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*UDK: 330.101:553.98](55)*

*Bibliid 0025-8555, 62(2010)*

*Vol. LXII, br. 1, str. 7-36*

*Izvorni naučni rad*

*Februar 2010.*

## **POTENTIAL IRANIAN HEGEMONY IN OIL PRODUCING ISLAMIC COUNTRIES – IMPLICATIONS FOR OIL GEOPOLITICS**

### **ABSTRACT**

In recent decades world supply of oil has been increasingly held in the Islamic countries around the Persian Gulf. The fact that the level of oil production is high in these countries and that they possess most of the world's oil reserves could be extremely significant. This "petropower" could lead to strategic geopolitical developments when oil is used as economic and political weapons. It may be that the apocalyptic appeal of militant Islamism coming out of Iran can weld both Shia and Sunni people of the region to the cause of establishing a world Islamic "caliphate". This may appear in a new world of a tripartite mix of superpowers, one of which could be an Iranian-led oil rich Islamic bloc of Gulf states. Each superpower would vie for advantage, and particularly two of these superpowers would seek favour in maintaining supplies of oil imports increasingly from a potentially Iran dominated mix of oil producing Islamic countries.

*Key words:* Iran, Islamism, Shia, Sunni, oil, Persian Gulf, OPEC, geopolitics, nuclear weapons, civilization clash.

### **INTRODUCTION**

**I**ndustrial civilization from the early 1900s was fired up by the plentiful supply of cheap oil from various and many areas around the world. However, it may be that this abundant supply of cheap oil, is about to come to an end, as "Peak Oil" introduces dwindling supplies of more expensive oil to world markets.

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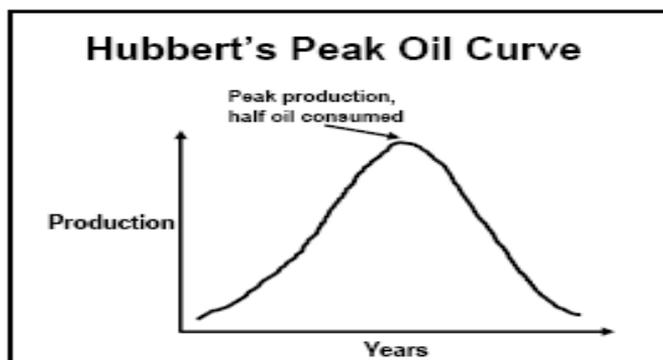
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In recent decades world supply of oil has been increasingly held in OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) nations, and specifically in the Islamic nations around the Persian Gulf. These nations are now enjoying newly held power, with an increasingly scarce energy source, which is vital for the maintenance of western developed societies, and for the other poorer nations that anticipate imminent economic development.

Specifically this paper suggests that growing Iranian hegemony, emanating from the Persian Gulf, may incorporate both Shia and Sunni into an Iranian league of nations spanning both the Middle East and Persian Gulf Regions. This league would have considerable “petropower” giving it significant world influence in oil geopolitics, with implications for international relations and civilization clash.

#### THE “PEAK OIL” THEORY

Dr King Hubbert, a Shell Oil geophysicist in America, developed the “Peak Oil” theory. He predicted that oil production in an oil field (which may be variously defined according to different levels of scale), will have increasing rates of production, until the production levels off at peak production point, when half of the available oil has been extracted. After Peak Oil production, the second half of the available oil’s production will fall increasingly quickly, until it levels off to exhaustion point. Typically we could expect the declining levels of production to lead to scarcity and high prices. Considerable attention was given to Hubbert as he correctly predicted that the US would reach Peak Oil in 1970. Hubbert’s theory is illustrated in the graph below:



Concerning Peak Oil, the world's nations will not all peak at once, even though most producer nations have already peaked. The main countries which have not yet peaked are all OPEC members in the Persian Gulf: Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Kuwait, and The United Arab Emirates (Abu Dhabi). These nations taken collectively may be called the swing producers – that is, those countries which may still be able to increase production to meet world demand. And it is uncertain if, or how long they will be capable of performing as swing producers because we don't really know how much reserves they have left in the ground as their stated reserves are highly disputed.<sup>2</sup>

### THE PERSIAN GULF AND OIL RESERVES

Congruent with what we could expect with the world reaching Peak Oil, global production of conventional crude oil since 2005 has been on a plateau with slight decline in 2006 and 2007, and the slight increase in 2008 hardly even lifted off the plateau. Within this world petroleum plateau OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries) is holding rather steady around 45% of world production since 2005. The following table details these statistics:

<b>World Conventional Oil Production</b>			
Average 000/b/d			
<b>Year</b>	<b>World</b>	<b>OPEC</b>	<b>OPEC % World</b>
2005	73,737	32,938	45
2006	73,461	32,610	44
2007	73,015	32,174	44
2008	73,791	33,441	45

(EIA, 2009)

2 Dale Allen Pfeiffer, *The End of the Oil Age*, Centre for Research on Globalization, 30 July 2003 <http://www.globalresearch.ca/articles/PFE307A.html>

However, around 75% of the world's oil reserves are in OPEC countries and most of OPEC's oil reserves are in states around the Persian Gulf.<sup>3</sup>

More specifically we need to consider the facts of the following table, that the overwhelming majority of the world's conventional oil reserves are amassed in the Persian Gulf OPEC nations – with only the five nations of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE (United Arab Emirates) holding 58% of world oil reserves. In total, nine nations of the Persian Gulf region possess a hefty 61% of world oil reserves. And these nine nations are in close proximity, many bordering each other in the Gulf region.

<b>Shia Populations</b>			
<b>Country (OPEC ✓)</b>	<b>Population (millions)</b>	<b>Shia (%)</b>	<b>Shia (millions)</b>
Bahrain	0.7	61	0.4
Egypt	74	1	0.7
Iran ✓	66	90	59.4
Iraq ✓	28	60	16.8
Kuwait ✓	2.6	35	0.9
Lebanon	4	40	1.6
Oman	3.4	2	0.1
Palestine	10.1	0.005	0.02
Qatar ✓	0.8	20	0.2
Saudi Arabia ✓	28	10	2.8
Syria	20	25	5.0
Turkey	73	20	14.6
UAE ✓	4.6	16	0.7
Yemen	23	15	3.5
<b>Persian Gulf</b>	<b>134.1</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>81.3</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>338.2</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>106.7</b>
Gulf States			

(Population of Shia; Wikipedia, 2008; The Arabist, 2007)

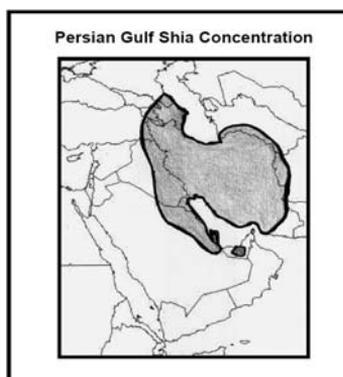
3 Abdalla Salem El-Badri (OPEC Secretary General) , Oil Outlook and Investment Challenges, Presentation, Nicosia Chamber of Commerce, 16 January 2008; OPEC Facts and Figures, (2007), <http://www.opec.org/home/PowerPoint/Reserves/OPEC%20share.htm> Mackenzie Warren, The List: A Guide to Oil for Dummies, Houston Chronicle, 25 June 2008, [http://blogs.chron.com/txpotomac/the\\_list/](http://blogs.chron.com/txpotomac/the_list/)

## THE GULF, SHIA AND OIL

In the table below we can see just how prevalent Shia populations are in OPEC and Persian Gulf states where world oil reserves are apparently largely positioned. Of the thirteen countries that make up OPEC, six are in the Gulf. And the prevalence of Shia is considerable around the Persian Gulf. If we draw a circle, with a 300 km radius using Bahrain as the centre point, the countries within that circle hold 75% of the Persian Gulf oil reserves and most of the Gulf Shia are living inside this circle.<sup>4</sup>

The Gulf states of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, have 81.3 million Shia or about 61% of the total Gulf population. Further, if we just take the Shia populations of the five nations of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE holding 58% of world oil reserves, we see Shia make up a total of 62% of their populations. Clearly the Shia have the potential for significant influence over this whole Gulf region through their own nations and also ultimately to the world. Of course they could also wield regional and world influence through their solid representation in OPEC.

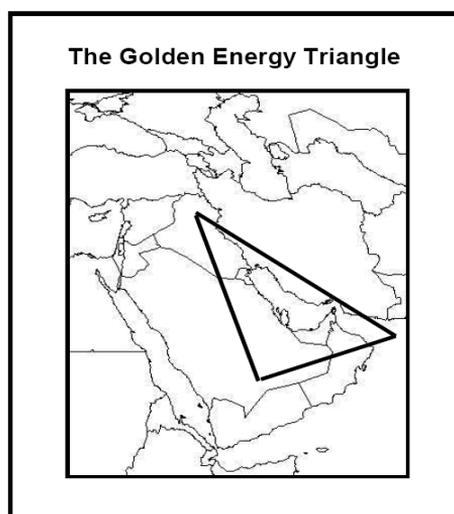
A map of this region showing where significant concentrations of Shia populations are, highlights the strategic positions of the Shia over the oil fields and in the petroleum installations of the Gulf states. The concentrations of oil fields and installations are, offshore along the full length of the Gulf, and onshore as could be expected, in Qatar, the east of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the south of Iraq and the west of Iran – exactly where Shia populations are concentrated. The Shia are also concentrated in the Abu Dhabi (UAE) area which is the UAE's oil centre on the southern end of the Gulf.



4 Abbas Maleki, *Extremism in Islamic Shi'ite's Faith. In: Roots and Routes of Democracy and Extremism, Porvoo, Finland 10-12 October 2005.* pp. 7-8.

Leigh . J., Vuković P., *Potencijalna hegemonija Irana među islamskim zemljama*, MP 1, 2010.  
(str. 7-36)

The positioning of the major oil fields in the Shia areas is sometimes called the Golden Triangle and the following map shows these common areas and their positioning in the triangle:



## ISLAM, SOVEREIGNTY AND LINEAR STATE BOUNDARIES

“The basis of the Islamic state was ideological, not political, territorial or ethnical and the primary purpose of the government was to defend and protect the faith, not the state ...Political boundaries were unknown to Islam except those that separated the ‘dar al islam’, the area inhabited by Muslims, from the ‘dar al-barb’, the abode of war inhabited by unbelievers”.<sup>5</sup> In this way the newly imposed sovereign state borders of the Arab states has nothing to do with the traditional Islamic view of territory.<sup>6</sup>

For this reason it has often been remarked, when taking into context the Persian Gulf region, that the system of modern state territories established by the European colonial powers in the Arab Middle East was at odds with the indigenous Muslim concept of spatial and social organization. The inheritance of linear state boundaries presented the governments of the newly independent

5 George E. Joffe, Territory, state and nation in the Middle East and North Africa. In: Clive H. Schofield and Richard N. Schofield(eds.) *World Boundaries Volume 2: the Middle East and North Africa*, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 231, 233.

6 Ibid., p. 233.

states of the region with awkward challenges of national integration. This was because in modern international law, sovereignty was explicitly linked to territory, but in Islamic constitutional law the basis of the Islamic state was ideological, not political, territorial or ethnical. Sovereignty had been regarded as a divine attribute whereby all of the Islamic world would ideally form a single political unit, the “umma”, under the control of the “khalifa”.<sup>7</sup>

Despite this rhetoric, it is apparent, that the Gulf Region linear boundaries are an increasingly accepted and permanent feature of the Arabian political landscape. Arabian boundary agreements have now been concluded and registered in a manner which has finally convinced the international legal community that they are intended to be permanent.

However, one still hears the argument that the contemporary system of linear boundaries is a concept imposed by the Europeans on a cultural landscape where it holds no relevance. This could be seen from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait and Saddam Hussein’s statement that there is no need to solve the border issue with Kuwait, since Kuwait’s borders reach as far as Baghdad and Iraqi borders reach as far as Kuwait (city). It was Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait which posed a grave challenge to the territorially defined states established in the time of Britain’s stay as a colonial power. It was this invasion which caused the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to become increasingly pre-occupied with the further institutionalization and finalization of the territorial framework of Pan Arabia. This has been not only a response to Iraq’s catastrophic move on Kuwait, but also more broadly an acknowledgement of the pressing territorial concerns of member states.

The GCC eventually evolved a body of legislation which works for the maintenance of the current territorial framework and which encourages bilateral means as a way of settling disputes. Its policy has up to now only been reactive as territorial questions only started to be raised after Iraq’s attempt to annex Kuwait. Notwithstanding the problematic situation, the territorial framework of the Arabian Peninsula and region has acquired some degree of permanency where the GCC will continue to be responsive to regional instability.<sup>8</sup>

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7 Richard N. Schofield, Boundaries, territorial disputes and the GCC states. In: David E. Long and Christian Koch (eds.) *Gulf Security in the twenty-first century*. The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, Abu Dhabi, 1997, p. 134.

8 Ibid., pp. 135, 146, 168.

## GEOSTRATEGIC POSITION OF IRAN

The Persian Gulf is at the junction of Asia, Europe and Africa. Also this Gulf, as an arm of the Indian Ocean, is considered part of a system linking the Mediterranean Sea, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean. The culture of the Persian Gulf has been founded on the principles of Islam. It has traditionally been the centre of attention for traders, businessmen and big powers. As the Persian Gulf is linked to the Indian Ocean only through the Strait of Hormuz, both the Strait and the Persian Gulf have acquired a special position in geopolitical concepts.<sup>9</sup> Geostrategically, the narrow and shallow Strait of Hormuz constitutes the world's "global chokepoint". Oil tankers carrying Gulf oil exports must pass through the Strait before crossing the Bab al-Mandab and Suez Canal waterways to the Eastern Mediterranean. or the sea lanes of the Strait of Malacca in the Pacific Ocean.<sup>10</sup> This leaves the Persian Gulf as the core region within the global political economy of oil. This region maintains – mostly from Saudi Arabia – around 70% of global current excess oil production capacity, leaving the world with limited options in case of supply disruption.<sup>11</sup>

Iran finds itself in an advantageous position in the Persian Gulf; its coast is 1259 kms long in the Gulf and has a large number of islands which can facilitate the protection of the Strait of Hormuz. Iran also has an edge over other countries in the waterway from the naval and technological point of view based on Iran's military developments and capacity. For a long time, the presence of alien forces in the Persian Gulf has been considered a threat against Iran. The Iranian government believes that the security of the region should be maintained by the Persian Gulf states and not by foreign powers.<sup>12</sup>

Iran and its Arab neighbours across the Persian Gulf perceive regional security in very different ways. Most of the Arab states have been concerned about Iran's regional hegemonic ambitions, both under the imperial and Islamic regimes. In order to reduce these concerns, they have always sought alliance

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9 Amir Sajedi, *Geopolitics of the Persian Gulf Security: Iran and the United States*. *IPRI Journal*, 9(2), 2009, p. 77.

10 Iran Coverage, *How to prevent war at the Strait of Hormuz*. (Online). Available from: <http://irancoverage.com/2008/01/18/how-to-prevent-war-at-the-strait-of-hormuz/> (Accessed 2 November 2008).

11 Philippe Le Billon & Fouad El Khatib, "From Free Oil to 'Freedom Oil'? Terrorism, War and US Geopolitics in the Persian Gulf. *Forthcoming in Geopolitics*, 2003, p. 8.

12 Amir Sajedi, *Geopolitics of the Persian Gulf Security: Iran and the United States*. *IPRI Journal*, 9(2), 2009, pp. 78-9.

with global powers, particularly the United States. Washington also makes similar allegations regarding Iran's design to dominate the region and it is for this reason the US maintains several military bases and tens of thousands of troops around the region.<sup>13</sup> If Iran continues its efforts to go nuclear and assemble nuclear weapons on short notice, the strategic ramifications could be severe. A nuclear Iran would be in a much stronger position to assert its geographic leverage over the Strait of Hormuz, the passageway for about 17 million barrels per day (mbpd) of oil.<sup>14</sup>

The greatest Arab fear is of a Shia crescent emerging from the ashes of Iraq. The possibility that Iran over the long term becomes the chief beneficiary of the war on terror is a major concern, particularly among the countries with significant Shia populations, such as Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.<sup>15</sup> Former Iranian president Ali Rafsanjani suggested that "The enemies of Islam are seeking to create division between the Shiites and Sunnis. Our position in Iran is an Islamic one and is based on fostering unity between Muslims".<sup>16</sup>

This comment could be a justification for Iranian greater influence over Islamic peoples of the region. This fear that Iran nurtures territorial ambitions against neighbours is fanned by the three observations: 1) Iran occupied three islands in the Gulf in 1971, 2) Iran is developing nuclear weapons, and 3) Iran with nuclear weapons may become more aggressively ambitious.<sup>17</sup>

The situation was further intensified when on June 4, 2006, the new Iranian Supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, issued a warning to the United States in the crisis over Iran's nuclear program by stating that "If the Americans make a wrong move toward Iran, the shipment of energy will definitely face danger, and the Americans would not be able to protect energy supply in the region".<sup>18</sup>

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13 Gawdat Bahgat, Security in the Persian Gulf: Perils and Opportunities. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 29(2), 2008, pp. 310-311.

14 Joe Barnes & Amy Myers Jaffe, The Persian Gulf and the Geopolitics of Oil. *Survival*, 48(1), 2006, p. 1.

15 Robert Lowe & Claire Spencer, Iran, Its Neighbors and the Regional Crises (London: Chatham House), 2006, at <http://www.chathamhouse.org.uk> (Accessed 2 November 2009).

16 Gawdat Bahgat, Security in the Persian Gulf: Perils and Opportunities. *Contemporary Security Policy*, 29(2), 2008, p. 313.

17 Fariborz Mokhtari, Security in the Persian Gulf: Is a Security Framework Possible? *American Foreign Policy Interests*, 26(1), 2004, p. 3.

18 Simon Henderson, Facing Iran's Challenge: Safeguarding Oil Exports from the Persian Gulf. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, 1112, 2006, p. 1.

## IRAN: HAWK WITH EXPANDING POLITICAL POWER

Since the 1980s Iran has been a destabilizing force on world oil markets, generally as a hawk pushing for higher prices. It has sought to subvert and radicalize neighboring oil exporting states whether Shia or Sunni. Iran is involved in the hostile activity of terrorism as the leading supporter of terrorism. Iran will use all ability to respond to any significant threats, including oil as a lethal economic weapon, and has an extensive network of terrorists in place in the region to act on its behalf, and if needed, to attack infrastructures to pursue Iran's objectives.<sup>19</sup>

“Iran is in the process of emerging as a regional player.”<sup>20</sup> Further, Iran is potentially the regional power of both militant Sunni and Shia. There is growing influence of Iran as a regional power with strong involvement and influence over politics in several Islamic nations: in Lebanon (through Shia Hezbollah), Syria (with its generally pliable government), Iraq (where it supports and influences the Shia in the south), Palestine (over Sunni Hamas which it supports and influences) and eventually in Egypt (where it supports the Sunni Moslem Brotherhood which may soon control the Egyptian government in future elections). And so just as Hezbollah functions an adjunct of Iranian foreign policy,<sup>21</sup> so do these other peoples in the region.<sup>22</sup>

There has also been concern that Iran could ignite active discontent in the Islamic nations even further afield, outside the Gulf and Middle East, across North Africa. Of course closer to home in the Gulf, including Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE there is concern that Iran could induce political change and dissidence, through the Shia populations and Sunni sympathizers, which would heavily influence matters in favour of Iran.

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19 James Philips, Sunni-Shia Conflict and the Future of Gulf Oil (Conference), The Heritage Foundation, 29 September 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/press/events/ev112907b.cfm>

20 Stratfor, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan: The Three-way Summit, Stratfor Global Intelligence, 24 May 2009, [http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090522\\_iran\\_afghanistan\\_pakistan\\_three\\_way\\_summit](http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/20090522_iran_afghanistan_pakistan_three_way_summit)

21 James Philips, Sunni-Shia Conflict and the Future of Gulf Oil (Conference), The Heritage Foundation, 29 September 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/press/events/ev112907b.cfm>

22 Bernard Lewis, The Sunni:Shiite Split and the Iranian Threat, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 15 March 2009, available YouTube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel_page)

## EMERGING ISLAMISM AND SHIA POWER

In all of this we could expect to see a greater voice of political Islamism coming from the Shia populations of the Gulf states. When that begins to appear, it may herald a growing and accelerating influence of Iranian Islamism over Shia populations, in the Gulf states, to influence their countries' foreign oil policy.

The following quote from Stratfor highlights the growing concern, in the Gulf nations, about the ascendancy of Iran as a regional power:

“Despite recent efforts on the part of the Gulf Cooperation Council member countries to engage Iran in a positive manner, countries like Saudi Arabia and Bahrain remain only too aware of Iran’s increasing ability to inflame internal sectarian tensions in their countries as its influence continues to rise...”<sup>23</sup>

Iranian Islamism’s influence may also extend to other Islamic Arab states, for example, across North Africa. This potential Iranian international Islamist power bloc, as a bulwark against the West, may greatly influence OPEC oil policy, and steer its decision making, and so exacerbate these oil producers’ relations with the Western Christian world. Oil could become much more expensive for the west and even difficult to obtain, and particularly so if oil scarcity becomes an increasing and reoccurring problem in the looming world.

Growing Shia power and influence coincides with the spread of Islamism at all levels of society in many Arab states. Not only in Iran is there a Shia government but as Juan Cole says, “The Shia now also have an Arab champion. This is a new thing. Baghdad has emerged as a centre of Arab Shiite power”.<sup>24</sup> David Hirst comments further, “For the first time in centuries, Shias are about to come into their own as the rulers – or at least the politically dominant community – in a key Arab country, Iraq.”<sup>25</sup>

Jordan’s King Abdulla is anxious about the Iranian peril which is beginning to appear as the leader of Shia in the Gulf and the wider region. King Abdulla

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23 Stratfor, The Persian Gulf: Rising Shia and Uneasy Sunnis, Stratfor Global Intelligence, 19 December 2007, [http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/persian\\_gulf\\_rising\\_shia\\_and\\_uneasy\\_sunnis](http://www.stratfor.com/analysis/persian_gulf_rising_shia_and_uneasy_sunnis)

24 In Mike Schuster, The Partisans of Ali, Iraq War deepens Sunny-Shia Divide, npr, 20 November 2008, [www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7411762](http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=7411762)

25 David Hirst, Analysis, Arab Leaders Watch in Feat as Shia Emancipation Draws Near, [guardian.co.uk](http://guardian.co.uk). 27 January 2005, [www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jan/27/iraq.david\\_hirst/print](http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/jan/27/iraq.david_hirst/print)

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has warned that with Iranian success to establish Iraq as an Islamic Shia Republic, Iran will not stop there. He has warned of a Shia “crescent” stretching from Iran into Iraq, Syria and Lebanon.<sup>26</sup>

It is not an exaggeration to say that several Arab leaders watch with anxiety as they suspect Shia emancipation looms large. Arab regimes with a majority, or at least a significant minority of Shia, could begin to feel the pressure of Political Shia as it aggressively pursues a more dominant role in several nations across the Gulf region: Iran, Bahrain, Yemen and Iraq, with majorities, and in Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE, with minorities. Further afield there could also be a swelling of Shia influence with their majority in Azerbaijan, and minorities in Turkey, Pakistan, Syria and Afghanistan. As Bernard Lewis says, “Iranians have plans going far beyond the Gulf and Middle East extending eastward to South and Southeast Asia and westwards into Africa.”<sup>27</sup>

Further, growing Iranian Shia influence in other nations’ own populations, through inciting revolutionary groups even where the group is Sunni like the Moslem Brotherhood, Hezbollah which is Shia and Hamas, we would add these three areas of Egypt, Lebanon and Palestine into the fold of the Islamist bloc. Already Iran has vassal bases in the Eastern Mediterranean with Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza, and this is bound to be of growing concern to Europe.

So in total we could expect to see Shia power appear in an array of nations, to a significant level, of course giving Iran access to much political power, in and across these nations, through their proxies or vassals.

The map shows the impressive regional expanse of nations across the Middle East, the Gulf, and well into South Asia, from Turkey to Pakistan, from Azerbaijan to Yemen, where Shia political power is well established, or soon by proxy, could be significant.

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26 Ibid.

27 Bernard Lewis, The Sunni:Shiite Split and the Iranian Threat, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 15 March 2009, available YouTube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel_page)



### SHIA AND SUNNI IN COALITION

In the Persian Gulf and across much of Islam the problem is extremism versus moderates<sup>28</sup> and this factor often has the ability to bridge the Sunni:Shia divide, and galvanize these two peoples together, when vested interests of extremism, with apocalyptic or revolutionary appeal arise, and that inspiration is being fired up from Iran.

It may also be that worldwide economic decline, falling trade and sagging tourism, along with collapsed oil prices are critically threatening Arab economies with unemployment and mounting economic, political and social unrest. There is a pervasive volatile mood of disgruntlement and doubt across the Arab world.<sup>29</sup> These overwhelming trends could open the door for many to adopt more extreme views, thus spreading the more aggressive Islamism, to both Shia and Sunni, as the populations seek hope in worsening circumstances.

Even though the schism that split asunder the Islamic faith originates from centuries-old theology and disputes of succession, still contemporary theology, politics and demographics keep this estrangement alive across the Islamic

28 Gal Luft, *Sunni-Shia Conflict and the Future of Gulf Oil* (Conference), The Heritage Foundation, 29 September 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/press/events/ev112907b.cfm>

29 Jamal Dajani, *The New Danger in the Middle East: Unemployment*, Link TV, 13 February 2009, <http://www.linktv.org/mosaic/mir>

world. Not only are Shia a minority in world Islam, but they are often discriminated against or at least shunned by conservative Sunnis. However, Shia are active with growing influence in several countries and this Shia assertiveness is a worry to many Sunni leaders. However, there is a new unifying Islamic force: “The Sunni: Shia divide for an increasing number of Moslems is not so important; the revolutionary appeal, even the apocalyptic appeal of Iranian Shia is more important.”<sup>30</sup>

As we have seen King Abdullah of Jordan has warned that Iran’s oil wealth and regional influence could be leading to a “Shia crescent” threatening the Gulf and Middle East, and he is vocal that this could pose threatening security, political and religious challenges in the region. The Iranian-born American Professor, Vali Nasr, has commented that the Shia reawakening across the Islamic world “is rattling some Sunni Arab governments”.<sup>31</sup>

Borr makes the following comment on the expanding influence of Iran: “What is clear is that the Islamic Republic of Iran is increasing its influence in the Middle East at the cost of moderate governments of the region.”<sup>32</sup>

From Shia Iran to Lebanon with Shia Hezbollah, to Bahrain with its Shia majority which are largely ruled by a Sunni elite to eastern Saudi Arabia’s oilfields where the Shia are concentrated, to Iraq with a Shia majority parliament, and powerful Shia leadership from Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr, to Sunni Hamas in Palestine and the Moslem Brotherhood in Egypt also Sunni, the emerging power of Shia Muslims, along with these radicalised Sunnis, is often disconcerting to moderate Sunnis. Even more worrying for the liberal or moderate Sunnis is that, Iran from recent windfalls of high oil prices, which are now in decline, has been not only willing to, but also well able to back these militant groups’ ascendancy with budgets, training and arms.

Robert Kaplan brings this together in summary when he says:

“Whether it is the sub-state entities of Hamas in Palestine, Hezbollah in Lebanon, or the Mahdi movement in Shiite southern Iraq; or the hopes,

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30 Bernard Lewis, The Sunni:Shiite Split and the Iranian Threat, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 15 March 2009, available YouTube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel_page)

31 Vali Nasr, When the Shiites Rise, Foreign Affairs, July/August 2006, <http://www.foreignaffairs.org/20060701faessay85405/vali-nasr/when-the-shiites-rise.html>

32 Reza Hossein Borr, Iran Extends its Influence in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Global Politician, 28 May 2009, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/25651-iran-afghanistan-pakistan>

dreams, and delusions of millions of Sunni Arabs, principally in Egypt, who feel a closer psychological identity with radical Shiite mullahs than with their own Pharaonic Sunni autocracy, Iran has built its dominion on a combination of anti-western ideas and the dynamic wiliness of its intelligence operations which, in turn, are a reflection of a civilization more developed and urbanized than that of the Arabs. Iran's message of anti-Semitism and hatred toward the United States plays well across sectarian lines in the Sunni Arab world, which identifies its own fatigued, uninspiring, and detested rulers with the side of the U.S. and Israel. Sunni Arabs hate their own rulers, but despairing of changing their own lot, they channel that hatred toward us: thus the potency of the Iranian message. A nuclear weapon will only supply Iran with more prestige among the Arab lumpen faithful."<sup>33</sup>

As we have seen, it is beginning to appear that not only can Iran, and their Shia, support aggressive firebrand Islamist Shia movements outside Iran, but also aggressive Islamist Sunni movements and groups abroad. For example, this is already apparent with Hamas in Palestine, and in illustration of the big brother influence of Iran, over Islamist movements, a Hamas commander has said "Iran is our mother... She gives us information, military supplies and financial support."<sup>34</sup>

Ironically Iran's archenemy, the United States, has toppled the Taliban in Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's regime in Baghdad, and so has eradicated these two neighbouring Sunni regimes that held Tehran's regional ambitions in check.

Several Sunni-led regimes are deeply worried about the effect of Iran's resurgence on their own, often contained and occasionally restless Shia populations. Shias aren't even counted as being a separate religious tradition in many Islamic nations, and so statistics are not even kept about the number of Shias within their borders.<sup>35</sup>

However, notwithstanding the above, it may be that eventually the swelling effect of militant Islamism, ever growing even among many Sunni populations,

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33 Robert Kaplan, Iran's Postmodern Beast in Gaza, The Atlantic, 5 January 2009, <http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200901u/gaza>

34 Marie Colvin, Palestinian Group Hamas Admits that its Fighters are Trained in Iran, Sunday Times, TimesOnline, 9 March 2008, [http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle\\_east/article3512018.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article3512018.ece)

35 CBC News, Islam, Sectarian Tensions, Shia vs. Sunni across the Middle East, 28 March 2007, <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/islam/sectarian-tensions.html>

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will lead both Sunni and Shia alike to forge an international coalition, in an Islamist Iranian league, so that the total reach of Islamism, overarching both Shia and Sunni, could reach from Morocco to Pakistan. Such a powerful and expansive league would be, at least in part, the reaction of the Islamic world, through Islamism, to confront the dominance of the Western Christian civilization in world economics and politics.

Bernard Lewis makes a chilling assessment of this present trend of Sunni:Shia alliance:

“It is possible for Sunni and Shia to take up the Iranian cause particularly when a people do not have an internal Sunni:Shia divide... The Sunni:Shia difference is not so important for many Moslems. Iranians have plans going far beyond the Middle East extending eastwards to South and Southeast Asia, westwards into Africa... And the impact has been enormous. It has the same kind of powerful impact for example as the French and Russian Revolutions in their days. There is one other point, what I would call the apocalyptic aspect... In Islam as in Judaism, as in Christianity, there is a scenario for the end of time, when the final battle takes place between the forces of good and forces of evil... In the view of a certain section within the Iranian leadership that time is now. For Ahmadinejad and his zealot followers the apocalyptic time has come. For them the time for the Mahdi, an Islamic messiah is already here, the final battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil has already begun... For Ahmamdinejad and his followers with their apocalyptic mindset, mutually assured destruction from the escalating use of mass destruction weapons in war is not a deterrent, it is an inducement. They believe the end of time has come, the final battle is already beginning, and the sooner the better, so the good can go to the delights of paradise.”<sup>36</sup>

## AMERICAN POLICY AND IRAN

The US Policy in the Middle East has bolstered arms sales and security cooperation in the Middle East to smaller Arab states, as well as Saudi Arabia and Egypt, in order to balance Iranian power in the region. The smaller Gulf States are all uneasy about provoking Iran politically and publicly. Privately, they are all coming to the United States looking for ways

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36 Bernard Lewis, The Sunni: Shiite Split and the Iranian Threat, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, 15 March 2009, available YouTube, [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel\\_page](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7fPoMAz2KgA&feature=channel_page)

to reassure or reinforce their security against a perceived Iranian threat.<sup>37</sup> The US goal has been to establish a balance of power in the Persian Gulf and keep the United States in a position to hold the balance and counter any challenges.<sup>38</sup>

The Bush administration has been accused of rejecting constructive opportunities for engaging Iran and it has been criticized for attempting to create a regional alignment of Sunni states against Shia Iran to stoke the fire of ancient enmities between Sunni and Shia.<sup>39</sup> However, many argue that the US policy of demobilising Saddam Hussein's Iraq has been a geopolitical gift to Iran, as Iran's main Gulf contender is now, many argue, is much more subservient to its Iranian neighbour.

The US Policy of the new Obama administration has attempted to downsize any American unilateralism, and to initialize a policy of engaging Iran to establish dialogue as an equal morally and politically, however, so far there has been more talk and less action regarding the US-Iran relationship.<sup>40</sup> Surprising to many is that Iran does not seem to be reacting positively or willing to take the olive branch at all.

Without a doubt Iran maintains huge influence on the stability and security of the Persian Gulf. For example, Iran's influential role in the new parliamentary Shia majority of Iraq is clear. And the Shia needs Iran's support in order to maintain security in Iraq. This has given Iran's revitalized beefed-up role in the region utmost importance.<sup>41</sup> Therefore any US policy to be effective in the Gulf must have Iran aboard.<sup>42</sup>

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37 Voice of America (VOA), *Rising Instability in the Middle East*, 2007 (Online). Available from: <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2007-08/2007-08-28-voa61>. (Accessed 3 November 2009).

38 Johar, Hasan & Gawdat Bahgat, Oil and democracy: The American dilemma in the Persian Gulf region. *Comparative Strategy*, 14(2), 1995, p. 180.

39 Payvand's Iran News, *Wider Conflict Threatens*. 2007. (Online). Available from: <http://www.payvand.com/news/07/feb/1142.html> (Accessed 2 November 2009).

40 British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), *US policy towards Iran shaping up*. 2009 (Online). Available from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7949233.stm> (Accessed 3 November 2009).

41 Kayhan Barzegar, Iran, New Iraq and the Persian Gulf Political-Security Architecture. *The Iranian Journal of International Affairs*, 20(1), 2008, p. 97.

42 Larry Diamond, Michael McFaul, and Abbas Milani, "A Win-Win U.S. Strategy for Dealing with Iran". *The Washington Quarterly*, 30(1), 2007, pp. 121-122.

## GULF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION

The potential and looming nuclear proliferation in the Persian Gulf Arab states could play out to eventually increase the hegemony of a potential Iranian league.

Amir Tahiri's chilling assessment of the proliferation of nuclear weapons, in the Middle East and Persian Gulf, is foreboding of the great likelihood of conflict with mass destruction weapons in the near future.<sup>43</sup>

Tahiri records that Iran has "triggered the nuclear race" and many Arab countries are considering, or actively seeking, to have nuclear weapons. Various agreements and cooperation with France, China, Pakistan, and even the US, could enable several nations to acquire nuclear capability: Iran, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Qatar, Iraq and Turkey.<sup>44</sup>

Also at the regional level, the six nations in the (Persian) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) are working on joint nuclear cooperation for a potentially massive project which could have far reaching possibilities for military development:

"The Persian Gulf Cooperation Council has set up a study group to find a fast track to nuclear power. Having spent more than \$140 billion on arms purchases in the past decade, the oil-rich Arab monarchies that make up the council – Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and Oman – and allies such as Egypt and Jordan would have little difficulty financing a massive nuclear project."<sup>45</sup>

The six nations of the GCC, along with Iraq, which is presently suspended, have a total of 50% of world oil reserves, and just under 22 million Shia, making up 32% of these Gulf countries' total populations. So any nuclear proliferation could eventually be subject to growing Iranian hegemonic influence either through the Shia or sympathetic Sunnis, or a combination of both. This would tremendously empower a bold Iranian league, and so the

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43 Amir Tahiri, *The Mideast Nuclear-Arms Scramble*, New York Post, 14 May 2009, [http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142009/postopinion/opedcolumnists/the\\_mideast\\_nuclear\\_arms\\_scramble\\_169188.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142009/postopinion/opedcolumnists/the_mideast_nuclear_arms_scramble_169188.htm)

44 Fred Lucas, *U.S. Inks Nuclear Deal with Persian Gulf Sheikdom Cited for Human Rights Abuses*, CNS News, 14 April 2009, <http://www.cnsnews.com/public/Content/article.aspx?RsrcID=46515>

45 Amir Tahiri, "The Mideast Nuclear-Arms Scramble", New York Post, 14 May 2009, [http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142009/postopinion/opedcolumnists/the\\_mideast\\_nuclear\\_arms\\_scramble\\_169188.htm](http://www.nypost.com/seven/05142009/postopinion/opedcolumnists/the_mideast_nuclear_arms_scramble_169188.htm)

likelihood of nuclear force in armed conflict, would increase manifold from what it is at the moment.

## CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

It may be that which is growing in the Islamic world is an aggressive Islamism which is able to weld together both Shia and Sunni in auspicious attempts to establish an international Islamic caliphate against the Western Christian foe. So against a common foe, both Sunni and Shia could unite, to prevail in combined strength, at least temporarily, overlooking that which separates them.

The perceived potential for an international Islamic caliphate has electrified many Islamists across the Islamic world. This inspiration is being fanned by Islamist organizations which adhere to an aggressive brand of Islam, and assertively pursue their goal of international diffusion of their aggressive Islam, to dominate a greater footprint around the globe.

Bernard Lewis says Christendom and Islam are struggling for world dominance, or as they would put it world enlightenment. He further highlights that: “Christendom and Islam are two religiously defined civilizations... brought into conflict”. Also fundamentalist Islamists regard the decadent West as a source of the evil values and lifestyle that is corroding Muslim society. This is usually directed more to the USA and Israel and will likely be extended to include Europe.<sup>46</sup>

The late Samuel Huntington argues that there is a great possibility for intercultural and inter-religious conflict between future world powers, each united from within through culture and religion, in a multi-polar world. He rejects the idea that the world will easily succumb to Western globalizing forces to displace the interests of both Eastern and Islamic peoples. These non-Western peoples may aggressively pursue their interests through their newly emerging international power blocs.<sup>47</sup>

There is no doubt that a growing fear of the threat of Islam against the west is fanned by explosive statements coming from political and religious leaders within Islam itself. The following quote is just one of many examples of such statements:

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46 Bernard Lewis, “The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror”, London, Phoenix, 2004, pp. 21, 36-7.

47 Samuel Huntington, “The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order”, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1996.

*Leigh . J., Vuković P., Potencijalna hegemonija Irana među islamskim zemljama, MP 1, 2010.  
(str. 7-36)*

“Libyan Leader Gaddafi has announced that one day Islam will disseminate its power over the European countries. According to him, the riots in the suburbs of Paris in 2005 were only the beginning of the armed struggle of the Muslims against discrimination in Europe. Probably one day Europe will be subordinated to Islam.”<sup>48</sup>

For the Islamists there is the great Satan (USA), the Little Satan (Israel), and Britain and France are described as arrogant. Many of these Islamists suggest the end of arrogance and the ushering in of justice is about here, as Islam may be on the cusp of a worldwide revival. Islamist Imams across the Arab and Islamic world in shrill voices herald the end of the West and the rising of a universal Islamic caliphate.

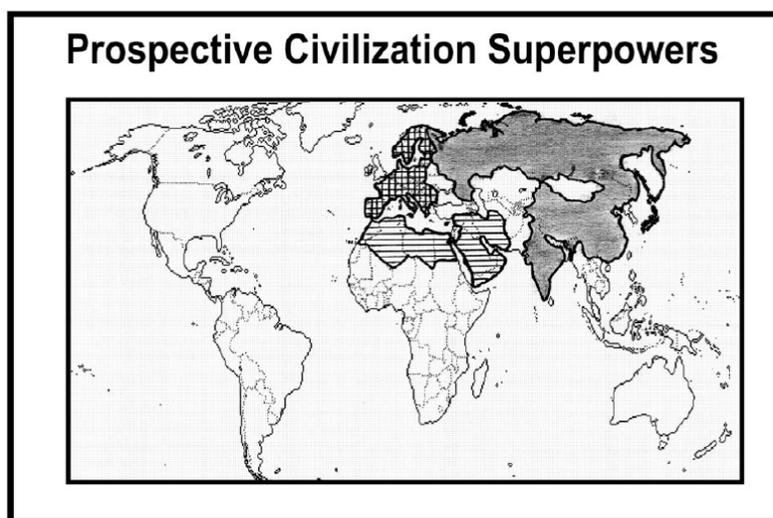
It does appear that Iran and the Islamic Pan Arab States, several of them making up most of OPEC, may be generally much more embittered against the Christian West and Israel, than they are against other peoples. History and current world events would suggest that there could be a looming civilization clash, between European Christendom and the Islamic world, which would put an Asian conglomerate superpower in an advantageous position for trade with the OPEC countries, even with preferential treatment, including the discounting of oil supplies when price hikes may make oil threateningly expensive.

Huntington collates the world into nine civilization nodes. Based on the concept of civilizational groupings, with a modified iteration of the distribution of future world power, the authors of this paper suggest a tripartite mix of world superpowers: a Christian European Union; Eurasia, largely made up of “eastern mysticism” civilization (a federation amassed around China and Russia); and an Iran-led Pan Arab league of Islamism.<sup>49</sup> The following map shows the geographic position and expanse of these three potential world superpowers.

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48 Fjordman Blog, France to give Nuclear Technology to Libya, Global Politician, 8 April 2007, <http://www.globalpolitician.com/23206-france>

49 James Leigh, Beyond Peak Oil in Post Globalization Civilization Clash, The Open Geography Journal, October, Vol 1, 2008, pp. 15-24, <http://www.bentham.org/open/togeogj/openaccess2.htm>; James Leigh, Death of Nations in Civilization Clash, Nicosia, 2009 Afi (Touch) Editions



Two of these superpowers surely will vie for advantage in the crude oil market, as buyers, with the oil rich Iranian league. Further, in this new world “order”, it may be that both the continents of Latin America and Africa, without significant political or military influence to pursue their own foreign policy, will be vassal states, economically colonized, to supply resources to the main world powers.

The following quote from Ramzi Salman suggests that much of the future in developing relations with OPEC, may be outside the developed West (largely of Christendom) and towards the less developed, but high potential countries or blocs including Asia:

“Given that developing countries will be responsible for most energy demand growth in the future, and given oil’s high energy concentration (in the Persian Gulf) and mobility, developing countries are the natural future partners of the big reserve holders (in the Gulf) on the producing side. The recent visit of the King of Saudi Arabia to China and India speaks for itself as an example of things to come in the dynamics and changes in the energy scene.”<sup>50</sup>

This has huge implications for access to reliable oil supplies at “favoured” prices. It may even be that eventually those states without good relations with

50 Ramzi Salman, *Skyrocketing Energy Prices – Cause and Implication*, Views from the Middle East, World Energy Council Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark, February, 4, 2006 [http://www.wec.dk/arran/doc/rsa\\_280206.pdf](http://www.wec.dk/arran/doc/rsa_280206.pdf)

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OPEC (a largely Islamic nations' cartel), will not readily find reliable supplies of oil at any price, as OPEC uses oil as a devastating economic weapon, at least until their own supplies are critically low in another couple of decades. And as non-OPEC nations have rapidly falling oil supplies to export, OPEC is heading to be the world's primary supplier – that is of much more than half the world's dwindling oil in the imminent few years ahead. It could also be anticipated that OPEC will enjoy great civilizational power to wield its oil weapon for its own political agenda.<sup>51</sup>

In the face of falling world oil supplies, Paul Roberts says: “We will face a post-oil future – a future that could be marked by recession and even war, as the nations that are importers of prodigious amounts of oil jockey for access to secure oil resources”.<sup>52</sup> And such conflict, considering the critical international context, could surely involve much of the world. The predicted trend in the dominance of OPEC, Richard Duncan argued, will soon be manifest as OPEC begins to produce more than half of the world's crude oil, as non-OPEC production declines more rapidly.<sup>53</sup> Specifically it was forecasted that the world oil production peak would be reached in 2006, and a further prediction that around 2008 OPEC will begin to produce more oil than the rest of the world combined. Whenever this actually does happen, it will give these OPEC nations incredible “petropower”. Also it is interesting to note that both sources of oil, OPEC and non-OPEC, are predicted to have falling production, although OPEC is better off in this trend.

Richard Heinberg is not optimist also: “The human world is going through the beginnings of some very difficult times right now. The calm before the storm is just coming to an end. You can hear the thunder on the horizon right now.”<sup>54</sup>

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51 EIA, Energy Information Administration, World Proved Reserves of Oil and Natural Gas, Most Recent Estimates, 2007, <http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/international/reserves.html>

Richard A. Kerr and Robert F. Service, What Can Replace Cheap Oil – and When? Science, AAAS, July, 309(5731): 10. 2005, <http://www.sciencemag.org/cgi/content/full/309/5731/101>

52 Paul Roberts, Tapped Out, National Geographic, June 2008, <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2008/06/world-oil/roberts-text>

53 Richard Duncan, The Peak of World Oil Production and the Road to the Olduvai Gorge, Geological Society of America, Summit, Reno, Nevada, 13 May 2000, <http://dieoff.org/page224.htm>

54 Richard Heinberg, Calm Before the Storm (video), 2008, Peak Moment, [www.peakmoment.tv](http://www.peakmoment.tv)

Bernard Lewis has put it tersely when asked what is at stake geopolitically – “the survival of our Western civilization”.<sup>55</sup>

## OTHER GEOPOLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The importance of the Gulf region for world oil supplies could not be overstated, for example, in the early third millennium, and lately 2006, the Persian Gulf countries (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) produced about 28 percent of the world’s oil, while holding more than half of the world’s crude oil reserves. In 2006, the Persian Gulf countries combined exported, via the Strait of Hormuz, roughly one-fifth of world oil supply.<sup>56</sup>

Even further, Richardson has specifically highlighted the strategic importance of the Strait of Hormuz and he says:

“The Strait of Hormuz is a vital node in world energy trade and is the only way by sea into and out of the Persian Gulf. Of all the oil exported from the Gulf, over 90% goes via the strait. The Gulf region, both onshore and offshore, produces close to 30% of the world’s oil... At a time of growing concern about future energy supplies, the Persian Gulf has 57% of all proven oil reserves... The Persian Gulf region is also one of the most politically volatile areas of the world.”<sup>57</sup>

Iran has been willing, even with military force, to stop the flow of oil exports from the Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz.<sup>58</sup> Iranian leaders have said that Iran will block the Strait of Hormuz if significant political or military

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55 Bernard Lewis, Bernard Lewis Explains Islam, CBN News 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NSi330SqtQ>

56 EIA, Energy Information Administration, Persian Gulf Oil and Gas Exports Fact Sheet, 13 March 2002, <http://www.eia.doe.gov:80/cabs/pgulf2.html>; EIA, Energy Information Administration, Persian Gulf Region, Background, June 2007b, [http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Persian\\_Gulf/Background.htm](http://www.eia.doe.gov/emeu/cabs/Persian_Gulf/Background.htm); Michael Richardson, The Sea Lane and Energy Security Lifeline between the Persian Gulf and Asia, in Forbes, A. (editor), Asian Energy Security: Regional Cooperation in the Malacca Strait, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs, No. 23, Canberra, Australia, Sea Power Centre, 2008, p. 115.

57 Michael Richardson, The Sea Lane and Energy Security Lifeline between the Persian Gulf and Asia, in Forbes, A. (editor), Asian Energy Security: Regional Cooperation in the Malacca Strait, Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs, No. 23, Canberra, Australia, Sea Power Centre, 2008, p. 115.

58 James Philips, Sunni-Shia Conflict and the Future of Gulf Oil (Conference), The Heritage Foundation, 29 September 2007, <http://www.heritage.org/press/events/ev112907b.cfm>

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developments threaten their country – that would halt 20% of the world oil supplies all of which are exported through the Strait,<sup>59</sup> that is 40% of the world's internationally traded oil. The map below shows the nations of the Persian Gulf and the Gulf chokepoint, the narrow strategically placed, yet vulnerable, Strait of Hormuz on the coast of Iran.<sup>60</sup>



The Persian Gulf countries Abu Dhabi, Kuwait, Iraq and Saudi Arabia are best positioned to be able to produce significant amounts of oil (before even their production begins to dwindle) for on average the next 15 next years. Influence and good relations with this region for the other superpowers are increasingly vital for their continued supplies of oil.

#### CONCLUDING COMMENT

As world oil production decreases, along with declining world oil reserves, Islamic OPEC will produce more than half the world's oil. With oil reserves increasingly concentrated in a few OPEC nations in the Gulf, the region will be increasingly influential and powerful.

The Gulf mix of Shia and Suni populations, with the Shia concentrated over the oil fields and installations, make for the genesis of dramatic political

59 Julian Borger, Iran Opens New Naval Base at Mouth of Persian Gulf, guardian.co.uk, 29 October 2008, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/29/iran>

60 Juan Cole [http://www.juancole.com/2008\\_05\\_01\\_juancole\\_archive.html](http://www.juancole.com/2008_05_01_juancole_archive.html)

scenarios in the near future. The possibility of Iran growing in influence to become the region's hegemon, with reach over a whole league of nations, would tip the balance of regional power decisively to Iran.

Within a new world order, of a tripartite mix of continent-wide civilization superpowers, an Iran-led Sunni:Shia Islamist coalition, across large stretches of the Islamic world, with aggressive revolutionary and apocalyptic inspiration from Teheran, may be the launch pad for attempted far-reaching Islamist influence. This Islamist bloc, rich in oil, and therefore petropower, and awash in nuclear weapons, could usher in a host of dramatic world events and trends.

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**POTENCIJALNA HEGEMONIJA IRANA  
MEĐU ISLAMSKIM ZEMLJAMA PROIZVOĐAČIMA NAFTE –  
IMPLIKACIJE ZA GEOPOLITIKU NAFTE**

**APSTRAKT**

Poslednjih decenija snabdevanje naftom u svetu sve više je u rukama islamskih zemalja oko Persijskog zaliva. Činjenica da se u ovim zemljama beleži visok nivo proizvodnje i da one poseduju najveći ideo u svetskim rezervama nafte, mogla bi da bude od veoma velike važnosti. Ova „naftna sila” bi mogla da dovede do određenih strategijskih geopolitičkih promena ukoliko se nafta koristi kao ekonomsko i političko oružje. Sasvim je moguće da apokaliptično obraćanje militantnog islamizma koji dolazi iz Irana poveže šiite i sunita u regionu u težnji da se stvori svetski islamski „kalifat”. To bi moglo da dovede do nove trojne podele supersila od kojih bi jednu činio blok islamskih zalivskih zemalja bogatih naftom. Druge dve supersile bi se borile da održe uvoz nafte iz islamskih zemalja proizvođača nafte koje bi mogle da podpadnu pod dominaciju Irana.

*Ključne reči:* Iran, islamizam, šiiti, suniti, nafta, Persijski zaliv, OPEC, geopolitika, nuklearno oružje, sukob civilizacija