

Canada and the Arabian Gulf: Adapting to The Post September 11 World

Executive Summary -

The events of September 11 and the "War Against Terrorism" have had a fundamental impact on Canada's international relations. This paper examines the impact of these events on our relations with the Gulf. Although there has been a temporary decline in travel by Canadians to the region, recent events have actually created new opportunities for political exchange and dialogue. As well, the immense economic wealth and potential of the region present many commercial opportunities for Canada.

The region is going through a period of rapid demographic, economic and social change. A new generation, better educated and well traveled, is emerging as the dominant demographic cohort. It is in Canada's long-term interests to cultivate this generation *now* to enhance Canada's future position in the region. To do so, we need to build upon, and better market, many of our strengths - our world-class educational system, our tolerant multi-culturalism, and our position as a world leader in high-tech and communications.

Interviews conducted for this report underlined the desire of the elites of the region to engage in a dialogue with their Canadian counterparts across a range of policy areas - security, intelligence, defence relations, crime, among others. It is in our mutual interests to pursue this desire for dialogue. There are also regional organizations, such as the Gulf Co-operation Council, which have concentrations of experts and expertise that can be easily tapped.

Above all, governments, institutions and elites in the region are seeking international respect and recognition, and see Canada as a desired partner. To take advantage of this interest, even a modest increase in diplomatic resources and presence would pay tremendous long-term dividends. In the short term, specific initiatives, such as holding of policy talks in different fields and promoting visits and exchange of experts, would have a positive impact on our bilateral relations.

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