The Arab Spring and the Three ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’

The Quest for Regional Primacy of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar in View of the Helsinki Conference

Lars Berger, Bernd W. Kubbig, and Erzsébet N. Rózsa

Since the decision was made in late 2012 to postpone the envisaged Middle East Conference (MEC) on a zone free of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery vehicles (DVs), its main Facilitator, Finnish Ambassador Jaakko Laajava, and his team have worked jointly with the major conveners of the MEC, the United States and Russia, to bring together the relevant regional players. They in fact succeeded in setting up a series of informal meetings in Glion and Geneva since October 2013. There is some hope that the official Conference will become reality in due course in Helsinki, before the 2015 Review Conference on the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) convenes.

The Arab Spring: Regional and International Developments Shaping Middle East Politics

These efforts are taking place in the context of an apparent worsening of the security environment in the region, with some positive developments in Tunisia and the E3+3 (or P5+1) negotiations with Iran on a Nuclear Interim Agreement. In Libya, the post-conflict transition ‘nears chaotic state,’ and the elections have led to the establishment of two antagonistic camps – one negative weapons-related implication being the illicit proliferation of military equipment from the arsenal of deposed dictator Muammar al-Gaddafi. Egypt, after one revolution (2012) and one military coup (2013), remains torn between Islamists, the secular democratic opposition, and the secular military regime, with no sign at present of bridging the gap between the opposing segments. In fact, the decision of the Egyptian government at the end of 2013 to declare the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist organization sharply increased the risk of continued polarization. It thus remains to be seen whether under the new President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi the Egyptian military and its allies within the domestic security services will be successful in their attempt to re-establish Nasser-style authoritarian ‘stability’. The sentencing of 680 people to death in April 2014 and of 529 others one month earlier in a mass trial, demonstrating “ruthless disregards for law,” are worrying signs in this respect.

The Arab Spring has not only thrown Syria into a civil war with some 200,000 casualties, but the country has also become the battleground for a proxy war involving regional and global rivalries. Patrick Seale’s classic account sounds programmatic, if not prophetic, in this respect: Syria is a “mirror of rival interests on an international scale […]. Indeed, her internal affairs are almost meaningless unless related to the wider context, first of her Arab neighbours and then of other interested Powers […]. Whoever controlled Syria or enjoyed her special friendship could isolate the other and need bow to no other combination of Arab states.” The central regional role of Damascus in disturbing developments especially in Iraq has been highlighted by the surge of the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), since Syria’s conflict is closely intertwined with the destabilization

Abstract

The Arab Spring has severely impacted upon the Middle East. While several countries descended into chaos, the three ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’ – Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar – adapted their policies to maintain regime security by preserving and extending their regional influence although with limited success. In this Policy Brief, we develop the ‘Middle East Regional Hegemony Approach’, drawing on the traditional hegemony concept and the recent regional power approach for analyzing the regional ambitions of the three countries. This includes examining, first, the existing patterns of amity/enmity in the Gulf sub-region; second, the domestic dimensions as the basis for foreign policy and regional security; and third, the foreign policy instruments – from soft to hard power. This approach makes it finally possible to assess the influence of the three ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’ on the sub-regional, wider Middle East, and international level. Concluding that there are severe costs to pay for pursuing a hegemonic policy, this Policy Brief argues that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar should search for opportunities of cooperation as an alternative and a less risky route towards securing sub-regional, regional, and international influence. This could have positive repercussions on the Helsinki Conference on a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East.

This Policy Brief builds on the contributions of two Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East workshops held in Vienna on September 8-10, 2012, and in Istanbul on May 27-29, 2013, with participants from China, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States, and Yemen. The working groups on the Arab Spring have been generously funded by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung.
At first glance, our focus on the interaction between domestic and foreign policies within the Gulf region might not have an obvious connection with Ambassador Jaakko Laajava’s current step-by-step-efforts to pave the way for the Middle East Conference in the Finnish capital. [But] the dynamics within the conflict constellations and their associated alliances finally shape the behavior of all states participating in the Helsinki Conference.«

and even fragmentation of Iraq: ISIS, which wants to dismantle existing borders among Sunni states in order to restore an Islamic state (‘caliphate’), has probably been the most ferocious of the disparate groups in the mostly Sunni rebel movement that has been trying to topple President Bashar al-Assad.¹

The situation in Bahrain is still tense with protests and clashes occurring. In March 2011, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) deployed troops to Bahrain at the behest of the Bahraini royal family in order to quash a peaceful movement calling for political reform. Yemen is still trying to master a national reconciliation process and keep the country unified. This is made difficult by ongoing al-Qaeda activities and military confrontations with the Houthi.⁶

Tunisia, where the Arab Spring began in December 2010 with a series of unprecedented demonstrations, stands as the sole encouraging example (fragile as it is) of what can be achieved if all main political actors are willing to negotiate and to compromise both on the adoption of a new constitution and an agreement in December 2013 for a caretaker government to run the country until elections in 2014. The government of Mehdi Jomaa, who took over as Prime Minister in January 2014, followed the government led by the Islamic party Ennahda. Despite enormous economic problems, social unrest, and the rise in extremism and terrorist attacks, the state of emergency was lifted in March 2014, signalling growing confidence in the security of the country. Another sign that Tunisia is on a good way towards democracy is the result of the October 2014 parliamentary elections: Ennahda lost its plurality to Nidaa Tounes, which won 86 seats in the 217-seat parliament and has now the right to name a prime minister and form a government in coalition. One month later, the presidential elections paved another milestone in Tunisia’s democratic transition.⁸

At the level of international diplomacy, the conclusion of the nuclear Interim Agreement between the P5+1 and Iran on November 24, 2013 stands out. To be sure, despite considerable progress, the plan to reach an accord in July 2014 could not be fulfilled, because of unresolved disagreements. But the parties reached consensus on extending the talks until November 24, 2014. On that day, they agreed on a second extension by seven months with the aim of reaching a high-level political agreement by March 1, 2015 and confirming the full technical details of the agreement by July 1, 2015. Still, a comprehensive agreement may be the first step towards a solution to a decades-long major conflict, which would have positive consequences for the entire region — and a new Helsinki process on establishing a zone free from weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles. But this event follows its own dynamics; it has less to do with the Arab Spring. The ruling elite in the non-Arab Islamic Republic of Iran has pursued the strategy of keeping the winds of change outside its own territory. There are small signs of political and social liberalization, for instance in the academic area, since Hassan Rouhani became President; yet he was allowed to run for election and was elected President in June 2013 in the first place to relax the financial and economic sanctions.

On the Arab Peninsula (and of course in Syria) the Arab Spring has also seen authoritarian regimes attempting to prevent transformative changes. The domestic and foreign policy activities of two Gulf states, which have adopted new and in part different elements, stand out in this respect: the monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Their ruling families have expressed an increased quest for regional supremacy as a specific element of their strategy of regime and state survival.

In addition to the Arab Spring, a second determinant has developed for the regional ambitions of both Gulf monarchies, although to a different degree: an emerging nuclear Iran. Especially Saudi Arabia (to a lesser extent Qatar) fears that Tehran’s foreign policies will become even more assertive, interventionist, and expansionist — and thus have Arab Spring-like destabilizing effects. A third factor has to be taken into account: the new role of the United States which is widely perceived in the Arab world as “non-committal, wavering, ‘fatigued’ and thus an unreliable partner and protector.”¹⁰ This negative assessment is due to the following factors: the power vacuum the United States has left behind especially in Iraq, Washington’s abandoning of long-term allies such as the Hosni Mubarak regime; its reluctance to pursue the option of a military strike against the Bashar al-Assad regime in
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Damascus and to offer the requested military assistance to Gulf states allies among the rebels; and last, but not least, Washington’s preparedness to strike a deal with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the key rival of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The Intensifying Rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran

These regional developments have forced Saudi Arabia and Qatar to adapt their policies in such a way that they continue to serve the twin interests of maintaining regime security as well as preserving (and in fact extending) their regional influence. With Iran seen as a menace, the intensified rivalry between Riyadh and Tehran that goes with the quest for supremacy as a way of seeking regime security has become a dominant feature of regional dynamics. Qatar has evolved as a new but distinct player whose interventionism is redefining its traditional relations with Saudi Arabia, the dominant member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

At first glance, our focus on the interaction between domestic and foreign policies within the Gulf region might not have an obvious connection with Ambassador Jaakko Laajava’s current step-by-step efforts to pave the way for the Middle East Conference in the Finnish capital. As we show below, the dynamics within the conflict constellations and their associated alliances finally shape the behavior of all states participating in the Helsinki Conference. Although each policy field does have its own dynamics, a more coordinated and even cooperative policy of the three selected states could help to improve conditions for a new Helsinki process on establishing a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles. In any case, the outstanding nuclear Interim Accord, if implemented adequately, would in all likelihood imply that Iran in a verifiable way will not even be a near-nuclear country. This will ease pressures especially on Saudi Arabia to go nuclear, putting Israel in the center of the discussion about a WMD/DVs Free Zone in the Middle East – all crucial issues for and at the Helsinki Conference.

The Structure of This Policy Brief

In order to analyze the Arab Spring as probably the most important causal factor or catalyst for the current regional ambitions of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, we go beyond the country-by-country profile of the first Policy Brief (Nos. 9/10) on the Arab Spring. Of course, domestic politics remain important, but they will be presented in a different way. This Policy Brief starts by outlining the major elements of our framework, and our endeavor amounts to examining the continuity and changes of these three actors in the following respects:

• The patterns of regional conflict and their associated alliances (for instances among Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the UAE) as well as the regional dynamics in terms of the competitive setting, especially between Tehran and Riyadh;

• the domestic contexts, i.e. the power structures and constellations; the economic and socio-demographic sources of the respective foreign policies; and the attempts to legitimize ambitious foreign policies in the context of a foreign policy culture shaped, in particular, by two factors: a) the identity (self-conception, self-understanding) of the three actors, i.e. their motives/interests, basic principles, and objectives; and b) the scope of and preference for their foreign policy instruments, including the relationship between

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Good Bye or Welcome Hegemony? Two Opposing Views

“All three functions of hegemony [see below] require contingent forms of influence rather than the blunt exercise of power. Their application is becoming increasingly diffused among states, rather than concentrated in the hands of a hegemon. These functions are performed by multiple states, sometimes in collaboration with nonstate actors. Global governance practices are sharply at odds with the formulations of realists and liberals alike. Western Europeans have made consistent efforts to extend their normative influence by promoting agendas well beyond those with which they are traditionally associated. These include environmental and human rights initiatives, but also security issues and corporate regulation. Asian states – most notably China – have increasingly assumed a custodial role, albeit embryonic at this point, quite at odds with the neomercantilist or rising military power depicted by realists. Under President Obama, the United States has continued to pursue a bipartisan sponsorship role that runs parallel to its more conventional efforts at leadership.”


“Reich and Lebow have joined a long list of writers who have announced the end of U.S. hegemony and the coming of the next world order. In fact, they argue that hegemony has been dead for many decades. ‘Hegemony is a fiction propagated to support a large defense establishment, justify American claims to world leadership, and buttress the self-esteem of voters,’ they proclaim. But they have an odd notion of what constitutes hegemony, which they equate with ‘the blunt exercise of force.’ Reich and Lebow note that influence is far more important than raw power and identify three functions that leading states must perform to sustain order in today’s allegedly post-hegemonic international system: agenda setting (advocating policies and principles of order), custodianship (stabilizing the world economy), and sponsorship (initiating rules and institutions). These are perfectly good points, but the main critique relies on a straw man: political scientists and policymakers are well aware of the distinction between raw power and influence. Indeed, the field of international relations even has a term for the strategy of influence that Reich and Lebow advocate. That term is ‘hegemony.’”


Policy Briefs Nos. 43-45. Our bottom line is: the status of all three relevant states as ‘true hegemons’ is in severe doubt and their policies of seeking regime/state survival through their quest for regional primacy/supremacy are sub-optimal. Therefore, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar may come to realize, also with respect to the envisaged Helsinki Conference, that less competitive and less risky ways of maintaining and protecting regime security exist in the form of cooperative engagement.

Conceptualizing the Power, Influence, and Leadership of the Three ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’

This Policy Brief is informed by one traditional and one recent approach to conceptualizing the expansion, safeguarding, and retraction of spheres of influence.

The Traditional Hegemony Approach

First, U.S.-centered analyses examined the role of the United States during its Cold War competition with the Soviet Union as a militarily more or less equal adversary because of their huge arsenals. Both the United States and the Soviet Union served as the ‘sole remaining superpower’. While, certainly, the capabilities and the roles of the ‘Hegemon’s of the Gulf’ appear very limited by comparison, their quest for regional primacy/supremacy in the competitive setting of the Middle East characterized by complex and overlapping conflict formations is very much shaped by these formations.

The Recent Regional Power Approach

Second, recent comparative studies have sought to define emerging powers in various regions of the world that qualify for the category of a regional power. There is disagreement with regard to which Middle Eastern actors should be considered regional powers (for instance, sometimes the United Arab Emirates are listed, while Qatar is generally missing). One recent study by the German Institute of Global
and Area Studies (GIGA) developed two sets of four criteria for considering a country an emerging regional power. The first set, which is apparently more important than the second one, implies that a “regional power (1) is part of a geographically delimited region; (2) is ready to assume leadership; (3) displays the necessary material and ideational capabilities for regional power projection; and (4) is highly influential in regional affairs.”

However, not all of the regional powers listed meet all of the yardsticks. This shows, as one contributor of the GIGA project acknowledges, that this academic undertaking is “not yet a fully-fledged” research design.

None of the three countries under consideration in Policy Briefs No. 43-45 can satisfy each one of the four (or eight) criteria, thus demonstrating already at first glance the limits and vulnerabilities of the ambitious regional policies pursued by each one of them. While this would support our assumption that the characterization of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar as true ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’ is questionable, by no means do we apply the four (or eight) criteria in a systematic way. The GIGA study is relevant for our undertaking, since it endorses the starting point of our approach which is the GIGA project’s final Middle East-related result: that this region does not fit the concept of one regional power, “because there are several actors whose power capabilities are superior to those of the weaker actors in the region.” Also, as already outlined in the introductory remarks (and presented in a more systematic way below), the nature of the Middle East/Gulf as a “fragmented and conflict-laden” region is a central assumption for us.

The Middle East Regional Hegemony Approach

Against this backdrop, we define a regional ‘Hegemon of the Gulf’ as a Middle Eastern power which

1. satisfies at the domestic level the structural, institutional, and ideological/religious preconditions for legitimizing its regional quest for primacy/supremacy;

2. has a certain range of soft and hard instruments at its disposal to implement its regional aspirations, also with the variant of preventing the paramount rival(s) from reaching their objective of regional primacy/supremacy; and

3. has political actors at the highest level of the relevant decision-making processes who are willing to assume leadership for pursuing such regional ambitions.

Despite country-related specifics, we assume that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar use their strategies of consolidating or even extending their influence as part of their basic domestic interest in regime survival. We shall see that for all three countries considerable gaps exist between their foreign policy aspirations and their actual successes (see Policy Briefs No. 43-45).

For this Policy Brief, which seeks to understand for what reasons and in what regional setting Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar aim at increasing their influence and providing leadership, especially the classic hegemony-related approach has to some extent been helpful for distilling the following four dimensions:

1) The Regional Setting – Existing Patterns of Amity/Enmity in the Gulf Sub-region

The recognition that there is no single dominant player, but several competing powers striving for regional primacy in terms of influence and leadership within the overall conflict formations, allows us to differentiate between a strong Iranian-Saudi rivalry (in fact our emphasis) and the ambiguous relationship between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the State of Qatar; the latter has been oscillating between competition and policy coordination. In the context of the Arab Spring and the Syrian Civil War in particular, Qatar’s relationship with Iran, on the other hand, has shown a similar oscillation between guarded accommodation and an adversarial stance tilting towards a somewhat more confrontational one. It would be dangerous to reify these current patterns of enmity and amity. The Middle East’s modern history is full of examples of sudden, sometimes quite dramatic, shifts in regional and global allegiances. Even among the actors under consideration here, such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, we can see periods of accommodation.

»Despite country-related specifics, we assume that Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar use their strategies of consolidating or even extending their influence as part of their basic domestic interest in regime survival.«
One of the early lessons of the Arab Spring was that observers and policy-makers have ignored the domestic dimension of regional security at their own peril. While all of the revolutions and calls for reform are clearly grounded in dissatisfaction with various aspects of the Arab world’s political, social, and economic status quo, they remain closely intertwined with foreign policy behavior. To be more concrete, the domestic context matters in three respects:

- The specific features of political structures and power constellations. These structures determine to a large degree which faction(s) prevail(s) over others and how this impacts on the wider foreign policy agenda and preferred foreign policy instruments. For the sake of brevity, we can only provide a rough overview of the major factions in Iran and the interests of the ruling families in Saudi Arabia and Qatar (see third bullet below for a relevant qualification).

- Foreign policy culture/identity. Changes in ideological (ideational or normative)/religious identities do not serve solely as a source for legitimizing domestic political order and foreign policy ambitions. They can also lead to a re-ordering, or at least re-evaluation, of long-established definitions of what actually constitutes each country’s national interests, its status, and its roles. We will show how their political tactics and legitimation strategies differ: the ruling family in Qatar defends its regime by emphasizing its spearhead role in gradual change in the entire Middle East. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, acts as the preserver or re-builder of the old, pre-Arab Spring order. In this turbulent environment neither the kingdom nor the emirate are status quo powers, except for their own state.

- The economic, socio-demographic, and military underpinnings of domestic and regional (in)stability. As we shall see, these dimensions have an ambivalent impact on the effort to ensure regime survival and safeguard regional ambitions. On the one hand, they constitute the material source for providing the tools and even legitimacy for those ambitions. On the other hand, all three countries suffer from (potential) vulnerabilities which, if left unaddressed, could seriously imperil not just regional influence, but the very future of the respective regimes. Important as those dimensions are, they do not automatically translate into a specific foreign policy strategy. Iran is a case in point. Enormous economic difficulties have not prevented Tehran from pursuing its assertive foreign policy in the region, while the two wealthy Arab states have used their financial resources as foreign policy incentives, for instance to reach mediation results. In short, not by themselves, but, as mentioned above, in combination with the self-understanding/identity of the hegemon and the prevailing domestic actors (or factions within the ruling families in Saudi Arabia and Qatar) will these dimensions impact upon the preferred goals and tools.

3) Foreign Policy Instruments – The Relationship between Power, Influence and Leadership

The scope of the instruments available to regional actors is best described by the two categories of hard power and soft power:

- Hard power can include a) economic measures applied via coercion (e.g. sanctions) and incentives; and b) military interventions and (indirectly) participating in a civil war by providing military/and or financial assistance.

- Soft power can include classical diplomacy, mainly in terms of mediation, but also co-optation (Riyadh’s offer to Jordan and Morocco to join the Gulf Cooperation Council). But ‘soft power’ is also understood as a model for others, i.e. as the ability of an actor to achieve its foreign policy interests based on the attraction of its cultural, political, and ideological (ideational) values as opposed to the use of military or economic coercion and incentives. Soft power appears particularly relevant when regional upheavals such as the Arab Spring
bring into focus the power of ideas and questions about the orientation of the most successful or appropriate domestic political structures (democracy, Islamism, post-Islamism, secularism, nationalism etc.). With respect to our POLICY BRIEF’s interest in the Iranian-Saudi rivalry, it is evident that both Saudi/Sunni conservatism and Iranian revolutionary zeal are to a very limited extent, if at all, welcome in the region. And yet, as we shall see in the case of Iran, the leadership’s anti-Western attitude has had a certain appeal, ironically less for its own population than for the Arab people.

In light of the conceptual considerations of domestic and international sources of power mentioned above, it is obvious that willingness to lead is not the same as having the capacity to lead. That is why the following analysis must take into account potential changes that affect the willing-to-lead issue. As we shall see in the case of Qatar (POLICY BRIEF No. 45), the highly personalized foreign policy decision-making process means that the form and intensity of regional ambitions are actor-dependent and may alter, due to crucial personal changes at the very top of domestic political structures (this occurred in Doha in mid-2013).

At the same time, the interest in regime/state survival will always remain the primary driver of foreign policy and of any strategy seeking to expand the sphere of influence. What can change, however, is the emphasis on specific political and economic strategies serving the primary goal of regime survival. In the case of Saudi Arabia and Qatar, for instance, we are witnessing a major change in foreign policy tools from mediation to active interventionism.

4) Assessing the Regional Influence of Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar as ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’

We assess regional primary/supremacy by primarily focusing on the influence of the three ‘Hegemons of the Gulf’, i.e. by

Endnotes


6. The Economist, April 26, 2014, p. 36.


11. For this classic concept of hegemony see Bernd W. Kubiak (guest ed.) (2001) Toward a New American Century? The US Hegemon in Motion, Amerikastudien/American Studies, 46(4), especially the Introduction and Conclusions. For the regional power concept see Daniel Flemes (ed.) Regional Leadership in the Global System: Ideas, Interests and Strategies of Regional Powers, Farnham Ashgate: (‘GIGA study’).


14. Daniel Flemes and Detlef Nolte (2010) ‘Introduction’, in Flemes (ed.), 1-14, here pp. 6-7. This first set is followed by four additional criteria for distinguishing and classifying different types of regional powers. These include (1) economic, political and cultural interconnectedness of the regional power within its region; (2) the provision of collective goods for the region; (3) the existence of an ideational leadership project; and (4) the acceptance of the leadership by potential followers.


16. Ibid. p. 127.


Further Reading


looking at the ability of these actors to maintain or change the status quo in line with their interests at three levels:

- First, the sub-regional status quo. For Riyadh, for instance, it will make sense to address two challenges within its immediate sphere of interest on the Arab Peninsula: first, Saudi Arabia as the hegemon/dominating power will have to protect its closest allies, the GCC members; second, Riyadh, in accordance with its security interests, will remain active in fostering the stabilization of its precarious neighbor Yemen.

- Second, the wider Middle East outside the narrow confines of the Arab/Persian Gulf. Here, the question will be about the extent to which these three state actors have been able to secure the success of various regimes and opposition groups which they had supported militarily and politically – or whether the record shows failures.

- Third, the international level. Here, attention must be paid to Iran’s attempt to address the international sanctions regime. For Saudi Arabia and Qatar, alliances with the United States constitute a pillar of strategies to secure regime/state survival.

Conclusions and Outlook

Our main conclusion is that for all three countries under consideration, there are heavy costs to pay for a policy of being a hegemon/dominant regional power. Indeed, a more suitable strategy would be for Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar with their limited power and influence to search for opportunities of cooperation as an alternative, more cost-efficient, and less risky route towards regime survival by securing sub-regional, regional, and international influence in a competitive setting. This recognition on the part of the relevant foreign policy elites would also have positive repercussions for the envisaged Helsinki Conference – the most tangible and perhaps most important would be if the E3+3 and Iran reached comprehensive agreement on the nuclear issue that also satisfied Saudi Arabia and Qatar (and certainly Israel). Such a result could be a door opener especially for Israel and Iran to join the Helsinki Conference as constructive, compromise-oriented participants.

About the Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East (APOME)

The ORCHESTRA is the follow-up project of the “Multilateral Study Group on the Establishment of a Missile Free Zone in the Middle East”. The Academic Peace Orchestra Middle East is a classical Track II initiative: it consists of some 100 experts – mainly from the Middle East/Gulf, one of the most conflict-ridden areas of the world. The ORCHESTRA is meeting regularly in working groups (CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITs) on specific topics in the context of a workshop cycle from 2011-2014. The main goal of this initiative is to shape the prospective Middle East Conference on the establishment of a zone free of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles agreed upon by the international community in May 2010. For this reason, these experts develop ideas, concepts, and background information in a series of POLICY BRIEFS which are the results of intense discussions within the CHAMBER ORCHESTRA UNITs. In this framework, the broader normative Cooperative Security Concept will be further developed, embedded, and institutionalized in the region. At the same time, the ORCHESTRA meetings serve as venues for confidence building among the experts. The networking activities of PRIF’s Project Group are documented by the ATLAS on Track II research activities in or about the Middle East/Gulf region.

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