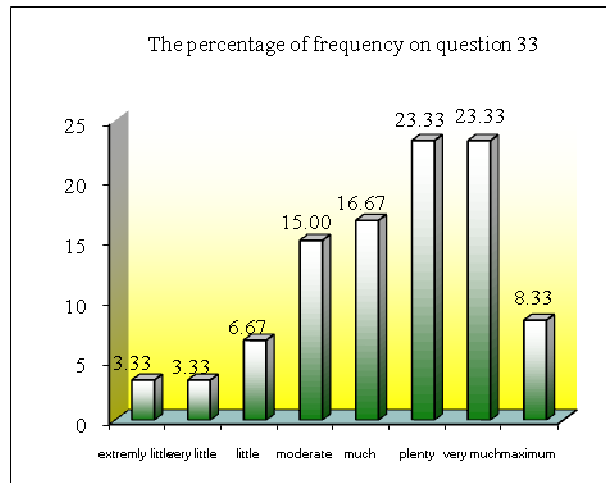
A-The Economic Factor Analysis

In addition to all other indicatives of questions 1-33, in question 33 the participants were asked to rate the effect of political, economic, socio-cultural, and defense-security factors in paving the way for regional cooperation and formation of regional organizations in the Persian Gulf. The results:

Based on Table A, 88.33 percent of the participants gave high rates to the economic factors. In other words, 53.33 percent gave very high and 35 percent high and moderately high rates to them. Also 5 percent gave average and only 6.67 percent gave lower rates.

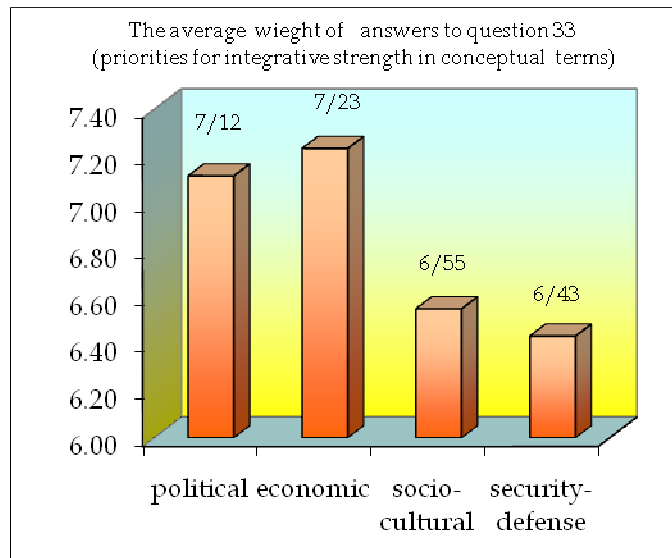
Question 33 (Economic Factor) Table A

Chi 2 Test		Option	Witnessed Plenty	Expected Plenty	Rest
Statistics		Too Little	2	8.57	-6.57
Chi-Square	####	Little	2	8.57	-6.57
Df	6	Average	3	8.57	-5.57
Asymp. Sig	####	Plenty	8	8.57	-0.57
		Too Much	13	8.57	4.43
		Exceptionally High	20	8.57	11.43
		Maximum	12	8.57	3.43
		Total	60		



B-Analytic Results of Convergence Factors Mechanism

The average rate given to each and every factor showed that the economic factor with 7.23 percent on average – as put by the experts – could be the most effective in paving the way for regional teamwork and convergence as well as formation of regional organizations. The political factor with an average rate of 7.12 percent ranks second, followed by social-cultural, and defense-security with average rates of 6.55 and 6.43 respectively. Therefore, based on graph B and the Chi 2 Test, the theory of zero was rejected and priorities were set for convergence measures (verifying the first theory).



C-Setting Security Priorities through AHP Process

The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was used to prioritize efficient factors in building security for the Persian Gulf – using the test results. Based on AHP Table B and Matrix, defense and economic factors with a weight of 0.225 and 0.210 were the first and the second priorities followed by cultural and political factors with 0.197 and 0.146. Iraq and the United States followed the ranks with a weight of 0.125 and 0.097 respectively. (Table B)

Setting Priorities for Subdivision Factors: Since each and every factor has its own subdivisions, first of all tables were sketched for all questions and their effects were analyzed before being accepted. After that, their priorities were set. Priorities in defense and subdivisions of the economic field for building cooperation and convergence – as per the AHP matrix –from the first to the third place were weighed and are hereby presented as an example.

1-Military delegation exchanges, training and research visits, inviting supervisors for military maneuvers and border activities: (0.180)

2-Transparency in civilian nuclear activities, exchange of information on military capabilities, organizing constant security meetings: (0.171)

3-Security MOUs on fight against drug trafficking and terrorism, as well as environmental issues between Iran and the regional states plus extending it to other fields: (0.170)

Economic Measures

1-Setting up joint free trade zones, attracting private investments, bilateral and multilateral investments in petrochemicals, refinery, water and electricity, cement, steel and fisheries projects in order to generate strategic shared interests: (0.16)

2-Creating facilities for air and sea transportation, railway and road links between Iran and the regional states for the sake of interdependence: (0.15)

3-Development of tourism industry, pilgrimage tours, relations between expert individuals and technical taskforce in order to build up economic relations: (0.14)

Table B AHP Matrix: Priority for Security Building Factors

	Priorities	Defense	Economic	Cultural	Political	Iraq	US
US	0.97	0.43	0.46	0.49	0.67	0.78	1.00
Iraq	0.125	0.56	0.60	0.64	0.86	1.00	1.29
Political Factor	0.146	0.65	0.70	0.74	1.00	1.16	1.50
Cultural Factor	0.197	0.88	0.94	1.00	1.35	1.57	2.03
Economic Factor	0.210	0.93	1.00	1.06	1.44	1.67	2.16
Military Factor	0.225	1.00	1.07	1.14	1.54	1.80	2.32

D-Linear Dependence Test

The “Spearman” Linear Dependence for Persian Gulf security system was tested with selected factors. Based on the results, defense-security and economic factors with ($r=0.88$) and $r=0.82$) have the highest level of linear dependence with the security system in the Persian Gulf. In other words, these factors have stronger linear links to the security system and any changes in them could have direct impacts on the region’s overall security system. Therefore, their boost could play a key role in creating security, forming regional arrangements and setting up a joint security system {The main hypothesis}.

The final results of this analysis have been measured and calculated. These results have been obtained by the information collected from each and every test (with 95 percent accuracy) plus the results obtained from their links, unity and solidarity. The results of the process which crystallize a joint security system confirm the hypothesis that is the main focus of the present research work.

“Spearman” Unity Table 1- Unity between Security System and Research Factors

	Joint Security System	Defense Factor	Economic Factor	Cultural Factor	Political Factor	Iraq Factor	US Factor
Joint Security System	100%	88%	82%	77%	57%	49%	38%

Persian Gulf Security Building: Future Outlook and Modus Operandi

Based on previous research works at national, regional and international levels, as well as the results of the initial analysis, research findings, and statistical analysis, the future outlook for

creating security could be devised using the existing scenarios and within the following circumstances:

A-Continuing Present Situation

If the current situation continues and the tensions between Iran and the US persists within the framework of containment strategy and regional isolation, and sanctions policies be pursued as previously and US military domination is sustained, this situation will never lead Islamic Republic of Iran to a sustainable security.

B-Constructive Interaction

The unsuccessful challenges between Iran (as the main regional power) and the US (the global superpower) during the past two decades, lead them toward an optimized strategy so that they could both play roles and pursue national interests by means of constructive interaction. This could be considered as an executive policy.

C-Regional Siege

In this hypothetical scenario the US measures and pressures to set up a security system within the Red Sea framework comprising the Persian Gulf littoral states (excluding Iran) plus Jordan, Egypt and even Yemen and Israel -in worst case scenario - something that the American officials will apparently go for it if Tehran does not compromise with the US. This strategy could be the worst situation for Iran.

D-Islamic Republic of Iran Supremacy

The US forces retreat from the Persian Gulf (in light of a defeat or change in strategy) and in most optimistic view, the situation returns to normalcy in Iraq; Iran is welcomed by the littoral states and other powers; and the US and other international players recognize Iran's regional role. Such condition is unlikely to happen in the near future.

Given the above hypotheses and scenarios, it is indispensable to pay attention to two specific matters: Firstly, it is necessary to

consider and appreciate participation of the eight littoral states and their national security interests. Secondly, the vital interests and security of international players should also be taken into consideration in order to effectively win the support of international community and organizations while respecting the norms.

Such a standpoint could facilitate security building and practically help materialize regional arrangements within the theoretical framework of the research on “regional convergence and joint security solution”, which by the way, is both idealistic and bona fide. Therefore, the following scenarios will be discussed and the best solution will be given.

Strategy Explanation, Analysis by Scenario Planning Technique

The regional governments agree that failure to orchestrate a unified, joint and formal security system is the most important malaise for them and the region. The present research work aims to delve into the root causes of such failure and provide a proper solution in the form of a strategic initiative - that could turn the existing policies of confrontation, rivalry and unresponsiveness into collaboration, confidence-building, convergence and ultimately shared security, and also to lead the region to sustainable security amid the current chaotic condition in international relations.

A. The most significant dilemma that undermines regional security is “inattention to the actual demands of the nations and independent governments plus prioritizing the interests and the agenda of extra-regional and foreign powers.” (Dorosti, 2005: 316)

This particular paradox has caused huge damages to the regional states and heavier than that to the US as the most influential foreign player. So, finding a proper formula to change the current circumstances and solve the problems could remove an important barrier from the path of regional arrangements. This end is the “main priority” for security building in the region. Strengthening convergence can stop the Persian Gulf from serving the utmost interests of Western world. In the absence of a unified security

arrangement, the situation in the region will remain volatile. So, the aim is to devise, analyze and finalize likely scenarios within the framework of the present research.

B. Regional and international experts and officials came up with several scenario-plannings in the past, especially after the occupation of Iraq, and there are still others that can be discussed. The variety of these scenarios indicates the fact that no strategic decision has yet been made for the regional security arrangement, a condition in which both international system and the region are passing through a transitional period. Since the US forces are still stuck in the mire of Iraq, Iran and other regional players still have the opportunity to seat at the negotiating tables and come up with a joint strategy for greater unity that could also usher the way for withdrawal of foreign forces, and align the new Iraqi government with regional objectives.

Although the rapid trend of developments gives little room for raising an assumption in near future, the present research results could help limit the number of scenarios for Iran's security policy. The Russian, Chinese or EU strategies to confront the US militarism in the region which have also been backed by scientists and political elite are no longer applicable. (Eftekhari, 2006: 137) These strategies cannot solve the region's security problems; quite the opposite, it could further raise new problems. In a realistic scenario, the US role as an independent variable cannot be overlooked. (Taeb, 2003) Such an assumption could be contentious and even controversial, yet it is possible to play a plus-sum game with this particular player. (Massoudnia, 2004: 103) In this respect, seven possible scenarios, which have also been brought up occasionally in the region in light of recent developments, are hereby presented.

E-Likely Scenarios for Regional Security Structure

1-Iran and Iraq membership in a security treaty with Persian Gulf Cooperation Council (PGCC);

Security Pattern after Iraq Occupation

a-The security structures of Persian Gulf littoral states against the US policies;

b-The security structures of Persian Gulf littoral states devised by the US;

c-The security structures of Persian Gulf littoral states independent of the US regional policies;

2-Islamic Republic of Iran plus PGCC member states;

3-Iraq plus PGCC member states;

4-Ensuring security through a collective security treaty that also includes influential Muslim countries such as Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Pakistan;

5-Any option excluding Islamic Republic of Iran;

6-PGCC member states plus ECCO;

7-Persian Gulf security under a subsystem within the security structure of the Middle East region.

Scenario Planning Review and the Optimized Solution

1-The second and the third scenarios are not suitable at all as they exclude the two regional powers of Iran and Iraq. The fifth and the sixth scenarios are similarly unacceptable as they exclude Iran, and are inconsistent with the condition for collective security to be comprehensive for the eight regional states or “security partnership approach” which both have been confirmed in the process of research.

Moreover, the fourth scenario could be favorable as it has Islamic tendency. However, international powers are concerned about their own interests and not Islamic convergence. Therefore, the scenario could face serious Western opposition. On the other hand, in the Islamic world, especially certain heads of state in the Middle East, have not reached sufficient political/Islamic maturity to relegate part of their powers to regional bodies. An example could be the experience of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and/or their failure to send troops to Iraq. Hence, Islamic states are unlikely to put efforts to this end. In addition, Iran’s national security gets improved by the day and at the same time the presence of foreign players in the region goes against its national security and interests.

2-As for the seventh scenario in order to link the security of Persian Gulf to that of the Middle Eastern, some points are worthy of mentioning. The Persian Gulf is a unique geopolitical region and distinct from other places in the Middle East. (Mojtahedzadeh, 2001:41) Secondly, issues in the Middle East are far too many and too complex to be sorted out in a short period of time. Thirdly, based on the results of the present research, if the Persian Gulf littoral states manage to collaborate within the framework of a security partnership arrangement, this could also encourage stability in the surrounding areas in the long-run. It could also help resolve issues beyond the scope of the security arrangement i.e., between the two sides of the waterway which is a focal point for Arab-Israeli conflict. Last but not the least, if a policy as such is pursued, the littoral states could reach a point of convergence and security cooperation as it is the requirement of having a security treaty in the Persian Gulf - whose problems are far less than those in the Middle East.

3-Given the above-mentioned clarifications, the only remaining case is the first scenario which has been selected as the best possible strategy within the framework of three likely optimistic, pessimistic and rational scenarios.

A-First Strategic Scenario

Assumption: Formation of a security arrangement in the region encompassing the eight littoral states anchored in a joint security solution against the US policies.

Such an assumption if enacted, could be the most desirable and ideal model for the regional states, especially Iran. The pros and cons of the hypothesis are explained in the following:

The policy is in line with the optimal interests of Islamic Republic of Iran. It is for granted that countries in any given geographical location with common civilizations are better off sharing security and fate. It goes without saying that all regional nations welcome such an idea. However, in the existing regional and

international circumstances, chance for such a convergence is slim due to the following reasons:

1-The collective defense capabilities of the seven Arab states in the Persian Gulf are far lower than those in Iran. At the same time, they have greater oil reserves and higher GDP than Iran. Average per capita income in these countries is at least four times higher than Iran. Since oil is a strategic commodity, especially in the industrialized nations, the Westerners will not endorse a new security arrangement for the region.

2-The US has paid heavy costs to stabilize and continue its presence in the region, by setting up numerous military bases and opposes the formation of such security arrangement. This is because the strategic goals and policies of the US presence go beyond gaining access to the region's energy resources. Washington sees the region as a heartland and a place to contain its likely rivals across the globe.

3-The Arab states of Persian Gulf are not intellectually and politically mature enough to cut off ties with the great powers. Quite the opposite, they take advantage of frictions between Iran and the Western world. That explains why they do not endorse such policy i.e., having a joint security system.

4-The region's structural and socio-cultural disputes are too deep-rooted, so much so that even in a place such as Iraq it is very difficult if not impossible to reach national unity within conventional social norms and political inclusion, let alone having the entire region work and interact peacefully under regional/international norms. Even in the absence of foreign players or ineffectiveness of their roles, given the experience in Afghanistan, this will never be the case in the near future.

5-The hidden or public objections of the littoral states to the Iranian and American policies in occupied Iraq as well as Shiite-Sunni strife (aggravated by Arab states) serve as a further proof that the Arab states can never stand the idea of having a joint security system in place as it could weaken their traditional regimes. This is especially

given due to the political norms in Iran which are based on religious democracy and the nature of their officialdoms which is still passing through a traditional phase.

6-As for another practical reason, since the victory of Islamic Revolution, Iran has been seriously pursuing this policy. Numerous research works have been done in this respect and none of them have ever been practical. That explains why the Iranian efforts to rid the region of foreign powers have never delivered the expected results.

B-Second Strategic Scenario

Assumption: The security structures of Persian Gulf littoral states devised by the US.

This scenario dates back to a 1970s strategy. It follows the Nixon doctrine which is based on the policy of "balance of power" and reducing US military presence in the region. Under the strategy, the US depends on the presence of its fifth naval fleet in Bahrain, reduction of other naval forces, air base support in Qatar's al-Adid, capabilities in Kuwait and other regional states, and the newly established bases in Iraq. The project was first proposed in an article written by Kenneth Pollack immediately after the occupation of Iraq that included Iran and the Arab states of Persian Gulf based on collective security and European model.

The plan came in the aftermath of early victory in Iraq - when the neocons vigorously backed the idea of direct US presence in the Persian Gulf to protect and secure American interests. A plan as such could in the short-run hoard the region from the present crisis; help the US have a face-saving retreat from Iraq; and limit US presence to fewer bases. However, even a plan as such has its own challenges:

1-Given the failed Nixon doctrine of 1970s that came to an end after the victory of Islamic Revolution in Iran, this strategy - despite its positive aspects - from one hand will not be endorsed by Washington, and on the other, it goes against Iran's strategic policies as the great regional power. This is because precondition for this

scenario is for Iran to endorse the hegemonic system. As far as the experiences of the past three decades suggest, this is an undesirable picture.

2-The scenario cannot resolve the challenges of public opinion that have been created by the military presence and military bases of foreign powers across the southern shores of the Persian Gulf, which by the way, resulted in the 9/11 terrorist attacks on US soil. Limiting the number of US troops and bases could to some extent reduce the number of terrorist attacks but the gap for such direct presence - since the psychological factors have not been resolved yet - could aggravate terrorist activities and even threaten their governments. Even if the eight littoral states decide to go ahead with such scenario, the geopolitical systems of the region are quite different than those in the 1970s. This is because the anti-American sentiments at that time were not as widespread as now. Besides, the US had to deal with its traditional rival i.e., the former Soviet Union.

On the other hand, although this particular scenario does little good to Iran or other regional states, having the regional states under a joint security umbrella in which there is no military threat could be a positive and constructive step forward in restoring peace in region that is under constant threat and fear by the hegemonic system.

C-Third Strategic Scenario: The Finest Strategy

Assumption: Forming a “security partnership arrangement” on the basis of traditional values and practices, that is compatible with the people’s norms and governments across the Persian Gulf waterway, and independent of the strategic US policies.

If regional states reach to that extent of intellectual maturity so that they could constructively interact in economic cooperation and through confidence building measures, then region goes towards convergence and establishment of a joint security system in order to reduce the existing tensions and make optimum use of the Western intellectual/technological potentials. In such a hypothetical scenario, only when they astutely consider the interests of the Western world

under the US leadership as a player (as peacemakers and a factor that reduces deep-seated Arab concerns) can the region be on a "collective defense" course.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, individual and collective security are in the first and the second place of this arrangement that includes the existing MOUs signed between Iran and other littoral states. The success of this scenario within the strategic regional framework will also pave the way for the success of the third scenario which concerns joint defense. Eventually and in the long-run, they can realize the great objective of sustainable regional security as well as promotion of peace along the borders of the "security arrangement" as the final point.

A scenario as such is the wisest strategy in the present circumstances simply because a joint security solution also has a steady tendency towards regional order and security plus fulfillment of security in different spheres and angles as its ultimate goal. Therefore, this scenario could be considered as a dynamic strategy for serving the national interests and security concerns of all regional and international players. That explains why this scenario is being introduced as the wisest and the finest option.

A scenario as such for ensuring security requires preconditions in the region explained in the following.

1-The first level of the security partnership arrangement concerns individual security in which the Arab officialdoms have to pay closer attention to domestic political developments through political reforms, promotion of democracy and political participation. However there is no consensus in this regard yet.

2-In line with regional convergence and the priorities that have been scientifically established in the process of this research, they must also work towards economic cooperation, free trade, cultural exchanges, building trust and security.

3-Iran has already inked cooperation agreements with the littoral states on fighting drug trafficking and organized crimes, protecting the environment, and even sea patrols. It has also had favorable economic ties with some of them with promising outlook. In fact, Iran has already established close economic and political ties with

Iraq, participating in its reconstruction efforts. All these along with active diplomatic efforts to set up informal organizations and confidence building serve as further proof that a scenario and a strategy as such could indeed deliver.

4-In this policy, for numerous reasons such as bilateral military treaties between the tiny Sheikdoms of the PGCC with the global powers, their strategies are being devised in line with the US policies. However, the US presence in such solution (policy) is inevitable. The US could ensure stability in the Persian Gulf region if it can optimally protect its own interests.

Like the ASEAN member states which have signed bilateral agreements with the US as a balancing power, a limited US presence could from one hand change the perceived Iranian or Iraqi threat to their eyes of littoral states and on the other, help stop the increase in the number of radical and terrorist groups or organizations in the region.

5-The foremost challenge for this strategy is the absence of formal diplomatic relations between Tehran and Washington plus the uneven ties with the Western and influential countries. (Kemp, 2001, p49) However, this factor does in no way go against the characteristics of the proposed joint security arrangement.

6-In any case, the formation of such security arrangement depends much on future developments as well as the future political system in Iraq. The US invaded and occupied Iraq as a gateway to democratize the Arab world, but it has been stuck there now. Although the American occupation has tightened the Iranian geographical borders, it has also offered rare opportunities that Tehran needs to make the most of it. In other words, the Iraqi gateway to the Arab world can create opportunities and threats in the future. Obviously the future Iraqi threats will not be military in nature. However, it could still act as a "Shiite crescent" and restrict the Iranian influence. On the other hand, it could act as a Shiite-Arab nation and devise dynamic policies to promote Iranian cultural ties with Arab world and also lessen nationalistic conflicts throughout the region.

7-Generally speaking, the regional states can use their rich oil resources to sort out individual/social security issues; make government subsidies goal-oriented; endorse the presence of great powers as a balancing force; pledge global energy security through fair pricing practices; enhance confidence-building measures in bilateral and trilateral relations; and interact with each other as a team. A scenario as such through patience and articulation and care could make the regional states a role model in collaboration and security building for other Muslim states and even Asia.

8- Since in this scenario, based on theoretical principles of regional convergence, the regional (indigenous) norms similar to the ASEAN model and the confidence-building measures in the European model are being considered, it has been introduced as the optimized option.

9-It could be concluded that the above-mentioned points have been used by the authors based on theoretical principles of the "strategic games". The aim was to offer a solution that would best serve the Iranian interests. The assumption is that any given player will always make maximum efforts to realize its goals. It is also possible to change the type of game and it is Logically safer to play with less risky players an via a plus-sum game. We must start playing our constructive role by using the guidelines of the Supreme Leader of Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who designated last year as the year of national unity and Islamic solidarity. We should make decisions based on the slogan of science, wisdom and resolve that could serve our constructive interests in the future security arrangement of the Persian Gulf. This could also pave the way to establish justice for what was lost in the past along with establishing sustainable peace and security across the entire region.

Conclusion

To attain sustainable security and become the sole regional power with a collective security approach, in addition to the proposed suggestions and along with developing its defense capabilities, it will be necessary for Iran to pursue the following strategic policies as well:

A- Development of economic, political and socio-cultural relations with other Persian Gulf littoral states to smooth the grounds for integration and defense and security cooperation.

B- Boosting defense capabilities with an emphasis on non-provocative defense based on public forces and the Basij (voluntary forces) and refraining from provocative military maneuvers that could be taken advantage by the Western media.

C- To realize the objectives of national unity and Islamic solidarity with an emphasis on common principles, it is necessary for the politicians and religious leaders to be briefed on macro policies and strategic solutions, and study and create public awareness about psychological warfare, enemy plots.

D- Experience in the past three decades suggests that weakness of intellectuals, low public awareness along the southern Persian Gulf shores, and meager relations between the regional governments pave the way for emergence and fortification of extremist religious groups. The positions of these extremists are far more traditional and drastic than those of their rulers. Enhancing relations among the regional governments and setting up regional organizations to share the experiences of Iranian democracy could be appealing and result in regional convergence.

E- Iran has far better capabilities than other regional states. Iran could use this advantage to fight against Western media propaganda which is trying to give an unpleasant picture about the country's military and ideological capabilities. It can also use soft power to reduce Arab nationalistic sentiments.

Other suggestions that might help resourcefully administer the region and facilitate implementation of the strategic results of this research are:

1- Having a nonstop, dynamic, lively and constructive diplomacy with an eye on greater coalition in joint political positions, bringing into line national/regional interests.

- 2- If necessary, resolving discretionally the security matters of other regional players.
- 3- Dependence on non-provocative defense mechanisms and promoting the Basij forces among the youth.
- 4- Exerting efforts to win the attention and support of public opinion across the region and the globe in the course of coordinated media programs.
- 5- Paying attention to the country's hydro-political capabilities and drinking water exports.
- 6- Establishment of a joint center for strategic studies that will include regional experts, researchers and elite.
- 7- Broadening economic ties, exerting collective efforts to organize and combine political activities in the regional states, and strengthening relations between the general public and the government in order to achieve sustainable regional development and stability.

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