
The Persian Gulf’s strategic and economic significance have made it of critical importance not only to all the states bordering its coastline, but also to the global economy. Situated in the heart of the Middle East, the Persian Gulf serves as gateway for the global energy supply, which has made outside powers compete for dominance in the region. As such, the question of security in the Persian Gulf has occupied leaders of the United States, Europe and Japan for decades. Their Gulf security policies have often relied on local powers, such as Iran or Saudi Arabia, but when deemed necessary, they have also turned to military means for protection of their interests.

Mahboubeh F. Sadeghinia’s new book, *Security Arrangements in the Persian Gulf*, aims to understand the reasons for the failure of Gulf security models and to provide a new model. To this end, Sadeghinia analyzes the various security models adopted in this highly important region since 1962, with special reference to Iran’s foreign policy. Although the timeframe of the discussion is limited to the period 1962–1997, the book also includes some analysis of geopolitical and security developments since 1997.

Dr. Sadeghinia is a former international journalist and researcher who, as part of her research, visited Iran between the years 1980 and 2003. She is certainly well equipped to deal with the geo-strategic complexities of the Persian Gulf. Moreover, she is able to utilize unique primary source material collected in Iran, as well as a great variety of secondary sources, mainly historical analytical data and various Iranian Foreign Ministry documents.

Sadeghinia analyzes the issue of Gulf security by combining various perspectives, political, social, military, economic, geopolitical and international, which affect security in the region. Her study explores, among other things, how security policy in the Gulf has been affected by energy issues and by relations between the Middle East and the West. She employs a variety of conceptual and analytical tools to understand the reasons for the failure of security models in the Persian Gulf and addresses the significant obstacles in designing a regional security system. The book offers a well-structured analysis of the geopolitical discourse and addresses the elements of insecurity—e.g., territorial, boundary and maritime disputes—in detail.

Having examined the three schools of thought in international security—the realist, the hegemonic (or counter-proliferation), and the neo-liberalist (or cooperative)—Sadeghinia provides a conceptual and analytical foundation for
a discussion about the future shape of security arrangements in the Persian Gulf. She suggests that only by addressing the fragile region as a whole, rather than as separate states, will it be possible to deal with the region's very volatile situation. The book thus highlights the need for a stable and peaceful structure of relationships that provide security for the states within the region while assuring the interests of external powers.

To this end, Sadeghinia designs a model that calls for a collective security architecture in the Persian Gulf, which she terms the "Pyramid Security Model." This model is based on a set of major principles, with geopolitics providing the basis for discussion. While assessing the need to assure the political and economic concerns of all regional and extra-regional players, and the need to have the region free of foreign military presence—which badly affects the regional balance of power and serves as a source of instability—the Pyramid Security Model emphasizes the role of people and sub-national groups and their interactions. It follows the rationale that developing human resources and capitalizing on an emerging civil society increases the nation-state's soft power and strengthens the regional security situation. Sadeghinia argues that reforms will encourage positive competition among all littoral states to upgrade their status through increased civil development, rather than through military power or territorial size. This would apply to supra-regional players too: By contributing towards the region's development, they would upgrade their roles in the region.

*Security Arrangements in the Persian Gulf* is a comprehensive study that approaches its topic from various angles. As such, the book serves as a useful compilation of the main scholarly writings on the issue. It barely contains errata. Nevertheless, while we can accept the notion of shifting more emphasis to the cultural aspects of the region and the soft dimensions of the Gulf societies, we must note that the Pyramid model is an ideal type. Although it introduces a well-explained and systematic method, its main tenets do not meet the basic realities of the Persian Gulf and the Middle East at large. In other words, the model is based on wishful thinking. One has to take into account the complicated set of inter-regional relations and rivalries as they exist in the Gulf. Iraq in the aftermath of the American withdrawal can serve as a case in point. Primordial identities rather than regional cooperation appear to be dictating its rhythm. Similarly, the Gulf's historical structures; its ethnic composition of Arabs, Persians and Kurds; its religious composition of Sunnis and Shi'is; together with oil interests and outside intervention as well as longstanding territorial conflicts, are deep-rooted to the extent that no model can solve. Although development of civil society