

UNITY AND DIVISION IN RELATION TO POLITICS, RELIGION AND OIL IN THE PERSIAN GULF: AN HISTORICAL REVIEW

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A study of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, its understanding of key outside powers that influence it, and the perceptions of those powers of the Council itself will be of use in trying to ascertain whether the Persian Gulf tends to unite or divide. From an examination based on the theme posited above we can gather a helpful insight into the place of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council in global and regional power configurations.¹

There are four regional powers: Iran, Iraq, Israel and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen and the two superpowers whose impact on the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council and the preoccupation of the council with them which need to be considered to arrive at an answer to the question whether the Persian Gulf inclines to unite or divide. Of course, in attempting our exercise it is undoubtedly necessary to commence with Iran because of the major role she takes in the region.

Relations between the Shah of Iran in the earlier years and the Arab rulers on the western shore of the Persian Gulf were clouded by rivalry and suspicion often.² Moreover, Iran and Saudi Arabia were themselves regional competitors even though these two powers had to play a complementary role in regard to the United States' Persian Gulf strategy. The sense of rivalry and suspicion naturally impeded any attempt made by the Shah for a region-wide security arrangement because the Arabs saw in him an intention of dominating the area. But the rivalries however were contained within the framework of the status quo for the maintenance of which there was a common broad consensus.. With the departure of the Shah the context changed drastically. Post revolutionary Iran continued to demonstrate interest in dominance but also disregarded the earlier posture of preserving the status quo. Consequently there occurred an almost total estrangement of Arab-Iranian relations in the Persian Gulf.

Iran presented an ideological appeal and political example to a willing and eager audience and in view of this there appeared a threat from Iran to Arabia, and others. Islam accords priority to the concept of community that transcended natural identities. As the Iranian government came to be the state of God and a precursor of the universal divine government it was bound to extol the ideal of divine rule and spread the message to all the exploited and to be rid of the exploiters. It is in the nature of Iranian ideology to export the revolution.

As it was a true example of an Islamic state large sections of people across the Persian Gulf were also ready to follow Iran's Shias who accounted for about threefourths of the population of the Persian Gulf. Ninetyfive per cent of the Iranians totalling upto roughly forty million, and sixty per cent of Iraqis or nearly thirteen million were Shias. Within the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council seventy percent of people in Bahrain, fortyfour percent in Kuwait, eighteen percent in the UAE, sixteen percent in Qatar, eight

percent in Saudi Arabia and four percent in Oman are Shias. Furthermore, most of the oil rich areas in the Persian Gulf are Shia populated; Apart from Iran and Iraq, in the oil rich al-Hasa province of Saudi Arabia there is a Shia population. But the Persian Gulf rulers are Sunnis and this made Shias who are a minority in the Persian Gulf states feel politically and economically deprived. Against such a background, since the Shias were having region wide family, business and religious connections, the Shia revolution in Iran became more significant in its impact.

Religion therein although is Islam yet tended to divide because of the break up of it into Shias and Sunnis. Moreover the successful Shia revolution in Iran and its effect within the Persian Gulf made the cleavage even more salient than before. The appeal of Iran was not merely that of a true Islamic state and confined only to the Shias. It extended beyond since it espoused the cause of the exploited to these deprived and oppressed. Iran's defiance of the United States has inspired all nationalists in the Persian Gulf and particularly as the champion of the cause of Palestine, Iran's role was appreciated by the Arabs. Revolutionary Iran exerted tremendous pressures on the Arab Persian Gulf regimes and strained unity.

The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was formed to stem the tide of the Iranian revolution. Iran's search for supremacy in Persian Gulf security was seen as a principal point of threat to the stability of the Persian Gulf states of the Cooperation Council. Iran saw that the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was directed against her and threatened to act if any political or military pact was aimed against her. According to Iran, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was formed not in the interests of security but for maintaining foreign military interests in the area. Ali Akbar Velayati, Iran's Foreign Minister, reminded those bordering the Persian Gulf that Iran is the greatest and most powerful community in the region. The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was warned against aligning itself with the United States, for America was the archenemy.³

Against such an Iranian attitude, it is necessary to review concisely the relations between Iran and individual members of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. Bahrain has a big Shia population and Iran has asserted a historical claim over it. Naturally this led to a sense of fear in Bahrain, especially in December 1981, when Bahrain feared a plot had been engineered by Iran to overthrow the regime there.⁴ The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council reacted immediately. Saudi Arabia signed a bilateral security arrangement with Bahrain and similar arrangements were concluded with Oman, Qatar and the UAE. Only Kuwait kept out of a formal arrangement because it would have violated her constitution and as a result the bilateral security arrangements with Saudi Arabia did not assume a general Gulf Cooperation Council characteristic. Nevertheless, Kuwait too accepted the obligations a bilateral arrangement entailed.

Another dispute arose between Iran and the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council when Iran seized three islands from Ras al-Khaima and the Sharjah Emirates. But the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council reacted in a muted manner to this action although Iraq wanted the restitution of the islands as one of the conditions for stopping their war in its initial stage. The President of the UAE has however been more cautious in reaction

and prayed for the return of the islands. The UAE among the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has maintained most cordial relations with Iran. Iran - Dubai trade has remained uninterrupted, the UAE press was not so hostile towards Iran and communication links between the UAE and Iran had grown. There had been an exchange of foreign ministry visits in March 1982 and August 1983 while in mid 1983 the UAE along with Kuwait took an initiative in moderating between Iran and Iraq over the oil slick issue. Hence it is this relationship that probably explains the muted reaction of the UAE to Iran's seizure of territory.

Qatar also had little love for Iran. Before the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's summit held in Doha in November 1983 there was a discovery of a cache of arms and an attempt to blow up the Sheraton Hotel where the summit was convened. Qatar suspected Iranian involvement in these events despite a want of conclusive proof. Likewise, in December 1983 when targets such as the American and French Embassies, the air port and a ministry were attacked, the Kuwait government found out that members of *Dawa* a Shia opposition group of Iraq, who were in Iran, were involved. Later the *Dawa* attempted to get the convicted prisoners using strong arms tactics in December 1984, hijacking a Kuwait air liner to Teheran, and in May 1985 attempting to assassinate the Emir of Kuwait. Thus Kuwait too saw in Iran a foe.

While the above review sums up concisely the relations of the countries in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council with Iran, the chief protagonists of the division in the Persian Gulf are Iran and Saudi Arabia. Both have questioned the Islamic credentials of one another while a major issue of conflict has been the Haj. Iran accuses Saudi Arabia of neglecting the holy places and Haj pilgrims, and Saudi Arabia counters with allegations of Iranian pilgrims engaging in political propaganda and demonstrations which disrupt religious ceremonies and violate sanctity. Of course, while the division persists the relationship between the two countries have seesawed alternating between heightening tensions and thawing relations; in May 1985 Prince Saud visited Tehran and Minister Velayeti returned the visit in December.

The attack of Iraq on Iran in September 1980 gave room for immediate suspicion that the Persian Gulf states had incited Iraq promising support for the war. This belief gathered reinforcement when Iraq initially claimed it was heading an Arab war against Iran. But it was also believed that when Iraq complained of lack of Arab support, Saudi Arabia had replied that Arab states had not been consulted by Iraq and that they would never have agreed to Iraq's attitude.⁶

Nevertheless, the Iran-Iraq war brought relief to the Persian Gulf states which saw in the event a diversion of Iranian fury away from them. There was however initially a general sense of solidarity with Iraq but later on the Persian Gulf states have not gone beyond a point in getting involved in the conflict. They wield no influence on Iran and very limited influence on Iraq, and they feared a spill over of the war which could have dragged them into it. Furthermore, any outcome of the war would have a serious impact on the regional power structure and in domestic power sharing arrangements; an Iranian

victory, could entail disastrous consequences while Iraqi success could also imply equal peril.

During the first two years of war, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait directly aided Iraq by grants and loans, but from 1982 direct military aid was halted. Instead, indirectly, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council countries produced Iraq's quota of oil and transferred the proceeds to Baghdad. Also, the first two summits of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council called for an end to the war but when Iran's offensive in 1982 led to a march towards Basra the Gulf Cooperation Council members realized the urgency and brought the matter up at the Organization of Islamic Conferences and in the United Nations. When the third summit convened in November 1982, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council advanced a tough proposition to Iran. Iran was blamed for crossing the international border with Iraq, for posing a threat to the security and safety of the Arab nation, for violating its sovereignty and she was urged to respond to peace proposals proposed by the Organisation of Islamic Conferences, the Non aligned Movement and the United Nations.

In November 1983, the Doha summit advanced a peace formula which proposed a step by step creation of neutralized zones.⁸ A reconstruction plan for both countries was also mooted. A new attitude on the part of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council members had emerged. There was a desire to come to terms with Iran without jeopardizing relations with Iraq. But by mid 1984 the situation changed with attacks on oil tankers by Iraq and Iran's ultimatum to retaliate by blocking the Straits of Hormuz. Attacks on Kuwait and Saudi tankers in the Persian Gulf heightened tensions. The foreign ministers of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council decided to raise the issue at the Arab League and then at the United Nations' Security Council; new inshore lanes proximate to the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf for use by Persian Gulf Cooperation Council members' tankers and joint air cover for ships by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were planned.⁹ Later, in June 1984, Saudi jets guided by the AWACS destroyed an Iranian F4 fighter bomber which brought in a temporary respite in attacks.

The fifth summit of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council reiterated the call to Iran to join in the attempts at seeking a solution which could ensure the rights of both partners. At the sixth summit, a similar call was made again but significantly the call for peace was addressed to both Iran and Iraq. The assumption earlier that Iraq desired peace while Iran was intransigent was abandoned now. This change in posture by the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council was welcomed by Iran, and in a climate of expectations Minister Velayeti of Iran visited Riyadh. Disappointingly, the visit was bereft of results.

As noted earlier the war continued despite fluctuations in the attitude of Iran towards the countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council. Iran launched another offensive now which brought Iranian troops within fifty miles of Kuwait city. The Kuwait Emir was cautioned by the Iranian President to maintain strict neutrality and Kuwait was charged of assisting Iraq. The reactions of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council's members to Iran were strong and once again more favourable to Iraq.¹⁰

This situation which prevailed throughout the war showed that despite differences in political systems, economic structures and external orientations that the member states of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council had evolved a consensus. The threat perceived from Iran on the one side and Saudi Arabian diplomacy on the other have helped to retain and consolidate the consensus even though occasional differences have cropped up. Apparently the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council had been forged primarily as a safeguard against the threats from Iran. To this extent during the years of the Iran - Iraq war clearly the Persian Gulf had united some countries as it is evident in the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and this under the guidance or leadership of Saudi Arabia. But if one looked at the time of belligerence between Iran and Iraq the Gulf countries had divided on occasions and consensus was strained.

Delving deeper into the position around the Persian Gulf, it is evident that the Persian Gulf is a major factor in great power rivalry because of the economic question - huge oil resources - and also because of the strategic question of geopolitical location.¹¹ In the past, European powers occupied areas around the Persian Gulf or subjected them to unequal treaties while today a similar dominance is wielded under euphemistic agreements like strategic consensus. Here we see again the tendency of the Persian Gulf to divide or invite already divided powers to bring in their rivalry into the region, and the affairs there.

A similar division exists in South Asia and in turn it affects the relations between the South Asian countries and the Persian Gulf. Hence there is a division of interest among the South Asian powers in regard to the Persian Gulf. There is no unity of understanding among members of the South Asian region. Indo-Pakistan relations continue to be strained while between India and Nepal or Sri Lanka relations are sour. There is no unity as such in South Asia.

Likewise, the scene in the Persian Gulf too shows division. The traditional Iran-Iraq rivalry has been violent and has taken a turn to create Arab-Iran rivalry as shown in the earlier discussions. While such divisions have occurred, at the same time the Iran-Iraq conflict, as we know, has hastened and consolidated unity among the monarchies in the Persian Gulf region at least. A clear example of this process was the emergence of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council which is however a subsystem of the Persian Gulf. Between the main actors in the Persian Gulf; the Cooperation Council states, Iraq and Iran, nevertheless prevail conflictual relations too.

There is on the whole no understanding between members of the South Asian region among themselves or between members of the Persian Gulf region. Hence there cannot be cooperation either within a region or between the two regions of the Persian Gulf and South Asia, but there is understanding between some members of each of these two regions. Pakistan, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Countries and Saudi Arabia have an understanding and sense of unity. Furthermore this understanding prevails in a framework of security and leads to a systemic linkage between these states and the West which tends to be a strong binding force.

From the point of view of security, if real regional cooperation can be politically forged between the states, either in South Asia or in the Persian Gulf, each of these regions can ward off military threats to the region from forces outside; at least till international factors come to the rescue. Unfortunately, the politico-military capabilities of these regions are cancelled out owing to intra-regional rivalries and factions. Additionally when forces are deployed in confrontation with each other within the region itself, then the situation, instead of ensuring the security of the region creates insecurity. Thus the context is more divisive then.

A country like Pakistan, particularly after 1971, has pursued a West Asian identity. It has tended to develop stronger political, economic and strategic ties with the West Asian states rather than with those in South Asia. Also, given Pakistan's attitude towards India, which is one of distrust, Pakistan tends to unite more with West Asia than with South Asia to which India is central. So there the lure of the Persian Gulf is to sharpen the division between Pakistan and India and break up any trend towards unity in South Asia.

These divisions got clearly pronounced after the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan in December 1979. The West feared Soviet troop intrusion southwards through Baluchistan towards the Strait of Hormuz and thereby a threat to the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf. Moreover, after the new dispensation in Iran in 1979, there grew an impression that Iran's westward tilt had been ended and she was likely to be pro-Soviet, which was not correct. Consequently, in the Persian Gulf on the issue of strategy, the West had to make new arrangements and this arose from the division of interests in the Persian Gulf region between the West and the socialists.

Antagonistic politics pursued by powers within regions accentuated divisions. As referred to earlier, India and Pakistan were opposed to one another. Since 1979 Pakistan and Afghanistan and Iran and Iraq were opposing one another. The scene was further compounded by other antagonisms : Iraq and Syria, Saudi Arabia and South Yemen, Somalia and Ethiopia, and so on. These antagonisms accounted not only for intra - regional divisions, but also enabled the great powers to play the old trick of divide and rule, effectively to the disadvantage of the regional powers. For instance, in January 1980, after the changes in Iran and Afghanistan, the United States warned that any attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region would be construed inimical to vital American interests. The US was sure of support from some powers in the Persian Gulf.

However certain positive steps could be taken to work out cooperative arrangements for ensuring security in the Persian Gulf on a region wide basis. The Persian Gulf is a shallow area getting clogged not only with international shipping but also with mechanical structures related to the oil industry. Shipping and the oil industry have to be properly organised on a regional level if future complications are to be avoided. An authority could regulate and manage Persian Gulf maritime activity such as surveying sea lanes. There is room for intra - regional and inter - regional cooperation and regional powers could coordinate in ensuring freedom of navigation even to the extent of freezing

adjoining high seas from great naval presence. This sort of activity will help to promote an observance of the Indian Ocean as a peace zone. If these type of measures bring about regional stability, within the ambit of a strategic consensus among regional powers, this advance would be welcomed by the great powers who would be assured that their legitimate interests in the area are not harmed owing to intra regional rivalries or linkages between regional and great powers.¹² Persian Gulf regional unity is a pre requisite to bring around South Asian unity and great power unity in regard to interests in the Persian Gulf.

It may now be pertinent to examine the roles taken by Islam, and briefly by oil, both so closely connected to the Persian Gulf region, and estimate whether they contribute towards uniting or dividing the peoples in the region. Islam is often claimed to be an integral element of the Muslim polity; religion becomes inseparable from politics¹³. To a distant observer, Muslims form a monolithic community and all the Persian Gulf countries seem to be united by the their religion. But this is not quite true. Countries of the Persian Gulf region like Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, the two Yemens and other countries in West Asia like Saudi Arabia, Syria and Lebanon are deeply divided against each other. If some are more united it is more because of their common interests than common religion. Similarly countries of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council are bound together by their common interests or else if it were by religion how is Iran excluded. Moreover, division on sectarian grounds prevail within countries and disturb unity.

Islam even if dubbed as fundamentalist, in itself is not a homogeneous phenomenon.¹⁴ Iranian Islam is different from that in Saudi Arabia, and the two confront each other directly. In similar manner there is conflict between Iran and Iraq on a sectarian basis but it is not mere sectarian conflict alone. It is a conflict of interests too. Nation states nurture national interests and it is those that determine cooperation and alliances to a greater degree.

Countries around the Persian Gulf entertain a deep sense of insecurity against each other and arms have been piled up not to fight against Israel, the common enemy of Islam, but to be used in the conflict among Islamic Persian Gulf Countries. Iran had to face all Arab countries and Iraq, a former enemy of Saudi Arabia, had moved closer to Saudi Arabia when she fought Iran. Here common interests and not a common religion forged a link between the two one time enemies.

Likewise, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia got close together owing to common interest. Both were under American influence and desired American presence in the region. Of course, Pakistan in recent times has moved closer to Iran, especially after the end of the war between Iran and Iraq.

Evidently religion is not an only dominant influence to bring around cooperation and unity between Persian Gulf countries and South Asia, although it is an important factor. Common interests are more significant in cooperation and alliances but religious sensitivity also matters. Religion in South Asia did not prevent division between Pakistan and Bangladesh and even inside Pakistan, and divisions among countries and within the

Persian Gulf region. So while religion can be a force for unity in the Persian Gulf, religion has divided too.

As regards the role of oil in uniting or dividing the countries of the Persian Gulf, remarkable is the successful anti imperialist struggle against unrestrained robbery of oil. The 1973 oil price hike, a major achievement for the Persian Gulf, yielded unpredictable and unimaginable oil revenues which were invested in imperialist banks. But the measure also led to the hold of imperialism in the Persian Gulf in turn. However, the advancement of refining capabilities and energy intensive industries, such as petrochemicals, although in an initial stage have demonstrated that the Gulf is not and will not be a periphery of imperialist powers but will emerge as a competitor in the economic field of world capitalism.

The future of Persian Gulf economics lies in energy intensive industries. The flow of petrochemical products began in the 1980's and more or less coincided with the first recession for the Gulf economies caused by a fall in oil prices. Furthermore, the Gulf economic problems are worsened by the protectionist measures used by imperialist powers against the Persian Gulf products. Protectionism has made the Gulf economies look for returns from other ventures and elsewhere, although returns may be late. The Gulf economies endeavoured in such a context to achieve integration at the regional level and also to increase their relationship with the third world countries where Persian Gulf products could find markets. To some extent the fortunes that oil underwent have tended to induce among some Persian Gulf countries at least integration and cooperation in their responses to the vicissitudes of oil but these have also led to different approaches among the countries of the region to the problems they encountered. There was no unity of action.

For instance, Iran and Iraq opted for nationalization of oil resources and prepared their people for an anti imperialist struggle. A second set of Persian Gulf countries like Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman chose the path of participation, and hardly prepared their peoples for anti-imperialist struggles. They depended on foreign countries for petroleum extraction and other downstream industries more than Kuwait. Kuwait has chosen to be relatively independent of foreign companies and multinationals and has made far more inroads into downstream operations.

These different types of responses and reactions in regard to a change involving oil in different countries in the Persian Gulf indicate that oil had acted as a divisive element, too in the region. There hence was only limited united response to the problem when it was decided to jack up prices.

In the 1970's the specific position of the main oil exporting countries, notably of those organised through the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), made it possible for them to push up the price of oil dramatically at the end of 1973 and again at the end of 1979.¹⁵ Here these countries in the OPEC in the Persian Gulf region acted unitedly. This enabled them to join the ranks of the surplus countries overnight, provided them with accumulations of foreign exchange to dispose of both internationally

and domestically, and impoverished their customers, especially those in the Third World. This change and a deterioration in their balance of payments position worsened the economic prospects of the Third World. Poorer third world countries suffered a fall in production and welfare as a consequence. Here the less developed countries in South Asia or Africa were distanced by a united action of the Persian Gulf countries to increase prices of oil; they got divided from the Gulf.

The changes in oil prices hit hard the poorest countries, and those in South Asia, hardest. For them the recession deteriorated into a depression with imports being severely cut with drastic consequences for investment, growth and consumption. The South Asian countries were left to fend for themselves separated from the countries of the Persian Gulf. Their interests were different and unity not possible.

The situations in the Persian Gulf had been as such that some of them tended to unite the countries in the region while some of them inclined to divide. In relation to South Asia which itself was more divided than united this inherent division was reflected in the relationship of South Asian lands with the Persian Gulf countries causing a division in choosing alliances or options. In a like manner as there were super power rivalry and divided interests between the great powers, that division too was carried into super power relationships with the Persian Gulf region states. Moreover, even in South Asia alliances with superpowers went along the line of division that prevailed between the great powers, and South Asian nations too carried into their relationships with the Persian Gulf countries the reflection of this division. The Persian Gulf has divided more than united in the recent past, although a potential to unity exists.

The conflict (1990-91) in the Gulf region which brought the United States led coalition against Iraq to play such a decisive role in it gave a clear indication of the propensity of the context within the Gulf to divide countries in the area as well as to unite some of them. First, there was the division between Iraq and Kuwait and Kuwait itself was backed by Saudi Arabia which stood by the anti Iraqi alliance. Then the Sheikdoms, Egypt and Syria remained ranged against Iraq adding further to the division of the countries within the Gulf region.¹⁶

Iraq was, although not openly, supported by Jordan, Libya, and even Iran, all of which however did not support the idea of giving support to the United States headed coalition, with an anti-Iraqi agenda, a role in the Gulf region in the conflict. These divisions in attitude became clearly manifest when the conflict deteriorated into a war where Iraq was pommelled by the United States led coalition of forces, particularly the members of it such as the United States of America, Britain and France, and to a lesser extent others.

Of course, at this time, the USSR was in a state of flux having already suffered dissolution, but still the geostrategic implications of controlling a highly vital area of land and sea communications in the Persian Gulf continued to be significant for the United States. Since the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in 1979, the United States had decided that any threat to her vital interests in the Persian Gulf would be countered by

force in the region. At that time, the threat had been perceived to have arisen from Soviet Russia but now the threat was perceived to be from unfriendly Arab countries. Anyway the geostrategic significance of the Gulf region to the United States remained.

The Gulf area needed to be kept under United States' control, and within her reach, also because the area was important for securing land and sea communications in the region.¹⁷ and, of course, more so for obtaining oil. America wanted to ensure that the line of oil supply from the Gulf to be unimpeded because of uncooperative forces and that a cheap supply of oil should continue to keep flowing. The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had ignored the view of the majority of the cartel of the OPEC countries who wanted production quotas to be limited so that prices would remain high. While this favoured the United States it had divided those three Arab regions from Iraq.

The Gulf War furnished another illustration to prove that the Gulf can unite and also divide. Some semblance of unity was evident between erstwhile enemies like Iran and Iraq; and other countries such as Jordan and Libya were more clearly united with Iraq on an anti-coalition stance. At the same time, clearly Saudi Arabia, the Emirates to an extent, and more explicitly, Egypt and Syria, were against Iraq and allied with the United States and against the anti-Iraq alliance. Thus there was strong and active division between the pro-Kuwait, pro-Coalition countries, and the pro-Iraqi group in this Gulf Conflict. This division prevailed even though all Arab and Gulf countries had little love for Israel. But even Iraq's attempts to evoke an anti-Israeli unity among the Arabs and Gulf countries failed. The truth that emerges is that the Persian Gulf can divide as much as it can unite, and even now unity and division among countries exist within the region of the Gulf.

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