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SAKARYA UNIVERSITY
SOCIAL SCIENCES INSTITUTE

**THE RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKEY AND
THE COOPERATION COUNCIL FOR THE ARAB STATES
OF THE GULF: TOWARD A PARTNERSHIP**

MASTER'S THESIS

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Department: International Relations

Supervisor: Associate Prof. Tuncay KARDAŞ

JULY-2013

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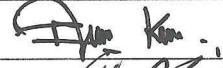

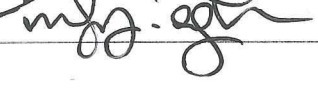
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"This thesis was unanimously/by a large of majority accepted at the date of 26/07/2013.by the following juries."

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DECLARATION

In this study, all commitments regarding the scientific ethical rules have been adopted. In case of using other sources, it was referred to these sources properly to the scientific norms. There was not any alteration made in the benefited references. And I state that no part of this thesis is presented either in Sakarya University or in another university.

Ahmet ÜÇAĞAÇ

10.07.2013

PREFACE

The subject of ‘The Evolution of the Relations between Turkey and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf’ is believed to be an important area to be investigated in order to understand the changed dynamics of the Middle East region for Turkey. The topic is also beneficial for those who want to know the dramatic evolution between Turkey and Arab World. I would like to state my appreciations to my professor, Associate Professor Tuncay KARDAŞ for his enduring support and contributions. Besides, I want to express my special thanks to my family and colleagues who have encouraged me in the process of my study. Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my all professors who contributed to this thesis study with their different point of views.

Ahmet ÜÇAĞAÇ

10.07.2013

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LIST OF ABRIDGMENTS

US	: United States
GCC	: Gulf Cooperation Council
AKP	: Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi
JDP	: Justice and Development Party
UK	: United Kingdom
NATO	: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OECE	: Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
OECD	: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
CENTO	: Central Treaty Organization
UNGA	: United Nations General Assembly
USSR	: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UAE	: United Arab Emirates
EU	: European Union
USA	: United States of America
EEC	: European Economic Cooperation
OAS	: Organisation of American States
OAU	: Organisation of African Union
EAC	: East African Community
ECOWAS	: Andean Pact and the Economic Community of West Africa States
LAFTA	: Latin American Free Trade Association
GIC	: Gulf Investment Cooperation
NGO	: Non Governmental Organization
PKK	: Kurdish Worker Party (Partiya Karkeran Kurdistan)
OIC	: Organization of the Islamic Conference
WMEI	: Wider Middle East Initiative
IAEA	: International Atomic Energy Agency
MOU	: Memorandum of Understanding
FTA	: Free Trade Agreement
ICI	: Istanbul Cooperation Initiative
IMF	: International Monetary Fund
V	: Volume
N	: Number

Title of the Thesis: The Relations Between Turkey and the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf: Toward a Partnership

Author: Ahmet ÜÇAĞAÇ

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The Middle East region, as it has been in every stage of history, continues to take an active role without depreciating in the current century. Mankind is by nature a political existence. For that reason, the history or humankind has witnessed various political alliances. The region called as the Middle East had witnessed many political alliances due to the fact that the area is the source of history, civilizations and politics. The fact that Turkey started to develop day by day and play a crucial role in world politics in 21st century leads to interrelations with close regions. In the last decade, in other words after Justice and Development Party came into power; Turkey has gained a great growth rate. However the new master of Turkish Foreign Policy Ahmet Davutoğlu who draw a vision for Turkish Foreign Policy believes that, convergence with the immediate surroundings will help in development and being one of the major players of world politics. As it is explained in this study the last decade has witnessed to a significant convergence between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council states. To examine the last ten years in the world politics one can see that: After the 9/11 attacks GCC states started to look for other safe destinations for their overflowed cashes. However Turkey as an emerging economy needed for foreign investments. These two factors are seen to be drawing force behind the convergence of these entities. In addition to that the threat perception of the GCC states associated from Iran forced them to look for a strategic regional partner. Although Turkey and the GCC do not have common stand towards Iran, their different interests brought them on the ground of convergence. Nevertheless, the new Turkish Foreign Policy perspective and the global conjuncture played a crucial role in convergence of these parties. To consider all, it seems that the bilateral relations will be carried further since both Turkey and the GCC are eager to establish partnership. It is expected that there will be a security partnership established between Turkey and the GCC. If such attempt comes true, definitely the bilateral relations will reside on a steady ground.

Key Words: Turkey, GCC, Middle East, Iran, Security, Economy

Tezin Başlığı: Son On (10) Yılda Türkiye-Körfez Arap Ülkelerinin İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkileri: İşbirliğine doğru

Tezin Yazarı: Ahmet ÜÇAĞAÇ
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Anabilim dalı: Uluslararası İlişkiler

Ortadoğu bölgesi tarihin her safhasında olduğu gibi içinde bulunduğumuz bu yüzyılda da geçmişte sahip olduğu değerden hiç bir şey kaybetmeden sahnenin tam ortasında rol oynamaya devam etmektedir. İnsanoğlu varoluşu nedeniyle siyasi bir varlıktır. Ortadoğu diye adlandırdığımız bölge tarihin, medeniyetlerin ve siyasetin ana kaynağı olması hasebiyle siyasi ittifaklara tarih boyunca sahne olmuş bir bölgedir. İçinde yaşadığımız 21. Yüzyılda ülkemizin giderek gelişip dünya siyasetinde aktif rol oynamaya başlaması tarihi bağları olan yakın coğrafyalara yönelmesini de beraberinde getirmiştir. Türkiye son 10 yılda yani Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisinin iktidara gelmesiyle çok büyük bir kalkınma ivmesi kazanmıştır. Ancak gelişme ve dünya siyasetinde rol oynama arzusunun yakın coğrafyaların kazanılmasıyla gerçekleşeceğine inanan Türk Dış Politikasının yeni mimarı Ahmet Davutoğlu, belirlemiş olduğu yeni yol haritasında bütün yakın komşularla sıfır sorun ortamı yaratıp ilişkilerin en üst seviyeye çıkarılmasını amaçlamıştır. Bu bağlamda, Türk Dış Politikası yeni vizyonu ile yakın coğrafyalarda yeni müttefikler arama yoluna girmiştir. Dünya siyasetine bakıldığında son 10 yılda meydana gelen gelişmelere dikkat çekilecek olursa; Türkiye'nin ekonomik kalkınmaya başlaması ve bol miktarda dış yatırımlara ihtiyaç duyması aynı zaman da Körfez Arap ülkelerinin kasalarını taşıran nakit fazlasının özellikle 11 eylül saldırılarından sonra yeni ve güvenli limanlar aramaya başlamış olması göze çarpmaktadır. Bu gelişmeler göz önünde bulundurulduğunda Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi'ne üye ülkeler ve Türkiye'nin yaklaşması çokta sürpriz olarak karlanmamalıdır. Zira her iki tarafında birbirine farklı nedenlerden dolayı ihtiyaç duyduğu açıkça farkedilebilmektedir. Bununla birlikte Körfez ülkelerinin bölgedeki güvenlik kaygıları bulunmakta ve Türkiye'ye yaklaşarak bunu kısmen aşmaya çalışmaktadırlar. Özellikle İran bu ülkeler tarafından büyük bir tehdit olarak görülmektedir. Bu noktada Türkiye ve Körfez ülkeri aynı kaygıları taşımaları da farklı çıkarlar onları ortak bir noktada buluşturmaktadır. Sonuç olarak son on yılda Türkiye ve Körfez ülkeri arasında büyük bir yakınlaşma olmuştur. Bu yakınlaşma çok büyük ortaklıkları beraberinde getirmiştir. Bu yakınlaşmayı etkileyen en önemli unsurlar da değişen Türk Dış Politikası ve küresel konjonktürün bu iki tarafı yakınlaşmaya zorlaması denilebilir. Çalışmada da belirtildiği gibi ilişkiler gelişmeye devam etmekte ve ileriki safhalarda ilişkilerin güvenlik ortaklıkları boyutuna taşınıp daha da kökleşeceği öngörülebilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Türkiye, KİK, Ortadoğu, İran, Güvenlik, Ekonomi

INTRODUCTION

The Middle East region is a radically changing area in the current decade. As a result of United States' (U.S.) direct interference to Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq by the U.S., the Middle Eastern states started to change their political directions, transform their selves socially, politically and economically. Challenges for reform and renewal have reached an incomparable level. In fact, Middle Eastern societies have always had the desire for better conditions, and hope for good governance, democracy and human rights in their countries.¹

In that respect, the Arab Gulf region which is consist of six oil rich Arab states, cannot be independent from the problems of the greater Middle East. This region is also a participant in these critical developments. As a result of this conflictual environment every country wants to set up strong partnerships with stable and powerful states. For this reason, the stable and militarily strong Turkey started to grow up dramatically. Today, Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) relations are very positive. Relation between these two entities is seen to be more positive and to be constructed on a strong ground. To consider the problems these states are facing in a close neighbourhood, the constutive nature of these bilateral relations is encouraging. Although there is a physical distance and variable foreign policy orientations, it might be an over statement to describe the circumstance as one of close relationships and mutually satisfying trade.²

On the other hand, it has been witnessed in recent period that there is also a considerable development in both political and economic relations between the member states of GCC and Turkey. It is significant that the participation of these countries in the regional and international diplomatic activities and meetings has been gradually increasing. By doing that both sides purposes to mention regional and international conflicts. The conflict capable environment in different parts of the Middle East is providing arguments for greater roles for the stable countries of the region. Even though there are a number of regional and international contentions, the study focuses on the developments in positive relations between Turkey and the GCC at the beginning

¹ Muhittin Ataman ve Gülşah Neslihan Demir, "Körfez Ülkelerinin Ortadoğu Politikası ve Arap Baharına Bakışları", **Seta Analiz**, Sayı: 52/ Ekim 2012, p. 1-34.

² Nermina Biberovic, "Turkey and the GCC States: A New Era of Bilateral Economic Relations", **Gulf Monitor**, Issue No: 11, October 2008, p.15-25.

of the current decade in which Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) came to power in Turkey. Together with the coming of Justice and Development Party (JDP) to power Turkey's foreign policy started to change radically.³ The cooperation between Turkey and GCC states has improved as a response to global terrorist threats, the question of Iran and the Iraq question.⁴ Turkey's new foreign policy perspective seized a neighbourhood policy that would minimize its problems with bordering states which is named as zero problem policy. This policy also aims to go beyond the close neighbourhood and, specifically, establish economic connections in an amount of relatively close geographies. In this respect the Gulf region is very important for Turkey since the GCC figurates a feasible set of countries in which Turkey has significant columns. The 2003 Iraq War and the 9/11 Middle East based attacks on United States' twin towers generated a constructive environment in which to establish further connections. The Middle East region is promising relations coming up between Turkey and the GCC now.⁵

The growing desire of Turkey to cooperate with the GCC and Turkey's increased soft power (civil power) image is marketable and really welcomed by the GCC. There is no doubt that the active peace making role of Turkey in the Middle East is seen to serve strongly for the interests of the GCC, too. The GCC aims to build a security regime in the Gulf region.⁶ Moreover, this security regime will produce positive results for all entities. As a result, Turkey is seen to be one of the main regional countries which are going to get benefit of a conflict free peaceful environment. Turkey wants a secured and safe environment to mobilize her soft power and economic policies. Areas of business and trade relations, between Turkey and the GCC, will maintain constructive relations which are likely to expand faster than the relations in the political arena. Peace and security in the Middle East begin from the internal system in the states and require an interdependent security approaches and practices along with the region.⁷ The growing

³ Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationships", **Middle East Policy**, Volume, XII, No. 4, Winter 2005, p. 89-97.

⁴ Gawdat Bahga, "Security in the Persian Gulf: Perils and Opportunities", **Contemporary Security Policy**, Volume 29, Issue 2, 2008, 303-321.

⁵ Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Turkey-Gulf Cooperation Council Relations", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Haziran 2009, Cilt 1 - Sayı 6, p.77-81.

⁶ Joseph Kostiner, "The GCC States and the Security Challenges of the Twenty-First Century," **The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies**, September 2010, p.12-51.

⁷ Aliye Pekin Çelik and Laura Elizabeth Çelik, "Turkey: Current and Future Political, Economic and Security Trends", **Canadian Defence & Foreign Affairs Institute**, June 2012, p. 1-11.

relations between Turkey and the GCC in the last decade can be shown as good samples in this aspect.

The traditional and historical solution to the security problem in the Persian or Arabian Gulf, that is, the presence of military protection of a super-power, like United Kingdom (UK) and after UK the U.S. protection. However, that system is not seen to go on longer as the unipolar world gives way to a multipolar one in the last decade. For that reason, the credibility of one superpower, mainly the United States, to provide security has been widely questioned by the elites of the Arab Gulf people.⁸ Related to the issue, the current paper appeals to a question which is ignored by both international and regional political experts. The present study will also answer that if Turkey can play any role in the future of Gulf security building. The paper examines that Turkey can help and contribute to the GCC states to establish effective state institutions and build regional institutional mechanisms to solve potential crises and diminish the security dilemma in the Gulf region.

As a result of high oil prices, investment portfolios of the Gulf Arab countries have increased rapidly. At the same time, growing regional geopolitical security concerns and global geostrategic issues recommend that these countries (GCC member states) are seen to continue to have eyes on Turkey as a good investment chance for their overflowed cash boxes.⁹ Turkey also considers such relationships and wider participation in the politics of the Arab Middle East is a kind of benefit for her national, economic and security interest. Furthermore, these processes remark that such investments can bring the parties to closer political and security relations and can also bring the parties about a turn back not only to the Ottoman paradigm but also to a wholly new page of affairs between the GCC and Turkey.¹⁰

Another major factor is that the exceedingly increased amount of capital present to the GCC states with the increase in oil prices. The oil prices increased especially in 2005 and in the beginning of 2006 when oil prices became \$70 per barrel, before it declined

⁸ Kenneth M. Pollack, "Security in the Persian Gulf: New Frameworks For the Twenty First Century", **Memo**, Number 24, June 2012, p.1-15.

⁹ For more on these statistics, <http://www.invest.gov.tr/enUS/investmentguide/investorguide/pages/FDIinTurkey.aspx>.

¹⁰ Robert Olson, "Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007," **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Volume 19, Number 3, Summer 2008, p. 68-87.

in late 2006. In late 2007, oil prices almost reached \$100 per barrel before partially declined by the end of the same year. Only in 2006, it was estimated that the GCC countries had oil incomes more than \$400 billion. In 2007, the oil incomes were expected to climb to \$500 billion. For that reason the GCC countries started to look for different markets other than the United States or Europe.¹¹ From this aspect Turkey was a good choice with population of 75 million people which includes a dynamic and quite well educated young population. In addition, the country's annual growth rates increased from 5 to 6 per cent in the last decade.

To consider all these reasons mentioned above, Turkey is an attractive country to invest in. The other option that makes Turkey appealing for the GCC states is the Turkish construction companies, which have a perfect, worldwide fame of building good, firm and sort of cheap buildings. Turkey was an obvious choice for GCC investments.

The Importance and the Aim of the Study

The main aim of this study is to investigate whether there is an evolution in the relations of Turkey and the Gulf Arab states in last decade. The study also aims to demonstrate the main factors which affected the evolution of Turkey-Gulf states relations if such relations exist. The study tries to demonstrate the regional and global elements which played role in the evolution of relations between these parties. Another major aim of this study is to show the reasons which draw both Turkey and Gulf states to rapprochement.

The Topic of the Study

The main topic of this study is to show the evolution of the relations between Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council member states. To understand the topic of this study one should know about the world view of the Turkey's governing party. This study tries to indicate the new Turkish Foreign Policy vision and its effects on the convergence as well. In addition to that, in this study it can be seen that there is a new emerging strategic partnership in the Middle East region.

The Methods of the Study

¹¹ Sean Foley, *The Gulf Arab states: Beyond the Oil and Islam*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010, p. 81.

What can be said for this study is that; to put the study on a trusted ground the author has tried to diversify the sources and opinions which were benefited for the study. First of all, it is aimed to give basic information on Turkish-Arab relations. Therefore, the study starts with a general overview of the Turkish-Arab relations and their historic connections. In addition to that, it has been benefited from many different perspectives of different analysts and academics. Then, the new Turkish foreign policy perspective and its effect on the emerging relations between Turkey and Gulf States were examined. Finally, it is tried to testify if there is a fundamental change in Turkey- Gulf Cooperation Council member states relations and if so what has affected this fundamental change of relations.

CHAPTER 1: GENERAL OVERVIEW OF TURKISH-GULF ARAB RELATIONS

The Arabs and Turks had lived together for centuries in an understanding of full cooperation, and coherence. The contact between the Arabs and Turks was greater than any influence on each other's lives. As a matter of fact, two societies have shared common values, culture, traditions and religion. Although this special relationship was interwoven by history and geography, it has been put to test by the changes in regime and leadership of both entities for many times. It has always continued as a firm foundation even if one side has stand shunner from the other side in different periods. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the leaders in certain Arab lands which are located in the Asian part of the Ottoman Empire cooperated with the Western powers, mainly France and United Kingdom, with the promise of being independent from the Turkish rule. During the World War I, these Arab leaders fought against the Ottoman Sultan. At the end of the war, all Arab people who were part of these lands had to take up with the mandatory rule of the Western powers. Therefore, Arab people who fought against the Ottoman Empire lived for a quite long period under the mandatory of the Western powers before they finally achieved their independencies.¹²

After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, direct contacts between the newly founded Turkish Republic and the Arab World were of small importance for several different reasons. One of these reasons is that Turkish people had fought against the Western colonial powers for many years in a heavy cost in order to sustain their special ties of partnership with the Arab World. When this feeling of special relation was not reciprocated by other Arabs, this attitude created a sense of disintegration and infelicity on the part of the Turkish people, and the effects of these events continued for several decades. Many generations in Turkish society were affected by this event. The second reason is that up until to the time of World War II, there were only four Arab countries which are Saudi Arabia (1926), Iraq (1932), North Yemen (1934) and Egypt (1936) had gained their independencies.¹³ As for the rest, Western colonial powers, United Kingdom and France, were acting on their behalf in foreign affairs. As a result, there was no strongly existed Arabic country which Turkey could set up independent

¹² Haytham Al-Kilani, "Turkey and the Arabs", Abu Dabi, **UAE Strategic Research Center**, 1996, V. 12.

¹³ Vladimir Borisovich Lutsky, "Modern History of the Arab Countries", **Moscow for the USSR Academy of Sciences, Institute of the Peoples of Asia**, 1969.

relations with. The third one is the factor of the secularism.¹⁴ The secularism had been adopted in Turkish constitution not only as a political understanding of the state but also it has been imposed as a rule of life for individuals in almost every step of life. Thus, Arab people misunderstood Turkish society and the life style of Turks. The Arab World had the impression that the Turkish people under the new leadership of the country wanted to pull away from this world, referring to Arab World.¹⁵

After the Second World War, the period of 1945-1960, three more Arab countries, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon, emerged in the Arab World after they obtained their independence from Western colonial powers.¹⁶ In these years, the relations between Arab World and Turkey started to be soft after two decades. Both parties started to forget the past and search for new formulas in order to come closer. The shyness between the two parties had disappeared. The relations at that period could be explained as warm and friendly but it had not had a serious importance yet.¹⁷

On the contrary, some developments which took place in the second half of the 1940s were forced to bring about a reorientation in Turkey's foreign policy. Soviet Union's territorial claims on Turkey and its offer for a joint control of the Straits in 1945 made Turkey feel herself alone and weak. Turkey refused both proposals but the feeling of being weak and surrounded by the powerful neighbour forced Turkey to feel herself under a great threat. Afterwards, Turkey started to intensify her relations with the Western World in order to counter balance the Soviet threat.¹⁸ However, Turkey had already turned her face to the Western World to modernize its society both in physical appearance and mentality as well as its institutions. The first indication of this negotiation between Turkey and the Western World was the signing of the mutual assistance agreement with the U.S. Government, in July 1947 which had just declared

¹⁴ Şerif Mardin, "Religion and Secularism in Turkey", **Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State**, ed. Ali Kazancigil and Ergun Özbudun, 1981, p. 191 – 212.

¹⁵ Bernard Lewis, "The Emergence of Modern Turkey 277 (2d ed. 1968); G.L. Lewis, Atatürk's Language Reform as an Aspect of Modernization in the Republic of Turkey", in **Atatürk and the Modernisation of Turkey**, supra note 61, at 195 (supporting the alphabet reform); Karpas, supra note 57, at 535.

¹⁶ William L. Cleveland, "Modern Ortadoğu Tarihi", Colarado, Westwiew Press, 2004, p. 242-265.

¹⁷ Ömer E. Kürkçüoğlu, "An Analysis of Turkish-Arab Relations", **The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations**, Institute of International Relations, Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Ankara, Ankara, 1969, p.10-132.

¹⁸ Fahir Armaoğlu, "İkinci Dünya Harbi'nde Türkiye", **Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi**, C. 13, S. 2, Haziran 1958, s. 165.

the Truman Doctrine.¹⁹ Turkey applied for membership in NATO and it was accepted to this security organization in the NATO's Ottawa meeting together with Greece.²⁰ Turkey asserted the Czechoslovak drama and the Berlin Blockade as new evidences of Soviet intentions and political objectives. Furthermore, as part of her overall policy of arrangement, Turkey has also become a member of the other European political and economic organizations such as the Council of Europe and OECE (the present name is OECD).²¹

At the same time with the events mentioned above, there were other significant developments taking place in the Middle East which is the near abroad of Turkey. In these years, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a resolution which proposed the partition of Palestine between the Arab and Jewish people. Thereafter, the United Kingdom withdrew its forces from this region which put an end to the mandate given to her over Palestine since the 1917.²² Thus, the State of Israel established in Palestine on May 14, 1948.

The foundation of Israel state was accepted as a job of Western powers by the Arab World. This event was the beginning of a steady deterioration in relations between Arab countries and Western powers. As a reaction to this event, nationalist inclinations gained momentum in the Arab World. This became the starting of a parallel evolvement in relations between Turkey and the Arab countries as well. At this period, Turkey had voted against the U.N. General Assembly Resolution which was proposing for the partition of Palestine. This attitude of Turkey had really pleased all the Arab countries at that time. On the other hand, Turkey had already engaged in a policy of accommodation with the Western World and took specific steps as regards the conflict between Arabs and Jews which were not welcomed at all by Arab countries. First of all, Turkey accepted to serve together with the United Kingdom and France in the Palestine Ceasefire Commission, while the Arab countries were substantially opposed to the creation such commission. A few months later, Turkey recognized the independent

¹⁹ **Cumhuriyet**, 13 Temmuz 1947, s. 1; Antlaşmanın metni için bkz. Fahir Armaoglu, *Belgelerle Türk Amerikan ilişkileri*, s. 162-165; *Düstur*, III. Tertip, Cilt 28, s. 1485-1488.

²⁰ Armağan Kuloğlu, "Nato and Turkey: 60 Years of Coalition", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Cilt 1 - Sayı 4, Nisan 2009, p. 52-65.

²¹ Walter Schwimmer, "The Future Path of Turkey Within the Council of Europe", **Journal of International Affairs**, Volume VI - Number 2, June - July 2001, <http://sam.gov.tr/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Walter-Schwimmer.pdf> Accessed: 20 May 2013.

²² Doreen Ingrams, **Palestine Papers, 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict**, George Braziller, 1973, p. 98-103.

State of Israel. The recognition of Israel by Turkey had over shadowing effect on Turkey's relations with these countries. Turkey's decision was regretted by some Arab countries, when it met with reaction by others in the Arab World. It also created a thoroughly frustration. As a result of the fact, Turkey which was the leader of this world for centuries was now the first Muslim country which privileged recognition to Israel.²³

Furthermore, as it is mentioned above, Turkey was trying to reinforce her relations with Western powers, which Arab countries were approving responsible for the establishment of Jewish State of Israel. Therefore, this decision of Turkey was acknowledged by Arab countries as a direct result of the reconciliation of Turkey with the Western World, which was not necessarily the case. Turkey was profounded by the Arab World to be in conspiracy with the Western powers in connection with certain developments which took place in the region in the following years. All these events caused to a crisis of confidence step by step between the two entities at the level of government despite the stances of friendship and brotherhood at the level of people and it could be said that these crises of confidence have remained more or less like before.²⁴

As it is pointed out, Turkey approached the Western World in a reaction to the Soviet threat. During the Cold War which arrived to the mid-1960s, Turkey's main concern was to ensure her security and to stand with any threat from her neighbour in the North whose influence was steadily increasing in the south of Turkey. Actually this threat was the Soviet Union for Turkey.²⁵

In consideration of that, the Arab countries probably were not in a position to interpret these security concerns of Turkey which was altogether motivated, mainly for two reasons: The first reason was that Arabs could not feel the Soviet threat as much as Turkey felt. Because of her geographic and strategic position, Turkey felt the external threat more than other Arab countries. As a result, Turkey needed a security umbrella which was provided by the Western powers, mainly the U.S. The second one was that, unlike Turkey, Arab countries were eager to establish good relations with the Soviet

²³ Dietrich Jung, "Turkey and the Arab World: Historical Narratives and New Political Realities" **Mediterranean Politics**, Vol.10 (1), 2005, p. 1-17.

²⁴ Ibid, p.1-15.

²⁵ Oral Sander, **Siyasi Tarih: 1918-1994**, İmge Yayınları, Ankara, 2007, p. 64-75.

Union in order to counter balance American influence in the Middle Eastern Region and her support for Israel as well.²⁶

Another significant point in Turkish and Arab relations was the establishment of Baghdad Pact. The pact was signed on February 24, 1955 between Turkey and Iraq. The pact was open to the Arab countries. President of Egypt Nasser was the most charismatic and strong leader in the Arab World. Therefore, at that time Nasser stigmatized the pact as an “imperialist” toy which would according to him assist Western powers to develop their aims in the region.²⁷ The attitude of other Arab countries was affected by this strong reaction against the pact. Infact, only Iraq was a member of the pact as an Arabic country. However, Iraq withdrew from the pact after the 1958 revolution. In spite of all efforts to attract Arabs into the pact, none of the other Arab countries joined to the pact. So that, the role of Turkey as the co-founder of the pact (named CENTO Central Treaty Organization after the withdrawal of Iraq) composed another reason which caused a deterioration between Turkey and the Arab World.

The Turkish stand interrelatedly the 1956 Suez crisis, which started with the nationalization of the Suez Canal as a reaction to the U.S. decision to restrict the financing of the Aswan Dam project and caused a war between Egypt and Israel. Hence, the intervention of France and the United Kingdom was another sign that Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East as part of her exact policy was thoroughly imposed by her national security considerations. Turkey’s attitude could have been different in cases when these considerations were not on the priority.²⁸

This was not an issue in the eyes of Turkey that could directly put its security in a danger. Actually at the beginning, Turkey followed middle of the road policy but after the Israel attack against Egypt, Turkey extravagated as to condemn Israel attack against Egypt. Turkey also requested the withdrawal of the U.K. and French forces, together with the other three regional allies of the pact in their Tehran Declaration. As a further

²⁶ Jesse Ferris, “Soviet Support for Egypt’s Intervention in Yemen, 1962-63”, *Journal of Cold War Studies*, V. 10, N. 4, 2008, p. 5-36.

²⁷ Stephen Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1987, p.59. and Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab Politics*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1998, p. 109.

²⁸ Michael Barnett, *Dialogues in Arab politics*, p. 109-111, 114-115, 117.

step in its reaction to the Israeli attack, Turkey withdrew its Ambassador from Tel Aviv.²⁹

However, Turkey has always been careful on this issue. The Turkish foreign policy in the 1960s has been different than the foreign policy that in the 1950s. The 1960 coup d'état opened many new pages and brought a change in Turkey in many respects. First of all, the new constitution which was adopted after that coup was more liberal with respect to the freedoms and the rights of the civil. After the coup the economic policies of the country took a new route. Turkish economy started to be planned. For example, the Turkish media as an instrument of public opinion enjoyed great freedom to discuss important questions of domestic policies. Through the coup, a new period of looking over, reflection and rearrangement was begun. It was only natural that this change should have its impacts on matters of foreign policy. Even so, this review of foreign policy matters was expected to take place much later, most probably after than in all the other fields, because Turkish public opinion's general interest in these matters was so limited. For that account, as far as foreign policy issues are concerned, the first half of the 1960s can be explained as a transitional period.³⁰ The beginning of the Cyprus conflict and the alternating events, including the famous Johnson letter incident, accelerated this process of review in foreign policy problems with the several results. These results are:

I) Resulting from her past foreign policy, Turkey was being pushed into a diplomatic isolation, as it was reflected in the United Nations General Assembly's (U.N.G.A.) voting on the Cyprus issue in 1965. Indeed, during the voting in the U.N.G.A., NATO countries took an "impartial" position between Turkey and Greece. However, the Greek Archbishop Makarios, who was well known to be an influential figure in the non-aligned group, succeeded to get the support of a great majority within this group.

II) It became definite that the Cyprus issue could hardly be located in a manner satisfactory to Turkey against the opposition of the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), from whom Makarios was enjoying full support. Therefore, the Russian attitude had to be softened.

²⁹ Elie Kedourie, **Politics in the Middle East**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 318-319.

³⁰ George S. Harris, "The Causes of the 1960 Revolution in Turkey", **The Middle East Journal**, Vol. 24 (4), Autumn 1970, p. 454.

III) Although it was perhaps too early to talk about a detente, the Cold War was losing ground. Actually, following the Cuban crisis, the two superpowers the U.S. and the USSR accepted that it was necessary to avoid a nuclear disaster and instead put to use in a peaceful rivalry.

IV) As result of the letter from U.S. President Johnson to Turkish Prime Minister Inonu, Turkish public reminded that even a close ally could not always be depended on, especially if that ally supposed to have worldwide responsibilities. It would have been wrong to believe that this ally would always act as Turkey expect. It would also be wrong that this ally would always be in a position to act, as Turkey wished her to do and that the objectives of their foreign policies would necessarily be the same in every issue. Under these circumstances, Turkey felt that, as a foreign policy aim, it is necessary of diversifying her foreign affairs. To do that Turkey believed that it should diversify its ties without changing the main orientation of her foreign policy.³¹

After that Turkey began to promote good relations with Arab countries. This aim required a look into foreign policy issues from a much broader aspect, in fact from different aspects, and as a second step, an analysis should be done before a decision or position was taken in each case. For this reason, when the 1967 War (six days war) broke out between Israel and the Arab countries, a development in the Turkish-Arab relations was already in the phase of making. During the war and after the war, Turkey showed solidarity with Arab countries. It made a stance with Arab countries. It is claimed that Turkish Foreign Minister of that period gave an assurance to the Arab countries that during the war Turkish government would not allow the usage of the defence bases under joint control against Arab countries. At the end of the war, Turkish Foreign Minister made the statement that Turkey was opposed to the gaining of territory or the gain of political advantages by the use of force.

In the following years, Turkey continued to give political support to the Arab cause; at the same time she tried to support a close cooperation with Arab countries in many fields. With this aim, mutual visits took place at all levels. Exchanges of goods and contacts between Turkish and Arab people increased. During the October War in 1973,

³¹ Halil Fikret Alasya, **Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti Tarihi**, Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1987, s. 114.

Turkey again gave full diplomatic support to the Arab countries and provided them with certain aid. She also offered to Syria the port facilities on the southern coast of Turkey where material sent for Syria from the third countries was unloaded for improved transportation.³² Therefore, all these changes brought the parties closer to each other.

1.1. The Main Principles of the Bilateral Relations

The principles of Turkish foreign policy towards the Arab countries can be summarized as follows:

I) Giving political support to the Arab warrant. Turkey has on several opportunities repeated that she was against territorial gains or political advantages gotten by the use of force and against any policy of *fait accompli* as well. As a result, she has always supported the idea which refers to the withdrawal of Israel forces from all the occupied territories that belong to Arabs. Furthermore, Turkey continues to reject any change in the status of Jerusalem and Israel practices in this city aiming at such a change.

II) Considering that Turkish foreign policy in general, and her relations with the West in various fields which were military, economic and political areas in particular, do not create a negative effect on the Arab countries interests. In previous times, many Arab countries have accepted Turkey's membership to NATO with confused feelings. At that time, Arabs believed that the U.S. Government could use Turkey against Arab interests without even getting advice of Turkey especially during the war time. As a reality, when some American soldiers deployed at Incirlik Base during the Lebanese crisis in 1958 Arabs had the same concerns.³³ For this reason, Turkey assured her Arab friends that these bases would in no way be used against them during the 1973 War. Another reason which can be explained in the same context is that Turkey in 1970s became a member of Energy Agency which was created within the OECD. Turkey decided to become a party to the Agency after testing Arab countries reactions. She also gave assurances that she was against any crisis between oil producers Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf States

³² Philip Robins, **Turkey and the Middle East**, London: Chatham House Papers, 1991, p. 78.

³³ Michael Adams, "A Little Trip?", **The Spectator**, London, 6 June 1958, p. 721, quoted in M. H. S. Mustafa, "The United States and Lebanon Before and During the Crisis of 1958", PhD. diss. Duke University, 1976, p. 126.

and consumers which were the Western powers. Turkey also declared that she would do her best to oppose any development or proposal which tends to harm Arab interests.³⁴

III) Developing, as a policy aim, close cooperation with all Arab countries in economic, technical, commercial, and other fields of mutual benefits. Turkey also reduced her relations with Israel in order to take Arabs on her side.

In addition, Turkey's relations with the countries situated in the Gulf region (Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Oman) have so far received little attention. The reasons for that are the administrative difficulties. One cannot explain that as these relations did not receive great attention because of the lack of interests. Because until Turkey has not got resident embassies in any of these Gulf Arab Countries. At this time almost all Arab countries appreciated the solid Turkish position and her support to the Arab warrant which is the withdrawal of Israel forces from all the occupied territories and the recognition of the national rights of the Palestinians. Turkey's orientation towards the Middle East in these years got the sympathy of the Arabs. However, most Arab countries have either endorsed or met with understanding the peace operations undertaken by Turkey in Cyprus. Many Arab countries went even further by providing material aid to Turkey in that period. The attitude of the Arab countries in the U.N. General Assembly was in general satisfactory. In fact, some of the Arab countries have not only supported Turkish Cypriot and Turkish views but also worked hard to counter these manoeuvres of Makarios and to win over some African members or at least to soften their stand in favour of Turkey.³⁵

1.2. Historic Evolution of Turkish-Arab Relations

After the First World War Ottoman Empire which includes the Arab lands in, collapsed and new nation states were formed on the territories that Ottoman Empire had controlled for almost four centuries. One of these nation states and perhaps the most important one was the newly founded Republic of Turkey. The founder of the Turkish Republic Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in October 1927 made a historical speech to the nation. Turkish President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk reported a very important historic

³⁴ Anoushiravan Ehteshami and Süleyman Elik, "Turkey's Growing Relations with Iran and Arab Middle East", *Turkish Studies*, Volume 12, Issue 4, 2011, p. 643-662.

³⁵ Ayhan Kamel, "Turkey's Relations with the Arab World", *Foreign Policy*, issue: 1 / 2009, p. 91-105.

speech in which he explained why Turkish people had to leave the Ottoman Empire and appropriate his newly founded nation state. Atatürk stressed the high cost and uselessness of seeking an empire length ending beyond Turkish populated territories. In his historical speech Mustafa Kemal Atatürk asked to the audiences the question below;

Do you know how many Anatolian young men have died in the boiling sands of Yemen or other Arabian lands? Following that question Atatürk promised that Turkish young people would no longer die in wars in Yemen or the Arabian Peninsula in the future. At that time Arabian Peninsula was a region of the world which had become synonymous with the stature of the Turkish Ottoman soldier in Turkish folklore and popular songs. The mentioned advices of Atatürk were widely accepted by the Atatürk's successors and became the main source of Turkish foreign policy. After the death of Atatürk in 1938, Atatürk's successors tightly adhered to their leader's remarks and put a priority on Turkey's relations with the Western World mainly United States and Western Europe over Turkey's connections to Arabian states along with the Cold War.³⁶

On the other hand, many Arab intellectuals emphasized that Arabs has suffered under the Ottoman rule almost for four centuries and from their struggles against Turks in order to gain their independencies. During a celebration in Mecca the Islamic holy city of Saudi Arabia in 1931, the then King of Saudi Arabia, Ibni Saud, indicated his hand at an Ottoman Sultan and told that how his ancestors had fought these Sultans in preference to describe themselves as servants of the Ottoman Turkish Caliphate.³⁷ In the following decades Saudi school textbooks praised their free kingdom as the great light that had enlightener the way of freedom and independency for the Arab world from European imperialism and the slavery of Turkish Ottoman rule.³⁸

Another major event in the relations between Turkey and the Arab world is the declaration of Turkey as Persona Non Grata in the Arab world by the Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser in 1954 when Turkish ruling elites opposed Algerian

³⁶ Sean Foley, "Yemen: A Beginners Guide to the Perils of Intervention", **Enduring America**, February 2, 2010, (<http://enduringamerica.com/2010/02/02/yemen-a-beginners-guide-to-the-perils-of-intervention/> Accessed: 14 April 2013).

³⁷ "The Address of the King to the Royal Banquet", **Um al-Qura**, May 10, 1931, p. 6.

³⁸ Foley, "The Arab Gulf States: Beyond Oil and Islam", p. 41.

independence and backed France in the United Nations forum.³⁹ In the not too distant past, in 2002, Turkey and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia blamed each other of perpetrating cultural massacres after that Turkey criticized Riyadh for putting away of a historic Ottoman Turkish citadel in the holy Mecca to make way for a new Saudi projects.⁴⁰

However, few years later, a series of events started a rapid development in relations between Turkey and the Arab world, particularly in the relations between Turkey and the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states which include Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The developing relations between Turkey and GCC states have not only emerging in bilateral trade and investment, but also Turkey and GCC governments have consolidated their attitudes toward many crises and foreign policy challenges in the Middle East region. When Saudi King Abdallah ibni Abdulaziz al Suud made his milestone visit to Turkey in 2006, his delegates who came with him told to their Turkish counterparts in Turkish language that they had come to their “second homeland.”⁴¹ Thus, this step shows the fundamental change in the point of views of the parties toward each other.

After the visit of the Saudi king, other Gulf leaders have paid visits to Turkey, and Turkish leaders also extensively expressed their frank words when they visited the Gulf Sheikhdoms. During a trip by Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan to Riyadh the capital of Saudi Arabia in January 2010, the Prime Minister stressed that Turkish cooperation with Saudi Arabia was just as important as Turkey’s desire to join the European Union.⁴² These words of Erdogan were definitely mean so much for newly structuring Turkish-Arab relations.

This section of the current study aims to examine why Turkey’s relations have developed so instantly with the GCC member states within the last decade after the JDP

³⁹ Nicole Pope and Hugh Pope, “Turkey Unveiled: a History of Modern Turkey”, Woodstock NY: **The Overlook Press**, 1998, p. 223-27.

⁴⁰ Graham E. Fuller, “The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World”, Washington DC, **United States Institute of Peace**, 2008, p. 125.

⁴¹ Robert Olson, “Turkey’s Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007: New Paradigms?”, **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol. 19, No. 3, Summer 2008, p. 68-87.

⁴² Hugh Pope, “Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints”, **Crisis Group Europe Report**, No. 203, April 7, 2010, p. 7.

* It should be noted that Turkish foreign policy makers aimed to increase their influence not only in the regions immediately around Turkey but also in Africa, Latin America, and East Asia. The Foreign Economic Relations Board (DEIK) plays a key role in this process.

seized the power in Turkey. It is seen that new emerging relationship represents the clustering of four policy drivers.

The first element of these policies is the refusal of Turkish parliament to allow United States to bypass Turkish territory in 2003 to occupy Iraq which is a gulf state. This historic decision of Turkey encouraged Gulf Arabs to reset their views toward Turkey for the first time in the last decades and Gulf Arabs allowed new Turkish leaders to state appearance of Turkish nation's foreign policy that had been left in the shade for a long time by Turkey's Western friends.

The second element is the desire of Ankara to adopt new policies that aims at promoting Turkey's economy to enlarge rapidly. Although Turkey's most important strategic partner, the U.S., was not happy with Ankara's new policies, Turkey seized the control of the country's southeast border. It also attempted to resolve political crises in the Middle East even if that meant substantial risks for Turkey's relations with her traditional strategic partner, the United States.*

Another major factor is the fundamental change in the Gulf Arab perspectives toward world politics. The twin economic and political shocks which are the collapse of the oil market and the instability that became dominant on the region after the invasion of Iraq by the United States and her western allies made the Gulf Arabs to face that kind of difficulties in the late of 1990s and at the beginning of twenty first century. For that reason, Gulf Arabs found themselves in a situation that forced them to create alternatives. From that respect together with her dynamics Turkey was the best alternative for the GCC member states. The fourth factor is that both parties Ankara and the GCC realised that a mutual cooperation could help and address to their foreign policies in the long term as both entities started to question their old policies and alliances. Like Ankara, the GCC states also started to see the reality that the European Union for Turkey and the U.S. for the Gulf Arabs no longer can be beneficial. Realizing these facts brought the parties closer to each other and created a natural environment for partnership. At the same time, the recent relations between Turkey and Gulf Arab states shouldn't be exaggerated. People should be very careful while they analyse these emerging bilateral relations because one should not forget the importance of longstanding different viewpoints toward Iran. Besides, one should not underestimate

the longstanding very close alliances between Gulf Arab sheikhdoms and U.S. We should always consider the black with the white in that kind of partnerships. In the monarchy regimes even if the orientations of the states change, they cannot easily leave their old attitudes and alliances.

1.3. What Is the GCC

1.3.1. The GCC Formation Process

There have been many attempts in various world regions to build regional cooperation forums on political, economic, and, growingly, security issues. In this context, the six Arabian Gulf states which consist of Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, and Qatar came together to set up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) by means of an agreement which was formalized on May 26, 1981, in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia.⁴³ The GCC was established because the states were mainly Arabian Gulf States in this region, sharing same social values, political systems which were monarchy, economic programs, and visions. The primary reasons for the establishment of the GCC were their security needs and the connectivity to each other.⁴⁴

The common security concerns of these militarily weak states, especially after the Iranian revolution and during the Iran-Iraq war, forced the Gulf States to adopt the process of “Collective Security” as an important aim for the organisation.⁴⁵ The concept of collective security demanded that the GCC member states to gather on the same security policies and to increase their defence capabilities. After a series of advisory meetings by the defence ministers of the GCC states, plans to enhance a common defence system and joint command were agreed on and it was drafted by these six GCC member states. These plans resulted with a substantial action which is to setting up a

⁴³ Abdul Khaleq Abdulla, “The Gulf Cooperation Council: Nature, Origin, and Process in Middle East Dilemma: The Politics and Economics of Arab Integration”, ed. Michael C. Hudson, New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 150. Cited: Christian Koch, “The GCC as a Regional Security Organization”, **KAS International Reports**, 11/2010, p. 23-35.

⁴⁴ Rohani Ramazani, “The Gulf Cooperation Council: Record and Analysis”, Charlottesville VA, University Press of Virginia, 1988, p. 4.

⁴⁵ Charles Tripp, “Regional Organizations in the Arab Middle East”, **Regionalism in World Politics; Regional Organization and International Order**, ed. L. Fawcett and A. Hurrell, New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 293.

Peninsula Shield Force with the size of two teams was set up in 1984 as a step for the enhanced integration of the GCC member states defence and security systems.⁴⁶

1.3.2. The Question of Whether the GCC Is a Security Organization or Not

The main focus of the GCC was the coordination, integration, and cooperation among the member states in all fields when the GCC was on the eve of the foundation in May of 1981. At that period, the Kuwaiti Crown Prince Shaikh Jabir al-Ahmad al-Sabah made an invitation in May 1976. The Kuwaiti prince had offered that the foundation of Gulf Union should be with the purpose of materializing cooperation in all economic, political, educational and informational fields.⁴⁷

At the same period, proposing a defence agreement was also attempted but the member states could not agree on that proposal. For this reason, this proposal was postponed for other terms. In addition to that, in 1970s several different associations like Gulf Organization for Industrial Consultancy, Gulf Ports Union, the Gulf News Agency, the Gulf Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry and a regional airline called Gulf Air were established. In this decade a defence agreement was written as well. As a result of these developments, Muhammed Saleh al-Musfir stressed that the founding of the GCC was the configuration of long standing efforts.⁴⁸

Establishment of the GCC was directly related with the deterioration in regional security environment. Indeed the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan at the end of 1979 and the breaking out of the Iran-Iraq War in September 1980 increased the concern of the Gulf Arab States. Interestingly, even though all these security issues triggered the formation of GCC, security and defence cooperation was not mentioned in the original GCC Charter. At the beginning of the establishment, none of the committees set up in the organisation to exclusively deal with security issues. During the formation of the GCC one cannot see any reference to the security issues.

⁴⁶ Marco Pinfari, "Nothing But Failure? The Arab League and the Gulf Cooperation Council as Mediators in the Middle Eastern Conflicts", **Regional and Global Axes of Conflict**, Crisis States Working Papers Series, No. 2, Paper No. 45, March 2009, p. 5.

⁴⁷ Cf. J.E. Peterson, "The GCC and Regional Security", **The Gulf Cooperation Council: Moderation and Stability in an Interdependent World**, ed. John A. Sandwick, Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1986, p. 171-173.

⁴⁸ Muhammad Saleh al-Musfir, "Political Security Issues at the Concluding Statements of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Sessions 1981-2001: An Analytical Study of the Content", **Digest of Middle East Studies**, Fall 2004, p. 32.

Only the final announcement issued after the first summit meeting in May 1981 just notified the will and the desire of the parties to defend their security and independence. They also wanted to secure their region from international and regional troubles. The essential objectives of the GCC as they defined in Article 4, although the security was the main case, these objectives never attributed on a clear department for greater security cooperation and they did not define the existing security environment as being a predominant issue of the time. Since 1981, the concerns over security have not been counterbalanced by enough improvement to bring about coordinated defence and security policies. However, one should not miss that the GCC states have attempted to develop security and military regularizations to promote the notion of regional self-defence. Establishing a collective military force was the first specified commitment for the GCC's security attempts. The GCC decided to set up the Peninsula Shield Forces in December 1986. This attempt of the organisation was seen as a new period in military and security cooperation. So that, it can be understood as the foundation for a collective self-defence capability, was an attempt to get rid of the dependency on outside military support. When Iraqi forces attacked and occupied Kuwait which was the GCC member state in 1990, the Peninsula Shield force was faced with its first real challenge. During that war, Arabian Gulf elites realized that the ineffectiveness of their force became immediately clear. The GCC leaders declared the Doha Declaration in December 1990. In this declaration the GCC leaders recognized the ineffectiveness of the GCC defence and security arrangements and they accepted the failure either to deter the Iraqi aggression or to protect Kuwait against the invasion. This statement stressed that the GCC security arrangements was unable to maintain security for the organisation. As a result of that, they called for the establishment of a new security and defence system which is capable of ensuring the national security of every GCC state and protecting the regional security for all six states.⁴⁹

The weakness of the GCC states to act collectively and deter the Iraqi aggression towards its members made the organisation to face very serious questions which have continued up until present time. The fact that GCC needs to rely on Western forces for their own defence raised the concerns extensively in last decade. After these questions

⁴⁹ "GCC documents", 6th Year, No. 21, Prepared by the **GCC General Secretariat**. Cf. also: <http://www.gcc-sg.org/index.php?action=Sec-Show&ID=113> (accessed September 17, 2012).

GCC leaders realized that each member state had different orientation. Therefore, each member state had different opinion on how a joint military force should be structured and what aims it should serve in the future.

Saudi Arabia, which is accepted as a leader in the council as she provides the most of the forces had wanted that Peninsula Shield, would exist as a powerful force able to contribute to regional conflict management and resolution. The Sultanate of Oman was on the same line with Saudi Arabia in this aspect. However, the other GCC states, did not share this idea. Due to the fact that Kuwait had an experience of invasion in its history, it was cautious to this idea. During the invasion, Kuwait proved the effectiveness of external powers security guarantees. Kuwait has also realized the limited value of the national or regional defence ability to cope with the sources of threats in the region. Several senses about the benefit of Peninsula Shield caused to an increasing hesitancy on behalf of the smaller GCC states about possibly modernizing the force and even expanding it.

Actually these concerns included that a large standing force would simply be leaded and dominated by the greatest GCC member Saudi Arabia and it could most probably be used at some degree to even digest them and influence on their foreign policies. For that matter, when it was clear that the first 5,000 strong force was insufficient for the organisation, it was not possible to accept to expand the force to 25,000 or even 100,000 stuffs. The Sultanate of Oman had already suggested that in order to increase its effectiveness. Saudi Arabia made a suggestion during the GCC summit meeting in Riyadh in December 2006. Saudi Arabia made that suggestion after the periods of irresoluteness and postponement and she invited for the embracement of the principle of centralized command but decentralized forces and separating the Peninsula Shield force as a collective single military unit. To understand the Saudi proposal clearly it can be said that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia offered each GCC state shall determine definite military agents to be part of the new proposed military structure with those units stationed within each state's national territory and linked to a unified central authority. Following these events, the member states approved the proposal and agreed to carry it further. Even though all members accepted such proposal, they did not make any action

to take any decision again. When it comes to 2009, the council decided to create a rapid reaction force to posture security threats.⁵⁰

At the same time a proposal was drawn by the naval chiefs of the GCC. The purpose was to research the formation of a joint naval force to fight piracy and take the safety of the seas under guarantee.⁵¹ But at the end, these are the least compensation to a notion that has failed to live to its expectations.

Moreover, GCC leaders attempted to set up formal security and military convention. Thus, there has also been a political legal dependence for common defence. At their summit in December 2000, the member states have reached to a decision which is the GCC Joint Defense Agreement. This agreement was made in order to provide a framework for collective defence based on the principle that any aggression against a member state would be accepted as an aggression against all the GCC states. As it stands, the GCC hoped to have a legal structure like the article 5 of the NATO. The agreement put all the six states under responsibility to provide military assistance to help each other. Obviously this was not based on the will of the states but the legal condition of the agreement makes it obligatory. Furthermore, the organisation carried it forward and set up a Joint Defense Council and a Military Committee to supervise cooperation. The agreement also tried to incite cooperation in a number of military activities comprising joint military practises and configuration in the field of military industries. Joint defense agreement has rarely developed beyond limited cooperation and examination. In place of this, each single state continues to preserve full control over its security and defence policy and behaves almost exclusively according to its self-interests and national strategy. However, the GCC leaders have always hoped that the agreement could one day lead to a jointed defence policy with a united.⁵²

1.3.3. The External Factors to the Organisation

The integration process among developing countries which can also be described as third world countries like most of Arab countries is affected by regional and non-

⁵⁰ “GCC states agree on joint military force”, **Oman Tribune**, December 16, 2012.

⁵¹ “GCC decides to form joint naval force”, **Arab News**, October 27, 2012.

⁵² For the GCC Joint Defense Agreement, see the **GCC official website**: <http://www.gcc.org/index.php?action=Sec-Show&ID=49> (accessed September 17, 2012). Cf. also, Abdullah al-Shayehji, “GCC leaders must look to strengthen security, harness GCC’s soft power”, **Gulf News** (UAE), December 14, 2012.

regional governments' extensively. Compared with the industrialized countries, the process of integration for the third world countries is very difficult and last longing. As a matter of fact, the GCC is comprised of states; supposedly, these states are very rich in their financial resources. However, they are generally small in geography and population, and economically underdeveloped. In addition, these states were militarily weak. As a result, the outside world could have greater impact on them than they are likely to have on the outside world. Before the creation of the GCC, there were many external factors that influenced the formation of the GCC. Mainly, this effect refers to the regional actors, global powers like U.S. and USSR, and non-governmental players, and the affairs of those to the creation of the GCC in terms of their roles and interests.⁵³

For that reason, the establishment of the GCC was a direct reaction to the situation created by series of events in the region and around the world. At the end of the 1970s, many events took place. These events included, the emergence of a Marxist state in Ethiopia, the downfall of the Shah's regime in Iran and in return creation of a Shia Islamic Republic in that country, which constitute a big threat towards the Sunni gulf monarchies. The other major events are the invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, outbreak of Iran-Iraq war, and the developments in the oil markets during the 1973 oil crisis.⁵⁴

1.3.4. The Core of the GCC

It is widely accepted by the political experts and strategists that all historical cases which have been studied by different experts, together with the data, demonstrate that wider political communities have been founded and integrated firstly around the values of political and economic strength, and of social or cultural attraction, provided by larger state. For example, NATO founded and integrated around the values of the largest state the U.S.A. and the E.U. was primarily established around the cores of France which was the most effective state in the E.U. foundation period.⁵⁵

⁵³ "External factors, is used in the same conception elaborated in Axkine W. A. South Pacific Region Cooperation in Comparative Perspective: An Analytical Framework", **Political Science**, Vol. 1 July 1985, p. 45-46.

⁵⁴ Sami Alpanda and Adrian Peralta-Alva, "Oil Crisis, Energy-Saving Technological Change and the Stock Market Crash of 1973-74", **Research Division Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis Working Paper Series**, June 2008.

⁵⁵ Karl Deutsch, (1979), op. cit.p. 183-184.

In the case of the GCC, without any doubt Saudi Arabia is the largest and most strong, and important member of the GCC. There are many factors that makes Saudi Arabia key player in the GCC. The superiority in both territorial size and material resources has made Saudi Arabia enable to provide a core area for the development of the organisation, and is likely to play a significant role in how it develops. Unlike other five council members, Saudi Arabia has also the human resources. Interpretively Saudi Arabia has the largest population. It has a population of 28 million while other five members have about 6 million in total. She has the world's largest proven oil reserves as well. It has procured its global importance from its role as the world's largest oil exporter. In addition to that, Saudi Arabia located on a key strategic position. It locates across the air routes between Europe and the Far East. The country also dominates two great sea routes which are the Red Sea and the Gulf from where a majority of Western oil flows. Because of the presence of the Muslim holy places the al-Ka'ba and Madinat al Munavvara, the country has also inherited a key political role. Unlike the European Economic Cooperation (EEC) and union of relatively strong states, the GCC has one dominant member which is the Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has a crucial role in the council. The Saudis are pushing the GCC for political reasons. Saudis want a great happy family in the Arabian Gulf. And there can be no doubt that the Saudis were the driving force behind GCC creation. There are many evidences which demonstrate that result. One of these evidences is that the Council Headquarter Secretariat is located in Riyadh.⁵⁶

Another major point is that Saudi Arabia has the means to support the integration with all the socio-economic and political implication that might be involved. In this respect there is a discussion of whether this core orientation will be accompanied in the long run by a gradual shift in loyalties from the peripheries to the core will be put off to a later chapter.

1.3.5. Security Orientation

As a result of the complexions of the twentieth century, many concerns over the security and military defence of the Gulf region have continually intensified. At the same time,

⁵⁶ **Financial time** 820215. London, Arab Gulf States are eager to achieve economic cooperation, and **ORBIS**, Fall, 1984.p. 486. And **Foreign Policy Research Institute**, USA Defending Arabia, Evolution of Responsibility, December 28, 2012.

the actors undertaking responsibility for the security of the Arab Gulf states had changed. Furthermore, perceived threats to the security of the Gulf have changed. Because of its predominant position in the Gulf through World War I, Britain accustomed primary responsibility for the security of this region and she had continued to be directly concerned with the area until 1971 when she finally withdrew from the Arabian Gulf region. When American military and security interests arose from around the time of the Second World War, it was not until after 1971 that the United States became growingly and directly concerned with the defence of the Gulf region. In the meantime, the question of security of these states, particularly in the light of territorial problems in the region, in 1980s came to assume first priority.⁵⁷

Indeed, the matter of survival might have charged the integration with sense of urgency seldom matched elsewhere. What is worse, that the GCC is a reality, is probably more psychological than material in the sense of security has been procured. The second half of the Cold War was witnessed by decline of the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Organisation of African Union (OAU) and the Arab League. Afterwards, many sub regional frameworks emerged for security issue.⁵⁸ Something must be emphasized in this point is that, it was the perception on the part of those concerned the unity of the Arabian Gulf states was more likely to discourage external ambitions than disunity. At least when it is looked at from an internationally legalistic and moralistic perspective, the GCC has begun as an alliance for the goal of internal and external security.⁵⁹

The internal security of the Gulf States is also started to occupy a high priority. The Gulf States begun to realize that they would not be able to solve their economic, social, and political problems on their own hook. The coordination and integration of their security capabilities was not enough for that. For that reason, they could only assure their future security by collective respond.

⁵⁷ “The orizing on security” see Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum, (2001) op.cit Chapter 1.p.1-53.

⁵⁸ Shaun Breslin, 2002, op. cit. p. 22.

⁵⁹ Michael Barnett and F. Gregory Gause 111, “Caravans in opposite direction: society, state and the development of a community in the GCC”, **Security Communities**, eds. Emanuel Adler and Michael Barnett, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

1.3.6. Political Nature of the GCC

The integration of the six Gulf States is primarily a political act brought by intentional action of political elites from the Gulf countries. Its politicization has been rapidly. It is not progressively. As a result of matter, this integration demonstrates both shared insights of common interest and an understanding of a deep seated threat towards their security. The Western European conception of breaking down is strange to this integrative prove. In fact, if there is any breaking down at all, it operates in an opposite direction, that is, a breaking down from politics to economics. It exists in the form of planning for economic improvement by related political elites. Furthermore, the Arabian Gulf States accept the integration of their states neither as an end in itself, nor as integration of nations. But these states see that as an integration of tribes within much larger sphere of Arab nationalism.⁶⁰

1.3.7. GCC Organizational Structures and Objectives

Among the other things, and in some ways, the GCC pursues a confederalist approach, though in a somewhat altered form owing to member states to give up some of their sovereignty on some issues. However, the GCC shares some of the specialities of a confederation and a federation. These specialities are institutional. The GCC has structure which is not easy to understand. For sure the GCC is far from a totally federal or confederal structure. Despite this, the first Secretary General of the GCC Bishara described the GCC. When he described the organisation and its aims he stated “The philosophy of the GCC is that it is a confederate structure whose aim is total unity. For that reason, we (Gulf Arabs) move on the rationale of this understanding.”⁶¹

Additionally, Mr. Bishara tried to explain the alliance. He expressed “The GCC is a forward looking organization and embodies the aspiration of the member states, but we embrace change only when it is peaceful, based on persuasion and consensus”. The Council may be passed for as a legal step serviced by a Charter adopted by all member states, while the integration is a process that can be detailed and frustrating. Before we get to this process, however, a presentation of the institutional setting of this

⁶⁰ Al-Haj Abdullah Juma. “A Gulf Citizen’s Viewpoint of the Gulf Cooperation Council: A critique”, **Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies**, Summer 1999, p. 60-61.

⁶¹ Abdullah Bishara A. Y., **The first five years of the GCC: An Experiment in Unification**, Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf The Secretariat General, Riyadh Saudi Arabia, 1987, p. 13.

organization is in order. The GCC is organizationally composed of three principal bodies; these bodies are the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council and the Secretariat General. But, unlike the EU the GCC has no Budget. In this respect the GCC organisation has only operational budget which can be used only during an operation decided by all members. And the GCC has also no Parliament which legitimizes an organisation and creates a democratic ground,⁶² and no Court of Justice. All these deficiencies demonstrate that the GCC is not a democratic and advanced alliance like the EU.

1.3.8. The Supreme Council

The Supreme Council is the highest authority of the GCC. The council consists of the six heads of state, or their deputies. For any reason, if the head of state is unable to attend the sessions the deputies do that duty. The Council meets once a year in an ordinary session. If two or more member states demand an emergence meeting, the council can meet in an extraordinary session. The presidency of the Council is undertaken by each state in turn. This transaction became according to the Arabic alphabetical order of the names of member states. Meetings of the Supreme Council are taken in account valid if two thirds of the member states attended to the meetings. Each member state has one vote and it takes decisions on substantive issues. As opposed to procedure, matters by unanimous consent of those chiefs of state participating, while a majority is enough to approve those of procedural nature. The Supreme Council draws up the comprehensive policy of the organization. It discusses recommendations and laws presented to it by the Ministerial Council and Secretariat General in preparation for approval. The council also appoints the Secretary General and approves the budget of the Secretariat General. Article 10 of the GCC charter establishes a Commission for settlement of disputes. This commission makes recommendations to the Supreme Council for resolving either disputes between member states or issues with respect to commentary of the Charter. The Supreme Council is to select the members of the

⁶² There is no popular participation in decision-making among the GCC States. The idea which has been discussed, in many occasions in 2004, among the member states of creating a joint popular GCC entity is bound to meet with fierce resistance among the members. For more detailed information see www.bahraintribune.com/ArticleDetail.asp. November 4- 2012 (In English); www.gulf-daily.com/Article/78806&Sn=BNEW November 10 2012 (In English); www.alayam.com/ArticleDetail.asp november 10-2012. (In Arabic); and [www.alwastnews.com/topic.asp?tID=79049 & order=03](http://www.alwastnews.com/topic.asp?tID=79049&order=03) 20-03-2004, and [=81594& order 28,](http://www.alwastnews.com/topic.asp?tID=81594&order=28) 11-04-2012 (In Arabic).

Commission for each conflict pointed at to it. The nominees to be drawn from member states, and (at least 3 persons) other than those who are part to the issue that prepared.⁶³

What is more, there is the Advisory Commission (Council), or sometimes it is called as Consultative or Conciliation Committee for the Supreme Council. This committee is produce of the GCC Heads of state Summit in Kuwait in 1997 and held its first meeting in Kuwait on November 7 of the same year.⁶⁴ The committee has 30 members. The members of the committee are chosen according to their experience and qualification for a period of three years. Each GCC member state has the some seats in the committee. So that the members are chosen with seats equally distributed among the six member countries composing the GCC. One of the duties of this committee is that it provides advice and suggestions on subjects referred to it by the Supreme Council.⁶⁵

Furthermore, this committee is attached to the Council to serve as a mediator in any case of disagreement between the six member states. To interpret the rules decisions taken by this Committee are binding.⁶⁶ The Supreme Council stressed its satisfaction after the committee started to function in a summit in 1998. To show their confidence to that committee, member states entrusted the committee with the duty of studying the economic, social, cultural problems in the member states. According to the proposal which presented by the Sultanate of Oman, the Supreme Council ratified that Commission should have a permanent headquarters locates in Sultanate of Oman.⁶⁷ So that in October 2004 the Commission held its fourth meeting in Muscat, the capital of the Sultanate of Oman.⁶⁸

Conscious of obstacles to regional integration, GCC leaders reached to difficult agreement by internalize a Charter that would decrease the fears of member states and

⁶³Abdullah Bishara, "GCC Effort a Step or an Obstacle on the Path of Arab Unity" **Arab Thought Forum**, Amman, Jordan, 1985, p. 80-106; **American-Arab Affairs**. Vol.7. 1983/84.p. 157-177. And, **The Supreme Council-Rules of Procedure**.p. 12-20, and **The Commission for the Settlement of Disputes Rules of Procedure** p. 32. **Secretariat-General** Riyadh. 1990.

⁶⁴ www.arabicnews.com/891028/1998102805.html. "The Committee held its second meeting for its fourth term in Bahrain June 2001, discussed many topics presented to the GCC Supreme Council it its summit in the Sultanate of Oman in December 2001", See www.moi.gov.bh/newspage/englishmain.html. 9 May 2013.

⁶⁵ www.imf.org/external/np/sec/decdo/gcc.html.2000-06-11. And www.gna.bh/gnanews/gnarabic/current/news-13.html. (in Arabic), 2001-02-21. and www.imf.org/external/np/sec/decdo/gcc.htm. 2000-06-11

⁶⁶ www.medeia.be/en/index063.html.

⁶⁷ See the closing statements of the nineteenth session in the UAE in Dec1998, the twenty second session in Sultanate of Oman in Dec 2001 and the twenty third session in Qatar in Dec 2002, in www.gcc-sg.org/index. Html.

⁶⁸ See www.gcc-sg.org/gcc_news/news2k41005.html, 3/ 10/ 2012 and held its first in Feb 2003 in Kuwait; the second in April 2004 in Muscat: and the third in May 2004 in Muscat, see www.gcc-sg.org/gcc_news/news2k40414a.html.

satisfy their different ambitions. The Charter projects the desire of the member states to increase the bilateral and multilateral cooperation within the region. The Charter also provides a process via which integration could be achieved, and encourages member states to make the sacrifices necessary for association. It also spells out the means for succeeding the GCC objectives and provides the corporate system that gives effect to the community. In the third world, most of the regional groupings are represented by weak supranational organizations. In neither Latin America nor Africa have national leaders showed much willingness to establish regional institutions with enough resources and autonomy to accelerate integration. The special Latin American Coordination Commission, (CECLA) created in 1964 for the purpose of collective economic bargaining with foreign countries and international organizations. Immediately afterwards, it started to be known as “Latin America’s floating rubbish game”. This name came from its extremely weak institutions; there was no permanent headquarters and no secretariat, for that organisation. As a result of that, the organisation did not reach to any process. In this organisation any member could call for a meeting procured it hosted and financed the session and prepared the documentations.⁶⁹

The East African Community (EAC) was also institutionally fragile which now extinguished is. The East African Authority consisted of the heads of the three member states. It was the supreme decision making organ. The stability of the community in effect was reliant on the continuation of good relations among the three heads of state. As a matter of fact, the organisation was very fragile by all means. Because the community was not insulated from interstate conflicts, the debates can easily break down to disrupt regional cooperation, because the community was not insulated from intra state disagreements. This problem was inflamed by general lack of autonomy for regional associations. Treaty conditions were planned to maintain national possession in regional decision making. Before becoming a law, all regulations of the regional assembly had to be ratified by the territorial assemblies and receive the consent of the three heads of states. Thus it gives national legislation priority over the regional one. In

⁶⁹ D.R. Bond, “Regionalism in Latin America; Prospects for Latin American Economic System” **SELA, International Organization**, 32. Spring 1978. p. 404; and complete elaboration on Latin America institutional structures see *The Challenge of Integration. Europe and the Americas*, Edited by Peter H. Smith, USA 1993, especially chapter 12, p 305-328.

this respect many Latin American organizations' structure pursues a similar model. All important decisions of the organizations are subject to national veto.⁷⁰

As a matter of fact, the integration in North America and Asia Pacific regions are widely induced like most other plans. The effects of the European integration mainly by economical reasoning and trade,⁷¹ as an example of second integrative response, unlike the GCC integrative plan which has nothing to do, mainly, with trade, or integration in Europe.⁷² During the formulation of the GCC Charter, Gulf Arab leaders may be took comprehensions of the organizational weaknesses of these earlier groupings and the strengths of the Andean Pact and the Economic Community of West Africa States (ECOWAS).⁷³

The Supreme Council of the GCC in contrast to the European Council can make legally binding resolutions, and this council can also announce rules that will apply in the member states. At any proportion, perspectives of this organization's corporate structure resemble GCC in simplifying the integration process. The supreme policy making organ in the GCC is the authority of heads of state and government consisted six heads of GCC member states. The heads of states of the GCC select a plain and effective mechanism via which to secure the ground and the continuation of work. The heads of GCC states hold a regular meeting annually to analyse political, security and economic affairs. They also come together to study and recover the advancement of the work⁷⁴ At the same time, the GCC leaders meet in the capital of one of the member states each year, to 1) Recover their progress since last year's meeting, 2) Appraise the current regional and international situation, and 3) Deliberate and, where possible, reach consensus on ways to move forward in pursuing their common needs, concerns, and interests.⁷⁵

Solely since 1999, the GCC states agreed on coming together in a semi-annual summit (between two summits every year). Then secretary general J. al-Hujailan stated that it

⁷⁰ Ibid. P. 405.

⁷¹ Bijit Bora and Christopher Findlay, "Regional Integration and the Asia-Pacific", **Oxford University Press**. 1996.

⁷² Analyses on Latin America integrative schemes see Mattli (1999) op cit. Passim.

⁷³ Okolo J. E. 1985. op. cit. p. 137.

⁷⁴ For more detailed information about the Supreme Council, see GCC Charter, General Secretariat. Riyadh Saudi Arabia. Articles 7-9.

⁷⁵ Anthony J. D, "21st GCC Summit Result", Part One: Economic Issue, 2000, www.arablink.com/GulfWire/Archives2001/GulfWire200108Spec.Supp.html 2001-01-08.p. 1-10.

will be free from protocols and it will be convened for one day without a program. Thus they (the GCC leaders) will debate matters which they find necessary to debate under the current conditions.⁷⁶ In 1998, the consultative meeting of GCC leaders comes at the decision of the 19th summit in Abu Dhabi. It held its first meeting in 1999 in Saudi Arabia. After that, the second meeting was held in Oman in 2000. And the third one was in Bahrain in 2001. Following that, the other three meetings were held as follow: the fourth meeting in 2002, the fifth meeting in 2003 and the sixth in 2004 in Saudi Arabia.⁷⁷ The advisory meeting is accumulated without a predetermined agenda. However, the duty of these consultative meetings is to study all topics and issues that related with the GCC in different fields.⁷⁸

1.3.9. The Ministerial Council of the GCC

The other important organ of the GCC institutions is the Ministerial Council. The Ministerial Council is composed of the ministers of foreign affairs of the GCC member states. Or they can be other ministers who act on behalf of the ministers of Foreign affairs. The Ministerial Council gathers at least every three months. If any member state requests for an extraordinary meeting, the council may also choose to meet for extraordinary sessions upon that request of one member state supported by another state. Presidency of the Ministerial Council is entrusted with the member state that headed the last usual session of the Supreme Council, or when necessary, with the member state that is next to head the Supreme Council. Rotating its location and the council also takes decisions unanimously. If two third of the member states attend to the meeting that meeting is accepted valid. The main function of the Ministerial Council is to study issues and make commendations to the Supreme Council for proposals. The council also performs the policy proposals of the Supreme Council. It constitutes proposals and commendations that investigate to mitigate closer cooperation among the GCC member states. Another task of the Ministerial Council of the GCC is that it also listens to the reports of the Secretariat General about the work continuation and its problems giving commands as to how to solve the problems. The GCC Ministerial

⁷⁶ www.arabicnews.com/990421/1999042117.html. 10.12.2012.

⁷⁷ www.gcc-org/gccnew/news/2k40517.ht; www.saudiembassy/2003news.Index 682; www.arabicnews.com/02051611.

⁷⁸ Ibid./990406/1999040665.html; 990419/1999041904.html; [/000429/2000042922.html](http://000429/2000042922.html); www.gna.gov.bn/gnaenglish/current/news-10.html 2001-05-13; www.arabia.com/news/article/english/0,1690,45652,00.html. 2001-05-01; www.washington-report.org/backissues/0399/990328.html. and table 5-1.

Council in contrary to the European Council of Ministers cannot make decisions. On the other hand, it can make a political guide line for cooperation and notify declarations on foreign policy matters, related to the organisation of the GCC.⁷⁹

1.3.10. The Secretariat General

The Secretariat General would contain the Secretary General assisted by four assistants of Secretaries General. One of these secretaries is for economic affairs, one is for military affairs and the other one is for political affairs. In 2004, in it's propose to confront the threat of terrorism, the GCC block also created the post of assistant secretary general for the security affairs. However, there is also the GCC Permanent Mission to the European Commission in Brussels by an Ambassador, who is appointed by Ministerial Council for three years on the preferment of the Secretary General Renewably. In this way the multinational character of the Secretariat General which located in Riyadh, not unexpectedly, was established. Supplement with personnel that represents the GCC and its members to their same kind organisation the EU contracting parties on a permanent foundation. It is not comparable that GCC office or any other form of representation consists in any other country outside of the GCC.⁸⁰

The Secretariat General is combined of the Office of the Secretary General, Directorates of: Political Affairs, Economic Affairs, Military Affairs, Environmental and Human Resources, Legal Affairs; Financial and Administrative Affairs, an Information Centre, Patent Bureau, and Telecommunication Bureau in Bahrain in the end of the 1990s. The secretariat helps member states in practising recommendations by the Supreme and Ministerial Councils. The secretariat also accustoms records and studies together with the budgets and accounts. The Supreme Council appoints the Secretary General upon the commendation of the Ministerial Council, for an extendable three year term. Dr. Abdulla Yacoub Bishara, a senior Kuwaiti diplomat was selected by the Supreme Council as the first Secretary General of the GCC. Dr. Bishara had constructed a distinguished reputation as Kuwaiti Permanent Representative to the United Nations. He held that post for twelve years (four three-year terms, 1981-1993). After his post he was followed by Shaykh Fahim bin Sultan Al-Qasimi, a diplomat from the United Arab Emirates for one term (1993-1996). After Al-Qasimi a Saudi diplomat was appointed as

⁷⁹ GCC Charter, op. cit., Articles 11-13.

⁸⁰ Anthony J. D., 2000, op. cit. p. 4.

the third Secretary-General to the GCC. The Saudi diplomat Mr. Jamil Ibrahim Al Hejailan was appointed during Muscat summit of 1995, and in 1998 the GCC decided to renew its Secretary General. Thus, al-Hujeilan was appointed for a second three year term of office in April 1999. In their final pronouncement of 22nd summit, held in Muscat in Dec 2001, the leaders ended their pronouncement with admiration for the efforts of Al-Hejailan during his term in the office of Secretary General. Following that, the GCC declared the appointment the then Qatari Minister of State Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Ateyyah to this Office. The Qatari diplomat became the fourth General Secretary who was appointed to this position. The GCC leaders decided to renew the term of the organizations of the Qatari secretary general, so that Attiyah appointed for another three years in Manama in 2004 which begins from April 2005.⁸¹

All member states of the GCC contribute in an equal ratio to the budget of the General Secretariat. To compare with some other regional organisations like, CECLA, the EAC, and LAFTA, the GCC Supreme Council and Ministerial Council are assisted by independent secretariat of supranational or semi supranational formal associations.⁸²

For the GCC Charter designate that Secretaries General and all staff of Secretariat General of the member states should fulfil their posts in totally independence and they should seek the collective benefit of the member states. They should keep calm from any action or treatment that statesmanlike with their duties and from exposing the secrets of their jobs either during their post in office or after their position of the office. They are to operate, then, like the Commission of the EEC, according to the universally valid rules of international secretariats as uninformed bureaucrats, a circumstance that can increase integration by authorizing technical issues to be isolated from the politics of national interest. Whether it is dependent or not, for sure, on the general manners of member states and their abilities, decision making style, dynamism, and comprehensive perspective of secretariat officials. In 1986, the Secretariat General had 275 staff members in its offices in Riyadh.⁸³

⁸¹ www.tradearabia.com/tanews/newsdetails.asp?Ref=S&Article=79238&Sn=&Cnt=31December21,2012.

⁸² Okolo J. E. 1985, op. cit. p. 139.

⁸³ Statistics for 1986, obtained from the GCC Secretariat General, see The Secretariat General, "In Brief". Riyadh. June 1986.

In 2000 the number arrived to 300, 85 per cent of the staff work on the issues related to economy. In addition to the Supreme, Ministerial Councils and Secretariat, the GCC institutional structure has seven more committees that function. These committees are as following: The Economic and Social Planning Committee, the Financial, Economic and Commercial Cooperation Committee, the Transportation and Communications Committee, the Social and Cultural Services Committee, the Financial and Currency Cooperation Committee. Since 1985, the figure of ministerial committees has been enhanced so there are eleven permanent committees. These committees compromise of experts from all member countries, and their duty is to draw up integration programs in their fields of proficiency and to appraise implementation of programs. These experts produce statements and present recommendations to the Council through the executive secretary.⁸⁴

1.3.11. The GCC Charter

The Charter of the GCC comprises of an introduction and 22 articles. In the introduction, the parties sought to emphasise the common characteristics and the specialities of the member states. This jointness was felt to generate the substructure of the GCC. The 22 articles are divided into 6 topics. These topics are as follow: (a) main information (Articles 1, 2, 3, 5), (b) objectives (Article4), (c) the structure (Article5); (d) the function of the basic bodies within the GCC (Articles 7-16 and 18), (e) Concessions and specialities (Article 17); and (f) charter practice, change, and dismissal (Articles 19-22). In addition to these, there are three more bodies which are permanent bodies. One of these is the commission for moderation of conflicts, which can be framed when it is necessary. This commission is connected to Supreme Council (Article 10, Section1). The Commission is a recommending body only and it operates at the enchantment of the Supreme Council (Article 10, Section 4). One more time, in addition to the charter, the leaders of the six Gulf States have confirmed de jure for the Supreme Council, the Ministerial Council, and the Commission for Settlement of Disputes. The de jure structure of the Supreme Council emanates 19 articles. It focuses on the nature of the Council, the management of the meetings, the program of meetings, and voting system. The de jure further describes the responsibilities dedicated to the Supreme

⁸⁴ "The Role of the GCC in the Achievement of Arab Unity" The Secretariat General. Riyadh 1985. p. 29.

Council under the Charter.⁸⁵ They are also focusing on the internal procedures of meetings which are those; agenda, voting, debate, and resolutions, the determination of technical committees, and working together with the Secretary General. The by law of the commission for Settlement of Disputes consist of 13 articles and that focus on the structure, responsibilities, meetings, and deliberations of the Commission. For instance, the Commission is to be headquartered in in the capital of Saudi Arabia, Riyadh. The judgement of the Commission separates into two fields these fields are the rivalry among member states and the disputes relating to commenting or performing any articles of the GCC Charter (Article 3). Being temporal in nature, the Commission halts to consist whenever it presents its recommendations on a specific disagreement to the Supreme Council (Article 4). Furthermore, the GCC proposed an agreement that described the parameters for economic cooperation among the member states less than three weeks after the Charter was appropriated. The resulting Unified Economic Agreement (UEA) was approved in principle on June 8, 1981. It was officially confirmed by the GCC heads of state at their summit in November 11, 1981. A new economic agreement that replace the agreement of 1981 was approved in the 22nd summit which held in Oman. The new agreement is coaxial with economic developments and it takes international differences into consideration.⁸⁶

In the final stage, the GCC ministers of finance and economy founded the Gulf Investment Cooperation (GIC) in November of 1982, to encourage the industrialization and economic development of the Arabian Gulf States.

1.3.12. Objectives of the Organisation

The main objectives of the GCC are described in Article 4 of the GCC Charter, these objectives are as follows:

- (1) To succeed cooperation among member states in all fields as a preface to unity.
- (2) To reinforce the links of cooperation among the Gulf peoples of the member states in different areas.

⁸⁵ Cooperation Council of the Arab States of the Gulf. Government Printing Office, Bahrain.(in Arabic) 1983, p. 99-113.

⁸⁶ www.saudiembassy.net/press_release/01-spa/12-31-GCC.htm. 2012-12-04.

(3) To set up similar systems among the member states in all fields, including economic and finance, trade, customs, and communication, education and culture, social welfare and health; information and tourism; and legislation and administration.

(4) To encourage scientific and technological development in the areas of industry, mineralogy, agriculture, and animal resources, and to establish common projects, and stimulate the cooperation of the private sector for the common good of the Gulf people.⁸⁷

Moreover, the principal stated several aims. These aims are to preserve and strengthen peace, to achieve economic integration for the interest of all the peoples of the GCC states through the establishment of a large economic area, and to work towards political union of the Gulf Arabs. A research of Article 4 guides to several investigations. Firstly, it is interesting to mark down that cooperation in area of security was not even mentioned as being among the main objectives of the GCC. None of the six specific areas of cooperation under paragraph 3 of Article 4 mentions on security. For as much as the security has been the most remarkable apprehension of the GCC leaders. Secondly, Article 4 promises a foundation for further GCC cooperation in all fields. According to Mr. Bishara, the first Secretary General of the GCC, the GCC is not a supranational association with fully independent legislative and judicial authority. The member states have not assigned their national sovereignty to the GCC.

In accordance with their individual constitutional or other requirements, policies, official decisions and other actions taken in application of the Charter have the effect of law under the legal systems of the member states. In this respect, one can observe that these objectives are universalities and except of the injunction to set up similar systems in all fields no any descriptions are given. The factor about this which draws people's attention is the fact that this recommended style of joint Gulf action is not loaded with any limitation. There is no hitting record high and there are no restraining hedges as well. The area is widely open, flexible and prevented as regarding future activity. One can also observe the absence of any specific reference to cooperation in the field of security and defence. Even though the Council was established in period of both

⁸⁷ For more elaboration on the issue of the objectives of the GCC, see Bishara (1985). op. cit. P. 36; Bishara (1987). op. cit. Passim; The Role of the GCC (1985). op. cit. P. 27, and Annual Report (1985). Secretariat General. Riyadh.p. 11-15.

regional and global troubles, the establishing Charter contented itself with an unclear reference for cooperation in all fields.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ *The role of the GCC.* (1985) op. cit. P. 27; and www.gcc-sg.org/cooperation.html, *Areas of Cooperation*, 10 pages. 2001-01-06.

CHAPTER 2: THE FACTORS WHICH AFFECTED THE RAPPROCHEMENT BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE ARAB GULF STATES

2.1. The New Turkish Foreign Policy Perspective

Many agree that there is a dramatic transformation in Turkish foreign policy. Besides, it is suggested that the changes are not aimed to de-westernize Turkey. Instead of shifting from a side to another, Turkish foreign policy makers attempted to create an autonomous, self-regulating, and self-confident foreign policy agenda and normalize the previous crisis driven foreign policy making of Turkey.⁸⁹

These transformations are the extending of Turkey's foreign policy agenda to include various regions other than Europe and North America, the affiliation of new actors in sharing foreign policy (such as civil experts and NGOs) and the alteration in making mechanisms to combine these transformations.⁹⁰ Although some recurring problems still exist in Turkey's foreign policy, the text tries to show that Turkey is not turning away from the West but just trying to reshape and redevelop its foreign policy, representing the demands of an ascending open and democratic society and adapting to the realities of a multi-polar world.⁹¹

2.2. AKP Era

Almost all debates and discussions on Turkish foreign policy centre on the Justice and Development Party. Many Turkish foreign policy experts believe that the AK Party and its leadership, especially Tayyip Erdogan, Abdullah Gül, and Ahmet Davutoglu, were responsible for the reorientation of Turkish foreign policy. The AKP was founded in August, 2001 by the reformist members (mainly Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Abdullah Gül and Bülent Arınç) of the Virtue Party.⁹² Not so long after its formation, in 2002, the AK Party won an unprecedented electoral victory and captured 34 per cent of the general vote and almost two thirds of the seats in the Turkish Grand National Assembly. Although some ultra-secular groups had concerns about the newly elected party, the AK

⁸⁹ William Hale, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 'New Era'", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 11 / No. 3 / 2009, p. 143-159.

⁹⁰ Einar Wigen, "Turkish Neo-Ottomanism; A turn to the Middle East", *Security Policy Library*, 3-2009.

⁹¹ William Hale, "Turkish Foreign policy 1774-2000", *BCSIA Studies in International Security*, London & Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 2000, p.137-181.

⁹² Hakan Yavuz, "The Emergence of a New Turkey: Democracy and the Ak Parti", Utah: University of Utah Press, 2006; and Ümit Cizre (eds), "Secular and Islamic Politics in Turkey: The Making of the Justice and Development Party" (London: Routledge, 2007).

Party leadership emphasized on a composer tone after the elections in 2002. Erdogan, in his victory speech after the election, stated his willingness to work with people from all parts of life in Turkey and he promised to be the leader of all Turkish citizens, not only the leader of those who voted for him.⁹³

After the landslide victory the AKP government initiated policy of openings and reforms in different areas, most importantly in the sphere of foreign policy. On the elections night, the Turkish newly elected leader Erdogan signalled a change on a number of key issues in Turkish foreign policy.⁹⁴ He stressed the importance of the European integration process for Turkey. It was a strong variation for the Islamist discourse in foreign policy. He highlighted his government's readiness for any possible solution suggested. Islamist politician Erdoğan also stressed that he and his party's readiness to negotiate a solution formula to the Cyprus problem with the Greek side. AKP government significantly, accepted to negotiate a formula that based upon the parameters set by Kofi Annan, which was a separation from traditional Turkish foreign policy on Cyprus and Greece.⁹⁵ The new leadership of Turkey also expressed the concern about the war in Iraq. Hence, new Turkish government signalled a form of resistance to US demands in the region.⁹⁶

At the first, Turkish politics observers considered this new discourse in foreign policy with many suspicions. Most of these observers believed that the AKP government's new foreign policy approach was a strategic and pragmatic move to gain international legitimacy. They also viewed this policy as a way to distract public opinion from their real policy agendas. Nevertheless, the AKP's foreign policy discourse proved to be more permanent than temporal and tactical shifts away from mainstream Turkish foreign policy.⁹⁷ Moreover, it was a break out from the foreign policy perspective of earlier Islamic movements and parties, including the deceased Necmettin Erbakan's National Outlook Movement. Unlike Erbakan, who firstly paid a visit to Islamic

⁹³ "6 Güvence", **Hürriyet**, November 04, 2002, available at <http://webarsiv.hurriyet.com.tr/2012/11/04/202919.asp> May 23, 2013.

⁹⁴ William Hale, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 'New Era'", **Insight Turkey**, Vol. 11, No. 3, 2009, p. 143-159.

⁹⁵ Philip Robins, "Between the EU and the Middle East: Turkish Foreign Policy under the AKP Government, 2002-2007" **Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale**, p. 2-23.

⁹⁶ Ioannis N. Grigoriadis, "Friends No More?: The Rise of Anti-American Nationalism in Turkey", **The Middle East Journal**, Volume 64, Number 1, Winter 2010.

⁹⁷ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Türkiye Merkez Ülke Olmalı", **Radikal**, February 26, 2002. (accessed May25, 2013) See also his article "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: an Assessment of 2007", **Insight Turkey**, Vol.10, No.1., 2008, p. 78-9.

Republic of Iran as a Prime Minister, Erdogan paid his first visit to a Western neighbour, Greece, which has a conflictual political past with Turkey just two weeks after the elections. The new foreign policy of AKP was also far from being reminiscent of the political dreams of Erbakan, who had spent his days in office to establish an alliance with the Middle Eastern and African states especially Muslim states in this geography. However, AKP formed a new model and performed in a different way. This model and performance was something unexpected from the conservative AKP.⁹⁸ In addition, at the beginning of the AKP term, the party founding leader Erdogan convicted and served time in prison as he was accused of inciting religious hatred among society.

Prime Minister Erdogan and President Gül together, have been trying to quicken the Turkey's membership process to the EU, and they aimed to follow a zero-problem policy with Turkey's neighbours all around starting with Greece and Cyprus. At the beginning of the AKP duty term, due to the fact that the AKP needed international legitimacy, political experts predicted an extremely dependent relationship with the US. In addition to that, this impression was supported, when Erdogan received a very warm welcome by the Americans during his first visit to Washington. When the AKP government resisted US demands before the occupation of Iraq in 2003 and trying to pursue a more independent foreign policy in the Middle East came as a surprise to both Turkish public and international observers. In the following years, the AKP government reinforced this new foreign policy approach by involving different regions and integrating different foreign policy problems. This new approach of Turkey's foreign policy includes intensifying economic cooperation with different economies of the World and being proactive in the Israeli Palestinian conflict, particularly during the Israeli raids into Gaza in the winter of 2008-2009.⁹⁹ Turkey initiated diplomatic efforts on the question of Iran's nuclear bid and took part in various international organizations and initiatives as well.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Ahmet Davutdođlu, "Turkey's Foreign Policy Vision: An Assessment of 2007", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2008p. 77-96.

* Erdoğan was convicted for reciting a poem in Siirt in December 1998 and was sentenced to 10 months in jail.

⁹⁹ Cengiz Dinç, "Turkey as a New Security Actor in the Middle East: Beyond the Slogans," *Perceptions*, Summer 2011, Volume XVI, Number 2, p. 61-80.

¹⁰⁰ Ziya Öniş & Şuhnaz Yılmaz, "Between Europeanization and Euro-Asianism: Foreign Policy Activism in Turkey during the AKP Era", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 7-24, March 2009.

2.3. Revision in Turkish Foreign Policy

When the AKP government seized power in 2002, Turkey was trying to get better from the worst financial crisis in its history. In addition, Turkey had reached to the status of a candidate country to EU in the Helsinki Summit in December 1999. At that time, there were high expectations among Turkish society about EU membership process. More crucially, the new government faced with a debate regarding the U.S. plan to invade Iraq and Turkey's possible role in the invasion.¹⁰¹ Immediately after the elections, several high level meetings took place between the US and Turkish governments. The Turkish government had stressed Turkey's concerns about the results of a possible US invasion. These possible results could be that the future of the Kurdish question, the possible economic loss that Turkey would suffer from, and the support that Turkey may need in case of an Iraqi attack against Turkey¹⁰² The negotiations between Turkish and American officials regarding the launching of US troops from the Turkish soil together with the using of Turkish land and the related March 1st vote in the Turkish parliament were among the first signs of a new era in Turkish foreign policy. Unlike the First Gulf War, the Turkish government was more careful and reluctant in terms of meeting US demands. Turkey was seen more assertive with respect to its own priorities. Nevertheless, Turkish society was also willing to be more influential in the decision making process on international issues than it used to be. The anti-war demonstrations that took place in different parts of Turkey were on an unprecedented scale.¹⁰³ However, an important part of the Turkish media supported the anti-war position of the public by revealing information and providing extensive coverage. Nonetheless, Turkish intellectuals were very critical of the AKP for even beginning to negotiate with the US government. For these reasons, the AKP leadership felt itself under a strong pressure from its electorate and other anti-war demonstrators regarding this critical foreign policy decision and tried to balance an increasingly attentive public and Turkey's old strategic partner.

¹⁰¹ William Hale, **Turkey, the US and Iraq**, London, SAQI Books, 2007.

¹⁰² Murat Yetkin, "Tezkere; Irak Krizinin Gerçek Öyküsü" Istanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2004; Deniz Bölükbaşı, "1 Mart Vakası, Irak Tezkeresi ve Sonrası", Istanbul: Dogan Kitapçılık, 2008; Fikret Biçer, Ankara'da Irak Savaşları Giüncel Yayıncılık, 2004.

¹⁰³ Nasuh Üslu, Metin Toprak, İbrahim Dalmaş, and Ertan Aydın, "Turkish Public Opinion Towards the United States: In the Context of Iraqi Question" **The Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol.9: No. 3 2005.

Eventually, the permission for US ground troops to launch from Turkish soil was not admitted by the Turkish parliament. As a result of that, a political crisis occurred between Turkey and the U.S. This crisis between old strategic partners reached its peak when several Turkish military personnel, who were operating in the Northern Iraq, captured by American soldiers on the 4th of July 2003. Everyone, including foreign observers of the U.S. administration and the leaders of the AKP itself, surprised of the decision that the Turkish parliament admitted. However, this was only an early sign of the changes in Turkish foreign policy attitudes.¹⁰⁴

Professor Ihsan Dağı of the Middle East Technical University dates this change back to the EU integration process and calls it “a liberal turn in Turkish foreign policy”. According to him, this liberal turn rescued Turkey from its past fears and insecurities and taught Turkish people to look at its foreign policy issues and regional affairs from a different point of view.¹⁰⁵ This process of change increased and materialized with the AKP government. Both the pro- and anti AKP experts of Turkish policy agree that there has been a radical change in Turkish foreign policy. According to many scholars including the political analyst Graham Fuller, the changes in foreign policy making are so critical and so significant for Turkey. The new Turkey which emerged from these changes should be called “The New Turkish Republic according to Fuller.”¹⁰⁶

2.4. Reengagement with the Middle East

In the 20th century, since the establishment of the new Turkish Republic, Turkey sustained minimal relations with the newly independent nation states of the Arab World. Additionally, Turkey politically followed a non-involvement and non-interference policy towards most of these countries. Polarization during the Cold War solidified this alienation and promoted Turkey's (mostly) identity based abstention. Except of a few Cold War alliances including Baghdad and Sadabad Pacts and economic cooperation, such as increasing economic relations with the region after the oil crisis, Turkish governments had sustained this stand and it had averaged friendly relations with the Middle Eastern countries as a possible threat to the Westernization process for decades.

¹⁰⁴ Talha Köse, “Türk Dış Politikasının Ortadoğudaki Yeni Kimliği, ve Çatışma Çözümlerinin Keşfi,” **Türk Dış Politikası Yıllığı**, p. 623-653.

¹⁰⁵ Ihsan Dagi, “The Liberal Turn in Turkish Foreign Policy”, **Today's Zaman**, 23 February 2013.

¹⁰⁶ Graham Fuller, **The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World**, Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 2007, p. 72-81.

Turkish elites believed that, Islamization and Middle Easternisation had the same meaning and these two elements included in the main threats to new Turkish Republic. In the meantime, the policies of the United States in the region were supported by Turkish elites, and in following years Israel was considered the only country that Turkey could keep close and stable relationship with in the Middle East region.

During the Turkish leader Turgut Ozal era in 1980s, an important change happened. Ozal tried to change this avoidance of Turkey towards the Middle East. Ankara tried to benefit from Middle Eastern capital to revive its economy in the first years of the Ozal's government. Ozal's government also pursued a policy of "active neutrality" during the Iran-Iraq War.¹⁰⁷ When Kuwait invaded by Iraqi forces in 1990 a dramatic change in Turkish foreign policy towards the Middle East took place. After many years of non-involvement in bilateral conflicts between Middle Eastern countries and non-interference in domestic politics of individual countries, Turkey changed its conventional foreign policy by participating in the allied coalition in the First Gulf War. With this policy change in the last years of the Cold War, Ozal's goal was to demonstrate Turkey's continued geopolitical relevance to the Western world in post-Cold War and its capability to become a regional actor in the Middle East.¹⁰⁸ These attempts of Ozal also purported that Turkey did not seek autonomy in its foreign policy. Nonetheless, after the first gulf war, Turkey's relations with the region decreased in parallel with its domestic problems. There are several reasons that affected the deterioration in Turkey's relations with the Middle Eastern and Arab countries. The first reason is that since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, Turkey was suspicious of Iran's intention of exporting the revolution to Turkey. The global rise of political Islam combined with the domestic electoral victories of the Welfare Party in Turkey exacerbated these suspicions. These events caused to paranoia on Turkish elites and impacted Turkey's relations with the Iranian regime and Arab governments.

¹⁰⁷ Muhittin Ataman, "Leadership Change: Ozal Leadership and Restructuring in Turkish Foreign Policy Alternatives", **Turkish Journal of International Relations**, Vol. 1, No. 1. 2002, For more information about this issue. See Hakan Yavuz, "Turkish Identity and Foreign Policy in Flux: The Rise of Neo-Ottomanism", **Critique**, Vol.7, No: 12, 1998, p.19-41.

¹⁰⁸ William Hale, "Turkey, the Middle East and the Gulf Crisis," **International Affairs**, Vol. 68, No. 4 1992, p. 679-692; and Sabri Sayari, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 1990s", **Journal of Palestine Studies**, Vol. 26, No: 3, 1997, p. 44-55.

The second reason was the Kurdish question in general, and the PKK problem in particular, constituted serious challenges for Turkey's leadership. Besides that, Syria and Iraq's logistical support for the members of the PKK raised the anger in the Turkish government and public towards these countries. According to many scholars, including Sabri Sayari and Meliha Benli Altunışık, the Kurdish question was, in fact, the most important factor in Turkey's relations with its Middle Eastern neighbours.¹⁰⁹

In the 1990s, another fundamental development that occurred was Turkey's rapprochement with Israel, which had the effect of further alienating most Middle Eastern Arab countries from Turkey. During Erbakan's short lived government a brief space in that policy took place as he tried to repair relations with the countries in the region. However, Erbakan's anti-Western attitude and the reaction of Turkey's state establishment to this policy change became more harmful while its goal was constructive. Because of Syria's harbouring of the PKK and its hosting of Abdullah Ocalan, the leader of PKK, relations with Syria deteriorated and as a result of that Turkey threatened Syria with a military intervention. When Syria agreed to the deportation of Ocalan from Syria, the first step in normalization of relations with Middle Eastern neighbours started.

The AKP government which came to power following the 2002 elections further intensified the process of normalization with the Middle Eastern mainly Arabic countries. While it passing reform packages to approach accession negotiations with the EU, Turkish government had also spent a lot of time and energy in order to build friendly and cooperative relations with the Middle Eastern countries. The new government of Turkey aimed to play a more active role in the region's politics. As part of this strategy, the Turkish government started to approach the Middle East from a multidimensional perspective. Even the rise of PKK terrorism after the invasion of Iraq by the US did not stop the Turkish government from approaching bilateral and multilateral diplomatic initiatives with the Middle Eastern countries.

Several policies changed during this period. As a first attempt, the Turkish government started to work hard to become more active in regional and other multilateral

¹⁰⁹ Sabri Sayari, "Turkey and the Middle East in the 1990s", and Meliha Benli Altunışık, "Turkey's Middle East Challenges: Towards a New Beginning?", *Turkish Foreign Policy in Post Cold War Era*, ed. Idris Bal, Florida, Brown Walker Press, 2004.p.1-25.

institutions. Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, a Turkish scholar, has become the general secretary of the Organization of Islamic Conference in 2004 and Turkey gained the status of observer in the Arab League.¹¹⁰ In addition to that, Turkey intensified its business and strategic relations with the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council.¹¹¹ As a second step, Turkey also started to reconstruct its relations with its neighbours with a proactive diplomacy. Turkey's bilateral relations with Syria had historically been poor since the foundation of the Turkish Republic. The normalization of relations between Turkey and Syria continued and the relations peaked after the Turkish president Ahmet Necdet Sezer's visit to Syria to attend to Hafız Asad's funeral. Following the funeral, the new Syrian president Bashar al-Assad visited Turkey and this visit was the first trip of a Syrian President to Ankara.¹¹² Diplomatic interactions and high level visits increased dramatically between Ankara and Damascus. Some observers interpreted these summits as part of the AKP's hidden Islamic agenda, but the ultra-secular president of Turkey Ahmet Necdet Sezer also agreed with the policy change and paid an official visit to Damascus during his presidency. The bilateral relations between the two countries developed through growing economic and political ties. As a result of these developments, Turkey started to supervise the indirect talks between Syria and Israel in 2008. Turkey has also taken initiative in the talk between Syria and Iraq in 2009 (after a deepening crisis regarding insurgency bombings in Iraq and cancelations of visa requirements for both countries).¹¹³ Nonetheless, Turkey and Syria also signed a technical military cooperation agreement. Following that, they launched their first joint military exercise in April 2009.¹¹⁴

Thirdly, Turkey also established mutual economic and political cooperation with other Middle Eastern countries. These countries are including Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In the AKP era high level visits between Turkey and Middle Eastern countries have become a common and ordinary. Another one of the most significant developments took

¹¹⁰ Serhat Guvenc, Soli Ozel and Suhnaz Yilmaz, "Rebuilding a Partnership: Turkish- American Relations for a New Era", Istanbul: **TUSIAD Publication**, April, 2009.p. 9-87.

¹¹¹ Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship" **Middle East Policy**, Vol: 12, No.4, 2005, p. 89-97 and Robert Olson, "Turkey's Relations with Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007: New Paradigms", **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol: 19, No: 3, 2008, p.68-87.

¹¹² Ömer Taşpınar, "Turkey's Middle East Policies: Between Neo-Ottomanism and Kemalism" **Carneige Papers**, Carneige Middle East Center, Number 10, 2008.

¹¹³ Carol Migdalowitz, "Turkey: Selected Foreign Policy Issues and US Views", **Congressional Research Service Report for Congress**, 2008.

¹¹⁴ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkish-Syrian Security Cooperation Testing Turkish Foreign Policy" **Eurasia Daily Monitor**, Vol. 6, No: 84, 2009, p. 1-8.

place between Turkey and Qatar. Besides the high level exchanges, Turkey and Qatar increased their economic cooperation, and these economic cooperation later spread over to energy, security and foreign policy fields. The parties also agreed to set up a committee on energy cooperation after the increasing volume of trade and economic cooperation. Furthermore, Turkey and Qatar also played an active role to solve regional disputes. So that, these two countries initiated a new term in order to solve the conflict between Syria and Israel.¹¹⁵ The economic and strategic relations with other Gulf countries, including Kuwait and United Arab Emirates increased in these years.¹¹⁶ During the AKP government, Turkey's relations with Saudi Arabia also improved in a great dimension. In this period, Saudi King Abdullah visited Turkey for the first time in 2006. This visit of the King was also the first visit of its kind in 40 years. As evidence to the developing ties between Turkey and Saudi Arabia, King Abdullah paid another visit with Saudi Foreign Minister as well as businessmen and investors from Saudi Arabia just after a year in 2007.¹¹⁷ The high level visits continued with the visit of the President Abdullah Gül to Saudi Arabia in 2009 and Turkish Foreign Minister Davutoğlu's visit in January 2010. New bilateral agreements were signed during these visits and the volume of trade and cooperation increased in a great dimension between Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Many Scholars including Bulent Aras interpreted this as a result of successfully use of "soft power". The soft power policy reflects Turkey's new image in the Middle East with its rising civil-economic power in the region.¹¹⁸ In this period, Turkish foreign policy makers utilized almost all possible means of diplomacy, including personal diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, and even sports diplomacy. As it is known that the sports diplomacy was also used in Turkey's rapprochement with Armenia. This proactive peace making and conflict resolution diplomacy in the Middle East was partly an outcome of Ahmet Davutoğlu's "zero-problem policy with neighbours". The zero problem policy with the neighbours prioritizes Turkey's desire to resolve problems with

¹¹⁵ Şaban Kardaş, "Turkey Seeks Closer Energy Partnership and LNG Contract with Qatar", **Eurasia Daily Monitor**, Vol. 6, No.158, 2009; "Turkey and Qatar Agreed to Set Up Committee on Energy Cooperation", **The Journal of Turkish Weekly**, August, 18. 2009; "Syria floats direct talks with Israel", **CNN.com**, Sept. 4 2012.

¹¹⁶ Robert Olson, "Turkey's Relations with Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007: New Paradigms", **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol. 19, No:3, 2008, p. 68-87.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* p. 82-83.

¹¹⁸ Bülent Aras, "Turkey between Syria and Israel: Turkey's Rising Soft Power", **SETA Policy Brief**, No. 15, March 2008, p.1-6.

its neighbours over scheduling its strength and influence in the region. As a reflection of that policy of Davutoğlu, relations with emerging Iraq developed by following these principles. Although serious questions proceed to be solved, including the issue of Kirkuk and the PKK problem, in recent years, especially after Talabani's visit to Turkey and Gül's visit to Baghdad, Turkey has begun to establish and expand its relationship with the new Iraqi state.¹¹⁹ Various bilateral agreements were signed by the parties, which extend the scope of bilateral cooperation. At the same time, Turkey also contributed to the political stability and territorial integrity of Iraq. To meet that, Turkey followed and led different diplomatic paths, such as the Platform for Iraqi Neighbours. This platform firstly met in Istanbul in 2003, and its initial aim was to find a peaceful solution of disputes among Iraq and its neighbours and it continued its activities after the Iraq War.¹²⁰

Beyond bilateral relations, after a long non -involvement and non-interference in the domestic politics of countries and regional disputes, Turkey has also started to involve itself in the resolution of regional disputes. With that Turkey is aiming to provide peaceful and effective solutions. However, Turkey has become a mediator and facilitator among different parties and in different regional conflicts. Additionally, the Turkish government also tried to mediate between the Sunni and Shiites in Iraq and it attempted to contribute to the resolution of disputes between the Sunnis of Iraq and the Americans after it experienced to become a mediator between Syria and Iraq as well as between Syria and Israel in last few years.

Despite intense domestic and external criticisms and concerns, Turkey has also taken some brave and politically risky initiatives in foreign policy under the AKP government. As an example for that, the AKP government invited the leaders of Hamas, including exciled Halid Meshal. In addition, Shia political leaders of Iraq, including Muqtada al-Sadr who fought against the Americans during the Iraqi invasion, was invited to Ankara in order to express Turkey's concerns and demands, as well as to listen their conditions and priorities. Furthermore, Ankara has also sent Turkish troops to Lebanon as a part of the UN peace keeping mission after the conflict between

¹¹⁹ William Hale, "Turkey and the Middle East in the New Era," *Insight Turkey*, Vol: 11, No: 3, 2009, p 143-159.

¹²⁰ Bülent Aras, "Turkey's Rise in the Greater Middle East: Peace - Building in the Periphery", *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, Vol.11, No: 1, 2009, p. 29-41.

Hizbullah and Israel. Due to its reflection of Turkish new activism in foreign policy issues it was a very significant attempt. Thus, these mediation attempts and hustings increased Turkey's country profile not only in the Middle East but also in global politics.¹²¹

The radical change in Turkey's foreign policy orientation also resulted in many conflicts of interests and approaches between Turkey and the other regional actors, like Iran, Israel and some Western countries. After long years of absence when Turkey was trying to position itself in and place its stamp on regional politics Western policy makers observed the sudden and assertive presence of Turkey in the region with a great interest. Ankara was simply trying to be a policy producer in the Middle East instead of being a policy implementer in accordance with the policies of the United States and Europe in the region. In spite of that, many policy analysts observed the policies of the AKP government as an ideological reconfiguration of foreign policy with expansionist goals. However, Turkey was also trying to be pro-actively engaged in regionally significant issues instead of shying away from involvement as Turkey wants to be an important actor in that historically relative region. Turkey's pro-active peace making strategy has been sometimes acclaimed and sometimes criticized. This was most certain during and after the discussions between the Turkish Prime Minister and the Israeli President during the World Economic Forum meeting at Davos which is also known as the One Minute crisis. That crisis resulted with criticism and praise for the Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan's reaction against Israel's raids into Gaza. However, in both instances, the increasing engagement of Turkey in the Middle East transformed Turkey's position from a bridge to a regional and global player. After that, Turkey was recognized as a significant regional actor by different world leaders including Hilary Clinton, as well as the Arab public in the Middle East.

To sum up, we need to raise several points to explain the radical change of Turkish foreign policy in the last decade. First of all, to understand from these transformations that Turkey turns away from the West rests on a zero-sum assumption of foreign policy making. Thus, Turkey is trying to create a new positive sum understanding of foreign

¹²¹ Cengiz Dinç&Mustafa Yetim, "Transformation of Turkish Foreign Policy Toward the Middle East: From Non-Involvement to a Leading Role", *Alternatives Turkish Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Spring 2012, p. 168-184.

policy, by increasing interactions, trade and economic exchanges within its region in this new era. However, Turkey is also struggling to solve the problems with its neighbours, diversifying its foreign policy options, and pursuing an autonomous foreign policy after so many years of dependency on the West.

Actually, it would not be wrong if one claim that Turkish foreign policy has lived through a transformation in last decade. But not only that, this transformation has more to do with the changes in the foreign policy decision making processes. The crucial attempts in this process are diversification of issue areas, normalization of foreign policy perspectives, and democratization rather than (securitization) in Turkey. In this respect, Turkey would not need an ideological re-configuration, de Westernization, or "Middle Easternization" of Turkish foreign policy. Today, Turkish foreign policy is more participatory and bright than it used to be a decade ago. Moreover, the domestic democratization of Turkey also affected its foreign policy process and opened new common ground for the public and civil society to influence decision making. Turkish foreign policy today is also more proactive and more multi-dimensional in terms of orientations, and more assertive regarding its own policy priorities.

2.5. Turkey's New Foreign Policy Vision and the Historic Connections

There are many significant factors that bring Turkey and Gulf Arabs closer to each other. The two additional factors consolidated Turkey's political position in the Arab Gulf region. Firstly when one looks at the traditional political history of the Gulf sheikhdoms, he or she will realize that royal families of Gulf Arab states had never totally refused the historic relativity with Turkey. Effat al-Thunayyan, the most prominent wife of former Saudi King Faysal who is the most famous Saudi first lady, born and grew up in Turkey and she could speak Turkish fluently. Currently two sons of the deceased prencess seize very high and significant positions in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's government. When Turki al-Faysal was the kingdom's ambassador to the United States, Saud bin Faysal was Saudi Arabia's foreign minister. Both of these important and key figures have Turkish impression on them. As it is understood from

the names they have, Saud bin Faysal and Turki al Faysal have a strong liking for Turkey and Turkish people.¹²²

Second important factor which is widely believed is that if Turkey refused U.S. demand to use her territory, Ankara would have face substantial challenges from the Washington. Nevertheless, the following attitudes of the U.S. toward Turkey disappointed people who believed that Turkey would suffer of her rejection. Washington conceded to accept Turkish parliament decision without protesting it and Turkish U.S. relations started to sit on better economic and political grounds. When one compares Turkish-United States affairs he/she can see that after Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan's visit to Washington in 2004; ties between two states became far stronger than the relations they had before 2003. Still Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan, who is well known with his Islamist roots, differed with U.S. policy toward Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Erdoğan gave a very strong support to Palestinian people and drastically criticized Israel over her attacks on Palestinians while United States' elites have different opinions on that issue. To consider all the factors mentioned above, Arabs in general and Gulf Arabs in particular started to think different about Turkey. Turkey was seemed that she was now a very significant regional power and she was enough strong in terms of politics to refuse U.S. when it is necessary. With its developing economy, giving support to Palestinians frankly and open her doors to the Middle East, changed the Arab people's opinions toward Turkey.¹²³

Turkey's effect on the Gulf was not only for show but it also reflected the life experiences of one of the key figures of Turkish policy Abdullah Gül. Today's Turkey's President Abdullah Gül had been in Saudi Arabia from 1983 to 1991. When he was in Saudi Arabia, he had worked for the Islamic Development Bank as a financial analyst. Due to this reason he learned to speak Arabic fluently, and also he had make up close friendship with the present Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz. This close relationship effected Turkey's Gulf Arabs relations positively. When one mentions about the effects of the individuals on the bilateral relations he/she cannot by pass the effects of the

¹²² Mark Wetson, **Prophets and Princes: Saudi Arabia from Muhammad to the Present**, Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2008, p. 169.

¹²³ William Hale, **Turkey, the US, and Iraq**, p. 123-51; and Aras, **Turkey and the GCC**, p. 94-95.

Turkish academic and diplomats Professor Ahmet Davutoğlu who has promoted a new approach to Turkish Foreign Policy.¹²⁴

However, President Gül has also helped in promoting the new Turkish Foreign policy vision the zero problem policy towards neighbours that come to agenda by Professor Davutoğlu. What the new Turkey's Foreign Policy seeks was that reinforcement of democracy and to quiet controversies which directly or indirectly related with Turkey.¹²⁵ The Turkey's Foreign Minister consequently said that this new vision aims to build a region which is stable, integrated, and prosperous one arriving from Europe to North Africa to the Balkans, Central Asia, and the Arabian/Persian Gulf.¹²⁶

The main point that lay behind zero problem policy of Davutoğlu addresses two different but related issues that had haunted Turkish leaders for the last ten years. These issues are creating enough economic development to keep tempo with Turkey's increasing population and controlling the Kurdish rebellion together with southeast border whose habitant are mostly constituted by Kurds. The 2001 economic crisis that Turkey had faced pointed out the country's need to increase its exports and take advantage of gainfully, unused markets for Turkish goods, especially in the near abroad that Arab world, Russia, and Iran.¹²⁷ As a result of the recession Turkey has also realized that even though Europe would still be important to Turkey's economy in future, the 2001 economic crisis showed that trade extensively with Europe by itself was no longer enough to meet the country's needs and aims that she desire to reach. Another major issue which is highlighted as a result of the recession is the possibility of being two additional unused sources of income for the country. Turkey aims to cross the energy pipelines through its territory which would connect gas-rich Russia, Iran, and other energy-producing nations like central Asian states and even the Gulf gas to consumers in Europe. Gulf based Islamic banks could attract more prosperities than Turkey's traditional Western-style financial institutions which use interest. That's why they are

¹²⁴ Robert Olson, "Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007", **Mediterranean Quarterly**, Vol. 19, No:3, 2008, p. 81.

¹²⁵ Ahmet Davutoglu, "Turkish Foreign Policy and the EU in 2010", **Turkish Policy Quarterly**, Fall 2009, p. 12.

¹²⁶ Ibid. P.13.

¹²⁷ Reza Moghadam, "Turkey at the Crossroads: From Crisis Resolution to EU Accession", **Washington, DC: International Monetary Fund**, 2005, p. 3.

seen as forbidden ground to Muslims, especially from the Gulf Arab states, who accept interest is forbidden under Islamic law.¹²⁸

Turkey's economy would be strong after the newly emerging trade linkages in the Middle East. That kind of linkages give Ankara the leverage it needed to obligate its neighbours who are located along Turkey's southern borders and Iran, to help secure Turkey's borders and passivate the Kurdish rebels there. Since these neighbours also had Kurdish populations and they had backed the political desires of the Kurds of Turkey in the past years such a strategy was also very significant.¹²⁹ On the other hand, the invasion of Iraq by the U.S. had seen as a golden opportunity by many separatist Kurds to create an independent Kurdish state, which might even include southeast Turkey in. Unlike Turkish people, separatist Kurds had supported U.S. actively during the invasion of Iraq and expected admittance for their demands of independency from Washington.¹³⁰

2.6. Effects of the Famous Rejected March 1 Bill

The newly emerging of relations between Turkey and the Gulf became especially risky for Turkey and for Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan himself personally. The developing relations apparently created a critical environment for Turkey's relations with the U.S. As it is known, United States asked Turkey to authorize the U.S. army to use her territory to occupy Iraq in 2003. To check this period, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leading Justice and Development Party had just shortly before seized the power in November 2002. Indubitable the newly elected AKP was facing a very difficult situation. As a response, to come off that hard situation Erdoğan's leading AKP proposed a resolution in the Turkish parliament to allow U.S. forces pass through Turkey into northern Iraq. The ruling elites pointed to the risks of refusing an urgent request of the U.S. which is the sole superpower in the world. Government's ruling elites and most of Turkish political experts also warned of that unless the bill was accepted by the Turkish

¹²⁸ Graham Fuller, "The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World", **Washington DC United States Institute of Peace Press**, 2008, p. 82-84.

¹²⁹ Huge Pope, "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints" International Crises Group, Europe Report, 7 April 2010, p. 3-35.

¹³⁰ William Hale, "Turkey, the US, and Iraq", **Middle East Issues**, September 1, 2007, p. 124-25.

Parliament, Turkey would not have a seat on the table or any right to speak in the provision which would shape the Iraqi future situation.¹³¹

However, the March 1 bill did not find enough support in Turkish society. There was also a widely anti-Americanism among Turkish society which is generating from Palestine issue. Another reason which caused to less support for the proposal is that in 1990-1991 when Saddam's Iraq invaded Kuwait and as a response to that U.S. leading western coalition intervened in the war over Kuwait, Turkey had strongly supported U.S. led NATO coalition. At the end of the war, Turkey had just lost a big amount of millions of dollars in cross border trade. What Turkey got after the war is that an unstable borders in her southeast region and a diminished credibility over Iraq. The semi-independent Kurdish region in northern Iraq gained more power from Baghdad after the war and it had a great effect on Turkey's Kurds in southeast Anatolia. Turkey's Kurdish community impressed by the Iraqi Kurdistan and tensions escalated between the state and local people. In addition to this, Turkish society was very poised toward the new Iraqi invasion by the U.S. The new invasion was expected to bring more problems and conflicts in the region. According to surveys, 80 per cent of Turkish citizens evaluated the invasion as a U.S. attempt to suck Iraq's natural sources. Also people in Turkey saw U.S. attempt to show her power to the Middle Eastern people. Eventually the bill of March 1 had been refused by the Turkish Parliament in 2003.¹³²

Although Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan was seen as a loser after the refusal of the bill, the refusal became a milestone for the relations between Turkey and the Gulf states. That event signalled that Turkish foreign policy was exactly about to change orientation. Turkish elites were looking for a new foreign policy perspective to put a new view of their Islamic and regional role into practice. As it is understood from Turkish leaders discourses, Turkey would no more carelessly adopt policies that

¹³¹ Graham Fuller, "The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World", p. 100-01; and William Hale, "Turkey, the US, and Iraq", London: **London Middle East Institute at SOAS in Association With Saqi Books**, 2007, p. 158-63.

¹³² William Hale, "Turkey, the US, and Iraq", **Middle East Issues**, September 1, 2007, p. 159-61.

imposed by the west and they would no longer follow the West in foreign policy making.¹³³

Turkey was for the first time a serious potential ally for the Gulf Arab states. As most of Gulf monarchs get stuck in between their close relationships with Washington and their own people who were opposing the invasion of Iraq by U.S. For that reason, Turkey was a sympathized country by the Gulf Arabs. Gulf governments needed a strong country which is preferable by their people. Thus, Gulf sheikhdoms aimed to soften the opposition which was radically against U.S. as an invader in Iraq. The darkness in Iraq after the U.S invasion, the al-Qaida terrorist attacks in Turkey and Saudi Arabia, and the new Shi'a government in Iraq were other supporting documents for the new perception that Turkey was the best potential ally who was facing many of the same challenges with the Gulf States.¹³⁴ These same challenges were mainly raising Iranian power in the region, the Iraq question that related with Iraq's shi'a government and territorial integrity of Iraq and the increasing terrorist attacks on the both entities Turkey and the Gulf states. The decision of Iran to carry out nuclear power and further that to nuclear weapons was worried both Gulf Arabs and Turkey. On the other side, the fear of that America left Iraq to Iran has triggered the desire of many Gulf Arabs review Ottoman past as a Sunni Muslim state in these territory. A strong Sunni Muslim state could regulate Iran's effect in the region particularly in Iraq.¹³⁵

As time passes Turkey's image started to increase in the Arab world. Especially some Gulf Arabs saw Turkey as a new regulator in the region which can prevent Iranian influence. The increasing interest in Turkey made Arab media to concentrate on this ambitious country. As a result of that, 200 representatives of the Arab media attended Erdogan's press conference on Turkey's membership process for joining the European Union in December 2004.¹³⁶

¹³³ Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship", *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 13, No. 4, Winter 2005, p. 91-92.

¹³⁴ Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 82.

¹³⁵ Ibid, p. 82. and Sean Foley, *The Arab Gulf States*, p. 141-42.

¹³⁶ Bülent Aras, Turkey and the GCC, p. 89.

2.7. Zero Problem Policy and the GCC States

Ankara's new foreign policy attitude which was mainly focused on the economic relations has produced intended gains since the beginning of the JDP's redesignation of Turkish policy. Trade relations between Turkey and the Gulf states resulted in a substantial income for Turkey. Turkey's trade in the region expanded significantly. Between 2002 and 2007 Turkey's per capita income had doubled and economic growth had reached seven per cent averagely. In this period, Ankara also got impressive victories from her foreign policy. In 2004, for the first time, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) foreign ministers adopted a Turkish suggestion and elected Turkish citizen Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as a president for the organization. From now onward a Turk would be the general secretariat of the most prestigious organisation which gathers all Muslim worlds under a single roof. The selection of Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu as chair demonstrated that Turkey now has a growing prestige in the Muslim world rapidly.¹³⁷

To consider Saudi Arabia's strong influence on the OIC one can realize the substantial change in Arab states especially in Saudi Arabia which has a very strict understanding of Islam toward Turkey. Since Riyadh hosts to the OIC's headquarters and the Kingdom has always had a great deal of influence on how the organization is administered, Saudi Arabia was chary to a Turkish candidate Ihsanoglu and Turkey's success until the beginning of the last century. As recently as 2000, Saudi Arabia had strongly opposed Ankara's attempts to nominate a Turkish person for the OIC chair as Saudi's Wahhabi understanding of Islam was not comfortable with Turkey's Sufi Islamic registrations.¹³⁸

With the OIC vote determined the start of a new process which prescribes a substantial support to significant Turkish initiatives by the GCC's most influential member Saudi Arabia and other members. At this period, Turkish elites aligned their regional policies with those of the GCC states which started to give support to Turkey in the latest initiatives. After all these steps, the Gulf States backed Turkey's candidacy for observer status in the Arab League as well. Besides, GCC states put support behind

¹³⁷ Kılıç Buğra Kanat, "AK Party's Foreign Policy: is Turkey Turning Away from the West?", *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2010, p. 205-225.

¹³⁸ Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC", p. 94-95; and Pope Hüge, "Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints", p. 12-13.

Turkey to have a seat on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).¹³⁹ Other supports of GCC member states to Turkey are that GCC states also backed U.S. and NATO precautions supported by Turkey, the Wider Middle East Initiative (WMEI) and NATO's security alliance with the GCC states together with the opinion of Ankara to be a mediator or facilitator to settle the dispute between the Arab and Israeli entities.¹⁴⁰ Another important issue is the Gulf governments' compromise on a unified Iraq which was one of the priority efforts of Turkey and opposed Kurdish attempts to establish an independent Kurdish state. That was another very significant point for Turkey as Turkey has always looked for support on the idea of territorial integrity of Iraq.¹⁴¹

Turkey's prestige has an increasing trend among Gulf Arabs in the last decade. Throughout the 2006 Lebanon-Israel War, Turkey's diplomacy started to show its effect in the Arab Middle East. The 2008 political crisis in Lebanon and the Israeli military operations in Gaza in 2009 exposed the diplomacy Gulf state especially the Emirate of Qatar. Gulf Arabs became filled of admiration toward Erdoğan when he angrily interrupted the moderator and left a televised panel with the then Arab league's secretary general Egyptian diplomat Amr Musa and Israeli President Shimon Peres at the 2009 Davos International Conference in Switzerland to show his reaction, and to protest Israeli military actions in Palestinian city of Gaza. Going further Gulf Arabs wished if Erdoğan were one of their own leaders. The biggest and strongest GCC member Saudi Arabia awarded the Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan its King Faisal Award for his services to Islam and his contribution to the regional peace and stability in March 2010.¹⁴²

In 2008, foreign ministers of Turkey and the GCC come together in the capital of Saudi Arabia Riyadh, when diplomacy and cultural interchange were done on an ad hoc basis. Foreign Ministers of these entities compromised on signing a memorandum of understanding. In 2009, they also repeated the same in Turkey and signed another

¹³⁹ Turkey is also a permanent observer to organizations outside of the Middle East, such as the Organization of American States and the Organization of Caribbean States. Turkey is a strategic partner of the African Union as well. For more on Turkish links to the Arab league and its trade outside of Europe, see Pope, **Turkey and the Middle East: Ambitions and Constraints**, p. 13 and Arthur Beesley, "Turkey Sets Out Its Global Stall," **The Irish Times**, november 27 2012.

¹⁴⁰ Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC", p. 93-94; and Olson, "Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007", p. 69-70.

¹⁴¹ Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", p. 82.

¹⁴² "Prime Minister Erdoğan Due to Saudi Arabia to Receive King Faisal Prize", **Today's Zaman**, December 10, 2010. Accessed, 14 May 2013.

memorandum of mutual understanding.¹⁴³ In 2005, Turkey and the Gulf states signed a commercial agreement and Turkey started to negotiate bilateral trade agreements with GCC states one by one. This kind of agreements demonstrated that there was a shift in thinking among policymakers and business in Turkey. The Gulf Arabs also recognized that each had assets which could help the other in addressing system weaknesses in their economies.

2.8. Issues of the Oil and Iraq

The bilateral interests between Turkey and the GCC had potentially been appeared since the 1970s. The Dynamics which triggered this potential convergency are that; on one side Turkey has the qualified workers, modern companies, and technological expertise which are needed extensively by the Gulf Arab. On the other side, GCC states have the natural resources like petroleum, consumer markets, and investment capital which are desired by Turkey.¹⁴⁴ However, GCC states preferred to use their priority to massive financial and commercial relations with European firms and North America rather than the firms which located in Turkey. According to GCC leaders, the investments into Europe and North America would guarantee the maintaining of military alliances that guarded the Gulf States from the danger of Soviet Union, Iran, and other hostile neighbours. Because of their geostrategic location and militarily weaknesses, GCC states have always needed a supra protection from a superpower. From all appearances, this policy of GCC resulted with a substantial success as this policy proved its value when a U.S.-led coalition saved Kuwait from an Iraqi occupation in 1990 and 1991.¹⁴⁵

In connection with this, at the end of 1990s the oil prices decreased. The U.S. changed her policies after 2001 as well. The changed U.S. policies and the decline of oil prices forced Gulf States to re-evaluate these hypotheses. The Gulf States have a dependency on the proceeds from oil exports. For that reason, the sudden harsh collapse in oil prices at the end of 1990s eviscerated government budgets and minimised economic developments in the Arab Gulf region.

¹⁴³ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Troubled Partnership: U.S.-Turkish Relations in an Era of Global Geopolitical Change", **Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation**, 2010, p. 42.

¹⁴⁴ Graham Fuller, "The New Turkish Republic: Turkey as a Pivotal State in the Muslim World", p. 84.

¹⁴⁵ Christopher Greenwood, "New World Order or Old? The Invasion of Kuwait and the Rule of Law", **The Modern Law Review**, Volume 55, March 1992, No. 2. p. 153-178.

As a response to that, GCC states started to change their orientations and look for other alternatives than the oil for their economic stability. Gulf States aimed to decrease their dependence on oil exports by simulating Dubai's success. What Dubai did for creating alternatives to the oil incomes is that it scheduled a combination of foreign direct investment, advanced infrastructure, and heavy borrowing. So that Dubai had built an economy dependent not only on oil exports but also on transportation, modern manufacturing, and services. This success of Dubai impressed other GCC states and embraced their desires of building varieties in their economic system. At the last decades, Gulf governments believed that oil prices would once again collapse and it would put their rapidly rising incomes in non-oil industries and investments even that world's oil prices has doubled many times and would double still again between 1999 and 2008 too.¹⁴⁶

When GCC states became convinced that U.S. military failed in Iraq to bring the country's civil war under the control or to suppress either Iran's activities, or Sunni extremist groups as a result of that the concerns of GCC states increased. So that, as a driving force of the GCC Saudi Arabia and other Gulf States would not rely on their strategic partnership or investments in the United States to be precious strategically.

Furthermore during the 2006 Lebanon war, in a news conference Foreign Minister of Saudi Arabia Faysal manifested the Saudi Kingdom's and Gulf Arabs' disappointment with U.S. policy for the Middle East in the last decade. As a response, U.S. secretary of State Condoleezza Rice Foreign Minister Faysal during a news conference in August 2006 reproached his U.S. counterpart over her claim that the war in Lebanon was part of the birth crises of the new Middle East. Prince Faysal stated that Saudi Arabia preferred "to go back to the old Middle East" since the old middle east was more stable than the new one for the Gulf Sheikhdoms. Faysal also attached that the new Middle East has just brought more disasters and more crises. He said only things people saw "from this new Middle East" were "more problems and more disasters."¹⁴⁷ At the end he mentioned that the enhanced beholding of large Gulf investments all around the world and of Gulf Arabs when they travelled to Europe and North America after the

¹⁴⁶ Sean Foley, *The Arab Gulf States*, p. 133-34.

¹⁴⁷ Sean Foley, "Turkey and the Gulf States in the Twenty First Centuries", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol. 14, No. 3. September 2010.

September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks only fuelled disillusionment with Washington's policies in the Middle East.¹⁴⁸

2.9. Turkey as an Alternative to U.S. and Europe

With its growing economy, Turkey was a natural alternative for the GCC states. Ankara's gravitation toward Arab World in particular and toward the Middle East in general was welcomed by the Gulf Arabs. Turkey emphasized the issues that were apparently ignored by Washington in the Middle East, and also large Gulf capital was of vital importance for the developing Turkish economy.¹⁴⁹

Despite the fact that the Turkish government was self-dedicated and extensively concentrated to join European Union with a full membership status, the new foreign policy perspective which is predicated on zero problem policy with the neighbours had always been in article meant to be an alternative against the possibility that the journey of Turkey's candidacy would never reach a success after 2006. The belief reinforced when the leaders of two EU strongest member states France and Germany publicly expressed their unwillingness toward Turkey to join the Union. As a result, the possibility of that Turkey would never reach a full membership status grew stronger. To equalize the EU, Turkish ruling elites searched even more capital from the cash rich Gulf Arab states. To impress Gulf Arabs and to attract their capitals, Turks emphasized their country's Islamic legacy and openness to Muslims and Arab visitors from the Middle East. In 2007, Turkey's finance minister Kemal Unakitan, during a meeting with the Gulf Arabs representatives said to Kuwait's minister of industry and trade, Falah Muhammad al-Hajiri that:

“Forget about the United States and the European countries. When you go to the United States, they even make you take off your shoes. Forget these places. The best thing that you can do is to invest and vacation here. We have excellent hotels. If you want, you can go to mosque; if you want, you can go to nightclubs.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Foley, p. 141-142.

¹⁴⁹ Muhittin Ataman and Nuh Uçgan, “Türkiye'nin Körfez Ülkeleri, Yemen, Mısır, Ürdün ve Lübnan Politikası”, **Türk Dış Politikası Yılığ**, 2009, Ankara: SETA Publications, 2011, p.189-222.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Olson, “Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007”, p. 73.

Both Turkey and the Gulf states thought about each other that any partnership between them would be a viable alternative to their old strategic partners of the Western world. Talim Harb the CEO of Dubai's Jebel Ali Free Trade Corporation purported the dreams of many people in Turkey and the Gulf when he addressed to the media representatives in Istanbul in 2007. Mr. Harb told that "our relationship with Turkish people will be a partnership which will create a win environment for both entities".¹⁵¹

In the last decade, Turkey's relations with Gulf Arabs have increased especially in the economic area. These bilateral financial partnerships have proved true in several different sectors. Many Gulf corporations and individuals from different Gulf States including UAE, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia have made investments valuing billions of dollars in Turkish real estate, banks, hospitals, and educational institutions. Gulf Arabs have also purchased large percentages in prominent Turkish companies, such as Turkcell, which is the largest mobile phone provider company in Turkey.¹⁵²

According to statistics of Turkish government, from 2003 to 2008 the Gulf investments increased from nothing to \$2 billion. At the same time, Turkish companies were successful in the Gulf States. Turkish trading volume with Gulf States had growth from \$17 billion in 1998 to \$166 billion in 2008.¹⁵³ Only to the UAE Turkish exports grew from \$239 million to over \$79 billion between the period of 1998 and 2008.¹⁵⁴ In terms of contracts awarded at the annual Gulf International Trade Show Turkish companies became the seventh largest group in the city of Saudi Arabia Ad Dammam in 2004.¹⁵⁵ Turkish companies have increased continually ever since. In 2006, a Turkish construction company, which is called as Baytur won a \$124 million contract to build Qatar's Islamic museum and a \$245 million contract to build the Qatari national library.¹⁵⁶ And at the same year, a Turkish-Austrian company Tepe, Akfen, Vie which is a Turkish-Austrian won an \$869 million contract to help building a new terminal and to conduct the international airport which is outside of Doha.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵¹ Olson, p. 76.

¹⁵² Olson, P. 78.

¹⁵³ <http://www.invest.gov.tr/enUS/investmentguide/investorsguide/pages/FDIinTurkey.aspx>.

¹⁵⁴ Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS), **International Monetary Fund**, <http://www.imfstatistics.org>; and Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", p. 78.

¹⁵⁵ Direction of Trade Statistics (DOTS), **International Monetary Fund**, <http://www.imfstatistics.org>.

¹⁵⁶ Robert Olson, "Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007," p. 72.

¹⁵⁷ Olson, "Turkey's Relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council from 2003 to 2007", p. 75.

2.10. The Question of Iran for the GCC

There are many political analysts who believe that the tension between Gulf Arabs and Iranians is an Arab-Persian struggle for control of the Gulf. Therefore, one can find much literature about the tense relations between Iran and the GCC states. On the other side, there are many writers who relate this situation to the Arab-Muslim devastation of the Sassanid Empire and the resulting change of Persian to Islam. Nevertheless, there are also a considerable amount of experts who describe these tensions to a historic struggle for power and domination between Sunnis and Shi'ites in Islam. When we look at the history of Iran it shows us that it has long competed for regional power. For this reason, it is not only ideology which influences the relationship between these two entities.¹⁵⁸

After Britain's withdrawal from its Gulf colonies following World War II Iran's ambitions for hegemony in this region increased. In this respect, the occupation of the United Arab Emirates' Islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Lesser Tunb by Iran can be shown as examples of this tension between the new Arab Gulf states and Iran before the creation of the GCC.¹⁵⁹

Because of its demographic weight, geostrategic position and theoretical advanced economy, Iran under the Shah had also seen itself as the dominant power in the Gulf region. Before the Islamic Revolution and after the foundation of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, the Shi'ite ideology was not the encouragement behind the regional ambitions. Under the rule of the Shah, Iranian- Gulf Arabs tensions were all about hegemony and domination over the Gulf.

2.11. The Revolution of 1979

With the Islamic Revolution of 1979, new Iranian elites added a religious element to the hegemony, so this new perspective has shaped Iran's foreign policy toward its Arab neighbours in the Gulf region. New Iranian leader's motto was that calling to export the revolution to the whole Islamic world especially to the Arab States. The new leader of

¹⁵⁸ Emir Sadık Asadollahi, "Basra Körfezi'ndeki Arap Baharı", **21. Yüzyıl Dergisi**, Aralık 2011, Sayı: 36, p. 26-34.

¹⁵⁹ Mehdi Noorbaksh, "Religion, Politics, and Ideological Trends in Contemporary Iran in Iran and the Gulf: A Search for Stability", ed. Jamal S. al Suwaidi **The Emirates Center For Strategic Studies and Research**, 1996, p.15-18.

Iran, Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini used religion as a crucial tool to challenge the Gulf State rulers' legitimacy. The policy of using religion to destabilize the internal security of the Gulf States escalated the tensions between Gulf Arabs and Iran on sectarian bases. Iran incentivized the Shi'ite communities in the Gulf States to revolt against their rulers as their rulers are tyrant according to Khomeini. Thus, they could join Iran and establish the Islamic states or the umma, (religious community) with Iran as the only "Government of God" at its core. As a result of these attempts, widespread riots occurred in Bahrain's cities where the Shi'ite community lives and in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia in 1979–80. At the parallel period Kuwait and Iraq were subjected to terrorist attacks by their own Shi'ite citizens. Iraq suffered from most of these attacks, which alarmed all the governments of the Gulf States.¹⁶⁰

For the first time that Iraq and the Gulf sheikhdoms had faced that kind of internal threat which was supported and assisted by an external power. These Arabian states were accustomed to facing the ambitions of Iranian Shah which were based on interest and hegemony. The Shah's regime was satisfied when his ambitions were achieved, but unlike to Shah's regime the new Iranian theocratic regime harmonized interest with ideology. Hence, the new Iranian elites used religion as a tool in their attempt to remove the governments of the other Gulf States. In this respect one can realize that Iraq and the GCC states had been able to tolerate Iran under the Shah regime in the past. After the Islamic revolution the same Arab leaders could not tolerate the new Iranian agenda. As it aimed to create chaos, destabilize them internally and finally remove them from the power. Most probably this Iranian threat to Iraq was one of the main factors that forced Saddam to begin the war with Iran in 1980, which lasted for eight years and caused to catastrophe and many casualties from both sides.¹⁶¹

2.12. Iraq-Iran War

The War between Iraq-Iran lasted for more than eight years and in this period both states suffered severe casualties and billions of dollars in damage. This war which is also named by many scholars as the first Gulf war started when Iraq attacked Iran in September 1980. Several different issues caused to the war, but the main cause is that

¹⁶⁰ Efraim Karsh, *Essential Histories: "The Iran-Iraq War 1980–1988"*, Osprey Publishing, 2002, p.7–10.

¹⁶¹ Emir Sadık Asadollahi, "Basra Körfezi'ndeki Arap Baharı", *21. Yüzyıl Dergisi*, Aralık 2011, Sayı: 36, p. 26-34.

the long-standing regional rivalry between Persian Iran and Arab Iraq. Although the immediate cause was a border dispute, between the sides¹⁶² other issues also led Iraq to start the war against Iran. Iraq under Saddam Hussein rule wanted to put an end to the religious propaganda made by Iran which was directed against the Iraqi secular regime. Additionally, Iraq had suffered from many Iranian terrorist attacks on Iraqi officials. Nonetheless, Iraq also feared that the influence of Iranian revolution would affect Iraq's Shi'ite to revolt against the Iraqi government, which had suppressed them for many years.

On the other hand, Iraq wanted to exploit the chaos and weakness of Iran's military after the Revolution in order to gain control of oil field territories. So that Iraq would replace Iran as the dominant power in the Gulf region. Although Iraq gained many advantages and went further in the first two years of the war, Iran managed to stop the Iraqi forces in middle of 1981. After that, Iran took the offensive initiative through actions such as Operation Jerusalem.¹⁶³ Iran forced out all Iraqi forces from Iranian territory in 1982. Hence Iran rejected all cease-fire proposals from the Iraqi side, and it continued the war. The aim of Iran was punishing Iraq and overthrowing Saddam.¹⁶⁴

From 1982 to 1987, Iran was on the offensive and Iraq was on the defensive. Iran had launched offensive attack and, it regained all its lost territory by June 1982. Furthermore, Iran continued its offensive move and invaded Iraq in an attempt to capture Al Basra, but Iraq resisted against that attempt. In contrast, Iraq started a war of attrition after 1982. Iraq was donated and financed by the Arab Gulf States. With the assist of these states Iraq had a chance obtain modern weapons from the West and the Soviet Union, while Iran had only limited access to the international weapons market.¹⁶⁵

Because of the aid that provided by the Arab Gulf States, Iraq enabled to shift the balance of the war. As a result, Iran began to attack the oil tankers of those Gulf States which were aiding Iraq. Additionally, the United States also became involved in the war when Kuwait raised the U.S. flag on its tankers targeted by Iran. Iran and United States fought insignificant naval battles in the period of 1987–1988. In 1988, after Iran forces

¹⁶² Efraim Karsh, "Essential Histories", p. 13–14.

¹⁶³ Efraim Karsh, "Essential Histories", p. 14.

¹⁶⁴ Efraim Karsh, "Essential Histories", p. 19.

¹⁶⁵ Anthony Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia: National Security in a Troubled Region", **Washington, DC, Center for Strategic and International Studies**, 2006, p.73.

collapsed under a series of successful Iraqi offensives, the Iran-Iraq War ended. The success of Iraq against Iran forced Khomeini to accept the United Nations Security Council Resolution 598, that calling to an Iraqi victory in the war.¹⁶⁶

The future of Iran-Arab Gulf State relations was shaped by the Iraq-Iran War during the 1980s. While the GCC States formed to develop a collective security mechanism against the threat from Iran and due to their fears that revolution would be exported to their countries from their Islamic rival Iran. The GCC states had strongly stood by Iraq in its war against Iran. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait backed Iraq's war efforts by providing Saddam with billions of dollars as loans. However, the United Arab Emirates was split; while Dubai and others remain neutral, the general government took the same position with Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and stood with Saddam's Iraq. As a consequence of to the GCC states position of assisting Iraq in the war, these countries became legitimate targets for the Iranians. Kuwait was subject to many Iranian terrorist attacks. As it is mentioned above, the Iranian navy targeted Kuwait's oil tankers. In addition, Saudi Arabia was subject to different Iranian terrorist operations. Moreover, Iran exploited the Hajj, or pilgrimage, season to destabilize and shows the weakness of Saudi internal security.¹⁶⁷

2.13. Hajj Demonstration in 1987

After the revolution, Iran defined itself as the defender of Shi'ite Islam and attempted to spread the Shi'ite revolution throughout the Arab World. For that aim Iran made intensive efforts to destabilize the Gulf States' security and to delegitimize Saudi control over the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. "The Iranian leadership made concerted efforts to convince the Muslim world that Saudi Arabia was not fit to control the Saudi holy sites of Mecca and Medina."¹⁶⁸ Because of the Gulf states' stood with Iraq during the war against Iran, led the Iranians to create a chaos and use the Hajj seasons to destabilize Saudi security and the safety of the pilgrims in retortion for that support and in order to put pressure on Saudi Arabia to stop aiding Iraq. To reach that aim, Iranian pilgrims rioted in the holy city of Mecca in 1987, which resulted in the

¹⁶⁶ Karsh, "Essential Histories", p. 79.

¹⁶⁷ Henner Furtig, "Iran's Rivalry with Saudi Arabia Between the Gulf Wars", **Reading**, UK: Ithaca Press, 2006, p. 37.

¹⁶⁸ Antony Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia", p.20.

death of 400 people. Following that Saudi Arabia, in a move to counter Iranian efforts to use the Hajj to destabilize its internal security, succeeded in passing a proposal at an Islamic summit which changes the system of pilgrim and brings quotas that restricted the number of Iranian pilgrims. However, Iran was also accused of two bombs that exploded in Mecca in 1989 in retaliation for the Saudi quota system.¹⁶⁹

After Ayatollah Khomeini's death in 1989, Iranian efforts to exporting the revolution generally decreased. Although Iran restored diplomatic relations with the Gulf States after the Liberation of Kuwait in 1990, and improved its relationship with the GCC member states, it was alleged that Iran was involved in Khobar Towers bombing in 1996.¹⁷⁰ Generally Iran kept its relations moderate with the Gulf States until 2003, when the U.S. invaded Iraq. The invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 created a new opportunity for Iran to dominate the Gulf region through Iraq. The invasion of Iraq shifted Iranian policy from mere threats of interference in the Gulf to actual interference and from threats of hegemony to actual hegemony.

2.14. The Impact of the United States 2003 Invasion of Iraq

The U.S.-led western invasion of Iraq in 2003 further shifted the regional balance of power in the Gulf. This invasion has also created a new challenge for the GCC member states. The GCC states have followed a strategy based on ensuring a balance of power between Iraq and Iran. This balance prevented either Iraq or Iran from dominating the Gulf region. As Stansfield observes, "The Gulf security architecture had been largely built upon the presence of two principal political and military forces (Iran-Iraq)".¹⁷¹ However, the invasion of Iraq by the United States in 2003 resulted with the removal of Saddam's regime and destroyed Iraqi armed forces, security services, and broke up its central government. As a result of that, Iraq became fragile while Iran benefited from this situation to fill the vacuum in the balance of power, emerge as a dominant power in the Gulf region.

The change in the balance of power in the Gulf region also brought a new government to Iraq which is dominated by Shi'ites and hence backed by Iran. The GCC states have

¹⁶⁹ Antony Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia", p.20.

¹⁷⁰ Antony Cordesman, "Saudi Arabia", p. 21.

¹⁷¹ Gareth Stansfield, "Gulf Security Following the Invasion of Iraq", in *Arabian Gulf Security Internal and External Challenges*, **The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research**, 2008, P.117.

been concerned about the influence of Iranian Shi'ism on their Shi'ite communities since the Iranian Islamic Revolution took place in 1979. The consequences of the invasion provided Iraqi Shi'ite who composing the majority in Iraq to seize the power after the removal of Saddam's regime. Therefore, the new situation which brings a new government in Iraq raised two concerns in the eyes of GCC states. The first concern was that the indirect threat of Iran embodied in the new opportunity for Iran to put forward more influence over Shi'ites inside the GCC. The second concern was the direct threat of Iran, that embodied in Iraqi cooperation with Iran or the manipulation of the Shi'ite dominated Iraqi government by Iran, against the GCC States.¹⁷²

What can be said for the first case is that the new Shi'ite government in Iraq has strengthened Shi'ite aspirations which had been suppressed for many years deepening sectarian divisions throughout the region, so that Iran could exploit in order to manipulate the region. As it is expressed before, Iran's policy of exporting its Islamic revolution has spoiled Iran-GCC relations. According to this ideology, Iran believes that, security in the Gulf will not be reached unless the populations of the Arab nations revolt against their ruling monarchs and form governments similar to Iranian regime. It is now easier for Iran to spread its ideology not only throughout the Gulf, but also throughout the Middle East as a whole. Because of this ideology was revived by the political order which has changed in Iraq following the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Iran has a big influence in Lebanon and Palestine. This influence can be seen as a part of an Iranian policy of challenging the GCC's role in these countries and in the region at whole. The GCC member states anxiously watch Iranian influence through Hizballah in Lebanon, and through Hamas in Palestine. As Iranian influence on these entities increases Gulf sheikhdoms concerns about the interference of Iran in Arab domestic issues. Additionally, the sectarian tension in the Middle Eastern region has grown to greater levels than at any time since the Iranian Islamic Revolution. The GCC leaders have taken this issue into consideration and as a result of these concerns King Fahd of Saudi Arabia paid attention to Saudi Shi'ite demands and hosted meeting with their

¹⁷² Stephanie Cronin and Nur Masalha, "The Islamic Republic of Iran and the GCC states: Revolution to realpolitik?", **Research Paper, Kuwait Programme on Development, Governance and Globalisation in the Gulf States**, August 2011, p. 1-37.

delegation in Jeddah in 2005. GCC leaders took these steps to counter the growing sectarian tensions over the region and to prevent Iran from exploiting it.¹⁷³

In the second case, the GCC has worried about the future of relations between Iran and the new Iraqi Shi'ite dominated government and their results on the issues related to GCC security. The GCC particularly worried about the new established alliance between Iran and Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine. The tension in Lebanon after the Israeli attacks of 2006 and Hizballah's attempt to occupy Beirut in 2008 indicated the extent to which Iranian interference in Arab domestic politics has reached. Following the United States' invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Iranian foreign policy has passed through two stages. The first stage is the era of President Mohammad Khatami, and the second one is the era of President Mahmud Ahmadinejad, which began with his election in 2005.¹⁷⁴

Iran's main strategy was a defensive one during the Khatami term. This strategy focused on avoiding any aggression from United States against Iran. Iran wanted to benefit from the invasion of Iraq. To do so, Iran supported the Shi'ite leaders in consolidating their rule after the fall of Saddam's Sunni regime. As a result of that, the GCC attempted to use the moderate policies of Khatami as a means of developing its relationship with Iran. Therefore, GCC leaders called for a new collective security arrangement which would bring Yemen, Iraq, and Iran into partnership with the GCC member states and that would revolve the role of security guarantor to the U.N. Security Council.¹⁷⁵

2.15. Iran's Rising Regional Ambitions

President Mahmud Ahmadinejad was elected in 2005. Since his election, Iran's policy entered to a new phase. As a consequence, its regional policy has become more ambitious. Ahmedinejad started to reflect his hegemonic ambitions in the region. In order to gain Arab Street support, Ahmedinejad increased Iran's rhetoric tone against U.S. and Israel. This attitude of Iran started to challenge the GCC's moderate position on regional problems. The GCC's role in the region has negatively affected from the

¹⁷³ Gareth Stansfield, "Gulf Security", p. 128–130.

¹⁷⁴ Frederick W.Kagan&Ahmed K. Majidyar, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq and Afganistan", **A report by the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War**, 2012, p. 6-79.

¹⁷⁵ Kenneth Katzman, "The Persian Gulf States: Post-War Issues for U.S. Policy," **CRS Report for Congress**, 2003: p. 7–11.

exploitation of Arab problems by Iran, especially the leading GCC member state Saudi Arabia's position has weakened in the last decade. Iran's newly hostile policy towards the GCC and the greater Arab world has succeeded to some extent. Iran has adopted a non-sectarian policy that focuses on the people in the street in order to find supporters for its policy by supporting Arab rights. As an indication, Frederic Wehrey points out that "Since the election of Ahmadinejad, Iran has pursued what can be best described as an aggressively non-sectarian 'Arab Street' strategy that appeals to Arab publics by emphasizing Iran's commitment to the Palestinian cause, opposition to Western imperialism in the region."¹⁷⁶

2.16. Nuclear Iran

Iran's attempt to develop nuclear energy is another major concern arising from Ahmadinejad's policy. The Iranian nuclear program is neither new nor secret. Furthermore recent professions show that Iran has followed a very secret military program that could result in its developing nuclear weapons. Although Iran has profounded many times that its program is for peaceful purposes, there is a great deal of mistrust between Iran and the international community because of a number of secret facilities. The most important facility is that the Iranian refusal to open the doors to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors. The consequences of this program could affect the GCC States not only politically, but could also cause to an environmental disaster and maritime pollution.¹⁷⁷

To take these into consideration, the case investigated how the Islamic Revolution in Iran and its commitment to export revolution to the Gulf region increased the tension between Iran and its Gulf Arab neighbours to a new stage of rivalry. The GCC States took a side with the Iraqi regime against Iran during the war between Iraq and Iran. For that reason, the tension between these two entities escalated radically in that period.

Following these events, 2003 invasion of Iraq and subsequent removal of Saddam by the U.S. led Western powers, the destruction of Iraqi military power, and establishment of Iraq's new, Iranian supported Shi'ite government changed the balance of power in

¹⁷⁶ Frederic Wehrey et al, "Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy", **RAND** (2009): p. 49.

¹⁷⁷ James Noyes, "Iran's Nuclear Program: Impact on the Security of the GCC in Iran's Nuclear Program: Realities and Repercussions", **The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research**, 2006, 63–68.

the Gulf region toward Iran's interests. Ahmadinejad, who is considered as a hardliner and has ambitions for hegemony in the region elected as Iranian President in 2005. The election of Ahmedinejad led Iran to start a new, more aggressive strategy toward the Gulf States and the region. Ahmedinejad's new strategy is based on street support by taking the same strong position that the Arab leaders took against Israel regarding Palestinian cause to sabotage their legitimacy in their population's opinion. At the same time, Iran has followed a controversial nuclear program which has provoked suspicions about the links with military programs that aimed to produce nuclear weapons. Many GCC member states have also accused Iran, claiming that Iran interferes in their domestic issues. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain accuse Iran of upsetting their internal stability by encouraging their Shi'ite population to rebel against them. All of these Iranian challenges to the GCC member states shows how the GCC need a strong regional alliance who can the GCC work on all these issues with. To consider all these issues, due to its Sunni identity and huge potential, the GCC find Turkey as the best partner in the region.¹⁷⁸

2.17. The Question of Syria

The question of the future of Syria is the most compelling issue in the Middle East today. The violence and massacres of Assad regime since the beginning of the protests cost him the support of the countries in the region and the world. Russia, China and Iran remained the only supporters of Assad regime. Russia and China use their veto right in Security Council to prevent any sanction against Assad administration. However, their support can be considered as bargaining chip against the Western Powers, Arab League and Turkey. If China and Russia have assurance of the protection of their investments in Syria, most probably these countries will change their policies. For Iran, the Syrian issue is more significant since Iran can lose its control over Lebanon without Syria. The strategic link between Lebanon, Syria and Iran can be broken. For that reason, Iran is not seen to give up her support to Assad administration.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ "Iran's silent war in the Gulf", **The Jerusalem Post**, Aug 4, 2013.

¹⁷⁹ Frederick W.Kagan&Ahmed K. Majidiyar, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq and Afganistan", **A report by the American Enterprise Institute and the Institute for the Study of War**, 2012, p. 6-79.

The fall of Assad seems inevitable despite of strong backing of Russia and Iran. The regime gets worse day by day. To consider these circumstances, an intervention by North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) could cause to several problems. Because of that, such intervention can be regarded as an imperialist step by both Syrian and regional people. In this period, the Arab League, led by main GCC states Saudi Arabia and Qatar together with Turkey may consider a joint operation in Syria. This operation does not explicitly occur as direct military intervention in Syria. Moreover, the Free Syrian Army after this operation can be recognized as the legitimate representative of Syrian people so the legitimacy of Assad regime can be lose ground in the Arab and Muslim world. As NATO supplied tactical support to Libyan opposition, the Arab League led by GCC states and Turkey could cooperate in this issue, as both entities have the same directions on Syrian issue.¹⁸⁰

Political situation after Assad administration in Syria is also very complicated and problematic. There are several ethnic groups including Arabs, Kurds, Armenians, Aramaic, and Circassian in the country. The Muslims are composing the majority in Syria but they are divided into various sects.¹⁸¹ The Assad family which is the ruling family of the country belonged to the sect of Alawite. This group prevented the participation of other groups and sects into the political life. There is a secular system in Syria but the secularism in Syria is interpreted as an oppressive tool on other religious groups. Furthermore, Kurdish people in Syria are not even considered as citizens.¹⁸²

In this respect, Turkey with the help of its own experiences can help Syria to establish a secular and democratic regime in which there is not an actual ruling sect or ethnicity and different religions and ethnic groups can live equally. The support given to Turkey by Saudi Arabia and Qatar can reinforce Turkey's position in Syria in the eyes of Arab world. As a result of that, it is seen Turkey and the GCC states need to cooperate on the question of Syria too.

¹⁸⁰ Thomas Seibert, "GCC and Turkey stand united on Syria", **The National**, Jan 29, 2012. Accessed. Aug. 4 2013.

¹⁸¹ "Syria", CIA. World Factbook.

¹⁸² Abdi Noyan ÖZKAYA, "Suriye Kürtleri: Siyasi Etkisizlik ve Suriye Devleti'nin Politikaları", **Uşak Yayınları**, 2007, Cilt 2, No: 8, p. 90-116.

2.18. The Maliki Question

The alteration in the Maliki's character (the Shi'ite prime minister of Iraq) after the post-USA era in Iraq is seen by many political experts as an identical case with Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. The prime minister of Iraq who sought consensus and compromise among political players in the country is gone and a new guy came to ground. The new Maliki, who dared to arrest the vice president of the country Tarik al-Haşimi; created a wide range anxiety in the Iraqi society. By putting pressure and cutting their shares in the budget, Maliki antagonized the Sunni provinces. Following that, wide range protests occurred in these provinces. The separatist demands started to be articulated in those areas. There is already an autonomous Kurdish region in the North part of Iraq which is composed of Sunnis predominantly. If Sunni provinces declare their independence, Iraq as a one country can be faced destruction.¹⁸³

The Kurds in Northern Iraq and The Sunni population are much more connected with Turkey rather than Iraqi central government. The economic relationship between Northern Iraq and Turkey forces Kurdish leaders to avoid confrontation with Turkey.¹⁸⁴ As a result of that, the economic integration brings political conversance. In this respect, Turkey can be a shield against a possible Shia propagation and aggression in this geography. For that reason, Saudi Arabia and other GCC states will be glad the limitation of Iran's and Shiites influence in Mesopotamia.

2.19. Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Iranian and Syrian regimes largely base their legitimacy on their stance on Palestinian issue. Hezbollah, which is a religious organisation backed by Iran operates in Lebanon. Hamas, the elected government of Palestinian people in Gaza, had a bureau operates in Damascus until the uprisings in Syria. The hesitant position of Turkey and Arab countries on Israeli-Palestinian conflict allowed Iran and Syria to rise as defenders of

¹⁸³ Anthony H. Cordesman and Sam Khazai, "Iraq After US Withdrawal: US Policy and the Iraqi Search for Security and Stability", **Center For Strategic and International Studies**, July 3, 2012. p.40-98.

¹⁸⁴ Tarik Oğuzlu, "ABD sonrası Irak ve Türkiye", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, 37, No. 4, 2012, p. 35.

Palestinian cause in the region. As a consequence of that, Iran and Syria gained the sympathy of the people in Muslim world.¹⁸⁵

Turkey under the leadership of Erdoğan started to increase its popularity in Arab streets because of its harsh discourses against Israel. Furthermore, the Davos meeting on 29 January 2009 was the breaking point of the relationship between Israel and Turkey. Turkish popular Prime Minister Erdoğan, aggressively scolded Peres the president of Israel, and left the session. The tension between two countries was never normalized.

The Justice and Development Party's moderate perception is highly supported the Palestinian side. The group's deputy minister Ahmad Yusuf told the Daily Hurriyet that Hamas will adopt the model of Erdoğan in an interview held in 2010. He legitimized the AKP's model as it works for democracy and avoids extremism.¹⁸⁶ The adoption of moderate views will obligate Western world to recognize Hamas as a political actor instead of terrorist organization. This development can serve to the solution of Palestinian-Israeli disagreement in a peaceful way.

The latest development highlighted the significance of the cooperation between the GCC member Qatar and Turkey. One of the new developments regard this cooperation is that, Hamas moved its bureau from Damascus to Doha the capital of Qatar. By this step Hamas deprived Assad rule from an important source of propaganda. Iran was replaced by Qatar and Turkey as financial source for Hamas. Therefore, the new developments show that it is strongly likely that Qatar and Turkey will be new best allies of Hamas and Palestinian cause. The popularity of these countries will increase in Muslim world due to their stances in Palestinian issue. Thus, both Turkey and the GCC states need to cooperate in order to solve Israel-Palestine conflict. As it is seen, the issue of Palestine has a crucial role to the establishment of a new block between Turkey and the Gulf Arab states.¹⁸⁷

The cooperation between Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkey in the Middle East maybe will not solve all chronic regional problems. However, this cooperation can bring

¹⁸⁵ Frederick W.Kagan&Ahmed K. Majidyar, "Iranian Influence in the Levant, Egypt, Iraq and Afganistan", 2012, p. 6-79.

¹⁸⁶ Hamas: "We want Erdoğan's model, not Taliban's", **Daily Hurriyet**, April 30, 2013.

¹⁸⁷ Valeria Talbot, "Turkey-GCC Relations in a Transforming Middle East", **Analysis**, No. 178, June 2013.

relative peace and stability to the region. The old disagreements among those countries pose obstacles for their collaboration.

2.20. Contrariety in Turkey-GCC Relations

Although Turkey's political and economic relations has increased with the Gulf since JDP come to power, there are also undeniable limitations in this relationship in terms of political, economic, and the cultural fields. One should consider all sides to understand the main limitations between Turkey and GCC states. The main limitation is seen to be the nuclear program of Iran together with its regional policies. However, Iran is not accepted as a threat by Turkey while Gulf Arabs see Iran as the main threat to their presence. For that reason, one cannot say that Turkey and GCC states are totally agree on the regional politics and both sides have the same directions. To examine Turkey's policy towards the question of Iran one can realize that on one hand Turkish government has repeatedly stated her concerns that Iran will have nuclear weapons in near future, it has supported that the only way for the resolving crisis over Iran's nuclear program is diplomatic struggles. This example demonstrates that there are also substantial differences between GCC and Turkey in terms of foreign policy approaches.¹⁸⁸

Turkey does not accept to support U.S. and international proposals which are prescriptive to use diplomatic isolation, sanctions, or military action to force Iran to give up its nuclear ambitions. Unlike Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, Turkey sees that there is no need to act as a Sunni counterweight to Tehran in the Gulf or Iraq. On the other hand, the zero problem policy approach of Turkish foreign policy shows the same idea which is the driven force for the Ankara's successful approach in the Gulf region. Iran is very important country for Turkey. Since it is one of Turkey's biggest neighbours, Turks see the country as a profitable market for their goods. Iran transports its gas through Turkey to Europe, and it can help Turkey to manage the Kurdish rebels and securing Turkey's southeast border.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Birol Başkan, "Turkey-GCC Countries Is There a Future?" *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, no. 1, 2011, p.159-173.

¹⁸⁹ Turkish-Iranian trade grew by 500 percent between 2002 and 2009, "Turkey Says Iran Sanctions 'Mistake' Deepens ties", *Reuters*, October 10, 2012.

In spite of the Gulf Arabs see Iran as a huge threat with its nuclear power program, and regional influence, Iran is an alarming and potential danger for the Gulf monarchs. According to the GCC governments Iran helped to insult Iraq's Sunni Arabs and support Iraq's Shiites. One more reason to see Iran as a threat for them is that Gulf monarchs believe that Iran tries to influence Shi'a Muslims in Gulf States, and finally aims to expel Sunnis from the Arabian Peninsula.¹⁹⁰ What should be done toward Iran? Is it a military intervention or a peaceful dialogue which refers to diplomacy? In that issue most probably Turkey and the GCC would follow completely different positions. While Turkey struggles to resolve the conflict peacefully with Tehran,¹⁹¹ GCC governments have practised exercises with the U.S. navy in preparation for a military conflict with Iran.¹⁹² Such performs represents the importance of GCC security partnerships with the United States and the increasing gap in the relations between Turkey the GCC and the United States. In addition, during the Turkish-Israeli crisis Gulf governments unlike Iran provided little public support for Turkey in June 2010 following the Israel prevention of a Turkish-led flotilla which targeted to reach Palestinians in Gaza.

Another major reason that can be added to the limitations of Turkey's relationship with the Gulf States is the economic area. Although Turkish trade with the Gulf Arab states has increased and Gulf foreign investment has growth swiftly in Turkey since 2003, these bilateral economic relations neither near to matching that in general with the EU, and in particular European states individually, nor the United States.¹⁹³ The EU regarded as for 48 per cent of Turkey's trade in 2008.¹⁹⁴ The European investments in Turkey were six times bigger than those of the GCC investments in 2008. In compare with the EU and the U.S., there is also a large gap between Turkey and the GCC in the field of economic relations.¹⁹⁵ However, Gulf Arabs and their government have not

¹⁹⁰ For more on these issue, see Donna Abu-Nasr, "Yemen Conflict Inflaming Saudi-Iranian Rivalry", **The Associated Press**, November 24, 2009; and Jeffrey Fleishman, "Yemen Teeters on the Brink of Failure", **The Los Angeles Times**, June 6, 2013.

¹⁹¹ David Sanger and Mark Langer, "Major Powers Have Deal on Sanctions for Iran", **New York Times**, October 18, 2012.

¹⁹² Joby Warrick, "US Steps Up Arms Sales to Persian Gulf Allies", **Washington Post**, February 3, 2013; and Sean Foley, "Arabian-Persian Gulf States: An Introduction to Iran and the Arab Gulf States", **Enduring America**, February 8, 2013.

¹⁹³ see http://www.invest.gov.tr/en_US/investmentguide/investorsguide/pages/FDIinTurkey.aspx.

¹⁹⁴ For more on these statistics, see <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/prospects-and-recent-developments-in-the-turkischeconomy.en.mfa>.

¹⁹⁵ see http://www.invest.gov.tr/en_US/investmentguide/investorsguide/pages/FDIinTurkey.aspx.

stopped to invest in Europe or North America. The United States has also an important place of investment for the Gulf capitals. It is for the fact that the petroleum which is the main export good of GCC states is sold and bought in U.S. dollars in all over the world. That fact secures the financial partnerships between GCC Arabs and the U.S. This situation is not likely to change in the near future since the U.S. and the European institutional and cultural relationships which were built with Turkey and the Gulf Arab states during the cold war era remain feasible even today.

Turkey is still member and a part of the NATO alliance and its policy. As a result, Turkish links with the West still remain strong. Military, cultural, and economic ties continue to bind the Europe and the United States with the Gulf States. Both Gulf Arabs and Turkey still believe that the hub of the world is the west in terms of science and developments. Therefore, these relationships and interests will determine how events develop between Turkey and the Gulf states in future.

2.21. The Bilateral Relations between Turkey and the Leading Force of the GCC; Saudi Arabia

When the AKP came to power in 2002, a new phase started for Turkish politics. The Party started to reshape its foreign policy. To do that, the Party declared significant principles such as zero problems with neighbour's policy, maximum cooperation with neighbours, and pro-active, dynamic, and multidimensional foreign policy. For that reason, Turkey tried to solve her bilateral problems and to increase cooperation with other countries, in particular neighbouring countries. As a necessity of this new understanding, the AK Party government improved its relations with Saudi Arabia, which was still dependent on the West while it is one of the main powers in the region especially within the GCC organisation.

To analyse the bilateral relations between Turkey and Saudi Arabia one can see that, both Ankara and Riyadh attempted to decrease their dependence on global powers in the last decade. For this reason, Turkey and Saudi Arabia followed a regional policy that did not alienate the other and did not increase their dependence on the West. In the AKP era Turkey has preferred a regional policy which is attempting to solve regional problems via regional Dynamics. Parallel to that policy of Turkey, Saudi Arabia has followed a regional policy which did not marginalize Turkey in the Middle East. Saudi

leaders thought that if Turkey was marginalized because of its increased regional initiatives, Ankara could get closer to Israel and the West. As result of getting closer to the West and Israel it could turn its back on regional countries, which would have negative effect to the Arab people's interests. The Saudi Administration feared that a new Turkish-Israeli alliance could establish in the region. Before Turkish Islamist seize the power in Turkey, in other words during the Kemalist leadership period, the more Turkey improved its relations with Israel and the West, the more it turned its back on the Arab peoples.¹⁹⁶ Considering that circumstance Saudi Arabia which started to accept itself as the leader of Arab World recently took steps carefully on the policies regarding Turkey. On that account, Saudi Arabia preferred to improve its cooperation with Turkey under Erdoğan's leadership and to follow similar policies towards the mid-east region.¹⁹⁷ Not only the new Turkish leadership of the AKP played a role but also other internal and regional developments has contributed to the normalization and improvement of relations between the two countries since 2003.

During the decade that we are in, Saudi Arabia and Turkey adopted relatively independent regional policies and both countries agreed to cooperate in maintaining regional stability. Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia reoriented their regional foreign policies as a result of domestic, regional, and international developments. In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, when al-Qaeda, which caused the deterioration of Saudi Arabian relations with the West, began to challenge the authority of al-Saud family, the Kingdom decided to cooperate with Turkey against regional transnational threats. The struggle against transnational terrorism aggravated similar concerns among Saudi and Turkish authorities and the two began to understand and recognize their political differences. While Saudi Arabia began to acknowledge Turkey's pro-Western policy and its secular political system, Turkey gave up the "otherization" of the Kingdom. Although they were unable to stop the events in Iraq, both countries were concerned about the American invasion and adopted similar stances in the Iraq's Neighbouring Countries Platform.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Ömer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türkiye'nin Arap Ortadoğu'suna Karşı Politikası (1945-1970)*, Barış Kitabevi, Ankara, 2010, s.21-22; Türel Yılmaz, *Türkiye-İsrail Yakınlaşması*, imaj Yayıncılık, Ankara, 2001, s.4.

¹⁹⁷ "Türkiye'yi İsrail'e Kaptırmayalım", *El-Cezire Gazetesi*, Başyazı, 3 Mayıs 2005'ten çeviren *Radikal*, 4 Mayıs 2013.

¹⁹⁸ Veysel Ayhan, "Türkiye-Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkilerinde Yeni Bir Dönem: Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik Diyalog", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.1, no.7-8, July-August 2009. p. 114-123

After the increase in mistrust between the Western countries and Saudi Arabia as a result of the September 11 attacks, the Kingdom began to look to alternative countries for partnership, especially for investment and economic cooperation. Turkey, as one of the fastest growing economies in the world and as an emerging regional power, was considered one of the best candidates for economic and political cooperation. The Saudi administration began to see Turkey as a military power to balance regional threats and to prevent instabilities, and as an economy with which it could increase bilateral trade and initiate joint projects.¹⁹⁹

In this context, Saudi Arabia and Turkey launched many economic initiatives. They signed the treaty establishing the Turkish-Saudi Business Council in 2003. In May 2005, Ankara and Riyadh decided to establish an investment fund in order to encourage Gulf country private and governmental investments in Turkey; the fund is to be governed by an international body and to be coordinated by the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce and Jeddah Chamber of Trade and Commerce.²⁰⁰ Moreover, Turkey and Saudi Arabia agreed to cooperate on regional political and social problems and to utilize regional dynamics in solving these problems. They signed a cooperation agreement on 12 February 2005 to fight transnational terrorism.²⁰¹ Thus, political elites of the Kingdom have tried to benefit from Turkey's military, political, and economic leverage in their dealings with regional political, economic, and cultural problems.

One of the best indications of the improvement of bilateral relations between the two capitals has been the high level official visits. The first visit by King Abdullah to Turkey in 2006 should be considered a milestone in Turkish-Saudi relations. This visit was historical due to several factors. It was the first top-level visit from Saudi Arabia to Turkey (besides King Faisal's few hours in Istanbul).²⁰²

The participation of a large delegation made this meeting even more significant. Unlike the traditional royal trips, King Abdullah visited Ankara with a large delegation including 400 ministers, businessmen, bureaucrats, and family members.²⁰³ The two

¹⁹⁹ Muhittin Ataman, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri Temkinli İlişkilerden Çok Taraflı Birlikteliğe", **ORSAM, Ortadoğu Analiz**, Eylül 2009, Cilt 1 Sayı 9.

²⁰⁰ "Arap Sermayesine Fon", **Radikal**, Mayıs 10, 2013.

²⁰¹ P. K. Abdol Ghafoor, "Kingdom, Turkey Ink Landmark Security Pact", **Arab News**, 13 February 2013.

²⁰² "Suudi Arabistan Kralı Türkiye'deydi", **Anlayış**, September 2012.

²⁰³ "Saudi King Abdullah to Visit Turkey on August 8", **Today's Zaman**, 3 September 2012.

governments signed many agreements during this historical visit. Turkish and Saudi businessmen and entrepreneurs signed many agreements for common investments.²⁰⁴ Businessmen from the two countries exchanged views in order to find investment opportunities and improve commercial relations. Saudi public and private institutions planned to invest \$25 billion in energy, finance, tourism, petroleum chemicals, and communications areas in Turkey. Turkish businessmen and companies currently handle \$30 billion in projects in Saudi Arabia.²⁰⁵

The visit of 32,000 businessmen and tourists to Turkey in 2005 also indicates the increasing Saudi interest in Turkey.²⁰⁶ Just before the global economic crisis, bilateral trade volume between Ankara and Riyadh increased to more than \$5.5 billion. It decreased somewhat because of the crisis, but remains much higher than it used to be. While Turkey sells industrial materials, textiles, agricultural products, machines, automobiles, and similar industrial goods, it mainly imports oil from the Kingdom.²⁰⁷ Saudi Arabia and Turkey have also signed six agreements regarding political consultation, cooperation in exchanging state archives, encouraging and maintaining investments, prevention of double taxation, cooperation in the health sector, and transportation of passengers and cargo. King Abdullah's visit added a new security dimension into the bilateral relationship. The national and regional security questions were major discussion points since the regional security vacuum increased as a result of developments in Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, and Palestine. The Kingdom has been trying to get reduce its American dependency in the wake of 9/11 attacks in light of the increasing Western critiques of Wahhabi Islam and the Saudi Administration. Being concerned about the unilateral and conflictual American/Israeli-centered regional policies, the Saudi government improved its military and political relations with Turkey. Despite the Saudi dependence on American weaponry, the Saudi authorities began to exchange regional views with their Turkish counterparts. King Abdullah revisited Turkey in 2007 in order to congratulate Abdullah Gül on his presidential election and to exchange views with Turkish authorities about the Middle Eastern peace process. President Gül welcomed the King at the airport and awarded him the State Medal of Honor, which has

²⁰⁴ "Kral 6 Anlaşma, Dostluk ve Milyar Dolarlık Yatırım Biraktı", **Yeni Şafak**, 12 August 2012.

²⁰⁵ M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Kingdom, Turkey Set to Boost Trade Ties", **Arab News**, 11 August 2012.

²⁰⁶ "Saudi King Abdullah to Visit Turkey on August 8", **Today's Zaman**, 3 September 2012.

²⁰⁷ "Suudi Arabistan Ulke Bulteni, Haziran 2010_Tr.Pdf", **Diş Ekonomik İlişkiler Kurulu**, http://www.deik.org.tr/Konseylcerik/1270/Suudi_Arabistan_Bulteni.html.

been granted to only seven foreign statesmen. In return, in a ceremony held at Çankaya Presidential Palace, King Abdullah granted the King Abdulaziz Medal of the First Degree to President Gül and awarded the Abdulaziz Legion of Honor to Prime Minister Erdoğan.²⁰⁸ During this second visit, the two countries emphasized the necessity to diversify and improve relations. President Gül and King Abdullah signed a memorandum of understanding for strengthening political and economic cooperation between the two countries and a convention on the avoidance of double taxation. Having similar opinions about the problems in the Middle East, Riyadh and Ankara shared views regarding the Palestinian, Lebanese, Iraqi and Kurdish issues, and voiced opposition to both Iranian regional dominance and US intervention in regional issues.

While Turkey has been pursuing policy that does not alienate Iran in regional issues, Saudi Arabia accelerated a process of rapprochement with Turkey. Although Ankara and Riyadh try to be in contact with Iran, they initiated a process of establishing a Sunni cooperation against an Iran-led Shiite regional block. For example, upon the invitation of another Sunni state, Pakistan, ministers of foreign affairs from seven Sunni countries gathered in Islamabad on 25 February 2007. Pakistan, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Egypt, and Jordan attended the meeting where the countries tried to adopt a common attitude towards regional problems. In the joint declaration, the priority was given to the Palestinian issue, the territorial integrity of Iraq, and Lebanese politics. These countries stated that the problem regarding Iran's nuclear energy production must be resolved through peaceful means.²⁰⁹

Parallel to the close relations between public institutions of the two countries, private sectors also increased their cooperation. For instance, The National Commercial Bank, which is the largest bank in Saudi Arabia, paid \$1.8 billion and acquired 60 per cent of the shares of the Türkiye Finans Katılım Bankası which belongs to Ülker and Boydak groups.²¹⁰ Ziraat Bank was granted a fully authorized banking license in Saudi Arabia in 2008. Ziraat Bank announced that it will establish seven additional branches in the country after its first branch opened in Jeddah.²¹¹ Moreover, one of the leading Turkish communication companies, Yüksel Consortium won a water transportation tender in

²⁰⁸ "Al Madalyanı Ver Madalyamı", **Radikal**, 10 Şubat 2013.

²⁰⁹ "Ortadoğu İçin Sünni Dayanışması", **Radikal**, 26 Şubat 2013.

²¹⁰ "Türkiye Finans Suudi NCB'ye Satıldı", **Aksiyon**, n. 659, 29 Şubat, 2013.

²¹¹ "Ziraat Cidde'de Şube Açacak", **Hürriyet**, 6 February 2013.

Saudi Arabia worth \$383 million. A Turkish construction firm, Yüksel Construction, also won the Saudi Arabia Eastern Region Water Pipeline Project tender of \$372 million in March 2008.²¹²

The strong relationship between Saudi Arabia and Turkey has continued in recent years. Multilateral active foreign policies adopted by Turkey and Saudi Arabia influenced the two countries to cooperate on regional and bilateral issues. Saudi Arabia's Chief of the Naval Forces Admiral Fahd bin Abdullah Mohammed al-Suud and the head of Shura Council Abdullah Bin Mohammed Bin Ibrahim al-Sheikh paid official visits to Turkey in 2009. In addition to official visits, the head of the Saudi Arabian Security Council Prince Bender Bin Sultan Bin Abdul-Aziz al-Suud and Prince Abdulaziz Bin Mohammed Bin Fahd al-Suud spent their holiday together with their families in Turkey in the same year.

Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Babacan accompanied a delegation visiting Jeddah in September 2008 to participate in the first ministerial meeting of the High Level Strategic Dialogue mechanism between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and Turkey.²¹³

It was the first regular consultation process between the GCC and a country. Babacan underlined that institutionalization of relations with the GCC countries will serve common interests and pave the way for cooperation. Minister Babacan took part in the meeting held by the Organization of Islamic Conference in Jeddah at the beginning of 2009 while Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan paid a one-day visit to Riyadh.²¹⁴ In February 2009, President Abdullah Gül paid a visit to Saudi Arabia. Gül called on Saudis to use Turkey for economic investment, education, tourism, and health services. President Gül, who was welcomed at the airport by the King, became the first president of a Muslim country who addressed the Saudi Shura consultative assembly.²¹⁵

Political, economic, and social relations between Turkey and the Kingdom continued to improve in 2010 and 2011 with mutual and rhythmic visits. Among others, Turkish

²¹² "Turkish Firm Wins Saudi Project", **The New Anatolian**, 3 July 2013.

²¹³ "Türkiye ile KİK Arasında Mutabakat Muhtırası İmzalandı", **Hürriyet**, 3 May 2013.

²¹⁴ "Başbakan Erdoğan, Suudi Arabistan'a Gitti", **Hürriyet**, 3 January 2013.

²¹⁵ Sultan Sooud Al-Qassemi, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia: The Buildup to Syria", **Today's Zaman**, 18 April 2013; Zeynep Gürçanlı, "Gül'den Suudi Arabistan'a 4 Çağrı", **Hürriyet**, 3 May 2013; "Gül: Terörle İşimiz Olmadı", **Hürriyet**, 4 May 2013.

Prime Minister Erdoğan visited the Kingdom twice in 2010. During his second visit, Erdoğan was awarded with the King Faisal International Prize, which is considered the Nobel Prize of the Arab world. This prize was awarded due to his services to Islam like Erdoğan's courageous conduct towards Israeli President Peres during the Davos meeting in 2009.²¹⁶ Ankara and Riyadh signed a military cooperation agreement during Saudi Deputy Defense Minister Prince Sultan's visit in May 2010. After signing treaties to protect mutual investments and to avoid double taxation, Turkish-Saudi trade increased to \$4.65 billion by the end of 2010. According to the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the number of Saudi bookings in Turkish hotels increased to 75 per cent.²¹⁷

Turkey and Saudi Arabia had been strongly dependent on the Western world, especially on American support for decades. Recently, both countries have tried to diversify their foreign relations without abandoning their friendly relations with the West. On the one hand, they have tried to improve their relations with other global powers to decrease their dependence on the West. On the other hand, they have improved bilateral and multilateral regional cooperation to decrease their dependence on global powers. The developments mentioned above can be shown as indications of the improvement of bilateral relations in all spheres.

2.22. Regional Power Balances and the Threat from Iran

One of the main pillars of Saudi and Turkish regional policies is the fear of Iran and balancing against possible Iranian hegemony. For instance, both countries tried to contribute to the reconstruction process of the country and supported Iyad Allawi during the Iraqi parliamentary elections held in 2010, in order to ensure Iraq was away from Iranian control. However, Ankara and Riyadh pursue different policies regarding Iran. While Turkey mainly follows a supra-sectarian regional policy and oppose Western military intervention, the Kingdom encourages the West to punish Iran. Saudi Arabia is especially concerned about the Iranian objective of creating a Shia region (*Shia Cres-*

²¹⁶ "Erdoğan Awarded 'Nobel Prize' of Arab World", **Hurriyet Daily News**, 1 April 2013.

²¹⁷ Al-Qassem, "Turkey and Saudi Arabia: The Buildup to Syria", **Todays Zaman**, 06.05.2013.

cent) in the Middle East. This would contain Saudi activities and compel the Kingdom to make all its regional plans based upon anti-Iranianism.²¹⁸

In this context, Saudi Arabia seeks cooperation with Turkey which is another regional Sunni state concerned about Iranian regional hegemony. Saudi leaders are convinced that without Turkey, which nowadays claims influence in global power calculations as well as in the Arab streets, it is quite difficult to overcome the regional rivalry with Iran. The long time regional balance between the moderate axis of Riyadh-Cairo and the radical Tehran-Damascus axis ended with the revolts in 2011. The Arab revolts struck countries from both axes and harmed both sides. The loss of Egypt meant more for Saudi Arabia, since it was not only the loss of an ally, but also changed the regional balances previously in favour of the Kingdom. For today's regional power calculations in which Egypt lost its leverage, the Kingdom needs Turkey, the only possible regional power to fill the gap as an ally in its struggle against Iran, which still uses a conflictual discourse for the Middle East.²¹⁹

²¹⁸Frederic Wehrey, Theodore W. Karasik, Alireza Nader, Jeremy Ghez, Lydia Hansell, Robert A. Guffey, "Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy", **RAND, National Security Research Division**. P. 77-91.

²¹⁹ Fuad Farhavi, "Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri ve Ortak Stratejik Derinlik", **Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu**, 2012 Mart Sayısı.

CHAPTER 3: THE EVOLUTION OF THE FOREIGN POLICY BETWEEN TURKEY AND THE GCC

In the last decade which has witnessed to the power of AKP government in Turkey became a ground for several developments. The Arabian Gulf region has raised as an important focal area for Turkish foreign policy makers. Turkish trade with these countries has developed dramatically in this decade so Turkish exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE have scaled up rapidly. However, Turkey has become a centre of attraction for the investments which originated from the Gulf Arab States. In addition to that, another major development took place in 2008. In September 2008, the bilateral relations between Turkey and GCC states have also started to take on a wider political dimension. Turkey and the GCC countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). This memorandum makes Turkey the first country outside the Gulf which has been given the status of a strategic partner.²²⁰ The MOU represents a qualified progress of GCC–Turkey relations. It also facilitates the foundation for a regular dialogue at the level of foreign ministries.

In this chapter, it is tried to analyse Turkey’s foreign policy toward the GCC within the broader context of Turkey’s policy in the Middle East. The first part focuses on the factors that shaped this policy and its strategic goals.

3.1. The Broader Geostrategic Context

The advancement of Turkey’s ties with the GCC has been a part of the broader struggle by the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) to strengthen relations with the Middle East.²²¹ Within the last decade, Turkey has emerged as an important and strong regional power in the Middle East. Particularly, relations with Iran and Syria have been strengthened along with the Arabian Gulf countries. Turkey also started to play a mediator role in the regional conflicts. In this context, Turkey has sought to act as a mediator between Syria and Israel and in a number of other conflicts. Turkey’s new activism in the Middle East and the Gulf represents an important departure from the traditional Turkish foreign policy since the

²²⁰ “Turkey-GCC sign deal for strategic cooperation”, **Todays Zaman**, 15.06.2013.

²²¹ F. Stephen Larrabee, “Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East”, **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 86, No. 4, July-August 2007, p. 103–18.

establishment of the Republic. Turkey has always avoided from involvements in Middle Eastern affairs deeply. Except of a short period in the mid of 1950s under the rule of Democratic Party, principally, Ankara has always given priority to strengthen relations with the West for most of the post war period. For that reason, it kept largely shunner from the Middle East. This new activism of Turkey in the Middle East and Gulf does not mean that Turkey wants to turn its back on the West. Rather, this new Turkish activism in the Middle East represents an effort to widen and diversify Turkish foreign policy. It is not seen to change its basic orientation. Turkey's deeper involvement in the Middle East and Gulf can be seen as a response to changes in Turkey's security environment as well. Turkey today faces a very different security environment than the one it faced during the Cold War. After the Cold War, Turkey's dependence on the USA for its security has reduced. At the same time, the end of the cold war opened up new opportunities and perspectives to Turkish foreign policy in areas that had been neglected for long time by Turkish authorities. These areas are the Balkans, the Caucasus and the Middle East.²²² Besides, Turkey found itself at the crossroads of a new, emerging and a strategic landscape that includes areas in which Turkey had long standing interests and historical connections. Therefore, Turkey tried to exploit this new diplomatic flexibility. To do so, Turkey established new relationships in areas it had previously neglected, above all the Middle East and in particular the Persian Gulf region.

3.2. Looking for New Alliances

The process of broadening and deepening Turkey's ties to areas beyond the West has started before the AKP came to power. The first attempts begun under the then President Turgut Ozal. In Ozal era, Turkey spent big efforts to establish closer ties to Central Asia. As an effect of that, this process gained greater strength after the seizure of power by the AKP in November 2002. Additionally, it has been heavily influenced by the doctrine of Strategic Depth, a concept which has developed by Ahmet Davutoğlu, who is a Turkish academic became chief foreign policy advisor to Prime

²²² F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey's New Geopolitics", *Survival*, Vol. 52, No. 2, April–May 2010, p. 157–89.

Minister Erdoğan after the AKP won the November 2002 elections. He also serves as Turkey's Foreign Minister currently.²²³

The main idea behind the doctrine of Strategic Depth is that a nation's value in international relations depends upon its geostrategic location. According to Davutoğlu, due to its strategic location and control of the Bosphorus Turkey was particularly well suited to play an important geopolitical role. Besides, the concept of Strategic Depth emphasizes the importance of Turkey's Ottoman legacy and its historical and cultural ties to the neighbouring regions. These connections coming up from Turkey's Ottoman heritage are seen as important fortune that advances Turkey's ability to become a regional power. Davutoğlu's doctrine also offers that by establishing multiple alliances, Turkey should counterbalance its relations with the West. According to Davutoğlu, this strategy would enable Turkey to develop its freedom of action and increase its leverage. In spite of that, Turkey's new foreign policy outreach in the Middle East and Gulf has little to do with a resurrection of Turkish imperial ambitions of the Ottoman period.²²⁴ As a result of all mentioned above, one can say that the AKP's Islamic roots have influenced Turkish policy but they have not been the main driving force behind it. Rather the policy has been driven primarily by strategic factors, above all the need to put tensions down with its immediate neighbours and former enemies.²²⁵

3.3. Getting Closer with the Gulf

Recently, Turkey has expanded its ties with the Gulf States dramatically. This radical shift can be seen as a source of the background of the broader shift in Turkish foreign policy. Economic factors have been an important driving force of the expansion of Turkey's relations with the Gulf States and the Middle East. In the last decade, especially with the AKP's seizure of power in Turkey, trade with the GCC members has boomed. In 1998, trade volume with the GCC countries amounted to \$1.6 billion. When it comes to 2008, this volume of trade had risen to \$ 17.5 billion. However, trade

²²³ Ahmet Davutoğlu, "Turkiye'nin Uluslararası Konumu", **Stratejik Derinlik**, Istanbul: Kure Yayinlari, 2001. For a detailed discussion of the content and influence of the concept, see Alexander Murinson, "The Strategic Depth Doctrine in Turkish Foreign Policy", **Middle Eastern Studies**, Vol. 42, No. 6, November 2006, p. 945–64.

²²⁴ Ibrahim Kalin, Chief Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Erdoğan, "A Neo-Ottomanism?", **The Majalla**, November 27, 2009.

²²⁵ Ekrem Eddy Güzeldere, "Turkish Foreign Policy: From "Surrounded by Enemies" to Zero Problems", **CAP Policy Analysis**, October 1 2009.

volume decreased in 2009 due to the global financial crisis but rose by 25 per cent in the first seven months of 2010.

The Erdoğan government's new strategy to diversify export markets and reduce Turkey's reliance on the EU has played a major role in this expansion of trade relations with the Gulf. The EU is still Turkey's largest trading partner.²²⁶ Almost half of all Turkish trade is with EU. On the other hand, the percentage of Turkish exports to the EU has declined from 56 per cent from the 2002 when the AKP took power to about 50 per cent in 2010. Today, the Gulf region represents an important market for Turkish products. There is also a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) attempt between Turkey and the GCC, which has been under negotiation since 2005. Due to the long postponements of this attempt, FTA between Turkey and GCC has not been reached to a successful level yet.²²⁷ For that reason, Turkey has always explicitly put its frustration in words about this issue. It seems that one of the main obstacles to the conclusion of the FTA has been the concern of the GCC members to prevent the influx of cheap Turkish steel and iron products into the GCC market. Apart from this, Turkey has become an increasing hub for Gulf based investors. According to figures from the Turkish Treasury, the number of Gulf based firms investments in Turkey has more than doubled since 2003, as there was no Gulf based capital invested in Turkey in 2003. However, Gulf based capital investments in Turkey reached to \$1.78 billion in 2006. Most of these investments based on Gulf capital have been in the agricultural sector. With this strategy Gulf Arabs aimed to increase strategic food reserves.²²⁸

The GCC interest in Turkey is not only economic but also political. At the beginning of the 2000s, the oil prices were too high for that reason GCC revenue increased enormously. As a result of this high revenue, the GCC countries were searching for a safe country to invest in. In this respect, Turkey was seen as an attractive market for Gulf Arabs investments. Turkey especially emerged as an attractive place for Muslim's

²²⁶http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_1134, Comext, Statistical regime; World excluding Intra-EU trade and European Union: 27 member, 5 July, 2013. 56.pdf, See; EUROSTAT.

²²⁷ <http://www.ekonomi.gov.tr/sta/>. Accessed, 10 July, 2013.

²²⁸ Ebru Tunkay, "Turkey the winner in Gulf's investment hunt", **Hurriyet Daily News and Economic Review**, December 1, 2012.

investments after the 9/11 incidents which increased serious negative reactions toward Muslims who live and invest in the Western countries.²²⁹

However, in late 1990s the price of oil started to decline sharply. As a result of that, Gulf States felt themselves obliged to make some changes in their economic strategy and reduce their dependence on oil exports. The Dubai (one of the seven emirates that generate the United Arab Emirates) success which built country's economy around transportation, modern manufacturing and services became an economic model for many Gulf countries as most of them sought to replicate the success of Dubai in this context. Afterwards, Gulf States realized that they have to diversify their investments as relying on one income sector in which oil market is so risky. Thus, Turkey has become an increasingly important destination for Gulf investments.²³⁰ As a result of the rapprochement between Turkey and Gulf Sheikdoms, Gulf banks have been allowed to invest in many sectors inside Turkey. The main sector which attracts the Gulf capital is the banking sector. Hence, Gulf Arabs made huge investments in Turkish banks. Besides, there have been substantial Kuwaiti investments in housing projects in Istanbul as well.²³¹ Gulf establishments and individuals have also bought large interests in Turkish companies such as Turkcell, Turkey's largest mobile phone provider.

On the other hand, Turkish-EU relations also played an important role in the development of Gulf investments to Turkey. As a result of the Customs Union Agreement has been signed in 1995 by Turkey and the EU, Gulf investment increased rapidly to Turkey. Not only that but also the worsening atmosphere that emerged after 9/11 forced the GCC states to move for diversification of their investments with more going to Turkey.²³² The Muslim identity of Turkey together with its increasing activism in the region and globe became a crucial reason behind the GCC investments to Turkey. Nonetheless, Turkish companies have also been highly successful in the GCC countries. According to the figures Turkish companies were the seventh largest in terms of contracts awarded at the annual Gulf International Trade Show in Dammam, Saudi Arabia. Since then, they have expanded their success. Another success story for Turkish

²²⁹ "Körfez Sermayesi Türkiye'ye akıyor", **Dünya Bülteni**, 15.06.2013.

²³⁰ "WSJ: Körfez ülkeleri Türkiye'ye yoğun yatırım yapıyor", **Milliyet**, June 10,2013.

²³¹ Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", **Turkish Studies**, Vol. 10, No. 1 (March 2009), p. 76.

²³² "Türk Dış Politikasının Eksen Genişlemesinde Körfez Sermayesinin Etkisi", **Bilgesam**, 10.06.2013.

companies came with the Baytur, which is a Turkish construction company, won a \$124 million contract to build Qatar's Islamic museum and a \$245 million contract to build the Qatari National Library in 2006.²³³

3.4. The Case of Security and the Turkey-GCC Convergence

The relations between Turkey and GCC states have been built on the economical ground. The bilateral relations between Turkey and the GCC have recently begun to take on a wider political and strategic dimension while economics has been the driving force behind the intensified cooperation between Turkey and the Gulf states. In this respect, the signing of the MOU in 2008 can be seen as an important step in which Turkey granted the status of strategic partner. This development provided the foundation for the starting of a broad political and strategic dialogue between the parties which has intensified substantially since the memorandum has been signed in 2008. As it is mentioned before, being the main power within the GCC organisation, Saudi Arabia's relations with Turkey have also been strengthened. In August 2006, Saudi Arabia's King Abdullah paid a visit to Turkey which is the first visit to Turkey by a Saudi ruler in 40 years. King Abdullah with his this comprehensive visit aimed to give political impetus to bilateral trade and investment. This visit was not only related to trade and investment issues but also it had an important political goal. This goal was to gain Turkish support for an axis of Sunni states against Iran as Saudi Elites has always sought formulas to create Sunni axis includes Turkey in. The first visit in 2006 was followed by a second one by King Abdullah in 2007 again. In this visit the two parties' further sign of the warming of ties. According to many claims, Saudi King Abdullah brought about 24 billion dollars in his plane to Turkey in order to help Turkey to overcome the global economic crises.²³⁴ The Gulf States, especially Saudi Arabia, accept Turkey as a potential countervailing power which could balance Iran's growing influence over the Middle East and Gulf region. As a result, Riyadh is pushing for Turkey's engagement into a Sunni block against Iranian rising influence. On the other side, Ankara seems to be unwilling to join an open anti-Iranian coalition as Iran supplies

²³³ Sean Foley, "Turkey and the Gulf States in the Twenty-First Century", **Middle East Review of International Affairs**, Vol. 14, No. 3, September 2010, p. 34.

²³⁴ "Arabistan'dan Türkiye'ye uçakla 15 milyar dolar geldi mi?", **Milliyet**, 20.06.2013.

more than 20 per cent of Turkey's natural gas.²³⁵ Thus, Turkey is very hesitant to take action against Iran as Ankara is not ready to risk its energy acquisition.

To consider Turkey's growing energy needs in the coming years, Turkey is not seen to break up with Iran easily. Unlike to break the relations with Iran Turkey has a big interest in keeping relations warm with Tehran at least at the current conditions. Turkey's interests to keep its relations warm with Iran are not only related with the economic reasons but it also related with political aspects. Turkey and Iran have a common interest in containing Kurdish nationalism and preventing the emergence of an independent Kurdish state in Northern Iraq.²³⁶ It is clear that Turkey has both strong economic and political reasons to maintain good relations with Tehran and avoid being drawn into an open anti-Iranian axis. For that reason, policies of Turkey and GCC block can clash over the issue of Iran. When it comes to Iraq, Turkey and the Gulf Monarchies have a common policy on the security issues.²³⁷ In this respect, it can be seen that the Gulf States and Turkey share a common interest in securing of a stable Iraq. The US-led western invasion of Iraq in 2003 led to an intensified sectarian violence. This environment of trouble caused to a seriously dangerous fragmentation of political power in Iraq. The reason is that Ankara and the Gulf states are concerned that the withdrawal of the U.S. combat forces from Iraq could lead to the creation of a power vacuum that Iran could seek to fill as it is proving in these years after the U.S. withdrawal.

3.5. Turkey's Contribution to Gulf Security

In the previous decades Turkey was cautious about the engagement related to security issues with the Gulf States. For that reason, Turkey tried to stay far from any direct interaction with the GCC with respect to the security issues in the Gulf until September 2008. Until the mentioned date, Turkey was satisfied to provide security support through its NATO network. The step of Turkey to take part in NATO's force fighting the Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan showed that Turkey has a common security policy with the GCC states. This step demonstrated the solidarity of Turkey and the GCC states which also concern of terrorist attacks by radical Islamists. Turkey openly

²³⁵ Janine Zacharia, "Obama Calls Turkey an Important Player in Iran (Update 3)", **Bloomberg**, June 7, 2013.

²³⁶ "Yeni 'Kürdistan' denklemi: Kim ne istiyor?", **Aksiyon**, sayı 968/ 24-30 Haziran 2013.

²³⁷ F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey Rediscovered the Middle East", **Foreign Affairs**, Vol. 86, No. 4 (July/August 2007), p. 110-18.

hosted the NATO summit in Istanbul in 2004. This summit developed the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative (ICI). The main of the ICI is to create a security cooperation relationship with the wider Middle East, including the Arab Gulf states. Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) the four GCC member states joined the ICI in 2006. Despite the encouragement of NATO, Saudi Arabia and Oman have not joined yet.²³⁸ The Memorandum of Understanding which was signed between the GCC and Turkey's foreign ministers in September 2, 2008 led Turkey to engage in GCC security issues.²³⁹ According to this memorandum, Turkey and the GCC states agreed to meet periodically. Thus, they would be able to strengthen a strategic dialogue.²⁴⁰

Many different issues discussed by Turkish Foreign Minister Ali Babacan and his GCC counterparts. The matters discussed in these meetings are as following; the first matter was the decision of Iran to build a maritime rescue office and a ship registration office on the disputed island of Abu Musa.²⁴¹ The second issue was the Iranian nuclear program together with the developments after the 2003 invasion Iraq.²⁴² Beyond any doubt, there have been several radical changes in Turkey-GCC relations in the last decade. These radical changes raised many questions as well. The main questions for these concerns are; what is behind these ties between Turkey and the GCC states? Why these parties ear eager to increase the economic and political interactions? Do the GCC states accept Turkey as a strategic partner really? Can Turkey be a counterweight to Iran especially if the US presence in the Gulf becomes problematic for the GCC states? Will Turkey be able to shoulder this responsibility? On the other hand, one should ask that what role Turkey is willing to play in providing security to the Gulf Arab states. There are many different answers to these questions. However the fact that should not fail to be noticed the GCC states face a series of security challenges in the Gulf region originated from Iran and international terrorism. Nevertheless, it is clear that these tiny

²³⁸ "NATO Urges Saudi Arabia to Join Cooperation Pact", **Reuters**, June 30, 2013. The UAE did agree in January 2008 to grant France a permanent naval base for a small contingent of French troops and signed agreements to acquire civilian nuclear capabilities from France. "France Signs Deal over Military Base in Abu Dhabi", **France 24**, May 1, 2013, Ben Hall and Simeon Kerr, "Iran bristles as French forces head for war games in the Gulf", **Financial Times**, May 23, 2013, Accessed; 24 May, 2013.

²³⁹ "GCC-Turkey to Boost Trade Relations", **Agence France-Presse**, May 4, 2013; Accessed 5 May, 2013.

²⁴⁰ "GCC Foreign Ministers Conclude Meeting", **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, State of Qatar**, September 3, 2008, <http://english.mofa.gov.qa/newsPage.cfm?newsid=3279> (accessed May 6, 2013).

²⁴¹ Abu Musa is one of the disputed Gulf islands that Iran occupied in 1971 and continues to be claimed by the UAE.

²⁴² "Turkey Signs Strategic Agreement with Gulf States", **World Bulletin**, September 3, 2008, accessed June 6, 2013.

Gulf States are unable to meet their own security concerns by themselves. As a result, they must rely on the U.S. military protection. The main concern for Gulf sheikhdoms is that what if U.S.A. pulls its military support back.

It seems that the Gulf Arab states have big advantages to further an economic relationship with Turkey. They believe the second step after the economic alignment will be pursued with the rising of the possibility of forming a closer alignment for security purposes that they may need in the future. This convergence is not a gain only for the GCC states but it is also in Turkey's national interest to enhance a closer relationship with the GCC, as Turkey also has security challenges emanating from the Gulf region to Turkey. For this reason, both sides can take additional steps and it seems they are willing to take these steps which will facilitate the groundwork for closer security cooperation.²⁴³

3.6. The Reasons for GCC-Turkey Convergence

It seems to be very advantageous to set up a closer alignment with Turkey for the Gulf sheikhdoms. There are serious of reasons which drive the Gulf leaders to come close to Turkey.²⁴⁴ First reason is the ideological intimacy between Turkey and the Gulf states. After the 2002 the moderate Islamist government of the AKP under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's leadership came to power in Turkey. This development led a more comfortable environment to establish diplomatic partnership for the Gulf States than the predecessor government which was strictly secularist. Moreover, Turkey like Arab Gulf countries has a large Sunni population. In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion Turkey and Arab Gulf states followed relatively common policies towards Iraqi question.²⁴⁵ Turkey and GCC states wanted to share their borders with a reintegrated Iraq and a functioning central government that able to cope with all problems in the country and which is equidistant to all different parties in the country. Neither the Gulf Arab states nor Turkey (in the first term of AKP government) wanted to see a divided Iraq with a strong

²⁴³ Lenore G.Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security", *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 75-93, March 2009. p. 76-88.

²⁴⁴ Faruk Loğoğlu, "Turkey's potential as a strategic ally for the GCC states has not been lost on influential commentators", the "Manama Dialogue" in Bahrain, held in December 2007, organized by the IISS sees Turkey as "poised to become a security enhancer in the region, provided it is willing to take up the challenge". Faruk Logoglu, "The Manama Dialogue: Gulf Security and Turkey", *Today's Zaman*, January 7, 2013. Jihal al-Zayn, "Turkey Knows How to Intervene", *al-Hayat*, June 15, 2013.

²⁴⁵ Veysel Ayhan, "Turkey-Iraq Relations: An Analysis in the Framework of Regional Countries' Iraq Policy", *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Eylül 2009, Cilt 1, Sayı 9, p. 22-31.

autonomous Kurdistan in the north, a strong autonomous Shi'a south, and a weak Sunni middle. Furthermore, Turkey and GCC states pushed for a Sunni-dominated central government but they couldn't reach to this aim.

Additionally, Turkey under the AKP government has not carelessly followed US policies in the Middle East.²⁴⁶ Turkey clearly opposed the US invasion of Iraq. On the Palestinian-Israeli dispute Turkey prefers to play a mediating role rather than act as a supporter of Israel. Turkey has also tried to mediate in the Syrian-Israeli peace negotiations.²⁴⁷ It is important to notice that Turkey began these activities when the United States has been advocating the isolation of Syria. Moreover Turkey has also faced radical Islamist terrorist attacks in major cities like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.²⁴⁸ Many claimed that some of these attacks have been state sponsored terrorism.²⁴⁹ And other terrorist attacks, like the bombing of an Istanbul synagogue and HSBC bank, have been violent incidents by extra territorial Islamic radicals.²⁵⁰

Turkey is also powerful regional country with its sufficient large conventional military force that has a capacity to counteract Iran's conventional military capabilities. When we take a look to Turkey's modern history especially to the last two decades, Turkey has not been reluctant to use its large conventional military force to put military pressure when it considered its vital national interests in danger. For instance, Turkey deployed its troops on its Syrian border in October 1998 and threatened to invade Syria as Syria used to harbour PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan. Similar to that, Turkey sent forces into northern Iraq in hot pursuit of the PKK in 1990s to destroy PKK havens and to establish a security zone for that purpose.²⁵¹ On December 16 2007, Turkey again

²⁴⁶ Ahmet Sözen, "A Paradigm Shift in Turkish Foreign Policy: Transition and Challenges", *Turkish Studies*, 1743-9663, Cilt:11, Sayı: 1, 2010, p. 103-123.

²⁴⁷ Bülent Aras, "Davutoğlu Era in Turkish Foreign Policy", *SETA* (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research), www.setav.org, (Accessed: 01.06.2013).

²⁴⁸ These common concerns led to a 2004 agreement between Riyadh and Ankara over combating terrorism. M. Ghazanfar Ali Khan, "Kingdom, Turkey Finalize Pact on Land Transport", *Arab News*, June 6, 2013.

²⁴⁹ "Turkish Hezbollah had an estimated 20,000 sympathizers and activists in Turkey in 1999", *Turkish Daily News*, June 23, 2013. "Turkey: Hizbullah Said to Have Murdered 484 since 1991", *Ankara Anatolia* in English, February 12, 2013. Turkish Security officials claim that the organization received support from Iran. *Amberin Zaman*, "Turkey/Hizbollah", *Voice of America*, January 19, 2013. John T. Nugent, Jr. "The Defeat of Turkish Hizbollah", *Middle East Review of International Affairs*, Vol.8, No.1 (March 2004), <http://www.merijournal.com>, accessed June 5, 2013. "Kurdish Militant Group 'Turkish Hezbollah' Issuing Terror Threats", *International Herald Tribune*, December 21, 2006, accessed June 22, 2013.

²⁵⁰ Lawrence E. Cline, "From Ocalan to Al Qaeda: The Continuing Terrorist Threat in Turkey", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, Vol.27, p.321-35 (2004); "17 al-Qaeda Suspects Arrested", *Agence France-Presse*, January 30, 2008, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=94989> (accessed June 30, 2013).

²⁵¹ Gareth Jenkins, "Turkey and Northern Iraq: An Overview", *Occasional Paper, The Jamestown Foundation*, February 2002, p.14.

started to use military pressure to end PKK attacks emanating from over the Iraqi border. In this time Turkey acted with intelligence information coming from the United States.²⁵²

Following this developments, Turkey decidedly continued the air raids into areas in northern Iraq which were believed to be PKK havens. Therefore, Turkey has shown its military capability to the regional states. As a result, Turkey was viewed as the best partner which could provide security to the tiny Gulf States by the Arab Gulf rulers. There are also other states that have military potential with which GCC states could seek a security alignment. However, all these states with their significant military capabilities are not as attractive allies to the GCC states as is Turkey. For example, if we take a look to the other potential states; Firstly, Israel has its own security reasons to deter Iran's nuclear weapons programme.²⁵³ When Gulf States are considered as Muslim and Arab, the option of Israel is ideologically unacceptable as a potential ally to the GCC states since there is an unresolved conflict between Palestinians and Israel. Another major obstacle which stands as a barrier in front of this alignment is the Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank.²⁵⁴

The other potential state to be ally for the GCC is Pakistan. Pakistan for a long time has been a source for a contingent of forces and equipment training for Saudi Arabia. In return the Saudis have provided Pakistan with substantial foreign aid over the years.²⁵⁵ However, Pakistan itself has many problems. For this reason, Pakistan does not constitute the reliable situation for the GCC states in the long run. Due to the fact that its own distracting security threats are stemming from its rivalry with India, the Taliban and al-Qa'ida groups operating in the northwest tribal region, and potential domestic internal political instability Pakistan's position in the eyes of Gulf Arab leaders decreased.²⁵⁶

On the other hand, Turkey seems to be the best partner in the long run for the Arab Gulf states. Turkey is considered a relatively stable country. It also has a large Sunni Muslim population with the largest conventional military force in the region. Turkey has already

²⁵² "U.S. Helps Turkey Hit Rebel Kurds In Iraq", **The Washington Post**, June 30, 2013.

²⁵³ "Netanyahu: Hükümetin ilk görevi İran'ı durdurmak olacak", **Zaman**, 30 Haziran, 2013.

²⁵⁴ "İsrail hızla işgal etmeye devam ediyor", **Vahdet Haber**, 30 Haziran 2013.

²⁵⁵ "Pak-Saudi Special Relationship", **Daily Times**, April 17, 2006, Accessed April 20, 2013.

²⁵⁶ "Political problems in Pakistan escalate", **The Telegraph**, June 29, 2013.

been a part of the block which provides security to Gulf Arab states. As Turkey's Incirlik base is strategically very important for supplying material for defending Gulf region.

3.7. Economic Benefits to Turkey

Economically, Turkey seems to benefit from increasing its economic relationships with the Gulf Arab states. The GCC countries aim to direct funds for trade and investment into developing countries like Turkey. By these trade relations Gulf leaders aim to gain additional political benefits from such investments. The Turkish economy has improved radically in the last decade. In the last decade, Turkish economy is considered to be one of the most successful emerging economies. In 2001, when Turkey faced a destructive economic crisis the Turkish government invited and appointed Kemal Dervis a World Bank economist, to Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Treasury to help Turkey in overcoming of the big crises. The new minister Derviş began a new economic programme with the help of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Kemal Dervis initiated a solid economic policy which was aiming to enable Turkey to overcome high inflation, governmental corruption and other barriers.²⁵⁷

Following the election of the AKP government in November 2002 the support of a strong Anatolian business community encouraged the economic reforms which begun by the former administration under Kemal Derviş's ministry. The main reforms for Turkish economy is claimed to be the increased privatization. As a result of these reforms, Turkey has become a more attractive partner for international trade and direct foreign investment including the Gulf Arab businessmen. At this period, Turkey and Gulf Arabs started to work on more serious and long run projects. For example, the liquefied natural gas deal started to be negotiating between Turkey and Qatar which is one of the most important GCC member state.²⁵⁸

Ankara has been seeking to diversify its energy imports for a long time as Ankara is aware of past energy supply cut-offs from Iran, Russia, and the Central Asian states. For this reason, Turkey does not want to be dependent on one party for its vital need which

²⁵⁷ Erdal T. Karagöl, "Does Turkey Need a New Standby Agreement?", **Policy Brief**, No.9 (March 2008), SETA (Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research) 6 pages report.

²⁵⁸ "Turkey Accelerates Efforts for LNG Purchase from Qatar", **Today's Zaman**, April 15, 2008, Accessed April 16, 2013.

is energy. Hence it seems that both Turkey and the GCC states would gain from the partnership related to energy issues. To be aware of that Turkey want to get more closer to the GCC states as Ankara aims to be an energy hub in the coming century.²⁵⁹

3.8. Forming a Security Partnership between Turkey and the GCC?

When examined the security challenges emanating from the Gulf for both Turkey and the GCC states, it is realized that the two entities share two crucial concerns regarding security issues. There are two concerns which are the radical Islamic terrorism and Iranian nuclear weapons development. Another important concern for Turkey and the GCC is the instability in Iraq. The instability in Iraq could cause to a Kurdish irredentism for Turkey. However, for the GCC, Iraqi instability could help Iran to have greater influence over the Iraqi Shi'a and that could give an open door for Iranian expansion over the Gulf region including GCC states. For that reason, the common interests should serve as a basis for both Turkey and the GCC to seek mutual support and security cooperation. In this respect, the initiation of a strategic dialogue which began in September 2008 takes a step in that direction.²⁶⁰

On the other hand, both Turkey and Gulf Arab states are cautious on alienating Iran. That's why the ambivalent relationship that both Turkey and the GCC states keep with Iran suggests that they will proceed cautiously towards a security relationship. From Turkey's perspective, its border with Iran has been determined before almost four centuries and these borders haven't been changed. The two states have also a common mistrust of the national aspirations of the Iraqi Kurds towards the formation of an independent Kurdistan which could influence the Kurds in both Iran and Turkey. The two states, Iran and Turkey, have a common economic interest as well.²⁶¹ Turkey and Iran have vital importance in shipping oil and gas on the most direct route from Iran or

²⁵⁹ John C.K. Daly, "Turkey Seeks to Become Energy Transit Hub", **United Press International**, May 28, 2008, Accessed May 29, 2013. For example, Daly quotes Natural Resource Minister Hilmi Güler stating that the Bakü-Tbilisi-Ceyhan earned \$2 billion for transiting 378 million barrels of oil from Azerbaijan.

²⁶⁰ Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Turkey and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Strategic Partnership after 5 year", **Ortadoğu Analiz**, Temmuz 2013 - Cilt: 5 - Sayı: 55.

²⁶¹ Kemal İnat, "Türkiye'nin İran Politikası 2008", **Ortadoğu Yılığ** 2008, Küre Yayınları, İstanbul, p. 9-42.

through Iran and Turkey to Europe. This interest plays a major place in Iranian- Turkish economic relations.²⁶²

In the last decade, under the AKP government Turkey has always avoid creating a conflictual ground in the relations with Iran. As a result of this fact, Turkey has been willing to enter into energy deals with Iran even at the cost of its western infelicity. Turkey signed a preliminary agreement to route Iranian and Turkmen gas into Europe. Not only that, Turkey also invested in Iran's South Pars gas fields in July 2007.²⁶³

To consider all these relationships between Turkey and Iran it seems that Turkey would not want to declare Iran as a security threat. Gulf Arab states have ambivalent relationship with Iran. This ambivalent relationship makes it cautious for them to keep diplomatic links open with Tehran. To do so, they try to stress their cultural linkages, and further their commercial arrangements with Iran. The attendance of Iran's President Ahmedinejad at the GCC Conference Summit in early December 2007 can be shown as an indication for that policy. Following that Iranian president received an important invitation from Saudi Arabia to participate in the Hajj later. All these steps were made by the Gulf Arabs demonstrate their unwillingness to alienate their powerful neighbour.²⁶⁴ Currently, neither Turkey nor the GCC states are willing to alienate Iran. The main reason behind this unwillingness is claimed to be the economic and diplomatic ties. On the other hand, both Turkey and the GCC share common concerns over security issues arising from Iran's growing influence in Iraq, terrorism, and the Iranian nuclear weapons capability.²⁶⁵

To examine Gulf Arabs security concerns and the realities of the region, it seems that Turkey can be the best partner which has the capability to provide security for the GCC states that could maintain the strong regional balance in the Gulf. In this context, Turkey can replace Iraqi role before the 1991 for the GCC states. Although the United

²⁶² Arzu Celalifer Ekinçi, "İran'ın en büyük partneri Türkiye", *Yeni Şafak*, 30 Haziran, 2013, "İran-Türkiye arasında imzalanan doğalgaz mütabakatı", *Uluslararası Stratejik Araştırmalar Kurumu Ortadoğu Araştırmaları Merkezi*, 3 Temmuz, 2013.

²⁶³ "Turkey-Iran Gas Deal Marks New Stage in Energy Cooperation", *Business Intelligence Middle East*, July 31 2007, Accessed in april 1, 2013. Turkey also signed an energy cooperation agreement in November 2007 to build a thermal power plant in Turkey while Iran builds two as well as one hydroelectric power plant in Iran. "Turkey and Iran Sign Energy Pact," *Tusiad Selected News*, November 19–25, 2007. The parties continued to negotiate this deal in April 2008. *Turkish Daily News*, April 11, 2008, Accessed April 12, 2013.

²⁶⁴ *International Herald Tribune*, December 3, 2007, <http://www.iht.com/printfriendly.php?id=8567692> (Accessed December 4, 2012); *Arab News*, April 21, 2013.

²⁶⁵ "Orta Doğu'da Güncel Güvenlik Sorunları", *BÜSAM*, İstanbul, Ekim 2010, p. 30-45.

States is likely to remain the major source of security for the GCC states, it could change its policy and play a less interfering role. In such circumstances, Turkey may help maintain the power balance in the Gulf. Increasing diplomatic exchanges between Turkey and the GCC states and continuing discussions of their common concerns is compatible with Ankara's activist Middle East foreign policy and will be effective in achieving that goal.

3.9. Turkey and the GCC States in the Shadow of Arab Awakening

During the Arab awakening Turkey also started to face new challenges in the Gulf region. The popular demands for change unleashed by the Arab Spring have created a dangerous environment for the monarchies in the Gulf, especially to Saudi Arabia. The government in Bahrain faced with strong pressures for change. Therefore, Saudi Arabia believes that if the protests cause to topple the current rulers in this country, they could have a wave which could affect the entire Gulf, including in Saudi family itself. The Saudis also has concern about that if the unrest pass to the Arabian Peninsula it will help Iran to step up its efforts and to spoil the Gulf governments. In this point, Bahrain has become the main country in the emerging struggle for influence between Riyadh and Tehran in the Gulf. As Bahrain has a considerable Shia population resides in. Seeking it as an opportunity, Iran has aimed to exploit the disaffection among the Shia population in Bahrain (Shia people represent 70 per cent of the country's total population). To reach of this goal, Tehran is providing generous financial support to the Shiites in Bahrain. Iran has not only provided financial aid to those but also supply them weapons via Hizbullah.²⁶⁶

The overthrow of the Royal family in Bahrain would be a serious disaster for Saudi Arabia as it would lose a serious ground in preventing Iran's expansion over the Gulf region. Due to Bahrain shares borders with Saudi Arabia the fall of Bahraini regime would give Iran an open door to access into Saudi Arabia directly and would be seen in Riyadh as constituting a serious threat to Saudi national security. In March 2011, when the popular protests started in Bahrain, the deployment of 15,000 Saudi-led security forces under the GCC command to suppress the protests against the Sunni monarchy,

²⁶⁶ Michael Segall, "Why Iran is Pushing a Shiite Victory in Bahrain", *Jerusalem Issue Brief*, Vol. 11, No. 2 (June 2, 2011), p. 1-12.

demonstrates the depth of Riyadh's concern over the expansion of Iran and its Shia proxy influence.²⁶⁷ That is why the Saudis have spent so much effort to prevent the toppling of President Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen as well as the royal family in Bahrain. The decision at the GCC summit in Riyadh in April 2011 to invite Morocco and Jordan to join the GCC can be seen as an indication for these concerns. As it is known the GCC established to enhance regional trade and economic cooperation. It also had an aim to prevent Iranian hegemonic ambitions. After that step, GCC started to be transformed into a monarchs club to protect the existed Arab monarchies.²⁶⁸

The GCC members have serious concerns that if one monarchy is toppled it could have irreversible results for the other monarchies in the region. The growing uncertainty about the aims and direction of the U.S. policy in the region have been reinforced these fears of Gulf monarchs. The Gulf monarchies, especially Saudi Arabia, were upset by the lack of U.S. support for Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. As Mubarak had been an important and loyal ally of the U.S. As a result of that the trust of Gulf monarchs toward U.S.A. has diminished.²⁶⁹

The Gulf Arab leaders started to wonder, what if this events happen in their countries. Would U.S.A. withdraw its support from her allies or it would stand with them and help them in order to maintain their power? The Gulf leaders concerns have been raised after the U.S. President Obama's warning in his speech on May 19, 2011 in which he stated that the status quo is not sustainable.²⁷⁰ As it is understood from that, Gulf leaders realized that the implication of these words and the tone of the whole speech showed that in the future the U.S.A. would stand on the side of popular aspirations for political change. It would leave the elites in the Gulf to get over the problems by themselves. Parallel to Washington view, Ankara was also met the unrest in Bahrain and Yemen in an unprepared circumstances. Turkey attempted to be a mediator in Bahrain. Its action became unsuccessful and following this failure Ankara quietly abandoned this attempt. Turkey has also could not play an active diplomatic role in the crisis of Yemen. That's

²⁶⁷ "Saudi Troops Enter Bahrain to Help Put Down Unrest", **The New York Times**, 30 June, 2013.

²⁶⁸ Pierre Razoux, "The New Club of Arab Monarchies", **International Herald Tribune**, June 2, 2013.

²⁶⁹ "US using tough language to urge Mubarak to step down", **BBC News**, July 2, 2013.

²⁷⁰ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/05/19/remarks-president-middle-east-and-north-africa>. Accessed. July 5, 2013.

why Ankara preferred to concentrate its attention instead on Libya and Syria, where it has direct and bigger interests.²⁷¹

To consider all mentioned above, the future policy of Turkey toward the Gulf will be mostly affected by three elements. These elements can be stated as follows: the first element is Iran's future nuclear programme. In this context, if Iran is a nuclear power, this can have a serious impact on the military balance in the Gulf. This event can also encourage some other countries in the region such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to seek to have nuclear weapons. In fact, Turkey does not feel a strong military threat from Iran but it is worried about the regional nuclear balance.

The second element is the political evolution of Iraq and whether Iraq is able to hold together as an integral state after U.S.A. withdraws its forces from this country. The main concern of Turkey and the Gulf states in the issue of Iraq is that, what If the U.S. withdrawal leads to increased sectarian differences and violence in Iraq which has direct effect to both GCC states and Turkey. At the same time, Turkey does not want to see an increase of Iranian influence in Iraq. An increased influence of Iran in Iraq could lead to a weakening of Iraq's independence and a shift in the regional balance of power in the Gulf region. Indubitable this fact gives Turkey a strong motivation to maintain close relations to the Gulf States. At this point, especially Saudi Arabia and Turkey have same direction towards Iran as Saudis strongly opposed to an increase in Iranian influence in the Gulf.

The other major factor which effects Turkey's policy toward the Gulf is the evolution of the U.S. policy toward the Gulf. Currently, American policy towards the Gulf is unlikely to shift radically. This does not mean that the U.S. policy will remain in this direction as America's commitment to the Gulf's sheikhdoms is not clear and certain as it proved in the past. As a result of the growing pressures for democratization in the region, the current monarchies in the Gulf are likely to have less central control on their citizens. For that reason, U.S.A. will be confused about whether it can rely on its current allies in the Gulf or not. This issue of confidence is also a problem of Gulf rulers toward U.S.A.

²⁷¹ "Arap Baharı ve Türkiye'nin Değişen Konumu", **Tuğ Akademi**, 2 Temmuz, 2013.

According to Abdulaziz Sager who is a respected specialist on Gulf security, has noted, the ultimate outcome of the Arab Awakening is likely to be a more volatile Gulf security environment, growing competition among regional actors, and a decline in the U.S. influence in the region. This will present challenges not only for the USA but also for Turkey. A more assertive Iranian push to expand its influence in the Gulf is likely to lead to increased pressure by Riyadh and Washington on Turkey to oppose Iranian policy more forthrightly than it has in the past. Thus, Ankara may find it more difficult to maintain the current level of cordial ties to Tehran if it wants to stay in step with its Western allies and maintain the support of the states in the Gulf, above all Saudi Arabia. So far, it has been able to maintain close ties to Tehran and pay very little penalty for it. However, this is likely to be harder to do in the future, especially with the growing unrest in Syria, which is creating strains in Ankara's relations with Tehran.²⁷²

²⁷² Abdulaziz Sager, "Gulf Leadership and the US: A Matter of Trust", **Gulf Research Center**, May 30, 2011.

CONCLUSION

To take all what mentioned in the whole of the text into consideration, there are several factors which can affect the policies of Turkey toward the Gulf in the future. As mentioned above, the main factors which can affect the bilateral relations between Turkey and the GCC can be described as the Iran's future nuclear programme, global and regional threat of terror, US policies towards the Gulf and the territorial integrity of Iraq.

To start with the concerns toward Iran, we should remark that both the GCC and Turkey do not want to see a nuclear armed Iran in the region. If Iran achieves a nuclear capability, this could change the whole balance in the region. As a result of serious impacts on the military balance in the Gulf and the levant region, this could encourage other Powers such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, to seek to have a nuclear Arsenal in the region. As both Saudi Arabia and Egypt want to be the leading force in Arab World. This interaction could be reason for setting off a nuclear arms race in the Middle East. Turkey does not see Iran as a threat to its national security. On the other hand, Turkey as a regional power is worried about the regional nuclear balance.

In this way, if Iran achieves to have nuclear weapons which threaten to encourage a nuclear regional arms race in the Middle East, then this can be seen as a threat to Turkey as well. Especially, if Turkey's importance for NATO weaken or the ties become seriously stretched, Turkey might feel compelled to rethink for its own interests and thus Ankara might look for a way to acquire nuclear weapons.

The other significant factor which can play role in the future of the GCC-Turkey relations is the political evolution of Iraq. Main question about Iraq is that if Iraq will be able to hold together as an integral state after the withdrawal of USA forces. Just after the USA withdrawal from the country the intensified sectarian differences and violence started to erupt in Iraq. Neither Turkey nor the GCC wants to see a conflictual Iraq at their elbows. Turkey's problems with the PKK organisation which is mostly located in northern Iraq could increase domestic pressure on the government to take more aggressive cross-border strikes against the PKK. Nevertheless, Turkey does not want to offend its own Kurdish population. Hence, that kind of an action could undermine the recent improvement in relations with the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) as

well as inflame relations with Turkey's own Kurdish community, which has begun to press for greater local autonomy in the last years. For this reason, Turkey and the GCC want to see a strong central Iraqi government which is able to control the whole country.

At the same time, both Turkey and the Arab Gulf rulers do not want to see an increase of Iranian influence in Iraq. This option could lead to a weakening of Iraq's independence and a radical shift in the regional balance of power in the Gulf. Only this reason is enough to give Turkey a strong incentive to maintain close ties to the Gulf States. Especially Saudi Arabia, which is strongly opposed to an increase of Iranian influence in the Gulf, tries to keep so close with Turkey in this sense.

The third factor and maybe the most important one is the evolution of the U.S. policy toward the Gulf. Although American policy is unlikely to shift radically towards the Gulf, America's commitment to the Gulf rulers is not clear as it used to be some years ago. To consider the growing pressures for greater democratization in the Arab World, the Gulf monarchies are likely to have less central control over their countries. For that reason, neither the USA nor the Gulf monarchs will be sure that they can rely on each other in the future. At the same time, the US still has strong strategic interests in the Gulf. The premier aim of USA is to secure the unimpeded flow of energy resources from the Gulf to the Western World. A wide range instability in the Gulf could insecure the flow of gas and oil to the West. This can be the reason for important social and economic upheaval. That's why USA is not seen to allow instability in the Gulf Sheikhdoms.

In this context, there are clear limits to how actively Washington is likely to support calls for democratic reform in the Gulf monarchies. The current events in the Middle East demonstrated that U.S.A. is no more a crucial supporter of democratic systems. However, the USA is likely to find such developments difficult to control events in the Middle East and Gulf. That's why USA is likely to stay apart from such actions. As many political specialist on Gulf security, are convinced that, the ultimate outcome of the Arab Awakening is likely to be a more unbalanced Gulf security environment. That can cause a growing competition among regional actors, like Turkey and Iran, and a decline in the U.S. influence in the region. This new developments will present

challenges for Turkey. A more assertive Iranian demand to expand its influence in the Gulf is likely to lead to increased pressure by Riyadh and Washington on Turkey to oppose Iranian policy more clearly than it has in the past. Thus, the things will be more difficult and complicated for Ankara. For this reason, Ankara may find it more difficult to maintain the current level of relations with Tehran. As a result, Turkey will have to choose whether it is with Iran or with her western and Gulf friends. Therefore, Turkey must be careful and patient. The fact that Turkey should be always in the middle as GCC does not mean more than Tehran for Turkey. On the other hand, Turkey so far has been able to maintain close ties to Tehran and pay very little penalty for it. However, this is likely to be harder to do in the future. Especially with the growing unrest in Syria and Iranian aggressive attitude towards that is creating strains in Ankara's relations with Tehran.

The relations between Turkey and the GCC in the last decade have increased dramatically. In this respect, the developed trade and growing economic relations between Turkey and Gulf states in the last decade represent only some parts of the evolved relations. The GCC states especially Bahrain and Kuwait has always mentioned about their willingness of the rapprochement with Turkey counter Iran and be as a balance in their relations with Tehran. Not only because of Iranian threat but they also need Turkey's geopolitical presence as a factor in the possible regulation of Iraq that will be the best fit for their interests. In this context we can say that both Turkey and Gulf States do not want to see an independent Kurdish state in Iraq. These two entities want an integrated Iraq which will have some elements inside to oppose Iranian growing influence in Iraq. Otherwise, Iraq would be a backyard of Iran and its policies in the Gulf and Levant regions.

The growth of the GCC countries' economies and the extended investment portfolios as a result of high oil and gas prices together with rising regional geopolitical security issues and global geostrategic concerns propose that the Gulf countries will continue to see Turkey as a good opportunity to invest in. From other perspective, Turkey sees that developed relationships and intensified participation in the Arab countries politics will serve to its national economic and security interests as well. However, the economic investments can also offer that these engagements might result in a closer political and security partnership. It has been proved in many significant partnerships that bilateral

relations start with the economical engagements and then reaches to the political level just like in the EU's example. These relations can bring about a return to an entirely new pattern of relations between Turkey and the GCC states.

Middle East is widely accepted as the world's most conflictual region. Although there are several regional and international problems, there are positive developments as well. In this respect, the development of positive relations between Turkey and the GCC in the last decade can be shown as an example to these positive developments. In the last decade, the cooperation and convergence of Turkey and the Gulf states has increased rapidly. The factors of the international terrorist threats, the Iraqi crisis and the threat of Iranian expansion played the main role in this convergence. Not only these reasons remarked above but also the willingness of both parties became determinative in the new positive environment.

However, Turkey adopted a new foreign policy perspective which is drowned by Ahmet Davutoğlu (Turkish Foreign Minister), in the last decade. This new neighbourhood policy aims to minimize Turkey's old problems with its bordering states. This new foreign policy vision also aims to go beyond the close geographies. For that reason, this new policy aimed to especially develop economic relations in many relatively close areas. As a result, the Gulf region is very important for Turkey since the GCC represents a plausible set of countries in which Turkey has important stakes. The 9/11 event and the Iraqi invasion by US-led Western Powers created a convenient environment in which to set up stronger ties. The relations started to emerge between Turkey and the GCC within the last decade are now promising. The Gulf countries are welcomed Turkey's improved civil power and that is a crucial marketable factor for Turkey. There is an increasing attention in Turkey to cooperate with the GCC as well. The GCC states are aware that Turkey's active peace making role in the region will serve their interests too. Now the GCC attempts to build a security regime in the Gulf. This aim of the GCC is seen to produce positive results. Turkey with its advanced technology and marketable goods seems to be one of the main beneficiaries of a peaceful environment to mobilize its trade relations. Business and trade relations are likely to increase faster than those in the political area. These relations between the parties are expected to consolidate constructive relations. Generally, peace and security begin from the internal structures in the states. For this reason, states need to maintain

an interdependent security understanding and practices. To consider all what mentioned, the relations between Turkey and the GCC in the last decade can be also an exemplary in this context.

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ÖZGEÇMİŞ

1983 yılında Şanlıurfa'nın Viranşehir ilçesinde doğan ÜÇAĞAÇ ilkokul öğrenimini Viranşehir Yatılı İlköğretim Bölge Okulu'nda tamamlamıştır. Bunun akabinde orta ve lise eğitimini de aynı ilçenin Anadolu Lisesinde tamamlayarak lisans öğrenimine 2005 yılında İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesinde başlamış, 2010 yılında da bu üniversitesinin İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi bünyesindeki Uluslararası İlişkiler bölümünde tamamlamıştır. Halen Sakarya Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Uluslararası İlişkiler Ana Bilim Dalı, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bilim Dalı'nda yüksek lisans öğrenimine devam etmektedir.