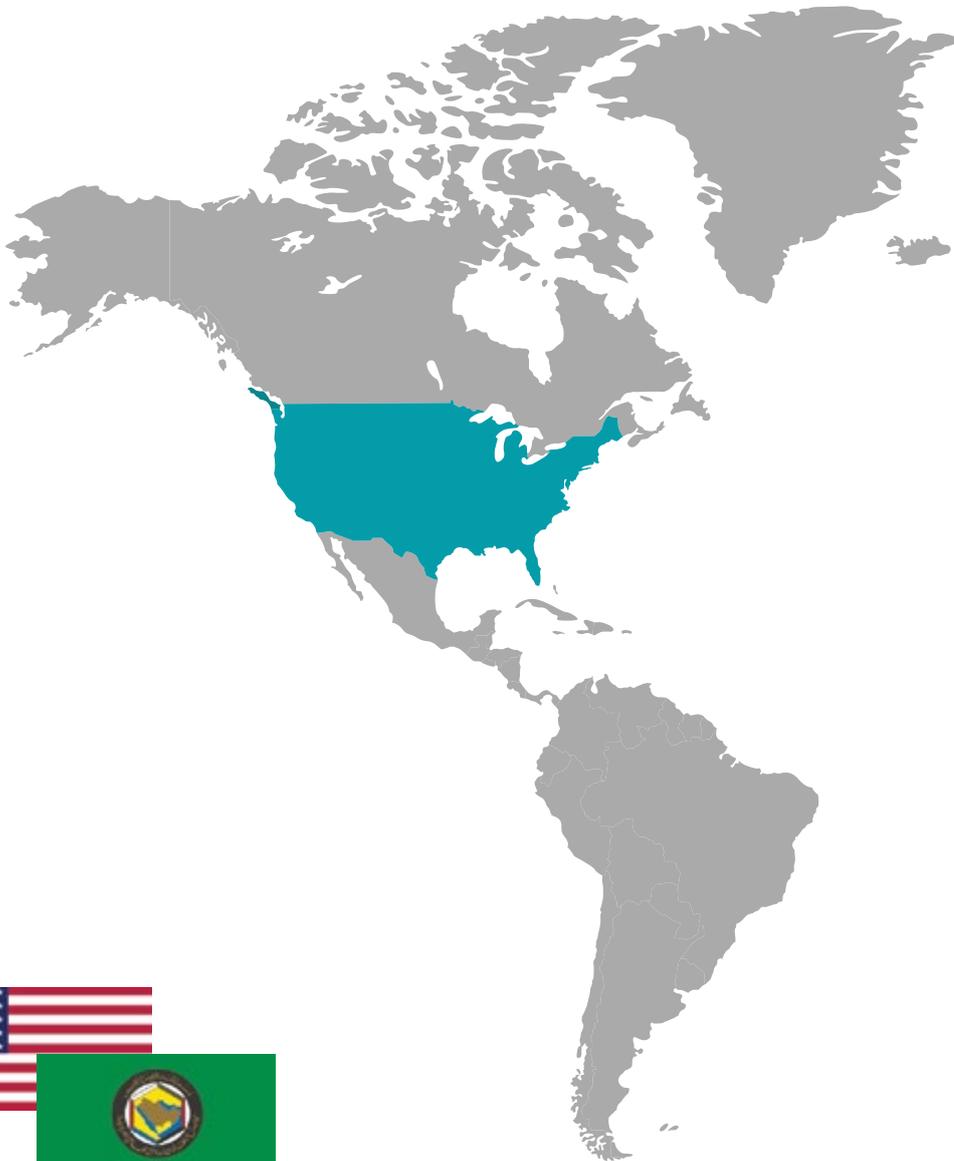




**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All

# U.S. - GCC Relations



## 1. Key Domestic Developments

Historically, midterm elections in the United States result in the incumbent president's party losing a significant number of seats. This time, however, Democrats were able to outperform this trend by retaining control of the Senate and stopping what many considered would be a "red wave" in Republican victories. The Republicans did win control of the House of Representative after gaining 9 votes and passing the threshold of 218 seats by a total of 222 votes. The final tally was again narrower than initially expected. Overall, the midterm results are being considered as a setback for the Republican prospects of reclaiming the White House in the 2024 presidential elections.

Domestic challenges and political polarization between the two sides of the American political



divide remain as stark as ever. President Joe Biden continues to face low approval ratings due to inflation, crime, and other domestic issues. Voters have suffered from high consumer prices, gas prices, and interest rates. Gas prices surged to \$4 per gallon in March 2022, the highest since 2008. Moreover, the US national debt crossed \$31 trillion in October 2022. Consequently, inflation levels rose to record levels for over 40 years, hitting 7% in 2021, the largest 12-month gain since June 1982.

For the Republicans, the burden of these developments falls on President Biden alone, whereas Democrats are keen to emphasize that the recent spikes are related to the Ukraine crisis. Although the crisis in Ukraine exacerbated the uptick in gas prices, it is not the root cause. Data indicates that gas prices began rising in November 2021, long before the crisis in Ukraine. According to data from the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), after the national average gas prices stabilized at \$2 per gallon in April 2020, it increased back up to \$3.32, the highest since 2014. The same goes for inflation, which began to increase in the middle of 2021.

There has also been a deep polarization regarding crime and gun control following the numerous mass shootings, particularly the Robb Elementary School shooting in May 2022. Democrats pushed for stricter gun control and regulations, such as banning assault weapons, whereas Republicans pushed for their legal right to keep and bear arms under the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution. Although President Biden and Democrats promoted the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act that was passed in June 2022 to provide stricter gun-safety laws, Republicans continue to identify crime as a top concern. Abortion was another key topic in the midterm elections. Democrats pushed to protect the right to abortion, while Republicans continued to pass restrictive abortion laws. Following the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling in June 2022 that overturned *Roe v. Wade*, abortion was cited as a major contributor for voter turnout, particularly young women.

### Key US Economic and Social Data

- GDP: \$23 trillion (2021)  
GDP per capita: \$69,287.54 (2021).
- Annual Growth Rate: 5.7% (2021)  
Inflation: 7% (2021).
- Population: 331.9 million (2021)  
Unemployment Rate: 5.3% (2021).



- Credit Rating: Standard & Poor: AA+ with a stable outlook. Moody: Aaa with a stable outlook. Fitch: AAA with a stable outlook. DBRS: AAA with a stable outlook.

The COVID-19 pandemic signaled the 2020 recession, the worst recession since the Great Depression, causing the US economy to contract by 3.5% in 2020. In addition, due to states requiring non-essential businesses to shut down, the US economy lost around 20.6 million jobs, with the unemployment rate peaking at 14.8% in April 2020. However, the US GDP growth rose by 5.7% and the unemployment rate fell to a healthy 5.3% in 2021. Despite these developments, economists estimate a mere 0.3% average GDP growth and a 70% chance for US recession in 2023.

## 2. US Foreign Policy

In October 2022, the White House released the US National Security Strategy, where the goal is a “free, open, prosperous, and secure international order.” The strategy outlines the way the US will tackle “shared challenges,” particularly climate change, pandemics, and economic turbulence: investing in national power to maintain a competitive edge, through implementing a modern industrial and innovation strategy, investing in American citizens, and strengthening democracy. The National Security Strategy also outlines the US’ efforts to “build the strongest possible coalitions” through transformative cooperation with alliances such as NATO, AUKUS, Five Eyes, Quad, and G7.

In his first foreign policy address as president, President Biden stated that “diplomacy is back at the center of our foreign policy.” He added, “America is back, diplomacy is back.” Additionally, President Biden stated in the State Department that his administration will work toward “reclaiming our credibility and moral authority.”

### *Key Foreign Policy Initiatives in 2022*

- The US declares the Rohingya repression in Myanmar as genocide.
- The US imposes sanctions on China over the repression of Uighur Muslims and other ethnic and religious minorities.
- The US imposes sanctions on Russia for invading Ukraine.
- The US resurrects JCPOA deal talks.
- US delegation visits Taiwan amid tensions with China.
- The US announced a new foreign policy for Africa.
- The US rejoined the Paris Climate Accords and the World Health Organization.

The sudden and chaotic withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, which opened the door open for the Taliban to control Kabul and seize overall political power, significantly damaged US credibility. Overall, the Biden administration received criticism domestically and abroad, given how the affair was conducted. For example, General Mark Milley, chair of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, called the war in Afghanistan a “strategic failure” in a hearing in the Senate. In addition, according to the Wall Street Journal, several US agencies began internal reviews of the Biden administration’s handling of the withdrawal.

Potentially equally damaging to US credibility could be President Biden’s handling of the crisis in Ukraine. Although the sense is that the crisis has brought forward a newfound unity in the Western alliance, there are concerns that some of the steps announced by the US could lead to a further increase in tensions rather than bringing the crisis to an end. For example, President Biden labeled Russian leader Vladimir Putin a “war criminal,” which, according to experts, closes the door further on a diplomatic solution. Others, such as John Mearsheimer, go as far as to blame the US for the crisis in Ukraine. They argue that the US pushing to expand NATO towards the east over the past decades has increased the likelihood of war between nuclear-armed powers.



In addition, US officials' visit to Taiwan has also led to some controversy. Following the visits, China imposed sanctions on Taiwanese political figures as well as warned the US, with the Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson stating "China will take resolute and strong measures to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. Associating themselves with the separatists in Taiwan and attempting to challenge the one-China principle is a misjudgment and will get these small number of US politicians nowhere." The visits also yielded negative reactions internationally. For instance, Singapore's prime minister-in-waiting warned that the US and China are closer to military confrontation. Moreover, Former US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, explained that the US is "at the edge of war with Russia and China on issues which we partly created." In an effort to repair US-China relations, President Biden and President Xi held a three-hour meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit. Both leaders agreed to take action to put the bilateral relations back on track as it is key for overall international peace and security. The meeting managed to pacify tensions between US and China, but there continues to be room for improvement.

Part of the global priorities in the National Security Strategy involves China and Russia. Regarding China, the White House provided a three-part strategy: invest in the foundations of the US' strength, align US efforts with allies and partners, and compete responsibly with China. When it comes to Russia, the US aims to make Russia's involvement in Ukraine a strategic failure. Other strategies by region include promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, deepening US alliance with Europe, fostering democracy and shared prosperity in the Western Hemisphere, supporting de-escalation and integration in the Middle East, maintaining a peaceful Arctic, and protecting sea, air, and space.

Another pillar in the National Security Strategy is building 21<sup>st</sup> century US-Africa partnerships as President Biden continues to place an emphasis

on Africa with the New US Africa Strategy. To strengthen ties with African partners, President Biden held a 3-day summit on December 13-15, 2022, for the US-Africa Leaders Summit. The summit highlighted the importance of issues such as, developing new economic engagement, cooperating to strengthen regional and global health, promoting food security, advancing peace and security, and fighting climate change. The summit was the first to include most of Africa's leaders in Washington since 2014.

### 3. US-GCC Fact Sheet

- US trade in goods with GCC countries in 2022 as of October 2022:

Country	Exports	Imports	Balance
Saudi Arabia	\$9,229.3M	\$19,783.8M	\$-10,554.5M
United Arab Emirates	\$16,792.9M	\$6,048.3M	\$10,744.6M
Qatar	\$2,639.0M	\$2,330.8M	\$308.2M
Oman	\$1,255.9	\$2,301.1M	\$-1,045.2M
Bahrain	\$714.1M	\$1,667.3M	\$-953.3M
Kuwait	\$2,948.5M	\$1,609.1M	\$1,339.4M

#### *Establishment of Diplomatic Relationships*

- US-GCC Diplomatic Relations: Saudi Arabia (1940 following recognition in 1931), Kuwait (1961), Bahrain (1971), United Arab Emirates (1972), Qatar (1972), and Oman (1972).

#### *Current Diplomatic Representation*

- US Embassy in Riyadh: Chargé d'Affaires, Martina Strong.
  - Consulate General Dhahran: Consulate General David Edginton.
  - Consulate General Jeddah: Consulate General Faris Y. Asad.



- Embassy of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in Washington: H.R.H. Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.
  - Consulate General Houston: Consulate General Mr. Saad Hamad Aljebreen.
  - Consulate General Los Angeles: Consulate General Mr. Fawaz Alshubaili.
  - Consulate General New York: Consulate General H.E. Mr. Hatem Al Gahamdi.

### *Key US Officials with Responsibility for the Gulf Region*

- US Department of State:
  - 71<sup>st</sup> Secretary of State: Antony J. Blinken.
  - Deputy Secretary of State: Wendy R. Sherman
  - Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs:
    - Assistant Secretary: Barbara A. Leaf.
    - Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary: Yael Lempert.
    - Deputy Assistant Secretary: Ethan A. Goldrich.
    - Deputy Assistant Secretary for Iran, Iraq, and Public Diplomacy: Jennifer Gavito.
    - Special Representative for Palestinian Affairs: Hady Amr.
    - Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs: Andrew P. Miller.
    - Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs: Daniel Benaim.
    - US Special Envoy for Yemen: Timothy A. Lenderking.

- US Special Envoy for Iran: Robert Malley.

- US Department of Defense:
  - 28<sup>th</sup> Secretary of Defense: Lloyd James Austin III.
  - Under Secretary of Defense: Colin Kahl.
  - Assistant Secretary of Defense of International Security Affairs: Celeste A. Wallander.
  - Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for the Middle East: Dana Stroul.
- National Security Council:
  - National Security Advisor: Jake Sullivan.
  - Coordinator for the Middle East and North Africa: Brett McGurk.
    - Senior Director for the Middle East: Stephanie Hallet.
      - Director for Gulf Affairs: Stephanie Hallet.
      - Director for the Arabian Peninsula: Evyenia Sidereas.
      - Director for Iran: Sam Martin.
      - Director for Iraq and Syria: Zehra Bell.
      - Director for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs: Julie Sawyer.
      - Director for Lebanon and Jordan: Maxwell Martin.
      - Director for Political-Military Affairs and Yemen: K.C. Evans.

- Congress:
  - United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and Counterterrorism:
    - Chair: Chris Murphy (D-CT).
    - Ranking Member: Todd Young (R-IN).
  - United States House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism:
    - Chair: David Cicilline (D-RI-01).
    - Ranking Member: Joe Wilson (R-SC).
- RAND Corporation: <https://www.rand.org>
- Stimson Center: <https://www.stimson.org>
- The Century Foundation: <https://tcf.org>
- Wilson Center for International Scholars: <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/>
- United States Institute of Peace: <https://www.usip.org/>
- Center for a New American Security (CNAS): <https://www.cnas.org/>
- Baker Institute for Public Policy: <https://www.bakerinstitute.org/>
- Congressional Research Service: <https://crsreports.congress.gov/>

### *Selected Key Regional Experts*

- [Karen Young](#) (Middle East Institute)
- [Hussein Ibish](#) (Arab Gulf Institute in Washington – AGSIW)
- [David des Roches](#) (National Defense University)
- [F. Gregory Gause, III](#) (Texas A&M University)
- [Frederic Wehrey](#) (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace)
- [Anthony Cordesman](#) (Center for Strategic and International Studies – CSIS)
- [Kirsten Fontenrose](#) (The Atlantic Council)

### *Key Research Centers and Think Tanks*

- American Enterprise Institute: <https://www.aei.org>
- Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington: <https://agsiw.org>
- Atlantic Council: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org>
- Brookings: <https://www.brookings.edu>
- Carnegie Endowment for International Peace: <https://carnegieendowment.org>
- Center for American Progress: <https://www.americanprogress.org>
- Center for Strategic and International Studies: <https://www.csis.org>
- Council on Foreign Relations: <https://www.cfr.org>
- Foreign Policy Research Institute: <https://www.fpri.org>
- Heritage Foundation: <https://www.heritage.org>
- Hudson Institute: <https://www.hudson.org>
- Middle East Institute: <https://www.mei.edu>
- Middle East Policy Council: <https://mepc.org>
- Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft: <https://quincyinst.org>

### *Key Recent Literature*

- [The Kingdom and the Power: How to Salvage the U.S.-Saudi Relationship – Foreign Affairs, January/February 2023](#)
- [US and Saudi Arabia Have Put Their Rift Behind Them - Bloomberg - December 2022](#)
- [Why the US-Saudi Crisis is So Bad and So Unnecessary - Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington - October 2022](#)
- [Biden’s Middle East Trip Achieved as Much as Possible - Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington - July 2022](#)
- [The New Old Middle Eastern Order: Biden’s Trip Shows Why Washington Is Still Getting the Region Wrong - Foreign](#)



#### Affairs – July 2022

- Middle East and North Africa: Implications of 2022 Russia-Ukraine War - Congressional Research Service - June 2022
- The Case for a New US-Saudi Strategic Compact – Council on Foreign Relations – June 2022
- A Gradual Reset with Saudi Arabia - Middle East Institute - February 2022.
- When Less Is More: Rethinking US Military Strategy and Posture in the Middle East - CNAS - October 2021.

### 4. Key Developments in US-GCC Relations

#### US-GCC

- On November 28, 2022, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General H.E. Dr. Nayef al-Hajraf and US Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Peninsula Affairs Daniel Benaim discussed ways to boost cooperation within the framework of the existing US-GCC strategic partnership. The officials reviewed topics of common interests, highlighted the growth and development in various fields, and efforts to enhance stability and security in the region.
- On November 27, 2022, US Special Envoy for Yemen Tim Lenderking traveled to Oman and Saudi Arabia to support ongoing peace efforts in Yemen.
- During October 2022, Saudi Arabia and the UAE led mediation efforts regarding the release of US basketball player Brittney Griner, facilitating a prisoner exchange between the US and Russia.
- On August 11, 2022, Tim Lenderking, the US Special Envoy for Yemen, began a tour to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman to discuss and maintain the truce in Yemen.
- On July 16, 2022, President Biden met with leaders from the six GCC countries plus Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, in the Jeddah Security and Development Summit in

Saudi Arabia. They discussed a wide range of topics, including preserving the region’s security and stability, resolving the Israel-Palestinian conflict on the basis of two-state solution, achieving energy security, stabilizing energy markets, welcoming the truce in Yemen, and the ongoing issues in Syria, Lebanon, Libya, Sudan, and Ukraine.

- In mid-April 2022, the GCC states and the US formed a new naval task force, known as the Combined Maritime Forces-153 (CMF-153), to improve maritime security in the Red Sea, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Gulf of Aden.
- The United States and the members of GCC convened Working Groups on Integrated Air and Missile Defense and Maritime Security at the GCC’s headquarters in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 9, 2022.



#### US-Saudi

- During December 2022, the White House stated their intention to use a presidential veto on a bill banning US support for the kingdom amidst the war in Yemen.
- On November 29, 2022, the US Department of State officially dedicated the new US Consulate General campus in Dhahran as an “important symbol” of the US partnership with the kingdom.



- In November 2022, the Biden administration announced that they consider Crown Prince and Prime Minister HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman to have the status of diplomatic immunity. Senators, such as Senators Tom Cotton and Mark Warner, backed the Biden administration's decision.
- Following OPEC+'s decision to reduce oil production to 2 million barrels per day in October 2022, the US has put out a statement saying, "the President is disappointed by the shortsighted decision by OPEC+ to cut production quotas while the global economy is dealing with the continued negative impact of Putin's invasion of Ukraine."
- On August 2, 2022, the US State Department cleared military sales to Saudi Arabia to provide 300 Patriot missiles to defend the kingdom against attacks by the Houthis in Yemen, valued at more than \$3 billion.
- On July 15, 2022, President Biden met with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The two leaders discussed various topics, including global energy security. Some of the agreements include cooperation on 5G/6G, energy security, clean energy, and cybersecurity, as well as enhanced maritime security cooperation.
- In May 2022, the United States and Saudi Arabia held the US-Saudi Strategic Joint Planning Committee (SJPC) led by Saudi Vice Minister of Defense His Royal Highness Prince Khalid bin Salman and Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Dr. Colin Kahl.
- On March 20, 2022, President Biden sent a significant number of Patriot antimissile systems to Saudis following the Houthi attacks on the Kingdom.
- Also in March 2022, Saudi Foreign

Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan discussed ongoing negotiations to restore the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers with US Special Envoy for Iran Rob Malley.

- In November 2021, President Biden approved the first significant arms sale of 280 air-to-air missiles valued up to \$650 million and a \$500 million military contract.

### US-United Arab Emirates

- In October 2022, UAE's Sheikh Tahnoon's investment firm, Royal Group, stated that it plans to invest \$10 billion into US and European stocks.
- On August 15, 2022, the Head of the US Central Command visited the Chief of Staff of the UAE Armed Force at the Ministry of Defense in Abu Dhabi. The two discussed areas of mutual concern as well as bilateral cooperation in defense and military sectors.
- On August 2, 2022, the US State Department cleared military sales to the UAE to provide 96 defense system missiles valued at \$2.2 billion.
- In May 2022, Vice President Kamala Harris led the US delegation to the UAE following the passing of the President, His Highness Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan.
- US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken met with his counterparts from Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco at the so-called Negev Summit on March 31, 2022.
- Starting on March 19, 2022, the UAE hosted Syrian President Bashar al-Assad despite warnings from the US against normalizing ties with the government in Damascus.
- On March 3, 2022, speaking at a defense event in Washington, UAE Ambassador to the US Yousef Al-Otaiba stated: "It is like



any relationship. It has strong days where the relationship is very healthy and days where the relationship is under question ... Today, we're going through a stress test, but I am confident that we will get out of it and get to a better place.”

### US-Qatar

- On November 20, 2022, the US Department of State released a fact sheet on “The United States and Qatar: Strategic Partners Advancing Peace and Security” before the fifth section of the US-Qatar Strategic Dialogue. The dialogue addressed several issues of mutual interest, including regional stability, defense cooperation, public health, counterterrorism, combating human trafficking, human rights, climate change, energy efficiency, humanitarian assistance, strategic investments, economic cooperation, and cultural and educational exchanges.
- On October 1-3, 2022, Uzra Zeya, the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights, traveled to Qatar to highlight strong US-Qatar ties, ongoing cooperation to confront global security challenges. She also promoted cooperation in various topics such as combating human trafficking and advancing labor reforms.
- On September 25, 2022, the regional spokesman for the US State Department, Samuel Warberg, stated that US-Qatar relations are “at its best” in 50 years.
- On July 20-21, 2022, the US and Qatar held the US-Qatar Military Consultative Commission (MCC) in Doha, led by Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (DASD) for the Middle East Dana Stroul and Qatar Chief of the International Military Cooperation Authority, Brigadier General Abdulaziz Al-Sulaiti.

- In March 2022, President Joe Biden issued a presidential declaration formally designating Qatar as a major non-NATO ally, weeks after his pledge to Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.

### US-Oman

- The United States and the Sultanate of Oman held the US-Oman Joint Military Commission (JMC) at the Pentagon on March 23-24, 2022.

### US-Bahrain

- On August 18, 2022, the US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) hosted the Combined Force Maritime Component Commander (CFMCC) officer course at Naval Support Activity Bahrain.
- The US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Bahrain Defence Force participated in US Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Bahrain Defence Force, an annual 10-day military exercise in and off the coast of Bahrain.
- US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken met with his counterparts from Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco at the so-called Negev Summit on March 31, 2022.
- Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III hosted Bahrain Crown Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa in March 2022 to discuss Iran and Ukraine.
- The United States and the Kingdom of Bahrain held the US-Bahrain Military Consultative Committee (MCC) in Manama, Bahrain, on March 6-7, 2022.
- In March 2022, the US State Department approved the potential sale to Bahrain of M270 Multiple Launch Rocket Systems Upgrade and related equipment for an estimated \$176 million.

## US-Kuwait

- On December 11, 2022, Kuwait, the US, and Iraq completed the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Patrol in Arabian Gulf to promote regional maritime security.
- In October 2022, the US State Department approved the sale of a \$3 billion deal for National Advanced Surface-To-Air Missile System (NASAMS) and Medium Range Air Defense Systems (MRADS) to Kuwait to help Kuwait defend itself “against regional malign actors and improve interoperability with systems operated by US forces and other Gulf countries.”
- In August 2022, Michele Sison, the US Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs met with Sheikh Ahmed Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, Kuwait’s Foreign Minister, in Kuwait to discuss enhancing global food security and cooperation in the health sector.
- In July 2022, Gen. Michael Kurilla, the Commander of the US Central Command, met with Lt. Gen. Sheikh Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah, Kuwait Armed Forces’ Chief of the General Staff, at the Kuwait Army General Staff HQ, to discuss joint military cooperation.

On the one hand, the traditional relationship centered around oil, trade, and foreign military sales between the US and GCC remain. According to the US State Department, Saudi Arabia is still the United States’ largest foreign military sales customer and one of the United States’ largest trading partners in the Middle East. Saudi Arabia is also the third leading source of imported oil for the United States. In addition, the US continues to provide Export and Border Security assistance to the UAE, the United States’ single largest export market in the Middle East and North Africa region. The United States and Qatar also cooperate on security in the Persian Gulf region, notably via hosting the Al-Udeid Air Force Base

and CENTCOM Forward Headquarters, Qatar’s support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and US military operations in the region. Qatar has also become the United States base after the US suspended its diplomatic presence in Afghanistan. Kuwait provided the primary platform for US and coalition operations in Iraq and hosted the headquarters of Combined Joint Task Force – Operation Inherent Resolve as a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

On the other hand, the Biden administration and its allies in Congress have called for a “recalibration” in the US relationship with the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Gulf region. The Biden administration signaled a new approach by limiting direct US involvement and military engagement in the Middle East. On the security aspect, although some argue that the US is withdrawing from the Middle East, the United States remains the premier security partner of the region as it offers GCC states military capabilities, such as Patriot missiles to Saudi Arabia amid attacks from the Houthis. Washington’s initial announcements that military sales to the GCC states would be curtailed have not been completely followed up upon. On the contrary, the Biden administration approved a \$500 million military contract with Saudi Arabia and the first significant arms sale of 280 air-to-air missiles valued at up to \$650 million to the kingdom in late 2021. Despite President Biden’s pledge to end the war in Yemen, the crisis has persisted, including an increase in Houthi missile and drone attacks on Saudi Arabia. Initial withdrawals of Patriot missile systems from the kingdom were subsequently reversed.





The deployment of these missile systems came as the United States turned to Saudi Arabia regarding oil prices following the crisis in Ukraine.

Overall, a significant level of skepticism remains among GCC member states not only on the US position vis-a-vis Iran but also regarding US policy in the rest of the region. However, the Jeddah Security and Development Summit undoubtedly signaled a positive shift in US-GCC relations. In an address before the summit, President Biden stated that the US would “remain an active, engaged partner in the Middle East” and “will not walk away and leave a vacuum to be filled by China, Russia, or Iran,” adding that the interests of the US are “closely interwoven” with the successes of the gulf region. Addressing the leaders of the GCC countries, President Biden stated that “the United States is invested in building a positive future in the region, in partnership with all of you, and the United States is not going anywhere. Moreover, President Biden outlined a “new framework for the Middle East,” divided into five parts, including economic development, military and security, and regional stability. Moreover, military ties between the US and the GCC are also improving, as demonstrated by military sales to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and the UAE, as well as joint military cooperation with Qatar and Bahrain.

On October 12, 2022, Biden-Harris administration announced the US National Security Strategy, outlining a new framework for US policy in the Middle East. This framework reiterates US policy in not allowing Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon, combatting terrorism in Yemen, Syria, and Libya, and supporting a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine crisis. It rests on five principles:

First, the United States will support and strengthen partnerships with countries that subscribe to the rules-based international order, and we will make sure those countries can defend themselves against foreign

threats. Second, the United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to jeopardize freedom of navigation through the Middle East’s waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al Mandab, nor tolerate efforts by any country to dominate another—or the region—through military buildups, incursions, or threats. Third, even as the United States works to deter threats to regional stability, we will work to reduce tensions, de-escalate, and end conflicts wherever possible through diplomacy. Fourth, the United States will promote regional integration by building political, economic, and security connections between and among US partners, including through integrated air and maritime defense structures, while respecting each country’s sovereignty and independent choices. Fifth, the United States will always promote human rights and the values enshrined in the UN Charter.

However, GCC states have continued to maintain a policy of reaching out to other countries to strengthen various ties, avoiding falling into a security vacuum. Additionally, GCC-US ties were highlighted in different positions concerning the Russia-Ukraine crisis, with the UAE initially abstaining from two UN Security Council resolutions and Saudi Arabia and the UAE sticking to the energy output commitment within the OPEC+ framework, which includes Russia. Particularly, OPEC+ decision to cut oil production cuts to 2 million barrels per day stirred a negative reaction in the US. The White House released a statement that “the President is disappointed by the shortsighted decision by OPEC+ to cut production quotas while the global economy is dealing with the continued negative impact of Putin’s invasion of Ukraine.” Saudi Arabia and the UAE have

rejected the accusations that they are taking sides in international conflicts and that it was politically motivated against the US, and that the production cuts were a unanimous decision by all OPEC+ member states. However, the White House then expressed its support to the kingdom and the UAE for their efforts to aid Ukraine amidst the crisis. This indicates that, although US-GCC ties remain robust, new dynamics are taking hold in the region's ties to the United States.

## 5. Supporting Documents

### *GRC publications and GRM workshops*

- GRC Publication 2021: Changes in United States Foreign Policy Shifts Towards the Middle East: Strategies - Approaches - Evidences - Forecasts (Dr. Amera Alrashed Alghamdi).
- GRC Publication 2019: The Arab Gulf States and the West. Perception and Realities - Opportunities and Perils (Edited by: Dania Koleilat Khatib and Marwa Maziad)
  - GRM Workshop 2017: The Arab Gulf in the West: Perceptions and Realities; Opportunities and Perils.
- GRC Publication 2015: The United States and the Gulf: Shifting Pressures, Strategies and Alignments (Edited by: Steven W. Hook and Tim Niblock).

### *Araa Magazine*

- [Issue 176](#): Enhancing US-Gulf Relations and the Results of the Jeddah Security and Development Summit - August 2022.
- [Issue 167](#): The AUKUS Agreement and Its Impact on Global Alliances and the Gulf Region - October 2021.
- [Issue 159](#): The Features of Biden's Policy Towards the Middle East and the Gulf Region - February 2021.
- [Issue 153](#): US-Chinese Relations and Its Impact on the Arab Region - September 2020.
- [Issue 148](#): US-Saudi Relations Over 75 Years - April 2020.

- [Issue 132](#): The US Withdrawal from the Iran Nuclear Deal: Implications and Scenarios - August 2018.

### *GRC recent interviews on the issues related to the US:*

- November 30, 2022: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, participated in an interview by the Independent (Turkey) and discussed Saudi-US relations.
- November 2-3, 2022: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager spoke at the 31st annual Arab-US Policymakers Conference hosted by the National Council on US-Arab Relations in the panel titled 'Geopolitical Dynamics of Arabia and the Gulf.'
- October 17, 2022: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager participated in the 'Panorama' program on Al-Arabiya on an episode entitled 'Saudi - US Relations Escalating Statements'.
- July 15, 2022: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, discussed with "Asharq Bloomberg" the implications of the visit of President Biden to the Middle East in a program entitled: "Biden's visit to the Middle East... What do Arabs want from America?"
- October 13, 2021: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager participated in the private round table discussion: "Beyond Yemen's Borders," co-organized by the Office of the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen (OSEGY), the Sana'a Center for Strategic Studies, and King's College London, Department of Geography, and Institute for Middle Eastern Studies.
- June 1, 2021: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager was a speaker in the "Geopolitical Setting – Changes with the Biden administration" session organized by the Bush School of Government & Public Service, Texas A&M University.





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