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February 20, 2004

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The Gulf Cooperation Council: Strengths  
By John Duke Anthony  
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Publisher's Note:

This is the third in *GulfWire's* series of reports on the Gulf Cooperation Council in conjunction with the most recent GCC heads of state summit in Kuwait. The previous two reports, "GCC Heads of State Summits: Context and Perspective," and "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Constraints," appeared on January 10 and February 4, 2004. Information on forthcoming articles in the series is provided at the end of this report.

Other reports in this series:

- "GCC Heads of State Summits: Context and Perspective," by John Duke Anthony
  - o [http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP\\_2004\\_01\\_10.htm](http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP_2004_01_10.htm)
- "The Gulf Cooperation Council: Constraints," by John Duke Anthony
  - o [http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP\\_2004\\_02\\_04.htm](http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP_2004_02_04.htm)

This report will be distributed in two parts. To read part two, visit [http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP\\_2004\\_02\\_20b.htm](http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2004/GWP_2004_02_20b.htm).

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**THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL: STRENGTHS**  
By John Duke Anthony

The immediately preceding report focused on what the GCC's many critics have long believed to be the organization's major constraints and perceived shortcomings in the nearly twenty-three years since the GCC experiment began. This report addresses and analyzes the GCC's strengths.

The GCC members have always shared a disarmingly simple but powerful idea: they believe that through greater cooperation with one another, and with appropriate assistance from key foreign partners, they stand a reasonable

chance of reaching their near and longer term goals. With their collective eyes focused on pursuing objectives unlikely to be furthered easily if at all were they to act alone, the GCC's founders agreed that "a rising tide lifts all boats." They also felt that if the immediate region could be spared a catastrophe that would preclude them from reaching their goals, the process of continuous cooperation among them over time would almost certainly increase their individual and collective benefits.

The founders believed further that, if their reasoning was correct, they would in due course look back and realize that the legacy of their concerted efforts was an achievement of no small moment. They would have passed to their successors a structure and a system for joint action. This alone would enable them to bequeath something of value that previously did not exist. It would be an institution different from all the other groupings to which they belonged. Were they to succeed, they would have created an enduring means for addressing more effectively their people's needs, concerns, and interests. With patience, perseverance, and a deliberate reluctance to seek instant gratification, they believed their experiment would come closer than previous Arab interstate efforts to matching deeds with rhetoric - a tall order.

### **Categories of Goals**

Assuming their success, to what use might the members put such incrementally acquired and sustained strengths? Ideally, they would be applied to three broad areas of activities with a shared range of objectives. The two most important would be: (1) the modernization and development of their respective commercial, economic, social, political, and human resource capabilities and performance, and (2) the enhancement of their overall positions and roles in regional and world affairs.

Largely by design, a third objective was excluded from the GCC's Charter for reasons the members deemed only prudent. It was voiced by Oman at the end of the inaugural summit that launched the GCC experiment in Abu Dhabi, capital of the United Arab Emirates, on May 25, 1981, which this analyst attended. It was introduced then as a concept and goal worthy of their serious and favorable consideration, and was later agreed to in principle at a second summit in November of the same year in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This additional goal would be to cooperate also in exploring ways to maintain and strengthen their external defense and internal security. According to Oman's Sultan Qaboos, the idea's most articulate and ardent advocate, failure to do so would likely result in the members being more than reckless and irresponsible; it would place at risk what they had already achieved as independent countries in their pre-GCC days.

In retrospect, it is clear that had the members refused to cooperate with one another in conjunction with this additional goal the results would have been dire and the consequences far-reaching. At a minimum, it would have reduced the likelihood of the member-states' being able to save and savor not only what had made their economies and political stability the envy of the rest of the Arab world, but also whatever the members might succeed in achieving as a group through the GCC.

This said, the GCC's decision to cooperate on defense issues was instantly controversial and laced with especially sensitive considerations, not so much internally but externally. First, it was obvious that unless special precautions were taken, the war then being waged between Iran and Iraq might

spread to the GCC states. Second, Baghdad and Tehran, everyone agreed, were livid that they had been deliberately excluded from joining the GCC.

A third consideration centered on the implications of an assessment shared by Iraq's Saddam Hussein and Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, heads of state throughout the Iran-Iraq war from September 1980 until mid-August 1988. Both leaders were convinced that there was no way the GCC countries could even proceed in the direction of enhancing their defense cooperation without becoming far more intimately involved with the member-states' Great Power allies. This, indeed, was the case. It still is.

If Iran and Iraq agreed on nothing else, it was that they were both strongly opposed to such an outcome. For different, competing, and over-arching strategic reasons, each, truth be told, aspired to become the Gulf's paramount military power.

### **Governmental Structures and Systems**

In the members' earliest planning stages for bringing the GCC into being, no one could then have foreseen how their political systems and systems of governance would face such broad-based scrutiny and criticism twenty years later. But this is exactly what happened following the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11, 2001 for reasons owing to the fact that men from the GCC region were among the attackers and their supporters.

Unable to know or have even the remotest idea that this could happen and become an issue, it was natural that the GCC's founders, foremost among whom were Kuwaitis and Saudi Arabians, decided to work within a range of existing political and governmental mechanisms with which they had long been familiar and, for the most part, had served their needs relatively well.

In light of the ongoing debate mainly in the United States about the perceived merits and demerits of the GCC member's systems of governance that shows no sign of early abatement, the observations about such systems by an astute Western expatriate of many years service in the area from the mid-1940s until the mid-1990s are perhaps worth noting. In examining the question of political development in the sheikhdoms and emirates in the third quarter of the twentieth century, he commented to this writer in July 1971, four months before nine Gulf polities received their full independence from Great Britain, as follows: "In an area such as this, which is largely illiterate and undeveloped, it would have been impossible to establish modern democratic systems such as we know in the West. It is also largely unnecessary since the shaikhly system [of governance] is very democratic. Like the wings on which it was carried and presented to the inhabitants of east Arabia, it is widely accepted by the people who are governed by it. A rule of law that is accepted by those subject to it is by definition just and in a sense democratic. The availability of the heads of state to the people for discussions is democratic to a fault." (1)

Even so, many Western critics who lack extensive empirical educational exposure to the Arabian Peninsula remain confused about and highly critical of the member-states' political and governmental processes. Accordingly, they are quick to reject the notion that versions of democratic principles and practices, as these are known in the West, are at work anywhere in these countries.

### **GCC Views of Western Governments and Politics**

It is to their credit that Arabs with advanced degrees in political science, theory, and philosophy from the United States and other Western countries take the criticisms and lack of knowledge of foreigners in stride. In an effort to enhance international understanding of such matters, many, however, emphasize that most outsiders' use and misuse of the term "democracy" is at root of much of the confusion. Its use by Americans in particular, they emphasize, is not only consistently misleading, but also inaccurate for reasons of its lacking definitional precision and being devoid of literal interpretation. In contrast, the counter observation by many Arabs and Europeans that the United States is not, and has never been, a democracy, usually comes as a shock to many Americans. Not least among the reasons is that it is usually non-Americans that point this out, and not their fellow citizens. It is also because what Arabs and other foreigners have to say about this particular aspect of America's system of governance is accurate and unassailable. (2)

Echoing what they were taught by their American professors, learned in their readings of classic texts on the subject, and were deemed proficient in their comprehensive examinations pursuant to their successful fulfillment of the requirements for their degree, GCC political science graduates from U.S. universities note that a democracy in its truest sense involves all citizens in the decision-making process. To compensate for the impracticality of having the entire American citizenry directly vote and participate in the formulation of each and every piece of legislation, they note that the United States, more precisely defined, is a republic, with a representative government whose powers are divided among executive, legislative, and judiciary branches, and whose citizens are ruled by a set of laws.

In a further enhancement of any discussion and debate on this subject, GCC graduates of U.S. universities frequently quote Jefferson's observation that "democracy is the consent of the governed." By this criterion, those who have studied the inner workings of GCC societies first hand acknowledge that popular consent, often achieved through tedious and transparent consultation, has long been at the heart of the region's political dynamics and systems of governance. In short, the claims of outsiders that the GCC systems of governance lack either extensive popular consent or a degree of citizen representation are untenable.

Even so, many Americans insist on pointing out there are important substantive and procedural differences between the American and GCC systems of governance. On this point, there is no quarrel. Indeed, practitioners of the latter are second to none in admitting that such observations are correct and that major differences do exist. One in particular, for which there is region-wide awareness and mounting popular complaint, has to do with the overall lack of transparency in national fiscal matters, especially with regard to published budgets. For years on end, certain portions of these vital national documents, and not only those that pertain to such sensitive matters as security, defense, and intelligence, but the extent of governmental indebtedness as well, have been withheld from public inspection.

### **Structural and Systemic Differences**

In addition, prominent among other major structural and systemic differences that are deemed to be shortcomings are four other issues. One is the lack of women's suffrage in three GCC countries and its very recent applicability and manifestation in the other three member-states. (3) Another is the absence of

formal political parties per se. The third has to do with the fact that there are major limitations in most of the member-countries regarding the degree to which the media is free to criticize public officials by name as opposed to their policies. A fourth is intertwined with the educational systems and their overall acknowledged inadequacy for preparing the member-states' burgeoning population of graduates for employment in a workplace that is increasingly modernizing, developing, and demanding of cutting edge skills in the areas of science and technology. (4)

But it is one thing to emphasize the differences between and among various countries' political systems and to agree in this instance that the GCC member-states, in common with nations elsewhere, confront major challenges in terms of improving their systems of governance. It is quite another to extrapolate falsely from such observations that the GCC's citizenry have, should have, or in any case will sooner or later have, no choice but to orient their governance and political compasses in accordance with American longitudes and latitudes. Rhetoric to the contrary on both sides of the Atlantic notwithstanding, such is not the case. (5)

Even less verifiable is, one, the proposition that Bush administration officials who would reconfigure the governments and political dynamics of Iraq, Iran, and the GCC countries in an American image know what they are doing or are on the right track. Two, no less tenable is the view of Washington officialdom's so-called "neo-conservatives"/"democratic globalists" (6) that large segments of the region's citizenry would give much, perhaps even to the point of turning upside down and inside out their countries' incumbent national leadership, if they could but have in its place a system of governance similar to America's. The degree of American hubris and self-absorption reflected in this imperial intrusiveness aside, what one GCC minister commented to this author about such hullabaloo seems apt: "For anyone who has observed and studied American politics and government at close hand, how could they believe that our people would want to emulate such a system?" (7)

A perspective no less insightful was provided this analyst by a popular long-serving minister in another GCC member-state. In response to the many Americans who insist on lecturing him and other officials as to how the GCC countries should become more like the United States, he says he has found it useful to emphasize, "No one claims that our system is democratic. But neither is yours.

### **Compensating Differences**

"It is true that our two systems differ, in some ways rather profoundly. No one argues that ours is an extension of nirvana. But to cite just one case in point regarding major differences between the two, our governmental institutions, in comparison to America's, exhibit in general far greater responsiveness to such core human rights and social welfare needs as education, public safety, law enforcement with regard to rape, robbery, murder, drug trafficking, and inheritance, and the provision of judicial, medical, and health services. Our systems are also far more responsive in terms of caring for the poor, the orphaned, the homeless, the uninsured, and the elderly, not to mention that nowhere in the entire GCC region is there yet in place a system whereby a person's income, whether a citizen's or foreigner's, is subject to taxation." (8)

Another GCC minister, holder of an advanced degree from a prominent American university, acknowledged the validity of these points but addressed the issues and their implications for public policy somewhat differently. "Given the general lack of civility and the enormous expenditure of time, effort, and millions of hard-earned dollars required to enhance an American candidate's electability," he said, "and the corrupting impact that this money and the candidate's private promises to special interests has on the integrity of the overall process, why would anyone here, or for that matter anywhere else, want to adopt such a system?" (9)

A propos such questions, a GCC country's ambassador to the United States who is currently observing the American system of primaries and caucuses pursuant to determining who will be the Democratic Party's presidential candidate in 2004 made the following remark in passing to this analyst and several other friends. "Canada, to which I am also accredited as a non-resident ambassador, is a great neighbor of the United States, and Great Britain, for most Americans, is the 'mother country.' Yet it has long been the case that national elections in both these countries are limited by law to *six weeks*. By comparison it seems the American electoral system, in terms of the sheer amount of time and human as well as financial resources that it takes to administer it, plus the media's obsession with each and every detail of candidates' private lives, their statements, personalities, and supporters ends up being, or so it seems to me, very wasteful, not to mention rather senseless and seemingly unnecessary. Am I missing something?" (10) No one had an answer.

Whatever the merits and demerits of different cultures and countries' political systems, most GCC region spokespeople, like their counterparts in the United States and elsewhere, readily acknowledge the need for reforms in many areas of their countries' governance. Yet in almost the same breath, they point out how long America's governmental institutions and political processes have been in the making, how they remain works in progress, and how millions of Americans are adamant in their insistence on the need for further additional major reforms.

Out of this musing and sparring about the merits of one political system vis-à-vis another, it is clear there is much that Americans and GCC Arabs and Muslims can learn from one another. Yet even in the best of circumstances this would be a stretch for Americans more than those in the GCC countries, for there is arguably little evidence that the American side is as ready for such an intellectual exchange as it needs to be. A major reason is the following. Thousands of GCC Arabs have not only obtained advanced degrees in political science, theory, and philosophy from leading American graduate schools, but they have also become fluent in English in the process whilst retaining their native proficiency in Arabic. (11) In contrast, the number of Americans who have studied the same subjects for as long, who have graduated from GCC universities, who have lived for comparable periods of time in the GCC region, and who have become fluent in Arabic whilst remaining articulate in their mother tongue of English, is close to zero.

Even so, there remains much that Americans can do to help compensate for their far more limited knowledge and understanding of GCC systems of politics and governance in comparison to what GCC citizens know and understand about governments and politics in the United States. A recent example that tends to have a sobering effect on both sides is the following. In none of the GCC countries where elections have increasingly been held has there as yet been a situation akin to the 2004 presidential election in the United States where

the candidate receiving the most votes, together with the tens of millions of Americans who cast their ballot for that candidate, ended up losing, begging the question of what happened to "the consent of the governed?"

### **Consultation and Consensus**

Among the GCC's strengths, therefore, have been its capacity to use age-old means of reaching accord. More particularly, from the outset, the members' leaders and key constituents and supporters believed there was no need to devise entirely new or radically different methodologies for the purpose of advancing their cause. Rather, all agreed that they could fashion what was needed by erecting an edifice along the lines of various time-tested, pre-existing institutions and tactics. In so doing, they could elevate to a higher level the kinds of policymaking and decision-making processes with which they had had extensive experience and that, for the most part, had held up well over the previous centuries.

With this as background, the founders from the beginning were determined to add value to and derive benefit from two particular pan-GCC practices: consultation and consensus. For many generations, these practices had demonstrated their effectiveness and utilitarian value and were enshrined in the member-states' political and governmental institutions. Considered ideally suited for GCC purposes, objectives, and needs, the practices were steeped in the region's time-honored culture, customs, and traditions. As part and parcel of the participatory components ingrained in the consultative assemblies and decision-making process, each had long proved its relevance and reliability not only at the highest levels of statecraft in executive branch councils of ministers and consultative assemblies, but also in sub-regional settings through tribes and extended clans,(12) and locally in municipalities.

No other remotely comparable political precepts have been as finely honed in the body politic and social fabric of Arabia. (13) Nor have any others been as deeply ingrained or as close to the principles and practices of what, in the Western world, often misleadingly pass for democratic processes, rooted as such practices and principles are in the consent of the governed. Neither have any other two phenomena offered a clearer pair of prisms or more luminous lenses to view the inner workings of the member-states' public business.

But there is more. In contrast to established thought and considered opinion as to what constitutes political modernization and development in African, Asian, Latin American, and Western countries, the ancestral origins of intra-GCC consultation and consensus were forged on the anvils of antiquity. The practices themselves are admittedly not only far from perfect, but it is also the case that they are not always appropriate to the needs of each and every moment. However, in their capacity to narrow the gap between governors and governed, to ease the citizenry's access to decision-makers, and to underscore the need for those in positions of authority to exhibit responsiveness to people's needs, these practices have done more than borne the test of time. They have also, for the most part, been widely endorsed by participants and practitioners alike for nearly a millennium longer than anything comparable that Americans, Europeans, and others have as yet produced and experienced.

In short, no one claims that either the Western or GCC versions of governance are without blemish. But within the GCC region what is indisputable is that

the dynamic interplay between consultation and consensus has consistently and accurately reflected, on one hand, the quintessential essence of the member-states' political beliefs and practices, and, on the other, bestowed a kind of moral imprimatur or stamp of legitimacy upon their governmental institutions and processes.

### **Cultural Antecedents, Moral Principles, Religious Beliefs**

There are two further explanations for why the merits and applicability of consultation and consensus have endured for as long as they have. One has to do with the fact that both practices were endorsed and elevated by Islam. The second is rooted in the obligation of anyone occupying a position of public trust and confidence to utilize the dynamics of consultation and consensus as often as possible. Thusly shaped by time and circumstance, and by matters of faith as well as socially approved norms throughout the region's history, both precepts remain operational in each GCC member-state at the micro level and in the way the leaders conduct their relationships with each another. As acknowledged by the members' political elites across the board, the worthiness of utilizing consultation is a proven route to achieving consensus.

Providing added salience and sustenance to these attributes of the dynamics of policymaking and decision-making is the fact that they are anchored in the region's core societal values. In this light, if the focus is on societies governed by the rule of law, the GCC member-states' systems of governance are not nearly as far removed from Western and American norms as many imagine. Indeed, while the relevant vocabulary and various administrative details may differ from one country to the next, the case can be made that similar systems and processes constitute a significant part of the manner in which public policies are formulated the world over.

In underscoring these bedrock underpinnings of GCC culture and experience, the purpose is to emphasize how, in substance as in style and structure, the inner workings of the GCC members' public affairs reflect time-honored dimensions of the region's political and governmental practices. Further, it is to demonstrate that the dynamic interplay between consultation and consensus has been ingrained in the psyches and practices of the GCC peoples and their ancestors since the dawn of human history. (14)

### **Failed Experiments as Teachers**

While many maintain that nothing succeeds like success, something else can be just as important. Equally crucial to determining success is often the ability to learn from the perceived shortcomings and failures of one's predecessors and a determination not to repeat their mistakes. In the course of establishing the GCC, the members' policy elites acknowledged and took to heart the reasons so many prior experiments in Arab unity had failed. One reason is that their founders set the experiment's ambitions impractically high. Others failed because their capabilities for achieving strategic or tactical accord were incompatible with the reality of the situations they confronted.

In still other instances, the preeminent leader of a regional enterprise ended up over-reaching or was perceived as over-bearing. (15) In some cases, the leadership was regarded as either dangerously devoid of elemental prudence or competence or overly ambitious to a degree that their colleagues found disagreeable. (16) In some ventures, failure was attributed to one or

more of the would-be regional leaders having consulted dishonestly or inadequately with the other leaders. In other ventures, everyone was consulted sufficiently, but too many members felt the leadership was insensitive to their legitimate objectives.

Among the most important and far-reaching reasons for failure were fundamental differences and incompatibilities between one or more of the members' governmental systems. (17) For example, efforts to combine Arab monarchies with republics forged on the ashes of an ousted dynasty, in general, have seldom had a smooth sail. For this reason, the GCC founders believed that, if they were to maximize their prospects for success, they would be more likely to do so if the basic structures and orientations of their respective governments were broadly similar.

### **The Impact of Lessons Learned**

With these lessons and their own needs uppermost in their minds, the founders sought to avoid the pitfalls of other unsuccessful experiments. Instead, they were keen to craft a mechanism as closely adapted to their requirements and aspirations as possible and, as discussed in the immediately preceding *GulfWire* report, one that would make allowance for their constraints as well. To these ends, it was inevitable that the founders would favor a tack altogether different in tone and focus from other organizations.

In the first place, it was clear that they intended to exhibit whatever amounts of patience and persistence necessary to reach their goals. In the second instance, it was clear from their stated intents and reservations that the members' objectives would be fewer and more realistic of attainment. Third, it followed from these two features that they would raise less in the way of expectations and their international profile would be lower. Finally, they agreed that membership would be limited to those countries that shared a similar culture, history, developmental objectives, and, of cardinal importance, a broadly similar form of government.

From the outset, and continuing to this day, this last criterion has been a particular source of strength. This is certainly the case in the eyes of the members even if, in the minds of their critics in other countries who for this reason were prohibited from joining, the conclusion is the exact opposite. If nothing else, the degree of periodic distrust and mutual suspicion that tend to surface and mar the morale and deliberations in any organization would likely have been considerably greater had the founders permitted less traditional forms of government as members. Yet, the decision to thusly limit membership was not cost-free. In countries where regimes similar to those of the members have been overthrown, government leaders have tended to be more generous in finding fault with the way the GCC is structured, and how it operates, than would otherwise have been the case. The foregoing provides further insight into why Iran and Iraq, for the additional reasons pointed out earlier, and, also, Jordan and Yemen were not invited to join. Jordan might have otherwise qualified as a member for reasons owing to its dynastic government. However, its status as a non-Gulf country, the fact that a majority of its citizenry was not indigenous but of Palestinian ancestry, and the extraordinary extent to which the country's economy and foreign policies were intermeshed with those of Iraq, as well as its uncertain future in light of many Israelis viewing Jordan as a future independent State of Palestine, all combined to mitigate against Jordan's membership. Yemen's unsuccessful candidacy was laced with similarly perceived liabilities, most especially its location, which was even further distant

from the Gulf than Jordan, plus its having a republican form of government in addition to the dire poverty that characterized much of its economy. (18) A further objective of the founders was that all policies be devoid of ideology and pretense. Instead, a conscientious commitment was made to the effect that their public statements, commitment of resources, and resolutions should always be guided and judged by the standards of moderation and credibility. If through consultation, consensus, and self-discipline they could proceed in this manner, the founders believed the prospects for attaining success would be enhanced.

### **Eschewing Unification**

It followed that a key component of the agreed upon *modus operandi* was a resolve to cooperate solely for mutually determined purposes. Thus, in contrast to numerous other failed attempts to forge a regionally powerful grouping, they eschewed unification as a goal. Illustrative of how limited the GCC's goals would be in this regard is how the founding heads of state emphasized that even their commitment to consultation would be partial and selective rather than comprehensive. The leaders agreed further that consultation on a particular issue would not be obligatory upon a member if, for whatever reason, it was disinclined to have such a matter addressed collectively.

Moreover, so as not to leave anyone in doubt, the founders were emphatic that even the act of determining the matters on which they would consult had to be determined through consultation. This feature alone marked the GCC as different from many other experiments in regional cooperation. It meant that if any one member opposed an issue being discussed or debated, they were entitled to exclude it from intra-GCC consideration.

The plethora of limitations built into the GCC's rules of engagement was not without consequences. However rational, measured, and realistic the decision to constrain the organization's authority from the outset, it disappointed those who would have had the effort reflect a more ambitious and robust approach to regional problem-solving.

### **Living with Limitations**

If one stands back from the pros and cons of the adopted methodology, what emerges *vis-à-vis* the merits and demerits is more mixed. For example, this analyst was present at the November 1990 GCC summit in Qatar when members of the Bahraini delegation indicated that if the long-unresolved territorial dispute between Bahrain and Qatar could not be resolved within the GCC, they intended to submit the dispute to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Netherlands.

Subsequently, Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, in an effort to avoid such an outcome, attempted to devise the makings of a settlement that would be acceptable to both sides. The effort foundered, however, when some of Qatar's representatives privately indicated that, for reasons rooted in the region's history and age-old relations among the various ruling families and prominent tribes, the mediation mechanism's sentiments seemed weighted against them and towards Bahrain. For example, it was an indisputable fact that the Bahraini and Kuwaiti ruling families were blood relatives. Further, these two countries' leaders, plus Saudi Arabia's as well, hailed from the same tribe, the Anazah. Hence, the dispute ended up being submitted to and resolved by the ICJ after all.

Two years after the dispute was formally addressed and the means for its future resolution were provisionally decided at the Qatar summit in 1990, one GCC foreign minister, in an effort to rationalize the GCC's inability to settle the conflict, commented to this author, "The parties have changed their minds. They have decided to let the ICJ settle the dispute. As a result, not all is lost, for as members of the United Nations, we have an interest and an obligation to do what we can to strengthen the UN's institutions."

### **War Related Issues**

More dramatic examples of the GCC's limitations, as opposed to its strengths, have involved matters pertaining to the waging of international wars in the immediate region. But here, too, depending upon one's perspective, the record is mixed and laced with nuance. On one hand, it is undeniable that the GCC, like the United States and virtually every other country, was unable to prevent Iraq's invasion and occupation of member-state Kuwait on August 2, 1990. Neither could the GCC deter an American administration determined to invade and occupy Iraq on March 19, 2003, or compel the U.S.-led coalition to return national sovereignty and political independence to the Iraqi people immediately thereafter. On the other hand, just as the GCC was indispensable to the internationally concerted action that ended the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88, so, too, was its assistance vital to reversing the Iraqi aggression in 1990-1991.

But the opposite was, and still is, nearer the case in the war, which continues to rage, inside Iraq. Four months prior to the invasion, at the GCC summit in late December 2002, this analyst and others met with the Foreign Minister of Qatar, Shaikh Hamad bin Jassim Al Jabr Al-Thani, immediately after the sessions had adjourned. Shaikh Hamad, who had just assumed the post of president of the GCC's Ministerial Council, the organization's highest policy recommending body, agreed to brief me and others on what had and had not transpired in the closed meetings. (19) When asked whether he and his fellow summiteers had discussed ways in which they might prevent the United States from organizing and leading an invasion of Iraq, Shaikh Hamad paused for a few moments and then answered, "No; tell me, who can?" No one had a rebuttal.

After that summit, and nearer to the actual invasion of Iraq, this author met with foreign ministers and other senior level officials in most of the GCC countries. In each instance, the response to questions about whether an invasion was likely or certain was much the same as the Qatari foreign minister's. On the very eve of the invasion, one GCC foreign minister made clear to me what were not only his own views but those of his colleagues and counterparts elsewhere in the GCC region as well. (20)

"The situation in which we find ourselves," he said, "could not be more alarming and complex. None of us believe the United States has a valid case to launch a war against Iraq. Much of what the American administration is saying in its efforts to rationalize the use of force at this time is simply not true. We understand Iraq far more intimately and have known it for a far longer period than anyone in the United States. But it seems that Washington has already made up its mind, and our knowledge and advice are of little value or relevance.

"If the United States invades Iraq despite our and many others' misgivings, we believe the consequences will be disastrous and not only for the Iraqi people, but many others, indeed far more than anyone in Washington seems to acknowledge or, as far as we can see, even care. We are at a loss as to what to do. On one hand, what the United States seems intent on doing is, from our perspective, wrong, unnecessary, and dangerous. On the other hand, because we want so many things from the United States, our situation is difficult. We cannot afford to risk everything else we want from Washington by going against it in this one instance, particularly when it seems it is going to do whatever it wants anyway, regardless of anything we have to say, and, for that matter, regardless of what anyone else has to say either."

Both the 1991 and 2003 wars, as in the case of the 1980-88 war between Iran and Iraq, have had catastrophic consequences for the countries and peoples of the area. They have left the future of the region rife with uncertainty, with decision-makers unable to plan, predict, or anticipate the near-term with a reasonable degree of assurance. Such observations are haunting and daunting in their implications not just for the GCC members' needs and concerns, but, also, for other countries' interests and key foreign policy objectives.

On the other hand, by neither asking nor insisting that its members bear more burdens and responsibilities than they were willing to assume, and despite the intra-regional calamities that have occurred, the GCC has survived. This alone distinguishes it from the two other most recent Arab experiments, inspired by the GCC's perceived success, to forge comparable sub-regional organizations. Here the references are to the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen, and the Arab Maghreb Union of Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, and Tunisia. Both were established within days of each other in mid-February 1987.

The ACC collapsed of its own weight when the members ended up on the losing side - its critics would add, "also the wrong side" -- of the Allied Coalition and the GCC members' internationally concerted action to reverse Iraq's aggression against Kuwait. As for the AMU, the organization survives. However, it is, in effect, on life support, having entered into a state of near dormancy not long after its establishment. It has yet to achieve even a small fraction of its hopes and dreams. Among the reasons are that, despite being formidable on paper in terms of its assets - for example, 80 million people and 3,000 miles of territory from one end to the other -- the members have yet to resolve a range of differences in outlook, systems of governance, foreign policy, and territorial conflicts.

### **Long Term and in Lockstep**

Finally, it is to the credit of the GCC's founders that they have been disinclined to assess the success or failure of their experiment on the basis of how well, or poorly, they were able to achieve quick fixes to various challenges. Guided by the perceived haste and waste that characterized unsuccessful attempts elsewhere, they have been inclined towards proceeding in a manner that cannot be characterized in any other way than as slow but sure, and towards achieving goals that would have a chance of success over the long-term.

This is not to imply that the GCC countries' policy elites have eschewed the setting of deadlines for the implementation of agreed policies. They have not. To the contrary, they have repeatedly proclaimed timelines that, time

and again, have proved unrealistic and, for that reason, elusive. The member-states' leaders acknowledge that they have regularly declared specific dates for achieving a particular objective only to discover later that the timetable for their envisioned success should have been extended further into the future.

In their defense, the members' representatives have pointed out that the inability to adhere rigidly to timelines is not an inherent flaw in either the GCC's structure or processes. Instead, it is a trait that throughout history has been emblematic of a flawed humanity as a whole. Rather than adhere to dates set in concrete, leaders in various GCC countries have repeatedly stressed to this author that what is more important is the need to agree on goals and, to that end, fashion a reasonably realistic time frame in which progress towards the goals could be registered if not fully accomplished. Accordingly, set dates for reaching a particular GCC milestone more often than not have served as guidelines, not hard and fast deadlines. However frustrating to many the consequences of such a *modus operandi* have been, and may continue to be, there may be another way of assessing the GCC: in spite of its manifold self-imposed constraints and its record of missing many deadlines, the organization has nonetheless endured and the member-states, to varying degrees, have prospered. In the process, the member-states have underscored the validity of the maxim that "politics is the art of the possible." In so doing, they have illustrated the difficulties inherent in trying to determine, let alone successfully choreograph, how fast and far it is possible to propel any multi-state effort toward its declared objectives. If nothing else, the GCC's leaders have held fast to the view that their experiment will succeed or fail in direct proportion to how successfully and scrupulously they proceed, more or less, in lockstep as a group.

#### **Missed Deadlines and Glacier-Like Pace**

This particular feature is perennially and critically pointed out as a major constraint by those who seek more immediate and effective results in response to many of the issues bedeviling the GCC region. Even so, it is a useful frame of reference for assessing the organization's effectiveness to date. On one hand, it helps explain the seemingly glacier-like pace that frustrates many of the GCC's critics. On the other hand, continued affirmation of the same attribute indicates why and how the organization has remained intact for as long as it has and why it retains the potential to accomplish more in the future.

Indeed, with one exception, the GCC, albeit not yet a relic but neither a novice or infant either, has lasted longer than any other pan-Arab regional organization in modern Arab history. The exception is the quite differently structured and mandated League of Arab States, comprised of 22 members, founded in 1945, and headquartered in Cairo. (21)

#### **As Think Tank and Sounding Board**

An earlier *GulfWire* report noted one of the GCC's constraints to be the fact that, relative to other regional organizations' headquarters staff, its secretariat in Riyadh has little more than 300 employees. Limited as this may be, the total nonetheless exceeds that of any other intra-GCC organization devoted to advancing the interests of the member-states as a whole.

Here the major frames of reference, with the location of their headquarters in parentheses, are the Arab Education Bureau (Riyadh), the Arab Monetary Fund (Abu Dhabi), the Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard (Bahrain), the Arab Cities Organization (Kuwait), the Organization of Arab Exporting Countries (Kuwait), the Arab Gulf Chambers of Commerce and Industry Secretariat (Dammam, Saudi Arabia), the Gulf International Bank (Bahrain), the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy (Qatar), the Gulf Investment Fund (Kuwait), the GCC Commercial Disputes Resolution Mechanism (Bahrain), and the GCC Standards Organization (Saudi Arabia).

At the end of the 2002 summit in Qatar, Oman, site of a Mideastern center for research on water issues that was established during a previous Mideast peace process and is still operating, was asked to prepare a report on how the several GCC states increasingly concerned about present and looming water shortages might increase the nature and extent of their cooperation. In addition, each of the GCC countries also hosts and administers one or more centers for strategic studies and research. Although established to function as national institutions, and despite the fact that they are financed and largely staffed and advised by their own citizens, these centers regularly conduct research, host conferences and seminars, and produce publications on a host of regional issues of interests to nearly all the members.

The increasingly impressive output of these research institutes in the region notwithstanding, few of them come close to matching the GCC secretariat in terms of vision or mandate or, for that matter, longevity of existence either. As most of the secretariat's publications are in Arabic, they remain largely unknown to foreigners and are not as readily accessible to scholars and analysts outside the region as one might imagine. In addition, there is a small GCC office in Brussels that acts in a liaison capacity with the secretariat of the European Union, with which the six states remain interested in reaching a free trade agreement.

Thus, a relatively under-reported strength of the GCC is the extent to which, for nearly a quarter century, it has tapped the talents and increasing expertise of a headquarters staff in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, the one GCC country that borders all the others. The GCC secretariat's main purpose is to administer to the members' needs, explore possible new and better ways of interstate cooperation, search for solutions to complex issues, liaise with appropriate outside parties as requested or required, administer pan-GCC agreements, and prepare for the meetings of the organization's Ministerial and Supreme Councils. One of its most important functions is its behind-the-scenes role in ensuring that the myriad follow-up tasks resulting from GCC meetings and decisions are carried out in as timely and efficient a manner as possible.

On balance, the secretariat's civil servants have conducted myriad pre- and post- summit functions essential to furthering the members' collective progress and achievements. Taking into consideration all the other mechanisms that serve the needs of two or more countries in the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states, no other organization has as large a number or as impressively educated experienced professionals dedicated to bringing an entire sub-region's member-countries closer to the realization of the founders' goals.

**As Steward of Energy Supplies and Security**

In the United States, the number of Americans who are uncertain whether the GCC is an animal, vegetable, or mineral is considerable. Those who recognize it to be none of the three but, instead, an important regional organization, are also limited. Moreover, among the latter are large numbers who perceive the GCC states in ways that are hardly flattering. Further, the image that many outsiders have of the GCC members' governments as a whole is one of irresponsibility, endemic instability, and financial and other resource mismanagement.

Added to these stereotypes, which are regularly articulated by media pundits and congressional representatives keen to "reduce America's dependence on Mideast oil," is another view: that these countries' leaders and many among their rank and file citizens are irrational actors with a pre-disposition to harm the United States. Given that Hollywood has produced more than 900 films depicting Arabs and Muslims in negatively stereotypical ways bordering on racism, while producing no movie that portrays the same people in a balanced, let alone positive or humane manner, and given the frequency with which prominent U.S. religious leaders have increasingly depicted the faith of most Arabs and Muslims in the most pejorative terms, it is little wonder why this is the mindset of untold numbers of Americans. (22)

In nature, if not in frequency and extent, none of this is new. However, the increasing degree to which such views are voiced by otherwise renowned American leaders hardly bodes well for GCC-U.S. relations, improved understanding, and a mutuality of respect between the two region's peoples. For their part, GCC leaders and citizens alike acknowledge that their societies are no more an extension of nirvana than other societies, and their heads of state, like their counterparts the world over, hardly have a corner on virtuosity. To the contrary, there is widespread recognition that their societies and leaders, like others elsewhere around the globe, not only are hardly brimming over with perfection, but are in need of improvement on numerous fronts.

Such expressions of humility and self-effacement notwithstanding, many in the GCC region take pride in various facts that are little, if at all, publicized in the mainstream Western media. To wit: much of what the GCC's members have done that has benefited the world beyond their shores is not only largely unknown, but so much so that anyone who would list the GCC or its members' accomplishments as worthy of study and emulation risks being dismissed as ill-informed, misguided, or some kind of propagandist.

Despite this, the following is arguably undeniable as far as anyone is concerned about the extent to which the member-states have exhibited responsible stewardship of the scarce resources upon which much of humanity is dependent. Since the GCC's establishment in 1981, regardless of the perceived provocation and antagonism by various Western countries' foreign policies - of note is that Eastern countries' policies have yet to be perceived as provocative or antagonistic - none of the GCC countries has "used" the "oil weapon." However hostile or harmful the effects of those countries' policies have seemed in the eyes of the GCC citizenry and the source of popular pressures for the GCC leaders to "*please do something*" that will force the offending countries' governments to cease their provocations and antagonisms, the members have as yet managed to avoid doing so.

#### **A Quartet of Cases**

Four examples prove the point. One involves Lebanon. In August 1982, Israel invaded Lebanon, violating an extended ceasefire worked out between Israel, Lebanon, the United States, and the Palestine Liberation Organization that had been honored for most of the preceding year. In so doing, the Israeli Defense Forces killed 19,000 mainly civilian, unarmed, and innocent Lebanese and Palestinians. (23) In addition, they rendered homeless hundreds of thousands of people. As the carnage and material devastation mounted over the next several months, surpassing all the previous Arab-Israeli wars combined, millions of Arab Christians and Muslims clamored openly for the GCC countries to "*do something*" to compel the United States to force Israel to stop the slaughter. From beginning to end, the GCC resisted such calls and was resoundingly condemned throughout the Arab and Islamic worlds for doing so. That humanity as a whole benefited as a result was self-evident but seldom then, or later, mentioned.

The second case involves the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war. In November 1986, in the midst of a GCC summit that had just commenced in Abu Dhabi, it was revealed that the United States had illegally been sending vital U.S.-manufactured weaponry and military spare parts to Tehran via Israel, with Washington's collusion with the latter country dating back to when Iran held 52 Americans hostage. Despite renewed Arab calls for the GCC countries to "*do something*" in response, the members' oil weapon remained sheathed. The consequences for their doing so were hardly marginal: the members' adversaries dismissed them as "America's Arabs" for refusing to make the United States pay for its perfidy. That the world economy gained from such GCC member-states' and other Arab restraint is obvious but, again, outside the region, it was a little reported fact, if it was noted at all.

The third case involved Iraq's August 2, 1990 invasion of Kuwait. In response to the attack, unanimous decisions by the UN Security Council and the GCC immediately prohibited the further international purchase of either Iraqi or Kuwaiti oil exports. This resulted in 4.5 million barrels of the world's daily oil exports being removed from the world marketplace. As a result, the price of oil sold in global markets shot immediately skyward. But almost as quickly, the GCC countries acted to reverse the rise and restore price stability. Outmanned, out-gunned, and opposed by Iraq, the four GCC members of OPEC - Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE - were not outsmarted, nor were they out-resolved: they succeeded in convening an emergency OPEC meeting. As a result, GCC members Saudi Arabia and the UAE succeeded in persuading OPEC members Iran and Nigeria to join them in raising production to 4.5 million barrels a day to replace that same amount that the UN Security Council had decided could not be obtained from Iraq or occupied Kuwait. (24) This was not something that the United States or any other country could have done as quickly or effectively. The result was that the price of oil quickly returned to its pre-invasion range. That stock markets, economies, and financial institutions throughout the world benefited enormously as a direct result was noted mainly by specialists but few others.

The fourth case is associated with the March 2003 American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq. During the lengthy build-up to the attack, a constant uncertainty voiced in the Western media was whether Saudi Arabia and one or more of the other GCC states would declare an embargo or institute production or export cutbacks in retaliation. Here again, Riyadh and its fellow GCC members' declared policy from long before there was even talk of an invasion was the one they implemented. (25) To the surprise of many, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE went out of their way to ensure that Jordan, for whom Iraq had long been its major source of imported energy, was able to meet its

energy requirements that were severely threatened when the war commenced.  
(26)

The result, which was vital not only to Jordan but, more importantly and extensively, to the prolonged material well-being of much of humanity, was mentioned only in passing in much of the U.S. mainstream media and practically forgotten within a relatively short span of time, as the anti-Saudi Arabia bashing by many Americans and supporters of Usamah Bin Laden alike resumed with gale like force. Even now, the de facto intervention of the four GCC members noted that exercised restraint and self-discipline in response to the regional instability that the American-led invasion and occupation produced, and for which there is no end in sight, has benefited hundred of millions of people.

#### **As Bastions of Foreign Currency and Investment Stability**

But what is regularly overlooked by many is not just pan-GCC stewardship in being a consistently reliable and secure source of the energy that drives the engine of the world's economies. It is the additional fact that, through good days and bad, when the American dollar has been weak and when it has been strong, the GCC countries have all remained firm in their decision many years ago to peg the value of their currencies to the American dollar. Beyond bolstering the degree to which the dollar remains a preferred instrument in many international economic transactions, the members' steadfastness in adhering to the dollar in their own foreign exchange dealings has been of direct benefit to the ongoing preeminence of the American banking, economic, and investment systems worldwide.

In addition to matters pertaining to currency exchange and fluctuations, there are other instances where the members have repeatedly resisted American and other foreign provocation and where such resistance contrasts just as sharply with the image portrayed by much of the Western media and by various legislators, mainly in the United States, regarding the GCC countries' leaders. For reasons owing to longstanding timidity among American leaders from the president on down whenever election season is at hand, the impact of which is presently in full force, any effort to mention how the United States gains from its relationships with the GCC region seems to be beneath the courage of any and all American public servants who would run for and be elected to public office. As such, the mere official announcement of such benefit, let alone the conveyance of any expression of gratitude to the benefactor, remains largely fenced off from media mention or discussion. For example, the number of Americans who credit the GCC member-countries for not withdrawing their billions in investments in the United States, despite pressures and temptations to do so, and how this results in lower inflation and interest rates for Americans as a whole, is likewise very limited.

#### **Great Power Assistance**

After all is said and done, the GCC's strengths include still other attributes and assets that make it stand out from the rest of the Arab world. These include, among other things, relatively small populations, an abundance of oil and gas, and world class economic infrastructures. Also included is a degree of political and governmental stability over a period of several decades and counting that is unmatched by six other geographically contiguous countries anywhere in the developing world.

Further, the GCC, on balance, has benefited immensely, albeit not unambiguously, from an almost unbroken record of more than 400 years' external protection and defense by one or more Great Powers of the day. For a period approaching half a millennium, five consecutive Western countries, sometimes singly and at other times in combination, have managed to forge and maintain a degree of regional peace and stability in the GCC region that would be difficult to imagine having occurred otherwise or in quite the same way.

The protecting powers, beginning in the late 1500s, were, first, the Portuguese, second, the Dutch, and, third, the British. The latter, by far, performed this role the longest and, arguably, the most effectively. Since Great Britain's 1971 abrogation of its remaining protected-state treaties with nine Gulf polities that would later become members of the GCC, the situation of course has been different. From then until the present, the primary defending power has been the United States in association with Great Britain and France.

Omitted from this report is an analysis of an additional pan-GCC strength that relates to the members having been able thus far, in cooperation with their Great Power partners, to finance the near totality of their external defense systems, equipment, and weaponry. This is something that few other developing countries would be able to do. A report on this particular dimension of GCC strengths is the focus of a subsequent report.

#### **Different Legacies, Mixed Blessings**

The extended period of Great Power protection has bequeathed mixed legacies. On one hand, one would be hard pressed to name a comparable combination of six developing countries that have gained as much from the continuity and diversity of international support as a succession of Great Powers has extended to those who inhabit the GCC region. On the other hand, the involvement of these outside powers in the affairs of the GCC region has not always been the blessing that Western public relations specialists or court historians would have the GCC region and other Gulf peoples as well as the citizenry of these Western countries believe.

This is particularly the case with regard to the United States. Indeed, given that the context is one of relativity to other factors and forces, it would be hard to imagine how much greater damage a largely civilian Washington establishment in the past few years could have inflicted upon not just important U.S. national security and related interests in this region, but, also, the interests of its erstwhile GCC friends, allies, and working partners.

Throughout the GCC region, many can recite from memory President Bush's numerous declarations, with direct or indirect reference to this particular region, that he "will do whatever is necessary to protect the United States and the interests of the American people." It is an unfortunate reflection of prevailing reality that such pronouncements are regarded by the vast majority of people living in this region, and in virtually every continent, as the Arabic equivalent of "kalam fadi," or "empty rhetoric."

Worse has been not just the regional but worldwide reaction to the frequency with which the American president has offered his explanations for why international goodwill towards the United States and American policymakers has plummeted so precipitously on his watch. In the words of one GCC

political observer who completed his higher studies in the United States, "The president's repetition of the view that, 'It's because they - by which he means us -- hate freedom; they hate our freedoms; they hate our way of life..' may be regarded by some Americans as patriotic, but in my country and elsewhere outside the United States millions view such sentiments as idiotic."

"That so few Americans are willing to discuss in public why Arabs and other Muslims persist in violently resisting an American-led invasion and occupation of Iraq, together with the ongoing American-assisted Israeli illegal occupation and expropriation of Palestinian land, water, and other natural resources, suggests that a gag order is in effect. The result, as we see it, is that America's much-vaunted freedom of speech does not really apply to such issues. A popular bumper sticker seems to say it all: 'Talk is cheap. Free speech - at least on matters pertaining to Israel and the Israeli-United States relationship -- is not.'"

The effect is underscored by another observation, nearly ubiquitous in its oral manifestations by GCC students of strategy and national defense issues. It is that one of the greatest threats to Gulf stability, on one hand, and to American individuals, involvement, and interests in the area, on the other, is U.S. policies toward issues of elemental importance to the region's peoples. Such sentiments are not new. Neither are they limited to the pain that many feel in reaction to what the United States-led coalition has been doing and not doing with regard to Iraq and to the Intifada. Nor are they rooted mainly in matters pertaining to the Bush administration's tendency towards unilateralism and the perceived arrogance in its growing disregard for international law, institutions, and the norms of legitimacy.

### **Unsalutary Trends**

That increasingly large numbers of observers and specialists on every continent perceive the United States to have lost its mooring in foreign affairs in general, and in the Mideast in particular, is hardly a salutary trend. That some of America's closest allies note that various aspects of US policies are perceived as clear and present dangers to Gulf peace and security is no less disturbing. It is the more so when one takes note of how far and how dramatically U.S. global prestige, on one hand, and international respect for American ideals and leadership, on the other, have plummeted in little more than two years' time. Earlier, the notion that America's reputation for strategic sagacity, political acumen, moral probity, and an endless quest for stability in this particular region could have suffered such a large number of mainly self-inflicted wounds in such a short span of time would have been hard to imagine.

From the perspective of American long term strategic economic and energy needs and objectives, not the least of recent wounds to U.S. interests is one that was announced in the past few days. China, Russia, and France, together with Great Britain's Shell International Oil Company, but notably no American firms, were awarded first-time concessions to develop Saudi Arabia's extensive gas deposits. Perspective on the implications of these developments is provided by the fact that five years ago it was widely assumed, if not practically guaranteed, that American firms, not those of other countries, would likely win the lion's share of contracts to develop the Kingdom's gas reserves.

But that was then and now is now. The world that existed then, barely half a decade ago, is gone and the one that has replaced it is vastly different. In terms of where America presently stands in key Arab countries, the Mideast, and the Islamic world, with whom it seeks to curry favor, and indeed hold onto its unparalleled position of regional strategic and economic predominance, the United States position, for reasons attributed largely to what is perceived to be self-inflicted damage, is far shakier and uncertain than in memory. All of which but underscores that a national leadership's actions, inaction, neglect, and uncalled-for pontification and insensitivity to the needs, concerns, and legitimate interests of its friends, especially its long term friends, inevitably have consequences.

In conclusion, no one denies that the GCC countries are outmanned and outgunned, albeit not always outfoxed, by larger and more militarily powerful regional adversaries. And no one is unmindful that the member-states need many things that they are as yet unable to produce by themselves. But acknowledging this is not the same as saying that they are doomed to idle at the intersection or are bereft of major offsetting strengths. Neither is it synonymous with indicating that, should the United States opt to stand aside, they are incapable of looking elsewhere for their welfare.

Nor, with regard to their individual and collective interests, is it the equivalent of saying that the GCC countries are likely to be loathe to leverage the fact that Great Powers other than the United States are more than ready, able, eager, and prepared to take advantage of any openings the United States unwittingly provides them to enter into their own mutually beneficial relationships with the member-states in pursuit of enhancing their strategic position and economic advantage. Nor, in terms of maintaining Arab-U.S-goodwill, is it the same as saying that in return for the propensity to shoot itself in the foot, and for displaying a capacity to reload faster than anyone else, the United States can expect to maintain indefinitely its interests in the region on a business-as-usual basis. It cannot.

**[TO BE CONTINUED]**

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**Notes:**

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(1) John Duke Anthony, *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: People, Politics, Petroleum*. Washington, D.C.: The Middle East Institute, 1975, p. 233, fn 1. A more detailed treatment of this theme can be found in Chapter Ten, "The Lower Gulf Today: A Period of Transition," passim, in *ibid.*, pp. 219-233. The expatriate in question, the author's host in Qatar in July 1971, was the late Edward F. Henderson, longtime friend, former British Political Agent in Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Doha, and Great Britain's first ambassador to the independent State of Qatar. For Henderson's memoirs, see, *Arabian Destiny*, by Edward Henderson, London and Abu Dhabi: Motivate Publishing, 1999. An earlier and substantially abridged version was published in 1993 under the title, *This Strange Eventful Life*. The original volume, in typescript, bore the title *Keys to Castle*. When Henderson was a guest of mine in Washington, D.C. in 1976, and again in 1982-83, when we were colleagues, he allowed me to read the entire text.

(2) Integral to this point is a story related by Saudi Arabia's King Fahd to which this writer was made privy in the mid-1900s. Addressing a group of journalists who queried him on the extent to which the country could rightly be described as "authoritarian" or an "absolute monarchy," Fahd allegedly responded as follows. "Look, I have been in public affairs my entire adult life. In all these years I can honestly say that only on one occasion did I make a decision on my own while the process of consultation was still underway and a consensus had not yet been reached. It was in mid-August 1990, when I was shown satellite pictures of the extent to which the Iraqi forces that had invaded Kuwait had already intruded into Saudi territory several times. Without waiting to ascertain how far the state of consultation underway had proceeded or how near or far we were from achieving a consensus, or even whether it would be possible to achieve one, I took the decision then and there to invite our American partners' troops into the Kingdom to assist in our defense against the intruder. In so doing, I invoked Art. 51 of the UN Charter, with which, having been present at the formation of the UN, I was very familiar. Although a consensus had not been reached, I took full responsibility for my decision, reasoning that it would be better to err on the side of safety rather than having to regret later having been too slow to do what, in any case, was for the sake of the safety of our people. I do not regret what I did. If I had to do it again, I would do the same. This is the only time I have made an important decision on my own. With regard to all the other times, I was nothing more than a press conference spokesman. By that, I mean all I did was to announce publicly a consensus that had been reached by consultation." See, "John Duke Anthony, "Transition and Stability: Leadership Change in the Middle East," in *Proceedings of the Arab-U.S Policymakers Conference*, Washington, D.C.: National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, 1999, pp 115-119.

(3) See *Arab Human Resource Development Reports*, United Nations Development Fund, New York: United Nations, 2002, 2003.

(4) *Ibid.*

(5) See Naomi Kline, 'Appointocracy' in *The Guardian*, January 24, 2004, as reprinted in *Arab News* (Jeddah), February 2004.

(6) The term "global democratists" was used as a substitute phrase for "neo-conservatives" by syndicated columnist Charles Krauthammer at the annual Jefferson Jackson Day Dinner in Wisconsin on February 10, 2004 as reported live by *C-SPAN*.

(7) Author's interview with the Minister of Economy of a GCC member-state in January 2003.

(8) The Minister in question received his PhD from a prominent American university. Since the mid-1970s, he has held three separate ministerial portfolios dealing with development issues.

(9) Author's interview with the Minister of Economy of a GCC member-state in January 2003.

(10) Author's interview conducted in Washington, D.C. on February 13, 2004.

(11) In July 1976, this writer was given permission to read and evaluate every master's and doctoral dissertation successfully completed by a GCC member-state's citizens in the United States. From the late 1940s until the present, the total number of that country's nationals who have received a minimum of a bachelor's degree from institutions of higher education in the United States is a minimum of 200,000. This does not include additional tens of thousands who have obtained American diplomas and certificates certifying their successful completion of various professional training courses other than post-secondary degree-conferring programs. As a means of underscoring the implications of this phenomenon for American national interests and the bilateral relationship between the United States and a key GCC country, this writer has been commenting in public for decades that there are more American-trained PhDs in that GCC country's Cabinet than there are PhDs of any kind in the U.S. Cabinet, Senate, Supreme Court, and House of Representatives combined.

(12) See John Duke Anthony, " Saudi Arabia : From Tribal Society to a Nation-State," in Ragaee and Dorothea H. El Mallakh, *Saudi Arabia: Environment, Development Planning, and Industrialization*, Toronto: Lexington Books, 1982, pp. 93-98.

(13) See John Duke Anthony and J.E. Peterson, *Historical and Cultural Dictionary of the Sultanate of Oman and the Emirates of Eastern Arabia*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976.

(14) For a more microscopic focus on how the process of consultation and consensus not only play out in Arabian society but are vital to policymaking, decision-making, and statecraft in the GCC region in general, see the author's *The United Arab Emirates: The Dynamics of State Formation*. Abu Dhabi, UAE: Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2002.

(15) One case in point, among others, would be the ill-fated "Wahda," or Union, of the United Arab Republic formed by Egypt and Syria and lasting from 1958 until its breakup in 1961. No one denies that Egypt, by far the more populous and militarily powerful of the two, was too domineering of its junior partner Syria and that this, more than anything else, caused the experiment to fail.

(16) An example is the Arab Cooperation Council formed on February 14, 1987 among Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Yemen. Subsequent to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in on August 2, 1990, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has given many interviews to Judith Miller and others as published in the *New York Times* and elsewhere in which he expressed the view that the other three members were less than honest or transparent in what he believes was their intent to attack Kuwait with or without his knowledge or approval.

(17) A case in point would be the ill-fated Union of Arab Republics formed of Egypt, Syria, and the Mutawakilite Imamate of Yemen in 1958. Because Yemen was then still a monarchy, the word "states" could not be used; hence, the ingenious substitute of the Union of Arab States, even though within four years' time, Egypt invaded and occupied Yemen from 1962-1967, putting, in effect, and end to Yemen's dynastic regime and ushering in a republic in its place. A separate case validating the same point would be the Arab Maghreb Union, also formed on February 14, 1987. The AMU groups Mauritania (which recognizes Israel), dynastic Morocco, revolutionary and republican Algeria (which continues to dispute Morocco's claim to sovereignty over the Western Sahara), republican Tunisia, and republican Libya.

(18) On balance, the current situation as pertains to the four countries excluded from GCC membership is as follows. Egypt, for reasons of not being a Gulf country and having a government different from the GCC members, remains excluded on those two grounds alone. Iraq and Iran, not least for reasons of the profound differences in their governmental structures and political systems, but also for reasons of well-founded suspicion and mistrust, likewise remain excluded despite the efforts of numerous advisers to the United States Departments of Defense, State, and the intelligence establishments to recommend the opposite. Yemen is the one country of the four that has its telephone calls returned by most of the GCC member governments and its needs and concerns granted serious consideration if only because it is the one country that was a member of the Arab Cooperation Council that has apologized for failing to support Kuwait and the other GCC members in 1990-1991 and because most of the GCC countries acknowledge a substantial part of their ancestral roots are linked to Yemen, which is not the case with regard to Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan. Even so, despite the exceptional degrees to which Oman, Qatar, and the UAE have been willing to speak on Yemen's behalf in the GCC's councils, the consensus is that the GCC members, in lieu of admitting Yemen as a full-fledged member, can best assist it outside the GCC through special bilateral agreements.

(19) For a full account of the meeting with the Foreign Minister and his comments, see my "In the Shadow of the Clouds: Assessing the GCC's 23rd Summit," *GulfWire Perspectives*, January 1, 2003 [http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2003/GWP\\_2003\\_01\\_01.htm](http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2003/GWP_2003_01_01.htm)

(20) My agreement with the foreign minister was that I would reveal neither his name nor his country, but I was free to mention the month in which we met. It was mid-March, 2004.

(21) See Robert MacDonald, *League of Arab States: A Study in the Dynamics of Regional Organization*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1965. See also Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *The Arab League, 1945-1955*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1955.

(22) See Jack G. Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People*. New York: Oliva Branch Press, 2001.

(23) 19,000 mainly Lebanese civilians were killed by the Israeli Defense Forces in the space of their four months' invasion of Lebanon launched in August 1982. Taking into consideration that the Lebanese population at the time was approximately three million and the United States population was then 280 million, in United States' equivalency terms, the number killed in the same span of time would approximate 1.8 million Americans.

(24) See John Duke Anthony, "After the War: The GCC and the World," in Ibrahim Al-Ibrahim, ed., *The Gulf Crisis: Background and Consequences*. Washington, D.C. Georgetown University Center for Contemporary Arab Studies, 1992, pp. 121-141.

(25) See John Duke Anthony, "An Interview with Saudi Arabian Minister of Foreign Affairs HRH Prince Saud Al Faisal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Riyadh Saudi Arabia, as reported in GulfWire Perspectives, October 13, 2002, [http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2002/GWP\\_2002\\_10\\_13.htm](http://www.arabialink.com/Archive/GWPersp/GWP2002/GWP_2002_10_13.htm).

(26) The author's interviews with relevant officials at the U.S. Department of State in Washington, D.C, January 2004, and with representatives of Jordan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Amman, Jordan.

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