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CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN THE PERSIAN GULF
THE SMALLER GCC STATES
BAHRAIN, OMAN, QATAR, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

by

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Lieutenant Colonel, USAFR

A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
IN
FULFILLMENT OF THE CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lieutenant Colonel Charles D. Ethredge developed an early interest in the Middle East because of the region's prominent role in world affairs since the beginning of history. This interest has been encouraged by years of traveling to the region as a C-141 Pilot. Beginning his career in 1969, his active duty tours were served in airlift, rotary wing special operations, and air rescue. Foreign tours were served in the Republic of South Vietnam and the Republic of Thailand. Separating from active duty in 1976, he began a reserve career in 1978. He is presently assigned as an Air Reserve Technician to the 707 ALS, Charleston AFB, S.C.. Along with primary duties of Aircraft Operations Officer, he is a Flight Examiner in all phases of the C-141 mission. He is presently completing the Air War College in residence.

INTRODUCTION

Conflict and change in the Persian Gulf region has been a way of life since the ending of "*Pax Britannica*" in 1971. This momentous change in the regional power base began a new era in which the local powers have attempted to create a regional balance which would secure their future peace and prosperity. The Gulf states' hopes for stability have been severely challenged in recent years, first by Khomeini and then by Hussein. Resulting from these and other threats during this period has been the formation of closer more involved relationships between the Gulf states and the United States. (8:271) The Gulf states see this as a source of encouragement yet are still concerned about the long term impact of a western presence.

Sources of conflict and change in the Gulf region are many. Most often discussed have been the external threats posed by Iran and Iraq, but each state also has existing or potential conflicts with its neighbors and fellow Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. Potential for internal conflict is also present. Pressures for more representative forms of government are increasing and may become serious as monarchs' abilities to satisfy the needs and desires of their subjects are reduced. Other internal pressures created by population makeup and economic difficulties are posing interesting challenges.

In this paper we will examine these challenges to Gulf stability and the ways in which the Gulf states are meeting them. Since much has been written on the two Gulf states of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, this examination will focus on the four less

prominent states of Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Oman. The first section will discuss geographic, demographic, historical, and governmental characteristics of these states. Following sections will discuss both the internal and external challenges they are facing now and in the future.

STATE CHARACTERISTICS

BAHRAIN

The archipelago of Bahrain consists of 35 islands covering an area of approximately 267 square miles. These islands are in close proximity of Qatar and Saudi Arabia, being linked to the latter by a 15 mile causeway. Causeways also link the main island of Bahrain with Muharraq and Sitra islands to the north-east.

The population of Bahrain ,at latest count, is approximately 503,000 of which 66% are Bahraini citizens. The latest age demographic showed that 34% of the population consisted of those under 14 years of age. The large percentage of young people has raised expectations of a doubled Bahraini work force by the year 2000. (18:239) The work force is weighted, at last estimate, to the expatriate side with 56% being from other countries. The Bahraini population ethnically favors Arabs at 73% while Iranians make up 9%. The remainder of the population consists of multiple ethnic groups.

The dominate religion by far is Islam. Two-thirds of the population are Shi'a while the rest are primarily Sunni. Despite this Shi'a majority, most individuals working in the government, military, and business sectors are Sunni. Other religions are

represented on a small basis as well as a tiny Jewish community.
(20:1-2)

Bahrain has enjoyed a long history of independence following rule under first the Portuguese then the Iranians in the 16th through 18th centuries. The Utub tribe of Arabia expelled the Iranians in 1783. Its principle family, the Al-Khalifas, have since ruled as independent sheiks. There has been only one short break of this rule, a period prior to 1810. Resulting from the Iranian rule (1602-1782) of the islands, periodic Iranian claims resurface.

A long relationship with Britain began in the 19th century resulting in the first of many mutual agreements. A continuous line of agreements between the two countries guaranteed protection for Bahrain at the cost of relinquishment of certain elements of her sovereignty. An 1892 agreement required British consent before Bahrain could enter into relationship with other nations. This extended to a requirement for British permission for disposition of any Bahraini territory. Bahrain's independence was recognized by both Britain and the Ottoman Empire in 1913. Britain, however, continued to administer Bahraini affairs to varying degrees until they decided in 1971 to withdraw their forces from East of the Suez Canal. (18:339)

After the 1968 British decision to end treaty relationships with Bahrain, Qatar, and the seven Trucial states, these states attempted to form a union of Arab emirates. By mid 1971 an agreement between the states could not be reached. On August 15, 1971 Bahrain declared full independence.

The Amir set up a new constitution in 1973 which formed a parliamentary government. By 1975, determining that the experiment had failed, he disbanded the National Assembly which has yet to be called back. The Al-Khalifa family, led by two brothers who hold the offices of Amir and Prime Minister, continue to rule this constitutional emirate with the help of a council of ministers. (20:2-3)

QATAR

The peninsular state of Qatar extends from its border with Saudi Arabia into the Persian gulf. Though small, approximately the size of Connecticut and Rhode Island put together, it is substantially larger than its other neighbor Bahrain. The native Qatari people are mostly descended from migratory tribes which settled in the area during the 18th century. The capital city of Doha, on the Eastern shore, contains the majority of the population, approximately 300,000. Of the total population of 400,000, 75%-80% are expatriate workers, primarily South Asians. Islam is the religion of 95% of the population with most being Sunni (Wahabi) Muslims. As a result of Islam being the official religion, the legal system has been based on the Shari'a, or Islamic law.

The history of Qatar closely parallels that of Bahrain and is in fact intertwined with that neighbor. The Bahraini Al Khalifa family ruled over Qatar until 1868 when Qatari nobles asked Britain to negotiate termination of Al Khalifa rule. Qatar was later rule by the Turks. This lasted until the beginning of

WW I when Shaikh Abdullah bin Jassim Al Thani was recognized by the British as ruler. The Al Thani family, long time residents of Qatar, entered into similar agreements with Britain as other Gulf states had concluded. These agreements allowed for protection of Qatar at the cost of important elements of her sovereignty. Following the 1968 British announcement to vacate the Gulf region, Qatar joined with other Gulf states to form an Arab union. After failure of this endeavor, Qatar declared independence on September 3, 1971.

The right to govern Qatar has remained with the Al Thani family to the present. Although the Amir is the preeminent power, he is "influenced by continuing traditions of consultation, rule by consensus, and the right to appeal personally to the Amir." Despite his technical freedom of accountability, the Amir cannot violate Shari'a nor can he ignore opinions of the religious establishment or other prominent notables. An advisory council was set up to include these groups. The councils only task is to help the Amir formulate national policy. (21:1-3)

In 1972 the Amir, Sheikh Ahmad ath-Thani, was absent abroad. In his absence the Prime Minister, his cousin Sheikh Khalifa ath-Thani, overthrew Sheikh Ahmad in a bloodless coup. The royal family and the military seemed to give its approval by lack of opposition. Sheikh Khalifa proceeded to institute new reforms which curbed previous extravagant practices of the royal family. (18:761)

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a loose seven state federation of emirates: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah. These emirates occupy an area of about 30,000 square miles (approximately the size of Maine) on a point of land jutting into the Persian Gulf from the Arabian land mass. Its borders lay on the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.

The total Emiri population numbers about 1.8 million people of which only 15%-20% are actual residents of the UAE. The expatriate community makes up 90% of the 650,000 person work force. As with the other GCC countries, the foreign population is significantly Arab with numbers of Asians, Filipinos, Iranians, and Western Europeans also present. Most UAE citizens are Sunni Muslims but there is a small Shi'a minority. The largest percentage of expatriates are also Muslim.

The seven states of the UAE are tribally organized Shaikdoms which were once known as the Pirate Coast because of their harassing shipping raids. Early agreements with Britain to stem the pirate raids gradually evolved in long term treaties similar to those Britain established with other Gulf states. The Trucial Shaikdoms, as they are also called, maintained this mutually beneficial relationship until the treaty expired on December 1, 1971. One year after independence, six of the states came together as the United Arab Emirates. Later, in early 1972, Ras al-Kaimah completed the now seven nation federation.

The loose federation of seven emirates maintain separate governments, each led by a separate Amir. The authority over use of all resources remains with each individual Emirate. This naturally has restricted the growth of Federal powers. The UAE has operated under a provisional constitution since October, 1986. "The constitution established the positions of president (chief of state) and vice president, each serving five year terms; a Council of Ministers (cabinet), led by a prime minister (head of government); a supreme council of rulers; and a forty member National Assembly, a consultative body whose members are appointed by the emirate rulers." The ruler of Abu Dhabi, Shaik Zayyed bin Sultan Al Nahayyan, has been the president of the UAE since its formation. The ruler of Dubai, Shaikh Makhtoum bin Rashid Al Maktum, is both the Vice President and Prime Minister. (22:1-3)

OMAN

The Sultinate of Oman is the largest of the four GCC states we are examining. The total area of the country is about 82,000 square miles, approximately equal to the state of Kansas. Over 1,000 miles of coastline on the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Oman make Oman strategically important to anyone desiring influence in the Persian Gulf region. A small part of Oman, the Musandam peninsula, is separated from the main country mass by the UAE. This peninsula lies on the southern coast of the Straits of Hormuz through which passes 17% of the worlds oil production.

Most land borders, until recently, have been either under dispute or undefined. (23:1,3)

Since no census has ever been held in Oman the population estimates vary greatly from one agency to another. The estimates range from over 1.2 million to over 2 million. Large numbers of expatriate workers have entered the country and comprise, by one estimate, 55% of the work force. (18:743) Most of these expatriates, comprising about 25% of the Omani population, immigrate from Mid-East or Asian countries. The majority religion is Muslim with 75% being of the Iba sect and the remainder split between Sunni and Shi'a. (23:1,3)

Oman has an ancient history that extends from the third millennium B.C.. Having been one of the first countries to be converted to Islam, the majority of its people practice the Ibadi doctrine which holds that the caliphate of Islam is not isolated to one family. Since the eighth century when an independent Imamate was established, Oman has maintained virtual independence. A short period in their history, during the 16th and 17th centuries, saw Oman come under Portuguese control. After 1650 Omani leadership led the country to extend its influence from the East African coast to the South Asian coast. (18:743-744) Zanzibar became a possession of Oman as well as other areas on the East African coast. Further extensions of Omani rule were on the Arabian peninsula, Persian coast, and as far away as what is now the Pakistani coast. The territory in Asia was part of Oman as late as 1958 and Zanzibar gained its independence in 1964.

In its early history, Oman was ruled by Imams. This gradually changed to rule by hereditary sultans. The influence of the religious Imams continued in the interior regions of Oman until 1959 when the Sultan, with British help, terminated the office of Imam and forced the Imam into exile. In 1964 a revolt of communist influenced separatists flared in the southern province. This insurgency continued until 1975 when the present sultan, Sultan Qaboos bin Sa'id, defeated the movement. The nation has been relatively peaceful since then.

Oman, as other GCC states, has come under European, Turkish, and Persian influence through its history. The 19th and 20th centuries saw Oman's independence maintained for the most part. Oman has concluded numerous agreements with Britain since 1798 but it never seemed to release control of its sovereignty as other Gulf states did.

The Al Sa'id dynasty was established about 250 years ago. The present monarch is a direct descendent of the 19th century ruler Sa'id bin Sultan. Sultan Qaboos rules without help from a constitution, legislature, or any political entities. In 1981 he did appoint a Consultative Council which makes recommendations to the Sultan on economic and social issues. (23:3,4)

INTERNAL SOURCES FOR CONCERN

GOVERNMENTAL PARTICIPATION

The governments of the Gulf states are structurally similar, each country being ruled as a monarchy. Varying types of cabinet/ministry systems have been adopted to help handle the

increasingly complicated government responsibilities. As the economies and societies have become more modern so has the thinking of the people. Many are dismayed by their inability to participate in government as even the citizens of Eastern Europe are now doing. (3:18)

Many sources express concern over threats to government stability due to pressures of democratization. The recent increased presence of foreign troops on Gulf state soil lowers the credibility of dependent leaders which is causing questions of legitimacy to arise. (15:146) Rulers had feared pressures from Washington for democratization but thus far these fears have been unfounded. Fears still remain, however, about the spread of democratic ideas from a different direction. "One of the potentially most threatening is the notion of representative government cloaked in the mantle of Islam." This threat, based in fundamentalist Islamic terms, comes from Iran. (6:19)

POPULATION CONCERNS

Although Gulf states' populations consist primarily of Sunni Muslims, large Shi'a communities are potential sources of conflict, particularly under the forces of economic advancement. Fortunately, the call for an uprising of the Shiite populations by Iranian leaders proved unsuccessful. This was a driving factor in the formation of the Gulf Cooperation Council in 1981 and also has led most states to seek U.S. security assistance. Despite resistance to Shiite pressures, each Gulf state retains traditional Islamic values and lifestyles. A major concern for

the future will be the continuing need to control religious pressures and balance them with pressures caused by economic development and security requirements.(3:15-16)

The Gulf states requirements to import large numbers of workers to satisfy demands of the oil industry created large communities of expatriate workers. This has pressured both economic and social infrastructures. During the early years of the oil boom this was handled well, but as oil prices stalled, then decreased, the growth in the expatriate population came to a halt. This resulted in a stalled housing market and a decrease in demand for consumer goods, which had earlier driven the domestic economy at a rapid pace. (10:457-458) As labor needs fluctuate, states either expel or import workers. These fluctuations are causes for concern which can be measured by the percentages of expatriates in the populations: Bahrain 33%, Qatar 75-80%, UAE 80-85%, Oman 25%.(20-23:1)

ECONOMICAL CONCERNS

The primary driving force behind conflict and change in the Gulf states is the presence of petroleum. The Gulf states are heavily dependent on oil and its by-products for the vast majority of their wealth. Rapid rises in oil prices after 1970 followed by a slump and continuing downward pressures have caused all states to look to diversification as a means to secure their post-oil survival.(3:16)

Bahrain's oil economy developed earlier than its neighbors. Its deposits were relatively small and are forecast to be

depleted by the end of this century. Recognizing this, Bahrain has been successful in diversifying into oil refining, banking, and aluminum production. Ship repair work at its extensive docking facilities has also done well. Construction of the 17 mile causeway connecting Bahrain to Saudi Arabia further improved its economic future, linking it more securely with its biggest neighbor. With increasing competition from other Gulf states which have greater financial resources, Bahrain's future may be encounter turbulence. (16:36)

The tiny Emirate of Qatar has a bright economic future despite its dwindling supply of oil. Recently, exploration of the North Dome gas field was begun. The field may place Qatar in the top five gas producers in the world. It is already one of the richest nations with per capita income exceeding \$20,000. (12:33) This potential growth makes their most challenging economic problem how to wisely spend their vast wealth. Diversification into other aspects of the petroleum industry is also underway. Primary is a liquid natural gas plant. Needing help to develop the new gas sources, Qatar is inviting participation by any serious foreign partners. (19:38)

The UAE has now become the second largest oil producer in the region. Despite high revenues, however, budgetary pressures exist because of sharply increased military expenditures and the payment of its portion of the costs of Operation Desert Storm. As oil prices decrease, a deficit could be experienced. In spite of these difficulties, the economic future should be bright as their reputation for stability in the business community is enhance

Even though the recent Bank of Commerce and Credit International scandal caused some concern, growth in strength of the UAE banking community continues. This growth is causing great concern in the Bahrain banking community. Tourism and the attainment of a position of dominance in the shipping and transportation arena have also become targets of economic opportunity.(13:21,23) This continuing economic expansion involving increased contact with western cultures is destined to cause increasing internal and external pressures.

Oman also has an oil based economy where approximately 90% of the government's budget is supplied by oil income. Unlike its neighbors, a strong agricultural base exists and is being further developed. Gas reserves are now being exploited as are copper, coal and asbestos deposits.(16:151) Oman's primary task due to the limited life of oil reserves, approximately 20 years, is to reduce its dependence on oil. Interesting attempts to look beyond the Gulf for opportunities are its development of oil resources in Kazakhstan and refining operations in Thailand. (14:26)

WATER

As one traverses the lands of the Middle East, whether by air or land, the strongest impression on the senses is one of barrenness and lack of water. Naturally occurring potable water is a scarce commodity in the region which has only been overcome in the Gulf states by application of revenues from a plentiful liquid, oil. The concerns over water supplies caused the Gulf States to convene a water conference last October to discuss

rationalization of consumption and efficiency upgrades of desalination plants. The level of interest is indicated by the large number, 500, experts and officials who attended.

Limited natural water resources has caused Gulf states to rely upon desalination plants for 70% of their drinking water requirements. Plans for expanding production as population increases are estimated to cost \$150 billion not to speak of the millions of additional dollars required to operate them each year. By world standards Gulf water consumption is high. Causes for this high level of consumption vary from excessive use on irrigation to just pure waste. Some experts feel that the drive for agricultural self-sufficiency in the GCC countries does not justify use of its natural resources which include water and the petroleum products required to operate the desalination plants.

Options other than desalination plants have been examined. The feasibility of a pipeline from Turkey through Iraq to the Gulf States has been studied. Even if this could be accomplished politically, the cost of \$25 billion would be prohibitive. A similar proposal of piping water from Lebanon would cost approximately \$7 billion.(24:38) At present there seems to be no viable alternative to reliance on desalination for water. This reliance undoubtedly will become more expensive as time passes and will require higher percentages of national wealth be expended. As long as petroleum and gas reserves are available, Gulf states will be able to meet water requirements. When oil and gas supplies are depleted, other means of providing for the costs of water production must be found.

EXTERNAL SECURITY CONCERNS

BORDER DISPUTES

External security concerns of the Gulf states take two primary forms: border disputes with its GCC neighbors and territorial disputes with other regional actors. Both types of disputes have been a part of Gulf history from the earliest of days and continue to the present.

A long history of border conflict between Bahrain and Qatar flared in 1986. The issue involved the island of Fasht al-Dibal and a coast guard station Bahrain was building there. Tensions remained high for two months until a temporary agreement was made. This issue remains a point of conflict.(10:455-456)

In an additional border dispute, Qatar has come to blows with Saudi Arabia. In 1965 the Qatari-Saudi border was negotiated through the British but the frontier was not clearly marked. Present levels of nationalism and resource competition has caused both nations to establish their own version of the border. As late as September of 1992 armed conflict occurred resulting in two Qatari deaths.(7:15-16) Arab mediations had tempered both parties for a time but Qatari seriousness over the dispute was recently emphasized by their threat to boycott last December's GCC summit. A Mubarak brokered agreement averted a publicly divided summit when both countries agreed that borders were to be finalized within the year. Under this agreement the disputed al Kufus area would be ceded to Qatar while Riyadh's control over a

previously Abu Dhabi ceded corridor to the southern Gulf would be recognized.(25:12)

The UAE is presently involved in two disputes over its borders. Oman and the UAE have been working towards an agreement over borders between Oman and the emirates of Dubai, Fujairah, and Ras al Khaimah. Progress is slow. In May 1992 they exchanged ambassadors for the first time.(7:14-15) The second dispute, ongoing since 1971 when the former Shah of Iran seized the islands of Aba Musa and the Tumbs, is a more serious one. UAE citizens had been allowed to remain on Aba Musa until April 1992 when most Arab inhabitants were forced to leave. The UAE has attempted to negotiate a settlement but Iran refuses. The location of Abu Musa, in the middle of the oil tanker lanes, causes some concern.(9:17-18) A recent communiqué from the December GCC summit pledged GCC support for use of any peaceful means to be used by the UAE to regain these possessions. The communiqué further clearly stated that "Tehran would have to mend its ways radically if it wanted to win the confidence of its Arab neighbors". The angered Iranians warned that attempts to remove them from the islands would require the crossing of a "sea of blood".(25:12)

In the last few years Oman has made great progress in securing its borders. A 1990 agreement with Saudi Arabia set agreed borders in place. In October of 1991 Sultan Qaboos signed another accord with Yemen. Yemeni negotiations have continued for over a decade with occasional clashes. As previously mentioned,

the border disagreements with the UAE may be near settlement.

(7:14-15)

MAJOR SECURITY THREATS

Iraq and Iran are the two major sources of present and future security concerns. Although Iraq was quickly pushed from Kuwait, it remains "hostile, intransigent, and uncooperative". It retains a significant military capability and shows intent at rebuilding.

Iran seems to be the area of greatest concern. The CENTCOM commander states, "Iran has accelerated its military modernization and force expansion with the apparent aim of reestablishing itself as a dominant regional power". Indications are that Iran is in the process of a vast rearmament process using hard currency to purchase the latest high-tech equipment available from numerous sources. MiG 29's, Su-24's, SA-5's and other less expensive equipment is appearing. Iranian efforts to build its naval presence in the form of Chinese missile patrol boats, and three Russian Kilo class submarines poses a formidable threat.(5:12) The latter part of 1992 saw the delivery of the first of these submarines.(11:8-9)

The disputed island of Abu Musa, strategically located to control the traffic lanes into the Gulf, is taking on added importance. Longtime Arab residents were expelled as construction began on new military installations which include a MiG 29 and Illyushin airfield, launch pads for North Korean Scuds, and radar equipment.(4:5)

Iran is evidently telling everyone that it intends to be an important player in the region. Despite economic cooperation by the Gulf states, Iran seems set on seeking further redress against them for their earlier support of Iraq in the eight year Gulf war.(9:18)

INSURING GULF STATE SECURITY

There have been several attempts at collective security agreements in the Middle East since Britain removed its protection in 1971. CENTO looked good on paper, the Arab League appeared to benefit only Syria, and the GCC proved no protection for one of its members. Another attempt, the Damascus Declaration, entered into by Egypt, Syria and the GCC, collapsed within a few months of its issuance.(8:271) Prior to the Damascus Agreement, the only steps taken towards post Gulf war cooperation in the GCC was a 7,000 man joint force called Peninsula Shield. The March 1991 agreement contained an Omani proposal for a GCC funded force of 100,000 having as its nucleus a large force of Egyptians and Syrians. These plans collapsed in December 1991 due to Saudi opposition. The Saudi rejection appeared aimed at limiting foreign military presence of any nationality. "Egyptian or Syrian troops on the peninsula presented the same ideological infection as U.S. troops - only the danger was Arabist rather than liberal."(17:10-11)

The results of Arab failure to provide cohesive security arrangements amongst themselves has caused them to turn to the

west, primarily the U.S., for its security. For the Gulf states, increasing dependence on the west takes the form of security agreements, joint training exercises, military presence, and weapons purchases.

Bahrain, long cooperating with the U.S., signed an agreement in October 1991 which granted continued access to facilities and allowed some prepositioning of materiel for future activities. Joint exercises of both air and ground forces have also been planned.(20:3) Defense spending continues to increase with requests to purchase eight Apache helicopters and 25 more M-60 tanks.

Qatari armed forces played an important role as a member of the coalition forces fighting beside their U.S. Marine counterparts. Historically, however, they have chosen to meet their defense needs from other than U.S. sources. Early reliance on the British has been replaced by a privileged relationship with France.(1:48) They have purchased U.S. military equipment but movement in further cooperation had been limited (3:19) until last June when a defense accord was signed. Qatari officials have been reluctant to provide any details.(2:21)

The UAE is a microcosm of the GCC in that its parts cannot agree to a solution for defense needs. While individual emirates maintain separate defense budgets, they have placed forces under a unified command. An exception to this is Dubai which maintains its own force of 12,000 ground troops.(1:49) Security assistance arrangements with the U.S. have increased. Recent weapons system purchases of Mirage 2,000's, British Hawks, French helicopters

and Hawk anti-aircraft batteries reflect UAE defense concerns.(22:3)

Oman has maintained security arrangements with both the U.S. and Britain for a number of years. As a result, they are viewed to be superior militarily to all others in the Gulf. Their competence during Desert Storm showed the benefits of joint exercises held with the U.S. and Britain. Financial constraints cause Oman to limit weapons purchases but plans for growth and modernization are progressing.(1:50)

CONCLUSION

Changes in the affairs of states are normally accompanied by conflict or the potential for conflict. That has certainly been the case in the Gulf states. Fortunately, actual conflict resulting in the resort to hostilities has been isolated. Internal conflict within state borders, although threatening at times, has been avoided and should continue to be avoided as long as an abundance of revenue is available from the marketing of oil. Any event which disrupts the flow of revenue will also disrupt internal calm.

Centuries ago, when the British first determined a significant role for the Gulf states in the economic and political affairs of the world, no one could imagine how important the region would become. As petroleum sources were discovered in ever increasing amounts world economic and political well being became dependent on Gulf stability. Although this stability is influenced to a greater degree by the largest

GCC member Saudi Arabia, the smaller states have an impact on world affairs far out of proportion to that which their physical size should warrant. Until some other fuel decreases the need for Gulf oil products or the sources themselves run out, Gulf states security will remain high on the world's list of priorities.

The blessings that oil brought to the Gulf did not come without cost. All the interest in the Gulf states shown by world powers has brought changes and conflict which the region never expected. Since the early days when British protection secured the Gulf way of life, reliance on foreign powers for peace and safety has been the norm. Attempts to formulate other means of ensured security have fallen victim to distrust among GCC members. Whatever desires the Gulf states may have about methods of maintaining security within the region, their dependence on external influences remains the reality. The dilemma is that by relying on external influences their own sovereignty and internal order may be compromised. This statement expressed by knowledgeable observers gives us the bottom line on Gulf state security:

The emerging security order in the Gulf is an order with the United States at its center. It is an order premised upon the United States being the balancer; it is premised on the United States being willing and able to intervene when and where necessary. (8:272)

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