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# Evolution of the Gulf, U.S.-Gulf Relations, and Prospects for the Future

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Claremont McKenna College

Evolution of the Gulf, U.S.-Gulf Relations, and Prospects for the Future

Submitted to

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For

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## Introduction

The Gulf region is an area composed of immense complexities that has garnered a great deal of media and international attention for decades. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was specifically established as a result of tumultuous times and aimed at unifying the six Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The United States has been directly involved in the Gulf region and the greater Middle East for many years. The Gulf region has experienced different conflicts, strategic partnerships, peace talks, economic councils, and large scale wars. The United States foreign policy over the years has developed an intriguing relationship with many of the Gulf States that has evolved through a number of Presidential Administrations from negative and positive moments throughout recent history. The continuation of the relations between the U.S. and the Gulf States bilaterally as well as the GCC multilaterally is likely to be determined by the events that transpire in the future, as well as how the GCC states effectively address their human rights violations.

When understanding the Gulf Cooperation Council and the U.S. relationship with this entity, it is important to gather a formal understanding of the Gulf prior to these events. The Gulf societies have a rich history that dates back hundreds of years. However, it has only been since the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that the Gulf states have reached the height of a so-called modern state. The Gulf region has been directly influenced to a significant degree by foreign intervention. Having lacked permanent borders and formal bureaucracies, the tribes of the Gulf region have relied on outside protectors for issues of concern such as security, which was exercised by major world powers such as the Ottomans, the Portuguese, and for approximately 150 years, the British Empire.<sup>1</sup> The British were the most recent foreign power that had a

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<sup>1</sup> Uzi Rabi. 2006. "Britain's 'special Position' in the Gulf: Its Origins, Dynamics and Legacy". *Middle Eastern Studies* 42 (3). Taylor & Francis, Ltd.: 351–64.

significant influence in the region for over a century by using the foreign policy tool of protection as a means of significant strategic influence and power in the Gulf region. In fact, the British compiled a number of treaties with all of the GCC member states with the exception being, Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the treaties were strategic elements used by the British in order to protect vital trade routes between India and the United Kingdom.<sup>2</sup> During the time when the British initiated the treaties, it is stated, “the local sheikhs generally benefited from the increased trade and stability, and when the British left in 1971, it was to ease the financial burden of maintaining a presence in the Gulf, rather than at the insistence of the rulers.”<sup>3</sup> This example of outside influence in the Gulf displayed the significance of the Gulf both historically and currently because of the vital economic shipping routes. Even today, the Strait of Hormuz is a strategically vital geographic location and has been a concern for numerous empires who held a presence in the Gulf region. It also exemplifies that the leaders and economic elite of the Gulf states, both past and present, benefited from the protection and strategic partnerships. The history of other elements of foreign protectors for the Gulf is also evident. However, the focus of this thesis is to explain what the evolution of the United States relations with the Gulf states was bilaterally and multilaterally. Furthermore, this thesis will also focus on the establishment of the GCC as the rationale of providing greater levels of autonomy and security for the Gulf states in regional conflicts and disputes without the need of outside influence or intervention by a thorough analysis of the evolution of the GCC. It is also important to review recent events involving the GCC that display the future relations between the U.S.-GCC going forward in the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> James Olney, “Britain and the Gulf Shaikhdoms, 1820-1971: The Politics of Protection,” Occasional Paper no. 4 (Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar, 2009)

future. For that reason, it is of significance to study the history of U.S. involvement prior to the establishment as well as after the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Saudi Arabia is of major significance in the Gulf region. Historically, Saudi Arabia is home to the religion of Islam's primary Holy sites, which are located in the cities of Mecca and Medina. Each year large number of Muslim believers travel on pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina from the United States, Europe, and throughout the world. The United States has a historical relationship that dates back a number of years with Saudi Arabia. The U.S. and Saudi relationship like many other relationships in life and foreign policy in general, has had positive as well as negative moments. Historically, the U.S. and Saudi relationship was established on February 14, 1945 when President Franklin Roosevelt met with Saudi King Abdul-Aziz on the U.S.S. Quincy in the Suez Canal.<sup>4</sup> Although this moment dates back many years, it hasn't been until recently that the United States engaged with a great deal of direct foreign policy with the Gulf. Recently, there have been a number of strains on the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia with major events such as; the 1973 oil embargo, the aftermath of attacks in New York City, and attacks throughout the United States on September 11, 2001, and the different policies toward the Arab Spring in Egypt and Bahrain in 2011.<sup>5</sup> However, even though there have been different elements of negative events on the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the U.S., the U.S. has remained committed to its partnership with the Saudis as exemplified by the U.S. providing large amounts of arms sales over a number of years to the Saudi government, continuing to the present day.

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<sup>4</sup> Ottaway, David. 2009. "The King and Us: U.S.-saudi Relations in the Wake of 9/11". *Foreign Affairs* 88 (3). Council on Foreign Relations: 121-31.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. By John F. Kerry. 112 Cong., 2d sess. S. Rept. 74-603. Accessed January 15, 2016.

The United States unique history with the Gulf region in general also dates back over one-hundred years. In fact, the U.S. presence in the Gulf is commonly dated to December 1879, when the USS Ticonderoga, a steam-powered veteran of the Civil War, transited the Strait of Hormuz into the Persian Gulf. Once again as it was with the British, the first momentous position of United States foreign policy interaction with the Gulf involved the strategically vital waterway of the Strait of Hormuz. Also of major significance was the fact that commercial quantities of oil were discovered in Bahrain in 1932 and Standard Oil arrived in the Gulf in 1939, thus beginning the dramatic regional transformation from a desert shipping hub to a global energy provider of oil and natural gas.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the United States has also had a military presence in the region since 1948 when, the United States established the Middle East Force and specifically a small presence in Bahrain on a British naval base to protect ships along the coast of Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The force, although much evolved, in fact still remains to the present day.<sup>7</sup>

Political leaders of the United States, and especially Presidents, have not been shy in engaging in dialogue toward the American public about the strategic importance and significance of the Gulf region. One such example was the Nixon doctrine which transpired around 1969 during Nixon's presidency. The Nixon Doctrine specifically called on U.S. allies to contribute to their nation's personal security with the aid of the United States security assistance.<sup>8</sup> Nixon also instituted a policy in the region known as the "Twin Pillars" policy in order to protect American strategic interests. Under the policy of the "Twin Pillars", the United States had relied heavily on Saudi Arabia as well as Iran to provide a foundation to deter the Soviet Union expansion into the

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

Gulf region for fear of the spread of Communism throughout the world.<sup>9</sup> President Carter also had a unique involvement in the Gulf region during his Presidency. President Carter created his own personal doctrine in his State of the Union address in 1980 stating, “An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.”<sup>10</sup> The United States, prior to the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council, had a vested interest in the Gulf region. However, this commitment to the Gulf allies did not end once the establishment of the GCC transpired, but in fact, led to a strategic alliance between the U.S. and the GCC which has evolved over many years.

The history of outside influence and foreign protection for the Gulf region and many of the smaller Gulf states such as Bahrain is something that has existed for hundreds of years. The United States continues to maintain a military presence in the Gulf region and in a majority of the GCC states to the present day. When the British departure from the Gulf region occurred, the United States filled the void. This is illustrated by many American political leaders rhetoric of this chosen policy for a number of reasons, whether it be to deter Soviet expansion, protect economic interests especially in regard to the Strait of Hormuz, deter Iranian influence, or protect American military personnel.

This research paper seeks to better understand the complexities and evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Focusing on the possibility that the GCC has become a major platform for greater autonomy in regional conflicts and issues as they pertain to the Gulf states as well as the United States involvement with the GCC and its member states since the GCC

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid

<sup>10</sup> Jimmy, Carter. “The State of the Union Address Delivered Before a Joint Session of the Congress. January 23, 1980,” The American Presidency Project, University of California, Santa Barba



establishment in the 1980's up to the present in 2016. The Gulf Cooperation Council is a unified cooperation of economic and military interests of the various Gulf States that specifically consists of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Oman. The Gulf Cooperation Council was established in 1981 and the Charter was officially signed on May 21, 1981. The member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council are in a very volatile region with many economic and security issues facing each of them individually and collectively. This is true both from the past and now into the present, namely, the invasion of Kuwait, the rise of ISIS or ISIL, growing influence from the Iranian regime, Arab Spring, or other regional and international disputes. There are many economic issues facing the various states in the Gulf region whether it be free trade, globalization, and other important economic factors.

The United States has had a vested interest in the Gulf region due to a significant amount of United States military bases and personnel in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, which includes the vital strategic route through the Strait of Hormuz, where a significant portion of the world's energy is handled and has implications of major economic global significance. This treatise seeks to discover and define the evolutionary history of the institutional establishment and continuation of the Gulf Cooperation Council as an element of foreign policy for autonomy of the Gulf states from foreign intervention. Included in this analysis is how the United States involvement both economically and militarily with the GCC multilaterally still remains with arms sales, military exercises, and other matters due to major historical events that transpired and overall language from high level U.S. officials on the strategic partnership with the U.S. and the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council bilaterally.

It is also notable that the accomplishments of the GCC seem to indicate that the GCC has fallen short of providing a large degree of autonomy to the Gulf states because there has been a

consistent reliance of the Gulf states on the United States. However, more recently the United States seems willing to promote greater autonomy to the GCC and Gulf states and to lead more through influence, technological, and armament support. This may be a systematic movement as the United States transitions its foreign policy focus on the shift to “Asia East”. The final section of this thesis will analyze the question of what is the U.S.-GCC relations going forward in the future.

## Historical Establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council

When analyzing the establishment and evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council it is important to investigate the primary documents that laid the foundation for the culmination of the regional establishment. The establishment of the GCC in the 1980's signaled that the Gulf desired to better coordinate effectively with its neighbors and allies which share close ties, rather than the continuance of reliance on foreign powers such as the British and the United States, which may have different ideologies and interests that do not directly align with the Gulf states interests. When analyzing the establishment of the GCC it is important to gather primary source evidence that display the goals of cooperation. The opening statements of the Gulf Cooperation Council Charter emphasizes such cooperation by stating: "Being fully aware of the ties of special relations, common characteristics and similar systems founded on the creed of Islam which bind them; and desiring to effect coordination, cooperation and integration between them in all fields."<sup>11</sup> Here the GCC seems to be an established group, because there are unique shared core values, something that outside forces could likely never relate to or emulate.

The commonality in place that helps to foster the path to a unified regional cooperation does not end there for the GCC. The Charter in 1981 further proceeds to describe, "Having the conviction that coordination, cooperation, and integration between them serve the sublime objectives of the Arab nation;".<sup>12</sup> This statement emphasizes the common link of an Arab nation. It embodies the idea to foster and inculcate the common interests and grow the interest for each GCC state together in the form of a "Arab Nation", independent of foreign ideology. There also is language in the creation of the GCC that states there has already been previous efforts of the

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<sup>11</sup> Ramazani, Rouhollah K., and Joseph A. Kechichian. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

Gulf states working with one another on areas of common interest both economically and militarily. This signals that there is an enhancement of the previously established identities, ideas, and norms that have been shared between the GCC states for some time prior to the actual establishment in 1981. This seems to be fitting as neighboring states often engage more directly with one another in international relations. Furthermore, the final sentences before each Article of the Charter is presented which states the effort to create closer relations and greater bonds and, “In order to channel their efforts to reinforce and serve Arab and Islamic causes, Have agreed as follows:”.<sup>13</sup> This early establishment of the Charter clearly exemplifies the goals of creating a unified identity on Arab and Islamic principles as the pillar of the creation of the GCC.

When analyzing the establishment of the GCC it is important to understand what outside forces influenced either directly or indirectly the culmination of this cooperation. According to many scholars and historians there are three notable events that developed prior to the establishment of the GCC that likely had a significant degree of influence on the culmination of the GCC. The three events that seem to fit the puzzle as to why the GCC was created specifically are; (1) the Iranian revolution, (2) the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan on the 25<sup>th</sup> of December 1979, and (3) the continuation of the Iran-Iraq war and the battle for supremacy.<sup>14</sup> The current events that had unfolded in the late 1970’s and early 1980’s sparked an unstable environment which intruded on the GCC states, causing major security concerns collectively of both internal and external elements of threats regarding independence, sovereignty, and ideology.

The first major event that was taking shape in the Gulf region prior to the establishment of the GCC was the Iranian revolution. The Gulf states and the rest of the world were in shock and

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Peterson, Erik R., and Lee H. Hamilton. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Unity in a Dynamic Region*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

many were caught by surprise by the overthrowing of the Shah of Iran in February, 1979, which had taken place from a number of different factions working in concert with one another.<sup>15</sup> It is stated that the Shah of Iran was overthrown specifically, by a radical Islamic Shia force that worked together with middle class anti-royalist liberals, the Kurdish tribal regionalists and the leftist revolutionary Mujahideen-e-Khalq which together were able to officially overthrow the Shah.<sup>16</sup> However, within a few months of the Shah of Iran being overthrown the leader of the radical Islamic forces of Khomeini turned on the groups that had helped in overthrowing the Shah and began ruling in an authoritarian manner crushing groups such as the Kurdish rebels.<sup>17</sup> With much of the world and the Gulf states specifically keeping an intense eye on what was taking place in Iran, there was a perceived threat that the Islamic revolution would spill-over and that the effects would be felt in some of the nearby Gulf states. Even to this very day the threat of revolution and the overthrowing of leaders is something that seems to be a concern of the GCC and the rest of the Middle East collectively. The GCC states had witnessed the threat take place early in the 1980's and took the steps necessary to build a coalition to combat against these future forces.

In fact, this was the case and there was a spill-over effect of the Iranian revolution of 1979 that was directly felt in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and to some extent Kuwait. A sentiment was beginning to take shape from many factions in Saudi Arabia, which had viewed the Saudi royal family as corrupt, westernized, and un-Islamic.<sup>18</sup> One major case that exemplified this scenario was when the religious leader Juhaiman al Otaibi, led a major movement against the Grand

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<sup>15</sup> Jawid, Laiq. The Gulf Cooperation Council: Royal Insurance against Pressures from within and Without *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 21, No. 35 (Aug. 30, 1986).

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

Mosque in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. In November 1979, Otaibi directed a group of around 400 followers to storm the Grand Mosque. This event transpired at the height of the Iranian Revolution among unprecedented fear circling the GCC states. Once Juhaiman al Otaibi and his followers stormed the Grand Mosque in Mecca, a fourteen-day battle ensued between the Saudi Government. During the conflict Otaibi and his followers were killed and the followers who survived the battle were somewhere in the number of around 63. The 63 surviving followers were later beheaded by the Saudi government, and some of the followers executed were in fact foreign fighters and not Saudi citizens. Otaibi and his followers provide a detailed example as to why the uprising took place when he wrote a religious pamphlet in 1978 which stated, “The royal family is corrupt. It worships money and spends it on palaces not mosques. If you accept what they say, they will make you rich; otherwise they will persecute and even torture you.”<sup>19</sup> This pamphlet in 1978 displayed the anger toward royal family establishments in the Gulf and the tension that had been built in the Middle East with the great desire for revolution and revolts in the late 1970’s, which did not end there. In fact, in November, 1979, there were also a number of uprisings in eastern Saudi Arabia in the province of Hasa, which created a clash with security forces who fired upon the riots and left 17 dead over a period of 24 hours. The Saudi’s understanding the unrest of the Shias responded by installing new public work projects in the region of Hasa and placing in power a liberal, provincial governor.<sup>20</sup> The Saudi government in both instances acted swiftly and violently in response to the unrest, but also sought long term solutions to insure that new violence would not continue to erupt throughout all of Saudi Arabia’s provinces.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Ibid

Bahrain also had a major revolutionary uprising that seemed to have been spurred from the Iranian revolution. There was even a coup attempt in Bahrain as well as protests throughout the country during the late 1970's and early 1980's. These events directly led to the establishment of the GCC. The major political and military group that was involved in the uprising in Bahrain that was found to have direct and indirect ties to the Iranian regime was, The Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (IFLB).<sup>21</sup> There have been a number of direct events between the Gulf States and Iran that still persist to the present day. One example of this is when the former Iranian Speaker of Parliament and high ranking adviser 'Ali Akbar Nateq Nouri stated, that Bahrain was Iran's fourteenth providence, and such a claim has been made numerous times over the past four decades by top Iranian officials and diplomats.<sup>22</sup> One major piece of evidence that Iran had direct involvement in the uprisings stirred by the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain (ILFB) was that, major leaders in this organization of Shia clerics have occupied important positions such as Shaykh al-Ikri who was arrested on August 21, 1971 by the Bahraini authorities following a return visit from Iran and the leaders Hadi al-Modarresi and Mohammad Taqi al Modarresi lead antigovernment protest from inside and outside of Iran.<sup>23</sup> More directly the IFLB was at a conference which was held in Tehran on August 9-11, 1980 where the IFLB proclaimed four major points of its doctrine in which direct language is made against American and Israeli involvement in the Gulf through sales of weapons and there is also direct language of support and proclaimed admiration for the Imam Khomeini.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, Imam Khomeini announced on August 8, 1980 that, "The Muslim peoples have to celebrate Jerusalem Day...your

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<sup>21</sup> Hasan, Tariq, Alhasan. The Role of Iran in the Failed Coup of 1981: The IFLB in Bahrain *Middle East Institute*. The Middle East Journal, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Autumn 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Ibid

demonstrations and protests at the last Friday of the blessed month of Ramadan (Jerusalem Day) are the precursor to the expulsion of these corruptive rulers and to the end of their manipulation of the Islamic countries.”<sup>25</sup> This speech by Imam Khomeini was used by the IFLB as propaganda to support the Islamic revolution and instigate riots in and around Bahrain. In Saudi Arabia and Bahrain as well as other Gulf states there were perceived and actual threats of uprisings that had taken place which sparked the fear that the Iranian revolution was going to spill over into the Gulf states. These events caused the Gulf to unite and work together to provide autonomy and independence from outside intervention in order to provide and maintain internal security.

The second major development that had taken shape in the Middle East near the Gulf was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, which had taken place on December 25-26, 1979. The invasion of Afghanistan had directly placed the Soviet Union within a close proximity for political and military strikes on the Gulf states.<sup>26</sup> The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was perceived from a political standpoint as a threat because it intensified the possible spread of communism to the Gulf states.<sup>27</sup> The military threat and the threat of a preeminent strike was due to the fact that now there was a large military presence of Soviet Union troops totaling a number of around 100,000 in the nearby country of Afghanistan. This created a delicate situation which the Gulf watched very carefully including events unfolding in Afghanistan, and Kuwait and other Gulf states which helped deal with the humanitarian issues from the Soviet-Afghanistan conflict by providing refugees with food and medicine.<sup>28</sup> The additional concern of the Gulf with regard to the Soviet Union was from the proposal of Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev that would ban

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> Peterson, Erik R., and Lee H. Hamilton. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Unity in a Dynamic Region*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

<sup>27</sup> Ramazani, Rouhollah K., and Joseph A. Kechichian. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid



the establishment of major world powers to place bases in the Gulf region. This policy from Soviet President Brezhnev was directly aimed at countering the Carter Doctrine and would not allow the United States to provide protection to the Gulf states.<sup>29</sup> The political rhetoric of the Soviet President caused a direct response from the Gulf states leadership such as, Saudi information minister, Dr. Muhammad Abduh Yamani who stated that, “the Gulf area is in no need of custodianship and that its people are capable of defending it.”<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, the Omani undersecretary of Foreign Affairs, Yusuf al-Alawi stated, “these proposals will provide the Soviet Union with the opportunity to interfere in the area’s domestic affairs.”<sup>31</sup> These developments that had taken place rapidly and escalated to unprecedented circumstances solidified the need for the Gulf states to find autonomy over security concerns independent of foreign actors. It also increased the threat from the Soviet Union and began to create an environment where the Gulf states perceived that the Soviet Union desired to be the major dominant world power in the region. This was directly explained by the Saudi Foreign Minister who stated when discussing the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that, “confirmed the need for Gulf states to depend on themselves for the protection of their independence and resources”. The Saudi Foreign Minister did concede that there still was a need for allies of Saudi Arabia to offer arms supplies in order that the Gulf States could prevail in providing self-reliance and defense.<sup>32</sup> The issues of the Iranian revolution and Soviet-Afghanistan conflict led to the notion that the Gulf states needed to be able to protect themselves and to be more adept in international affairs taking place and that diplomacy and negotiation is needed in a modern world.

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<sup>29</sup> Stuart, Auerbach. *Brezhnev Urges Ban on Foreign Troops in Gulf* The Washington Post. December 11, 1980.

<sup>30</sup> Ramazani, Rouhollah K., and Joseph A. Kechichian. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid

<sup>32</sup> Ibid

The third major concern that was perceived by the Gulf States as a major international event that helped lead to the creation and independent security concerns of the Gulf states was the Iran-Iraq war. This is due to the fact of the proximity of the Iraq-Iran war, which was close geographically to the Gulf region and a concern that this may create a spill-over effect. The conflict created instability and also led to an issue of a power struggle and was a way of claiming regional superiority, which was seen as a threat to the Gulf states.<sup>33</sup> The Iran-Iraq war had taken place close to the conception of the GCC and that is why it is perceived by some academic scholars as not a major concern that led to the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Instead, the Iran-Iraq war has been primarily viewed by scholars and from direct language of the leadership of the Gulf states not as a primary concern, but that the main concerns leading up to the establishment of the GCC was the Iranian revolution from the fall of the Shah and the Soviet expansionary movement in Afghanistan. However, all three of these events placed an emphasis in the minds of many Gulf leaders that it is necessary to put together a legitimate coalition that could provide autonomy for the Gulf states to deal directly with concerns without foreign intervention.

After conceptualizing the transpiring current events that took place prior to the establishment of the GCC, it is important to analyze what the GCC aimed to accomplish and if this was a tactic to provide more autonomy and protection to the GCC states, and not to be seen as deeply indebted in U.S. foreign policy goals. Specifically, the Charter of the GCC is the fundamental outline which provides in detail the unique shared identities and commonality seen in the Gulf region and between the six Gulf states. The primary documents of the GCC help to provide an understanding of the evolution of the GCC and what the overarching goals were. In fact, this

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<sup>33</sup> Mansoor Akbar Kundi. *Security Integration Under The Gulf Cooperation Council*. Pakistan Institute of International Affairs. Pakistan Horizon, Vol. 42, No. 1 (January 1989)

unique commonality is observed in a number of other aspects of the Gulf states. This is due to the relevance that the newly emergent governmental structures of the six Arab Gulf states of Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates evolved from the Arab tribalism that has existed for centuries in the region even with foreign occupations.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, the systems of government share a common structure in that they are vertically based with a ruling family, and greatly influenced by Islamic principles and practices that have lead to many deeply held social beliefs and norms.<sup>35</sup> The governments also share some, but not complete common perceptions on foreign policy issues, ideological opposition to communism, and the idea of free market trade and to free the region from foreign intervention both politically and militarily.<sup>36</sup> These historical aspects have laid the previous groundwork for a social connection that helped lead to the creation of the Gulf Cooperation and the idea of a larger Arab unified coalition economically, socially, and militarily. This differs from American principles and ideology which is not based in a ruling family tradition, but rather a Republic based form of government with political representation. This is another area where the GCC states thought it was of important to establish such a cooperation in order to have greater independence from outside intervention from forces such as the U.S.

The early Articles of the Gulf Cooperation Council, primarily One through Three, focus on the key operational components of the GCC, namely where the Headquarters is to be established. Article Two explicitly states that, “The Cooperation Council shall have its headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia”.<sup>37</sup> Saudi Arabia was the major leader in suggesting the importance of

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<sup>34</sup> Peterson, Erik R., and Lee H. Hamilton. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Search for Unity in a Dynamic Region*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1988.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Ramazani, Rouhollah K., and Joseph A. Kechichian. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

building a more unified Arab regional institution for both security and economic benefits. The reason why Saudi Arabia seemed to be specifically influencing the importance of building a more unified Arab cooperation was from the perceived balance of power that was transpiring in the Middle East through the Iran-Iraq war and Saudi Arabia desired to be legitimized as a major regional power. Article Four however, traces back to the initial statements and focuses on the goals of the Cooperation Council stating the basic objectives and specifically, “To deepen and strengthen relations, links and areas of cooperation now prevailing between their peoples in various fields. To formulate similar regulations in various fields including the following: Economic and financial affairs, Commerce, customs and communications, Education and culture”.<sup>38</sup> This idea of unity was a major element of the GCC and the idea to grow together to combat a divided Middle East was a central theme.

An additional document of significant importance in the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council is the document of the GCC Working Paper which was also dated May 26, 1981.<sup>39</sup> This is exemplified in the statements of the GCC Working Paper as such, “The natural solidarity which links the Arab states in the Gulf merits appearance in a joint framework after all the positive and effective bilateral and collective measures adopted to date.”<sup>40</sup> This statement clearly exemplifies the common solidarity of the six Gulf states that was instrumental in the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The rationale seems to be that this type of bond and unification had previously existed historically with the six Gulf states, but that new and unique events have developed a more globalized and connected world, which has provided the necessary environment to create a formal regional institution. This is highlighted in the GCC

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid

<sup>39</sup> Ibid

<sup>40</sup> Ibid

Working Paper, “Today’s world emphasizes the importance of links between nations. Hence, the regional merger, particularly in the Gulf region, will be an aid and support to the objectives of the Arab and Islamic nation, and becomes more urgent and a local demand in the historical phase.”<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, the GCC Working Paper believes that the unique sense of belonging because of similar ethnicity and religion will define that a constructed institution can effectively be achieved, “If challenges are enough to create effective cooperation in any part of the world, the circumstances of the Gulf region are even more opportune for such cooperation. We constitute a part of an ethnicity which has one religion, a joint civilization and joint values and customs.”<sup>42</sup> These joint shared ideas and values were used to construct the necessary element for the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council between the six States and build a buffer zone from outside forces and working together in unity to combat the forces of the three major events that had taken place in the late 1970’s.

There is another fundamental document for understanding the initial creation and evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council. The document is the GCC Ministerial Council: First Extraordinary Meeting-Opening Address by Shaykh Muhammad ibn Mubarak Al-Khalifa, Foreign Minister of Bahrain dated February 6, 1982, stating, “Brothers, we are brought together by a fraternal gathering that is free of complicated official formalities in order to exchange and clarify our views, deepen our common understanding of the pressing issues that have a direct effect on the GCC countries, and strive to turn our hopes into action.”<sup>43</sup> This letter, when addressing the security concern in Bahrain, further demonstrated that this meeting superseded the rules and formality because the unique bond shared by these states is the most important aspect

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid

<sup>42</sup> Ibid

<sup>43</sup> Ibid

of the Gulf Cooperation Council. It is clearly evident that the Gulf Cooperation Council Charter and additional documents provide a great deal of focus on the norms and identities shared. The importance of the Islamic beliefs as well as the goal to create a larger Arab nation by unifying together is constructed and thus this provides an important groundwork for the institution between the six sovereign countries to better establish unity in both economic and military fields. This extraordinary meeting also fostered the environment in the evolution of the GCC that the member states would not fight and deal with issues of revolution and security concerns alone, but that the nations could work together with one another to better address these concerns.

The early creation and initial evolution of the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council also emphasized rules and standards similar to other institutions such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union. For example, Article Six of the Charter, which establishes the main organizations of the Gulf Cooperation Council, states the following: “First, The Supreme Council to which shall be attached the Commission for Settlement of Disputes. Second, The Ministerial Council. Third, The Secretariat General. Each of these organizations may establish sub-agencies as may be necessary.”<sup>44</sup> Article Eight goes into further detail about the ruling organizations in the GCC. Stating, “The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the Cooperation Council and shall be formed of heads of member states. Its presidency shall be rotatory based on the alphabetic order of the names of the member states.”<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, establishing the basic rules that will govern the cooperation and solidify that cooperative behavior was a primary mission of the GCC upon its establishment. An additional rule discussed in Article Eight is that, “A Supreme Council’s meeting shall be considered valid if

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid

<sup>45</sup> Ibid

attended by two-thirds of the member states.”<sup>46</sup> In Article Ten there are also more rules establishing the notion that cooperation based on these shared principles of an Arab nation and Islam may not be enough to ensure the mutual cooperation. In Article Ten it states, “If a dispute arises over interpretation or implementation of the Charter and such dispute is not resolved within the Ministerial Council or the Supreme Council, the Supreme Council may refer such dispute to the Commission for the Settlement of Disputes.”<sup>47</sup> The other Articles in the Gulf Cooperation Council Charter further elaborate on points regarding establishment, functionality, rules, and those who can be representatives for the Supreme Council, Ministerial Council, and the Secretariat General. Clearly there was a large emphasis on the rules and functionality of the Gulf Cooperation Council Charter that was signed on May 25, 1981. The rules and formalities help to legitimize the regional institution in a fashion similar to organizations such as, NATO and the European Union. This part of the evolution of the GCC focused directly on legitimizing the regional Cooperation Council and to insure that order and security be maintained for the future and long term goals of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Without the basic rules it would be difficult for the GCC to have evolved into a major regional cooperation council that directly established relations and dialogues with the United States.

There was also a document signed that pertained directly to rules and was implemented regarding the Rules of Procedures of the Supreme Council that was signed on May 25, 1981.<sup>48</sup> In the Rules of Procedures there are Nineteen Articles that provide specific instructions and rules on how the Supreme Council will operate, specifically, voting and membership requirements, as well as sub-committee rules.<sup>49</sup> Also signed on May 25, 1981 were the Rules of Procedures of the

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

<sup>48</sup> Ibid

<sup>49</sup> Ibid

Ministerial Council. The format of the rules for the Ministerial Council was predominately similar in fashion to the Rules of Procedures of the Supreme Council, providing the framework for cooperative behavior and institutionalizing rules in order to provide a cohesive cooperative environment.<sup>50</sup> Furthermore, on May 25, 1981, there was implementation of the Rules of Procedures of the Commission for the Settlement of Dispute.<sup>51</sup> Clearly since this was an initial framework for a regional cooperation agreement, there was a necessary requirement to provide and implement rules for standard operating procedures. These documents helped to implement the framework for the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council.

Additionally, on May 26, 1981 there was the creation of the document of Bylaws of the GCC which also provides vital historic importance for the creation and evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In the document it states that, “They contain the rules regulating the convocation of the council and the exercise of its tasks”.<sup>52</sup> The Bylaws of the Gulf Cooperation Council also confirm the importance of implementation of regular meetings that further legitimize the Gulf Cooperation Council as an institution. For example, “The Supreme Council shall hold two ordinary sessions a year.”<sup>53</sup> The Bylaws also provide some of the basic administrative duties and provide interesting aspects of agenda criteria for the meetings such as, “The Ministerial Council shall prepare the Supreme Council’s draft agenda and the secretary general shall communicate it to the member states with explanatory memorandums, documents and the letter inviting the council to convene, at least 30 days before the date of convening the council.”<sup>54</sup> These initial documents help to illustrate a clear coherent understanding of the Gulf

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid

<sup>51</sup> Ibid

<sup>52</sup> Ibid

<sup>53</sup> Ibid

<sup>54</sup> Ibid



Cooperation Council as a legitimate regional institution. This also provides a united force that can gather together in dialogue to formulate policy and goals of the six Gulf states.

There are also other documents that provide the necessary rules and operations that lead to the evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council under an anarchic system. One such being, the GCC Transit System Regulations on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March, 1983.<sup>55</sup> The GCC Transit System Regulations is a document with specific rules and regulations which provide a framework for transit goods in the Cooperation Council. This displays the evolution of the GCC in regard to regulations, which were then approved by the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee as implemented from the Unified Economic Agreement. It was stated in this document that the transit containers must meet certain conditions. It also focused on the idea that Customs Seals must be clear and carry the word CUSTOMS and the country's name in Arabic.<sup>56</sup> This is one example of the framework that certain rules and regulations must be established in order to produce successful cooperation. It led to a larger significant success of the Gulf Cooperation Council in the Unified Economic Agreement. This shows how the GCC evolved from initial rules and procedures and fostered the early creation into a larger more unified coalition garnering respect that led the GCC to have direct dialogue and relations with the United States and major political correspondents such as former and current Secretary of States and Defense.

One of the major accomplishments in the early evolution of the Gulf Cooperation Council was the Unified Economic Agreement which was agreed to in principle on June 8, 1981 and was then formally ratified by the GCC heads of state at the summit in November 1981.<sup>57</sup> It was then decided that the GCC was to begin the gradual implementation of the agreement beginning,

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> Nakhleh, Emile A. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Policies, Problems, and Prospects*. New York: Praeger, 1986.

March 1, 1983. The Unified Economic Agreement has seven chapters and is divided into a total of 28 articles.<sup>58</sup> The agreement is based on numerous rules and regulations that have to be implemented in order to provide cohesive cooperation and deter mutual defection and encourage mutual cooperation. For example, in Article 3, to qualify as “national origin” a product has to pass two tests: first, the value added to the product during the manufacturing stage in GCC member states shall not be less than 40 percent of final value; and secondly, at least 51 percent of the manufacturing plant must be owned by GCC citizens, either from one country or a combination of countries.<sup>59</sup> The important natural resource of oil is also a major focus of the economic agreement. The resource of oil and its relations to industrial concerns are discussed in Articles 10-13.<sup>60</sup> Coordination in the oil sector involves areas of production, refining, marketing, processing, and pricing.

There was also a focus on establishing cooperation in economic and monetary policy. This has been a difficult aspect to create cooperation as some have noted. In an interview with Khalil Ibrahim al-Mutawwa’, the director of customs in Bahrain, he stated that, “if economic cooperation is to function effectively, two cardinal principles must be observed: (1) competition on an equal footing, and (2) uniformity of state support.”<sup>61</sup> This displays the difficulty with cooperation and many states have maintained the current monetary policy, while having differing views on investments and monetary policies that have lead to a difficult environment for effective monetary policy coordination. These documents help to lay the bedrock of the creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council and help to shed light on how the GCC was established and

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

what the primary goals and rationale was for this institution as stated by the official documents. This issue displays the evolution of the GCC. That as the GCC aims to be more coordinated and harmonious, there are going to be setbacks, and that certain GCC states may desire to maintain autonomy over specific issues that they think would be in the best interest to their citizens and overall well being of their particular nation.

### **Conclusion on the Initial Establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council**

Overall, it seems that the early evolution and creation of the six neighboring autonomous countries of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Oman have effectively come together to better establish coordination in various fields due to the fact that there is a number of shared identities and norms that make a larger constructed Arab nation, based on historical connections in Islamic beliefs and practices. There is a definite legitimacy made in the claim that not only in the Gulf Cooperation Council, but also in other aspects, that rules and norms are established. However, there are very little monitoring aspects and the focus is not on defection. The hopeful or naïve view of the Council may in fact be that since the Cooperation Council is based on a group of member states that share a great deal of collective interests, that the likelihood of defecting is not taken into consideration. However, the Gulf Cooperation Council has found that it is important to have rules and functionality in order to legitimize the regional institution on an international scale that can have diplomatic ties and relations with other institutions and autonomous countries. It also displays that rules and regulations are necessary to create and establish future elements of cooperation in an evolving council that must guard against destruction or demise. The unique aspect of the GCC is that there is shared language, religion, identities and other aspects that make the GCC more unique than the typical European institutions that also had many commonalities, but not to the degree that seems

to be present or aims to be present in the Gulf Cooperation Council. The GCC aims at distinguishing and showing to the world that these states can remain autonomous, but also can build on shared principles. The GCC helps to further facilitate these shared principles through this connected aspect that enhances what was already once in place before the Gulf Cooperation Council was established.

When analyzing the establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council and the primary documents, such as the Charter and other early documents in 1981 one can decipher that little to nothing is discussed in the form of collective security or military integration. There is however, a number of security and military initiatives taken by the GCC and their leaders early on in 1982, such as the Peninsula Shield Force and more recently with other military cooperation initiatives. It also seems that military, security coalitions, and regional stability is a primary concern for the Gulf Cooperation Council and it is of significance to analyze and review the historical initiatives taken by the GCC both independently and collectively. Although, security concerns seem to be neglected in the creation of the GCC, they are a significant factor today for the GCC, both collectively and independently for the six Gulf States.

## The Evolution of GCC Military Cooperation

It is of note that within the first year of the establishment and Charter of the Gulf Cooperation Council that the Council took a step in creating a Gulf self-defense force in 1982. That self-defense force established early in the evolution of the GCC is known as the Peninsula Shield Force and is also known as the Al-Jazeera Shield Force. This is of significance because it seems the goal of the GCC early in its evolution was to build a force that could directly address the issues in a fashion that was desirable for the GCC states without the influence or demands of a foreign power such as the United States or Britain. The self defense force known as the Al-Jazeera Shield Force was commanded and stationed in Saudi Arabia. Once again the establishment of the GCC self-defense force in Saudi Arabia displays how the Saudi government desired to be a leader in the GCC and more broadly a leading power in the region. The creation of the Peninsula Shield force in 1982 had the approximate size of two brigades with a total force of around 10,000 troops.<sup>62</sup> The forces of the Peninsula Shield Force were stationed at Hafr al-Batin in Saudi Arabia and under the command of a Saudi Officer. The purported goal of the early establishment of the Peninsula Shield Force was to, “developing that force in line with the changes in the security environment, to become a mechanized infantry with full firepower and fighting and logistics.”<sup>63</sup> From the expedient establishment of a defense force shortly after the Charter and establishment of the GCC it seems to elude the fact that security was of a primary concern for the GCC. This is especially true of logical interpretation since the events in the early 1980’s and late 1970’s sparked a large scale of concern from a majority of the GCC states.

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<sup>62</sup> Saïdy, Brahim. "The Gulf Cooperation Council's Unified Military Command." Foreign Policy Research Institute. October 2014. Accessed January 17, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> “Joint Military Action” The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Secretariat General.

There were many outsiders and academics that questioned the reasons for the “Peninsula Shield” and some military leaders of the GCC provided substantive information in interviews. One such interview was with Lieutenant General Shaykh Khalifah ibn Zayid Al-Nuhayyan, the Deputy Commander in Chief of the UAE Armed Forces on October 24, 1983. In a response on whether the maneuvers of the GCC Peninsula Shield were a direct response to Iranian threats to close the Strait of Hormuz he said, “The idea of creating a unified defense system for the GCC was not born in the past few weeks. Indeed, it has been the subject of long studies since the GCC was established, and its aim is to pool the real sources of strength of the Arab Gulf states in accordance with a strategy that ensures the maintenance of peace and defense of the people and the land. The “Peninsula Shield” maneuvers are a step toward the realization of this strategy and have nothing to do with current developments in the area.”<sup>64</sup> General Al-Nuhayyan tried to address the reporter in a straight forward manner and clearly illustrates that the creation of the GCC defense force was something that had been thought out for some time and that there was a mission to realize the goals of successfully achieving a capable military defense force which was further exemplified in the final sentences of the interview, “Steps toward military cooperation will continue to be taken in accordance with the study plans, whose ultimate aim is to establish a joint military command. During the next month there will be joint air maneuvers by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait as a first stage, and joint air maneuvers by Oman and the UAE as a second stage.”<sup>65</sup> This early analysis by a military General expressed that cooperation in the field of defense and military cooperation is a significant issue that the evolving GCC aimed to resolve.

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<sup>64</sup> Ramazani, Rouhollah K., and Joseph A. Kechichian. *The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid

Once the establishment of the “Peninsula Shield” force was initiated the GCC aimed at providing additional cooperation in the arena of military and defense support, and the next major step in the evolutionary process that the Gulf Cooperation Council achieved was the creation and establishment of the “Cooperation Belt”. The “Cooperation Belt” was established more recently, “In 1997, Their Majesties and Highnesses the leaders of the GCC approved the ‘Cooperation Belt’ project to connect the operations center of the Air forces and Air defense in GCC states’ armed forces.”<sup>66</sup> The focus of the Cooperation Belt was to provide a more integrated operation center that would be used for the different Air forces of the GCC states. It was also of significance to analyze the concluding statements of the GCC sessions to better understand the evolving process of the GCC cooperation in security and military strategy. One such statement being the Closing Statement of the Eighteenth Session of the Supreme Council in Kuwait City on December 20-22 of 1997, when the establishment of the “Cooperation Belt” took place. The closing statements of the Eighteenth Session for military affairs is, “In the military sphere, the Supreme Council approved the decisions recommended by the Ministers of Defense at their 16<sup>th</sup> session held at Doha. Foremost among those decisions were those relating to the concrete steps to connect member states with a secure communications network for military purposes, radar coverage, early warning and military games.”<sup>67</sup> Furthermore, the Closing Statements at the Eighteenth Session went on to state, “The Council noted with satisfaction the progress made in military cooperation across the board, and stressed the need for further expansion of cooperation in this area with a view in particular to improve the collective defense capabilities of member

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<sup>66</sup> “Joint Military Action” The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Secretariat General.

<sup>67</sup> The Closing Statement of the Eighteenth Session of the Gulf Cooperation Council Supreme Council Kuwait City-The State of Kuwait Corresponding to 20 to 22 December 1997 A.D.

states which share common goals, heritage and destiny.”<sup>68</sup> The effort and evolutionary process by the GCC to establish a joint security and military cooperation does not end here, but instead continues for a number of years which includes a number of recent agreements in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, it is noteworthy that the movement for a more robust and autonomous military coalition had not made significant bounds, which caused the GCC and many of the member states to continue to rely on the United States as an outside protector and supplier of important sophisticated military technology.

After the establishment of a joint GCC Peninsula Shield self-defense force and the “Cooperation Belt” the GCC decided to take a new stance of creating a more robust Joint Defense force. The evolution of the GCC culminated in a GCC Joint Defense Agreement which was signed by the leaders of the GCC States at the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Supreme Council in Manama, Bahrain in December of 2000.<sup>69</sup> This transition and evolution of the GCC marked a new strategic direction from cooperation to a more strategic unified defense for the GCC and its member States. According to the statements and writing of the 21<sup>st</sup> session of the Supreme Council, “The contracting parties confirm their adherence to the GCC Charter and their respect of the charters of the Arab League and the UN. They also confirm their intention to defend each other collectively, based on the principle that an attack on any Member State implies an attack against all of them, and that whatever threatens any state will be considered as a common threat.”<sup>70</sup> The focus of the Joint Defense Agreement was to supplement a more united front for the GCC that aligned each of the six States in a more united defense for collective security. The emphasis of the idea that an attack on any Member State was an attack against all states

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<sup>68</sup> Ibid

<sup>69</sup> “Joint Military Action” The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Secretariat General.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid



resembles a similarity to NATO, which is something the GCC may have desired to achieve and to be viewed as a similar institution, and be compared to that of a form of NATO for the Gulf and Middle East. However, the goal of the GCC creating a more unified military command and joint defense cooperation did not end at the 21st session of the Supreme Council and the evolution has continued to transpire to the present.

More recently at the 34<sup>th</sup> Session of the GCC which was held in Kuwait City on December 10-11 of 2013, the GCC had decided to make a major advancement in establishing a unified military command structure for the six States of the GCC. The new military command of the GCC will have a force of around 100,000 which is a significant increase from where the Peninsula Shield force was at with 10,000 a total of around two brigades.<sup>71</sup> Half of the 100,000 troops are to be contributed by Saudi Arabia, which was the major state pursuing this unified military initiative. This once again displays the continuing push of Saudi Arabia as a regional power to remain as a strong power and to rival Iran as the major superpower in the region. However, under this new unified military command, the six GCC states will come together to coordinate air, land, and marine forces that will fall under one common structure.<sup>72</sup> One foreign minister directly discussed the impact of this new unified military command, specifically, Bahrain's Foreign Minister, Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa where he said: "We want to create a central command that coordinates between all sub-commands and makes them work under one umbrella. But, the new structure won't replace the Peninsula Shield forces."<sup>73</sup> This is important because this ensures that the prior establishment of the Peninsula Shield forces

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<sup>71</sup> Saïdy, Brahim. "The Gulf Cooperation Council's Unified Military Command." Foreign Policy Research Institute. October 2014. Accessed January 17, 2016.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

remained intact. This also continues the path of the GCC on its evolutionary change in becoming a major military security cooperation in the region.

In addition to the Unified military command the GCC leaders also established the Gulf Academy for Strategic and Security Studies at the 34<sup>th</sup> session in Kuwait City. Specifically, “The Supreme Council at the 34<sup>th</sup> session (Kuwait, December 2013) approved the establishment of the Gulf Academy for Strategic and Security Studies for the GCC States in Abu Dhabi, UAE. This resolution was issued to affirm that the GCC States place great importance to keep pace with rapid development in the field of military and security, and that this academy would become one of the significant sources to rely upon in the field of studies, researches, development and sustainable knowledge.”<sup>74</sup> The Supreme Council at the 34<sup>th</sup> session in Kuwait of December 2013 also pursued a more robust rapid development, “in the field of digital technology information and secured communication,”<sup>75</sup> Also, in December of 2013, “the Joint Defense Council, approved the use of satellite communication as an alternate means of transmission to broadcast important data in case of interruption or termination of the service.”<sup>76</sup> These are some of the more recent achievements and evolution of the GCC in the arena of military cooperation and unified military command.

The “Peninsula Shield” force, “Cooperation Belt”, Joint Defense agreement, and the unified military command highlight the key military and strategic cooperation agreements that have been established by the GCC. However, they continue to be built upon and likely will continue to change and evolve for a number of years. It is also noteworthy that military and

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<sup>74</sup> “Joint Military Action” The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Secretariat General.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

defense strategy is commonly discussed at GCC sessions and joint military training exercises. Many scholars and researchers have been skeptical of the effectiveness and capabilities of these agreements which have not truly been put to the test. The uniqueness of this GCC military coalition is that it seems to aim to produce an effective alliance that would make the GCC states less reliant on foreign actors for defense. This may not be the case for some of the smaller GCC states, but with the help of Saudi Arabia and the UAE, the achievement of these goals may be more realistic. It is important to analyze the historical context and evolutionary transition of the military cooperation of the GCC, however since this force has not been put into a formal military combat or major conflict, the GCC and its member states have consistently relied on protection and assistance from the United States, which in turn has been able to leverage this strength for achieving the goals desired by the U.S.

## U.S. Military Facilities in the Gulf States

When uncovering the evolution of the U.S.-Gulf relations it is important to first analyze the military agreements and current military presence in the Gulf States. The United States has an interconnected military and strategic alliance with the Gulf bilaterally and the Cooperation Council multilaterally due to the United States vested interest in the Gulf region's security. Even with the Gulf seeking to provide a military force that could grant greater autonomy in dealing with the conflicts in the Middle East, the U.S. remains as a major power broker. In fact, there are a number of vitally important military facilities that the United States has stationed in Gulf Cooperation Council states. Some of the key facilities that the United States has in GCC countries are the U.S. Navy's 5<sup>th</sup> fleet headquarters in Manama, Bahrain and the United States CENTCOM command facility in Qatar.<sup>77</sup> However, there are many other facilities and military bases also located within the Gulf Cooperation Council states. In fact, as of 2015 there are around 35,000 United States military forces and personnel currently in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.<sup>78</sup>

The 35,000 United States military forces and service men and women are currently in GCC countries through a number of Defense Cooperation Agreements (DCAS) as well as other strategic military agreements. Also of interest is that recently then Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel made reference to new security initiatives dealing directly with the Gulf region in his remarks at the Manama Dialogue from Manama, Bahrain on December 7, 2013. Secretary of Defense Hagel specifically stated at the Manama dialogue, "As part of our efforts to ensure freedom of navigation throughout the Gulf, we routinely maintain a naval presence of over 40

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<sup>77</sup> Blanchard, Christopher M. "CRS Reprint for Congress." *The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sale Proposals*, October 8, 2008.

<sup>78</sup> Katzman, Kenneth. *The Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Summit: Any Results?*, Serial No. 114-68, July 9, 2015, 114-1. Congressional Research Service, 2015.

ships in the broader region, including a carrier strike group, and conduct a range of freedom of navigation operations. These operations include approximately 50 transits of the Strait of Hormuz over the past six months.”<sup>79</sup> Secretary of Defense Hagel’s comments clearly illustrated the United States vested interest in the region and acting as a foreign force providing protection to the Gulf states. Furthermore, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel also discussed how the United States was continuing to invest in the military facilities in the Gulf and focusing on how the U.S. is working on a \$580 million construction project that would help expand the U.S. Navy’s Fifth Fleet capabilities in the Gulf.<sup>80</sup> This policy goal of the United States displayed that the U.S. commitment to the region has evolved, but also confirmed the desire to maintain a long term commitment to the security and stability of the region.

The six countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council each have some element of military agreements or military strategic ties with the United States. One country the United States does not have a Defense Cooperation Agreement with is Saudi Arabia. However, the United States does have military assets in Saudi Arabia that are used to train the Saudi Arabia National Guard and Ministry of Interior forces.<sup>81</sup> The Saudi Arabian armed forces have around 200 United States made M1A2 “Abrams” tanks and also have U.S. made F-15 fighter jets, which are used by the Saudi Air Force.<sup>82</sup> Although the Saudi Arabian government does not have a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the United States, Qatar does have a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the United States. The United States has had a Defense Cooperation Agreement with Qatar since 1992 and the Defense Cooperation Agreement has been recently renewed with an agreement in

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<sup>79</sup> “Remarks by Secretary Hagel at the Manama Dialogue from Manama, Bahrain” United States Department of Defense. December 7, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid

<sup>81</sup> Katzman, Kenneth. *The Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Summit: Any Results?*, Serial No. 114-68, July 9, 2015, 114-1. Congressional Research Service, 2015.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid

December of 2013.<sup>83</sup> The United States has around 5,000 military personnel which are predominately made up of the United States Air Force. The reason why the majority of the United States military personnel in Qatar are from the Air Force is because of the U.S. Central Command or more commonly known as (CENTCOM) is based in the country of Qatar.<sup>84</sup> In the Central Command in Qatar, the United States has established this unit as the forward headquarters which has the responsibility for the Middle East and Central Asia and thus oversees United States combat aircraft missions in the region.<sup>85</sup>

The United States also has a Defense Cooperation Agreement with Kuwait that has been in place since 1991.<sup>86</sup> There is a relatively large number of United States military personnel in Kuwait with a total force of around 13,000 U.S. military members, which is made up primarily of the United States Army. There are major facilities that the United States military has in Kuwait such as, Camp Arifan, Camp Buehring, Shaykh Jabir Air Base, and Shaykh Ali al-Salem Air Base.<sup>87</sup> Not only are there United States personnel in Kuwait, but the United States has also sold and given specific U.S. made military technology to Kuwait. For example, the Kuwait military has United States military equipment such as, M1A2 “Abrams” tanks and F/A-18 “Hornet” aircraft.<sup>88</sup> The United States also has a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the United Arab Emirates that has been in place since 1994 and there is around 5,000 United States military members in the United Arab Emirates.<sup>89</sup> The major United States military facility in the United Arab Emirates is the Al Dhafra Air Base which operates surveillance and refueling of

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid  
<sup>84</sup> Ibid  
<sup>85</sup> Ibid  
<sup>86</sup> Ibid  
<sup>87</sup> Ibid  
<sup>88</sup> Ibid  
<sup>89</sup> Ibid

military aircraft.<sup>90</sup> One interesting development as of late has been the United Arab Emirates desire to purchase the highly sophisticated U.S. made F-35 “Joint Strike Fighter”. However, it is purportedly highly unlikely that the United States would sell this military technology to the United Arab Emirates because of the fact that it would go against the United States maintained policy of ensuring Israel’s “Qualitative Military Edge” (QME) in the region.<sup>91</sup> The U.S.-UAE relations have evolved over a number of years, but there seems to be a limit on the extent to where that relation can and will go.

The United States also has a Defense Cooperation Agreement with Bahrain that has been established since 1991 and there is around 6,000 United States military service men and women in Bahrain.<sup>92</sup> Of the 6,000 U.S. military personnel in Bahrain a majority of the service personnel are from the Navy and are stationed at the Naval Support Activity Facility.<sup>93</sup> The United States has also given Bahrain M60A3 United States made tanks and has also sold United States made F-16 fighter jets.<sup>94</sup> The United States does not have a Defense Cooperation Agreement with Oman, but still has military agreements similar to what the U.S. has with Saudi Arabia. Specifically, the United States has a “facilities access agreement” with the Oman government. Under the “facilities access agreement” the United States has with the Omani government the United States military forces and personnel have access to Omani military facilities especially Omani Air Bases such as, Seeb, Masirah Island, Thumrait, and Musnanah.<sup>95</sup> The United States has also given Oman M60A3 tanks through excess defense articles which the United States also

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid  
<sup>91</sup> Ibid  
<sup>92</sup> Ibid  
<sup>93</sup> Ibid  
<sup>94</sup> Ibid  
<sup>95</sup> Ibid

did for Bahrain. Oman has also purchased F-16 fighter jets from the United States through national funds.<sup>96</sup>

The United States has also acted strategically with the Gulf Cooperation Council multilaterally through a number of joint military exercises over the years. One major military exercise between the GCC-U.S. military is an exercise known as “Eagle Resolve”. It is specifically, known as the major multinational exercise in the Gulf region and has taken place since 1999.<sup>97</sup> Most recently the Eagle Resolve military exercise had taken place in Kuwait City on March 15, 2015 where, the Kuwaiti and U.S. military had also welcomed 29 other countries including all of the GCC states to work on exercises to ensure regional stability. Of major significance is that this was the first time that Kuwait had specifically held the exercise, and although many GCC states have participated in the Eagle Resolve exercise in the past, that was the first time that all six of the GCC states had participated in the exercise. The Eagle Resolve military exercises were lead by U.S. Air Force Major General Rick Mattson. General Mattson was the exercise director and he signified the strategic importance of the Gulf region.<sup>98</sup> As the Eagle Resolve exercise has evolved over the years, it has transpired from an event of a U.S.-GCC military exercise, but now it has partnered with U.S. allies from North and South America, European, as well as Pacific Partners. Each year the joint military exercises have specific operational phases that deal with certain logistical components and tactical operations to prepare for the possibility of future military action in the Gulf. One of the phases of the Eagle Resolve military exercise was a special forces operation to rescue hostages.<sup>99</sup> The Eagle Resolve military exercise with the GCC and U.S. is another example of the U.S. commitment to the GCC, and the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid

<sup>97</sup> Jason, Medina. “Exercise Eagle Resolve 2015 carries on multinational tradition” United States Central Command.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> Ibid



present program also exemplifies the security relationship and military training that the U.S. is committed to providing to the GCC multilaterally.

Clearly the United States has a large vested interest in the Gulf Cooperation Council and the individual states both bilaterally and multilaterally because of the large number of military forces that have been committed and are currently in the region. The United States has also invested in selling and providing major arms deals to the Gulf Cooperation Council states that illustrate the American commitment to the Gulf allies both in the present and the future. The United States has an important military strategic interests due to American investment in military bases and military technology, but also has had high level government officials including past and present Presidents that have outlined and guided specific goals for relations with the GCC collectively and the states individually. The United States leading political leaders have maintained a commitment to the region and have devoted time and energy, as well as, significant resources, to further develop the relationship with the Gulf states bilaterally and the GCC collectively.

## U.S.-Gulf Relations

The establishment of the Gulf Cooperation Council had taken place in tumultuous events surrounding the Gulf and Middle East. The United States has had an evolving relationship with the GCC and Gulf states that has been influenced greatly by a number of conflicts and disputes throughout history. The President of the United States who was in office during the establishment and early years of the Gulf Cooperation Council was President Ronald Regan. Ronald Reagan was the 40<sup>th</sup> President of the United States serving two terms from 1981 to 1989.<sup>100</sup> The Reagan Presidency is often well known for the focus on the Soviet Union and ending the Cold War. However, President Reagan also had a great deal of foreign policy focus on the Middle East and Gulf region as well. The Reagan Presidency also had interestingly maintained much of the policies created under the Carter Administration. For example, the Secretary of Defense for Reagan in January 28, 1981, spoke at an Armed Services Committee and focused on insuring that the U.S. navy had the capability to maintain a three ocean commitment.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, then Secretary of State Alexander Haig stressed the importance of the Persian Gulf and the flow of oil and described how the U.S. and Western industrialized countries are deeply dependent on oil for growth and stability and that the free access to oil is especially important to the U.S. because of oil's major significance for the U.S. economic and national interests.

One of the pivotal issues and events that transpired in the Gulf region under the Reagan Presidency was when in September, 1981, Iran had their military aircraft strike Kuwait oil facilities on Kuwaiti soil and waterways. This specific event raised serious concerns from the

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<sup>100</sup> "Ronald Reagan" White House. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/ronaldreagan>

<sup>101</sup> Michael, A. Palmer. *"Guardians of The Gulf A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992"* New York. The Free Press.

U.S. perspective over the anti-air defense capabilities of the GCC states and specifically of Kuwait, since Kuwait was now a direct target of Iran. President Reagan also used this issue of anti-air defense to lobby Congress to approve the completion of the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia that was first initiated by President Carter's administration.<sup>102</sup> President Reagan specifically addressed this issue at various press conferences. President's Reagan's policy was that of a deep commitment to Saudi Arabia as a combating deterrent to Tehran and had become known as the Reagan corollary, a slight shift away from the Carter Doctrine and more independently signaled a new foreign policy agenda by the Reagan Administration. The U.S. not only pushed for Saudi Arabia to have a sophisticated air defense network, but also desired a more sophisticated integrated air defense network with and throughout the GCC states that would have the capability to work in a cohesive manner.

As the war between Iraq and Iran grew and intensified the Reagan Administration began to take more diplomatic and political tactics to more effectively combat the international crisis. This was especially so when there was a spillover from the War. On June 1, 1984, the U.S. supported the United Nations Security Council Resolution (552) which specifically condemned the Iranian attacks on ships bound to neutral Kuwait and Saudi ports.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, all of the six GCC states together had written the letter for Resolution 552 of June 1, 1984 and the resolution that was supported by the U.S. had called upon Iran to respect international law, reaffirmed the right of free navigation in international waters, condemned the attacks on commercial ships en route to and from the ports of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The resolution was adopted at the 2546<sup>th</sup> meeting by 13 votes to none, with 2 abstentions.<sup>104</sup> This development in the evolution of the

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

<sup>104</sup> United Nations. Resolution 332 (1984) June 1, 1984

U.S.-GCC relations symbolizes the U.S. commitment to the GCC states and it also displayed the GCC combined commitment with the unity in the United Nations resolution 552 of 1984. This further solidified the U.S. commitment to the Gulf in the early years creating the environment for a long term commitment and allied support.

Under the Reagan Administration the conflict with the Iran-Iraq War and the spillover to Kuwait had continued to be a major predicament in the region. For example, in September, 1987 President Reagan made a statement regarding the Persian Gulf stating: “Prudently pursuing cooperative efforts with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States and other friends to protect U.S.-flag ships and to prevent Iran from seriously jeopardizing freedom of nonbelligerent navigation.”<sup>105</sup> Furthermore, in 1987, the Reagan administration directly engaged in the crisis through a military operation specifically known as Operation “Earnest Will”, which was initiated in order to protect Kuwaiti ships that were carrying oil from an Iranian attack and to guide a safe transit of the oil.<sup>106</sup> Due to the constraints of American laws which had prevented the U.S. Navy from escorting foreign ships, the Kuwaiti ships were re-registered under the American flag and this became known as the re-flagging policy of the Reagan administration. Reagan understood he had to stand by the commitment to Kuwait, not just as an ally, but in order to ensure the stability of oil. This was a position that the Carter administration did not deal with effectively, which had major economic and political repercussions in the United States. However, the military tactics of the Reagan administration did not lead to a de-escalation of the crisis and in fact on October 16, 1987, the tanker Sea Isle City which was re-flagged was struck while at anchor in Kuwaiti waters by an Iranian silkworm missile and many people were wounded as a direct result from the

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<sup>105</sup> Ronald, Reagan. “Statement on the United States Policy in the Persian Gulf” September 24, 1987.

<sup>106</sup> Geoffrey, Kemp. “The Iran Primer: The Reagan Administration” United States Institute of Peace.

Iranian missile strike.<sup>107</sup> As time continued to elapse escalation of tension between the U.S., it's GCC allies, and Iran evolved. A major turning point occurred which indicated a dangerous and violent crisis or large scale war was on the horizon. The event that transpired was in April of 1988, when the USS Samuel B. Roberts suffered an attack by Iran forces. In response, the Reagan administration initiated an additional military operation known as "Operation Praying Mantis" in which U.S. warships sunk an Iranian frigate and also went on to shell two Iranian oil platforms that were near the Strait of Hormuz. Furthermore, events climaxed in a dramatic fashion, when the USS Vincennes accidentally shot down and Iran Air flight 655, which was a commercial jet carrying 290 passengers and crew all of whom were lost in the strike.<sup>108</sup> This once again showed under the Reagan Administration the deep commitment to the Gulf and the strategic interests that the United States had in the region as well as a commitment to building a greater and more united coalition with the GCC states to counter the aggression of Iran.

The events that transpired under the Reagan administration in 1987 and 1988 with the tanker war clearly signified to the Gulf states that the United States was committed to the region and to the allies of the GCC that the alliance was reliable and could be counted on in times of peril and violence. However, there were other forces and leaders within the region that had observed a different perspective on the U.S. relationship with the Gulf states bilaterally and the GCC multilaterally. For one, the tensions between the U.S. and Tehran had grown even more and remained that way even in the wake of the death of Ayatollah Khomeini. Along with Iran, another country and leader in the Middle East, the Saddam regime of Iraq also took notice of the U.S. presence in the Gulf. Saddam specifically stated at the Arab Cooperation Council (ACC) which consisted of the states of Iraq, Jordan, Yemen, and Egypt that the United States has

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid

<sup>108</sup> Ibid

entered in to the Middle East region after the collapse of the Soviet Union and was trying to become the hegemonic power in the region. Saddam called upon his fellow Arabs to come together and unify to force the United States to withdraw it's naval forces from the Gulf region.<sup>109</sup> Furthermore, the concern among the Gulf states, particularly the GCC member states of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, was that they had helped finance Iraq's war efforts against Iran. Some place the estimates in financing to around \$50-60 billion and some even estimate it to be as high as over \$100 billion.<sup>110</sup> This led Saddam and his regime into great debt and the country of Iraq was on the brink of economic demise. Gulf States such as Kuwait were far better off because along with the military alliance with the United States, Kuwait had also invested in economic diversification with the U.S. and was doing well financially as compared to Iran and Iraq. Kuwait also had important oil reserves, something that Iran and Iraq did not have as they needed to sell oil rapidly in order to pay for the war efforts. It is important in analyzing this because these events that transpired directly led to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and was a moment in history where the United States involvement and the evolution of relations between the U.S. and Gulf states would change dramatically.

Something that also helped lead to a transition of the U.S. in the Gulf was the agreements made between the Saudi's and U.S. government during the Iran-Iraq war of the 1980's in which the Saudis agreed to allow American military access to facilities in the Gulf which in turn was used to support an initiate the rapid deployment of U.S. troops and military logistics for Operation Desert Shield and Desert Storm.<sup>111</sup> The evolution of Saudi and U.S. relations display

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<sup>109</sup> Michael, A. Palmer. *"Guardians of The Gulf A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992"* New York. The Free Press.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Steve A. Yetiv. "The Outcomes of Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm: Some Antecedent Causes" *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 107, No. 2 (Summer, 1992), pp. 195-212

how the trust and resolve between the two countries helped facilitate the Operations of the U.S. military in Iraq and Kuwait in the early 1990's. Moreover, although the Gulf states had recognized a commitment for security by the U.S. Saddam had a different perspective which led to Saddam thinking that the U.S. would not intervene in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Historical events had transpired earlier, such as the bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut, that although the U.S. was involved in the Iran-Iraq war it played more of a backseat behind closed doors role and tried to avoid direct conflict altogether.<sup>112</sup> There was also the events that transpired with U.S. Ambassador April Glaspie and Saddam. For example, Glaspie met with Saddam on numerous occasions to ensure that the U.S. was not trying to overthrow the Iraqi regime.<sup>113</sup> However, as history has displayed, this was a miscalculation by the Saddam regime and the U.S. did in fact intervene in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and 1991. This was truly a moment in history that greatly shaped the U.S. influence in the Middle East and Gulf region.

President Reagan's successor, President George H. W. Bush also had an instrumental part of history, further involving the United States in the Middle East and building a coalition with the Gulf States in the military conflict known as Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm. The ensuing war with Iraq led to a significant shift in the U.S.-Gulf relations. President Bush stated in a news conference on November 8, 1990 that, "On August 6<sup>th</sup>, in response to the unprovoked Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, I ordered the deployment of U.S. military forces to Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf to deter further Iraqi aggression and to protect our interests in the region."<sup>114</sup> President Bush directly stated the significance of the force in the operation and the

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<sup>112</sup> Brian D. Laslie. "The Air Force Way of War: Preparing for a Storm: Operation Desert Shield" University Press of Kentucky. (2015)

<sup>113</sup> Neff, Donald. 1991. "The U.S., Iraq, Israel, and Iran: Backdrop to War". *Journal of Palestine Studies* 20 (4). University of California Press, Institute for Palestine Studies: 23-41.

<sup>114</sup> George, Bush. "George Bush: The President's News Conference on the Persian Gulf Crisis" The American Presidency Project. November 8, 1990.

military coordination with the Gulf State of Saudi Arabia specifically stating, “After consultation with King Fahd [of Saudi Arabia] and our other allies, I have today directed the Secretary of Defense to increase the size of U.S. forces committed to Desert Shield to ensure that the coalition has an adequate offensive military option should that be necessary to achieve our common goals.”<sup>115</sup> President Bush also used many of his assets and trusted advisors to consult with Saudi Arabia in order to build a coalition and deter Saddam in case of an impending invasion of Saudi Arabia. Specifically, President Bush sent Secretary of Defense Cheney and General Schwarzkopf to Jeddah to meet with King Fahd of Saudi Arabia to discuss military strategies and options for Saddam’s forces that had been mounting a large army near the borders of Saudi Arabia. Intriguingly, and likely because of the economic sanctions imposed on Iraq by the United Nations, the U.S. also asked Saudi Arabia to end the flow of Iraqi oil in respect to the protection afforded to Saudi Arabia on behalf of the United States. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia agreed and understood the strategic importance of having the American military deployed in the country in order to protect against Saddam’s possible aggression that was on the edge of spilling over from Kuwait to his country. The specifics on the increase of the size of the U.S. troops in Saudi Arabia is stated, “In 3 months, the U.S. troops contribution to the multinational force in Saudi Arabia has gone from 10,000 to 230,000 as part of Operation Desert Shield.”<sup>116</sup> President Bush’s trusted diplomat, Secretary of State James Baker, also worked directly with key allies and member states of the GCC when dealing with the Iraqi invasion of the GCC state of Kuwait, specifically stating, “Iraq’s brutality, aggression, and violations of international law cannot be allowed to succeed. Secretary Baker had been consulting with our key partners in the coalition especially with GCC diplomats. Baker met with the Amirs of Bahrain [‘Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa] and Kuwait [Jabir

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<sup>115</sup> Ibid

<sup>116</sup> Ibid



al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah],”.<sup>117</sup> Clearly the relation of the U.S. with the GCC and the member states became very significant due to the historical events of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, especially with respect to Saudi Arabia which was seen as the next target of the Saddam regime.

President George H. W. Bush also took further measures regarding the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait by providing security and stability to GCC member state Kuwait and issued a National Security Directive. Specifically, President George H. W. Bush on January 15, 1991 issued National Security Directive Number 54, which was presented to the members of the National Security Council stating that, the United States is committed to the security and stability of the region in order to protect U.S. interests and the right and necessity to use power and military force against others that are contrary to the United States.<sup>118</sup> President Bush also in accordance with numerous United Nations resolutions that were directly related to Iraq had authorized “military actions to bring about Iraq’s withdrawal from Kuwait” and on January 16, 1991 the first military air tasking order was sent out and on the morning of January 17, 1991 the War had begun.<sup>119</sup> This was a monumental moment in the history of U.S.-Gulf relations where the full power of American military capability was on display for the world and GCC states to witness and to remember for years to come.

The build up and transpiring events of Desert Shield and Desert Storm had come to fruition. In January and February of 1991 the battle was in full flight. The Iraqi Navy and Air Force had been greatly diminished and destroyed, and those who survived fled to Iran due to the mass amounts of air strikes from the U.S. Navy carrier and aircraft logistics operating in the Persian Gulf. The allied air forces had destroyed much of the Iraqi Army. Then the war began to shift

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid

<sup>118</sup> Brian D. Laslie. “The Air Force Way of War: Preparing for a Storm: Operation Desert Shield” University Press of Kentucky. (2015)

<sup>119</sup> Ibid

into the final phase that was to completely destroy Saddam's regime through a ground offensive which began on February 24, 1991.<sup>120</sup> Interestingly although there was not a specific GCC Peninsula Shield force presence, the Gulf states did coalesce in the allied battle against Iraq through the Arab Joint Forces Command-East (JFC-E) which had specifically consisted of a task force that was made up of Saudi, U.A.E., Omani, Bahraini, Qatar, and Kuwaiti units. This was a ground force that was involved with the battle directly and with the U.S. marines that entered Kuwait to expel the Saddam regime. In all, the Gulf War, which had culminated with a great deal of European and Arab Allied forces ended the ground offensive in 100 hours. The War from the air and land operations lasted for a total of around six weeks and this was the height of American military superiority in the Persian Gulf. This once again showed the commitment of the U.S., and also displayed commitment from the Gulf states, but in hindsight it displayed that this military victory and the ending of the Iraqi aggression was not going to be successfully achieved without the help of the U.S. Thus, the U.S. emerged as the predominant force and protector for the GCC going forward. Not only that, but it also displayed to many of the Gulf States that their former Arab allies of Iraq and Iran with whom they shared certain ethnic and religious connections could no longer be trusted and the belligerence was something that has sparked fear for the GCC states. The only other viable option was to accept the U.S. as an ally and force in which future relations would be necessary for sustainability and survival. However, even with this success the Saddam regime was still alive albeit very bruised and battered, but the issue would remain and was in fact inherited by the next Presidential administration, the Clinton administration in the early and mid 1990's.

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<sup>120</sup> Michael, A. Palmer. *“Guardians of The Gulf A History of America's Expanding Role in the Persian Gulf, 1833-1992”* New York. The Free Press.

The next Presidential administration to be handed the mantle of foreign policy in the Gulf was the Clinton administration. President Clinton ran a Presidential campaign that was closely tied to foreign policy and the issues of the Gulf War. Specifically, President Clinton ran a campaign that focused on expanding democracy and to promote American interests abroad to work with the allies in the Middle East such as Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia, each of which could help in promoting American interests and counter threats of violence from the more radical regimes in the Middle East. Clinton was also in a position to be able to better leverage American foreign policy and power in the region because of the demise of the Soviet Union years ago, the Iran-Iraq War, and the Gulf War in which the balance of power in the region had greatly been shifted and disbursed from the weakening of regimes such as Iraq and Iran. However, with that being said, President Clinton still understood that any threat as minimal as it may be had to be dealt with effectively in order to insure the free-flow of oil from the Gulf and Middle East in order to avoid what every President had desired to avoid, namely being involved in an issue with oil shortages like the Carter administration had experienced.

President Clinton entered into a time of foreign policy with the Gulf states where America had solidified its position as the major power and influencing force. However, with the advancement of technology and military sophistication in the new age of missiles and rapid military deployment there was an environment in which Saudi Arabia and Israel could be directly attacked at the same time by an Iraqi missile strike or Iranian missile strike. President Clinton had ambitious desires and one such goal that President Clinton aimed to achieve and he did have some success with was peace relations in the Arab-Israeli negotiation process. President Clinton seemed to believe that he could use the alliance with the Gulf as direct leverage with the

GCC states to insure the help of Gulf diplomats and leaders to facilitate the negotiations.<sup>121</sup>

However, this later led to a backfire and stalemate in regards to other foreign policy goals and issues of the Clinton administration.

For the Clinton administration, the major foreign policy manner in the arena of the Middle East was a policy of “dual containment”. The dual containment policy aimed at containing Iran and Iraq in the East and to promote a policy of peace between Arab-Israeli relations in the West.<sup>122</sup> The goal of containing both Iran and Iraq was a direct continuance of the previous Presidential administrations as both of these regimes were observed as direct threats to American strategic interests. There were also hopeful aspirations that the allies in the Gulf War such as Egypt, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the GCC would help to keep the balance of power in the region more widely distributed. Also of interest was that Clinton focused a great deal of attention toward Iraq and desired to have Iraq respect the United Nations resolutions and wanted the Saddam regime to be ousted. Clinton also desired a new regime to enter in place of the Saddam regime that would respect human rights issues, taking a more prudent and cautionary approach in looking for a replacement regime.

Interestingly Clinton become President in 1993 and in that same year in March, there was an attempt to assassinate former President Bush during a visit to the GCC state of Kuwait, which only lead to further escalating tensions between the U.S. and Iraq.<sup>123</sup> In the evolution of the U.S.-Gulf relations under the Clinton administration there were further strains. For example, on June 25, 1996, there was a car bomb attack at the U.S. Air force facility in Khobar, Saudi Arabia. This

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<sup>121</sup> Martin, Indyk. “The Clinton Administration’s Approach to the Middle East” The Washington Institute for Near East Policy.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> Robert, O. Freedman. “*American Policy Toward Iraq and Iran in Clinton’s Second Term*” Jerusalem Letter No. 402 15 March, 1999. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

devastating terror attack left numerous Americans dead and hundreds were injured including Americans and Saudi nationals.<sup>124</sup> The Clinton administration and investigators had pinpointed those responsible for the attack on Hezbollah al Hijaz, which was a Saudi Shite group that has ties to Iran. This intelligence allowed the Clinton administration to focus the attack on Iran, but they may have missed the element that many Saudi's who were part of the radical factions within Saudi society saw the U.S. involvement and continuing military presence in Saudi Arabia after the Gulf War as returning to a position of an occupying colonial presence. Moreover, the Saudi-U.S. relations hit an additional snag when in February 1998, Saudi Arabia had formally announced that it would not permit or accept the U.S. to use bases on its soil to attack Iraq. Scholars reported that this was because of the U.S. inability to find an agreement for broader peace communications between Arabs and Israel diplomats. Many Saudis felt that the U.S. was unfairly using its leverage of security to influence the peace dialogues in a non equitable manner.<sup>125</sup>

Also of interest is that the U.S. and Clinton administration had directly sent Bruce Riedel and Martin Indyk to Fontaine-le-Port, France to carry written and oral messages and direct correspondences to be delivered by GCC member state Oman for future delivery to the Iranian government.<sup>126</sup> The Clinton administrations correspondents met directly with the Sultan Qaboos. This clearly displayed that the U.S. viewed the Omani government as an important ally, and that the trust of engaging the use of the Omani government as an intermediary to have dialogue with the Iranian government. The Clinton administration clearly had positive and negative moments

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<sup>124</sup> Bruce, O. Riedel. "The Clinton Administration: The Iran Primer" United States Institute of Peace.

<sup>125</sup> Robert, O. Freedman. "*American Policy Toward Iraq and Iran in Clinton's Second Term*" Jerusalem Letter No. 402 15 March, 1999. Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

<sup>126</sup> Bruce, O. Riedel. "The Clinton Administration: The Iran Primer" United States Institute of Peace.

in the dealings with the Middle East as well as the Gulf, but that has been a standard for Presidential administrations over the last few decades. Nonetheless the Clinton administration continued to exemplify that the GCC was and remains one of the U.S. allies in the region and that because of the strategic interests for America, the U.S. is likely to continue this process in the future. The question arises as to what extent.

The next Presidential administration to enter the White House was President George W. Bush. The events that transpired during the Bush Presidency greatly changed the world and life in America as we know it. However, the Bush administration continued in the path of commitment with the GCC states and increased diplomatic ties in a number of facets. President George W. Bush assumed the office of the White House in 2001 and in that same year on September 11, 2001 the world would forever be changed and the date will be remembered in the precepts of history for eternity. On September 11, 2001, airborne terrorist attacks were initiated against the World Trade Center, The Pentagon, and the Nations Capital that killed over 3,000 Americans. The fact that the attacks were directly on American soil has dramatically affected the lives of ordinary American citizens.<sup>127</sup> This moment in history completely changed all of Bush's desires and ambitions for foreign policy, and President Bush would now be directly engaged in another U.S. war in the Middle East. This caused President Bush to coalesce allies from around the World to fight in a War against Osama Bin Laden, the leader of al-Qaeda in Afghanistan which claimed responsibility for the attacks of September 11, 2001. Interestingly, Osama Bin Laden was a Saudi national and came from a wealthy family in Saudi Arabia. Osama Bin Laden was greatly aggravated against America and the colonial power it was displaying in the region.<sup>128</sup> However, this was not the only War that was undertaken by President George W. Bush.

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<sup>127</sup> The White House. "George W. Bush 43." <https://www.whitehouse.gov/1600/presidents/georgewbush>

<sup>128</sup> Rohan, Gunaratna. "Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror" 2002. Columbia University Press.

President Bush also invaded Iraq to oust the Saddam regime once and for all. These wars were extremely long and costly for the U.S. Although they initially began with the support of the allies of the U.S. this support began to dwindle and these wars were predominately operated and paid for by the United States. Even with the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, President Bush was able to continue to build on the relationship with the GCC. This is evident from diplomacy taken on later in his administration when Iraq and Afghanistan were not the complete and absolute focus of his administration's foreign policy.

One key political figure of the United States that had displayed a clear outline of the U.S.-GCC relations was President George W. Bush. For example, in May 2006, under President Bush's Administration, the United States had specifically aimed at revitalizing U.S. and Gulf Cooperation Council Security and the new policy platform was known as the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD).<sup>129</sup> The basic foundation for the Gulf Security Dialogue was to help promote and foster intra-GCC and GCC-U.S. cooperation to deal with common security threats, specifically, relating to international and regional terrorism. The aspirations of the Gulf Security Dialogue were designed to provide a more robust security framework in order to provide greater stability for the Gulf region. This issue of terrorism was of special concern for the Bush administration because under his administration the U.S. was directly involved in two wars simultaneously in Iraq and Afghanistan. For the Bush Administration the framework for the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) actually outlined six specific areas of cooperation that follows: (1) the improvement of GCC defense capabilities and interoperability; (2) regional security issues such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Lebanon; (3) counter-proliferation; (4) counter terrorism

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<sup>129</sup> Blanchard, Christopher M. "CRS Report for Congress." *The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sale Proposals*, October 8, 2008.

and internal security; (5) critical infrastructure security; and finally (6) commitments to Iraq.<sup>130</sup>

This policy is a continued commitment to the region and fostering a more sophisticated relationship with the GCC that has evolved over a number of years. Even with the U.S. directly engaged in two large scale conflicts, the importance of fostering relations with the GCC was not neglected. Rather new policy tools were implemented and brought forth that are in practice and have been built upon by the current Obama administration.

More recently the United States political leaders outlined and provided a guide on what the relationship between the United States and Gulf region should be currently as well as going forward in the future. Specifically, on June 19, 2012 there was a Majority Staff Report Prepared For The Use Of The Committee On Foreign Relations in the United States Senate. The title is, “The Gulf Security Architecture: Partnership With The Gulf Cooperation Council”. Individual members of the Committee On Foreign Relations included chairman John F. Kerry, Senator of Massachusetts and Barbara Boxer, Senator from California.<sup>131</sup> Foreign Relations Chairman John F. Kerry reported: “I instructed two of my staff members to examine the United States evolving security relations with the GCC countries, including the challenges and opportunities in promoting American interests and supporting regional security in the Gulf region. I hope that this report and the recommendations contained within will be useful to our colleagues in Congress and to the public in considering this strategically important region. Sincerely, John F. Kerry, Chairman.”<sup>132</sup> The Staff Report was thus a recommendation from research as to what the United States policy should be with the GCC states from a strategic standpoint in both economic and security dimensions. This marked an interesting moment in the evolving relationship between the

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid

<sup>131</sup> U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on Foreign Relations. By John F. Kerry. 112 Cong., 2d sess. S. Rept. 74-603. Accessed January 15, 2016.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid



U.S. and GCC, which provided substantive information into the goals and desires of the relationship from the U.S. perspective.

The strategic foundation of the executive summary is that it is important for the United States to continue to remain close allies with the GCC states and partner together with them in order to better provide security and stability in the region. Kerry further stated, “the centerpiece of this framework is deepening security cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, with the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council”.<sup>133</sup> There is also an emphasis in the staff report to continue in developing and evolving the success from the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD) which was initiated by President Bush in 2006 and has continued to be facilitated currently under the Obama administration. This is explicitly exemplified, “Though still in its nascent stages, this initiative is in many respects a continuation of the Gulf Security Dialogue, which began in 2006 as an effort to coordinate common defense initiatives between the United States and the GCC but was conducted mostly through bilateral channels.”<sup>134</sup> However, although there is a sense of maintaining the status quo and continuing down the path of commitment to the region and the GCC states partnership, there is specific language that warns that the United States has to look at the fiscal constraints that hamper the United States. The U.S. should look to it’s allies to take on a larger role independent of the U.S. This is exemplified in the major points of the strategy in the report, which specifically states, “a security architecture should be erected on three pillars: (1) a small but capable U.S. military presence; (2) increased burden-sharing as GCC partners contribute to their own regional security and stability; and (3) steady diplomatic engagement with the GCC to promote improved governance, economic diversification, and human rights.”<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

There is also additional rhetoric emphasizing the importance of burden sharing and emphasizing how this is in fact a goal of the Obama Administration moving forward when dealing with the U.S.-GCC partnership, “The Obama administration has sought to shape the U.S. force posture in the region to be both militarily effective and financially sustainable.”<sup>136</sup> The report further states: “To maintain a right-sized American security footprint in the Gulf, the United States should continue to promote a degree of burden-sharing with GCC states.”<sup>137</sup> These were the opening remarks and focus of the executive summary in the report that allows President Obama to have a more independent relationship with the GCC and deciding how the future strategic relationship should be with the GCC bilaterally and multilaterally. This autonomy that many Presidential administrations have makes it more unique and tailored meticulously for the Obama administration. Each President and their respective Administration will have flexibility in determining the evolution of the relationship between the U.S. and Gulf bilaterally and multilaterally.

The Majority Staff Report in 2012 also elaborated on a number of challenges the United States faces with the strategic relationship of the GCC collectively and independently with specific member states. The report issues a number of recommendations for the continuing relationship of all parties. The first challenge that is described in the partnership between the U.S. and GCC is the idea that political leaders need to find a fine line of balancing between security interests and promoting fundamental freedoms and political reforms. The recommendation from the U.S. perspective was provided as a diplomatic policy prescription to use the strategic position the United States has in the region to push for more moderate stability

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid

<sup>137</sup> Ibid

and pursue support for human rights throughout the Gulf states. The language went as far as describing “redlines” in the partnership with the GCC member states by elaborating that, “Nonetheless, there should be redlines associated with the U.S. security agreements in the Gulf, like elsewhere. The United States should make clear that states must not use arms procured from the United States against their own people engaged in peaceful assembly or exploit the U.S. security umbrella as protection for belligerent action against their neighbors.”<sup>138</sup> This was the first challenge that the Staff Report discussed and this specific policy issue seemed to be seeking to use the United States military assistance to the GCC states as an leveraged strength aimed to provide the citizens of GCC states more freedom and rights consistent with Western democratic values that the United States upholds.

The second challenge that was addressed by the majority staff report specifically focused on the acknowledgment that the GCC states such as, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are becoming more effective and successful at providing their own independent level of security and stability in the region. This is primarily achieved through the U.S. perspective by the purchase and acquiring of a large number of sophisticated military technology by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. However, the staff report also illustrates the fact that the U.S. has been an actor that has provided security to the region since the absence of the British in 1971. The recommendation seems to be on building positive bonds with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE who have recently emerged as larger players militarily in the region. The third challenge addressed by the Staff report from the U.S. focused on the economic issues and challenges that the GCC faces. In recommendation on economic issues the staff report explicitly stated, “The United States should work with GCC states to promote economic reform and diversification, as

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<sup>138</sup> Ibid

well as increased trade relations...the United States should focus on educational and labor reforms, as well as the promotion of entrepreneurship.”<sup>139</sup> The second and third challenges respectively, detail how to better foster relations and to enhance the GCC collective goals of economic and military security. This also provides insight that the U.S.-GCC relations have evolved and broadened to a number of different issues facing both the U.S. and GCC respectively. This may also signal that in times of peace in the Gulf the U.S. can focus more attention on economic and social concerns pertaining to both the U.S. and GCC. However, in times of crisis and conflict the primary concern from the U.S. perspective is security and military strategy and the other issues and factors take a diplomatic backseat.

The fourth challenge that the United States discussed in the Majority Staff Report was to focus on the United States Military presence in the Gulf region. Specifically, the challenge stated, “The United States must carefully shape its military presence so as not to create a popular backlash, while retaining the capability to protect the free flow of critical natural resources and to provide a counterbalance to Iran.”<sup>140</sup> It was stated in the challenge that the reason for fear of popular backlash was because of rhetoric and influence from the past that the United States was acting as a Western colonial oppressive presence. The recommendation specifically stated what the policy of the United States should be focused on in order to maintain important strategic military positions in the region, “The United States should preserve the model of “lily pad” bases throughout the Gulf, which permits the rapid escalation of military force in case of emergency.”<sup>141</sup> Furthermore, the recommendation also states why this is of strategic importance to maintain this delicately planned military presence and strategically positioned military

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid

<sup>140</sup> Ibid

<sup>141</sup> Ibid

facilities, as follows: “An agile footprint enables the United States to quickly deploy its superior conventional force should conflict arise, without maintaining a costly and unstable presence. Sustaining physical infrastructure and enabling functions such as intelligence, surveillance, and logistics, while keeping certain war reserve material forward positioned, is more important than deploying large numbers of U.S. forces.”<sup>142</sup> The fourth challenge and recommendation clearly illustrated to the Committee on Foreign Relations that a strategic military presence and a robust system of military facilities are just as important as maintaining physical assets in the region. These positions are critical to long term goals and concerns for the possibility of a rapid conflict in the Gulf and surrounding areas of the Middle East. The seems to infer that in the evolution of the U.S.-Gulf relations the U.S. is likely to remain committed to maintaining a military presence in GCC states. However, the fact that the U.S. has the components and the infrastructure necessary to provide a rapid and large scale deployment of forces to the Gulf helps to provide for stability for the Gulf states and insures that if another regime like Saddam or other countries aim at provoking a full scale war on the GCC states that the U.S. would be able to effectively and quickly respond. Moreover, this is seen as an emergency contingency only to be used as a last resort after all other options have been exhausted.

The fifth major challenge that the staff report addresses to the committee is that there has to be a realistic understanding of how much the GCC collectively and GCC states independently can provide in terms of effective military security and rapid response. Specifically stating, “U.S. leaders should not expect more from the Gulf states than they are capable of or willing to provide.”<sup>143</sup> In the challenge there is also concern that the U.S. should not engage in selling arms in large quantities to the region as it may cause a strategic international relations issue of creating

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

an offset of the balance of power. This could have an impact of leading to an arms race which would make the volatile region of the middle east even more unstable. The recommendation for addressing this challenge directly is stated as, “The U.S. Government should continue to cultivate the capabilities of GCC partners in select defensive missions, such as missile defense, combat air patrol, and maritime security, while building capacity through deployments in other theaters such as Libya and Afghanistan.”<sup>144</sup> There was a more realistic understanding that burden sharing may not be as viable as United States political leaders have hoped for and that burden sharing does not mean neglecting the region entirely, “Rather, it is intended to deepen strategic ties with the Gulf by improving the competencies of the GCC states through joint exercises, security assistance, and training. Over time, these partnerships can improve the effectiveness of Gulf militaries, promote trust, and instill professional military values such as respect for civilian authority, human rights, and the rule-of-law. However, the Obama administration should carefully consider what missions it expects the Gulf states to execute effectively.”<sup>145</sup> This statement exemplifies that the U.S.-GCC relations have evolved. There is a desire from U.S. political leaders to provide more autonomy and independent action to the GCC, but at the same time the U.S. must act in an intellectually sound manner on what exactly those capabilities of the GCC states would in fact entail.

The sixth challenge that the majority staff report referred to was finding a foreign policy balance on how much assistance the U.S. should provide to the Gulf states specifically in the sales of military arms. The recommendation is to maintain the policy of providing arms to the Gulf partners. However, there are a number of parameters that exemplify as to what extent the

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid

<sup>145</sup> Ibid

arms sales should be going forward, “But the United States should be scrupulous in determining which weapons to sell in order to (1) ensure that sales contribute to regional security and do not weaken the position of Israel, (2) support legitimate defense requirements to Gulf partners, (3) prevent a regional arms race, and (4) protect its technological superiority.” This challenge specifically addresses that although the GCC is a major ally of the U.S. in the Middle East, Israel is still the greatest ally to the U.S. in the region. The U.S. will not neglect the concerns of Israel and that position has to be taken into account when contemplating specific arms sales or transfers. It also demonstrates that the U.S. has to act responsibly with its allies so as not to provide arms to the region which would offset the balance of power, and thus make the allies of the U.S. worse off than they otherwise would be.

There was also a major development of U.S. foreign policy toward the GCC that has been established in conjunction and extending from the Gulf Security Dialogue that has been undertaken by the current Obama administration and U.S. diplomats. The major evolution of foreign policy by the U.S. toward the GCC that had taken effect was on March 31, 2012, when then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton met with GCC leaders in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia in what is known as the first meeting of U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum. In the meeting Secretary Clinton thanks the GCC for the contributions toward regional and global security, but also provides language of autonomy and greater responsibility for the GCC. Secretary Clinton specifically stated that one of the goals of this Forum is to, “Among other things, it should help the American and GCC militaries pursue in concert a set of practical steps, such as improving interoperability, cooperating on maritime security, furthering ballistic missile defense for the region, and coordinating responses to crises.”<sup>146</sup> This was the first meeting of the Cooperation

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<sup>146</sup> Hillary, Clinton. “*Remarks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Saud Al-Faisal*” United States Department of State. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. March 31, 2012.

Forum and the Forum has continued through 2015. This also signals the more intimate relationship that has been developed between the U.S. and GCC which extends praise and a hopeful message of unity and a more coalesced alliance to build greater levels of future success.

The Second Ministerial meeting for the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum took place on September 28, 2012 with Foreign Ministers of the GCC, the Secretary General of the GCC, and Secretary Clinton in New York.<sup>147</sup> There was a great deal of work accomplished prior to this meeting as well as at the Second meeting of the Strategic Cooperation. For example, the officials formed a Joint U.S.-GCC Security Committee, which focused on dealing directly with threats relating to counter-terrorism and border security.<sup>148</sup> The officials also were able to achieve success prior to the meeting that was celebrated such as, signing the U.S.-GCC Framework Agreement for Trade, Economic, Investment and Technical Cooperation, which was signed in New York on September 25, 2012.<sup>149</sup> One aspect of focus that was carried over from the First Cooperation Forum was that officials focused on the efforts for enhancing ballistic missile defense cooperation and saw this as an essential aspect for peace and stability in the region. Other military and security concerns addressed at the Forum were to work and continue to focus on efforts to develop and enlarge the U.S.-GCC counterproliferation cooperation, which was developed in March 2012, at the U.S.-GCC Counterproliferation workshop that was held in Dubai, UAE.<sup>150</sup> These were the primary cooperation elements that took place in the Second meeting of the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum. Once again the continuation and evolution of the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum focused on a number of issues aimed at

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<sup>147</sup> Office of the Spokesman. *“Joint Communique From the Second Ministerial Meeting for the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum”* United States Department of State. Washington, DC. October 1, 2012.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

<sup>150</sup> Ibid



enhancing the relationship with a great deal of emphasis on being up to date with current technological achievements.

In the Third Ministerial Meeting for the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum Foreign Ministers from the GCC, the Secretary General of the GCC, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and U.S. Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel attended the meeting in New York on September 26, 2013.<sup>151</sup> In this Forum there was a large degree of discussion on the issues pertaining to Syria. Both sides concluded that Bashar Al Asad and his aides would not be involved in the new government after the conflict ended.<sup>152</sup> The dignitaries at the Forum also announced a detailed plan that would focus on collective action for a number of different categories in order to promote security and stability. The discussion focused on enhancing U.S.-GCC coordination in Ballistic Missile Defense and directly developing a Gulf-wide coordinated missile defense architecture. This defense system would be built around an interoperable combined U.S. and GCC forces that would work in unity on an integrated system to provide security to GCC states and to focus on providing security to the GCC critical energy infrastructure.<sup>153</sup> The third Forum focused heavily on current events that were taking place in Syria as well as analyzing previous aspects that needed to be improved. The analysis from the Third Strategic Cooperation Forum is that the U.S. and GCC desire to focus on taking action on current events and atrocities taking place in the Middle East with a great deal of high ranking officials from both the U.S. and GCC continuing the dialogue.

During his term of office, Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel had been deeply involved in the events that have unfolded in the Gulf and Middle East. Secretary Hagel's insights provide a

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<sup>151</sup> Office of the Spokesman. *Joint Communique From the Third Ministerial Meeting for the U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum* United States Department of State. Washington, DC. September 26, 2013.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid

<sup>153</sup> Ibid

better grasp for understanding U.S. foreign policy directed at the Gulf region. Specifically, on December 7, 2013 at the Manama Dialogue in Bahrain, Secretary Hagel had made specific remarks as follows: “Diplomacy takes courage. It takes vision. But our emphasis on diplomatic tools should not be misinterpreted. We know diplomacy cannot operate in a vacuum. Our success will continue to hinge on American’s military power, the credibility of our assurances to our allies and partners in the Middle East that we will use it. They have bound the United States together with nations of this region for decades through administrations, all administrations, the administrations of both political parties, from Eisenhower to Obama. These commitments are not open for negotiation.”<sup>154</sup> This statement by Secretary of Defense Hagel exemplifies the United States commitment to the Gulf and GCC states crosses party lines. Presidential administrations and the Congress of the United States have remained consistent in the focus for providing assistance and security to the Gulf states for many years. However, one aspect that Secretary of Defense Hagel focused on was the fact that the Gulf states have to act on their own in dealing directly with their concerns, because the United States can not bare all the responsibility. This is profound because many scholars have focused on the idea that the GCC was designed specifically to deal solely with these issues, but the Gulf War in 1991 drastically changed the region’s security outlook. Secretary of Defense Hagel specifically stated, “The GCC and its member nations will blaze their own path, their own way, but no one should underestimate the promise that has been nurtured here since 2004, not least by the United States, which has fought and invested in the security of this region for many years.”<sup>155</sup> This statement confirms that the United States will remain involved, but allow the GCC to have authority and responsibility to

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<sup>154</sup> “Remarks by Secretary Hagel at the Manama Dialogue from Manama, Bahrain” United States Department of Defense. December 7, 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid

dictate their goals and aspirations for the region. These statements by Secretary of Defense Hagel also displays that at a minimum the U.S. will continue to keep a close eye and an ear on the region. A large commitment has been made to the Gulf region over a number of years by the United States both economically and military.

Following Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel's meeting at the Manama Dialogue in December 7, 2013 the Fourth GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum took place in New York in 2014. The Fourth Ministerial Meeting specifically took place on September 25, 2014 in New York City with dignitaries from the GCC and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry.<sup>156</sup> In the Fourth Strategic Cooperation Forum the major focus was on current events and directly on how the U.S. and GCC could combat Da'ish (ISIS) through specific tactics such as, cutting off funding, preventing recruitment of foreign fighters, countering the Da'ish ideology and propaganda through public messaging, and providing support to Iraq in order to stabilize that country and combat Da'ish.<sup>157</sup> Furthermore, there was also a focus on the continuance of enhancing U.S.-GCC security coordination, which was focused once again on Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD). The Fourth Strategic Cooperation Forum was a continuance of the early meetings, but each meeting aimed at evolving in dealing effectively with the current issues that faced the region and security concerns for the U.S. and GCC alike.

The most recent GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum was the Fifth Ministerial Meeting which took place on September 30, 2015 in New York City again with Secretary of State Kerry, Foreign Ministers of the GCC, and the Secretary General of the GCC.<sup>158</sup> The major

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<sup>156</sup> Office of the Spokesman. *Joint Communiqué Following the Fourth Ministerial Meeting of the GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum* United States Department of Defense. New York City. September 25, 2014.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

<sup>158</sup> Office of the Spokesman. *Joint Communiqué Following the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of the GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum* United States Department of Defense. Washington, DC. September 30, 2015.

developments taking place in the Gulf region that were explicitly addressed at this meeting were the issues pertaining to Syria and the major humanitarian crisis unfolding in Syria which has now spread as a refugee crisis in Europe. The other issue that was of major importance was the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between the P5 + 1 and Iran.<sup>159</sup> When directly addressing the issue of the Syrian crisis, the leaders once again agreed at the Strategic Cooperation Forum that there needed to be a transition of the Syrian government away from Assad, and specifically, remain consistent with the Geneva Communiqué that would focus on establishing a new government in Syria.<sup>160</sup> The Forum also discussed the continued commitment of fostering relations regarding security as previously noted in earlier Forums. However, this Forum seemed more focused on addressing the major current events that are taking place in the Gulf and greater Middle East. There were concerns over the relations between the U.S. and GCC because of the (JCPOA) between the P5 + 1 and Iran. There were also concerns about the evolution of the U.S.-GCC relations and the Obama Administration had aimed at providing allies with the assurance that the U.S. is committed to the security and stability in the region.

The Obama Administration is the most recent United States political leadership that has also directly engaged in the evolving relationship between the U.S. and GCC states. President Obama has continued to build upon President Bush's Gulf Security Dialogue and has enhanced it through the GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum. The foreign policy of the Obama Administration was specifically observed recently in April 2, 2015 when President Obama was discussing the framework for the nuclear accord with Iran and the P5 + 1. President Obama presented an invitation to the leaders of the six member states of the GCC to meet directly with the President at Camp David, "to discuss how we can further strengthen our security cooperation,

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<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

while resolving the multiple conflicts that have caused so much hardship and instability throughout the Middle East.”<sup>161</sup> The Summit that commenced at Camp David did not include all six of the GCC leaders. However, there were two GCC leaders that did attend, those being, Emir Sabah of Kuwait and Emir Tamin bin Hamad Al Thani of Qatar.<sup>162</sup> Even though four of the six countries leaders did not attend, many high ranking officials from the member states of the GCC did attend the meeting. One such dignitary was, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad Bin Nayef Al Saud.<sup>163</sup> Once the Camp David Summit had officially concluded there was a joint statement that was issued by the U.S. and the GCC that officially proclaimed a new U.S.-GCC strategic partnership which reinforced the U.S. policy to use all elements of U.S. national power to secure core U.S. interests in the Gulf and to deter and confront external aggression.<sup>164</sup>

The United States also issued a more independent statement at the conclusion of the Camp David Summit with the GCC dignitaries, specifically describing that the U.S. will increase the security cooperation of the GCC states through numerous avenues such as; facilitating U.S. arms transfers to the GCC states, increase U.S.-GCC cooperation on maritime security, cyber security, counterterrorism, organizing additional large-scale joint military exercises and U.S. training, and finally, reviving a commitment to a concept of a Gulf-wide ballistic missile defense capability, something that the United States has been working on promoting for many years as observed in the GCC-U.S. Strategic Cooperation Forum.<sup>165</sup> More specifically, “GCC member states committed to develop a region-wide ballistic missile defense capability, including through the development of a ballistic missile early warning system. The United States will help conduct a

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<sup>161</sup> Katzman, Kenneth. *The Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Summit: Any Results?*, Serial No. 114-68, July 9, 2015, 114-1. Congressional Research Service, 2015.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid

<sup>163</sup> Ibid

<sup>164</sup> Ibid

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

study of GCC ballistic missile defense architecture and offered technical assistance in the development of a GCC-wide Ballistic Missile Early Warning System.”<sup>166</sup> This element of dialogue by the Obama Administration displayed the commitment of the United States to the allies of the GCC, which embodied an element of significance that such a meeting took place at Camp David. Camp David is a foreign policy venue of large proportion for vital conferences and peace talks historically between the United States and close ally Israel.

At the Camp David Summit with the GCC leaders and President Obama there was also an emphasis on regional security issues such as counter-terrorism and countering violent extremism in the Gulf. The United States specifically outlined core issues in regard to counter-terrorism with the assistance of the GCC states specifically, “Building on a shared commitment to address the acute threats posed by Al-Qa’ida, ISIL/DAESH and their affiliates, the United States and GCC member states will pursue initiatives to further build their capacity to track, investigate, and prosecute those engaged in terrorist activity within their borders,”<sup>167</sup> The strategy to combat counter-terrorism was also discussed in more detail, “The United States and the GCC will hold a second U.S.-GCC Strategic Cooperation Forum Working Group on Counter-terrorism and Border Security to follow up on previous efforts to cooperate on border security, countering the financing of terrorism, cybersecurity, and critical infrastructure protection.”<sup>168</sup> This shows that in the overall evolution of the U.S.-GCC relations that the U.S. is now not just a protector of the GCC, but rather more of a united coalition to combat terrorism in the region. The GCC states going forward will be an Arab ally of the U.S. to combat terrorism in the region.

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<sup>166</sup> "Annex to U.S.-Gulf Cooperation Council Camp David Joint Statement." The White House. May 14, 2015. Accessed January 23, 2016.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid

<sup>168</sup> Ibid

At the Camp David meeting between President Obama and the GCC member state leaders there was a call to deal with some of the major regional issues. The major regional issues that were addressed were, most notably Iraq and Syria. Regarding Iraq it was stated, “The United States and GCC member states reiterated their support for the Iraqi government in its efforts to degrade and defeat ISIL/DAESH.”<sup>169</sup> Further, when discussing the regional issue of Iraq, it was stated, “GCC member states recommitted themselves to reestablishing a diplomatic presence in Baghdad and to working with the Iraqi government to support efforts against ISIL/DAESH, including in Anbar and other provinces.”<sup>170</sup> There also was a dialogue that engaged in dealing with the issues facing Syria and the Civil War crisis that has also lead to dramatic human rights issues. When dealing with the regional issue of Syria, it was stated, “The United States and GCC member states reaffirmed the importance of a genuine, sustainable political solution as soon as possible to end the war in Syria and prevent the further suffering of its people.”<sup>171</sup> Furthermore, the United States and it’s GCC allies discussed issue in regards to Assad stating, “All affirmed that Assad had lost all legitimacy and had no role in Syria’s future. They affirmed their commitment to working towards a post-Assad government that is independent, inclusive, and protects the rights of minority groups. The United States and the GCC member states committed to increasing support to the moderate opposition.”<sup>172</sup> When directly addressing the issues of ISIL or DAESH in Syria, it was more direct in the agenda and prescription on how to better effectively deal with the terrorist organization specifically, “GCC member states decided to intensify efforts to combat extremist groups in Syria, notably by shutting down private financial flows or any form or assistance to ISIL/DAESH, Al Nusrah Front, and any other violent

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid

<sup>170</sup> Ibid

<sup>171</sup> Ibid

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

extremist groups, and to intensify efforts to prevent the movement of foreign terrorist fighters in and out of Syria.”<sup>173</sup> There were a number of other significant issues that were discussed and brought to the table, but Syria and Iraq and the issues of ISIL/DAESH remained as the preeminent issues discussed. The U.S. and President Obama have specifically aimed at having this meeting at Camp David with the GCC leaders and dignitaries in order to better solidify relations between the U.S. and the GCC member states as well as propose the plans for strategically dealing with the regional crisis that persists to the present day. This continuance of a commitment toward the allies of the Gulf seems to be one that is moving forward and is being built upon by each U.S. Presidential administration.

Also of note in the evolution of the U.S.-GCC relations is the commitment of the U.S. arms sales to the GCC through the U.S. military-industrial complex. In the recent decade the United States has committed a great deal of armament sales and transfers to a number of the Gulf States. In both President Bush’s and the current Obama administration there has been evidence of strong rhetoric against the Gulf States involving human rights issues. However, some of the proposed arms sales of 2007 and 2008 to GCC states provides a better understanding of U.S. foreign policy toward the Gulf. On August 3, 2007, the United States Congress was notified of the possible sale of six Bell 412 Air Search and Recovery Helicopters to Bahrain with a total approximate cost of \$160 million U.S. dollars.<sup>174</sup> On December 4, 2007, Congress was also notified of a possible sale of arms through way of 80 PAC-3 missiles, PATRIOT GEM-T Modification kits in order to upgrade PATRIOT radars to REP II. There was also notifications to U.S. Government and contractor technical and logistics personnel for program support to Kuwait

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid

<sup>174</sup> Blanchard, Christopher M. "CRS Report for Congress." *The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sale Proposals*, October 8, 2008.



for an approximate cost of \$1.36 billion U.S. dollars.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, on July 18, 2008, the Congress of the United States was notified of a possible sale of training for the advancement of the Saudi Arabian National Guard Modernization Program through 2013. The specific program presented to Congress has been managed by the Vinnell Corporation since 1975, which is a subsidiary of Northrop Grumman.<sup>176</sup> The estimated proposed value of this sale for logistical training and military equipment to Saudi Arabia was stated to be upward of \$1.8 billion U.S. dollars.<sup>177</sup> On December 4, 2007, the United States Congress was notified of a possible sale of Patriot Advanced capability-3 Air defense missile system, consisting of 288 Patriot advanced capability-3 (Pac-3) missiles, 216 Guidance enhanced missiles-t (Gem-T), and 9 Patriot fire units to the United Arab Emirates. In total for all of these parts, repairs, technical assistance, and logistical support the estimated possible value of this sale could be around \$9 billion U.S. dollars.<sup>178</sup> Another example is on July 9, 2008, when the United States Congress was notified of a possible sale of logistics and support as well as training for C-17 Globemaster III aircraft and associated equipment and services for Qatar, the estimated value for this sale is around \$400 million U.S. dollars.<sup>179</sup> These arms sales exemplify that the United States has continued to commit military assets and resources to the Gulf states bilaterally. The United States also desires to maintain a strategic leverage with the GCC over training and logistical support. The United States may use this leverage to ensure that the GCC states act on human rights in a more just manner.

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid

<sup>176</sup> Ibid

<sup>177</sup> Ibid

<sup>178</sup> Ibid

<sup>179</sup> Ibid

The United States as of late has focused on the human rights issues regarding the GCC states and the Department of State has released numerous human rights reports on each of the six GCC member states. The U.S. relations with the GCC has been evolving since the Reagan administration in the 1980's and until recently in the current Obama administration. During issues of conflict and instability in the region, the U.S. seems to have turned a blind eye on the issues of the GCC states governments neglect and disregard for human rights. It may be that as the Gulf region gains more stability and security, the U.S. officials and public opinion will garner more attention and dissatisfaction toward the GCC for the human rights violations. This may be especially true in a day and age where non-governmental organizations (NGO's) are constantly on the rise and bring public attention to issues throughout the globe which are easily transmitted across language and social borders in the globalized interconnected world that we live in today. With that being said, it still seems as though the U.S. commitment to the GCC is likely to be maintained because there still is a great deal of instability in the region currently with the rise of Da'ish and the travesty currently taking place in Syria. However, if the GCC desires to broaden the relationship with the U.S. more capably through economic ties it is to be considered that the GCC states must better answer and deal with human rights violations more effectively. The question of what the future relations with the U.S.-GCC may entail going forward largely depends on how the GCC handles it own human rights issues, as well as the human rights issues of it's neighbors such as Syria and Iraq.

### **Prospects for Future U.S.-Gulf Relations**

Over the last few years one of the determining factors in the relationship between the U.S. and GCC is the issue of whether the GCC can more effectively be an autonomous force that can directly provide for their own security and aggressively deal with the issues of regional terrorism. The way in which U.S. Presidential administrations have offered support of this policy goal is through military training exercises and logistical assistance as well as the sales of sophisticated U.S. military equipment and arms. Going forward as the U.S. pivots its foreign policy focus to the East in Asia, the question becomes how can the GCC states prove to be a reliable and long standing ally of the U.S. for generations to come and not just the only viable ally option in the region other than Israel. The likely answer to that question is for the GCC states to be a government and society that honors fundamental human rights and freedoms that are afforded to, and honored by U.S. and European citizens. This commitment by the GCC would signal a sense of modernity and would further elevate the GCC onto the regional and international stage. The GCC and the member states would gain respect as being an entity of change and hope for a region that has been historically conflicted by numerous wars and human rights atrocities. This would give the GCC a real chance to have power and respect with the world, not just economically, but diplomatically and politically.

The U.S. Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor has provided a detailed analysis of its most recent year of country reports on human rights practices which is currently for 2014. All six of the GCC states have detailed reports by the U.S. Department of State that outline some of the major issues and concerns of the human rights practices by each of the governments and their respective leaders. There are reports for Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates, which each have issues that are distinctive to

their country. Some issues seem to overlap and share commonalities between the six countries. Nonetheless, it is pertinent that the GCC states address these issues to continue the relationship with the U.S. in the manner that it has since the 1980's.

For Bahrain, the human rights report focuses directly on addressing the issues of the al-Khalifa family which rules the country through a constitutional monarchy which has been in power for generations.<sup>180</sup> Some of the major concerns that are described for Bahrain is that the constitutional monarchy of government has led to questionable election practices. There are concerns that Bahrain has not allowed international election monitors to better prove to citizens and the world that the elections are free and fair which would give Bahrain's government greater levels of legitimacy from both the U.S. and international perspective. There are also concerns regarding basic political freedoms such as the right of free speech and protest. Many of the human rights issues have been directly related to political protesters which has lead to torture and mistreatment. There have also been cases and a focus in the report on the issues of discrimination especially toward the Shia population in Bahrain. There was also an emphasis in the report directly focusing on the issues that transpired in Bahrain during the 2011 mass protests that called for political reform in Bahrain especially unrest toward the Khalifa family dynasty.

In the 2011, political protests in Bahrain, which transpired between February and October 2011, over 70 people died due to clashes with police and security forces. As a result many reports were made that government security forces had committed unlawful killings of civilians.<sup>181</sup> This issue however did not draw a large media presence or attention because other countries in the Middle East were experiencing much larger and widespread violence with police

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<sup>180</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *"Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Bahrain"*

<sup>181</sup> Ibid

and security forces during the Arab Spring. However, this was not the desired outcome of protests that the U.S. would want to see from an ally which was acting in such an authoritarian manner, especially since the U.S. had provided a great deal of arms and military training to the country of Bahrain. Even more shockingly there was reports of riot police firing pellets and tear gas at a man that pierced his lungs and heart during a funeral procession and later that individual had lost his life.<sup>182</sup> To some extent the police officers and security forces involved in the clashes were punished and sentenced for their crimes, but, some were not punished, and in many cases were cleared from any responsibility of causalities or injuries to protestors. These issues facing Bahrain may cause strains in future relations with the U.S. if the actions of the government and leaders remain consistent with these human rights violations. In conclusion, the report also investigates and elaborates that Bahrain has serious human rights issues with regard to torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment of punishment of prisoners and political activists which has been reported to a number of international and domestic human rights groups.

In the reports on human rights for Kuwait the central focus is on the hereditary emirate ruled by the Al-Sabah family with specific focus on human rights issues regarding restrictions on freedom of speech and political assembly as well as issues of foreign workers and human trafficking.<sup>183</sup> There is also a great deal of focus in the report on the issue of security forces and police forces unlawfully abusing prisoners and protesters with little or no accountability. This issue is an overlapping problem that was also observed in Bahrain. The GCC may have to work together in better achieving a more just and respectful way to engage with prisoners and protesters. In Kuwait there is also widespread concern and human rights issues regarding the

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid

<sup>183</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. *“Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Kuwait”*

treatment of women and domestic violence is a major problem that country has failed to deal with effectively. These are the overarching human rights issues facing Kuwait. If Kuwait desires a continuance of U.S. support for security and military alliance they will also need to address these issues adequately.

When analyzing the human rights report, the details on the torture and cruel punishment of prisoners and protestors the details are quite disturbing. For example, there was a human rights activist and lawyer who attended and was monitoring a rally in Kuwait and after leaving the rally he was arrested and purportedly shot by rubber pellets as well as assaulted by police. He was even sentenced to one month of prison for “participating in an illegal gathering” and for not properly disbursing from the rally.<sup>184</sup> These are some of the major human rights issues, although there are still major concerns for human rights issues in Kuwait in regard to civil liberties. If Kuwait desires a continuing relationship with the U.S. they will have to more effectively address these issues.

The U.S. State Department also released a human rights report on the GCC state of Oman. Some of the highlighted aspects from the report was that Oman has been ruled by a monarchy under the Sultan Qaboos al-Said which has ruled the country of Oman since the 1970’s.<sup>185</sup> The major human rights issues that are addressed in the report is the fact that people are unable to effectively change the government in a peaceful manner and that there are limits on freedom of speech, assembly, and association, which all make it difficult for activists to seek out peaceful protests and dissent for the current government. Moreover, additional human rights issues focus

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid

<sup>185</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. “Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Oman”

on discrimination and assault on women through issues of domestic violence and human rights issues pertaining to immigration.

When analyzing the report on the human rights issues of Oman a more robust picture of the U.S. concerns is permeated. For example, in 2013, there are reports that armed security forces of the Omani government had arrested a social media activist and he was detained for over a month just because the activist had posted comments online that were critical of the Omani government.<sup>186</sup> Furthermore, there were reports that other activists and bloggers were detained for several weeks and were denied access to a lawyer or their family and protesters were also incarcerated for speaking out against the Omani regime. There is a continued trend of instances such as these in the report which outlines how political activists and human rights activists have been held without a legitimate charge from the Omani government. It is important that Oman deal with these issues.

With freedom of the press, the right of assembly, and free speech at the forefront regarding the human rights issues in Oman there are still a number of issues that persist and garner the attention of NGO's and governmental oversight. For example, there have been reports by prisoners that Oman has engaged in acts of sleep depriving prisoners and exposing them to extreme temperatures as well as solitary confinement.<sup>187</sup> There has also been reports that individuals that were placed in prisons by the Omani government were released on specific conditions that stated the men must sign a pledge not to do advocacy work or to protest against the Omani government. The prison situation for illegal immigrants is much grimmer. There are numerous reports that the prisons for illegal immigrants are severely overcrowded and many of the illegal immigrants are held in temporary detention centers which then wait to be deported and

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid

<sup>187</sup> Ibid

the conditions of these centers are also less than standard. If the U.S. continues to view Oman as an important strategic ally the U.S. should engage in a dialogue with the Omani officials on the importance of free speech.

The U.S. has also issued a human rights report on the GCC state of Qatar. In the U.S. State Department report on Qatar, much like the other six GCC states, the discussion exists on how Qatar is a constitutional monarchy and is ruled by hereditary laws through the al-Thani family.<sup>188</sup> The primary human rights concerns from the perspective of the U.S. in regards to Qatar were the issues of free and fair elections as well as the right to peacefully assemble. For example, it is reported that the Qatari government has directly interpreted Sharia law and has imposed corporal punishment for certain offenses and these include court-ordered flogging in cases of alcohol consumption and extramarital sex by Muslims. A case that exemplifies this is when a man was sentenced to 40 lashes and his license was suspended for driving under the influence of alcohol.<sup>189</sup> In regards to the mistreatment of migrants in Qatar the report went on to explain that Deportation Detention Centers in Qatar were overcrowded, unsanitary, and the centers were holding migrants for a significant amount of time, in some cases individuals were detained for as long as a year or more. When analyzing the Qatari governments human rights in terms of individual freedom and the right to free speech, there are more concerns from the U.S. perspective. For example, in the report it stated that the emir of Qatar had signed into law a new cybercrime law. That law imposes criminalization for a wide range of online speech of which the punishment can be as much as three years in prison and a large fine of 500,000 riyals the equivalent to over 100,00 U.S. dollars.<sup>190</sup> This issue of regulating free speech on the internet is

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<sup>188</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2014: Qatar"

<sup>189</sup> Ibid

<sup>190</sup> Ibid



consistent with what was seen in the Omani government and in other GCC states. These issues that the Qatari government has failed to address pose a strategic threat to the U.S.-Qatari bilateral alliance.

The U.S. State Department has also issued a comprehensive report on the human rights issues in Saudi Arabia, the largest GCC state and major arms buyer of U.S. military equipment. Since Saudi Arabia has been directly under examination for human rights violations by the general public and governmental organizations, there have been numerous public and political leaders expressing concern regarding the large amount of arms sales to Saudi Arabia. However, even with these concerns the U.S. has remained committed to selling arms to the GCC state of Saudi Arabia and between 2008 and 2011 the U.S. has sold over 5.9 billion U.S. dollars worth of military equipment to Saudi Arabia.<sup>191</sup> If Saudi Arabia does not respond to these human rights allegations, they may have to look to other countries to purchase arms, and that transition has begun to take place as the Saudi government over the same years between 2008 and 2011 has purchased over \$700 million U.S. dollars worth of military equipment from China.<sup>192</sup> The major question going forward is: if Saudi Arabia continues to rely on the U.S. as a strategic ally, and desires to be a regional power for the Gulf and Middle East, they ultimately have to deal with the human rights violations facing their country.

The human rights report by the U.S. State Department in addressing Saudi Arabia specifically describes that Saudi Arabia is a monarchy and the government is based on the interpretation of Sharia law and the 1992 basic law.<sup>193</sup> Also, the report discusses more extensively the key human rights issues facing Saudi Arabia. The major concerns are the

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<sup>191</sup> Anthony, H. Cordesman. *“Improving the US-GCC Partnership Planning for the Future”* April 11, 2014. Center For Strategic and International Studies.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid

<sup>193</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. “Country Reports on

restriction of universal rights of freedom of speech, especially as it pertains to the internet. The report also signifies issues regarding the treatment of women in Saudi Arabia through the lack of equal rights, violence, especially domestic violence. Even with the detailed report of the human rights violations of the Saudi government it is worth noting that the report states because there is a lack of transparency and access, it is difficult to assess the true and full scale human rights issues that the Saudi Arabian government has ignored or violated.<sup>194</sup>

When uncovering more of the detailed accounts in the human rights report by the State Department, it becomes more understandable as to why people have questioned the U.S. relationship with Saudi Arabia. For example, there were reports of a human rights activist that was tortured while being detained. The manner of the torture is truly cruel and unusual. A man was taken from his cell a number of times and security officials poured an antiseptic cleaning liquid down his throat, which led to the man needing to be treated medically and was hospitalized.<sup>195</sup> Furthermore, one man in Saudi Arabia was sentenced to two years of prison as well as 200 lashes because the man had made comments on Twitter in which he supported a Shia-Sunni reconciliation and he had attended a Shia religious gathering.<sup>196</sup> Even more striking is that the Courts in Saudi Arabia have sentenced a number of individuals that had been convicted of theft to be punished via amputations. The report had conformed at least one such case in which the amputation punishment was judicially administered.

In analyzing the human rights report in regard to the rights of women, there were more shocking discoveries uncovered of the atrocities committed and accepted by the Saudi government. For example, the Saudi government does not recognize spousal rape as a crime.

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Human Rights Practices for 2014: Saudi Arabia”

<sup>194</sup> Ibid

<sup>195</sup> Ibid

<sup>196</sup> Ibid

Moreover, there are significantly lenient laws regarding domestic abuse which has a punishment of 1 month to 1 year of imprisonment unless a court decides to provide a harsher sentence. Also, of note is that when many of the trials regarding domestic violence ended, the judges and police have been reported to have returned the women directly back to their abusers in which many of those abusers are in fact the women's legal guardians.<sup>197</sup> This is a cause of concern and the Saudi's must act in a manner of respecting basic human dignity and rights of individuals if it truly desires to enter onto the stage as a major regional power. The Saudi's have garnered a great deal of weapons and have strengthened their military. However, if the Saudi government continues to be oppressive and tyrannical towards their own people, it seems to be hard to image the U.S. would remain committed. However, the U.S. and Saudi officials have had other moments in history that have been extremely tumultuous. Furthermore, the U.S. has known about these attacks on basic human rights for a number of years, and has taken a blind eye in order to deal with the other military powers and authoritarian leaders in the region as well as to ensure the free flow of oil. It may be that for the U.S., the Saudi's have been the lesser of two evils and that this commitment will continue to persist between the two countries. Nonetheless, it is important that the U.S. support the political activists and should further leverage the military and arms deals to push for Saudi Arabia to recognize human rights and take a more just stance going forward.

The U.S. State Department has also issued a human rights practices report on the GCC state of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The governmental system of the UAE is different from the other GCC states in that it has a federation of seven semiautonomous emirates which are under a patriarchal rule.<sup>198</sup> The major human rights issues discussed by the report state that there are

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid

<sup>198</sup> United States Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor. "Country Reports on

limitations and the government blocks many of the citizens' civil liberties such as freedom of the press, assembly, association, and once again the issue of limiting rights in regards to internet usage. There are also issues regarding detainment and holding individuals for a substantial amount of time which has been reported as unjust and unnecessary. The issues regarding freedom of speech on the internet is a theme observed in nearly all of the GCC states and is something the U.S. may desire to work on improving. This is an interesting point as the U.S. has worked with the GCC states on issues of cyber security and sharing intelligence data. The U.S. should use those avenues as a way to understand the complexities and importance of the internet which is also used by citizens to freely express themselves.

Overall, the GCC states have been involved in human rights violations and depriving citizens of basic fundamental rights. However, over the years the recognition of these human rights issues have developed and been discussed in the U.S. political discourse, especially in regard to the relationship and strategic partnership with the GCC states, but ultimately the U.S. has taken a policy in which it is the lesser of two evils and working with the GCC states has been a continuing commitment. For example, it has recently been confirmed by the White House that President Obama is going to attend the GCC Summit on April 21<sup>st</sup> 2016 when he visits Saudi Arabia.<sup>199</sup> This displays the continued commitment of the U.S. toward the GCC. Moreover, the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, San Bernardino, Turkey, and Brussels has many political leaders in the U.S. and Europe stating that they are unable to deal with ISIS/Daesh alone. The Western world needs the help of Arab allies such as the GCC states as well as the likes of Jordan. Thus, in times such as these, which we currently live in, it is unlikely that the human rights atrocities of

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Human Rights Practices for 2014: United Arab Emirates”

<sup>199</sup> “White House: Obama to participate in GCC Summit in Riyadh” Middle East Monitor. March 17, 2016.

the GCC states come to center stage, but rather the GCC states are seen as an ally to better deal with a greater threat. Further, this is how the relationship between the U.S. and GCC has evolved over a number of years. The GCC states have been seen as the more moderate states in the region. They can independently and collectively be a reliable ally in times of war and conflict which has been ongoing for a number of decades and Presidential Administrations.

Currently the U.S.-GCC relationship primarily relies on security and economic threats to U.S. strategic positions. The question that arises is, if there ever is a time when the Gulf finds a secure level of stability, or if the U.S. and Western trade partners are no longer predominately focused on oil and natural gas, is the U.S. going to remain a security provider and committed ally of the Gulf states? One may say that it would be much more difficult for American political and public opinion to desire being engaged with oppressive regimes of any kind especially in times of peace and prosperity. Furthermore, there have been recent strains in the U.S.-GCC relations stemming from the recent Iran nuclear treaty as well as President Obama making direct statements that the regional face off between Iran and Saudi Arabia has led to a number of proxy wars over the years in Yemen, Syria, and Iraq. Nonetheless, the GCC has evolved since 1981 to the present day into a much more formidable security force and alliance as well as becoming much stronger militarily from the number of arms deals made with the United States military and multinational military corporations. The U.S.-GCC relations have evolved and continue to evolve. The next Presidential Administrations will have to directly engage and inherit a number of past policies regarding the Gulf, but the next President can also look at some of the issues that may cause them to adopt a policy of disengaging with the GCC. However, since the relationship between the GCC and U.S. has crossed party lines it may be a miscalculation to assume the U.S. would disengage especially with the growing concern of regional and international terrorism.

The U.S. has initiated a foreign policy now focusing on the Asia Pacific, but it remains to be seen what the U.S. does down the road in the Gulf and Middle East. The question is, if the U.S. reengages more aggressively in the Middle East or relies more heavily on the GCC states and Arab allies. With a number of moving parts and history as a guiding compass, it is plausible that the U.S. will mend the relations and build upon the strategic alliances with the GCC states bilaterally and multilaterally. This relationship is continuing to develop in the final months of the Obama administration. What takes place in the next few years regarding the Middle East and the Gulf may determine whether the U.S. continues down the road of a committed relationship with the GCC or if the GCC will begin to have to act independently as the evolution of the GCC had anticipated. Time as well as current events will be the indicators that determine the strategy for the U.S. and GCC going forward.

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