

## **I. Introduction:**

The terrorist attacks of September 11, and resulting diplomatic and military maneuvering, has resulted in major changes in international relations. At the geographic crossroads of the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, the Arab Gulf finds itself on the front lines of the war against terrorism. The historic birthplace and current bastion of the Islamic faith, the region has a special significance for the billion-plus followers of Islam. Its massive energy reserves, and tremendous purchasing power, also make the Arab Gulf a major focus of international commerce.

This paper will examine the impact of the war on terrorism on Canada's relations with this region. It is based on research conducted in four countries: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, during December, 2001. In the subject countries, a range of government officials, universities, think tanks, business organizations, and Canadian expatriates were interviewed. Meetings were also held with key representatives of multilateral Islamic organizations: the Organization of Islamic Conference, Islamic Development Bank, Gulf Cooperation Council among others.

There were three broad objectives for the research: 1) to examine key trends in the region and how they affect the future of Canada's relations with the Gulf, 2) to review how the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the War Against Terrorism are perceived in the region, and 3) to draw up practical recommendations on how Canada can enhance relations with, and profile in, these countries.

### **Assessment - Opportunities for Canada:**

The shock of September 11 had a short-term negative impact on Canadian relations with the Gulf. The tension and uncertainty caused by the September 11 terrorist attacks, especially the media hype of the perceived danger to travelers, caused a decrease in the flow of commercial and other visitors to the region. This effect should diminish as the shock of the first steps of the war against terrorism subside. *However, in contrast to this short-term downside, the aftermath to the "war against terrorism" actually provides Canada with a unique opportunity to enhance its profile and expand relations within the region. Why is this?*