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The Gulf Co-operation Council

The prevailing view among many observers of the Middle East is that the states in the Arab Gulf are fragile entities on the verge of popular revolt and governmental collapse. The complaint most often heard is that the governmental structures of these states are not keeping up with the stresses and strains that have accompanied the dramatic, and at times traumatic, social changes that ten years of oil wealth have wrought upon their societies. The source of these views, of course, is the memory of the revolution that so swiftly overtook Iran and toppled Pahlavi rule.

A closer look at the Gulf states and a review of their efforts in establishing the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC), however, shows that many of these fears are misplaced and that events in the Gulf are often misunderstood. This article posits that primarily through the individual and collective efforts of the six GCC states – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) – the Gulf's stability and the West's access to oil will be ensured. Indeed, these states, along with Iraq, are determined to provide substantially for their own defence. The key to their search for self-defence, however, is the West's willingness to provide them with the necessary armaments and technical assistance.

There is no question that interstate relations in the Middle East often shudder with turbulence and instability. In the Gulf, the five-year-long Iran-Iraq War offers horrific testimony to this fact. But apart from that conflict, the internal affairs of the

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states in the Gulf have proven remarkably stable. In contrast to the countries of the Fertile Crescent and North Africa, the internal dynamics and decision-making processes in the Gulf states have been remarkably flexible and resilient in the face of threats and change. This is particularly true of the GCC states. Indeed, a strong case can be made that, both internally and intraregionally, these societies are among the most politically stable not just in the Middle East but anywhere in the developing world.

Such a positive assessment, flying as it does in the face of conventional wisdom, will undoubtedly provoke scepticism and criticism from certain quarters. The question might well be: 'stable? by what standards?' The response of these states would be cast in terms of the following criteria:

- by the infinitesimally small number of protest movements, demonstrations, and riots they have suffered in the past decade;
- by the paucity of clandestine cells and revolutionary presses which have been uncovered or are believed to exist;
- by the relatively low level of crime in their societies and by the absence of coups d'état during the past fifteen years.
- by the small – one could almost argue non-existent – degree of citizen unemployment;
- by the low level of alienation among the politically aware – an alienation that would be ubiquitous if either the general level of the human aspirations or societal opportunities of the citizenry could be characterized as seriously limited or stifled;
- by the lack of abrupt régime changes in the past two decades. Indeed all of these régimes remain dynastic as they have been for the past several centuries.
- by the fact that in the few instances of forced change of leadership, the change has merely led to a perpetuation of the former system of rule while substituting a more popular leader for a less popular one.

A look at the individual countries of the GCC bears out this

assessment. Saudi Arabia has had five heads of state since the kingdom was established in 1932. Four of these have been widely respected during their lifetimes, while the fifth, King Saud, is currently being rehabilitated. Although King Faisal was assassinated by one of his nephews, the perpetrator of the crime was quickly apprehended and executed, and there was no subsequent régime instability. Oman presents a similar picture albeit the dynasty has reigned for a much shorter time. However, Sultan Qaboos has enjoyed fifteen years of uninterrupted rule since wresting the throne from his father in 1970. He has retained the traditional form of rule, the sultanate, while attempting to modernize in order to fulfil the aspirations of the Omani people. Thus, he has alleviated the backwardness and the poverty which were the main cause of his father's unpopularity and eventual downfall, and at the same time has moved to introduce some popular participation in the development process. In the United Arab Emirates, the two principal leaders, Shaykh Zayed of Abu Dhabi and Shaykh Rashid of Dubai, have dominated the political scene since 1971 and have managed to maintain undisputed authority in their own emirates since 1956 and 1958 respectively. Much of the same pattern of legitimacy and stability arising from ruler longevity and ease of transition of rule is evident in the other UAE states as well. In Qatar the situation is much the same. Shaykh Khalifa has faced only minor domestic incidents since he seized power fourteen years ago and introduced a vigorous programme of economic and social reform. Supporting the thesis that internal stability can exist in the face of external threats, Kuwait has enjoyed relatively little internal dissidence despite Iraq's persistent refusal to recognize this 'lost province' as a sovereign state. In fact, Kuwait's head of state, Shaykh Jabir, is regarded as one of the region's more astute leaders. His combination of more secularized rule combined with an effective programme of modernization is fit to be regarded as a model for development. Neighbouring Bahrain has admittedly suffered a considerably greater degree of domestic unrest than all the other GCC states combined over the

past quarter-century. The roots of this unrest arise from many sources, all of which are internal. The most prominent causes of friction are the resentment of Sunni rule by the Shi'is who form the majority of the population, a lack of significant amounts of petrol-based wealth with which to placate alienated segments of the society, and a record of limited success with governmental reform. This single case, however, should not obscure the general point that the GCC states represent régime stability in the midst of an otherwise turbulent region.

The continuity of régimes and governmental systems in the GCC states has permitted outsiders and insiders alike to predict successfully how individual states in the Gulf might react to particular events and what policies they are likely to enact. This predictability is largely due to the longevity of the leadership in the area. Moreover, although many high officials lack formal educations, their practical experience would match or exceed that of their counterparts in the West. To name but a few examples: Prince Sultan of Saudi Arabia has been the defence minister for over twenty years; Shaykh Yamani, also of Saudi Arabia, has been his country's oil minister for just as long; Shaykh Sabah has been Kuwait's minister of foreign affairs for the past two decades.

Thus, in spite of the presence of two turbulent states in the region, Iran and Iraq, the countries of the GCC have managed to attain a perceptibly higher degree of stability because of internal factors in each country. Bahrain, the weakest of the six, is vulnerable precisely because it lacks to a certain degree one of the requisite keys to stability, namely, meaningful governmental reform and substantial economic resources.

But, on the whole, the individual characteristics of each GCC state combine to create a strong basis for regional stability.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE GCC

Despite this impressive level of domestic stability, important external security concerns, heightened by the Iranian revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, led the GCC states

to seek a more formal regional relationship. In 1981 the Co-operation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf was established with the ultimate goal of creating among its member states a closely knit common market through which economic, political, and security policies would be carried out jointly. An experiment in living in the Arab world that has proven surprisingly successful, the GCC has achieved more in four years than the European Economic Community, upon which it is modelled, did in its first ten years. Quite apart from its immediate economic and security ramifications, the GCC stands as proof that extensive political and economic co-operation – and, in some areas, even integration – in the Arab world is possible.

A fundamental reason for the success of the GCC was the recognition that Gulf integration could only be achieved through slow and steady steps towards co-operation. The need to be sensitive to the peculiar dynamics of individual Gulf states was thoroughly understood and has been respected. In other words, from the very beginning, there never was any thought of attempting to integrate massively or quickly, as there has been in some earlier plans for Arab unity. The architects of the GCC, acknowledging the need for unity within diversity, sought to co-ordinate the policies of the six member states to overcome common dangers and respond to common challenges.

It was essential to be flexible in pursuing GCC goals because there are potentially divisive factors at work in the Gulf as well. Some of these are economic: Saudi Arabia is far more affluent, for example, than the other states. Economic competition often pits one state against another. Contention over pricing arrangements for oil, petrochemicals, liquefied gas, fertilizers, and aluminium products adds to such discord and is a potential cause of division. Different population bases and education levels also make for skewed domestic concerns and policies.

But such competing and contradictory interests have not been so great as to fracture the cohesiveness of the lower Gulf. Despite existing divisions within the GCC, the factors pressing for accord and harmonization have overcome those pushing

for disintegration. A common language, religion, and culture are a subtle but perhaps the most influential factor in maintaining solidarity. The relatively small, compact geographic territory which defines the GCC region encourages a sense of common identity. The similar history shared by the six states leads to a common view of the outside world. Indeed, common external threats and domestic pressures made a search for greater cohesion inevitable.

Gulf leaders recognized this commonality of interests many years ago. Efforts to co-ordinate policies and share equally in specific trade and security matters predate the formation of the GCC. For example, in 1953 Kuwait created the General Board of the South and Arab Gulf to provide cultural, scientific, and health services to the south and Arab Gulf states. In 1976 the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Qatar, and Kuwait established the United Arab Shipping Company to stabilize shipping operations among themselves. That same year the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, and Oman formed the Gulf Ports Union to co-ordinate and improve the performance of regional ports, and the Gulf International Bank was established as a Bahraini company with the participation of Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, the UAE, and Oman. In 1979, Bahrain, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia incorporated the Gulf Petrochemical Industries Company in order to establish a petroleum byproducts industry. To provide training for students in different scientific and professional fields, the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq founded the Arab Gulf University in 1980.

Other joint endeavours that preceded the formation of the GCC included the Arab Shipbuilding and Repair Yard Company, the Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation, the Dry Dock, the Gulf News Agency, the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting, the Arab Maritime Petroleum Transport Company, the Arabian Gulf States Joint Program Production Institution, the Gulf States Information Documentation Center, the Radio/TV Training Center, the Gulf Television Corpora-

tion, the Regional Project for the Survey and Development of Fish Wealth, the Joint Gulf Organization for Marine Meteorology, and the Gulf Postal Union. Clearly, there was a solid base of past co-operation and planning on which the GCC states could build.

The GCC itself has a well-defined bureaucratic structure with well-articulated organizational functions. A charter details the goals and laws of the council, the central administrative body which has yearly meetings at its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. The council has established three main bodies: the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council, and the Secretariat General.

The Supreme Council, the highest authority, is composed of the heads of member states. Its presidency is rotated yearly, and each member has a single vote. The function of the Supreme Council is to set the domestic and foreign policies for the GCC, and it has the authority to amend the organization's charter and internal rules. Attached to the Supreme Council is the Commission for Settlement of Disputes which seeks to resolve any disagreement among member states which cannot be resolved within the Ministerial Council or the Supreme Council.

The Ministerial Council is composed of the foreign ministers of each member state. Each country has one vote. Resolution of substantive matters must be reached by a unanimous vote but procedural issues can be passed by a majority vote. The function of the Ministerial Council is to implement the policy decisions of the Supreme Council and to encourage and further co-operation.

The Secretariat General is appointed by the Supreme Council. Its functions include preparing studies related to co-operation and co-ordination and integrating plans and programmes for common action by member states. It also oversees the administrative and financial regulations of the organization.

The Secretariat is further divided into numerous operational sectors. The most influential would include the general office, economic affairs, and political affairs. The economic sec-

tion deals with financial investment and industrial development planning, including customs, transportation and communications, oil and other energy-related matters, agriculture and livestock management. The end goal is the integration of the development plans of the GCC states. The political sector deals with political and strategic matters concerning the member states. It works toward achieving an integrated mutual security arrangement for the GCC. The political sector is subdivided into individual departments dealing with Arab relations, international relations, security affairs, and information. It is in these departments that GCC policy is set toward issues such as mutual security and weapons purchases, the Iran-Iraq War, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and East-West developments.

ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

The ultimate economic objective of the GCC is slowly but steadily to co-ordinate and integrate the economic policies of the six member states first into a common market and eventually into a single economic entity. Ideally, industrialization and economic development would be co-operative efforts, with each state undertaking programmes and projects that best use its comparative advantages. Such joint planning would lead to economic efficiency and create and distribute greater wealth throughout the area.

The means by which economic unity is to be achieved were outlined in the 1981 unified economic agreement which superseded all previous bilateral agreements. It calls for freedom of travel for the nationals of each state, freedom of commerce between member states, and the construction of a common economic infrastructure. The terms of the agreement include:

- elimination of customs duties between GCC states, provided the goods satisfy a criterion of a minimum local value-added content (set at 4 per cent but open to rising as high as 20 per cent).
- co-ordination of import and export policies and regulations. The agreement also calls for the creation of a 'collective

negotiating force' to strengthen the GCC's position in dealing with foreign suppliers.

- free movement of labour and capital.
- co-ordination of oil prices.
- co-ordination of industrial activities and standardization of industrial laws. Efforts are to be made to allocate industries to member states according to 'relative advantages.'
- co-ordination of policies for technology, training, and labour affairs.
- a co-operative approach to land, sea, and air transportation policies.
- establishment of a unified investment strategy and co-ordination of financial, monetary, and banking policies including possible introduction of a common currency.

To assist in implementing the agreement the Gulf Investment Corporation was established in 1982. It has appropriated US \$2.1 billion to be used as a catalyst for economic development and industrialization in the area and to facilitate joint economic projects in agriculture, commerce, mining, and general investment.

The first step was taken in early 1983 when customs duties were rescinded for all agriculture, animal, industrial, and natural resources products of national origin traded among GCC states. The transit of goods from one member state to another was similarly exempted from duties and taxes. Professionals in medicine, law, accounting, engineering, and consulting were permitted to register and practice in the country of their choice.

Another step to assist integration was the creation of the Gulf Standards Organization in 1982 which set out a uniform standard of weights and measures for the community. GCC leaders also sought to convince various manufacturers to consider plans for uniform standards and to co-ordinate future production. In 1983 the GCC was able to obtain lower prices on bulk purchases of rice for its member states. That same year, the GCC leadership began studying the possibility of constructing a distribution supply network for liquefied natural gas to

support GCC electric power and desalination plants and basic industries. Other plans call for a GCC electricity grid and a railway system. Exporters of natural gas have moved closer to co-ordinating prices. Finally, an ambitious goal with immense symbolic as well as practical importance is the creation of a unified currency which is under active consideration.

While the GCC leadership also believes that it is imperative to wean member countries away from oil revenue dependency and to secure non-oil sector revenue through industrialization and trade in non-petroleum goods, particular attention has nonetheless been paid to expanding GCC activities in international oil operations. The breadth of the GCC mandate for expanding activities in the petroleum sector can be seen in a resolution passed at the first GCC summit meeting. The resolution called for 'joint cooperation for the establishment of an integrated oil industry including exploration, refining, marketing, industrialization, pricing, transport, utilization of gas and development of energy sources.'

Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have led the way in promoting downstream oil operations which, in turn, has fostered GCC co-operation and economic integration. In the mid-1970s the GCC member states had jointly established several such projects, and in 1982, in a significant demonstration of co-operation, the GCC oil ministers agreed to help Oman expand its marketing capabilities by building an industrial park in Oman, including a refinery for Omani crude oil. Because of the threat to shipping in the Gulf arising out of the Iran-Iraq War, the GCC is considering the construction of a pipeline in Oman that would carry Saudi crude oil directly to the Indian Ocean and bypass the Strait of Hormuz. The pipeline would be an important step forward for co-ordinating oil transport and refining among the GCC states.

An important step toward economic diversification has been to move from the sale of crude petroleum to focus efforts on such export-oriented industries as petrochemicals, fertilizers, aluminium, iron and steel, and cement. Joint economic invest-

ment and development plans in these areas had begun as early as 1975, with the establishment of the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consulting to act as a data and information clearinghouse and to undertake feasibility studies for proposed projects. With the establishment of the GCC, and the unified economic agreement, industrialization was accelerated by removing tariff barriers and allowing the free flow of products, labour, and capital. The agreement also provided for the establishment of joint industrial ventures in cement production and aluminium rolling. As well, the GCC industry ministers have mapped out a strategy to ensure co-ordination and integration between existing national industries. Agreements were struck concerning protection of infant industries from foreign imports. Recommendations were offered on how best to eliminate differences among themselves. While few joint industrial projects so far have been agreed, the GCC did resolve in 1982 that all member states would use products from the GCC's basic industries in government projects. This will not only increase GCC self-reliance and stimulate local demand, it will also strengthen economic integration within the GCC. To underscore the ministers' commitment to co-operation, they resolved to construct a tire factory (possibly in Oman) to supply the needs of the member states. In 1984 the GCC industrial sector contributed only 8 per cent to its GNP, but this is the sector in which new area industries will develop and from which new technology will be transmitted.

Signs of growing common economic development and regional integration are already evident. Commercial trade in industrial products among GCC countries has become the major factor in the growth of intraregional trading. Although such trade represents only 3 per cent of total exports from the region, it has registered a growth rate of 40 per cent during the past 10 years.

Trade figures for 1985 show that GCC imports are comprised of 42 per cent capital goods, 34 per cent industrial products, and 12 per cent foodstuffs. Europe provided 37 per cent of the GCC's commodity requirements, followed by Japan at 17

per cent and the United States at 11 per cent. This diversity of suppliers permits a certain degree of manoeuvrability for the GCC if it ever decides that particular exporters are treating GCC member states unfairly in the international marketplace. It also means that as the GCC enters its second stage of development, trading relations will change. Perhaps the biggest loser as the GCC states move toward the 1990s will be the United States which has already seen its dominant market position taken over by European and Japanese firms. The complaint heard most often from GCC businessmen and government officials is that American businesses are not meeting the new economic challenges in the Gulf and are charging too high a price for their products. The Middle East policies of the United States government also adversely affect the ability of American business to compete for contracts in the Gulf.

SECURITY CO-OPERATION

The GCC leadership has enunciated five principles to guide the security policy of its member states. First, the GCC was not established as a military bloc directed against any power; rather it is a regional organization that seeks well-being and stability, as well as security, for its people. Second, collective security binds the GCC together. A hostile act against any single GCC state will be interpreted as an attack against the entire GCC. Third and fourth, the GCC was established as a defensive measure against potential domestic instability and against foreign, especially superpower, intervention. Fifth, GCC military policy is inseparable from the future of the Arab world.

Joint defence policies are mapped out in meetings of defence ministers, commanders-in-chief, and senior military personnel. The defence ministers usually meet yearly but their top aides, other military personnel, and specialized technicians meet more frequently to implement policies, co-ordinate strategies, and prepare recommendations for the ministers.

Early meetings of the GCC chiefs of staff discussed co-ordination among their armed forces and practical means of

implementing the resolutions passed by the defence ministers. The chiefs of staff also evaluated the results of joint GCC military manoeuvres and discussed weapons acquisitions policies. At their June 1984 meeting in Riyadh, the chiefs of staff expanded the discussion to include the formation of a unified Gulf military force and reviewed how the GCC could protect oil exports. It is recognized that collective security, with a view toward GCC integration, necessitates a joint defence system, the development of a common military infrastructure, joint policies on arms purchases, and joint military manoeuvres.

The GCC has moved to implement these four conditions. GCC military units have conducted several military exercises, including Peninsula Shield in the UAE (1983) and in Saudi Arabia (1984). Other joint manoeuvres include Saudi-Kuwaiti air exercises in 1983 and 1984 and UAE-Omani air exercises in 1984.

The GCC has not officially announced that it has established a joint defence strategy, but common sense dictates that contingency plans have been worked out to meet the various potential security threats that confront it. Indeed, the fact that top military personnel regularly meet to discuss how best to coordinate their respective military forces suggests that common defence policies have been agreed. The fact that the GCC holds regular joint military exercises implies that mutual security policies are being implemented.

The achievement of the last two prerequisites for a working integrated collective security agreement – a common military infrastructure and a common arms acquisitions policy – has proven difficult and time consuming. Each would require individual states to relinquish a substantial degree of their independence and to merge their security concerns with those of the Gulf community as a whole. Such actions do not come easily to contemporary nation-states. Moreover, a common arms acquisitions policy would require all states to purchase a weapons system, and long-term, follow-on support systems, from one source. The consequent dependence on one supplier would inevitably be perceived as an alliance and send important po-

litical messages throughout the Middle East and international communities.

The long-range foreign policy issues arising from adoption of a common arms acquisitions policy and a common military infrastructure underline some of the political differences within the GCC which slow down the movement toward unity. Three competing views on defence policy, represented by three GCC member states, can be discerned. Kuwait is the most reluctant to commit itself to any one arms supplier. It seeks to maintain an equal distance between the United States and the Soviet Union and has diplomatic relations with both. In an effort to present a more independent, non-aligned foreign policy, it has resisted attempts to integrate fully its military forces to a common infrastructure and has rejected suggestions that Western military forces be allowed to use Kuwaiti facilities. Oman, however, has embraced joint military exercises with foreign forces, primarily those of the United States and Britain. It seeks a GCC military policy closely linked with the West in defence of the Strait of Hormuz. Saudi Arabia pursues a third path. Its slow but persistent approach seeks to create a GCC that is independent and self-reliant but sensible enough to recognize that a conflict may erupt where preservation of the Gulf's security may ultimately require the assistance of outside forces.

The Saudi approach is likely to be the path which GCC security policy will ultimately follow. This means that a unified arms acquisitions policy and the formal trappings of a collective security pact may not be achieved immediately. It also implies that explicit basing rights for United States forces or the permanent, large-scale presence of American troops in the GCC states will be forbidden. National security managers in Washington will have to recognize that the GCC is determined to provide for its own security and be content with formulating contingency plans from afar.

Only in Oman is the United States assured of strong military support. In the past half-dozen years, this country has emerged as Washington's most reliable collaborator on matters pertain-

ing to Gulf security. The sultanate has become a base for Western military manoeuvres and logistical preparations for any defence of the area. Nevertheless the United States cannot use Omani bases without the sultan's express consent, and no United States personnel can be permanently stationed there. Apart from Oman, only Saudi Arabia has allowed the United States to preposition supplies and spare parts and agreed to permit the possible use of local bases in an emergency.

Washington has thus found itself forced to support GCC military co-operation partly because no GCC state would accept a formal public defence treaty with the United States. The security design Washington apparently envisions, however, is an elaborate electronic air defence network that would provide a protective umbrella over the GCC. The mainstay of this umbrella would be the Saudis' airborne warning and control system (AWACS) into which the other GCC states would be integrated by the acquisition of compatible radar and missile defence systems. The GCC states would be connected in one common military network headquartered in Saudi Arabia.

In the past five years, at least \$50 billion has been spent on military facilities and equipment by the GCC states. Such expenditure has enhanced the GCC's deterrent to regional threats, both internal and external. A review of developments suggests that Washington's vision of an electronic defence network integrating the GCC may eventually be realized.

In Saudi Arabia, a central command, control, communications, and intelligence (C³I) system with the capability of linking to other GCC countries will be finished by 1990. Another command, control, and communications system will link Saudi army units, bases, and at least 16 Hawk missile units to a master C³ system. Twelve sets of long-range radar stations used for civilian and commercial purposes will also be integrated to this system. All the military-related C³ systems will be linked by satellite. The Saudis have permitted the United States access to preposition equipment and munitions sufficient to sustain United States forces during intensive combat for 90 days or more. This

makes available not only the AWACS but also other military equipment purchased by the Saudis. Finally, the Saudis established a mini-rapid deployment force to protect the oilfields from saboteurs.

In the United Arab Emirates an air defence study recommended purchase of an advanced C³I system and surface-to-air missile systems; the UAE is now acquiring at least seven Hawk missile batteries with data links to the Saudi C³ system. Kuwait has purchased at least 27 Hawk missile batteries as well as other missiles and equipment that potentially can be electronically linked to the Saudi system. Oman has radar and C³I systems operating at the air and naval bases used by United States forces. Bahrain has acquired jet fighters and missiles with air control and warning systems tied to the Saudi system. A teleprinter and voice links to the Saudi C³I system are already in place, and the Saudis are purchasing for Bahrain batteries of Hawk missiles that will be integrated into the Saudi air defence network. Qatar has purchased Hawk missiles with the potential to be tied to the Saudi network.

When the Saudis complete linking up the C³I systems with the AWACS, it will provide a Gulf-wide defence network able to co-ordinate between 100 and 150 fighter aircraft purchased by the other regional states.

The security threats and challenges that confront the GCC are as varied as they are numerous. Apart from the Iran-Iraq War, three Gulf security concerns stand out: the fear of United States and/or Soviet military intervention, the Islamic revolution in Iran, and the problem of immigration.

One force that gave rise to the GCC was the fear that unless local states could quiet their own domestic troubles and build a force sufficiently credible to deter regional aggressors, the Western powers would feel obligated to intervene in a time of turmoil. The introduction of such outside forces, it was feared, could have a boomerang effect: proof that the existing governments could not protect themselves would only further weaken their credibility and legitimacy. The GCC's military build-up is

designed to undermine any big power pretext for introducing its forces into the Gulf.

The overthrow of the Iranian monarchy and the subsequent export of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran affected the GCC states in several ways. First, the destruction of the shah's régime left the Gulf without a self-proclaimed 'guardian' and thus potentially vulnerable to adventurism by any regional state or organization. Second, the fact that the shah's major Western allies sat idly by while revolution overtook the Pahlavi dynasty led the GCC leadership to question the usefulness of an external commitment to their survival. Third, it raised the issue of whether or not a foreign guarantee might bear more liabilities than benefits. Finally, the fulminations of Iran's Islamic revolutionaries have alarmed and confused public and rulers alike in the GCC states; Khomeini's Islamic message with its notions of righteousness, legitimacy, and inherent Muslim superiority strikes deep chords of sympathy among devout Muslims in these states, both Sunni and Shi'a, and thereby threatens the existing political structures of the Gulf states.

The two most serious incidents arising out of Islamic ferment were the brief takeover of the Grand Mosque in Mecca in 1979 and an Iranian-sponsored coup attempt in Bahrain in 1981. While both incidents were dealt with quickly, they underscored the importance of security co-operation and led to a tightening of the police apparatus throughout the GCC states.

The large immigrant work force in the GCC states also raises profound security concerns among GCC leaders. Although a less overt and immediate danger, the potential problem is evident when one realizes that thousands of aliens are engaged in port or construction work in these countries and many who bear these states' weapons do not carry their passports. In statistical terms, the GCC states today have a combined population of approximately 13 million, of whom 5 million are immigrant workers. Moreover, 59 per cent of the 4.1 million people of the smaller Gulf states are foreign labourers. These workers are largely Palestinians, Egyptians, Pakistanis, and Indians.

A sluggish economy in the Gulf recently has led to the expulsion of many immigrant workers, but their potential for destabilizing the GCC governments remains, and indeed the uncertain economic future may give the remaining foreign workers increased incentives for political agitation. Officials in many of the GCC states anticipate that by 1990 non-citizens will compose anywhere from 60 to 90 per cent of their labour forces. Of particular concern is the permanent labour force that must be imported to run the aluminium smelters, gas liquefaction plants, water desalination facilities, petrochemical factories, and other industrial ventures already under way or contemplated. This population is conservatively estimated to number in the high tens of thousands for most of the states.

There is mounting antipathy among a growing number of the citizens of the GCC states toward the foreign labour class. The security forces are concerned about certain small groups of foreigners – for example, Marxist-oriented Yemenis, pro-Soviet Baluchis, or, to an alarming degree in both Bahrain and Kuwait, pro-Khomeini Shi'a militants inspired by Iran. Alarm is also expressed over the possibility that hired assassins could find shelter within various alien groups. During the early 1980s close to a dozen political murders were carried out in Kuwait and the UAE. Until fairly recently, none were conducted by or against the citizens of these two countries; rather they involved radical elements of other nationalities engaged in settling personal and political scores rooted in conflicts in Iraq, Lebanon, and Syria. With the series of Iranian-inspired bombings in Kuwait, which included the United States embassy, the complexion of the attacks changed. These incidents and their destabilizing potential are a matter of serious deliberation within the GCC.

The ways in which the GCC has attempted to tackle the immigrant worker issue and concern over the export of Islamic fundamentalism from Iran are instructive. On the one hand, each state has at times responded individually to the problem in its own way. For example, in June 1982, the UAE arrested and deported 2000 persons who lacked proper papers, and

Kuwait discharged more than 25,000 that same year. Following the bombings in Kuwait, several thousand more workers were discharged. On the other hand, there has been a concerted joint response to the problem. The organization reacted by establishing special security committees and agreeing to co-ordinate policies on immigration and naturalization. Passports issued by GCC states were standardized as to colour, size, and shape and the personal data to be included. An instruction document was published concerning entry regulations and procedures for all GCC states. Eventually, one computer will oversee migration throughout the GCC. As well, the secretariat is currently reviewing plans to establish a centre that will facilitate the collection and exchange of security information among member states. Clearly, these efforts are advancing collective security and political integration within the Gulf.

When Gulf events of recent years, admittedly problematic on many fronts, are considered in light of the evolving political reality of the GCC, a perhaps surprisingly favourable outlook emerges for the organization and its member states in terms of maintaining local security. It is certain that the will to do so exists and that the impetus to follow the necessary course to achieve the goal is strong. A wider Western recognition of this reality, and appropriate responses of support would greatly enhance its chances of success – an outcome in the best interests of the Gulf states and the world at large.