



## The interaction of the [Persian] Gulf cooperation council (GCC) with Iran for a new security arrangement in the Persian Gulf

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### ABSTRACT

The [Persian] Gulf cooperation council (GCC) was founded on May 25, 1981 by six littoral Persian Gulf states just two years after the occurrence of the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979. This article explains the interaction between Islamic Republic of Iran and the GCC member states (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, UAE, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain). In the first part this article is going to summarize the main reasons of founding the GCC since 1981 and explains the interaction between Iran and the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council and the influence of the decisions of GCC on Iran's security policies during the past thirty years; and in third part, we will evaluate the workbook of the GCC conservative states regarding to Iran and influences of struggle between Iran and the GCC states. At the end, according to the results of the research, writers will recommend some new parameters that must be considered to maintain peace and security in the Persian Gulf region.

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### Introduction

The (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] was established on 25 May 1981 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia between Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. The agreement was signed by Arab states of the Persian Gulf region except Iraq. The GCC states declared that the GCC is established in view of the special relations between them, their similar political systems based on Islamic beliefs, joint destiny, common objectives and common market with a defence planning council.

On the other side, there are a few Undeclared aims in the GCC charter which shows the main concern of the GCC states for establishing the GCC, was Islamic Revolution in Iran and its idealist purposes to export Revolution to its conservative Arab neighbor states of the Persian Gulf. The immediate objective was to protect them from the threat posed by the Iran-Iraq war and Iranian-inspired activist Islamism (fundamentalism), but later on August 2, 1990 when Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait, the GCC states revised their past policies regarding to Iran although it was not a permanent policy.

In March 1991, after the Persian Gulf War was over, the six members of the GCC, together with Egypt and Syria, declared their decision to establish 6+2 security arrangement for the region. According to 6+2 security arrangement, Syria and Egypt had the responsibility of providing the troops and military role, and the GCC states are to provide the financing (Global-Security.Org, 2011). The plan subsequently encountered a series of setbacks especially from Iran and therefore the 6+2 security policy was not successful.

This text examines the behavior of the GCC as an important center of Arab states of the Persian Gulf in relation to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war up to now and also the interaction of GCC with the U.S. since its formation. As it was mentioned above, the main objective of formation of the GCC was Islamic revolution in Iran so this paper will investigate the main declared and undeclared reasons for formation of the GCC and

its policy among Islamic Republic of Iran. Evaluating of the GCC policies in relation to Iran in the Persian Gulf region will shows the impact of military cooperation between the U.S. and the GCC states to stabilize peace and security in this strategic region of the world.

### Foundation of the (Persian) Gulf cooperation Council

The [Persian] Gulf cooperation council (GCC) funded on May 25, 1981 by six littoral Persian Gulf states including: Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman. The main common characteristics of the GCC states are: 1) they are all Arab and Islamic states; 2) all governed by monarchs or sheikhs; 3) they are all oil producers; 4) they have all lunched programmers of economic development financed by oil revenues 5) all suffer from labor shortage. However there are some disparities between the GCC states such as their geographical location, oil reserves and production differentials, and the history of inter tribal relations (Troxler, 1987). Since the beginning in 1981, the Persian Gulf cooperation council (GCC) has experienced three major wars: 1) the Iran-Iraq war (1980-1988), 2) the Operation Desert Storm, January 16- February 27, 1991 [the Persian Gulf War], and 3) Operation Iraqi Freedom (March 2003) [U.S.-Iraqi liberation war].

### Previous efforts for cooperation

There were so many efforts to create an organization for cooperation within the Arab community of the Persian Gulf that are considered as the background of the formation of GCC in 1981. Such of these efforts are: establishment the Gulf Air in 1974, establishing the [Persian] Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy (GOIC) in 1976, establishment the [Persian] Gulf News Agency in 1978. On the other side Political co operations such as border agreements between the six GCC states and formation of the UAE in 1971 also has been registered in the workbook of the Persian Gulf Arab countries.

One of the first Persian Gulf security plans was promulgated by Iran in 1974. According on this plan the Shah

Pahlavi wished to sign a military cooperation agreement to lead all of the conservative sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf region – except Iraq- in a quest for regional dominance but Saudi Arabia was disagreed and was willing to establish security arrangement within the Arab "nation"(Chubin, 1982, pp. 145-160). Another Arab attempt was in March 1976, when Saudi Arabian leader, King Khalid, visited Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE to bring into force such a decision, but the pressure from Iranian Shah Pahlavi on the Persian Gulf leaders, especially Bahrain and UAE sheikhdoms leaders caused failure in achieving this goal.

In 1976, at the fourth session of the Persian Gulf States foreign Ministers Conference in Muscat, Oman's Sultan Qabus, because of its dependence on Iran's Shah recommended the creation of a special force for defending the Strait of Hormuz but Iraqi regime tabled this suggestion. Between 1976 to 1979, a number of security agreements were signed between Saudi Arabia and its Arabs neighbors such as the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain, establishing permanent foundations of cooperation, but these efforts, however, could not provide the kind of permanent security needed in the Persian Gulf, since Iran, the leading military power of the region at the time, was not included (Cordesman, 1984, pp. 395-398).

At last the Iranian revolution in 1979 and Iran-Iraq war in 1980 brought the six Arab Persian Gulf States to establish a regional security organization (GCC) without the participation of the two main northern states (Iran & Iraq) in the Persian Gulf, so following the Islamic Conference Organization (ICO) meeting in Saudi Arabia in early January 1981, the six conservative Arab Persian Gulf states signed an agreement on establishing the "Gulf Cooperation Council" for including the main Islamic countries such as Egypt, Afghanistan, Iran and Libya at the ICO conference. In the final ICO conference declaration the Persian Gulf leaders declared the Persian Gulf security as the first indication of a joint policy, "our collective conviction that security and stability of the Gulf as well as the safety of its waterways are the absolute responsibility of the Gulf states without any foreign interferences."(Taeif, 1982, p. 1) But in practice, subsequent developments of the [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council were shown that the motto of "Non-interference of foreign powers in the Persian Gulf Security" did not achieve.

#### **Reasons of establishment**

There are both announced and undeclared reasons that the littoral Arab states of the Persian Gulf decided to establish [Persia] Gulf cooperation council in 1981. The main undeclared reasons from point of view of Persian Gulf scholars, who are close to the Iranian government's viewpoint, are that:

- 1) The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan intensified the concern of the conservative monarchies on the stability and security of their regimes.
- 2) Iran – Iraq war and the fear of its spread in the region;
- 3) Challenges of Iranian revolution that involves:
  - a) Continued struggle between Iran and the United Arab Emirates on three islands of Abu Musa, the greater and the lesser Tunbs from 1971;
  - b) Iran's program to develop its military arsenal and its ambition to acquire atomic energy and nuclear weapons of mass destruction;

c) Iran's support for Jihadist groups and liberation movements around the world especially in littoral sheikhdoms of the Persian Gulf;

d) The ideology of Islamic republic that wanted to export the Islamic revolution to Arab Persian Gulf countries that all of them had non democratic governments;

e) Iranian struggle over Israeli Arabs peace process;

f) Historical Iranian ambitions to expand their influence to the Persian Gulf region as the sole hegemonic power.

j) Arab sheikhdom's claim that new Islamic Republic regime in Iran conducted itself as an Islamic critic of themselves and pursued an active policy to destabilize the Persian Gulf states;

h) And the main reason was US-Iranian relation whereas US wanted to contain the threats of Iran to regional security that was involved in the security of Western access to the Persian Gulf oil (Al-suwaidi, 1996);

And finally impact of Camp David accords on the Arab world that was Kissinger methodology and the Carter administration identified it as its primary foreign policy goal the resolution of the conflict between Israel and Egypt (Troxler, p. 7).

The priority goal of the GCC was emphasizing the economic affairs and non-military cooperation. The reason for this policy was that the GCC member states didn't want to provoke the feelings of the new revolutionary regime in Iran. But factors such as deterioration of relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia and protecting Shiite extremist groups in Bahrain by Iran brought into the open the underlying security concerns of GCC states and non-military organization of GCC transformed into a security institution (Kechichian, 1985). The GCC officials emphasized that the main purpose of the GCC was to lay the "foundations for Gulf unity" in the fields of "economic and finance, education and culture, social affairs and health, communications, information media, nationality and passports, travel and transportation, commerce, customs and the movement of goods, and finally, in legal and legislative affairs" (Kuwait-News-Agency, 1981).

#### **The main concerns of the GCC states regarding Iran**

There are many cases that caused an uncertain relationship between Iran and the GCC countries, the main misconstrued in view of the GCC states of the Persian Gulf region are:

- 1) The GCC states believe that after the overthrow of Saddam's regime in Iraq, the new Iraqi government has acted poorly towards the security issues of the Persian Gulf so its resulted in more interference of Iranian regime, taking a more active role in the Persian Gulf security arrangements especially after the victory of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, hardliner president, in 2005.
- 2) The second concern is on Iran's WMD programs. The GCC states believe that Iranian nuclear program, can encourage Islamic republic to try to frighten the Persian Gulf states. In response to Iranian nuclear program, the GCC states renewed their discussions with US on some of the common defense systems (Krane, 2006).
- 3) Iranian support for Shia expansion. Islamic revolution was an Ideological revolution and its main aim at first was exporting revolution to the world especially neighbors of Islamic republic such as GCC countries, so leaders of these states were frighten to be overthrow by their opposition groups that were influenced and helped by Iranian government. When the Shia government took the power in Iraq after fall of Saddam Hussein's regime, the Iraqi Shia government supported Shia Islamist factions. Otherwise, rise of Shia extremist groups in new Iraqi regime

caused concerned of the GCC states, because in view of the GCC member states, the Iraqi Shia parties would prompt growing Shia demands to take power inside the GCC states. In recent Bahraini parliamentary election in November 2010, Shia groups took power and they are hoping to assert Bahraini Shia rights against the Sunni-dominated government of Bahrain.

4) The expansionist ambitions of the Iranian. For a long time GCC states or the Arab states of the Persian Gulf in general, have suffered the Iranian expansionist ambitions at present time and at the regime of the former shah. First, Pahlavi Shah sought to turn the Persian Gulf into an Iranian lake. The Pahlavi Shah's period of expansionist advanced into the Persian Gulf in the late 1960s, when the Shah claimed on Bahrain and then in 1971 captured three small islands of Great and Lesser Tunbs and Abu-Mousa in the strait of Hurmoz that were in dispute between Iran and the Trucial States (later the United Arab Emirates). Later after Islamic revolution in 1979; Islamic Republic of Iran tried to export the Islamic Revolution into the sheikhdom's territories and kingdoms so Iran began push into the GCC states at the beginning of the Islamic regime in Iran in 1979. In both cases Iraq had stepped in to deter Iranian's willingness.

#### **Relationship between the GCC states and external powers**

##### ***Interactions with the U.S. in post-Saddam Persian Gulf***

The cooperation between GCC and US enabled the United State to operate military action against Iraq in 2003. The GCC states hoped that post – Saddam Iraq would be a powerful country, but the post Saddam Iraq was less stable than the GCC states initially expected, so nowadays the defense cooperation between US and GCC states that was put in place after the Desert Storm operation in 1991 renewed with emphasis on Iran's rising power. During the Iran – Iraq War (1980-1988), the GCC summit conferences had supported the Iraqi regime by several declarations at the end of each summit and the GCC pursued various methods to achieve this end, including 1) direct financial and military assistance to Iraq; 2) building of an oil pipe line through Saudi Arabia for Iraqi oil 3) transshipment of Iraqi imports through the port of Kuwait (Troxler, p. 15). Also the GCC states helped US military forces performing operation in Afghanistan after the September 11, 2001, attacks.

After first Persian Gulf War (Desert Storm) in 1991, there were bilateral defense relations between the U.S. and each Persian Gulf state except Saudi Arabia. These pacts focus on "facilities access for U.S. forces, for U.S. advice, training, and joint exercises; lethal and non-lethal U.S. equipment pre-positioning; and arms sales" (Hajjar, 2002, p. 20). After Saddam's removal from power in 2003, these contracts still remain and none of the Persian Gulf littoral states has moved to suspended or ended these formal pacts.

One of the most important goals of the U.S. in the Persian Gulf is arms sales and defense services. This strategy has two benefits for US, first; it will help in protecting the Persian Gulf states from growing threats from Iran and second, these purchases have big effects on the US economy.

Many US military personnel are working in the army of the GCC states. There are in "Saudi Arabia about 400 U.S. military personnel, mostly to train Saudi military and National Guard, about 90,000 of the Army are in Kuwait, about 1800 are Air Force Officers in UAE, about 6000 are Air Force Officers in Qatar, about 25 are Air Force Officers in Oman, and about 4700 , are Navy in Bahrain" (Defense, 2005).

The reasons for US in strengthening its defense forces in the GCC countries and improving GCC states' Air and Naval

cooperation is "Sensing growing air and naval threats from Iran and from terrorist infiltration by sea"(Cohen, 2000), but according to these activities Iran claim that the US wants to interfere in the Persian Gulf region and GCC countries, so the more military presence of the US in the Persian gulf region will lead to Iran's concerns and its activities to counter US intervention in the GCC states and Persian gulf region.

The US arranged another joint security cooperation in 1991 which was called 6+2 security arrangement for the Persian Gulf region. According to this idea six Persian Gulf littoral states (GCC states) and Syria + Egypt under "Damascus Declaration" would be present in the Persian Gulf region to bolster the Peninsula Shield Forces. But "Damascus Declaration" never extended beyond the concept stage, because Persian Gulf states were not sure of Egypt and Syria and this prevented close military cooperation with those countries. Another main reason for defeating the "6+2" plan, was the absence of Iran, because Iran was the most powerful country in the region and its absence caused imbalance security system in the Persian Gulf region.

Inside the GCC forum, many of the political disputes have been solved and almost all border disputes between the GCC states that had mired cooperation within the GCC have been dissolute so the groundwork has been prepared for solving Arab-Iranian conflicts.

The Arab-Israeli struggle had always been one of the most important policies of the United States in the Middle East, that US seeks GCC's support for it. During the Arab-Israeli peace process, in the Arabs world most of the GCC states had supported the US's mediation efforts, so in the aftermath of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and Israel bilateral recognition agreement in 1993, the GCC states participated in the multilateral peace talks. On the other hand, the GCC states, as Arab countries, clearly support the Arab positions on the struggle between Palestine and Israel such as financial support for the Palestinian Authority (PA) and also for the Palestinian nation that are managed by the Islamic Development Bank(Kessler, February 26, 2005).

But there are various differences between the GCC states and the United States. For example one main difference is about Hamas because the US sees Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization (FTO), but the GCC states see Hamas as a legitimate defender of Palestinian interests and resister of Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. Therefore it seems that reliance of the GCC states on US about Palestine issue cannot be sustainable.

The other issue that the United State seeks the support of GCC is counter-terrorism. In this case, the interest of the GCC states and the United States have been tied together because preventing Islamic extremist movements is the same goal for US and GCC states. Although the September 11 attack caused some tensions between the US and some of the GCC states, mainly Saudi Arabia, because US investigation showed that some of the GCC states donors had been contributing to groups and institutions that were linked to Al Qaeda (Katzman, p. 31), but in an effort to keep Al Qaeda militants contained, especially after the Iraq war in March 2003, the GCC states have been partners of the United States against Al Qaeda because Al Qaeda was a threat to the Persian gulf states themselves.

##### ***Interaction with the ex-Soviet Union***

The most important relations between [Persian] Gulf Cooperation Council and the former Soviet Union refers to the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan. Not only all GCC

monarchies but all Arab Muslim countries with the exception of Libya and Syria have strongly condemned the Soviet invasion and occupation in Afghanistan. Around one year after the invasion of the Soviet Union in to Afghanistan, Leonid Brezhnev Leader of the communist party, in New Delhi suggested a Peace Plan for the Persian Gulf on December 10, 1980.

The plan considered the following five points:

- 1- Not to set up foreign military bases in the Persian Gulf area and on the adjacent islands not to deploy nuclear or any other weapons of mass destruction there;
- 2- Not to use or threaten to use force against the countries of the Persian Gulf area, and not to interfere in their internal affairs;
- 3- To respect the status of non-alignment chosen by the states of the Persian Gulf area; not to draw them into military groupings with the participation of nuclear powers;
- 4- To respect the sovereign right of the states of that area to their normal- resources;
- 5- Not to raise any obstacles or pose threats to normal trade exchanges and to the use of sea lanes linking the states of that area with other countries in the world (Kuznetsov, 1981, p. 69).

In response towards Moscow's peace proposal, the GCC states announced three main points:

- 1-withdrawing from Afghanistan unconditionally;
- 2-The USSR should pull out its military "advisors" from South Yemen.
- 3-The Soviet Union should dismantle its extensive military bases in Ethiopia ("An-nahar," Decem-ber 22, 1980, p. 2).

The Soviet Union did not accept the three conditions of the Arab Persian Gulf states so the Arab conservative states replied that, since the security of the region was a matter concerning exclusively of the states' of that region, "interference of any sort by any party not belonging to the area in the affairs of this vital part of the world is rejected as unacceptable to the leaders and peoples of the area." And "if the major powers really desire to maintain the security of this important and vital part of the world, they must realize that the area must be kept out of their conflicts and ambitions so that it will remain as an area of peace and stability" (ash-Shahri, March 26, 1981, p. 1)

#### **Military abilities of the GCC state**

Although the GCC states always had the desire of a joint military force and capabilities to defend them and their territory from any external aggressive invasion, but until the end of 2008 they were unsuccessful. The GCC countries spent the estimated \$85 billion on military equipments and trainings between 1981 and 1983 (Kechichian, p. 369) but they didn't acquire a deterrent force and a combined military capacity of the GCC countries.

All GCC member states have in total approximately 200,000 military men despite the heavy eight years of war between Iran and Iraq, Iran remains more powerful than all six GCC states. Also there are two reasons why the present military equipments and trained forces are not compatible with the present and foreseeable military needs for the security of GCC states and the Persian Gulf region; First, although GCC states have bought some sophisticated military weapons from US and other western countries but they don't have technical personnel to operate these systems so they heavily rely on foreigner personnel for operating and training indigenous military and civilian personnel for example there are alone as many as 10,000 military advisors in Saudi Arabia and about 3700 foreign military personnel in Oman (Allen, 1983, p. 12). Second, the

sophisticated armament weapons system that were sold to the GCC states are from western countries and the US, so variety of these sold military combat equipments have slowed down the process of unification of the GCC armies at the technical level, because as long as GCC countries continue to purchase military weapon systems from various sources it is not possible for integration and cooperation between GCC countries for a common military army. On the other hand, the presence of about 15,000 foreign military personnel in the GCC states are dependent on the arms dealer countries such as the western countries and the USA, so the GCC countries cannot take any decision for military cooperation without the permission of external arms dealers unless they are dependent on them and this case will limit GCC military cooperation.

On the other hand there are some political reasons why the GCC states have not been able to establish a joint military command; The first reason comes back to the concern of GCC states from their western supporters that have military relation with some of the GCC members, and a local integrated military cooperation may be harmful to their interests in the Persian gulf region. For example Sultanate of Oman has close military cooperation with the United States and Britain and the other GCC members consider this military cooperation as a banning line for themselves.

Although there have been so many endeavors to establish a joint defense policy since 1981, except for the two Peninsula Shield exercises, there have been not serious Joint defense agreements between the GCC states. GCC countries rely on external powers for their security and stability because of their limited military and political capabilities, so it is obvious that the two parameters are depending on each other: the lack of security leads to the lack of a Joint powerful army and the lack of a powerful army results in the security relations with external powers.

#### **Evaluation the GCC policies in the Persian Gulf region**

All the threats faced by GCC states are not produced by the external regimes such as Iran or Iraq, but some of these threats are raised within the political structure of power inside the Persian Gulf monarchies' states. There are some domestic forces that challenge and destabilize monarchies and sheikhdoms inside these states. There are some social and political similarities between the GCC states that distinguish them from other Arab countries, including oil based economies, undemocratic political systems such as monarchies and sheikhdoms, small populations and territories, and especially cultural and religious traditions. As a result of these characteristics, political stability in the GCC Persian Gulf states is challenged by inherent structural limitations, rising expectations and outside interferences(Kechichian, p. 222).

According to what has been mentioned in the above paragraph, the following steps should be the first steps for independence of external powers:

#### **a) Gradual domestic political and economic reform:**

Although there have been some established democratic symbols such as national assemblies or consultative councils in recent years in GCC states, but the fact is that the real power belongs to the sheikhs and monarchies. The semi-parliamentary systems in Bahrain and Kuwait Bahrain were dissolved at least once in the 70s, and the limitation of the legislative power of the UAE Federal National Council has made it an unprofitable institution. Qatar has a constitutional monarchy that is reigned by families. Likewise Saudi Arabia and Oman are another two

monarchy countries that don't have democratic institutions and are ruled by royal families.

It is a common characteristic that the ruling families in all GCC states control the political power. For example, the executive monopoly of the important positions, are held by members of the ruler's family; in Bahrain it is 50%, in Kuwait it is 47%, in Oman it is 25%, in Qatar it is 45%, and in Saudi Arabia it is 46% of cabinet positions are held by members of the ruler family (Kechichian, p. 225).

We can conclude that the GCC States, like most Middle Eastern states, don't have popular legitimacy, are not democratic and that most of them are newly independent states that were subjected to some forms of imperialism or colonialism. Historical background of the GCC states influences the governors of these states to take the old very seriously the old agenda of arms, territory, resources, and the defense of sovereignty" (Chubin, p. 932). In 1990s and in 2000s the leaders of these states were confronted with increased demands for democratization affected by globalization. Although the risks of reforms in Arab societies are high, but there is no alternative for it.

Almost all of GCC states does not even have the primary elements of a democratic society such as parliament or election for choosing the executive leaders, so the following democratic changes in power structure in these states are needed to satisfy dissatisfied the population of GCC states;

#### **b) Transition of power:**

A hereditary form of power transition still exist in all states of GCC states, from king/sheikh to their sons or their brothers, and this dictatorship kind of leadership cannot be acceptable to the nations of these states. The transitions of power to new democratic selected leaders will allow new leaders to move forward on political and economic reforms.

#### **c) Political liberalization:**

Although some of the GCC states are opening the political process to coincide with the challenges of modernization and globalization but these changes are very slow and negligible. There are two reasons for the slow liberalization: first; some of the Persian Gulf sheikhdoms "fear that rapid liberalization could backfire by providing Islamist extremists a platform to challenge the incumbent regimes" (Katzman, 2006, p. 25), second; the GCC leaders are worried that widespread political changes in these countries will make them fall from inherited power, because in a democratic political system leaders are chosen by people not by heredity.

#### **d) Human rights violation:**

There have been many cases of human rights violations of Arab and non Arab citizens in the GCC states such as 1) GCC leaders don't give their citizens the right to peacefully change their government; 2) The foreign workers on which the Persian Gulf economies rely have no political rights or the right to join unions; 3) there are in the GCC states varying degrees of religious inequity especially between Shiite and Sunni Muslims, and the Shiite minorities in these countries are under tremendous pressure from the government, 4) arbitrary arrests and detentions; 5) Suppression of peaceful assembly and free expression; 6) trafficking in persons especially trafficking of young boys to the GCC states to work as camel jockeys (Katzman, p. 25)

#### **Conclusion and recommendation**

There are two options among the GCC states: first; Dependence on the United States for their traditional security

concerns, arm equipments, and guarantees. According to this option the new security threats may be aggravated by a close connection to the United States. Second; being independent of the Americans and introducing political reforms and respect to human rights, this is needed because globalization is seen as a threat to traditional values and stimulates reaction of nations based on religion, ethnicity, and nationalism. In line with the second option an internal security system for the Persian Gulf region to cooperate with all countries including Iran and Iraq can bring a stable security to this strategic region.

Islamic republic of Iran has sought to reassure the GCC states by engaging in diplomatic relations and confidence building. Iran hopes to encourage the GCC states to engage in regional cooperation, Iran thinks that joint military operations and exercises will restore peace and stability to the Persian Gulf region, and doing this will make the presence of foreign forces unnecessary. In this regard Ali Shamkhani Iranian Defense Minister during the presidency of Khatami says:

Because of the unstable global security situation, regionalism is one of the United States' main national security policies. Time, environmental necessities, and regional conditions force us to pursue a policy based on the concept of regionalism. The United States has pursued a policy of undermining relations between Iran and regional countries. Today, it is clear that it has failed. In fact a system of confidence building has dominated our relations with regional countries (Shamkhani, 2000).

On the other hand, the US has been unenthusiastic to promote a fully regional security system, relying on its regional states that are GCC states, Saudi Arabia and new Shiite Iraq because US policy makers believe that it is an uncertain policy and that it puts all the eggs in one uncertain basket. So the US believes that they must act as one of the Persian Gulf region's main security manager. This policy as mentioned above has its consequences especially regarding Iran, is not sustainable and will worsen the soft security issues in the Persian Gulf region.

While incidents such as the Camp David accords, the Islamic revolution in Iran in 1979, the Iran-Iraq War (1980), and the Soviet threat had a catalytic effect on establishing of the GCC, but before 1979 those efforts were based on economic needs and internal security. Through the mechanism of changes in recent years in the Persian Gulf region, there must be a greater focus on defusing regional conflicts and removing the region from superpower conflict. The experiences of economic cooperation before the 1979 between the 6 GCC members can be moved towards fulfilling the objectives of all 8 states of the region including Iran and Iraq and rearranging the GCC at a comprehensive forum that involve all countries so it will become institutionalized and will play an increasingly significant role in the region.

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