Gulf Cooperation Council States Probable Attitude Towards a Military Action against Iran’s Nuclear Facilities

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Preamble

The recent escalation of tension over the Iranian nuclear military development program has emerged as a potentially critical clash-point in the Middle East region. The Gulf Research Centre (GRC) feels it to be an imperative that the issues and potential scenarios related to this matter are addressed. A main incentive in producing this policy paper stems broadly from the mission of the GRC to assess and analyze developments that may impact on the security and stability of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States. Just as importantly, this paper comes out of the GRC’s concern with the heated media campaign mounted recently within certain Western media circles against Iran. Also of note to the author is the fact that this media campaign has unfolded in close parallel with occasional statements issued by Israeli and US officials pointing to the possibility of a military strike being launched against Iran’s nuclear facilities. The stated intention of such an act is to wipe out or at least cripple Tehran’s nuclear program. There can be no doubt that such a scenario carries serious possible ramifications for the security and stability of the GCC States.

This policy paper seeks to put forth a tentative and personal reading by the author of the GCC States’ attitude/s towards the current developments unraveling in the Gulf region. In no way does the paper reflect the official position taken by the GCC States nor does it rest on any official information; it is rather an analytic approach to the current conditions in the region as well as to the possible developments that might unfold in the near future.

This policy paper sets out from an increasingly possible reality. That ‘foreign powers’ may resort to the military option to put an end, or alternatively disable, Iran’s nuclear program
can certainly not be excluded as a possible scenario. It is
evident that if this option is pushed from within certain circles,
there is both the military capability and the political will to
carry it out. In this context, it is worth recalling Israel’s attempt
in 1981 to destroy Iraq’s nuclear facilities by conducting a
surprise air strike.

This paper focuses on the potential of the military
option being used against Iran not because it is inevitable,
legal or even legitimate. It is however the position of the
author that in light of various factors and considerations this
possible outcome must be taken seriously. Recent
developments suggest that it is one of the likely scenarios
that could take place in the forthcoming period. Washington
and Tel Aviv are contemplating the prospect of staging a
military strike against Iran’s nuclear facilities.

The scenario grows even likelier on consideration of the
recent direction of US foreign policy which seems to have
been driven by anything but legal justification or reason over
the last few years. Similarly, Israel’s policies are dominated
by sustainable aggressiveness. Besides which, both the US
and Israel seem to be wholeheartedly convinced of the value
of pursuing the approach of ‘Pre-emptive Attack’ or
‘Preventive Strategy’ both of which are founded on the vested
right of states to destroy any perceived sources of threat,
whether imminent or potential, before such threats become a
palpable reality. The obvious objective of such a strategy is to
guarantee the security of states by neutralizing, or better still
utterly annihilating, possible security threats.
Legitimate Gulf Queries
Is the destruction of Iran's nuclear sites a serious option?

Certain key questions are making the rounds across the GCC States decision-making circles and in many other countries within and outside the Middle East region, as outlined below:

1. Are the US-Israeli threats of embracing a military option to deal with Iran’s nuclear ambitions genuinely serious or a strategic bluff? Some analysts perceive the threats as merely a tactic - a political and psychological tool deployed to pressure Iran’s leadership, as well as other states that seem to hold a tolerant attitude vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear project. This line of thinking is perhaps based on the belief that the very possibility of a military attack is practically unrealizable under any circumstances?

2. Or, does the military option represent in actual fact a real and serious option amongst others to deal with what has come to be described as Iran's nuclear danger? Under this scenario, foreign powers would resort to the military option only if other options fail and only after conditions are assessed as particularly favorable to a successful outcome. This is perhaps not the case right now. Hence, the attitude of decision-makers in the GCC States could be founded on the assumption of a 'postponed option'. In other words, the GCC States would articulate their position around the presumption that a military strike targeting Iran’s nuclear facilities is serious and highly possible, though it is not exactly inevitable or on the verge of occurring, in light of prevailing realities.
3. Or, has the military option become inevitable, under the stated intention of dealing with Iran's alleged nuclear ambitions, but with multi-faceted and covert objectives? This scenario is based on an assessment of presumed or existing policy motivations on the agenda of ‘foreign powers’ as going beyond the simple objective of destroying Iran’s nuclear capabilities and sites. In fact, the US and Israel may wish to achieve certain undeclared policy objectives through enacting the military option. A similar political calculation was embedded in the US decision to remove the regime of Saddam Hussein aside from the stated and reiterated goal of destroying Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction (WMDs). This scenario seems to be predicated on the assumption that a military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities would not be a single-objective strategy or option. Instead, a possible military action would serve as a cover for other objectives to be achieved within or outside Iran. Possibly, these could include the destabilization of the Iranian regime and rendering Tehran impotent in external regional interventions.

4. Alternatively, does the option of enacting intelligence operations or what is more commonly known as the "intelligence option" by destroying or pre-empting Iran’s nuclear program from achieving any progress via non-military means, constitute a likely policy substitute to direct military strikes?

This is precisely the type of operations Israeli and Western intelligence services conducted widely and rather effectively during the mid-sixties against Egypt’s program for the development of medium- and long-range missiles (the missile types are known as ‘Al-Qaher’ and ‘Al-Zafer.’) Again, during the late seventies and up until the nineties, Western and Israeli intelligence services engaged in secret sabotage
operations against Iraq’s nuclear program and the program for the production of the ‘Super Gun’. In point of fact, these intelligence activities unraveled in the run-up to Tel Aviv’s decision to resort to a military strike in 1981 as a means for crippling Iraq’s nuclear program. At the time, a wide-ranging Israeli-led intelligence campaign was kick-started across several countries. Practically, the campaign included the physical elimination of Iraqi and non-Iraqi scientists working on Iraq’s nuclear program. The intelligence campaign repeatedly sought to destroy military hardware purchased by contract at the seaport of exporting countries. In the meantime, attempts were deployed to destroy the equipment and facilities of Iraq’s nuclear reactor by staging a series of well-devised sabotage operations targeting the main hardware on which work progress relied. However, Israel’s recourse to the intelligence option did not prove sufficiently productive. Iraq’s nuclear program sustained minor damages that resulted in only a temporary interruption of the work. Subsequently, Iraq managed to resume its nuclear development program by enacting wide anti-intelligence measures.
Presumed Basis of the GCC States’ Attitude

The author believes that there exists a fundamental and evident premise from which one could set out to examine the stand the GCC States might take towards any attempt to cripple or abort the development of Iran’s nuclear program. Indeed, no matter how different the positions of the six member states of the GCC and the other regional states are, whether adjacent or geographically proximate to Iran and no matter what conflicting interests individual states nourish, all the states in the region seem to stand on a common ground and share common national interests in supporting the policies of Western nations and the international community. Should the consensus point to seeking to strip Iran of its potential or actual nuclear military capabilities, this option would likely have support at the decision making level of the GCC States. Just as the countries in the region had direct or not so direct interests, declared or tightly kept secret, in seeing Iraq stripped of both its nuclear capabilities and its WMD arsenal.

The presumed attitude of the GCC States, at the official level and perhaps also at the popular level, needs to be based on the articulation of a fundamental and collective stand on the following principles:

The GCC States need to embrace a position that understands the necessity of formulating a regional agreement spanning all the countries in the Gulf and perhaps the wider Middle East region. Israel in particular should be included in the agreement, whose key objective would be to consolidate the legal foundation for declaring the region a ‘nuclear-free zone’ or a ‘region free of weapons of mass destruction’. All states in the region should comply with the strict implementation of this principle. Appropriate and sustainable mechanisms ought to be devised for the
implementation of the disarming process while countries possessing nuclear programs for peaceful purposes ought to be closely monitored.

This position was re-confirmed by the statement issued at the conclusion of the 92\textsuperscript{nd} session of the GCC foreign ministerial meeting held in Jeddah on September 13, 2004. Through their collective statement, the GCC States urged the international community to ‘endeavor to make the Middle East region free of weapons of mass destruction and pressure Israel into signing on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty [NPT] as well as subject Israel’s nuclear facilities to international inspections.’

It is worth recalling in this specific context that all the countries in the Gulf region, namely the GCC States, Iraq, Iran and Yemen, are signatories of the NPT.

In fact, Iran was the first country to adopt in 1974 the project of declaring the Middle East region free of nuclear weapons. In the same year, Tehran submitted its project to the UN General Assembly with the full support of Egypt, accordingly the UN General Assembly adopted resolution no 3236 (XXIX) calling for the establishment of a nuclear – weapon free zone in the Middle East region based on the Iranian draft. Again, in 1990, Cairo floated a comprehensive project carrying the tag ‘The Mubarak Initiative’, which sought to present a well-integrated document likely to serve as a pillar for declaring the Middle East region a WMD-free zone (WMDFZME). However, and in spite of the wide support in the Arab world, Israel’s rejection of the Egyptian initiative simply killed the idea.

There are, of course, some regional enterprises that have successfully managed to develop an effective formula for the implementation of the non-proliferation principle, notably the "Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in
Latin America", ratified in Mexico City on February 1967. Signatory states have effectively maintained the principle of keeping Latin America free of nuclear weaponry. Other similar treaties include the "South Pacific Nuclear-Free Zone" [SPNFZ] ratified in Brisbane, Australia, on August 6, 1985 and the "African Nuclear Weapon Free Zone Treaty" [ANFZT] ratified in Cairo on April 11, 1996.

Within this context, the GCC States believe that other successful experiences in the field of nuclear non-proliferation could well be applied to the region, as a way of enhancing security and stability, as well as building inter-state confidence. The GCC States strongly reject the principle of nuclear proliferation across the region, considering Israel's possession of nuclear capabilities as one of the most formidable sources of threat against regional and international security and peace. In fact, Israel's nuclear capabilities induce other states in the region to develop and possess nuclear capabilities, opening the door for a dangerous regional nuclear arms-race.

There can be no doubt that Israel's abandonment of its nuclear capabilities represents a basic component and a mandatory condition for the Middle East region to become free of any WMDs, precisely as the UN General Assembly Resolution 49/71 issued on December 15, 1994, stipulated. The resolution explicitly urged all states in the Middle East region to take practical and serious measures to turn the project of a Middle East nuclear-free zone into a tangible reality.

Additionally, the GCC States believe Israel ought to comply with its own legal commitments to making the Middle East region a 'WMD-free zone', as clearly stipulated by the fourth clause of the "Jordanian-Israeli Peace Treaty" ratified in 1994 (Wadi Araba agreement) in accordance with which
both Amman and Tel Aviv pledged to strive to make the
Middle East region a zone free of conventional as well as
non-conversional weapons of mass destruction as part of a
just, comprehensive and durable peace.

Within the general framework of the need to urgently
free the Middle East region of weapons of mass destruction,
the GCC States’ current reaction revolves around an implicit,
undeclared, and perhaps officially unagreed upon, consent
to the ‘principle’ that Iran should be prevented from
developing any nuclear capabilities for any non-peaceful
uses.

Even though the dangers associated with Iran’s nuclear
program started to emerge more clearly over the last few
years, and despite allegations about Tehran’s acquisition of
military nuclear capabilities in the very near future, the
leaderships of the six GCC States have so far avoided openly
expressing a collective stand that would define their position.
GCC summits and joint meetings, too, have shunned away
from directly and openly holding the issue of Iran’s nuclear
capability or nuclear arms development program up for
collective deliberation or for determining a unified policy
approach towards what can now be regarded as a potential
and serious threat to the strategic balance of power in Gulf
region.

To be sure, the GCC States’ position informed as it is
by the principle of needing to prevent Iran from ever
possessing nuclear military capabilities stems nonetheless
from the geo-political reality of these states. The GCC States
along with their people would potentially be the first victims
and the main targets of the political and military
repercussions that might arise once Tehran steps through the
gates of the nuclear club. This development has certainly
prompted a radical and permanent shift in the regional
balance of power. Besides this, the GCC States and the Gulf people would be the potential victims of environmental pollution, whether deliberate or simply incidental, which might be caused by a leakage and diffusion of radioactive material in the skies or waters of the Gulf region.

Supporting the principle of preventing Iran from developing nuclear capabilities does reflect, albeit indirectly, an implicit recognition that Israel alone enjoys the right to monopolize nuclear capabilities in the region. This would surely reflect negatively not just on the position held by the GCC States but also on the other countries in the region. National and even collective self-interest entails a clear-cut separation of the two issues.

Iran’s development of nuclear capabilities would represent a serious development with wide-ranging ramifications for the Gulf region, just as it would carry deep implications for the nature of GCC-Iran relations on the one hand and Arab-Iran relations on the other. While the Gulf States and the wider Arab world are fully aware of the imminent dangers associated with Israel’s nuclear capabilities, they are no less aware of their impotence to change this reality. The dominating sentiment, however, is that no other nuclear power should emerge in the region, for such a development would intensify the possibility of a non-conventional war that could wreak irreparable havoc on the whole region and deepen the instability across the Middle East.

Within the political calculations of the GCC States and the rest of the Arab world, Iran’s possession of nuclear capabilities does not constitute an instrument of deterrence, nor does it represent a counter-balancing lever against Israel’s nuclear capabilities. Perhaps, on the popular level, Tehran’s interests are perceived as fitting hand in glove with
the ultimate interest of Arab states in seeking the proper means for breaking Israel's monopolization over nuclear military capabilities. On other hand Iran's interests and the Arab world's interests radically clash in other areas, namely the occupation of the three islands in the Gulf, fundamental disagreements over the Arab/Israeli peace process and the presumed Iranian intervention in Arab internal affairs. So far as the strategic calculation and assessment of the GCC and Arab states is concerned, Iran's entry in the world's nuclear club is certainly more undesirable than it is appealing, and is viewed as more of a negative rather than positive a development.

Over the past three decades, the prevailing conditions in the Gulf region have grown markedly more sensitive, particularly as a result of the expansionist policies enacted by the Shah of Iran during the early seventies. Shortly afterwards, new threats loomed over the Gulf horizon in the wake of the rise of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the subsequent Iraq-Iran war, followed by the First Gulf War in 1991 and the Second Gulf War in 2003. The security and stability conundrums in the Gulf region have borne the brunt of successive adverse developments.

In light of these realities, it seems that Iran's development of nuclear capabilities, at least in the eyes of the GCC States, represents an additional negative ingredient and a turning-point development that would inevitably impinge on the security and stability of the region the outcome of which, now and in the long run, are too hard to predict.
Between the Principle & the Means

A Unified Strategic Stand and Tactical Differences

If we assume that the GCC States share a set of unified interests and an undisclosed and implicit agreement on the principle that Iran ought to be stripped of its current nuclear capabilities as well as of the potential ability to acquire nuclear military capabilities any time in the future, another essential part of the issue remains unaddressed. That part bears on the nature of the means the GCC States could deploy to achieve their desired goal. It is precisely on this specific issue that disagreement comes to the forefront of debate between the Gulf-regional position on the one hand and the US-Israeli stand on the other.

Indisputably, the scenario that the GCC States would like to see unfold in order to achieve this goal would involve a concerted move by the international community to dismantle Iran's nuclear program via diplomatic pressures, coupled with economic pressures. The international community, embodied in UN organizations and the international agencies, would assume a pivotal role directed to realizing a precise goal by non-military means. However, while the GCC leaderships are positively convinced that diplomatic means alone are partially unable, if not actually totally unable, to achieve this objective, they are deeply concerned about the possibility that other concerned parties, namely the US and Israel, might resort to the military option as an alternative means.

Clearly, the GCC States’ concern, so tightly correlated with their rejection of a military option, has its own rational justifications and legitimate queries, which can be summarized as follows:
A- Queries about the style and the feasibility of waging a military action as a means of destroying Iran’s nuclear program (the military attack.) Queries in this regard focus on the following points:

1. Is the military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities, if conducted, going to be a unilateral action to be executed individually by US or Israeli forces? Or, will it be a joint military action? And, if the military action is conducted unilaterally from a purely military perspective, is the action itself going to be jointly conducted from the perspective of intelligence cooperation in the run-up to a military attack?

2. What is the geographical zone to be targeted by the presumed military action? Is the military strike going to exclusively target the Bushaher nuclear reactor? Or, is the zone of attack going to extend to other nuclear facilities related to Iran’s nuclear program, including even Iran’s missile development program, both of which cover a vast area of Iranian territory?

3. Is the military strike against Iran’s nuclear sites going to be preceded by a pre-emptive military action which would first target Iran’s missile capability such as storage sites and long-range missile launch-pads, command and control posts, in a bid to prevent Iran from conducting any immediate retaliatory act? Or, perhaps the attack would be a starting point to expanding the range of military action, destroying Iran’s sites for the production of long-range missiles program, namely the Shihab missiles production facilities?

4. Is the military strike, no matter how precise and intense, going to put an end to Iran’s nuclear program in any
effective and instantaneous way? Or, is the military action going just to cripple Iran’s nuclear capabilities partially and temporarily?

In this specific context, one needs to refer back to the lessons drawn from Israel’s military action against Iraq’s nuclear facilities in 1981, which proved utterly unproductive in achieving the goals initially set for it. The Iraqi nuclear development program was later resumed. In fact, Israel’s action achieved nothing more than partially crippling and delaying the progress of the program.

5. Will the timing of the military action be linked to particular political developments? Will concerned countries first try to secure a UN Security Council resolution condemning Iran’s program so as to gain international cover to legitimize the action? Also, are the myriad developments unfolding currently in Iraq, or what some political pundit prefer to call the ‘Iraqi factor’ going to have a positive or negative impact on the calculations of concerned parties or on the decision to conduct or refrain from conducting the military attack or even on its timing?

Logically, conventional wisdom dictates that no military action will be conducted, neither unilaterally or jointly against Iran so long as the security and military predicament of the US is still far from over in Iraq.

6. What environmental damages would be caused by a military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities which are presumably in effective operation? Are environmental damages, both in the short and longer terms, going to extend beyond the limited geographical zone where Iran’s nuclear sites are located? Is a military action going to pollute the skies and waters of the Gulf region?
B- Queries about the ability of the US and its allies to control or deal effectively with Iranian reactions (Post-Attack developments).

Setting out from the rational assumption that military action against Iran’s nuclear facilities would take the form of either air strikes, missile attacks, and operations staged by special forces or by multiple means, it is clearly going to be conducted by using the huge military capabilities of the two concerned states, the US and Israel. The military action itself would be technically and practically feasible and would require no more than limited efforts and capabilities which both the US and Israel currently possess either individually or together. Besides which, both Washington and Tel Aviv possess the required intelligence capabilities to collect necessary intelligence to sustain a military action.

The second logical assumption rests on the possible fact that Iran does not possess the appropriate military capabilities to prevent an attack, whether unilaterally or jointly conducted against its nuclear sites, from happening. In this case, Iran’s defense capabilities would be unable to prevent an attack and would suffer from its military deficiencies when pitted against the advanced military technology the US and Israel would most likely deploy in any military action against Tehran.

These two assumptions lead inevitably to deeper concerns amongst the GCC leadership. The conclusion that Iran is powerless to prevent or defeat a military attack necessarily paves the way to the evident possibility that the Iranian leadership would rely basically on a ‘reactive strategy’ and not on a ‘preventive or deterrence strategy’. The focus therefore turns to Iran’s reactions after the execution of a military strike, which would certainly take the shape of
retaliatory acts. As such, the concern of the GCC States stem from two fundamental sources:

**First: The nature and shape of Iran’s retaliatory acts**

Most likely, the scenarios of Iran’s reactions seem to indicate that Tehran would essentially fall back on ‘non-military’ means of retaliation. Perhaps, it would mobilize its intelligence and diplomatic capabilities which have proved their effectiveness in the past in a bid to support and execute the strategic and political goals defined by the Iranian leadership. Specifically, this relates to Iran’s capabilities to carry out limited, but qualitatively successful, operations, which have been labeled lately as ‘terrorist operations’. The use of the descriptive ‘terrorist operations’ does not mean in any way that the author supports the concept; it simply refers to the categorizing tag used by the other party.

Presuming that the Iranian leadership would adopt an offensive stand regionally and internationally, this position would probably concretely translate into the following options and means:

1. A series of Iranian-branded ‘terrorist’ operations against US military, diplomatic and economic assets across the GCC states and the Middle East.

2. A series of Iranian targeted attacks against US-Israeli interests throughout the world.

3. Extending support to allied foreign ‘terrorist’ organizations, so that they stage operations against US-Israeli interests.

4. Offering wide support to the various Palestinian resistance factions, particularly factions with an Islamist
agenda in order to reinforce their punitive capabilities against Israel.

5. Re-activating the confrontation front between Lebanon and Israel through operations conducted by Hezbollah both within and outside Lebanon. More specifically, Iran would probably encourage Hezbollah to reactivate low-intensity military operations along the front of the Israeli-occupied Shaba’a farms and perhaps re-activating the whole Lebanese front with Israel, if only for a specific period of time.

6. Pursuing a wide-ranging interventionist thrust on both the security and diplomatic fronts in Iraq. The objective would be to chastise the US and its allies on Iraqi soil through providing military and material support to a select pool of Iraqi resistance groups. In the meantime, Tehran might strive to boost its role as a key player in the Iraqi political scene, which would no doubt threaten US long-term interests in Iraq.

7. Iran could possibly target oil assets across the Gulf region in order to affect the psychological environment of international oil markets which are already passing through a disturbed phase. Such a move would surely lead to destabilizing oil supplies and prices, if only for a short period of time. Achieving this goal would involve limited sabotage acts against some oil infrastructures in the region.

The US administration would be placed in a highly embarrassing situation, both domestically and internationally. The negative ramifications of the US decision to resort to the military option against Iran would at the same time be dramatically exposed.
Second: The impact of a military attack on the domestic political conditions in Iran

Indisputably, the objective and the supreme interests of the GCC States, both as individual states and as a collective regional grouping, lie in upholding the political stability of Iran. In light of this self-evident truth, the GCC States are understandably and justifiably concerned about current regional developments. Any foreign military action against Iran's nuclear sites will carry undesirable implications that would dangerously impact on the domestic stability of Iran. As various centers of power within the Iranian leadership are today engrossed in a competitive political contest, it seems likely that any external aggression against Iran would provide the much-awaited chance for some hard-line and extremist currents within the Iranian leadership to shake up the existing political balance and relative political participation. Hard-liners might capitalize on the aggression against Iran to foster their own interests and lay monopolistic control over the reins of political power and, thus, democratic practices, however limited they are, would simply be cast aside. Under no circumstances would such a development serve the political stability or democratic governance in Iran, nor would it positively impact on regional relations nor for that matter would it help build confidence between Iran and its neighboring GCC States.
‘Optionless’ Option

What, then, could the GCC States do?

Conventional wisdom would confirm that the options open before the GCC States in the event a foreign power conducting a military action against Iran’s nuclear sites are limited, if not actually non-existent. Even though one could assume that there are genuine interests shared by the majority, if not all, the Gulf States, in supporting the ‘principle’ of the need to prevent Iran from entering the nuclear club, the leaderships of the Gulf States cast a rather wary eye on the military option, at least for the time being.

In the face of this reality, the GCC States have held fast to a position that shuns away from a pronounced stand towards the issue. Similarly, the GCC States have avoided commenting on press statements and reports that point to a possible resort by concerned parties to the military option. The GCC States have no vested interest in supporting or encouraging a military action against Iran, as has been made amply clear here.

Basing our arguments on this position, it seems unlikely that the GCC States would provide any military facilities to US forces or allow the US to use its military bases in some Gulf countries as launch-pads for a military action against Iran. In fact, the GCC States are extremely careful not to implicate themselves in any rash military adventure, just as they are strongly committed to building regional relations on the basis of mutual trust and good faith. Besides, the GCC States recognize the standing and the role of Iran in the stability of the region.

Likewise, the GCC leaderships see no interest in supporting publicly the option of stripping Iran of its nuclear
capabilities via diplomatic channels, although the GCC States actually, if privately, support the diplomatic option as the ideal means of achieving their desired goal. However, the general sentiment among the GCC leaderships is that there is no pressing need to make their position public, either individually or collectively, through the Gulf Cooperation Council, as such a declaration would cause some discomfort to GCC-Iranian relations. Perhaps such a position would be interpreted as an indirect support of Israel’s position. Hence, the GCC leaderships closely monitor the sword-rattling between Tehran on the one hand and the International Atomic Energy Agency [IAEA], the US and West European countries on the other. It would certainly not be sensible at present to move to the limelight of such heated debate.

In light of all the above-mentioned scenarios, it can safely be said that the concerns of the GCC States about any military action against Iran’s nuclear program are perfectly legitimate. The GCC States’ concerns and objectives contain their own justifications and logic as well as practical motivations. One main source of concern has a lot to do with the distrust that the GCC leaderships feel towards, not just the rationality of US decisions, but also towards the principles and considerations on which those decisions are founded. This attitude is clearly manifested as:

A. Distrust of the US leadership to take decisions constructed on a clear comprehension of the specific nature of the Middle East region and apparent US indifference to the need to protect and respect the interests of regional allies. There is also the widespread belief in US indifference to the domestic and regional political considerations that rule the positions of the leaders across the region. The GCC States are also concerned that US domestic political calculations might shape US decisions on foreign
policy issues. Just as worrisome is the role played by the Israeli lobby in defining US decisions.

B. Distrust of the ability of Washington to control or deal effectively or even rationally with the ramifications and subsequent developments that might follow in the wake of a military action against Iran. Past and current experiences have proven that US foreign policies are often tainted by disturbing miscalculations and myopic assumptions, a lack of comprehensive strategies, whether medium or longer-term, that can handle subsequent developments on the ground.

The GCC States' position towards this critical issue and perhaps towards the dangerous ramifications that might impact the security and stability of the Gulf region can be summarized as follows: The major and probably the insistent outcome and implication of Iran’s entry to the nuclear club is that the Gulf states will be placed (strategically) in a highly difficult and tricky position. Ironically for many, they will have no alternative but to become more dependant on US military protection and a US military presence (including nuclear capability) in the region as a means of counterbalancing the considerable shift in strategic dynamics of power. Such an option by no means represents an ideal option for the Gulf States. But it will be a crucial and even compulsory move to undermine and challenge the strategic advantage gained by Iran through such a development.

Today, the GCC States find themselves in an unenviable situation, caught as they are between the anvil of an Iranian position steadfastly bent on pursuing a nuclear program for military purposes and the hammer of a US-Israeli position almost single-mindedly determined to strip Tehran of its nuclear capabilities by whatever means and no matter what the price.
About the Author

Dr Mustafa Alani took up the position of Senior Advisor and Director of the Security and Terrorism Studies program at the Gulf Research Center on August 20, 2004. Prior to his appointment at the GRC, he worked as Senior Consultant on Security and Fellow at the Royal United Service Institute for Defense and Security Studies (RUSI) Whitehall – London. Dr Alani worked for many years on studying political Islam and the activities of Islamist fundamentalist groups. He is known for his major contributions in Arab and international media on most issues related to the Middle East political developments, security, and defense. He has published on various topics related to security and strategic issues.
About Policy Analysis

Analytical policy papers offering in-depth and well-researched exploration of public policies in the GCC countries.

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The Gulf Research Center (GRC) is an independent research institute located in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE). The GRC was founded in July 2000 by Mr. Abdulaziz Sager, a Saudi businessman, who realized, in a world of rapid political, social and economic change, the importance of pursuing politically neutral and academically sound research about the Gulf region and disseminating the knowledge obtained as widely as possible. The Center is a non-partisan think-tank, education service provider and consultancy specializing in the Gulf region. The GRC seeks to provide a better understanding of the challenges and prospects of the Gulf region.
## GRC Publications

**Translated and Published by GRC**

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<td>The political Economy of International Relations</td>
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<td>Addresses the relations between the US and Europe on one hand, and Japan and the emerging economic powers, on the other hand, in addition to the concepts of international political economy.</td>
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