



## The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) after U.S. led Invasion of Iraq: Toward a Security Community?

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### Abstract

*The consequences of the led invasion of Iraq have not only been limited within Iraq, but passed beyond its borders. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that was accepted as a loose alliance until that time has been one of the most affected units by these consequences. This paper argues that in the post-Iraq war period, even if the GCC is not yet a security community, it has made progress toward being so. The analysis of the developments occurring both outside and inside of the GCC leads us to reach this conclusion.*

**Keywords:** Iraq War, Iran, Security Community, The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the United States of America (USA).

### INTRODUCTION

In all areas regarding social units, it is true that transformative dynamics concerning the existing units from different levels take action when a core violent act occurs. Undoubtedly U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003 constitutes an example of that kind of act since not only it had transformative effects on Iraq's internal balance, but also it had such an impact on the whole region. And the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) seems to be one of these units most affected.

It is possible to indicate that the year 2003 and its aftermath constitutes a critical period for the GCC. U.S. led invasion of Iraq and the consequences of this second Gulf war have encouraged the GCC member states to intensify their relations within this organization and to act as a united body since the threat arising from this last event has been quite challenging and maybe much more challenging than those arising from previous events, for Gulf states' regimes. So, what we expect to understand in this paper is the change that Iraq war made in the GCC's perceptions concerning the region and to answer if this change may

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lead the GCC toward a security community? To answer this question, first of all, it seems necessary to make a definition of a security community.

A security community was initially proposed by Richard Van Wagenen in 1950s. But it was pioneered by Karl Deutsch in 1957<sup>1</sup>, and defined as a group of people that had become integrated to the point that there is a "real assurance that members of that community will not fight each other physically, but will settle their disputes in some other way". Put differently, the members of this community agree that the common problems must and can be resolved by processes of 'peaceful change'. Later, scholars developed this theoretical framework by adding that the formation of a shared identity constitutes one of the major parts to form a security community. Here, the combination of Deutsch concept with Constructivism is quite important as in the example of Emmanuel Adler and Michael Barnett's edited book titled *Security Communities*, which combines Deutsch's work with constructivism.

According to Deutsch, there are two types of security community: amalgamated and pluralistic security communities. The first one exists when states formally unify while the second when states remain sovereign. What we are interested in this paper is obviously the second type. The states within a pluralistic security community possess common institutions, therefore common values and mutual responsiveness, mutual identity, so a sense of 'we-ness'. The communication, so the transaction and interaction that flows between societies are the core elements of this community. Briefly, this community is constituted through shared identities rather than through pre-given interests.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we mustn't overlook here the social character of global politics and the importance of state identities that shape their conceptions of interest.

Once the security community concept is defined as briefly as possible, it seems appropriate to go on with the GCC. In the first section of the paper, we will briefly have a look to Michael Barnett and Gregory Gause's analysis on the GCC in the Adler&Barnett edited book. We will try to understand why the GCC was not accepted by these authors as a security community, at the time of the writing of this article, which means toward the end of 1990s. So, this section will give us some ideas about the period before U.S. invasion of Iraq. Then, in the second section, which is the central part of our paper, our emphasis will shift to the effects of this invasion into the GCC. In that section, the aftermath of Iraq war will be analyzed in details through different topics that took place in the GCC's agenda. Keeping in mind what a security community means throughout our work, we will have the opportunity to discuss the changes the GCC has undergone.

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<sup>1</sup> Karl Deutsch, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, (Princeton University Press, 1957)

<sup>2</sup> Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett, 'Security Communities in the Theoretical Perspective', in Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett (eds), *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.7-11

### **BEFORE IRAQ WAR 2003**

The chapter written by Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause III titled "Caravans in Opposite Directions: Society, State and the Development of a Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council" in Adler and Barnett's edited book on security communities, argues that although the GCC illuminates some subterranean processes associated with security communities, it would never be mistaken with a security community because the member states could still imagine using force against each other<sup>3</sup>. Surely, there are several concrete examples that are enumerated in the chapter to support this argument.

According to the chapter, since the GCC was born in the circumstances of Iranian Revolution and in this birth, common historical features played an important role: Tribalism (as an important element in state formation), dependence heavily upon the export of oil, alliance with the West in Cold War, sharing the same concerns regarding Nasserist pan-Arabism in 1950s and 1960s and Iranian Islamic revolution in 1980s.<sup>4</sup> Although, these points succeeded to the creation of a Gulf cooperation platform, further development was blocked by certain problems such as border disputes between member states, therefore sense of mistrust and suspicion (fear of Saudi hegemony) between them, and fear of lose of sovereignty (for newly independent states especially).

Indeed, disputes and even armed conflicts that occurred among the six members of the GCC throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a quite important fact. For example, Saudi Arabia withheld diplomatic recognition of the UAE for 4 years after the latter's independence, until 1975, awaiting the settlement of border disputes<sup>5</sup>. Other disputes took place between Qatar and Bahrain, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, Oman and Saudi Arabia. But the gravest dispute was the one occurred Bahrain vs. Qatar on the sovereignty over several islands. The tension reached such a degree that two sides of the dispute were at the brink of a war in December 1995<sup>6</sup>.

Despite the existence of such territorial disputes, the GCC leaders started to cooperate on military and internal security issues. The stimulus behind this was a series of domestic disturbances that had external linkages. A coup attempt in Bahrain in December 1981, supported by Iran; bombings in Kuwait in December 1983, an attempt on the life of the Kuwaiti ruler in May 1985 and later acts of violence attributed to Kuwaiti Shiites sympathetic with Iran, pushed the GCC's foreign ministers and interior ministers to take this issue into their agenda as soon as possible.<sup>7</sup> After the fact that the GCC states conducted numerous

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<sup>3</sup> Michael Barnett, F. Gregory Gause III, 'Caravans in Opposite Directions: Society, State and the Development of a Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council', in Emanuel Adler, Michael Barnett (eds) *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.189

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> For further detail, Saideh Lotfian, 'A Regional Security System in the Persian Gulf', in Lawrence G. Potter and Gary G. Sick (eds) *Security in the Persian Gulf, Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus*, (Palgrave, 2002), p.119

<sup>7</sup> Barnett, Gause, 'Caravans in Opposite...', p.172-173

military exercises, at the fifth GCC summit in November 1984, they agreed to establish a joint GCC strike force under Saudi command, called Peninsula Shield Force. However, further impressive developments remained largely on paper. On one hand, the sense of mistrust and suspicion and on the other hand the fear of lose of sovereignty became dominant between member states<sup>8</sup>. In fact, suspicions among them remained so strong that the smaller states would not acknowledge Riyadh as their leader<sup>9</sup>. And it was clear that institutionally, Saudi dominance was expressed within the GCC<sup>10</sup>, which discouraged smaller member states from trusting the GCC. On the other side, the fact that newly independent countries were extremely sensitive and feared conceding too much authority to international body was another factor blocking further cooperation<sup>11</sup>.

Despite the existing factors, the test that the GCC cooperation faced during Iraq invasion of Kuwait at the beginning of 1990's was extremely remarkable. "The speed and unanimity with which the Gulf States came together to support Kuwait and accept the American and other international forces that would expel Iraq from Kuwait" deserve to be underlined here, as indicated in Barnett and Gause's work.<sup>12</sup> But this ambiance of cooperation didn't last long. Since the origin of threat (Iraq) was blocked, the GCC member states "abandoned any sense of regionalism"<sup>13</sup>. Therefore, "the GCC's trajectory seems consistent with alliance formation-formed in response to specific security threats, enduring as those threats endure, and fraying as those threats recede"<sup>14</sup>.

We may also strengthen Barnett and Gause's argument by adding that an important factor blocking further cooperation during 1990s was the erosion of consensus within the GCC, regarding other regional states such as Iran and Israel. Indeed, it is true that during 1990s, the different attitudes assumed by Gulf States toward Iran and Israel were another point of divergence between them. So in addition to their border disputes, the facts that some of them advocated improving the ties with Iran (as Qatar and Oman) while others maintained a more cautious approach (as Saudi Arabia and Bahrain) and that similar disputes concerning Israel occurred, are important to reveal the erosion of consensus within the GCC.<sup>15</sup>

In sum, it is possible to say that Gulf States remained reluctant to form a well developed community for a long time. As it is indicated in Barnett &

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.174

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164

<sup>10</sup> F.Gregory Gause, 'The Foreign Policy of Saudi Arabia', in Raymond Hinnebusch and Anoushiravan Ehteshami (eds), *The Foreign Policies of Middle Eastern States* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001), p.198

<sup>11</sup> Barnett, Gause, 'Cavarians in Opposite...', p.174

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p.180

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.181

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161

<sup>15</sup> Ibrahim A. Karawan, 'The Erosion of Consensus, Perceptions of GCC States of a Changing Region', in Lawrence G.Potter and Gary G. Sick (eds), *Security in the Persian Gulf, Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus*, (Palgrave, 2002), pp.95-100

Gause's chapter and in other works which we referred to, although the 1990-91 Gulf War accelerated the formation of group cohesion, this acceleration stayed limited in the following years since there were lots of points of divergence that triggered an erosion of consensus between member states. Therefore, Gulf States preferred to develop bilateral cooperative relations rather than multilateral ones, which prevented the GCC to become a security community. So, once we tried to give a brief summary of the pre-war period, now, it seems appropriate to pass to Iraq war period and its aftermath that is the core part of our paper. And in this part, firstly we will focus on the regional developments occurring outside of the GCC, and then we will shift our focus to the developments occurring inside the GCC.

## **IRAQ WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH**

### **Out Group Developments**

In this section, two developments having occurred independently from the GCC will be mentioned. For each development, the organizational behavior will be analyzed first. Then particularities at states' level will be revealed.

#### ***Iraq War and its Implications for the GCC***

Before the start of U.S. led invasion of Iraq, many leaders got together to state their concerns about such a war and the GCC's leaders were some of them. In fact, they did not hesitate to join the meetings organized by Turkey, which the neighborhood countries to Iraq attended to, and whose goal was to prevent a probable war declared by the U.S. against Iraq, by emphasizing the Iraqi territorial integrity<sup>16</sup>. At that time, they didn't hesitate either to say that Arab public opinion wouldn't support a probable the U.S. military operation against Saddam's regime and that the U.S. wouldn't be able to control the aftermath of such war<sup>17</sup>. But even if the GCC states were against such an American war with Iraq, they ended up supporting the U.S., their traditional ally<sup>18</sup>. It was obviously the consequence of the fact that the GCC states had always been the main partners of the U.S. in Middle East. The origin of this partnership comes from the Cold War era's unofficial alliance based on two pillars (oil and security) between Saudi Arabia (oil provider for the U.S.) and the U.S. (security provider for Saudi Arabia)<sup>19</sup>. Although the main security concern for Gulf states, which was the communist threat, disappeared with the collapse of Soviet Union, their partnership with the U.S. continued in the post-Cold war era since Gulf states needed a very powerful partner to ensure the main goal of their foreign policy:

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<sup>16</sup> Hasan Yılmaz, 'İstanbul'da Gerçekleşen Irak Zirvesi'nin Sonuçları ve Arapların Tepkisi', *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol:3, No:35, 2003, pp.13-14

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Mattair, 'Mutual Threat Perceptions in the Arab/Persian Gulf: GCC Perceptions', *Middle East Policy*, Vol:14, No:2, Summer 2007, p.134

<sup>18</sup> 'Savaşa Karşı Çıkanlar da ABD'ye Destek', *Radikal*, 20 March 2003 <http://www.radikal.com.tr/haber.php?haberno=69512>

<sup>19</sup> Gawdat Bahgat, 'Nuclear Proliferation: The Case of Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Journal*, , Vol.:60, No:3, Summer 2006, p.436

to keep the Gulf region from the dominance of any regional powerful state by carrying out a strategy of balance between potential powers that are Iran and Iraq. During 1990's, the U.S. became a direct component of the application of the strategy mentioned above. Therefore, supporting the U.S. politics regarding the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was indeed a sign of gratitude and loyalty shown to the U.S. by the GCC and the GCC countries proved this loyalty by opening their military bases to the coalition's military forces against Iraq.

The concerns of the GCC in the pre-war period regarding Iraq war were justified throughout the military operation since the effects of this war on the GCC were quite clear: the emergence of a new source of instability created deep concerns within the GCC. Therefore many analysts agreed that the GCC summit held in 21<sup>st</sup> December 2003 was a historic one and different from all previous ones<sup>20</sup>, since the circumstances under which the summit was held were challenging: Iraq was invaded by the U.S. troops and Saddam was captured. And problems coming from this fact seem to have played the key role in the changing atmosphere within the GCC.

The main problem for the GCC coming from U.S. led invasion of Iraq is obviously the change in the regional balance of power since the main element of foreign policies for Gulf States was known until that time, as to ensure a balance between Iraq and Iran so that none of them could dominate the region. But once Iraq became fragile by U.S. led invasion, Iran was supposed to be the major actor having a wide range influence. Surely, this dominance would not be welcomed easily by the GCC countries since there was a discussion with Iran even on the name of the gulf. In fact, named as 'Persian Gulf' by Iran on one hand and 'Arab Gulf' by Arabs on the other, the naming of the sea separating Arabian Peninsula and Iran has been a controversial issue for long years<sup>21</sup>. Also in case of Iranian dominance, the islands' problem between the UAE and Iran coming from 1970's could be ended in favor of Iran, which would be another unexpected consequence. Indeed, this problem of islands dates back to 1970's when Iran had occupied the three islands belonging to the UAE: Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb and Abu Mousa. Therefore, with Iraq war of 2003, the GCC was primarily concerned that Iraq might no longer serve as a strategic counterweight to Iran.

Another consequence of the change in the regional balance of power was coming directly from the groups having the power in Iraq. At the beginning of the invasion, the GCC countries were quite concerned that pro-Iranian shiite muslim groups might obtain a major share of power in post-war Iraq<sup>22</sup>, which

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<sup>20</sup> Dr. Fatma Al Sayegh, 'Challenges to GCC', *Gulf News*, 19.12.2003 <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/challenges-to-gcc-1.373566>

<sup>21</sup> According to Arab perspective, the Iranian insistence for 'Persian Gulf' demonstrates "the arrogance and hidden agenda for dominance that Iranians harbor toward them". Abdullah K. Alshayji, 'Mutual Realities, Perceptions, and Impediments between The GCC States and Iran', in Lawrence G.Potter and Gary G. Sick (eds), *Security in the Persian Gulf, Origins, Obstacles and the Search for Consensus*, (Palgrave, 2002), p.222

<sup>22</sup> Kenneth Katzman, 'The Persian Gulf States: Post-War Issues for U.S. Policy', *CRS Report for Congress*, 2003, p.2

would probably influence the GCC's internal stability. In fact, the existence of Shiite population is a fact in the Gulf region<sup>23</sup>. According to official reports, the war in Iraq has had a notable effect strengthening Shiite aspirations, Sunni suspicions, deepening sectarian divisions throughout the region and sectarian tensions became higher than any time since 1979<sup>24</sup>. It is possible to enumerate several examples regarding this issue, but the most effective example is undoubtedly the explosions at the Askari Mosque in Samarra, Iraq in 2006. These explosions are quite important to understand the high tension between different sects since the Askari Mosque, famed golden-domed mosque, is accepted as one of the holy sites in Shi'a Islam. The acts of violence between members of different sects after these explosions were more and more alarming.

Facing this challenge, the GCC's efforts to mediate these sectarian tensions are remarkable. Saudi King Abdullah has many times stated its interest to strengthen relations with Saudi Shiites. He didn't hesitate to host a meeting in Jeddah with a Shiite delegation in 2005. Even in the reports of International Crisis Groups, King Abdullah's readiness to meet the Shiites and discuss their demands is accepted as 'encouraging'<sup>25</sup>. And it shows us how this issue is taken into consideration and paid attention by the Gulf leaders.

Certainly, the direct relationship between the instability in Iraq and the domestic stability of the GCC countries has been an important element to understand the stance that the GCC member states have taken. This stance has been quite clear: to defend the Iraqi territorial integrity as much as possible. This emphasis on the Iraqi territorial integrity shows itself in several summit meeting's declarations. Recently, in the summit of December 2009 that took place in Kuwait, the GCC leaders emphasized one more time their firm position on respect for Iraq's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity as well as for the non-interference in its internal affairs and the preservation of its Arab and Islamic identity<sup>26</sup>.

On the other hand, the fact that U.S. led invasion created a black hole within the region threatening Arabian Gulf countries' domestic stability and therefore regimes, U.S. led politics related to Gulf security became of questionable value even to its allies. American credibility and confidence in American capability have become low to the point that Iraq is seen as the 'graveyard of the U.S.-Arab relations' according to some analysts<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, the U.S. invasion of Iraq encouraged the GCC states for taking a common stance towards regional

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, the 10-15% of the population of Saudi Arabia is Shiite. The percentage becomes higher when to Kuwait with 40%. And in Bahrain, the majority of the population is Shiite with 60% of the total population.

International Crisis Group, 'The Shiite Question in Saudi Arabia', *Middle East Report*, No:45, 19 September 2005, p.1

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14

<sup>26</sup> 'GCC Reviews Steps in Military Cooperation', *Gulf News*, 15 December 2009 <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/gcc-reviews-steps-in-military-cooperation-1.554035>

<sup>27</sup> Patrick Seale, 'A Fresh Vision of the Security Structure in the Middle East', *Gulf News*, 31 December 2004, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/a-fresh-vision-of-the-security-structure-in-the-middle-east-1.343341>

problems, deepening their relations within the GCC, and constituting a new security structure for the Gulf, based more on regional states and less on the U.S. Regional consensus and the dialogue with regional states have become more important for Arab decision makers. Supporting only the American politics seems to have ceased the only security policy of these states. In addition to American partnership, the GCC has started to take its own initiatives. The most important example for this may be the fact that the GCC states didn't accept to integrate Iraq into their council as a member, despite American insistence on this issue<sup>28</sup>. Because of the emergence of unexpected consequences of Iraq war, GCC member states have another kind of perception.

### ***The Rise of Iran and its Regional Implications***

We have already said that the rise of Iran after Iraq war constitutes a direct source of threat for the GCC countries. As indicated before, the island problems and the rising demands of Shiite population living in the GCC member countries are examples of this direct threat coming from Iran. But it is also true that the threats arising from Iran do not only have direct effects into the GCC but also they have indirect effects throughout different countries.

The growing Iranian influence has some implications for the whole region, and thereof for the GCC, on three points: the first point is Iran's Islamic ideology. The ideological difference of Iran comes evidently from 1979. As it is indicated in an article, Ayetollah Khomeini's Islamic ideology was one of the major factors poisoning Iran-GCC relationship after the Iranian revolution. According to this ideology, "security in the Persian Gulf could be achieved only if the Arab peoples of the region rebelled against the ruling monarchs and created governments similar to, but not identical with, Iran's, cut their subservient ties with the United States, and acknowledged Iran's primacy in the Gulf"<sup>29</sup>. With the change of order in the Gulf region after Iraq war in 2003, this ideology was refreshed. Now, it affects the nature of regimes existing there since the Islamic ideology and Islamic extremism interiorized by Iranian government finds possibility to spread out throughout the Gulf region and it goes on even further. This effect is mostly seen in Palestinian territorial authority after the election of Hamas in 2006 and also in Lebanon with the growing influence of Hezbollah.

Hamas won the elections in Palestinian territories in 2006 against his secular rival, Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO). In contrast to the moderate stance of PLO, Hamas acts more assertively and has several convergent points with Iran regarding the regional order that should exist. Both having the same approach towards Israel, Iran is supposed to increase financial support to Hamas (even though Hamas has never admitted it) and other Islamist political and military movements there, such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). When Hamas won the election in Palestinian territories in 2006, Iran was one of the

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<sup>28</sup> 'KİK, Irak'ı Aralanna Almıyor', *Zaman*, 15 December 2008 <http://www.zaman.com.tr/haber.do?haberno=770440>

<sup>29</sup> Abdullah K. Alshayji, 'Mutual Realities...' p.226

first states to welcome this result. Especially, Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's speeches concerning Iranian relations with Hamas are quite clarifying on this point. The fact that he has pointed out many times that Iran will support Hamas until the collapse of Israel<sup>30</sup> is significant. Indeed, Iran perceives Palestinian issue as a part of its religious and national duty, thus supports movements that share the same ideological stance with itself as much as possible, despite their sectarian difference. Although Gulf countries have traditionally supported their Arab allies who are Palestinian Islamist movements against Israel for decades, since 9/11 attacks, they have adopted a moderate attitude emphasizing normalization of Palestinian-Israeli relations with the Israeli withdrawal to its 1967 borders. And this attitude has opposed to Hamas's position<sup>31</sup>. Therefore Shiite Iranian support to Sunni Hamas constitutes another indirect threat for the GCC's ideological perspective.

The growing ideological influence of Iran in Lebanon through Hezbollah is another example of source of indirect threat for the GCC, as mentioned before. But this relationship between Iran and Hezbollah can not be explained only by Islamist ideology, as in the case of Hamas. This relationship reveals a much more dangerous source of threat from the perspectives of Sunni monarchs: the rise of Shia. The rise of Shia is also the second point that demonstrates the growing influence of Iran and especially its regional implications. Also, this second point is obviously the component of the first one. Similar to the case of Islamist ideology, the rise of Shia is not only a problem for just Gulf countries, it is a problem for the whole region. And particularly after Iraq war in 2003, the rise of Shia crescent and its implications in other countries such as Lebanon and Yemen deserve to be mentioned here to prove the unlimited spreading of Iranian influence.

Relations between Iran and the Shiite Hezbollah movement of Lebanon are crucial to verify Iranian regional influence. Iran is known to give support to Hezbollah since its founding and therefore to interfere in Lebanese internal affairs. The instability created by the conflicts occurring between Hezbollah and Israel on Lebanese territories has become a general source of concern for the Middle East peace process overall. And of course, the GCC countries are some of those most affected. Obviously the tension became higher in July 2006 when Tehran accused the Arab states of allowing Israel to invade Lebanon, as reported<sup>32</sup>. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia accused Hezbollah and therefore Iran for triggering the war<sup>33</sup>. Although the Lebanese war ended in September 2006 with a ceasefire, the presence of Hezbollah is still a source of instability

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<sup>30</sup> 'Ahmedinejad: Iran will Support Hamas until Collapse of Israel', *Haaretz*, 12 September 2008, <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1020630.html>

<sup>31</sup> Kamran Bokhari \_ Reva Bholla, 'Hamas and the Arab States', STRATFOR Report, 7 January 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090107\\_hamas\\_and\\_arab\\_states](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/20090107_hamas_and_arab_states)

<sup>32</sup> 'Timeline: Arab-Iranian Relations', *Al-Jazeera English*, 13 April 2009 <http://english.aljazeera.net/focus/2009/04/200941382542790118.html>

<sup>33</sup> Paul Salem, 'The Aftereffects of the Israeli – Hezbollah war', *Report*, Carnegie Endowment <http://www.carnegieendowment.org/files/PaulSalemChapter.pdf>

and that of disagreement between Iran and Arab states, including the GCC members.

Yemeni uprisings are the second example showing the growing Iranian influence and therefore, the seriousness of the rise of Shia. Indeed, Yemeni-Saudi relations have always been tense since Taif Treaty that established official borders between two countries, in 1934. Border disputes continually accompanied bilateral relations until 2000, when they signed an agreement to end these border disputes. But Yemen has not reached to the stability because of the clashes between the government and the northern Yemeni residents belonging to the Zaidi sect, a branch of Shiite Islam in this mainly Sunni country (Shiite population constitutes 35% of the total Yemeni population). These clashes have become more and more remarkable since the summer of 2009 and the conflict has acquired a regional dimension. On one hand, Yemeni authorities accuse Iran of backing these uprisings<sup>34</sup>, on the other, the rebels accuse Saudi Arabia for aiding Yemeni government to apply a policy of pressure on them because of the fact that they are from Shiite sect<sup>35</sup>. And here, it is especially Saudi Arabia which is most concerned by the rebels of Shiite population in its immediate neighbor's territories since the rebels have expanded into the Saudi territories.

Finally the third point showing the growing Iranian influence is obviously the Iranian nuclear program. Indeed, Iran's achievement of nuclear status and its regional implications proves its enhanced power. Despite international community's efforts to find a consensus with Iran, the fact that Iran has not given any concession from its strict stance regarding its nuclear program has created a source of concern for some other states, including the GCC countries, although Iran restates each time that it develops a civil nuclear program. This serious attitude of Iran has also triggered others to reach the same status. Facing this new threat, the GCC states declared in their 27<sup>th</sup> summit held in December 2006 their will to develop their own nuclear program under the provisions of International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)<sup>36</sup>, emphasizing that each state has the right to develop nuclear program for peaceful purposes. Especially, Putin's visit to Saudi Arabia in February 2007 showed that the GCC states are ready to develop such a program, that they are looking for nuclear supply providers and that Russia is volunteer to be this provider<sup>37</sup>. It is possible to evaluate this attempt coming from the GCC's side as an attempt aiming at balancing Iran's nuclear issue even if this is not expressed directly. But even though Iran's nuclear issue is an uneasy problem in the GCC's leaders' minds, taking lessons from Iraq war in 2003, they have always called for a peaceful

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<sup>34</sup> 'Yemen Points to Iranian backing for Rebels', *Reuters*, 18 August 2009, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSTRE57H5TK20090818>

<sup>35</sup> 'Yemen Rebels Begin Handover of Saudi Arabian Soldiers', *BBC*, 15 February 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8515903.stm>

<sup>36</sup> 'GCC Seeks Nuclear Energy', *Gulf News*, 11 December 2006 <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/gcc-seeks-nuclear-energy-1.270258>

<sup>37</sup> 'Russia Could Help Saudi in Atomic Energy-Putin', *Reuters*, 12 February 2007, <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSL1239787>

settlement of the dispute rather than the use of tougher cautions such as the use of force<sup>38</sup>. Even during the fieriest speeches of Bush administration against Iran in 2006 and 2007, the GCC did never change its stance toward Iran, opposing to rumors that they would permit their territories to be used in an attack against Iran<sup>39</sup>, admitting that Iran is a very powerful regional state and that no regional stability could be achieved there without the consent of Iran. This means that the GCC has adopted a precautious but also a moderate attitude toward Iran, to prevent the rise of any instability that may come from this dispute between Iran and international community.

So far, we have based our analysis on organizational level, therefore on the GCC's summit declarations and on the statements made by Arab politicians talking on the behalf of the GCC. The conclusion we reached after this analysis, leads us to accept that the GCC members have generally a common perception of international politics since they could agree on the GCC's official declarations. This point is obviously relevant for a candidate of security community. However, to make a complete analysis, we must not miss another point: particularities at states' level. Here, it would be necessary to look at different stances that the GCC' members have taken in some cases.

After all mentioned previously, it is evident that U.S. led invasion of Iraq led to an undeniable truth: the rise of Iran as a growing power in the region. Not only this rise affects directly the GCC countries as in the case of island dispute and that of sectarian tensions within their borders, but also it has an indirect impact on them through its regional implications as in the cases of Hamas, Hezbollah, Yemen and nuclear issue. Facing all of them, the official policy of the GCC at organizational level is clear: It prefers to act multilaterally, respects international rules, particularly putting the military option off the table, but also it prefers to avoid the direct interference of external actors. This moderate and balancer behavior of the GCC shows the common perception and the common purpose (about the regional order that should exist) of the member states. However, even if they have these convergences, in some cases they use different means to reach their shared purpose: the relations with Iran constitute the first example of this divergence. Indeed, the degree of the relations with Iran differs from state to state in the Gulf region. To illustrate, the UAE, Qatar and Oman give a special importance to have close relations with Iran, do efforts to expand economic cooperation with Iran and do not hesitate to use expressions of fraternity and friendship during the high level visits with Iran<sup>40</sup>. It is not a coincidence that the UAE, Qatar and Oman congratulated Ahmadinejad on his

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<sup>38</sup> 'GCC Seeks Nuclear Energy', *Gulf News*, 11 December 2006.

<sup>39</sup> 'GCC Calls For Peaceful Solution to Iran's Nuclear Issue', *People's Daily Online*, 16 December 2009  
<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90777/90856/6843954.html>

<sup>39</sup> Thomas Mattair, 'Mutual Threat...', pp.135-136

<sup>40</sup> 'What to do about Iran? American & Gulf Perspectives', SABAN Center for Middle East Policy& Brookings Doha Center, the Brookings Institution, Doha-Qatar, 05 May 2010, pp.18-20  
See also Ahmadinejad's statement on Iranian-Qatari relations, 'Our Relations with Qatar Deep-Rooted, with Saudis Changing due to Foreign Interventions', *Tabnak News*, 21 August 2010, <http://www.tabnak.ir/en/pages/?cid=480>

reelection victory in 2009<sup>41</sup>. Interestingly, despite the problem of islands, the fact that the UAE has strong economic ties with Iran (even it is said that these two states are economically interdependent. The UAE provides one third of foreign investment in Iran and Iran gives technical services to the UAE<sup>42</sup>) may only be explained by the pragmatic goals of the UAE. As it is argued, Iran is "an important, political and economic ally that is too powerful and too potentially dangerous to ignore, let alone antagonize", for all these small countries of the Gulf region<sup>43</sup>.

Another example showing that although the GCC members have a convergent perception regarding the threats at organizational level (as it is indicated in summit's statements emphasizing that they all agree that Iran's nuclear problem is a threat for the whole region), they prefer nuanced means to counter this threat, was observed in December 2008. In December 2008, when the GCC foreign ministers met representatives of Bush administration to talk about Iranian issue, despite the presence of others, Oman and Qatar preferred not to join this meeting arguing that Iranian issue is an international problem that did not need the regional involvement of the GCC states<sup>44</sup>. Here, the more accommodating stances of Oman and Qatar towards Iran diverge from the others'. Similarly to this, another point of divergence at states' level is seen on Hezbollah issue. On one hand, Saudi Foreign Minister's explanations related to Hezbollah are quite clear to understand how negatively Iranian support to Hezbollah is perceived by Saudi Arabia<sup>45</sup>, on the other hand Qatari decision makers prefer a more mitigate tone toward Hezbollah and do not hesitate to realize high level official visits to Hezbollah's leaders in Lebanon to talk about international issues.<sup>46</sup> Again, means preferred by the GCC members differ from each other. Indeed, although the GCC has declared many times a common attitude toward Iran, as seen above, sometimes member states respond differently to "how to deal with Iran?". Some of them prefer a more precautious stance (Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait) while others make efforts to establish close economic and political relations (Oman, Qatar) despite the existing bilateral problems (such as the case of the UAE who has islands' problem with Iran). Inevitably, this difference affects their behaviors regarding groups, organizations supported by Iran (such as Hamas and Hezbollah) either.

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<sup>41</sup> Patrick Knapp, 'The Gulf States in the Shadow of Iran, Iranian Ambitions', *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2010, p.56

<sup>42</sup> Ömür Uzun, 'BAE-ABD Nükleer İşbirliği Antlaşması'nı Nasıl Değerlendirmeli?' ORSAM, Ocak 2009, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/tr/yazigoster.aspx?ID=24>

<sup>43</sup> Patrick Knapp, 'The Gulf States...'

<sup>44</sup> Nicole Stracke, 'The GCC and Iran: If There is Nothing to Say, Don't Say It', *The National*, 27 December 2009, <http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091228/OPINION/712279940/1317>

<sup>45</sup> 'Iran's Support for Hizbullah will Affect Foreign Relations', *Jerusalem Post*, 1 March 2010 <http://www.jpost.com/MiddleEast/Article.aspx?id=101006>

<sup>46</sup> 'Nasrallah, Katar Başbakanını Kabul Etti', *İsra Haber*, 1 May 2010, <http://www.israhaber.com/nasrallah-katar-basbakanini-kabul-etti--haberi.html>

### **In Group Developments: Efforts to Resolve Territorial Disputes within the GCC and the Military Cooperation**

In this part, it would be more meaningful to analyze the steps of military cooperation of the GCC in the post-2003 period, just after having a look at military developments occurred between 1981 and 2003.

The six Gulf States established the GCC in 1981 with the purpose of coordination, integration and cooperation in 'all fields', and the main reason why these six countries decided to come together was mainly based on security concerns in the Persian/ Arabian Gulf region. The instinct of the GCC states to protect themselves from the dangers of the political-religious atmosphere in Iran and those of the Iraq-Iran War encouraged them to establish a new structure of cooperation. Also, the need to ensure the regional security by the regional actors (without external interference) made them more motivated for such structure. Indeed, the statement issued by the General Secretary of the GCC Abdollah Bishara in June 1981 emphasizing that the western military aid is not the only way to ensure Gulf's security and underlying that the U.S. presence in this region through RDF (Rapid Deployment Force, a military force established ...) would trigger Soviet interference into the region and thereby it would create an instability rather than ensuring the regional security, is quite clarifying<sup>47</sup>. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was another reason triggering further military cooperation between member countries in the following years. After condemning Iraqi action, the GCC decided to strengthen the Peninsula Shield Force. This decision was followed by another one, foreseeing the establishment of a permanent security force with the help of Egypt and that of Syria, to protect Kuwait against future aggression. Even if this last decision didn't have a 'permanent' structure in practice, the GCC guaranteed Egypt's and Syria's military help in a case of threat.<sup>48</sup>

Despite of the existence of these sources of motivation, the security field was not held primarily by the member countries in the following years for several reasons. The security agenda in the Gulf was mainly complicated by the fact that the local states were competing with each other for power and influence, also confronting domestic issues of state building<sup>49</sup>. As mentioned before, even if the GCC states were motivated to cooperate militarily at the beginning, all these developments stayed on paper because of problem of mistrust between member states. Political differences among the members had been the main factors preventing them from placing gulf defense on a collective rather than on a bilateral basis<sup>50</sup>. In the following years of the Gulf War, since the immediate source of threat disappeared, the GCC's members lost their motivation to deepen their cooperation within the organization; instead they

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<sup>47</sup> Tayyar Arı, *Basra Körfezi ve Ortadoğu'da Güç Dengesi 1978-1996*, (Alfa, 1996), p.159

<sup>48</sup> Helem Chapin Mets, *Persian Gulf States: A Country Study*, (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1993), <http://countrystudies.us/persian-gulf-states>

<sup>49</sup> F.Gregory Gause III, 'The International Politics of the Gulf', in Louise Fawcett (ed) *International Relations of the Middle East*, (Oxford University Press, 2005) p. 264

<sup>50</sup> Mets, *Persian Gulf...*

preferred to sign security agreements with Great Powers. For instance, Kuwait preferred to sign bilateral cooperation agreements with every permanent member of Security Council to have more security guarantees. The rest signed several deals with the USA, France and the United-Kingdom. As it is indicated in Barnett and Gause's article, the Gulf monarchies choose at that time a 'go it alone' defense strategy.<sup>51</sup> Of course, the reemergence of territorial disputes among Gulf monarchies (Qatar& Bahrain; Qatar& Saudi Arabia, Oman& Saudi Arabia, UAE& Saudi Arabia) played an important role in this choice either. The member states of the GCC could not agree on what was the threat, and how the security should be established. In fact, one of the most concrete examples of this divergence of perception came from Omani side since Oman was the only country of the GCC that accepted the RDF's deployment during 1980's (contrary to the general opinion within the GCC refusing the direct U.S. presence in the Gulf Region). Moreover, Oman continued to have positive relations with Iran even during Iran-Iraq war, in a period when Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were openly supporting Iraq<sup>52</sup>. In addition to that kind of divergence of perception between member states, the facts that each of them was not able to spend military expenditures to carry out a common military project as much as other members do, and that there was also an economic competition between them especially after the rise of oil demand in the world were other reasons why military cooperation could not develop.<sup>53</sup> The tension between the countries was at such a high degree that the probability of war was not out of question in the general public opinion<sup>54</sup>. The first and most important condition to be a security community was thereby blocked.

By the end of 1990's, although there were some efforts coming from American side to increase defense integration and information sharing between the GCC states, Egypt and Jordan (known as 'Cooperative Defense Initiative' launched in 1999), it did not change lots of things in the general regional context. In fact, cost concerns were the first factor preventing such development. Secondly, because of the fact that this initiative identified Iraq and Iran as major threats to the region, GCC states diverged one more time.<sup>55</sup>

By the 2000's, the GCC member states had already started to make efforts to solve their territorial and other disputes even before 2003, as in the example of Saudi-Kuwaiti deal on their maritime border signed at the beginning of 2000's<sup>56</sup>. And it is obvious that with the changing regional circumstances, the

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<sup>51</sup> Barnett, Gause III, 'Caravans in Opposite...' p.182

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey A. Lefebvre, 'Oman's Foreign Policy in the Twenty-First Century', *Middle East Policy*, Vol:17, No:1, Spring 2010, p.100

<sup>53</sup> Arı, *Basra Körfezi ve ...*, p.160-161

<sup>54</sup> In Barnett and Gause's work, an example of that is given. It is said that when Gause had participated in a seminar on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East at Qatar University in 1994, the first question directed to him was what would be the American position if one GCC country attacked another one. This example proves that the escalation of tension between these countries could lead to armed conflict. So the idea of war was between probabilities.

<sup>55</sup> Patrick Knapp, 'The Gulf States...', p.52

<sup>56</sup> 'Kuwait, Saudi Finalize Gulf Border Deal', *Gulf News*, 1 February 2001, <http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/kuwait-saudi-finalise-gulf-border-deal-1.414278>

unresolved border disputes within the GCC took fewer places in its agenda and it left its place with time to the territorial disputes between the UAE and Iran.

It is possible to say that, especially since 2003, the GCC leaders have drawn their attention from in group territorial disputes to the group-out group territorial disputes. Indeed, the analysis of summit communiqués helps us to see that there is a special focus given to the islands' dispute (Greater Tunb and Lesser Tunb and Abu Mousa ) between the UAE and Iran and that the GCC backs each time the UAE on that issue, which may be accepted as a sign of the birth of 'we-ness'. But it is also significant that the GCC leaders call for peaceful means to restore the UAE's right to its three islands occupied by Iran. In each meeting of the GCC Foreign Ministers Council, they do not hesitate to reiterate their support for the UAE.<sup>57</sup> Also, the fact that the GCC cooperate with other powers such as the European Union (EU) is another crucial point which we have to refer to. In fact, all member states of the GCC declared a communiqué in April 2009 with the EU emphasizing their common strong support for the UAE regarding the islands' issue and urging Iran to restore confidence<sup>58</sup>. All these points are significant to reveal that the GCC internalized the three islands' problem of the UAE and that they decided to adopt a common stance. According to this, the problem of the UAE is not only the problem of this state anymore. It is the problem of the GCC overall.

Except the islands' problem between the UAE and Iran, the fact that the GCC member states faced new challenges after 2003 made them reluctant to continue their disputes. They become reluctant even to talk about this issue. When it comes to analyze the summit communiqués after 2003, it is possible to notice that the GCC member states prefer other urgent topics to discuss about. According to Gulf diplomatic sources, the leaders usually avoid discussing disputes between their countries<sup>59</sup>. Indeed, other internal sources of threat such as terrorist attacks occurred in different member countries or uprisings arising from sectarian issues have dominated their agenda. This reluctance to revitalize their disputes may be accepted as a strategy to ensure the cooperation within the GCC to deal with other regional common threats. Particularly, at the beginning of 2008, the fact that Saudi Arabia has appointed a new ambassador to Qatar<sup>60</sup> six years after recalling its diplomat from Doha and suspending relations with this country is another key element demonstrating that the

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<sup>57</sup> 'GCC Rejects Iran Move on UAE Island', *Gulf News*, 15 March 2005  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/gcc-rejects-iran-move-on-uae-island-1.280753>  
GCC Backs UAE on Islands Issue', *Gulf News*, 9 June 2009

<sup>58</sup> 'UAE Gets Strong Backing in Island Dispute with Iran', *Gulf News*, 30 April 2009  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/uae/general/gcc-backs-uae-on-islands-issue-1.2127>  
<sup>59</sup> 'UAE Gets Strong Backing in Island Dispute with Iran', *Gulf News*, 30 April 2009  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/oman/uae-gets-strong-backing-in-island-dispute-with-iran-1.1934>

<sup>59</sup> 'Riyadh Summit 'will not Discuss Qatar-Saudi Spat', *Gulf News*, 20 May 2005  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/saudi-arabia/riyadh-summit-will-not-discuss-qatar-saudi-spat-1.288290>

<sup>60</sup> 'Saudi Ambassador to Renew Qatar Ties', *Gulf News*, 28 February 2008  
<http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/saudi-ambassador-to-renew-qatar-ties-1.86846>  
'Katar ve Suudi Arabistan Sınır İhtilafını Çözdü', *Yakın Doğu Haber*, 20 March 2009  
[http://www.yakindoguhaber.com/haber\\_detay.php?haber\\_id=6396](http://www.yakindoguhaber.com/haber_detay.php?haber_id=6396)

problems within the GCC are put aside and other hot topics began to attract attention.

Moreover, the GCC member states not only make efforts to solve their intra-group problem but also they make special efforts to establish a military cooperation. Their efforts to establish a military cooperation have taken a concrete shape both at multilateral (organizational) and bilateral levels.

The first effort to establish multilateral military cooperation is Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI) that was launched at NATO's summit in 2004, in Istanbul. Through this summit, NATO declared its readiness to undertake a new initiative in the Broader Middle East region. Enhancing security and regional stability through promoting NATO's cooperation with interested countries such as providing tailored advice on defense reform, promoting military-to-military cooperation to contribute to interoperability through participation, fighting against terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) was declared as the priority of this initiative<sup>61</sup>. This initiative is also accepted as the complementary part of NATO's specific relationship with the partner countries of the Mediterranean Dialogue. Only Bahrain, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar accepted to become parts of this new cooperation, accepting to hold regular consultative meetings regarding military training and exchanges, differently from Saudi Arabia and Oman who were hesitant about ICI. And it is appropriate to say that this hesitance is still continues.

Indeed, the consultative meetings aiming at the strengthening of cooperation between NATO and Arab Gulf Arab countries constitute the main proof showing Saudi and Omani hesitance. Especially the one held in 2008 in Bahrain was quite clarifying on the Saudi and Omani reluctance. In this summit, contrary to Bahrain who signed a new security intelligence agreement with NATO, Saudi Arabia and Oman still kept their hesitance about the participation to ICI. Saudi Arabian and Omani diplomatic representatives attending this meeting declared that their states had not officially decided yet about the participation to this initiative.<sup>62</sup> It is generally said that the main reason of this Saudi and Omani reluctance lies behind the disappointment created by the U.S. after Iraqi War of 2003. Since it was officially stated by the Saudi ambassador in Brussels Abdullah el Muallimi, in Saudi minds there are some questions marks about NATO's role and its purpose after this war.<sup>63</sup> Saudi and Omani officials made similar statements in the next annual consultative meeting, held in the UAE in 2009.

Another initiative aiming at upgrading military cooperation to a higher level was launched in 2006 through the Gulf Security Dialogue (GSD), aiming at providing a cooperative platform between the USA and the GCC. The GCC

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<sup>61</sup> Istanbul Cooperation Initiative, *NATO Policy Document*, 28 June 2004, <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-cooperation.htm>

<sup>62</sup> 'NATO Körfez Ülkeleriyle İşbirliğini Genişletiyor', *Deutsche Welle*, 25 April 2008, [http://dw-world.de/popup/popup\\_printcontent/0,,3291224,00.html](http://dw-world.de/popup/popup_printcontent/0,,3291224,00.html)

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

defense capabilities and interoperability, regional security issues, counter-proliferation, counterterrorism, critical infrastructure protection and commitments to Iraq have been the main points of cooperation. Defined as 'defensive' by the Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs of the USA in 2006, John Hillen, the GSD was primarily initiated to ensure defense integration of all regional countries with USA.<sup>64</sup> The GSD was implemented during Bush's era through annual multilateral exercises including "the world's largest mine countermeasure exercise" (Arabian Guntlet in Bahrain) and "a missile defense operation with full GCC participation" (Eagle Resolve in Qatar). Besides, the U.S. Arms sales up to 4 billion dollars to the GCC states still constitutes other dimensions of this military cooperation.<sup>65</sup> Border and maritime security equipments, including radar systems and communication gears and also Upgraded Patriot Advances Capability-3 have been some of the arms sold to the GCC members<sup>66</sup>.

The EU is another partner of the GCC in the post-Iraqi War period. Besides economic ties such as negotiations since 2002 for a Free Trade Agreement, the GCC is also motivated to establish political and military relations with the EU. The principal factor under this motivation is undoubtedly "the new security environment in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 and the Iraq War"<sup>67</sup>. This new environment has motivated two sides "to come together and to adopt common positions"<sup>68</sup>. Nowadays, the relations between two sides exceed the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue. Indeed, the framework of the relations comes from EU-GCC Cooperation Agreement signed in 1989, but during 2000's, current political ties have become tenser than what was expected in this agreement. It is possible to realize common political positions of two sides toward current international developments (such as Israeli-Palestinian dispute, Iraq and Iran) in the Joint Communiqués of the Joint Council and Ministerial Meetings<sup>69</sup>. In these communiqués, the EU and the GCC are showing clear readiness and willingness to move their relations to a higher strategic level<sup>70</sup>.

In addition to these multilateral ones, new bilateral relationships were established in recent years. Facing Iranian challenge, the GCC member countries, in addition to deepen their relations within the organization,

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<sup>64</sup> Patrick Knapp, *The Gulf States...*, p.52

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.52-54

<sup>66</sup> Kenneth Katzman, 'The U.S.-Gulf Security Dialogue', The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2007 [http://www.ecssr.ac.ae/CDA/en/FeaturedTopics/PFFeaturedTopics/0,1764,607,00.html?tablename=article\\_detail](http://www.ecssr.ac.ae/CDA/en/FeaturedTopics/PFFeaturedTopics/0,1764,607,00.html?tablename=article_detail)

See also, Cristopher M. Blanchard – Richard F. Grimmett 'The Gulf Security Dialogue and Related Arms Sale Proposals' CRS *Report for Congress*, 8 October 2008

<sup>67</sup> Bülent Aras, 'Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship', *Middle East Policy*, Vol.12, No.4, Winter 2005, p.93

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> For an example of common positions on Israeli-Palestinian dispute, Iraqi stability and Iranian nuclear program, see the Joint Communiqué of 20th EU-GCC Joint Council and Ministerial Meeting, Luxembourg, 14 June 2010, [http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/115186.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/er/115186.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> For detailed information about the EU-GCC Relations, see also 'GCC-EU Research Bulletins', Gulf Research Center Publications.

preferred improving their military structure by signing bilateral agreements with regional and global powers as well. The examples are as follows: Saudi Arabia proposed to sign a missile-defense deal with Russia; Oman initiated to start joint air-defense exercises with India in October 2009; UAE decided to accept the proposition of French President Nicholas Sarkozy regarding having a naval and air base in Abu Dhabi.<sup>71</sup>

Apart from multilateral and bilateral military cooperation initiatives, the GCC leaders have also decided to deepen their military relations within the organization: In fact, in December 2009, they ratified a defense strategy to upgrade the joint Al Jazeera Shield's capabilities, to deal with arms smuggling to the GCC countries and to intensify the information exchange among regional security bodies<sup>72</sup>. No need to enumerate all the developments concerning that. But this general will for the military cooperation seems to us critical to understand the changing philosophy of the GCC member states regarding the GCC, after 2003. The GCC is not anymore just a platform for further dialog but it is a continuing institution in which common projects on paper become concrete achievements. And the most important characteristic of this institution seems to be the fact that the members prefer to settle their disputes not by physical force anymore but in some other way, which make them closer to be a security community.

### ***Efforts to Ensure an Economic Integration***

The Unified Economic Agreement was signed by the GCC members in November 1981, establishing strict economic goals to achieve by the end of the 1980's, or the latest during 1990's. This agreement, calling for the formation of a GCC custom union and free trade zone, the creation of a collective negotiating force to enhance the group's leverage in international economy in general, coordinated oil policies and a common currency, was too ambitious for all these states who had problems of economic complementarity and also political tensions (that were analyzed in the previous chapter) prevented them from going further.<sup>73</sup> Therefore little steps were taken at that time to achieve these goals.

By the 2000's, it is possible to indicate that the oil boom started at the beginning of 2000's has created an appropriate milieu to launch an economic integration process in the Middle East region overall and that the GCC has become the pivotal player in this new phase of integration<sup>74</sup>. The growth rates in GDP, the improvement in inter-Arab trade, the big amounts of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) are the revelators of regional economic development. The facts

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<sup>71</sup> 'Gulf States Step up Defenses', International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), *Strategic Comments*, Volume 15, Issue:09, November 2009

<sup>72</sup> 'GCC Reviews Steps in Military Cooperation', *Gulf News*, 15 December 2009  
<http://gulfnews.com/news/gulf/kuwait/gcc-reviews-steps-in-military-cooperation-1.554035>

<sup>73</sup> Barnett, Gause, 'Caravans in Opposite...', p.176-177

<sup>74</sup> Steffen Hertog, 'The GCC and Arab Economic Integration: A New Paradigm', *Middle East Policy*, Vol:XIV, No:1, Spring 2007, p.52

that most of the largest Arab investment companies are located in the Gulf and that cross border capital flows increase the interdependence within the GCC are crucial to mention. All these points demonstrating that "the GCC is an emerging dominant economic hub" lead us to say that the GCC is a "potential anchor of stability in the Arab world"<sup>75</sup>.

The GCC member states had already agreed in 2001 to create a shared currency which would help them integrate their economies and pursue an independent monetary policy. Especially, in the second half of 2000's, the leaders accelerated their efforts for such a project. Almost in every annual summit of leaders, the general will for a Monetary Union was repeated. In December 2006's summit, the statement given by Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah is significant to understand the general hope attributed to such project: "... united, we will be a power that can not be ignored"<sup>76</sup>. And in December 2007's summit, their leaders restated concretely their will to pursue such a policy and called for further integration<sup>77</sup>. But the project to create a common monetary policy was put into practice 7 years later after 2001's summit, by the adoption of the GCC Monetary Union Agreement by the GCC Supreme Council in the session of December 2008. Even though Oman backed out of the deal in 2006 and the UAE also announced that it was withdrawing from the deal after expressing opposition to the central bank being located in Riyadh<sup>78</sup>, the decision of December 2008 may be accepted as the start of a new period within the GCC, since the general idea about Monetary Union is that the two countries will be tempted to join the project in the near future after their needs and demands are accommodated.

Another development that may contribute to the economic integration of those countries is the project of a pan-GCC railway project. If that project becomes real, the integration of the GCC will be faster since the connection of the people of the six states will be ensured, easing free movement. That's why the summit of Kuwait in December 2009 is accepted as a landmark in the GCC's history since the awaited railway project was concretely launched in this summit.<sup>79</sup> At the end, all these points may be accepted as the sign of increased local confidence within the GCC.

At the end, it is appropriate to say that the GCC tends to be more motivated to have military and economic cooperation both multilaterally and bilaterally, compared to previous periods (1981-2003). The main reason of this motivation

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<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p.67

<sup>76</sup> 'Saudi Urges Gulf Arabs to Back Economic Union', *Kahaleej Times*, 9 December 2006  
[http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2006/December/middleeast\\_December145.xml&section=middleeast](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/DisplayArticle.asp?xfile=data/middleeast/2006/December/middleeast_December145.xml&section=middleeast)

<sup>77</sup> 'GCC Aims for Greater Integration', *Arab News*, 4 December 2007  
<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=4&section=0&article=104278&d=4&m=12&y=2007>

<sup>78</sup> 'Saudi Arabia approves GCC monetary union agreement', *Gulf News*, 2 September 2009.  
<http://gulfnews.com/business/banking/saudi-arabia-approves-gcc-monetary-union-agreement-1.537863>

<sup>79</sup> 'Kuwait Summit a Landmark for GCC', *Gulf News*, 16 December 2009  
<http://gulfnews.com/opinions/editorials/kuwait-summit-a-landmark-for-gcc-1.554000>

seems to be Iraq war in 2003 and its consequences. At organizational level, although there is a general will of military and economic cooperation; at states' level, there are some divergent opinions about "who must be the partner?". Again, in contrast to the convergent perception and purpose (each of them agree that only more military, economic cooperation and partnerships may make them stronger to deal with the sources of threat), means preferred by states diverge from each other. The main example of that is obviously the cases of Saudi Arabia and Oman, which do not agree to join ICI. Having close relations with Iran, Oman does not want to antagonize Iran, while Saudi Arabia prefers bilateral ties with its historic partner U.S..<sup>80</sup>

## CONCLUSION

According to Barnett and Gause's chapter written at the end of 1990's, the GCC was not a security community since there were several factors that prevented the members from being a united body. Agreeing totally with this argument mentioned above, it would be significant to complete this argument, arguing that U.S. led invasion of Iraq in 2003 played a critical role encouraging the GCC members for moving toward a security community.

Barnett and Gause enumerated the border disputes, the general suspicion of small Gulf countries toward Saudi hegemony, the erosion of consensus between the GCC members regarding regional states, as the main factors preventing the GCC from being a security community. Also they added that although the first Gulf war triggered these states to cooperate, it did not last long when the threat disappeared. But with all the points we referred to in the previous chapters of this paper, it seems possible to say that in contrast to the first one, the second Gulf War (2003) succeeded to create a permanent ambiance of cooperation within the GCC, since in the post Second Gulf war period, the problems mentioned by Barnett and Gause have been out of the agenda of the GCC countries.

The main reason why there is a permanent ambiance of cooperation within the GCC lies in the fact that the Second Gulf war is quite different from the first one on one point: on the crucial change that have undergone Iraqi internal dynamics. In fact, in the first Gulf War, the threat was Iraq it self. Once Iraq was forced to withdraw from Kuwait, the threat disappeared and the region came back to its previous situation. After a short period of total cooperation, the GCC's members, in parallel with the region, came back to their previous situations and the members continued to invest in bilateral security ties with the U.S., as before. So, the post-war ambiance was not so different from the pre-war ambiance. However, it is not exactly the same case for the second Gulf War. Indeed, the post-war ambiance is different from the pre-war ambiance since Saddam's regime does not exist anymore. Also, the pre-war—post-war ambiances' difference is not limited in Iraq since the change in Iraqi internal

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<sup>80</sup> Mina AL-ORAIBI, 'An Emirati Vision for NATO's Gulf Strategy', Royal United Services Institute, 5 November 2009, <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4AF2CAD7E7536>

dynamics has had regional consequences. Iraq war of 2003 triggered deep and insidious threats for Gulf states (the rise of Shia on one hand and that of the extreme Islamist ideology on the other) and therefore decreased American credibility from the GCC's perspective. So, differently from the post first Gulf War period, the GCC members have ceased to invest only in bilateral security ties with the U.S. and started to pay also attention to deepen their relations within the GCC and to act in a multilateral approach.

This change in the GCC members' minds may be best summarized by the statements of the GCC officials. Indeed, Saudi foreign Minister Al Faisal's speech on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2004 in Manama, Bahrain was quite meaningful and sent the first signals of a new vision of security structure for the GCC states:

*"...There is an urgent need for a collective effort aimed at developing a new and more solid framework for Gulf security... The development of cooperative relations among the countries of the region themselves is dependent on each of them feeling confident and secure in its own borders, which in turn requires international guarantees. These international guarantees can not be provided unilaterally even by the only superpower in the world. They can only be provided by the collective will of the international community through a unanimous declaration by the Security Council guaranteeing the sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of all the countries of the Gulf and promising to act forcefully against any external threats....."*<sup>81</sup>

And five years after this statement, in 2009, Secretary General of the GCC, Abdul Rahman Al Atiyah briefly summarized the general circumstances in which the GCC has been, with these words:

*"...The special regional, Arab and international political, economic and security conditions required that the Gulf States adopt a common stance..."*<sup>82</sup>

All these statements are important to demonstrate that Iraq war of 2003 and especially its consequences are indelibly printed in the GCC's countries memories and made their foreign policies move toward a new structure based on a multilateral stance. After Iraq War, they started to rethink about their institution, their security structure and also about their identity. However, as mentioned before, it is possible to realize that although after Iraq War in 2003 the GCC has made strides in the way toward being a security community, it is not yet a security community. In one hand, it is obvious that the GCC member states agree on the dangerous consequences of Iraqi War and thus on Iran's growing influence and its regional impacts. They also agree on the fact that any strong military opposition to Iran may cause a deep regional instability by creating military confrontation. That's why, the GCC has taken generally a mitigate attitude toward Iran and opposed to all propositions aiming a military

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<sup>81</sup> Prince Saud's Address on Security at Bahrain Seminar, 12 February 2004, <http://www.saudiembassy.net/archive/2004/speeches/page1.aspx>

<sup>82</sup> 'GCC Foreign Ministers Discuss Qatari Vision', *Gulf News*, 10 November 2009 <http://gulfnnews.com/news/gulf/qatar/gcc-foreign-ministers-discuss-qatari-vision-1.525618>

intervention. These points regarding their perception of threat constitute the main convergent perspective between Gulf countries. Another convergent point is that all members agree on the fact that there should be more military and economic cooperation within the GCC and also with other powers. These shared points may be seen clearly at the GCC's summits declarations and official statements. On the other hand however, their divergence starts at the point of their preferred way of confronting the threat (the means). Almost each of members has its own style of answering to "how to deal with Iran?" and "who must be our partner?". The answers of these questions constitute the principal points of divergence at states' level in the GCC for the moment.

As it is indicated in Barnett and Gause's chapter that we take as the basis of this paper:

*"...When the GCC was created, membership was determined largely by their shared identity. The final statement of the first meeting of the GCC expressed the sentiment that their common destiny, shared interests and values, and common economic and political systems produced a natural solidarity among Arabs of the Gulf region... even if it was not publicly declared, one purpose of the GCC was to provide Gulf citizens with a rhetorical and institutional alternative identity that would compete with Iran's Islamic revolutionary and Iraq's secular Arab nationalist platforms. GCC could provide a safe political alternative for citizen's loyalties against the appeals of Baghdad and Teheran But there is little evidence that citizens of the 6 states shared a conscious 'Gulf' political identification at that time..."<sup>83</sup>*

After Iraq war's hard consequences, it seems appropriate to say that the GCC countries have made efforts to rediscover this identity they planned to create when they had first launched the GCC as a regional platform. The dangerous climate arising from Iraq war in 2003 made them rethink about their behaviors and also remember their main intention at the time of beginning the GCC's initiative. Maybe this time, the leaders of the six states will succeed to overcome the existing divergent preferences of means, and will be more determined to share "a conscious Gulf political identification", a sense of 'w-ness' and therefore to become a security community.

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<sup>83</sup> Barnett, F. Gause III, 'Caravans in Opposite...', pp.166-171

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