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# Iran and violence in the Gulf

## An outlook on the realities and a plan for resolution

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**T**he Arab writer who raises the issue of Iran in an objective way faces a systematic problem from three perspectives. The first and most important perspective is that some wish to confuse this issue so they can negatively affect it. When some people speak up about the policies of Iran, others hasten to confuse it with the Shiite doctrine. This attitude questions the veracity and objectivity of works produced by those attacking Shiism. It creates a strong case for Iran to make its policies acceptable to the masses, who see that Tehran is not defending an expansionist project, as seen by the realities on the ground. Instead, they believe that Tehran is defending Shiites. Thus, it should be noted that this work is dedicated to criticizing Iranian policies, especially towards its neighbors. This work will not aim at Shiite doctrine based on non-scholarly generalizations, which promotes the notion that all Shiites, especially Arabs, are loyal to Iran. This notion is true in part. Some of them are loyal to Iran on doctrinal, ethnic or political grounds.

The second perspective is that some people still insist on seeing the Iranian regime as a theocratic one with a denominational nature. This is an oversimplification of the Iranian political system, which is nationalist, though cloaked in religion and sect.<sup>(1)</sup> As it is a religious system of governance, its relationship with its neighbors and the world restricts its movements. It is fettered by dogma, which pushes its behaviors towards fanaticism and fascism.<sup>(2)</sup> Perhaps there is a margin or maneuver, but it exists on a very narrow scale. The regime itself is restricted by religious texts that in no way match the realities of our time. The regime is caught between the necessity of coping with the requirements of the times in terms of running the state's affairs, and the absolute and extreme religious texts inspired by the illusion of historic superiority or lasting solutions to the problems of mankind offered by the 'Absent Imam.' These texts defy the realities of modern times.

The third perspective is that the parties of the government in Iran have been decimating each other since they seized power in 1979. From time to time, tensions flare between the ruling factions. In the beginning, partners of the government eliminated each other through conventional means, including arrests, assassinations or exiles.<sup>(3)</sup> Then the conflict confined itself to being between the reformists and conservatives. This spat is projected to intensify in the coming years, especially after the eradication of all those who participated in the revolution. Disagreements surfaced on the heels of the election of Hassan Rouhani to the presidency. The supreme leader is at loggerheads with Rouhani. Both have supporters on the streets.

Another point related to the study should be raised: the fact that violence has different forms. It starts verbally and ends with the use of force. Verbal abuse against neighboring countries has occurred since the Iranian Revolution. This revolution bears characteristics resembling those of coups. It lacks self-confidence and its legitimacy stands on shaky ground. It sees opponents as enemies who should be crushed or forced to spin in its orbit. These are all characteristics of coups, from the French Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution.

### **First: Reasons for Iran's violence towards its neighbors**

The Iranian regime is plagued with extreme fears and phobias about the fall of its establishments. In some sense, this fear might be legitimate. However, it might also be a figment of the regime's imagination. Thus, the regime is extremely wary of dealing with the outside world. The regime uses all means to protect itself. Primary among these is the waging of wars beyond its borders. Iran has taken practical steps in this direction, including the removal from neighboring countries of any possible threats against the regime. Also, the government started enlisting sympathizers from neighboring countries as well as manipulating the interlocking interests of neighbors

to render its strategy achieved. The regime uses three factors to lure supporters: defending sect, money and slogans. The disintegration of nationalist Arab nations such as Syria, Iraq and Yemen has helped make this strategy partially successful.<sup>(4)</sup>

Myriad historic, political, economic and social factors have made successful the Iranian strategy of expansionism and violence. History tells us that the Iranian regime was reluctantly accepted by the outside world, neighbors and even the Iranian people. Iranians continued looking upon citizens of neighboring nations in a racist way, which deepened hate.<sup>(5)</sup> For decades, the conquest of Iran has been known in Iran as the 'Arab occupation'. The Iranian literature portrays the Arab man as ignorant and barefooted, someone who feeds on insects.<sup>(6)</sup> This orientation is manifested in the behavior of the Iranian rulers, as clerics. They issue fatwas in Arabic but they refuse to speak in Arabic.

As for political factors, some elements are intertwined with modern Iranian political history. Some of these have led to the aborting of the "revolutions of Iran" because of external interference, especially from the major powers.<sup>(7)</sup> Therefore, the ruling elite of Iran saw that the best strategy for defending the regime lies in a good offense. The survival of the revolution is always based on the development of an external attack under different slogans, some of which can be marketed with relative ease to an audience lacking knowledge of the regime's background. Examples include supporting the oppressed, standing against Israel and supporting the Palestinians, and the war against the US. At the political level, the weakness of some Arab nations helped Iran execute its strategy. Lebanon is a case in point. There, Iran has supporters who are simply stooges using false slogans. The state in Iraq is in tatters. Shiite oligarchs are ruling Syria, which pushed them to seek Iran's help against the Sunni majority. It backs the Houthis, who dream of reinstating 'Imams.' Exploiting these cracks in the Arab world, Iran furthers its expansionism, using both forms of violence.

### **Second: Change in the world order**

The shifts occurring in the international arena affect the Arab and Gulf nations before they affect other parts of the world. The Arab region faced unprecedented challenges that surfaced during the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These challenges are represented by a radical change in the world order. They started taking shape after the incidents of September 11, 2001, and ended with the election of Donald Trump as President of the US in November 2016. Also, the Arab region started adopting right-wing policies. In the meantime, the Arab nations are witnessing unheard-of levels of infighting and disintegration. As indicated above, the Gulf nations are engaged in a war in Yemen, gripped by a decline in oil prices, rising social and political demands, and civil wars raging in neighboring countries. This makes it imperative to reconsider the policies adopted towards neighbors and beyond.

In the face of this change in policy, especially United States policy during Barack Obama's presidency from 2008 to 2016, the Gulf States have placed much blame on that administration and the ambiguity of the new administration's policy.<sup>(8)</sup> They tried to make overtures to Iran, especially after the GCC mandated that Kuwait carry a message to Iran on January 25, 2017, in an attempt to find a rational, balanced neighborhood formula.<sup>(9)</sup> However, that attempt did not bear fruit, and Iran remained the most active actor that does nothing but meddle in the Arab region. Its influences spill over into Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon, and interfere in some Gulf countries, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.<sup>(10)</sup>

The Gulf States' demands of Tehran are known. They essentially want it to stop interfering in their internal affairs. Today, Iran senses the possibility that American policy toward it will change from the previous "moderate" approach to a confrontational one.<sup>(11)</sup> This sensation pushed Tehran to seek overtures with the Gulf nations through statements made by Foreign Minister Mohammed Jawad Zarif on the desire to "cooperate with Saudi Arabia on the outstanding issues as it was the case in Lebanon." On the ground, what happened in Lebanon is almost a victory for the Iranian project despite what had been done to make the situation seem to be a win-win. Still influential in Lebanese politics are Hezbollah and its backers, a group wholly affiliated with Iran and the Wali e-Faqih [Jurist Leader]. Iran also claimed a place among the powers working to settle the Syrian crisis through cooperation with Moscow and Ankara. In addition, Tehran sought to seize the opportunity that emerged from the Qatar crisis with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt. It tried to meddle by offering logistical aid to Qatar.<sup>(12)</sup> This support was certainly not given because Tehran was on good terms with Qatar. The first simply wants to take advantage of the situation.<sup>(13)</sup> At this stage, Iran may be looking for some appeasement due to the blurry position of the new US administration. It is sending various (or even contradictory) messages about its policies in the region. Iran, despite taking precautions in light of the policies of the new US administration, keeps all its "achievements" in Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon, and has not abandoned its policy of "harassment" in the Gulf. Helping convicts escape from prison in Bahrain is a case in point.<sup>(14)</sup> This harassment can also be seen in the attacks on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and on the Saudi consulate in Mashhad on January 2, 2016. In exchange for reducing its meddling, Iran wants to "take something from the Gulf States, and here we can talk about coordination from the Iranian perspective." This coordination may appear in the form of intra-trade, oil or other arrangements with the Gulf. However, Iran's belief that it should be the protector of the Shiites in the Gulf or that it should take a toehold in the oil-rich area is unacceptable. Also, Iran's harsh stance against Saudi Arabia and its attempts to pick fights with the Gulf almost every Hajj season

have caused tensions between Tehran and the Gulf States to flare. This tension is based on a fable that the 'Absent Imam' will appear first in Makkah.<sup>(15)</sup>

### **Third: Violent meddling of Iran in the Gulf**

There are multiple manifestations of Iran's aggressive and disdainful interference in the affairs of the Gulf States. In June 2016,<sup>(16)</sup> the Kuwaiti courts issued a ruling against a group of Kuwaitis and Iranians in what has become known as the Abdali terror cell.<sup>(17)</sup> In the span of 50 days, Kuwaiti society was shaken twice, during June and August 2015.<sup>(18)</sup> In the first incident, the perpetrator was a Sunni hardliner incited by his extremist group to rend Kuwaiti society and hamper its national unity. However, this attempt failed. In the second attack, the culprit was a Shiite operative backed by Iran and Hezbollah. He perpetrated the second attack for the same reasons behind the first one. On the heels of this attack, many weapons were seized.<sup>(19)</sup> Here, it should be noted that all Sunnis in Kuwait are not linked to ISIS and that the Shiites of the Gulf are not necessarily loyal to Lebanon-based Hezbollah. Supporters of both blocks do not represent the majority of Kuwaiti society. Such acts are politically motivated in the first place. As to acts related to the stockpiling of weapons, it has been revealed that Christian cells loyal to Michel Awn stand behind the matter. In addition to their aims at the political level, these attacks shuffled the cards. The engagement of Christian elements proves the matter has nothing to do with sectarianism. Accusations levied at a certain sect or talk of sectarianism should not be points of discussion by those who possess rational minds. The crime is personal and so is the penalty. The demonization of a certain sect, including blaming it for all crimes, is a form of moral degeneration of which Iran takes advantage.

Terrorism transcends sect. Also, turning a blind eye to acts of terror for the sake of a certain country or sect is a crime. These forces want to tamper with the security of Kuwait and the entire Gulf region. Some of these forces achieved success, while others failed miserably. The influx of Kuwaitis to the Grand Mosque to offer condolences for the souls of the martyrs who died in the 'Imam al-Sadiq' Mosque attack on June 26, 2015 is testament to the Kuwaiti people's deep understanding of the aims behind the assault. Keeping national cohesion deep-rooted, well-established and unhampered will prevent enemies from accomplishing their schemes and indicates that they failed to achieve the plot hatched by Iran-backed groups. Segments of people clearly and unambiguously condemned the terrorist act.<sup>(20)</sup>

In the second incident, the cell gave the stockpiled weaponry the code name 'pomegranates', as indicated by the cell's written communications. Many people in Kuwait denounced the terror attack and were furious at those who perpetrated it. They called on the government to reveal the identities of the perpetrators. However,

some people became confused, adopting the opinion that neither Hezbollah nor Iran had links to this arsenal. As for the Kuwaiti government, many media outlets called on those who possessed unlicensed weapons to hand them over to the authorities even if those weapons were not being used. Advertisements reminded people of the number of days remaining in the grace period. This stockpile of weaponry spread panic among those who noted its size. It stands to reason that these stockpiles are being warehoused for use on a later date. The decrees issued in June 2016 revealed the truth that Iran and Hezbollah were the perpetrators.

At this stage, an urgent need existed among concerned individuals in the Gulf to maintain awareness of the fact that – for the sake of the security of the people, homeland and region – the gray area should no longer exist. These issues cannot be compromised or negotiated. Days before exposing the terror cell, the chief of Hezbollah saluted the Kuwaiti leadership and people in quasi-military style for their unity and condemnation of the attack on the ‘Imam al-Sadiq’ Mosque. Perhaps he knew enormous quantities of weapons were being stockpiled in the country. In addition, elements are training others to launch terror attacks and bring weapons from outside the country, thereby undermining the country’s stability and the safety of its citizens. This matter is not only grave; it is condemned and criminal. These behaviors are within the framework of the ‘Taqiyya’ policy followed by Hezbollah to be a thorn in the Gulf States’ side.

Therefore, the claims of Hezbollah’s followers that those stockpiled weapons and the policies adopted by Iran do not represent the same agenda seem implausible. Only novices can believe these claims, given the fact that the remarks of the Kuwaiti government and the results of the investigation leaked to the press prove these suspicions. Thus, the court handed down sentences to the defendants. The perpetrators included a Hezbollah affiliate and an official working in the Iranian embassy. In fact, Hezbollah is no longer a group that resists Israel, as its media outlets claim. It destroyed the Lebanese state through a string of assassinations, including one carried out against former Premier Rafic Hariri. The group waged war on the neighboring people of Syria, who dream of freedom and a decent life like that available to other people. Thereafter, the group moved its destructive policies to Gulf States such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.<sup>(21)</sup> These policies depend on the creation of an armed group within the state mimicking Hezbollah in Lebanon and Houthis in Yemen.

No place for a gray area should exist when there is an existential threat to homelands, especially in cases in which active civil society organizations and institutions are representing the people. The offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood in Kuwait toed the line of the umbrella organization, which stood in the gray area,

supporting the Iraqi invasion. The Kuwaiti people were quick to condemn the move, which they saw as threatening to the country's security. This caused the group's offshoot in Kuwait to distance itself from the umbrella organization, at least outwardly. The same move should be taken by other factions in the Gulf whose loyalties are to outside parties, including Iran or groups in Iraq and Lebanon. This equation should not be breached, especially in a country where all factions enjoy the right to declare their positions and loyalties and all people have their own viewpoints regardless of others' outlooks on those practices or institutions.

In Bahrain, both Iran and Hezbollah, as well as some political forces in Iraq, have been fueling instability at home, especially after February 2011. At the time, some Shiite factions attempted to bulldoze the political process based mainly on elections and the constitution. They raised the stakes at their protests, demanding the establishment of an 'Islamic government' and turning the uprising into a sectarian tumult fully controlled by Iran. Many of those who represented the voice of reason among the Sunnis and Shiites warned of this scenario. However, the forces paid no heed to such warnings. Things got even worse, as they resorted to violence. Iran – and Hezbollah – played a role in inciting this turmoil. On several occasions, the chief of Hezbollah appeared in the media threatening Bahrain, brazenly meddling in the region's affairs and violating all international norms in this respect. Also, to stir up unrest, Iran attempted to exploit the execution of the Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr, who, along with 47 others, was accused of sponsoring terror. The cleric was known for his absolute loyalty to Jurist Leader.

Sticking to ambiguous positions causes societies to collapse. Some people are obligated to adopt ambiguous positions for political and diplomatic reasons. It is an individual duty for those who present the news to the people. One piece of news published in the Kuwaiti papers stated that the Abdali cell had been trained in Lebanon and that its members shuttled between Kuwait and Europe, then returned to Lebanon. This reminded the Kuwaitis of the string of terror attacks waged against them in the 1980s. On top of that came the attempt to kill the Emir Gabeer al-Ahmed. This attack was followed by an attack on passengers, who were murdered in cold blood – an incident following the hijacking of aircraft operated by the domestic aviation firm. The bodies of the victims were piled on the ramp.<sup>(22)</sup>

#### **Fourth: Iran's destructive policies**

On April 21, 2017, the United States' representative to the United Nations, Nicky Halley, stated that "the world must pay attention to the destructive nature of Iran and Hezbollah." Even before it became apparent what role Iran had played in inciting the detention and release of Qatari abductees days after these remarks were made,



the issue became a subject of marathon bargaining by forces loyal to Iran in Iraq and Lebanon. All these forces are terror groups sponsored by Iran, a fact that again indicates the Iranian government has had a hand in sponsoring terror to achieve its political interests.<sup>(23)</sup> This fact has been made clear on several occasions throughout the past decades. No one knows the limits of US escalation towards Iran in the current administration, and what options the new administration has for reducing Iran's expansionist policies in the region. Some stated options include pressure, economic blockade and the blacklisting of personalities and properties.<sup>(24)</sup> However, these options may cause Tehran to heighten tensions in the region through its stooges deployed in neighboring countries. It may seek the opportunity to undermine peace, stir up chaos and spill much more blood than that spilled in Syria, Iraq, Yemen or perhaps the Gulf. In its own media platforms and through its senior officials, Tehran claims to fight terrorism. Terrorism has turned out to be an idol cursed by all parties, even those who crafted it. As the conflict between the turbaned clerics intensifies, the Iranian people have become certain that the rule of theologians is in no way easy to eliminate. Some of those clerics were engaged in physical liquidation against opponents under the guise of maintaining the law.<sup>(25)</sup>

The US escalation against Iran deplores the Iranian people who seek to eliminate this regime and usher in the era of development of which they have long been deprived. Reformists have worked hard to attain such gains. At the time, partial reforms were made, followed by the reforms that Mohammed Mosaddegh made in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and then those of Mohammed Reza Bahlavi thereafter.

There were hopes that Iran would embrace development and justice at home and peace with the outside world. However, the situation turned upside down when the mullahs seized power. They implemented schemes fomenting chauvinism, expansionism and uncertainty, all based on groundless fables. An Iranian official once said that the US was preventing the reappearance of the 'Absent Imam.' Such a statement is more devastating than the destructive nature of Iran's policies at home and in neighboring countries.

Destroying the minds of the people allows domination, control and mobilization to achieve foggy and ambiguous aims. The mullahs foisted upon the Iranian people sacrifices they could not endure. They also squandered the country's resources, channeling these funds into mobilizing, financing and arming militias. The mullahs also used this money to entice the gullible, naïve public. The Iranian people have been deprived of development; in its place has been an expansionist plot. Anyone who possesses reason in Iran should wonder: Why are we spending all this money on armament and training camps in Lebanon? It is done solely to create divisions among the Arab societies. As they are born and raised in a Shiite community, Iranian youths

are forced to become involved in proxy wars to defend the despot of Damascus, killing their brothers in Syria. Moving those forces to the Israeli borders did not move the Arab masses, as the real aim behind the establishment of Hezbollah was exposed. All the forces posted on the borders with Israel did not gain even an inch of Palestine's territory, and they never will.<sup>(26)</sup>

In the medium and long-term, what can Iran achieve in Iraq? A considerable segment of the Iraqi population is mounting resistance to Iranian influence. By nature, the Iraqi people refuse to yield to foreign meddling. If we overlook the political elite benefiting from the Iranian presence that protects Tehran's interests in Baghdad, we will not find any Iraqi citizens who accept Iranian meddling in Iraq's affairs and the squandering of its resources. It will be a matter of time before the Iraqis rise up against such meddling. The consequences of this interference will resonate in Iran itself.

Iranian intervention in Yemen represented a catastrophe for all Yemenis. The biggest calamity has been the attempt to impose the Hezbollah model on the Yemenis. The policymakers in Iran know of no other models. It imposes itself in every area of the Arab world plagued by Iran's presence. There is no question that Jurist Leadership's project have proven contradictory and bankrupt. Blocking Ahmadinejad from running for president exposed the farcical Iranian democracy.<sup>(27)</sup> He is not an opposition figure, nor is he a reformist. Ahmadinejad cannot be accused of being a liberal, as was the case with Khatami, Karrubi and Mousavi. Though he is a member of the regime's inner circle, he was blocked from running for the presidency. Afterwards, he said he would not press the issue to avoid stirring up sedition.<sup>(28)</sup> Which slogans remain for the mullahs to use in attracting powerless people? In fact, blocking Ahmadinejad from running for the presidency is a measure opposing the possible revitalization of the spirit of the Green Movement triggered by Ahmadinejad's second election to office. Hezbollah has recently banned the screening of a movie dealing with the Green Revolution in Lebanon. Contesting to attain senior political posts – considered a normal practice throughout the world – is sedition in Iran. On the other hand, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif admitted in a recent article “there is a direct relationship between extremism and dictatorship”.<sup>(29)</sup> It seems that Zarif believes that “dictatorship” is what the other does, while the regime he represents is “the paragon of democracy” – and the regime he defends in Syria is a democratic one “to the bone”. This denial not only grips the political system of the Iranian state, it also stretches out to other apparatuses. On the other hand, the economic situation is deteriorating in Iran due to the devaluation of the national currency, the decline in oil prices, the rise of unemployment, the existence of corruption, rampant drug abuse, and restrictions on freedoms, even in its simplest forms

(such as the use of social media platforms, most of which are prohibited in Iran).  
*Which slogans remain for the regime to use in deceiving the people but fables and myths?*

The Iranian regime laid the foundations for some myths – and believed them. There are three major ones, the first of which is supporting the oppressed against the insolent. Branding parties as either insolents or oppressed is done based on the political affiliations and interests of the Iranian regime. In Syria, for example, the insolents are the people of Syria, while the oppressed comprise the regime of Bashar al-Assad, with its massive military arsenal containing even chemical weapons. The second myth is the claim that all followers of the Shiite Twelver should be loyal to Jurist Leader and should obey its directives. This myth is rejected by reason, international law and the new world order. This ideology led some Arab societies to be plagued with sectarianism and hatred. The third myth is leading a conflict against Israel under the hollow slogan of resistance. How could this happen given the fact that the regime once received weapons from Israel?<sup>(30)</sup>

#### **Fifth: What shall the Gulf States do?**

In the face of the Iranian regime's failures at home and the rising tensions in neighboring countries, plans to counter the Iranian expansionism in the Gulf are not prepared. They are even ambiguous. Until the time arrives for these plans to be enforced, the region will continue to bleed and the Arabs will be the primary victims. The odds are high that the conflict will intensify. This requires several factors which do not currently exist. Hence, we should think of a soft confrontation, so to speak.

We suggest forming a new relationship with Iran from a strategic perspective. This relationship will be based on an accurate diagnosis of the areas where possible consensus can be reached so as to outline alternative soft and tough approaches, determine a set of objectives with mechanisms to render them, and establish discipline for the plans to achieve the common interests of the countries located on the two banks of the Gulf. There will be three determinants: considerations, objectives and mechanisms. They can be addressed as follows:

#### **Considerations and determinants in the Gulf**

A. The Gulf region is experiencing a reality in which global threats intersect and interests converge. The region is also witnessing political volatility due to shifts in the positions, influences, compromises, aims and roles of the superpowers.<sup>(31)</sup> Also, the region is seeing unprecedented divergence on several issues, such as terrorism, development and challenges in neighboring countries. Therefore, a hot conflict would cause the region and the world to explode. Its scale could never be predicted should the region resort to ill-considered action.

B. Arab-US ties were shaken in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001, on a scale as destructive as the attacks themselves. The toppling of the Iraqi regime and the dismantling of its apparatuses constituted a qualitative transformation of US foreign policy and its relations with the Middle East, especially with the Saudi kingdom and the other GCC states. This prompts us to track the course of the relationship between the new US administration and Saudi Arabia, the GCC, Iraq and Iran, as the situation at home in these countries affects the national security of the Gulf.

C. With respect to the Gulf States, the consequences of the situation in Iraq and the so-called Arab Spring have testified to the importance of national security in terms of dealing with threats and dangers. The consequences have led to substantial changes in ideologies, popular demands, rules of political action, the legitimacy of national sovereignty, standards and indications of power, and the bases and implications of coalitions. Therefore, security concerns dictate that, when dealing with Iran, the GCC states establish a solid, collective and unified will.

D. The need exists to observe the internal problems in the Iranian arena as represented in the struggle between the reformist movement, the clerics and the hardliners, the wave of popular rejection, and the economic and social problems facing the state. Foremost among these is the increase in unemployment and the rising poverty and its implications on the Gulf States.

E. The Iranian educational curricula (according to the study referenced above) have contributed to the creation of a psychological mobilization against the Arabs, while the conflict with the Arabs has become one relating to doctrine and education.<sup>(32)</sup>

F. The needs exists to strengthen the bases of national unity in the Gulf States among the different factions within society, and to confront politically motivated sectarianism by rooting out its causes, eradicating its manifestations, and ridding society of its grave consequences and impacts on the functions of the state and national unity.

### **Political and strategic objectives**

*At this stage, the Gulf States' policies should be based on a strategic vision to achieve a host of objectives, including:*

A. Working to prevent Iran from interfering in internal affairs, violating the principles of good neighborliness and the rules of international law, and jeopardizing the national sovereignty of the GCC and neighboring Arab countries.

B. Standing up to Iran's attempts to become the dominant state in the region, especially the Arab Gulf region and neighboring Arab countries, and its development of deadly weapons such as long-range missiles.

C. Abandoning the notion of a cross-border revolutionary and sectarian approach and instead shifting to the concept of state in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations.

D. Refraining from building military capabilities beyond its defense needs and dropping hints about the possibility of using these capabilities on several occasions by its senior officials.

E. Resolving the border disputes between the GCC countries and Iran using dialogue and negotiation in a way that guarantees the rights of both parties.

### **Proposed mechanisms for implementation**

It is extremely important to seek mechanisms in the political, economic and security arenas. The possibility also exists for security and judicial cooperation. Such mechanisms could come into play and be enhanced through:

A. Opening channels of dialogue at all political, security and economic levels to address controversial issues, develop solutions to these matters and interact in a way that eases the crisis rather than simply manages it.

B. Forming joint committees to discuss all issues and develop perceptions to deal with them in the interest of both parties, as well as intensifying the visits between senior officials of the Gulf and Iran, preparing a common GCC agenda for the core issues.

C. Encouraging the visits of parliamentary and popular delegations and holding conferences and symposia to promote rapprochement and identify issues of common interest.

D. Establishing a business council for Gulf and Iranian businessmen, which will enhance cooperation and strengthen coordination between the two sides' private sectors.

E. Boosting the role of Gulf embassies and competent bodies to gather information related to political and security issues, both inside and outside Iran, and to analyze and recommend their implementation.

F. Adopting active and collective diplomacy in the Gulf States towards major powers and influential countries, addressing global public opinion to explain worries and concerns about Iran's expansionist policy.

### **Conclusion**

For the Arab region and the Gulf States, the issue of Iran will remain a source of squandered resources. Direct confrontation is not in the cards, and neither is international intervention. It is possible that the conflict will remain unresolved, draining the resources of both the Arabs and Iran. One cannot downplay the obstacles

in the path to the dispute's settlement, in particular the immature behavior of Iranian institutions to differentiate between the state and the revolution. In addition, relying on the possibility that the other party will be forced to yield could be a bad idea. Therefore, as stated before, it is imperative to think outside the box. We should halt conflicts and cooperate to achieve common interests, thereby resolving the more complicated problems. If we stand by idly, letting the situation worsen, we will perpetuate the status quo, prolong the crisis and squander resources.

# Endnotes

- (1) There is no democratic rule under turbaned clerics.
- (2) According to the Iranian constitution, the supreme leader has significant legislative and executive powers, making him an object of envy among dictators around the world. For the Iranian constitution issued in 1979 and its amendments until 1989, here is a link to the International Foundation for Democracy and Elections-Update of compared constitutions' project: <https://goo.gl/hbgXV8>
- (3) This is what happened with the first president of the republic after the revolution, al-Hassan Bani Sadr, who was forced to escape, and what happened to the second president, Mohammed Ali Rajaei (August 1981).
- (4) This is due to the failure of the nationalist Arab states to fulfill the people's needs in terms of modernity and development.
- (5) One of the reasons for the conversion from Sunni to Shiite Islam is the Safavids' war against the Sunni Ottomans in the 16th century.
- (6) Nabil Al-Atum: The sectarian grounds of the Iranian geopolitical project. Sunni Arabs in the Iranian curricula. Symposium at the Center for Strategic Studies in Abu Dhabi. Ray Takeyh, What Really Happened in Iran, Foreign Affairs, July\August 2014
- (7) The nationalist revolution led by Mohammed Mosadaq, which was thwarted by the US and Shiite clerics. The link sheds light on the clerics' role in the counterrevolution.
- (8) At some point, Obama spoke about the "partnership between Iran and the Gulf states" in the region. He also talked about the importance of internal reforms in the Gulf States to curb dissatisfaction and weaken the sources of terrorism.
- (9) This initiative did not pay dividends.
- (10) Al-Arab: Kuwaiti mediation to ease tensions between the Gulf and Iran. January 25, 2017. <http://cutt.us/ul0OM>
- (11) . Mahmoud Hamdi Abu Al-Qasim: US Policy toward Iran after Trump: Intense pressure and possible confrontation. Gulf Arab Center for Iranian Studies, August 14, 2017. <http://cutt.us/PTUKV>
- (12) This disagreement creates a new opportunity for Iran to meddle.
- (13) Mohamed Khalfan al-Sawafi: The strategic gap... How does Iran benefit from the Gulf crisis? Future Center for Advanced Studies and Research, July 3, 2017. <http://cutt.us/RbaAo>
- (14) Hudhayfah Ibrahim: Bahrain foils the smuggling of 19 terrorists in two different operations. Al-Yawm newspaper, Dammam: Dar Al-Youm, June 6, 2016, p. 6.
- (15) It is another myth promoted by some policymakers in Iran, who use it to deceive the masses. They claim that the Absent Imam will first appear in Makkah. Thus, Makkah is a hotspot of public attention. For more, see Eman Zahran: Seasonal crises: The politicization of Hajj and the theories of internationalization of holy sites, Arab Center for Research and Studies, September 20, 2016. <http://www.acrseg.org/40360> <http://cutt.us/2xAvZ>
- (16) Abdali, north of Kuwait, is where an underground arms depot was discovered. The arms were found to have been transferred from various locations, including Iran. The defendants, including Iranians and Kuwaitis, were sentenced to death and life imprisonment. See: Orient Net: Details of the arrest of Hezbollah terrorist cell in Kuwait, 18 April 2017.
- (17) The terrorist incident that targeted the mosque of Imam Sadiq.
- (18) Discovering depots of sophisticated arms in Abdali, north of Kuwait.
- (19) The case was known in the media as "pomegranate" because the conspirators used that term to refer to the arrival or storage of weapons.
- (20) Mirza Al-Khuwailidi: Kuwait: National unity defeats terrorism, Middle East. London: Saudi-British Research and Marketing Company, Issue 13553, January 6, 2016, p.

(21) Here, it is important to reference a book written by a French researcher and translated into English: Laurence Louer: *Transnational SHIA Politics. Region and political Network in the Gulf*, Hurst publication, 2008/2011.

(22) This book points to an issue not raised in the Arabic writings on the matter – that “Iran is using the Arab regions (Iraq) as a place to recruit the Shiites Gulfists, and Hezbollah is used to train those it deceive[s]”. This study, in my opinion, is worthy of translation into Arabic.

(23) On May 25, 1985, the late Emir of Kuwait, Jaber Al-Ahmad, was exposed to an assassination attempt by a group of Hezbollah and Iranian militiamen. This was followed by a number of kidnappings of Kuwaiti civilians aboard an aircraft, with the intention of freeing the killers from prison. On April 5, 1988, the plane was hijacked to the Iranian airport of Mashhad, then to Beirut (where it was not allowed to land) and then to Algeria, where some passengers were killed. For more information, see: Muhammad Bani Humayem: *Kuwaiti-Iranian relations between continuity and change*, Gulf Arab Center for Iranian Studies, August 3, 2017. <http://cutt.us/5bE7e>

(24) Muhammad al-Sayyid al-Sayyad: *Iran’s relationship with terrorist organizations - a study of the psychology of Iranian violence since the revolution until now*, Gulf Arab Center for Iranian Studies, May 29, 2016. <http://cutt.us/vHeA4>

(25) Reuters: *Iran holds Trump responsible for destabilizing and rejects describing it as “rogue state”*, July 15, 2017. <http://www.mapnews.com/2128926/>

(26) Perhaps the Iranian people will ‘make [their] own spring’ due to the mounting pressures.

(27) Mohammed al-Rumaihi: *The destructive nature of Iran, The Yemeni Scene*, April 29, 2017. <https://www.almashhad-alyemeni.com/art30773.html>

(28) On May 3, 2017, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad told the French Arabic-language TV network: “Democracy is under control at the end of the road,” a reference to the leader’s control of Iranian political life.

(29) This is because he knows well the heavy-handedness of security apparatuses against those attempting to defy the regime’s policies.

Mohammad Javad Zarif: *Let’s rid the world of Wahhabism*, The New York Times, September 13, 2016. <https://goo.gl/jWbj9R>

(30) In the 1985 Contragate scandal, which proved that interests are above principles, Iran obtained a weapon from Israel. The scandal is documented on the Internet.

(31) The oil and gas reserves the world needs for its survival.

(32) Nabil al-Atun, mentioned above.