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## Collective Security in the Gulf: An Analysis of the Development of the Gulf Cooperation Council and Regional Security as a Function of the Council

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# **COLLECTIVE SECURITY** **IN THE GULF**

**An Analysis of the Development of the  
Gulf Cooperation Council and  
Regional Security as a Function of the Council**

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10 May 1993

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>ARAMCO</b>	-	<b>American Arabian Oil Company</b>
<b>EC</b>	-	<b>European Community</b>
<b>GCC</b>	-	<b>Gulf Cooperation Council</b>
<b>GDP</b>	-	<b>Gross Domestic Product</b>
<b>OPEC</b>	-	<b>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</b>
<b>PDRY</b>	-	<b>People's Democratic Republic of Yemen</b>
<b>RDF</b>	-	<b>Rapid Deployment Force</b>
<b>SFC</b>	-	<b>Supreme Federal Council</b>
<b>UAE</b>	-	<b>United Arab Emirates</b>
<b>YAR</b>	-	<b>Yemen Arab Republic</b>

# ***INTRODUCTION***

The region today referred to as the Middle East has always interested the greatest world empires. From the times of Alexander the Great through those of the Roman Empire, the Arab expansion, the Mongols, the Ottomans, and indeed right up to the present, this area at the crossroads of three continents has drawn the attention and interference of foreign peoples. Some of them came to conquer, others simply to pass through on their way to other locales, but all considered the area in some way important to their imperial and/or commercial goals and aspirations.

Conquerors and traders have continued to influence Middle Eastern history, with the English in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries often encompassing both roles. Great Britain's concern with the region originally sprang from the desire to keep open the shipping lanes to its most prized possession -- India. However, the British went beyond a strictly maritime function and colonized or "protected" much of the Middle East, even until the early 1970s. This tradition of subjugation and imperialism created deep feelings of resentment among the peoples of the region over several centuries. These emotions heavily contributed to the development of organizations such as the League of Arab States and, in the volatile Gulf region, the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf.

The latter organization, commonly referred to as the Gulf Cooperation Council or the GCC, consists of the independent states of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman. The GCC's 1981 charter expresses one of the group's primary purposes: "...to strengthen their cooperation and reinforce their common links... for a better future on the path to unity of [the member] states"<sup>1</sup> Such

a venture toward unity obviously requires movement in the direction of joint self-defense mechanisms, allowing freedom from outside intervention in the case of attack from a non-GCC state. Although the Council was not created specifically as a regional defense organization, and in fact the Charter does not mention any joint defense requirements, a collective security system has been discussed since the early days of the GCC and has recently become one of the hottest topics of debate at organizational meetings. Such collective security under GCC auspices was obviously absent in the 1980s, as the United States Navy entered the Gulf to protect Kuwaiti oil tankers, and especially in 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait with no formidable military response from the other members of the GCC.

These examples highlight the need for an examination of the Gulf Cooperation Council's prospects for providing Gulf security in the future. The stated goals of several member states, following the humiliating Kuwaiti invasion, include the creation of a credible self-defense force as a means of preventing Gulf affairs from requiring outside intervention. Some GCC member states see the best road to these aims as further integration and cooperation among themselves in the military and political arenas. However, several obstacles hinder efforts toward increased collaboration and political unity. These include outstanding territorial and border disputes within the GCC. The tension surrounding the undefined Saudi-Qatari border, for example, led to armed conflict between these two member states in October 1992. In addition, domestic sovereignty concerns similar to those expressed by members of the European Community and other regional organizations stand firmly in the way of smooth and unchallenged unification of the countries in the Council.

This project concerns itself with these issues – the factors leading toward Gulf unity and those seemingly precluding the possibility. Through intensive research of existing literature on the GCC (such as books, magazines, newspapers, and journal articles) in addition to archival material and original primary sources, this paper brings

the history of the Gulf and the realities of the present situation together to determine the chances of peace and stability in the area under the direction of a GCC-sponsored regional security system.

The paper is divided into major topic areas, each building upon the last in progression towards an analysis of GCC regional security prospects. The first section, entitled **The Member States**, gives a brief overview of each of the states in the Gulf Cooperation Council. This chapter serves two purposes: 1) informing the reader about the history and development of each member state; and 2) allowing for better understanding of the comparative politics and social structures of the GCC countries (and the impacts of these upon Gulf integration efforts). **The Evolution of Gulf Cooperation** follows, chronicling the stimuli for the creation of the GCC and explaining the formation and structure of the organization itself. The next section, **The GCC Through the Iran-Iraq War**, discusses the ways in which the GCC interacted with Iran and Iraq during the 1980-88 war, in terms of threat analysis, mediation efforts, and the advantages, if any, the GCC provided for its members during this crucial period. Even more important to the GCC was the 1990 invasion of Kuwait by Iraq and the subsequent Coalition attack on Iraq, covered in **The 1990-91 Gulf War**. This chapter focuses upon the failure of the GCC in its collective security function and provides the details of the war itself -- why outside intervention was necessary along with a brief description of the war's progression. **The Impacts of the Gulf War** takes this a step further and analyzes physical, social, and political impacts of the war on the GCC states in addition to identifying lessons learned by the GCC as an organization. The paper concludes with **Prospects for Gulf Security**, which examines the Council at this pivotal time when calls for further integration and closer cooperation are being challenged by continued intra-member disputes and traditional concerns over sovereignty.



## ***THE MEMBER STATES***

### **Saudi Arabia**

Saudi Arabia is by far the largest of the Gulf Cooperation Council's member states. Geographically, the Kingdom holds over four-fifths of the Arabian Peninsula, an area the size of the United States east of the Mississippi, under its jurisdiction. Bordering countries are Jordan to the northwest, Iraq and Kuwait to the northeast, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Oman to the east, and Yemen to the southwest. Major regions include the Hijaz, lying along the Red Sea and containing the holy cities of Mecca and Medina in addition to the commercial center of Jidda; Najd, the central heartland of the Arabs in which lies the country's capital, Riyadh; Al Hasa (the Eastern Province), containing a large Shia population and most of the Saudi oil fields; and Asir, a mountainous, fairly lush region bordering Yemen. In terms of population, Saudi Arabia again overshadows its neighbors. The Kingdom claims to have some twelve million inhabitants, four million of which are expatriates. Islam is the state religion and central cultural influence on all aspects of life in the nation. The "puritan" Wahhabi sect, derived from the conservative Hanbali school of the Sunni branch, prevails throughout the Saudi state, with the exception of Al Hasa where Shi'ism plays a large role.<sup>1</sup>

Saudi Arabia's modern history begins with the character of Muhammad ibn Abdul Wahhab, an eighteenth century conservative Sunni preacher who emphasized the unity of God (*tawhid*) and the sin of idolatry in any form. His "conversion" of and alliance with Muhammad ibn Saud, the ruler of a nearby town, gave him the strength in arms he needed to spread his message across Najd. By 1804, the Wahhabi-Saudi

union, sealed by intermarriages and Saudi family belief in the Wahhabi message, controlled most of present-day Saudi Arabia, including Mecca and Medina.<sup>2</sup> The Ottoman Sultan claimed to be Protector of the Holy Places and took offense at the limitations the Wahhabis were putting on Ottoman citizens making the *hajj*. An Egyptian army, by order of the Sultan, was sent to crush the young state. The Wahhabis were decimated by 1811 and the survivors were sent back to their original lands in central Arabia.<sup>3</sup>

The Wahhabis rose again in the mid-nineteenth century only to be repulsed by the Ottoman-affiliated Al Rashid clan of northern Arabia. However, a young scion of the House of Saud, Abdul Aziz ibn Abdul Rahman, began the third and (so far) final rise of the Saudis when he defeated the Al Rashid at Riyadh in 1902.<sup>4</sup> Also known as Ibn Saud, he conquered all of the regions in the modern state by 1926 and unified the territories into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in 1932. The nature of the conquests, mostly relying upon shifting alliances with nomad tribes, contributed to non-definition of borders which even now gives rise to heated debate between the states of the peninsula.<sup>5</sup>

King Abdul Aziz's successor Saud came to power in 1953 and along with the subsequent kings (Faisal 1964-75, Kahlid 1975-82, and Fahd 1982-present) represents the importance of the state's founder -- they are all his sons.<sup>6</sup> Power in the country gravitates around the descendents of Abdul Aziz and those of his father, Abdul Rahman. Nearly all of the top positions in government, ranging from ministers in almost all fields to governors of the various regions of the country are held by Al Saud members. The decision making process involves not simply the whim of the king as many Westerners perceive. The family's centuries of experience with tribal hierarchy has made councils of the leading figures in the family, including not only many sons of Abdul Aziz but also members of other Al Saud branches, the major method of policy formulation. Consensus among the family remains important even in the modern

administration. If the king's actions bring disfavor from his kin, he may experience a fate similar to King Saud and be removed from power and replaced by a more capable ruler.<sup>7</sup>

These rulers have overseen the transformation of Saudi Arabia from a traditional, bedouin society into one dominated by oil wealth and modernization efforts. Discovered in 1936, oil in the Kingdom now amounts to some 168 billion barrels of recoverable reserves, the largest such source in the world.<sup>8</sup> The country leads the world in oil exports, and relies upon this one product for sixty percent of government revenues. Almost all Saudi oil is produced by the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO) for the government, creating a large U.S. presence in the nation and explaining the West's close ties to the Saudi royal family. The 1970s saw a rise in oil prices which made the Kingdom very rich very quickly, but the glut of the 1980s forced the Saudis to scale back many projects and realize the limits of "black gold" power. Development plans have made the infrastructure, health and educational facilities, and industry in Saudi Arabia among the best in the Middle East.<sup>9</sup>

Because of its large population, vast geographical domain, control over the holy cities of Islam, and incredible oil wealth, the Kingdom stands out as the "first among equals" in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Outside observers typically view the organization as Saudi-centered; this is not wholly inaccurate, although overly simplistic. Events such as the 1992 Saudi-Qatari border dispute and its resolution<sup>10</sup> illustrate the fact that the Saudis do not dominate their neighbors to the extent that many Westerners believe.

## **Kuwait**

Kuwait lies at the northwestern tip of the Gulf between Saudi Arabia and Iraq. The emirate, slightly smaller than the state of New Jersey, is for all intents and purposes a city-state. The capital, Kuwait, controls the best harbor in the entire

Gulf.<sup>11</sup> A 1987 estimate put the population at over two million, of which only about 700,000 were Kuwaitis (the rest being expatriates, mostly low-skill workers from Palestine and the poorer nations of the Middle East and Asia).<sup>12</sup> The overwhelming majority of the inhabitants are Muslims, with citizens almost exclusively so. About fifteen percent of the overall populace adheres to Shi'ite Islam, while the larger percentage has adopted the Sunni tradition, with emphasis (like the Saudis) on the conservative Hanbali school of jurisprudence.<sup>13</sup>

The current ruling dynasty, the Al Sabah, came to the area from central Arabia in the eighteenth century as part of the larger Utub tribal migration. This tribe was an extension of the huge Anaiza tribal confederation, from which also derive the Al Saud rulers in Saudi Arabia and the Al Khalifah of Bahrain.<sup>14</sup> The excellent harbor at Kuwait contributed to the Utub tribe's success in Gulf trade and helped make the Kuwaitis prosperous throughout the rest of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The Al Sabah emerged as the unchallenged authority in Kuwait by the 1770s and managed to keep the city-state autonomous through all of its history by engaging in a system of constantly shifting alliances with local powers, namely the Ottomans, and foreigners such as the British. In 1871, the Al Sabah accepted formal Ottoman protection although the Turks never sent any personnel to the emirate.<sup>15</sup> However, this association set the stage for future Iraqi claims to Kuwait (see especially the section entitled *The 1990-91 Gulf War*). A violent palace coup brought Mubarak, referred to as "the Great," to power in 1896. He changed Kuwaiti foreign policy and in 1899 signed a treaty with Great Britain making their representatives the only foreigners Kuwait would receive -- in exchange for British protection from the Ottomans and Ottoman allies in northern Arabia. Britain continued to play an important role in Kuwait for many years, including the negotiation of the 1922 Al Uqair border treaty with the Saudis.<sup>16</sup>

Oil became an important factor in Kuwait upon the discovery in 1938 of large quantities in the Burgan field, since identified as one of the world's largest sources. The English, of course, supervised the Kuwaiti oil industry through its creation and early stages.<sup>17</sup> However, by 1961, Kuwait no longer felt the need for the 1899 agreement and on June 19 the British agreed that Kuwait was fully independent. Iraq made the first of several claims to Kuwait upon the British departure, causing both U.K. and Arab League troops to be positioned to defend the city-state.<sup>18</sup> A constitution was drafted soon after independence allowing for a representative body to be elected in 1963. Although suspended in 1976, the National Assembly illustrated Kuwait's reputation as one of the Gulf's more democratic states. The Al Sabah's ruling position had traditionally depended upon the constant support of the important merchants rather than authoritarianism, making the development of modern Kuwait as at least somewhat democratic by Gulf standards not entirely unexpected.<sup>19</sup>

Kuwait developed its oil sector extensively and became the first Middle Eastern nation to retail oil in Europe. Traditional merchant families were co-opted in the modernization process through government incentives for participating in new industries such as finance and banking, as well as infrastructure development. For example, the majority of a Kuwaiti company's shares must be owned by Kuwaitis, thus protecting the interests of the commercial elite.<sup>20</sup> The society is marked by a set of divisions -- the Al Sabah vs. the ruled, the "true," long-in-residence Kuwaitis vs. newer arrivals, men vs. women, Sunni vs. Shia, citizens vs. expatriates -- all of which create some tension in the country. A basic sense of unity still characterizes Kuwait, however, making the city-state unique among GCC member states; perhaps more than any other Arab state, Kuwaiti citizens see themselves almost as much as members of a state as they see themselves as Arabs.<sup>21</sup>

## **Bahrain**

The State of Bahrain consists of an archipelago of thirty-three islands midway between mainland Saudi Arabia and the Qatar Peninsula in the Gulf. Only five of these islands are inhabited, however, with the largest called al-Awal or simply Bahrain Island<sup>22</sup> and being the location of the capital and most populous city, Manama. Like most of the Arab Gulf states, Bahrain's population (around 420,000) contains a large percentage of non-citizens -- around thirty-three percent. The indigenous population derives from Arab and (to a fairly large extent) Persian sources, as opposed to the other GCC states which have overwhelming Arab majorities in their citizenry.<sup>23</sup> Islam, the predominant religion in Bahrain, serves as a somewhat divisive element. Of the 240,000 actual Bahraini citizens, some two-thirds follow the Shi'ite tradition with the remainder being Sunni. The latter have dominated the islands' society for hundreds of years, and the current ruling family, the Al Khalifah, most major merchant families, and the Arabs associated with the Al Khalifah follow the Sunni branch of Islam. The Al Khalifah adhere to the Maliki school of Islamic law and interpretation, setting them apart from the Hanbali-influenced Saudi and Kuwaiti ruling families, although all fall under the Sunni umbrella. Most of the Shi'ites in Bahrain conform to "Twelver" Shi'ite belief, like the Persians across the Gulf and the population of southern Iraq.<sup>24</sup>

Bahrain's modern history may properly begin in the early 1800s, when Britain developed strong ties with the Gulf, including Bahrain, to protect the shipping lanes to India. The islands were governed by the Al Khalifah family and allied tribal families who had migrated to Bahrain from Kuwait and northwest Qatar over the previous centuries, wresting sovereignty away from a small Persian garrison which had held nominal control for some time. In fact, for much of the 1800s, the Al Khalifah held a great deal of power in the central Gulf, controlling not only Bahrain and the neighboring islands but much of the Qatar Peninsula. This position made them quite

noticeable to the British, who by now were interested in making deals to keep the Gulf area in order.

The association between Bahrain and the United Kingdom began in earnest in 1820 with a "General Treaty" between the Al Khalifah and the East India Company. Subsequent agreements followed throughout the nineteenth century, including a "Perpetual Treaty of Peace and Friendship" in 1861 and more treaties in 1880 and 1892.<sup>25</sup> The latter two solidified British control over the Gulf by preventing Bahrain from entering into any direct relationship with other foreign powers and requiring that the English be consulted before any Bahraini territory be used by foreigners.<sup>26</sup>

Oil production began in the mid-1930s, creating new problems -- especially the expansion of foreign firms and an increase in resident foreign nationals. Nationalist sentiments grew among the Bahraini citizens, within both the Sunni and Shi'ite sectors. Strikes and sporadic violence characterized Manama during the 1950s as the clash between tradition and modernity continued. The Al Khalifah appeased the movement somewhat with a mild reform of the system of governmental influence -- the richer merchants' role in governmental affairs was reduced in exchange for these merchants' continued control over, and in many cases monopoly in, most areas of Bahraini commerce. The Al Khalifah expanded its influence over many aspects of daily life, and set itself up as a stable and organized government for the country. Britain withdrew from the Gulf in 1971, and on August 14 of that year, Bahrain became independent with the Al Khalifah in undisputed control.<sup>27</sup> This occurred despite British pressure for Bahrain (as well as Qatar) to join the seven Trucial States in a "Federation of Arab Emirates." Bahrain's original interest in such a union was the protection it offered from possible Iranian annexation; the likelihood of such actions decreased in 1970 when a U.N. investigation made public the Bahrainis' overwhelming desire for an independent sovereign state rather than union with Iran. The lower Gulf

states<sup>28</sup> did proceed with the federation plan and formed the United Arab Emirates in 1971, without Bahrain and Qatar.<sup>29</sup>

The family continues to hold the most power within Bahraini society. The ruling emir is Sheikh Isa ibn Sulman Al Khalifah, and close relatives comprise the majority of important posts within Bahrain's cabinet. A council of elders chosen from within the family serves the purposes of settling intra-family disputes and balancing the interests of the family's several branches. Regarding succession, Bahrain's 1973 constitution states that unless the ruler chooses otherwise, his eldest son will become emir upon the former's death.

Bahrain's power is not simply a family affair. Other institutions and groups have an impact upon politics in the island nation, including the government bureaucracy, municipal councils, and powerful businessmen. The state bureaucracy grew rapidly in the 1950s and 1960s, continued in the immediate post-independence years, then slowed somewhat in the 1980s. This large apparatus has impacts on nearly all aspects of Bahraini life, ranging from labor issues to security and defense. Municipal councils govern the cities and towns at a local level, providing for much of the basic services of any community. The commercial elite are generally either descendants of traditional rich Bahraini merchant families or those who make money from oil enterprises. Some individuals from this wealthy merchant community, especially those with long-standing ties to the Al Khalifah, hold government positions, thus blurring the line between the government and business sectors of Bahrain.<sup>30</sup>

Bahrain stands out with Kuwait among the GCC member states in the political realm for one major reason -- it has had elections. On December 1, 1972, Bahrainis went to the polls to elect representatives for a Constitutional Assembly, engaging in a rather democratic election by Gulf standards, albeit with age, sex, and other qualifiers for voting eligibility.<sup>31</sup> The draft constitution prepared by the Assembly planned for a National Assembly, with both elected and appointed members. Unlike most other Gulf



nations' plans for consultative bodies, however, this one actually bore fruit. December 7, 1973 saw another election, and Bahrain's first National Assembly was born. Although dissolved in August 1975, the Assembly did engage in real debate on substantive issues, such as a law allowing unions and limiting the importation of foreign workers. The brief tenure of the body indicated the difficulty of sustaining liberal democratic institutions in traditional, autocratic societies, but also showed that such consultative groups were not fully incompatible with the Arab Gulf.<sup>32</sup>

## **Qatar**

The small nation of Qatar comprises an area of around 4,400 square miles on the peninsula of the same name about midway along the Arab side of the Gulf. The only known border is with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; border agreements between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates have not been made public. The capital of Doha holds well over two-thirds of the country's nearly 350,000 people. Oil is the primary export, as is true for the other Gulf states, presenting the need for foreign expatriate workers. The "native" population is overwhelmingly Arab, with some Persian influence, although with less of the latter than the neighboring island nation of Bahrain.<sup>33</sup> In fact, the only basic characteristic setting Qatar apart from the other littoral states is the fact that it has never had any lasting inland settlements, the coastal regions having been and continuing to be the lifeblood of the tiny country.<sup>34</sup> In terms of religious affiliation, Qataris mostly adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. The Shi'ites that do live in the peninsular nation are almost all either of Persian stock or Arabs who had migrated to Persia and have returned to the Arab side of the Gulf. The Arab Gulf states (Qatar being no exception) have in common, albeit to diverging extents, this issue of minority Shi'a populations.

For centuries before the 1800s, Qatar (with the exception of small coastal villages) had generally been of interest to neither local populations nor foreign powers.

The Al Khalifah family (now in power in Bahrain) for a time held sway over much of the peninsula. But by 1868, the British Political Resident for the Gulf recognized the Al Thani tribe as the "legitimate" authority in Qatar. In fact, the British at this time worked out an agreement whereby, among many other measures, the Al Khalifah would pay the Al Thani fines for violating their rights earlier in the century.<sup>35</sup> Soon thereafter, the Ottomans asserted nominal control over the peninsula, but this effectively ended in 1893 when the Qataris successfully fought Ottoman troops. Relations grew with the British, and in 1916, the two parties signed an agreement much like those tying the other Gulf sheikhdoms to the United Kingdom. There was only one major difference in the Qatari treaty – whereas the others guaranteed British protection from maritime assaults, the Al Thani received a pledge of help in the case of a land attack.<sup>36</sup>

Oil was discovered in Qatar in 1939, with large scale production beginning in 1949. This led not only to increased international attention for the small emirate, but also gave rise to questions about the border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, and the ownership of the Hawar islands, just off the west coast of Qatar but claimed by Bahrain. Before oil, bedouins would trek across most inland desert areas freely and little concern was given to the exact location of borders. However, as oil companies required lines on maps for their concession rights, disputes arose.<sup>37</sup> In the case of the Saudi-Qatar border, occasional armed conflict continues to this day, as will be discussed in a future section.<sup>38</sup>

Qatar did not have a sudden and overwhelming oil boom as many other Gulf states. Its development has been more sequential and less dramatic. In the political arena, the 1960s stood out as a time of consolidation of the power of the Al Thani and emergence of structures to serve as a governmental apparatus upon eventual independence. The British decision, announced in 1968, to leave the Gulf and move its "protectorates" toward independence created a swirl of activity in Qatar. This included

movement toward a union of the lower Gulf states, which succeeded in combining seven of the sheikhdoms into a new nation-state (eventually becoming the United Arab Emirates). Qatar opted out of this union because it had overall friendly relations with the Arabian peninsula's dominant power, Saudi Arabia, and thus did not feel that security depended upon federation with other emirates.<sup>39</sup> On September 3, 1971, the State of Qatar became officially independent, as a sovereign state untied to any other Gulf or non-Gulf nations.<sup>40</sup> Since this time, the Al Thani has dominated all aspects of Qatari society. Members of the clan hold many of the key positions in government and industry. The Al Thani traditionally traded as well as governed; the ruling family consequently engages in private enterprise to a greater extent today than, for example, the Al Sabah in Kuwait.<sup>41</sup> Governmental structures have expanded quite a bit since independence such that a fairly modern administration supervised by well educated civil servants now runs the nation's affairs.<sup>42</sup>

Petroleum production has been Qatar's primary industry, but the country does not have reserves nearly as large as many of its neighbors. Gas is looked to as a more valuable natural resource to be exploited -- over ten percent of the world's proven reserves lie in one field in Qatar! The government employs more Qataris than any other business in the country, explaining the nation's expansive bureaucracy.<sup>43</sup> Trade in the Gulf continues to play a large role in the Qatari economy with long-standing, prominent merchants such as the Darwish and the Mani holding enviable positions, although competition from more educated, younger Qataris makes their status in the future somewhat tenuous. In short, the base of power in Qatar, although still primarily in the hands of traditional elites and tribal leaders, is expanding and shifting downwards to reach new levels of society.<sup>44</sup>

## **The United Arab Emirates**

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a federation of the following seven emirates of the lower Gulf: Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Umm al-Qaiwain, Ras al-Khaimah, and Fujairah. Oman borders the Emirates to their southeast, and a border exists with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, although the exact boundary details have not been released by the respective governments. The capital and most populous city is Abu Dhabi, also the capital of the emirate with the same name.<sup>45</sup> The emirates range in size from Abu Dhabi's 28,000 square miles to tiny Ajman's 150. The geography of the UAE is much less monotonous than that of Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar, with upland plains and mountains adding variety to the coastal plain and desert.<sup>46</sup> The UAE has a small (no more than 300,000) citizenry, although the number of residents including expatriates is over 1.2 million. Abu Dhabi and Dubai, the most influential emirates, have especially large foreign populations of fellow Arabs, Westerners, and (especially in Dubai) Iranians. Almost all residents are Muslims. Elements of Christianity and Hinduism exist within the expatriate communities.

Historically, the UAE's coast has been prime preying ground for Gulf pirates. By the 19th century, the British presence in the Gulf had increased to the point whereby it could no longer tolerate such piracy; many campaigns struck the pirate hideouts along the Gulf's southwestern shores. The sheikhs of the lower Gulf signed treaties with the United Kingdom in 1853 creating a "perpetual maritime truce," creating the term "Trucial States" for these sheikhdoms.<sup>47</sup> The Trucial States agreed to the Exclusive Treaty of 1892 which bound the emirs and their successors to the British government, giving the latter the right to be the "exclusive" foreign power in the sheikhdoms. The British took this keen interest in the Trucial States because of their strategic position along the route to India, the Empire's prize.<sup>48</sup>

After World War II, the British continued to be involved in the Trucial States despite the loss of India in 1947 and the scaling back of commitments elsewhere. This

continuation of British activity can be explained with one word -- oil (discovered in Abu Dhabi in 1958 and Dubai in 1966, and to be found in Sharjah in 1972 and Ras al-Khaimah in 1983). Eventually, as the United Kingdom decided to withdraw from all areas east of Suez, it allowed the treaty relationships to end. Hopes were for a union to develop with Bahrain and Qatar joining the seven Trucial States, but terms of a joint agreement could not be worked out.<sup>49</sup> Bahrain and Qatar opted for independence, leaving six of the Trucial States (minus Ras al-Khaimah, which joined in February 1972) to declare the independent United Arab Emirates on December 2, 1971. Since independence, the major issues in the federation have been handling disputes among the emirates, mostly concerning borders, and providing protection against its larger neighbors.<sup>50</sup>

The government of the UAE is actually very similar to that of the GCC as a whole (see **The Evolution of Gulf Cooperation**). The Supreme Federal Council (SFC), made up of the seven emirate rulers, charts policy, elects the President and Vice-President, and ratifies federal and international laws and agreements. Legislative authority rests in the Council of Ministers. This group initiates most laws, supervises the implementation of laws, and proposes the budget for SFC approval. The UAE also has a Supreme Court and a Federal National Council. The latter, which makes non-binding recommendations on draft laws, has its membership allocated on the basis of emirate influence and population and is seen as a possible step toward a democratic parliament.<sup>51</sup> This loose confederation structure has been led since independence by President Sheikh Zayed ibn Sultan Al Nahayyan, the ruler of Abu Dhabi, and Vice-President Sheikh Rashid ibn Said Al Maktum of Dubai.<sup>52</sup>

As in the other GCC states, oil has prompted rapid modernization. Reserves are large and ensure that the UAE's development will continue well into the twenty-first century. To encourage citizen participation in the nation's business activities, a fifty-one percent local ownership law is in effect.<sup>53</sup> Tribes hold some influence in UAE

society, but oil has prompted many traditional tribal leaders and members to move from the hinterlands to urban areas. Families have taken up some of the slack in authority structures, especially seen in the active ruling families of each emirate.<sup>54</sup> The most pressing issue for the UAE is the incredible percentage (over seventy-five percent) of expatriates, though no serious threat has been made against the government since independence.

## Oman

Oman is the easternmost of the GCC states, occupying some 82,000 square miles on the eastern end of the Arabian Peninsula. The sultanate can be divided into three main regions -- historical Oman in the central area, Dhofar in the south, and the Musandam Peninsula. The latter, separated from the rest of the country by the United Arab Emirates, juts out into the strategic Straits of Hormuz at the mouth of the Gulf and is the only Omani territory actually bordering the Gulf. In addition to the Emirates, Oman borders on Yemen to the southwest. The capital, Muscat, lies on the Gulf of Oman, an extension of the Arabian Sea. The population, never the subject of an official census, is estimated at just over 1.3 million.<sup>55</sup> Arabs dominate these numbers, but several distinct ethnic communities prosper in Oman. The most interesting of these are the mysterious Shihuh who populate the Musandam Peninsula -- perhaps the only true non-Arab indigenous group in the GCC.<sup>56</sup> Ibadism, a branch of Islam allowing for the election of an imam to be the community's religious leader, dominates Oman, although many tribes and ethnic minorities subscribe to a range of Sunni and Shi'ite sects. Oman's Ibadism distinguishes the country from its GCC neighbors. However, its conservative nature fits in well with the other nations' religious leanings.<sup>57</sup>

A long tradition of independence, mostly under Ibadi imam rule, exists in Oman, dating back (with brief interruptions and civil wars) over a thousand years. By

the end of the seventeenth century, the influence of Muscat's rulers had extended along the entire eastern coast of Arabia and to East Africa while traditional rule by the imams had shifted to control by more secular hereditary sultans.<sup>58</sup> In 1829, Zanzibar became the hub of the Omani state, with Muscat and other Arabian territories becoming secondary in importance. Zanzibar and Muscat separated into distinct entities in 1861 on terms that the former pay the latter 40,000 Maria Theresa (Austrian) dollars as an annual tribute. This practice continued until Zanzibar's official independence in 1964. Civil wars and intra-Omani disputes, often over sultanate or imamate successions, characterized the country into the twentieth century.<sup>59</sup>

Foreigners had approached the area for centuries beginning with the Portuguese in 1508. The Turks, Persians, French and British all followed. Treaties of friendship and trade were eventually signed with Great Britain and remained in force until independence was officially recognized in 1951.<sup>60</sup> Later in that decade, a dispute over succession to the imamate ended with Sultan Said ibn Taimur expanding outwards from Muscat eventually taking over all of modern-day Oman and ending the imamate altogether. The only major threat to Oman's integrity since has been a rebellion in Dhofar (supported by the USSR and Communist China). The uprising began in 1961 and continued until 1976 when it was quelled by Said's young pro-Western son Qaboos (who had become sultan in a 1970 palace coup).<sup>61</sup>

The Omani sultans up and through Qaboos have been from the Al Said branch of the Al Bu Said tribal grouping. This important family has tended to hold important positions (in addition to the sultanate) in the administration/bureaucracy throughout modern times.<sup>62</sup> Sultan Qaboos has overseen a shift of control from solely the sultan to a council of ministers and a number of national councils. Officially, Qaboos still chairs each of these councils and continues to be the real authority in the country. In 1981, the State Consultative Council was created as an advisory body to reflect popular opinion. Its delegates, though appointed by the sultan and in truth powerless, do hold a

unique right in the Gulf region -- freedom of speech. Despite this appearance of at least some deference to the general public, Qaboos remains the prime minister, defense minister, finance minister, and minister of foreign affairs in his own government (in addition to being the sultan).<sup>63</sup> The state has increased its authority under Qaboos, infringing on the traditional power relationships between tribal chiefs. Although they continue to wield a great deal of influence in local affairs, these leaders no longer present any challenge to the sultan on a national level.<sup>64</sup> The Al Bu Said members, particularly descendents of the nineteenth century Sultan Said ibn Sultan, dominates upper levels of the government. Some positions in the administrative bureaucracy are also filled by the family's business associates and British expatriates.<sup>65</sup>

Oil, the key to the country's economy, is less abundant in Oman than in most of the other GCC states. Recoverable reserves are low, with no more than twenty years supply left at current production rates. However, more reserves will most likely be found in areas as of yet unexplored. Due to the oil money, education and health care have improved markedly. Large scale development in Muscat does not represent the level of advancement in the entire country -- many rural areas of the interior have been untouched by modernizing influences.<sup>66</sup> Other than spreading the benefits of modernization to all Omanis, Qaboos faces other challenges such as religious opposition and the lack of a named successor. Overall, however, the stability of Qaboos and Oman itself seems assured for at least the rest of the century.<sup>67</sup>



# ***THE EVOLUTION OF GULF COOPERATION***

## **The Unstable Gulf**

The Arab Gulf states collectively sit on some of the most expensive real estate in the world. Each of the countries described in the previous section have used their oil wealth to quickly bring themselves into the modern era. With this rapid development, and the vast reserves of oil still waiting to be tapped, attention has naturally gravitated toward the Gulf. Threats abound not only from internal sources but from other nations as well. These threats provided the impetus for the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

The 1970s saw the best of times and the worst of times for the Gulf states. What we know in the United States as the Oil Crisis of the middle of the decade brought a windfall to nations in the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), especially to the large producers in the Gulf. Oil prices jumped worldwide, and OPEC countries tripled their intake per barrel. In the five year period from 1971 to 1976, the future members of the GCC saw their combined Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) rise from eleven billion dollars to seventy-nine billion dollars.<sup>1</sup> Whereas oil had previously provided mostly domestic benefits, in the form of infrastructural and industrial development, the wealth by the mid-1970s enabled the Gulf Arabs to become foreign policy actors of great importance. The influence of "petrodollars" was felt throughout the world as Saudi Arabia and the sheikhdoms of the Gulf spent their extra money on their favorite causes, usually Islamic and Arab ones. In addition to the obvious foreign policy value of such aid, it seemed that the Gulf region itself in the

1970s was relatively safe. Iran and Iraq, the two largest and most powerful area states, were constrained by each other and, in the case of Iran, by the United States.

By the end of the decade, however, the tide had begun to turn; instability, fear, and conflict characterized the region. Britain had long since given up its somewhat stabilizing sphere of influence in the Gulf. Iran suffered a revolution which brought the Islamic Republic to power under the Ayatollah Khomeini, who espoused fundamentalist revolution throughout the Islamic world and beyond. Religious militants took over the Grand Mosque in Mecca, resulting in a violent clash with Saudi authorities in November 1979. A month later, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, drawing criticism not only from the West but also from the Muslim nations of the Middle East. Both Iran and Ba'thi Iraq continued to claim territory of the Arab Gulf states. Iraq had previously asserted that Kuwait was an integral part of Iraq (see *The 1990-91 Gulf War*). Despite publicly relinquishing such claims, Saddam Hussein's Iraq still pushed Kuwait for access to the strategic Gulf islands of Bubiyan and Warba. Meanwhile, Iran kept control of three small Arab islands near the Straits of Hormuz and accused Gulf Arabs of not being "true Muslims."<sup>2</sup> Propaganda from the Islamic Republic intensified:

...the Arab governments of the Gulf are friends of the US, therefore we do not consider these states as independent, nor do we wish to cooperate with them, and Iran intends to export its Islamic revolution in support of any Islamic movement that rises against any Arab government.<sup>3</sup>

However, even these comments paled in comparison to the danger presented by the onset of the Iran-Iraq War. In September 1980, expecting disarray and confusion within Iran's army because of the recent revolutionary purges, Iraq launched a surprise air and land attack all along the border. The Iran's superior American weapons left over from the Shah's reign could not stop initial Iraqi success. But by early 1981, the Iranian ability to obtain plenty of fanatic recruits (to replace heavy battle losses)

enabled the Islamic Republic to halt the Iraqi advance and create a virtual stalemate. A violent war ensued which eventually involved chemical weapons, missile strikes, and hundreds of thousands of deaths.<sup>4</sup>

The Gulf states favored a rapid Iraqi victory. This desire makes perfect sense -- the fundamentalist Shi'ite threat from Iran was worse than the Ba'thi government currently in power in Iraq. A strengthening of Saddam Hussein, while not welcomed, was seen as the better of two evils.<sup>5</sup> Although Iraqi forces started their surprise invasion with incredible success, by the end of 1980 it was clear that no Iraqi victory would come soon, if at all. The hopes for Iranian impotence and disorganization were dashed when Kuwait itself was attacked by Iranian planes in November 1980.<sup>6</sup>

### **Initial Efforts at Gulf Cooperation**

The war brought a direct threat to the states along the Gulf. Iran proved that it was capable of striking across the Gulf if it so desired. Also, the restive Shi'a minorities in the Arab Gulf states would easily be whipped up into a revolutionary fervor if their governments fought alongside Iraq. The alternative -- not supporting Iraq -- was not much better. Leaving the nation of fourteen million (most of whom were either Shi'ites themselves or Kurds, who had no love lost for Saddam Hussein) to fight by itself against Iran, with over forty million people, would open the Gulf Arabs up to charges of abandoning a fellow Arab state. Since the sheikhdoms had given so much lip service and "petrodollars" to Arab causes, such a stance would be indefensible. Each of the Gulf states faced this dilemma of two bad choices with no regional security mechanism to fall back upon.

But even before the Iran-Iraq War and the security crisis it created in the Gulf, the smaller states had taken small steps toward cooperation. The United Arab Emirates (UAE), formed in 1971, was the first example of Arab unity becoming more than just a phrase. Although Bahrain and Qatar did not join the federation, the very fact that they

met with the other small sheikhdoms showed promise for future coordination activities. Sultan Qaboos of Oman brought the foreign ministers of Iran, Iraq, and the future GCC states to Muscat in 1976 to consider the development of a regional defense and security policy. No conclusions could be reached and the effort died. Later in the year, Kuwait's Sheikh Jaber al Ahmad Al Sabah, then crown prince and prime minister but now emir, traveled to the Gulf states to push for his proposal for some sort of Gulf union. This initiative was endorsed by all of the future GCC states, leading to a series of slow-moving and rather unproductive meetings on the regional union concept. Because of other, more pressing issues on each nation's agenda, the idea of a Gulf federation was not advanced beyond a very limited conceptual level.<sup>7</sup>

It may seem somewhat shocking that the Gulf Arabs did not seek close cooperation at this early time. Despite the lack of an immediate threat (such as the Iran-Iraq War or the invasion of Kuwait), many arguments existed in favor of greater coordination. These arguments, however, did not convince the future GCC members that the benefits of taking steps toward unity justified the costs. State sovereignty, as in the European Community, held sway over many decision makers' thoughts and kept cooperation from blooming. Also, the firmly entrenched family rule in each state made rivalry and family pride factors in regional discussions. For example, the Saudis, ruling the largest and most powerful of the Arabian Peninsula states, had on several occasions brought force to bear against their neighbors. Such actions had not been forgotten by the smaller states; it would have been extremely difficult to justify a sudden move toward cooperation without some external stimulus.

Likewise, the superpower with the most influence in the Gulf, the United States, saw no real point to Gulf security pacts in the 1970s. In American eyes, the region was made secure through the surrogate policy of the "Nixon Doctrine." Iran played the role of the anti-communist substitute for direct United States supervision and became the "policeman of the Gulf." Iran's cooperation, taken with Oman's public

pro-Western stance and Saudi Arabia's massive arms purchases from the United States, ensured that even an extensive Soviet presence in the Horn of Africa and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY) would not challenge the Gulf and its vital oil supply.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, efforts to unite the Gulf Arabs were half-hearted and generally non-productive before the Iran-Iraq War. In fact, the only real development between the 1976 Kuwaiti initiative and the start of the war was a proposal in 1980 for the establishment of a Gulf University.<sup>9</sup> But the war changed attitudes toward regional cooperation. The Gulf states knew that their choices were limited if they wanted to support Iraq without incurring the wrath of Iran and their own Shi'ite populations. One option was to help the Iraqis massively and openly, counting upon the United States to intervene if Iran threatened the oil fields of the Arabian Peninsula. But the Kuwaitis led the Gulf states (over the objections of Oman) in opposition of increased superpower influence in the area. A better option existed, one that had been on ice for five years — closer cooperation among the Arab Gulf states.

### **The Gulf Cooperation Council**

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) became an organization as a result of continued Kuwaiti efforts. Scared at the prospect of further attacks on non-belligerent soil (especially their own), and in an attempt to keep the United States out of the Gulf, the Kuwaitis, through their foreign minister, recommended the creation of a Gulf Arab union in a working paper presented to the other five Gulf governments in early 1981.<sup>10</sup> This set the stage for the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia to invite his counterparts from Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman to Riyadh for the purpose of forming a regional organization. At their historic meeting on February 4, 1981, the formation of the GCC was announced with the following statement:

Since the United Arab Emirates, State of Bahrain, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Oman, State of Qatar and State of Kuwait realize the very close relations among them arising from their heritage, identical political, social and demographic structures and their shared cultural background; and since these states are desirous of deepening and developing cooperation and coordination amongst them in various fields, they have agreed to establish a new organization to be called the Gulf Cooperation Council, to be based in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.<sup>11</sup>

The GCC Charter, approved by the heads of state in May 1981 and printed in full as Appendix 1, lays out the structures of the organization. The organization's most important authority is the Supreme Council, comprised of the heads of the member states. Each member state gets a chance to hold the presidency, which is rotated based on the alphabetical order of the country's names in Arabic. This council meets once a year to discuss any matters affecting the GCC and its members. Any votes in the Supreme Council on substantive matters (each member state has one vote) must be unanimous in order to be valid. The policies and budget of the GCC are in the Supreme Council's control. In addition, the heads of state appoint the Secretary-General of the GCC, review reports and studies submitted by the Ministerial Council and the Secretary-General, and approve all rules of procedure. The annual meeting of the Supreme Council has become an event capturing the world's attention; the communiqués released at the end of each session indicate both the GCC's stance on major issues and the direction the heads of state see the organization going in the future.

Foreign Ministers of the member states meet more often (every three months) as the Ministerial Council of the GCC. This group is charged to "propose policies, prepare recommendations, studies and projects aimed at developing cooperation and coordination between member states." Basically, this GCC wing is the filter through which ideas pass on their way to becoming proposals for the Supreme Council to consider. Because it meets more often than the Supreme Council, the Ministerial

Council engages more in substantive, hands-on issues than broad policy statements. Here also, each state gets one vote in any non-procedural tally. The other major body of the GCC is the Secretariat-General, which runs the day-to-day affairs of the Council in addition to preparing special studies for the Supreme and Ministerial Councils. For most of the GCC's existence, the Secretary-General has been Abdullah Yacoub Bishara of Kuwait.<sup>12</sup> The continuity both in the Councils and in the office of the Secretary-General has led to the stability of the GCC over the years.

The written objectives of the GCC emphasize "coordination, integration and interconnection between member states in all fields." Considering the intense insecurity each state felt at the time of the Charter's adoption, it seemed odd that defense affairs and regional security were left off of the following list of specific fields of coordination in Article Four: economic and financial affairs; commerce, customs and communications; education and culture; social and health affairs; information and tourism; and legislation and administrative affairs.<sup>13</sup> The security area, it turns out, was consciously omitted by the Charter writers. Oman had presented proposals for the Charter dealing with this sensitive issue and calling for complete integration of the six states' military forces. In addition, Oman pointed out the weakness which even a combined Gulf army would have and emphasized the need for open cooperation with a larger power -- the United States. The other states balked and adopted a Kuwaiti blueprint for the Charter instead, one that made no mention of defense cooperation and provided the skeleton for the final document.<sup>14</sup>

Despite the lack of a specific reference in the Charter to regional security, the GCC summits since 1981 have been forums for discussion on issues of security and common defense. The meeting at which the heads of state signed the Charter was apparently dominated by consultation about the Iran-Iraq War. Strategic guidelines for security issues were established emphasizing non-interference by foreigners and the responsibility of Gulf nations to handle their own affairs and keep international

conflicts out of the region. Despite such discussions, member states emphatically argued that the focus of the GCC was economic cooperation, not defense issues, in order to preempt charges from other Arab states that the GCC was a military alliance. The world (especially area states) did not believe this explanation -- Iraq and Iran, excluded from the GCC talks, went ahead and immediately attacked the organization as "a military and security alliance."<sup>15</sup>



# ***THE GCC THROUGH THE IRAN-IRAQ WAR***

## **Closing Ranks**

The Gulf Cooperation Council took immediate steps to come together and protect the member states from the war's danger. Coordination began in a number of areas, ranging from a joint threat of "appropriate" oil measures against "aggressive" nations to the exchange of information on security and other matters.<sup>1</sup> The need for the latter became apparent after events in Bahrain during December 1981. Iranian-backed terrorists attempted a coup against the island nations through assassination of Bahraini leaders. Security forces in other member states, specifically Dubai in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, helped identify the plotters and foil the plot before it could be carried out. Despite the effectiveness in this case of informally exchanging internal security information, the shock waves caused by the nearly successful coup attempt helped to speed up the institutionalization of such security cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

The Supreme Council's third summit (held in Manama, Bahrain in November 1982) was dominated by discussion of defense issues and the threat from Iran. The latter was seen as severe because Iran had recently launched a massive counter-offensive into Iraq. The heads of state lamented the "dangerous developments following Iran's crossing of international borders" and declared their support for the Iraqis. Although the GCC gave no direct military support to Iraq, despite repeated requests for such action, the public stance in favor of Iraq helped bring about a GCC (and especially Saudi) policy of giving large loans and grants to Iraq to pay for the war.<sup>3</sup> The member states felt the need to deal with their own security as well, not just that of Iraq. After all, Iraq was potentially (and to Kuwait, in reality) as much of a

threat to the sovereignty of the Gulf states as Iran. Defense ministers submitted recommendations to the GCC for the creation of a new regional defense force, dubbed "Peninsula Shield."<sup>4</sup> Progress in this regard was rapid; ground troops from all six states took part in "Peninsula Shield" military exercises in October 1983 (and again in 1984). The maneuvers, held in the UAE with air cover from the Abu Dhabi air force, demonstrated the determination of the Gulf states to provide their own deterrent to possibly hostile neighbors.<sup>5</sup> In the event of an actual attack, the forces would not be nearly large enough to stop Iran, Iraq, or any other probable invader. In fact, the idea of regional defense in the event of aggression involved the use of joint GCC forces to occupy the belligerent until larger forces, most likely from the United States, arrived to defend the Gulf Arabs. Despite the lack of true power in the "Peninsula Shield," it did show the GCC's concern with regional security and its willingness to coordinate military activity among member states in order to provide some degree of stability.

Other military operations not connected to the "Peninsula Shield" concept followed. Joint air activities occurred between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in November 1983 and between the UAE and Oman in both February and April 1984. These exercises did not take place under GCC auspices, but the cooperative spirit the organization provided certainly contributed to their occurrence. Even subsequent coordinated military operations between member states outside GCC channels were conducted on a much larger scale. In fact, based solely on the number of countries involved in some of these activities, they could almost be called GCC efforts. For example, four of the GCC states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar) held joint air exercises in January 1985.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the early to mid 1980s the GCC projected a unified anti-Iranian stand. The fourth summit of GCC heads of state convened in Doha, Qatar in late 1983. By this time, the belligerents had begun attacking each other's oil ships and facilities. Iran, knowledgeable of the GCC's "under the table" support of Iraq, hinted

that in retaliation it might make the entire Gulf a war zone and bar any tankers from leaving through the narrow Straits of Hormuz. The Supreme Council responded from Doha by stating their willingness to enter into "direct hostilities" with Iran if shipping lanes were in any way blocked.<sup>7</sup> Iran made good on its threat to attack oil tankers in May 1984, targeting ships on their way to or from Saudi and Kuwaiti ports. Defense ministers and military officers, although holding back from entrance into the conflict, decided to greatly expand their coordination activities in response to these Iranian acts of aggression.<sup>8</sup>

One manner in which the member states together sought to provide for their own safety was through an international body – the United Nations. The GCC suggested a resolution to the United Nations Security Council calling on "all states to respect the right of free navigation in the Gulf and refrain from any act which may lead to further escalation and conflict." It was adopted with only minor revisions, an example of the international political condemnation the GCC could now summon against Iran.<sup>9</sup> Protective steps continued in the regional arena as well. The GCC approved the development of a Gulf Rapid Deployment Force to meet any direct attack on GCC soil. The Gulf RDF would never be a large force, but the GCC states hoped that its very existence, much like the "Peninsula Shield" exercises discussed above, would serve as an additional deterrent to any potential adversaries.<sup>10</sup>

### **Mediation Efforts and the End of the War**

In 1985, the Gulf Cooperation Council members seemed to shift their approach to the conflict in the Gulf, both within the organization and as individual states. Several major factors contributed to the turn from anti-Iranian rhetoric and public support of Iraq to conciliatory gestures and mediation efforts. One is obvious – the disappointment in Iraq for not winning the war in four and a half years. The GCC states were also disappointed that Iraq had not accepted their financial support

gratefully or even politely. Instead, Iraq took the tens of billions of dollars in grants and loans while lambasting the Gulf Arabs for not offering larger amounts of money and for refusing to engage in direct military support. Another factor in the more neutral stance was the oil glut. As prices declined in the mid 1980s, the source of member states' revenue and thus of potential financial aid for the Iraqis shrunk. The GCC states had a great many things to spend money on besides the war, and began to think that bringing the war to an end, even if it meant no clear victory for either side, would be more beneficial than waiting for a possible Iraqi resurgence.<sup>11</sup>

The shift was made public at the fifth summit of the GCC rulers in late 1985. The communique issued as the meetings ended was much less critical of Iran than had previous statements from the organization. The GCC established a mediation team, headed by the Omani Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, to renew peacemaking efforts between the belligerents.<sup>12</sup> This more "neutralist" slant of the organization was perhaps best stated by the summit's host, Sultan Qaboos of Oman. He pleaded for "the leaders of both states to show flexibility that could pave the way for good offices to end the war."

However, the GCC's stance and the attempt to play the role of "honest broker" did not last for long. Neither side in the war had much faith in GCC peace efforts -- Iran believed that the GCC states were still aiding Iraq and thus could not be credible negotiators, while Iraq felt slighted by the perceived desertion of sister Arab states.<sup>13</sup> In February 1986, after the Ayatollah Khomeini's rejection of any peace with Iraq, the Iranians launched a large offensive in the south and captured the Fao Peninsula on Iraq's side of the Shatt al-Arab (the former and current waterway boundary). Iranian troops were suddenly dangerously close to Kuwaiti soil. This Iranian advance, along with continued Islamic Republic attacks on oil tankers, shocked the GCC states into speaking out in favor of Iraq again.<sup>14</sup>

One impact of the Iranian success was the Kuwaiti decision to ask the superpowers for protection of its tankers. Kuwait had always been opposed to outside intervention in the Gulf, but the situation demanded drastic action. The emirate faced a severe loss to its property, life, and revenue. It seems logical to say that the Kuwaiti request for superpower help constitutes the first failure of the GCC's regional security hopes. The United States at first refused the request. Kuwait then went to the Soviets, who in February 1987 agreed to reflag three Kuwaiti ships. Immediately the United States reversed its decision and allowed eleven Kuwaiti oil tankers to sail under the American flag. Despite GCC fears of danger accompanying increased superpower influence in the Gulf, the policy worked; after a short-lived surge in Iranian attacks, the Gulf soon saw safe passage of almost all ships.<sup>15</sup>

In early 1987, the Iranians moved past FAO and besieged the large Iraqi city of Basra. Although the Iranians attacked with incredible troop strength and fanatic zeal, the population center held out against the massive onslaught. This psychological victory turned the advantage in the war back to Iraq. Saddam Hussein had made clear his willingness to end the fighting for years, and despite previous promises to fight until the very last man, the Islamic Republic began to see advantages in proposals for ending the war. Whereas earlier GCC attempts at mediation through the Islamic Conference and United Nations had fallen on deaf Iranian ears, they now made some progress.<sup>16</sup> United Nations Resolution 598, passed by the Security Council in July 1987, urged an immediate cease-fire in the Iran-Iraq War. This set up the framework for expanded GCC mediation between the belligerents.<sup>17</sup> Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini ordered a cessation of fighting in July 1988, bowing to pressure from moderates within the government as well as from demonstrators throughout the country. Upon the end of the conflict, the Islamic Republic abandoned much of its revolutionary propaganda and began emphasizing Iran's peaceful intentions and desire for closer ties with the Gulf states.<sup>18</sup>

Having been an important topic of discussion at every Supreme Council meeting and most of the Foreign Ministers' gatherings, the war affected the GCC's first seven years so deeply that many questioned the organization's saliency once hostilities ended. If the GCC was created for reasons other than just fear of Iranian hegemony in the Gulf, then areas outside of security should have been addressed during this time. Indeed, many areas ranging from economic cooperation to cultural exchange had been part of the GCC agenda during the war years. Especially in the economic realm, enough progress had been made to enable the organization to continue even after the war's end.

Further support for the thesis that the GCC could survive beyond the Iran-Iraq War lies in the security field itself. Advances occurred in this area during the war even in areas unrelated to the war itself. The best example involves the border dispute between a GCC member (Oman) and a non-member (the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen, or PDRY). The GCC played an aggressive role in negotiating a settlement and establishing better relations between the two nations. The GCC assigned Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates the task of preventing any possible hostilities and bringing the two together for talks. After a series of meetings throughout the early 1980s in Kuwait, the UAE, Oman, and the PDRY, agreement was reached on both the joint boundary and general relations. By 1985, Oman and the PDRY (which merged with the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR) in 1990 to form the Republic of Yemen) exchanged ambassadors and formally founded diplomatic relations.<sup>19</sup> This case highlights the GCC's expansion in the field of regional security into areas other than just the war, and its successful attempts at handling non-war concerns of the member states and the organization as a whole.

# ***THE 1990-91 GULF WAR***

## **Prelude to Iraqi Aggression**

Throughout the 1980s, the GCC states gave support to Iraq in the war against Iran, despite the fear felt (especially by Kuwait) towards Iraq. As mentioned earlier<sup>1</sup>, Iraq believed that Kuwait was part of the state of Iraq. This claim dates back to the eighteenth century, when Kuwait was nominally under Ottoman control. By the end of the nineteenth century, Kuwait was part of the *vilayet* (province) of Basra, now in southern Iraq. The Kuwait area included in the Basra *vilayet* never held any Ottoman troops or representatives, however, making this claim of ownership based upon Ottoman history somewhat weak.

Since independence in 1932, Iraq has on several occasions denied Kuwait's existence as a sovereign entity. King Ghazi openly called for Iraqi absorption of the city-state in the late 1930s. When Abdul Karim Qassem overthrew the Iraqi monarchy in July, 1958, demands for Kuwait's incorporation became more strident. Kuwaiti independence was declared in June 1961 and Qassem immediately deployed armed forces at the border and reiterated the Basra *vilayet* argument for Iraqi control of the city-state. Only British and Arab League troops rushed to Kuwait dissuaded Iraqi aggression.<sup>2</sup>

A Ba'th party *coup d'etat* in 1963 removed Qassem from power and in October recognized the independence of Kuwait. The new regime realized that the bellicosity toward Kuwait was doing nothing but alienating Iraq within the Arab world. Steps toward peace were taken by agreeing to move towards recognition of the common boundary. It seems that Kuwait bought this limited concession; less than a week after

the recognition of Kuwait, Iraq received a thirty million Kuwaiti dinar (at the time about eighty-five million dollar) loan.<sup>3</sup>

However, Iraqi ambitions were not stopped by this action. In 1969, Iraq stationed troops on Kuwaiti soil near Umm Qasr. An imminent Iranian attack was cited by Iraq as justification for this incursion into the city-state. The military presence remained even after the pretense of the Iranian threat proved unfounded.<sup>4</sup> Iraqi laborers even began construction of a road in Kuwaiti territory in December 1972, using troops to protect the workers from any possible interference by Kuwaiti authorities.

The Iraqis grew bolder in March 1973 by submitting the draft of a proposed treaty to the Kuwaitis. The proposal gave Iraq vast privileges in the territory of its southern neighbor, including the freedom to use Kuwaiti oil export facilities and access to the strategic Gulf islands of Bubiyan and Warba. The Al Sabah immediately rejected the treaty as an unacceptable infringement upon Kuwaiti sovereign rights, prompting the Iraqis to build a garrison at al-Samita -- in Kuwait! When the Kuwaiti authorities moved in to stop Iraq, the intruders opened fire, resulting in one Iraqi and two Kuwaiti deaths.<sup>5</sup> Kuwait responded to the crisis by closing the border, ceasing all aid to the Ba'thist regime, and recalling its ambassador from Baghdad. Iraq soon pulled back across the border under pressure from Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Iran as well as Kuwait. Iraqis crossed the boundary (and quickly withdrew) again in 1976, but still pressed their claim to at least Bubiyan and Warba.<sup>6</sup>

This history of Iraqi efforts to annex all or part of Kuwait was but one of many factors leading to the August 1990 invasion. Financial difficulty, more than any other factor, caused Saddam Hussein to initiate the crisis. Still hurting from the costs of the war with Iran, Iraq demanded Gulf Arab forgiveness of all war debts and an additional thirty billion dollar grant. Hussein believed that his eight year war defended the eastern frontier of the Arab world from what would have been Iranian hegemony;



support from the rich Arabs of the Gulf was only natural to pay for this invaluable service. All of the GCC nations (including Kuwait) refused such orders, citing Iraq's initiation of the conflict with Iran and their own shaky economies.

Oil also played a large role in the decision to attack Kuwait. Iraq strongly objected to Kuwaiti overproduction which forced world oil prices downward and negatively impacted Iraqi revenues. Hussein had personally told King Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia to somehow convince the GCC states, especially Kuwait, to reduce production to levels below their OPEC quotas in order to help Iraq's financial recovery. However, GCC unity prevailed; even if King Fahd mentioned this request to other Gulf heads of state, he most certainly did not push for its acceptance.<sup>7</sup> In addition to the quota issue, Iraq claimed that the Rumailah oil field, along the Iraqi-Kuwaiti border, had been exploited by Kuwait during the war with Iran. To prevent Iran from taking the field, Iraq had placed mines in its half and stopped production. Kuwaiti production, however, continued full steam. Hussein believed that Kuwait sucked oil from Iraq's half and demanded \$2.4 billion dollars in exchange for the oil Kuwait had stolen.<sup>8</sup>

Finally, politics influenced Hussein's decision to invade. Large numbers of soldiers returning from the war front put immense pressure on the economy of Iraq and the political viability of Hussein himself. Being a man of at least caution and perhaps paranoia<sup>9</sup>, he surely feared an uprising from the discontented army. Traditionally, the best way to keep an upset army from revolting is to send them on a foreign expedition - such as the foray into Kuwait. The population as a whole was somewhat disgruntled as well. After eight years of sacrifice during the Iran-Iraq War, benefits still had not come to the demoralized Iraqi people. A quick and easy victory over a poorly defended neighbor would help restore national pride and enhance Hussein's political position.<sup>10</sup>

## **The Invasion of Kuwait and the World's Response**

Iraq began its attack on its southern neighbor with nearly 150,000 soldiers, almost 2000 tanks, and many Soviet-built aircraft on August 2, 1990. The emir of Kuwait had not mobilized his troops out of fear of provoking Saddam Hussein. Thus, except for scattered resistance, Kuwait's defenses were crushed and all of the city-state was firmly in Iraqi hands within twelve hours of the border violation. The royal family (minus one of the emir's brothers who died defending the Royal Palace) escaped to Saudi Arabia and begged the GCC and the United States for immediate assistance in their restoration.<sup>11</sup>

The GCC's response to the crisis caught nobody by surprise. Each member state made statements upholding their belief in Kuwait's sovereignty and demanding Iraqi withdrawal. Attempts by the Gulf Arabs to quickly bring about resolution of the conflict through both direct conversations with Saddam Hussein and public condemnation failed as the Iraqis made it clear that they were not leaving Kuwait. At their December 1990 summit in Doha, Qatar, the Supreme Council issued a scathing criticism of Iraq. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia said,

It was beyond our expectations that one day we would hold a meeting with one of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries under the siege of a vicious occupation, not by an expected enemy, but by a country which used to be considered a friend an ally...a brother who had received from us unlimited and every possible support when he himself was confronted by danger.<sup>12</sup>

The host of the meetings, Sheikh Khalifa ibn Hamad Al Thani, justified such GCC indictment by stating that "the aggression launched by Iraq against Kuwait constitutes aggression on all the GCC member-states."<sup>13</sup>

From its Riyadh headquarters, the administrative wing of the GCC also spoke about the invasion. Secretary-General Bishara acknowledged that the organization

failed in one of its most important roles. Although a former advocate of Arab unity above state interests, Bishara admitted after the Iraqi annexation of Kuwait that

We [the GCC] should have realized the nature of the Iraqi regime as a de-stabilizing force, but as Arabs we suffered from an inability to contemplate the invasion by one Arab country of another...this inability to detach reality from illusion is the lethal flaw of Arab politics.<sup>14</sup>

The organization vowed to restore the longtime royal family to power in Kuwait. Although some of the other ruling families had differences with the Al Sabah, their common GCC bonds and fear of further Iraqi aggression encouraged them to support the traditional regime. The American presence in the Gulf (see below) was seen as an unfortunate but necessary step toward defending their nations and liberating Kuwait. The Doha Declaration issued at the end of the 1990 summit states the GCC members' willingness to see the process of restoring of Al Sabah through to the end. Peaceful means of resolution were to be sought first of all, but military action would not be ruled out as long as Iraqi troops remained in Kuwait.<sup>15</sup>

The Americans did not, and in fact could not, rush to save Kuwait upon its invasion.<sup>16</sup> However, the United States (with plenty of GCC help) turned international opinion forcefully against the Iraqi action within days. Condemnation came from all quarters -- West and East, Arab and non-Arab. Immediate Arab efforts (by both the GCC and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak) toward reconciliation failed and Iraqi troops massed at the Saudi border. The Kingdom asked the United States to send defensive forces since the small GCC capabilities could not stand up to any Iraqi attack. The "Peninsula Shield" concept was one of deterrence and had never been envisioned as a force able to fight a prolonged war against a superior enemy such as the Iraqis. On August 8, President George Bush announced the deployment of U.S. troops in northern Saudi Arabia. Soon afterward, contingents from several Arab states,

including all of the GCC members, joined Americans and Saudis along the borders with Iraq and Kuwait as part of "Desert Shield."<sup>17</sup>

The United Nations acted almost immediately on the Kuwaiti issue. The organization began to pass resolutions chastising Iraq and calling for its withdrawal from Kuwait. The only reason these UN actions met with such success was the new, collaborative relationship between the superpowers. Normally, the Soviet Union would veto such U.S.-sponsored measures as the anti-Iraq resolutions. But Moscow had no interest in threatening its recently-won diplomatic exchanges with the Gulf states and thus went along with the American and UN actions in the Gulf. As time progressed, and Iraq gave no indications that it would comply with UN mandates, the resolutions grew more and more severe.<sup>18</sup> Economic sanctions called for in early resolutions evolved into Resolution 678, adopted November 29. UN states were charged "to use all necessary means to uphold and implement" previous resolutions demanding Iraqi withdrawal and Kuwaiti sovereignty.<sup>19</sup>

On January 17, 1991, Coalition forces attacked Kuwait and Iraq with massive air strikes on military and communication sites. The Iraqi air force was crippled, allowing the Allied aircraft to have nearly unhindered control of the skies over Iraq. Sorties followed on more varied targets, including industrial and scientific sites.<sup>20</sup> All of these attacks set up the land campaign, which began during the last week of February. The land war decimated the Iraqi forces. Many of them left Kuwait before the Coalition troops arrived, fleeing back into Iraq. Unfortunately for the Iraqis, the road they took to Basra was the only one out of Kuwait. The Allies had no difficulty bombing the road in front of and behind the 1000 vehicle escape convoy. What followed was a massacre; those involved recalled that it was much like "clubbing baby seals."<sup>21</sup> Bush soon announced a ceasefire rather than risk international criticism for slaughtering the nearly defenseless retreating Iraqis.

The liberation of Kuwait had cost tens of thousands of Iraqi lives while only about 150 Coalition forces died in action.<sup>22</sup> However, despite this extraordinary lopsided tally and Hussein's surrender, the Allies failed in one of their major goals -- removing Hussein from power. He gained a great deal of credibility and popularity among the Arab "street" because of his stand against the West. The fact that he remained in control of the (albeit devastated) country was quite a psychological victory for Hussein. His intransigence worried the GCC states because of the instability he brought to the region and the resentment he would likely harbor toward the Arab Gulf. Statements from GCC heads of state throughout the war about Hussein were unpleasant and not conducive toward any future rapprochement. Iraq, though defeated, would not be given the trust of the member states again.

# ***THE IMPACTS OF THE GULF WAR***

## **Immediate Effects on the Member States**

Although Saddam Hussein did not succeed in his attempt to make Kuwait a permanent part of Iraq, the city-state was not the same in March 1991 as it had been in August 1990. The Iraqis made no attempt to return the country to the same condition as it was when originally occupied. Estimates in May 1991 put the loss of Kuwaiti revenue during the occupation at over sixty billion dollars and reconstruction costs at some ten to twenty billion dollars.<sup>1</sup> This rebuilding expense figure is much less than the \$100 billion guess initially ventured, but even the lower amount exceeds Kuwait's export earnings from oil during any two years in the 1980s. United Nations Resolution 692 requires Iraqi compensation for Kuwaiti reconstruction expenses. However, the costs of Iraq's own rebuilding efforts, the staggering figures involved in the proposed reparations, and Hussein's unwillingness to pay make it likely that neither Kuwait nor the other GCC states will ever have their war costs reimbursed.<sup>2</sup>

The damage to Kuwait's oil industry was the most publicized aspect of post-occupation Kuwait. As they evacuated Kuwait in February 1991, Iraqi soldiers were ordered to set some 600 of Kuwait's nearly 1000 oil wells ablaze, and simply open up many of the rest, pouring millions of barrels of oil into the Gulf. Kuwait's finance minister estimated that quelling the fires, stopping the leaks, and fixing the oil facilities in Kuwait would cost some twenty billion dollars and take several years.<sup>3</sup> The effects of the oil spill on water life in the Gulf and the effects of the billowing smoke from the well fires on the atmosphere shocked the world. Ecologists warned that it might be decades before the Gulf returned to the condition it was in before these disasters.

The invasion also affected the Kuwaitis themselves deeply. The psychological trauma of occupation prompted many residents to leave the country when the Iraqis settled in. Others were forced to stay, often enduring abuse and sometimes torture. Occupation at first unified Kuwaitis around the exiled emir, who became the symbol of their lost nation and their disrupted lives. Soon, however, those who remained in the city-state became bitter about the royal family's rapid evacuation and apparent disregard for the citizens they left behind. The emir and his entourage still flew around the world, spending millions of dollars and enjoying the benefits of royalty, while hundreds of thousands of their subjects suffered in Kuwait.<sup>4</sup>

Expatriate workers also experienced difficulties because of the Iraqi aggression against Kuwait. First of all, the world boycotted Iraqi and occupied Kuwaiti oil, leaving nearly a million expatriates in Kuwait alone with little or no work. Most of these evacuated the city-state in the fall of 1990, putting an enormous strain on their home economies (from both the lack of remittance income and the burden of caring for so many returning citizens). Palestinians and Yemenis had troubles in other GCC states as well as in Kuwait. When Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Chairman Yasir Arafat and Republic of Yemen President Ali Abdallah Saleh publicly supported Saddam Hussein in the war, several Arab Gulf states expelled large portions of their Palestinian and Yemeni populations.<sup>5</sup>

For the other GCC states, the surprise invasion heightened the insecurity inherent in Gulf existence. Kuwait fell so quickly to the Iraqi onslaught that the GCC members, especially Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Qatar, feared that they would be next. Hussein's massing of troops along the Kuwaiti-Saudi border gave rise to the theory that he was planning on a massive offensive aimed at dominating the Arab Gulf and thus a large percentage of the world's oil supply. The first GCC attempt to alleviate the crisis was through Arab channels. As indicated before<sup>6</sup>, Hussein refused to budge and declared that Kuwait was a permanent part of Iraq. The next step, as repulsive as it

was to certain sectors of Gulf Arab society, involved inviting the strong West into the area for protection.

The influx of American (as well as British and French) troops in the Gulf states directly exposed these countries to Western democracy. Thus, even domestic political systems were affected by the Gulf War. The situation in Kuwait provides the best example of such a political impact. The National Assembly, before its suspension in 1986, had contributed to Kuwait's reputation as a rather liberal and open society by Gulf standards. Kuwaiti democracy activists in exile because of the Iraqi invasion stressed the importance of restoring representative structures once their nation was liberated. However, they did give their full support to the reign of Sheikh Jaber (and to overall Al Sabah dominance of Kuwaiti political life), calling for the restoration in full of the emirate's former government. In return for this support, and under pressure from the Western states saving his city-state, the emir promised to renew the suspended Assembly once Kuwait was freed.<sup>7</sup>

Not unexpectedly, the emir stalled on this initiative once his rule was restored by putting off the election date and imposing martial law. Hundreds of court cases dealing with suspected Iraqi collaborators dominated the royal family's agenda; the return of the Assembly and reform of the system ranked much lower.<sup>8</sup> Eventually, in October 1992, elections were held for seats in the Kuwaiti National Assembly. As before, only adult males from pre-1920 resident families could take part. Still, the elections drew the world's attention and brought some measure of representative government to the Gulf again. "Opposition" or "opposition-endorsed" candidates won thirty-five of the fifty seats up for grabs. The cabinet also underwent a reshuffle, with various opposition groups gaining representation. The most dramatic move involved the appointment of a non-royal to the position of second deputy prime minister, in the past always held by a member of the ruling Al Sabah family.<sup>9</sup>



Other GCC states seemed to catch this interest in increased democratization. Bahrain's emir announced in late 1992 the formation of a consultative body, with thirty members to be selected by the emir. Sheikh Khalifa ibn Hamad Al Thani, the emir of Qatar, was presented with a petition from fifty-four prominent citizens in May 1992. The document proposed free elections for a parliament, a written constitution, and more political freedom for individuals:

This [proposed] parliamentary body should have the responsibility of creating a permanent constitution that guarantees the establishment of democracy and outlines the basis of government...Such demands,...constitute a recognition of the right of citizens to run the affairs of their nation, and is in accordance with our Islamic faith, which directs us to adopt consultations and to abide by them.

No written constitution came about from this initiative, but a consultative body has been elected to advise the emir.

Likewise, Saudi Arabia heard many voices calling for more representation after the war. The Saudis had never experimented with any form of parliamentary body. Al Saud rulers, however, have always conducted *majlis*, traditional tribal meetings whereby anyone can speak to the top rulers about issues of concern. This practice has perhaps kept the royal family in closer contact with the people than in a representative system. A comparable situation in the United States would be a weekly open meeting whereby anybody could have a short one-on-one session with, for example, a governor. Thus, the idea of democracy and the importance of the people is not foreign to the Gulf Arabs. In order to satisfy those who pressed for more than just the *majlis*, King Fahd approved the establishment of a Consultative Assembly with sixty members to be appointed by the king. The Assembly would review decisions of the Council of Ministers, and have the power to overrule such decisions.<sup>10</sup> However, this long-promised development still has not born fruit. Also, King Fahd has rejected the idea of a new written constitution -- the official Saudi line is that since the Quran was God-

given and is in itself the perfect constitution, no human has the right to supersede it with another, man-made basis for society.

### **Lessons Learned by the GCC**

The most important impact of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on the Council itself involved regional security and collective self defense. The GCC found out that a small Gulf force such as "Peninsula Shield" would not deter ambitious neighbors. Even with massive arms purchases, the armies of the GCC simply are not large enough to face down a potential enemy. Part of the problem is population. With many less citizens combined than either Iran or Iraq singly, the GCC member states cannot develop a fighting force of any size without either drawing needed talent away from industry and development or hiring troops as mercenaries from other nations.

This last option, using other nations' soldiers to defend the Gulf, was part of the so-called Damascus Declaration of March 1991. According to the terms of the regional defense agreement, Syria and Egypt would deploy tens of thousands of troops in the GCC countries. In exchange, billions of dollars would go from the oil-rich states to the poorer Syria and Egypt. This option came about as a direct result of the roles played by Hafez al-Assad and Hosni Mubarak in Iraq's defeat in the 1990-91 Gulf War. Syria and Egypt had contributed 20,000 and over 30,000 men respectively to the Coalition forces which fought in the war.<sup>11</sup> Some viewed this declaration, the first of its kind in the Arab world trading a large amount of money for semi-permanent protection, as the beginning of a new Arab order, centered around the GCC. However, the Damascus Declaration fell through over the issue of payment to the nations supplying the troops. Most observers consider it unlikely that much except positive relations will ever come of the GCC agreement with Egypt and Syria.

Another option for the defense of the Gulf Arabs was the continuing presence of the United States. To some extent this has been the GCC regional security decision by

default. American troops, whose presence began with the "Desert Shield" operation in 1990, have remained in the area and seem more connected militarily to the Arab Gulf states than either Egypt or Syria. Perhaps the GCC member states felt that the United States could be relied upon much more than sister Arab nations. Syria has not always seen eye to eye with the Gulf Arabs on issues such as the Palestine question and the Iran-Iraq war. Likewise, Egypt-Gulf relations have not always been rosy; Nasser kept tens of thousands of Egyptian troops in Yemen for years to fight Saudi-backed tribes. The policies of Egypt and Syria were much closer to those of the GCC members after the Gulf War. Still, the rulers of the GCC must have thought about the temptation that Syria and Egypt would feel with tens of thousands of troops near the rich oil fields. The direct non-Gulf Arab military presence, along with the shadow of hundreds of thousands of eager soldiers at home, could very well become more of a hostage situation than a protective one for the Gulf Arabs. After all, although Saddam Hussein had been given billions of dollars in loans and direct assistance by the GCC countries during the long war with Iran, which the organization thought would make him indebted for life, Hussein did not hesitate to invade and occupy Kuwait.

The member states themselves had not always agreed on the question of regional security. For example, Oman and Kuwait often disagreed on the role of outside forces. Oman, with strong ties to Great Britain and more recently to the United States as well, felt that having a strong Western presence in the Gulf would be the best mode of defense, not only for Oman but for the entire Gulf region. Kuwait typically represented the opposite view. Kuwait's prerogative prevailed in the early stages of the GCC, as organizational statements emphasized superpower non-involvement in Gulf affairs and the need for regional states to handle their disputes among themselves. As late as 1989, a Kuwaiti publication emphasized Kuwait's adherence to the principle of "resisting all military alliances that evolved as a result of the Cold War between the Eastern and Western blocs."<sup>12</sup> However, the Al Sabah and most other "Arab solution"

partisans finally acknowledged the superiority of strong Western armies over the flimsy "Peninsula Shield" of the GCC when only the former proved able to liberate Kuwait. Considering the first nine years of the GCC's existence, only such a tragedy as the Iraqi invasion could have moved Kuwait away from its conceptions about keeping Arab problems within the Arab world and toward the somewhat unholy alliance with a Western power. The momentum of the organization moved quickly and decisively in the direction of acceptance of outside forces in the Gulf once Kuwait, the most outspoken supporter of "doing it ourselves," reversed its attitude. The remarkable part of the Gulf War, and its relation to security in the Gulf, is thus the unity which the GCC displayed (concerning the value of inviting and keeping foreign troops in the region) once the decision was made to liberate Kuwait at all costs.

Despite concerns that the absence of a direct threat would break it apart, the GCC had found itself a viable organization when the Iran-Iraq War ended. The much larger shock of the invasion of one their sister member states brought the countries together even closer as each feared its own absorption into a Gulf mega-state. Although the invasion and occupation proved the inadequacy of the organization's collective defense/regional security function, it also gave the GCC nations a hint that such aggression most likely would have occurred even earlier without the strength in numbers the GCC provided. Events in the 1980s such as the assassination attempts in Bahrain<sup>13</sup> proved that internal security could be improved with formal channels of communication between the GCC countries. The 1990-91 Gulf War proved the vulnerability of the Gulf Arabs and the desperate need for enhanced cooperation in security from external threats.

# ***PROSPECTS FOR GULF SECURITY***

## **Unity**

The GCC countries have so many aspects of their existence in common that it becomes difficult for one to envision a future without further steps toward unity. Similarities in language, culture, religion, and natural resources are obvious. These factors alone hint at eventual successful integration -- the thirteen British colonies in the late eighteenth century had less in common but were able to come together. The advances of the colonies, first through confederation and soon union, came despite divergent points of view on the nature of threats facing them and how to respond. Now, after Kuwaiti liberation, the GCC states seem to think very much alike about similar issues. If this is truly the case, then the commonalities in cultural areas will serve as catalysts for unity.

As discussed in previous sections, regional security issues have dominated the GCC since its creation. First the Iran-Iraq War and soon thereafter the invasion of Kuwait ensured that the Arab Gulf states would seek strength in numbers as a solution to the threats around them. Providing for the defense of the Gulf became a hotly debated issue in the 1980s, with all of the GCC members agreeing that more should be done but disagreeing on the methods of doing so. Even today, the GCC has not made it clear whether its medium and long-range defense plans will involve United States forces, or those of other Arab states, or simply their own enhanced militaries.

This uncertainty about how to handle regional security is leaning in the direction of closer cooperation. The Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman reflects this attitude:

...the GCC is...a regional framework for cooperation with complete programs and purposes. Defending its countries against dangers is one of those programs...Indeed, there is an urgent need for revising this, and time, constant work, and the desire of the member countries to strengthen the council, guarantee dealing with this matter. The Sultanate has prepared a strategic report, that His Majesty the Sultan himself has supervised, to deal with this defect.<sup>1</sup>

Others in the GCC also emphasize the unity of the member states. As King Fahd of Saudi Arabia said at the thirteenth GCC summit in December 1992, "We are one hand and one heart." He also made clear his hope that the meetings would "further strengthen cooperation in all fields among GCC states."<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps the most compelling factor leading toward greater unity among the GCC states is the lack of any viable alternative. Just as the members of the European Community are finding that going it alone in Europe means economic hardship and lack of opportunity, the GCC members realize that going it alone in the Gulf means giving out invitations for aggression. If any of the Arab Gulf nations (except perhaps Saudi Arabia) were to drop out of the GCC structure and end the harmony usually existing between the GCC countries, that nation would find itself an easy target for Iranian or Iraqi manipulation, if not outright control.

An example of the value of togetherness can be taken from the headlines of autumn and winter 1992. Three strategic islands located near the Straits of Hormuz (Abu Musa, Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb) had been administered jointly by Iran and Sharjah (the third largest of the United Arab Emirates) since 1971. On September 10, 1992, Iran announced that it and not Sharjah was the true owner of the islands and began expelling hundreds of UAE nationals, in direct violation of a 1971 treaty.<sup>3</sup> Iranian forces on Abu Musa even refused to allow a ship from the UAE to stop at the island, supposedly because they did not hold Iranian identity papers. Not unexpectedly, the UAE, the GCC, and the Arab world as a whole condemned the Iranian action and called for immediate negotiations.

Besides the determination to see that Iraq was kept down by the United Nations and United States forces still in the Gulf, this was the first real challenge to the GCC since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. All parties watched intently to see if the GCC would rally around the issue and unite in opposition to the apparent aggression. Indeed, despite previous dissention within the UAE and the GCC over other issues, the organization released a statement calling Iranian activity "a blatant violation of the good-neighborly relations and spirit of understanding and cooperation."<sup>4</sup> The GCC states knew of the two submarines Iran had bought from Russia (the first such vessels to be owned by a Gulf state) and heard rumors of plans to purchase more. Abu Musa, with its location in the center of the lower Gulf, would be an excellent base for these submarines.<sup>5</sup>

Eventually, the crisis subsided as Iran let UAE nationals back onto Abu Musa and basically returned to the post-1971 status quo. Most likely, the Islamic Republic's leaders underestimated the determination of the GCC, and in fact the Arab world as a whole, to stick by the UAE in the crisis. Thus, they attempted to bring back the better relations they had won with the Gulf Arabs through remaining neutral in the 1990-91 Gulf War. However, Iranian ambitions still frighten the GCC nations, perhaps even more than was the case immediately after the revolution. With Iraq now in shambles, no true Gulf balance of power exists. Only the presence of the United States keep Iran from having its way in the entire region. Thus, the GCC states may view further unification as a necessary step toward creating a counterforce to the Islamic Republic's overwhelming potential.

## **Disunity**

Although most factors indicate that the Gulf Arabs will continue along the road toward unification and enhanced cooperation in the field of regional security, several important influences are working in the other direction. The first of these is history.

Almost all of the GCC member states have fought with almost all of the others at some time within the last hundred years. Animosities remaining from many of these conflicts have intensified rivalries between the ruling families, and vice versa. Even within each of the member countries, there are often political battles being waged which necessarily lead to organizational disunity. An excellent example is the squabbling between Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Even though they are partners in the United Arab Emirates, the two more often than not disagree on major issues such as relations with Iran and regional security. If elements within each nation are fragmented, it seems unlikely that large steps toward unity can be successfully taken.

One might believe that the recent threat to the sovereignty of GCC member Kuwait would have shocked the others into putting aside their disputes and cooperating more fully. A example involving Saudi Arabia and Qatar has shown that this is not necessarily the case. On September 30, 1992, armed conflict erupted along the two nations' border at a Qatari post at Al-Khaffus. At least two soldiers died (the exact details of the clash are disputed) and the nations seemed on the brink of further hostilities.<sup>6</sup> This development served to "weaken the GCC," according to Kuwait's Crown Prince, who attempted to mediate between the two countries.<sup>7</sup> It was not until a set of meetings the night before the GCC heads of state summit in Abu Dhabi that the dispute was settled. It took someone outside the GCC structure, President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, to negotiate the terms of an agreement upon which the two states would agree.<sup>8</sup>

This conflict illustrates the security dangers within the GCC. Many of the borders between the GCC states are undefined. If oil is found in these areas (as it was in the Saudi-Kuwaiti Neutral Zone) difficulties will arise and agreements will need to be worked out. Even in the waters of the Gulf itself disputes exist. One is between member states Bahrain and Qatar over the small Hawar Islands. Although just off the west coast of the Qatar Peninsula, much closer to Qatar than Bahrain, the islands are



administered by the latter.<sup>9</sup> Other Gulf disputes center around offshore rights. With many of the land boundaries which extend to the coast still undefined, determining the territorial waters of each state remains extremely difficult.

Even unifying elements sometimes have an obstacle. The common organizational opposition to Iranian hegemony in the Gulf leads one to believe that each state thought alike regarding Iran. However, some of the Gulf states, specifically Dubai in the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, have had a history of closer cooperation with the Iranians than with some of their GCC sister states. Even as the organization helped Iraq in its war against Iraq, some elements within the GCC wished for an Islamic Republic victory. Likewise, some states have wanted to rekindle relations with Iraq faster than Kuwait and Saudi Arabia would like.

Qatar, as a result of its dispute with Saudi Arabia, decided to act in ways the GCC would not approve. For example, by the end of 1992 Iraq re-received Qatar's ambassador. Qatar thus became the first GCC state to establish post-Gulf War relations with Saddam Hussein. The Qataris also took steps with Iran which raised eyebrows in the other Arab Gulf states. Although the GCC generally had tried to improve relations with Iran ever since the end of the Iran-Iraq War in 1988, the organization proceeded with caution. When the Gulf island struggle alienated the Islamic Republic from the GCC, Qatar went ahead and continued business as usual with Tehran.<sup>10</sup>

### **The Future of the Gulf**

The Gulf Cooperation Council is a young organization, not yet fifteen years old. One would not expect such a newcomer to transform Gulf politics. Indeed, although the GCC has made incredible progress in the economic area, among others, the Gulf remains an unstable region. The 1990 Iraqi invasion of Kuwait proved that regional security, the original impetus for and arguably the important function of the organization, had not developed as a result of the GCC's efforts.

The elements which seem to keep the GCC from coming closer together do not necessarily mean that the GCC will stagnate at its current level of unification. In fact, it seems that the GCC is doing rather well as an organization considering its short tenure. The European Community is still struggling with issues of national sovereignty despite its decades of existence. The border disputes and family rivalries which characterize member state relations reflect the social structures and history of the region and should not be seen as major threats to Gulf cooperation. In fact, the same history and culture which in some ways separate the nations of the GCC also serve in many other ways to unify them. The common language, religion, and social background all give the GCC a distinct advantage over most other regional organizations, especially the diverse EC.

The real question remains -- can the GCC provide a regional security system for the member states' collective defense? The determination the member states have shown in both ending the Iran-Iraq War and liberating Kuwait indicate their dedication to keeping their states free of Iranian and Iraqi dominance. For now, the United States protects the Arab Gulf from any threat, but in the future security most likely will come from the GCC nations themselves. Massive arms purchases and technological advancement since the 1990-91 Gulf War have only added to their large, although still not adequate, defense capabilities. With time, a solid organizational structure supported fully by all of the Arab Gulf states could become not only the protector of GCC members and the Gulf region, but also a stabilizing influence upon the volatile Middle East in general.

## **APPENDIX**

### **CHARTER, COOPERATION COUNCIL** **FOR THE ARAB STATES OF THE GULF**

**The States of the United Arab Emirates, the State of Bahrain, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Sultanate of Oman, the State of Qatar, and the State of Kuwait,**

Being fully aware of their mutual bonds of special relations, common characteristics and similar systems founded on the Creed of Islam; and based on their faith in the common destiny and destination that link their peoples; and in view of their desire to effect coordination, integration, and interconnection between them in all fields; and based on their conviction that coordination, cooperation, and integration between them serve the higher goals of the Arab Nation; and, in order to strengthen their cooperation and reinforce their common links; and in an endeavor to complement efforts already begun in all vital scopes that concern their peoples and realize their hopes for a better future on the path to unity of their States; and in conformity with the Charter of the League of Arab States which calls for the realization of closer relations and stronger bonds; and in order to channel their efforts to reinforce and serve Arab and Islamic causes, have agreed as follows:

#### **ARTICLE ONE, Establishment of Council**

A council shall be established hereby to be named The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, hereinafter referred to as Cooperation Council.

#### **ARTICLE TWO, Headquarters**

The Cooperation Council shall have its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

#### **ARTICLE THREE, Cooperation Council Meetings**

The Council shall hold its meetings in the state where it has its headquarters, and may convene in any member state.

#### **ARTICLE FOUR, Objectives**

The basic objectives of the Cooperation Council are:

1. To effect coordination, integration, and interconnection between member states in all fields in order to achieve unity between them.

2. Deepen and strengthen relations, links and scopes of cooperation now prevailing between their peoples in various fields.
3. Formulate similar regulations in various fields including the following:
  - a. Economic and financial affairs
  - b. Commerce, customs and communications
  - c. Education and culture
  - d. Social and health affairs
  - e. Information and tourism
  - f. Legislation and administrative affairs
4. Stimulate scientific and technological progress in the fields of industry, mineralogy, agriculture, water and animal resources; the establishment of scientific research centers, implementation of common projects, and encourage cooperation by the private sector for the good of their peoples.

#### **ARTICLE FIVE, Council Membership**

The Cooperation Council shall be formed of the six states that participated in the Foreign Ministers' meeting held at Riyadh on 4 February 1981.

#### **ARTICLE SIX, Organizations of the Cooperation Council**

The Cooperation Council shall have the following main organizations:

1. Supreme Council to which shall be attached the Commission for Settlement of Disputes.
2. Ministerial Council.
3. Secretariat-General.

Each of these organizations may establish branch organizations as necessary.

#### **ARTICLE SEVEN, Supreme Council**

1. The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the Cooperation Council and shall be formed of heads of member states. Its presidency shall be rotatory based on the alphabetical order of the names of the member states.
2. The Supreme Council shall hold one regular session every year. Extraordinary sessions may be convened at the request of any member seconded by another member.
3. The Supreme Council shall hold its sessions in the territory of member states.
4. A Supreme Council shall be considered valid if attended by two thirds of the member states.

#### **ARTICLE EIGHT, Supreme Council's Functions**

The Supreme Council shall endeavor to achieve the objectives of the Cooperation Council, particularly as concerns the following:

1. Review matters of interest to the member states.
2. Lay down the higher policy for the Cooperation Council and the basic line it should follow.
3. Review the recommendations, reports, studies and common projects submitted by the Ministerial Council for approval.
4. Review reports and studies which the Secretary-General is charged to prepare.

5. Approve the bases for dealing with other states and international organizations.
6. Approve the rules of procedures of the Commission for Settlement of Disputes and nominate its members.
7. Appoint the Secretary-General.
8. Amend the Charter of the Cooperation Council.
9. Approve the Council's Internal Rules.
10. Approve the budget of the Secretariat-General.

#### **ARTICLE NINE, Voting in Supreme Council**

1. Each member of the Supreme Council shall have one vote.
2. Resolutions of the Supreme Council in substantive matters shall be carried by unanimous approval of the member states participating in the voting, while resolutions on procedural matters shall be carried by majority vote.

#### **ARTICLE TEN, Commission for Settlement of Disputes**

1. The Cooperation Council shall have a commission called "Commission for Settlement of Disputes" and shall be attached to the Supreme Council.
2. The Supreme Council shall form the Commission for every case separately based on the nature of the dispute.
3. If a dispute arises over interpretation or implementation of the Charter and such dispute is not resolved within the Ministerial Council or the Supreme Council, the Supreme Council may refer such dispute to the Commission for Settlement of Disputes.
4. The Commission shall submit its recommendation or opinion, as applicable, to the Supreme Council for appropriate action.

#### **ARTICLE ELEVEN, Ministerial Council**

1. The Ministerial Council shall be formed of the Foreign Ministers of the member states or other delegated Ministers. The Council's presidency shall rotate among members every three months by alphabetical order of the states.
2. The Ministerial Council shall convene every three months and may hold extraordinary sessions at the invitation of any member seconded by another member.
3. The Ministerial Council shall decide the venue of its next session.
4. A Council's meeting shall be deemed valid if attended by two thirds of the member states.

#### **ARTICLE TWELVE, Functions of the Ministerial Council**

The Ministerial Council's functions shall include the following:

1. Propose policies, prepare recommendations, studies and projects aimed at developing cooperation and coordination between member states in the various fields and adopt required resolution or recommendations concerning thereof.
2. Endeavor to encourage, develop and coordinate activities existing between member states in all fields. Resolutions adopted in such matters shall be referred to the Ministerial Council for further submission, with recommendations, to the Supreme Council for appropriate action.

3. Submit recommendations to the Ministers concerned to formulate policies whereby the Cooperation Council's resolutions may be put into action.
4. Encourage means of cooperation and coordination between the various private sector activities, develop existing cooperation between the member states' chambers of commerce and industry, and encourage the flow of working citizens of the member states among them.
5. Refer any of the various facets of cooperation to one or more technical or specialized committees for study and presentation of relevant proposals.
6. Review proposals related to amendments to this Charter and submit appropriate recommendations to the Supreme Council.
7. Approve the Ministerial Council's Rules of Procedures as well as the Rules of Procedures of the Secretariat-General.
8. Appoint the Assistant Secretaries-General, as nominated by the Secretary-General, for a renewable period of three years.
9. Approve periodic reports as well as internal rules and regulations related to administrative and financial affairs proposed by the Secretary-General, and submit recommendations to the Supreme Council for approval of the budget of the Secretariat-General.
10. Make arrangements for the Supreme Council's meetings and prepare its agenda.
11. Review matters referred to it by the Supreme Council.

#### **ARTICLE THIRTEEN, Voting at Ministerial Council**

1. Every member of the Ministerial Council shall have one vote.
2. Resolutions of the Ministerial Council in substantive matters shall be carried by unanimous vote of the member states present and participating in the vote, and in procedural matters by majority vote.

#### **ARTICLE FOURTEEN, Secretariat-General**

1. The Secretariat-General shall be composed of a Secretary-General who shall be assisted by assistants and a number of staff as required.
2. The Supreme Council shall appoint the Secretary-General, who shall be a citizen of one of the Cooperation Council states, for a period of three years which may be renewed for one time only.
3. The Secretary-General shall nominate the Assistant Secretaries-General.
4. The Secretary-General shall appoint the Secretariat-General's staff from among the citizens of member states, and may not make exceptions without the approval of the Ministerial Council.
5. The Secretary-General shall be directly responsible for the work of the Secretariat-General and the smooth flow of work in its various organization. He shall represent the Cooperation Council with other parties within the powers vested in him.

#### **ARTICLE FIFTEEN, Functions of the Secretariat-General**

The Secretariat-General shall undertake the following functions:

1. Prepare studies related to cooperation and coordination, and to integrated plans and programmes for member states' common action.

2. Prepare periodic reports on the Cooperation Council's work.
3. Follow up the execution by the member states of the resolutions and recommendations of the Supreme Council and Ministerial Council.
4. Prepare reports and studies ordered by the Supreme Council or Ministerial Council.
5. Prepare the draft of administrative and financial regulations commensurate with the growth of the Cooperation Council and its expanding responsibilities.
6. Prepare the Cooperation Council's budget and closing accounts.
7. Make preparations for meetings and prepare agenda and draft resolutions for the Ministerial Council.
8. Recommend to the Chairman of the Ministerial Council the convocation of an extraordinary session of the Council whenever necessary.
9. Any other tasks entrusted to it by the Supreme Council or Ministerial Council.

#### **ARTICLE SIXTEEN, The Secretary-General and the Assistant**

Secretaries-General and all the Secretariat-General's staff shall carry out their duties in complete independence and in the common interest of the member states. They shall refrain from any action or behavior that is incompatible with their duties and from divulging the secrets of their jobs either during or after their tenure of office.

#### **ARTICLE SEVENTEEN, Privileges and Immunities**

1. The Cooperation Council and its organizations shall enjoy on the territories of all member states such legal competence, privileges and immunities as required to realize their objectives and carry out their functions.
2. Representatives of the member states of the Council, and the Council's employees, shall enjoy such privileges and immunities as are specified in agreements to be concluded for this purpose between the member states. A special agreement shall organize the relation between the Council and the state in which it has its headquarters.
3. Until such time as the two agreements mentioned in item 2 above are prepared and put into effect, the representatives of the member states in the Cooperation Council and its staff shall enjoy the diplomatic privileges and immunities established for similar organizations.

#### **ARTICLE EIGHTEEN, Budget of the Secretariat-General**

The Secretariat-General shall have a budget to which the member states shall contribute equal amounts.

#### **ARTICLE NINETEEN, Charter Implementation**

1. This Charter shall go into effect as of the date it is signed by the heads of state of the six member states named in this Charter's preamble.
2. The original copy of this Charter shall be deposited with Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs which shall act as custodian and shall deliver a true copy thereof to every member state, pending the establishment of the Secretariat-General at which time the latter shall become depository.

**ARTICLE TWENTY, Amendments to Charter**

1. Any member may request an amendment of this Charter.
2. Requests for Charter amendments shall be submitted to the Secretary-General who shall refer them to the member states at least four months prior to submission to the Ministerial Council.

**ARTICLE TWENTY-ONE, Closing Provisions**

No reservations may be voiced in respect of the provisions of this Charter.

**ARTICLE TWENTY-TWO**

The Secretariat-General shall arrange to deposit and register copies of this Charter with the League of Arab States and the United Nations, by resolution of the Ministerial Council.

This Charter is signed on one copy in Arabic language at Abu Dhabi City, United Arab Emirates, on 21 Rajab 1401 corresponding to 25 May 1981.

United Arab Emirates  
State of Bahrain  
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia  
Sultanate of Oman  
State of Qatar  
State of Kuwait



## **ENDNOTES**

### ***INTRODUCTION***

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# GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE

**PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE. ATTACH SEPARATE SHEETS IF NECESSARY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ASSISTANCE IN HELPING WITH THIS PROJECT.**

1. What role does the State of Kuwait expect the Gulf Cooperation Council to play in regional mediation efforts, such as the Palestinian issue?
- 2a. Does the state of Kuwait support further integration of the Arabian Gulf states within the GCC framework?    yes \_\_\_\_\_    no \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Would Kuwait support the addition of further members to the GCC, such as Iraq or Yemen, in the future?
3. Does Kuwait view the GCC as becoming a true regional defense organization, or will outside assistance continue to be needed in the case of external aggression?

4. What effect did last year's border clash between Saudi Arabia and Qatar have upon Kuwait's view of the long-term viability of the GCC?
5. Will the traditional distrust and border disputes between many of the GCC member states prevent the development of any effective joint defense force?

**PLEASE MAIL THE COMPLETED PAGES TO THE FOLLOWING ADDRESS:**

**DAVID MICHAEL PRIESS**  
**323 ROBERT DRIVE**  
**NORMAL, IL 61761**

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP WITH THIS STUDY.**