

# **INDIA and the Gulf Cooperation Council: Growing Strategic Partnership**

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# India and the Gulf region

- India has historical links with the Gulf region.
- For India, the Gulf region is the “Extended neighbourhood” and “Economic Hinterland”
- India’s ‘Look West policy’ is also complemented by the ‘Look East’ policies of a number of Gulf Arab states.
- India’s Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla: “Think West – our outreach to the Gulf and West Asian countries – has become an increasingly important pillar of our foreign policy.”
- ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi

# India's interests in the GCC

- GCC is a major trading partner of India
- India is reliant on the GCC countries for energy security
- Defence and security cooperation
- Strategic partnership
- Safety of Indian nationals in the Gulf

## India and GCC Bilateral Trade (figures in mn) [Source: Department of Commerce, Govt of India]

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
<b>Bahrain</b>	919.23	1,011.04	762.40	987.94	1,281.77	980.6
<b>Kuwait</b>	14,580.85	6,217.21	5,960.27	8,531.34	8,764.74	10860.36
<b>Oman</b>	4,131.69	3,865.66	4,018.79	6,703.76	5,005.30	5931.14
<b>Qatar</b>	15,659.69	9,924.29	8,430.78	9,880.90	12,332.86	10954.33
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	39,268.98	26,702.80	25,082.68	27,480.66	34,040.93	33094.22
<b>UAE</b>	59,167.99	49,762.18	52,685.33	49,885.23	59,912.05	59110.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>133,728.43</b>	<b>97,483.18</b>	<b>96,940.25</b>	<b>103,469.83</b>	<b>121,337.65</b>	<b>120,930.8</b>

# India's Energy Imports (figures in mn) [Source: Department of Commerce, Govt of India]

		2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
1.	IRAQ	17,544.24	22,265.04	22,764.55
2.	<b>SAUDI ARABIA</b>	15,262.60	21,381.04	20,355.22
3.	IRAN	8,978.76	12,110.72	994.81
4.	NIGERIA	8,192.30	9,432.34	8,972.73
5.	<b>UAE</b>	6,122.20	9,512.48	10,927.52
6.	VENEZUELA	5,859.30	7,247.67	6,029.42
7.	<b>KUWAIT</b>	5,283.96	5,430.90	4,840.35
8.	ANGOLA	3,080.08	3,282.46	2,638.12
9.	MEXICO	2,751.73	4,260.78	3,312.97
10.	<b>OMAN</b>	2,413.73	805.61	1,010.43

# Defence and Security cooperation

- India's engagements with the GCC countries in defence and security arena are deepening in recent years
- Continuing instability in the West Asian region, terrorism and extremism, maritime security etc. are key drivers for forging defence and security ties with the GCC
- India has signed defence and security cooperation agreements with GCC states
- Joint exercises and Training with GCC militaries
- There have been a number of success stories of security cooperation where some terrorists wanted in India have been deported from the GCC countries.

# Counter-Terror cooperation

- Defence and security cooperation is driven by the desire to join hands together to combat the growing menace of terrorism and other security challenges.
- Terror groups have established inter-state networks; combating terror also requires cooperation at international level as well. The security challenges we face today requires deeper security cooperation.
- India, therefore, is enhancing cooperation in the areas of exchange of information relating to terrorist activities, terror financing etc.

# ISIS and India's concern

- Emergence of ISIS has been a key concern for India
- Few Indians have joined the ISIS
- Indian security agencies have busted a number of ISIS cells and have arrested ISIS cadres in India
- Radicalisation is a concern for India
- Growing ISIS networks in India's neighbourhood is a security challenge

# Piracy/Safety of the SLOCs

- Safety of the sea lines of communication is important for India.
- Approximately 95% of the country's trade by volume and 68% by value is done through the maritime route
- Similarly the Gulf countries are heavily dependent on the maritime routes for trade and commerce. GCC countries are crude oil suppliers. Many countries are international trading hubs
- It is, therefore, important to maintain the safety and security of SLOCs. There are mutual interests in keeping the SLOCs safe from the pirates
- Since 2008, India has consistently deployed a naval ship in the Gulf of Aden to ward off threat of piracy

# Choke Points

- Strait of Hormuz, the Suez Canal, the Gulf of Oman, the Bab el Mandeb, the Cape of Good Hope and the Mozambique Channel
- India intends to advance broad economic and security interests, including the “security” of the various “gates” to the Indian Ocean
- Indian Maritime Doctrine 2009 terms the choke points as one of the ‘primary areas’ of maritime interests.

# Indian expatriates and remittances

- There are around nine million Indians living and working in the region. The large Indian expatriates form a natural link between India and the region.
- India is deeply concerned about the safety of its citizens living in the region in the event of the protests in the GCC countries.
- India is the highest recipient of remittances in the world in 2018 - US\$79 billion.
- Reserve Bank of India: 52% of remittances to India come from West Asia. Most of this money comes from the UAE and Saudi Arabia.

# Building strategic partnerships

- India has opened multiple fronts of engagement with GCC countries
- India and the GCC states are moving beyond buyer-seller relationship
- India is building comprehensive strategic partnerships with key regional powers
- India-GCC Political Dialogue held regularly

# Cooperation during COVID-19 pandemic

- India has extended support to the countries in the region by providing Hydroxychloroquine tablets and medical equipment to GCC countries
- India sent a 15-member medical team to Kuwait at the request of its government
- India sent a team of 88 medical and healthcare professionals to the UAE
- India is also supplying COVID-19 vaccines to the GCC states
- By quickly providing medical aid and expertise, India has reinforced its image of a strong and reliable friend standing alongside in an hour of crisis.