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# The Gulf Cooperation Council: Constraints

By John Duke Anthony

Publisher's Note:

This is the second installment in *GulfWire's* series of reports relating to the GCC heads of state summit in Kuwait. Here, the focus is on providing an overview of some of the major constraints facing the GCC as a regional organization. Another essay, giving an overview of the GCC's strengths, is forthcoming.

The first report in this series, "GCC Heads of State Summits: Context and Perspective," appeared on January 10, 2004.

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In keeping with *GulfWire's* series on the Gulf Cooperation Council and the most recent GCC heads of state summit in Kuwait, this overview focuses on aspects of the GCC frequently overlooked by the mainstream media. The purpose is to provide a frame of reference for understanding a range of constraints that have made it difficult for the GCC to achieve some of its goals.

The value of having a feel for what constrains the GCC would appear to be self-evident. It can shed light on what the GCC has and has not succeeded in achieving thus far. As importantly, it can illuminate the prospects for the GCC, unaided by others, addressing satisfactorily challenges that presently lie beyond the organization and the member-states' current capabilities.

Constraints

The GCC has numerous constraints. Some are by design. For context, it is helpful to recall that the GCC was established at a time when Iran and Iraq, both non-members but neighbors of the GCC, were at war with one another. The GCC's founders accordingly reasoned that the better part of wisdom would be to proceed with utmost caution and care. With this in mind, they also thought it would be only prudent to build into the organization various constraints that were known to have served other organizations reasonably well over time.

Lack of Supranational Authority

Perhaps the single greatest constraint upon the GCC in terms of realizing its vision and mission is one it shares with numerous other international organizations, namely that it is not a supranational authority. Unlike the member-states, it has no sovereignty or political independence, and other than the complex of buildings in Riyadh, where it is headquartered, no territory either. As such, it lacks the authorization and power to demand the member countries' compliance on any matter.

In addition, few outsiders are aware of how limited the GCC Secretariat's staff is relative to other, more established regional organizations. For example, the Brussels-based European Union has more than 7,000 employees. The GCC's staff, by contrast, is slightly more than 300. Notwithstanding the fact that many EU employees are translators, unnecessary for the monolingual GCC, the organization still operates with a small number of employees.

Limited Economic Differentiation and Narrow Export Bases

Another pervasive constraint in the GCC's ability to improve the material well-being of the region's citizenry to a greater extent than it has done thus far is rooted in the nature of the member-states' economies. With few exceptions, the members' economies are very similar. Hence, there is less opportunity to add value from the interplay of differing economic advantages than one might imagine.

All of the members are engaged in varying degrees of trade, commerce and banking. Oman, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, in differing degrees, boast impressive agriculture projects. Saudi Arabia, in addition, has numerous large scale farms and agricultural production centers, the other two nowhere near as many, and the remaining three very few.

Apart from Saudi Arabia, there is relatively little manufacturing in the GCC region. The Kingdom's more than 3,300 factories increasingly export products to the other GCC countries. Outside of oil, gas and petrochemicals, there are far fewer factories elsewhere. Bahrain, Oman and the UAE are partial exceptions.

In general, compared to the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, there is no shortage of capital. Every GCC country has a stock market. Many of the region's financial institutions are quite profitable. In addition, the GCC has its own bank, Gulf International Bank, owned by the six governments, with branches throughout the member-states.

The *Financial Times* has reported that Saudi Arabia's banks account for approximately forty percent of the entire Arab world's capital. Tiny Bahrain, however, hosts, to a far greater extent than any of the other members, the largest number of international banking units. Moreover, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE all have extensive investments overseas as well as impressive funds that play major developmental, economic assistance and humanitarian roles among the world's poorer countries and peoples. Except for Bahrain and Oman, the members also possess impressive amounts of oil and gas. There are vast discrepancies, however, in terms of the extent of their reserves as well as levels of production. For example, Saudi Arabia's production has long been in the neighborhood of nine million barrels of oil a day, whereas for years on end Bahrain's has averaged only 40,000 barrels a day. Saudi Arabia's extractable reserves, moreover, equal those of the other five GCC countries combined.

Qatar's natural gas reserves are so vast that that no one can confidently assign a number reflecting anywhere near their exact extent. Because most of its gas production is exported, and its population is the smallest of any of the GCC states, Qatar has rapidly become the country with the world's wealthiest people in terms of income per capita. It is also rapidly becoming a world leader in the gas-to-liquids industry.

Several GCC countries have plants that manufacture aluminum products for domestic use and export. Bahrain's aluminum industry and smelting plant is the oldest, dating from the early 1970s, and has led the way for the others. Saudi Arabia has the lion's share of the region's petrochemical industries, agribusiness and poultry as well as dairy products.

But altogether, what the GCC countries typically *export*, as opposed to what they import and re-export, comprises barely half a dozen major categories of goods. In contrast, they typically purchase from more than 1,000 different general categories of goods produced for export by their trading partners. Because the member-states' economies are relatively small and more alike than different, they tend not to import from or export to each other. Rather, their customers are in the more distant markets of North America, Asia, Europe, the Indian subcontinent, and East Africa.

All of these and other distinguishing characteristics function more as limitations than propellants towards greater GCC economic cooperation and integration.

Risk Aversion and Delays in Implementation

It would be tempting to suggest that, in general, the GCC's constraints are but the reverse of their strengths, nearly a dozen of which were addressed in the *GulfWire* Perspective on "GCC Heads of State Summits: Context and Perspective," that appeared on January 10, 2004. Additional strengths will be addressed somewhat differently in the report that follows this one.
For example, the GCC's detractors are correct in noting that the edifice the founders built is ill-suited either to initiate palpable rapid action beyond the issuance of a rhetorical resolution or to confront issues as decisively and effectively with regard to having a substantive impact as certain challenges might require. The flip side of this observation, however, would be that this is but an accurate reflection of how the founders sought to structure the organization and limit its power.

The perceived pan-GCC trait of aversion to immediately substantive action and reaction, a characteristic shared with many other international organizations, is rooted in reality and acknowledged by various GCC leaders. It was succinctly encapsulated in a comment once made to this author by a member-state's foreign minister: "It's true," he said, "that we tend to be slow to act or react, but we're from the East and, since time was measured, this has been our way."
The examples most frequently cited to demonstrate significant delays in the implementation of specific GCC policies include specific, detailed agreement on the modalities and timing for implementing a common passport, common

market, common currency, and a customs union. In some cases, years have passed where certain agreed policies were slow in being implemented in some GCC states, whereas, in other states, they were either applied more nominally than actually or it took an exceptionally long time in order for them to take effect.

Two additional examples have to do with security issues. For example, Kuwait's constitution has liberal provisions for granting asylum to people fleeing persecution in other countries for their political beliefs. As a result, this has made it next to impossible for the government to accept, let alone allow to be implemented, the doctrine of "hot pursuit," where another member-states' armed forces or police engaged in tracking a suspected criminal can continue their pursuit unimpeded into Kuwait in the event the suspect crosses the country's border.

A related constraint that applies to Saudi Arabia derives from the fact that the Kingdom has unparalleled safety and security responsibilities as custodian of Islam's two holiest places. Accordingly, as the GCC moves to establish a common market, it remains the most reluctant member-state to accept the idea that once imported goods are inspected at a port of entry in any of the other member-countries, they ought not to be subjected to inspection further when they reach the Kingdom's borders.

On the other hand, there have been exceptions to the degree of rigidity with which the all-together-or-not-at-all approach to implementing a particular GCC policy has been enforced. Such exceptions, however, have been few and far between. An example is the pace by which the member-states agreed to integrate their electricity grids at border cross points.

This particular decision was taken as a precautionary measure. The members wanted to put into place a strategy for meeting a member-states' electricity needs in the event of a technical or systemic stoppage. It turned out that the four northernmost GCC countries - Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia - were ready and willing to proceed in this direction far sooner than Oman and the UAE.

The reasons had to do with the fact that the UAE, formed as a loosely-knit confederation, had a different form of governance and system for national decision-making than the rest of the members. And Oman, having been the last of the members to embark on the course of modernization and development pursued by the others, needed more time to catch up with everyone else. Accordingly, it was agreed that the four northern members could proceed without waiting for the two most southern members, which would link up with the others later.

Polar Opposites' Hesitation

In terms of advancing the GCC citizenries' material well-being, the record of the GCC is mixed. A reason has been the existence of constraints rooted in the member-states' different development strategies as well as policies regarding trade, investment, and the establishment of commercial joint ventures, together with their reluctance to compromise on matters that, in public and private sector minds alike, are related to their economic lifeblood.

A result of such reluctance has been that it took far longer than many had originally envisioned for the member-states to reach agreement, as they did two years ago, on a common external tariff of five per cent on most imported goods. As *GulfWire Perspectives* reported at some length in 2000, the reason for the extended delay was clear. It centered on certain members' seeming inability to narrow the gaps between polar opposite, but equally valid, positions on the matter. These opposites were associated with two radically different schools of economic thought. One was being followed by free trade advocates in the Emirate of Dubai and other members of the United Arab Emirates.

*The Emirate of Dubai..*

Dubai's most important interests and skills boil down to three: business, business and business. One seldom if ever meets anyone involved in trade in the GCC who does not marvel at what Dubai has been able to achieve. Given that half a century ago it was as underdeveloped as many other places in eastern Arabia, what Dubai has accomplished is indeed remarkable.

Yet, for all of the emirate's achievements thus far, and the healthy prospects for its still greater growth and prosperity in the years to come, it is undeniable that some of its policies have acted as a constraint on what the GCC as a whole has been able to accomplish. Indeed, just as Dubai's reservations about federating with other polities posed major challenges that had to be surmounted in order for the United Arab Emirates to come into being in December 1971, so, too, did its reluctance to rush towards reaching agreement on a GCC common external tariff take a long time to overcome.

The emirate's position on the tariff issue was formidable. Its leaders reasoned that, unlike the other GCC states, the UAE as a whole, and in particular Dubai, would have to *raise* its customs duties in order to be in accord with the other member-states. However, were it to do so, this would risk running head-on into a risk it wished to avoid. The risk was linked to the fact that the emirate is perennially engaged in fierce competition with Singapore, Colombo, Hong Kong and other small-state commercial dynamos whose economies and reliance on trade are similar.

Like Dubai, these other highly successful trading centers generate much of their revenue through low-margin profits. These are typically derived from dealing in very high volumes of goods, fees for around-the-clock world class business services and the rapid turnover of imports and re-exports. Accordingly, given the nature of its competition, the emirate's leaders, weighing the possible loss of business if the level of customs duties exceeded that of its rivals, saw the emirate as possibly being damaged substantially as a result.

.. *and Saudi Arabia*

If the UAE was one dramatic case in point in terms of resistance to altering its successful economic and commercial policies, another reluctant power was Saudi Arabia. When the Kingdom embarked upon its ambitious and at the time highly controversial course of industrialization in the late 1960s, its advisers were nearly unanimous in what they believed would be required for the experiment to succeed.

The advisers felt the chances of success would be determined in large measure by the extent to which, at least in the beginning years if not also for the first few decades, they would be able to levy and maintain a range of protective tariffs on the imports of competing goods that were lower-priced.

This policy was not novel. It had long been popular and was reasonably effective in many other countries, developed and underdeveloped alike. In the case of Saudi Arabia, it worked more or less successfully not only until the establishment of the GCC but long afterwards.

Gradually, however, it became increasingly obvious that the prospects for greater GCC economic integration were being impeded by the inability of the UAE, on one hand, and Saudi Arabia, on the other, to compromise in order to reach agreement on a unified external tariff pursuant to the formation of a GCC common market and the possibility of concluding a free trade agreement with the European Union.

The challenge was to reconcile the fact that UAE tariffs, on one hand, were very low and, at times, seemingly non-existent. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, and to a lesser extent in Bahrain and Oman, they were substantially higher and government agencies had come to depend on their collection as an important source of revenue.

In Saudi Arabia's case, the dangers and the risks were obvious. If its higher tariffs were forced to drop significantly, the economic and possibly the social and political results, in the absence of off-setting financial benefits or some other form of compensation, none of which existed at the time, could be devastating. For example, many of its factories would be hard-pressed to compete successfully in the Kingdom's marketplace if cheaper goods produced for export by other countries were allowed to be imported duty free or with low level tariffs.

The reasoning of Saudi Arabia's leaders was based on empirically validated evidence. Workers' wages in other countries were, and still are, often lower than the Kingdom's or anywhere else in the GCC. In addition, competing countries' standards regarding safety requirements in the work place, on one hand, and the extent of employer expenditures on health and environmental standards as well as retirement benefits, on the other, are far lower, too.

For the longest time, the UAE and Saudi Arabia remained mired in their positions. Neither was able to see a way forward towards implementing what they agreed in principle would be beneficial for the members as a whole but not necessarily for their respective economies. In particular, neither could see itself reaching a stage, were Dubai to raise its customs duties, and were Saudi Arabia to lower its tariffs, where it would be adequately compensated. No one took issue with the UAE and Saudi Arabia's respective rationales for being so reluctant to alter the cornerstones of their respective development strategies and policies. Everyone accepted that their reasons were understandable and legitimate. Even so, the protracted period it took to reconcile their differences was not without consequence. With the European Union's not dissimilar experience, it is the primary reason why it took far longer for the members to arrive at a common accord for their external tariffs than anyone thought would be the case when such an ambitious objective was first proclaimed.

Nonetheless, the delay was costly and not just for these two powers. It had negative repercussions for the other members as well. Some members' economic advisers have measured the price in terms of the more than 15-year postponement of the possibility of the GCC's concluding of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the European Union.

Others believe the lengthy delay may yet prove costlier because related issues of major importance have hardly stood still during the extended period of waiting until a consensus could be reached on this matter. For example, after all this time, it is anybody's guess as to when, and some would say perhaps even whether, the earlier long-sought FTA between the GCC and the EU will be concluded. Among the reasons is a more recently perceived trend among the members away from the urgency of negotiating multilateral business agreements, in favor of entering earlier into bilateral accords with their most important trading partners.

Leaders and Leadership Styles

An additional GCC constraint that various observers point to is the fact that the member-states are led by a distinctive set of personalities steeped in the conservative mores of traditional societies. What accounts for the uniqueness of the GCC's heads of state vis-à-vis leaders in other regions has a lot to do with their style, interests and the formative influences on their upbringing that, in turn, derive in substantial measure from the fact that they were born and raised in Arabia rather than in the profoundly different areas of the Levant, Nile Valley, Fertile Crescent, and Arab North Africa. One of the hallmarks of these differences is that cultural, civic, moral, and social norms posit that it is bad form, and worse substance, to mount vehement personal attacks against specific leaders for their perceived shortcomings as opposed to the failure or inadequacies of their policies. Accordingly, many students and observers of political behavior within the GCC region are reluctant to name names or even describe in detail the specific traits they find worthy of emulation and admiration in any one *particular* leader that, they believe, are largely lacking in another.

Even so, to a greater extent than in years past, many in the GCC region, especially representative elements among the educated but unemployed youth, together with segments of academe and various journalists, openly admit to being troubled by what they conclude is overall a far less robust and effective group of leaders within the region nowadays than when the GCC began.

The reasons, most acknowledge, have mainly to do with the elevated ages and/or physical infirmities of various leaders. At issue are the implications of this situation for the near-term prospects of the leaders' being able to adequately address, let alone surmount, various challenges. In several GCC countries, the advanced age, deteriorating health and resultant inactivity of the head of state is itself an issue that has tended to complicate policy matters.

Succession Dynamics

There are various ways to interpret this particular aspect of the leadership picture at the present time. However, one way of analyzing the situation in several of the member-states is as follows. In one GCC member-state, most agree that an air of uncertainty beclouds anyone's ability to know with certainty the name of the individual likely to become the next head of state. An officially designated successor to the incumbent has not yet been appointed.

In another GCC country, the head of state has in varying degrees been incapacitated since suffering a stroke in the mid-1990s. But to the surprise of many, his designated heir apparent, or crown prince, was able to step in immediately and manifest a degree of command, control, and exemplary leadership that pleased and inspired nearly everyone.

Indeed, the degree to which this particular crown prince subsequently exhibited a substantial measure of competence and effectiveness has had a sobering effect on many outside political analysts. It has proved how wide of the mark were these and other detractors' earlier assessments of his talents and potential.

Against all expectations, this individual, from the moment he filled a sudden and unanticipated political vacuum, has been able to garner steadily a degree of local, national, regional, and international admiration, as well as respect, for his personal qualities in the face of extraordinary adversity. Still, because he is not number one, he is bereft of the official and substantive components of paramount authority that come with being the head of state.

In two other GCC countries, what many observers believed had been agreed upon in terms of the second-in-command for the present, or their next head of state, was in recent months turned upside down and inside out -- both countries' previously known and appointed successors, or heirs apparent, were changed and someone else was appointed in their place.

Further, in a fifth member-state, only in the past month did a more definitive picture of the future line of succession become clearer than before. This occurred when one particular undeclared candidate for the future post of crown prince was announced as having officially been chosen to succeed to that position in the future. In this way, years of seemingly endless speculation as to who the ultimate choice might be finally came to an end.

Transitions Amidst Tradition

These appointments and reversals of appointments are illustrative of an unusual degree of intra-GCC transition and transformation amidst the simultaneous persistence of age-old tradition. Indeed, the sheer number of changes occurring on the leadership front in such a relatively brief span of time is, in itself, unprecedented.

Observers from afar often seem to be taken aback when changes of this kind occur with such relative rapidity or assumed unpredictability. This is true regardless of whether the change becomes known either as a result of a seemingly abrupt announcement that catches many people off guard, or is perceived as a much-awaited act of leadership transition that, having been delayed for so long, many had begun to think might never come to pass.

A reason why outsiders frequently find a particular leadership transition within the GCC region confusing and difficult to understand derives in large measure from their tendency to view the phenomenon largely from their own country or culture's perspective. This tendency applies not only to the GCC region. It applies also to Iraq where, as numerous specialists warned in advance of the U.S.-led invasion but to no avail, its American manifestation, in human and material terms, has been far costlier than U.S. policymakers, even now, are willing to admit. Most foreign observers are unaccustomed or otherwise ill-equipped to view such matters from the inside out, from the ground up, from within the political traditions and norms of the member-states' themselves instead of perceiving them through the prism of criteria applicable elsewhere.

However understandable this may be, it can result in unfortunate consequences. For in their inability to comprehend the implications of any particular action, reaction and interaction of intra-GCC political dynamics, it is inevitable that some outside observers, and through them their readers or their audiences on the receiving end of a briefing, will conclude inaccurately that "the wrong person" was mistakenly elevated to a key position of leadership, or a political earthquake is likely to occur at any moment, or something cataclysmic, waiting in the wings, could explode any minute.

This analyst reads such situations differently. A more helpful lens through which to view such intra-GCC changes in leadership is one which reveals that nothing stays fixed. Indeed, what is presently occurring within the member-states is not synonymous with a political or governmental structure or system being set aside, broken, shattered to bits, or even damaged.

Instead, what has been happening can be better understood if one views the process as much nearer to a repetition of how change and continuity have transpired in this particular region for centuries. What is more, almost all of the cases noted herein were anticipated and/or forecast beforehand by specialists. In short, for the most part, the recent changes in intra-GCC leadership mainly reflect how the region's leaders have long been chosen.

The process by which these leadership transitions occur is admittedly quite different from an American- or European-style political framework or system of governance. As such, a newcomer to the GCC region will find it difficult to recognize much, if anything, that is familiar. Yet stripped of the differences in formats, systems, values, vocabulary, even perspectives, there are clues that can aid the non-specialist. For example, one might want to consider the following. The age-old institutions and practices that are rooted in the GCC region have been tried and time-tested for longer than the United States has existed as a country. Similarly, such institutions have managed to retain their earlier resonance, relevance and resilience.

Regional Uncertainties

An additional yet different constraint on what the GCC has been able to accomplish is associated with the immediate region. Having Iran and Iraq as neighbors has often produced nightmares from one end of the GCC to the other. Neither Iran nor Iraq sent notes of congratulation when the GCC was formed in 1981. Each reacted negatively to its not being invited to become a member. Neither is pleased about that, even now.

Yet despite this, various American policymakers, with hardly a nod to the viewpoints of the GCC countries' leaders, either individually or as a whole, continue to argue that Iran and Iraq should be admitted to the GCC as members. From a GCC perspective, however, if either of these two countries were admitted, the nightmares, and the day-mares as well, would become real. It is well known that neither revolutionary Iran nor Iraq, under Saddam Hussein, was or has been in accord with what the GCC represents. Neither, for that matter, has either country's leaders ever expressed agreement with the merits of what the members seek to achieve. In addition, Baghdad, under the regime it had before it was recently changed, and Tehran, since the fall of the Shah in 1979, has repeatedly and often vehemently commented negatively on the close association between the GCC members and Western countries.

As to the ongoing impact of Iran and Iraq on the GCC region, one of the more negative and pervasive results is hardly difficult to measure. It can be tabulated notionally in the extent to which the uncertain policies and actions of Baghdad and Tehran have acted as constraints, within the member-states, on the inflow of foreign investment, the readiness with which multinational corporations are eager to open branch offices, and on the degree to which foreigners, especially Westerners, are willing either to relocate to or remain in the region. Few, if any, GCC financial strategists disagree that the levels of international investment would be far higher, the number of foreign companies establishing regional headquarters would be greater, and the effectiveness of expatriate employers extolling the merits of doing business in the region would be more pronounced and credible if only the six-state area was synonymous with a zone of peace and prosperity instead of the opposite.

Domestic Investment Challenges

Just as constraining in its overall negative impact on economic growth has been the low level of private domestic investment in the GCC region in comparison to the extent of citizen money that exists. The latter has long exceeded what is known to be the amount of private financial largesse in any grouping of six contiguous developing countries elsewhere.

Yet, the extent to which the GCC citizenry's wealth has been invested locally remains very limited. Instead, the pattern has been for GCC nationals to invest a high percentage of their disposable income abroad. The stated reasons are for safekeeping, ease of liquidation or greater profitability than at home. In some cases, all three rationales apply.

The effect needs underscoring. It has lessened substantially the overall financial wherewithal that the member-states need in order to grow their economies. It has constrained the degree to which they have been able to maintain and expand their commercial, industrial and service infrastructures. And, it has lowered the extent to which the GCC countries have been able to provide adequate meaningful employment for their burgeoning populations, the majority of which is youthful.

Employment Issues

The economic constraints are linked to employment and educational constraints, and one can make the case that the reverse is also true. It is necessary, however, to point out that none of these constraints can be attributable to the organization per se. On the contrary, a part of the GCC's secretariat has been staffed and mandated from the beginning to do what it can to advance the human resources development of the member-states' citizenries.

For years, and for the most part having nothing to do with the pressures mounted by the United States in the aftermath of 9-11, GCC country leaders have been the first to admit that their educational systems fall short of meeting the needs of employers. Three GCC members, Bahrain, Oman and Saudi Arabia, face serious unemployment problems and challenges. But, compounding the situation is that the other three members, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, are in no position to pick up the slack for any of these countries. The short-term answer lies elsewhere than within the GCC itself as an organization. Viewed from afar, the situation confronting the GCC in this regard frequently lacks context, background and perspective. The challenge is one of mounting concern to all the member-states' leaders, true enough. However, as serious and far-reaching as the situation is, it is nonetheless far less dire, urgent, or incapable of being addressed effectively over time in any of the GCC countries than it is in Arab North Africa, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, let alone vast numbers of other developing countries.

The jobs exist. The challenge lies in the fact that there is an increasingly large number of youth whose economic skills are inadequate in number or in quality to merit their being recruited and hired for employment instead of someone from another country. The problem is compounded by the fact that the latter typically have such skills and are willing to work longer hours and for less pay than their counterparts among the local citizenry.

In further contrast, the situation is far worse in neighboring Iraq as a result of the U.S.-led invasion and occupation, where the level of unemployment for nearly a year has been fifty percent. It is little better in neighboring Iran, where the United States, for more than two decades, and alone among the world's countries, has maintained a unilaterally-imposed economic embargo. And the employment prospects are scarcely more hopeful in non-Arab but nearby Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan.

Related to this constraint is an example that has to do with GCC trans-national employment opportunities and benefits. Several years ago, the leaders agreed that, for such positions of employment as may exist or become available in the member countries in the future, GCC nationals, as opposed to foreign workers, would henceforth receive preferential consideration.

Yet, it soon became apparent how difficult it would be to translate such a preference and policy into practice. As for one of the difficulties, in the three GCC states with a mounting unemployment problem, no one doubted that, if there were any meaningful and well-paying jobs to be had in their country, there was no way that some other member-state's unemployed citizen, however well qualified, was going to be hired for the position instead of one of their own.

As for another difficulty, a leading member of one of the member-state's governments remarked to this author that he could not foresee a way in which he would be likely to recommend to any of his country's unemployed citizens that they apply for work in another member-state if, in his view, the available jobs were beneath their dignity.

A third difficulty bespeaks of a phenomenon that is equally endemic in the United States and many countries, and knows no cultural, ethnic, or religious boundaries. It is that the national employers who have yet to be convinced that a citizen will work just as long hours, with just as few benefits, and for just as low a salary as a non-citizen, remain too numerous to count.

In this regard, not only have domestic and external economic pressures and practices within the GCC region been hard to break. Such pressures and practices, and the economic and employment realities they reflect, have also often been hard to curtail, circumvent or modify. This has left unfulfilled the goals of an otherwise worthy and agreed GCC policy.

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