



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 8

The Arms Trade, Military Services and the Security Market in the Gulf: Trends and Implications

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Abstract

This workshop seeks to examine the implications and trends of the market for weapons and military services in the Gulf. This is not intended to be limited to security and economic matters, but rather welcomes the examination of the various impacts of this market on social and political issues in the Gulf and beyond. This is intended to be a multidisciplinary examination of a phenomenon which is both understudied and rapidly developing.

Description and Rationale

Objectives and scope

The Gulf is the largest market for imported military sales and equipment in the world. In spite of its relatively small population, the Gulf continues to be the top destination for US military weapons sales and for European weapons sales as well as for associated security training and education services.

This workshop aims to develop a collection of essays suitable for publication on the general subject of the booming market for military services and equipment in the Gulf. We are also considering launching an on-line forum to continue pursuing issues of scholarly interest related to this trade, which is among the oldest and most entrenched in the region. We propose to examine the market from a broad interdisciplinary approach, which would make such a publication of great use to many people interested in the region.

The development of the security market in the Gulf lays at the intersection of two major trends in the global economy. In the Gulf, rich countries are modernizing at a pace unknown in history while many arms exporting countries have manufacturing industries in decline. For many countries weapons are one of the few manufactured goods which are competitive in the global market. Western militaries are shrinking and thus seek out the military training contracts that Gulf countries provide, both to justify existing force structure as well as to provide lucrative employment for retired officers.

For decades the countries of the Gulf have strived to become self-sufficient in a broad array of areas such as food, water and basic industrial commodities, but have usually couched this desire in terms of national security. At the same time, every country in the Gulf (save Iran) has a foreign security presence to bolster their security.

The security market in the Gulf has evolved from simple issues of basing and producing local constabulary, often under foreign command. The states of the Gulf have developed robust military forces with the most modern equipment in the world, to include latest-generation fighter aircraft, world-class air defense systems and significant arsenals of ballistic missiles. At the same time, the nations of the Gulf have been building up a massive training and defense infrastructure which aims to produce professional security forces on a par with any others in the world.

Much of this development of Gulf security capacity has been either purchased from outside or has been enabled from outside the Gulf. In the past, there have been significant Gulf military formations commanded by foreign officers on secondment, as, for example, with the Royal Omani Air Force being commanded by British officers until recently. Even in countries seeking to maximize homegrown talent and leadership, the reliance of foreign weapons, and the numbers of trainers and advisors is greater than in any other region in the world.

There is also a robust domestic industry in Iran producing intermediate- and short-range missiles, high speed torpedoes, and – most controversially – nuclear weapons. There is

much speculation about the possibility of other Gulf countries seeking to match Iran in these areas.

There are immense profits to be made in selling weapons and other military services to the Gulf. The largest weapons sale in history is the Al-Yamanah sale of aircraft from the UK to Saudi Arabia. The Gulf is the largest destination of American weapons by dollar value. France has sold ships, tanks and hopes to find a major market for the Rafale advanced aircraft in the Gulf, and China has equipped the Saudi Strategic Rocket Forces. Iraq's security forces have a mix of Iranian, American and Russian equipment and expertise.

Contribution to the expansion of Gulf studies

The security, political and social impacts of this market have implications which are worthy of further study. The Gulf provides a unique combination of both a group of countries rapidly trying to build national identity and capacity as well as very rich economies which can afford to buy whatever they want.

Much of the writing on the arms trade is, however, polemical and tends to draw on the broad Western antipathy towards the arms trade, an antipathy brought into focus this year by the centennial of the First World War, which in popular memory was fueled by the "merchants of death." Advancing beyond this stale and un-illuminating narrative would be a major contribution to our understanding of the Gulf.

The political implications of the trade in military equipment and services are worthy of examination. Outside observers generally start and end their analysis of this trade by looking at the amounts of money involved, and assume an economic motive. But there have been refusals by major exporters to sell certain items of equipment -- these refusals cannot be explained by economic determinism.

The role of the military and of security assistance in establishing the national identity of the Gulf nations is, at the same time, a matter worthy of some study. The Gulf countries have generally sought to develop and promote their national identity through the establishment of modern state institutions. The state security apparatus is one of the most prominent of these institutions. The interaction between this sector of government and other sectors, and the relative efficacy of developing national identity through the establishment of a security force is unclear in the Gulf.

The impact of the market in security services in the Gulf is also a development worthy of review. Does the emphasis on the development of the security sector skew national

development of the Gulf states? How does this emphasis affect the way the Gulf states are perceived by their citizens and by others? Do outside powers behave differently (for example, do they not promote political reform) when dealing with security partners than they would with other countries?

Finally, the development of a large market in security material and services can lead to corruption and undermining the rule of law in both Gulf States as well as supplier states. Since government purchasing processes in the Gulf are largely opaque, there is a great propensity for fiscal irregularities. But are these different from any other governmental purchasing, or does the regional security trade carry with it a greater potential for corruption?

Anticipated Participants

This table would welcome papers from a variety of disciplines. The trade in weapons and security services such as training is a global one with an extreme importance in the Gulf and consequences beyond. Forming an accurate understanding of this trade is beyond the abilities of a single academic discipline and will require a comprehensive evaluation from a variety of perspectives.

The security relations between the Gulf States as well as those with other states is perhaps one of the most discussed area of Gulf studies. However, much of what is written in this area can be fairly described as reporting rather than analysis. Papers dealing with the international and internal aspects of the trade would be welcome, particularly as they reflect the relationship between the security industry in the region and broader regional and international trends.

The question of trade-offs (or “offsets”) for security goods and services are also unexamined. Do these industries (many of which are purchased by the state from outside countries without a system of accountability) distort national priorities, or do they enhance them? Economists, students of development studies and political sciences will have an active contribution to make to the roundtable. Does this trade stifle growth in other areas? Are the best and brightest in the Gulf being drawn to a sector which does not directly advance the political and economic development of each nation?

The role of the military in the development of national identity in various Gulf countries would be a useful topic for discussion. In some countries, there are multiple security institutions being formed and developed. Many of the other national institutions are either nascent or are ineffective. Is the development of a military force (often at great expense) an effective means of promoting national development?

Many suppliers of military equipment and services to the region are seeking to advance their own security interests, to influence political change within the region, or a combination of both. But the weapons and training export are often used to bolster regimes which resist political change or which are not in synch with the political interests of security exporting nations. Does this market enhance or detract from the political and philosophical goals of the states which participate in it?

Specific topics welcomed include:

- The role of militaries in developing national identity in the Gulf.
- The evolving security mission (from domestic to expeditionary) of militaries in the Gulf.
- The role of outside powers in the development of militaries in the Gulf.
- The arms trade in the Gulf – what is needed, what is not, what way is the trade going.
- The nature of the present and evolving security threat to the Gulf.
- Trends in Gulf military education and integration with civil education.
- Civil military relations in the Gulf.
- The arms trade and foreign military training as an aide to or drag on development.
- What civil roles (e.g., disaster management) would be appropriate for Gulf militaries?
- The role of private security companies in the Gulf.
- The interaction between militaries and rulers in the Gulf.
- Case studies of “offset” spending from regional arms deals.
- GCC military command and GCC military integration – promise and prospects.
- Is the arms and security trade in the Gulf more or less susceptible to corruption than other industries in other regions?
- How dependent are the Gulf countries on foreign contractors?

This list of subjects is not exhaustive and is intended to stimulate discussion. A broad range of topics and disciplines would be welcome.

Workshop Director Profiles

David Des Roches is Associate Professor of at the Near East South Asia Center for Security Studies. Prior to this, he was the Defense Department director responsible for policy concerning Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen. Prior to this assignment, he has served in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as the DoD Liaison to the Department of Homeland Security, as the senior country director for Pakistan, as the NATO operations director, and as the deputy director for peacekeeping. Prior to coming to OSD, he was the command speechwriter and spokesman for the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. His first job in government was as a special assistant for strategy and later as the international law enforcement analyst in the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

He graduated from the United States Military Academy and obtained advanced degrees in Arab Politics from the University of London School of Oriental and African Studies, in War Studies from Kings College London, and Strategic Studies from the US Army War College. He has also attended the Federal Executive Institute, the German Staff College's Higher Officer Seminar, the US Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare School and the US Army Command and General Staff College.

An Airborne Ranger in the Army Reserve, he was awarded the Bronze Star for service in Afghanistan and currently serves as the Deputy Commander of the Center for Military History in Washington DC. He has commanded conventional and special operations parachute units and has served on the US Special Operations Command staff as well as on the Joint Staff. He has served overseas in Morocco, Italy, Germany, Bosnia, Uzbekistan, Turkey, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and the United Kingdom. Other awards and decorations include the Master Parachutist Badge, the Defense Meritorious Service Medal, the Expert Infantryman's Badge, and the parachutist badges of Canada, the United Kingdom, and Germany. His academic awards include Phi Kappa Phi, the British Marshall Scholarship, designation as a Distinguished Alumnus of the Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, and selection as a Joseph Malone Fellow of the National Council of Arab American Relations.

Ms. Dania Thafer is a researcher with a regional focus on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. She is a Political Science Doctoral Candidate at American University in Washington, DC and has a master's degree in Political Economy from New York

University. Ms. Thayer has published several articles on the region including a monograph entitled *Iraqi Oil: A Looming Shift in Regional Dominance*. Currently, her research interest lies in understanding the security issues of the GCC with a focus on strategic alliances and energy.

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