



B'HUTH - WORKSHOP REPORT

The Emerging Global Role of Arab Gulf States

1st May 2018 – London, UK





Acknowledgement

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Prepared by: Angus Taverner and Dora Allday



Summary

This report captures the main discussion points and findings of the B'uth Workshop on the 'Emerging Role of Arab Gulf States', held at the Royal Society, London, UK, on 1st May 2018. The workshop discussed the perceived transition from global unipolarity to multipolarity, the development of Asia and Russia's ambitions in the international system, and how the Arab Gulf states might prepare and respond to these changes in the international system. The workshop also reminded participants of the origins of the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) and considered how the organisation is evolving, and is likely to change in the future, particularly in response to shifting polarities of power, both regionally and globally.

The report provides an overview of how shifts within the Arab Gulf should be perceived against an optimistic backdrop for the region's potential as a source of global influence. Conflicts within the Gulf region, notably concerning Qatar, Iran and Yemen, were also considered in the context of the changing influence of the region's traditional Western allies, especially the US, as well as changing relationships with the nascent and re-emerging global powers of Russia, China and India.

Introduction

The ‘Emerging Role of the Arab Gulf States’ Workshop brought together experts from across Europe and the Arab Gulf to examine: the perceived changes to Western engagement in the Gulf, and consideration of Western perspectives of shifting Gulf priorities; opportunities for the Gulf in the context of the rise of China and India, and the return of Russia as a primary strategic actor in the region. The workshop also explored Gulf responses in terms of the potential for international competition, looking beyond military and strategic co-operation to changing economic drivers; and the Gulf as a place of contest between East and West, strategically and economically, as well as considering the extent to which the Gulf’s traditional Western allies should be concerned by emerging competition in Asia.

The first panel examined perceptions of a shift from the post-Cold War era of unipolarity, dominated by the United States, to the emergence of new poles of strategic influence and power. It also explored the changing nature of engagement between the traditional Western powers and the GCC.

An early consensus was the need to consider countries in terms of relative economic strength and strategic interest, rather than merely which countries should be seen as disruptive or destabilising. This helped to clarify countries’ relationships with the Gulf states in terms of energy production and wider commerce.

The second panel explored the resurgence of Asia, and particularly China and India’s ambitions in the region. It also examined the re-emergence of Russia and the increasing role that Moscow is playing in Middle Eastern affairs.



The final panel sought to draw the strands of the first two panels together and assess how prepared the Arab Gulf is for the changes implied by the region's own growing influence and ambitions in this changing world. It also attempted to identify not only the opportunities that change is likely to bring, but also the challenges the region is likely to confront.

Participants discussed the wide diversity of changes across the Arab Gulf region; agreeing it is crucial to acknowledge its sociological and cultural differences from the West. It was argued that these underlying differences underpin and inform every strategic, diplomatic and commercial decision made by the Gulf states, and should be taken into consideration by all relevant institutions and individual leaders.



The Workshop considered
the various issues through
three panels which considered:



A MOSTLY
REGIONAL TO A
MORE PROMINENTLY
GLOBAL ROLE,
THUS REQUIRING
INTERACTION
WITH A BROADER
RANGE OF
ACTORS



- **FROM UNIPOLARITY TO MULTIPOLARITY - REALITY OR PERCEPTION?**
- **THE EMERGENCE OF ASIA AND RUSSIA'S AMBITIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM**
- **HOW SHOULD THE ARAB GULF STATES PREPARE AND RESPOND?**

The Workshop was conducted under the 'Chatham House Rule'. Broader themes emerged during the course of the presentations and debate which provide the general structure for this report.

CHANGE IN THE ARAB GULF REGION

Change has become a defining theme for all the Arab Gulf states, in part driven by internal pressures and also by evident shifts in global power. This is manifest in perceptions of increasing multipolarity; primarily a result of declining US economic dominance and the emergence of China as a competitive economic (but not necessarily military) superpower. Simultaneously, the Arab Gulf states have been moving from a mostly regional to a more prominently global role, thus requiring interaction with a broader range of actors. This has led to shifts away from relatively straightforward international relationships to a more complex web of international engagement that has demanded more nuanced foreign and international policies. This shift arguably began in the wake of the 1991 liberation of Kuwait, now regarded as the peak 'unipolar moment' for the Gulf, and has accelerated with the resurgence of new centres of global power, most notably China and India, but also the still growing influence of many medium ranked powers including: South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore.

The Arab Gulf's geographic position means it will always be subject to high levels of foreign interest and engagement, and sometimes intervention. Not only are oil and gas abundant but it is a key route to zones further east where Western powers often conflict with Asian rivals. This theme seems likely to become more dominant as the countries of Africa similarly start to emerge as global players with both resources and markets to drive economic development.

While no country can be entirely self-reliant, it was agreed that there is a particular deficit of self-sufficiency in the Middle East. This creates inherent friction: with neither the traditional superpowers, the US and Russia, willing to support dependent states unconditionally, unless it is in their own strategic interest. Nor do the emerging powers of China and India. Participants agreed that trying to reduce this inherent friction remains an important strategic goal and may engender increased multipolarity as more countries share responsibility and play a more prominent role than has traditionally been the case in the Gulf. In short, the Arab Gulf appears no longer able to rely completely on Western, mainly US, security undertakings. Equally, while present trends suggest the need for greater self-reliance in terms of defence and security combined with a broader range of Asian support, it seems likely that the region's long-standing allies in the West should still be seen as the





most important bloc in terms of the region's defence and security.

Considering the origins of the GCC in relation to this era of shifting polarity, it was pointed out that the largely un-codified nature of the Gulf Co-operation Council's (GCC) founding charter was rooted in mutual trust between the six founding leaders; a concept which seems dated but is still of key relevance, particularly in the context of recent differences with Qatar. The coming together of the GCC was a response to the challenges posed in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and was never intended to bind member states through a codified set of formal agreements. However, more recent perceptions of Gulf unity, comparable to more formal international bodies such as the European Union and ASEAN, have complicated understanding of the similarities and differences that have been brought into sharp relief by the recent Gulf stand-off between the Arab Quartet and Qatar. It was argued that the present Doha leadership has

departed from the GCC's founding principle of 'trust' and may therefore have harmed the long-term efficacy of the GCC.

The founding principle of trust at the heart of the GCC was also considered in the context of two further criteria. First, the understanding that each country or member state would take the interests of others into consideration when pursuing its national interests, and not follow policies that were inherently risky, dangerous or harmful to other GCC members. The second, and less tangible notion of shared faith and goodwill, was described as the 'bedrock' of the GCC, which was said to be the first organisation in the world built on "oneness". Over the past 40 years, this has encouraged the GCC to remain risk averse and to work to enhance shared interests. Arguably, it is this breakdown of trust and shared confidence that now challenges the longevity of the GCC as an organisation built on shared values and interests.

The 1973 oil crisis inspired the GCC's original slogan: 'the power of scarcity'. This refers to the Gulf's abundant possession of a commodity which the whole world needed – oil. Participants discussed how the GCC's founders used this commodity wisely and rationally, laying down a basis of communication with the global community, considering the rights of consumers and striking a compromise which is still largely valid today.

Growing up through this period of change has been a new generation of younger Gulf leaders. This new cohort appears more comfortable playing a global role and being actors beyond the Arab Gulf region. These new leaders have also grown up learning to choose between competing allies and economic partners, and are arguably more comfortable engaging with the present diversity of mid-range powers as well as the traditional powers of the post-World War Two consensus. Thus, Arab Gulf states are presently embracing change and are seen acting more strategically in a much more complex world.



DISCUSSED
HOW THE GCC'S
FOUNDERS USED
THIS COMMODITY
WISELY AND
RATIONALLY,



This process of change is congruent with parallel shifts in broader international relations. Major change such as the election of President Trump and the UK's vote to leave the European Union – Brexit – have compelled governments to reconsider the status quo, the evident demand for change and to act more strategically.

This more overt engagement with the international system by the Gulf states seems likely to encourage a measure of recalibration of the international order within the continuing, broad acceptance of the post-World War Two international consensus, largely built on US-dominated international institutions such as: the UN, the World Bank, NATO and the IMF. Such a reordering will likely see the Gulf states capitalising on their oil and security 'capital', while pursuing relationships built primarily on commerce. Participants agreed the GCC is doing well within the security and defence sectors, receiving in exchange, intelligence and strategic alignment with friends and allies.

It was also agreed that this is not limited merely to traditional key players, but also mid-ranking states with arguably greater influence over emerging markets, that are likely to increase their international influence and leverage alongside the Gulf.

Looking back to the era of the British Empire, it is clear the British were primarily interested in the Gulf's geographic position and particularly its ports, rather than as countries in the round. Strategic importance was placed on geography and resources. In the 21st century, geography and maritime assets are still of key importance, but the Gulf's importance has increased exponentially, largely due to its energy resources and growing sovereign wealth.

PERCEPTIONS OF AMERICAN WITHDRAWAL AND WESTERN DECLINE



It was broadly agreed that there is a perception of a loss of US commitment to the Gulf region. This is attributed to a complex mix of factors including: perceived US/UK failure in Iraq post-2003; US domestic antipathy to continuing American involvement in the Middle East; the emergence of alternative sources of energy to Gulf oil and gas; the failure of the US to intervene decisively and strategically in the Arab Spring, and a growing sense of renewed American isolationism.

PRES TRUMP'S
SEEMING
UNPREDICTABILITY
AND IRRATIONALITY
LOOMED LARGE IN
DISCUSSION OF
LONG-TERM
US COMMITMENT
TO THE REGION.



Historically, the US has been perceived in the Gulf as a reluctant, and increasingly unreliable, security guarantor. With the honourable exception of Kuwait in 1990 and 1991, US leadership has too often been found wanting. Strategic failure in both Iraq and Afghanistan have eroded confidence in the US' capacity to deliver desired outcomes; a sense that was further reinforced by President Obama's flirtation with resetting relations with Iran and his failure to stand by Arab leaders during the uprisings of 2011. More recently, the US and UK's failure to reinforce moderate rebel forces in Syria is widely perceived to have opened the door to both Iran and Russia. Even with President Trump seemingly offering firmer leadership in support of Arab Gulf interests, it was broadly accepted that all GCC leaders see the US in long-term retreat, particularly as the strategic guarantor of the region.

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Pres Trump's seeming unpredictability and irrationality loomed large in discussion of long-term US commitment to the region. It was accepted that while he has shown that he tends to keep promises, these tend to be short-termist and, so far at least, cannot be ascribed to a settled strategic vision of America's place in the Middle East – let alone the world.

Considering Mr Trump's unhappiness with the 2015 international nuclear agreement with Iran (the Joint Committee Plan of Action



الخليج في عالم متعدد القطبية
GCC IN MULTIPOLAR WORLD
PROGRAMME



[JCPOA]), it was suggested that his handling of the issue marks the first time in his presidency that a foreign issue is colliding directly with a domestic issue that he, rather than his administration, has had to confront head-on. By the end of April 2018, oil prices had surged to \$75 per barrel, a 65% increase since June 2017, largely in anticipation of US withdrawal from the JCPOA. This impact is palpable inside America, not only encouraging the fracking industry but conversely threatening a significant increase in the price of fuel oil with likely concomitant consequences for ordinary Americans – Mr Trump's famed 'base' of political support.

It was also agreed that the present US leadership is pursuing a more 'transactional' approach to regional diplomacy and continues to emphasise the importance of greater burden-sharing, not only within NATO but across other global relationships, including with the GCC. US commitments in the region are expensive at a time of financial constraint. This trend seems likely to continue and will probably influence America's continuing strategic commitment to the Arab Gulf region. Some in the West, notably within the present US administration, seem to believe that GCC countries owe the United States a favour for the security commitments the US continues to provide. Participants agreed that the Gulf states need to become more assertive and demonstrate to the US that the Arab Gulf not only continues to fulfil its security undertakings but is also prepared to shoulder the burden of its own regional security in partnership with allies. This process is also backed by offering valuable and enduring economic partnerships.

For the moment at least, the Arab Gulf region sees little alternative to the strategic power of the US. Rising Chinese and Indian economic engagement in the region should not be conflated with strategic commitment to the defence of Arab Gulf interests. A key question for the future will be the extent to which the growing emphasis on a more transactional approach to Western involvement may encourage alternative strategic partnerships..



RUSSIA

Russia's ambition to restore its global pre-eminence was acknowledged and debated at length. It was generally agreed that Russia's relative economic weakness seems likely to constrain Moscow from pursuing a sustained security role in the Arab Gulf region. In this respect, Russia has not challenged Western pre-eminence as the region's long-term ally and partner.

That said, it was also argued that Russia continues to seek increased involvement in the region, offering attractive opportunities through: the provision of defence equipment and capability; energy co-operation, including possible nuclear energy development, while Russia also offers the Arab Gulf states an alternative to traditional Western dependency that Gulf capitals are increasingly utilising as a 'hedge' against over-reliance on Western supply. In particular, offers of participation in defence programmes, with the additional benefit of knowledge transfer, are proving to be welcome bargaining tools in negotiations with traditional Western allies; particularly the US. Views were expressed suggesting that the West withholds its best technology in order to maintain a 'strategic edge', emphasising the need for the Gulf to build broader relationships in both high-tech and defence sectors.

From a strategic perspective, Russia remains one of the only global powers capable and willing to act with decisive effect. Accordingly, it maintains strategic influence in the Arab Gulf, buttressed by Russia's own ambitions to restore its position in the wider Middle East.

However, it was also argued that Russia's economic weakness and failure to command wider regional support for its intervention in Syria, has shown that Russia seems unlikely to emerge fully as an alternative strategic partner in the region. The relationship between the Arab Gulf and Russia is seen as opportunistic and pragmatic, rather than strategic.



It also observed that Russia's involvement in Syria and its alignment with Iranian ambitions in the region are strategically incompatible with the interests of the GCC. Russia's Syrian imbroglio exemplifies the key factors of reliability and confidence. It was suggested that this has been exemplified by Russia's intransigence in its support for the Assad regime and Moscow's unwillingness to heed advice, despite multiple diplomatic efforts from GCC countries. It was also pointed out that Russia does not share the GCC ethos of an altruistic foreign policy, whereas the UK and even the US are willing to make compromises and remain sensitive to the Gulf's culture and tradition.



CHINA AND INDIA

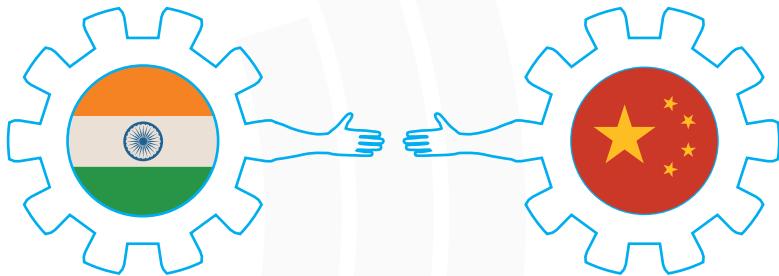
The rise of Asian economic power is now challenging the Western post-war consensus. It is arguably the defining strategic shift of our time. But it is also an evolving process and Asian progress has not been especially swift. China and India are the most important players, primarily because of their sheer size and the still untapped potential of much of their populations. This growing economic power is enabling China in particular to invest in military capability. China is thus providing defence budgets to match their growth of national income.

America remains China's strongest competitor in the technological sector, but it was also argued that the supranational nature of technological development by vastly wealthy international corporations transcends national borders, leading to participants questioning the relevance of states in their traditionally accepted Westphalian construct. While it was agreed that the nation-state certainly remains important today, the emergence of powerful non-state actors is also proving to be an important influence. Cultural trends across state lines, especially in the UAE and Pakistan, include technology spread, as seen on social media apps, engendering a form of soft power which adds to Asia's quiet rise. States can control these trends to an extent, as shown by China's censorship of many internet sites, but even there their control is constrained.

In contrast to Russia, China and India are targeting the Arab Gulf as strategic economic partners but, for the moment at least, show little inclination to become involved as defence or security partners in the region. It was argued that GCC member states were compelled to look eastwards as President Obama pursued his own Asian pivot. This irked GCC leaders who felt betrayed by a perceived loss of US commitment. Gulf flirtation with China and India, as well as Russia, has been an inevitable consequence alongside determination to become more self-reliant and less dependent on uncertain allies.

China in particular has proved to be a willing trading partner with the GCC, filling some gaps created by the Obama administration's Pacific policy. However,

Chinese reluctance to engage in the region as a defence partner and ally has arguably diminished potential Chinese influence and strategic leverage. That said, it was also agreed that this should not be understood as grounds for complacency – particularly by the West. As China, in particular, is likely to become strategically dominant across Asia through the expansion and pursuit of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), so strategic friction is likely to increase. In particular, the elimination of alternative markets may put China in a dominant position that becomes inimical to Arab Gulf interests.



Presently, the Gulf states are at a moment of inflection where China and India's apparent willingness to share knowledge and to be open to greater Gulf involvement in strategic projects encourages invitations to Chinese and Indian investors. However, this also engenders uncertainty because neither China nor India show significant interest in the kinds of strategic relationship that would be attractive to the GCC over the longer term. Chinese investments in particular are prevalent worldwide, but Chinese investment in the UAE, for example, is only three percent of GDP; limiting its potential power and leverage.

It was also pointed out that the relationships between China and the Gulf, and India and the Gulf are significantly different. Over the past millennium, China has not had a strong relationship with the Middle East on any level, notwithstanding the folklore around the original Silk Road. In contrast, India has always maintained a deep relationship with the region, founded on trade and shared strategic interests. This, combined with the emergence of a new generation of leaders, is likely to see the Arab Gulf's relationships with the emerging super-powers develop in very different ways.

QATAR AND REGIONAL INSTABILITY

The present regional challenges posed by Qatar's stand-off with its Gulf neighbours and continued Arab Gulf involvement in Yemen were discussed at length; largely because it has such an obviously negative effect on the GCC's capacity to continue functioning as a unified and strategically coherent bloc. That said, participants suggested that the present Qatar stand-off should not be considered a full-blown regional crisis. Intra-Gulf relations continue, energy and commerce are still flowing, and discourse continues – although not in the manner that the international community might wish. Presently, there may be too much concern over Qatar's destabilising impact within the region. It is and remains a regional disagreement that reflects longer-standing tensions.

The resurgence of Turkey's influence is inextricably bound up with Qatar's role in the region. Turkey's increasing presence represents not just a shifting alliance in the Gulf but a shift between Turkey and Qatar themselves. Participants questioned the role of Turkey as an actor and whether it should be regarded as a calming or destabilising actor. The January 2018 decision to deploy 60,000 Turkish troops across the region, including to reinforce Qatar's defences, indicated the latter to several participants, but it was ultimately recognised to be less important to the region as a whole.

This theme permeated the workshop: thinking of the whole, rather than the sum of parts. Within the GCC community, it was suggested that international observers too often exaggerate regional disputes and issues, leading to misunderstanding of Gulf intentions and longer term strategy.

Thus, the core of the Qatari problem may be as much a failure of communication as actuality. That said, Qatar's absence from the most recent attempt by Kuwait to broker a compromise still suggests Qatar's continuing unwillingness to co-operate and co-ordinate with its immediate regional partners. The primary concern remains how Qatar's intransigence is now affecting the overall image of the Arab Gulf in a period when GCC states should be looking to capitalise on global shifts to the region's advantage.



While Yemen remains a regional crisis having a significant impact on the Arab Gulf, it is similarly important to remain objective and to maintain perspective on the issues arising. It was emphasised and broadly agreed that the conflict in Yemen has not reached the extremes of Syria. The Arab Gulf coalition that intervened in Yemen in 2015 did so out of necessity in response to the rebellious uprising by the Houthi, and was mandated by a UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR 2216, 2015). The Arab Gulf's response to instability in Yemen, and Iran's regional meddling, reflected acceptance of the existing world order and the GCC's willing acceptance of the authority of international law and its institutions.



TURKEY AND IRAN

Considering Iran, it was argued that Tehran's leadership is too often given credit for a grand strategic plan of hegemonic outreach that, in reality, amounts to little more than opportunist regional meddling. It was also suggested that internally, Iran lacks mechanisms capable of developing a settled strategy. Accordingly, Iran makes mischief across the region whenever opportunity arises, frequently subverting the GCC's strategic intent. As was pointed out, Iran did not initiate the conflicts in Syria, Yemen or the crisis with Qatar, but in each case, the Iranian leadership has sought to capitalise on inherent instability for its own benefit and in opposition to the Arab Gulf.

While Iran has always influenced GCC decision-making, Turkey is a relative newcomer as far as engagement in the Gulf region is concerned. The emerging alliance between Turkey and Qatar may exemplify the return of multipolarity in the Gulf. At the time of the GCC's conception Iran was the pre-eminent challenge, but Turkey now poses a strategic challenge in the Horn of Africa. Averting the risk of cutting off the flow of oil in the Bad al-Mandab strait into the Red Sea is likely to emerge as an increasingly important strategic driver for the region.

Despite frictions over Syria, it was argued that Qatar has offered both Turkey and Iran an opportunity to align their interests, particularly in opposition to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. This is a particular matter of concern, because in isolating Qatar, it may be that the Arab Quartet (Saudi, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt) has compelled Qatar to reach out to less desirable partners. Within Turkey, Pres Erdogan continues to emerge as a powerful figure, not only prepared to work with Russia and to some extent Iran, but also to abandon Turkey's long-held tradition of religious secularism in favour of increasingly Islamist forms of political and strategic engagement. Again, as US influence in the Middle East is perceived to be waning so Erdogan's Turkey may be mirroring Iran in opportunistic development as a new pole of regional influence – arguably also in opposition to the interests of the Arab Gulf.





UK'S ROLE POST-BREXIT

Finally, the Workshop briefly considered the impact of Brexit and the UK's longer-term role in the Arab Gulf. It was broadly accepted that Britain continues to engage with the GCC with greater commitment and more enthusiastically than many countries, including some European neighbours. The combination of history, willingness to commit defence capability, and to pursue trade opportunities remain emblems of a unique UK-Gulf relationship that the UK clearly hopes will prosper in the future.



**RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN UK
AND SAUDI ARABIA
IS MOVING
BEYOND THE
DEFENCE ARENA**



It was also agreed that the relationship between UK and Saudi Arabia is moving beyond the defence arena. Rather than focusing on energy and defence, as Britain leaves the European Union it will be crucial that leaders focus on more diverse areas of commerce and diplomacy. As demonstrated by HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to the UK in March, a more progressive change to the relationship between the UK and Saudi Arabia appears to be developing. It was also pointed out that while the UAE does not have a major defence equipment programme with the UK, the relationship is deemed to be strong, both culturally and economically. From a pro-Brexit perspective, it was pointed out that the EU has signally failed to conclude a free trade agreement with any single country in the GCC because of the constraints of the European customs union. This is perceived as an opportunity for the UK post-Brexit, offering the UK the chance to negotiate a free trade agreement with all GCC member-states.





Conclusions

Bearing in mind that this workshop was the initial step in pursuit of a longer-term programme of research aimed at considering the impact of a perceived re-ordering of the world order around multiple poles of global interests and power, it was generally agreed that the event had been successful in identifying the main issues for the Arab Gulf in a changing world. It also confirmed the notion that the Arab Gulf itself is increasingly being recognised not only for its geostrategic significance and as a vital source of the world's energy supply, but also as an increasingly prominent actor in international relations and trading partner.

Accordingly, the conclusions reached by workshop participants should not be seen as either prescriptive or as firm recommendations for policy makers, but as a foundation on which B'huth's further research into this area can be developed and future policy recommendations can be consolidated.



"STILL" DOWNLOADING MULTIPOLARITY



There was consensus that Gulf shifts are probably less dramatic than may be currently perceived, marked by a 'recalibration' and 'still downloading' multipolarity, rather than a globalised 'pivot' between states. Consideration of countries in terms of their national assets and interests, rather than who is a destabiliser or not, was deemed useful. Uncertainty permeates in a world of increased fragmentation, and there is a fundamental need for diplomacy linked with commerce.

STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT



It was also agreed that, notwithstanding temporary disagreements, the Arab Gulf has the capacity to emerge as a global force in a future world with many poles of interest and in which no country is truly dominant. This suggests that the GCC member nations have to settle temporary differences and then reshape the basis of the Arab Gulf countries' relationships with each other. This needs to encompass both economic and strategic realignment.

EMERGING PLAYERS



Just as the Gulf sees new, younger leaders shape its future, it is important that they broaden their engagement with the emerging key players in Asia, as well as realigning their relationships with the US, the UK and Europe. The GCC should not mirror the nativist ideologies evident in Trump's America but member states need to engage on a broader basis and not limit alliances solely to leadership relationships. Having acknowledged the cultural and social differences between the West and the Middle East, and so the Gulf has to reach out to different sectors of Western society to develop its interests more broadly.

POWER BALANCER



For the foreseeable future, the US and its Western allies are likely to remain the essential guarantors of Arab Gulf interests. Equally, the region has to maintain progress towards increasing self-reliance so that it reaches a point where its influence is equal to other poles of global power.

WIDER PARTNERSHIPS



China and India represent significant opportunities for the Arab Gulf states but they should also be understood in the context of traditional interests. Neither Chinese nor Indian involvement in the Gulf region or wider Middle East should be misconstrued as altruistic.

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TRIDE LINK



The liberal world trade order is one that uniquely favours small states. Large states can trade freely because they are closer to self-sufficiency; the more specialised you are, the harder it is to thrive, particularly in a protectionist world. In security terms, there is a risk that small states could become squeezed should the world order recalibrate fully. The model for successful small states is therefore based on agility, comparative advantage, domestic strength and a lower susceptibility to external interference. Singapore was noted as a good example, being the most prosperous country in South East Asia with a strong military, cohesive society and good education. A cohesive GCC alliance could emulate this on a larger scale, boosting their global credentials – and not just in the defence arena, but economically, commercially and socially.



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