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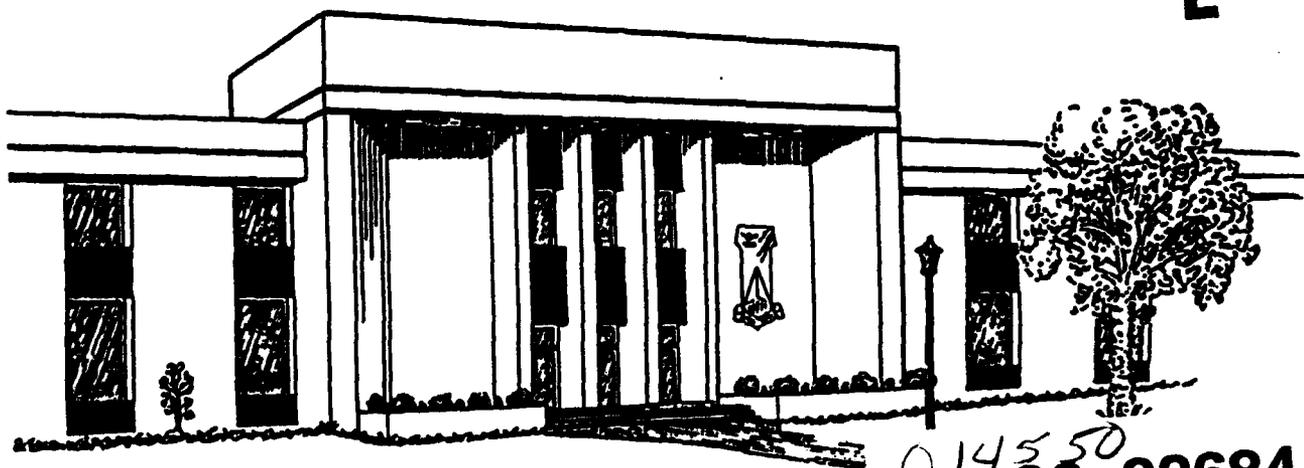
# AIR WAR COLLEGE

## Research Report

THE FOG OF PEACE IN THE SOUTHWEST ASIA GULF REGION  
THE TIME AND PLACE FOR A NEW GRAND STRATEGY

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THE TIME AND PLACE FOR A NEW GRAND STRATEGY**

BY

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**A RESEARCH PAPER SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY IN  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REGIONAL SECURITY ANALYSIS  
CURRICULUM REQUIREMENT**

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**MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA**

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**THE FOG OF PEACE IN THE SOUTHWEST ASIA GULF REGION:  
THE TIME AND PLACE FOR A NEW GRAND STRATEGY**

"Our vital national interests depend on a stable  
and secure Gulf."

1991 U.S. National Security Strategy

**INTRODUCTION**

The post-Cold War and post-Gulf War environment in the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) Area of Responsibility (AOR) and resulting New World Order provide a new set of challenges and opportunities for the United States National Security Strategy. Iraq's hegemonic efforts, at least in the foreseeable future, no longer threaten its Gulf neighbors. Moreover, along with its defeat goes the dream of regional Arab nationalism. Instead, two historic Islamic powers within the region, Iran and Saudi Arabia, now reemerge as the prospective pillars of stability and prosperity as the region transitions into the 21st Century.

Prior to the most recent Gulf War our foremost concern within the USCENTCOM AOR, to ensure peace and minimize instability, was containment of what we perceived to be a growing threat from Iran fueled by Islamic radicalism. However, our failed regional strategy which apparently focused on the "the wrong target" was salvaged, in part, by our vast military superiority demonstrated during DESERT STORM and our

resolve to protect our vital interests. The coalition of heretofore unlikely comrades in arms that developed during that conflict as well as the restraint and neutrality demonstrated by Israel and Iran, resulted in conditions of uncertainty and friction that fortunately worked in our favor. Will our subsequent post-war strategy withstand the impact of these conditions we characterize as the *fog of war* during peacetime and future conflict challenges?

For the future, a new grand strategy is needed to engage the emerging leaders in the Gulf region. It should focus on bringing the 'odd couple', Iran and Saudi Arabia, closer together by multilateral efforts to support their shared vital interests in the region. It also should be durable--able to withstand the challenges of the *fog of peace*. Ultimately, the essence of any new strategy should focus on an alliance for continued security and prosperity within the Gulf region--with the United States as one player of a multi-national team brought together by shared interests and common objectives that will endure in time of peace and conflict. Given the geostrategic importance of the region and the uncertainty and friction to be overcome, what follows are some thoughts on crafting such a strategy to seize the opportunity the New World Order presents.

## LOOKING BACK TO THE FUTURE

### Past Lessons

Since the war to end all wars, the United States military has served as a participant and spectator in a second world

war, a forty year Cold War, and several 'hot' regional conflicts--some lengthy and some quite short, such as DESERT STORM. From these emerge many lessons of strategy successes and failures, some similar and some unique to each conflict. Unfortunately, repeated failures, suggest that those involved with developing and implementing our past strategies for the Gulf region show a proclivity for repeating the mistakes of the past rather than profiting from them. Still, looking back for pertinent lessons can help both clear our vision of the future and strengthen our resolve to shape both the strategies and the political, economic, and military resources to ensure success.

The New World Order President Bush describes in his most recent National Security Strategy is not yet a fact. It remains, as he calls it, an aspiration and an opportunity.(41:v). In fact, we remain in a period of rapid geopolitical change characterized by a major transformation of both global and regional strategic environments. With this change comes uncertainty and instability. Our ability to identify friend or foe is now more complex. What's more, the opportunities we choose to exploit to build friendships and support as allies may and probably should change considerably during this period of transition. Nonetheless, looking back does give us a reference point--a point of departure in pursuit of a multinational alliance for security and prosperity which includes both Iran and Saudi Arabia.

If anything, past lessons whether commonplace or unique, like the success of the DESERT STORM multinational coalition and disengagement of Israel and Iran, the failure of Operation

DESERT ONE, or even the downfall of the Shah of Iran, should not be the principal source for answers but for questions. As I.B. Holley asserts, "...it is commonplace that one doesn't look to historical experience for answers. One turns there for questions..."(19:5) Our focus now should be the quest for the right questions to address the uncertainty, unknowns and possible sources of friction that may eventually impact of whatever ways and means we attempt to implement. Frank Kendall, U.S. Under Secretary of Defense for Tactical Warfare Programs aptly argues that the lessons not learned from our most recent war in the Gulf may prove to be as important as those that were. "What we did not learn was how to defeat a modern, well-trained, well-motivated, well-led force in a dynamic environment. We did not learn how to engage in a combat scenario without any significant preparation time or how to engage in operations where you did not have a large indigenous infrastructure to depend upon for support."(8:38)

It is precisely these unknowns as well as those of other so-called unique conflicts that become essential questions to consider as we reassess the essential elements for a successful theater strategy for mid- to high-intensity conflict challenges. The same assessment process is necessary across the entire spectrum of conflict to include security assistance and related peacetime engagement activities.

#### The Changing Security Environment

Notwithstanding our nation's most recent strategic victories resulting in the reduced risk of East-West conflict,

and the demonstration of our resolve and capability to project a decisive force to protect our own vital interests; do significant threats remain to U.S. interests in the Gulf region? The 1991 Joint Military Net Assessment (JMNA) largely depicts an unstable and unpredictable global security environment, especially regarding conventional force requirements. But most strikingly, forward presence requirements forecasted for Southwest Asia in the 1999 timeframe show no air and ground assets and the lowest naval presence of any regional theater.(6:4-3) Its assessment of crisis response requirements gets to the essence of the downsizing dilemma CENTCOM forces will be confronted with through the 90's. Therefore, what is our vision of the threat or the nature of instability that may affect our interests and objectives and ultimately influence the development of a new regional grand strategy?

Now within the so-called New World Order, the answer might appropriately be who or what do we want it to be? Indeed, what we do with our preeminent instruments of power at this juncture ultimately will shape the security environment and lead us to designate our friends and foes as they best serve our national interests and objectives. Above all, we must establish and maintain a clear vision of the interests and objectives we now have or desire within this region and not get lost in the 'fog' as we have done so in the past.

## THE FOG OF PEACE

The concept of the *fog of war* that Carl von Clausewitz so eloquently describes in his seminal work, *On War*, also aptly explains many of the so called emerging realities of the new world order.(7:117) As mentioned earlier, uncertainty and unpredictability abound throughout the region. This continually complicates the execution of existing national security policies within the region as well as attenuates whatever visions we have for future policies and supporting strategies.

Similarly, as in war, friction can thwart peacetime policy and strategy initiatives. Some can be anticipated, such as the relative incompatibility of western democratic ideals and values compared to those of islamic theocracies within the region. Other friction may not be so apparent and predictable and may render conditions we often relate to "Murphy's Law" -- what can go wrong will go wrong. For example, even though the fall of the Shah of Iran in Januaray 1979 became apparent near the end of his reign, our Cold War strategy that depended on the Iranian pillar was thought to be strong enough to withstand the internal pressures that eventually brought it down.

Suffice it to say, both uncertainty and friction are as relevant concerns for the formulation of strategy in peacetime as in war. Hence, the grand strategy initiatives proposed in this paper will consider these same concerns in what is referred to conceptually as the *fog of peace*.

## CURRENT STRATEGY

### National Strategy

The United States' current national security strategy for Southwest Asia provides sufficient ambiguity so as not to upset the delicate balance between idealism and pragmatism that is necessary for successful political, diplomatic, economic, and military peacetime engagement within the region. It states:

"We may be acting in hybrid coalitions that include not only traditional allies but also nations with whom we do not have a mature history of diplomatic and military cooperation or, indeed, even a common political or moral outlook. This will require flexibility in our diplomacy and military policy, without losing sight of the fundamental values which that diplomacy and policy are designed to protect and on which they are based."(9:13)

Moreover, our current national security policy states that our basic policy shows powerful continuity. Essentially, our key strategic concerns for the Gulf region continue to be security of our friends, maintaining a free flow of oil, curbing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles, discouraging destabilizing conventional arms sales, and countering terrorism.(9:10) What's more, our policy clearly states: "We remain open to an improved relationship with Iran. However, meaningful improvement can only occur after Iran makes clear it is lending no support to hostage-taking or other forms of terrorism."(9:10)

Does our current military strategy provide the necessary ways and means to fully exploit the opportunities and aspirations as stated above in our national security strategy? Does it address specific measures for an improved relationship

with Iran given the prerequisites for engagement? Answers to these questions are not readily apparent in either our current National Military Strategy or in USCENTCOM's current security strategy for the Gulf region. This suggests a major change in our grand strategy for the region may be necessary as well as a new supporting military strategy.

### Current Military Strategy

The end of the Cold War has shifted the focus of our national military strategy from one of containment and forward defense to primarily a regional defense strategy that achieves U.S. objectives through strategic nuclear deterrence and strategic defense, power projection to respond to crises; forward presence vice forward-deployed forces in peacetime; and the ability to reconstitute and expand as needed.(3:2,7) At the same time we are reshaping the force to absorb an overall 25% strength cut over the next four years, while attempting to preserve the quality and readiness necessary for current and future requirements.

Consequently, developing military strategies and resources are primarily focused on deterring and, if necessary, fighting limited regional conflicts. Greater emphasis is being placed on the benefits and opportunities of forward presence. As our current National Military Strategy states, "In peacetime...forward presence is the 'glue' that helps hold alliances together, builds cooperative insititutions, and helps regional countries work together, including some with

historical antagonisms. Forward presence (also) helps to reduce regional tensions, to deter potential aggressors, and to dampen regional arms competitions."(3:11) Among the more traditional ways forward presence operations are conducted include combined exercises, deployments, port visits, military-to-military contacts, security assistance, countering terrorism and protecting American citizens in crisis areas. More recent involvement includes less traditional military operations such as counternarcotics operations and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief efforts both at home and abroad.

## CRAFTING A NEW STRATEGY

### Factors To Consider

Given the above statement of our intent, it appears our current security policy priorities at least establishes the ideals and ends we aspire to achieve and pragmatic ways to achieve these objectives according to our own agenda. But what about the underlying sources of uncertainty and friction impacting on the agenda of our current strategy? What's more, should we continue to consider Iran a principal threat and mainly rely upon Saudi Arabia as the region's sole pillar of stability? Or has Iran met our terms for rapprochement? To answer these questions, two key assessments are provided: (1) The geostrategic importance of Iran and Saudi Arabia within the region; and (2) Factors contributing to the existing fog of peace in Iran and Saudi Arabia that should be considered in crafting any new regional grand strategy.

### Saudi Arabia and Iran's Strategic Importance

What makes these two nations strategically significant in the post-Cold War, New World Order? First, Iran and Saudi Arabia possess several common attributes and interests of geostrategic importance. From a geographic perspective, their location, spatial dimensions and resource base are major factors contributing to their strategic importance. As the two largest countries within the CENTCOM AOR, they occupy nearly 50% of both the theatre's territory and coastline, 3.8 million square kilometers and 5,700 km, respectively; or comparable to half the size of the continental U.S.(6:146, 273)

Next, together they share common borders with all other CENTCOM AOR nations, with the exceptions of Djibouti, Somalia and Kenya. Both are dependent upon unrestricted access to their coastal ports to sustain economies which are highly dependent upon foreign markets, especially their oil export markets.

Unquestionably, the most significant strategic attribute they share, directly related to their spatial dimensions and geographic setting, is the vast reserve of oil and natural gas they possess, together with those of their Gulf neighbors as shown in Figure I. Saudi Arabia and Iran rank first and fourth in oil reserves, respectively; accounting for one quarter of the world's remaining recoverable crude oil reserves.(8:105) Saudi Arabia's estimated 260 billion barrels and Iran's 93 billion barrels, combined, represent 41% of the top ten countries in proved oil reserves.(37:24) Additionally, Iran

and Saudi Arabia rank 2nd and 3rd in the world in proven natural gas reserves with 600.3 trillion and 185.5 trillion cubic feet, respectively. In fact, after the Commonwealth of Independent States, Iran and Saudi Arabia possess 46% of the remaining top ten nations proven gas reserves.(37:24)

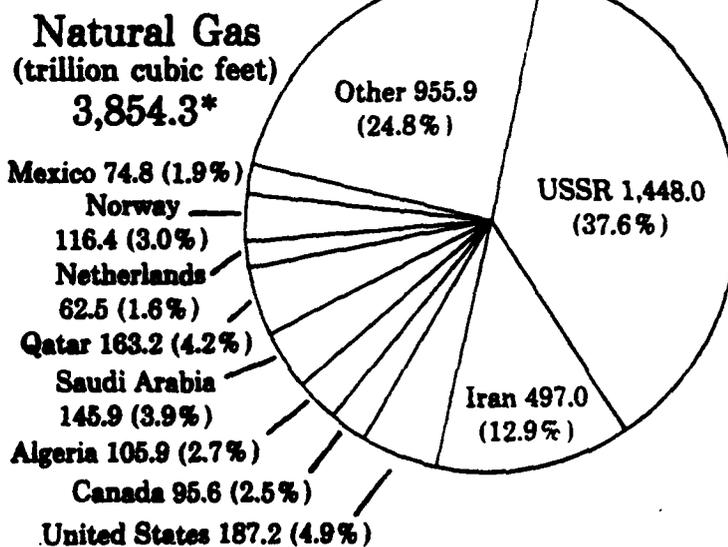
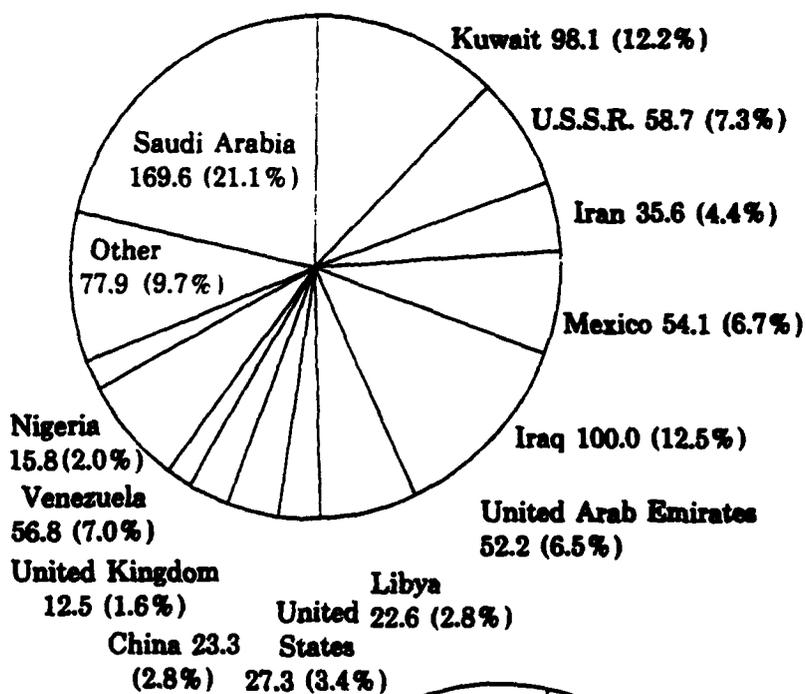
Furthermore, Saudi Arabia and Iran also rank first and second among crude oil producing countries in the Middle East and North Africa; together producing an average 9.5 million barrels daily or the equivalent of 50% of the region's daily production effort.(37:19) Since DESERT STORM, production from Saudi Arabia has increased substantially to absorb the temporary loss of Iraqi and Kuwaiti production capacities. Similar regional dominance can also be seen in refining capacities again ranking as the top two nations with approximately 64% of the region's total daily capacity.(37:21)

Understandably, the significance of this vast resource base cannot be underestimated vis-a-vis maintaining stability amongst the uncertainty and associated tensions of the New World Order. For the United States the real threat to our trade balance and economic well-being is our growing dependence on foreign oil from the Gulf. In 1991, oil imports accounted for nearly 70% of our total trade deficit.(30:1)

Figure 1. Estimated Crude Oil and Natural Gas Reserves  
(8:105)

## Estimated Crude Oil and Natural Gas Proved Reserves

Crude Oil (billion barrels)  
803.0\*



\* World totals as of January 1, 1988.

Source: Department of Energy, Energy Information Agency,  
*International Energy Annual 1987.*

This increased reliance on imported oil makes our economy even more vulnerable to events like the 1973 oil embargo and subsequent price jumps, that have occurred in 1979, 1981, 1982, and 1990 when the price nearly doubled after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.(30:1) The dependence on uninterrupted flow of these crucial energy sources, to not only the U.S. but to our other friends and allies, will remain a common vital interest for all. Our mutual interdependency will only continue to grow until more economical energy alternatives are fully developed. According to the Department of Energy, U.S. dependency on foreign oil will increase to as much as 74% of our total demand by the year 2010--exemplifying a similar trend for virtually all developed and developing nations dependent upon foreign oil and gas imports.(30:11) Therefore, continued availability and access to oil and petroleum products is a major underpinning for global stability and economic prosperity and not just the Gulf's.

The spatial dimension and setting of these two Gulf nations also are significant as one views the recent past and current political instability within the CENTCOM AOR that currently is occurring along the peripheral borders of both Iran and Saudi Arabia. Beyond the most obvious troubled nations Iraq and Kuwait, we see continued unrest in Afganistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yeman, and Ethiopia, not to mention evidence of instability in the newly independent Central Asia States to the north of Iran. But for the most part, both Saudi Arabia and Iran remain relatively stable considering both are recovering from significant social and economic burdens of

recent wars to include even the Cold War. Several salient insights can be gained from these conflicts.

\*Both served as the so-called twin pillars of the Nixon Doctrine for containment of Soviet expansion into the region.

\*Both faced a common enemy, Iraq, who remains the most potent military force in the CENTCOM AOR.

\*Both retained a strategic defense posture throughout their wars with Iraq.

\*Both suffered substantial economic burdens from their respective wars.

\*Both have become increasingly security conscious and seek arms to build forces to protect the sovereignty of their vast territories.

\*Both have had to struggle with the U.S. to obtain needed conventional weapons to fulfill U.S. collective security objectives within the region.

\*Both countries alienated their neighbors, to some degree, by deporting potentially hostile labor forces.

\*For both, UN resolutions and subsequent sanctions had significant importance; and as a result the U.N. has regained international political and diplomatic clout.

\*Both learned the advantage modern technology provides on the battlefield. Unfortunately, Iran suffered dearly by conducting human wave counterattacks to overcome their technology shortfalls.

#### Some Key Differences:

\*Both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia backed Iraq in its war against Iran.

\*The U.S. was resolute in defense of its long time ally, Saudi Arabia; but not its once pro-west supporter Iran.

\*Arab nations were essentially united behind Iraq against essentially their age-old rivals the Persians, but not so against Iraq in Desert Shield/Desert Storm.

\*An ad Hoc coalition of Arabs and non-Arab nations united against Iraq. No other such coalition of Moslem 'believers' and 'non-believers' have fought together against another Moslem nation in the region since World War II.

Looking back at these insights we can see that the future security and prosperity of the U.S. and nations in the CENTCOM AOR, especially Saudi Arabia and Iran, depend on common vital national interests " - - a stable and secure Gulf." From the U.S. perspective our foreign oil dependency alone virtually dictates our current and foreseeable interests and objectives within the region of the CENTCOM theatre. Likewise, for Iran and Saudi Arabia, stability and security in the region is paramount for protecting both their dependency on oil production and access to export markets.(40, 45:18)

#### **UNCERTAINTY AND FRICTION WITHIN SAUDI ARABIA**

In spite of Saudi Arabia's apparent political stability and vast energy reserves, there are growing postwar internal pressures that may ultimately impact on their national security policies and strategies. These pressures also underlie most of the conditions of uncertainty and friction the U.S. must adequately consider as we reshape our foreign policy and strategies. Such internal sources of friction include rapid modernization, democratization movements and concomitant growing Islamic militancy, unchecked populations growth, and an increasing debt burden.(40)

#### **Rapid Modernization**

Saudi Arabia is essentially a country of two different worlds. Capitalizing on its oil wealth, the House of Saud aggressively has pursued a first-rate modernization effort

emphasizing the development of infrastructure, urbanization, rapid exploitation of its petroleum industry; and more recently, development of major diversified industrial centers at Al Jubile and Yanbu. From the outset to the present, the ideas and expertise for these massive modernization efforts came from the West. This continued western influence has had a profound impact on the ruling elite to perpetuate these powerful forces of change. However, two significant sources of friction have resulted. One derives from the conflict between western secular ideals and an absolute monarchy that is strictly governed according to Islamic law. The other is the country's substantial dependency on foreign labor to sustain the growth and viability of virtually all sectors of the economy. In effect, a literacy rate of less than 50% among the men alone, the religious conservatives, Bedouins, and women of the Saudi society characterize much of the 'other world' whose part in this modernization effort is performed principally by a surrogate labor force of foreign nationals, not Saudis.

#### Democratization Trends and Growing Islamic Militancy

Despite pressure from western democracies and secular movements within the region, Saudi Arabia remains as the most conservative Arab nation whose absolute monarchy, under the House of Saud, is governed strictly according to Islamic law. No autonomous political activity such as the Muslim Brotherhood organizations in Egypt and Jordan, are tolerated and all public criticism and organized opposition to the current theocratic regime is ruthlessly suppressed. The concept of 'Shura', which

according to the Quran is the tradition of consultation based on tribal loyalties to ruling leaders, provides their forum for democratic participation according to the conservative traditions of Islam.(25:23) Still, there are no formal political organizations or any form of western-style representative governing officials either elected or appointed. Nonetheless, because of the continued exposure to western liberalism, a growing number of western-educated Saudis are seeking reform and democratization movements as in neighboring Arab states.

Throughout the Arab world , human rights organizations and women's organizations are at the fore of efforts to liberalize the authoritarian patterns of control.(27:4) However, in Saudi Arabia the conservative, more militant clerics continue to demand strict adherence to Islamic policies. The resulting friction has recently caused King Fahd to finally move on a promise he made when he ascended to the throne a decade ago-- to grant his subjects greater political freedom. In March, 1992 he announced the formation of a sixty member consultative council of leading businessmen, academics, and clergy to suggest new laws and advise the monarch but will have no other independent political authority.(42:45)

Yet, in subsequent pronouncements, King Fahd publicly ruled out Western-style democracy, saying that it is "incompatible with Riyadh's Islamic ideology. The system of free elections is not part of islamic ideology, and criticism of Islam, the existing government or the ruling family is not allowed. Also prohibited are public demonstrations as a means

of political expression or presenting grievances.(31:1) An example of this could be seen during Operations DESERT SHIELD/DESERT STORM when in October 1990 in Riyadh, 47 women were arrested for driving cars to protest the ban on women driving. As a consequence, they were subjected to a variety of sanctions, including the loss of their government jobs and seizure of their passports.(31:1) What's ironic about this is the fact that many women comprising the multinational force defending Saudi Arabia during that timeframe drove vehicles as part of their military duties and were subsequently rewarded and decorated for their efforts.

Nevertheless, the growing pressures of liberalism and democratization versus Islamic militantism will inevitably sustain the political status quo for the foreseeable future and continue to be a source of friction between the foreign policy and national security requirements of the Saudis and the U.S.. As King Fadh states, "democracies in the West might be good in those countries, but this (does not) suit all the people of the world."(31:1)

#### Population Growth Pressures

Currently Saudi Arabia is experiencing a 4% annual growth rate with 50% of its population under 15 years of age.(40) This will continue to place greater demand for future infrastructure development and continued expansion of a more diversified economy. The industrial city-centers of Yanbu and Al Jubile are significant beginnings but further opportunities will be needed to accommodate rising expectations of a more

enlightened generation. The cost to the government to accommodate this unchecked growth brings us to the fourth source of internal uncertainty and friction.

#### Saudi Debt

The \$16.8 billion cost to the Saudis for the Gulf War is only part of a current financial dilemma they are experiencing. This, added to an existing external debt burden of approximately \$20 billion, places increasing pressure on future spending priorities for economic growth necessary to meet the modernization and population demands mentioned above.(5:274) It also impacts on decisions made regarding future defense expenditures, especially for military equipment and the role the Kingdom will be able to play in the future as an aid donor within the region. The Saudis desire to establish closer ties to the newly independent Central Asian Moslem states may not be as aggressively pursued and supported as it might otherwise be because of their current debt burden. Its past record of nearly \$65 billion in bilateral aid (during 1979-89) certainly contributed to its past leadership standing within the region.(5:274) But these growing internal tensions, at least in the near term, will probably result in a decline in external aid and a focus of available resources closer to home on social, economic and security issues that more directly impact on their immediate stability and prosperity.

## UNCERTAINTY AND FRICTION WITHIN IRAN

### Modernization Demands

Iran faces somewhat similar internal friction; however, the scope and complexity are of a much larger dimension. As the other pillar of our Cold War regional containment strategy, the product of our Nixon Doctrine and extensive involvement in modernization efforts, gave us blind faith. Faith that U.S. influence within the region would prevail as we continued our security assistance and technology infusion, especially to Iran. Iran essentially was a more open society to us and better served our Cold War geopolitical objectives because of its proximity to the Soviet Union.. Yet, the Iranian revolution of 1978-79 upset virtually all the old assumptions, both in Iran and throughout the region.(22:422)

Since the Arab conquest of Iran (formerly Persia) in the 7th Century A.D., Arabs and Iranians have coexisted uneasily within the framework of Islam.(22:420) The Arab perception of the Iranian military buildups to provide territorial security and security of their vital Gulf oil fields and tanker facilities were usually viewed as a threat of growing Iranian hegemony throughout the region.

But the revolution and costly 8 year war with Iraq has forced the Iranian government to focus primarily on growing domestic concerns. These include the rebuilding of its oil production and export facilities, diversification and expansion of its economy, and the modernization of its military to keep pace with its perceived threats and own territorial security

needs. One only needs to look at the recent past and ongoing unrest in its neighboring states to appreciate their longstanding paranoia of encirclement.

Their rapid modernization program that flourished during the Shah's reign, was carried out largely along Western lines, with the heavy infusion of Western technicians and values. These influences eventually became too destabilizing and, with the Shah's extreme authoritarianism and repression, precipitated the Shah's downfall and the resurgence of Moslem fundamentalism.(22:422)

Like Saudi Arabia, Iran still depends greatly upon its petroleum production and export market, representing 90% of its total exports, to sustain a population nearing 60 million and growing at nearly the same rate of Saudi Arabia, 4%.(5:146-7) But unlike Saudi Arabia, Iran must deal with a current unemployment rate of 30% and greater, immediate social demands. Therefore, we have seen of late more moderate political overtures made to not only the West (for the U.S. in particular) but to other regions for potential markets. Notably, an aggressive foreign relations effort began in June of 1989 with Hashemi-Rafsanjani's visit to the former Soviet Union and continued efforts to formalize relations with the Commonwealth of Independent States, especially the Moslem Central Asian States, and with over two dozen African nations.(35:475,550)

### Liberalism and Democratization

The impact of liberalism and democratization within Iran contrasts considerably to that of Saudi Arabia. The specter of Iran's revolution still hangs over the region with meanings that are complex and contradictory. These include the first modern mass urban revolution in the region, the establishment of Western-derived political institutions, but subordinating those institutions and mechanisms to a theocratic expression of nationalist ideology.(27:47) Throughout the 1980's, the examples of an assertively Iranian Shi'a revolution across the Gulf, and fear of its export were particularly menacing. Yet, despite initial disturbances by Shi'a groups in the early 80's and vigorous opposition from Sunni activists, Gulf rulers managed to stabilize the situation with policies that included greater sensitivity toward Islamic sensibilities and a tough posture toward militants.(14:433)

The current populist government of the Islamic Republic of Iran as seen from the Arab side of the Gulf, provides a sharp contrast to those of Saudi Arabia and other GCC countries.(20:20) Competitive political elections, representatives to various local governmental institutions and what appears to be a more free government control of the media are a move along the lines of the democratic values the U.S. and those the United Nations encourage.

Iran's advocacy and practice of representative government appears to be very much a part of an international trend. It certainly is more open and more liberal than its counterparts

across the Gulf. In particular, the contrast with Saudi Arabia is quite significant. Iran for instance does not restrict women from driving cars or working in offices and factories with men.(20:21) This liberalism within Iranian culture causes tension especially with the more conservative Shi'a Moslems -- primarily because of the remaining Western influence. But it also creates another form of friction within the region.

Disenfranchised Arabs see in the Islamic government of Iran as what seems to be a good example of democracy within an Islamic context. Therefore, as long as rulers of neighboring Gulf states continue to resist demands for political reform, disenfranchised citizens will be tempted to see Iran as an attractive alternative.(20:21) This rub may, indeed, hold down cooperative efforts between Iran and its Gulf neighbors more than the fear of the spread of radical Shi'a fundamentalism into predominantly Sunni states, such as Saudi Arabia.

Above all, Iran has continued to show a move to greater moderation in its Islamic fundamentalist views--a trend that has been recognized internationally. The release of the U.S. Embassy hostages, and subsequent brokering efforts by Iran for release of hostages in Lebanon and departure from state supported terrorism are examples of more apparent moderation trends. Also, recent national parliamentary elections show a significant increase in the number of moderates elected.

It appears now that both the U.S. and its Arab friends and allies in the Gulf region are interested in containing, not promoting political change largely because of the spreading liberalism that is tolerated in neighboring Islamic

fundamentalist nations.(20:19) Political status quo may in some respect reduce the negative effects of change that contribute to instability. But it may also preclude the formation of new relationships that could eventually render greater stability. Considering our current national security policy and the democratic values we espouse, it is somewhat ironic that we tolerate this dilemma--but this is where pragmatism prevails over idealism when it comes to what interests are absolutely vital.

As General Schwartzkopf pointed out in March 1990, it remains to be seen whether Rafsanjani can survive and guide Iran "along a path toward moderation and stability; or whether Iran will slip back into the hands of powerful anti-Western radicals."(38) But he also stated that in either case, "the U.S. response to an Iranian attempt at rapprochement should be based on the principle of reciprocity"(38) If this is so, where do we stand today?

## **HEADING TO A NEW GRAND STRATEGY**

### **Common Interests and Objectives**

If one objectively assesses enduring vital interests we share today with our two Cold War pillars that flank the Gulf it is not surprising as to the fit. The past security objectives of Soviet containment may have changed, but the tight fit for the supply and demand of oil now remains as the vital ingredient to mutual security arrangements for the

foreseeable future. Oil, access to markets, regional stability, and continued economic development will remain the heart of common interests and objectives and impetus for a mutually beneficial regional security strategy. Therefore, we should not overreact to pragmatic decisions by either Saudi Arabia or Iran to increase their defense capabilities given the events of the recent past, their geostrategic setting, and the region's destiny they both essentially control.

In an era of declining defense budgets and reductions in U.S. power projection as well as forward presence capability, the U.S. will rely more on friends and allies to share the common defense burden.(11:5) Unfortunately, our national security policy for Southwest Asia does not adequately address the current, 'new world' circumstances within the region.

In charting courses of action for a new strategy, the U.S. must be cognizant of and keep pace with changes occurring within this vital region. The development and implementation of a prudent strategy demands a careful analysis of all three countries enduring vital interests and political objectives. It also must adequately consider the sources of uncertainty and friction that will require accommodation of the these two remaining pillars within the region. As we move into the 21st century these will most likely remain foremost concerns for the region's security and stability.

#### Pragmatic Ways and Means

Pragmatism is the key to a viable course of action. Any balance of power sought within the region cannot be based solely

on military might. It will require practical solutions to problems arising from the forementioned uncertainty and friction within Iran and Saudi Arabia; as well as the friction between these two countries and the U.S. vis a vis the clash between western democratic values and Islamic values. Mutual respect and accommodation of these differing values are crucial for the success of any resulting grand strategy.

Economically, politically and diplomatically the U.S. must move to normalize relations with Iran and bolster its cooperative efforts with Saudi Arabia. In addition to bilateral efforts, the U.S. should use the United Nations as the forum to lay out and sponsor the framework for a regional collective security arrangement which includes multinational commitments to secure sea lines of communication and other multinational regional presence and related security assistance activities to deter potential crises.

Thus, our existing forward presence and deterrence strategies for possible regional crisis become be predicated on a viable grand strategy that addresses the integration of the nations economic, political, diplomatic, as well as the the collective security provided by United Nations sponsored multinational, military means to meet U.S. national security objectives. As Herrmann points out, our strategic dilemma is more political now than it is military. (18:43) The key challenge is how can the U.S. build and maintain positive relationships with the countries within the theater that will survive through the fog of peace within and between the principal guardians of the regions future prosperity. As

mentioned earlier, the U.S. has been so preoccupied with deterring Iran it has lost sight of the need for developing a new grand political-military strategy toward regional security.

No doubt our military forward presence, peacetime engagement activities and crisis response capabilities will continue during the interim; but as Art argues, "the nature of our presence in the Gulf will depend upon the post-war constellation of political-military forces in the region, but it should occur with a multinational United Nations format".(3:8) Additionally, Herrmann aptly sums up our point of departure for the challenge ahead:

"This is not a moment for self-serving and crude assumptions about the Middle East culture or for abstract theorizing about the 'laws' of international relations. Washington has relied too heavily in the past on military superiority to salvage a failed political strategy based on superficial area knowledge. A new world order that will protect U.S. interests into the next century must put to rest Arab and Islamic images of Colonial Empire, not reinforce them ... it must secure a balance of power committed to the protection of American interests. What is needed now is a political approach that rests on the security of (crisis) deterrence and opens new avenues to multilateral options, democratic procedures, and judicial protection for civil liberties."(18:75)

Hence, our perceptions regarding Iran may deserve reassessment. Saudi Arabia and Iran are the key to regional stability and prosperity. A grand strategy that builds relationships based on common interests and objectives through multilateral efforts sponsored by the United Nations will be the way and the source for means for safe passage through the *for of peace* in the Gulf region.

## CONCLUSION

The Gulf region of the CENTCOM AOR has and will continue to be the geostrategic epicenter for the U.S. as we move to the 21st Century. Given our current National Security objectives, the region will remain the greatest challenge to our National Security policy and supporting military strategies. Our continued Gulf oil dependency is the most vital regional interest that will ultimately steer our policy and strategy decisions for the foreseeable future. The twin pillars, Saudi Arabia and Iran, that we relied upon in the past for extra-regional containment of Soviet expansion again reemerge as the key pillars--but now for the purposes of regional security and supporting global prosperity. The uncertainty and friction that exists within and between these two countries will complicate successful execution of future regional collective security strategy. Therefore, what is needed is a strategy that aims at the common vital security interests and objectives of the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia and seeks pragmatic ways and means to overcome the ideological friction between them.

Now is the time to reshape our grand strategy for the Gulf. It should be predicated on an understanding of past lessons of U.S. security involvement in the region and begin with rapprochement with Iran. The course of action central to this strategy must incorporate greater reliance on the United Nations to sponsor and integrate inter- and intra-regional multinational cooperation and participation in the region's

security needs during the *fog of peace* as well as during conflict. Even though such a strategy may seem antithetical to most Arabs and Persians within the region now, recent history has shown change brings both uncertainty and opportunity. Now is the time to seize the opportunity.

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