



# Armless Visions? The Quest for Security in the GCC

*Bader Al-Saif*

*Published as part of debate #4 of the SALAM project, Fall 2024*

The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (hereafter the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC) announced its first Vision for Regional Security in March 2024.<sup>1</sup> The announcement came with fanfare in the Gulf.<sup>2</sup> The reasons for that are plenty. The GCC recently recovered from an existential crisis in 2021 after mending a three-plus-year-old rift between its member states. Reflecting the Gulf's increasing clout, the vision centers the GCC and its security in the Middle East.<sup>3</sup> It is the most consolidated expression of a GCC regional security doctrine to date. But it is not the first such effort; several prior GCC communiqués, press releases, and interviews with its leaders have addressed various elements of the regional security vision,<sup>4</sup> as have the different national visions that preceded it. In that sense, there are no surprises. Nevertheless, bringing these various known components and aspirations of the GCC's regional security order under one umbrella is a good step in the right direction.

However, the security vision also reproduces a recurring challenge within the GCC: consensus often forms around the lowest common denominator – one that ensures buy-in from all six states. While much undoubtedly unites the six Gulf member states, their paths diverge at times. Accommodating these differences has led to either lowering the bar or inserting vague clauses in the text. This is evident in the vision's weak references to arms and its deliberate omission of naming specific states, paradoxically undermining the very notion of regionalism. Yet, these gaps may also present an opportunity. Policymakers could transform the vague references in the vision into more concrete recommendations,

---

1 The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf Secretariat-General, "Gulf Cooperation Council Vision for Regional Security," March 2024, Available at: <https://www.gcc-sg.org/ar/MediaCenter/DigitalLibrary/Documents/GCCPOL%202.pdf>.

2 "His Excellency the GCCSG Launches the Vision of the Gulf Cooperation Council for Regional Security," GCC News, March 29, 2024, Available at: <https://www.gcc-sg.org/ar/MediaCenter/DigitalLibrary/Documents/GCCPOL%20EE.pdf>; Ismaeel Naar, "GCC emphasizes diplomacy in its first unified vision for regional security," The National, March 29, 2024, Available at: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/news/gulf/2024/03/29/gcc-emphasises-diplomacy-in-its-first-unified-vision-for-regional-security/>; Ghazi al-Harhi, "Majlis al-Ta'awun al-Khaliji yakshif 'an ru'yatih lil-amn al-iqlimi [The GCC unveils its vision for regional security]," Al-Sharq Al-Awsat, March 28, 2024, Available at: <https://aawsat.com/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%85-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A8%D9%8A/%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AC/4937991-%D9%85%D8%AC%D9%84%D8%B3-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%B9%D8%A7%D9%88%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AE%D9%84%D9%8A%D8%AC%D9%8A-%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%B4%D9%81-%D8%B9%D9%86-%D8%B1%D8%A4%D9%8A%D8%AA%D9%87-%D9%84%D9%84%D8%A3%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%82%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%85%D9%8A>.

3 Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg, "GCC vision for regional security unveiled for the first time," Arab News, March 28, 2024, Available at: <https://www.arabnews.com/node/2484326>.

4 See, for instance, the annual final communiqués: "Supreme Council Statements," GCC Secretariat-General, Available at: <https://www.gcc-sg.org/en-us/Pages/default.aspx>.



especially in light of the ongoing tit-for-tat confrontation between Israel and Iran and the increasingly aligned threat perception among GCC member states.<sup>5</sup> They could also address the hard security questions by leveraging and enhancing the agreed upon expansive notion of security already embedded in the GCC and national visions (including areas like environmental, cyber, energy, food, and water security). The GCC vision inadvertently decenters arms in its thin, veiled references to them. Though this is certainly not corroborated by the behavior of member states in terms of ongoing armament and elaborate military policies, consensus over a broader security framework could, ironically, help bridge gaps and eventually lessen the impact of armament in the GCC's ethos. In this sense, the vision could lay the groundwork for an innovative security architecture that actively incorporates regional states in its design and implementation.

I analyze the themes and structure of the GCC Vision, followed by a discussion of two key gaps and two opportunities. I integrate common security themes found in the national visions, demonstrating continuities with their GCC counterpart in both the presence of a wider security lens and gaps over hard security. A regional security vision is a welcome step, but its effectiveness depends on what follows. A regional vision 2.0 that addresses the current gaps followed by a clear, inclusive strategy and a measurable set of policies would bring the region closer to achieving the GCC Vision's peace and prosperity objectives.

## The GCC Vision for Regional Security: Two Gaps, Two Opportunities

True to vision formats, the GCC vision is straightforward and succinct. It adheres to and repeatedly refers to the GCC Charter, international law, and the GCC Joint Defense Agreement of 2000, with a single reference to the charters of the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, and the United Nations.<sup>6</sup> It aims to enhance security in the region and, most importantly, reveals the GCC's worldview and its alignment with global norms and the international community. The vision also displays what is at stake for the GCC – the threats and opportunities – and charts a path toward a more secure region.

The vision refers to the GCC's "indivisible security" and "unified foreign policy," which is more aspirational than real given the divergences on various files when it comes to each nation's self-perception; adaptive policies; relations with contentious actors (like Israel, Turkey, and Iran); and attitudes toward transnational and non-state actors.<sup>7</sup> The vision in a sense extends the diplomatic language found in iterative GCC communiqués. Despite that, it also includes credible references to a unity of purpose: arriving at a peaceful and prosperous region that fulfills national interests and upholds state sovereignty.<sup>8</sup> The vision identifies peaceful conflict resolution and continued mediation as part of its toolkit. It also targets transnational challenges like terrorism; climate change; maritime, energy, and cyber threats; and nuclear proliferation, among others.<sup>9</sup>

Despite its brevity, the vision suffers from redundancy and an overly structured format. In sixteen pages (English version) and twelve pages (Arabic version), it presents six sections:

5 Jean-Loup Samaan refers to this vagueness too and the vision's "cautious" approach. See "The GCC's Joint Security Vision: Reading between the Lines," Gulf International Forum, Available at: <https://gulffif.org/the-gccs-joint-security-vision-reading-between-the-lines/>.

6 "GCC Vision," 2, 6, 8.

7 "GCC Vision," 2, 3, 8 for both phrases.

8 "GCC Vision," 4-6, 8.



introduction, principles, motives, starting points, objectives, and “joint efforts to enhance regional security.”<sup>10</sup> The repetition and over-structuring could be a way to gloss over key missing elements in the vision: the role of arms and the GCC’s perceptions and stance toward other states.

## Arms -or the lack thereof- in the GCC Vision

It is surprising for a regional security vision to sidestep armament as a standalone issue. This could be due to the vision’s attempt to avoid adversarial topics or to maintain decorum by centering a wider security lens. The vision raises the question of arms four times. The first two references appear indirectly and in passing. The “Starting Points” section points to the GCC’s right to arm for defense: “The GCC states are actively reinforcing their capabilities to deter dangers and sources of threat against their security and territorial integrity.”<sup>11</sup> Under “Objectives”, the GCC flags its “concern for the non-proliferation regime,” specifically speaking about nuclear arms and most probably alluding to Iran and Israel, without naming either directly.<sup>12</sup>

The two direct references to arms appear in the vision’s final and longest section that contains 15 points summarizing the council’s consolidated efforts to improve regional security. Item 4 expands on the earlier mention of nuclear non-proliferation. It calls on Middle Eastern actors to join the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and to work toward a region free of WMDs. At the same time, it also suggests toward the end of the section that a nuclear arms race could be inevitable if the non-proliferation route is not taken. It therefore interweaves a call for nuclear disarmament with a veiled threat of further nuclear armament within the GCC if others (implicitly, Iran) do not comply.<sup>13</sup>

The final direct reference to arms moves beyond nuclear arms to address terrorism. It condemns “arming terrorist militias” and curiously adds to them “sectarian groups,” specifying the need to end “supplying them with ballistic missiles and drones.”<sup>14</sup> Although the vision is speaking in the abstract, it is hard to ignore its clear allusion yet again to Iran and its axis of resistance partners, namely the Houthis and other groups in Iraq. The vision further reinforces its stance on blocking non-state actors’ access to arms in the same pointer, this time including the technology and systems behind ballistic missiles and drones, respectively.<sup>15</sup> Just as the earlier mention of nuclear arms may suggest an alarming arms race in the future, this item is concerned with the identity of arms holders. It limits the possession of arms to state actors without discussing the role of arms in an evolving regional security architecture or acknowledging past support of certain non-state actors by some Gulf states.

---

9 “GCC Vision,” 9-11, 16-18. This list of challenges underscores the vagueness built into the text given that, for instance, the understanding and scope of terrorism differs from one Gulf state to another based on the issue under discussion.

10 “GCC Vision.” The last section is the longest from pages 11-18. Both versions contain two blank pages that I do not include as part of the overall page count. The Arabic version is available at: <https://www.gcc-sg.org/ar/MediaCenter/DigitalLibrary/Documents/GCCPOL%202.pdf>. All page number references to the vision are to the English version.

11 “GCC Vision,” 8.

12 “GCC Vision,” 9-10.

13 “GCC Vision,” 12-13 for item 4.

14 “GCC Vision,” 15 for item 9.

15 “GCC Vision,” 15.



These pithy mentions of hard security in the GCC vision contrast with the more explicit references found in the Saudi and Kuwaiti national visions. The Saudi vision is the Gulf's only national vision to directly mention arms. However, the topic is primarily broached from an economic perspective.<sup>16</sup> The vision aims to localize the defense industry and generate jobs to siphon away funds from foreign coffers by increasing local spending from 2 to 50 percent by 2030.<sup>17</sup> Initial production targets include “spare parts, armored vehicles and basic ammunition...military aircraft(s).”<sup>18</sup> Disarmament, or even the notion of prioritizing holistic security over arms manufacturing, is absent. The opposite holds true: defense and arms development are viewed as profitable sectors that would not only serve the local market but also “strengthen our defense exports.”<sup>19</sup> Even though arms are not explicitly mentioned in the UAE Vision 2031, the logic present in the Saudi vision follows in the footsteps of past Emirati strategies.

Kuwait Vision 2035 boasts a unique national security discussion connected to regional security. The vision sets the context early on by identifying ten challenges facing Kuwait. The “Geographic Challenge” squarely ties the country's economic prosperity and security to a stable neighborhood, especially its “northern neighbors” (implicit reference to Iraq and Iran).<sup>20</sup> It is therefore incumbent on Kuwait to work on “reinforcing the stability of these countries” to guarantee better returns for itself.<sup>21</sup> Kuwait is candidly and wisely tying its security and prosperity to that of its neighbors.

More intriguing is a thoughtful reference to a “three-pronged security strategy.” The first two elements are unsurprising: reinforcing ongoing security partnerships (implicit reference to the US) and intensifying GCC-wide defense initiatives. However, the third element calls for creating a new

[S]ecurity and cooperation organization in the Gulf similar to the Helsinki Accords during the Cold War. It would include methodological mechanisms for conflict resolution, early warning systems, and methods for peaceful crisis management.<sup>22</sup>

Such holistic regional security thinking is welcome, and would serve its purposes if properly marketed, implemented, and – most importantly – incorporated in the GCC Vision.

---

16 “Saudi Vision 2030,” Government of Saudi Arabia, 2016, 7 and 48, Available at: [https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rcob5oy1/saudi\\_vision203.pdf](https://www.vision2030.gov.sa/media/rcob5oy1/saudi_vision203.pdf).

17 “Saudi Vision,” 48. The vision recognizes the kingdom's position as “the world's third biggest military spender, only 2 percent of this spending is within our Kingdom.” That was in 2016. Saudi Arabia went slightly down to the fifth largest spender in 2023, but at a hefty \$75.8 billion, nonetheless. See “Trends in World Military Expenditure, 2023, SIPRI Fact Sheet, April 2024, Available at: [https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2404\\_fs\\_milex\\_2023.pdf](https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2024-04/2404_fs_milex_2023.pdf).

18 “Saudi Vision,” 48.

19 “Saudi Vision,” 48. This is underway with strides and challenges connected to the local defense industry. More on this issue in Omar Al-Ubaydli, “The Potential Drawbacks Associated with Domestic Military Manufacturing in the GCC,” PRISME, Fall 2023, Available at: <https://prismeinitiative.org/blog/potential-drawbacks-gcc-military-manufacturing-omar-al-ubaydli/>.

20 “Ru'yat al-Kuwait 2035 [Kuwait Vision 2035],” Government of Kuwait and the Office of Tony Blair, Kuwait, 2009. “New Kuwait,” Government of Kuwait, Available at: <https://www.newkuwait.gov.kw/plan.aspx>. The vision was first released in 2010 and put together by the government with the support of Tony Blair Associates. It was revised and remarketed in 2017 under “New Kuwait”. The vision directly refers to Iran and Iraq later on. “Kuwait Vision,” 22.

21 “Kuwait Vision,” 22.

22 “Kuwait Vision,” 51 for the whole paragraph and its discussion of security. This is my translation.



## Who is not in the Vision?

This leads us to a second major gap in the vision: the unnamed actors. No regional security vision operates in isolation. For it to succeed in a critical region with multiple competing states, it has to move beyond its immediate boundaries to acknowledge and engage with other states. The 2022 US National Security Strategy and Iran's Hormuz Peace Initiative, for example, clearly identify their adversaries and potential partners.<sup>23</sup> The GCC vision, however, does not. It repeatedly hints at Iran without naming it, especially when it raises non-state actors or frequently condemns interference in the internal affairs of states. The hesitation to name specific actors is yet another example of the GCC's tendency to settle on a low common denominator, opting for nonconfrontation with seemingly difficult neighbors even when directness and coordination with these actors, like Iran, could arguably yield better security outcomes in an evolving security landscape.<sup>24</sup>

The only state clearly named in the vision is yet to be established: Palestine. Item 3 of the 15 initiatives focuses on the Saudi-born, Arab League-sanctioned Arab Peace Initiative.<sup>25</sup> The relaxed tone and elaborative discussion reflect the GCC's consensus on ending the occupation of Palestine and implementing the two-state solution. This remains true despite the diverse range of views toward Israel, which spans from complete dissociation (Kuwait) and eclectic engagement (Oman, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia) to full normalization (Bahrain and the UAE). This broad spectrum of perspectives goes unaddressed in the vision and even contradicts its reference to a "unified foreign policy".

Security and vision documents in general hold a performative function, and the GCC Vision is no exception. Its global worldview, set of values on display, and lack of clear framing of partners and foes speak to the vision's intended audiences. In addition to direct neighbors (whether Arab states, Iran, Israel, or Turkey), the vision also addresses the Gulf's international partners – as suggested by its mention of global threats and its simultaneous release in Arabic and English.

The question of "the other" also makes its way in the differences between the Arabic and English versions of the document. Both texts are carefully worded and vetted, though the two versions contain three minor oversights.<sup>26</sup> The two main text omissions, however, convey a message of non-engagement, reinforcing the conscious absence of and collaboration with named actors. For instance, the Arabic version mentions working with

---

23 Joseph Biden, National Security Strategy, (Washington, DC, The White House, 2022), Available at: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>; "On Hormuz Peace Initiative," Iranian Diplomacy, November 26, 2019, Available at: <http://irdiplomacy.ir/en/news/1988121/on-hormuz-peace-initiative>. Al-Sayyid Zahra refers to the US National Security Strategy as well. See Al-Sayyid Zahra, "Ru'yat Majlis al-Taawun...As'ila bi-la Ajwiba [The GCC Vision: Questions without Answers]", Akhbar Alkhaleej, Available at: <https://akhbar-alkhaleej.com/news/article/1362853>.

24 Mehran Haghirian, "To succeed, the GCC requires cooperation with Iran for regional security," Stimson, April 29, 2024, Available at: <https://www.stimson.org/2024/to-succeed-the-gcc-requires-cooperation-with-iran-for-regional-security/>.

25 "Gulf Vision," 12.

26 The three minor omissions are in (a) paragraph 1 of page 2 (a missing word, most probably "position"); (b) missing quotations in the English text (p.8) for the text from the Joint Defense Agreement in the Arabic version; (c) grammar mistake or omission of 'of' in the very last sentence of item 15 in the English version (p.18). A second edition of the English version makes an appearance on the GCC website, but these minor omissions remain.





neighbors to reinforce nuclear safety,<sup>27</sup> which is missing in the original English version's item 5 of the final section. The GCC secretariat quietly released a second edition of the English version a few months later, rectifying this mishap in item 5.<sup>28</sup> However, item 10 in the English version (both the original and second edition) refers to “enhanc[ing] the use of joint action plans” in cybercrime and cybersecurity<sup>29</sup> – pointing to collective behavior that is missing in the Arabic original.<sup>30</sup> The vision would benefit from a clearer, more consistent identification of the GCC member states’ partners and adversaries.

## Two looming opportunities

Despite gaps in clearly articulating an armament policy and lucid attitudes toward other actors, the GCC security vision presents a looming opportunity. Expanding the security bandwidth to include domains like the climate, food and water, maritime affairs, and energy (both traditional and alternative) is a low-hanging fruit worth pursuing. There is consensus on these topics within the GCC. Their appeal is at its clearest manifestation in the UAE Vision 2031. Released in 2022, it is the most up-to-date vision among the various national Gulf visions. It calls for global leadership on technology, food and water security alongside a singular emphasis on digital security.<sup>31</sup> These wider security issues could serve as initial points of engagement with GCC neighbors instead of starting, for instance, with the expectedly more challenging discussions over hard security. These are not new topics, as demonstrated by the earlier GCC national visions.<sup>32</sup> Their incorporation in the security vision invites the GCC collective to better integrate their intra-Gulf efforts on these diverse files and utilize them as openers to advance a more productive security dialogue in the wider region.

While the vision’s vague language seems like a drawback, it also presents an opportunity. GCC officials can interpret its wording in ways that align with and support the broader goals of the security vision. For example, the “Objectives” section talks about challenges turning into opportunities and “ensur[ing] respect for the legitimate interests of all parties while avoiding polarization attempts.”<sup>33</sup> The text gives a sneak peek into an evolving GCC mindset. Such flexible statements and postures can be translated into specific workstreams involving the GCC’s partners and neighbors to explore what constitutes legitimate interests for all relevant parties. Some of this work is underway by the GCC secretariat and member

---

27 “Gulf Vision,” 13 for item 5 in the English version and page 10 in the Arabic version.

28 “Gulf Vision, second edition,” 13 for item 5, Available at: <https://www.gcc-sg.org/ar/MediaCenter/DigitalLibrary/Documents/27848330-555a-4a7d-9a6c-206b797fd2f9.pdf>. Item 5 on page 13 is the only modified text in the second edition.

29 “Gulf Vision, 15 for item 10.

30 “Gulf Vision,” 12 for item 10 in the Arabic version.

31 “We the UAE 2031-Towards New Peaks,” Government of the UAE, 2022, 39, 47, Available at: <https://u.ae/en/about-the-uae/strategies-initiatives-and-awards/strategies-plans-and-visions/innovation-and-future-shaping/we-the-uae-2031-vision>.

32 “Qatar National Vision 2030,” General Secretariat for Development Planning, July 2008, 30-32 Available at: [https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Documents/QNV2030\\_English\\_v2.pdf#page=17](https://www.psa.gov.qa/en/qnv1/Documents/QNV2030_English_v2.pdf#page=17); “Oman Vision 2040,” Government of Oman, Available at: <https://www.oman2040.om/assets/books/oman2040-en/index.html#p=38>, 10-11, 38-39; “Saudi Vision,” 23, 44, 49, 65. Kuwait’s vision does not directly refer to this issue as clearly as the other visions. Implicit reference on 21.

33 “Gulf Vision,” 9.



states. Another opener is “[e]xploring ways to prevent future risks before they occur.”<sup>34</sup> A coordinated early warning system or joint programs and committees can be built around this notion to deter threats and bridge gaps. Building on these and similar ideas in the vision could help allay fears and support the overarching goal of sustainable peace and prosperity.

## Towards Security-Sensitive Visions

The GCC Vision for Regional Security reflects a confident and resurgent Gulf: one that has been leading the Arab region for the past decade. The vision sets aside the question of armament and the active consideration of other states in its security calculus. Yet a consolidated GCC security strategy and set of policies that builds on the vision’s helpful but still abstract ideas is the best way forward. Broadening the security lens and discussions to include the environment, technology, and energy holds the best promise for uniting the Gulf states and their neighbors over common threats. This focus needs to be sustained, accelerated, and connected to the more delicate hard security discussions.

Even though security visions tend to have a performative function and may not consistently translate or reflect behavior on the ground, the GCC Security Vision should not be dismissed. The six member states have gone through intense rounds of discussions to arrive at an agreed upon text. The task of putting together the regional vision came about during KSA’s presidency in 2022 (the 42nd session) right after the end of the rift in 2021 and was only ratified two years later in 2024 after Oman passed the GCC presidency to Qatar in December 2023.<sup>35</sup> Continued intra-GCC discussions will bring the needed clarity, compromise, and consensus to arrive at a punchier roadmap – one that maintains its goal for peace and prosperity despite existing challenges. Articulating a joint view on armament beyond self-defense would sharpen the GCC’s worldview present in its first security vision. After all, the Gulf states share various defense realities, from hosting US bases to pursuing lucrative arms deals with multiple powers. Any upcoming defense strategy would benefit from openly identifying friends and foes, and defining what it takes to become one or the other.

Arriving at an inclusive regional security architecture that involves the Arab Gulf states and their immediate neighbors from the outset offers the best guarantee for peace and prosperity. Achieving this requires proactive and sustained interaction between GCC member states, Iran, Turkey, the broader region, and involved great powers. Now, more than ever, such collaboration is indispensable. The region is in flux. It is currently witnessing an uncharted regional war with deterrence shattered, red lines crossed, and hollowed rules of engagement. The unfolding crisis is the golden moment for regional states to pursue a joint security doctrine – one that elevates their collective voice, prioritizes human security, and promotes a demilitarized approach to conflict management and transformation.<sup>36</sup> Building a comprehensive regional security architecture will remain a work in progress, given the various moving parts, inevitable differences, and shifting priorities. But having a working, holistic blueprint is better than a compartmentalized one

---

<sup>34</sup> “Gulf Vision,” 10.

<sup>35</sup> Phone interview with an informed Gulf official, May 2024.

<sup>36</sup> Emma Soubrier, “The Impacts of militarized foreign policy in the MENA region,” SALAM Synthesis Paper, Available at: <https://prismeinitiative.org/blog/impacts-militarized-foreign-policy-mena-region-emma-soubrier/>.



# PRISME

Pathways to Renewed and Inclusive  
Security in the Middle East

or, frankly, none at all. The ideal regional security doctrine is one that recognizes the national interests of the various actors, accommodates different perspectives as much as possible, and collectively builds manageable rules of engagement. Only anchoring the GCC within its larger neighborhood will yield sustainable peace and prosperity.





# PRISME

Pathways to Renewed and Inclusive  
Security in the Middle East



## Bader Al-Saif

Bader Mousa Al-Saif is a historian of the modern and contemporary Middle East and Islamic thought. He focuses on the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, namely its geopolitics, public policy, culture, reform dynamics, transnational trends, and gender studies. He is an assistant professor of history at Kuwait University and a fellow at The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington and the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House).

Al-Saif has over two decades of experience researching and working in the Arab Gulf states, most notably as a deputy chief of staff to a former prime minister of Kuwait; senior vice president of the oil and gas sector at Agility Logistics; and a senior public policy consultant. Al-Saif is the recipient of various awards and a co-founder of several NGOs in the fields of education, youth empowerment, and transitional justice. He has published numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters, including “Transnational History in the Making: Islam and Hip Hop between the United States and the Middle East” (Contemporary Arab Affairs, Fall 2023) and “On the Edge: How Risks from Iraq Have Helped Form Kuwaiti Identity” (Palgrave, 2023). Al-Saif contributes policy analyses to multiple outlets and is frequently quoted and interviewed by renowned media platforms and publications around the world.

He holds a Ph.D. with distinction from Georgetown University, a Master of Education and a Master of Theology, both with honors from Harvard University, and a Master of Law with honors from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He graduated summa cum laude from Boston College with a double major in political science and history. He is on X (formerly Twitter) @bmalsaif.



# PRISME

Pathways to Renewed and Inclusive  
Security in the Middle East

## PRISME Initiative

PRISME aims to redefine the conception of “security” in the Middle East and North Africa, as the starting point for strategic relations between MENA countries and their European and North American partners. It does so in pursuit of effective, collaborative approaches to ensuring a more peaceful and stable future. To this end, PRISME sponsors dialogue and debate between foreign policy professionals across diverse backgrounds and perspectives. These include individuals in governments, thinktanks and academic institutions located in the MENA region, Europe and North America, with a specific focus on engaging young and emerging thinkers and practitioners. Its goal is to re-define security in the Middle East, broadening the definitions of what it looks like, for whom, how it can be achieved, and how outside actors can contribute to it.

## SALAM Project

SALAM (Sustaining Alternative Links beyond Arms and the Military) proposes to rethink the centrality of the arms trade in international relations with and among Middle East & North Africa (MENA) countries.

It fosters and amplifies ideas from a network of scholars and practitioners working in and with the Middle East. Issues they will address include the arms trade’s advertised role in cementing bilateral and multilateral ties between North America, Europe and the MENA region; the opportunity costs of over- or sole reliance on weaponry as security; and alternative modes of engagement that might redefine a shared strategic agenda.