



The Concept of Deterrence in Arab and Muslim Thought - The Arab Gulf States

Working Paper

June 2012

Name of Author: Brandon Friedman

Project Leader: Shmuel Bar

Executive Summary

Security decisions in the Gulf are affected by cultural "factors." Any deterrence scenario must take into account the way the Gulf rulers orient themselves toward the world. Tribal kinship, religion (Sunni Islam), and material power (wealth and armed forces) are their sources of legitimacy. In addition, psycho-social structures which include dominance, subordination, and patriarchy contribute to the way leaders in the Gulf interact with one another and their allies and enemies. Saudi Arabia is viewed, implicitly as much as explicitly, as first among equals among the Gulf States.

There is a direct relationship between Iran's nuclear program and Saudi Arabia's decision to obtain nuclear weapons. Saudi Arabia will decide to obtain nuclear weapons capability if Iran obtains a nuclear weapon capability.

Saudi Arabia is unlikely to accept U.S. extended deterrence as a solution. This is, in part, due to its desire to avoid provoking the most radical religious elements in Saudi society. The radical doctrine of al-isti'ana bi-l-kuffar, which refers to showing non-believers loyalty by asking them for help, is one example of a radical doctrine the Saudi regime may be seeking to mitigate.

Saudi Arabia, therefore, is likely to turn to Pakistan for extended deterrence in the short term. In the medium to long-term Saudi Arabia will turn to China, Pakistan, South Korea, and France to develop its own indigenous nuclear supply chain and weapons program.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia appears to be pushing its neighboring monarchs toward a consensus for a more robust GCC union. Therefore, a future Middle East deterrence scenario must consider the strong possibility that there will be joint-GCC nuclear weapons capability. This raises a critical series of questions regarding how such a joint GCC capability will be deployed, defended, staffed, and, most important, jointly managed.

Introduction

Sir Michael Howard, the British military historian, noted that ideology is more than simply "a set of closely-related beliefs or ideas, or even attitudes." It is something broader and less systematic than what is conventionally described as "ideology." It is closer to "a mind-set" or a "Weltanschauung," or a "*mentalite*." Howard describes it as the unconsciously accepted framework for our lives, which consists of "a richly confused mixture of partly inherited and partly acquired assumptions" most of which have not been deliberately chosen.

In short, ideology is a particular group's orientation toward the world. As Howard notes, "we are all *ideologues* in spite of ourselves."¹

Therefore, any potential framework for analyzing potential Saudi deterrence behavior and policy must account for its particular orientation toward the world. It is this particularly Saudi orientation that sets decision-makers' preferences and shapes their strategic perceptions of the actions and intentions of their rivals.

Brigadier General Prince Naef bin Ahmed Al-Saud, formerly responsible for Saudi Strategic Planning, wrote that "Cultural factors are crucial to shaping Saudi security. Any prudent policy must encompass the historical, political, social, and economic features of the country, particularly to gain legitimacy among its people. Ignoring this dimension would be a reckless invitation for instability."² Saudi culture, which includes its political culture, is based on a patriarchal-tribal structure. In this structure kinship and religious affiliation remain the ultimate basis for loyalty and allegiance. Primordial clan and sectarian allegiances have been institutionalized and should not be underestimated. Further, within this structure relationships are clearly defined and obligations strictly fulfilled, while outside the tribal structure there are no clearly defined social obligations, all relationships and obligations are contingent or contractual. In such a cultural paradigm, "the only restraints on your behavior toward an enemy or a stranger were set by fear of retaliation."³ This general principle has important ramifications in a nuclear deterrence scenario, as well as for more general modes of Saudi conflict and cooperation. It also greatly affects the Saudi view of alliances.

This paper's primary working assumption is that Saudi Arabian decision makers believe Iran is trying to obtain nuclear weapons.

¹ Michael Howard, "Ideology and International Relations," *Lessons of History* (Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 139-140.

² Naef bin Ahmed Al Saud, "Underpinning Saudi National Security Strategy," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn 2002.

³ Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy* (Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 28-29.

In October 2008, the Saudi foreign minister, Saud al-Faysal, pointed out that Iran would pursue nuclear capabilities to match the "other country in the region" with a nuclear capability, alluding to Israel. He added that pursuing nuclear capability is a cornerstone national policy, not just a talking point for Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmedinejad. Most important for how Saudi Arabia perceives Iran was Saud's statement that "Whatever they say, Iran will seek a nuclear capability because it sees this as essential to their rightful position in the region."⁴

Chapter One: Extended U.S. Deterrence?

In the fall of 2009 U.S. Secretary of State Hilary Clinton floated the idea of defense umbrella for the GCC states. Her statement, which evoked Cold War-era 'extended deterrence' strategies, was intended to calm regional fears regarding Iran's expanding conventional missile capabilities. In November 2008, Iran successfully flight-tested its new *Sejil-2* medium-range, solid-fuel propellant missile. The *Sejil-2* is capable of delivering a 750 kilogram warhead to a range of about 2,200 kilometers. Iran is the only country to have developed a missile of this reach without first having developed nuclear weapons. The solid-fuel system is less vulnerable to pre-emption as a result of its shorter launch preparation time.⁵ It is believed that this missile will be operational in 2012.

In a 2011 expert report to the U.N., it was reported that Iran test-fired its 2,000-km-range *Sejil-2* in October 2010 and February 2011 and, in February 2011, also test-fired its 1,600-km-range liquid-fuel *Shehab-3*.⁶ Unlike previous tests, which had been publicly announced and widely reported in the Iranian media, there was no media coverage of these three tests. Three missile tests of this scale in five months demand a serious commitment of financial and logistical resources.⁷ So despite claims that the Iranian missile threat to Saudi Arabian oil infrastructure is overstated,⁸ the Saudis take this threat very seriously. A Saudi official, speaking to the Assistant to the U.S. President for Homeland Security in Riyadh in 2006, said that he worried more about an Iranian missile strike against Saudi oil facilities than about a terrorist attack against them, because "he can take preventative measures against terrorism but not against Iranian missiles."⁹

The Saudi reaction to a conventional missile attack was documented in the memoirs of Saudi Prince Khalid Bin Sultan, the Joint Forces Commander during the 1990-1991 Gulf War. He described how the Saudis nearly retaliated to the 20 Iraqi Scud missiles that were fired on Saudi Arabia between 20 and 23 January 1991. Prince Khalid noted that "these attacks prompted us to think of retaliation," and "If ever there was a right moment to unleash our Chinese-built surface-to-surface missiles, this seemed to be it." He elaborated on the Saudi

⁴ U.S. Department of State Cable, Riyadh to Washington, 8 November 2008, 08RIYADH1668; Last accessed in January 2012 at: <http://dazzlepod.com/cable/08RIYADH1668/?q=%2Bsaudi%20%2Bnuclear%20%2Bpakistan>

⁵ Dr. John Chipman, "Iran's ballistic missile capabilities: A net assessment," IISS Strategic Dossier, Press Statement, 10 May 2010.

⁶ U.N. Panel of Experts report, p. 26. Accessed here: <http://www.innerecitypress.com/1929r051711.pdf> on 24 January 2012.

⁷ Alon Ben-David and Robert Wall, *Aviation Week & Space Technology*, 13 June 2011, Vol. 173 Issue 21, p. 25.

⁸ Joshua R. Itzkowitz Shiffrinson and Miranda Priebe, "A Crude Threat," *International Security*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Summer 2011), p. 170.

⁹ U.S. Department of State Cable, Riyadh to Washington: 06Riyadh 9095#2, U.S. Embassy Riyadh to U.S. Department of Treasury/Department of State/NSC, 16 December 2006.

rationale in contemplating its response to the missile attacks: "We felt we needed to hit back in self-defense in order to deter further Iraqi scud attacks. Accordingly, I gave orders to assemble in the right locations all the various elements of our missiles – save for the liquid fuel, which is pumped in at the very last stage, following which a launch cannot be reversed. I then waited for Prince Sultan to transmit to me the King's order to fire. But, after some anxious hours, King Fahd decided not to escalate the conflict. He made a rational decision to reserve the missiles as a weapon of last resort, thereby demonstrating the Kingdom's sense of responsibility. He did not want to cause casualties among innocent Iraqi civilians and he no doubt judged that the Coalition's air campaign being waged against Iraq was sufficient retaliation." The Iranian missile capabilities are much more technologically sophisticated and potentially much more damaging than the relatively primitive 1991 Iraqi Scuds. In fact, one military analyst based in the Gulf suggested the U.S. and its Gulf allies should consider repositioning forces to take into consideration a preemptive attack by Iran, which would mean moving key assets to the west (in Saudi Arabia towards the Red Sea) or south (in Sea of Oman). The same analyst even suggested immediately expanding the regional missile defense system to include counter-measures against shorter-range Iranian artillery rockets and cruise missiles, which, if delivered in volume, are potentially more difficult for missile defense systems to defend against.¹⁰

In an attempt to address GCC fears the U.S. has taken concrete steps to reassure its GCC allies. It has promised the sale of modern air defense systems such as the PAC-3 and THAAD systems, and agreed to advanced weapons sales to enhance "GCC counterforce capabilities for offensive operations."¹¹ However, these advanced weapons systems are geared toward the Iranian ballistic missile program and not necessarily a practical a solution for cruise missiles and artillery rockets and other forms of Iranian asymmetric naval capabilities.

If the GCC remains unsatisfied with U.S. extended deterrence of Iran's rapidly advancing conventional weapons capabilities, then it behooves us to ask how the GCC would respond in the event that Iran breaks through as a nuclear weapons state. Extended deterrence originated in the Cold War when the U.S. and the Soviet Union declared their intention to employ their nuclear arsenals for the protection of allies. Yet, in the Gulf, the prospect of a U.S. defense umbrella is complicated precisely because it would have to take into account that the GCC consists of five member states. Would a U.S. defense umbrella be framed within a bilateral arrangement with the GCC, or through a multilateral arrangement with each of the individual member states of the GCC? Further, do the GCC regimes believe that the U.S. would take extended deterrence as far as guaranteeing that an Iranian nuclear attack on GCC states would be met with a U.S. return strike?

In order to convince the GCC states that such any such nuclear deterrence commitment was real, U.S. nuclear weapons would need to be deployed on GCC territory. U.S. aircraft carriers, naval ships, and submarines would not satisfy the Gulf rulers because they do not reflect a firm commitment. Nuclear armed submarines also raise arms-controls issues between the U.S., Russia, and China that would overshadow any kind of deterrence scenario regarding Iran. Yet placing U.S. nuclear weapons on GCC territory raises the thorny but critical issue of how much control over these weapons would devolve to the GCC governments. This would be "an essential element of any U.S. efforts to convince GCC states to voluntarily forgo efforts to launch their own nuclear weapons programs."¹²

¹⁰ Riad Kahwaji, "Possibility, Scenario of an Iranian Preemptive Attack to Control Gulf Waters," INEGMA, 4 January 2012.

¹¹ Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," INEGMA, 12 January 2012.

¹² Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," INEGMA, 12 January 2012.

Turkey offers a potential precedent for some level of joint control over U.S. nuclear weapons stationed in an ally's territory. Under a Cold War-era NATO arrangement, Turkey still hosts as many as 90 B-61 gravity bombs that can be delivered with F-16 jets at its Incirlik Air Base (IAB). Reportedly, U.S. pilots are assigned to deliver 50 of the 90 B-61 bombs stored at IAB, and the rest are assigned for delivery by the Turkish Air Force. In addition, the U.S. keeps approximately 100 nuclear bombs at NATO bases in Belgium, Germany, Netherlands, and Italy. However, the Turkish arrangement does not include a permanent deployment of a nuclear-capable F-16 wing aircraft, only the bombs suitable for the B-61. This kind of arrangement may not satisfy the Gulf rulers. Further, the Turkish model of extended deterrence does not solve the problem of nuclear parity in the event that Iran begins to accumulate a serious stockpile of nuclear weapons. Would the U.S. be willing to ensure there was nuclear parity in the Gulf? It also does not address the future scenario where Iran has developed a legitimate air-defense system, similar to the Russian S-400.¹³

The GCC regimes fundamentally understand that extended deterrence is meant to (1) signal the U.S. commitment to its GCC allies, and (2) to dissuade GCC states from developing their own nuclear weapons programs if Iran became a nuclear armed state.¹⁴ However, following the Arab uprisings in 2011, there are some who question the ultimate reliability of the U.S. as a security partner. In a speech at the GCC National and Regional Security Conference held in the Bahraini capital of Manama, Dubai's Chief of Police, Lieutenant General Dhahi Khalfan Tamim, spoke about the GCC's declining confidence in America's role in the region, and doubts about whether this serves the GCC's interests and security.¹⁵

Riad Kahwaji, who writes about military affairs in the Gulf, reported that an Iranian official recently told him that "We have crossed all the red lines and the U.S. did not do anything, and we do not think they can do anything at this stage." Kahwaji believes that the U.S. ability to set effective red lines for Iran has been gradually eroded since 2004. The Iranian official also told Kahwaji: "They (U.S. and West) said enrichment of uranium was a red line and we crossed it, and they said enriching to 20 percent was a red line and we crossed." Further, Kahwaji believes the U.S. appears weak and indecisive and expressed skepticism regarding the seriousness of U.S. threats to use the military option. Kahwaji raises the question of how seriously Iran is taking those U.S. threats. He believes that U.S. passivity in the face of Iranian threats and attacks on U.S. forces in the Gulf and Afghanistan have emboldened Iran. Further, certain Arab officials in the Gulf see the U.S. in a different light than the America of twenty years ago. Kahwaji wrote, "Washington's quick and complete switch in its foreign policy from an offensive mode to a passive mode seems to have severely undermined U.S. deterrence posture. It is hard for third world countries to see or understand how a global super power could be pushed around and be helpless against a third world regional power."¹⁶ These provocative remarks may be a form of psychological brinksmanship, perhaps intended to generate a more aggressive U.S. posture in the Gulf, however they also represent genuine fears and concerns.

The GCC also has to ask itself what would happen to U.S. extended deterrence in the event that a nuclear-armed Iran underwent a regime change and fundamentally reoriented itself into a pro-Western liberal

¹³ Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," INEGMA, 12 January 2012.

¹⁴ Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," INEGMA, 12 January 2012.

¹⁵ Mshari al-Zaydi, "When the Lieutenant General speaks," *Asharq Al-Awsat*, 22 January 2011.

¹⁶ Riad Kahwaji, "Eroded U.S. Deterrence Posture Emboldens Iran, Worries Allies," INEGMA, 10 January 2012.

democracy, but did not disarm or dispose of its nuclear weapons: Would the GCC rulers be willing to live in the shadow of a nuclear-armed Iran, regardless of the nature of the regime?¹⁷

Chapter Two:

Toward a GCC Nuclear Capability...or a Saudi Nuclear Capability?

On 2 April 2012, Steven A. Cook, the Hasib J. Sabbagh Senior Fellow for Middle Eastern Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York, argued that there is no reason to fear that the Saudis will obtain a nuclear weapon. He wrote that "given the fact that the Saudis have very little nuclear infrastructure to speak of, this kind of statement is little more than posturing designed to force the U.S. hand on Iran." He added quite cavalierly, that "Riyadh's rhetoric about acquiring nuclear weapons is empty. What is amazing is how many people take the Saudis seriously."¹⁸ Yet the volume of recent statements from senior Saudi officials and their media organs, as well as the circumstances surrounding the Saudi acquisition of the Chinese DF-3A intermediate range ballistic missiles in the mid-1980s, suggest the Saudis are not bluffing.

In 2011, there appeared to be several serious signs of the will to move toward a GCC nuclear weapons capability. In mid-November 2011 a Saudi 'alim, writing in *Asharq Al-Awsat*, a pan-Arab newspaper widely known for reflecting the views of the Saudi establishment, called for an Arab nuclear capability. Dr. Aaidh al-Qarni urged "the Arabs to manufacture the nuclear bomb and nuclear weapons." Invoking an almost wartime type call to arms, he claimed, "There are buildings currently being occupied by minor daily newspapers that no one reads, and "cultural heritage" museums housing scrap metal, worn-out rope, blunt axes, and other artifacts. These should all be turned into factories to manufacture tanks, rocket-launchers, missiles, satellites and submarines, so that the world comes to respect us, hear our voice, and appreciate our status. The world is governed by the law of the strong." Invoking Umar, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, Qarni, asked rhetorically: "Does the world respect a state for its peaceful reputation, finesse, tact, and modesty, or for its strength and power? Iran realized this secret, and indeed the Persians are among the most cunning people, described by Umar Ibn al-Khattab as having "the virtue of the mind, with which they rule."¹⁹ Qarni's comments are representative of a growing volume of voices in the Gulf suggesting that there should be an Arab nuclear weapons capability in the Gulf if Iran becomes a nuclear armed state.

In addition to important media commentators and analysts, this idea is also being expressed by voices of authority, like Turki al-Faysal. On at least three separate occasions in 2011, Turki al-Faysal made statements suggesting that there should be an Arab nuclear weapons capability if Iran obtains such a capability. The first statement was indirect and delivered 21 March at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research in Abu Dhabi.²⁰ The second statement, which was also somewhat indirect, was made in June 2011 at a private meeting with senior NATO officials at Molesworth Air base in the United Kingdom.²¹ The third statement, on 5 December 2011, at the 'Gulf and the Globe' conference, hosted by the Institute of Diplomatic Studies and the

¹⁷ Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," 12 January 2012.

¹⁸ Steven A. Cook, *Foreign Policy*, 2 April 2012.

¹⁹ Dr. Aaidh al-Qarni, *Asharq al-Awsat*, 15 November 2011.

²⁰ *Emirates News Agency*, "Arab World has been hit by political quake: Prince Turki," 21 March 2011.

²¹ *The Guardian* (U.K.), 30 June 2011.

Gulf Research Centre in Riyadh, was much clearer and more direct, "We are committed to the Middle East Zone Free of Weapons of Mass Destruction, but if our efforts and the efforts of the world community fail to bring about the dismantling of the Israeli arsenals of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons and the prevention of Iran acquiring the same by failing to construct such a Zone, then why shouldn't we at least, and as a duty towards our nations and our people's, study, seriously, all of the available options, including acquiring WMDs so that future generations will not blame us for neglecting any course of action that will keep looming dangers away from us?" Turki al-Faysal's position represents a change from the past policy statements from important Saudis. In March 2010, Prince Khalid bin Sultan, the current Deputy Defense Minister and former operational commander of Saudi forces during the 1990-1991 Gulf War, said "the kingdom has always been against nuclear armament - against it all the way. The kingdom is with the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes." Turki al-Faysal himself has reversed his position; as recently as December 2010, he delivered a speech arguing strongly for a nuclear-free Middle East.²²

Pakistan-Saudi and Extended Deterrence

Rather than extended U.S. deterrence, a far more likely short-term scenario if Iran obtains nuclear weapons would be Pakistani extended deterrence in the short-term, followed by medium to long-term move toward joint Pakistani-GCC nuclear weapons development, and a long-term GCC nuclear weapons program.

Saudi Arabia's historical financial support for Pakistan's nuclear program has led some to consider the possibility of Pakistan deploying part of its own arsenal in the kingdom.²³ The recently deceased former Saudi defense minister, Prince Sultan, had been a VIP guest at Kahuta, where he toured Pakistan's nuclear and missile facilities just in May 1999. Years earlier Benazir Bhutto, the then serving prime minister, had been denied entry.²⁴ In 2007, Pakistani officials in Saudi Arabia expressed the opinion that Saudi Arabia would attempt "to protect itself and the region," and given the weakness of the other major Arab states in the region – e.g., Egypt – it would be logical for the Saudis to "step in as the physical 'protector' just as they have been increasingly stepping in as peace mediators in various regional conflicts."²⁵

Saudi Arabia had ties to Abdul Qadeer Khan, who orchestrated the development of Pakistan's nuclear bomb and provided nuclear expertise to Iran, Libya and North Korea until his proliferation network was uncovered in 2003. Khan admitted visiting Saudi Arabia as many times over the years and hosted Saudi officials visiting Pakistan several times. In June 1994, claims surfaced that Saudi Arabia intended to buy ready-made nuclear weapons, rather than go through the lengthy and verifiable process of developing their own. Mohammed Khilewi, a former Saudi diplomat in the Saudi mission to the United Nations in New York, claimed Saudi Arabia had paid up to \$5 billion to Saddam Hussein to build a nuclear weapon for Saudi Arabia. Khilewi, who was the Saudi official responsible for issues related to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) – to which Saudi was a reluctant signatory – reportedly produced thousands of documents in support of his claim that Saudi Arabia engaged in a secret effort to acquire nuclear weapons, first from Iraq, which Saudi Arabia had backed in the

²² *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*, Vol. XXIX No. 9, pp. 27-29.

²³ Sabahat Khan, "Nuclear Deterrence For A Nuclear-Armed Iran - The U.S./GCC Dilemma," INEGMA, 12 January 2012.

²⁴ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "The bomb: Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), 23 January 2012.

²⁵ U.S. Department of State Cable, Riyadh to Washington, 5 December 2007, 07RIYADH2407; last accessed January 2012 at: <http://dazzlepod.com/cable/07RIYADH2407?q=%2Bsaudi%20%2Bnuclear%20%2Bpakistan>

1980-88 Iran-Iraq war, and later from Khan and Pakistan. Khilewi has also claimed that Saudi Arabia helped bankroll Pakistan's secret nuclear project and signed a pact that in the event Saudi Arabia was attacked with nuclear weapons, Pakistan would respond against the aggressor with its own nuclear arms.²⁶ In 1990, the Saudis were reportedly discussed purchasing Pakistani nuclear warheads for the DF-3A/CSS-2 missiles they had acquired from China.²⁷

There is another important and underappreciated element in the Saudi logic to turn to Pakistan rather than the U.S. for either extended deterrence or a ready-made nuclear solution. The radical Shu'aybi school of Wahhabi (*muwahiddun*) religious thought in Saudi Arabia has attacked the Al Saud regime for its decision to turn to the U.S. for military protection in 1990-1991. Drawing on a concept developed in the nineteenth century, the idea of *al-isti'ana bi-l-kuffar* (showing non-Muslims loyalty by asking them for help) has been used by contemporary radical religious scholars to criticize U.S.-Saudi ties.

Nineteenth century Wahhabi religious scholar Sulayman bin 'Abdullah Al Shaykh (1785-1818) argued that if Muslims showed loyalty to polytheists, they effectively transformed themselves into unbelievers (*kuffar*).²⁸ Taking this concept and applying it to the Saudi civil-war during the late nineteenth century, Hamd bin Atiq wrote in *Sabil al-Najat wa-l-Fikak min Muwalat al-Murtaddin wal-Atrak* (Fleeing and Separating from Loyalty to Apostates and the Turks) that it was not enough to avoid giving loyalty to non-Muslims one must also actively guard their faith by disavowing non-Muslims as "infidels."²⁹ In essence, these nineteenth century religious scholars were critiquing the decision of 'Abdallah turning to the Ottomans in Iraq for outside military support against his brother Saud during the Saudi civil war in the late nineteenth century. The Ottoman rulers were considered polytheistic and therefore unbelievers.

The concept of critiquing the Saudi regime by using *al-isti'ana bi-l-kuffar* (showing non-Muslims loyalty by asking them for help) was revived in the 1990s by Palestinian-Jordanian Abu Muhammad al-Maqdisi most explicitly in his book *al-Kawashif al-Jaliyya fi Kufr al-Dawla al-Sa'udiyya* (The Manifest Revelations of the Unbelief of the Saudi State).³⁰ Al-Maqdisi's analogy between Saudi-U.S. ties and Saudi-Ottoman ties in the late nineteenth century was appropriated in Saudi Arabia by scholars affiliated with Humud bin Uqala al-Shu'aybi (1927–2002), a religious scholar from Imam Muhammad bin Saud University who sympathized with al-Qa'ida and approved of the 9/11 attacks. Shu'aybi argued that "asking a state for help in fighting other Muslims is even worse than asking individuals, because states are more powerful and can thus do more damage to Islam."³¹ Another important critique that demonstrates the hostility of the Wahhabi radicals toward the Saudi-U.S. military alliance is Nasir bin Hamd al-Fahd's *al-Tibyan fi Kufr Man A'ana al-Amrikan* (The Demonstration of the Unbelief of Those Who Help the Americans).³² The importance and relevance of this critique to the issue at hand - Saudi nuclear deterrence -- is that it suggests that using a Pakistani extended deterrence capability would be a much more attractive *political* option for the Saudi regime than relying on American extended

²⁶ Daniel Pipes, "Interview with Mohammed Al Khilewi," *Middle East Quarterly*, September 1998.

²⁷ *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A.Q. Khan and the rise of proliferation networks: A net assessment*, IISS, May 2007, Chapter 3, p. 83.

²⁸ Joas Wagemakers, "The Enduring Legacy of the Second Saudi State: Quietist and Radical Wahhabi Contestations of Al-Wala wa-l-bara," *JMES*, Vol. 44 (2012), p. 95.

²⁹ Wagemakers, p. 96.

³⁰ Wagemakers, p. 100.

³¹ Wagemakers, p. 101.

³² Wagemakers, p. 102.

deterrence, which might be a more reliable *military* option but might also constitute a significant political risk. In other words, Pakistani (read: Sunni) nuclear weapons deployed on Saudi territory would be much less likely to raise the ire of Saudi Arabia's radical Wahhabi religious thinkers than an American/NATO nuclear capability along the lines of what is deployed in Turkey. Therefore, a Pakistan-Saudi nuclear cooperation in a deterrence scenario seems like a more attractive short-term option for the Al Saud.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia also have a long history of conventional military cooperation, as well. Historically, Pakistani pilots have worked very closely with the Saudi air force. It is said that whenever Pakistan requires Saudi defense technology or equipment it is available including advanced fighter aircraft. Pakistan's pilot - aircraft ratio is one of the highest in world thanks to the Saudi contribution of fighter aircraft to the Pakistan air force. Pakistan will also benefit from the recent \$60 billion defense deal between the Saudis and the U.S., half of which will be used to add the F-15SA advanced fighter aircraft to the Saudi air force.³³ The larger deal is also said to include 70 Apache helicopters, 72 Black Hawk helicopters, 26 Little Bird helicopters and advanced weapons systems for the aircraft. Presumably the Saudi acquisition of the next generation aircraft will allow it to make its older technology to Pakistan. While Pakistan's nuclear deterrence is mainly based on its missiles, the Saudi contribution to the Pakistani air force presumably strengthens its conventional deterrence position toward India.³⁴ For the Saudi part, military officials have explicitly stated that this recent weapons deal with the U.S. is to achieve deterrence in the Gulf region where it "will contribute towards reining in Iran's expanding power."³⁵

In late September and early October 2011, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan conducted a three-week long joint military exercise (Al-Samsam IV), and Lieutenant General Khalid Bin Bandar Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Commander Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF), met with Pakistani General Khalid Shameem Wynne, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJSC) at Joint Staff Headquarters in Pakistan "and exchanged views related to matters of mutual interests." These joint exercises between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have been taking place biennially since 2004.

More recently, on 3 April 2012, Saudi Defense Minister, Prince Salman, met with Pakistani Chief of Army Staff Ashfaq Parvez Kayani in Riyadh. After the meetings, where expanding joint military ties was discussed, the Saudi-Pakistani relationship was described by the Pakistani Embassy as "long-lasting, time-tested and unmatched."³⁶ Saudi Arabia is balancing its expanding military relationship with Pakistan by also cultivating a more cooperative relationship with India. India, for its part is eager to develop stronger ties with oil-rich Saudi Arabia in order to secure its oil supplies and mitigate India's exposure to the West's sanctions on Iran's oil and financial industries. On 14-16 February 2012, a high-level Indian delegation visited Riyadh, led by Indian Defense Minister A.K. Antony. The two sides agreed to establish a joint committee on Defense Cooperation which will create a framework for defense collaboration and reciprocal high level diplomatic visits. The committee will also explore cooperation in hydrography, increased participation in joint training programs, and the possibility of coordination in defense industries.³⁷ From the Saudi perspective, developing a stronger strategic relationship with India would be a very important element in a future scenario where Saudi Arabia

³³ The deal includes 84 new F-15SA aircraft, and provides for upgrading the current Saudi fleet of 70 F-15S to the SA configuration.

³⁴ S. Ranjan, "Pakistan-Saudi Islamic nexus: what it means for India," *The Northlines*, 14 December 2010.

³⁵ Major General Zafir bin Ali Al Shehri, "Deterrence," *Al Barriyah* (Magazine of the Royal Saudi Land Forces), 2011.

³⁶ *The Daily Times* (Lahore), 4 April 2012.

³⁷ *McClatchy - Tribune Business News*, 16 February 2012.

relies on Pakistani extended nuclear deterrence. India would obviously want reassurance or a guarantee from Saudi Arabia that any Pakistani nuclear weapons stationed on Saudi territory would not be directed at India. Likewise, Saudi Arabia would want to be reassured that Pakistani extended deterrence would not cause India to direct its nuclear weapons capability toward Saudi Arabia. Yet, Saudi Arabia may not feel that Pakistani extended deterrence is sufficient for its long-term security needs. As Brigadier General Prince Naef bin Ahmed Al-Saud noted in July 2003, "Saudi Arabia does not accept the notion that a Pakistani bomb is an Islamic bomb. Instead, national interest is regarded as the most likely factor affecting how nuclear capabilities will be used."³⁸ It is probable that Saudi Arabia views Pakistani extended deterrence only as a stop-gap, short-term solution in order to buy time for laying the groundwork for its own indigenous nuclear program.

Saudi Arabia has ambitious plans to develop its own nuclear energy program. Saudi Arabia was reported to have had a nuclear research center in its desert military complex at al-Sulayyil, near Al-Kharj, in 1975. More recently Saudi Arabia has announced plans to open its first nuclear facility by 2020. King Abdullah Centre for Atomic and Renewable Energy (KACARE), which was established in 2010 to drive forward the Kingdom's nuclear plans, has been given a 63 square kilometer site 20 kilometers from Riyadh. Hashim bin Abdullah Yamani, its president, has been given ministerial rank.³⁹ The Chief Strategist of King Abdullah City for Atomic and Renewable Energy is Ibrahim Babelli, who received his PhD in nuclear engineering from Purdue University in Indiana in 1996. The title of his thesis was "Flow instabilities under low-pressure and low flow conditions with application to the simplified boiling water reactor."

Pervez Hoodbhoy, the former head of the physics department at Quaid-i-Azam University in Pakistan claims that "To create, run and maintain the resulting nuclear infrastructure will require importing large numbers of technical workers. Some will be brought over from western countries, as well as Russia and former Soviet Union countries." Saudi Arabia would likely turn to Pakistan for engineering and scientific assistance in its nuclear development. This is another instance where relying on Sunni Muslims from Pakistan might mitigate political risk, and defuse radical criticism of the regime. Saudi Arabia would also be able to offer Pakistani scientists salaries that far exceed those in Pakistan, and many qualified scientists and technicians in Pakistan could be expected to ask for leave from their parent institutions at the Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission, Kahuta Research Laboratories, and National Development Complex.⁴⁰

Saudi Arabia is not likely to place all of its eggs in one basket when it comes to developing its nuclear program. Turki al-Faysal has claimed Saudi Arabia will invest \$100 billion to build 16 nuclear reactors by 2030. On 16 January 2012, Saudi Arabia signed a nuclear cooperation agreement with China. A joint statement outlined a legal framework to build scientific, technological and economic cooperation between Riyadh and Beijing. On a practical level, a nuclear cooperation agreement with China will provide Saudi Arabia with the means, experience, and expertise to develop and supply nuclear-power plants and research reactors, and manufacture nuclear-fuel elements. China has adopted advanced technology from Westinghouse Electric Co. to develop a domestic version of the company's AP1000 nuclear reactor.⁴¹ Saudi Arabia may be looking to China to provide it with a stable nuclear supply chain as well as training facilities for a new generation of Saudi nuclear technicians

³⁸ *The Times of India*, 12 July 2003.

³⁹ *Financial Times*, 28 September 2011.

⁴⁰ Pervez Hoodbhoy, "The bomb: Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), 23 January 2012.

⁴¹ *The Wall Street Journal*, 17 January 2012.

and scientists. Saudi Arabia also has nuclear cooperation agreements with France, Argentina, and South Korea, but the agreement with China may be the most significant and symbiotic, in terms of the strategic goals of both states.

Further, there is also an established historical record of discreet strategic military cooperation between China and Saudi Arabia. Between 1986 and 1988, Saudi Arabia secretly collaborated with China to obtain a stockpile of China's long-range DF-3A (CSS-2) intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) for \$3-3.5 billion. This was a sophisticated logistical process that involved building a training base at al-Sulayyil (500km southwest of Riyadh), secretly safeguarding transporting the missiles from China to Saudi Arabia, creating multiple launch sites and storage facilities in Saudi Arabia, and learning to operate and maintain the missile systems. This was no easy feat considering each missile is approximately 21 meters long and 2.5 meters in diameter and weigh 64,000 kg. In addition to the facility at al-Sulayyil, the Saudis also created a missile base at al-Joffer (100 km south of Riyadh). The Saudis also purchased reportedly purchased 10 to 15 transport vehicles for the missiles and nine mobile launchers. Moreover, the acquisition and of this major weapons system was carried out in secrecy during the peak of fighting during the Iran-Iraq War. It also established the foundation for diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Communist China. With the CSS-2 missile purchases from China, Saudi Arabia became the only state outside the U.N. Security Council states to possess ballistic missiles with such an extended range (2,800-4,000 km). Saudi Arabia is often noted for being risk averse and cautious, yet it engaged in high risk behavior by going behind the backs of its major security ally, the United States, in order to acquire the CSS-2 ballistic missiles. What triggered the Saudi deviation from its traditional *modus operandi*?

A ninety-page Master's thesis, published by the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California in 2003, offers several theories as to the rationale behind the secret Saudi acquisition of the Chinese ballistic missiles.⁴² Missing from the thesis, however, was an important source of empirical evidence that provides a relatively straightforward answer. In Prince Khaled bin Sultan's book, *Desert Warrior*, published in 1995, he states: "In brief, our aim was to give us the capability to counterattack in the event of an attack on us by either Israel or Iran, both in their different ways hostile at that time."⁴³ Yet Prince Khaled devotes only a brief paragraph to explaining the Israeli threat, while devoting two full pages to explaining the Iranian threat to Saudi Arabia. He finishes the explanation with perhaps even a sharper explanation of the Saudi decision to acquire the Chinese long-range ballistic missiles: "It was against this background of Iranian violence and belligerence that, I assume, King Fahd decided we needed a weapon to improve the morale of our armed services and our people; a deterrent weapon not intended to be used, except as a last resort when it should be able to demoralize the enemy by delivering a painful and decisive blow; a weapon which, once launched, could not be jammed or intercepted; a weapon which would make the enemy think twice before attacking us."⁴⁴ In short, Prince Khaled, the current Deputy Defense Minister of Saudi Arabia, framed the Saudi acquisition of the Chinese missiles as a deterrent in response to Iranian belligerence.

In addition to Saudi Arabia, the UAE possesses the financial and technical capacity to develop a robust nuclear program of its own. There were reports of A.Q. Khan discussing nuclear training assistance with the United

⁴² Steven R. McDowell, "Is Saudi Arabia a Nuclear Threat?", Master's Thesis, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, September 2003. Accessed at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/mcdowell.pdf> (April 2012).

⁴³ Khalid bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, p. 142.

⁴⁴ Khalid bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior*, p. 145.

Arab Emirates, as well, and Khan is believed to have operated part of his proliferation network from an office based in Dubai.⁴⁵ Mohamad ElBaradei, the former Director-General (1997-2009) of the IAEA, claims that between 2002 and 2004 Khan offered to sell his wares to a Gulf royal.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Abu Dhabi has pursued its nuclear plans more transparently and has plans to build a \$20 power plant some 300 kilometers west of the capital and begin producing electricity from it within six years, which would make the UAE the first Arab state with nuclear energy.⁴⁷ The UAE hopes to complete initial construction work by mid-2012 for four nuclear plants, each of 1400 MW, in a program estimated to cost \$30 billion. The reactors are due online from 2017. Thus far the UAE's civilian nuclear program has been advanced transparently. Yet the nature of the technology would suggest that a military dimension could be added to it.

Who would control GCC nuclear weapons program? Would the UAE be willing to share its nuclear facilities and collaborate with its neighbors in a multi-national nuclear enterprise? The long history of bitter historic rivalry between the members of GCC, and their state specific interests vis-à-vis their relationships with Iran, would make joint-possession of a nuclear deterrent contentious and complex.⁴⁸ This is a critical issue. While it would be impossible to address each GCC state with the same analytical attention applied to the Soviet Union by Kremlinologists, this issue illustrates the need for a closer study of the relationships between the GCC states and how such relations might influence joint or collective decision-making in a deterrence environment.⁴⁹ The historical rivalries between the GCC states and how such rivalries might influence a deterrence scenario in the Persian Gulf is another important question to consider.⁵⁰

Chapter Three:

Past as Prelude: Sources of Conflict in the Gulf

Territorial and border disputes in the Gulf are widely misunderstood. They are often characterized in material terms as disputes over access to potential hydrocarbon resources, or in historical/legal terms as disputes based on competing historical claims to territory arising from nationalist interpretations of history. In truth, these disputes are neither entirely material nor historical/legal, although certainly elements of both play a role in legitimizing competing claims. Rather, these disputes are manifestations of the modes of political behavior that reflect the tribal social structures that exist in the region.

Authority, domination, and dependency drive the principal modes of patriarchal and neo-patriarchal tribal social behavior in the Gulf.⁵¹ Territorial conflict in the Gulf has often been a means through which a ruling tribal

⁴⁵ *Nuclear Black Markets: Pakistan, A.Q. Khan and the rise of proliferation networks A net assessment*, IISS, May 2007, Chapter 3, p. 83.

⁴⁶ Mohamad ElBaradei, *The Age Deception: Nuclear Diplomacy in Treacherous Times* (Metropolitan Books, 2011), p. 178.

⁴⁷ *The National* (UAE), 17 November 2011.

⁴⁸ James Russell and Daniel Moran, Extended Deterrence, Security Guarantees, and Nuclear Proliferation: Strategic Stability in the Gulf Region, Conference held at Gulf Research Center, Dubai, UAE, 4-5 October 2009 .

⁴⁹ Austin Long, *From Cold War to Long War: lessons from six decades of Rand deterrence research* (Santa Monica: RAND,2008), p. 75.

⁵⁰ For an older but thorough treatment of these local disputes, see: J.B. Kelly, *Arabia, the Gulf, and the West* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980), pp. 165-223. For a brief analysis of more recent obstacles to GCC cooperation, see: Matteo Legrenzi, "The Peninsula Shield Force: The End of a Symbol?", *Security and Terrorism: Regional Security in the Gulf*, July 2006.

⁵¹ Hisham Sharabi, *Neopatriarchy*, p. 41.

shaykh can demonstrate that he is "first among equals."⁵² In other words, these conflicts are manifestations of the competition for dominance. James Onley and Suleyman Khalaf have noted that "The greater a ruler's military strength, the more territory and economic resources he could control and the higher his status in regional politics. Borders naturally fluctuated according to rulers' military abilities."⁵³ Providing security then provides a ruling shaykh with the authority and the means to acquire and distribute scarce resources to his people, which, in turn, make the ruling shaykh the chief patron in the patriarchal social order. Therefore territorial and border conflicts are a means to demonstrate, assert, or maintain *power* and *authority*, and as such are fundamentally socio-political in character, rather than economic or legal. Thus, much of the existing literature and analysis about territorial and border disputes in the Gulf erroneously identifies these disputes as a *cause* of regional instability, when, in fact, they are more likely a *symptom* or outward manifestation of the latent social structures and modes of political behavior.

The sources of suspicion and mistrust in the Gulf have their roots in the competitions for power and territory that largely evolved during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These disputes may seem far removed from today's strategic nuclear realities. Yet the tension and rivalry between today's rulers in the Gulf are rooted in the legacy of these disputes. When discussing a prospective joint-GCC nuclear capability, these issues will influence (in no small part) how such nuclear and military assets will be developed, deployed, and defended. But perhaps most importantly, these lingering disputes reflect the recurring challenge of creating a functional chain of strategic decision making among GCC officials. In other words, to date, the legacy of rivalry and competition, particularly among the five smaller GCC states, have hindered the ability of these states to arrive at a consensus on an efficient joint institutional military mechanism.

The ruling Al Khalifa clan of Bahrain led the conquest of Bahrain from its fortified coastal compound of Zubarah in the northwest corner of Qatar in 1782-1783.⁵⁴ The Al Khalifa are historically part of the Bani Utbah tribe that established itself in Kuwait in 1716 and in Zubarah in 1766. At the time of the Al Khalifa conquest in 1782-1783 Bahrain had been ruled by Shaykh Nasr Al Madhkur of the Bushire (or "Abu Shahr") on the Persian coast, who was said to be of Omani origin but recognized the suzerainty of the Persian Shah. At the end of the eighteenth century the Al Khalifa continued to rule Bahrain from Zubarah on the Qatari coast, and exacted tribute from the Al Thani shaykhs of the Qatari town of Doha. The tribute from Al Thani was used by the Al Khalifa to pay the Bedouin Nu'aym tribe of Qatar for their loyalty to the Al Khalifa.

The ruling Al Thani family of Qatar established their authority over the Qatari peninsula between 1861 and 1878, when they maneuvered between British and Ottoman authorities to rid themselves of the tribute demanded from them by the Al Khalifa of Bahrain. The Al Thani shaykhs are part of the Bani Tamim tribe and were encouraged by the Saudis in Najd to rise against the Al Khalifa. In 1871, the Al Thani acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty and ended their tribute payment to Al Khalifa. In 1878 the Al Thani attacked and destroyed the Al Khalifa base in Zubarah. The Al Khalifa considered this territory rightfully theirs, and territorial and maritime rights between Bahrain and Qatar remain disputed.⁵⁵ Today, there is broadening economic

⁵² Fuad I. Khuri, *Tents and pyramids: games and ideology in Arab culture from backgammon to autocratic rule* (London: Saqi Books, 1990).

⁵³ James Onley and Suleyman Khalaf, "Shaikhly Authority in the Pre-oil Gulf: An Historical-Anthropological Study," *History & Anthropology*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (September 2006), p. 195.

⁵⁴ Ahmad Mustafa Abu Hakima, *History of Eastern Arabia, 1750-1800* (Beirut: Khayats, 1965), pp. 91-124.

⁵⁵ Kelly, p. 186.

cooperation between Qatar and Bahrain, but the Al Thani of Qatar continue to view Bahrain as source of regional political instability and a security threat.

The feud between Abu Dhabi and Dubai derives from an inter-family struggle within the Bani Yas confederacy. In the early nineteenth century, the Al Bu Falasah, a section of the Bani Yas, renounced its allegiance to the ruling Al Nahyan (or Al Bu Falah) clan of Abu Dhabi. In 1833 the Al Bu Falasah migrated to Dubai and the Al Maktum family established its independent rule there. Apart from thriving commercial trade and good relations with the Al Bu Said sultans of Muscat in Oman, Dubai played almost no part in the tribal politics of the interior during the nineteenth century. Dubai became known as a refuge for disaffected or disposed tribal factions. Yet the feud between the Al Maktum of Dubai and Al Nahyan of Abu Dhabi continued to fester and erupted into open warfare between 1945 and 1948, and afterward Dubai provided refuge and support for disaffected subjects of Abu Dhabi's ruler. This dispute also led the Al Maktum to align themselves with opponents of the Al Nahyan, such as the Al Thani of Qatar during the mid-twentieth century.⁵⁶ Today, as a product of the Abu Dhabi bailout of Dubai following the collapse of the real estate market in Dubai in 2008, Dubai is more financially dependent on Abu Dhabi than ever before. As a result, Dubai's ability to steer a political course that was somewhat independent of Abu Dhabi – which is what Dubai had done since independence in 1971 -- is now more limited.

Abu Dhabi's feud with Dubai and territorial disputes with Qatar and the Saudis were only part of the regional politics. Throughout the nineteenth century Abu Dhabi contested the Al Qawasim state (comprised of the present day shaykhdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaymah) for supremacy on the Arabian Gulf coast. In particular, it was the Bani Yas challenge to the Al Qawasim supremacy in the pearl fishing trade in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that caused tension between the two tribal confederations. This tension was heightened by the fact that the Qasimi maritime trade declined with the increasing commercial expansion of the British during this period, leaving the Al Qawsim more dependent on pearl fishing. The decimation of the Gulf's pearl fishing industry in the 1930s added another serious blow to the economies of the Al Qawasim shaykhdoms of Sharjah and Ras al-Khaymah, who now remain poorer and perhaps marginal emirates that are financially dependent on Abu Dhabi.

In addition to these sources of historical rivalry, conflict, and social change, in part rooted in tribal competition, there were four recurring territorial claims that greatly influenced the rulers' perceptions of security. First, Iran did not recognize the Al Khalifa conquest and has periodically claimed sovereignty over Bahrain. Second, the Arab Gulf States view Iran as illegally occupying Abu Musa, and Greater and Lesser Tunb islands in the Gulf. Iran seized these islands on the eve of British military withdrawal in 1971. Third, Iraq's claim to Kuwaiti territory, particularly Bubiyan and Warbah islands, has also remained an important lingering source of tension and suspicion. And fourth, Iran and Iraq have periodically veered perilously close to war on several occasions over the question of navigational rights and border definitions along the Shatt al-Arab ("Arvand Rud," in Persian) waterway that forms the southern border between Iran and Iraq.

The purpose of pointing out these complex internal relationships within the GCC is not to delve into the minutiae of Gulf politics, but rather to underscore the historical and social sources of mistrust and suspicion which have obstructed efficient political cooperation in the Gulf. That is not to say these disputes can not be

⁵⁶ Kelly, p. 203.

overcome. Since the formation of the GCC in 1981,⁵⁷ the Gulf rulers have recognized that the best way to preserve their thrones is through collective security cooperation. However, what has been absent during the last twenty years was some kind of catalyst to set aside historical modes of competition and bridge the chasm between recognizing the need for security collaboration and creating joint institutional mechanisms to bring it to fruition. A nuclear Iran following the Arab uprisings of 2011 may, ultimately, be that catalyst.

In the spring of 2011, following the Arab uprisings across the region, and Iran's continued regional belligerence, Prince Turki al-Faysal outlined the need to re-conceive the nature of the GCC even alluding to the possibility of a GCC confederation: "We must also reconsider the nature of national sovereignty, which could result in the failure of joint initiatives. We in the GCC deeply believe that the security of one country contributes to the security of others, and a danger which threatens one is a threat to all. This means that we share a collective sovereignty. We have recently witnessed how the GCC countries responded to the challenges facing some of its members - namely Oman and Bahrain - just as they responded in the past to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait."⁵⁸ Prince Turki's call for a more powerful and robust GCC suggests an important new development, particularly if compared to a tongue-in-cheek statement he made when asked about the GCC in November 2003, "The GCC? You will have to tell me because I don't know anything about it."⁵⁹ How then can we account for this shift in GCC perceptions?

The Legacy of Post-Invasion Iraq

The current GCC outlook is, in part, a product of watching Iran institutionalize its political influence in Iraq during the eight years that followed the US invasion of Iraq. Iran's support for Shi'i militias in Iraq served three strategic aims. First, it allowed Iran to use the Shi'i militias in Iraq as a proxy force to engage and deter U.S. forces. If U.S. forces were bogged down fighting insurgents in Iraq, the U.S. would be less likely to threaten Iran's regime. Second, it allowed Iran to cultivate Iraqi Shi'i political parties and politicians who would cooperate with Iran. This political influence allowed Iran to expand its trade with Iraq and ensure the Iraqi government was Shi'i and friendly toward Iran rather than Sunni and hostile, as it had been during Saddam Husayn's regime and much of Iraq's post- World War Two history.⁶⁰ The GCC leaders fear that a Shi'i government in Iraq, with close relations to Iran, would mean Iraq would not balance against Iran's power. Third, arming Shi'i militias in Iraq that were engaged in a sectarian war fighting anti-Shi'i Sunni insurgents would keep Iraq weak and divided, allowing Iran to increase its power at Iraq's expense.

The sectarian war which emerged in Iraq between 2005 and 2008 was particularly troubling to GCC leaders for two primary reasons related to the internal security of their own regimes. The GCC rulers feared the sectarian war in Iraq would cause their own large Shi'i minorities to mobilize against their regimes. For example, in February 2006, when the Shi'i "Golden Mosque"⁶¹ in Samarra, Iraq was bombed by Sunni radicals, thousands

⁵⁷ See: F. Gregory Gause and Michael Barnett, "Caravans in Opposite Directions: Society, State and the Development of Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council," in Adler and Barnett (eds.), *Security Communities* (Cambridge University Press, 1998).

⁵⁸ *Emirates News Agency*, "Arab World has been hit by political quake: Prince Turki," 21 March 2011.

⁵⁹ Matteo Legrenzi, "Did the GCC Make a Difference? Institutional Realities and (Un)intended Consequences," *EUI Working Paper*, RSCAS, No. 2006/01, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Italy, p. 3 (footnote 6).

⁶⁰ International Crisis Group, "Iran in Iraq: How Much Influence?" *Middle East Report*, No. 38, 21 March 2005.

⁶¹ The shrine for the 10th and 11th Shi'i Imams, Ali al-Hadi and Hassan al-Askari.

took to the streets in Bahrain to demonstrate.⁶² Second, the GCC leaders also feared that, just as radical Sunnis were leaving the Gulf states to fight in Iraq, Shi'i insurgents from Iraq would attempt to slip into their states and lead local insurgencies against the Sunni Gulf regimes. In other words, the GCC rulers were afraid that sectarianism in Iraq would spread to their states causing political instability.

Yet despite shared perceptions regarding the severity of the security crisis in Iraq and the threats the crisis represented to their own states, the GCC states did not come together to coordinate a joint policy or diplomatic approach to address Iraq related security issues or Iran's increasing political, cultural, and economic influence. In fact, the GCC, for the most part, ceded the issue to the United States. However, in 2007, when the U.S. was struggling to control the sectarian violence in Iraq, Saudi Arabia appeared to hedge its bet on the U.S. by taking steps to mend diplomatic fences with Iran.⁶³

Iran's successful effort to institutionalize its political influence in post-Saddam Iraq has shaped GCC perception that Iran intends to dominate the Gulf region.⁶⁴ Further, a weak Iraq has created a deep concern among the GCC states that Iraq's weakness means there is a dangerous imbalance of power in the region. During an appearance on *Al Jazeera* television on 7 January, Dr. Abdalkhaliq Abdallah, a professor of political science at UAE University, noted that when Saddam Husayn invaded Kuwait, he posed a threat to all Gulf countries, including Iran. In contrast to the 1990s, Abdallah noted that "Iraq's absence affects the security balance" and gives Iran a disproportionate amount of influence in the region. Abdallah emphasized that, "The existence of a weak Iraq and a strong Iran is a serious and huge imbalance in the security equation and this does not reassure us at all."⁶⁵

There appear to be three interrelated components that underlie the GCC fear of Iran. First, the GCC views Iran's post-2005 leadership as actively promoting Shi'i ascendancy in the region, which has particularly manifested itself in Iraq, Lebanon, and, most recently, in Bahrain. A second and related theme is that the GCC states view Iran's rhetorical and media support for Shi'i communities in the GCC states as a form of sabotage or subversion that seeks to delegitimize the GCC regimes and undermine their political independence and authority. Third, and most important, the GCC states are beginning to see Iran more as a hard security threat and strongly believe Iran is actively working toward its ambition to become the dominant military power, in the Gulf. The Gulf states believe that if Iran achieves hegemony it would use its power to coerce and manipulate its Gulf neighbors, which would limit GCC state sovereignty and political autonomy – a form of Finlandization, to use strategic Cold War terminology.

This fear was outlined in a blunt editorial published in *ASharq Alawsat* in November 2011. Abdelmalik bin Ahmad Al-Shaykh quoted Iranian MP Muhammad Karim Abadi as saying: "It is within Iran's power to occupy Saudi Arabia with utter ease if it wants to do so." Al-Shaykh explained that Abadi's comments represented Iran's decision-makers' "deep conviction and unbridled desire." Al-Shaykh then asked, "What if the Iranian regime possessed nuclear weapons? What will happen to the region?" Al-Shaykh urged the Gulf states to "deal more seriously with the Iranian regime, not just suffice with denunciations and statements," and directly

⁶² *BBC News*, 22 February 2006; *Khaleej Times*, "Bahraini Shiites answer Sistani call to protest bombing," 23 February 2006.

⁶³ The Daily Star (Lebanon), "Saudi-Iranian rapprochement opens up some intriguing possibilities," 19 December 2007.

⁶⁴ Salah Nasrawi, "Saudi Royal Family, Gov't Split on Iraq," *The Associated Press*, 13 December 2006; International Crisis Group, "Shi'ite Politics in Iraq: The Role of the Supreme Council," *Middle East Report*, 15 November 2007; Ozden Zeynep Oktav, "The Gulf States and Iran: A Turkish Perspective," *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVIII, No. 2 (Summer 2011), pp. 137-138.

⁶⁵ Sami Qulayb, "The File," *Al Jazeera*, 7 January 2011 – *BBC Worldwide Monitoring*, 7 January 2011.

articulated the fear of Finlandization, stating: "The Arab Gulf States have to guarantee for their present and future generations that they will not become hostage to a regime within a stone's throw from them, one that has expansionist ambitions to possess the region and is exercising terrorism and in possession of weapons of mass destruction."⁶⁶

In short, following the crisis in Bahrain, comments from certain senior members of the Al Saud family suggest the Saudis are beginning to see the GCC as being forced to *deter* Iran in order to preserve their autonomy and resist Iranian hegemony. If this perception is indeed shared throughout the GCC, and is translated into action, it represents an important change in GCC perception and *modus operandi*: Since its inception in 1981, the GCC has attempted to avoid direct confrontation with its larger neighbors, Iran and Iraq. Throughout the 1980s, the GCC tilted toward Iraq, but hardly presented a unified front in the Iran-Iraq war, yet was largely able to avoid direct confrontation with Iran during the war. In the 1990s, following the 1990-1991 Gulf war, the GCC states used the US military to balance and contain Iran and Iraq's power. The GCC's military intervention in Bahrain in March and its dissatisfaction with the US response to the popular uprisings in the region suggest that the GCC may be moving toward creating a more integrated and powerful *joint*-military institution, which includes a nuclear capability, to deter Iran.

If this kind of military coordination is indeed emerging, it is an unprecedented and important new step for the GCC.⁶⁷ This point was underscored by Saudi Foreign Minister Sa'ud al-Faysal, in an early March press conference, when he said, "...I believe what you are going to witness from now on is a substantial change represented in the solidarity among the GCC states and their agreement on unified strategy and policies."⁶⁸ Sa'ud al-Faysal's claim that solidarity is increasing among GCC states, would be a unique development in a region where historical disputes among the local rulers have been a historical obstacle to broader regional cooperation.

Chapter Four:

Post-2011 Strategic Shift?

In addition to the GCC perceptions about the political evolution of post-invasion Iraq, there have been two important and related post-2011 developments that appear to have impacted the GCC decision to move toward a nuclear weapons capability. First, the Saudi/GCC faith in the US security guarantee in the wake of Husni Mubarak's ouster in Egypt and the uprising in Bahrain in 2011 has been badly shaken. These developments, at the very least, have prompted Saudi officials to actively seek to diversify and deepen Saudi defense relationships in order to mitigate the risk that accompanies excessive dependence on US support. The uprisings that erupted throughout the Arab world in 2011, and in particular in Bahrain, have prompted Saudi Arabia to become more pro-active in seeking an urgent consensus among the GCC states for a more robust union, which would include a bigger and more functional joint-military force.

⁶⁶ *Asharq Alawsat*, 24 November 2011.

⁶⁷ For an overview of past obstacles to GCC integration, see: Matteo Legrenzi, "Did the GCC Make a Difference? Institutional Realities and (Un) intended Consequences," *EUI Working Paper*, RSCAS, No. 2006/01, Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, San Domenico di Fiesole (FI), Italy.

⁶⁸ Sa'ud al-Faysal, *Al-Ikhabariyah TV* (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia), 9 March 2011 – BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 11 March 2011.

Second, in the wake of the uprising in Bahrain, Iran has renewed its anti-monarchical rhetoric attacking its Gulf neighbors. The language used by key Iranian officials attacking the legitimacy of the Saudi monarchy was reminiscent of the language employed by Ayatollah Khomeini during the earliest post-revolutionary period of the Islamic Republic. These statements, in combination with the perception that Iran is actively working to sabotage the Gulf regimes and advancing toward a nuclear weapons capability have prompted senior Saudi officials to begin nudging the Gulf monarchs toward a reconfigured GCC with an independent nuclear capability.

Iran's response to the popular uprising in Tunisia was initially cautious, emphasizing that the rapidly evolving events were Tunisia's domestic affair. Iran, which since June 2009 had faced its own sporadic popular demonstrations, appeared eager to voice Iran's support for non-interference in Tunisian sovereign affairs. However, after the bin Ali regime fell in Tunisia the discourse in Iran changed. On 19 January, Hossein Shariatmadari, the influential editor of the Iranian daily newspaper *Kayhan*, and adviser to the Supreme Leader 'Ali Khamene'i, published a column in which he argued that the popular uprisings in the Arab world paralleled Iran's 1978/9 revolution: "Look at the region: Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Algeria, Bahrain...roaring in populist slogans and demands against their absolutist rulers; pay attention. All the demands and slogans are in complete accordance with the teachings of the Islamic revolution: death to America; death to Israel; hail Islam; death to the seculars; Islam is my religion..."⁶⁹ Shariatmadari's column marked an important shift in the Iranian mainstream media's coverage of the popular uprisings. The Iranian media now began to attack the legitimacy of the Arab rulers allied with the West and claim that the Arabs that had taken to the streets in Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, and Bahrain were inspired by Iran's Islamic revolution.

Despite continued popular unrest at home, Iran's Supreme Leader, 'Ali Khamene'i was framing the popular uprisings in the Arab world in terms of the Islamic Republic's revolutionary Shi'i ideology. He referred to the events in Tunisia and Egypt as an "Islamic Awakening," and revived Ayatollah Khomeini's anti-monarchic rhetoric.⁷⁰ Khamene'i said, "Before the [1978/9 Iranian] revolution the government was based on a monarchic system...In a monarchic system the people do not play any role." Khamene'i also contrasted the merits of Islamic Republic's elections to hereditary rule, when he claimed, "In a system based on the rule of the people, the people run the country. Before the revolution there was hereditary rule. The head of the country would appoint his successor before his death. The people played no role. Whether they agreed or not, they had to accept the situation. In the Islamic Republic, thank God, the government is decided on the basis of elections."⁷¹ In late February, Khamene'i advised regional states to "pay attention," and, alluding to the U.S., said they "must get rid of dominance and interference of arrogance" and "stop the big devil from interfering in and dominating their nations' destiny" in order to "save themselves."⁷²

Khamene'i's statements were almost identical to Ayatollah Khomeini's verbal attacks on the Gulf rulers during the early 1980s.⁷³ By attacking the legitimacy of monarchic rule and commanding the region's rulers to rid themselves of their American ally, Khamene'i confirmed the GCC leaders' impression, formed in part by Iran's post-2003 presence in Iraq, that Iran was provocatively interfering in domestic Arab affairs during a period of vulnerability, and promoting Khomeini's brand of revolutionary Shi'ism in order to sabotage the authority and

⁶⁹ Hossein Shariatmadari, *Keyhan*, 15 January 2011 – BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 26 January 2011.

⁷⁰ David Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution* (New York & London: Holmes & Meier, 1990), p. 209.

⁷¹ 'Ali Khamene'i, *Islamic Republic of Iran News Network*, 4 February 2011 – BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 4 February 2011.

⁷² 'Ali Khamene'i, *Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran*, 21 February 2011 – BBC Worldwide Monitoring, 21 February 2011.

⁷³ Menashri, *Iran: A Decade of War and Revolution*.

legitimacy of the Gulf monarchs.

In December 2011, current Saudi Director of Intelligence Prince Muqrin bin Abdulaziz delivered remarks diagnosing the new security dynamic in the region and what needs to be done to respond to it. Muqrin, who rarely makes public statements, said that there had been a "destabilization of the balance of power" in the Gulf, and that the GCC states had to face up to preparing for the "possibility of the Arabian Gulf turning into a nuclear region," and Iran's regional role and its "pursuit of a nuclear programme with mysterious ambitions and directions."

In separate remarks at the 'Gulf and the Globe' conference held by the Institute of Diplomatic Studies and the Gulf Research Center in Riyadh in early December 2011, former director of intelligence, Turki al-Faisal, outlined a plan of action to deal with the changes in the region. It has three elements: political reform, some form of union among the GCC countries, and possession of a nuclear weapon. Turki framed GCC unity as an obligation, stating that to "improve our political institutions and our cultural institutions in order to make them respond to the requirements of the social and cultural changes in our societies is no longer one of our options, but it is now an obligation imposed on us. The concept of citizenship in all its senses is the basis of the relationship that links the citizen and the state." In addition to re-conceiving the idea of citizenship in the Gulf, he went further and suggested that "We can establish a united Arabian Peninsula, an elected Shura Council for a single country, a single military force, and a unified military industry." In fact, Turki was arguing in blunt and forthright terms for a collective GCC sovereignty, and in more oblique terms for a joint-nuclear capability.⁷⁴

Chapter Five:

Saudi Strategic Decision Making: Lessons from the recent past

The best and perhaps the only first-hand account of how Saudi Arabia has behaved in a relatively recent deterrence-like scenario was outlined by Prince Khaled bin Sultan, the current Saudi Deputy Defense Minister. Prince Khaled described Saudi decision making on the eve of the 1990-1991 Gulf War with Iraq:

Before the start of Desert Storm, Saudi Arabia and the United States had made massive preparations for the defense of the Kingdom. Twenty-one U.S. Patriot batteries, comprising no fewer than 132 launchers, were deployed at key sites. The first significant test of the system in combat occurred on the nights of January 20 to January 23 when, as I have mentioned, 20 Scuds were fired at us. Not surprisingly, these attacks prompted us to think of retaliation...If ever there was a right moment to unleash our Chinese-built surface-to-surface missiles, this seemed to be it. We felt we needed to hit back in self-defense in order to deter further Iraqi scud attacks. Accordingly, I gave orders to assemble in the right locations all the various elements of our missiles – save for the liquid fuel, which is pumped in at the very last stage, following which a launch cannot be reversed. I then waited for Prince Sultan [Defense Minister] to transmit to me the King's order to fire. But, after some anxious hours, King Fahd decided not to escalate the conflict. He made a rational decision to reserve the missiles as a weapon of last resort, thereby demonstrating the Kingdom's sense of responsibility. He did not want

⁷⁴ Dr. Khalil al-Dakhil, *Al-Hayat*, 18 December 2011.

to cause casualties among innocent Iraqi civilians and he no doubt judged that the Coalition's air campaign being waged against Iraq was sufficient retaliation.⁷⁵

This episode is important because it suggests a number of components that factored into the Saudi decision. First, when attacked directly the Saudis immediately considered direct military retaliation in order to establish deterrence. Second, the Saudis possessed and maintained the necessary military capability in preparation to retaliate in kind. Third, the decision to retaliate was governed by a Royal Chain of Command that appears to be deeply ingrained and respected. Fourth, in the end the King did not retaliate directly in order to avoid escalation. This sensitivity to and recognition of the role of escalation in a deterrence scenario is also very important.

Khalid bin Sultan mentions three additional lessons the Saudis took away from the 1990-1991 Gulf War that relate to nuclear deterrence: First, he observed that Saudi Arabia was "extremely vulnerable to weapons of mass destruction: we had no effective deterrence; our major economic assets were concentrated in the Eastern Province; and our population was concentrated in a small number of centers."⁷⁶ Second, Prince Khaled believes it was fear of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction – chemical weapons – that made the Coalition's military commanders believe Iraq was a formidable enemy.⁷⁷ Third, the Saudis believed that Israel took its "bomb out of the basement" during the 1990-1991 war when it was the target of Saddam's SCUD missiles. Prince Khaled believed that this was done to pressure the US for more expedient support, similar to Israeli behavior at the start of the 1973 October War, when he claims Israel also took its bomb out of the basement when it was surprised and Egypt and Syria overran its defenses at the start of the war. In Khaled's words, "Evidently, nuclear weapons are as useful to pressure allies as they are to frighten enemies."⁷⁸

⁷⁵ HRH Khaled bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior* (HaperCollins Publishers, 1995), p. 350.

⁷⁶ Sultan, p. 316.

⁷⁷ Sultan, p. 314.

⁷⁸ Sultan, p. 349.