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**GULF SECURITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**BY**

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**GULF SECURITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

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## ABSTRACT

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This study contains strictly my personal views. It is intended to provide ideas about the security challenges facing the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) states and the threats to the region that posed by Iran and Iraq. Based on this background information, I will suggest recommendations for future solutions and how to achieve Gulf Security in the twenty-first century. It is absolutely essential that AGCC States ensure their own security by taking necessary steps for greater unity. They must enhance and develop collective political, military and economical policies. AGCC should not base their relation with the West on oil only but link it to greater economic, political and security cooperation. They should all create permanent and common interests such as establishing joint ventures on a variety of issues.

The ultimate strategic challenge for the AGCC States in the twenty-first century will be not only to deter and prepare to defend against external military threats, but also to insure that economic, political and social change remains evolutionary instead of becoming revolutionary. The challenges posed by the various forces that have been mentioned in this paper demand a collective responsive and flexible public policy within the Gulf.



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## PREFACE

This research project is the culmination of a study of security issues and its implications to the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council States. This paper aims to show how best the AGCC states can achieve security and stability to the region, both by self help in the military field and greater economic and political cooperation with the west. Colonel T. A Dempsey provided valuable guidance and directions on this project. His advice and assistance was invaluable.



## **GULF SECURITY IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

The six states of the Arabian Peninsula – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) now known as Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council States (AGCC) formed an organization called Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) in 1981. In May 1981 the GCC charter was ratified committing the six signatories to implement measures to effect coordination, integration and interconnection between them in a great variety of fields<sup>1</sup>. This study contains strictly my personal views. It is intended to provide ideas about the security challenges facing the AGCC states and the threats to the region that posed by Iran and Iraq. Based on this background information, I will suggest recommendations for future solutions and how to achieve Gulf Security in the twenty-first century.

It is absolutely essential that AGCC States ensure their own security by taking necessary steps for greater unity. They must enhance and develop collective political, military and economic policies. AGCC should not base their relation with the West on oil only but link it to greater economic, political and security cooperation. They should all create permanent and common interests such as establishing joint ventures on a variety of issues.

The ultimate strategic challenge for the AGCC States in the twenty-first century will be not only to deter and prepare to defend against external military threats, but also to insure the economic, political and social change remains evolutionary instead of becoming revolutionary. The challenges posed by the various forces that have been mentioned in this paper demand a collective, responsive and flexible public policy within the Gulf.

Security is an issue that concerns many of today's leaders and policy makers. Gulf security is a particularly complicated affair, involving as it does a set of integrated and divisive interests. The excellent strategic location and the abundant natural resources of the area are in fact a boon and a bane at the same time.

Although oil is readily available, history has proven that the region's stability can be affected by numerous factors. Tensions in the region were seriously increased following the 1980 invasion of 140,000 Soviet troops into Afghanistan. The revolution in Iran, followed by the Iraq-Iran War, created additional instability in the region. The most recent major instability was caused when Iraqi forces attacked Kuwait in 1990-1991. This resulted in the formation of the 30-nation coalition led by the United States that reversed the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

### **THREAT ANALYSIS**

Much has been written about the military aspects of the Gulf security since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Military threat analysis is and will no doubt continue to be at the

heart of regional security concerns. However, concentrating exclusively on military threats in the Gulf would ignore many political, social and economic factors that also have a crucial bearing on security. Military threat analysis is most valid in the short term, but in the longer run, looking to the twenty-first century, both military capabilities and intentions are likely to change significantly in response to changing conditions in those political, social and economic areas that play an important role in the Gulf region<sup>2</sup>. These non-military factors could not only substantially affect the military threat, but also can themselves create and evolve into both external and internal security risks. In terms of geopolitics, the two most powerful states in the gulf by any measure other than economics are Iran and Iraq. Besides such factors as history, population and geographical size, the leadership of the two states continues to pose the greatest external military threats to the six Arab states of the GCC. More over the intentions of these states are unlikely to change in the near future particularly in terms of foreign policy.

Iran has a historically based and strongly developed national consensus that transcends and indeed strengthens the current regime. For example, the sense of empire goes back in history for millennia, making it essentially fruitless to attempt to distinguish between age-old imperial Persian aspirations and contemporary revolutionary Islamic ideology as the primary motivating factor behind Iran's expansionist foreign policies. It is probably safe to assume that expanding Iran's influence in the Gulf will be a high priority in Tehran during the next century no matter what regime is in power or what its relative military capabilities might be.

The geographic boundaries of Iraq are an artificial creation of Britain following World War One which awkwardly combines Arabs and Kurds, Sunnis and Shi'ites into single state. While it appeared that over the years a sense of Iraqi identity had emerged, in turn creating the basis for a true nation-state, the old ethnic and confessional differences have remained and have been greatly exacerbated by recent wars and their aftermath. Thus the question of Iraqi political cohesion is and will indefinitely remain a major factor in the construction of foreign and domestic policies.

Security challenges continue to emanate from Iran and Iraq. Both countries have engaged in unconventional and high-intensity conflicts that have caused enormous collateral damage in the region. Both states harbor regional hegemonic ambitions, and both have made territorial claims against their neighbors. Neither state has always acted in a rational manner on issues of foreign and security policy. For example, Iran continues to occupy the three UAE islands of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Musa. Both Iran and Iraq also possess significant fighting capacity and considerable military experience. Iran's ambitious military acquisition program is out of line not only with the threats it faces but also with its current uncertain economic position.

In order to deter any aggressor against any AGCC country, in 1983, the Peninsular Shield Force (ISF)<sup>3</sup> was born, with the mission of reinforcement to any of the six AGCC states if threatened by any external force. It is essential that AGCC states build their own collective security by enhancing and developing the military capabilities of ISF. This will ensure immediate military capabilities that would be at least able to deter, delay and fight any aggressor until Arab or International assistance arrives if necessary. This will also increase national prestige, transfer advanced technology, create more employment, improve national relations and eventually achieve Gulf Security.

### **THREAT FROM IRAQ**

Today, more than 10 years after the Gulf War, can Iraq again challenge the AGCC states in the twenty-first century? Is it likely to do so? Iraq's future is the most difficult to predict. In my opinion Iraq may still be considered as a threat to AGCC security. During the Iraq-Iran War the AGCC States provided Iraq with financial and political assistance based on the fact that an Arab State was fighting its non-Arab neighbor. However, when the war ended in 1988, the AGCC leaders became wary of Saddam Hussein's intentions, especially when he took strong public positions on oil policy that strongly criticized Kuwait and U.A.E on their oil production policies. This and Saddam's overwhelming political dominance led to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

In the wake of the removal of Saddam Hussein from power, whatever the means may be, those who would follow would most likely be drawn from the same political circles that have governed Iraq in the recent past. Therefore, the potential challenges from Iraq will not be easy to manage, but they present the AGCC states and its Western partners with three essential tasks. The first is how to handle the return of Iraq to oil markets in ways that do not destabilize or create serious economic problems for the rest of the Gulf. The second will be the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty over its territory and easing the country out of its isolation. Lastly, the AGCC and the West must be prepared to contain and deal constructively with the instability that may accompany change in Baghdad.

The AGCC States are still concerned about possible Iraqi aggression since an unrepentant Saddam Hussein remains in power and the Iraqi army still has potential offensive capability with over 2,500 tanks, 4,400 armored vehicles, 1,000 artillery pieces, 120 attack helicopters, 230 transport helicopters and 300 combat aircrafts<sup>4</sup>. Apart from the military threat, the Iraqi regime could utilize other methods such as subversion or espionage to destabilize the AGCC States. This is quite possible although it is unlikely at the present time: the severe

economic, political and internal security problems in Iraq pose a serious threat directly to Saddam, his family and the Baathist regime.

Baghdad has tried to divide the AGCC States by appealing to some states such as Qatar, U.A.E and Oman while focusing criticism on other Gulf States such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This technique has not been successful. Nevertheless, while AGCC States realize the long-term impact of their division, they do have different points of view on how to deal with Saddam's regime. It must be clear that the AGCC States have no problems with the people of Iraq; their problem is with Saddam's regime. Actually, all the AGCC States have considerable sympathy for the innocent Iraq people, as fellow Arabs suffering from UN sanctions against Iraq. Some people of the AGCC States have called for lifting of unjustified UN sanctions against the people of Iraq who are paying heavy price for Saddam's aggression.

The public in AGCC are blaming the United States for not solving the problem of Iraq, especially since it is the only superpower in the world. Some AGCC nationals even privately express their belief that Saddam has stayed in power because the United States wants him there to keep Iraq weak, as an excuse to maintain U.S military presence in the Gulf, and to sell arms to rich AGCC States. Although this theory is doubtful, it is appealing because it is a simple explanation for the complex phenomenon of Saddam Hussein's extraordinary staying power. I believe that the AGCC leaders are really in a dilemma regarding the situation in Iraq. They are distressed that the Iraqi people are continuing to suffer with no end in sight. At the same time, they don't want to ease the international pressure on Saddam's regime. Listening to the media and talking to the people within the Gulf States suggests that the people of the AGCC really hope for the downfall of Saddam Hussein to help the Iraqi people and establish a new page with an acceptable Iraqi government.

While the nature and timing of Iraqi regime change cannot be predicted, it is not likely to be smooth. It is in AGCC interests to see that change comes to Iraq, but at the same time to prevent a collapse of government and its institutions, or disintegration of the Iraqi state. The challenge here will be to balance constraints on Iraq's rearmament with its need for economic revival. If sanctions and containment are continued too long, disintegration could occur. Too little containment however could result in an economic and military revival in Baghdad that could threaten the Gulf in the twenty-first century.

#### **THREAT FROM IRAN**

The AGCC is very concerned about Tehran's announcement of Iran's plans to buildup its military capabilities and its efforts to carry out those plans. The AGCC is convinced that these

efforts include the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the expansion of chemical and biological weapons capabilities, the acquisition of more sophisticated missiles, and the purchase of three Russian submarines. Despite the relatively improved relations between Iran and the AGCC States, there are still many factors that strain the relationship between the AGCC countries and Iran. The main problem continuing to strain the relationship between the AGCC and Iran is Iran's occupation of the Islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tumb and Lesser Tumb. These Islands, claimed by U.A.E, are strategically located at the mouth of the Straits of Hormuz in the Arabian Gulf.

It is quite clear that Iran harbors ambitions of establishing Iranian hegemony over the Arabian Gulf to export its unique brand of radical Shi'ism. Iran has not hesitated to pursue these twin objectives through every means at its disposal including subversion and terrorism. We see such tactics applied toward the realization of Iranian ambitions not only within the Gulf but far beyond its borders, in distant countries such as Egypt, Sudan, Algeria, Lebanon, the former Yugoslavia, and the newly independent Caucasian and Central Asian republics. Tehran has been the most vocal and active opponent of the Middle East Peace Process and is the sponsor of several of the groups (e.g. Hezbollah) most vehemently and violently opposed to it.

Iran's relations with the Arabian Gulf countries operate on two tracks. On the one hand Iran has a decided need to cultivate friends, to escape regional isolation, and to continue important trade relations. On the other hand, Iran nurtures a desire to assert an independent and forceful foreign policy. These contrasts can be seen in recent Iranian behavior towards the AGCC countries. For example Iran maintains relatively good relations with Oman, ties between Tehran and Riyadh had been improving, and Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar exchanged ambassadors with Iran. However, Iran has also been accused by Bahrain of interfering in its internal affairs, and Iran has not shown any flexibility in resolving the three Islands problem with UAE. Therefore, it can be questioned whether Iran's leaders have the skill and acumen needed to balance these often contradictory goals. Indeed, relations between Iran and its Arab neighbors have been strained for decades and especially since the Iranian Revolution.

Most Arab states supported Iraq during the Iran-Iraq War and paid huge sums of money to sustain Saddam Hussein's war effort. The shock and trauma of Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 put all of the AGCC countries on notice that aggressive neighbors could quite literally obliterate them. Given the vast asymmetries in population and wealth between the GCC and neighboring countries such as Iran, Iraq, and Yemen, it is not surprising that security is of paramount concern<sup>5</sup>.

We are left with an unclear portrait of how Iran regards its involvement within the Gulf. Security in the region cannot be achieved as long as any one of the key regional players - Iraq, the AGCC states and Iran is in a position to exercise a veto and is willing to do so. Therefore, true security necessitates a degree of collaboration and consensus including Iran and Iraq that has never been achieved and that may be beyond the capabilities of the Gulf States, in the twenty-first century.

## **TERRITORIAL DISPUTES**

Territorial dispute constitutes another issue that has threatened regional security for centuries, and one that requires scrutiny when looking toward the twenty-first century. Progress has been made during the 1990s toward finalizing the political map of the Arabian Gulf. It has been underscored above all by the universal and pragmatic realization that precise and clear boundary delimitations are needed in order for hydrocarbon development to proceed smoothly and securely in border areas. The continuing absence of Iran and Iraq from any regional forum such as the GCC, in which territorial disputes can be aired effectively, means that the region's most serious and historically-entrenched disputes will be increasingly difficult to settle.

AGCC states have contained their border disputes through bilateral agreements. Oman was the first country to conclude an agreement with Yemen during late eighties and with Saudi Arabia in 1990. The United Arab Emirates and Oman resolved their border problems after the Gulf War, followed by an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Border problems among Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE were resolved in 1998. The dispute among Qatar and Bahrain was finally solved by the International Court in December 2000.

It can be seen that AGCC states have managed to solve their border disputes through bilateral agreements with exception of Qatar and Bahrain. Due to the nature of the problem, both countries agreed to take their case to the International Court. The United Nation (UN) has resolved the border problems between Iraq and Kuwait, but the Iraqis have not yet agreed or acknowledged the agreement. Therefore, this is still considered a matter of security concern between these two countries.

Dr. Maryam Al – Kandary, a member of the teaching staff in the Political Science Department at Kuwait University stated that the leaders of the AGCC are fully aware of these problems and they deal with them wisely and with political skill<sup>6</sup>. On the other hand Dr. Hashim Bhabahani, a member of the same department in Kuwait University, believes that border issues are very explosive and could expose the Gulf States to challenges, although he considers that these challenges are soluble<sup>7</sup>.

From the above factors we can say that bilateral dialogues between AGCC states have proven to be one of the positive approaches to resolve border problems in the region. But this module didn't work with Iraq and with Iran. Therefore, security challenges will remain until such time as Iraq and Iran agree to meet with their AGCC neighbors, and negotiate these problems with sincerity.

## **OTHER THREATS**

A regional trend that actually extends beyond the Gulf to include the entire Muslim world is the rise of Islam as the idiom of political dialogue. This in and of itself could be considered a benefit to the extent that it raises the public's consciousness of Islamic values and heritage. However, with the frustrations that have accompanied rapid Western-style modernization, the new awakening of Islamic identity has played into the hands of Islamic political revolutionaries who could be referred to as 'revolutionary Islamists'. The revolutionaries proclaim most vestiges of Western influence, including science and technology, to be antithetical to Islam. Interestingly, these same groups often use modern, Western means of communication – telephone, fax and Internet – to spread their message. As recent history makes very clear, a radical Islamist message can be attractive to those who are frustrated with the societal discontinuities that tend to accompany rapid modernity, or to those who are truly concerned over the secularization that inevitably accompanies economic and social development.

The AGCC States are seriously concerned about violence, terrorism and extremism in the region. These issues are a direct threat to the security and stability of the AGCC States. The most serious group is the so called "Islamist Movement" found in most AGCC states. The Security Services in Saudi Arabia, Oman, Kuwait and Bahrain have uncovered secret organizations that are using Islam to cause civil unrest and national disunity in the AGCC States. In many cases, the organizations have external financial and organizational connections. Most of their members are political activists belonging to the Muslim Brotherhood or to other extremist organizations. In Bahrain, Iran has been accused by Bahrain officials through the media of providing political and financial aid for such organizations.

The members of these secret organizations are highly sophisticated and their aim is to overthrow the AGCC governments and replace the present ruling system with radical Islamic governments. Violence and extremism are strange phenomena in the AGCC State societies. By nature, the people of the AGCC States don't like violence or aggression. The vast majority of the people of the AGCC States are aware of the teaching of Islam, and in particular its basic tenets which reject bigotry.

The ideas and tactics of these radical Islamic organizations advocate terrorism. Their enmity is not just against the West, they also mean to hijack Islam itself and to destroy 13 centuries of Islamic civilization. This is of great concern to AGCC security. These radical Islamic organizations have done so much damage to the image of Islam in the world, that Muslims we have to correct it by showing the true tenets of Islam--its principles and its tolerance in order to eliminate terrorism in the Gulf region. We are not in a war between two civilizations. We are fighting an enemy of two civilizations.

Afghanistan has been a haven for some of the world's most radical terrorists and their supporters. In recent years, however, instability in Afghanistan has spread beyond its borders. Many terrorists in Saudi Arabia and Muslim extremists in the West received training in Afghanistan. These extremists have caused violence and instability in Israel, Bosnia, the Arabian Gulf, and other parts of the world. They pose a threat to the Middle East peace process, to the stability of the AGCC states and to Pakistan and Central Asia.

After September 11, 2001, Afghanistan became the focus of international concern as a result of the terrorist acts on U.S soil. Those horrible events have led the world to understand the truth of the Taliban organization and Osama bin Laden and his terrorist network. The need to remove them has become the world's first priority.

Stability in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia will enhance Gulf security. The United State is leading an international coalition in a war on terror with the goal of removing the Taliban from Afghanistan and capturing Osama bin Laden. While this is the goal of the U.S., it is not a solution for Afghanistan's problems. We need to look to the future of Afghanistan and help to solve its problems. International support must be provided to enable Afghanistan's interim government to undertake the task of building government institutions and of overseeing the reconstruction of new Afghanistan. All parts need to work sincerely toward this end. This issue must be taken seriously otherwise the region will remain tense, and terrorists will have a place to hide. If radical Islamic organizations are allowed to hide anywhere in the region, terrorist activities will again spread outside this regions borders to include other parts of the world. AGCC countries are no exception.

The Middle East peace process initially made solid progress following the 1991 Madrid Conference. The peace treaty between Jordan and Israel, and the Oslo Agreement between the Palestian Liberation Organization and Israel are both solid indicators that the agenda for peace in the Middle East is, or was, strategically on track. The breakdown of Arab-Israeli talks and the practice of violence between Israel and the Palestians had an immediate political and economic impact on the Gulf region. AGCC states are part of Arab world and regard Israel as a

regional threat, because The Palestinian Question is the central issue in the Middle East. The Arab-Israeli peace process is supposed to make the Middle East once again a 'normal' region of the world. By ending this bitter conflict, the Middle East can rid itself of the issue most responsible for its political and economic disrepair and can get on with the normal and sufficiently challenging business of development. To a degree, the Middle East has been left behind much of the rest of the world because all of its resources have been wasted fighting and preparing to fight Arab-Israeli wars.

Those resources could be used toward more productive ends. In fact, an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict would free up resources for development. It will also lead to greater regional economic integration that can cause societal pressures for further political openings. Peace begets prosperity and possibly democracy – or so the argument goes. Current Israeli leaders and especially Mr Sharon have not shown much interest in proceeding with the peace process. The practice of aggressive military activities towards the Palestinians has led to violence and increased tension in the region. Therefore, no one can predict an end of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Palestinians, Syrians, Iraqis, Iranians and other people of the Arabian and Islamic countries blame the United States for not putting pressure on Israel. The U.S has always been accused of using a double standard toward U.S Arab allies when addressing issues important to Israel. United States foreign policy must change towards the Middle East peace process otherwise the region will remain in conflict and innocent Arab and Israeli people will continue to die. If peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors is achieved, this will enhance the security of the Gulf States.

## **MAJOR POWERS**

Because of the international strategic importance of Gulf oil, and the resultant political and economic attention to Gulf affairs by countries beyond the region, it is also necessary to look at the impact on Gulf security of geopolitics beyond the region, particularly the West. Western interests are crucial to maintaining Gulf security. U.S. and European participation played a decisive role in creating a consensus for collective action during Gulf War. The U.S. umbrella will remain in place, but one should not take it for granted. U.S. domestic politics play a key role when the U.S. Government decides to commit forces abroad. The American public must perceive that a proximate and significant danger exists to its national interests. Congressional support is required for extended operations. The U.S focuses on two vital interests in the Middle East. Firstly, the security of Israel; secondly, protecting and ensuring the free flow of oil to the U.S and its allies in the West. The security of Israel has been clearly demonstrated to be

a vital American interest during all Arab-Israel wars, where the U.S provided unconditional, unlimited and arguably unjustified support for Israel, particular with the continued supply of military weapons and other goods necessary to fight a war.

With respect to oil President Carter outlined his doctrine of the Arabian Gulf in the State of Union Address on January 23, 1980:

" Let our position be absolutely clear: an attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United State of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force".

The oil security principle was reflected explicitly in the reaction of the U.S and its Western allies to the Iraqi invasion to Kuwait and the formation of Desert Storm Coalition.

It is believed that a major regional conventional war is not the most likely form of conflict either the U.S.A or the AGCC can expect in the region in the years ahead. In seeking to prevent such a crisis, therefore, both the U.S and the GCC states should ensure the U.S military presence in the Gulf maintains as low a profile as possible, while at the same time being aware of the cultural sensitivities and national pride of the local populations. Domestic political conditions in the GCC states themselves could make a continued U.S. military presence increasingly difficult.

For the Europeans, Gulf security ranks just behind Europe's security concerns on its Eastern (central and eastern Europe) and its southern flank (the Mediterranean). The Europeans have played a supportive as opposed to a primary role in the Middle East as witnessed by their contribution to the coalition that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. This situation is likely to endure to the extent that U.S and European long-term interests continue to coincide. Europe is more flexible towards relations with Iran and Iraq than the United States, these differing views have the potential to result in short-term policy disagreements, and European concerns in the Gulf are in line with those of the U.S: the security of energy supplies. Without access to a continuous flow of oil and gas at predictable and manageable prices, The U.S and European economies and the standard of living of their peoples would be at risk<sup>8</sup>. It is the U.S. which provides the military presence to counter-balance the combined strength of Iraq and Iran, in defense of AGCC states. Britain and France are cooperating in this arrangement, however critical they may be of some of the underlying logic of 'Dual Containment'. Within this context, the European role in the Gulf is essentially one of injecting a measure of flexibility and thereby softening what would otherwise be a very uncompromising line by the U.S. In this way, the Europeans may be helping to prevent the total alienation of both Iraq and Iran and, in

company with various members of the AGCC, keeping the lines of communication open for future accommodations to emerge.

The other important considerations in this regard are the political evolution of Russian intentions in the region. Russia, it appears, will continue to be politically active in Central Asia and the Caucasus, part of its declared 'near abroad', for the indefinite future. And as pointed by Barylski<sup>9</sup>, the key to understanding and interpreting Russia's intentions in this regard will be the close observation of the many Russian relationships – political, economic, and social and security – with the Islamic Republic of Iran. This means that Russia has definite state interest in maintaining a balance between Turkey, Iran and Iraq, one arranged to prevent either Turkey or Iran from challenging Russia in its historic sphere of influence. Strong, independent Gulf States are compatible with Russia's basic interest. However, the overall balance requires that an outside power such as the U.S. be the primary military ally of AGCC. Russia cannot play that role of AGCC ally without damaging its delicate relationship with Iran and Iraq.

## **ECONOMIC**

The prosperity of the world economy depends significantly on the availability of oil supplies at a reasonable price. This means that the Arabian Gulf will continue to be a crucial player in the international energy market for three principle reasons: it holds approximately 65% of the world's proven crude oil reserves and 33% of its proven natural gas reserves; these resources are extremely cheap to produce; and they are located on well-developed routes close to consumer markets in Europe and Asia.

The Gulf's share of world oil production is projected to rise in the next few decades and the world will become more dependent on supplies from the region. In other words, the availability of Gulf oil in reliable volume and at reasonable cost is a key to global prosperity.

Looking to the future, the modernization process and public expectations are economic in nature. The economic mainstay of the AGCC States is oil. Its strategic importance is also the basis of the U.S determination at present to secure Arab Gulf States against external threats. Dr Charles Doran<sup>10</sup> argues that the Gulf States are one-third to one-half way through their cycles of revenue generation from oil and must look beyond current strategies for effective economic planning for the next century. There are various revenue stream optimization strategies. They include waiting for the next international oil shortage, price hike sequence and indigenous investment within GCC economies. These three strategies may raise more problems than they solve. It is regional development that offers the best hope for long term economic prosperity and it requires commitment politically from the governments that will stand most to

benefit on commercial and structural grounds. Therefore, AGCC states must ensure economic growth that offers long term economic prosperity, which will lead to an atmosphere of economic stability and security in the region.

### **POLITICAL MODERNIZATION**

Political stability is far too complex a phenomenon to be linked to only economic development. The economic factor, important as it is, is only one of many factors contributing to stability. Analyzing the long-term impact of modernization on traditional societies is equally important in assessing Gulf security. With new ideas and material comforts obtainable through oil-generated wealth, social mores have changed drastically and expectations have soared. Perhaps the most important test of regime competency in the next century will be the AGCC states ability to continue to meet public expectations.

Rapidly rising populations throughout the Gulf with large families in addition to greatly improved health standards and technology will in all likelihood diminish the ability of Gulf governments to maintain the standard of living to which their citizens have become accustomed<sup>11</sup>. If populations double in the next 20 years, as projected, revenues will have to double for AGCC countries to maintain the current standard of living. Social and economic infrastructure deemed sufficient now will become woefully inadequate. The current population explosion throughout the Gulf will impact on the labor market. Gender and health issues arising from shifting demographics and rapid modernization all must also be fitted into the question of long-term Gulf security. Population growth projection indicate a future problem area although many Gulf officials believe that as the population grows, local citizens will simply assume those jobs now being performed by foreign labor. Unfortunately, many of these jobs are menial in nature and thus socially undesirable to a great majority of Gulf citizens. If Gulf citizens should be economically coerced to accept menial jobs, internal stability could diminish at least during the transition period. Therefore, policies must be formulated and implemented to reduce the dependence on the welfare state, to engender a work ethic, to educate citizens for skills and trades, and perhaps increase female employment in the workforce. The long-term prosperity of the nations ultimately depends upon the ability of its peoples to manage existing resources and develop new ones. New forms and modalities of political modernization participation must be negotiated and implemented between the ruling groups and the significant sectors in civil society.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure immediate military capabilities that would at least deter, delay and fight any aggressor until Arab or International assistance arrive if necessary, the AGCC should build its own collective security by enhancing and developing the military capabilities of the Peninsular Shield Forces. This will ensure an immediate military response, increase national prestige, transfer advanced technology, create more employment, and improve national relations. And this may be one of the joint ventures with the West.

Internal security and stability are extremely important, and can be achieved through greater political participation, social justice and high rates of economic growth. The strange phenomenon of terrorism, violence and extremism must be rejected and defeated at all cost.

It is in the AGCC interest to see that change comes to Iraq, however, it is not going to be easy to manage the potential challenges that this change brings. Therefore, AGCC states and their Western partners need to coordinate their political activities in order to be able to execute four essential tasks: the first is to make sure that sanctions and containment do not continue too long. The second is to handle the return of Iraq to oil markets in ways that do not destabilize or create serious economic problems for the rest of the Gulf. The third will be the restoration of Iraq's sovereignty over its territory and easing the country out of its isolation. Lastly, the AGCC and the West must be prepared to contain and deal constructively with the instability that may accompany change in Baghdad.

Security in the region cannot be achieved without Iran's participation. AGCC states should reduce tension and defuse conflict with Iran through diplomatic and peaceful means, and seek to establish a degree of collaboration and consensus.

Though AGCC play in the Middle East peace process continues to maintain a low profile, it is acknowledged that peace between Israel and its Arab neighbors would enhance the security of the Gulf region. AGCC should politically continue to support the Middle East peace process and encourage both sides to reach a comprehensive peaceful settlement. AGCC should also be prepared to utilize Israel as an economic partner.

AGCC States should not base their relations with the West on oil only but link it to greater economic and political cooperation. To understand each others vital interests and cultural differences, and to enhance and develop team work, there is a need to create permanent and common interests, with the aim of establishing joint ventures in a great variety of fields.

The imbalance of power created after the Gulf War should be offset by the U.S. The United States should take a less visible role in the security of the region. Establishing permanent U.S. bases in the AGCC States has proved to be dangerous and has become a

destabilizing factor. In order to maintain stability, the U.S. has the lift capability to quickly respond to major threats of its allies in the region. The U.S should assist the AGCC States in building their own collective security by enhancing and developing the military capabilities of ISF to be an AGCC joint force capable of deterring, delaying and fighting the aggressor.

All territorial disputes should be recognized as time bombs; therefore, regional organizations (AGCC, Arab League and Islamic Country Organization) must encourage bilateral discussions and be capable of resolving disputes between countries by peaceful and diplomatic means. And if both bilateral discussions and regional organization proposals could not resolve a particular issue, the Gulf States should practice flexibility for the subject matter to be pursued by The International Court.

AGCC economies depend on oil, waiting for the next international oil shortage, price hike sequence and indigenous investment. These strategies may raise more problems than they solve. Regional development and inviting foreign investment in all AGCC countries will offer the best hope for long term economic stability in the region.

Population growth projections indicate a future problem area. Though AGCC officials do acknowledge this, policies should be formulated and implemented to reduce the dependence on the welfare state, to engender a work ethic, and to educate citizens for skills and trades that will give them the ability to simply assume those jobs now being performed by foreign labor. We also need to increase female employment in the workforce.

## **CONCLUSION**

It is fairly clear from the above that although the AGCC countries do not take a belligerent stand towards their neighbors, a distinct security threat exists for the Gulf region. Therefore, it is absolutely essential that AGCC States ensure their own security by taking necessary steps for greater unity. They must enhance and develop collective political, military and economical policies. AGCC countries should not base their relation with the West on oil only but link it to greater economic, political and security cooperation. They should all create permanent and common interests such as establishing joint ventures on a variety of issues.

The ultimate strategic challenge for the AGCC States in the twenty-first century will not only be to deter and prepare to defend against external military threats, but also to insure that change – economic, political and social remains evolutionary instead of becoming revolutionary. One thing we can be certain of is that there will be a change. On the other hand, it is important to acknowledge that while much will change in the Arab Gulf over the coming decades, much

will not. The challenges posed by the various forces that have been mentioned in this paper demand a responsive and flexible public policy within the Gulf.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Cooperation Council for The Arab States of the Gulf, The Cooperation Council – Charter (Secretariat General: Riyadh: six edition, 1991), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Gulf Region/States – Refers to the countries of the Arabian Peninsular and those countries contiguous to the Gulf. Included are Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Oman, Yemen, Iraq and Iran.

<sup>3</sup> The Peninsular Shield Forces (ISF) is the land forces component consist of forces from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates.

<sup>4</sup> The International Institute for Strategic Studies, The Military Balance 2001-2002 (London, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 134.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Jamal S. Al Suwaidi, "United Arab Emirates University Students' views on Gulf Crisis," Al – Uloom Al Ijtima'iyya, autumn and winter 1991, 3/4, 111. Dr. Jamal Al Suwaidi is the director of the Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and Professor at the UAE University in Al Ain.

<sup>6</sup> Dr. Maryam Al – Kandari, "Challenges facing the Gulf Cooperation Council," Al – Siyassa, 13 August 1997, 1034.

<sup>7</sup> Dr. Hashem Bahbahani, "Challenges facing the Gulf Cooperation Council," Al – Siyassa, 11 August 1997, 10312.

<sup>8</sup> David E. Long and Christian Koch, Gulf Security in Twenty-first Century (Abu Dhabi: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997), 75.

<sup>9</sup> Dr. Robert V. Barylski, "The Collapse of the Soviet Union and the Gulf Security," in Gulf Security in the Twenty-first Century, ( Abu Dhabi, The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997),90.

<sup>10</sup> Dr. Charles F. Doran, "Economics and Security in the Gulf", Gulf Security in the Twenty-first Century, (Abu Dhabi, The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 1997), 189. Dr. Doran is the Andrew W. Mellon professor of International Relations at the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Johns Hopkins University, Washington DC.

<sup>11</sup> Birks Sinclair and Associates Ltd (BSAL), GCC Market Report 1992, (Dunham, England: Mountjoy Research Center, 1992), 89.



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