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Opinion: It is time for security cooperation between the Gulf states and Iran

Posted By [Seyed Hossein Mousavian](#) On June 28, 2013 @ 12:00 am In [Opinion](#) | [No Comments](#)

Leaders of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) have [congratulated](#) ^[1] Iranian president-elect Hassan Rouhani and expressed hope for positive change in bilateral relations.

Soon after Seyed Mohammad Khatami was elected as president in 1997, Rouhani, as the secretary of the National Security Council, [visited Jeddah](#) ^[2] to sign the first "Security Agreement" with Saudi Arabia. This brave and practical step demonstrated Iran's intention to remove security concerns of its Arab neighbors and "pledge not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Persian Gulf countries."

During his spring 2005 trip to all GCC countries, Rouhani met with the heads of GCC states separately and stressed Iran's readiness to establish a regional cooperation system between Iran, Iraq, and the GCC. Rouhani told the GCC leaders that Iran places no limit on the level and quality of a comprehensive cooperation for peace, security, and stability in the region. Moreover, Rouhani stressed Iran's readiness to remove all concerns the GCC might have about their large neighbor.

Later, in April 2007, Rouhani attended a conference in Doha and presented the most concrete proposal for establishing a "Persian Gulf Regional Cooperation System between Iran and the GCC." The following [ten-point plan](#) ^[3] was presented to participants from GCC, Asia, Europe and the US:

1. Establishment of "Persian Gulf Security and Cooperation Organization" comprising the six Member States of the GCC, plus Iran and Iraq, in accordance with Paragraph 8 of the UN Security Council Resolution 598.
2. Organizing "common security arrangements" within the framework of a collective security system to fight terrorism, extremism, sectarianism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and other common security concerns.
3. Phasing out various barriers that impede political, security, economic and cultural cooperation.
4. Promotion and development of trade and commercial relations, in light of the existing potential and joint investments in economic projects to establish "free trade" among regional states.
5. Drawing up plans to ensure security of energy supply and production in the region, so as to secure interests of the regional countries and meet long-term global demand.
6. Building confidence regarding regional nuclear programs and establishing a voluntary and nonintrusive monitoring and verification system for the nuclear activities of regional countries.
7. Establishing a consortium of regional states for production of nuclear fuel and other peaceful nuclear activities under the supervision of the IAEA.
8. Promoting earnest cooperation in the region to achieve the goal of a "Middle East free from Weapons of Mass Destruction."
9. Ending arms races in the region and diverting resources to economic development and

alleviating poverty.

10. Gradual withdrawal of foreign forces from the region and the transition to the provision of security by regional countries.

Regrettably, relations between Iran and the GCC have deteriorated to such low levels in recent years that the leaders of GCC have [encouraged](#) ^[4] the US to launch a military attack on Iran. Some American and European scholars repeatedly told me that during President Ahmadinejad's presidency, the level of GCC pressure on US and Europe to attack Iran was on par with that of Israel's.

During his presidential campaign, Rouhani made clear that on foreign relations, rapprochement with the neighboring countries would be his priority. A summit of the GCC, Iran and Iraq to discuss a regional cooperation system would be an important step towards this. Establishing such a regional cooperation system would ease rivalries between Iran and Saudi Arabia and other members of the GCC in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Yemen and Lebanon, diverting efforts instead to cooperation for peace and stability.

Furthermore, such regional cooperation would facilitate regional multilateral cooperation on peaceful nuclear technologies, including uranium enrichment, among Iran, the GCC, Iraq, and even Egypt and Turkey. Such regional multilateral cooperation would be the most durable confidence building measure on the nuclear dispute between Iran and the neighbors.

I took part in three rounds of lengthy closed-door meetings in 1996 on an array of bilateral, regional and international issues with Saudi Arabia's then Crown Prince Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz, where we agreed on a comprehensive package for reviving relations, including cooperation in the fields of politics, security, economy and other areas. My experience of this leaves me in no doubt that such an initiative has a good chance of success.



[Seyed Hossein Mousavian](#) ^[5]

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[1] congratulated: http://www.rttnews.com/2136514/gcc-oic-welcome-hassan-rowhani-s-election-as-iranian-president.aspx?type=gn&utm_source=google&utm_campaign=sitemap

[2] visited Jeddah: <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/views/2013/06/17/Rowhani-s-election-Welcoming-an-old-friend.html>

[3] ten-point plan: <http://www.csr.ir/departments.aspx?lng=en&abtid=00&depid=106&semid=193>

[4] encouraged: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/nov/29/world/la-fg-wikileaks-iran-20101129>

[5] Seyed Hossein Mousavian: <http://www.aawsat.net/author/seyed-hossein-mousavian>

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