

# Gulf Cooperation Council: Arabian Gulf Cooperation Continues Defense Forces (Peninsula Shield Force)

A Monograph

by

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## **Abstract**

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The Gulf region serves as one of the most crucial geographic areas in global security. Six Gulf States established the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) aimed at political and economic integration and cooperation. However, the mandate has extended to security issues due to increasing instability in the region. This study analyzes the member countries of the GCC and the strategic roles that they fill on security issues. Further, the study analyzes the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF). The GCC formed the PSF for joint military and defense coordination. The study offers recommendations for the progress of the PSF in terms of organizational structure and command configuration for increased defense of the GCC members.

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## **Acronyms**

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
JDC	Joint Defense Council
MAGTF	Marine Air Ground Task Force
MEF	Marine Expeditionary Force
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OPEC	Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries
PSF	Peninsula Shield Force
UAV	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UN	United Nations
WTO	World Trade Organization

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## **Introduction**

### **Overview**

This section offers a brief background concerning the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the formation of the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF). It provides information related to the internal and external security threats facing the Gulf region. The section shallowly investigates the regional cooperation between the states to provide a platform for later discussions.

### **The GCC**

Since the GCC's inception in 1981, the Middle East has experienced massive changes in terms of balances of power, security, economics, and political structures. Several wars have erupted since the formation of the Council over thirty years ago. Additionally, the region has experienced increased insurgency and radicalism. These factors led many member states to seek foreign assistance to fight both domestic and external threats.<sup>1</sup> Over the past decades, the Gulf countries have methodically worked together to tighten cooperation across different fields. The historic roles of external forces and interference from main world powers in the region led to the need to build a reasonable defense capacity against other regional powers.<sup>2</sup> The GCC's creation was aimed at facilitating this goal of joint security.<sup>3</sup> This goal was particularly salient after the

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<sup>1</sup> Bartosz Bojarczyk, "The Gulf Cooperation Council-Regional Integration Mechanism," *Annales UMCS, Sectio K (Politologia)* 201, no. 1 (2014): 70.

<sup>2</sup> Mehran Kamrava, ed., *International Politics of the Persian Gulf. Modern Intellectual and Political History of the Middle East* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011), 17-89.

<sup>3</sup> Sami F. Motairy, "The Gulf Cooperation Council and the Challenges of Establishing an Integrated Capability for Upholding Security" (Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 2011), 1.

extensive threats experienced after the invasion of the Soviet Union on Afghanistan.<sup>4</sup> It was at this point that the formation of a unitary defense force became a critical idea.

A proposal by the then Kuwaiti Crown Prince Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah in 1976 led to the formation of the GCC.<sup>5</sup> The member states included Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The GCC was intended to sustain cooperation, coordination, and integration across the fields of politics, education, economy, and information. The strategic interest of the new organization was to prevent confrontation and defuse tensions within the region. However, the progress for increased defense cooperation and collaboration has been slow because some members expressed fears of angering other neighbors in the region. The GCC's threat perceptions are marked by a tendency to overestimate the military threat from Iran and to underestimate their own capability.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, some members expressed fears regarding loss of sovereignty and reliance upon other types of defense, including foreign allies and national militaries.<sup>7</sup>

The formation of the GCC came after the British government's declaration to leave the Gulf Area in 1968. After most of the states received independence, the region sought to increase cooperation and to form close ties to establish a single political goal. Countries such as Oman, Iran, Kuwait, Iraq, and Saudi Arabia had each undertaken different initiatives after 1971 to create

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<sup>4</sup> Turki Al-Hamad, "Will the Gulf Monarchies Work Together?" *Middle East Quarterly* 4, no. 1 (March 1997): 47, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.meforum.org/340/will-the-gulf-monarchies-work-together>.

<sup>5</sup> Matteo Legrenzi and Cilja Harders, *Beyond Regionalism? Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and Regionalization in the Middle East* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 1-17.

<sup>6</sup> Frederic Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy Ghez, Lydia Hansell, and Robert A. Guffey, *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for US Policy* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), accessed December 10, 2014, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND\\_MG840.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2009/RAND_MG840.pdf), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Motairy, 1.

greater regional cooperation and a collective security alliance. However, the inherent mistrust among the Gulf States paralyzed the cooperation discussions among the aforementioned members.<sup>8</sup> However, a series of new external threats in the 1980s posed significant challenges to power balance and stability in the region. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and simultaneously the Iranian Revolution began. The Gulf State monarchies feared the spread of the Revolution into their territories.<sup>9</sup> However, it was the Iraq-Iran War between 1980 and 1988 that acted as the most significant catalyst towards the creation of the organization (and later the PSF) by the six relatively small Gulf States.

The formation of the GCC was originally a political vehicle for the unification of the economic systems of the Gulf countries. At the onset of its mandate, the GCC charter did not form a defensive alliance between the member-states. Moreover, the charter did not mention the word ‘defense’ or refer to ‘collective security.’ The member-states addressed benign issues including economics, agriculture, finance, commerce, economics, and culture in the charter.<sup>10</sup> The diplomats from the members made significant efforts in advertising that the organization had no military orientation. Fundamentally, that publicity aimed at avoiding inciting of Iraq or Iran into military action against the member-states. Additionally, at the onset of the mandate, high tensions existed among the members on the appropriate organization of a joint military force.<sup>11</sup> Security

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<sup>8</sup> Thoumani Al-Hamad, “Imperfect Alliances: Will the Gulf Monarchies Work Together,” *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 1, no. 2 (1997): 1.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Lubeck, CGIRS Working Paper Series – WP#99-1, “Antinomies of Islamic Movements Under Globalization,” Center for Global, International and Regional Studies, University of California Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA, 1999, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www2.ucsc.edu/globalinterns/wp/wp99-1.PDF>, 14.

<sup>10</sup> See Secretariat General, “The Charter,” The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, 1981, accessed February 20, 2015, <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/indexfc7a.html>.

<sup>11</sup> Matteo Legrenzi, “Did the GCC Make a Difference? Institutional Realities and (Un)intended Consequences,” in *Beyond Regionalism? Regional Cooperation, Regionalism and*

threats to the region were enough to instigate the formation of an alliance. However, the amplitude of the threat lacked enough strength to instigate a security pact between the members. Consequently, the countries maintained a non-military stance on integration and coordination in all fields.<sup>12</sup>

Implicitly, the establishment of the GCC aimed at the collective confrontation of the security threats from external sources in the region. The threats of the Iran-Iraq War, and later the Iranian Revolution growing influence and the exporting of the Sheatism, further motivated the formation of significant military cooperation between the member-states. The GCC excluded Iraq based on inherent differences with the Iraqi regime and the country's earlier policies towards Kuwait. Additionally, Iraq has a diverse ethnic composition, unlike the GCC member states whose populations are mainly Sunni.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, the organization perceived Iraq as a major threat that could invade one of the member-countries.

Fundamentally, the strategic interests of the GCC entail the prevention of confrontation between the member-states and other regional enemies. However, the military alliance between the member-states faces limitations in the form of training and personnel, as well as structural, organizational, and geographical constraints. After independence, the military capacity of the GCC member-states simply did not match with the strategic importance of the Gulf States. Additionally, at the onset of the military cooperation, the small populations of the member-states did not permit the formation of a large military unit or a labor-intensive military structure to

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*Regionalization in the Middle East*, edited by Cilja Harders and Matteo Legrenzi (England: Ashgate, 2008), 108.

<sup>12</sup> Legrenzi, "Did the GCC Make a Difference?" 79.

<sup>13</sup> James D. Fearon, Kimuli Kasara, and David D. Laitin, "Ethnic Minority Rule and Civil War Onset," *American Political Science Review* 101, no. 1(February 2007): 190, accessed December 10, 2014, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/fearon-research/cgi-bin/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Ethnic-Minority-Rule-and-Civil-War-Onset.pdf>.

match the large populations and military capacity of Iran and Iraq. Consequently, the countries sought to obtain sophisticated, capital-intensive defense and military weaponry from foreign suppliers and strategic allies. However, this created yet another challenge. The number of trained personnel capable of operating sophisticated weaponry was relatively small in comparison to the level of military modernization sought after at that time. Consequently, the member-states sought to invest heavily in human capital, especially in education and other economic development programs.<sup>14</sup> Until these investments paid off, though, the states had to rely on foreign personnel for training and assistance in the development of an indigenous military capacity. Additionally, many challenges pertinent to the strategic geographical location of the states remained unattended. The strategic oil installations located on the Gulf borders and in the desert remained vulnerable to attacks.<sup>15</sup> Attacks on these facilities could paralyze the oil infrastructure of the region, despite efforts aimed at achieving a certain degree of redundancy. These challenges were instrumental to the development of greater military capability to protect the territories with remote economic and structural infrastructures. In answer to the rising external threats and the challenges posed by geographical location, three member-states decided to form a common military unit called the Peninsula Shield Force (PSF) in 1984.

The GCC formed the PSF for mutual defense. The GCC considers any threat to any member-state as a direct act of aggression against the entire organization. Therefore, the principal of the founding of the PSF entails defense of the members. However, questions still exist on the adequacy of the force in meeting the challenges and threats of the twenty-first century. The security threats facing the region today remain extensive and call for the strengthening of the PSF

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<sup>14</sup> Emile El-Hokayem and Matteo Legrenzi, *The Arab Gulf States in Shadow of the Iranian Nuclear Challenge*, Henry L. Stimson Center, 26 May 2006, accessed December 9, 2014, [http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/The\\_Arab\\_Gulf\\_States\\_in\\_the\\_Shadow\\_2006.pdf](http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/The_Arab_Gulf_States_in_the_Shadow_2006.pdf), 14.

<sup>15</sup> Turki Al-Hamad, 47.

beyond its existent manpower.<sup>16</sup> The Arab-Israel Conflict and the issues surrounding Iran's nuclear weapons capability pose the most immediate and strategic concerns regarding the military competency of the PSF. Further, the strengthening of the mutual defense arrangements and the evolution of the PSF depends on resolution of other socioeconomic security issues that destabilize the members. The organization should deal with demands for pluralism in governance and radical extremism in some countries that leave the member-states highly vulnerable.<sup>17</sup> The aforementioned threats and challenges lead to an increased need for a strong joint military unit among the member countries.

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<sup>16</sup> Motairy, 11.

<sup>17</sup> Legrenzi and Harders, 163.

## Historical Background of the States

### Introduction



Figure 1. Map of the Middle East

Source: Central Intelligence Agency, "Middle East," *The World Factbook*, accessed February 2, 2015, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/ref\\_maps/political/jpg/middle\\_east.jpg](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/ref_maps/political/jpg/middle_east.jpg).



Historically, events in the Gulf have made the region an evolving geopolitical phenomenon of great significance on the international stage. The emergence of the regional and international power struggle stemmed by the end of the colonization era. Instigated by the Gulf geographic location providing an important trade passageway to the Indian sub-continent from the east by the Strait of Hormuz. But even more importantly, the region holds the world's largest oil basins containing fifty percent of the world's oil reserves.<sup>18</sup> Control of this oil and the Gulf access has led to a great number of conflicts between Gulf countries and other western nation's interests. Oil has gone from merely being another mere source of energy to a political asset that has shaped how the geopolitics of the region would develop.<sup>19</sup>

This section illuminates the historical background of each of the GCC member-states. The historical background of the nations is fundamental to understanding the rationale for the founding of the GCC and to recognizing the shared interests of the members. Furthermore, the information is significant to understanding the extent of the threat posed by external powers on each state. This section offers insight into the rationale behind each member-state's need for the overall improvement of the PSF. Finally, the section will delineate the capability of each state to improve the military capability of the GCC.

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<sup>18</sup> Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies, Background Paper, The Third Annual Conference of Arab Research Centers, *The GCC Countries: Politics and Economics in Light of the Regional and International Shifts and Changes*, 2014, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://english.dohainstitute.org/file/Get/2e0f239c-8993-4ae9-bc9d-7cef6c0b52de>.

<sup>19</sup> The Gulf area according to geopolitical expert Nicholas Spykman refers it to the "Rimland," the ongoing power struggles in the Gulf are quite a contest to determine a winner who would control the essential power relations of the world. See Nicholas John Spykman, *The Geography of the Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1944), 41-51.

## Analysis of Individual Countries

### Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the largest affiliate of the GCC in many respects.<sup>20</sup> The country borders Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. The country has long coastal boundaries on both the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf, and its population is ten percent Shia Muslim.<sup>21</sup> Saudi Arabia was one of the poorest countries in the region until the discovery of vast oil reserves in 1938. The development of the oil fields with support from the United States in 1941 led to significant economic development and political stability. The cultural life of the Saudis improved significantly, as the country acquired political and economic prosperity.<sup>22</sup> The country was among the few seeking regional cooperation with other Gulf States at the climax of the regional conflicts in the 1980s. However, Saudi Arabia is a monarchy and does not have political parties or a parliament. The country is mostly Sunni with significant religious intolerance toward other religions and a strong stand against women's involvement in politics.<sup>23</sup> However, the country may have reached a point of demographic inflection, since its largest population consists of young unemployed people prone to recruitment into Islamic militant opposition groups.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Turki Al-Hamad, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Henry Sokoloski and Patrick Clawson, eds., *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2005, accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub629.pdf>, 9.

<sup>22</sup> James Russell, "Saudi Arabia in the 21st Century: A New Security Dilemma," *Middle East Policy* 12, no. 3 (2005): 63.

<sup>23</sup> Lubeck, 15.

<sup>24</sup> Richard L. Russell, "Arab Security Responses to a Nuclear-Ready Iran," in *Getting Ready for a Nuclear-Ready Iran*, edited by Henry Sokoloski and Patricia Clawson, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2005, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB629.pdf>, 43.

The Kingdom had strategic connections with the United States even before the zenith of the Gulf War. The country remains a main beneficiary of US defense assistance. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia represents the largest military capability among the GCC member-states, with roughly 250,000 troops on active duty. The National Guard acts as a pillar of the country's regime and is separate from the military force. The Guard recruits members principally from the tribes loyal to the ruling family and numbers roughly 100,000 members. The country has acted as the geopolitical counterbalance to Iran, although historically, it has never directed its military force outside. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia maintains a predominant role in the improvement of the PSF because of its military prowess, gross domestic product, population, and extensive landmass.<sup>25</sup>

#### Kuwait

The political structure of the country developed from *diwaniya* – the traditional salons that discuss and debate political and social issues, hosted by prominent societal members. The Kuwait parliament served as the most dynamic assembly in the Middle-East even before the Arab Spring. However, the country has faced significant challenges in history. Since its independence, Kuwait has remained significantly vulnerable to external influence. Kuwait shares a long and strategic border with Iraq.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, Kuwait City lies approximately seventy miles across from Iran. In 1990, Saddam Hussein, then president of Iraq, ordered his forces to invade Kuwait. The war presented the GCC with a direct challenge and immediate threat to its existence and survival. The occupation of the country came almost eight years after the formation of the PSF,

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<sup>25</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 112th Congress, 2nd Session, Committee on Foreign Relations, June 19, 2012, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.foreign.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/74603.pdf>, 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 11. In addition, since the end of the colonization era this remained a source of conflict between them leading to the 1990 Gulf War.

but despite its existence, the GCC could not defend Kuwait.<sup>27</sup> The ceasefire came only after intervention from the United States, United Kingdom, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and other member-states of the GCC. Therefore, the immediate threat from Iraq has historically been the country's predominant concern. However, recent concerns over external threats relate predominantly to Iran and the development of nuclear weapons.

The country takes a restrained attitude to regional affairs. Kuwait formulates its foreign policy in alignment with Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait has maintained collaboration with the United States. The country has made significant strides in modernizing its military prowess, especially its missile defense. However, the combined military force comprised of roughly 16,000 active duty troops continues to rely heavily on assistance from the United States.<sup>28</sup> The country maintains a substantial American military presence.<sup>29</sup> Kuwait has remained the second leading contributor to the PSF in the provision of battalions, especially armor. Perceptually, the similarity in political structure with other Gulf States stimulated the country to join the defense council. Kuwait's membership in and contribution to the PSF is influenced by the country's perception of Iraq's and Iran's threat, and also by the need to safeguard the monarchy from external influence.<sup>30</sup>

## Bahrain

Bahrain gained independence in 1971 and signed a treaty of friendship with the United Kingdom of the Great Britain and Northern Ireland.<sup>31</sup> The country suffered a failed coup

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<sup>27</sup> Motairy, 27.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>29</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 12.

<sup>30</sup> El-Hokayem and Legrenzi, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Malcolm C. Peck, *The a to z of the Gulf Arab States* (The a to z Guide Series) (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), xxix. See also Great Britain Central Office of

instigated by the Iran Revolution in 1979. The failed coup led to the exile or execution of several Shia clerics. In 1994 and 2000, the country experienced a popular uprising where liberals, leftists, and Islamists joined forces.<sup>32</sup> The uprising led to roughly forty deaths and an end to the rule of Hamad ibn Isa al-Khalifa. Bahrain has presented the United States with difficult challenges regarding foreign policy issues. Recently, the country has experienced problems associated with the Arab Spring. Protests began peacefully in 2011, but over time deteriorated into violence. Consequently, the GCC member-states decided to deploy the PSF after the declaration of a state of emergency on March 4, 2011. Militarily, the country has the second smallest force among the Gulf States with roughly 13,000 troops in active duty. Some of the troops are of South Asian origin. The country relies significantly on American military presence and assistance for training and mitigation of external threats.<sup>33</sup> Historically, the country has maintained a contribution to the PSF of one battalion.

#### Qatar

Qatar gained independence in 1971. An absolute monarchy under the Al Thani family has ruled the country since its independence. The country rates as the wealthiest country in terms of per capita income. The country has a population of less than 400,000 citizens, yet has the third-largest reserve of natural gas in the world. Qatar relies on Sharia law for the formulation of laws. The country has served as mediator in Sudan, Lebanon, Yemen, Palestine, and Eritrea.<sup>34</sup> The

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Information, Reference Division, *Treaty of Freindship between the United Kingdom Of Great Britian and Northern Ireland and the State of Bahrain and Its Dependencies*, Treaty Series no. 79 (London, UK: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1971).

<sup>32</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 13.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 15.

country shares the North Gas Field with Iran in the gulf waters.<sup>35</sup> However, Iran and Qatar hold different views regarding Syria's civil war, and these differences might lead to bilateral rigidities between the two countries.

Qatar has smallest military capacity among GCC with approximately 11,800 troops on active duty comprising the air force, navy, and the army, and assisted Libya in ousting Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Additionally, it holds a small fleet of fighter aircraft and coastal combatants, but the country lacks an efficient system for integrated air defense. Given its small military and lack of air defense infrastructure, Qatar contributes only a small percentage to the PSF.

Fundamentally, the country relies on the presence of the American military for mitigation of external threats.<sup>36</sup> However, in the wake of increased need for regional cooperation to mitigate Iran's threat, the country could face calls to increase its contribution to the joint military force.

#### The United Arab Emirates

Prior to independence in 1971, individual sheikhdoms had signed treaties with the United Kingdom Of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for protection. The founding of the United Arab Emirates stemmed from the union created between Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The other emirates joined the union to form the United Arab Emirates in 1972. The United Arab Emirates encompasses seven different emirates with governance by dynastic monarchies. The country covers an area of 67,340 square kilometers and shares borders with Saudi Arabia and Oman, with a coast stretching approximately 650 kilometers. The United Arab Emirates derive her judicial system from Sharia and civil law. The country has faced insignificant external threats and challenges related to the Arab Spring. However, the country retains tensions with Iran over the

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<sup>35</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 15.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 16.

possession of a number of islands, with each country claiming ownership.<sup>37</sup> In 2012, the country condemned a visit to one of the islands, Abu Musa, by the Iranian President.<sup>38</sup>

The United Arab Emirates has the second-largest military among the GCC members with over 50,000 troops on active duty. The country also hosts a significant US military presence and has North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) observer status.<sup>39</sup> Further, the country has maintained a contingent of 250 troops in Afghanistan. Recently, the country has been aiding in the expulsion of the Islamic State insurgents in Syria. Despite the myriad challenges, the United Arab Emirates might assume an additional responsibility in supporting and strengthening the PSF.

#### Sultanate of Oman

The Sultanate of Oman has maintained rule by a Sultan since the end of Portuguese occupation.<sup>40</sup> An absolute monarchy rules the country with absolute executive, judicial, and legislative powers. The country bases its legal system on Sharia Law. The country opened up after Sultan Qaboos deposed his father in 1970. The country has a population of approximately 3.8 million with a relatively high number of expatriates. The country has vast oil deposits ranking twenty-fifth globally. The geography and demography of the country has made it a strategic player in region. With a population neither predominantly Shiite nor Sunni, and strategically possessing the only navigable route via the Strait of Hormuz, the country

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<sup>37</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>40</sup> Charles Fraser Beckingham, "Some Notes on the Portuguese in Oman," *The Journal of Oman Studies* 6, no 2 (1983) : 17-18. Portugal occupied Oman from 1507 until expulsion in 1649. Sultan bin Saif began his reign in 1649.

occupies a unique position in the GCC.<sup>41</sup> However, the country has often broken from the Arab consensus towards GCC's Iran policy. Therefore, the country often seeks accommodation with neighbors.<sup>42</sup> Oman acts as the only member of the GCC maintaining diplomatic relations with both United States and Iran. The country has the third-strongest military with roughly 43,000 troops in active duty. The country obtains military inventory from United Kingdom Of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. However, the country has increased the utilization of US manufactured equipment. Additionally, the country has defense connections with America. The country also considers Iran as the most immediate threat to the GCC. Therefore, the country may also play a crucial role in strengthening the military competency and capability of the PSF.

### **Comparison of the Countries**

The countries forming the GCC have a myriad of similarities and differences. The illustration drawn from information contained in Kerry et al. compares different facets of the member-countries.<sup>43</sup> Some of the information provided relies on estimates since official data does not exist. As the information in Table 1 shows, the countries rely on monarchies with a significant relationship with the United States on defense matters. Apparently, most member-states consider Iran as the predominant threat. The existence of a common enemy or source of external threat underpins the need for a stronger PSF to protect the shared military interests of the monarchies.

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<sup>41</sup> US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 18.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 9-19.



Table 1. Overview of GCC States

Country	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population (estimates)	Religion *No official figures available	Per capita income (US dollar)	Form of government	Military composition	Military cooperation with non-GCC countries	Foreign relations
The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	2,150,000	29,994,272	Islam (Sunni majority)	53,935	Unitary Islamic monarchy	233,500	A small U.S. military presence	Member of the UN, OPEC, GCC, Arab League, WTO Positive bilateral relations with America and other GCC members Helps in moderating the Arab-Israeli conflict
Kuwait	17,820	4,044,500	Islam (Sunni 60-70%; Shia 30-40%)	25,401	Unitary parliamentary constitutional monarchy	15,500	Military cooperation with the US with a significant presence of US military personnel (approx. 10,000)	Iran US Other GCC members
Bahrain	780	1, 343,000	Islam (Shia-60-75%)	24,465	Constitutional monarchy with a bicameral assembly	13,000	US	Bilateral relations with 190 countries Supports Palestine Tensions with Iran
Qatar	11,571	2,155,446	Islam (Sunni 71.5%; Shia 10%)	102,785	Unitary parliamentary absolute monarchy	11,800	France, US, United Kingdom	Member of OPEC, GCC, Arab League Alignment with Hamas Opposes Syrian regime Supports Palestine
The United Arab Emirates	83,600	9,205,651	Islam (85% Sunni; 15% Shia)	44,330	Federal hereditary absolute monarchy	51,000	US, France	OPEC, UN, GCC Disputes with Iran
The Sultanate of Oman	309,501	4,055,418	Islam	24,764	Absolute monarchy	43,000	US	Member of the GCC Maintains ties with Iran and US

Source: Created by author using information from Central Intelligence Agency, “Middle East, The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, The United Arab Emirates, The Sultanate of Oman,” *The World Factbook*, accessed November 15, 2014, [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_mde.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_mde.html).

### **The Importance of the Council on Regional Security**

The GCC does not have a supranational body for independent decision-making against political influence of member-states. The monarchies have shown strong reluctance to relinquish their sovereignty to a supranational decision-making body. Consequently, the region has experienced disunity in many regional issues because of distrust.<sup>44</sup> Further more, some of the member-states maintain relations with Iran, which other member-states deem as the foe, leading to tensions among the GCC members.<sup>45</sup> However, the GCC obtained a significant degree of cooperation pertinent to security after the formulation of the Comprehensive Security Strategy in 1987.<sup>46</sup> The GCC Security Agreement, revised in 2012, broadened the scope of the Comprehensive Security Strategy. Consequently, the move has necessitated easy coordination between policy and counterterrorism.<sup>47</sup> However, several member-states have historically stated the ineffectiveness of the organization on security and defense. Additionally, some of the issues affecting the region outline the ineffectiveness of the PSF in maintaining the security and defense arrangement of the region.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the ensuing incapability of the PSF to deal with the threat highlighted the ineffectiveness of the PSF. In the 1990s, the member-states recognized the ineffectiveness of the organization in dealing with the security and defense arrangement of the

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<sup>44</sup> Turki Al-Hamad, 47.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew Steele, "Mirage or Reality: Enabling Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Collective Defense" (Thesis, Naval War College, Newport, RI, 2011), accessed December 10, 2014, <http://www.dtic.mil/get-tr-doc/pdf?AD=ADA546355>, 7.

<sup>46</sup> Secretariat General, "Security Cooperation," The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, accessed November 22, 2014, <http://www.gcc-sg.org/eng/index142e.html>.

<sup>47</sup> Nadim Hasbani, *Reform Prospects in GCC Countries and the Establishment of a New Gulf Security Order*, Broader Middle East, June 24, 2005, accessed August 11, 2014, <http://www.worldsecuritynetwork.com/Broader-Middle-East/Hasbani-Nadim-1/Reform-prospects-in-GCC-countries-and-the-establishment-of-a-new-Gulf-security-order>, 1.

GCC during the Doha Summit.<sup>48</sup> A series of changes have occurred in the structure, organization, strength, and mandate of the PSF since then. However, experts still claim that the PSF cannot deter threats arising from strong foes such as Iran. Consequently, the member-states have maintained a strong reliance on foreign assistance for defense and security. The GCC has significant roles to play in maintaining the balance of power in the region. The security of the entire Gulf region depends on conditions and developments in areas such as the Afghanistan war, militarization of the Palestine-Israel conflict, the Syrian Civil War, and the Arab Spring. Furthermore, smaller states have expressed concerns with Saudi dominance in the force, which further constrains the formation of a strong force.<sup>49</sup>

In 2005, the Saudi Arabian Defense Minister and Crown Prince announced that the PSF would cease to exist. According to some sources, the proposals for change entailed the maintenance of administrative structures, with single military units to serve during emergencies.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, this transition period may serve as the ideal for the analysis of the symbolic importance of the joint military and defense force. Currently, external defense has remained symbolic under the mandate of the joint force because of structural constraints. This situation may not change in the future unless there are radical changes in terms of organizational structure, command configurations, and unified strategy. Many member-states demonstrated significant optimism when the PSF was created. However, that optimism has faded because of inefficient coordination and the lack of an appropriate command configuration. Additionally, the increased independence among the five smaller states in decision-making and strategic trade

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<sup>48</sup> Abdullah Al Kindi, "Arabian Gulf Security" (Thesis, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2003), 12.

<sup>49</sup> Glenn Kuffel, "The Gulf Cooperation Council's Peninsula Shield Force," (Discussion Paper, Naval War College, Newport, RI, 2000), 16.

<sup>50</sup> Matteo Legrenzi, "The Peninsula Shield Force: End of a Symbol?" *Gulf Research Center Insights*, no. 3 (July 2006): 11.

relations with the United States may constrain the further strengthening of a joint force. However, some military analysts have concluded that self-sufficiency in external defense lies beyond the grasp of these member-states, which may influence their decisions regarding a unified multi-national military.<sup>51</sup>

The member countries should realize that the force has a bigger role to play in regional security as threats become more violent and amorphous. These countries should be ready to face the spreading insurgency from Syria and Iran, as well as the exportation of Iranian ideologies into the region. The countries should reach a common accord in the resolution of misunderstandings on security issues affecting the region.<sup>52</sup> Further, the countries should assess the relationships between some member countries and Iran to enable the formulation of a strong defense strategy aiming at strengthening the PSF.<sup>53</sup>

### **Summary**

The overview section has analyzed the characteristics of the member-states. Reasonably, the section has indicated a significant similarity in the makeup of the member-states. Specifically, most countries perceive Iran as the common enemy. However, some countries have maintained ties with Iran, which has constrained the formulation of a unified security and defense policy. The section has further analyzed the importance of the GCC on matters pertinent to regional security. Specifically, the study has noted a variety of constraints in the GCC's security role and the reasons behind the constraints. Consequently, the study has

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<sup>51</sup> Wyn Q. Bowen and Joanna Kidd, "The Nuclear Capabilities and Ambitions of Iran's Neighbors," edited by Henry Sokoloski and Patricia Clawson, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2005, accessed November 10, 2014, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB629.pdf>, 53-55

<sup>52</sup> Hasbani, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

concluded that the role of the organization in security matters should further strengthen the need for a strong joint military force to mitigate the expanding threats in the region.

## **Current Threat and Evolution of PSF**

### **Introduction**

The previous sections have offered a general background on the GCC as an organization, as well as an analysis of each member-state. Furthermore, the previous section offered an overview of the security threats faced by the GCC. This section forms a platform for the analysis of the changing nature of the threats, as well as an analysis of the evolution of the PSF. The analysis of the current threats will require a review of the threats that the organization has faced since its establishment. This section will tackle the current threats depending on their typology. The analysis of the typology of the threats will help in elucidating the areas that require improvement in the PSF. Moreover, the section will present a detailed analysis of the PSF including its strengths and limitations pertinent to the maintenance of security of the region.

### **Security Threats Faced by the Middle East and GCC**

The Middle East has faced a multiplicity of security threats for many decades. Historically, the region has had to deal with the Arab-Israel conflict spanning decades since the creation of the State of Israel after World War II. Additionally, the GCC member countries had to mitigate the significant security threats posed by the Iranian Revolution in 1979, specifically the spread of revolutionary ideas into the GCC member-countries.<sup>54</sup> The Gulf War for the liberation of Kuwait, as well as the Iraq-Iran War, had significant implications for the stability of the

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<sup>54</sup> Hasbani, 1.

region.<sup>55</sup> The wars passed, but the security of the region remains at risk. Emergent challenges have placed the PSF at the center of the defense capabilities of the GCC. Particularly, the region must deal with the increasing threats posed by the growth of terrorism in the region as well as threats posed by Iran's efforts in the development of nuclear weapons.<sup>56</sup> Therefore, the myriad of contemporary threats have a significant effect on both the capability and the efficacy of the PSF, as well as the integrity of the GCC as a body. Aside from external threats, internal factors such as the political systems of the member-states offer a significant challenge to the improvement of the PSF.

#### External Threats

External threats created the impetus for the creation of the GCC and the establishment of the PSF. Although the nature of the external threats has changed, a majority of the dangers that the region faced in the early existence of the GCC still persist today. The conflict existing between Iran and United Arab Emirates makes Iran the major contemporary source of security threats facing the GCC, and particularly, the PSF.<sup>57</sup> Additionally, the Arab-Israel Conflict has persisted and continues to pose a security challenge.

Bigger and more powerful neighbors, particularly Iran and Iraq, have consistently posed threats to the defense capability of the PSF, although the GCC members have grown to play key roles in the regional and global oil market. According to Lagrenzi, the situation resembles a

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<sup>55</sup> Gareth Stansfield, *Gulf Security Following the Invasion of Iraq* (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2008), accessed December 9, 2014, <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/35334326?versionId=43935982>, 117.

<sup>56</sup> Kristian Ulrichsen, "Internal and External Security in the Arab Gulf States," *Middle East Policy* 16, no. 2 (2009): 39–58.

<sup>57</sup> Amir Toukan and Anthony Cordesman, *GCC-Iran: Operational Analysis of Air, SAM, and TBM Forces*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, August 20, 2009, accessed December 9, 2014, [https://csis.org/files/publication/090819\\_GCC\\_Iran\\_AirPower.pdf](https://csis.org/files/publication/090819_GCC_Iran_AirPower.pdf), 3.

“scalene triangle” in which Iran and Iraq have traditionally represented the longer sides of the triangle.<sup>58</sup> Regardless of the geo-economic importance, the GCC has continuously relied on external powers, especially the United States, for military and defense capabilities.

The GCC member-countries perceive the Iranian threat differently. Particularly, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has demonstrated significant hostility towards Iran. However, Oman has established relations with Iran for mutual interests. Therefore, Oman offers a pragmatic approach to relations with Iran rather than antagonizing relations.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the diversity in the perception towards Iran’s threat offers a security challenge and an additional obstacle to the integration of the PSF. Iran’s threat has run for many years. Iran’s unbridled ambition to become the regional dominant power carries a historical legacy. The threat posed by Persian neighbors dates hundreds of years back into history. However, recent Persian invasions of the Arab countries of the Gulf have heightened concerns about the military strength and ambitions of Iran. Specifically, Iran, conspiring with Hezbollah, interfered with the domestic affairs of some GCC countries through the instigation of Shia insurgencies in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Additionally, Iran has supported several violent organizations and engaged in proxy wars in the region throughout the history of the GCC. Yemen blames Iran for supporting the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force fighting.<sup>60</sup> Consequently, the fighting within Yemen may spill over to Oman and Saudi Arabia, causing additional challenges to the security of the region and a test to the defense capability of the PSF.

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<sup>58</sup> Matteo Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf Diplomacy, Security and Economic Ccoordination in a Changing Middle East* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011), 75.

<sup>59</sup> El-Hokayem and Legrenzi, 13.

<sup>60</sup> Motairy, 57.

Essentially, the GCC does not want Iran to dominate the region militarily. However, Iraq's defeat in 1991 led to a significant shift in the power balance within the region. Despite the earlier stated relationship between Oman and Iran, many members of the GCC consider Iran as a significant threat and a test to the defense capability of the PSF. The dangers presented by Iran's watercraft attacks, mines, and anti-ship missiles along the Strait of Hormuz pose a significant security threat to the region. Iran has made significant efforts in increasing its military and defensive capabilities along the Strait of Hormuz. However, the GCC considers the investment as an offensive, rather than a defensive strategy. Further, the hostility between Iran and the Gulf States revolves around the Tunb and Abu Musa islands. The United Arab Emirates dispute Iran's occupation of the islands.<sup>61</sup> The issue formed part of one of the top agendas during GCC's 34th Summit in 2013.<sup>62</sup>

From a military perspective, the GCC members have inferior depth compared to Iran. Consequently, this places the GCC members on the defensive. The GCC member-states have comparatively small population, vulnerable oil fields and refineries, and many coastal cities. Contrarily, Iran has a large population and most of its oil fields and cities are in the interior of the country. Consequently, the inefficient strategic depth in the GCC military capability places limitations on the zone of operational maneuverability in times of conflict.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, the location of economic centers close to the borders calls for a strong defense capability within the

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<sup>61</sup> The Tunb and Abu Musa islands location near to Hormuz strait choke point would give a relative advantage for basing, plus the dispute over the Island was a constant Issue between the United Arab Emirates and Iran since the end of the colonization era. US Congress, Senate, *The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership with the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 36.

<sup>62</sup> The Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia, "34th GCC Supreme Council Summit Concludes in Kuwait," Information Office of the Royal Embassy of Saudi Arabia in Washington, DC, December 11, 2013, accessed November 20, 2014, [http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest\\_news/](http://www.saudiembassy.net/latest_news/).

<sup>63</sup> Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf Diplomacy*, 75.



GCC.<sup>64</sup> Iran's medium- and short-range missiles place the GCC states coastal oil infrastructures within striking distance. This exposes the GCC to increased security challenges. It would take just a few attacks with surgical accuracy to cause infrastructural damage equivalent to the use of weapons of mass effectiveness.

Recently, Iran made concerted efforts to upgrade its nuclear facilities infrastructure. The underlying concern is the idea of developing nuclear weapons forms the central strategic anxiety for the defense capability of the PSF. The eventuality of a nuclear-capable Iran alongside the current disagreements within the GCC on key security issues forms the regions' doomsday scenario.<sup>65</sup> Regardless of the lack of modernization in Iran's large forces, the combination of the size of the forces with weapons of mass destruction would offer an advantage to the country.<sup>66</sup> Therefore, the GCC, through the PSF, must prepare for a nuclear-ready Iran. The extent of operationalization of the assets will act as a dynamic changer of the regional power equations. The key security threats associated with a nuclear-ready Iran entail subversion and terror, partial military conventions in the guise of protection by the nuclear weapons, and , of course, the actual use of the weapons.<sup>67</sup> The use of the weapons on a small or large scale may lead to external intervention based on the current incapability of the PSF. Consequently, this may lead to the escalation of a war, further jeopardizing the security of the GCC.

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<sup>64</sup> Kuffel, 1.

<sup>65</sup> Asharaff Tamimi, "GCC security pact divides Kuwait," Gulf News, March 2, 2014, accessed November 16, 2014, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/gcc-security-pact-divides-kuwait-1.1297430>, 1.

<sup>66</sup> Ian O. Lesser, "Turkey, Iran and Nuclear Risks," edited by Henry Sokoloski and Patricia Clawson, Strategic Studies Institute, October 2005, accessed February 10, 2015, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB629.pdf>, 95.

<sup>67</sup> Mahboubah F. Sadeghinia, *Security Arrangements in the Persian Gulf: With Special Reference to Iran's Foreign Policy* (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 2011), 23.

However, this also depends on the Arab Spring. Syria holds a strategic position as the dynamic hinge upon which the Arab Spring depends. The escalation of the Arab Spring in Syrian context may result in external intervention, and this may trigger the use of such capability as exists in the region for military defense. The escalation of war in the proximity of GCC countries jeopardizes the security of the region as a whole. Therefore, the countries have to establish a force with equal or almost equal capabilities to counter any spillover of war from the neighboring regions.

The political environment of post-war Iraq also poses a significant challenge to the security of the GCC. The uncertain future of the country has left adequate room for the speculation and perception of threats, including civil wars, increase in sectarianism, and aggressive dictatorial attempts to align the country to Iran's revolution. The never-ending political crisis within Iraq exacerbates the scenario. Kenneth Pollack noted that the current government has progressively gravitated towards Iran.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, this suggests that Iraq has been making deliberate efforts not to antagonize Iran, with significant focus on the security dynamics. Additionally, the ineffective formal arrangements between the Iraqi military and the US military highlights the fact that the primary threat to the GCC may come from the Iraqi border along Kuwait.<sup>69</sup> Therefore, the organization requires a joint force with the capability for rapid intervention pertinent to the extensive borders.

The diverse external threats facing the GCC indicate a significant need for the improvement of the current defense capability of the region. In particular, Iran's threat can be isolated as the most significant threat to raise concerns over the GCC's defense capability. The

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<sup>68</sup> Kenneth Pollack, "Securing the Gulf," *Foreign Affairs* (July/August 2003), accessed November 16, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/58993/kenneth-m-pollack/securing-the-gulf>, 1. Kenneth Pollack is a former CIA intelligence analyst, author, and expert on Middle East politics and military affairs. His work was essential as research for this thesis.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

GCC members do not have the diplomatic capabilities to mitigate most of the external threats. Consequently, the only viable solution would entail the strengthening of the PSF to counter the external threats stemming from different dimensions. However, the mitigation of external threats also relies on the mitigation of internal threats facing the region. The next subsection tackles the internal threats that challenge the capability of the GCC in maintaining regional security through the PSF.<sup>70</sup>

### Internal Threats

Besides the multiplicity of external threats, the GCC faces diverse internal threats that weaken its current joint military and defense capabilities. Firstly, the political systems of GCC member-states expose the PSF to unwarranted challenges. The countries rely on monarchies, with some of them having autocratic rulers.<sup>71</sup> Consequently, this situation has increased the sensitivity of the people to religious and democratic movements that could jeopardize the security of the region. The style of governance has created a hostile environment that could yield violence and/or terrorism.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, the issue of the rise of terrorism in the region forms a significant aspect of increased concerns regarding the improvement of the PSF.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Pollack, 1.

<sup>71</sup> Claudia Balzan, "Security Challenges in the GCC: Challenges and Opportunities," (Master's Thesis, Florida International University, Miami, FL, 2014), 6.

<sup>72</sup> Gaffield Steinberg, "Islamism in the Gulf," in *The Gulf States and the Arab Uprisings*, edited by A. Echague (Jeddah: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: FRIDE and the Gulf Research Center, 2013), 1-13; Fred Lawson, "Transformation of Regional Economic Governance in the Gulf Cooperation Council," Occasional Paper No. 10, Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2012, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www12.georgetown.edu/sfs/qatar/cirs.FredLawson-CIRSOccasionalPaper2012.pdf>, 15-56.

<sup>73</sup> Legrenzi, *The GCC and the International Relations of the Gulf Diplomacy*, 76.

Recently, the Arab world, including the GCC, has been experiencing increased terrorism and extremism. These issues are a direct threat to the stability and security of the member-states. The most serious threats stems from the Islamic Movement growing in Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait.<sup>74</sup> Most of the members of the Islamic Movement are from the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood has emerged as a significant concern, especially after the Arab Spring that started in 2011. However, the extent of the threat to the monarchies and security of the region has remained a point of contention among the member-states. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia have maintained significant apprehension about the Muslim Brotherhood. The two countries see the metastasizing of any revolutionary movement as a potential threat against the monarchies. However, the threat seems even bigger from the Saudi perspective. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has persistently viewed the Muslim Brotherhood as an imitation of Wahhabism. In the United Arab Emirates, the hostility against the group led to the conviction of a number of Brotherhood-affiliated activists and the support to the coup against Brotherhood-led government of Mohammed Morsi in Egypt in 2013.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand, Qatar has accommodated the group; even encouraging the movement as compared to their Emirati and Saudi counterparts.<sup>76</sup> Qatar hosts a prominent Muslim Brotherhood member (Shaikh Yusuf Al-Qaradawi) who has the right to use the Al Jazeera channel in spreading the group's goals and vision. The tensions have risen in the recent past, when United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia recalled their diplomats from Qatar, noting that Qatar had violated the GCC charter by meddling

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<sup>74</sup> Junior Freeman, "The GCC at 25: A Tour D'Horizon," *Middle East Policy* 13, no. 4 (2006): 26-28. As noted these Islamic movements grew to intensify the sunni shia divide driven by some groups to counter the Persian shia's growing intervention in the Gulf communities.

<sup>75</sup> Stratfor, "The UAE and Saudi War on the Muslim Brotherhood Could Be Trouble for the U.S.," November 18, 2014, accessed December 20, 2014, <https://www.stratfor.com/geopolitical-diary/uae-and-saudi-war-muslim-brotherhood-could-be-trouble-us>.

<sup>76</sup> Stansfield, 128-130.

with the internal affairs of the member-states.<sup>77</sup> The rise of the Muslim Brotherhood has the likelihood of developing into full-blown terrorist group. Consequently, this increases the perceived threat to the security of the region, which, in turn, calls for increased joint security through the PSF.<sup>78</sup>

However, the visible disagreement over the framing of the Muslim Brotherhood and the strategies of dealing with it may change the direction of the PSF if Qatar maintains its stand.<sup>79</sup> A possible scenario would entail Qatar acting as an incubation ground for the Muslim Brotherhood, which would become a source of security threats and instability in the region. Consequently, this would force the member countries to either expel Qatar from the organization or to accommodate it with its antagonistic political ideology. However, both actions would have a centrifugal effect on the group and accelerate its multi-polarization, leading to the disposal of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as the central security provider for the members. Consequently, this could lead to the dissolution of the organization, meaning that the PSF would not have the platform necessary to function in providing joint defense to the member-states. The evolution of the PSF depends significantly on how the countries deal with the internal threats for the maintenance of cohesion.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> Wafa Alsayed, “The future of Gulf defense cooperation,” International Institute for Strategic Studies, December 2, 2013, accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.iiss.org/en/manama%20voices/blogsections/2013-e202/future-gcccooperation-0989>, 1.

<sup>78</sup> Balzan, 17-27.

<sup>79</sup> Brahim Saidy, Philadelphia Papers No. 6, “GCC Defense Cooperation: Moving Towards Unity,” Foreign Policy Research Institute, Philadelphia, PA, October 2014, accessed December 9, 2014, [http://www.fpri.org/docs/saidy\\_web.pdf](http://www.fpri.org/docs/saidy_web.pdf), 1-16.

<sup>80</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *Securing the Gulf: Key Threats and Options for Enhanced Cooperation*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 19, 2013, accessed December 9, 2014, [https://csis.org/files/publication/130219\\_Securing\\_the\\_Gulf.pdf](https://csis.org/files/publication/130219_Securing_the_Gulf.pdf), 10.

## **Evolution of the PSF**

The GCC expects the PSF to act as the first line of defense against external security threats against the region. However, the PSF has operated under a narrow vision consisting exclusively of air and naval forces. The formation of the joint defensive force aimed at achieving joint security for the region. After the formation, the force had 7,000 men housed in Hafr al Batin in Saudi Arabia. As of this time, Saudi Arabia provided the majority of the soldiers, with Kuwait second in contribution. However, the PSF has remained ineffective throughout its history.<sup>81</sup> The force has often been a source of conflict and friction among the member-states. Distrust and discussions over the mission and roles of the force, as well as concerns pertinent to the control and command of the force have remained the critical weakness crippling the structure of the force.<sup>82</sup> Even after several meetings among the member-states, the PSF has not yet grown into a standing force with dedicated soldiers.

### **The Structure of PSF**

Fundamentally, the PSF has maintained two structures: one on paper at the PSF headquarters, and the standing force based at Hafr al Batin. The PSF Headquarters Staff has the mandate to plan for any joint military activities involving the force. The member countries have an obligatory contribution in the form of infantry, artillery, signals, armor, combat support, and engineers, among others.<sup>83</sup> However, the obligatory requirements for each country change frequently. The standing force at Hafr al Batin has two Saudi brigades and several advance parties promised by other member countries. The standing force participates in military exchanges, as well as unit level and individual training. Many experts have asserted that the ineffectiveness of

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<sup>81</sup> Thoumani Al-Hamad, 1-20.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Ulrichsen, 39–58.

the force stems from its lack of strategy for amelioration. The issues surrounding the expansion of the force have gone unsolved for many years. The member-states have held discussions for the expansion of the force without any resolution or action.

#### PSF Command Relationships

The PSF Headquarters has a command organization equivalent to the US Army staff. The Commanding General has always been a Saudi general officer serving for four years in office. In 1997, the members agreed to periodic rotation of the leadership among the members. However, the GCC Supreme Council has never adopted the policy to date. Fundamentally, other countries blame the situation on the fact that Saudi Arabia contributes the largest force to the PSF and provides the basing facilities. The Deputy Commanding General rotates among the other countries and serves two years in office.<sup>84</sup> The activation of the PSF calls for unanimous approval from the Supreme Council. Historically, the attainment of unanimous consensus in the Supreme Council has faced significant impediments. Consequently, the same impediments reflect on the employment and deployment of the PSF, as was the case in the 1991 Gulf War. The Commanding General should report directly to the Chief of Staff of the host country after the activation of the PSF for actual operations or exercise.

#### PSF Training

The PSF maintains three training levels: unit training, annual PSF training, and Peninsula Shield exercises. The unit level training occurs in a classroom-like environment within the base at Hafr al Batin.<sup>85</sup> The training includes religious instructions, as well as training in science and arts. The annual training exercises affect the PSF forces at the base, as

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<sup>84</sup> Ulrichsen, 39–58.

<sup>85</sup> Saudi-US Relations Information Service, “34th GCC Summit Concludes,” accessed November 16, 2014, <http://susris.com/2013/12/12/34th-gcc-summitconcludes>.

well as any additional forces that individual countries may provide. The member-states do not send a full complement of the PSF-dedicated forces for the training.<sup>86</sup> The annual exercises rotate from one member country to another, but receive limited press. The Peninsula Shield exercises form the core of the PSF training. The exercises involve joint arms events that incorporate GCC air forces and navies. Regardless of the extent of the exercises, different reports indicate that the force has remained ineffective because of the command structure.<sup>87</sup>

### **PSF Capabilities and Limitations**

The formation of the PSF was aimed at the maintenance of joint defense for the GCC member-states. However, the force has several limitations amid the little strength it portrays. Consequently, for the sake of understanding and offering appropriate recommendations, it is essential to analyze the key strengths and limitations inherent in the PSF.

#### **Capabilities**

The most significant and important capability of the PSF entails the headquarters and the support staff. The staff at the PSF headquarters provides a foundation for increased stability of the organization, but has continuously portrayed minimal integration. The long terms in office and the developed facilities at the Hafr al Batin base have established a feeling of permanency and mini-bureaucracy in the force. The staff at the headquarters has a permanent capability to concentrate on plans, coordination, and logistics relevant to the PSF. The PSF has enormous benefits to four of the six GCC countries: Qatar, Oman, United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain. The deployment of the force to the aforementioned countries provides a momentous enhancement to

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<sup>86</sup> Legrenzi, “The Peninsula Shield Force: End of a Symbol?” 11-12.

<sup>87</sup> Kuffel, 13.



the land forces of those countries. Additionally, the deployment of the PSF is indicative of the political decisions made by the Supreme Council.<sup>88</sup>

### Limitations

The lack of interoperability among PSF's main units represents the most serious limitation of the force. Between 1990 and 1997, the member-states spent roughly twenty four billion dollars on the purchase of arms. However, the countries did not indicate how the purchases could fit into the overall defense plan. Additionally, the PSF lacks anything equivalent to NATO military specification or secure communications. Consequently, equipment compatibility acts as a negative factor in planning by the headquarters. The contributing forces sometimes have to provide equipment founded on interoperability firepower.<sup>89</sup> The Gulf War provides a succinct example of the limitations of the PSF's interoperability. As of that time, Kuwait had to source for spare parts after retreating to Saudi Arabia because the air force-supplied F-15's but could not provide the spares for the Kuwaiti Mirages. Additionally, the GCC patched coordination between the command structure and basing facilities after the invasion. This is in the sense that the security frameworks were to align the goals of the efforts of inversion.

The development of the PSF faces restrictions in terms of unit cohesion. The scheduled exercises help individual units in familiarizing with each other and acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses. However, the exercises do not create lasting bonds for unity during actual operations. Furthermore, the PSF lacks a central point for storage of equipment for each member-state at the Hafr al Batin facility. Consequently, this limits the base from acting as an immediate

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<sup>88</sup> Sadeghinia, 23.

<sup>89</sup> Kuffel, 14.

and reliable base of operations for the PSF. This presents significant challenges should events call for responses on the eastern and northern parts of the peninsula.<sup>90</sup>

Additionally, the PSF is subject to political limitations that affect almost all areas of the GCC's development. Most member-states have concerns over the development of the unified military force. This scenario stems from the concerns that the joint military force would dilute the sovereignty of the member-states. Some countries express concerns over the placement of non-Saudi troops under the command of a Saudi general.<sup>91</sup> The frequency of meetings between the Ministers of Defense among the GCC countries is another indicator of political limitations hindering the development and deployment of the PSF. The ministers meet less frequently as compared to ministers in other areas. The rarity of the meetings of the Ministers of Defense indicates the cautious approach to collective defense among the member-states.

### **The Future of the PSF**

In the wake of the Arab Spring, the GCC has adopted a proactive regional posture. According to Pollack, the increase in the threats, including the Arab Spring, augments the need and the incentive to increase the defense capability of the region.<sup>92</sup> The expansion of the GCC to include Jordan and Morocco may not seem as viable of a solution for the security needs.<sup>93</sup> However, increased cohesion within the member countries is a solution to step up the

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<sup>90</sup> Kuffel, 15.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> Pollack, 1.

<sup>93</sup> Jamal Anani, "Jordan's accession to the GCC," Al Arabiya, May 6, 2013, accessed November 16, 2014, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/specialreports/bridgingthegulf/2013/05/06/Jordan-s-accession-to-the-GCC.html>, 1. There were some talks about including Morocco and Jordan in the GCC for two reasons. The first reason was to show support for the remaining

capabilities of the PSF. The recurrent theme of Saudi superiority in the region has always been present. The minimal progress in boosting military cooperation among the nations shows where the priorities of the member-states fall. The integration of a unified mechanism for defense under the Saudi command has caused significant friction among the member-states. Consequently, a majority of the member-states seek to strengthen their national forces rather than contribute to the joint force. The situation has only weakened the capability of the PSF to defend the region against external threats.<sup>94</sup> Therefore, the future of the PSF relies on the resolution of the myriad limitations that face the organization. The future of the PSF depends on the shift from the view that an integrated military force could morph into a tool for the intrusion of Saudi Arabia or lead to a loss of national sovereignty among the member-states. Despite the limitations, the aforementioned threats call for fully-fledged military cooperation and integration among the member-states.

### **Summary**

The section has discussed the current threats facing the Gulf Region in relation to security and defense. Notably, Iran has been isolated as the most significant source of threat to the existence of the GCC.<sup>95</sup> Fundamentally, the development of nuclear weapons in Iran calls for increased defense capability of the GCC members. Moreover, this section has indicated the plethora of internal threats faced by the region. The threats include the rise of terrorism and extremism in some member-states. The section also delineated issues pertinent to the

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monarchies in the Middle East. The second reason was to cover the shortages in manpower that the GCC PSF forces faced. There was not a consensus among the GCC members regarding this proposal.

<sup>94</sup> Balzan, 3.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 21.

evolution of the PSF. The section has shown that the lack of efficient command limits the development of the PSF.

## **Improvement to PSF Structure**

### **Introduction**

This section offers suggestions for the improvement of the PSF. First, the section reviews the current command structure applied by the PSF. The section will continue and compare the existing structure to the structure of the US Marine Corps Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU).<sup>96</sup> After a review of the structure, the section will review the changes to the threat environment since the creation of the force. This will involve a recap of the threats mentioned in section three. The section will discuss the evolution of the remotely piloted vehicle and sea borne threats from countries such as China, as well as the implications of the revolts and radical Islamists movements in the region. This section will address the inadequacy of the existing structure in dealing with the aforementioned threats. Subsequently, the inadequacy will illuminate the required structural improvements that the PSF should embrace to increase its adequacy in dealing with the changing threats.

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<sup>96</sup> According to a press release by the GCC in late 2013, the PSF would share similar roles with the Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF). After the projected formation of a joint military union, the PSF target was to increase the force to 100,000 personnel. This is in a bid to make the GCC alliance strong from a military perspective. Another reason the MEF was chosen is because the increase in troops also goes hand in hand with specialization in different missions, ranging from air, to land and sea. The fact that the two were similar in size and expeditionary tasking missions gives the MEF credibility as an example of a good working model.

## Current Command Structure

As noted earlier, the PSF relies on two structures. The two separate units have different functions.<sup>97</sup> One unit of the structure acts as the headquarters and the other forms the standing force. The force has frequently tried to increase its capabilities by increasing the number of troops. The command structure of the PSF is equivalent to the US Army Staff.<sup>98</sup> The Commanding General is at the top of the command structure. In practice, the Commanding General has always been a Saudi, even though the organization has called for constant rotation among the countries. Second in command is the Deputy Commanding General. The Deputy Commanding General alternates between the other countries in a more egalitarian manner. The others in the line of command include the generals in charge of administration, intelligence, operations, logistics, and plans. Moreover, the command structure includes a Naval Liaison Office and an Air Force Liaison Officer. As noted earlier, the PSF does not have any organic naval or air force units.<sup>99</sup> Consequently, liaison officers act as the link between the PSF and the navies and air forces of the individual states during exercises or operations. The PSF lacks a centralized command structure, since the staff heads from the member countries can either bring an entire support staff or rely on the ones provided by the GCC. Each country assigns thirty officers approximately to the Peninsular Shield Force without a clear definition of the number of support staff.<sup>100</sup> The Commanding Officers of each country report to the Deputy Commanding

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<sup>97</sup> Kuffel, 1-33.

<sup>98</sup> Christian Koch, "The GCC as a Regional Security Organization," *KAS International Reports* (November 2010): 23- 35, accessed December 9, 2014, [http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas\\_21076-544-2-30.pdf](http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_21076-544-2-30.pdf), 5-7.

<sup>99</sup> Kuffel, 1-33.

<sup>100</sup> David Aaron, Fredric Wehrey, and Brett Wallace, *The Future of Gulf Security in a Region of Dramatic Change, Mutual Equities and Enduring Relationships* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2011), accessed December 10, 2014, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf\\_proceedings/2011/RAND\\_CF293.sum.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/conf_proceedings/2011/RAND_CF293.sum.pdf), 1-25.

Officer of the PSF in the case of joint exercises and operations. However, the PSF is always under the control of the GCC Supreme Council. Although the GCC has a Military Committee, the Committee does not have any direct control over the PSF. The Commanding General of the PSF reports to the Chief of Staff of the host country's military in the case of joint operations and exercises.<sup>101</sup> Currently, all of the command comes from the headquarters without additional offices in the individual countries. This lack of a clear command structure has marred the advancement of the PSF to date. The decision-making process affects the operations and development of the PSF since it relies on unanimous decisions from the Supreme Council.<sup>102</sup> The figure below represents the command structure of the PSF, indicating all the individuals responsible throughout the chain of command.

From the diagram below, it is apparent that the command structure of the PSF has only six operational staff offices in charge of administration, intelligence, operations, logistics, and planning.<sup>103</sup> The command structure at the headquarters acts as the fundamental base upon which the unit stationed at Hafr al Batin relies.<sup>104</sup> It is important to note that the ranking officer in the force does not have significant input on the command structure of the PSF—meaning units provided by each country organize differently, yet the PSF command structure lacks

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<sup>101</sup> Kuffel, 1-33.

<sup>102</sup> Al Kindi, 1-20.

<sup>103</sup> Colonel Mohammed Al Qahtani RAF, Colonel Anthony J. Mastalir USAF, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Keating USA, and Lieutenant Colonel Rhett Champagne, USAF, "The Case for a Gulf Cooperation Council Peninsula Shield Force," *The FAOA Journal of International Affairs*, 12, no. 1 (2014): 29-31.

<sup>104</sup> Anthony Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity: Expanding the Role of the GCC in Gulf Security*, Center for Strategic International Studies, December 20, 2012, accessed December 9, 2014, [http://csis.org/files/publication/121224\\_GCC\\_and\\_New\\_Challenges\\_Gulf\\_Security.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/121224_GCC_and_New_Challenges_Gulf_Security.pdf), 1-20.

subcommittees to support different functions and relies directly on the offices of the aforementioned generals.

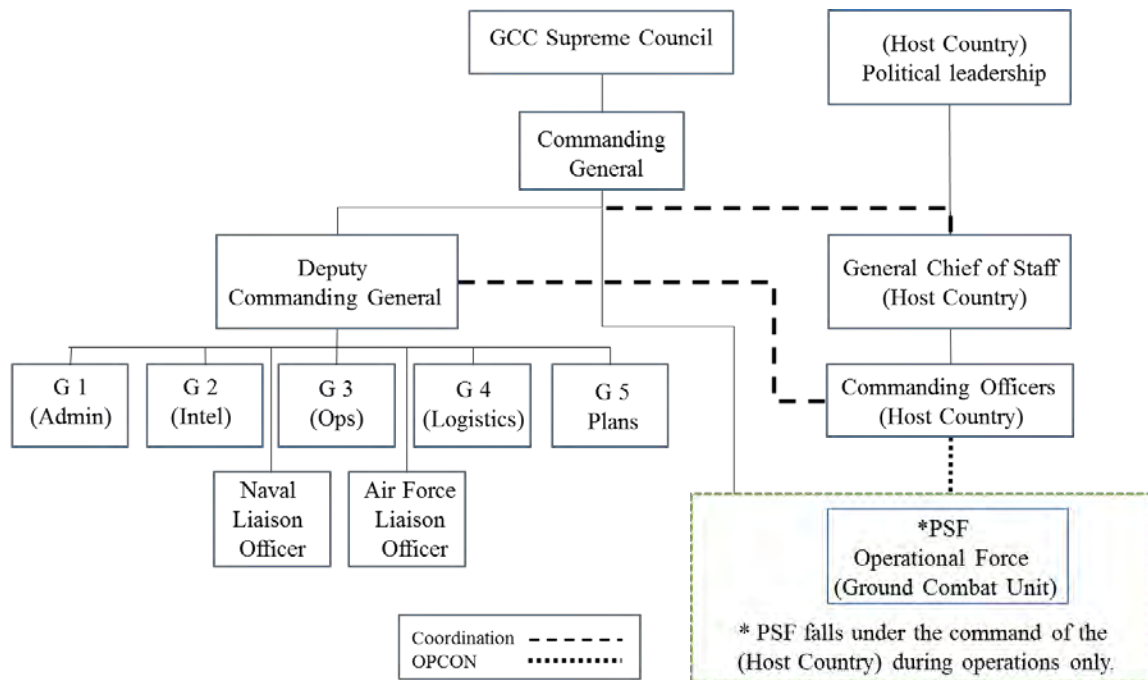


Figure 2. Current PSF Organization

Source: Created by author.

The PSF lacks a navy and air force unit. As stated earlier the PSF relies on ground combatant units stationed at the Hafr al Batin in Saudi Arabia.<sup>105</sup> The operational unit at the base lacks a centralized command structure and relies heavily on the commanding officers of the armies in respective countries.<sup>106</sup> Essentially, the structure indicates that the central

<sup>105</sup> Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity*, 1-20.

<sup>106</sup> Waheed A. Al-qassim, "Restructuring GCC Security Policy after the Gulf War" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, 1994), 1-54.

command at the headquarters has little contact with the operational unit on ground, instead relying on the officers of the host countries. This indicates that the PSF lacks central command of the operational unit. The reliance on commanding officers from the host countries causes challenges in coordination between the different units at the headquarters and the operational unit at the base.

### **Comparison of the Structure with Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF)**

The PSF has roles similar to the MEF. However, the command structure of the MEF differs significantly from the one adopted by the PSF. Fundamentally, the US Marine Corps has a complex and well developed structure to ensure efficient planning. The organization of the MEF has four main categories.<sup>107</sup> The Commandant of the Marine Corps sits at the top tier, stationed at the headquarters. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has similar roles to the Commanding General of the PSF. The Commandant relies on the advice and assistance of support staff stationed at the headquarters. The Commandant responds to the Secretary of the Navy concerning the performance of the Marine Corps. The Commandant reports on issues pertinent to internal organization, administration, discipline training requirements, readiness of service, and efficiency.<sup>108</sup>

The Operating Forces form the core of the US Marine Corps. The Operating forces are under the command of the US Marine Corps Forces Command and the US Marine Corps Forces, Pacific. The MEF is a Marine Air/Ground Task Force (MAGTF). The MEF consists of a ground

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<sup>107</sup> Headquarters US Marine Corps (HQMC), Marine Corps Doctrine Publication (MCDP) 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, August 2011), accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCDP%201-0%20Marine%20Corps%20Operations.pdf>, 1-18, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 1-19, 31.



combat element, an aviation combat element, and a logistics combat element.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, the MEF consists of a Expeditionary Operations Training Group responsible for the training of the MEU. Practically, the MATGFs have shown significant flexibility and task-organized capabilities in responding promptly to crisis and conflicts, unlike the PSF. At the basic level, the command structure of the MAGTFS comprises of the following elements.<sup>110</sup>

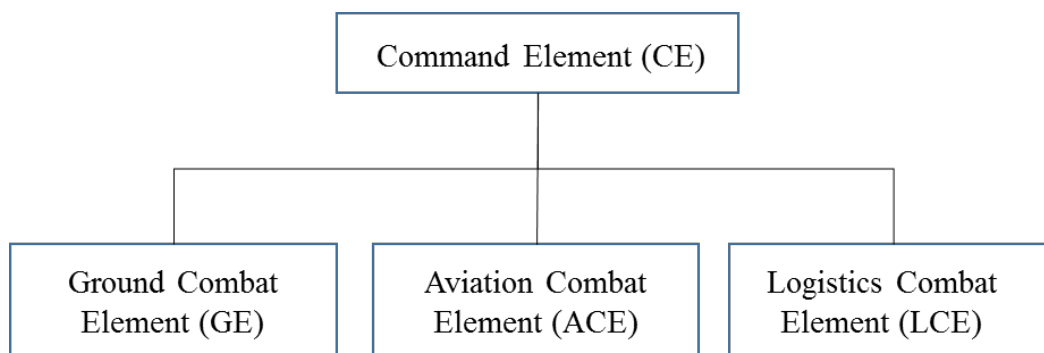


Figure 3. MAGTF Orgnaization

*Source:* Headquarters US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Reference Publication 5-12D, Organization of the Marine Corps Forces (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, 2008), 2-2.

The Command Element has analogous functions with the headquarters of the PSF. The Command Element provides communication, intelligence, and administrative support to the MEF. The PSF relies on the generals mentioned earlier to provide these functions. Therefore, at this level, the PSF generals in charge of administration, intelligence, logistics, operations, and planning would fall under the Command Element. The Ground Combat Element organizes ground

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<sup>109</sup> HQMD, MCDP 1-0, 1-19, 31.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

operations including the provision of artillery, infantry, armor, reconnaissance, engineers, and amphibious assault.<sup>111</sup> The GCC has similar functions within the operational unit of the PSF stationed at the Hafr al Batin base. However, unlike the PSF, the US Marine Corps procurement and provision comes from a central point, whereas operational units of the PSF rely on equipment supplied from individual countries. The Aviation Combat Element conducts defensive and offensive air operations while the Logistics Combat Element provides combat support services for the maintenance of readiness.<sup>112</sup> The PSF lacks the aviation elements in the command structure and the logistics elements fall under the general in charge of logistics.

Focusing on the MEF, it is seen that the force has three elements analogous to the ones under MAGTF. Unlike the PSF, which has only the ground combat unit, the MEF has the aircraft wing and logistics wing. Currently, the MAGTF has three standing MEFs located in different regions of the United States. A major general or a lieutenant general commands each MEF, which is comprised of personnel ranging in number from 20,000 to 90,000.<sup>113</sup> The lieutenant general or major general in charge of each MEF reports directly to the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Summarily, the structure of the MEF would be as shown in the diagram below.

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<sup>111</sup> HQMC, MCDP 1-0, 2-6, 41.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 2-7-2.9, 42-44.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

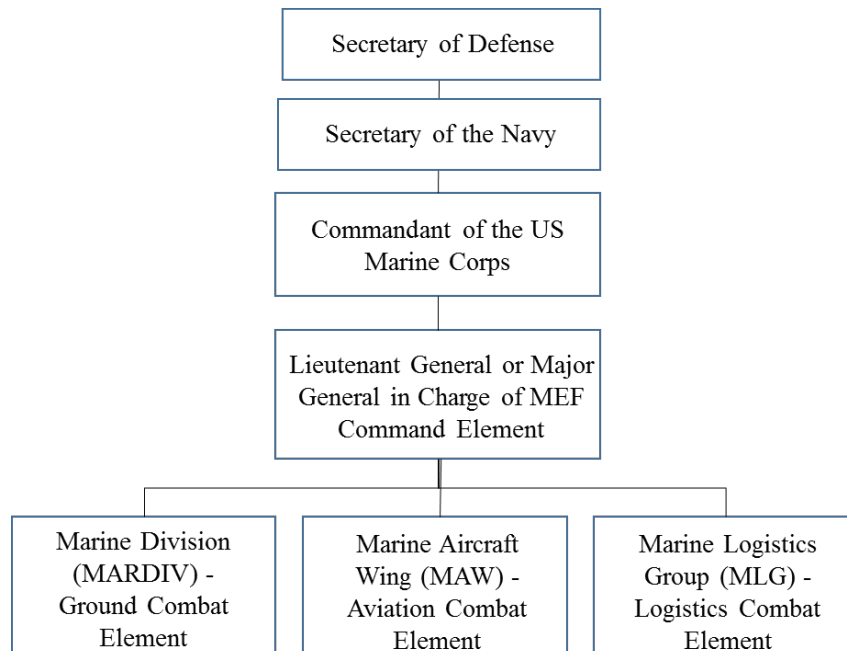


Figure 4. Service Branch Chain of Command

*Source:* Headquarters US Marine Corps, Marine Corps Doctrine Publication 1-0, *Marine Corps Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters US Marine Corps, August 2011), accessed December 9, 2014, <http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/Publications/MCDP%201-0%20Marine%20Corps%20Operations.pdf>, 2-2.

From the illustration, it is apparent that the MEF follows a unified chain of service command. The Commandant reports to the Secretary of the Navy. The Commander of command element (lieutenant general or major general) report to the Commandant of the Marine Corps.<sup>114</sup> The commanders oversee the operations of the ground, aviation, and logistics units of the MEF. The structure differs from the one adopted by the PSF in that the commanders of the operational unit do not associate directly with the individuals responsible for planning, intelligence, operations, and logistics.

<sup>114</sup> HQMC, MCDP 1-0, 3-10.

### **Problems with the Current Command Structure**

The command structure adopted by the PSF has exposed it to a wide array of problems. First, the force has maintained a Saudi general since its inception. This issue has raised concerns among the smaller member-states. The member-states feel that the force needs to rotate the command of the unit from one country to another.<sup>115</sup> Trust issues arising along the line of command have challenged cooperation between the countries pertinent to the force.<sup>116</sup> The smaller states have expressed significant discomfort at having their troops under a Saudi general. Therefore, the first issue that the PSF or GCC should address in the new structure involves the rotation of command between the countries. Countries such as Oman, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates suggest that the command structure should revert from Saudi Arabia to the host country when the force enters one of the countries. This assertion illustrates the preoccupation of the smaller states with the meddling in internal affairs by Saudi Arabia. The issue underlines the symbolic importance of the PSF command structure being at the headquarters in Saudi Arabia.<sup>117</sup> To benefit the joint military enterprise, the member-states should agree on the command structure provisions as the force moves from one member country to another.

Additionally, the poor command structure has led to significant challenges regarding joint military training, command, and training capacity. As stated earlier, the force has the headquarters in Saudi Arabia without other offices in the member countries. Therefore, the force has a decentralized command structure that leads to challenges in maintaining a joint strategy. Further, the command structure relies significantly on the decisions of the Supreme Council.

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<sup>115</sup> Al Kindi, 1-20.

<sup>116</sup> Neil Patrick, "The GCC: Gulf State Integration or Leadership Cooperation?" (Research Paper, Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States, London, UK, 2011), 1-38.

<sup>117</sup> Legrenzi, "The Peninsula Shield Force: End of a Symbol?" 11-12.

Consequently, the force lacks significant autonomy in decision-making, which leads to problems on military planning. The incapability to make some strategic decisions means that the PSF cannot form external alliances on its own without the unanimous decision of the Supreme Council.<sup>118</sup>

The decentralized command structure also means that the PSF faces challenges in the procurement of military and defense inventory from the member countries.<sup>119</sup> Specifically, the issue relates to planning and interoperability of equipment and systems from the individual states. The PSF relies on the equipment and systems provided by the military forces of the individual states, and consequently utilizes a mix of systems and equipment. The use of a mix of systems and equipment leads to issues of interoperability. This issue of procurement stems from the constant need to maintain national sovereignty among the member-states. To improve the capacity and capability of the PSF, the member countries should seek to include planning staff within the command structure to help in the acquisition of military systems and equipment jointly. The current command structure lacks efficiency in planning for procurement of equipment and systems. Consequently, joint operations may fail as the systems and equipment provided lack interoperability.<sup>120</sup>

From the comparison between MEF and PSF it is apparent that a centralized command structure would benefit the latter. Currently the operational unit has little interaction with the headquarters because of the policy of reliance upon the commanding officers of the host countries. Therefore, the PSF should build the capability to command its force without relying on the officers of the host nation. On this note, the PSF can liaise to the Chiefs of Staff

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<sup>118</sup> Aaron, Wehrey, and Wallace, 1-25.

<sup>119</sup> Balzan, 12.

<sup>120</sup> Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity*, 1-20.

and Commanding Officers to ensure cooperation during joint operations. The use of a centralized command structure for the force would streamline decision-making on issues affecting the force. As a tool for increased military strength, the GCC has a multitude of mission and institutional failures regarding the PSF that require correction. Essentially, the issues revolve around planning, interoperability, standardization, sustainability, logistics, and readiness.<sup>121</sup>

### **The Evolution of Threats in Relation to the Command Structure**

As noted earlier, the threats facing the GCC have evolved over the years. At the establishment of the PSF, Iraq and Iran were the main security threats to the organization, but they were not the only threats necessitating the formation of the PSF. Most of these traditional threats exist to date. However, the threats have taken a different dimension over the years. The GCC considered Iran a threat based on the spread of revolutionary shia ideas during the first years after the formation of the PSF.<sup>122</sup> Additionally, the GCC considered Iraq a threat based on the strength of Saddam's army at that time. However, currently, the main concern for the GCC is the development of nuclear weapons. The fall of Saddam from power has led to a shift in the balance of power towards Iran. This, combined with pursuit of a nuclear program, has made Iran the most crucial security threat within the region. Additionally, the escalation of political chaos and extremism in Iraq has become an issue of significant priority among the GCC members, and the GCC will face threats from other countries as well. The GCC has significant cooperation with the United States. Contrarily, the United States has strained relationship with some foreign

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<sup>121</sup> Al Qahtani, 29-31.

<sup>122</sup> Al Kindi, 1-20.

powers.<sup>123</sup> Threats to the United States also affect international allies like the GCC. Therefore, the GCC should consider its readiness in terms of maritime attacks as a precaution.

The current PSF command structure involves a long chain of command that reduces the capability of the PSF to respond promptly in the event of an attack. For example, it would take approximately seven to fifteen minutes of warning for Iran to initiate an air attack on any GCC member country.<sup>124</sup> Additionally, the threats in the region have increased due to the evolution of Remote Controlled Vehicles and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV). Considering the threat from Iran, the GCC should worry about the possibility of UAV attacks on the member countries. Traditionally, UAVs carried out reconnaissance missions with limited range. Today UAVs can carry out reconnaissance missions and stay in the air for extended periods for the correct identification of targets. Additionally, the current UAVs carry a payload of weaponry.<sup>125</sup> Therefore, the GCC should reexamine its capability of detecting UAVs to avert airstrikes, especially from Iran.

### **Evolving Threats**

The reliance on unanimous decisions from the Supreme Council regarding security issues also exacerbates the problems of command facing the PSF. The Supreme Council has all the capacity to make decisions regarding defensive or offensive missions of the PSF. However, the Supreme Council has always had problems arriving at unanimous decisions on matters affecting the GCC. Therefore, the Supreme Council should embrace change and allow

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<sup>123</sup> Al Qahtani, 29-31.

<sup>124</sup> James Noyes, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Impact on the Security of the GCC," *Iran's Nuclear Program: Realities and Repercussions* (Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates: Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, December 21, 2006), 1-56.

<sup>125</sup> Koch, 15-17.

decision-making based on majority votes in order to be effective in the collective security efforts. Further, the lack of subcommittees to plan the joint PSF exercises and operations has caused the problems associated with procurement and standardization of equipment and work force.<sup>126</sup> Therefore, the GCC should also address the issue of proper planning infrastructure to increase the military capacity of the PSF.

### **The New PSF Command Structure**

In 2013, the GCC announced that it would adopt a new command structure. Currently, the command structure allows for significant interaction between the sub-commands in the member countries. However, the countries have suggested that they intend to create a new central command to coordinate the operations and exercises of the sub-commands.<sup>127</sup> The new command structure revolves around forming a unified military command structure to respond to the threat from Iran. Firstly, the GCC intends to extend the current operational force to 100,000.<sup>128</sup> Further, the suggestions for the creation of a new command entail the creation of a Joint Defense Council to implement GCC security measures. The centralization of decision-making aims at increasing the region's readiness to face external maritime and aerial threats that face the region.<sup>129</sup> However, the GCC has not yet revealed the structure or else it has not yet developed a command structure. Therefore, the structure shown in the diagram below could help the PSF in increasing its military capacity.

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<sup>126</sup> Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity*, 1-20.

<sup>127</sup> Al Qahtani, 29-31.

<sup>128</sup> Saidy, 1-16.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.



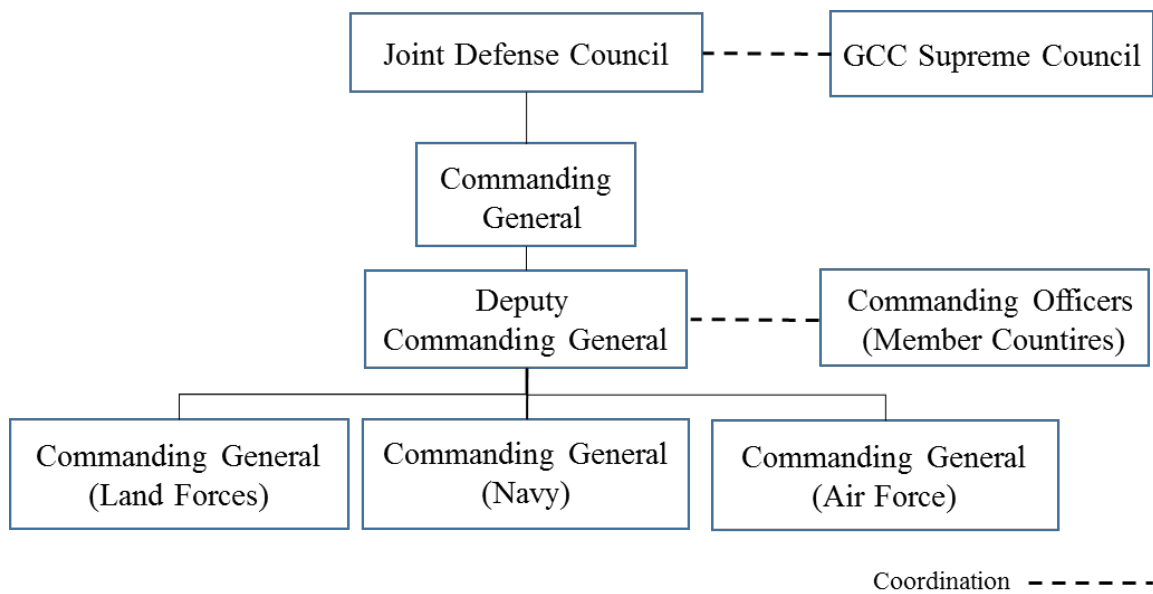


Figure 5. Proposed Command PSF Structure

*Source:* Created by author.

Essentially, the Supreme Council would serve as a decision-making body, but with a narrower scope compared to the current situation. The Joint Defense Council (JDC) would act as the main decision making body in matters regarding security. Therefore, the JDC would act as a supranational body with significant autonomy on matters involving regional security. The Commanding General of the PSF would answer directly to the JDC. Under the Commanding General would be the Deputy Commanding General. The Deputy Commanding General would seek cooperation and advice from the Commanding Officers of the member countries regarding the security concerns of each member-state. The Commanding Officers of the member-states would have limited control over the PSF in any member country. The new joint military cooperation intends to increase cooperation on naval and air force capabilities. Therefore, this would require a commandant for the land, navy, and air force units. The new structure would

ensure streamlined decision-making.<sup>130</sup> Consequently, this would increase the readiness of the GCC to respond to external threats. Additionally, the joint unit would increase interoperability since the JDC would oversee the acquisition of joint military equipment and systems.

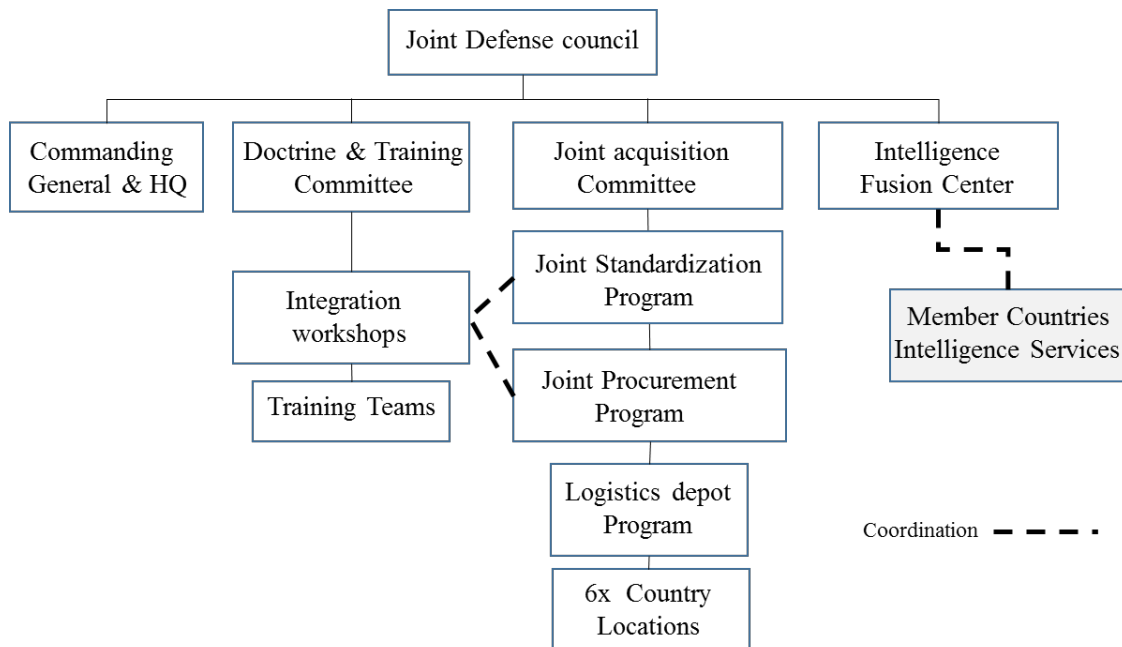


Figure 6. Internal Organizational Considerations

Source: Created by author.

### Other Considerations

The formation of a Joint Military Committee would introduce a number of changes. Therefore, the GCC should make other considerations pertinent to improving its defense capability in the region.<sup>131</sup> The JDC should consist of several subcommittees with distinct

<sup>130</sup> Alsayed, 1.

<sup>131</sup> Al-qassim, 1-54.

duties. First, an interoperability and standardization committee, and a joint acquisition committee would help in the evaluation of the redeployment capability of the forces. Additionally, the committee would establish standards for sharing and stockpiling of munitions among the countries.<sup>132</sup> Secondly, a procurement and technology committee and support staff would help in analyzing the procurement needs of the forces. Moreover, the committee would aid in the testing and evaluation of methods and technical issues affecting the PSF.<sup>133</sup> Thirdly, the JDC would create workgroups on arms control rather than relying on individual generals for these functions.<sup>134</sup> The mandate of the workgroups would include the creation of an integrated surface-to-air and air-to-air missile control and warning system, and also a maritime surveillance system.<sup>135</sup> Further, the JDC should incorporate an assessment group to address the external and internal asymmetric and extremist threats. Finally, the GCC should consider building a common training and exercise capacity to develop interoperability.

### Summary

This section was dedicated to analyzing the command structure employed by the PSF. On this note, the section compared the command structure with the one utilized by the MEF. A significant disparity was noted between the two. The PSF is subject to significant political pressure from the GCC Supreme Council. The functions of the PSF rely on unanimous decisions from the Supreme Council, but the GCC has always had problems arriving at unanimity. Further, the section has noted significant decentralization in the command structure. The command

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<sup>132</sup> Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity*, 1-20.

<sup>133</sup> Cordesman, *Securing the Gulf*, 10-12.

<sup>134</sup> Patrick, 1-38.

<sup>135</sup> Cordesman, *Moving Towards Unity*, 1-20; Al Qahtani, 29-31.

structure is fundamentally haphazard. The operational unit at the regional base does not have significant interaction with the Commanding General. Instead, the PSF relies on the commanding officers within the host nations.<sup>136</sup> Contrarily, the MEF has a streamlined and centralized command structure in which the president plays peripheral roles. The different units have a discrete commander.

The section delineated the challenges arising from this ineffective command structure. Fundamentally, the challenges revolve around interoperability, planning, readiness, sustainability, and standardization of the force.<sup>137</sup> The section evaluated the current environment of threats in the region in terms of the current command structure. The comparison has shown that the command structure would not hinder quick decision-making for joint military exercises and operations. Lastly, the section offered suggestions for the development of the proposed joint military unit. Notably, the unit would rely on centralization of decision-making and the inclusion of a number of PSF-specific commanding officers. The centralization of command would assist in prompt decision-making and coordination between the different sub-commands located in the member countries.<sup>138</sup> The next section will offer a recap of the main points of the study in the form of a conclusion.

## **Conclusion**

This study concentrated on security cooperation in the Gulf region. Specifically, the study aimed at investigating security threats in relation to the PSF. Section 1 offered an overview of the GCC. The section investigated the motives behind the formation of the GCC. Notably, the section

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<sup>136</sup> Alsayed, 1.

<sup>137</sup> Al Qahtani, 29-31.

<sup>138</sup> Cordesman, *Securing the Gulf*, 11.

observed that the initial objectives for the formation of the organization did not involve security considerations.

Section 2 described the historical backgrounds of the member-states. The most crucial areas in the section entailed the detailing of the military capabilities of each state and the needs for an improved unified military force. Summarily, the section observed that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia acts as the largest contributor towards the current joint force and enjoys a position of dominance in the chain of command. The section delineated the importance of security cooperation among the GCC countries.

Section 3 concentrated on the security threats facing the region. The section identified Iran as the primary external threat to the integrity of the GCC. Further, the section investigated the evolution of the PSF. On this note, the section gave an overview of the structure of the PSF. The most crucial part entailed the analysis of the capabilities and limitations of the PSF. The section noted that the PSF has a myriad of limitations that the GCC should address to increase its capability.

Section 4 gave a comprehensive analysis of the command structure of the PSF in comparison with the MEF. Notably, the structures differ in terms of centralization of decision-making. Moreover, the section gave suggestions for the development of the new joint force under a new command structure. The central aim of this section entailed the centralization of command to improve interoperability, readiness, sustainability, logistics, planning, and standardization.

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