

Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States Under Stress

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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](#). [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...