

# In Persian Gulf littoral, cooperative security is key

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## India's interests would be best served if stability in the region is ensured this way

The United Nations defines this body of water as the Persian Gulf. The lands around it are shared by eight countries (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates), all members of the UN. There is a commonality of interest among them in being major producers of crude oil and natural gas, and thereby contributing critically to the global economy and to their own prosperity. This has added to their geopolitical significance. At the same time, turbulence has often characterised their *inter se* political relations.

### A framework

For eight decades prior to 1970, this body of water was a closely guarded British lake, administered in good measure by imperial civil servants from India. When that era ended, regional players sought to assert themselves. Imperatives of rivalry and cooperation became evident and, as a United States State Department report put it in 1973, 'The upshot of all these cross currents is that the logic of Saudi-Iranian cooperation is being undercut by psychological, nationalistic, and prestige factors, which are likely to persist for a long time.' The Nixon and the Carter Doctrines were the logical outcome to ensure American hegemony. An early effort for collective security, attempted in a conference in Muscat in 1975, was thwarted by Baathist Iraq. The Iranian Revolution put an end to the Twin Pillar approach and disturbed the strategic balance. The Iraq-Iran War enhanced U.S. interests and role. Many moons and much bloodshed later, it was left to the Security Council through Resolution 598 (1987) to explore 'measures to enhance the security and stability in the region'.

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