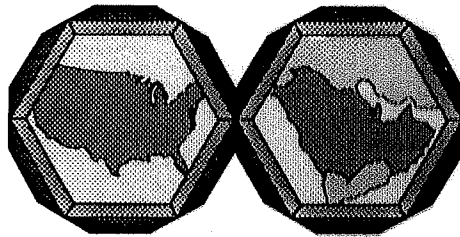


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After the Gulf War: The GCC and the World

by

John Duke Anthony

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AFTER THE GULF WAR: THE GCC AND THE WORLD

John Duke Anthony

The defense policies of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) face severe constraints posed by the vast territory of the GCC, its exposed infrastructure, and the small size of its population and armed forces in comparison to Iraq and Iran. The main implication of these constraints is that the GCC will, for the foreseeable future, pursue a strategy that combines enhanced deterrence with a reliance on the geopolitical and, *in extremis*, military components of the allied coalition that confronted the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The strong moral, political, diplomatic, and military support that the GCC received from regional and global powers during the Kuwait crisis convinced it of the necessity to ensure that such support will be as readily forthcoming in the future, if necessary, as it was in 1990. In the aftermath of Kuwait's liberation, more than a dozen countries could be envisaged as playing possible roles in the new, more credible deterrence and defense mechanism that the GCC sought to construct.

These countries are a diverse group, whose ties with the Gulf countries differ in nature. Some have strong economic interests in the flow of oil; others are linked by a common Arab or Islamic historical and cultural background. In the Gulf crisis, they were bound by a common interest in preventing the annexation of Kuwait by Iraq and the resulting Iraqi dominance over the world oil market, the Gulf and the eastern Arab world. This interest serves as a basis for their incorporation in future GCC strategies. GCC planners are also aware that the policies of their potential regional partners may be variable. The overall GCC strategy will aim to consolidate ties with a large number of countries to reduce problems that might arise from volatility in the behavior of any one country.

1. The Role of Middle Eastern States in GCC Strategic Planning

In its planning for a more effective defense in the postwar period, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has concentrated on both short-term and longer-term challenges from three countries: Iraq, Iran, and

Yemen. Among the three, Iraq is considered the foremost real threat, followed by a potential threat from Iran and, to a much lesser extent (if at all), Yemen.

The predominant belief among GCC governments is that the blame for the breakdown in regional order in 1990 lay with the government of Saddam Hussein, not with the Iraqi people. The GCC is also united in its view that Iraq must remain a unitary state. It is opposed to supporting either Kurdish or Shi'a separatism in Iraq and is not willing, under any circumstances, to accept the establishment of an independent state by either group. In this regard, the GCC's policy remains unchanged from the days of the Iran-Iraq war when it repeatedly stated that the regional status quo, particularly the territorial inviolability of the Gulf's existing eight riparian countries, must be upheld at all costs.

At the same time, the GCC is keen to see Iraq's future potential for military adventurism or revenge severely circumscribed. Further, the GCC wants to ensure that international arrangements are undertaken which will result in future Iraqi governments being held much more effectively to international law than was the case with Saddam Hussein's regime.

The GCC is also a vocal advocate of the unanimously passed Article Eight of UN Security Council Resolution 598 of July 1987 pertaining to the Iran-Iraq war. Article Eight voiced the international community's consensus (with Iraq adhering immediately and Iran agreeing a year later) that all eight of the Gulf countries should work to achieve a comprehensive regional security agreement for the Gulf as a whole. Implicit was the understanding among the signatories that the achievement of a tripolarity among Iraq, Iran, and the GCC would be the cornerstone of any such agreement.

As the GCC has been unable to be a credible "third pillar," either militarily or demographically, it has had to seek exceptional support to attain a level of overall parity vis a vis Iraq and Iran in terms of power and influence. It can become a credible third pillar in any regional defense arrangement only if it can succeed in enlisting the support of a sufficient number of powerful partners. As shown below, however, the regional components of what might constitute a successful arrangement are by no means certain.

In the broadly defined Middle East region, six countries are of major interest to GCC strategic planners. Egypt and Syria, as members of the coalition that liberated Kuwait, are prominent potential Arab partners in future GCC strategic planning. One other Arab country,

Morocco, has also traditionally played a role in the defense and security policies of a number of GCC states, although a number of factors limit the extent of the role it may be able to play in future GCC plans.

Among the leading non-Arab Muslim countries, Turkey played an important role in the Gulf crisis and continued close ties with Turkey are desired by the GCC countries. One country that is considered a possible threat by the GCC, Iran, is also viewed as sharing some common interests that would make it a possible partner under certain circumstances. A more distant country that has offered military advice and assistance to the Gulf countries in the past has been Pakistan, but its failure to offer wholehearted support to the GCC countries during the Gulf crisis has meant that its role in Gulf planning is not a primary one.

Egypt

When the guns fell silent in the aftermath of Kuwait's liberation, Egypt was the major Arab country that seemed likely to be accorded a prominent role in any new Gulf defense arrangement. From the GCC leaders' perspective, such a role would have followed naturally on Egypt's quick support for the GCC, the deployment of crack elite Egyptian troops, and Cairo's critical role in hosting the two Arab League summits that condemned Iraq's invasion and provided important Arab and Islamic geopolitical legitimacy to the allied coalition.

Soon after Kuwait was liberated, an important military role was envisaged for Egypt in the context of the Damascus Declaration, a communique issued following the meeting of the GCC's Ministerial Council plus the foreign ministers of Egypt and Syria in Damascus on March 6, 1991.¹ An important feature of discussions accompanying the Declaration was the eight countries' intention to establish a permanent peacekeeping force in the Gulf; however, within a few months after the announcement, the idea was scrapped.

One major reason was the objection of Iran, which balked at the concept of non-Gulf countries being invited into the Gulf to play a military role.² A second reason was that several GCC countries began to have second thoughts about the wisdom of the arrangement. In some, religious leaders and other conservative elements, reluctant in any case to endorse the concept of foreign troops on their soil, expressed displeasure at the thought of troops from Egypt and Syria, since in recent decades governments of these foreign countries had supported efforts to subvert what later became the GCC governments.

In the midst of Iran's highly vocal recriminations and the GCC's second thoughts, Egyptian President Mubarak, whose troops were to have been the backbone of the peacekeeping force, declared that he was having more than second thoughts. Insinuating that Egypt had been insulted, inadequately consulted, and insufficiently appreciated for its contributions to the liberation of Kuwait, Mubarak announced that Egypt would not participate at all in a peace-keeping force. Underlying the rhetoric was Egyptian disappointment that the GCC countries, and Kuwait in particular, had not been as forthcoming on the number of postwar reconstruction and related contracts offered to Egyptian firms and workers as Cairo had expected.

Weeks later, there were candid admissions by both the GCC and Egypt that they had expressed their doubts and criticisms in haste and should continue to meet with a view to agreeing on as many areas of potential cooperation as possible. In this spirit, the eight foreign ministers met again in Kuwait in July. At the Kuwait meeting, the ministers agreed to forego the idea of external Arab military involvement in any GCC regional defense arrangement, but indicated that they would not oppose a GCC member country entering into bilateral arrangements, with Egypt, Syria, or anybody else, which it felt necessary to enhance its defense. The ministers agreed that a role for Egypt, Syria, or any other Arab non-Gulf country should be confined solely to meeting the defense needs of Kuwait and such other GCC members as might wish to enter into separate bilateral arrangements for that purpose. While many Egyptians and Syrians viewed this development as a setback, the GCC saw it differently, as a policy sensitive to strategic considerations raised by Iran and opposition voiced by important domestic constituencies.

Syria

The Syrian potential for playing a significant role in postwar GCC defense or geopolitical arrangements was, in GCC eyes, at least as mixed as Egypt's. Apart from the fact that Syria, like Egypt, is not a Gulf country, there was opposition by the religious establishments, and the politically conservative constituencies in the GCC countries in general, to anything more than nominal Syrian involvement in any matter pertaining to defense. One reason given was that recent pro-Gulf changes in Syria's foreign policies notwithstanding, the Damascus regime had for a long time been considered a close copy of Iraq in its governmental structure, domestic political dynamics, and alleged hegemonic ambitions vis-a-vis its neighbors.

As such, in GCC eyes, Syria did not yet warrant the kind of trust and confidence that GCC members had extended to one another and, to a lesser degree, to Egypt. Other reservations were rooted in concern for operational details. Among such concerns were the perceived potential security risks that could ensue from Syrian involvement in the early stages of the GCC's planning for a postwar defense structure, in GCC command, control, and communications systems, and in intelligence-sharing activities. In addition, the GCC countries were reluctant to enter into arrangements with Syria that might involve them in Syria's disputes with its neighbors or its uneasy relationships with the United States, Great Britain, and others. The Gulf states were also wary of the possibility that a future Syrian government might be less willing than that of Hafiz al-Assad to enter into Gulf security arrangements.

For all these reasons, the GCC is likely to want any potential post-war role for Syria in the Gulf to focus on the following GCC goals: (1) enlisting Damascus' assistance in the GCC's objective of providing an important geostrategic and political counter-weight to Iraq; (2) engaging Iran in a multifaceted network of constructive relations; (3) achieving a semblance of political balance within the Arab League; and (4) working with Egypt, Lebanon, Djibouti, and as many other non-Gulf Arab countries as possible to form a moderate bloc within an eventually revived Arab order.

Nevertheless, a more extensive role for Syria may be agreed upon in the foreseeable future. In return, Syria, with de facto GCC political and diplomatic support, could stand a greater chance of regaining sooner rather than later the Golan Province lands that it lost to Israel in the June 1967 War and which Israel formally annexed in November 1981. Apart from the potential that close GCC-Syria cooperation offers prospects for securing a Middle East peace beyond the Gulf, there is also a potential for mutual benefit in the area of economic cooperation. For example, any financial assistance from the GCC countries to the Damascus government could be designated in such a way as to further facilitate the increasing transformation of Syria's economy into a market economy. Beyond encouraging trade and investment with Syria, this development might also help facilitate yet another GCC objective: the phased withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in accordance with the Taif Accord of 1989.

Morocco

Another potential but far less likely claimant for special consideration by the GCC in terms of regional defense cooperation is Morocco. Had it

sought such a role, which it did not, Morocco would likely have received favorable consideration for reasons that went beyond those pertaining to Egypt and Syria. Morocco, like Egypt and Syria, voted with the GCC on both of the critical Arab League resolutions in August 1990 and contributed troops very early in the Kuwait crisis. Moreover, unlike Egypt or Syria, it had provided special training and other security assistance to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates for much of the past decade.

Despite its favorable standing in the eyes of the GCC countries, Morocco was compelled, primarily for domestic reasons, to adopt a low profile on matters pertaining to Gulf defense arrangements during the Desert Storm phase of the Kuwait crisis. Little has changed in this regard in the postwar period. As the internationally concerted action to liberate Kuwait got underway in the autumn of 1990, the same anti-western religious currents that were manifested in Jordan, Mauritania, Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen, and several other countries in opposition to the allied coalition made themselves felt in Morocco. Had the Arab League met two months later to reconsider its August 10, 1990, vote in support of the member countries' contributing troops to the Multi-National Force, the need to maintain domestic stability would have compelled Morocco either to reverse its vote or to abstain.

Aside from the opposition to a regional defense role by Egypt, Syria, Morocco, or any other non-Gulf country, by Iran and elements within the GCC and its member countries, the potential for rapid progress in reaching the GCC's postwar defense goals in partnership with its regional allies remains problematic for another reason as well. It remains unclear whether the GCC would be able to pay for the costs of such an arrangement.

Egypt, Syria, Morocco and numerous other Arab countries have a legitimate need for capital—and certainly one way to obtain it would be to obtain major financial support from the Gulf states. Most of the GCC countries, however, continue to have pressing needs for increased revenues to address a range of domestic needs and prior obligations. All six GCC countries, moreover, have been in budgetary deficit each year since 1983. The boom has long since passed.

What this means insofar as non-Gulf potential regional partners in a postwar Gulf defense scheme are concerned is that such hopes and expectations as were raised in the immediate aftermath of the war have had to be trimmed back. Initial talk of a \$15 billion GCC fund

to assist Egypt and Syria that was initiated at the time of the GCC's heads of state summit in Qatar in December 1990 has been reduced to \$10 billion.

As a result of these developments and, more directly, the GCC's decision to engage Tehran constructively, Iran has moved to a more prominent place in the GCC's postwar planning. Even so, the prospects for Iran playing a role of any significance in either the short term or the long run are quite problematic.

Iran

Dating from before the August 1988 ceasefire in the Iran-Iraq war, the GCC has been communicating with Iran on a range of common concerns. Among the more important of these has been the extent to which Iran is willing to work with the GCC on a range of issues in which not only they but Iraq, too, share an interest. The issues include trade and investment, quotas for the Islamic pilgrimage, and the rationale for a western military presence in the Gulf. In the event that these topics are addressed to their mutual satisfaction (and only then), a role of some kind for Iran may well be welcomed by the GCC, and possibly also by others, in whatever regional defense arrangements are devised.

Iranian and GCC leaders indicate that neither of them has yet developed specific ideas and details with respect to defense cooperation in the post-crisis period. However, both are in agreement that Iranian views on any postwar regional defense arrangements will not be dismissed out of hand.

In the postwar period, diplomatic movement between Tehran and most GCC capitals, which was on a slow ascent prior to the Kuwait crisis, accelerated on the whole. Most of the GCC countries have encouraged their ministries of commerce and their private sectors to increase trade and related links with Iran, a development particularly welcomed by the highly influential GCC business communities. Building on the robust Iran-UAE trade that continued throughout the Iran-Iraq war, this informal governmental green light has spurred a flurry of new and renewed contacts between Iranians and Arabs on both sides of the Gulf.

Nowhere was this flurry more obvious than in Bahrain and Kuwait, with the latter conducting a brisk trade in fruits and vegetables with Iranian merchants who, by mid-summer 1991, were arriving at Kuwait's dhow harbor almost hourly unencumbered by the previous requirement of visas and with customs duties waived.

One of the intended consequences was that Baghdad and, by extension, Amman, Sana'a, and other Arab capitals, should receive a clear GCC message: that the GCC's future cooperation with non-GCC countries would be reciprocal and based on mutually beneficial needs, concerns, and interests. Foremost among the latter, the GCC insists, must be its partners' strict adherence to the principle of non-interference in one another's domestic affairs. Another criterion, definitionally imprecise but intuitively understood throughout the Gulf, is "good neighborliness."

Although most GCC leaders are pleased with their accelerated dialogue with Iran, there are major items of unfinished business on the GCC-Iran agenda. Iran frightened all the GCC leaders in 1992 when it challenged UAE sovereignty to a UAE island it had occupied since 1971 and, in response to the ensuing reaction by the UAE, refused to discuss the issue in dispute. And it deepened pan-GCC causes for concern when it purchased not only long distance SU-27 fighter-bombers and additional SCUD missiles from China and Korea but, also, advanced Russian submarines equipped with amphibious landing capabilities, which altered the strategic military balance of the Gulf countries overnight. As Iraq's coast is very short and in numerous places quite shallow, this suggests, in GCC eyes, that the submarines' intended use could be against one or more of the GCC states.

Among other outstanding issues are the GCC's questions of whether Iran will defer to the Organization of the Islamic Conference's policy of limiting the number of pilgrims from any country who can go on the Hajj to one pilgrim per thousand Muslim inhabitants in the mother country. This formula was accepted by all other Muslim countries, but in Iran's case would limit the number of Iranian pilgrims to 46,000 instead of the minimum 150,000 that Tehran has been demanding or the 1991 special dispensation allowing it to send 110,000 pilgrims. In 1992, although the official Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) quota remained the same, Saudi Arabia interpreted the numbers liberally. This helped accommodate the many Iranian pilgrims who were unable to participate in the Hajj during the 1988-90 period when, owing to the rupture in diplomatic relations between Riyadh and Tehran, most Iranians were unable to obtain visas to Saudi Arabia.

Additional GCC concerns are whether Tehran will reverse its opposition to the Middle East peace process which began in 1991 in Madrid and, for the first time, brought Israel, on one hand, into

face-to-face talks with Palestinians, Jordanians, Syrians, and Lebanese, on the other; whether it will cease the stridency of its media's denunciation of GCC-Western defense cooperation; whether it will do all within its power to curb the militancy in Lebanon of Hizballah (the Party of God), which is guided, inspired, financed, and armed by Iran, and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards who, by remaining in Lebanon, delay the prospects for more rapid implementation of the aforementioned Taif Accord; whether it will cease its insistence on being accorded the predominant role in any Gulf-related defense agreement; and whether its avowed intent to cease seeking ways to expand its radicalism to the GCC countries is strategic and permanent or merely tactical and, for the present, expedient.

GCC leaders have not forgotten Tehran's partial support for the GCC's political, economic, and military approach to solving the Kuwait crisis. They appreciated Tehran's support for the UN Security Council resolutions against Iraq; its refusal to countenance Iraq's attempts to avoid withdrawing from Kuwait completely and unconditionally; and its refusal to succumb to Baghdad's offer of material reward had Iran agreed to help Iraq evade the UN-mandated economic sanctions.

At the same time, however, the GCC resented Tehran's strident denunciation of its reliance on Western and other support to reverse the Iraqi invasion. It also resented the transparent hope of some Iranian leaders, during the Gulf crisis, that the crisis would continue indefinitely, if only to further benefit Iranian short-term strategic, economic, political, and military interests. The GCC, moreover, has continued to express concern about the uncertainty of who speaks for whom in Iran's many official pronouncements, both during and subsequent to the Kuwait crisis, including those that criticize, deride, and chastise the GCC governments in tones reminiscent of the Khomeini era. All of this is considered to be evidence that Iran has much further to go before it is likely to inspire sufficient confidence in GCC eyes to be a serious actor in regional geopolitical frameworks, let alone defense arrangements.

Other Islamic States

There are two remaining potential regional players in a postwar defense arrangement or geopolitical entente: Turkey and Pakistan. However, the passage of time since the war has resulted in a diminution of the likelihood of either country playing an important role. The reasons have been GCC endorsement of the aforementioned UN Security

Council Resolution 598 of 1987 and, of related significance, Iran's insistence that only the Gulf countries themselves should be afforded a role in any postwar regional defense arrangement. Even so, both Turkey and Pakistan have been associated with Iran and Iraq in previous regional defense arrangements, and each, in different ways, enjoys a close relationship with almost all of the GCC countries.

Turkey

Unlike Pakistan, Turkey has no soldiers in any of the GCC countries, and has never been party to a formal agreement or undertaking with any of the GCC countries in the area of defense cooperation. The extraordinary decisiveness of the Turkish leadership in the early days of the Kuwait crisis provoked an admiration among GCC leaders which, at the time, was arguably greater than that for any other Islamic country, with the exceptions of Egypt and Syria.

Notwithstanding this, the GCC does not presently foresee a significant role for Turkey. Were this to change, Turkey could be a formidable partner in any defense arrangement. Turkey has a status within NATO and a reputation for having one of the most admired armed forces in the non-Western world. It is also unique in being the only country that borders—and borders on the far side—both of the GCC's eastern neighbors, Iran and Iraq.

Turkey's continuing geopolitical support for the GCC countries will continue to be critical in the short term. In the longer term, the GCC will need to reevaluate continually the potential role that can be played by Turkey, not least because of Ankara's ongoing close relationship with Israel, but also because of the web of contentious issues between Turkey and Syria. As for Iran, with the breakup of the Soviet Union and consequent growing Turkish interest and involvement in the Turkish-speaking communities adjacent to Iran, there is an added incentive for Tehran, also, to engage Ankara constructively on the range of issues between them.

Pakistan

Pakistan has played a long-standing role in the secondment of specific units to individual GCC countries and in training their armed forces. Pakistan has also played a consistent role of support over the years on a range of Arab and Islamic issues of great concern to the GCC. In times and circumstances other than those which occurred during the Kuwait crisis, such considerations would likely have placed Islamabad

near the head of any queue of Muslim non-Arab countries seeking a participatory role in whatever regional defense system may emerge in the Gulf.

Despite this, opposition to a Western military presence in the region by large numbers of religious militants in Pakistan is sufficiently strong to render unlikely any scenario in which the Islamabad government could formally pursue a significant Gulf defense role. Domestic constraints within Pakistan are likely to continue to limit the nature and extent of Pakistan's involvement to the current kind of bilateral defense assistance agreements which Pakistan enjoys with most of the GCC countries.

In the early days of the Gulf crisis, Saudi Arabia requested that Pakistan render practical assistance to reverse the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Specifically, Pakistan was asked to contribute to the allied coalition tanks and other armored vehicles, especially those that Saudi Arabia had purchased on Islamabad's behalf with the clear understanding that Pakistan would come to the Kingdom's defense if it should ever come under threat of attack.

Pakistan, however, offered instead to send drivers and troops to defend the Islamic holy places, although neither of the shrines was even remotely under threat of attack. Its refusal to send tanks and armored personnel carriers came as a major affront to the GCC. The constraints on the Pakistani government were partly domestic; they were also fueled in part by Pakistani resentment at the US inconsistency in applying long-standing UN Security Council resolutions against Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands, on one hand, and against Iraq's occupation of Kuwait, on the other.

Uniquely compounding the Islamabad government's resentment against the US in the Kuwait crisis was Washington's 1990 decision to suspend US economic assistance to Pakistan. Pakistanis took special umbrage at the reason given for the curtailment: continuation of their country's nuclear weapons development program. In the eyes of many Pakistanis, Washington's development and application of the criterion by which Pakistan—but neither Israel nor Pakistan's arch-adversary, India, which also have nuclear weapons development programs—was, in effect, to be punished, were examples of US short-sightedness and application of a double standard.

The Pakistani example illustrates the significant role that public opinion can play in the prospects for specific countries contributing meaningfully to any regional defense arrangement that turns on

US-Arab or Western-Islamic cooperation. For many countries in the area, public opinion continues to be directly affected by the credibility of US efforts to bring about a just and lasting settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In this context, Pakistan was a non-Arabian mirror of the lack of support for the international coalition that was also seen in Algeria, Jordan, Libya, Mauritania, the PLO, Sudan, Tunisia, and Yemen.

2. Global Powers in GCC Strategic Planning

The United States

The US is aware that both Iraq and Iran will remain major Gulf powers and recognizes, accordingly, that any hope the GCC countries have of deterring either of these countries in the future turns heavily on the establishment of the tripolarity of power discussed earlier. There is little doubt that the United States and other countries are in a position to augment substantially the defense equipment and systems of the GCC countries and, if necessary, to defend them in the event of a future breakdown in regional order. Strategists within the allied coalition and the GCC alike agree that only thus can the GCC hope to provide a sufficiently credible deterrent to a threat from either Iraq or Iran or, in a worse-case scenario, from both.

Implicit in such an approach, however, is an unprecedented degree of intimacy and cooperation between the GCC countries, the US, and other sources of defense assistance. Also implicit is a much greater degree of standardization of GCC and allied forces' defense equipment than has hitherto been the case, plus joint procurement, combined maneuvers and training, regular meetings among force commanders of all three military services, and effective command, control, and communications systems linking the six countries' respective military establishments.

The goal of maintaining regional peace, security, and stability through this arrangement would stand a good chance of success with such a system, provided the politics were favorable. If there is a flaw, it lies in the proviso that the politics, while not completely disabling, are less than favorable.

Several political obstacles remain toward realizing this scenario. The biggest one, which by its nature has a pervasive influence on most of the others, is that US supporters of the Israeli government are opposed to a major military build-up by GCC countries. Their

reasoning, repeated in conjunction with their opposition to previous US arms sales to these countries, is that such sales significantly augment the armed forces of countries which, as yet, have no formal peace arrangement with Israel.

Israel's lobby accepts only carefully calibrated increases in prepositioned equipment for use primarily by American and other Allied forces. Anything else, Israel's supporters argue, should be approved or denied on the basis of whether they upset the military balance between the Arab world and Israel. If deliveries are likely to alter the balance, the lobby insists that Israel receive an equivalent compensating arms package.

Israeli opposition is a powerful factor. The Israel lobby forced a 60 percent reduction in the original US defense package intended for GCC countries in the fall of 1990. A \$7.2 billion sale was allowed to proceed; however, the remaining \$13.5 billion component was still on hold a year later. Not until the fall of 1992 was the Bush Administration able to gain authorization for the US to sell Saudi Arabia additional fighter aircraft and tanks to augment the Kingdom's Gulf defense capabilities.

One objective of the lobby is clearly to link any approval of sales to GCC countries with substantial increases in the level of economic and military assistance to Israel.

Also in the background are the Israeli government's wish for US gifts of replacement planes for Israel's aging Kfir fighter aircraft, cancellation of Israeli debts to the US in an amount comparable to the \$7 billion debt forgiveness to Egypt during the Gulf crisis, Israeli achievement of NATO "associate status," a US commitment not to try to force any Israeli diplomatic team to deal with anyone associated with the PLO in the Middle East peace talks, a US promise not to renew its dialogue with the PLO, and additional technology benefits in the form of greater privileged Israeli participation in research and development contracts for the US defense industry.

In addition to the Israel lobby, there is strong opposition in Congress, much of it influenced by the lobby, toward arms sales to the GCC in general. Quite apart from the lobby, for some, the issue is emotional; for others, the issue is partisan politics, with most Democrats pitted against Republicans. Leading members of the Democratic Party have traditionally opposed any effort to sell significant amounts of additional armaments and weapons systems to the GCC countries. An additional argument of these Democratic Party leaders in support of their rationale for opposing these scenarios posits that in the course of the allied

coalition's successful efforts in liberating Kuwait, the nature and extent of the threat to the GCC countries was so diminished that this, in itself, obviated the need for substantial new arms sales to these countries.

This argument, however, is oriented exclusively to short-run considerations. Those within the GCC and the allied coalition who are seeking to prevent a recurrence of the breakdown in regional order that occurred in 1990 are in agreement that the short term is but one among other considerations. The medium term and the longer term can be just as, if not more, important, especially given the uncertain long-term prospects regarding Iraq and the constants and trends noted earlier with respect to Iran.

GCC, US, and other allied coalition planners argue further that the building of a credible defense structure requires long lead times. Like those of the US and other well-defended countries, it cannot be achieved overnight. Nor is the goal of building credibility into such a structure well served if the focus of planning is only on the here and now, on the constellation of one's friends and adversaries at a given moment. Today's friends may become tomorrow's enemies—as history has shown, often with striking swiftness.

From the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq ceasefire in August 1988, less than 24 months separated GCC and Iraqi friendship from enmity in the conflict that ensued in 1990. While GCC relations with Iran have improved in some areas, Iran still occupies three UAE islands which it took by force in 1971 and, as noted earlier, shows every sign of preparing the islands for a future military role in its quest to become the dominant power in the Gulf. Unlike Iraq, Iran has close to a quarter of a million of its citizens living and working inside the GCC countries. A number of its religious kinfolk, Shia minority elements within the GCC citizenry, were trained in guerrilla warfare, sabotage, subversion, and related techniques in the 1980s so as to serve Iranian interests when and if the need arose.

It is only four years since the Iranian government belatedly accepted the UN ceasefire resolution on the Iran-Iraq war which effectively ended its threat at the time to the GCC. Many in the GCC still believe that an Iranian government of some kind will seek revenge against the GCC for its extensive, and in many ways vital, support for Iraq during the Iran-Iraq war. With armed forces more than three times the size of the combined forces of all six GCC countries, and with an intent to pursue an aggressive foreign policy in support of political and religious radicals both regionally and in the Islamic

world as a whole, Iran, in GCC eyes, will remain a major strategic adversary.

If the degree of potential US support is rendered problematic by the uncertain variable of American domestic politics and Congressional constraints, such reservations, in GCC eyes, do not apply to the second most important power in the allied coalition: Great Britain.

Great Britain

The relative ease of logistics and administrative roles in operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm can be attributed in substantial measure to the legacy of Great Britain in the GCC region. Britain administered the defense and foreign relations of most of the GCC countries from the early 19th century until as recently as two decades ago. The result was a multi-faceted foundation—language, standards, strategic and tactical doctrine, educational and administrative systems—that greatly facilitated not only the level of US participation in the multinational force, but the participation of Egypt's, Pakistan's, and numerous other countries' armed forces as well.

Prior to the Gulf crisis, Britain had replaced the US as the leading supplier of defense equipment to Saudi Arabia. The effectiveness of the Israel lobby in the US in blocking American arms sales to the country allowed the British to take advantage of the opportunity, as evidenced by Great Britain's multi-billion dollar sale of Tornado fighter planes and other defense equipment to Saudi Arabia in increasing amounts after 1985.

The sale of British military equipment to the GCC countries is not subject to the kind of severe Israeli-stipulated restrictions that have been routinely placed on the sales of American aircraft and other defense equipment to the Arab world. The resultant strategic and tactical strength that Great Britain continues to be able to provide the GCC countries can probably be counted on as a constant and, as such, a valued asset in GCC deterrence and defense planning.

Great Britain can likely be counted on to continue providing such assistance to virtually all the GCC countries. In the event of heightened regional tensions, Britain would likely be willing to resume some version of the naval protection role, with its Armilla Patrol, which it assumed during the oil tanker war phase of the Iran-Iraq conflict. The British intelligence and institutional memory regarding the *dramatis personae* in most of the GCC countries, and the large number of GCC officers who have been trained in Britain, will remain important to training and inter-force communications, command, and control.

France

France will also remain an important player in GCC postwar regional defense planning. There are several reasons. French officials know leading decisionmakers in Iran and Iraq as a result of French involvement in the region over the years.³ This knowledge includes a familiarity with significant segments of the leadership of Iraq's air force.

France has a close relationship with the naval forces of Saudi Arabia and the air forces of Kuwait, Qatar, and especially the UAE. There is, moreover, a shared concern between France and the GCC about the forces of Islamic militancy that target Arab governments and their Western partners, especially France, on whose soil these problems tend to be played out more than any other European country. France has the strategic advantage of continued privileged access to and use of valuable Red Sea naval and telecommunications facilities in Djibouti and other facilities at Reunion and Mayotte in the Indian Ocean. The French government demonstrated its commitment to peacemaking and peacekeeping efforts during the Iraq-Iran war, and won the confidence of GCC countries through its role in the Multi-National Force during the Gulf crisis.

Russia and the Former Soviet Republics

Russia is likely to offer far less than either the US, Great Britain, or France to GCC postwar defense planning needs. The reasons are rooted both in the uncertain governmental structure and political stability of the country, and in the lack of Russian involvement in such matters historically.

Despite the severe domestic restraints on Russian capabilities, there are, however, two areas in which the GCC states are interested in cooperating with Russia. One is the UN Security Council, where Russia holds a position as a permanent member with veto power over the Council's resolutions. The GCC is appreciative of the unprecedented role that the Soviet Union played in this regard throughout the Kuwait crisis.

The second area is the realm of state-of-the-art defense equipment and defense systems. Any Russian contribution in either of these areas would add credibility to both the deterrence and defense dimensions of the GCC's postwar planning. With the obvious need to earn vitally important hard currency, Russia is certainly prepared to play as contributive a role as possible in meeting GCC defense needs.

One focus of GCC attention will be the newly-independent Black Sea and Central Asian Republics that were formerly part of the Soviet Union. Owing to their status as neighbors or nearby countries, both Turkey and Iran are actively engaged in expanding their ties with the new Republics. Because of ethnic, linguistic and historical ties, and the largely secular cast to their political structures, Turkey sees the Republics as a natural focus of Turkish influence; the rebuff to its quest to join the EEC is likely to propel Turkey all the more strongly toward acting as an important force in the Black Sea area and establishing strong ties with them. Of greater concern to the GCC countries, however, is the nature of Iranian involvement in the former Soviet Republics. All the GCC countries are keen to moderate Iranian influence of the kind that would spread Iranian radicalism, or augment Iran's role among Islamic states with the backing of the new Republics. The GCC's member states are thus likely to use their financial and diplomatic leverage in an attempt to influence the new Republics toward non-revolutionary, non-militant expressions of Islam.

The People's Republic of China

If the past and present are any guide, China seems less likely to feature in GCC defense planning than any of the four other global powers discussed above. Yet China, much like Russia, can potentially play an international role of great significance to the GCC. One area in which it may be influential, like the other four countries mentioned, is in the UN Security Council where it has veto power. That it did not veto any of the dozen Security Council resolutions calling for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait unconditionally was a significant contribution to the outcome of the crisis.

Secondly, China can play both a positive and a negative role with regard to the GCC's hopes for a peaceful and stable Gulf. On the positive side, it added immensely to Saudi Arabia's deterrence credibility, and potentially its defense capabilities, by providing the Kingdom versions of its long-range CSS II missiles during the latter stages of the Iran-Iraq war when the so-called war between the cities (Baghdad and Tehran) threatened to spread to Riyadh and possibly other GCC capitals. The Reagan Administration had been unable to meet that particular GCC defense need owing to the Israeli lobby's pressures and despite repeated Saudi requests for such assistance.

3. Potential Roles for International and Other Regional Organizations

The United Nations

On matters pertaining to international law and diplomacy and the important geopolitical component of deterrence and defense, some of the GCC's most important international links with institutions outside the Gulf are those it has formed with the UN. No regional organization worked with other countries more effectively than the GCC to help ensure the successful passage of three key UN Security Council resolutions during the Iran-Iraq war. GCC countries were among the first, moreover, to render material assistance to the UN in the days immediately following the August 1988 ceasefire. All GCC leaders were impressed by the display of an unprecedented degree of unity of purpose among the UN Security Council's five permanent members in the Council's 12 resolutions aimed at repelling Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. Building on this foundation, the GCC is actively engaged in seeking ways to strengthen and expand the UN's effectiveness in conflict resolution.

Although mindful of the need to combine the geopolitical efficacy of the UN with additional means of deterrence and defense—of the need, as Secretary-General Abdulla Bishara has frequently stated, “to combine power with political persuasion”—the GCC can be counted on to enhance the role of the UN in regional and international affairs in general. In the aftermath of the Kuwaiti-Iraqi ceasefire, the role of the UN in Iraq, on one hand, and in Kuwait and along the Kuwait-Iraq border, on the other, has continued to demonstrate, as it did throughout the crisis itself, its multifaceted and far-ranging utility in the arena of conflict resolution.

If the UN, a truly ecumenical organization, can help to fashion a new Gulf order on matters pertaining to diplomacy, deterrence, and defense, thereby minimizing notions of a “pax Americana,” the GCC and other Arab countries could reap important dividends.

Europe-GCC Relations: A Multifaceted Partnership

The centerpiece of the GCC's web of cooperative relationships with Europe is the European Economic Community, or the European Community (EC). On a day-to-day basis the emphasis has long been on issues of trade, investment, and technology transfer, not deterrence or defense as such.

The EC presently accounts for nearly 40 percent of the GCC's lucrative import market. The United States, by contrast, accounts for

less than 20 percent. This state of affairs may in time work to the further advantage of Europe for the following reasons: (1) the size of the EC market, which has a population of 325 million as compared to the US market of 248 million; and (2) time and distance and their bearing on costs. The EC's closer proximity to the GCC countries—three time zones as compared to a minimum of seven and, in many cases ten, for the US—gives Europe a competitive advantage in land, sea, and air transportation. This edge also has potential deterrence and defense dimensions, in GCC eyes, as the efforts to deploy troops to the region during the Kuwait crisis underscored in force.

Other Organizations

The prospects for any fundamental change in the GCC's relationship with the 12-member NATO, the nine-member Western European Union (WEU), or the 34-member Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) are far more uncertain. This uncertainty exists despite the profound interest and involvement by some NATO, WEU, and CSCE member countries in the Kuwait crisis and their hopes for a more credible defense system for the Gulf region in the postwar period.

In the case of the Brussels-based NATO, a major reason for the uncertainty is NATO's long-standing policy of non-involvement in theaters of operation outside its member countries' territory. Indeed, in recognition of such constraints, the GCC pursued the 1987-89 Gulf naval protection scheme and the mobilization and deployment of European forces to the Multi-National Force with the Paris-based Western European Union (WEU) instead. For this reason, within GCC planning circles, the WEU, having performed effectively in two test cases, is likely to remain first among equals on the list of potentially helpful European defense organizations.

The CSCE, which emerged from the much more recent Helsinki Accords, looks at many of the same issues as the WEU, plus additional ones, such as human rights. Given the international concern for human rights violations in Iraq and the Arab areas under Israeli occupation, in particular, the CSCE may bear watching as a model of potentially greater relevance for the GCC's postwar efforts to secure peace, security, and stability in at least parts of the Gulf. However, critics of the CSCE's almost totally ineffective role in dealing with the crisis in Yugoslavia argue that any likelihood of GCC and other strategic planners' being able to derive much inspiration or relevance for the CSCE in the case of the Gulf is, at best, minimal.

4. Forging the Postwar Peace: A Strategic Appraisal

After the Gulf crisis, the GCC's interests included the establishment of a more credible mechanism that would effectively deter acts of aggression, threats, or intimidation, from within or outside the Gulf, while upholding each of the Gulf states' sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity. For outsiders, the stake was regional peace and stability, linked as these are to the world's interest in continued access to and uninterrupted production of the GCC's prodigious supplies of energy, a commodity upon which all countries are dependent for their survival. Two additional international interests remain the perpetuation of the generally moderate and conventional orientations of the GCC member countries' foreign policies and the preservation of their record of making substantial philanthropic contributions to many of the world's lesser developed countries.

Notwithstanding the unprecedented threats and considerable damage to the above interests occasioned by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and all that occurred in the process of repelling the invasion, the bulk of these interests remain intact. Within the GCC and the allied coalition there is a pervasive sentiment that the important question is not *whether* to establish a means for greater protection of these interests but *how*.

A number of uncertainties remain regarding the policy of the leader of the allied coalition, the United States. Here a question asked by GCC and Coalition planners alike is to what extent the US can realistically expect to be able to consolidate the gains from its unprecedented cooperation with the GCC countries in the deterrence and defense areas if it fails to stay the course in helping to settle the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and its ancillary Arab-Israeli components. From Kuwait to Salalah, from Aden to Aleppo, and from Mauritania to Muscat, virtually all Arabs long to see the US demonstrate leadership in solving this conflict comparable to that which it displayed in helping Kuwait regain its freedom and security.

Not until the US exhibits such leadership and sees the peace talks through to a broadly acceptable solution will the GCC countries, not to mention any group of other Arab countries, have any realistic hope of being able to strengthen and expand significantly their long-term interests with the US. The GCC-wide accolades and approbation for US leadership, courage, and commitment in bringing the Coalition into being and then directing the successful effort to repel Iraq's invasion will be short-lived if there is not sustained and major progress

toward a just and peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Certainly, the potential for significantly enhanced GCC-US cooperation in a matter so sensitive and vital as regional defense will be lessened substantially if the US allows Israel to veto or effectively paralyze American and other efforts in this regard.

The rewards for the world as a whole in settling the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian, Arab-Israeli conflict cannot be underestimated. Quite apart from ending one of this century's greatest tragedies, it would remove the one issue from which radical groups have long derived one of the greatest sources of their support, moral fervor, and legitimacy in challenging individual Arab governments, in attacking the rationale for Western-Arab relations generally, and in opposing regional security arrangements with Western components specifically.

A settlement deemed satisfactory to the broadest number of Palestinians and Israelis, as well as Lebanese and Syrians, would likely thereby improve the atmosphere for increasing the level of popular participation in the region's national development processes. With the greatly lessened need for sustained high levels of expenditure on defense resulting from a settlement, funds that could be used to help alleviate the misery of the region's poor would be available. A settlement would help ensure more reliable access to and export of the region's energy resources. Most significantly, it would contribute, like no other single factor, to the preservation of regional peace, security, and stability.

Notes

1. For reports on the Declaration itself, see Carol Berger, "Arab Ministers Discuss Regional Pact for Security, Economic Cooperation," *Christian Science Monitor*, March 6, 1991; William E. Schmidt, "Arab Nations Propose a Peacekeeping Force," *New York Times*, March 7, 1991; and Andrew Borowiec, "8 Arab Nations Agree to Become Gulf Watchdogs," *Washington Times*, March 7, 1991.

2. John Duke Anthony, "The 12th GCC Summit: Betwixt War and Peace," *Middle East International*, Vol. 8, No. 6 (July-October, 1992), pp. 57-58.

3. For background on France's relations with Iraq, see William Drozdiak, "Gulf Crisis Ends 15 Years of French-Iraqi Closeness," *Washington Post*, October 12, 1990.

A B O U T T H E A U T H O R

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