

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

ARABIAN GULF SECURITY

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE

Form Approved OMB No.
0704-0188

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.

1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 07-04-2003	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED (FROM - TO) xx-xx-2002 to xx-xx-2003	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Arabian Gulf Security Unclassified		5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
		5b. GRANT NUMBER	
		5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Al Kindi, Abdullah ; Author		5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
		5e. TASK NUMBER	
		5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks Carlisle, PA17013-5050		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME AND ADDRESS		10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
		11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT APUBLIC RELEASE			
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
14. ABSTRACT See attached file.			
15. SUBJECT TERMS			
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:		17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT Same as Report (SAR)	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 27
a. REPORT Unclassified	b. ABSTRACT Unclassified	19. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON Rife, Dave RifeD@awc.carlisle.army.mil	
c. THIS PAGE Unclassified	19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER International Area Code Area Code Telephone Number DSN		
			Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98) Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39.18

ABSTRACT

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TITLE: ARABIAN GULF SECURITY

FORMAT: Strategy Research Project

DATE: 07 April 2003 PAGES: 27 CLASSIFICATION: Unclassified

This Strategy Research Project contains strictly my personal views. It is intended to examine the security threats to and within the Arabian Gulf and addresses the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) States approach to solving these threats. Based on this background information, I will suggest recommendations for future solutions and how to achieve security in the region. 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 in order to face the security challenges in the future. AGCC States should get a solution to the main points of friction associated with the Iranian occupation of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Islands, and the current Iraqi threat. The AGCC States 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 greatest strategic challenge for the AGCC States in the future will be not only to deter and prepare to defend their soils against external military threats, but also to ensure that economic, political, and social changes remains evolutionary instead of becoming revolutionary. The challenges posed by various forces that have been mentioned in this study demand a collective, responsive, and flexible public policy within the Gulf region.

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PREFACE

This research project is the culmination of my studies of the myriad issues and the implications to the Arabian Gulf Cooperation Council States. This paper aims to show how best the AGCC States can approach to achieve security and stability in the region. Colonel James R. Oman provided valuable guidance and direction on this project. His advice and assistance were invaluable.

ARABIAN GULF SECURITY

BACKGROUND

The security threats and the instability in the Arabian Gulf in the late 1970s hastened the inception of the Arab Gulf Cooperation Council (AGCC) formed by the six Arabian Gulf States of the Arabian Peninsula--Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1981. The Iranian Revolution of 1979 was the opening stage of serious instability. The outbreak of war between Iran and Iraq in 1980 and the fear from the expansion of the war to nonbelligerent countries, and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan all exacerbated the instability in the region. These events posed serious regional threats and set the stage for formal military cooperation between the Arab Gulf States through the AGCC. At that time, the leaders of the AGCC States placed a greater emphasis on economic cooperation than military cooperation. Security was one of the major concerns of the leaders but it was not the only objective of the AGCC. Actually, security was not even included as one of the major AGCC objectives in Article Four of the AGCC Charter. Because security was a very sensitive issue, and the AGCC leaders did not want their neighbors to perceive the creation of this organization as a military alliance.

The strategic interest of the AGCC States has always been in preventing confrontation and defusing hostilities in the region. Due to the historical role of external actions and interference of major powers in the region, the AGCC States have been keen to build a reasonable defense capacity against other regional states in the area. There are many limitations and restrictions in personnel, training, as well as other structural and geographical constraints.¹ The military capacity of which the AGCC States could develop in the past individually and collectively did not match the enormous strategic importance of the AGCC States. The small population of the AGCC States did not allow the formation of large armies or other labor-intensive military structures to match the large populations and the standing armies of Iraq and Iran.

In order to compensate for the lack of personnel, the AGCC States concentrated on obtaining sophisticated capital-intensive defensive weaponry from foreign suppliers.² However, this approach created another problem. The number of indigenous educated personnel was comparatively small compared to where military modernization was necessary.

Having realized this shortcoming, all AGCC States invested generously in human capital, mainly in education and other related human development programs. At the same time, they

were obliged to rely on foreign personnel to train and assist in developing their indigenous military capacity.³

There are many other challenges of general relevance to the strategic interests and development of military capabilities, including the geographical characteristics of the AGCC States, such as protecting large territories with a remote social and economic infrastructure.

The strategic location of oil installations, most of which are located on the Gulf or in the desert, are vulnerable to attack by sea and air. Attacks on key facilities could impair the entire oil infrastructure, though efforts have been aimed at achieving a degree of redundancy.⁴

THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR, 1980-88

The outbreak of the war between Iraq and Iran provided the first major threat to the AGCC States. Full-scale warfare erupted on September 10, 1980 as Iraq's military units swept across the Shatt al Arab waterway.⁵ This war presented the Gulf region with great hostility and instability. Initially the AGCC States were affected peripherally, but as most of the AGCC States supported Iraq in this unfortunate war, the Iranians reacted to the Iraqi air attack on its main oil terminal on the Island of Kharj by attacking ships destined for ports in Gulf States that assisted Iraq in its war effort.⁶ Also, during the war some of the AGCC States (Bahrain and Kuwait) accused Iran of getting involved in destabilizing incidents, including an abortive coup in Bahrain in 1981, terrorist activity in Kuwait in 1983, and violence in Mecca, resulting in the death of more than 400 pilgrims.⁷ As a result of these attacks on the oil tankers, Kuwait sought the protection of the US to escort its vessels in the Gulf. The United States, determined to protect its interest in the region to ensure the flow of oil, accepted and placed Kuwaiti oil tankers under the American flag. Also, the British and Soviets took part in the re-flagging of Kuwaiti ships. Under this arrangement, Kuwait succeeded in protecting its oil tankers and Iran generally avoided interfering with Kuwaiti ships sailing under the major powers' protection.⁸ The war lasted for eight years. Heavy losses were sustained by both countries which included both human casualties and the destruction of main cities, eventually forcing the Iranians to accept a United Nations cease-fire in August 1988.

THE GULF WAR, 1990-1991

Unfortunately, on August 2, 1990 another full-scale war was initiated in the Gulf region by the president of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. But this time the war was a full-scale invasion against Kuwait, a member of the AGCC. This war presented the AGCC States with immediate threats and a direct challenge to their survival and existence. All AGCC States, and the whole world for

that matter, were caught by surprise waking up on the morning of August 2, 1990 to find that Kuwait had been invaded and ceased to exist as a sovereign state. The invasion of Kuwait was not only rejected by the AGCC States, but was condemned by the entire international community with the regrettable exception of a few Arab countries who felt that their moral principles would be compromised or were seeking vague economic advantages as promised by Saddam. The Iraqi invasion of its small neighbor, Kuwait, was a serious blow to Arab unity. It was an unprecedented event in the modern Arab history and was the most traumatic incident in the history of the Arab League.

It is ironic to remember that before the war, Egypt, Jordan, Yemen, and Iraq formed a short-lived Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) whose members then found themselves on opposing sides after Saddam's invasion of Kuwait. The AGCC had been unable to deter or prevent the forcible annexation of one of its members and the ACC had failed to stop one of its members, Iraq, from the unilateral use of force in realizing the ambitions of its leadership.⁹

Intelligence sources believed that, after Iraq completed its occupation of Kuwait, it was positioning its forces for a subsequent drive toward the Saudi Arabian oil fields and possibly continuing down toward other AGCC States. I personally did not agree with this analysis. It would not have been to Saddam Hussein's advantage to swallow Saudi Arabia and other AGCC States. His lines of communications would have been too thinly extended and his forces would have been dangerously and vulnerably exposed to air and land attacks. The threat of Saddam's subsequent drive to Saudi Arabia, however, was greatly exaggerated by the West. Such exaggeration of threats was not necessary because the AGCC States were totally committed to the liberation of Kuwait at any cost. The creditability of the AGCC was under serious challenge. Also, if the occupation had been allowed to continue, it would have set a serious precedence in the international relation and many aggressors around the world would follow Saddam's approach in dealing with their neighbors.

The UN issued a series of resolutions condemning Iraq. The Security Council, on August 2, 1990, called for Iraq's unconditional and immediate withdrawal from Kuwait. Again, to protect its interests in the region and as the only super-power in the world, the United States took the lead and formed a coalition from 28 countries and deployed more than 600,000 ground, sea, and air personnel to protect Saudi Arabia and liberate Kuwait. The majority of the coalition consisted of forces and military equipment that were provided by the US.

Command of the coalition forces was divided: Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf headed the US, British and French Units; his Saudi counterpart, Lt. Gen. Khalid Ibn Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz Al Saud, commanded units from 24 non-western countries, including troops from Saudi Arabia,

Egypt, Syria, Kuwait, and other AGCC States. In addition to 20,000 Saudi troops and 7,000 Kuwaiti troops, an estimated 3,000 personnel from other AGCC states took part in the land forces of the coalition offensive, which was known as Operation Desert Storm.¹⁰ On February 28, 1991, although Kuwait was liberated yet another tragic phase of the war had already begun, the suffering of the innocent Iraqi people. The sanctions that were placed on Iraq during the conflict are still on today after more than twelve years. The Iraqi people have paid heavy prices for the imperiousness of their unwise leadership.

EXTERNAL THREATS

Most of the external threats that precipitated the formation of the AGCC, in 1981, still exist today. In 1981, the AGCC did not regard Iraq as a serious threat to its security. Today, twelve years after the Gulf War, Iraq, despite its military defeat in 1991, still possesses the means to threaten the AGCC States as long as the Baath regime and Saddam Hussein are still in power. Iran, with its revolutionary ideology, still poses a threat. Iran has softened its radical position since President Mohammed Khatami came to power in 1997. It has attempted to improve its tarnished image in the international community, but it is still considered a threat. Iran will continue to be viewed as a threat as long as it continues to occupy the three islands that belong to UAE and to buy and develop offensive military capabilities.

The Arab- Israeli Conflict. The Arab-Israeli conflict was not really a pressing issue during the previous Labor Government as the peace process was making some progress and the parties were committed to the peace process. But the breakdown of Arab-Israeli talks and the practice of violence between Israelis and the Palestinians have an immediate impact on the Gulf region.

Many people of the Arabian and Islamic countries blame the United States for not putting pressure on Israel. The US has always been accused of using a double standard toward US-Arab allies when addressing issues important to Israel. United States foreign policy must change toward the Middle East peace process otherwise the region will remain in conflict and innocent Arab and Israeli people will continue to die. Therefore, any solution to this problem must include a just, comprehensive and permanent peaceful settlement in the Middle East, and the realization of Palestinian legitimate rights of having a state of their own side by side with Israel on the basis of UN Resolution 242 and 338 that established the "Land for peace".

The present Israeli Government is largely antagonistic to the Palestinians and toward the peace process. They are unwilling to move forward with the peace agreement, rather wanting to stop legitimate resistance to occupations and the renegotiation of the Oslo agreement, which

may endanger the whole peace process. Under such circumstances, the AGCC States regard Israel as a regional threat, because the Palestinian question is the central issue in the Middle East. The AGCC fully supports the peace process and previously two of its members, Oman and Qatar even had limited economic contact with Israel. But presently, they have frozen all contacts with the present Israeli Government because it has not honored the peace agreement that was signed by the previous Labor Government.

The Iranian Threat. The Persian threat to the Arab Gulf States goes back hundreds of years in history. In the distant past, there have been many Persian invasions to the Arab side of the Gulf. It was driven by a strong tradition of struggle in the region. It was also the ambition of Iran, expressed earlier by Shah Muhammed Reza Pahlavi, and then, more recently by Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors, to play the dominant role in the Gulf security. This along with the continuing occupation of the three islands in the Arabian Gulf and the Iranian weapon acquisition programs, has caused suspicion between the Sunni Muslims on the Arab side of the Gulf and the Shiite religious Imams who control Iran. These factors are the main causes for the confrontation. They have created a psychological threat and mistrust between the two groups.

However, the Iranians and the Arabs are neighbors and have been living together for many centuries. They both contributed generously to the Islamic Civilization and there has been strong economic and cultural cooperation between Iran and the member States of the AGCC. The AGCC States regard Iran as an important regional power but they do not want Iran to dominate the region. The defeat of Iraq, in 1991, has altered the balance of power in the Gulf region. The AGCC States are suspicious about the intention of Iran and its role in the security of the region. Yet the relationship between the AGCC States and Iran is not one of open hostility. Oman for example, has relatively good links with Iran, as they both share the responsibility of the Strait of Hormuz. Oman has always kept open links with Iran and mediated quietly between Iran and other AGCC States. Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar exchanged ambassadors in December, 1990 with Iran. However, Bahrain withdrew its ambassador in protest to the recent internal problems and its accusation of Iran of interfering in its internal affairs. Since then they have established normal relationships. Also, ties between Riyadh and Tehran had been improving until they soured again during the 1993 Haj (Pilgrimage) after a disagreement over a demonstration planned by Iranian pilgrims.¹¹ But since the 1993 Haj incident, the links between the two countries have been very much improved.

Despite the relatively improved relations between Iran and the AGCC States, there are still many factors that strain the relationships between the AGCC countries and Iran. The AGCC States believed that Iran was not only expressing political opposition to the Arab-Israeli

peace process, but that it was also financing operations to undermine it. The AGCC States are also concerned about Iran's involvement in the internal subversion acts that were carried out by resident Iranian nationals in some AGCC States such as Bahrain.¹² Additionally, the AGCC is very concerned about Iran's effort in building up its military capabilities, which Tehran announced and proceeded to carry out. AGCC States are convinced that this effort involves the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the expansion of chemical and biological weapons capabilities, the acquisition of more sophisticated missiles, and the purchase of three modern diesel submarines from Moscow.¹³ Iran denies that its military capability is of an offensive nature and argues that its arms build-up is simply the restoration of the capabilities destroyed in the eight-year war, and designed to protect the country from external enemies such as the US. Also, Iran denies the support of subversive activities in the AGCC States or elsewhere abroad.

Finally, the main problem which continues to strain the relationship between the AGCC and Iran is its occupation of the three islands of Abu Mosa, Greater Tumb and Lesser Tumb. These islands are claimed by the UAE. The three islands are strategically located at the mouth of Strait of Hurmoz in the Arabian Gulf. They are all very small and Abu Mosa has a small amount of oil, while the two Tumbs have none, but strategically they are very important for both countries.¹⁴

The UAE has been working hard in publicizing and internationalizing the issue of its claims of ownership. UAE claims that the Islands belonged to Emirates of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaimah prior to the formation of the UAE and that Iran "occupied" them by force in 1971 when the Emirates were weak. Iran adheres to its official position that "these islands have always belonged to Iran; the British took them in 1903 and gave them to the Emirates, but returned them to Iran in 1971. These islands are under Iranian sovereignty and if others do not accept this reality then that is their problem".¹⁵ After the Gulf War, the UAE broke a silence of 21 years and announced claims of ownership over all three islands after Iranian authorities prevented more than 100 people of various Arab nationalities (mainly teachers) from entering Abu Musa in April and September 1991.¹⁶

The UAE was very successful in drawing the Arab and world attention to its claims. The AGCC issued many statements supporting the UAE's claims. The Arab League has done the same and the UAE officials have brought up the issue in their annual addresses to the UN assembly. Also, the UAE is willing to take the case to the International Court of Justice at the Hague. However, Iran is not willing to accept this proposal and is not even willing to negotiate the "ownership" of the islands. Iran normally issued very strong statements to UAE claims; for example after the December, 1992, AGCC Summit Meeting, Tehran declared that if the UAE

tried to take the island, it would have to “cross a sea of blood” to do so.¹⁷ Also, the Iranian military presence on Abu Musa remains relatively high and increased in times of tension. It has been confirmed that Iran has deployed Silkworm Missiles in Abu Musa recently; this action may increase the tension between Iran, the UAE, and anybody else using the Straits of Hormuz.

In analyzing the islands problem it is clear that UAE and the rest of the AGCC States did not intend to provoke a violent conflict in the region, but the AGCC’s ultimate political purpose is to send clear signals to Iran and other potential aggressors, indicating that the AGCC States would not be intimidated by any external threats. Remembering the Iraqi invasion of one of its members (Kuwait) in 1990, and seeing Iran building its military forces and talking tough, the AGCC leaders want to draw a line in the water to ensure that Iran or Iraq would not try to encroach any further on AGCC States’ territories.¹⁸ Iran does not want the AGCC States to request the assistance of the West to ensure their security and stability. At the same time, its actions toward the AGCC States, including the islands issue and its weapon acquisition programs, do not correspond to Iran’s soft and reconciling language that it has been using recently to obtain the trust of the AGCC States. The AGCC States don’t want talks - they want positive actions and would like to see confidence-building measures taken to reduce the tensions in the region. Reaching a peaceful settlement on the issue of the islands, stopping the interference in the internal affairs of the AGCC States, and reducing its military offensive capability, would be a good start from the AGCC point of view.

The Iraqi Threat. Today, more than twelve years after the Gulf War, the AGCC States still consider Iraq as a threat to their security. During the Iran-Iraq war the AGCC States provided Iraq with financial and political assistance, considering that an Arab State was fighting a non-Arab neighbor. But when the war ended in 1988, the AGCC leaders had become wary of Saddam’s intentions, especially when Saddam Hussein took a strong public position on oil policy and strongly criticized Kuwait and the UAE for their policies toward oil prices.¹⁹

The AGCC States were hoping that the crushing military defeat of Saddam Hussein in 1991 would bring an acceptable and friendlier Iraqi government that would respect the sovereignty of the AGCC States and help the Iraqi people to get over the post-war problems. Unfortunately, this did not happen. Twelve years later Saddam is still in power causing more security threats to his neighbors and creating more misery for his own people.

Apart from the military threat, the Iraqi regime could utilize other methods such as subversion or secret agents to destabilize the AGCC States. This is quite possible, but it is unlikely at the present time, due to the severe economic, political and internal security problems in Iraq, which pose a serious threat directly to Saddam, his family, and the Baath regime. Also,

Baghdad has tried to divide the AGCC States by appealing to some states such as Qatar, UAE and Oman and focusing criticism on others such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. This technique has not been very successful.

The AGCC States realize the long term impact of their division, but 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, but their problem is with Saddam's regime. Actually, all AGCC States have considerable sympathy with the innocent Iraqi people, as fellow Arabs who are suffering from the UN sanctions against Iraq. Some of the AGCC States have called for lifting of the unjustified UN sanctions against the poor people of Iraq who are paying the heavy price of Saddam's aggression.

Some people of the AGCC are blaming the United States for not solving the problem, 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 and to serve as an excuse to maintain a US 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. 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.²⁰ At the same time, they don't want to ease the international pressure on Saddam's regime. 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.

INTERNAL THREAT

The internal threat to the AGCC States is even more serious than the external threat. In this case, the internal threat to the security and the stability of the AGCC countries comes from within the people of the AGCC States, through subversion or through secret agents working within the societies.

Terrorism and extremism. 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" which is 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

connections, both financial and organizational. Most of their members are political activists belonging to either the Muslim Brotherhood, or other independent organizations.

Terrorism in all its forms is strictly prohibited in Islam. Targeting of innocent civilians, women, and children like what happened on September 11, 2001 in the United States, or even in times of war is an unpardonable sin according to the teachings of Islam. AGCC countries have condemned this act and see that continuous vigilance is necessary to fight terrorism with an iron hand.

Terrorism has become a day-to-day concern within the Gulf region and internationally. Terrorists have taken on various means and methods in order to pursue their objective without regard for the lives of innocent women, men, children, and the elderly. These methods include assassination, kidnapping, and bombing, often with fatal consequences for their victims.

In the past some of the AGCC States, e.g., Bahrain, accused Iran 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 Islamist governments.²¹

THE WEST AND THE AGCC STATES

The West has been involved in the security of the region for many years. However, oil was the primary attraction for the United States, unlike the imperial goals of Britain and France before it. As the British influence gradually declined in the 1960s, the US started to fill the vacuum that was created by the withdrawal of the British. The Truman Doctrine of containment held the Middle East as a strategic region from which the fight against communism could be based. President Carter outlined his doctrine of the Arabian Gulf in the State of the Union Address on January 23, 1980 when he stated "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 States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force".²²

This is a clear commitment from the US to defend its vital interests in the region and the US has assumed full responsibility to respond to any outside aggressor on the AGCC States. With the loss of Iran as an ally, Saudi Arabia and other AGCC States' strategic position grew in stature.²³ The US focuses on two vital interests in the Middle East: first, the security of Israel; second, protecting and ensuring the free flow of oil to the US and its allies in the West. The security of Israel is clearly demonstrated during all Arab-Israeli wars, where the US has provided unconditional, unlimited, and unjustified support for Israel, using a double standard

toward US-Arab allies when addressing issues important to Israel, and the continued supply of military weapons and other goods necessary to fight a war. The Israeli political lobby in the United States showed remarkable influence in pushing the immediate and outright support for Israel's fight against its neighbors.²⁴ Moreover, in many cases such support is at the expense of other US strategic interests in the region and the American taxpayers. On the other hand, the oil security principle was reflected explicitly in the reaction of the US and its Western allies to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and the formation of the Desert Storm Coalition. Logically, as long as the AGCC States are blessed with oil, and Western economies depend on this commodity, these Western countries will always protect the region and will always reformulate a Desert Storm kind of coalition. Additionally, the West has found an excellent market for their weapons in the Gulf region. For example, in 2002 Oman purchased \$49 million worth of F16 ammunition to supplement their 2001 purchase of the F16 aircraft. Kuwait has informed the United States government of their intention to spend \$131 million on the Aerostat radar system. Finally, the UAE is spending \$1.5 billion in upgrading their Apache helicopter purchase.²⁵ This can be seen as the tax that the AGCC States have to pay to the West.²⁶

REGIONAL SECURITY ALLIANCES

The security arrangement of the Gulf region is a very delicate and sensitive issue. The AGCC States used to believe in phrases such as, "The security of the region is the responsibility of the countries in the region." This is of course, including the two major powers in the region, Iran and Iraq. Unfortunately, the Gulf War in 1990 contradicted this principle and the threat came from one of the major powers (Iraq) in the region. On the other hand, the other major power (Iran) continues to occupy three islands in the Arabian Gulf, to interfere in the internal affairs of some of the AGCC States, and to build an ambitious weapon acquisition program with offensive capabilities.

It is not clear at this point how the AGCC States can form a military alliance with Iran and Iraq in order to protect the region from potential foreign aggressors, since the AGCC States perceive Iran and Iraq themselves as potential and serious threats. The experience of the Gulf War in 1991 is still in vivid memory of the people of the AGCC. Inviting a Western power to assist in the security of the region does not please the AGCC States or their people, but they were forced to do so by their big neighbors. The AGCC States continue to pay a heavy price for Western protection, but their survival as sovereign states is more important than the cost. The United States has to maintain the military balance in the region until such time as a balance of power is achieved between the AGCC States and other major powers in the region, or until

more acceptable regimes come to power in Iran and Iraq who are willing to cooperate and not to dominate the region.

The Damascus Declaration. Soon after the conclusion of the Gulf War, the AGCC States formed a coalition with Egypt and Syria (AGCC + 2). This was achieved at the Damascus Declaration. The AGCC States were to provide the financial support for a regional security pact, while Egypt and Syria were to provide the manpower to ensure stability. Unfortunately, some of the AGCC States became uneasy at the thought of housing Egyptian and Syrian troops on their soil and asked them to leave soon after the alliance was formed.²⁷ The alliance still exists, but its role in the security of the region is very limited.

The Omani Proposal. After the Gulf War, the AGCC leaders asked Oman to prepare a proposal on the future security of the AGCC States. Oman proposed to establish a combined force of 100,000 troops, and that command of the forces be rotated among the member countries.²⁸ Oman believed that the AGCC should enhance and develop collective capabilities that would be at least capable to deter, delay, and fight an aggressor until Arab or international assistance arrives, if necessary. The proposed force was to match the Iraqi Republican Guard. Oman believed that a rotating command would enhance the level of commitment among the member states and underscore, politically and symbolically, the collective security aspects of their respective defense effort.²⁹ At the 1993 Saudi Arabia Summit, AGCC leaders voiced modest support of the Omani proposal and recommended further study.³⁰ The ultimate strategic objective of the Omani proposal is to achieve a collective balance of power between the AGCC States and either Iran or Iraq. This could be achieved by establishing a well-trained and equipped joint standing force from all the AGCC States. The desired end state of this proposal is to reduce or eliminate dependence on the western military protection, especially from the USA.

In 1983 the six AGCC countries formed a force called the Peninsula Shield Force. Its mission was to reinforce any of the six AGCC countries if threatened by any outside force. Any threat to the six States is considered a threat to all AGCC countries. The current strength is 7,000 troops based at Hafr Al Batin (Saudi Arabia) and it is made up from elements from all AGCC States.

The ambitious Omani proposal for a 100,000 strong AGCC Force was to enhance the existing Peninsula Shield Force of 7,000 men on active service and a combined augmentation force 20,000 soldiers. Now it seems that after serious study and consideration, the plan is for 27,000 men on active duty, and greater standardization of equipment and integration.³¹ Also there has been a decision by the AGCC leaders to include Air Force and Navy in the Peninsula

Shield Force, but this has not been activated yet. During the AGCC Summit in Doha in December, 1996, the AGCC leaders cleared most of the problems over differences of sovereignty and technicalities related to the enhancement of the Peninsula Shield Force and toward building an integrated defense system. The AGCC States possess sophisticated air power capabilities which will play a major role in the AGCC Security arrangement. Also, the AGCC States are building an integrated early warning system that allows information sharing and triggers a response if one part of the AGCC States is threatened. On 28 February 2001 the military commanders in Kuwait and the other members of the AGCC states commissioned the first phase of the early warning radar system. This early warning radar system will link command and control within the AGCC States. The cost of phase I of the project amounted to \$158m million.

The intent of this project is two fold, cooperation and protected communications. Kuwait news agency quoted Maj. Gen. Falih A'Shatty, the former Assistant General Secretary for military affairs as saying "The project will contribute to the achievement of peace and stability in the Gulf region and will also eliminate the limitations resulting from lack of radar coverage, and each state will now have the capability of tracking intruding aircraft across the entirety of their skies, thus acquiring a warning depth and more time for readiness to counter any attack on their states". At the present time, Saudi Arabia is the only AGCC State operating Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft capable of monitoring the whole AGCC States and beyond. It is also the only AGCC State with an operational, fully automatic air defensive system. Other AGCC States are enhancing similar defensive capabilities.³² The AGCC countries are extremely interested in coordinating their arms purchases in order to develop functional compatibility of their weapons systems. This is a necessary requirement for joint military exercises and operations.³³

In summary, the AGCC States must ensure their security through the following security elements. First, they should build their own collective security by enhancing and developing the military capabilities of the Peninsula Shield Force. This will ensure immediate response, increase national prestige, transfer advanced technology, create more employment, and improve international relations. Second, AGCC States should reduce tension and defuse conflict in the region through diplomatic and peaceful means, especially with Iran. Third, internal security and stability are extremely important and can be achieved through greater political participation, social justice, and high rate of economic growth. The strange phenomenon of terrorism, violence, and extremism must be rejected and defeated at all costs. Fourth, the imbalance of power that has been created after the Gulf War should be offset by the

US. The United States should take a less visible role in the security of the region. Establishing permanent US bases in the AGCC States has proven to be dangerous and a destabilizing factor. In order to maintain stability, the US has the lift capability to quickly respond to major threats of its allies in the region. The US should assist the AGCC States in building their own military capabilities to act collectively as a new regional stabilizer. The AGCC States should not base their relation with the west on oil, but rather link it with greater economic and political cooperation. We should aim to create permanent and common interests, such as establishing joint ventures. Fifth, the AGCC policy toward Iraq will probably not change until the demise of Saddam's regime. When that occurs, the AGCC States are likely to reconcile with the new leadership in Baghdad. Sixth, the AGCC States should continue to support the Middle East peace process and encourage both sides to reach a just and comprehensive peaceful settlement.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Economic growth and progress are only possible in an atmosphere of stability and security in the region. Therefore, the AGCC States must reduce tension and defuse potential conflicts in the region. Potential problems with Iran and Iraq should be settled through diplomatic and peaceful means. Undoubtedly, the AGCC States, Iran and Iraq have suffered greatly from the Iran-Iraq War from 1980-1988, and the Gulf War in 1991. By the end of the two wars, all countries in the region were losers. The actual winners were Israel and the weapons industry in the West and around the globe. We must understand that it is in the interest of some countries to keep the region under continuous turmoil.

The AGCC States must enhance and build their own collective security by developing and improving the military capabilities of the existing (Gulf) Peninsula Shield Force. This will not only ensure immediate military response, but will provide a much needed delay to potential aggressors. The AGCC States should not count on a Desert Storm kind of response from the West in the future, especially if the Western interests in the region declines. The AGCC States are confronted with such security threats because of its enormous economic resources. The US should keep a low profile in any security arrangements with the AGCC States, and assist the AGCC States in building their own military capabilities to act collectively as a new regional stabilizer.

The AGCC States should not base their relations with the West in general and the US in particular on a single commodity (oil), but rather link it with greater economic, political, and cultural cooperation. We should aim to create permanent common interests such as joint

ventures, common universities established in the Gulf, cultural centers in the AGCC States and the US as well as increased investment and trade between the US and the AGCC States. Positive steps in this direction have already been taken to establish US-AGCC economic dialogue to promote economic and political ties.

The AGCC States are a moderate force in this hot spot region of the world. The Arabs have accepted the peace process in the Middle East as their strategic choice in reaching a just and comprehensive peaceful settlement in the region, based on the principle of "Land for Peace" to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict. The AGCC has been very supportive of the peace process. The AGCC States should continue to encourage both sides to reach a just and lasting settlement that is acceptable by all parties.

Events have proved that there is a direct link between security and stability in the Middle East and in world stability. Solving the Palestinian question, which is the center to all other problems in the Middle East, and establishing just and comprehensive peace would be highly conducive to a more stable international order.

Disagreement and differing points of view of certain issues, such as relations with Iran, do exist within the AGCC member states, but such disagreements are natural in any healthy regional organization. The important thing is that differences should not be allowed to widen the gap between member states. Emotional and heated statements serve no purpose except to anger individuals and push the member states further apart.³⁴ In order to succeed, we must organize ourselves and put our own house in order.

The AGCC must have a firm grasp of existing problems such as border disputes. We should clearly state what the problems are, how serious they are, and the possible solutions that are available to us. This is no place for high-flown yet meaningless courtesies. Go direct to the point and attempt to solve the problem from the center.³⁵ Unity and common cause must be the objective of all concerned.

Human resource development has been the center of all other development in the AGCC States, but there is still a lack of a skilled local labor force. Therefore, investment in human capital should be the objective and the priority in all AGCC States. The large foreign labor force must be gradually replaced with well-qualified nationals in both the public and private sectors. Women should be encouraged to take up employment in suitable fields, such as education, health, and social work.

The AGCC States have a youthful population. Forty percent is under 15 years of age. A large number of the indigenous work force will enter the marketplace early this decade.

Therefore, serious and careful planning must take place now to maximize utilization of the much needed indigenous human resource.

Despite the enormous effort and achievement of the educational system in the AGCC States, the educational and training systems need radical reform. The educational system should be reengineered to put greater emphasis on vocational education and training as well as on the sciences and technological fields. We must understand technological education has become essential to meet modern day economic challenges which contribute successfully to national development. The educational system should meet the demands of the modern economies that the AGCC States are seeking to establish.

CONCLUSION

The AGCC represents both a model for development and unity in the Arab world and a working example of interstate cooperation.³⁶ The Charter of the AGCC was carefully drafted to be compatible with the Arab League's objectives and inspirations. The AGCC, however, soon proved that it was a successful regional organization with the primary goal of formalizing and enhancing political, economic, security and social cooperation and integration among its Member States. In fact, its strategies and attitudes promote unity and brotherhood in the region.³⁷

The citizens of the AGCC have placed high hopes in the AGCC, especially its role as a vehicle for comprehensive, social, economic, cultural development and effective regional stability and security.³⁸ The security of the Arabian Gulf will be shaped not only by uncertainty over what Iran and Iraq might do, but also by the Arab-Israeli problem and American policy with regard to Israel.

The AGCC is seriously concerned about violence, terrorism, and extremism within the AGCC States. The security services in most AGCC States uncovered secret organizations with external connections that were misusing Islam to achieve political ends and to cause civil unrest and disunity in the AGCC States.³⁹ Since its inception, the AGCC has been promoting harmony, tolerance in accordance with Islamic teachings, and understanding among its own people and people from other religions and cultures. By nature, the people of the AGCC States don't like violence, and extremism is seen as some strange phenomenon. In fact, such organizations have attracted no public support and rather are treated as a sick minority.

However, in order for the AGCC to further succeed, the AGCC States must address difficult problems and meet major challenges, such as security, the nature of the economy, the massive foreign labor force, the small size of skilled indigenous labor force and the limited

political participation in the decision making process. We should be bold enough to recognize our problems and make concerted efforts to solve them.

Finally, 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 in order to face the security challenges in the future. AGCC States should get a solution to the main points of friction associated with the Iranian occupation of the UAE Islands and the current Iraqi threat. The AGCC States 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 greatest strategic challenge for the AGCC States in the future will be not only to deter and prepare to defend their countries against external military threats, but also to ensure that economic, political, and social changes remain evolutionary instead of becoming revolutionary. The challenges posed by various forces that have been mentioned in this study demand a collective responsive and flexible public policy within the Gulf region.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Erick R Peterson, The Gulf Cooperation Council Search for Unity in a Dynamic Region (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1988), 57.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 58.

⁴ Ibid., 59.

⁵ Helen Chapin Metz, Persian Gulf States, Country (Washington, D. C.: Library of Congress, Study Federal Research Division, 1993), 325.

⁶ Ibid., 326.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Waheed Al-Qassim A, Restructuring GCC Security Policy after the Gulf War. Master's Thesis. (Monterey, California: Naval Postgraduate School, 1994), 69.

¹⁰ Metz, 327.

¹¹ Al-Qassim, 12.

¹² William A Rugh., "The Foreign Policy of the UAE," Middle East Journal 50 (Winter 1996): 59.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid., 60.

¹⁵ Pirouz Mojtahed-Zadah, "Iran and the UAE Meeting in the Dark," Middle East (1-15 December 1995): 18.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ "Iran Asserts Claims to 3 Disputed Islands in Gulf." New York Times, 27 December 1992, sec. 1, p. 6.

¹⁸ Rugh, 59.

¹⁹ Ibid., 63.

²⁰ Ibid., 64.

²¹ Al-Khalij, English Daily, UAE, 30 August 1994.

²² Jimmy Carter, "State of the Union," Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents 16 (23 January 1980): 197.

²³ William Judd, A Reassessment of U.S. Strategic Interests in the Post-Gulf War, Middle East Journal 50 (Winter 1996): 3.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Kuwait-Aerostat Radar System," 11 October 2002; available from http://www.dsca.osd.mil/pressreleases/36-b/36b_index.htm; Internet; accessed 7 February 2003.

²⁶ Al-Qassim, 77.

²⁷ Judd, 5.

²⁸ Al-Qassim, 73.

²⁹ "Unified Army Plan to be Discussed," FBIS-NES-91-228. Foreign Broadcast Information Service, 26 November 1991, 2.

³⁰ Al-Qassim, 74.

³¹ "1996 Nado Net," Reuter Information Service, 1996, 1.

³² Ibid., 2.

³³ Emile A Nakhleh ., The Gulf Cooperation Council Policies, Problems and Prospects, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1986), 40.

³⁴ Abu Hasmin Hashim, Arabview "GCC Problems and Possible Solutions," Okaz, 12 December 1996, p. 1.

³⁵ Ibid., 1.

³⁶ John Christie, "GCC Security," in The Gulf Cooperation Council, ed. John A Sandwick (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1987), 3.

³⁷ Ibid., 1.

³⁸ Nakhleh, v.

³⁹ Abdullah Juma Al-Haj, "The Politics of Participation in the GCC States," Middle East Journal 50(Autumn 1996): 566.

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