

Kuwait: Keystone of U.S. Gulf Policy

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Pages: 49

November 2007

In spring 2007, a Gulf diplomat visiting Washington was asked how states such as Kuwait seem to remain insulated from regional crises in Iraq, Iran, and elsewhere. His response was unexpectedly poetic: "Think of a swan gliding across a pond. It all seems so serene -- but right below the surface, the swan is actually pedaling as fast as it can just to stay on course." Does this description fit Kuwait, a country whose status as a key U.S. ally in the region is often taken for granted? What factors pose the greatest risk of knocking the U.S.-Kuwaiti relationship off course?

In this Washington Institute Policy Focus, former State Department senior advisor David Pollock offers a comprehensive answer to these questions. Moving from the inside out, he examines Kuwait's political, social, and economic situation and how each affects the country's stability and orientation toward the United States. From Islamist challenges to problematic reform efforts to the longstanding dilemma of oil wealth, it is these internal factors, he argues -- more so than worrisome external factors unfolding in neighbors like Iraq -- that will affect the country's future place in U.S. policy planning.