



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 7

Post-Brexit Britain, Europe and Policy towards Iran and the GCC states: Potential Challenges, and the Possibility of Cooperation

Workshop Directors:

Dr. Geoffrey Edwards

Department of Politics and International
Studies
University of Cambridge
United Kingdom
Email: gre1000@cam.ac.uk

Dr. Abdullah Baabood

University of Singapore
Singapore
Email: Baabooda@aol.com

Diana Galeeva

Research Scholar
University of Durham
United Kingdom
Email: diana.galeeva@durham.ac.uk

Adviser: Irfan Azeez Azeez

Abstract

Britain's unprecedented withdrawal from the EU presents a unique challenge both to the UK and the EU in defining their policies towards the countries of the Gulf, whether together, in friendly rivalry, or in less constructive competition. The regional dynamics in the Middle East, especially the destabilizing behavior of Iran, the ambitions of Saudi Arabia and the Qatar Crisis, has increased the levels of uncertainty in which European policies will be played out. Individual as well as collectively European states and the EU have been seeking to play a more critical role in the Gulf. Given Britain's historical role played in the Gulf, it is not surprising that it has been seeking to reestablish itself

as an influential actor, alongside and sometimes in competition with France, both perhaps aware of the more unpredictable role of the United States and the growing interest of China in the region. It is possible, however, that, due to the challenges the UK is likely to face in the years following Brexit, it will lose its place in the region. This workshop seeks to identify and explore the most urgent questions associated with this ambiguity both in relation to Britain and other European states as well as to the Gulf states themselves.

Description and Rationale

Objectives and scope:

In the case of the UK, though the date for its withdrawal from the EU is set for 29 March 2019, the nature of its withdrawal and its future relationship with the EU, economically and in terms of foreign and security policies remain uncertain. Several EU summits are likely before we know the terms of the UK-EU ‘divorce’, and the future relationship beyond any implementation period which is meant to last less than two years. The widely differing views on Brexit, not least within the Conservative Party, pose a challenge to the UK, made more so by the possibility of a general election if the May Government was defeated a growing support for a second referendum, though if one was to occur, whether the question posed would include the possibility of remaining within the EU remains unknown. With such a lack of consensus at home, it makes it particularly difficult to predict UK foreign policy beyond the platitudes of ‘Global Britain’.

One unknown of the UK’s withdrawal is its future relationship with EU-level security resources and institutions, such as the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) at a time of some possibly significant developments especially of the latter with moves towards Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and closer collaboration on defence equipment through the European Defence Agency. If there is progress, it means that the UK will not benefit from the advantages available to the EU27, at the same time as it loses the voice ‘magnification’ that EU membership has brought it. Moreover, a second unknown is the indirect consequences for the UK’s ability to pursue any grandiose policies independent of its erstwhile EU partners if the British economy suffers adversely from leaving the European market.

Moves within CSDP point, too, to third unknown – the extent to which the EU itself sees and acts on the potential of better relations with the Gulf states. On the one hand, the economic relationship between the EU and the GCC might have reached stalemate despite some efforts by, for example, Chancellor Merkel to restart negotiations on a free trade agreement during her visit to the Gulf in 2017. |Meanwhile German bilateral trade has been continuously improving. Both may well impact on the UK’s ability to sign any advantageous free trade agreements with either the GCC or individual Gulf states. On the other hand, France has for some time been seeking to establish itself, via, for example its base in Abu Dhabi, as a key security actor in the region.

A fourth unknown is the role of the United States in the region and the relationships both a post-Brexit UK and the EU27 may seek to establish with it. The UK has always

been at great pains to maintain its historical relationship with the US, which post Brexit may be of even greater importance given President Trump's endorsement of the Brexit vote – symbolized in the reciprocation of official visits in January 2017 (Ms. May's visit to the US) and in July 2018 (President Trump's visit to the UK). But the UK faces a dilemma – as does the rest of Europe – in its relationship with the Trump Administration. The President's unpredictability, his clear dislike of multilateralism whether expressed through NATO or the WTO create tensions in the Atlantic relationship. The President himself may not rue the loss of the UK as a diplomatic 'bridge' between the US and Europe but certainly past Administrations have seen it as useful. The British government may remain confident in the continuation of the 'special relationship' especially in terms of intelligence sharing and yet US policies create difficulties. One area of difficulty is in relations with the Gulf, and America's strong support for Saudi Arabia and its condemnation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPoA) with Iran.

The JCPoA epitomizes especially strongly contemporary tensions. As a member of the EU3, the UK worked hard to develop a better relationship with Iran. On the one hand, it was firm in supporting EU-level sanctions regime as the part of the comprehensive strategy that, on the other hand, also included negotiations to bring Iran's nuclear programme under control. The success of that strategy lay in the JCPoA of 14 July 2015. When he became Foreign Secretary, Boris Johnson, remarked: 'I hope this will mark the start of more productive cooperation between our countries, enabling us to discuss more directly issues such as human rights and Iran's role in the region, as well as ongoing implementation of the nuclear deal and the expansion of the trading relationship between both our countries'. The decision by President Trump to pull out of the agreement in May 2018 – despite, *inter alia*, Boris Johnson's last minute efforts to persuade the Trump administration to the contrary – left the UK government at odds with the US and working with the EU27 in an effort, along with Russia and China, to save the agreement. Whether this is possible remains, of course, to be seen, the so-called Special Purpose Vehicle, designed to side-step US sanctions being as yet [in September 2018] only a proposal. Some UK interests, some British banks and British Airways seem already to have assumed it to be unlikely.

But the US decision places the UK in a particularly delicate position not simply in its relationship with the US but also with Saudi Arabia. The British Prime Minister, Theresa May, during her visit to the Gulf in December 2016 may have wanted 'to assure you that I am clear-eyed about the threat that Iran poses to the Gulf and the wider Middle East; and the UK is fully committed to our strategic partnership with the Gulf and working with you to counter that threat'. But the Iran deal had considerable economic and financial potential that has had to be weighed against the existing significance of the relationship with Saudi Arabia, The UAE and Bahrain especially. Considering the challenges to EU/US relations, post-Brexit policies towards Iran remain particularly uncertain.

The GCC states are crucial partners for the UK, sharing deep-rooted relations in a number of contexts, including diplomacy, trade, military/security cooperation, culture, education, and relations between the royal families. Though the UK government is ready to fully engage with the GCC, the GCC's internal issues, such the Qatar Crisis that started in 2017, impede full cooperation. Theresa May participated in the Gulf Cooperation Council of 2016, and discussed relations between the GCC states,

highlighting the historical ties between the UK and the GCC, and stating her ambition ‘to build new alliances but more importantly, to go even further in working with old friends, like our allies here in the Gulf, who have stood alongside us for centuries’. And clearly the UK will be seeking agreements on a basis that may give it an advantage over the EU27 though the extent that that is possible may well depend on the UK’s final agreement with the EU.

That will also in part determine the extent to which a post-Brexit UK will retain its attraction as both a global financial hub and an attraction for inward investment from the Gulf. While there may be few challenges to the City of London as a financial centre in the immediate future, there are predictions of a movement of financial services towards other European centres. Whether the UK can remain the ‘eighth emirate’ to use the words of Tony Blair in 2006 and echoes by Boris Johnson a decade later, may well be of crucial importance given the levels of investment by the Gulf states, and not just the UAE. In part, for the UK, the importance of continued investment lies in whether it can persuade Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE to invest beyond the London property market. It is also a question of whether the ambitious visions and plans of the Gulf states remain attractive to British capital – but not of course only British capital, Germany and the other EU countries are also following such plans closely.

Britain and the other EU member states have inevitably hedged their bets in the crisis over Qatar. Given the need to attract inward investment from both sides in the Gulf dispute, most European states have been supporting the mediation attempts of others, especially Kuwait, and certainly, visits by the Saudi Crown Prince and the Qatari Emir to Paris, London and Berlin resulted in new commitments for investment and lucrative sales deals.

However, the sales of arms and military equipment, while increasingly significant for both British and French manufacturers, has also exacerbated tensions of the war in Yemen and human rights issues. In such circumstances, the extent to which Brexit reinforces the importance of Saudi purchases may create further embarrassment for the British government. On the other hand, Britain’s move to increase its physical presence in the Gulf has appealed to other sectors of the British polity in a similar way, perhaps as France’s physical presence enhances French support for the continuation of the concept of a Global France.

This workshop aims to consider how these different tensions and unknowns may interact for the future of relations between a post-Brexit UK, the EU and the countries of the Gulf including Iran. By the time of the next GRM, we will know the outcome of the Brexit negotiations and we will better be able to track moves that may change British and EU27 relations with the Gulf states – or whether traditions and the weight of history reinforce current patterns. Against this has to be set the changes in the Gulf, the present disputes and the trajectories of at least economic reform. And, not necessarily in the background, are the changing positions of the United States and China that are likely to impact on Europe’s interests.

Contribution to Gulf Studies:

Recognising Brexit as a unique moment in the development of UK and European politics, making a change in the foreign policy of the last 40 years, the outcomes of this

workshop will close a gap in the existing research, by focusing on relations between a post-Brexit UK and the GCC and Iran. Most existing research into the aftermath of Brexit focuses on the future of UK-EU relations, or considers UK foreign policy elsewhere only generally. A very limited number of investigations explore UK foreign policy in the Middle East, and especially the Gulf. Taking into consideration the nature of their previous engagement in the Gulf, this workshop will open a discussion about whether it will be possible for the Britain to return to the Gulf as a global power, or if the UK's future foreign policy will not play such a key role.

Anticipated Participants

Participants are encouraged to examine a wide range of issues associated with, but not limited to, the following themes:

- How might the policies of the UK and the EU in the Gulf region be affected by the uncertainty of the Brexit deal?
- How might UK policy towards the Gulf states and Iran be determined by the nature of their relationship with the EU?
- Will EU policy towards the Gulf be affected by Brexit?
- How might the domestic opinion affect to the UK's foreign policy towards the GCC and Iran?
- How might the policies of post Brexit Britain and the EU27 towards the Gulf states and and Iran be affected by their relationship with the US?
- Will the UK continue its support for the EU position on the 'Iran deal' or follow the United States in rejecting it?
- How will President Trump's pro-Saudi position affect that of the UK in the Gulf?
- How does the US position affect the role of France and the EU27 in the Gulf?
- What can we expect of a post-Brexit UK's relationship with Iran/ the GCC?
- Both the UK and EU27 states have condemned Iran's destabilizing behaviour in the Middle East, will Brexit have any impact on how they deal with Iran?
- To what extent will the positions of Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain influence a post Brexit UK policy towards Iran?
- By the time of the GRM, we shall know more about the Special Purpose Vehicle. Does the interaction of the E3 with Russia and China on the Iran deal presage new or changing coalitions?
- How does the GCC Crisis affect to the collaboration between the UK, the EU27 and the GCC states?
- To what extent will a post-Brexit UK and the GCC states co-operate on military, diplomatic, economic, trade, security, and cultural relations issues?

Workshop Director Profiles

Dr. Geoffrey Edwards is Deputy Director Europe @POLIS; Reader Emeritus in European Studies, University of Cambridge; Jean Monnet chair in Political Science, Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge; Emeritus Fellow, Pembroke College, Cambridge.

Dr. Abdullah Baabood is a graduate in business studies and international relations. He holds a master in Business Administration (MBA), a Master in International Relations (MA) and a Doctorate in International political Economy (PhD) at Cambridge University. He particularly focuses on the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and their economic, social and political development as well as external relations.

Diana Galeeva is a PhD candidate at the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University. Her research interests are philosophical and theoretical issues in international relations, especially concepts of power, transnational actors, international organizations and institutions. She particularly focuses on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) foreign policies, political Islam and post-Brexit Britain policies. She is a regular contributor to Al Arabiya English, with recent publications through the Al-Mesbar Studies and Research Center. She was an intern at the President of Tatarstan's office for the Department of Corporation and Religious organisations (2012), the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tatarstan (2011), and the Ministry of Justice (2010). She received her M.A. in International Relations from Exeter University in the UK, and earned a degree in Governmental Law from Kazan Federal University.

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**Post-Brexit Britain, Europe and Policy towards Iran
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Paper Presenter Abstracts:

**The “Brexit dilemma”: hard, mild or soft exit? The possible
impact of post Brexit on EU-GCC and UK-GCC relations**

Pasquale Borea

Royal University for Women
Bahrain
pasquale.borea@gmail.com

Abstract:

The procedure activated as per art. 50 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) after the referendum in the United Kingdom is progressively and quickly heading to a conclusion. From that moment, to the present time, “Brexit” has been the object of several negotiations, civil society debates, political drama, judicial decisions, academic studies. The recent rejection of the several drafts of the UK-EU agreement on a “consensual divorce” and the very recent vote of confidence gained by the British government, pave the way for a revamped dilemma on the exit options still available. Time is running out and the different options on the table to govern from a legal point of view the “dis-integration” of the European architecture are limited. Postpone the exit date, attempt to re-negotiate a new deal, the issue of “backstop” to preserve the Irish border, or the “no deal” solution will all undoubtedly have an impact on the way UK will deal with its international relations and - as a consequence- with the existing and prospective international obligations, with particular reference to its trade policy and trade agreements.

In this framework, if the most urgent issue is considered the negotiations of a trade agreement with the EU, governing the UK exit in its different possible

formats, other international agreements in different fields, but notably in the field of trade, represent a priority for the post-Brexit Britain's external policy. This could be oriented towards different areas such as the U.S. and NAFTA, as well as towards the eastern area, but also towards the Gulf area. In this respect, recent precedents of re-approaching the traditional British presence in the Gulf (May's visit to the GCC Summit in December 2016) may tend to be used as a springboard for a new consolidation of trade agreements and in general for a change in the British foreign policy towards the Gulf. Nevertheless, the current context is not the most favorable and it may not be the easiest target for Britain to achieve. The Gulf Cooperation Council is also facing internal challenges. At the same time, is engaged in pioneering the experiment of sub-regional fiscal integration (GCC VAT framework agreement). On the other hand, not only the EU-UK relation matter, but also the EU external action with other states or regional and sub-regional organizations does. And a critical area for the EU is the Gulf. And particularly the GCC, with specific reference to a Free Trade Agreement which is in a stalemate from too long. On these premises, the triangulation between a post-Brexit Britain, the European Union and the GCC becomes critical to predict the dynamics of both international relations and international agreements, particularly trade agreements, which will regulate the postBrexit world.

Based on all these considerations this paper intends to provide an analysis of the history of the EUGCC and UK-GCC bilateral relation. Also, it will reflect on the possible future relations between the post-Brexit Britain and the Gulf Cooperation Council, as well as the EU-GCC relations. As a consequence, it will also be explored a possible future development of the bi-regional integration path based on a bi-regional "re-integration", opposed to the regional "dis-integration" drift currently existing in both Europe and the Gulf region.

The Bahrain-UK Partnership: Requirements and obstacles

Ashraf Keshk

Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies

Bahrain

diplomatic_cairo@hotmail.com

Abstract:

Building security partnerships with major powers is one of the defense options for small countries. Bahrain and the other Gulf countries have pursued this option for decades. The United Kingdom was the main power responsible for safeguarding the security in the Gulf region before announcing its decision to withdraw from the Gulf and East of Suez in 1968, and before the British eventual withdrawal in 1971. This withdrawal was followed with US engagement in affairs of the region, indirectly during the Iran-Iraq war, and in the Kuwait liberation war in 1991.

In spite of the British withdrawal from the region, the UK has been engaged in affairs of the Arabian Gulf, though not by means of military bases like the United States. The UK engaged with Western allies in relation to all crises in the region

within the so-called ‘tanker wars’ during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war – when the United States sought to protect the Gulf oil tankers from Iranian attacks. The UK also joined the US-led international coalition to liberate Kuwait in 1991 and the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. In addition, the UK has had bilateral relations with the Gulf countries in the defense, security, economic and political areas.

The most significant development regarding the British return to the Gulf region involved signing an agreement on Maritime Support Facility with the Kingdom of Bahrain. Under this agreement, the British Royal Navy is provided with facilities at Mina Salman base of the Bahrain Defense Force. The agreement was signed in 2014 and the maritime support facilities were opened in 2016. “The naval base will play a central role in supporting the UK’s ability to operate in the region. It will be the hub of operations of the Royal Navy in the Gulf, the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean,” reads a statement issued by the British Embassy in Manama following the signing of the agreement. The British Prime Minister, Theresa May, also has explicitly voiced the UK’s desire to build partnerships with the Gulf countries when she attended the 37th GCC Summit held in Manama in December 2016, in a first time for her to attend GCC summit. “We want a real partnership with the Gulf countries,” she said during the event.

This means that the UK, despite its withdrawal from the Gulf region, has paid attention to affairs of the region, given maintaining maritime security in general is one of the sources of state power.

The Bahrain-UK relations, as part of the British-Gulf relations in general, is a strategic interest for the UK with the countries exit from the EU and its need to build partnerships with regions of strategic importance in the world. Nonetheless, the British return to the Gulf region came in a very complex regional and international environment that has opportunities for the UK to build partnerships, but imposes challenges as well.

Such challenges include the fact that the United States is still the main guarantor of the security of the Gulf countries, a fact that influences the course of relations with these countries. This is despite attempts of other powers to strengthen their relations with the Gulf countries, including Russia and China, as well as the European Union as an organization or with European countries on bilateral basis. The security threats to the Gulf countries, especially since 2011 and so far, have also gotten more complicated. Although the dangers of land invasion have declined after the overthrow of the Iraqi regime in 2003, there have been security developments that affected the entity of the united national states such as emergence of non-state armed groups that have targeted the vital maritime routes. Other threats include electronic attacks, Iran’s threats and the continuation of regional crises and their repercussions to the security of Bahrain and the Gulf countries. This means that the partnership that the UK is seeking with Bahrain must include mechanisms to address all these threats.

The points reviewed above raise a key question on how can the UK build a strategic partnership with Bahrain with the complexities of the current regional environment, and with the existence of British-Iranian relations on the one hand,

and the existence of strategic relations between Bahrain and the United States on the other?

To answer this question, this paper will be divided into the following four main elements:

First, the history of the British presence in the Gulf region until the British withdrawal in 1971, and the British role in addressing regional crises until the US invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Second, the importance of building partnerships for the UK after the decision to exit from the EU, and why Bahrain is an important regional partner for the UK? Third, the security challenges to the Kingdom of Bahrain, and the extent of the contribution by the UK to the security of Bahrain, or the so-called ‘the value added’ by the UK to Bahrain’s security, Given Bahrain’s distinguished relations with the United States?

Finally, the requirements of building the Bahraini-British partnership and obstacles to this.

Converging Diversification Concerns: Why are Europeans and Gulf States looking for deepening of relations

Nursin Guney

Bahcesehir Cyprus University / Center of Mediterranean Security-CEMES
Cyprus
gnursin@hotmail.com

Visne Korkmaz

Bahcesehir Cyprus University / Center of Mediterranean Security-CEMES
visnekorkmaz@hotmail.com

Eda Guney

Science Po Bordeaux
France
eda-guney@hotmail.com

Abstract:

For the last couple of years, both Europeans and Gulf states have felt necessity of diversification of relations for different reasons derived from current geopolitical and geo-economic fluctuations.

As it is known that Europeans faced with the Russian assertive policies both in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Brexit has led many other questions on the future of European security since the capability gap between EU security apparatuses and NATO is widening. Last but not least, Trump’s policies accelerate European concerns about the harmony in the Trans-Atlantic/Western Alliance. Trump seems to adapt more protectionist and coercive economic policy- including in the fields of energy and

defence economy. Hence, new American policies on the one hand challenge special relations between Russia and leading powers of Europe like Germany, on the other hand crack inner-European harmony by offering special relations with new European states like Poland. Besides, Trump's NATO rhetoric, his unilateralist tendency in decision making even in the issues related to European security, like future of JCPOA, or future of American units in Syria and his diplomatic style based on continuous and inconsistent backs-forwards strengthen European powers' search for more independent manoeuvring space and room of strategic existence in the Mediterranean- Middle East-Gulf Axis. Existence of real risks like possible crisis in Hormuz Strait, sudden increases in the oil prices in the case of Saudi Arabia- Iran confrontation etc also makes strategic dialogue of European powers with the Gulf states a requirement. The questions here are that i- whether Europeans will succeed to harmonize their policies towards Gulf states and ii- whether Europeans will succeed to balance their dialogue with Tehran and Gulf states especially independent factors (like Trump's policies or inner-Gulf crisis) affect this triangle.

It is also known that Gulf States' search of New Carter Doctrine or Gulf NATO in which USA's extended deterrence functions in more strengthened fashion has ended with unsuccessfully. Although USA has individually good relations with Gulf capitals, both USA's balancing in the inner-Gulf crisis as well as ambiguous Trump's policies related to Iran, Syria and Yemen led Gulf countries to think about diversification more seriously. Indeed, with their resources, money and energy, Gulf states has already started to diversify their relations and for example formed a kind of special dialogue with Moscow. Therefore, developing more strengthened relations with European capitals who have technology, know-how and arms has got importance. Besides gaining European support on the certain geopolitical issues like restraining Iranian influence in the Gulf and Middle East and stability of Hormuz is valuable for the Gulf states. The key question here is that how Gulf States will succeed to balance these diversified relations with Europeans without alienating Washington DC and Moscow especially in the critical sectors.

This brief paper will try to answer these questions after highlighting possible cooperation areas between European powers and Gulf states.

The E3/EU group, the United Kingdom and the Iranian nuclear issue: three problems of Brexit

Jacopo Scita

School of Government and International Affairs, Durham University

United Kingdom

jacopo.scita@durham.ac.uk

Abstract:

More than 1000 days after the June 2016 referendum, Brexit is still an unresolved issue. While the long-term effects of leaving the European Union are hard to be predicted, it appears clear, though, that Brexit is likely to become a major puzzle for British foreign policy. London's participation in the external activities of the EU will decrease in influence and weight substantially, although the new independence will open a complex

process of policy redefinition. The aim of this paper is not to predict the future of UK-Iran relations or of the Nuclear Deal. Vice versa, drawing on the role played by the E3 (Germany, France and the United Kingdom) in first approaching Tehran in 2003 and setting the framework for the EU involvement in Iran's nuclear issue, the present work argues that Brexit risks to represent an abrupt interruption of the constructive path that has begun in 2003. In particular, the paper suggests three macro problems that Brexit may generate to the E3/EU agenda vis-à-vis the Iranian dossier: (1) the potential re-emergence of mistrust and tensions between London and Tehran due to the volatile history of British-Iranian relations; (2) the effects of the growing transatlantic pressure on London's effort to keep its Iran policy harmonised with the E3/EU; (3) the potential impact of Brexit on the process that has created and reinforced a distinctively European foreign policy identity vis-à-vis the Iranian nuclear question.

JCPOA's destiny: Europe between the USA and Iran. For how long?

Alexander Shumilin

Institute of Europe, Russian Academy of Sciences
Russia
mideast@bk.ru

Inna Shumilina

Institute for the USA & Canada Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences
Russia
innashu@mail.ru

Abstract:

The US administration's pulling out of the agreement signed by P5+1 with Iran in 2015 has not crushed down the «nuclear deal» (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action - JCPOA) while having undermined it substantially. Nevertheless, the possibilities of the EU to salvage the deal are being put in question with the time to come. Europe itself is getting field for political and economic battles between the USA and its Middle East allies, on one hand, and Iran, on the other hand. The Iranian demarche of May 8, 2019 – the announced suspension of a part of its commitments under the 2015 accord in response to the re-imposed US sanctions – pushed Europeans to gradually reexamine its previous attitude in favor of the deal while taking more distance from Tehran. Until now, despite the difficulties facing the JCPOA, mounting US pressure, and recent strains on relations with Iran, European governments and the EU have continued to engage with Tehran. Europe's strong political commitment to the nuclear deal, not least through its approach to create a special purpose vehicle (SPV) designed to facilitate trade with Iran, is one of the key factors in the country's adherence to the JCPOA. On the other side, the question is to which extent Tehran might be able to pressure Europe to salvage the deal. The collapse of the JCPOA would create a real risk of further military conflict in the Middle East. Indeed, influential figures in the Trump administration, especially National Security Advisor John Bolton, have long advocated a US military operation against Iran. As recent history suggests, such an intervention would come at a high cost for Europe – and it is an outcome that Europe must do all it can to avoid. And that through maintaining the JCPOA, notwithstanding a shrinking European's enthusiasm vis-à-vis Iranian leadership.

The Aftermath of Brexit for British Presence in the Persian Gulf

Behzad Shahandeh

Tehran University

Iran

berniukchina@gmail.com

Abstract:

Among the expected consequences of Britain's withdrawal from the European Union are the country's likely efforts to restore a significant presence in the Persian Gulf region, and by that means to compensate for the perceived loss of its influence in the EU and beyond. With a weaker international role experienced in recent years, London will probably aim at regaining its once-prominent position in the Persian Gulf region by availing itself of its lasting, and even institutionalized, ties of friendship with regional states. In actual effect, despite its declared intentions to disengage from the "East of Suez", Britain never left the region or altogether lost interest in it, but rather maintained a new kind of presence that was to solidify over time. Later on, with the ultimate goal of a "Global Britain" being high on the agenda, the pre-Brexit period witnessed a trend towards engaging GCC States, with an emphasis being placed on enhancing ties to regional monarchies in the region. Britain's presently limited influence and reach both in Europe and globally will actually act as an incentive, and provide an opportunity, to gear its foreign policy objectives to expanding relations with Persian Gulf nations. Not only will the long-trusted partner continue to have a presence in the region, but it is also poised to become a major player ever more committed to strengthen bilateral ties with local states. At the time of the JCPOA deal, with relations of trust having developed at an institutional level, there was no doubt in the minds of the Persian Gulf monarchs as to Britain's subsequent course of action, namely that the nuclear accord, while causing London to warm up its stance towards Iran, would never lead it to sacrifice, or better said re-evaluate its relations with their own nations. Washington clearly shared British sentiments on the question, as evidenced by the improvement that then took place in relations between the USA and Iran. Based on the above developments, the purpose of the present paper is to discuss a possible upturn in Britain's Persian Gulf policies and standing subsequently to completion of Brexit. Under any government established thereafter, maintaining cordial relations with Arab countries bordering the Persian Gulf will be given a high priority, and this, not of the policy makers' own choice, but by necessity. With the expected rise in defense spending and the need to reaffirm bilateral ties overseas, increasing its presence in the region will indeed constitute an essential foreign policy goal for Britain, thereby prompting it to foster ties with GCC states in order to secure a niche position. As pointed out earlier, it will be compelled to make such crucial moves by circumstances, especially under growing pressure from the EU and beyond, as is becoming evident with states like Iraq, Syria, and Yemen which are gradually distancing themselves from Britain, while allowing other players to fortify their presence and influence in the area. Whereas London will be left with little room to maneuver in those countries, such will not be the case with Persian Gulf kingdoms where time-honored ties of friendship still prevail.

Brexit politico-economic influence on the prospects of trade and investment relations between the UK and the Gulf states

Vladimir Kukushkin

Institute for African Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences

Russia

vladimurk@gmail.com

Abstract:

The politico-economic aspects of so significant and complicated event as Brexit are practically numerous. Making any analytical endeavour in this field more problematical is absolute necessity to take into account the very volatile contemporary systems of both world economy and international relations in which the Brexit drama evolves. Another complexity is caused by high dynamics and contradictory results of the same factors in various fields and stages of Brexit process. Perhaps last but not least for any study on the topic it is indispensable to differentiate between market agents, forces together with theoretically proved results, patterns and rules of their interaction, on the one hand, while on the other – the purposeful activities of national states, multinational organisations as well as of other political institutions in the economic area.

The purpose of the paper is to explore first of all the politico-economic issues included into the workshop agenda. The author plans to discuss the realisation of EU's 'Special Purpose Vehicle' (SPV) designed to support the European-Iranian economic relations, the pros and cons of the British participation in this 'vehicle' connected to the Post-Brexit situation, and/or the prospects to offer some special British engines for the 'vehicle' construction, based on the longest in modern European economic history active co-operation with both Iran and the Arab Gulf states.

Rising challenges to the US-led regional security architecture in the European Union and Gulf

Shady Mansour

Future center for Advanced Research and Studies

United Arab Emirates

s.mansour@futureuae.com

Yara Ahmed

Future for Advanced Research and Studies

United Arab Emirates

y.ahmed@futureuae.com

Abstract:

Both the European Union and Gulf Cooperation Council have been hit by internal crises that negatively affect security cooperation among their members in dealing with eminent threats. Yet, in both regions, there has been dedicated efforts to establish security institutions, such as the recent call by the French president Emmanuel Macron

to establish a “true European Army” independent from the American-led NATO, as he warned that Europeans could no longer rely on the US to defend them.

On the other hand, Saudi Arabia, as well as UAE and Egypt established several independent Security alliances, like the “Arab coalition to restore legitimacy in Yemen, and “Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition”, which aims primarily at countering the Iranian influence in the region.

However, the European efforts were previously hindered by the UK, and as we are approaching Brexit, one can consider it a double-edged sword for the EU. On one hand, the British withdrawal from the EU presented an opportunity to revive the hope for establishing unified European security institutions, independent of the NATO’s umbrella. The most prominent of those calls were declaring the establishment of the Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), and proposing the need for closer collaboration on defense industries through the European Defense Agency. On the other hand, UK is a key security player, as it retains strategic capabilities not available to other European countries, which gives her a leverage in any form of defense and security cooperation with the EU.

These European efforts were harshly criticized by Trump’s administration, which favors NATO, as the main security umbrella for Europe. Washington was “deeply concerned” that approval of the rules for the European Defence Fund and the Permanent Structured Cooperation (Pesco), dedicated to fill the gaps in Europe’s military power, as such measures would restrict the involvement of American companies in pan-European military projects, and unnecessary competition between NATO and the EU, in Washington’s point of view().

In the Middle East, the US called for the establishment of an American-led security alliance in the region, known as Middle East Strategic alliance” (MESA), commonly referred to as the Arab NATO. This alliance will include the six member countries of the GCC, along with Egypt and Jordan.

In both cases, the US attempts to retain its leverage and influence on the security architecture in both regions through supporting NATO as the sole security umbrella for the EU, and openly attacking France-led efforts to establish an autonomous European defense capability. Similarly, Washington is attempting to establish and lead the MESA. However, both the GCC+2, in addition to the European Union are questioning the reliability of the US commitment for their defense, especially under the leadership of Trump.

The main aim of the paper is to analyze the extent of success of the American efforts to led the security architectures in both regions. This article advances three linked arguments. First: EU and Some leading Arab gulf states are attempting to establish an independent security structure from the US hegemony. Second: the US will resist these efforts, and try to keep its hegemony over the regional security, especially as both regions still lack the military capability that enables them to collectively defend their region without the American umbrella. Third: both regions will try to avoid any clash with the US, while trying to develop autonomous security architecture.

The paper will be divided as follows. First, it will shed the light on “off shore balancing”, as the new security strategy that Trump’s administration embraces in order to protect American supremacy over regional security agreements in both regions, while reducing the defense burden bestowed on Washington. Second, the paper will analyze the European efforts to enhance their security integration after Brexit, and the American counter policies. Third, the American efforts to establish MESA, as the dominant security architecture in the region will be assessed. Finally, the paper will reach to a number of concluding remarks that tries to evaluate the success or failure of American efforts in both cases.

Rethinking the GCC Scenario: Role of UK and EU27, Iran Deal and Post Conflict Non GCCs

Nazib Mohammad Nur

Bangladesh University of Professionals

Bangladesh

nmn.ctg.0095@gmail.com

Abstract:

The separation of the UK from the EU is a significant event of the history and also of course a vast influential game changer for those who are closely related with both the UK and the EU in several factors in terms of politics, economy, defence, participation, co-operation, collaboration etc. Although the GCCs have their set priorities, according to the transformation or in other words the emerging transverses of the power dynamics. The natural resources for example the petro-resources are no longer the only interest but the existing naval navigation and a possible emerging marketplace of renewable energy could transform the interests here. Overall, the geo politics of the region; contribution for the changing dynamics for GCCs; helping war torn and relative non GCCs; manage and mediate the external actors; recognizing the far ideologies in the region altogether could pose a more stable and peaceful scenario in the region. To set up a inclusive role model for non GCCs and also to attract multinational investment organizations to GCCs, they could come up with several action plans like providing peace building support to the war torn non GCCs in post conflict nation building phases for example Yemen, Syria and Iraq. For the last decades, the prolonged conflict and armed engagement with the regional neighbors is hard to believe that came up with benefits but huge number of money to carry out the expenses of the war, which could be spent as transformational development engagements.