

Turkey-GCC Relations: Is There a Future?*

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ABSTRACT

The historical solution to the security problem in the Persian/Arabian Gulf, that is, the active military protection of a super power, is no longer sustainable as the unipolar world gives way to a multipolar one and the credibility of the United States to provide military security is being increasingly questioned. This paper addresses a question neglected by both international and regional analysts: can Turkey play any role in the future Gulf security architecture? The paper argues that Turkey can help the GCC states develop effective state institutions and build regional institutional mechanisms to solve potential crises and alleviate the security dilemma in the Gulf. It can deliver this public good to the region precisely because Turkey has strong economic and political interests to have good relations with all sides concerned with the Gulf security.

According to different estimates, between 36 and 40 percent of the world oil reserves and between 22 and 23 percent of the world natural gas reserves are under the control of six states comprising the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman and UAE (Table 1). While only less than 0.6 percent of the world population, around 36 million, live in these countries in conditions above world standards, more than 20 percent of the world population, around 1.6 billion, live in their immediate geographical vicinity –India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia and Yemen– in conditions below world standards (Table 2). For example, GDP per capita levels among the GCC countries range from the lowest 14,031 \$ in Oman to the highest 64,193 \$ in Qatar, in terms of purchasing power parity. However, in the latter group, GDP per capita levels range from 284 \$ in Eritrea to 4,028 \$ in Iran, in terms of purchasing power parity.

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Table 1: Oil and Natural Gas Reserves in the GCC

	Oil Reserves (Billion Barrels)			Natural Gas Reserves (Trillion Cubic Feet)			
	BP	OGJ	World Oil	BP	CGAZ	OGJ	World Oil
Bahrain	NR	0.125	NR	3.002	3.002	3.25	NR
Kuwait	101.5	104	99.425	63.001	63.002	63.36	66.3
Oman	5.572	5.5	5.7	24.367	24.367	30	32
Qatar	27.436	15.21	20	904.05	904.06	891.94	903.15
Saudi Arabia	264.20	266.71	264.825	253.03	257.8	258.47	254
UAE	97.8	97.8	68.105	215.06	227.323	214.4	196.3
World	1238.89	1342.89	1184.208	6290.63	6342.41	6254.36	6436.02

Source: Energy Information Administration, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/reserves.html>

Notes: BP refers to BP Statistical Review of World Energy and its numbers are from year-end 2007; OGJ to Oil and Gas Journal and its numbers are from January 1, 2009; World Oil to World Oil Journal and its numbers are from year-end 2007; CGAZ to Centre International d'Information sur le Gaz Naturel et tous Hydrocarbures Gazeux and its numbers from January 1, 2009.

Table 2: The GCC States and its Environment

	Pop. (million)	HDI	GDP (per cap.)	Life Exp.	Health	Pop. Below \$2
World	6661.9					
Bahrain	0.8	39	21,421	66	669	
Kuwait	2.9	31	42,102	69	422	
Oman	2.7	56	14,031	67	321	
Qatar	1.1	33	64,193	66	1115	
Saudi Arabia	24.7	59	15,800	64	468	
UAE	4.4	35	38,436	68	491	
India	1164.7	134	1,046	57	21	75.8
Pakistan	173.2	141	879	55	8	60.3
Iran	72.4	88	4,028	62	406	8
Iraq	29.5	NA	NA	58	90	NA
Jordan	5.9	96	2,769	64	257	3.5
Egypt	80.1	123	1,729	62	129	18.4
Sudan	40.4	150	1,199	50	23	NA
Eritrea	4.8	165	284	56	10	NA
Djibouti	0.8	155	997	50	75	41.2
Somalia	8.7	NA	NA	46	8	NA
Yemen	22.3	140	1,006	55	38	46.6

Source: UN Human Development Report 2009.

Notes: Population numbers are in millions and from the year 2007; HDI refers to Human Development Index; health refers to the government expenditure per capita; pop. Below \$2 refers to the percentage of population earning below \$2 a day.

The extreme concentration of wealth in a few hands in the middle of an area heavily populated and marked by poverty constitutes the essence of the Gulf's security problems. In such an environment the neighboring states may develop strong predatory incentives, as the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait made it painfully clear. Furthermore, five smaller GCC states, -Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and

the UAE,- also have to guard their independence in the face of a much more populous Saudi Arabia.

Complicating the situation further, the GCC countries are not well endowed with necessary state capacities to combat these threats. The Gulf state institutions are often paralyzed by various factors, such as tribalism, widespread nepotism and corruption, as well as the lack of human capital. Hence, they are heavily dependent on expatriates in staffing state institutions. As a result, the GCC countries rely on domestic and international patronage, diplomacy, and more importantly, the protection of a super power in order to solve their security problem.

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The literature on the issue of security in the Gulf is ever-growing.¹ This paper aims to contribute to this literature by addressing a question, largely neglected by both international and regional analysts. Can Turkey play a role in the Gulf's future security architecture?² I argue that Turkey can make critical contributions to security in the Gulf. As the most likely regional hegemonic power in the near future, Turkey can help build institutional mechanisms to solve potential crises, thus alleviating the security dilemma of the GCC states vis-a-vis Iraq and Iran. Under the present government, Turkey is signaling its intention to serve such a role. However, I argue, Turkey still lacks the necessary resources to play that role. To do so, Turkey needs to develop a numerically and technologically superior military power, form an effective international intelligence gathering system, and turn itself into a major energy transit road connecting the GCC states, Iraq and Iran with the European energy market.

In the next section, I take a look at the security problem in the Gulf and discuss how Turkey can help the GCC states address it. In the final section I will present Qatar as a typical case among the GCC states to illustrate the Gulf's general security problem and the ways the GCC states tackle it.

Gulf Security Architecture

Security in the Gulf almost exclusively and heavily depends on the willingness of the United States to keep a strong military presence in the Gulf and wage, if necessary, costly wars against the aggressors. The problem with this situation is at least four-fold. First, the uni-polar world dominated by the US is slowly, but recognizably, giving way to a multi-polar world, which will possibly be dominated by, in addition to the US, China, Russia, India, and probably the EU. It is

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thus more advisable for the GCC states to keep a healthy distance from all sides in this global shift of power. Second, although heavy dependence on the US has positive aspects to it, it also carries with it negative repercussions. In return for the precious protection afforded by the US to its allies, the US gives itself the right

to define who are the friends and foes of the GCC states. Third, for one reason or another, anti-Americanism is on the rise throughout the Middle East, which may cause a crisis of legitimacy for the political regimes in the Gulf. Finally, if the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan further deteriorates, not only will the US' credibility be questioned, but also will the US' willingness to provide security weaken. Therefore, the present security architecture in the Gulf is unsustainable in the future and the GCC states should seriously consider all of their options.

But, what are the GCC's options? There are basically two. One option is the typical historical solution that is to depend on the protection of a superpower. If the US cannot, or is reluctant to provide security, then the choice is to invite another power, who can and is willing to do the job. Therefore, the underlying question becomes who is going to be that superpower? The future is more likely to be a multi-polar world, not a uni-polar one. In addition to the US, China, India, Russia, and the EU will possibly bid for superpower status. In such a world, dependence on one superpower only will not help, but complicate the security problem of the GCC states. The other option for the GCC states is to develop their own military capabilities, preferably within a common GCC defense system. This option is, according to this author's point of view, the only reliable option for the long-term security of the GCC states. A step in that direction has already been taken at the GCC summit in December 2009, when the GCC leaders decided to create a joint security force. However, important obstacles exist and similar attempts have failed in the past. It is highly likely that Saudi Arabia is going to dominate such a system, which is a matter of concern for the smaller Gulf States. More importantly, the GCC states have to contend with serious structural problems, such as a small and weak population base, which hinder the development of a joint. Strong military power that would serve as a deterrent.

What role, if any, can Turkey play in the future security architecture of the Gulf? Turkey had long been absent in the Gulf. In fact, after the Ottoman power was dismantled during the First World War, Turkey cut almost all of her relations with the Gulf. For example, the first high-level official visit between Turkey and a Gulf country, Saudi Arabia, occurred in 1966 when King Faysal visited Turkey.

However, Turkey remained distant and did not try to develop any relations with the Gulf States. For many years, both Turkish and Gulf dignitaries made no high level official visits to each other. It was not until 1984, when the Turkish President, Kenan Evren, and the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah finally visited each other.³ Driven mostly by Turkey's need for new markets and foreign capital, the relations took a new turn with the accession to power of the Justice and Development Party. Since then, economic relations between Turkey and the Gulf have expanded; for example, the trade volume has increased four-fold from 2.1 billion US dollar in 2002 to 8 billion US dollar in 2009 (Table 3).⁴

Table 3: Turkey-GCC Trade Relations (total volume in million \$)

	1996	2002	2005	2009
Saudi Arabia	2.138	1.348	2.850	3.462
Kuwait	0.210	0.165	0.251	0.395
Bahrain	0.014	0.035	0.060	0.138
Qatar	0.013	0.026	0.132	0.375
UAE	0.234	0.558	1.880	3.566
Oman	0.020	0.031	0.043	0.122
Total	2.632	2.165	5.220	8.059

Source: Turkish Statistics Institute, <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>

In May 2005, both sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding in Manama, Bahrain, to support economic cooperation, encourage exchange of technical expertise and information, improve economic relations, and initiate negotiations to establish free trade zones.⁵ As a symbol of the strengthening relations between Turkey and the GCC states exchanged high-level official visits. For example, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia visited Turkey in 2006 and 2007, and President of Turkey, Abdullah Gül, responded with an official visit to Saudi Arabia in 2009.

Truly a historical milestone in the relations, on September 2, 2008, the GCC foreign ministers declared Turkey a strategic partner.⁶ The GCC also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Turkey, calling for the establishment of a comprehensive and regular consultation mechanism on political, economic, defense, security and cultural matters. In this vein both sides agree to hold a joint annual meeting of foreign ministers. In the words of the Qatari prime minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jasem al Thani, by then the chairman of the GCC Ministerial Council, "the signing of the memo is a step on the way to strategic relations."⁷

The first joint ministerial meeting was held in Istanbul on July 8, 2009. As specified in the joint statement of the meeting, the sides decided to improve cooperation in "all economic, commercial and technical fields, including but not

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limited to transportation infrastructure, investment, food security and tourism," seek new prospects of cooperation "in the field of energy, including oil, gas, renewable energy and mineral resources," intensify "efforts with a view to conclude the FTA as soon as possible," coordinate the activities of security authorities "in

the fields of countering terrorism, sources of terror funding, money laundering, drug trafficking, and organized crime, as well as training at the Ankara-based Turkish International Academy against Drugs and Organized Crime," establish "mechanisms to increase cooperation among institutions of research and higher education, national archives and cultural institutions," and "promote and facilitate educational and cultural exchange programs as well as exchanges of young diplomats for language and on-the-job training." In the joint statement both sides also called for greater cooperation and coordination in military and defense domains and reiterated their support to each other's position on international problems, including issues ranging from the Iran nuclear program to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.⁸

The recent developments in the relations between Turkey and the GCC thus testify the growing recognition of the role Turkey can potentially play in the future Gulf security architecture. But, what exactly is, or should be, that role? Any plausible answer to this question should ultimately rest on a future projection on the status of Turkey in the global distribution of power. According to the 2009 statistics, Turkey has a population of 72 million with a median age of 28.8.⁹ According to the IMF statistics, Turkey's GDP was around 880 billion dollars in 2009; calculations were based on purchasing-power-parity. Turkey has become the 15th largest economy in the world. With a young population raised in a society where militaristic values are dominant, Turkey has no shortage of manpower to conscript for its armed forces. It still maintains the largest army in the EU, the second largest in NATO, and one of the largest in the world. However, Turkey has a thriving defense industry, which also started to make some headway internationally, participating, for example, at the Doha International Maritime Defense Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) in 2010 with 16 companies.¹⁰ Even though more than 200 firms and 1,000 sub-contractors with more than 50,000 people work in the domestic defense industry, Turkey is not a self-sufficient country in terms of military technologies, either directly importing high-tech military weapons or, producing them in coordination with other countries, such as, the UK, the EU, Germany, Israel, Italy, South Korea, and China. Reflecting her weakness in

military technology, Turkey was the fourth importer of arms, but the 28th largest exporter in 2007.¹¹

Based on these basic facts, one can safely assume that Turkey is going to be a formidable regional power in the near future. As such, it can play a very critical role in the future Gulf security architecture. That role is not, and should not be, a typical security provider in an Ottoman, or British or American “way”. First, it is beyond the reach of Turkey’s power. Second, it can harm Turkey’s equally important relations with the other countries in the region. For example, Turkey has good relations with Iran, and has to improve them further. In fact, in many aspects, Iran is even more critical to Turkey than the other GCC states. Iran has a huge domestic market with a population of more than 70 million, and its economy is still highly protected. Still, in 2009, for example, Iran was the fourteenth largest importer of Turkish goods. Only the United Arab Emirates, among the GCC states, imported more than Iran in that year. Requiring no visa from Iranians, Turkey attracts hundreds of thousands of Iranian tourists every year. Strategically, Iran is critical to Turkey for it is the most convenient transit road to the Central Asian Turkic Republics. Even more importantly, perhaps, Iran is not only a major gas and oil producer, but also sits between Turkey and Turkmenistan, another major gas producer. Hence, Iran’s participation is critical to the success of the Nabucco natural gas pipeline project, which will turn Turkey into a major energy transit road. In addition, Iran’s collaboration is essential for Turkey in combating Kurdish separatist movements.

Having a thriving industry and service sector, Turkey is aiming to expand its economic relations in all directions from Far East Asia to Latin America, from Russia to Africa. To do so, Turkey has to penetrate markets, which are already dominated by industrialized and industrializing countries. Hence, it cannot afford to harm its relations with any state, including those surrounding the GCC. In fact, this is exactly the reason why Turkey can play a constructive role in the future Gulf security architecture. The role of a peace broker or a third party arbiter of conflicts, preferably in an institutionalized setting, would be most befitting of Turkey’s goals in the region. The effectiveness of that role, however, ultimately depends on how much Turkey can contribute to the countries concerned with the Gulf security.

One possible way Turkey can contribute is to serve as a conduit between the GCC and NATO, hence, Europeans. In fact, upon mainly Turkey’s initiative, NATO declared its intention to develop further ties with the Middle East states in January 2004, an initiative known as the Istanbul Cooperation (ICI).¹² Especially

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smaller states in the Gulf, such as Kuwait, Bahrain, and Qatar showed an immediate enthusiasm, joining the initiative in 2004 and 2005. NATO's security provision in the Gulf has an important advantage. It brings "all the advantages of maintaining existing military-to-military ties with the US, while at the same time concealing this reality by broadening the scope of bilateral Gulf ties to include the European component of the alliance in a systematic way."¹³ However, NATO's military power really depends on the US' military power, without which NATO cannot credibly provide security in the Gulf. Hence, reliance on NATO does not solve the original security problem, which stems from the long-term unreliability of the US. Turkey should not be so dependent on NATO for its present security concerns. Moreover, Turkey should not only rely on NATO when dealing with Russia, either in terms of cooperation or in the case of potential conflicts. The same also holds true for the GCC states, whose interests overlap more with those of Russia than those of Europe since both GCC states and Russia are major oil and natural gas providers. Thus, energy ties Turkey and GCC states to Russia and Central Asia.

However, NATO can deliver critical short-to-medium term benefits to the future Gulf security architecture by helping them develop their own military capabilities within a common defense system. In fact, the Istanbul Initiative explicitly suggests this type of cooperation in "military-to-military cooperation to contribute to interoperability through participation in selected military exercises and related education and training activities that could improve the ability of participating countries' forces to operate with those of the Alliance in contributing to NATO-led operations consistent with the UN Charter." The initiative also invites "interested countries to observe and/or participate in selected NATO/PfP exercise activities as appropriate and provided that the necessary arrangements are in place," and encourages "additional participation by interested countries in NATO-led peace-support operations on a case-by-case basis."¹⁴ Close cooperation with the NATO, with greater involvement by Turkey, could steer the GCC states to develop a common defense system.

Turkey can also help GCC states in their state building projects by sharing its valuable historical experience. The Ottoman Empire started modern state building in the early 19th century as Mahmud II (1808-1839) set out to overcome two major obstacles within the Empire, which impeded modern state building: the

powerful notable families and the Janissaries. However, the Ottoman state building efforts fell short of expanding modern state structure into its Arab territories. Hence, when the Ottoman Empire dissolved, notable families continued to hold onto power in the Arab territories, a situation that Albert Hourani called ‘politics of notables.’¹⁵ Therefore, among all successor states to the Ottoman Empire, Turkey stands unique in inheriting the former imperial state structure. During the Republican period, Turkey continued to develop its state institutions, which are now possibly the most effective in the entire Middle East in delivering basic state services. In addition to its own efforts, the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF) has long enjoyed close collaboration with the US, Israel, and NATO, becoming one of the most efficient armed forces in the world.¹⁶ The TAF not only sends its officers corps abroad for training, but also attracts foreign officers for military training, reflecting its efficiency. So far, more than 20,000 military officers from 50 different countries have been trained through the TAF institutions.¹⁷ In line with the development of the modern state, Turkey also managed to create one nation out of an ethnically heterogeneous population with only some portion of the Kurdish population refusing Turkish national identity. Turkey can share its valuable historical experience with the GCC states and help them to train their bureaucrats and military personnel and cooperate in solving matters of common interest. I believe that there is a strong demand for more Turkish involvement in the region’s security architecture. To illustrate this point, we should examine a typical case among the GCC states, Qatar.

The Gulf Security Problem and the Gulf Response: The Case of Qatar

Qatar sits on 15 to 27 billion barrels of oil reserves and around 900 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, enough to turn it into an extremely wealthy country. In terms of GDP per capita purchasing power parity, Qatar arrives at the top of the list of the wealthiest countries in the world since 2004. But it is a small country with an area of 11,512 square kilometers, populated by a mere 1.2 million people. From such a small population, Qatar can muster merely around 12,000 men to defend its small, but richly endowed territories. Such a tiny force can perhaps deter other smaller GCC states, such as, Kuwait, Bahrain, and the United Arab Emirates, but it cannot be effective in deterring more populous neighbors, such as, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, or Pakistan.

To compensate for this unfavorable imbalance in military power, Qatar has no option, but to rely on the protection of a super power against its neighbors. In fact, this has been Qatar’s historical solution to its security problem. Against the encroaching Saudi state in the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the

20th century, Qatar first relied on the Ottoman Empire and then on Britain. After 1971, the US assumed the role that Britain was no longer willing to play. Qatar, thus, entered under the US' protective umbrella. The relations between Qatar and the US took a new turn in the 1990s. In 1992, Qatar signed a Defense Cooperation Agreement with the US, with which the US obtained access to Qatari bases. In 1996, Qatar spent more than \$ 1 billion to build Al-Udeid airbase even though it did not even have its own an air force. The objective was to attract the U.S military to Qatar. The opportunity arose after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. In 2003, the US moved the US Combat Air Operations Center in the Middle East from Saudi Arabia to Qatar's Al-Udeid Airbase. The US also constructed the world's largest pre-positioning facility in Qatar, Al Sayliyah army base.¹⁸ With these two bases, Qatar simply became indispensable to the US military and, in return, got the precious effective military protection it was seeking against a major military attack on its territories.

There is another dimension to the security problem Qatar and other GCC countries face. The GCC states are late-late modernizers; as a result, they have always lacked not only manpower numerically, but also in quality. In this regard, Qatar is a typical case among the GCC states. For example, in the late 1990s, Qatar launched its first law school, whose graduates could be employed in the state bureaucracy, the College of Sharia and Islamic Studies. But it was not until 2004/2005 did the College of Law became an independent college.¹⁹ Therefore, since the colonial and early independence period, the GCC states have imported in large numbers educated people from neighboring Arab states, mostly, from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, to fill the state institutions. Like other GCC countries, Qatar has extremely stringent citizenship laws. Therefore, there are many state officials who are not even citizens, mostly Arabs, but also Pakistanis. They occupy positions at all levels in almost all state institutions from the mosques and schools to the police and the armed forces. Not only are these Arab-Pakistani state officials denied citizenship for a long period of time, but also they are generally paid less than the Qataris and the Westerners occupying the same positions. It will follow suit that the state services are not going to be as effective as they could be. Therefore, Qatar, like other GCC countries, does not have the necessary state capacity to combat whatever security problems it may face, whether domestic or international.

In short, Qatar faces serious security problems. Aware of this, Qatar has been very pro-active in taking critical steps in solving its security problems. The US military bases gave Qatar the security, time, and opportunity to initiate a major transformation, which can aptly be described as state building.

Qatar, like other GCC states, is in the middle of building a stronger state, an important component of which has been the “Qatarization” of the workforce in public institutions. This is an area where Qatar has already come a long way. In 1991, the expatriates made up 56.1 per cent of the workforce employed in the government sector. By 2001, the expatriates’ share dropped to 33.9 per cent of the total workforce in the government sector. In the meantime, the number of employees in the government sector decreased from 37,028 to 34,380,²⁰ indicating that Qatar either released or did not replace a significant number of expatriates working in the government sector. If not supported by improvements in the quality of the workforce, this progress in mere quantity will not ameliorate the overall efficiency of the Qatar’s State institutions. On the contrary, it may even lead to their deterioration.

Aware of this paradox, Qatar is also aiming at a qualitative progress. Qatar puts huge sums of money in education. Sheikha Mozah’s grand ‘education city’ project brings quality programs of a few select US universities to Qatar. For example, Northwestern University has a journalism program in Education City, Cornell University a medicine program, Texas A & M an engineering program, Virginia Commonwealth a design program, and Carnegie-Mellon a business administration program. Qatar’s one and only national university, Qatar University, is also richly endowed by the state of Qatar, and is going through a major reformation. Both Education City and Qatar University also have programs to train the future bureaucrats of the State of Qatar. Education City brought Georgetown University’s renowned School of Foreign Service to Qatar in 2005, which graduated its first class in 2009. In 2006, Qatar University also initiated its own program in International Affairs, turned it into a department under the College of Arts and Sciences in 2009, which is about to graduate its first class in 2010.

Even though Qatar made some progress in the “Qatarization” of its workforce in public institutions, there is still a long way to go. With so few numbers of graduates, Georgetown SFS-Q and Qatar University Department of International Affairs produce every year; it will require decades to fill the state institutions with appropriately trained bureaucrats. More importantly, existing educational institutions are only sufficient for training entry-level bureaucratic posts. For higher-level bureaucratic training Qatar has to invest even more in intra-ministerial training, an important part of which is to instill professionalism, public service ethics, and an esprit de corps among Qatar’s public officials. For Qatar this will be a challenge to achieve, as is the case in many other places in the world, Qatar will have to struggle against over-reliance on foreign workers for a long period of time

and a paternalistic view of the state that have created a bureaucratic culture. All of these factors are inimical to developing an efficient state apparatus.

State building is essential for the sustainability of political order and stability in Qatar. The successful implementation of which is critically dependent on the unhindered flow of oil and natural gas to the world market. This is in turn dependent on the ability and willingness of the US to provide military security. Hence, the security question of Qatar and of the Gulf in a post- US hegemonic world is truly a conundrum. Aware of this problem, the GCC states are not just idly waiting to see the way their fate unfolds. They are in fact quite pro-active, working hard to have an impact on the course of their own history. In this vein, they have engaged in, what I call, international alliance building. In this regard, Qatar is a good example. Looking at the course of Qatar's foreign policy, one will not fail to notice that Qatar is, in fact, establishing extensive international links with almost all major regional and international powers. Qatar's foreign policy makers, especially four figures at the top of the Qatari political system, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al Thani, the Emir's wife, Sheikha Mozah bint Nasser al Missnad, the Crown Prince, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, and the Prime Minister, Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al Thani, travel extensively throughout the world signing trade and commercial deals with countries in different corners of the world. Even a cursory reading of Qatari newspapers' accounts of official visits of these four figures will show that Qatar is trying to construct an extensive web of relations with almost all important future potential powers of the world, such as: China, India, Russia, Brazil, Japan, European Union, Iran, and Turkey. For example, from April 2009 to March 2010 alone, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad, visited Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Costa Rica, Turkey (twice), Iran, Saudi Arabia (twice), Italy, the USA, France, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore, the UK, Belarus, Bulgaria, Portugal, and Croatia.²¹ In all of these visits and others undertaken by the Heir Apparent and the Prime Minister, Qatar signs dozens of trade agreements with the host countries. Qatar is, in a way, weaving a web of interests centered on Qatar and extending to other parts of the world.

Turkey is a critical political and international player in this broad international alliance building. Turkey has already set out to develop good relations with all sides concerned with the Gulf's security. Utilizing her relations Turkey can help institute a high-level dialogue mechanism, which was in fact, as discussed already, established between Turkey and the GCC states. That mechanism should expand to include all sides of the Gulf security system, but involving specifically Iraq and

Iran. And this is within Turkey's reach. Some GCC states, especially Qatar and Kuwait, are enthusiastic to enter into a dialogue with Iran. In an historical move, the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad, for example, extended an invitation to the President of Iran, Mahmoud Ahmedinejad, to attend the GCC summit held in Doha in December 2007, which was warmly received by the Iranian side. Qatar, in fact, has long been interested in developing good relations with Iran. The Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad, for example, visited Iran five times in the last decade, the first time was in July 2000.²² The relations have since then developed to the point that the Iranian Parliament speaker, Ali Larijani, described Qatar as a strategic partner during his visit to Qatar in July 2009. During the same visit, the Emir said, "Iran is always standing behind Arabs and the people of Palestine, but some want to make minds turn against the country while we have no problem with it. Iran is always our friend and we won't allow any ill-will person to create problems between us."²³ Qatar-Iran relations can in fact be a base upon which a broader Gulf dialogue mechanism can be built with Turkey's initiative to expand the already existing one between Turkey and the GCC. Such a dialogue mechanism can help the sides alleviate the security problem in the Gulf, build confidence and trust among all the sides.

Conclusion

This interactive security structure cannot survive alone if not supported by broader economic, educational, and cultural cooperation. It is important, for example, that Turkey becomes a energy transit corridor between the GCC states, Iran and Iraq on the one hand and Europe on the other. All sides should work to establish free trade zones, abolish trade barriers, encourage student and faculty exchanges, support common research projects, organize joint sport activities, support intra-regional tourism and so forth. Such an inter-dependent and inter-connected region will not only bring benefits to all sides, for each state has its own strategic and comparative advantage to bring to the table, but also, and more importantly, increase the cost of conflict in the region.

Finally, it should be emphasized that this scheme does not suggest in any way that the sides should aspire to create a political union, which, I think, is impractical and simply against historical trends. It also does not advise in any way that the sides should not continue to invest in their military power. The GCC states should definitely institute a common defense system and develop their own military capabilities. Hence, no other power can have an absolute upper hand over regional or international relations. Any arrangement that does not treat each and every state respectfully and equally will not last long

Endnotes

◆ The author thanks Steve Wright, Ibrahim Arafat, Özgür Pala and the participants in the Gulf Research Meeting 2010 held in Cambridge, UK, for constructive comments.

1. In a fact quite a number of policy papers address this problem. Just to name a few examples, see Andrew Rathmell, Theodore Karasik and David Gompert, "A New Persian Gulf Security System," *Rand Issue Paper*, (2003), retrieved October 2, 2010, from http://www.rand.org/pubs/issue_papers/IP248/IP248.pdf; Sherif Hamdy and Jennifer Maceyko, "The Future of Persian Gulf Security: Alternatives for the 21st Century," *The Stanley Foundation Policy Dialogue Brief*, (2005), retrieved October 2, 2010, from <http://vps.stanleyfoundation.org/reports/pdb05pg.pdf>; Judith S. Yaphe, "Challenges to Persian Gulf Security: How should the United States Respond?" *Strategic Forum*, No.237, (November, 2008), pp. 1-8; Kristian Ulrichsen, "Gulf Security: Changing Internal and External Dynamics," Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States, Working Paper, (May, 2009), retrieved October 2, 2010, from <http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/LSEKP/documents/Ulrichsen%20report%2012.5.09.pdf>.

2. As exceptions in the field, see Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XII, No.4 (Winter, 2005), pp.89-97; Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security," *Turkish Politics*, Vol. 10, No.1 (March, 2009), pp.75-93. There are also a few studies in Turkish addressing the question. See, Veysel Ayhan, "Türkiye-Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkilerinde Yeni Bir Dönem: Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik Diyalog," *Ortaoğu Analiz*, Vol. 1, No. 7-8, (July-August, 2009), pp.114-123; Ali Oğuz Dirioz, "Türkiye-Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkileri," *Ortaoğu Analiz*, Vol. 1, No. 6 (June, 2009), pp.77-81.

3. Muhittin Ataman, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri: Temkinli İlişkilerden Çok-Taraflı Birlikteliğe," *Ortaoğu Analiz*, Vol.1, No.9 (September, 2009), pp.72-81.

4. For more on the economic relations between Turkey and the GCC, see Nermina Biberovic, "Turkey and the GCC States: A New Era of Bilateral Economic Relations," *Gulf Monitor Issue*, 11 (October, 2008), pp.15-21.

5. T.C. Başbakanlık Kanun Tasarısı, "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve Körfez Arap Ülkeleri İşbirliği Konseyi Üyesi Ülkeler Arasında Ekonomik İşbirliğine ilişkin Çerçeve Anlaşma," (October 27, 2005), retrived October 2, 2010 from <http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d23/1/1-0322.pdf>.

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7. *ibid.*

8. The full text of the joint statement can be found at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey at <http://www.mfa.gov.tr>, retrived October 4, 2010, from http://www.mfa.gov.tr/joint-statement-of-the-joint-ministerial-meeting-of-the-gcc-turkey-high-level-strategic-dialogue-istanbul_-turkey_-8-july-2009.en.mfa

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13. John Bruni, "NATO: The Gulf's Last, Best Hope for Peace and Stability?" The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (January, 2008).

14. See Article 7.b of the Initiative at <http://www.nato.int/docu/comm/2004/06-istanbul/docu-cooperation.htm>

15. Albert H. Hourani, "Ottoman Reform and the Politics of Notables," in Albert H. Hourani, Philip S. Khoury, and Mary C. Wilson, (eds), *The Modern Middle East: A Reader* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2003).

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