Gulf Integration in Post-Arab Spring: Deepening or Decaying?

Arap Baharı Sonrası Körfez Entegrasyonu: Derinleşme mi Dağılma mı?

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Abstract

Theoretical explanations on regional integration in the Third World have been relatively sparse in International Relations literature. Against this background, the origins and expansion of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to date, despite the attention it received from rationalist and critical theories alike, are still underexplored. This article is a case study with the purpose of unfolding whether the GCC evolves on the path through a full-fledged "security community" in the constructivist sense. It specifically focuses on the question whether the Gulf security community transformed into a more integrated entity within the context of the Arab uprisings beginning in late 2010. Similar to what happened in the wake of the First and the Second Gulf wars, the so-called "Arab Spring" did not lead to a deepening of GCC integration. Apart from brief and inconsequential upturn in-group cohesion, the process in fact led to further divisions within, if not disintegration of the GCC.

Key Words: *The Gulf Cooperation Council, Arab Spring, Constructivism, Regional Integration, Security Community.*

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Öz

Uluslararası İlişkiler literatüründe Üçüncü Dünya'daki bölgesel entegrasyona yönelik teorik açıklamalar görece nadirdir. Bu bağlamda, Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi'nin (KİK) kökenleri ve gelişimi, rasyonalist ve eleştirel teorilerden ilgi toplamayı başarmışsa da, hala az çalışılmış konulardır. Bu makale, İnşacılık teorisi çerçevesinde KİK'in tam teşekküllü bir "güvenlik topluluğu"na dönüşüp dönüşmediğini ortaya koymayı amaçlayan bir vaka analizidir. Çalışma özellikle 2010 yılı sonunda başlayan Arap isyanları çerçevesinde Körfez güvenlik topluluğunun gevşek bir topluluktan daha sıkı bir birliğe evrilip evrilmediğini sorgulamaktadır. Bulgular, Birinci ve İkinci Körfez savaşlarında olduğu gibi, "Arap Baharı" olarak adlandırılan isyanların da Körfez bölgesi entegrasyonunda derinleşmeye yol açmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Süreç, grup dayanışmasında yarattığı kısa süreli bir sıçramanın ardından KİK'in dağılmasına yol açmasa da, üyeler arasındaki mevcut açmazlara yenilerini eklemiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi, Arap Baharı, İnşacılık, Bölgesel Entegrasyon, Güvenlik Topluluğu.*

A Theoretical Introduction to Regional Integration

Founded in May 1981 against the background of the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. These six members embody a number of political, economic and cultural similarities. To begin with, all states are feudal monarchies with mostly homogeneous populations. Sunni Islam is embraced as the official state religion and state revenues predominantly rest upon hydrocarbon resources, especially oil. In addition, they share similar externally or internally driven concerns about radical Palestinians, Shi'ite Iranians

and migrant workers whose numbers often exceed those of Gulf nationals.[1]

The issue of Gulf integration has attracted both positivist and post-positivist international relations theories. Also categorized as rationalist versus critical theories, the former group of theories is related with "why" something happened as opposed to "how" it happened that is related with the latter group. Realism, Liberalism and their neo-versions (plus also English School) adhere to the belief that social phenomena can be "explained" by the narrow and mostly quantitative methods utilized by natural/life sciences, whereas Marxist-oriented theories, Constructivism, Postmodernism, Poststructuralism as well as Copenhagen, Frankfurt, Aberystwyth and Paris schools call for "understanding" such phenomena through qualitative area studies. While rationalist theories assume that the international system as well as the actors (primarily states) comprising it have pre-defined and non-changing structures, identities, interests and behaviors, critical theories offer a constitutive and normative framework arguing that actors and the system have the ability to influence one another through social interactions and that they have ever-changing qualities. Taking issue with the value-neutral notion of "rationality", critical theories underline the subjectivity behind the formation of identities and interests and they commit themselves to exposing the nexus of power and knowledge behind any kind of domination at theoretical and practical levels.[2]

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[1] Mahnaz Zehra Isfahani, "Alone Together: Regional Security Agreements in Southern Africa and the Arabian Gulf", *International Security*, 1984 8(4), p. 158–161; Alex J. Bellamy, *Security Communities and Their Neighbors: Regional Fortresses or Global Integrators*, Palgrave Macmillan, Gordonsville, 2004, p. 119, 126–127.

[2] Pınar Bilgin, Ken Booth and Richard Wyn Jones, "Security Studies: The Next Stage?" *Naçao e Defesa*, 1998, 84 (2), p. 131-157; Martin Hollis and Steve Smith, *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1990; Andrew Linklater, *International Relations: Critical Concepts in Political Science*, Routledge, London, 2000; Steve Smith, Ken Booth and Maria Zalewski, *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996.

This paper focuses on Neorealist, Neoliberal and Constructivist interpretations of GCC integration and argues that Constructivism is better suited to explaining the origins as well as the evolution of the GCC to date.[3] Neorealist explanations for regional integration point at alliance formation. Based on short-lived balance of power considerations, regional (or sub-regional) integration is treated as a response of weak states to threats caused by potential hegemons. They further emphasize the factor of a "core" power within a regional organization. Neoliberals, on the other hand, argue that regional integration is a means to increase mutual benefits by reducing mutual threat perceptions and by enhancing welfare. Put in different terms, regional organizations help member states deal with common issues through creating a venue for dialogue and cooperation. As for the Constructivists, regional integration is based on regional awareness, meaning a shared sense of belonging to a particular regional community. Here the focus is both on material factors and on ideational motives. It is also maintained that compatibility of major values as well as the leadership of a strong power within and/or outside a regional grouping may contribute to the success and sustainability of regional coordination of issues.[4]

Within the realm of Liberalism, Karl Deutsch and his associates

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[3] Some English School theorists have also devoted attention to the concept of security communities, interpreting them as "islands" of international society. Such communities were associated with the status of "mature anarchy" on account of their high degree of interaction and the presence of dense networks of common rules and institutions. However, the scant number of comments on security communities in the English School discipline focus on interstate interactions, not on transnational forces. See Hedley Bull, "The Theory of International Politics, 1919-1969", in Brian Porte (ed.), *The Aberystwyth Papers: International Politics, 1919-1969*, Oxford University Press, London, 1972 and Barry Buzan, "From International System to International Society: Structural Realism and Regime Theory Meet the English School", *International Organization*, 1993, 47, p. 327–352.

[4] Matteo Legrenzi, "The Gulf Cooperation Council in Light of International Relations Theory", *International Area Studies Review*, 2002, Vol: 5, p. 23–24.

began to develop the notion of "security community"[5] in 1957, defining it as an integrated group having attained a sense of community within a set of formal or informal institutions or practices, which are sufficiently strong and widespread to assure peaceful change among the group members. Accordingly, a transnational identity develops through sustained interstate interaction, and, through the development of dependable behavior and common norms, a transnational community based on mutual trust and a sense of affiliation eventually emerges. The gist of the security community is that there exists real assurance that the members of that community will settle their disputes in other ways short of physical war. Distinguishing between the two types of security communities, (pluralistic and amalgamated) Deutsch and his colleagues argue that while both are founded on the expectations of peaceful change, the former refers to cases where members did not surrender their independence, whereas the latter refers to cases when states decided to merge as in the states of the United States of America. They did not consider compatibility of values to be necessary for the creation of security communities, since without mutual needs and concessions, even a high degree of similarity in institutions and perspectives would not be enough to pave the way toward integration.[6]

While the Cold War proved to be a stumbling block for the idea of security community to flourish, Deutsch unknowingly laid the foundation for the Constructivist approach to International Relations. From mid- to late 1990s, Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett made new contributions to Deutsch's understanding of security communities. Among these, especially three are important in analyzing GCC integration: liberal democracy as an essential ingredient of security communities, a differentiation between loosely and tightly coupled

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[5] The idea was initially put forth in the early 1950s by Richard Van Wagenen.
[6] Karl Deutsch et al., *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957, p. 5–21, 90–115; Karl Deutsch, *Political Community at the International Level*, Aardwark Global Publishing, Utah, 2006, p. 41–54.

pluralistic security communities as well as the factors for and phases of security communities. They argued that, through liberal ideas like tolerance, citizenship duties and the rule of law, the individual identities in a given community might mould into a shared transnational civic culture. For Adler and Barnett, the "Precipitating Conditions" for the creation of security communities are changes in external environment, technology, demography and economics. The "Facilitating Conditions" are related with structure and process, meaning both the material powers and the power of shared meanings. Underlining the notions of transactions, social learning and mutual identification, they posit that international organizations, working groups as well as more advanced states either inside or outside a region might act as a magnet, pacifier and mediator on the road to creating a security community. Non-state actors and intellectuals may also contribute to this process especially in situations where there is negligible governmental support for a security community. Finally, the "Necessary Conditions" involve deepening of mutual identification so that members maintain trust only through knowledge and beliefs about each other. Parenthetically, while these three factors may also trigger fragmentation and further chaos, it is the critical factor of human agency that would encourage states to display trust and willingness to collaborate for mutual gains.[7]

As Adler and Barnett maintain, the existence of a security community does not signify an end to the role of material factors, interest-based behavior or security dilemmas among the constituent states. Nonetheless, the high level of mutual trust eliminates the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution. On the path towards becoming a loose security community and transforming into a tighter one, Adler and Barnett define three phases: In Phase I (Nascent), the peoples and/or governments of two or more states begin to consider

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[7] Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, "A Framework for the Study of Security Communities" Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, (ed.), *Security Communities*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998, p. 37–45.

how they might coordinate and diversify their relations through less costlier and more productive means. Although Deutsch posits that war or a common threat is sufficient for sparking an interest in a security community, Adler and Barnett contend that, and then a security community would be relegated to a classic alliance. In their opinion, a shared identity can also lead to greater interaction and the development of new organizations and institutions. Powerful states that would instill a sense of purpose and mutual progress and provide leadership also facilitate the integration process. In Phase II (Ascendant), the states and societies increasingly identify themselves as trustworthy friends and engage in a dense network of relations especially in the security sector, where interdependency and interoperability are highly visible. Gradual harmonization of bureaucratic structures is also expected. In Phase III (Mature), it becomes harder for the regional actors to think in zero-sum perspective or prepare for war among themselves.[8]

Accordingly, in *loose security communities*, states identify positively with one another and proclaim a similar way of living. There exist shared meanings and a collective identity, albeit with a still enduring clash of interests and occasional disagreements. Member states are expected to resolve their disputes in a multilateral and peaceful manner. Border checks and patrols are still there, but only to secure the state against threats other than an organized military invasion. Although there might be concerns as regards contribution to a joint military campaign, worst-case military scenarios include only those outside the community. There is often a common definition of risks and threats constructed along the norms of the community, and the language of community reflects how these norms define "the other." *Tight security communities* are those having completed all the three phases of integration. The right to use force becomes a cooperative and collective security practice, legitimate only against

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[8] Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, *a.g.e.*, p. 3–4, 53–57; Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, "Governing Anarchy: A Research Agenda for the Study of Security Communities", *Ethics and International Affairs*, 1996, Vol: 10, p. 75–92.

external threats or against fellow members behaving in a regressive manner. Although not a very strict requirement, high level of military integration is observed built upon shared identities and a high degree of trust. Policy coordination against "internal" threats, which might inflict damage on the community identity; free movements of populations; internationalization of authority in terms of shared and coordinated policies, creation of an informal system of rule and attempts at harmonization of domestic laws; and finally, the creation of a "multi-perspectival" polity, where rule is shared at the national, transnational, and supranational levels are other indicators of tightly coupled communities.[9]

As a contribution, Raimo Väyrynen and Laurie Nathan take issue with Adler and Barnett's limitation of the theory of security community to interstate peace. Väyrynen also analyzes the intrastate aspects of security communities, differentiating between *comprehensive security communities* in which both an interstate and inter-societal peace prevail and *interstate security communities* in which members are at peace with each other though large-scale violence is still possible at the domestic level. In a similar vein, Nathan argues that domestic stability defined as the absence of large-scale violence in a country is a non-negotiable condition for a security community. In contrast to Adler and Barnett, Nathan concludes that the benchmark of dependable expectations of peaceful change should apply not only between states but also within them. As he maintains, domestic violence precludes the existence of security communities by rendering people and states insecure and generating mistrust and cross-border havoc. It erodes mutual confidence and prevents collective identity's taking root in a community.[10]

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[9] Emanuel Adler and Michael N. Barnett, *a.g.m*., p. 92–94.
[10] Andrej Tusicisny, "Security Communities and Their Values: Taking Masses Seriously", **International Political Science Review**, 2007, 28(4), p. 427; Raimo Väyrynen, "Stable Peace through Security Communities? Steps towards Theory-building", Arie Marcelo Kacowicz et al. (ed.), **Stable Peace Among Nations**, Rowman

Review of Literature on Theoretical Interpretations of GCC Integration

Although neorealist accounts on the formation of the GCC rightfully point at the changes in geopolitical context such as the power vacuum related with the British departure, state-based challenges like Iran and Iraq and a strong hegemonic actor like Saudi Arabia, they neglect the fundamental shift in the identity of the Arab states of the Gulf which contributed to integration efforts.

The predominant neorealist explanation for the formation of the GCC is based on Stephen Walt's balance-of-threat theory. In his study of alignments within the Middle East from 1955 to 1979, he observes that states balance against perceived threats, rather than against the most powerful states. For Walt, the GCC was designed as a collective defense agreement to counter potential threats from both Iran and the Soviet Union against the background of increasing external threats after 1971 in the wake of the British military withdrawal. As a response to Walt, Scott Cooper and Brock Taylor concurred that the balance-of-threat theory cannot explain the timing and nature of the Gulf States' response to the Iranian threat. Iranian military capabilities dramatically declined after the Revolution of 1979 on account of the trials and tribulations of transition. Lack of access to spare parts for US-made military equipment purchased during the Shah era added further constraints. In addition, the GCC had already been founded at the time when Iran proved to be a military threat in September 1981, as witnessed in their first successful offensive against Iraq. Walt's theory also fails to explain why the Gulf States chose to respond to regional threats by the creation of a predominantly economic organization, which aimed at dismantling internal trade barriers, harmonizing external tariffs or increasing labor and capital mobility. Despite the

& Littlefield, Maryland, 2000, p. 108–129; Laurie Nathan, "Domestic Instability and Security Communities", *European Journal of International Relations*, 2006, 12 (2), p. 275–299.

establishment of the Peninsula Shield Force, holding of military exercises and increased military spending, regional military integration has always been negligible. This has to do with internal security concerns. The possibility of military politicization and coups or of Saudi domination of an integrated Gulf military command precludes any genuine attempts at interoperability.[11]

David Priess also argues that the Council is an alliance in order to balance against the rising threat from post-revolutionary Iran. However, just like Cooper and Taylor he takes issue with Walt, by arguing that the nature of threat emanating from Iran was rather internal than external, aiming at creating political dissent among the Gulf peoples (especially the dissatisfied Shi'ite minorities) through its revolutionary call for all Muslims. In short, the six Gulf States were indeed threatened by Iran; but the primary threat was not to the Gulf States' territorial borders or political independence but to their domestic stability. Against this setting, economic cooperation was a means to create benefits for the disaffected minorities to ensure allegiance to dynastic rulers.[12]

Refuting the neorealist arguments, the founding documents of the GCC enumerated various lofty goals of coordination, integration, and cooperation among the members in all fields. Security cooperation was not defined among the basic objectives and the deteriorating security environment at the time was not portrayed as a pressing issue. Furthermore, several integration plans had been articulated well before the turmoil caused by the Iranian Revolution or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. In 1978, the Kuwaiti Crown Prince Shaikh Jabir al-

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[11] Scott Cooper, "State-centric Balance-of-Threat Theory: Explaining the Misunderstood Gulf Cooperation Council", *Security Studies*, 2003, 13 (2), p. 306–309, 341–342; Scott Cooper and Brock Taylor, "Power and Regionalism: Explaining Regional Cooperation in the Persian Gulf," Finn Laursen, (ed.), *Comparative Regional Integration: Theoretical Perspectives*, Ashgate, Hampshire, 2003, p. 112–115.
[12] David Priess, "Balance-of-threat Theory and the Genesis of the Gulf Cooperation Council", *Security Studies*, 1996, 5 (4), p. 143–71; Alex J. Bellamy, *a.g.e.*, p. 124.

Ahmad al-Sabah had called for the establishment of a Gulf Union for cooperation at the economic, political, educational and informational levels. Oman and Saudi Arabia had also shared their respective plans for a deeper community. Despite the failure to agree on an all-integrationist project, the 1970s had seen the creation of the Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy, a Gulf Ports Union, the Gulf News Agency, the Gulf Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and a regional airline Gulf Air.[13]

As a subaltern realist, Mohammad Ayoob speaks of Neorealism and Neoliberalism's inclination to focus on cooperation and competition among major industrialized democracies. Specifically concentrating on neoliberal institutionalism and functionalist theories, he contends that conditions, which encourage cooperation among diversified and developed economies, are non-existent in the Gulf. The GCC members are more or less trading in one line of production. In addition, they import almost all their industrial and consumer goods as well as their labor from outside the region. These conditions deter any incentive as regards concluding free trade agreements among the GCC members.[14]

Apart from a handful of studies questioning whether the GCC is an example for Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) under the Copenhagen School, other works argued whether the Council proves to be a security community in the Constructivist sense. The central idea in RSCT is that, since most threats or security problems travel more easily over short distances, security interdependence is frequently observed in regional security complexes defined by boundary, two or more units, distribution of power and patterns of amity and enmity. The RSCs are characterized

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[13] Christian Koch, "The GCC as a Regional Security Organization," **KAS International Reports**, 2010, No. 11, p. 23–35, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_21076-544-2-30.pdf?101110141517 (Access date: 06.12.2013).

[14] Matteo Legrenzi, **The Gulf Cooperation Council and the International Relations of the Gulf**, I.B. Tauris. London, 2011, p. 46.

by the intensity and persistence of security concerns as well as the process of securitization. Within this framework, intraregional disputes among the Gulf States have been of low intensity and are often left unresolved on the altar of stability. On the other hand, the GCC boundaries are often associated with destabilizing border issues. Hence, the GCC excludes Iraq, Iran and Yemen -the most unstable and poorest countries in the region.[15] Studies based on RCST also debate whether the Gulf region is a security complex in its own right or a sub-complex of the Middle East.[16]

In the Constructivist discipline, Adler and Barnett define the GCC as a loose security community. Founded mainly out of concerns for regime security, the GCC transformed, albeit unintentionally, into a multidimensional organization that resembles a security community. The founding rhetoric of the GCC underlined that their common destiny, shared interests and values, and common economic and political systems culminated in a natural solidarity among the Gulf Arabs. Tribal and family ties cut across the borders and, over the years, increasing number of citizens of these states consider themselves as *khalijin* ("of the Gulf"). Policies toward the free mobility of and economic opportunities for the populations also contribute to the shaping of the Gulf citizen. These monarchies' tribal structure distinguishes them from Iran, Iraq and Yemen. Their being Arab and Sunni Muslim states further differentiate them from Iran. Caught between the two fires of the revolutionary Iran and the secular Arab nationalist Iraq, it was only through the Iran-Iraq War, which began in September 1980 and destabilized these two states that the Gulf Arabs entertained seriously the idea of a union. The threat of Iranian-led

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[15] Talal Mohammed Al-Khalifa, *The Gulf and Southeast Asia: Regional Security Complex and Regional Security Community*, University of Exeter, United Kingdom, 2012, p. 24, 125–126, 405–406 (Unpublished PhD Dissertation).
[16] See F. Gregory Gause III, *The International Relations of the Persian Gulf*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2010; Matteo Legrenzi (ed.), *Security in the Gulf: Historical Legacies and Future Prospects*, Routledge, London, 2011.

domestic upheaval rather than an Iranian military invasion encouraged the smaller Gulf States to view the potential hegemon Saudi Arabia as the lesser evil, albeit not a core state in the constructivist sense. Fear of Saudi dominance and the issue of possessive sovereignty along with various practical and operational reasons have precluded effective multilevel integration, despite modest efforts to the contrary. Still, the members increasingly refer to the GCC to take common positions on international issues or to settle territorial disputes like the ones between Oman and Saudi Arabia or Qatar and Bahrain. While longstanding regional rivalries, interference in each other's domestic politics and border conflicts endure, major interstate war has been out of the question.[17]

The evolution of the GCC from a loose to tight security community owes a lot to a sub-regional awareness embraced by the Gulf States in the post-First Gulf War era, despite the fact that the momentum for further integration gradually waned afterwards. In the wake of the war, Gulf policy makers were particularly vocal in expressing that the long-cherished idea among Arabs that threats to the security of Arabs come from non-Arabs is no longer valid. The Gulf states' decision to expel not only Iraqi workers but also workers from pro-Iraqi Palestine, Yemen and Jordan attest to the emergence of a strictly Gulf Arabic interpretation of security. This policy pertained to a radical turning point in Arab economic interdependence based on labor migration.[18] In the pre-Gulf War era, while Arab leaders sought to enforce their status by aligning themselves with Arabism, they simultaneously engaged in state-building in order to win allegiance of their citizens, who, upon independence, no longer viewed their states as artificial products of foreign powers. In the case of the GCC, the

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[17] Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause III, "Caravans in Opposite Directions: Society, State, and the Development of Community in the Gulf Cooperation Council," Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, (ed.), *a.g.e.*, p. 161–197.

[18] Pınar Bilgin, ***Regional Security in the Middle East: A Critical Perspective***, Routledge, London, 2005, p. 181–183.

First Gulf War confirmed that a break with Arabism was unavoidable for both external and internal security.[19] Ironically though, the First Gulf War also endowed the GCC rulers with a new perspective that buying protection from major foreign powers might be a better security alternative. Short-term collective ideational transformation did not transpire into deepening of military integration, but bilateral defense agreements with the United States.[20]

The US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the repercussions of this Second Gulf War also encouraged the GCC members to intensify their relations. The United States lost credibility in the eyes of the GCC states upon the fall of Iraq and the accompanying rise of the Shi'ite threat from Iran. Hence, the GCC members acted in a two-pronged fashion: diversification of security ties on account of mistrust about US postwar motives and establishment of closer dialogue and coordination on various issues, albeit temporarily. The GCC displayed unconditional support for the UAE on its contentious islands' dispute[21] with Iran. Saudi Arabia resumed diplomatic ties with Qatar in early 2008, after six years of suspended relations with this country on account of border issues. Although the Gulf Security Dialogue was launched in 2006 with the purpose of realizing defense integration of the GCC states with the US, the members also concluded bilateral agreements with other parties on military issues. France opened its first permanent military base in the Gulf in May 2009, whereas Oman-India joint defense exercises began in October the same year.[22] Economic integration also proceeded on a slow note. The Gulf Customs Union launched in 2003 failed to materialize on account of revenue issues and

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[19] Michael N. Barnett, "Regional Security after the Gulf War", **Political Science Quarterly**, 1996-1997, 111 (4), p. 600–602.
[20] Anwar-Ul-Haq Ahady, "Security in the Persian Gulf after Desert Storm", **International Journal**, 1994, 49 (2), p. 231.
[21] At the time of British withdrawal from the Gulf, the Iranian Shah seized from the Sharjah Emirate the control of Abu Musa and the Tunbs and later fully occupied them.
[22] Nur Çetinoğlu, "The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) after US-led Invasion of Iraq: Toward a Security Community?" **Uluslararası Hukuk ve Politika**, 2010, 6 (24), p. 91–114.

general protectionism. At the GCC's 2007 Doha Summit, the idea of a Gulf Common Market was introduced, which has yet to be fully implemented. The same conclusion is valid for the plans to establish a Gulf Monetary Union. Oman and the United Arab Emirates showed reticence in 2006 and 2009 respectively to adopt a shared currency, while Kuwait withdrew from the region's shared dollar peg when, under inflationary pressure, it embraced a currency basket in 2007. In a similar vein, a GCC-wide railway network announced at the 24th summit in 2003 has been delayed repeatedly.[23]

GCC Integration during and after the Arab Spring

Arab uprisings, which began in late 2010 and replicated themselves in countries ranging from Iran to the United States were met by the GCC members with initial anxiety and increased momentum in cooperation followed by a return to normalcy. This was the same trajectory observed in the aftermath of the First and the Second Gulf War.

At the GCC conference in Riyadh in December 2011, the Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud made a surprise call for the transition from cooperation to union. The King shared his observations as to GCC's ineffectiveness in meeting the foundational aims and aspirations. This astounding idea fell into deaf ears at the time of its pronunciation on account of fears about a Saudi-dominated future. One exception was Bahrain, who looked to Saudi Arabia with gratitude as it provided military assistance against the protesters who sought to create a Bahraini Spring in March 2011. As a consequence, the initiative was handed over to experts for further elaboration. The Saudi King failed to elicit a positive response when he reminded his audience of his unification plans at the Manama Summit in December 2012.[24]

[23] Salman Shaikh, "A People's Agenda for Gulf Co-operation", The Brookings Center, January 15, 2013. http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/01/15-gulf-cooperation-shaikh (Access date: 20.12.2013).
[24] Abd al-Hadi Khalaf, "GCC Members Consider Future of Union", *Al Monitor*, January 14, 2013, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/politics/2013/01/saudi-arabia-gcc-

Within this framework, the following analysis uses Adler and Barnett's criteria for tight security communities. It is concluded that, to use Adler and Barnett's vocabulary, the GCC is still a loose security community -albeit among "illiberal" states- against the setting of the latest and yet unfinished regional uproar. As a complement, the findings also reify Väyrynen's and Nathan's arguments that intrastate qualities of security communities are important in their creation and evolution into a solid and sustainable unity. In Väyrynen's terms, the GCC has yet to become a comprehensive security community, because there still exists the possibility of domestic violence breeding insecurity at the state and social levels and precluding deeper integration.

In terms of **"cooperative and collective security"** and **"policy coordination against internal threats"**, the GCC fails to meet the criteria for tight or comprehensive security communities. Common definitions of external or internal threats are blurred or virtually non-existent. On the one hand, Saudi Arabia and the UAE pursue aggressive strategies against the Muslim Brotherhood to forestall domestic unrest, while Qatar is more open to establishing dialogue with them as witnessed in two Brotherhood members occupying ministerial positions. Doha has further backed the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Brotherhood-linked entities in Syria. In an attempt to appease the reform-seeking protesters, the GCC gave $20 billion in aid to Oman and Bahrain in mid-March 2011. However, the use of Peninsula Shield forces in Bahrain for the first time against an internal threat did not represent a Gulf consensus. It was composed troops and officers from Saudi Arabia and the UAE, while Kuwait and Oman strictly abstained from participating at all for fear of taking part in a "Saudi Brezhnev doctrine."[25]

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announcement.html# (Access date: 20.12.2013).
[25] Abd al-Hadi Khalaf, *a.g.y.*; Sara Hamdan, "Gulf Council Reaches Out to Morocco and Jordan", *The New York Times*, May 25, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/26/world/middleeast/26iht-M26-GCC.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1&_(Access date: 20.12.2013).

Inviting Jordan and Morocco for membership in the GCC in 2011 was another Saudi grandiose decision taken in haste in view of the unfolding Arab Spring. Jordan, which had applied twice but rejected in the 1980s and 1990s despite having one of the best-trained military and intelligence units in the region, and Morocco are two pro-Western, Sunni monarchies with an interest in containing Iran. Nevertheless, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman fervently argued against this project. In 2013, talks turned into creating a "strategic partnership" with these states rather than an enlarged union, congruent with the dissonance among the members as regards this far-fetched broadening plan for the GCC.[26]

Although sharing similar concerns over the Iranian threat, Saudi Arabia has been critical of US policies backing the deposition of their common ally, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, yet remaining on the sidelines when unrest hit Bahrain. While many Gulf Arabs believe the US seeks a strong Iran as a counter-weight to them, this neither led to a rupture in US-GCC relations nor raised the reliability and prestige of Riyadh in the eyes of its fellow members to qualify it as the leader of a deeper and self-reliant union.[27]

Put in different words, Saudi Arabia is in fact a bone of contention among the GCC members, although there are also some unresolved bilateral issues precluding a deepening of the GCC. Bahrain is a close ally of Saudi Arabia, but there is still some residual tension with Qatar over past territorial disputes. Oman-Saudi Arabia relations have always been characterized with a low-level tension over past border disputes as well as Muscat's search for an enhanced role in the GCC. In the past, there were sour relations with the UAE over maritime boundaries. Qatar shares the same interpretation of Islam as Saudi Arabia and border disputes with both Saudi Arabia and Bahrain

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[26] Sara Hamdan, *a.g.y.*
[27] David Rosenberg, "GCC Union: An EU or a NATO or a Nothing?", **The Jerusalem Post**, May 15, 2012, http://www.jpost.com/Middle-East/GCC-Union-An-EU-or-a-NATO-or-a-Nothing (Access date: 15.12.2013).

seem to have resolved in 2001 despite the recent discussion of border revisions among Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Tensions also exist between Saudi Arabia, UAE and current Qatari ruler Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani on grounds that the Saudi Arabia and the UAE are supposed to have colluded with an aim to overthrow the Emir, who himself had overthrown his father in 1995. Qatar also resists Saudi efforts to dominate the GCC agenda. It further uses the *Al Jazeera* news network to increase its visibility and criticize other Gulf States. Allegations that Riyadh has opposed the natural gas pipelines linking Qatar, the UAE and Kuwait cast dark clouds on regional cooperation.[28]

As for the Iranian threat, there also exist different interpretations. While Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait and the UAE demand a strong countervailing policy to stem Iranian influence in the region, Qatar and Oman are prone to nurturing cordial relations with Tehran. Qatar has always been careful not to antagonize Iran, which shares common massive gas formations in the Gulf. The UAE have been divided in the past on the Iranian issue, with Dubai enjoying friendly relations with Iran as a key transshipment and training partner with this state. Contrarily, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah have long viewed Tehran as an adversary. Oman's unique demographics based on predominance of the Ibadhi sect that does not identify with other major Islamic sects facilitate relations with Tehran. It was also a key mediator in negotiations leading to an interim nuclear agreement with Iran in Geneva in November 2013.[29]

As for the **"high level of military integration"**, the GCC falls short of meeting the requirements for evolution from a loose to tight security community. Defense of regional dynasties was one of the most

[28] Anthony H. Cordesman and Robert M. Shelala II, *The Gulf Military Balance Volume III: The Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula*, CSIS U.S.-Iranian Competition Series, May 29, 2013, p. xi–xvi.
[29] Anthony H. Cordesman and Robert M. Shelala II, *a.g.y.*, p. xii–xvi; "Iran agrees to curb nuclear activity at Geneva talks", BBC News, November 23, 2013, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-25074729 (Access date: 15.12.2013).

significant factors in the creation of the GCC. Despite the creation of the nascent collective force named Peninsula Shield less than a year later, no Gulf ruler displayed any remarkable incentive to minimize or wholly eradicate the obstacles hindering deeper military coordination between states. These were namely the lack of demographic depth necessary for developing conventional and unconventional military power and strategy and of political will and popular legitimacy. Devoid of a central military leadership and a unified military doctrine, rare cases of GCC military cooperation occurred only when national militaries operated under US military command, as happened during the First Gulf War. Huge defense spending devoted to importing military equipment and services from the US, Britain and France do not reflect a collective brainstorming process, which take into account the joint security needs of the member countries. Due to mutual suspicions, purchasing deals are concluded bilaterally. These coordination weaknesses lead to corruption and piling up of huge stores of arms in the Gulf, some of which quickly fall into disuse. The fact that national armed forces in at least three Gulf countries require recruitment of soldiers particularly from Pakistan and Bangladesh further complicates coordination issues.[30]

The United States has a huge military presence in the Gulf.[31]

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[30] Abd al-Hadi Khalaf, *a.g.y.*

[31] Bahrain is the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet. Kuwait maintains close cooperation with the US with major basing and prepositioning facilities since 2002. Both have been considered as major non-NATO allies. Oman also offers the US contingency bases and prepositioning facilities. It further has close security ties to the UK. Qatar is the forward headquarters of the USCENTCOM and hosts the US Combined Air Operations Center (CAOC). Saudi Arabia has been a key security partner of the US since World War II, but it no longer provides basing facilities to the US. The country has strong US advisory teams for its military, National Guard, and internal security forces and has enjoyed gigantic numbers of arms transfers from the US. The UAE cooperates closely with the US in its military development and security affairs in the Gulf. Like Qatar, it is one of the two states now buying Terminal High Altitude (THAAD) missile defenses. See Anthony H. Cordesman and Robert M. Shelala II, *a.g.y.*, p. xi–xvi.

Besides, the US and the European powers do not treat the GCC as a regional bloc, rather concluding bilateral agreements with each GCC state. However, the US Missile Defense Agency is now encouraging the GCC states to build an integrated defensive system. GCC countries operate the F-15, F-16, F-18, Tornado, and Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft as their front line defensive systems and NATO's Libya campaign in 2011, in which the UAE and Qatari air forces performed a major role, is an exemplary case of successful joint operations and interoperability. The creation and unification of indigenous defense industries may be another significant building block for a GCC Union. Based on the inspiration offered by the UAE's Tawazun and Mubadala, other GCC states have initiated to create defense projects of their own such as Saudi Arabia's Taqnia.[32] One very nascent project is a unified military command of the GCC with 100,000 personnel including combat soldiers in view of regional tensions and the self-interested Western policies on the Middle East. However, it remains to be seen whether this initiative could materialize on account of the ideational and practical issues besetting military integration.[33]

In terms of **"free movements of populations"**, the GCC still has a long way to proceed. Uninhibited mobility for the Gulf nationals in terms of the right to entry, residence, and employment was inscribed as a long-term goal in the original GCC charter. At present, various policies inside the GCC borders that privilege regional citizens' increasing mobility simultaneously exist with those restricting movements of foreign peoples. Besides, various GCC policy documents and public statements often underscore the need to protect the cultural integrity of the Gulf, which is perceived as being

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[32] Theodore Karasik, "The Gulf Union: defense first", *Al Arabiya*, May 8, 2013. http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/news/middle-east/2013/05/08/The-Gulf-Union-defense-first.html (Access date: 10.12.2013).

[33] Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "100,000 combat troops to beef up GCC military force", *Arab News*, December 22, 2013, http://www.arabnews.com/news/496701 (Access date: 30.12.2013).

threatened by foreign workforce. Nevertheless, consecutive steps toward a supranational cooperative mechanism such as the development of common borders, common visas, and regularized documentation are still absent. While border controls have eased for regional citizens, the screening process has not transpired into cooperative arrangements.[34] Still, over 16 million GCC citizens reportedly travelled among the six Arab Gulf countries in 2012 as compared to 4.5 million in 1995. As the GCC Secretariat maintained, the facilitation of peoples' movement contributed to fostering of social bonds and was one of the major factors for the common Gulf market.[35]

On the path to **"internationalization of authority"**, creation of an informal system of rule or harmonization of domestic laws is seen only in passing. Although the GCC decisions are based on unanimity, informal processes of deliberation are not in place. Institutional norms are not comprehensive and do not deter members from acting on national interest.[36]

One compelling reason is that, there exist differences among the member states in terms of tribe, sect, demography, political culture and legal framework. Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the UAE are concerned about a loss of individual state identity and refer to differences among the social, political and legal systems of the countries. While Saudi Arabia has no elected parliament, Kuwait enjoys a high degree of political openness.[37] Kuwait's hesitance about taking part in the Saudi plan of Gulf Union is a case in point. The underlying logic was that,

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[34] Zahra R. Babar, *Free Mobility within the Gulf Cooperation Council*, 2011, Center for International and Regional Studies Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar Occasional Paper No. 8, p. 2–5, 12–17.

[35] "Over 16 mln GCC citizens travel among Gulf countries in 2012 report", *Kuwait News Agency*, December 6, 2012, http://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2348892&Language=en (Access date: 10.12.2013).

[36] Alex J. Bellamy, *a.g.e.*, p. 129–130.

[37] Andrew Hammond, "Analysis: Saudi Gulf union plan stumbles as wary leaders seek detail," May 17, 2012, http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/05/17/us-gulf-union-idUSBRE84G0WN20120517 (Access date: 02.12.2013).

Kuwait, with its open political system, could not go along with its more authoritarian peers in a tighter union. Nevertheless, Kuwait also did not see it improper to drop its reservations and sign the Gulf Security Agreement (proposed in 1994) at the GCC Summit in December 2012. This means that, in the face of the trickle-down effect of the Arab Spring as witnessed in growing public criticism against the Kuwaiti government, Kuwait showed its willingness to coordinate more on security. However, the Government gave assurances that Kuwait's reservations ended up in an amended version of the security agreement and that the revised version did not clash with the country's constitutional exceptionalism in the Gulf.[38]

As regards other sectors of divergence among member states, Kuwait stands apart from the rest for its currency is not pegged to the US dollar only. Oman had, from the beginning, opposed taking part in a single currency project. Generally speaking, collaboration on the path to harmonizing beyond-the-border regulations or facilitating the processes for the GCC investors' setting up business and investing in member states are relegated to secondary status. Most attention is devoted to the single currency project, disregarding the fact that monetary integration alone, if unaccompanied by fiscal integration and budgetary discipline would not amount to sustainable development.[39] As the World Bank concluded in 2013, development of local human capital, strengthening of the private sector and increase in intra-GCC trade are indispensable for successful integration. The Report argues that, progress in all these aspects is slow and intermittent.[40]

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[38] Wafa Alsayed. "Bridging the Gulf: where Kuwait stands on the GCC Union," *Al Arabiya News*, May 12, 2013, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/special-reports/bridging-the-gulf/2013/05/12/Bridging-the-Gulf-where-Kuwait-stands-on-the-GCC-Union.html (Access date: 05.12.2013).

[39] Hasan Tariq al Hasan, "Three fallacies surrounding Gulf union", February 4, 2013, http://www.opendemocracy.net/hasan-tariq-al-hasan/three-fallacies-surrounding-gulf-union (Access date: 06.12.2013).

[40] Andrew Hammond, *a.g.y.*; Naser al-Tamimi, "Bridging the Gulf: what is there to gain from a GCC Union?" Al Arabiya, May 5, 2013, http://english.alarabiya.net/en/

Lastly, creation of a **"multi-perspectival polity"**, where rule is shared at the national, transnational and supranational levels, falls victim to the notion of possessive sovereignty. The GCC sounds more like a case of national leadership cooperation. As detailed previously, members often act according to their own interpretations of what constitute as external or internal threats, military procurements are realized separately and on a bilateral basis with foreign powers or divergence of views on currency issues renders the monetary union a stalled project. One additional case relates to development of domestic workforce. Although there exist transnational procedures on the issue of non-national workers at social and political levels, nationalization policies as regards local employment and professional education like Saudization, Omanization etc. still reflect nation-specific actions.[41] Ironically, while the Saudi King has followed the example of the European Union to prepare his own version for the Gulf, he seems to forget that the EU framework comprises a parliament, whose members are directly elected by the peoples of the member states. Replicating this structure in the Gulf region would be a very onerous task.[42] In a similar vein, as Bahrain's main Shi'ite opposition party Al Wefaq brought to public attention, the Gulf governments should put the idea of the Gulf Union to a popular vote, just like the Europeans who voted on the union decisions.[43] However, this proposition may be too utopian for the Gulf at least for the present.

Conclusion

Being an example of regional integration among illiberal states, the Gulf Security Council still stands as a "loose" and "interstate" security community against the setting of Arab uprisings. While

special-reports/bridging-the-gulf/2013/05/05/Bridging-the-Gulf-what-is-there-to-gain-from-a-GCC-Union-.html (Access date: 02.12.2013).
[41] Zahra R. Babar, *a.g.y.*, p. 2–5, 12–17.
[42] Hasan Tariq al Hasan, *a.g.y.*
[43] Samira Said, "Gulf leaders to discuss EU-style union," *CNN*, May 13, 2012, http://edition.cnn.com/2012/05/13/world/meast/gulf-gcc-union/ (Access date: 06.12.2013).

dependable expectations of peaceful change among member states do exist, the same conclusion is not valid at the intrastate level as witnessed in the latest responses to calls for reform within the GCC. The acute reality of domestic violence to forestall the widening of the protests stands as a solid barricade against creating a transnational civic culture and carries the potential for cross-border mistrust and tension.

Although "Precipitating conditions" between 1979 and 1980 like the Iranian Revolution, the Iran-Iraq War or the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan set the stage for closer dialogue and cooperation, "Facilitating conditions" and "Necessary conditions" to upgrade this initiative have not been met. Although there exists a degree of regional awareness and basic consensus about what constitutes as us versus them, neither Saudi Arabia nor the United States is a core power to handle the burdens on the path toward becoming more integrated entity. Mutual identification and social learning are processes dominated by the political elites, and despite the creation of a common Gulf identity and narrative, this is not an overarching phenomenon, existing only simultaneously with domestic identities and narratives. Furthermore, non-state actors and intellectuals have only marginal roles in the deepening of Gulf integration owing to the political culture, which limits civic participation. Finally, despite the fact that an interstate war among the GCC members are highly unlikely, unresolved territorial issues, fear of intervention in domestic affairs by another member and mistrust about Riyadh's hegemonic aspirations cast a gloom over creation of a tight security community.

Put in different terms, the GCC has only concluded the Phase I (Nascent) and, to an extent, Phase II (Ascendant) of security communities. Just like what was observed in the aftermath of the two Gulf wars, the initial euphoria for and attempts at a deeper regional integration proved to be temporary in the background of the Arab Spring. Through analysis of political, economic and military policies at the national and transnational levels, it is concluded that the GCC is yet to become a tight security community given the dearth of consensus, trust, harmonized practices and functional joint institutions. Responses to Arab Spring did not involve policies creating a

transnational and participatory culture and identity through GCC-wide reforms. In pursuit of bolstering order inside and around the borders, the member states have agreed at the elite level only on several joint institutional measures like the Gulf Security Agreement or a new joint military command (whose performance remain to be seen), which do not bode well for the prospects for a tight security community.

Özet

Bölgesel entegrasyonlar, hem rasyonalist hem de eleştirel uluslararası ilişkiler teorilerinin çalışma konularındandır. Ancak Batı coğrafyası dışındaki bölgelerde gözlemlenen entegrasyona yönelik analizler görece azdır. Bu çerçevede, rasyonalist bir teori olan Liberalizm'in ortaya attığı "güvenlik toplulukları" kavramını geliştiren İnşacılık teorisi, eleştirel teoriler kapsamında bölgesel entegrasyon konusunda oldukça kapsamlı çalışmalara zemin teşkil etmiştir. Bölgesel entegrasyonu çıkarlara bağlı ve dönemsel olarak tanımlamanın ötesinde bölgesel farkındalık ile ilişkilendiren İnşacılık'a göre, uygun koşulların varlığında ve sosyal etkileşim ve öğrenme ile birlikte bölgesel bir algı, kimlik ve çıkar tanımının yapılmasıyla bölgesel devletlerin birbirleri ile savaş ihtimali ortadan kalkacak ve sürdürülebilir barış ortamı içerisinde bir güvenlik topluluğu tezahür edecektir.

Adler ve Barnett'in güvenlik topluluklarına yönelik kültleşmiş çalışmalarındaki kriterler üzerinden Arap Baharı sürecinde Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi'ni açıklamaya çalışan bu makale, Konsey'in hala gevşek bir entegrasyon örneği olduğunu savunmaktadır. Bölgesel bilinç ile "biz" ve "öteki"nin ne olduğu konusunda nüanslar dışında genel bir uzlaşı olmasına rağmen Suudi Arabistan veya Amerika Birleşik Devletleri gibi bir merkez devletin entegrasyonun derinleşmesine yönelik liderliği söz konusu değildir. Karşılıklı benimseme ve sosyal öğrenme hala siyasi elitlerin baskın rolleri çerçevesinde şekillenmekte ve ortak bir "Körfez" kimliği ve söyleminin yaratılmasına rağmen bunlar ulus-üstü bir nitelikte olmayıp, mevcut ulusal kimlik ve söylemlerle birlikte eş zamanlı var

olmaktadır. İlaveten, hükümet-dışı aktörlerin ve entelektüellerin Körfez entegrasyonunun derinleşmesinde ancak oldukça sınırlı rollerinden bahsedilebilir. Bu durum, Körfez'deki sivil katılımı engelleyen baskıcı siyasi kültürle yakından alakalıdır. Son olarak, Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi üyeleri arasında bir sıcak savaş büyük ölçüde imkân dışı görünse de, henüz tam olarak çözüme kavuşmamış toprak ve sınır meseleleri, bir diğer Körfez ülkesi tarafından içişlerine müdahale korkusu ve Riyad'ın hegemonik heveslerine yönelik güvensizlik, Konsey'in daha sıkı bir güvenlik topluluğuna evrilmesinde temel engellerdir.

Birinci ve İkinci Körfez savaşlarında olduğu gibi, Arap Baharı sürecinde de daha derin bir entegrasyona yönelik ilk heves ve çabalar geçici olmaktan öteye gidememiştir. Ulusal ve ulus-aşırı seviyelerde siyasi, ekonomik ve askeri politikaların analizi doğrultusunda, uzlaşı, güven, uyumlu politikalar ve işlevsel ortak kurumların yokluğunda Konsey'in sıkı güvenlik topluluğuna dönüşmesi için daha çok yol kat etmesi gerektiği söylenebilir. Arap Baharı'na yönelik tepkiler, tüm Körfez bölgesini kapsayan reformlar vasıtasıyla ulus-aşırı ve katılımcı bir kültür yaratılmasını amaçlayan politikalar içermemektedir. Konsey üyeleri, çoğunlukla sınırların içerisinde ve etrafında düzen ve istikrarı sağlamak adına elitler seviyesinde bazı ortak askeri kararlar almışlardır. Körfez Güvenlik Anlaşması ve yeni bir ortak askeri komutanlık kurulması gibi inisiyatifler, fikirsel, yapısal ve operasyonel açılardan entegrasyonu tıkayan faktörler dikkat alındığında, performansı henüz muğlâk oluşumlardır. Öte yandan bu durum, sıkı güvenlik toplulukları ile ilişkilendirilen istikrarlı barış ilkesinin hayata geçirilmesi konusunda hiç de iyi bir işaret değildir.

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