

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States Under Stress

by [Simon Henderson \(/experts/simon-henderson\)](/experts/simon-henderson)

Jul 15, 2020

Also available in

[العربية \(/ar/policy-analysis/almmlkt-alrbyt-alswdyt-wdwl-alkhlyj-tht-aldght\)](/ar/policy-analysis/almmlkt-alrbyt-alswdyt-wdwl-alkhlyj-tht-aldght)

Also published in *inFocus*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Simon Henderson \(/experts/simon-henderson\)](/experts/simon-henderson)

Simon Henderson is the Baker Senior Fellow and director of the Bernstein Program on Gulf and Energy Policy at The Washington Institute, specializing in energy matters and the conservative Arab states of the Persian Gulf.



Articles & Testimony

As Riyadh aims to revamp the kingdom's place in the international community, its near-term approach to Iran and Israel will have much to say about the Gulf neighborhood's future trajectory.

The following is an excerpt from an essay originally published [on the Jewish Policy Center website](https://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/infocus-summer-2020-covid-19-the-more-things-change/) (<https://www.jewishpolicycenter.org/infocus-summer-2020-covid-19-the-more-things-change/>).

Download the PDF to read the full text.

Geography can be deceptive. On a map, Saudi Arabia rivals Iran and Iraq in size and dwarfs its Gulf Arab neighbors. Figures for oil reserves can also be misleading. According to the 2019 edition of the BP Statistical Review of World Energy (compiled by British Petroleum Corp.), the three countries are almost in a different league from the rest of the Gulf littoral countries, with Saudi Arabia way out front of the other two. The reality is that it has often been more appropriate to consider the kingdom as just another self-effacing Gulf monarchy with a relatively small citizen population, propped up economically by a large expatriate workforce, with oil and/or natural gas being the magic ingredient that keeps the whole edifice afloat. But a countervailing force has emerged in the last few years, one that aims to break the old model for Gulf statehood... ❖

RECOMMENDED



ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

[A Yom Hashoah Message, from Disgust to Hope](#)

May 5, 2024



Robert Satloff

[\(/policy-analysis/yom-has Shoah-message-disgust-hope\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Tracking Anti-U.S. Strikes in Iraq and Syria During the Gaza Crisis](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,
Amir al-Kaabi,
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/tracking-anti-us-strikes-iraq-and-syria-during-gaza-crisis\)](#)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

[Is Kataib Hezbollah Behind Saraya al-Ashtar's Claimed Attack on Israel?](#)

May 4, 2024



Michael Knights,
Amir al-Kaabi,
Hamdi Malik

[\(/policy-analysis/kataib-hezbollah-behind-saraya-al-ashtars-claimed-attack-israel\)](#)

TOPICS

[Arab & Islamic Politics \(/policy-analysis/arab-islamic-politics\)](#)

[Arab-Israeli Relations \(/policy-analysis/arab-israeli-relations\)](#)

[Energy & Economics \(/policy-analysis/energy-economics\)](#)

[Gulf & Energy Policy \(/policy-analysis/gulf-energy-policy\)](#)

REGIONS & COUNTRIES

[Gulf States \(/policy-analysis/gulf-states\)](/policy-analysis/gulf-states)

[Iran \(/policy-analysis/iran\)](/policy-analysis/iran)

[Israel \(/policy-analysis/israel\)](/policy-analysis/israel)