
Modernising GCC military HR models

**Improving morale,
motivation, and
performance**

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Executive summary



Armed forces in the Gulf Cooperation Council¹ (GCC) need to concentrate on human capital development after over a decade of focusing on modernising equipment and doctrine. To get the most from this modernisation, GCC militaries need military human resources (HR) models that recruit, retain, and train people to have the appropriate skills during service, and then prepare them for retirement. Instead, GCC militaries are currently facing problems of morale, motivation, and performance. They lack people with the necessary skills because it is difficult to “buy” military human capital as they can military equipment.

GCC governments need to reform military HR models so that they attract the most talented individuals, provide them with proper training, use them more efficiently, and support their post-retirement integration into society. This will improve morale and provide the skills required by heightened security situations and rising demand for advanced capabilities.

To achieve this, GCC militaries need military HR models that flexibly assign careers to increase productivity and efficiency, offer attractive pay scales linked to skills and responsibility, promote mental and physical health, use more flexible recruitment, and ensure proper integration of retirees into civilian life. These models should link promotions to performance, give service members more control over their careers, and encourage professional and educational development. They should recruit the brightest and the best, provide internationally comparable standards of training, implement retention programmes, use civilians for non-operational functions, and draw upon civilian expertise in specialised areas such as high tech. Such military HR models will strengthen military human capital, provide fulfilling careers for personnel, while improving overall force effectiveness, readiness, and performance levels.

A time to modernise

Over the past few decades, GCC militaries focused on inducting new equipment and modernising their operational capability. From a personnel perspective, armed forces invested in training “front-line operators.” Unfortunately, broader HR reform was not on the agenda of military leaders. Instead, HR practices remain stuck in routines inherited from the Second World War era, which has led to low morale, insufficient motivation, and inadequate performance.

A new way of thinking about HR is critical because GCC militaries are not attracting appropriately skilled people, nor are they providing those they do recruit with the right training to complement modern equipment or meet military threats. Without these skilled personnel, GCC militaries are unable to get the most out of the last decade of modernising equipment and doctrine.

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Military HR models under strain

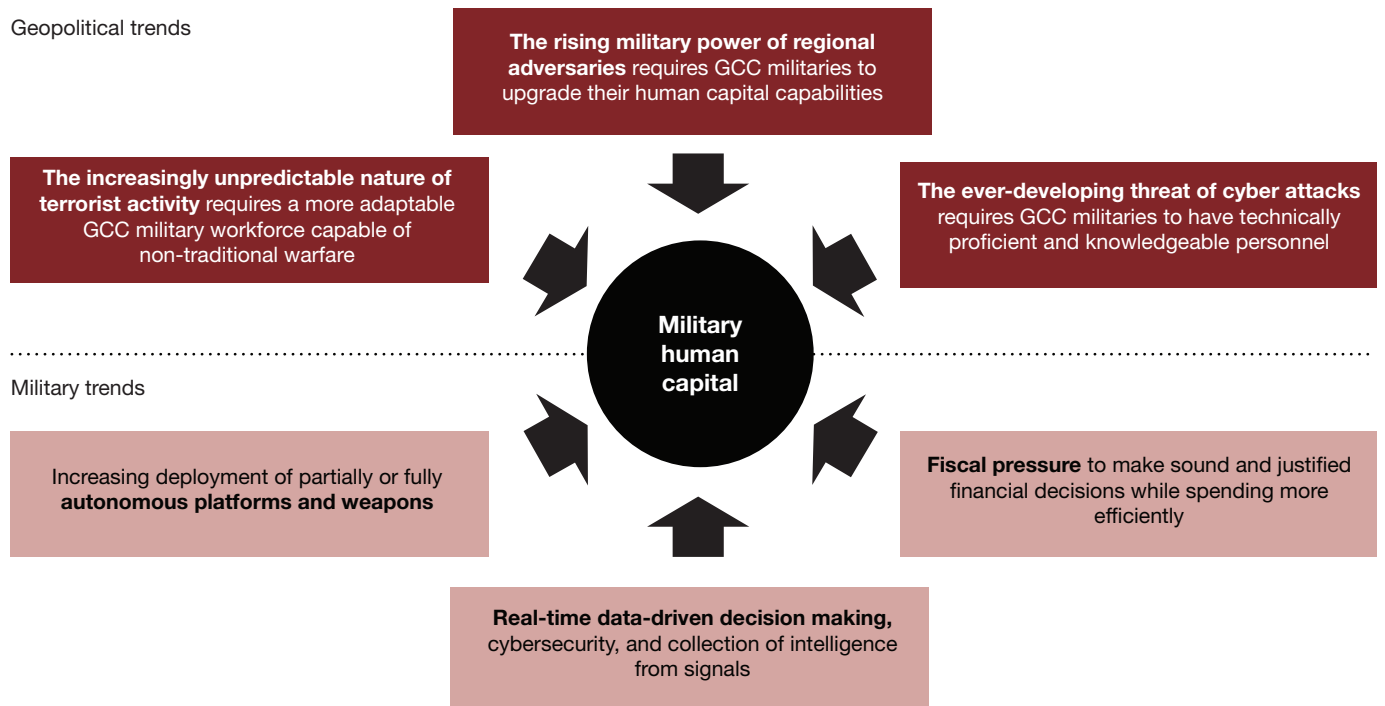
Existing GCC military HR models are under considerable pressure. Geopolitical and military trends are straining GCC military human capital, and GCC armed forces are facing increasingly capable adversaries. The technological environment is also changing, with unmanned, autonomous platforms and weapons increasingly appearing on the battlefield (see Exhibit 1).

Exhibit 1

GCC military human capital is under strain

Geopolitical and military trends are making unsustainable demands on military HR models

Geopolitical trends



Source: Strategy&

Mission-critical capabilities cannot be outsourced

In the 1980s and 1990s, GCC militaries would “acquire” capabilities from friendly and allied countries. They would use, for example, pilots seconded to them from Egypt, Jordan, and Pakistan. However, this option is no longer available. The modernisation of the GCC’s military platforms and systems has outpaced the capabilities of traditional allies. At best, GCC militaries can use expatriate contractors to plug gaps in support functions in a partial manner, but this is at odds with their ambition of developing indigenous defence capabilities.

Demographics are a disadvantage

GCC nations have relatively small populations, resulting in a scarcity of national manpower that can serve in the armed forces. The small volume of military human resources makes it difficult to invest in staff colleges, war colleges, and other specialist and local training institutions in the GCC. Consequently, militaries in the region traditionally either have relied on domestic civilian education facilities or have sent their personnel abroad for training and education.

Legacy peacetime military HR models cannot handle operational pressures

GCC militaries developed their military HR models during an era of relative peace and stability. These models cannot cope with today’s tempo of military operations and rapid technological change.

The military HR model is not working

The weakness of the peacetime military HR model is evident in the life cycle of military personnel. The current military HR model has an unattractive recruitment process compared to civilian opportunities, it does not give personnel the professional skills their armed forces careers require, it does not use them to their full potential, and it does not prepare them for their departure to civilian life when they retire (see Exhibit 2).

Recruitment is unappealing compared to the private sector

GCC militaries limit recruitment to entry-level personnel who are then trained as cadets. This initial training provides standard military skills that are unattractive when compared to the skills that companies impart to those joining the private sector. Personnel obtain subsequent specialisations during the course of a career through trainings — or not at all. By contrast, the U.S. military recruits entry-level personnel and looks for potential officer recruits with college degrees in various disciplines, thereby resulting in an intake with a diverse set of skills from day one.

Exhibit 2

The military HR model does not provide personnel with the necessary skills nor fulfilling careers

The GCC military personnel life cycle



Source: Strategy&

Lack of professional training

GCC militaries focus on training personnel for operations, with insufficient stress on managerial and professional skills. The lack of importance accorded to such aptitudes as project management, business management, organisation behaviour, IT proficiency, and languages deprives militaries of the ability to handle complex operational and procurement decisions. GCC militaries buy products and systems that they cannot fully exploit and that require expensive contractors to maintain and operate. The failure to impart commercial skills, and the concomitant inability to develop business cases and undertake cost-benefit analyses, has a negative effect on operations and procurement.

GCC militaries also do not invest sufficiently in training people with the new skills required by complex technologies. The professional training that exists does not aid career progression, is often not high quality, and is not transferable to civilian life. GCC military training rarely provides recognized accreditation, nor do military trainers seek it from local, regional, or international institutions.

Unsatisfying career paths

GCC militaries do not utilize their personnel efficiently, leading to capacity gaps and unsatisfying careers. They impose frequent, often unplanned changes in assignments and locations on their personnel. A lack of assigned career tracks and associated training limits personnel performance. Members of the armed forces do not accumulate the experience that leads to high performance. There is no incentive to seek training and so work to one's potential because pay and promotion schemes are often time-based.

Sudden retirement

GCC countries often impose abrupt and unplanned exit from service. Personnel have limited awareness of what retirement involves and have little time to make the transition from military to civilian life. GCC armed forces offer few programmes and benefits to service leavers and retirees to assist them with their personal and career transitions from the military to civilian life. In some cases, militaries force personnel into retirement even though they can still make significant contributions. This needs to change, since during the course of their career, military personnel accumulate experience and training, making them a significant resource.

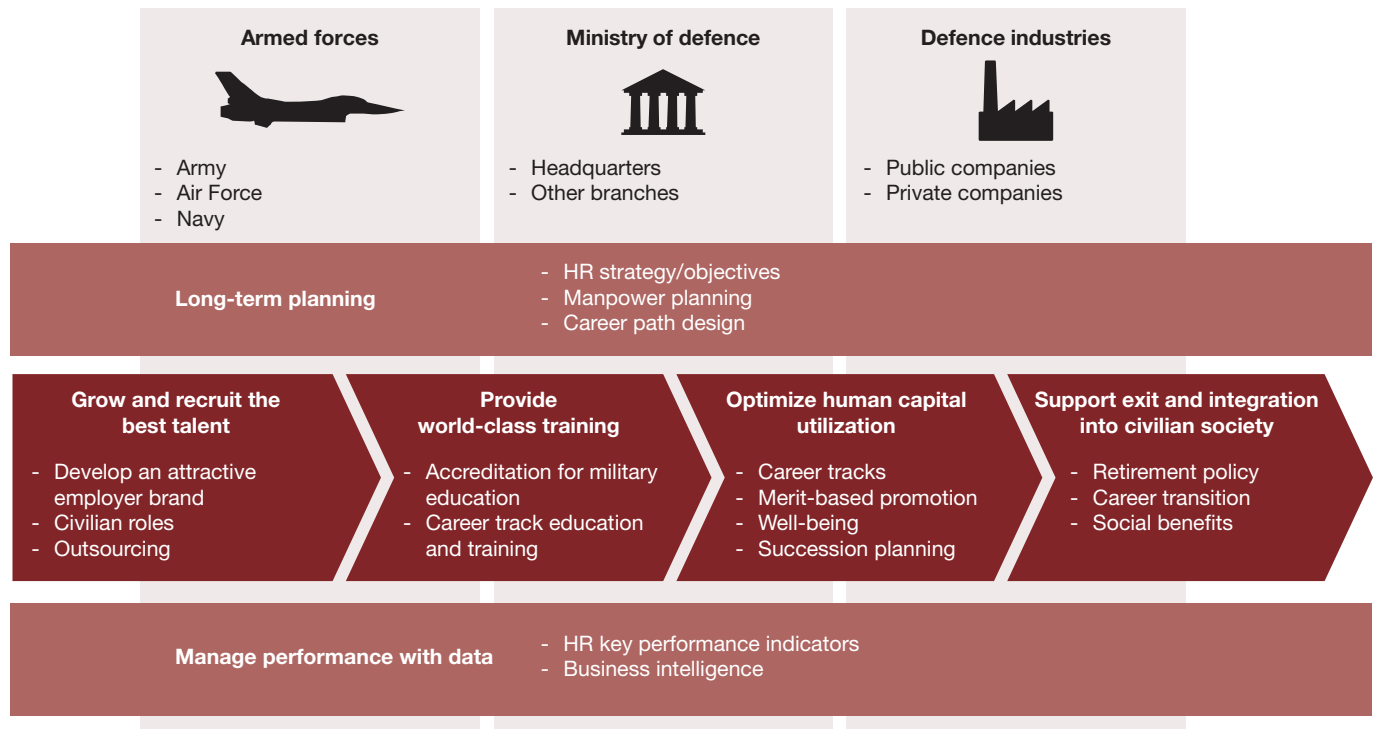
A new military HR model

Implementing a new military HR model involves planning, execution, and assessment. Long-term planning and managing performance with data are integral to the new military HR model and are involved in every component of it.

Each part of the defence sector — the armed forces, ministry of defence, privately and publicly owned defence industries — will need its own distinct HR strategy. Within each part of the defence sector, each organisation will have to develop its own career paths (*see Exhibit 3, page 10*). Although it makes sense for the three parts of the defence sector to coordinate efforts with each other, such an attempt at alignment could prove cumbersome. Instead, the armed forces, the ministry of defence, and defence industries could report to an oversight body, such as the ministry of defence's inspector general, with regard to training and evaluation. The inspector general would then share information and lessons learned.

Exhibit 3

A new military HR model



Source: Strategy&

Each part of the defence sector will need to implement a new, four-step military HR model that builds defence human capital.

1. Recruit the best talent at all levels

Recruitment campaigns need to attract top talent while communicating a message to the broader population that a military career is appealing and worthwhile. This requires the defence sector to consider how society, particularly schools and universities, perceives it. Based on these perceptions, the defence sector should craft an appealing value proposition to potential recruits based on messages including patriotism, career opportunities, professionalism, adventure, humanitarianism, national values, and camaraderie. GCC militaries also need to use marketing techniques that will engage a younger and more digitally aware demographic, as the U.S. has done (see “U.S. Army recruitment campaigns”).

U.S. Army recruitment campaigns

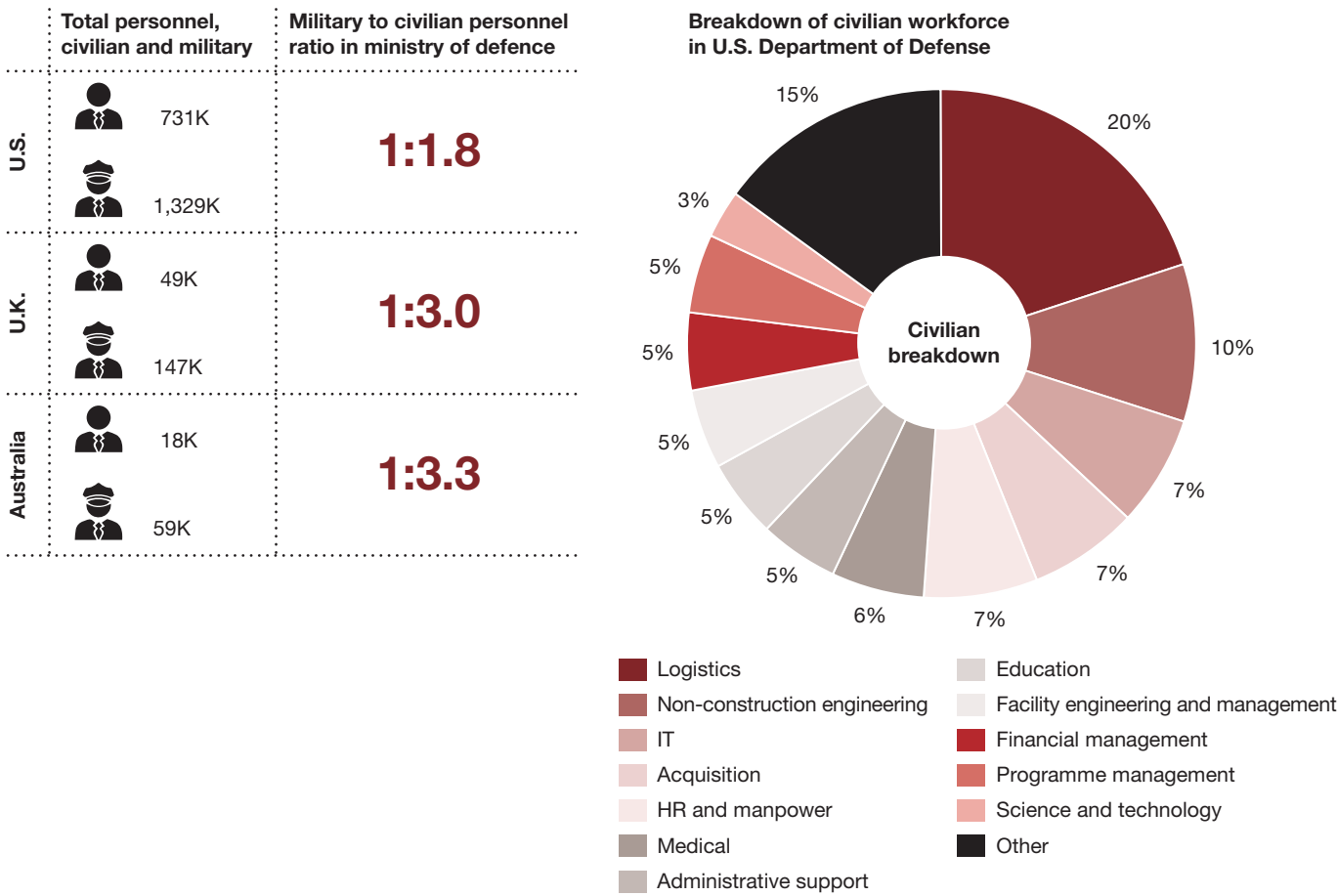
The U.S. Army has used a variety of tools, including experiential marketing, to attract top talent. Recent campaigns include:

- **“America’s Army” game:** In 2002, the U.S. Army financed a video game with an initial budget of US\$10 million and a yearly budget of \$1.5 million targeted at young Americans. In 2005, 40 percent of Special Forces recruits reported that they had played the game. The game has gone through multiple versions and has won awards. The army even uses the game in training programmes.²
- **Virtual Army Experience:** In 2007, the U.S. Army designed a mobile exhibit event to take people through a controlled mission simulation. The Virtual Army Experience uses a version of the game, “America’s Army.” The experience uses a 19,500 square foot space in which people get an immersive eight-minute experience from briefing to after-action review.³
- **Officership campaign:** In 2009, the U.S. Army realized it had enough young recruits but needed officers. The campaign emphasized the various careers within the army with focus on leadership and career progression in the Army Strong context.

Another aspect of recruitment is to use qualified civilians to perform non-operational functions. Western militaries have two or three civilians for every uniformed service member working in their ministries of defence (*see Exhibit 4, page 12*). GCC militaries, however, tend to use officers and enlisted men for civilian tasks, which is a misuse of resources.

Some militaries and ministries of defence recruit at all levels, in particular for leadership positions. For example, the Australian ministry of defence recruited its current Chief Information Officer (CIO) from the private sector,⁴ and the U.S. Undersecretary of the Navy was appointed after he spent several years in the private sector as a consultant.⁵

Exhibit 4
 Militaries increasingly hire civilians to conduct non-operational roles



Source: Fiscal Years 2013-2018, Strategic Workforce Plan Report, US Department of Defense

Source: US Department of Defense, “Number of Military and DoD Appropriated Fund (APF) Civilian Personnel Permanently Assigned By Duty Location and Service/Component,” (As of December 31, 2017); Parliament of Australia, Defence personnel, Table 1: ADF workforce data 2007–08 to 2017–18 (https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/pubs/rp/BudgetReview201415/DefencePersonnel#_ftnref5); Total British Armed Forces, Overview (early 2018) (<http://www.armedforces.co.uk/mod/listings/I0003.html>)

2. Provide world-class training

The military HR model needs to provide service members with the multitude of new skills and practices upon which military success now depends. By design, this military education and training needs to provide accreditation, to promote career progression and to create a pool of identified, standardised skills.

Among the most important skills is the ability to use information and communications technology (ICT) and to manipulate data to navigate complex decisions. Other critical skills include technical and business literacy. All of these need to be taught to the highest level and in a manner that builds the capabilities and careers of individuals. This will be challenging, because GCC countries as a whole have skills shortages. In particular, GCC economies lack skilled digital professionals.⁶ GCC universities also do not produce enough graduates with specialised degrees, depriving the economy and the armed forces of important skills.

Such training will apply to existing personnel as well as recruits. Indeed, one of the problems is that some of those currently doing training may have outdated or unneeded skills. For example, military financial management is often obsolete. Some GCC militaries capture data only for record keeping and reporting; they set budgets and manage costs simply by controlling consumption. New IT systems, however, allow for continuous data monitoring of platforms and logistics, capturing vast amounts of information that are useful if they are analysed properly by trained personnel. This can lead to improved budgeting. These new systems are demanding in IT personnel terms, as professionals need to manage dispersed IT platforms, ensure interoperability, and be cybersecurity adept and operations ready.

Training will also extend to making business case decisions based on opportunity costs, through-life management cost of assets, and cost accounting. Such skills will lead to improved procurement and are transferable to civilian life. Business skills are particularly important for managing outsourced functions. Militaries need supplier management competencies to get best value for money instead of opting for the lowest unit cost third-party providers.

In some areas, GCC militaries may find it hard to build capabilities because of the small potential pool of recruits and the weakness of military and civilian education. Specialities in which a shortfall is likely include digital and data analytics expertise. GCC militaries can use a mixture of four options to build capabilities in critical areas, in addition to using civilian specialists for non-operational demands:

1. *Build capabilities by partnering with other militaries and the private sector.* Oman, for example, has built a Military Technical College in partnership with private-sector players. GCC states can also build connections between their fledgling military education bodies and the well-developed military education ecosystem that exists in Europe and North America. The U.S. military, in particular, has a large education system providing high-quality academic, professional, and vocational training and accreditation. GCC militaries will need to consider carefully the design of such connections and supporting institutions in the region so that it aligns with operational needs and the new human capital model.
2. *Seek regional or international accreditation for military training courses.* Other militaries ensure that their training courses receive accreditation from external bodies. In the U.K., for instance, service personnel (current, reserve, or retired) can take courses accredited by the Chartered Management Institute.⁷ Other accreditations for U.K. military education come from the Institute of Leadership and Management,⁸ BTEC/Edexcel, and City and Guilds of London Institute.⁹ In the U.S., the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center and School provides further education to lawyers through an American Bar Association-recognized LLM in military law. In Australia, the Australian Command and Staff College awards a postgraduate degree accredited by the Australian National University.¹⁰
3. *Pay for personnel to take external vocational training courses.* The U.K.'s Enhanced Learning Credits (ELC) Scheme, for example, funds study to obtain nationally recognised qualifications relevant to a service member's duties.¹¹
4. *Use digital technology to deliver remote training.* In the U.K., for example, the University of Lincoln has work-based distance learning programmes to enable remote military education in business management, engineering management, logistics management, and HR management. These courses are eligible for ELC funding.¹²

Defence-sector organisations require a diverse set of skills — in today's era of specialisation, there is no room for generalists — and hence need different career paths and trainings. Given their size, GCC defence organisations should not try to have all these skills in-house. They can obtain these skills by updating their policies to allow external resources or service providers to complement those of their employees or those in uniform.

3. Design professional career paths

Given their small size and currently high operational tempo, GCC armed forces need to use talent efficiently and effectively. The main components of the military HR value chain will help militaries get the most out of human capital by providing a clear career path with an attractive value proposition, an ability to advance based on talent and demonstrated performance, training programmes tailored to the chosen career path, and well-defined exit opportunities.

Defence organisations need, however, to take a different approach to careers in ICT, which has distinct needs. These organisations need fast-track careers for ICT professionals to attract the best talent. This would mean that ICT should have younger one-star generals (equivalent to brigadier general rank) than would be the case in other specialisations, giving them responsibilities that are typically only possible for senior ranks. This would allow GCC defence organisations to compete with technology companies in which young specialists are allowed freedom, are involved in decision making, and can shape or influence policy and technology. The CIO, for example, may need to be a two-star general (equivalent to major general rank) to exercise influence.

4. Assist with exit and integration into civilian society

Militaries should support service leavers so they can make a smooth transition from military to civilian life. They need to ensure that retirees find jobs and integrate back into society, allowing the economy to capitalize on the skills they acquired during their service. This means designing pensions, retirement benefits, and career transition support in an integrated fashion. An important part of transition support is to advise service leavers on how to find a job. Given the need to develop the GCC defence industrial ecosystem, and the nature of service leavers' skills, such support should also encourage retirees to enter the private defence sector. Retirement and transition benefits need to be integrated into a wider set of assistance (see Exhibit 5).

Exhibit 5
Career transition benefits need to be part of a wider set of assistance

	Military life		Civilian life
	In-service	Transition	Post retirement
Career	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Salary- Training and education- Career paths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Career transition benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Pensions
Social well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Housing- Medical- Other		<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Housing- Medical- Other

Source: Strategy&

An example of these wider benefits comes from the U.K., where the Regulated Qualifications Framework means that there is equivalence between military training and civilian qualifications.¹³ This allows military retirees to more easily advertise their skills to civilian employers. The U.K. has also created a public–private partnership to manage career transition benefits. The Ministry of Defence’s Directorate of Training, Education, Skills, Recruitment and Resettlement (TESRR) and Right Management, a private-sector HR company, run the Career Transition Partnership (CTP).¹⁴ The government renewed CTP’s contract in 2015 for 10 years at a cost of £100 million (\$140 million). The Ministry of Defence typically notifies service leavers of their retirement date nine months in advance so that they can arrange an interview with a TESRR officer and start looking for jobs. During that time, service leavers access a variety of CTP services including a dedicated job-search portal, an online curriculum vitae builder, workshops, training courses, career consultants, and employment fairs. Service leavers can use CTP services for up to two years after retirement.

Conclusion

GCC armed forces are undergoing a profound transformation. They are adopting new technologies and platforms, while their frequent operations are straining their human capital. To reverse the current problems of low morale, poor motivation, and skills shortages, they need a new HR model that will recruit the best, train them to the highest standard, use them efficiently, and then help them reintegrate into civilian life. Such a model will meet the military HR needs of the future and treat their military personnel as national assets.

Endnotes

¹ The GCC countries are Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates.

² Blake Stillwell, “6 Military Video Games Used to Train Troops on the Battlefield,” *military.com*, May 13, 2016 (<https://www.military.com/undertheradar/2016/05/6-military-video-games-used-to-train-troops-on-the-battlefield>).

³ SPEVCO, Inc., “America’s Army Virtual Army Experience by SPEVCO,” January 20, 2017 (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FfFxb9qblk>).

⁴ Allie Coyne, “Defence’s new CIO revealed,” *iTnews*, December 1, 2017 (<https://www.itnews.com.au/news/defences-new-cio-revealed-478802>).

⁵ Ben Werner, “Thomas Modly Sworn In as Under Secretary of the Navy,” *U.S. Naval Institute News*, December 4, 2017 (<https://news.usni.org/2017/12/04/thomas-modly-confirmed-secretary-navy>).

⁶ Samer Bohsali, Sevag Papazian, Melissa Rizk, and Ali Matar, “Empowering the GCC digital workforce: Building adaptable skills in the digital era,” *Strategy& 2017* (<https://www.strategyand.pwc.com/reports/digital-workforce-full-report>).

⁷ Chartered Management Institute, “Get your skills recognised,” (<http://www.managers.org.uk/individuals/qualifications/armed-forces>).

⁸ Institute of Leadership & Management, “Future proof your career - with ILM Qualifications” (<https://www.i-l-m.com/working-with-ilm/working-with-the-armed-forces>).

⁹ City & Guilds, “Supporting the Ministry of Defence” (<https://www.cityandguilds.com/what-we-offer/employers/Supporting-the-Ministry-of-Defence>).

¹⁰ Australian Defence College, “About the Australian Command & Staff Course (Joint)” (<http://www.defence.gov.au/ADC/ACSC/Course/>).

¹¹ Enhanced Learning Credits Scheme (<http://www.enhancedlearningcredits.com>).

¹² University of Lincoln, “Military Programmes” (<https://www.lincoln.ac.uk/home/lbs/militaryprogrammes/>).

¹³ Find a regulated qualification, Gov.UK (<https://www.gov.uk/find-a-regulated-qualification>).

¹⁴ The Career Transition Partnership (<https://www.ctp.org.uk>).

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