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Among the Lessons Learned from the Gulf Crisis & Reference to the
Recommendation of the April 2026 Gulf Summit

Necessity to Develop Emergency Routes to Supply Gulf Gas Importers

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While the ongoing Gulf crisis has prevented Qatar and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from channeling their liquefied natural gas (LNG) beyond the Strait of Hormuz, the effective closure of the waterway has not only cut off exports but has also cut off Gulf LNG importers from external suppliers.

Despite these disruptions, Qatar has continued to pump gas to the UAE and Oman through the Dolphin pipeline, which remains fully operational. Doha also remains Kuwait's largest LNG supplier, delivering cargoes under long-term agreements and accounting for more than half of the country's imports (around 4 million tons out of a total of about 7.5 million tons in 2025).

Still, significant concerns for summer shortages persist in Kuwait, as wider regional instability continues to threaten supply security and strain Gulf energy markets.

In fact, the acute disruptions to LNG imports stemming from the regional conflict, together with a severe reduction in associated gas output following cuts in oil production, have triggered a significant gas shortage in Kuwait.

The increasingly fragile gas situation in Kuwait compounds broader supply challenges in both Bahrain and Iraq. Bahrain, which imported around one million tons of LNG in 2025, now faces mounting difficulties as the closure of the Strait of Hormuz disrupts critical energy trade routes. The country had only recently built the its LNG receiving and regasification terminal within the Khalifa bin Salman Port facility in the town of Hidd. Built with an annual capacity of 6 million tons, the facility was intended to support the country's growth in gas demand to fuel large industrial projects, generate power, desalinate water, and enhance oil recovery.

Bahrain LNG Terminal

In Iraq, plans were made to begin importing LNG this summer through a 7.3-million-ton/year Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU) at Khor al-Zubair, which was aimed at reducing the country's reliance on Iranian gas imports, stabilizing the national power grid, and enhancing energy security. However, Iraq's LNG plans have been delayed as escalating regional hostilities and financing constraints continue to hinder progress on the project. With LNG imports now postponed to at least next winter, Iraq--which imported around 8 billion cubic meters of gas in 2025--remains dependent on unpredictable Iranian supplies, leaving it exposed to severe gas shortages this summer.



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Floating Storage and Regasification Unit (FSRU)

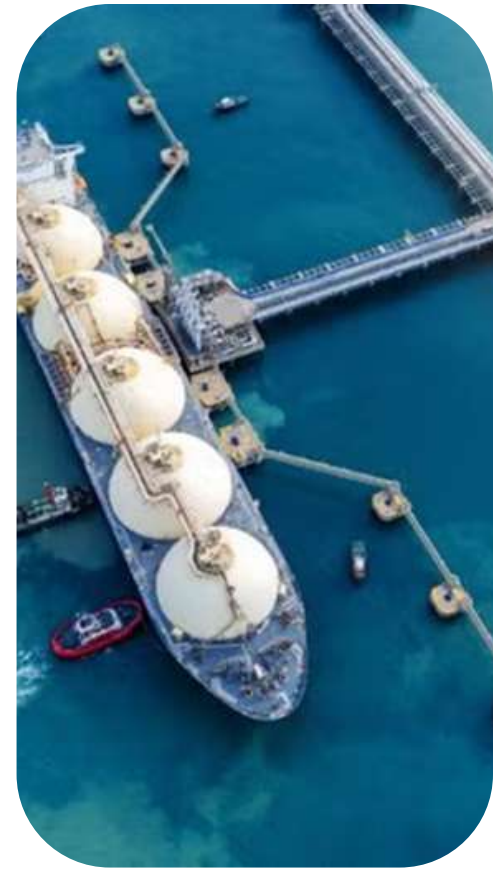
Taken together, it is clear that if and when the Strait of Hormuz is closed for any reason, there is a radical difference between the gas security situation in the northern Arab Gulf nations (Bahrain, Kuwait, and Iraq) and the southern part (the UAE and Oman). While the UAE and Oman have continued receiving piped gas from Qatar through existing infrastructure, Bahrain, Iraq, and Kuwait, in particular, remain vulnerable. They have an urgent need for an emergency system capable of delivering gas supplies through regional pipelines during times of crisis. Many gas pipeline projects have already been proposed to link Qatar to Bahrain and Kuwait. During the 1980s and 1990s, the creation of a **GCC gas network** was discussed, which would have included a segment running from Qatar to Kuwait via Bahrain and Saudi Arabia. The first section of this pipeline would have connected Qatar to Dhahran in Saudi Arabia. It would have had a total length of 300 km and consisted of two 42-inch parallel lines, each with an annual capacity of 10 billion cubic meters of gas.

Another, 60-km branch, partly submarine, would have run from Dhahran to Manama in Bahrain. This 30-inch line would have been able to carry 5.7 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually. Running from Dhahran to Kuwait City, a second branch, 42 inches in diameter and 500 km long, would have supplied some 7.4 billion cubic meters of Qatari gas to Kuwait annually.

Another direct **Qatar-Kuwait gas pipeline** was proposed in the early 2000s as a 535-km project from Qatar's Ras Laffan to Kuwaiti petrochemical facilities. Meanwhile, Qatar and Bahrain signed a memorandum of understanding to conduct a joint study on a bilateral gas pipeline with an annual capacity of 5 billion cubic meters.

Qatar had two options to supply gas to Bahrain. The first would be to build an entirely independent pipeline. The other option would be to construct a branch line from the proposed Qatar-Kuwait gas pipeline. This US\$2 billion (2005 \$) pipeline would have run north from Qatar to Bahrain, and then through Saudi waters on to Kuwait.

A credible and durable mechanism must be established to guarantee the secure transit of gas through Saudi territory, as most of these projected pipelines would pass through the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia itself could actually benefit from the revenues generated by gas flows. If transit fees are paid according to the borders the pipelines cross, it could greatly benefit industrial and power plants in the Eastern Province of the Kingdom, while indirectly reinforcing the “mutual dependency factor” that strengthens both the stability and security of cross-border gas trade.



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If and when a gas pipeline from **Qatar reaches Kuwait, it would become relatively easier to link it onward to Iraq**, thereby supplying Qatari gas initially to its southern regions. In fact, Iraq and Kuwait have already built the first interstate gas pipeline in the Gulf, linking the Iraqi Rumaila field to the Kuwaiti industrial city of Shuaiba. The 250-km, 40-inch, 4-billion-cubic- meters/year line began pumping in 1986 before being halted following the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August 1990. Since then, several attempts have been made to revive the project, including a serious proposal by the Iraqi government in November 2017. Yet, no concrete progress has materialized.

Gas Installations in Southern Iraq

It is obvious that the long-proposed projects designed to transport natural gas from Qatar to Bahrain and Kuwait have repeatedly been stalled due to regional geopolitical tensions. Yet the current Gulf crisis has underscored the strategic cost of delaying such initiatives. The states of the region now face the urgent need to draw lessons from the conflict and work together to address the medium- and long-term gas supply vulnerabilities exposed by the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. By revisiting these projects, or similar schemes, with the aim of building a regional emergency gas network, Arab Gulf countries can ensure a continuous and abundant supply of natural gas, even in the face of future geopolitical disruptions. Serious efforts should therefore be undertaken to establish new gas pipelines that meet the import requirements of Arab Gulf states. Despite the considerable expense, political complexities, and lengthy construction timelines, such projects may be the only way to reduce the enduring vulnerability of these countries to disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz, even though such infrastructure itself may be subject to closure and pumping disturbances. Still, the region could well learn from the successful experience of the Dolphin pipeline, which has represented an exemplary model of cross-border energy transport not only for the Gulf, but for the Middle East as a whole.

Even if the current Hormuz crisis is eventually resolved, Arab Gulf gas importers face an urgent need to implement these measures, integrate their national networks with regional gas pipelines, fully utilize them, and keep them in a constant state of operational readiness for future emergencies. This is precisely what GCC leaders recommended at their summit in Jeddah at the end of April 2026, when they stressed “the need to accelerate the start of taking steps towards a pipeline project for transporting oil and gas.” Their statement reflects a growing recognition that deeper energy integration is no longer merely an option, but a strategic imperative.



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