

**THE IMPACT OF THE PALESTINIAN AL-AQSA INTIFADA ON  
U.S. RELATIONS WITH KEY ARAB COUNTRIES: THE GCC  
REGION**

**Testimony Delivered by**

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**to**

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## THE IMPACT OF THE PALESTINIAN AL-AQSA INTIFADA ON U.S. RELATIONS WITH KEY ARAB COUNTRIES: THE GCC REGION

By

**Dr. John Duke Anthony**

Within the past year, the *Washington Post* has lost two of its best and brightest figures: publisher Katharine Graham, who died last week, and longtime editorialist Meg Greenfield, who passed away some months ago. Ms. Greenfield wrote about America's troubled relations with key Arab countries and other Middle Eastern nations on many occasions. One of her most insightful editorials on the subject, written nearly a quarter of a century ago, rings as true now as it did then.

As the U.S.-Iran crisis was heating up in 1979, Ms. Greenfield wrote, "We are heading into an expansion of the American relationship with that complex of religion, culture, and geography known as Islam. There are two things that can be said about this. One is that no part of the world is more important to our own well-being ... The other is that no part of the world is more *hopelessly* and *systematically* and *stubbornly* misunderstood by us." (Italics mine).

### The Quest for Better Understanding

Nowadays, nearly a quarter of a century later, concerns about American misunderstanding of the Islamic world have less to do with Iran, important as U.S. relations with that country are and will continue to be, and more to do with the impact of the Al-Aqsa Intifada on U.S. relations with the Arab world.

Today, I have been asked to address the effects of the Palestinian Al-Aqsa Intifada on our relations with six of the Gulf region's seven Arab countries: the GCC member states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. I do so not from the perspective of a government official, a lobbyist, or a business representative with commercial interests at stake. Rather, I do so as a student, writer, and analyst of the history, culture,

and development of these countries, as well as their roles in regional and world affairs, over the past three and a half decades.

From this perspective, I wish to dispense with understatement and fig leaves. The Palestinian resistance to Israeli military occupation, and U.S. reactions and inaction in response to that resistance, greatly affect our relations not only with these six friendly countries, but also our ties with the 16 other Arab states. Further, the current crisis negatively affects our relationships with 34 non-Arab Islamic nations.

The issues in question range from strategic, economic, and political matters, to those of a commercial, defense, and developmental nature. U.S. interests in these areas are inevitably influenced by the degree of local and regional goodwill expressed towards the United States. The possibilities of maintaining and strengthening key American foreign policy objectives in such critical areas as national security, trade, investment, technology cooperation, and other areas will rise or fall in large measure depending on whether the other countries involved are predisposed to cooperate, or not.

### What's At Stake?

On balance, there is broad agreement between the United States and the six GCC countries on the need to improve relations with Iran's reformers, maintain the military containment of Iraq, ensure stability in energy prices and supply, and support moderate public policies regarding issues that affect each other's needs, concerns, and interests. There is also substantial consensus between American foreign policy officials and their counterparts in these six countries regarding what must not be jeopardized in their relationship.

### For the United States...

Consider, for a moment, the following as to what must not be placed at risk from the perspective of American interests. An array of impressive benefits is gained each day from the levels of overall trade occurring between the United States and the six GCC countries.

Taking into consideration the standard frame of reference that 20,000 jobs are created and sustained for each billion dollars of exports by the United States, GCC country purchases presently underpin several hundred thousand

American jobs. In this alone, one is talking about a matter of no small moment. By the benchmark of four people per average U.S. family, the source of livelihood for more than a million Americans is directly associated with the GCC countries.

Conservatively estimated, as many as three quarters of a million additional jobs result from the fact that, of the nearly one trillion dollars invested abroad by the public and private sectors of these countries, World Bank officials estimate that at least 60% is invested in the United States, helping the U.S. economy to grow.

This is in addition to the fact that GCC energy exports to the United States fuel countless factories and other places of work where millions of Americans are employed, that hydrocarbon resources originating in the GCC region cool countless American homes and offices, and that oil and gas supplied by these countries propel millions of U.S. vehicles.

All of which underscores what is at stake and must not be placed at risk: the extensive benefits that millions of American families derive from our relations with these, among other, key Arab countries.

...And for the GCC countries

From the perspective of the interests of the six GCC countries, there is broad-based appreciation for what the United States did to liberate Kuwait eleven years ago, and what it has done since then to help maintain peace and stability in the Gulf as a whole.

Such gratitude is combined with awareness that the region's stability might again be threatened were it not for an American commitment to the perpetuation of these countries' national sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity. These sentiments have been translated into the conclusion of five U.S. defense cooperation agreements with GCC states.

The agreements provide for the repositioning of equipment, continuous consultation, the sharing of information, and the carrying out of training maneuvers designed to enhance the signatories' defense capabilities. Few, if any, doubt that these accords have made a major contribution to the diminution of threats to the GCC countries by the two nations that have threatened them repeatedly in the past: namely, Iran and Iraq.

But it has not been just the GCC countries, the United States, and other Great Power signatories to such agreements that have gained as a result. By and large, the entire world has benefited.

No one in the GCC region wishes to revert to the earlier period of prolonged instability. Who could equate “the good ol’ days” with that which was occasioned by two major international wars in the Gulf inside ten years (1980-88 and 1990-91)? Or with that which, for a time, in the case of Kuwait, saw a small and relatively undefended country literally erased from the map?

In the case of the five other GCC countries, who wants to revisit that era when domestic and foreign direct investment was stymied, and when the future, in effect, was put on ice, because one or the other, or both, of these terrible wars was being waged on their doorstep?

Likewise, just as the GCC peoples appreciate the benefits of the uneasy peace that has prevailed these past ten years, so, too, are the leaders and citizens of these countries keen to continue reaping the rewards of doing business with the world’s strongest economy, sending their youth to the United States for higher education, and being able to profit from an ever-closer nexus of mutually beneficial ties to the American private sector in the form of joint commercial ventures.

But at the same time, they admit to a sense of growing pain in their hearts. Neither the elites nor rank-and-file in any of these countries is oblivious to the implications for domestic and regional stability that flow from the prevailing perception that the United States is anything but “even-handed” or “honest,” or an “honest broker,” when it comes to the question of Palestine.

### The Intifada and The Failed Peace Process

For the United States, what is at issue is not a question of the validity of the many American and GCC interests that are met and furthered through our relationships with these countries. Rather, at issue is the fact that we are seen to be taking these countries and our relationships with them for granted. In so doing, we are not exactly idling at the intersection: we are putting these relationships and our own nation’s interests at risk.

Of all the major political issues that confound America's relations with these countries at present, the issue of greatest, almost over-riding regional concern is the matrix of official U.S. policies and positions, as well as actions, inaction, and attitudes, toward the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

It is no secret that, despite the fact that these countries are geographically distant from the violence taking place in Israeli-occupied Jerusalem, the Gaza Strip, and the West Bank, all is not well in America's relations with the GCC's member states with regard to this issue. To put it in a nutshell: our bilateral relations with all these countries are strained.

There is little merit in mincing words here: *this issue affects most if not all other issues* in our relations with the GCC countries. For the evidence that this is so, one need only ask any of the Administration's diplomats, envoys, and emissaries, or any of the Congressional Members or staff who have visited the region during the past year. The simmering disappointment of GCC leaders at the way they see Washington as having treated Palestinian issues has accelerated considerably since the onset of the Al-Aqsa Intifada ten months ago.

### The Roots of Rising Anti-Americanism

An increasing number of our diplomats and military leaders in the region admit privately that the degree of anti-American sentiments, stemming from the way the United States has handled this matter, is greater than at any time in memory. The root of this disappointment is a perceived American failure on several fronts, among which many believe the greatest is Washington's perceived inability to advance and protect its own interests in regional peace and stability.

GCC leaders have not as yet concluded that the numerous strategic ties between the United States and these countries are threatened at their core. But none will deny that they are considerably knottier than they were a year ago.

The strength of these ties remains strong overall. They continue to be anchored in a joint respect for each other's legitimate interests, combined with a mutuality of benefit that, despite the shortcomings highlighted herein, have long been the envy of most other countries.

But, this said, all agree that the political content of the relationship is presently endangered to a greater extent than at any time in the past two decades. Unless this situation is reversed, not only will the U.S.-GCC political relationship suffer, but, at some point, the U.S. strategic relationship with these countries will also be damaged.

A perpetuation of the current stalemate in the relationship between Israel and the Palestinians, and between Israel and the rest of the Arab and Islamic world, on one hand, and a prolongation of the strains in our own relationships with these and other key Arab countries, on the other, benefits no one.

For America's moderate Arab friends, allies, and strategic partners -- and, also, for the peace movement inside Israel and for many Israelis -- the stalemate and the strains are more than troubling.

They are dangerous.

Not least among the reasons is that, if the conflict continues unresolved, and if the strains should deepen and spread, there is little doubt that the credibility and legitimacy of moderate leaders on all sides will be challenged. Governance within such key Arab countries as the GCC's member-states, and among leaders within the Israeli peace camp, could be affected.

### Dwindling Respect for Stated American Values and Principles

GCC leaders have a need not to be perceived as unable to communicate their views effectively to the United States, their most important Great Power partner, on a matter that effects their and America's joint interests. At a minimum, they need to demonstrate a capacity to persuade Washington to reconsider the implications of its policies and actions regarding this issue.

And for good reason, as this is an issue that is an affront to their and many Americans' most basic notions of fairness and dignity, and a violation of stated U.S. principles related to democracy, human rights, freedom, and justice. If they fail to succeed in doing this, what can the effects be for them? Surely no one will argue that the effects would be to strengthen their regimes.

Some will of course say that this is too strong. Others will suspect that few Members of Congress care how the United States is seen with regard to these issues in the GCC countries. This may be so. But, as to “democracy,” in the eyes of those in these countries who know the United States well – and there are tens of thousands who do -- very few, if any, would agree that America’s policies towards Palestinians in recent months bear any resemblance to democratic processes at work.

Closer to the truth, our regional friends have concluded, is that powerful lobbyists keen to advance Israeli interests and objectives have had, and continue to have, the upper hand. Our friends in these countries believe that such groups have succeeded in intimidating American elected and appointed officials in such a way that the strategic interests of Israel, and not the multifaceted interests of the United States, have prevailed – and at enormous and escalating costs to American, Israeli, and Palestinian interests.

As to whether historically stated American principles regarding human rights, freedom, and justice have been applied with respect to the Palestinians who live under Israeli military occupation, the perception is similar. In the eyes of the world’s 280 million Arabs, its 1.2 billion Muslims, and the thousands inside the Israeli peace camp, nothing could be further from the truth.

### In Sorrow and Disbelief More Than in Anger

GCC leaders have long been accustomed to hearing but strongly disagreeing with American and Israeli officials who insist that there are no linkages between crises that involve Israel, the Palestinians, and Israel and its Arab neighbors, on one hand, and issues and interests of importance to the United States in the Gulf, on the other.

For the record, this analyst believes that the view from the GCC region regarding this basic point is on solid ground. Indeed, the evidence in support of this view is plentiful. One need only consider the profoundly negative impact on U.S. relations with the GCC and other Arab countries that followed the 1973-74 international oil embargo, itself a result of Arab reactions to U.S. support for Israel despite its illegal occupation of Arab lands.



In addition, there are all the analyses and assessments highlighting such linkages that have been gleaned from lessons learned from the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, the first Palestinian Intifada (1987-1994), Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm, and the resulting Mideast peace process that now lies in tatters. And continuing to the present, the linkages are there for all to see in the form of the mounting threats to U.S. interests in Arabia, the Gulf, and elsewhere in the wake of the Al-Aqsa Intifada.

In this light, many wonder what it will take to lay to rest the erroneous notion leveled by various Americans and Israelis that what the United States does and does not do to harm American, Arab, Islamic, and Israeli interests in one region has no relationship to what the United States does or does not do in other regions.

### U.S. Congressional Bashing of Key Arab Players

Few GCC leaders would dispute that most Americans believe that their country does and should identify with victims of injustice in many parts of the world. For this reason, it strikes many in the GCC region as bizarre that so many Members of Congress seem to identify only with the suffering of Israelis.

Worse, they find it out of character that the same Members refuse to express any remotely comparable empathy and compassion toward the far greater suffering and longer tragedy that Israel has inflicted upon Arab Christian and Muslim Palestinians trapped in the same drama.

Compounding the mounting anti-Americanism in the region, and the depletion of the wellspring of goodwill that took U.S. leaders decades to build, is a degree of disillusionment with Washington that would not have seemed possible half a century or, for that matter, even as recently as a decade ago. Underscoring this trend is the widespread view of American leaders as being unable, or worse, unwilling, to take the elemental human rights and need for justice of the Palestinian people into full account.

### Does the U.S. Say What It Means and Mean What It Says?

Virtually every GCC citizen, together with most of the rest of the world, is frustrated not only by Israel's continuing occupation by force of Palestinian land, but also by its persistent violation of international prohibitions against

building settlements in the Occupied Territories, its equally illegal exploitation of Palestinian water resources, its demolitions and bulldozing of Palestinian homes and orchards, its imposition of collective punishment against those who resist such actions; its authorization of de facto “death squads” to assassinate Palestinian resistance leaders; and all the rest.

GCC leaders are also dismayed by the perceived American role in this situation’s prolongation. As evidence, they cite the extraordinary U.S. financial, military, and political support for Israel in the bilateral U.S.-Israeli relationship. In addition, they point to comparable U.S. support for Israel in international councils in spite of its repeated violations of UN Security Council resolutions and international law, on one hand, and its continuing defiance of U.S. policies and the entreaties of ten consecutive U.S. presidents, on the other.

Many GCC citizens are aware of the arduous struggle by which Americans obtained their national freedom. They appreciate and admire the sacrifices the early patriots made in the course of accomplishing the transfer from colonial rule to national sovereignty and political independence.

Such awareness makes the inability of American officials to see the many parallels between their forebears’ quest for freedom and self-determination, and of those who struggle daily in their own land to be free of Israeli colonization and military subjugation, all the more shocking.

It is in this context that the leaders of the GCC countries find it increasingly difficult to reconcile official American pronouncements with unofficial American deeds and inaction. For example, Congressional threats to trim American economic assistance to Lebanon in the coming year to the equivalent of what the United States provides in less than two weeks to Israel, a country with an income per capita the size of Great Britain, are seen as unbelievable and objectionable.

In addition, many in the GCC region are taken aback to learn that some in the Congress would sever altogether assistance to the Palestine Authority, on top of threatening to close the Authority’s Washington offices and adding its name to the list of state sponsors of terrorism. They view such intentions, were they to be enacted into law, as especially misguided, irresponsible, and injurious to American interests and the cause of Israeli-Palestinian peace.

## Egypt, the GCC Countries, and the United States

But GCC and other Arab astonishment is higher, and altogether different in nature, in reaction to the fact that some pro-Israel Members of Congress would seemingly countenance harming America's relationship with Egypt, by cutting U.S. military aid to Egypt.

Here is where background, context, and perspective are missing. In the aftermath of Kuwait's liberation from Iraq in 1991, virtually every GCC strategic and defense leader agreed with what, from that point forward, would be an underlying premise of U.S. and Allied Coalition defense strategy towards the region.

In the decade since then, Egypt's leaders, and those within the United States' strategic and military leadership, have agreed that an expanded American and GCC engagement with Egypt's defense establishment would help to obviate the need for U.S. forces to mobilize and deploy massively to the region, should the GCC countries be threatened by one or the other of their neighbors again as they have been twice in the past decade and a half.

GCC strategic leaders and their American counterparts in the U.S. defense and diplomatic establishments concur that Egypt brings to the table a range of assets that few if any other Arab countries could match. Egypt is at once a founder and the seat of the League of Arab States, with its 22 sovereign and independent members. Its armed forces are recognized as one of the largest, most professional, and experienced of any in the Arab world.

The Suez Canal remains a vital maritime link in times of peace as well as international conflict. For the United States in particular, Egypt's sea lines of communication are critical to the U.S. capacity to project its defense forces to the Gulf, the Indian Ocean, East Africa, and South Asia.

For the past ten years, a key American foreign policy objective has been to ensure that the regional peace and stability restored upon the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi aggression remains intact. For this reason, the GCC countries have supported America's ongoing efforts to ensure that Egypt would retain its deterrence capabilities, and that the United States would work to enhance its and the GCC countries' joint defense capacities in the event of a renewed threat to the region's security and stability.

But, beginning several months ago when Egyptian President Mubarak visited the United States, Egyptian and GCC strategists have been taken aback by the behavior of some in the U.S. Congress.

These members, in pressing their case, have used almost verbatim language prepared by friends of Israel. In so doing, they have expressed support for legislation that, if enacted, would impair Egypt's military capabilities and cripple the U.S.-Egyptian defense relationship, despite the fact that, in previous years, the Israeli lobby in the United States *supported* U.S. military and economic assistance to Egypt. In so doing, these members would have endangered America's ability to provide for U.S. and GCC legitimate defense interests.

The reasons put forth by Members of Congress who support cutting military aid to Egypt – that Egypt no longer faces any military threat – were deemed then as now as not only dangerously irresponsible but also specious. Egyptian, GCC, and Palestinian leaders, too, believe that the real reason for some Congressional leaders wanting to inflict such a blow upon the strategic Egyptian-American relationship, and upon GCC-United States interests, lies elsewhere.

They believe it is rooted in an Israeli foreign policy gambit to weaken Egypt at this particular point in time in light of the fact that the Al-Aqsa Intifada is still underway and that Cairo has been outspoken in its criticism of Israeli policies towards the Palestinian resistance.

### Egyptian and GCC Perspectives

They believe further that Israel has chosen to do this without regard to the impact on American and allied Arab interests, and in pursuit of a perceived broader Israeli goal of wanting to damage the relationship between Washington and Cairo, and between the U.S. and other key American Arab allies.

Consider the situation from the perspective of Egyptian and GCC leaders. Their governments were encouraged by U.S. defense strategists to contribute to their, America's, and the rest of the world's goal of securing the Gulf.

Yet now it is as though some Members of Congress would have them concur with almost the opposite. Until recent days there was an effort afoot within the Congress that would have begun to phase out U.S. official military assistance to Egypt.

The assertion that Egypt no longer faces any credible military threat ignores reality. It disregards the fact that, for decades, the United States has enabled Israel to have a qualitative edge over anything that Egypt, either by itself or in combination with the armed forces of the entire Arab world, could conceivably mount in the way of a serious military threat to Israel.

The assertion also overlooks the fact that, in recent months, two members of Israel's parliament have threatened to bomb Cairo and the Aswan Dam. In this light, are Members of Congress really willing to say that an Israeli capability to threaten Egypt is lacking in credibility?

#### How Does This Help Israel?

GCC analysts acknowledge the extent to which American statesmanship vis-à-vis matters that relate to Mideast peace and stability is constrained by U.S. domestic political realities.

They also recognize the pervasive role that money has in limiting the degree to which U.S. politicians can exercise in public their First Amendment right to freedom of speech on most issues of interest to Israel without being smeared by allegations that they are anti-Israel or anti-Semitic [*i.e.*, in this instance, anti-Jewish], or both.

In addition, they are aware of the constraints that preclude so many Congressional leaders from voting their conscience on issues that concern Israel, lest, should they fail to accommodate what Israel wants, they risk not being re-elected.

Neither are GCC leaders unmindful of the difficulty that American legislators and policymakers face were they openly to favor policies consistent with the official American rhetoric of being “even-handed,” or an “honest broker,” between Israelis and Palestinians, or between Israelis and other Arabs.

Moreover, from long experience, GCC member-state decision makers and policymakers understand why so many American leaders appear to be hopelessly biased and committed to support Israeli interests over U.S. interests regardless of how this looks to the rest of the world, and regardless of the impact that this has on U.S. relations with key Arab countries.

And they comprehend why this is so, regardless of its effect on the many who believe that George Washington had the United States' and other countries' best interests at heart when, in his famous "Farewell Address," he counseled coming generations of American leaders to avoid a "passionate attachment" to another country.

### ...Or Help the United States?

But despite this knowledge and understanding, few within the GCC region are convinced that the United States is fully aware of the damage it has inflicted upon its relations with key Arab countries. Fewer still find credible the reasons advanced as to why the United States seems consistently willing to place at risk its own needs, concerns, and interests in the GCC region and elsewhere in the Arab and Islamic world.

It is difficult for GCC leaders to accept the rationale offered to explain U.S. support for many of the policies espoused by Israel. To its understandable consternation, Israel's rising number of critics argue that its limited assets offer little of enduring strategic and geo-political value, or, for that matter, much else of lasting benefit to broader American foreign policy objectives.

GCC policymakers and decision makers, in short, continue to be amazed by the seeming inability of American leaders to do what is right by the benchmark of long-term American and Israeli national interests.

Many GCC leaders ask, How can either Israelis or Americans possibly gain when the effect of their actions has such a negative impact on their respective relations, real as well as potential, with the much broader community of the six GCC member states, the 22 Arab nations, and the 56 Islamic countries in which a range of vital and multifaceted American, Arab, Islamic, and Israeli interests are at stake?

And they also ask, How many more Palestinian and Israeli spouses must be widowed? And How many more Christian, Jewish, and Muslim children

must be maimed for life, orphaned, or rendered homeless and stateless, before this conflict is brought to an end, before the Palestinians obtain their national independence, before the process of peaceful coexistence and reconciliation between the two peoples can begin?

GCC spokesmen and a growing number of Americans who reside and work in the region put the question even more starkly. In light of the fact that both groups have become targets of mounting hostility as a result of U.S. policies, positions, actions, inaction, and attitudes in support of Israel, both before and since the onset of the Al-Aqsa Intifada, and in light of the fact that Israel is increasingly at odds with all of its neighbors, and most of the rest of the world, it is important to ask, Who gains?

### The Arrogance of Arrogance

What an increasing number of visitors to the GCC region find troubling is the degree to which many middle-aged and older GCC citizens and Americans hearken back to the foreign policy precepts embedded in two books written by an earlier generation of American international affairs specialists.

Former U.S. Foreign Service Officers Eugene Burdick and William Lederer wrote the first book, *A Nation of Sheep*, more than three decades ago. Theirs was a clarion call for Americans to become better educated about the reality of how U.S. policies toward numerous countries are conceptualized, proposed, enacted into legislation, and implemented.

The second book, called *The Arrogance of Power*, and written by the late Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator J. William Fulbright, who was also the founding Chairman of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations Advisory Board, was equally well received.

Fulbright's book was regarded by many as an incisive commentary on the imperious way in which the United States often tended to behave towards many of its friends and allies. Nowadays, few U.S. citizens would find it flattering that many muse that a fitting sequel would be a work called *The Arrogance of American Arrogance*.

Critics of U.S. foreign policies toward friendly Arab regimes increasingly point out the following. No other important American ally – not the United

Kingdom, not Canada, not Mexico, not NATO or the European Union, despite the fact that they have interests similar to those of Americans in the region -- is tarnished with the brush of pontification and moralizing about the domestic affairs of other countries. *No other country has anywhere near the negative image the United States has regarding these kinds of issues.*

None of these Western strategic partners of the United States is known to insist that other countries ought to conform to their definitions of democracy, human rights, and justice, even though those definitions have large loopholes.

One need cite only a few examples of perceived arrogance, hypocrisy, and the embrace of double standards by the U.S. legislative and executive branches that, in the eyes of GCC and many other Arab and Islamic leaders, have harmed the U.S.-GCC and overall U.S.-Arab and U.S.-Islamic relationship.

The first of these is the extraordinary imbalance in the resolutions passed in the House and the Senate last fall that overwhelmingly blamed the Palestinians and exonerated Israelis for their respective roles in the violence that erupted following the breakdown in the last Camp David peace talks.

The second is the fact that, of the **72** times the United States has used its veto in the UN Security Council, the world's highest political body, it has done so on more than **40** occasions to thwart the democratically expressed will of the majority of the Security Council's members to criticize Israel for its violation of the UN Charter and/or specific Security Council resolutions.

The third was the U.S.-led campaign, in what many perceived as a transparent effort to accommodate Israeli objections, to boycott the efforts by Egypt, the GCC countries, and most of the world's 140 developing nations to convene a conference in 1999 to honor the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 regarding the obligations of occupying powers.

GCC leaders point out that an ongoing fourth example, with several different facets, is Washington's insistence that the GCC and other countries uphold U.S. demands that Iraq be held to account and made to comply with the UN



Security Council resolutions enacted against it for its invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

On the face of it, GCC leaders find nothing wrong with this. Indeed, they remain consistently on record that Iraq be made to comply fully with the UN Security Council resolutions enacted against it as a result of its invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

However, GCC leaders, and practically all other Arab and Islamic leaders, call attention to the fact that the United States, in almost the same breath, consistently fails to insist that Israel be held similarly accountable for its defiance of the UN Security Council. And they point out that the United States has done little to insist that Israel abide by the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which, *inter alia*, pertains to the obligations and prohibitions of an occupying power vis-à-vis the people whose territory it occupies.

In the eyes of many GCC leaders, if American officials would have the world believe that they say what they mean, and mean what they say, the U.S. would at least make a similar effort to hold Israel accountable for the following:

- in comparison to Iraq, its far longer and equally illegal occupation of lands it seized from Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria;
- its refusal to cease building colonies on expropriated Palestinian and Syrian land;
- its unwillingness to consider sharing sovereignty over Jerusalem;
- its opposition to entertaining the idea of accepting the principle of even minimal and incrementally-phased repatriation of Palestinian refugees; and
- its use of vastly superior, U.S.-supplied armaments to crush the Palestinians' internationally sanctioned right to resist the Israeli occupation.

GCC leaders point out that further examples of American arrogance run amok abound in the tendency of U.S. officials to rail against corruption in Arab countries, but pretend as though the U.S. system of elections and appointment to legislative and judicial office, and, from time to time, the process by which lucrative public sector contracts are awarded, is devoid of the same phenomenon.

In addition, they stress, the phenomenon is illustrated by the extent to which numerous American ambassadorships – in the Arab world and elsewhere -- are, in effect, purchased by the financial contributions of wealthy individuals to political campaigns, and by the extent to which commercial fraud and financial scandal in the public sector is exposed in the United States on a year-round basis.

#### Humility Wanted; Self-Effacement Will Do

In this light, GCC and other Arab leaders reason, a diminution of moralizing, double standardizing, and hypocritical posturing by U.S. Congressional and Administration officials would be one way of improving the U.S. image and lessening the damage to America's relations with key Arab countries.

Much progress could be gained by a decrease in the frequency with which one implies that the "American way" is the preferred, if not the "best" or "only," template for countries and cultures whose historical and contemporary circumstances and resources are in many cases substantially different from those of the United States.

As the heads of state of all 56 of the Arab and Islamic countries resolved at the end of their most recent summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference last October, the hope is that U.S. positions and policies towards the Palestinians would, at a minimum, be just and humane. Perhaps they realize how empty our rhetoric of "democracy" at times can be – a little justice, an abatement of cruelty, an expression of compassion for all who have been wronged, would go far.

Unless there is a fundamental change with respect to American actions and attitudes vis-à-vis the tragedies that continue to be visited upon the Palestinian people, there is little reason to believe that U.S. business with

many key Arab countries will continue as usual or that the steady erosion of American goodwill will cease anytime soon.

### Ensuring the Mutuality of Benefit

No doubt, some may wonder whether, in conveying the views of many in the GCC region with such candor, one is making a mountain out of a molehill or whether the critique of U.S. policies offered herein is wide of the mark.

Others may question whether the effort to do anything different is worth the candle. For those who do, there is this to consider: the evidence as to how the United States benefits from its relations with these countries, to repeat what was said at the outset, is incontestable.

As noted, the engine of the United States economy relies on the energy resources of this region more than on any other part of the world. Stated differently than earlier, Americans remain the world's single largest consumer and importer of this finite, depleting commodity, with the GCC countries alone holding nearly 50 per cent of all the world's proven petroleum reserves *versus* our own paltry share of less than 3 per cent. At the same time, the United States remains the number one destination of GCC country foreign investments, currently at a level that approaches one trillion dollars.

Among the commercial and economic benefits that result from the U.S.-GCC relationship are the following. Among other things, such benefits have:

- Made it possible to extend production lines of American products and to lower per unit costs, thereby enhancing sales, profitability, and employment;
- Augmented significantly federal, state, and local tax revenues, thereby adding strength and resilience to the economy;
- Provided much-needed and often hard-to-come-by funds to enhance the ability of aerospace and defense industries to expand research and development and produce cutting edge technologies – in both the civilian and military fields – thereby creating and sustaining high-paying jobs for tens of thousands of Americans;

- Helped the United States – by the member-states’ investment in profitable U.S. debt instruments – to control inflation, thereby holding interest rates down and lessening the national tax burden; and
- Made, and continue to make, their mark on much broader American national interests: U.S. commerce with the GCC countries, which has frequently generated a surplus on the American account, helps significantly to reduce the overall American trade deficit.

These benefits, beyond being substantial and a source of envy among U.S. competitors worldwide, represent a phenomenal commercial and economic success story that is little known, and even less well understood, among most Americans. They underscore the pivotal role of the United States and the GCC countries as major pillars of the world’s material well being, and of international stability, both now and in the decades to come.

In addition to these natural complementarities of interests that benefit both sides, and virtually the entire rest of the world, there are other considerations. Among them is the centrality to these countries’ citizens of an extraordinarily rich culture and heritage, together with a body of moral principles and, for Christians and Muslims as well as Jews, universal religious beliefs. Already followed by nearly a quarter of humanity, and by growing numbers of Americans, Islam, in the coming decade, is destined to become the second largest faith practiced in the United States.

Here, one would do well to contemplate the potential long-run electoral and policy implications – U.S. and regional -- for all three of the Mideast’s monotheistic faiths that are imbedded not so much in ethnicity, theological doctrine, or ideology, but *numbers* – for the world’s roughly 15 million Jews, its 1.2 billion Muslims, and its more than 2 billion Christians.

Not least among these additional factors are the kinds of potential synergies rooted in the fact that the United States remains a prodigious exporter of food. By contrast, the six GCC countries, lacking a single river or one perennially flowing stream, are likely to remain net food importers for the indefinite future. In this there are the makings of an ever-expanding and mutually rewarding relationship beyond energy at many different and

additional levels that are, and will continue to be, the envy of the rest of the world.

In sum, the GCC countries, at the end of the day, have proven beyond debate that they are among America's closest and steadfast friends *and* the source of undeniable benefit to innumerable U.S. national interests.

### The Way Forward

At the end of the day, reality brooks no illusions. In this instance, the linkage between cause and effect could hardly be more obvious. The shortcomings of America's official reactions to the illegal Israeli occupation of Palestinian land, and the subsequent Al-Aqsa Intifada, are injuring our nation's relationships with some of the countries whose friendship, trust, and confidence we need the most.

In any effort to improve our relations with these countries, our leaders will need to demonstrate the requisite conviction and courage to do whatever is necessary to protect our interests and to do the right thing. To do so will necessitate the manifestation of greater vision, statesmanship, and courage – personal, political, and, above all, moral courage -- than has been exhibited thus far. At a minimum, it will require that our leaders be more honest and forthcoming with the American people that elected them about what are the United States interests with the GCC and other key Arab countries.

One way for the Congress and the Administration to begin to be more “even-handed” and “honest” in its approach to this region would be to consider implementing some of the knowledge and understanding, and some of the information and insight, generated by today's briefing.

If this can be done, then one can begin to put the indictment made by the late Meg Greenfield about this region quoted at the beginning of this testimony – “...that no part of the world is more *hopelessly* and *systematically* and *stubbornly* misunderstood by us” – to rest.

But becoming an “even-handed” and effective “broker” for peace will also require that Congressional and Administration leaders manifest a greater willingness to listen and learn from our friends. And it will require that they do their utmost to act in support of what is best for the United States, instead of what is best for another country.

Lobbyists and special interest groups, of course, have their place in America. But, as this testimony has sought to indicate, in matters pertaining to the formulation and implementation of American foreign policy, no good but much harm will come by favoring any side that would place United States interests, or the interests of our Arab and Israeli friends, at risk.

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### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR ...**

**Dr. John Duke Anthony** is the founding President and Chief Executive Officer of the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, and is a founder, board member, and Secretary of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee, for which the National Council has served as Secretariat since the Committee's inception in 1986. He is also the founding president of the Middle East Educational Trust, a founder of the Commission on Israeli-Palestinian Peace, the founding president of the Society for Gulf Arab Studies, a founder and board member of the National Commission to Commemorate the 14<sup>th</sup> Centennial of Islam, founder of the annual U.S. Mideast Policymakers Conference, and founding co-chairman of the U.S.-Morocco Affairs Council. From 1975 to 1978, he directed the Saudi Arabia studies program for the U.S. Department of Treasury's personnel assigned to the Saudi Arabia-United States Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation.

For most of the past three decades, Dr. Anthony has been a consultant and regular lecturer on the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states for the Departments of Defense and State. For nearly a decade, he taught courses on the Middle East at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in Washington, DC. He has also been a Visiting and Adjunct Professor at the Defense Intelligence College, the Defense Institute for Security Assistance Management, the Woodrow Wilson School of Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia, the Universities of Pennsylvania and Texas, and the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School.

In 1983, Dr. Anthony received the Distinguished Achievement Award of the Department of Defense's Institute for Security Assistance Management, one of three granted to Middle East specialists in the Institute's history. In 1993,

he received the Department of State's Distinguished Visiting Lecturer Award, one of three awarded over a span of 25 years in recognition of his preparation of American diplomatic and defense personnel assigned to the Arabian Peninsula and the Gulf states. In 1994, he received the Stevens Award for Outstanding Contributions to American-Arab Understanding. On June 22, 2000, H.M. King Muhammad VI of Morocco, on the occasion of his first official visit to the United States, personally knighted Dr. Anthony, bestowing upon him a medal of the Order of Ouissam Alaouite, the nation of Morocco's highest award for excellence.

A member of the Council on Foreign Relations, Dr. Anthony is a frequent participant in its study groups on issues relating to the Gulf region and the broader Arab world. He is the only American to have served as an international observer in each of the parliamentary elections in Yemen and, since its establishment in 1981, the only non-Arab to have been invited to each of the Heads of State Summits of the Gulf Cooperation Council, a regional grouping of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

The author of three books and more than 100 articles and monographs dealing with America's interests and involvement in the Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world, Dr. Anthony's best-known work is *Arab States of the Lower Gulf: Peoples, Politics, Petroleum*.

Dr. Anthony earned a B.A. in History from the Virginia Military Institute, where he was elected president of his class all four years and president of the entire cadet corps his senior year. He also holds an M.S. in Foreign Service (With Distinction) from the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. Dr. Anthony was awarded a Ph.D. in International Relations and Middle East Studies from the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), where, while still a student, he was appointed to the fulltime faculty.

Dr. Anthony was born and raised in Richmond, Virginia. He is married to the former Cynthia Burns McDonald, and is the father of twin sons.

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