



# **MEI MEDIA WATCH**

**(A Survey of Editorials)**

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## **The Abu Dhabi GCC Summit, December 2010**

[Note: Against the backdrop of incriminating WikiLeaks disclosures over growing arab concerns regarding Iran and its nuclear programme and the renewed concerns over the health of Saudi king Abdullah Bin-Abdul Aziz, the Gulf Cooperation Council held its 31<sup>st</sup> summit in Abu Dhabi, UAE. Commentaries from the Middle Eastern and international media on this are reproduced here. **Editor, MEI Media Watch**]

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**gulfnews.com**

Dubai, Editorial, 5 December 2010, Sunday

### **1. GCC can play a stronger role in world affairs**

**M**embers must also find political will to act together and offer leadership to Arab world.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has been drifting for some years. It is a potentially important international organisation, but it has failed to make its mark on regional or global affairs. Its individual member states have tackled international issues with skill and influence, such as Saudi Arabia's launching of what was adopted in the 2002 Beirut Arab summit as the Arab Peace Initiative. But as a group the GCC

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remains invisible, even if the GCC says that it does not want to be a passive group. It claims that it wants to take a leading role in regional affairs, and many in the Arab world would like it to do more. The obvious failure of the Arab League to deliver any kind of political leadership has left a gap which the GCC is well placed to fill.

This week's GCC summit in Abu Dhabi is a chance for the organisation to re-launch itself as a force in the Arab world. The summit will have to spend some time on economic union, and try to resolve the impasse on currency union, but there is a lot more to think about.

Iran will need careful attention as the present US-led sanctions drift into eventual failure. Iraq is still not on the way to full recovery, and needs support from its neighbours. Palestine is getting more and more difficult by the day, and the looming catastrophe in Sudan is approaching very quickly with the hotly disputed referendum due in January. Yemen desperately needs well intentioned help, where the GCC is well placed to build on Qatar's noble start, and make a substantial impact in heading off a further drift to chaos in Yemen.

There is a lot to do in the region, and the GCC member states are well placed to make a substantial difference, if they can find the political will to act together.

**Source:** <http://gulfnews.com/opinions/editorials/gcc-can-play-a-stronger-role-in-world-affairs-1.722926>



Dubai, Editorial, 7 December 2010, Tuesday

## **2. GCC's impressive clout**

**T**he 31st Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Summit is currently underway in Abu Dhabi under the chairmanship of the UAE President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.

This Summit is particularly significant in terms of the implications of the GCC states' drive towards joint action in the areas of security, stability and the economic integration of the regional states. The fact that this is being held under the auspices of Sheikh Khalifa gives it an extra boost, for the UAE's contribution to the economic standing and the political stability and security of the region are both acknowledged and respected region-wide. No wonder, that the GCC Secretary General Abdul Rahman Al Attiya paid a glowing tribute to Sheikh Khalifa saying that his management would add many achievements.

Coming to the agenda of the Summit, there are several security and economic issues that are of major concern. This is especially important given the yet unstable economic world order and the

growing security threat posed by a possible nuclear arms race in the region. Moreover, the Mideast conflict and continuing territorial disputes in the Gulf continue to challenge regional peace and stability.

Though contentions among the member states continue to exist there is a growing understanding of the necessity to remove the major blocks in an effort to reach a more cohesive regional bloc. These contentions continue to prevent the member states to achieve several of the objectives set forth by the GCC. This is especially true of economic impediments that are blocking a more developed and defined integration within the GCC. Take for example the decision by the UAE to withdraw from the monetary union last year (2009) over a disagreement on the location of the Central Bank as claimed by Saudi Arabia. Oman following suit left the other four states as party to the commitment. However, as stated by the UAE Economic Minister Sultan Bin Saeed Al Mansouri, the UAE hopes to rejoin the single currency initiative in the future. The fact that each member state has a strong individualistic economic identity and takes its economic decisions based on that trend denotes discrepancies within the economic bloc. Kuwait for instance has de-pegged its currency from the dollar unlike other GCC States. This trend is also indicative of further obstacles in the future that are likely to mar the achievement of a single currency by 2015—the new deadline after the GCC states failed to do so this year.

Besides, power, energy and the inter-GCC railway link connecting all six states are issues expected to be taken up in the forum. The emphasis on the peaceful use of nuclear energy for civilian purposes in view of the aspirations of several member states to obtain it through legal international channels is a reminder to neighbouring Iran to abstain from covert illegal means that raise suspicions about its intent to divert it to military purposes.

It is hoped that the GCC states are able to resolve differences and emerge stronger to benefit the region. This is bound to propel it to new heights in terms of political weightage that will only enhance its economic status as a regional heavyweight.

**Source:**

[http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2010/December/editorial\\_December13.xml&section=editorial&col=](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2010/December/editorial_December13.xml&section=editorial&col=)



Dubai, Editorial, 8 December 2010, Wednesday

### **3. GCC confronts terror**

**G**iven the geo-strategic importance of the GCC states, it is not surprising that security was a predominant concern at the Gulf Cooperation Council Summit in Abu Dhabi.

The unanimous resolve of the GCC leaders to boost joint efforts to fight terrorism is a positive step in the right direction.

Terror groups, principally Al Qaeda, pose a major security challenge to the regional states. Not only does the GCC region host the world's largest energy reserves, it is strategically placed at the crossroads of Asia, Africa and Europe and is especially vulnerable to security threats. It is also a major transit point for the cross-border movement of terrorists ranging from the Far East, Central Asia, South West Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe. Past terror incidents bear witness to the fact as do intelligence findings on the ongoing trans-national recruitment by Al Qaeda and affiliated groups. The recent arrests of more than a hundred suspected Al Qaeda members in Saudi Arabia is commendable and speaks volumes for the impressive work being done by the Saudi Intelligence and counter-terrorism forces. Yet, the arrests also affirm the continued threat faced by the terror group. This is not confined to Saudi Arabia alone. Yemen itself is a hotbed for a resurgent Al Qaeda that has regrouped as an umbrella entity, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and has spread its influence across the Gulf and in eastern Africa. This is indeed alarming. It is well known that the energy sector is a principal target for the terrorists besides the economic infrastructure not to forget the foreign commercial enterprises in the region. There have been attacks targeting foreigners in the region in the past. It is indeed appreciable that combined intelligence and security efforts of the different states in the region have kept the terror threat at bay. While there has been palpable success in a containment of the terror threat, it is far from over. Given the innovative methodology employed by terror groups like Al Qaeda, increased vigilance must be made a top priority. This is why the Kuwaiti Emir, Sheikh Sabah al Ahmed al Jaber expressed strong disapproval of terrorism at the Summit. Talking on behalf of all GCC member states, Sheikh Sabah pledged to stand by Saudi Arabia and the international community in fighting terrorism in its varied forms.

The GCC states' concern for regional security also stems from the fact that some of the world's major conflicts are raging in its neighbourhood. The GCC Summit also reiterated the GCC stand on Palestine and called for Israel to review its policies that have effectively stalled the peace negotiations. It is hoped that the GCC platform can be better utilised in pushing for a resolution of the Mideast conflict on the international platform. It can also prove to be an effective regional voice to unanimously address international security concerns in the region.

**Source:**

[http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2010/December/editorial\\_December15.xml&section=editorial&col=](http://www.khaleejtimes.com/displayarticle.asp?xfile=data/editorial/2010/December/editorial_December15.xml&section=editorial&col=)



Dubai, Editorial, 8 December 2010, Wednesday

#### **4. GCC has always been a force for peace**

**T**he Gulf is famous for its mediation efforts, contrary to perceptions spread by WikiLeaks.

Leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), wrapping up their annual summit in Abu Dhabi yesterday (7 December), naturally expressed "an extreme concern" over the speedy expansion of Iran's nuclear programme.

But, contrary to perceptions spread by the WikiLeaks website quoting American diplomats, the leaders reiterated their opposition to the much talked about military option to tackle the Iran crisis. Instead, they welcomed "international efforts, including those made by the P5+1, to peacefully resolve Iran's nuclear crisis and hope it will respond positively to these efforts", according to a translation of the summit's final communiqué.

The summit of course has taken several decisions to speed up the integration of the six member states economically and socially, but it was important to spell out yet again in clear and definitive terms the GCC position towards the mostly complicated issue of neighbouring Iran's atomic project and its quest to exert influence in some parts of the Arab world. The GCC, which has a decades-old problem with Iran concerning the occupied UAE islands, nevertheless wanted to make it very clear that those issues must be addressed peacefully.

By its nature, the GCC is a force for stability. Its core purpose is to ensure stability and prosperity in the region. In all its 30-year history, it has strived to make human development its first priority and the results are there for all to see. Today, the GCC member states are leading the developing world on every development index. But development needs a stable and secure environment. Thus, few believed the GCC was actually looking to increase tension.

The Gulf is famous for its mediation efforts in a number of crises, including Sudan, Palestine, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. The aim is to bring about peaceful settlements and restore stability in an otherwise tumultuous region. The GCC has a proven record of promoting peace and stability. The Abu Dhabi communiqué with regard to Iran is an embodiment of this.

**Source:** <http://gulfnews.com/opinions/editorials/gcc-has-always-been-a-force-for-peace-1.725117>



Muscat, Editorial, 8 December 2010, Wednesday

### 5. Unity is strength

**T**he Gulf Cooperation Council has come a long way since its inception more than 30 years ago. The grouping has many miles to go before the vision of its founders is realised and its people enjoy the fruits of the tree, which the leaders of the six member-states had planted long ago and nourished so fondly in the years since then. And the 31st summit of its leaders, now being held in Abu Dhabi, no doubt, will take the GCC many more steps in the right direction to achieve a lot more for its people. In this context, the foreign ministers of the member-states have identified a number of crucial political, security and economic issues and the leaders are bound to tackle them successfully. HH Sayyid Fahd Bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers rightly said in Abu Dhabi: “The outlook for the Council’s joint action, in the light of the current regional and international developments, mandates consolidation of all efforts to accelerate performance, carry out agreed programmes and remove any barriers to the implementation of the targeted policies and meeting the interests of all parties.”

The past has seen the GCC taking giant leaps towards integration. Some of the steps taken until now include the setting up of a standardisation body in 2002, the establishment of the Customs Union in 2002, the creation of the Gulf Common Market in 2008, the framing of anti-dumping regulations to protect GCC markets in 2003, the approval of an integrated commercial policy in 2005 and other steps that have brought the member-states closer in the last 30 years.

The GCC has faced, still faces and will in future face a plethora of challenges in different spheres. In the past, it has successfully tackled them. And there is no doubt that in future too, the grouping will overcome them. The six nations have also faced many adversities together and prevailed over them. All this has happened because the leaders and the people of the six nations share a common vision and goals. At the same time, the six nations have only gained more strength due to the strong bonds of Islam binding them together, the cultural and social traditions and values that are unique to the region and a common language. The six leaders also have the same great ambitions for their people to be on par with those of the developed nations and enjoy the bounties and blessings of modernisation. In the foreign policy arena too, they are on the same wavelength. Basing their policy on non-interference in the internal affairs of others and co-operation with all like-minded countries, they have towed an independent line that has been to the satisfaction of all major power blocs. Such a policy has earned worldwide appreciation for

the GCC, which today is a force to reckon with and its voice is heard with rapt attention in every nook and cranny of this planet.

**Source:**

[http://www.omantribune.com/archives/index.php?page=editorial\\_details&id=1808&heading=EDITORIALS&archdate=2010-12-08](http://www.omantribune.com/archives/index.php?page=editorial_details&id=1808&heading=EDITORIALS&archdate=2010-12-08)

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# TheNational

Abu Dhabi, Editorial, 8 December 2010, Wednesday

## **6. The Gulf has more concerns about extremism than the US**

**E**arlier this week, WikiLeaks cables detailed US accusations that Saudi Arabia was not cooperating in the fight against the financing of terrorism. It was a reflection of the United States' national interests in the region, but it belied a basic fact: Gulf States are, if anything, more concerned about and more vulnerable to extremists than the Americans.

As the GCC summit closed in Abu Dhabi yesterday (7 December), this point had been made again and again. Sheikh Sabah al Ahmed Al Jaber, the Emir of Kuwait, spoke for all when he condemned terrorist plots intended to "murder innocents, spread destruction and halt development".

The US cables come from the Illicit Finance Task Force (IFTF), which has increasingly focused on the Gulf. But while the US secretary of state, Hillary Clinton, wrote of the "ongoing challenge to persuade Saudi officials to treat terrorist funds ... as a strategic priority", she also conceded that the IFTF was dealing with "limited information."

That lack of transparency is the key stumbling block. Blanket accusations will not help the cause, and nor will the opaque, often politically motivated challenges against GCC bank accounts. Action against terrorist financing, which funds both weaponry and propaganda, has to be based on solid, shared information. Otherwise the effort risks devolving into a witch hunt that does more harm than good.

The IFTF needs to rely on transparent judicial processes and evidence of wrongdoing. On the Saudi side, and indeed across the Gulf, there have been failings in law enforcement, in some cases because of weak institutions and, in others, a lack of political will.

But that does not diminish the determination of governments across the region to stamp out terrorism. This is a long-term process. As *The National* has commented in these pages, development is the ultimate solution to halt violent extremism.

The stability of the Gulf States and welfare of their citizens is what is at stake. Anyone who questions the basic commitment to stem extremism does not understand the region. There is room for honest criticism, but as with so much data in these WikiLeaks dumps, the context is missing. Both sides need to re-evaluate their efforts to fight terrorism financing.

**Source:** <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/the-gulf-has-more-concerns-about-extremism-than-the-us>

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# TheNational

Abu Dhabi, Editorial, 9 December 2010, Thursday

## 7. GCC policy maturity bodes well for the future

**T**his year's GCC Summit has not been slow off the starting block. Reinvigorating the council's relevance and proving the necessity of a region-wide policy body, the summit elicited tangible proposals by leaders that may well help to secure the region's future.

Indeed, the summit's emphasis on regional water security shows it is catching up with global concerns. As *The National* reported yesterday (8 December), Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan put forth a plan to create greater water security by encouraging local awareness campaigns and exploring water-saving technology.

As half of the world's desalinated water is produced in the GCC, a 15-point plan aimed at sustaining this vital resource is commendable. Such a policy not only has the potential to reduce the GCC's carbon footprint, but to address the economic drain that accompanies our water consumption.

Leaders also gave a boost to local businesses by announcing that GCC firms will now be able to set up shop in other member states. The impact for both the business community and consumers alike is significant. "It will reduce costs and encourage smaller companies to set up branches," said Dr Abdel Aluwaisheg, the GCC director general of international economic relations.

The ruling also has the potential to change business relations. Most firms currently rely on family connections with nationals of other states to find partners. But that barrier to entry for smaller

GCC retail businesses may now be overcome. Equal treatment could also mean equal access to banking and financial services, including credit - sure to be good news for the GCC's bankers.

But while the agreement has the potential to liberalise the business environment, there are caveats to bear in mind. Only businesses wholly owned and managed by GCC nationals are included in the agreement, and they must have been registered for three years. It will also take time for the ratified agreement to become a workable reality. The business community and consumer advocacy groups will have to weigh in on how new legislation should best enter the books of GCC nations.

This week's summit showed a policy maturity that bodes well for the future. Now, the task is to move what is down on paper forward.

**Source:** <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/editorial/gcc-policy-maturity-bodes-well-for-the-future>

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