



المركز العربي للأبحاث ودراسة السياسات
Arab Center for Research & Policy Studies

Tenth Round

Gulf Studies Forum

- **Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation?**
- **Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States**
- **Ostour Symposium: Historical Writing in the Gulf Countries**

2-4 December 2023



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About the Forum

Track I - Relations between Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation?

During the Cold War, Arab Gulf states' relations with China were subject to the ideological and geopolitical division that defined the post-World War II international order. China's support for leftist movements that sought to overthrow conservative US-allied Gulf regimes had negative repercussions for bilateral relations, the development of which was further impeded by China's backing of the Dhofar rebellion and the so-called "Front for the Liberation of the Arab Gulf", and Beijing's close ties with the Marxist regime in South Yemen. Hence, it was only after US-Chinese rapprochement came underway in the early 1970s, taking advantage of the growing rift between China and the Soviet Union, that the People's Republic of China's relations with some Arab Gulf states began to improve. For other states, it took until the end of the Cold War. Although China has unilaterally recognized Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, and the UAE since 1971, Kuwait was the first Gulf state to establish diplomatic relations with China, in March 1971, followed by Oman in May 1978, the UAE in November 1984, Qatar in July 1988, Bahrain in April 1989, and Saudi Arabia in July 1990.

The end of the Cold War and China's integration into the international liberal economic order, such as the World Trade Organization, as well as the major economic revival it has experienced in the past three decades as reflected in increasing energy demands to meet its industrial needs, led to the emergence of major common interests between China and the Gulf states. Since then, both parties have grown more interested in developing bilateral relations, whether economically, politically, culturally, or otherwise.

Yet the sprawling course of Gulf-China relations started to encounter increasing challenges resulting from the international system, as Washington's perspective on China shifted from that of a friendly state whose assimilation into the world economic order it had supported, beginning with Deng Xiaoping's reforms in the late 1970s, into a strategic competitor and adversary. The American national security strategy argued that China is the greatest challenge facing the United States following the decline of terrorism during the term of former President Barack Obama (2009-2017), who launched the "Pivot to Asia" policy. Through the changes in administrations (Donald Trump and Joe Biden) over the past decade, the United States has continued to regard China – on the rise economically, technologically, and militarily – as the greatest geostrategic challenge to its global hegemony, especially in the Indian and Pacific Oceans region.

Perhaps the tensions afflicting US-China relations, and their various causes, are superficial expressions of this new relationship. The US takes as a given that China is its most prominent geopolitical challenge, accusing it of trying to change the liberal world order established after World War II and create "a world in which might makes right and winners take all". Meanwhile, Beijing realizes that the US is working diligently to contain it, limit its international influence, and restrict its movement in the South China Sea, which China considers an economic zone all its own; Washington's policy on the region is part of why Beijing has seen tensions in its relations with Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam.

Several factors have come together to create the image of China emerging as a major power to confront the US, most prominently China's economic prowess. It is ranked second worldwide, after the US, in gross domestic product, which reached USD 17.94 trillion in 2021, and the largest in terms of purchasing power parity, apart from an annual growth rate that surpasses its American counterpart. All this demonstrates that China is quickening its pace to become the largest economy in the world, especially after gradually opening up its economy and adopting industrial policies to stimulate local industrialization and foreign exports. China has become one of the most important industrial regions in the world, positioning it to spark a fundamental transformation in the global mode of industrialization and commerce which emerged in the 20th century.

Thus, China has put forward several major strategic initiatives, notably the Belt and Road Initiative which it launched in 2013 to strengthen its economic and commercial leadership worldwide. An ambitious project costing more than one trillion US dollars, spanning countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe, the initiative would make Beijing Washington's foremost competitor – not only economically, but in terms of influence on international politics as well.

Although China's rise creates a strategic dilemma for the US, there are several reasons why, for the Arab Gulf states, it represents a challenge on the one hand and an opportunity on the other. This rise comes in the context of these states' historical relationship with the US, whereby they are traditionally considered allies of Washington, their main defence partner. Yet the Gulf states also enjoy broad economic relationships with China, now their main trade partner. The trade exchange between China and the GCC amounts to around USD 200 billion, and China is now the primary destination for several Gulf states' oil exports. By contrast, their relationship with the US is defined by the latter having emerged as a competitor in the energy sector, especially after the oil and shale gas revolution that made the US the world's largest producer of gas and oil – to say nothing of its conflict with (some) Gulf states over oil prices and the continual demand of these countries (which command a leading position

in OPEC) to set a production and export ceiling. Moreover, the Gulf states' relationship(s) with the US experienced fluctuations and disagreements during the Obama administration, especially in relation to abandoning the regime of former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak during the 25 January 2011 revolution and Obama's attempt at rapprochement with Iran. The Trump administration saw conflicts of a different variety with the Gulf states, particularly Trump's indifferent responses to attacks against Saudi Arabia, and these disputes continue to cast a shadow on US-Gulf relations (most prominently the disaffection in US-Saudi relations under the Biden administration).

Conversely, Gulf relations with China have experienced notable developments that culminated in the China-GCC Summit held in Riyadh in December 2022, which Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman described as "historic", and which concluded with the signing of bilateral strategic partnership agreements. This relationship has not been limited to the energy sector; in the past decade, the share of Chinese weapons exports to certain Gulf states has increased markedly, to the alarm of the US, which has gotten involved to limit this trade.

The developments of recent years (China's rise as a key power alongside the US, the faltering of GCC relations with Washington, and the stable economic and energy relationship between Gulf states and Beijing) have led the Gulf states to seek a kind of balance between their security interests that remain linked to the US and their growing economic interests with China, while simultaneously resisting what appear to be attempts to push them to choose between the two in light of heightening international polarization between Beijing and Washington.

While there is no doubt that the Gulf states' opening to China may be linked to particular economic factors, it cannot be separated from developments in Gulf-US relations and the consequences of the Trump era. Several Gulf convictions have been shaken, especially the idea of the United States as the guarantor of Gulf security after it was unable to protect them from attacks that Iran is believed to have perpetrated. There have also been signs that the Gulf states are losing their political significance as the US succeeds in transitioning into the world's largest energy producer.

The latest indication that the Gulf's turn toward China could have something to do with the wavering of US relations is the largest Gulf state, Saudi Arabia, seeking to resume relations with its regional adversary, Iran, under Chinese mediation, then agreeing to become a "dialogue partner" in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a step toward full membership.

Hence, if the Gulf states' opening to China can be understood as an attempt to pressure the US, it is surely part of their efforts to reshape their relationship with Washington and to open up to other world powers, even though China cannot be a strategic alternative to the US in the Gulf.

Therefore, the theme that the ACRPS will address in the first track of the tenth-annual Gulf Studies Forum is the Gulf states' relationship with China: is it possible to speak of "Gulf-China relations", or must one discuss the relations of individual Gulf states with China? Further, could the development in some Gulf states' ties with China be a mere response to the faltering relations with the US, or does it have a firm economic basis that transcends the logic of reaction? What are the policies that Gulf states are enacting (or are likely to enact) against this backdrop? To what extent will economics and oil inform their strategic choices in relations with China and the US, and will these factors produce strategic/political choices? That is, is China's strategic vision for the Gulf still limited to commercial exchange, or has it expanded to include political dimensions? Can (some) Gulf states perform the role of mediator between China and the United States, and can it be said that the two are engaged in a competition over the Gulf? How might we interpret the development of Gulf-China relations at the same time that China-Iran relations have seen unprecedented advancement? Does the relationship between the Gulf states and China have cultural or social dimensions, apart from politics and economics?

Track II - Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States

Culture (in the general anthropological sense, not the narrow definition that limits it to artistic and literary production) is inseparable from, if not at the heart of, nation-building processes; after a political entity is defined on this basis, it begins searching for (or producing) cultural content. Nationalism theorists, therefore, give culture (e.g., values, symbols, meanings) a central role in these processes.

The Arab Gulf states have sought to manage the question of culture since their independence – and even prior to that when central authority began taking shape – and this process moved forward in parallel with the solidification of the state. It was, however, a difficult process, and we lack sufficient literature that critically evaluates how Gulf states manage the cultural sphere, not to mention the particularities of the issue in the Gulf context.

It can be argued that the Gulf states face a set of problems related to the cultural issue:

- First (and most importantly), there is the issue of similarity and difference, or the extent to which the culture of Gulf states resembles other cultures that have much in common with each other, the limits of their particularity and divergence from other cultures, and thus, the symbolic (and political) expressions they employ to distinguish themselves. In the Arab world, the countries of the Mashreq have had a leading role in defining the content of Arab culture. The Gulf states have, since their establishment, made use of the established frameworks of Arab culture and taken care to demonstrate their "symmetry" with this culture as an essential part of belonging. Yet they also have their own cultural particularities – lifestyles, heritage, customs, symbols, and so on – which they have sought to showcase and symbolically enclose at various stages of development.
- Second, the display of distinctiveness expanded after the Gulf countries became home to a large migration movement aimed at finding work in these wealthy, oil-rich countries starting in the 1960s and 70s. This movement reached such an extent that the citizens of some of these countries have become demographic minorities. Here, another issue emerges: diversity and distinction are no longer directed toward the traditional incubators of Arab culture but also toward internal demographics that include migrants of various backgrounds, bringing their cultures, values, and symbols, who represent a majority of the population. The issue of cultural gatekeeping takes on a second dimension as citizenship, due to the wealth of the Gulf states, became a privilege.
- Third, this new demographic structure (perhaps unusual for other Arab states) and its associated requirements (especially the demand for education in foreign languages) have created an issue

relating to one of these countries' most important cultural pillars: language. The Arabic language has found itself clashing with other more competitive languages (notably English), disrupting its position in a way unparalleled in other Arab countries.

- Fourth, the Gulf countries saw the emergence of a strong central state after independence that undertook a process of habituating society to its nascent power as the primary, central authority. In so doing, the state was supported by a rentier economy of abundance by which it managed the distribution of social benefits. Although space does not permit delving into this issue, despite being of great importance for reimagining Gulf societies outside of the "tribal" label, an awareness of this factor is nevertheless crucial to understand that the state has come to dominate social debates in the Gulf (harbours, coastal cities, deserts, business elites, bureaucrats, etc.). Therefore, the state's management of the cultural issue does not entail the triumph of one social class or its culture and symbols over another, so much as it expresses a somewhat performative formula that the state carries out.
- Fifth, the Gulf states have become markedly under the influence of globalization due to their openness to the West, perhaps more so than other Arab societies. Over the past four decades, several Gulf cities have developed rapidly into major world attractions that feature cutting-edge architectural styles, cultural institutions, and the latest accoutrements of "smart cities". This happened through a comprehensive wave of urbanization that concentrated cultural and economic life within a few big cities (especially capitals). Faced with this opening to globalization and its urban impacts, it made sense for the Gulf states to reclaim and reproduce the symbols of nomadic life as a form of "authenticity" alongside the corresponding wave of globalization. Gradually, nomadism became a kind of cultural capital despite having nearly disintegrated as a way of life in Gulf societies. Here, it ought to be noted that the Gulf's "bedouinization of culture" was not invoked in the context of social conflict (as was the case in other Arab states) but out of a desire to establish a degree of balance in the face of globalization.
- Sixth, the presentation of these issues would not be complete without discussing "national identity", or association with a particular political entity. Although the small size of Gulf societies has led them to look to larger identities, especially Arab identity, there has been discussion of national identity at many points in the region's recent history, with emphasis on its precedence over other identities. There are two aspects to national identity: the first, which is political and legal, is based on the principle of citizenship and regulates the rights and duties of each "citizen" – one who identifies with this political identity. But states generally deal with this political entity

not as if it were something arbitrary, but as if there were a distinct cultural fabric that constitutes it. The state works to strengthen the cultural content of national identity, which represents the second aspect. In this way, national identity touches on all aspects of the cultural issue.

The ACRPS proposes to discuss these essentially cultural issues facing Gulf states through the second track of the tenth-annual Gulf Studies Forum, with emphasis on the policies Gulf states are implementing to address them. Here, the institutions of Gulf states are understood not only as cultural ministries or related bodies, but as all decision-making institutions. This also includes the societal perception of the cultural issue, which plays a role in decision making.

Ostour Symposium on "Historical Writing in the Gulf Countries"

Historical writing in the Arab Gulf countries has undergone remarkable development, especially in writing regional history. However, the discipline is still defined by many features that prevent real progress.

These writings were closer to official narratives, through which the nascent state chronicled its own establishment. However, despite the connection of these narratives to the existing political systems they were the work of the modernizing Gulf elite, who aspired to the establishment of a modern state. Just as emerging narratives cannot be separated from political systems, they cannot be separated from the visions of modernizing elites.

This context was mirrored in many other countries after the formation of their political entities, including the countries of the Arab Mashreq. But what distinguishes the Gulf countries is that the problem of establishment dominated even subsequent historical writings, foremost among them academic writings, especially in universities and modern academic institutions that were established after the state.

Historical writing in the Gulf remains overly concerned with the issue of "sources" at the expense of methodological and epistemological progress, remaining somewhat closed to social and critical history. Perhaps the reason for this, despite the multiplicity of sources, lies in their weakness at times, and in the inability to access them at others.

This has led to any critical review of historical writing in the Gulf, carried out by scholars in the field, remaining weak, except for some works by several historians.

Furthering this review entails the investigation the experiences of historical writing in the Gulf countries with a focus on the present, describing this writing objectively, identifying its characteristics, methodologically and thematically. It should navigate the prevailing research trends and theoretical sources from Western and Arab schools of history and explore how they collect their material and deal with documents. In addition to this, it should seek to understand the surrounding context regarding the relationship between historical writing and the state, its political dimensions, its sociological influences, and other research questions. All of this should be done from a critical perspective. This is the goal of the Ostour symposium, in line with its project to review Arabic historical writing more generally. The symposium also seeks to promote other objectives, such as defining a research agenda for historical writing, that academic institutions and specialized research centres can embrace, to address the shortcomings revealed by this critical review.

Timetable

Day One

Saturday, 2 December 2023

9:00-9:15	Registration	
9:15-9:30	Opening Remarks (Main Auditorium)	
9:30-10:45	Opening Lecture (Main Auditorium) Chair: Marwan Kabalan Abdulaziz Hamad Aluwaisheg: Gulf-Chinese Relations and Their Prospects for Development Kerry Brown: Global China in the Third Term of Xi: China's Relations with the Gulf States	
10:45-11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00-12:30	Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation? (Main Auditorium)	Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)
	Gulf-China Relations: Cornerstones and Challenges (1) Chair: Suhaim Al Thani Abdul Aziz bin Othman bin Saqr: Cornerstones of Gulf-China Relations Abdullah Alshayji: Gulf States' Relations with China and the United States: A Tenuous Balance Abdullah Baabood: The Expanding Relations between Gulf States and China	The State and Cultural Affairs in the Gulf Countries Chair: Abdullah Aljasmī Mohammad Al-Rumaihi: Arab Gulf States' Cultural Policies Ulrike Freitag: The Development of Cultural Policies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Lehbib Bellia, Mohamed Reda Soltani & Brahim Boulfefel: Management of the Legislative and Policy-Making Structure in Qatar: The Challenges of Cultural Diversity and Globalization
12:30-12:45	Coffee Break	

	<p>Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation? (Main Auditorium)</p>	<p>Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)</p>
<p>12:45-14:15</p>	<p>Gulf-China Relations: Cornerstones and Challenges (2)</p> <p>Chair: Ghanim Al Najjar</p> <p>Asaad Saleh Al-Shamlan: Gulf -China Relations in Light of US-China Competition: Opportunities and Challenges</p> <p>Rory Miller: China-Gulf Security Relations: The Maritime Dimension</p> <p>Jonathan Fulton: Relations between the Gulf States and China</p>	<p>Cultural Policies in the Gulf Countries in the Context of Political and Intellectual Transformations</p> <p>Chair: Aisha Al-Ammari</p> <p>Zaid Ali Al Fadeil: Cultural Shifts in Saudi Arabia: A Reading of Contemporary Policies</p> <p>Abdullah Abu Loz: Vision 2030: The Policy of Secularization and the Building of a New Saudi Citizen</p> <p>Jasem Hassan Al Ghaith: Arab Gulf States' Cultural Policies in the Face of Globalization: Acculturation and the Cognitive Hybridity of the Approved Culture Project</p>
<p>14:15-15:15</p>	<p>Lunch Break</p>	

	<p>Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation? (Main Auditorium)</p>	<p>Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)</p>
<p>15:15-16:45</p>	<p>Development of the Gulf States' Interrelations with China</p> <p>Chair: Faisal Abu Sulaib</p> <p>Muhammad Al-Musfir: Qatar-China Relations, 1988-2023</p> <p>Alanoud Alsabah: Cultural Relations between China and Kuwait</p> <p>Hade Mashaan Rabe: The Future of Iraqi-Chinese Economic Relations</p>	<p>The Sociological Framework of Cultural Policies in the Gulf Countries</p> <p>Chair: Baqer Al Najjar</p> <p>Yagoub Al-Kandari: Similarities and Differences Between Urban and Tribal Cultures in Gulf Society and their Impact on Social Integration: Kuwait as a Model</p> <p>Mohamed bin Salim Al-Mashani: The Cultural Formation of the Gulf Citizen: Between the Authority of State and Religion</p>
<p>16:45-17:30</p>	<p>Coffee Break</p>	
<p>17:30-18:30</p>	<p>Dialogue Session</p> <p>Culture and its Role in Society</p> <p>His Excellency, Minister of Culture</p> <p>Sheikh Abdulrahman bin Hamad Al Thani</p> <p>Chair: Abdulrahman Albaker</p> <p>(Main Auditorium)</p>	

Day Two

Sunday, 3 December 2023

	Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation? (Meeting Room 003)	Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)
9:30-11:00	<p style="text-align: center;">International Competition and its Ramifications for the Development of Gulf-China Relations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Nouf Al Jassar</p> <p>Kadhim Hashim Niama: Continuity and Change in China's Policy on the Arab Gulf States: The Role of the US</p> <p>Kazuto Matsuda: Japan, China, and the GCC States: Discussing the Triparty Political Dynamics in the Gulf</p> <p>Aftab Alam: China-GCC Ties: Evolving Challenges and Dynamics for Pakistan</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Museums in the Gulf countries and Identity Building</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Aisha Al Darmaki</p> <p>Sundus Al-Rashid: Museums in the Arab Gulf States: Cultural Symbols, or Political Forces?</p> <p>Alanoud Abdulla Al-Khalifa: Heritage and Global Expansion: Qatar National Museum's Discourse on Promoting Contemporary Qatari Identity</p> <p>Hae Won Jeong: Cultural Production and Nation-Branding in the Digital Age: Science, Technology, and Innovation in the United Arab Emirates</p>
11:00-11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15-12:45	<p style="text-align: center;">Security and Energy in China-Gulf Relations</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Hatim al-Shanfari</p> <p>Degang Sun & Si Liu: China's Policy towards Gulf Security: Hedging Strategy</p> <p>Dhafer Al-Ajmi: China-Gulf Security Relations: Incentives and Challenges</p> <p>Mostafa Al Bazergan: The Importance of the Gulf States' Position in China's Global Ambitions</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Gulf Cultural Strategies and Cultural Institutions</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Maryam Al-Kuwari</p> <p>Said Al Tarshi: Gulf and Omani Cultural Strategies: A Comparative Critical Analysis</p> <p>Khaled AlKhaldi: Cultural Institutions in Kuwait: From Rise to Fall</p> <p>Abdulrahman Al-Marri: The Cultural Horizon Fused: On the Inadequacy of the Shared Space Between the Individual and the Cultural Institution in Qatar</p>
12:45-13:45	Lunch Break	

13:45-15:30	<p>Relations Between Arab Gulf States and China: Continuity or Transformation? (Meeting Room 003)</p>	<p>Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)</p>
	<p>Belt and Road Initiative Chair: Majed al-Turki Gangzheng She: Sino-GCC Relations under the Developing Multidimensional BRI Emad Kaddorah: The Position of the Gulf States in the Belt and Road Initiative Yousuf bin Hamad Al-Balushi: Gulf-China Relations from a Strategic Perspective</p>	<p>Cultural and Educational Institutions in the Gulf Countries and National Identity Building Chair: Ibtihal Al-Khatib Mohamed Alyahyai: State Management of Identity in its Cultural Dimension: The Case of Oman Saif bin Adi Al-Maskari & Nasser bin Saif Al-Saadi: Cultural Identity Narratives in Humanities Curricula Adopted for Grades 5-12 in the Sultanate of Oman Mothanna Al-Masri & Omar Abdin: Policies of Identity Building and the Re-Production of Heritage: The Cultural Status of Diving in Qatar Saif bin Nasser Al-Maamari & Zainab bint Muhammad Al-Gharibi: How Gulf Countries Depict Culture to School Students Via Social Studies</p>
15:30-15:45	<p>Coffee Break</p>	
15:45-17:00	<p>Cultural Policies of the Arab Gulf States (Auditorium 2)</p>	
	<p>Gulf Culture in a Critical Framework Chair: Haider Saeed Maryam Alhajri: "Gulf Culture" as a Tool of Hegemony: Toward a Compound Understanding of Cultural Pluralism in the Gulf Said al-Hashimi: Omani Culture after the 2011 Arab Revolutions</p>	

- Timing of sessions based on Doha local time (GMT +3)

Ostour Symposium

Historical Writing in the Gulf Countries

Monday, 4 December 2023

(Auditorium 2)

9:30-10:00	Registration
10:00-10:15	Opening Remarks Abderrahim Benhadda Haider Saeed
10:15-12:15	Session One Trends and Paths Chair: Hayat Amamu Abdulrahman Alebrahim: Between Marginalization and Narratives in the History of the Arabian Gulf: Kuwait as a Model Nasser bin Saif Al-Saadi: Trends in Historical Writing in Oman: From the Traditional Approach to the Academic Amal Ghazal & Abdulrahman Albaker: How the Left in the Gulf Chronicled its Uprisings: The Case of the 1965 Uprising in Bahrain Ulrike Freitag: Saudi Historiography: Observations from Writing the History of a City
12:15-12:30	Coffee Break

12:30-14:30	<p style="text-align: center;">Session Two</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Narrators and Historians</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Alanoud Abdulla Al-Khalifa</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mustafa Aqeel: Historians in Qatar: From Narrators to Pioneers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saleh Abdullah Al Khulaifi: Uthman Ibn Sanad: Historian of the Birth of the Arab Emirate on the Gulf Coast</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Khalid bin Ghanim Al-Maadheed: Collective Memory and its Role in Creating Historical Writing in the Arabian Peninsula: Ibn Bishr as a Model</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Abdulrahman Al-Marri: The <i>Ghutra</i> Pinning Down the <i>Agal</i>: The Limits of Historical Writing about Qatar</p>
14:30-15:30	<p>Lunch Break</p>
15:30-16:45	<p style="text-align: center;">Session Three</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Issues and Intersections</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Ayat Hamdan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Hala Fattah: A Different Paradigm for Arab Gulf Studies</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Fahad Bishara: Writing in the Bazar: The Micro, the Macro, and the Ocean in Gulf History</p>
16:45-17:00	<p>Closing Remarks</p>

Wednesday, 6 December 2023

17:30-19:00	<p style="text-align: center;">Public Lecture (ACRPS lecture hall)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Haider Saeed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Saad Albazei: Humanities in the Gulf: An Institutional Crisis</p>
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- Timing of sessions based on Doha local time (GMT +3)

Participants

Abstracts



Abdul Aziz bin Othman bin Saqr

Head of the Gulf Research Center. He received a PhD in International Relations from Lancaster University, UK on "Gulf Security: Dynamics and Political Perceptions 1968-2003: A Comparative Study of the GCC States" and an MA in International Relations from the University of Kent, UK on "External Factors Affecting the Security and Stability of the Gulf Region". He has served as visiting professor at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy (2011) and at Osaka University, Japan (2013). He has lectured at various universities and military and civilian academies.

Cornerstones of Gulf-China Relations

This paper discusses the most important political, economic, security, military, and even scientific and technical pillars of Gulf-China relations. It will explore factors related to the coordination of political positions on regional issues, as well as China's role in mediation between Saudi Arabia and Iran and how it can be operationalized to promote stability in the Gulf region. It will also cover joint cooperation on political crises in Yemen, Sudan, Syria, Libya, and Iraq as well as bilateral initiatives to end the Russo-Ukrainian War. In terms of economics, the paper discusses joint and mutual investments with focus on the future of collaboration in environmental protection. In terms of security, it addresses cooperation on safeguarding international and regional maritime routes, straits, and international waters. In terms of military, the paper considers horizons for joint defence agreements. It concludes by addressing scientific and technical cooperation.



Abdulaziz Hamad Aluwaisheg

Assistant Secretary-General for GCC Political Affairs and Negotiations since 2011, coordinating the GCC's positions on regional and international issues, overseeing regional security, and managing cooperation, partnership, and economic negotiations with other entities. Before joining the GCC in 1999, he worked for the UN in New York and held various positions in Saudi Arabian government institutions. Aluwaisheg studied Economics in New York University, Law in Columbia University, and Political Economy in the New School University. He also interned at the Negotiation Institute of Harvard Law School and worked as a visiting professor at several Gulf and US universities. Besides his scholarly work, he contributes a weekly column to *Arab News*.

Gulf-Chinese Relations and Their Prospects for Development

This paper explores the evolving partnership between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and China. It centres around a pivotal shift marked by the first China-GCC Summit in Riyadh in December 2022. This summit resulted in the formal establishment of a strategic partnership between the two entities, following years of regular strategic dialogue initiated in May 2010. The paper posits that this transformative development signifies an expansion in the scope of cooperation, now encompassing security and strategic issues, along with a deepened political dialogue and coordination between the GCC and China. To this end, the paper offers a concise overview of the dimensions of this strategic partnership, outlining the opportunities it presents for both parties and addressing potential challenges that may arise during its implementation.



Abdullah Abu Loz

Researcher in Social Anthropology and an entrepreneur. He holds a Master's degree in Social Anthropology and a Bachelor's degree in Power Engineering and Electrical Machines from Yarmouk University in Irbid, Jordan. He has taken part in a range of cultural initiatives to build cognitive and cultural capacities among Jordanian youth. In addition to working as a freelance researcher, writer, and translator, he has published many articles and translations on well-known Arabic online platforms. His research interests focus on identity formation and its intersection with social, political, and economic contexts, representations of queer theory and their intersection with Islam and Muslim societies, academic freedom in the post-colonial era, and the impact of globalization and neoliberal economic policies on academia in the Arab region.

Vision 2030: The Policy of Secularization and the Building of a New Saudi Citizen

This paper presents a comprehensive theoretical framework for understanding Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, an ambitious initiative aimed at societal transformation. Drawing on key political science works, the paper discusses the role of elites in shaping mega plans and utopian social engineering projects, while exploring the influence of global capitalism on creating more uniform societies. The paper highlights the vital role of individual leadership, with a focus on Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in driving the Vision's implementation. The paper also discusses the concept of social engineering and its effects on cultural change, emphasizing the interaction among these factors and their implications for Saudi society within its sociopolitical context.



Abdulrahman Al-Marri

Research Assistant at the Ibn Khaldon Center for Humanities & Social Sciences at Qatar University. His research focuses on culture, society, and politics in the Arabian Gulf.

The Cultural Horizon Fused: On the Inadequacy of the Shared Space Between the Individual and the Cultural Institution in Qatar

Cultural production in Qatar is characterized by a strict hierarchy, a necessity in any sovereign institution. In a cultural institution, however, this characterization raises questions, especially when it comes to situating and evaluating the Qatari cultural landscape. The channels that transmit the ideas, values, and preferences of ruling politics, such as the media, schools, universities, and mosques – which Louis Althusser calls "the ideological apparatuses of the state" – are articulations of governance no less important than state institutions, such as the army, security, and police. Consequently, the state surveils their discourse, which reflects its standing in the public space. However, these channels have been afflicted by a kind of stagnation which disregards the necessities of phased development. Among other issues, this study identifies the paucity of Qatari literary and intellectual production as one of many cultural problems requiring resolution. The paper proceeds from the following hypotheses: (1) that there has been a contraction in the natural space between the individual citizen and the state institution in circles of cultural activity; (2) that internal interaction has been subject to the demands and constraints of external shifts, as no attempts have been made to establish a balanced equation specific to local/national cultural and intellectual activity. Furthermore, it seeks to diagnose the Qatari cultural situation through a historical analysis of the cultural institution's role in creating space for cultural expression; identify the individual's place in this institution and his/her share therein; and ascertain the extent to which the cultural institution reflects the cultural components of the social sphere and the challenges it faces in this connection.



Abdullah Alshayji

Professor of International Relations at Kuwait University. He received a PhD in Political Science from the University of Texas, Austin. Former chair of the Department of Political Science at Kuwait University. He has published several books and peer-reviewed journal articles, including *The GCC Crises: Roots, Causes, Mediation, and Future Scenarios, 2011-2018* (2008); "The Evolution of the Principles of US Presidents, 1789-1992: From George Washington to George Bush" (2019); and "The Evolution of the Principles of US Presidents from the End of the Cold War to the War on Terror" (2022).

Gulf States' Relations with China and the United States: A Tenuous Balance

The GCC states have to manage a difficult balancing act in its their ties with great powers. With the waning role of the US alongside the rise of China, beginning in a region of US influence – through a quarter century deal worth USD 400 billion with Iran in 2021 – and the success of Beijing's mediation between Riyadh and Tehran, ending a seven-year long rift in relations and a cold war in the Middle East from 2010 to 2020, China's role in the Middle East has taken root, but within limits that cannot be exceeded in being the GCC's primary commercial and economic partner. Meanwhile, the role and presence of Russia remain narrow in the Gulf region, which has entered a strategic alliance with China to combat US-Western influence seeking to leave its mark on a multipolar global order. Russia, embroiled in the Ukraine War and beset by Western sanctions, is not expected to have any ability to play a role in Gulf security. This paper discusses the GCC states' options and difficult balances in ties with Washington, a traditional security ally, and Beijing, the top trading partner. At the 2023 G20 Summit, the United States, India, and several European countries proposed the economic corridor project that would link India to Europe via the Middle East, pass through the UAE and Saudi Arabia, include Israel in the region, and strengthen India's position against China. All of this comes in the context of a US-Western response to China's worldwide One Belt, One Road initiative, seeking to curb Chinese expansion and influence. Hence, the Gulf states find themselves caught in the crossfire of Washington and Beijing.



Abdullah Baabood

Omani academic and researcher. Baabood holds the chair of the state of Qatar for Islamic Area Studies at Waseda University, Tokyo. He has previously served as director of the Gulf Studies Center at Qatar University and as director of the University of Cambridge Gulf Research Centre. He holds a PhD in International Political Economy from the same university and master's degrees in business administration and International Relations. Baabood's research interests include International Relations and International Political Economy, especially Gulf issues, economic, social, and political developments in the GCC states, and their foreign relations. He has taught and conducted research at several universities and institutes in Europe and has published books, articles, and research papers in his field.

The Expanding Relations between Gulf States and China

After a hesitant start, relations between China and the GCC states have evolved over past decades into a profound economic partnership based on commerce, energy trade, investment, and technical cooperation, bolstered by the Belt and Road initiative China launched in 2013. This paper argues that the joint plan of action (2023-2027) has served to deepen bilateral cooperation on economic, political, and cultural issues. Trade reached a landmark volume of USD 228.9 billion in 2021, a significant increase compared to USD 148.2 billion in 2020, which has strengthened their strategic partnership taken advantage of the Belt and Road initiative through economic diversification efforts for Gulf states. The paper argues that China has also become a major investor of around USD 25 billion over the past 17 years, pointing out that trade and investment figures between the two are expected to increase in the coming years. It argues that the GCC states' relations with China have transcended the commercial exchange stage and expanded into broader fields, given that China has become an important player in strategic sectors such as arms supplies and military-industrial cooperation. The paper focuses on the fact that, in addition to gradually expanding economic ties centred on China's energy needs, the broadening of relations with non-American partners has helped diversify the GCC states' network of global ties and, hence, decrease their dependence on the United States. The paper concludes that these relations are likely to pose a challenge to long-term relations between the US and the GCC and to serve as a laboratory for this bilateral partnership.



Aftab Alam

Currently affiliated with the Department of Political Science at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan, Pakistan, where he has been a pivotal force in fostering academic excellence and research in the realm of politics and International Relations. Alam also serves as a visiting researcher at the Department of Political Science at Ludwig Maximilian University (LMU) in Munich, Germany.

China-GCC Ties: Evolving Challenges and Dynamics for Pakistan

This paper argues that China's expansion of economic and diplomatic ties with the GCC states has had significant repercussions for Pakistan, a long-time Chinese ally. It discusses the impact of China-GCC relations on Pakistan through three dimensions: economic, geostrategic, and diplomatic. The economic dimension encompasses prospects for increasing trade volume, infrastructure development projects, and cooperation in the energy sector, especially oil imports. The study also explores the impact of China-GCC relations on regional security and stability as a potential counterbalance to the influence of other powers in the region, discussing this dimension through case studies like China's Belt and Road Initiative and its implications for Pakistan and the GCC, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its role in regional connectivity. It argues that these relations have had major consequences, with increased trade and investment opportunities leading to enhanced economic growth and development in Pakistan. In terms of geostrategic implications, the study highlights China-GCC ties bolstering regional stability. Diplomatically, the research underscores Pakistan's elevated diplomatic standing, particularly in the Muslim world, because of the close relations between China and the GCC.

Alanoud Abdulla Al-Khalifa

Researcher in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. She holds a PhD in Gulf Studies from Qatar University. In 2023, she was honoured as one of the distinguished researchers at Qatar University in recognition of her academic achievements and research contributions. Her research aims to clarify the vital role played by museums in creating and shaping narratives related to national identity and belonging in Gulf societies, examine shifts related to national identities and the new contexts that affect them at the local, regional and international levels, and explore political and economic issues in the region and their impact on the societal environment.

Heritage and Global Expansion: Qatar National Museum's Discourse on Promoting Contemporary Qatari Identity

The speech delivered by Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, during the inauguration of the Qatar National Museum (QNM) in March 2019 highlighted a fresh perspective on the role of the national museum, not merely as a repository for historical artifacts, but as an interactive institution poised for transformation. Museums are living entities that adapt over time. Hence, there is a need to explore QNM's evolving role as a pivotal component in reimagining traditions and cultivating a distinct identity within the Qatari context. Through its depiction of the nation's historical journey, aspirations and ambitions, the museum has become a symbol of Qatar's contemporary essence. Moreover, as a source of soft power, the museum catalyses shifts in policies, economics, and society, emerging as a pivotal contributor to Qatar's progress. But how has QNM reflected the sustainability of heritage in light of Qatar's rapid expansion on the global stage? Approaching QNM as a case study, this paper examines this question, seeking to determine the extent to which heritage is embodied in contemporary Qatari identity. The study discusses the ways in which QNM's discourse addresses the challenge of heritage sustainability amid Qatar's rapid expansion on the global plain. And lastly, the study seeks to identify the tools and methods used at QNM to integrate elements of heritage seamlessly into contemporary life, as well as the narrative promoted by the State of Qatar through the museum as a platform embodying national ideology and imagined identity.



Alanoud Alsabah

Kuwaiti researcher specialized in Chinese affairs. She earned a PhD writing on the history of Kuwaiti-Chinese relations, 1961-1990 from Pompeu Fabra University in Barcelona, Spain, as well as an MA in Chinese studies from the same university. She has experience in the field of International Relations (2007-2013) and has taken part in many courses and conferences on women's empowerment, security, defence, and International Relations.

Cultural Relations between China and Kuwait

This research paper sheds light on the continuity of bilateral relations between China and Kuwait in the cultural sphere – women's issues, medicine, sports, religion, education, and the arts – as a continuation of the author's doctoral thesis research on the history of China-Kuwait relations (1961-1990). The study begins with the assertion that both governments have wished to show that women are an important part of society, and that the relationship between women in these two countries could serve as a useful bridge between the two societies. It argues that this cooperation has contributed to strengthening community ties by giving both societies the opportunity to interact and exchange information through social, cultural, and other activities, and that cultural ties are a critical component of bilateral relations. China has used its medical staff to curry favour with Kuwaiti society and since 1990 has sent coaches for various sports. Chinese involvement in art, music, and education has helped Kuwaiti society get to know China and better understand its society. Moreover, in China athletics are thought of as a key tool of political and cultural diplomacy. This also applies to Kuwait, which has used athletic platforms to articulate support for the Arab cause and the One China policy. The study concludes that culture has been the third most important field of cooperation, following politics and the economy, at least from 1961 to 1990. In terms of religion, the study argues that China has turned to its Muslim community in order to connect with the Middle East. Islam or religion in general, then, have played a role in China's policy on the region. The study hence investigates whether cultural relations have experienced continuity or transformation.



Asaad Saleh Al-Shamlan

Professor of Political Science and head of the European Studies Centre at the Prince Saud Al Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies. PhD and MA in Political Science on – political analysis from University of Exeter, UK. He is a member of the International Political Science Association (IPSA). Al-Shamlan has many publications on Saudi-US relations and the study of political discourse, including "From Ideology to Discourse: A Study of the Post-Structural Approach to the Concept of Political Discourse" (2020).

Gulf-China Relations in Light of US-China Competition: Opportunities and Challenges

This paper identifies the opportunities and challenges related to the consequences of Sino-American competition for Gulf-China relations. It begins by noting that some of the broad contours of this competition have been forecasted since the 1990s and theoretically formulated as a post-Cold War characteristic, highlighting the predictability of the standoff between Washington and Beijing in its present form. This can be inferred from early official documents such as the US "National Security Strategy", which since the turn of the millennium has framed China as a strategic competitor and a true adversary in the long term. The paper argues that the rapid deterioration of China-US relations in recent years and the intensification of the diplomatic and economic standoff and security concerns have together presented a perplexing surprise to observers of international politics. They have raised the pressing need for strategic assessments on the matter in all world regions, especially those like the Gulf that have strong security, political, and economic ties with the US as well as significant, growing economic, commercial, and political partnerships with China. Hence, this is an indispensable relationship at present and in the foreseeable future. The paper concludes that in light of intensifying competition in US-China relations, it has come to represent a challenge that few countries can ignore – especially those with close ties to both regions such as the GCC – while also offering potential opportunities.



Brahim Boulfefel

Associate Professor of Sociology in the Department of Social Sciences at Qatar University. He holds a PhD in the Sociology of Organization and Work from the University of Algiers (2010), and a master's degree in the same discipline from the same university (2001). He was as an associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the Université de Jijel - Mohammed Seddik Benyahia (2008-2020), and an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Skikda in Algeria (2002-2008). He headed a research project on Khula in contemporary Algerian society at the Université de Jijel - Mohammed Seddik Benyahia (2016-2019). His publications include: "Family Disintegration and its Relationship to Suicidal Behaviour" (*Mafāhim lil-Dirāsa al-Falsafiyya wa-l-Insāniyya al-Mu'ammaqa*, 2018); "Social Marginalization and its Relationship to the Increased Tendency Toward Suicidal Behaviour among Algerian Youth: A Field Study" (*Madarat Ijtima'iya*, 2018).

Management of the Legislative and Policy-Making Structure in Qatar: The Challenges of Cultural Diversity and Globalization

This paper explores the question of how Qatar governs the cultural affairs despite facing many challenges. To address this question, the paper relies on the literature on social transformations in the Arab Gulf states, particularly the writings on identity, tribe, and development, as well as available resources, and evidence and data available at various related governmental bodies. The paper is based on the premise that Qatar, in response to the requirements of development driven by the oil boom, has been a major migration destination for decades now. This has assigned the country significant cultural challenges that have had profound impacts on its national identity, such as imbalanced demographics, cultural diversity, the decline of Arabic's status, and balance between globalization and its subsequent cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and adherence to authenticity on the other. While decision makers are fully aware of how serious the implications are, Qatar has worked to adopt adaptive policies. The paper utilizes a qualitative approach to analyse the policies adopted to confront these challenges, including strategies, plans, programmes, legislation, and guidelines, and present the institutions concerned with methods to formulate and implement these policies.



Degang Sun

Political Science Professor at Fudan University in Shanghai and Director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies. Sun is Vice President of the Chinese Association for Middle East Studies and has held visiting scholar positions at Harvard University, the University of Oxford, the University of Denver, and the University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on Middle East politics, International Relations, great power strategies in the Middle East, and China's regional diplomacy.

China's Policy towards Gulf Security: Hedging Strategy

Current scholarly and policy research highlights that the strategy of hedging is usually applied by small powers in face of great power politics. This article argues that the strategy can be implemented by great powers in face of conflicts among lesser powers as well. The hidden logic of Beijing's hedging strategy is seeking a zero-enemy policy in the Persian Gulf by building a network of partnerships in order to dilute the US military alliance system. The author identifies five pathways that have defined China's hedging strategy to respond to the Gulf security environment. First, Beijing tries to avoid a cold war with the US in the Gulf by cooperating with the US on selected issues to rebuild mutual trust. Second, China's multilateral efforts at resolving conflicts in the Gulf offers a sharp contrast to US hegemonism; the former has attempted to contribute to resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, the Yemeni conflict resolution, the sectarian disputes in Iraq, and terrorism. Third, Beijing encourages the Gulf countries to apply a balanced policy lest they choose sides between China and the US: to maintain security partnerships with the US while maintaining political and economic partnerships with China. Fourth, China proposes collective security for "a Community of Shared Future for Mankind" raised in 2012 by the work report of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China and is against the US-led collective defence practice which is criticized as the cause of the security dilemma. Fifth, China seeks pragmatic cooperation with all the Gulf countries and is against the US politicization of Beijing's high-tech cooperation with the Arab countries (including 5G, nuclear power plants, solar energy, and drones) and energy and defence cooperation with Iran, as the model of South-South cooperation. China's hedging strategy has so far successfully de-linked the global cold war (US-China and US-Russia rivalry) with the Gulf cold war (Saudi-Iranian confrontation), and has avoided the US-led Middle Eastern strategic alliance targeting China.



Dhafer Al-Ajmi

Executive Director of the Gulf Monitoring Group and Adjunct Professor at Kuwait University. Retired Staff Colonel, Kuwait Air Force. He has published many books and peer-reviewed journal articles in Arabic, including *Arab Gulf Security: Its Development and Problems from the Perspective of Regional and International Relations* (2011); *The History of the Kuwait Army* (2004, 2011); and *The Kuwait Army in the Age of Mubarak Al-Sabah, 1896-1915* (2009).

China-Gulf Security Relations: Incentives and Challenges

In China as well as the Gulf, there is interest in strengthening comprehensive strategic partnerships on economic, political, and security issues. This paper will consider security aspects in particular and trace the motivations within this relationship, most importantly the strategic security gap that the United States will create through its strategic reorientation toward the East and withdrawal from Afghanistan. Moreover, the Gulf states have an array of other strategic options by which to escape the Western bubble by joining Shanghai and BRICS. There are other incentives associated with maritime security, a critical issue for the Arab Gulf given the importance of the Strait of Hormuz and oil and gas shipments. On the other hand, the paper sheds light on the likely challenges stemming from the complexity of the Gulf's liberation from various military structures to maintain peace in the region, to say nothing of the relative insufficiency of Chinese military power compared to its Western counterpart. This has weighed on the minds of Gulf decision makers – that China is the key to the region's economic future – even amid ongoing reliance on the US and other Western powers in matters of security and defence. In most cases, China also seeks to avoid direct involvement in conflict zones or unnecessary long-term commitments. It is worth noting as well that China is working to achieve a precise balance in its relations with Iran and the Gulf states, with an awareness of the magnitude of the conflict and rivalry between the two. The paper argues that China-Gulf security ties, as well as their emphasis on security and defence cooperation, have experienced marked development in recent years, but that the incentives do not outweigh the obstacles to be overcome.



Emad Kaddorah

Researcher and Head of the ACRPS Editing Department. He holds a PhD in International Relations and Middle East Studies and MA in Defence and Strategic Studies. Kaddorah served as Researcher and Senior Editor at the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (1998-2012) and has published five books, including *The Rise of the GCC States and Turkey: Convergent and Divergent Regional Agendas* (Newcastle, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2021); *Turkish Foreign Policy: Orientations, Flexible Alliances, Power Politics* (2021), in addition to several peer-reviewed articles, including "The Geopolitical Significance of the Gulf in India's Strategy" (May 2020) and "External Initiatives for Regional Security in the Gulf" (March 2021).

The Position of the Gulf States in the Belt and Road Initiative

This paper proceeds from the fact that the geography, resources, and capabilities of states are very important within China's global strategy, arguing that although the Arab Gulf is strategically located and of economic importance to China, the Gulf states did not fall along the original routes demarcated by the Belt and Road initiative roadmap. Nevertheless, both China and these states have begun to engage with the initiative and its projects by signing strategic partnerships, and to enmesh these projects with perspectives on national development in the Gulf, as well as with some ports and industrial cities. This has unsettled the United States and its allies, some of whom have begun to view this expansion as a serious challenge. As a result, there has been an attempt to impede the initiative's projects through debt-trap propaganda, geopolitical alliances, and putting forth alternative economic proposals. This study argues that the Gulf is of great concern to China and the requirements of the Belt and Road initiative, identifying where the Arab Gulf states are located on the initiative map and illustrating the way in which each state has gradually become involved in associated projects. It considers Western mechanisms and alternative projects in response to respond to and impede the initiative and the degree to which these mechanisms may apply to the Gulf states. The paper presents deductive observations as to China's likely approach in the event that the initiative is obstructed and its interests undermined. Will it modify its foreign strategy – and will this impact the Gulf?



Gangzheng She

Associate Professor in the Department of International Relations and Director of the Center for External Security at Tsinghua University in Beijing, where he teaches courses on war and development in the Middle East, conflict resolution, and contemporary history of International Relations at both undergraduate and graduate levels. Specializing in the Middle East since the Cold War era, She's focus centres on the involvement of China and other great powers in the region. His research has been published in esteemed academic journals and by influential think tanks, including the Atlantic Council and the Italian Institute for International Political Studies.

Sino-GCC Relations under the Developing Multidimensional BRI

The convening of the two unprecedented China-Arab States and China-GCC summits in Riyadh, together with the landmark agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran inked in Beijing in March 2023, is a clear message that China has (economically and politically) shifted focus on the Arab world from countries around the Mediterranean to those in the Gulf region. China has increasingly demonstrated its status as an almost irreplaceable partner in diversification and development strategies of the GCC countries. Moreover, from missiles to military drones, China has further expanded the content and "connotation" of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and successfully continued to provide special security solutions for regional countries. On the other hand, it is due to the Gulf countries' growing tendency of hedging strategy in their foreign policy amid the return of great power competition that Beijing finds it a valuable case to advertise the economic profitability and geopolitical gains of its BRI. While the evolving Sino-US tensions as well as disputes and conflicts of interest within the GCC might bring challenges to the further development and implementation of BRI as well as China's relations with the regional actors, the Gulf countries as representatives of a new type of "intermediate zone" are likely to reject the "ideologization" of International Relations and cooperate with every major power on different issues. Their strategic hedging is expected to become a powerful pillar to resist the competition of great powers to return to a full-scale Cold War that the world witnessed in the second half of 20th century.



Hade Mashaan Rabe

Dean of the Faculty of Law and Political Science at the University of Anbar. He holds a PhD in Political Thought and MA in Political Science from Baghdad University. Former member of faculty at Attahadi University in Libya, where he chaired the Department of Political Science. Rabe has published many articles on political regimes, political pluralism, and democracy and sectarianism in Iraq, in addition to participating in several local and international conferences.

The Future of Iraqi-Chinese Economic Relations

Since the 1950s, Iraqi-Chinese economic relations have witnessed a growing development despite the obstacles they were facing, especially after the events that took place in the Arab Gulf in 1990, the international isolation and economic blockade of Iraq, then post-2003 developments resulting from the occupation, US influence on the country, chaos and instability, and the accompanying imbalance in economic activity. This paper argues that in recent years these relations have seen Chinese interest in Iraq, whether by increasing the actual presence of Chinese companies and labour in the Iraqi market or by increasing the volume and type of trade exchange. On the other hand, there is desire in Iraq to strengthen these ties in spite of international pressure. The paper aims to answer the question of how Iraq-China economic relations have persisted despite unrest geopolitically and locally in Iraq, and whether they will encounter a new crossroads in the future. It concludes that despite numerous obstacles, these relations will see an increase in dependency and mutual commitment in line with increasing commercial exchange and reliance on oil and oil revenues.



Hae Won Jeong

Assistant Professor of Strategic Studies at the National Defense College in the United Arab Emirates, and in the International Relations Program within the Academic Programs Project for Military Colleges at Abu Dhabi University. Her research interests include foreign policy analysis, diplomatic studies, Middle East-Asia relations, and Gulf studies. She has a number of publications on resource diplomacy, social, cultural, and economic development in rentier states, public diplomacy, and multi-track diplomacy, including: "South Korea's Middle Power Diplomacy in the Middle East: Development and Political and Diplomatic Pathways" (2022).

Cultural Production and Nation-Branding in the Digital Age: Science, Technology, and Innovation in the United Arab Emirates

Cultural production has been an integral expression of nation-building for the young nation-states in the Arab Gulf. In modern Gulf states, the roots of Arab and Islamic identity are enshrined in constitutions, and national museums are sites for cultural representation and national identity formation. The emphasis on the cultural authenticity of the Gulf states reflects the prevailing view that indigenous cultural heritage production is in competition with the cultural production that emanates from external forces of globalization. Departing from the conventional emphasis on the inward-looking projections of indigenous cultural and national identity formation in the Gulf states, this research contributes to the literature on public diplomacy and nation branding by advocating for the broadening of identity formation and representation through the lens of cultural production in museums. The study sheds light on innovation and the construction of futuristic trends as nation-branding strategies at the intersection of science, technology, and cultural policies by using the museums in the UAE as a case study.



Jassem Hassan Al Ghaith

Associate Professor of Drama, Criticism, and Theatrical Literature at the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts in Kuwait. He holds a PhD in Literary Criticism and Contemporary Theater. His publications include: "Manifestations of the Symbols of Arab Gulf Heritage in Contemporary Qatari Theater: A Study of the Play 'An Evening to Die'" (*Majallat Ansaq*, 2018), and "Acculturation in Contemporary Kuwaiti Theater: Shakespeare as a Model" (*Majallat Dirasat al-Khalij wa-l-Jazira al- 'Arabiyya*, 2018).

Arab Gulf States' Cultural Policies in the Face of Globalization: Acculturation and the Cognitive Hybridity of the Approved Culture Project

This study deals with interculturalism and cognitive (epistemological) hybridity, which are among the most significant and notable shifts being witnessed by Gulf culture. This occurs simultaneously with the visions of official institutions, which are formulating, crystallizing, and consolidating an approved culture that guarantees its loyalty and secures its presence in the memory and awareness of Gulf people. The study also addresses the extent to which cultural symbols can manifest and maintain their enduring attraction, and preserve their cultural incubators that provide Gulf societies with values inspired by the postulates and constants of Arab and Islamic history, thereby enabling them to exercise their role in protecting Gulf cultural identity from extinction and decay in the face of the illusion of Western-centered modernity. The paper raises several questions about the nature of Gulf culture: What are the challenges to its future survival in light of the waves of acculturation, hybridization, and displacement through word, image, movement, icon, symbol, and cultural paradigm (globalization), and the transformation of Gulf cities into global capitals? The paper also focuses on the mechanisms of Gulf culture and their applied aspect, of which the theatrical cultural project serves as a model.



Jonathan Fulton

Assistant Professor of Political Science at Zayed University in Abu Dhabi, UAE, and a Non-resident Senior Fellow at the Atlantic Council, Fulton specializes in teaching and researching China-Gulf Arab relations, International Relations of the Gulf Arab states, and International Relations in East Asia. He has contributed significantly to the field and published the *Routledge Handbook on China-Middle East Relations* in 2021.

Relations between the Gulf States and China

The December 2022 summits between China and Saudi Arabia, the GCC, and the broader Arab world brought increased attention to the deepening levels of engagement between China and the Middle East. President Raisi's trip to Beijing two months later, followed by the China-facilitated Saudi-Iran rapprochement made this even more explicit. With Iran formally joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in July 2023 and Saudi, the UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait becoming dialogue partners, the relationships between China and Gulf states are clearly on the rise. For Gulf states this presents both opportunities and challenges. China's economic presence supports Gulf countries across several important sectors – energy, investment, infrastructure construction, finance, and technology – which in turn contributes to efforts to build sustainable economies. At the same time, the relative unfamiliarity with China among Gulf publics and officials is an issue. Few people in the region formally study China and have little direct experience in the country. Another challenge is the fact that many of the Gulf's most important partners and allies have difficult, and sometimes hostile, relationships with China. The US is the obvious example, but the United Kingdom and European Union have also had problematic relations with China in recent years. Asian countries with deep economic relations in the Gulf such as India, Japan and South Korea have also had negative recent experiences in dealing with Beijing. This has the potential to further complicate the strategic landscape for Gulf countries. In this talk I will discuss the tensions inherent in growing Gulf-China relations. How can Gulf countries balance economic opportunities with Beijing against geopolitical challenges between China and many of the Gulf's most important partners?



Kadhim Hashim Niama

Professor of Strategy and Political Science at Baghdad University. He previously served as Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of International Studies, Head of the Center for International Studies at the University of Baghdad, Strategic and Regional Studies at Al-Bakr University in Libya. He holds an MA and PhD from the University of Wales School of International Politics and Strategy, Aberystwyth. He has published many books and studies on International Relations.

Continuity and Change in China's Policy on the Arab Gulf States: The Role of the US

This paper takes to task the issue of American influence on the development of China-Gulf relations by approaching the dynamism of tripartite US-China-Arab Gulf relations. It argues there are two forms thereof: US-China-GCC ties, and US-China-Gulf state ties. Given that it is not possible to determine the GCC's executive strategy, policies, mechanisms, or operational tracks, the paper considers the problem of a triad containing major Arab Gulf power Saudi Arabia, along with the UAE as required by the issue. Thus, the concept of continuity and change in developments is addressed on the basis that "continuity through change" has characterized tripartite relations, not continuity "or" change. The paper offers a discussion of this development across stages of strategic change, especially after the Cold War; here, the nature of China-Gulf relations must be determined through a study of each party's objectives, means, and strategies. The paper seeks to characterize restrictions, their efficacy, and their consequences for each leg of the triad, as well as these parties' options to respond positively or negatively. Hence, it addresses the political, economic, and security aspects of the restrictions. The paper concludes that change does not preclude continuity; change is rather the objective, the means, and the strategy within continuity.



Kazuto Matsuda

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Japan, China, and the GCC States: Discussing the Triparty Political Dynamics in the Gulf

In light of the US-China bipolarity in international politics, GCC states' recent pivot to Asia and China's increasing economic and diplomatic presence in the Gulf, China-Gulf relations have attracted scholarly and policy discussions. However, the overconcentration on China-Gulf relations sometimes overlooks the existence of intra-East Asian rivalry in the Gulf that is increasingly at play, albeit not always visible. Such rivalry includes China-Japan competition for more presence and influence in the Gulf. Hence, a study that situates China-Gulf relations in a broader regional context and discusses the strategic positionality of Japan and China for GCC states' policymakers is of increasing academic and policy importance to grasp a more complete picture of the deepening East Asia-Gulf nexus. Hence, this study aims to empirically elucidate the growing China-Japan rivalry in the Gulf and discusses distinct strategic positionalities of the two countries in the eyes of the GCC policymakers. It argues that, in the Gulf, the rivalry for more presence and influence does exist between China and Japan. It also argues that while China may be an attractive partner in the economic sphere, Japan can be a more attractive and politically neutral partner for the GCC states, given that deeper relations with Japan carry less political agendas and risks vis-à-vis the US-China bipolarity.



Kerry Brown

Professor of Chinese Studies and Director of the Lao China Institute at King's College London. Brown is an Associate member of the Asia Pacific Programme at Chatham House in London, an adjunct at the Australia and New Zealand School of Government in Melbourne, and an Associate Editor of the *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*. He serves as the President of the Kent Archaeological Society and is an Associate member of the Mongolia and Inner Asia Studies Unit at the University of Cambridge. He was previously a Professor of Chinese Politics and Director of the Centre for Chinese Studies at the University of Sydney, Australia. He earned a PhD in Politics and Chinese from the University of Leeds, a Master of Arts from the University of Cambridge, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Mandarin Chinese from Thames Valley University in London. He directed the European-Chinese Research and Advice Network and has authored numerous books on Chinese politics.

Global China in the Third Term of Xi: China's Relations with the Gulf States

Since being appointed for a third term as party leader in China, Xi Jinping is now in his second decade in charge of China. His first period was dominated by a more assertive, communicative approach to global affairs, with initiatives like the Belt and Road. In his second period, from 2017, relations with the US and then the impact of the pandemic from 2020 meant that China's global role grew more contested. It was challenged by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, and then by its own economic issues as it emerged from COVID 19. As a result of these changes, China in 2023 still struggles with how to define its global role in ways that balance its interests with the US, its desires in its own region, and the relationships it has with other powers. Of these, those in the Gulf states are amongst the most important, because they offer key investment, energy, and trading opportunities, but also give China space to use a new kind of diplomatic language. Its proposal in early 2023 for a peace plan between Iran and Saudi Arabia was the first of several – one for Russia and Ukraine followed afterwards. While using highly generic language, these display an awareness by China that it needs to adopt a more prominent role, but that it still works under the strong scrutiny of the US and its alliance system. This presentation will look at the ways in which China's economic interests in the Gulf States offer lessons for how its new diplomacy with great proactivity are likely to unfold in the years ahead.



Khaled AlKhalidi

Kuwaiti writer and researcher. He holds a master's degree in Political Science from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (2023), and a Bachelor's degree from the College of Islamic Studies at Kuwait University. His research interests include Kuwaiti foreign relations, the history of the political movement in Kuwait, Kuwaiti social and political phenomena, and issues relating to the Kuwaiti parliament. He published "Three from the North" (2017).

Cultural Institutions in Kuwait: From Rise to Fall

The cultural renaissance that Kuwait witnessed between the pre-independence period and the Iraqi invasion in 1990 presented a successful model of the proper use of oil wealth to build cultural institutions and attract Arab intellectuals. In this way, culture proved to be a tool of soft power in regional and international diplomacy that helped to establish a name for the country and politically promote it. This paper investigates the emergence and rise of cultural institutions in Kuwait, noting that the existence of successful cultural institutions played an important role in enhancing Kuwait's soft power at the regional level. It then examines the factors that led to Kuwait's success in building these institutions, which became a model that was later emulated by other Gulf states. The paper then examines the reasons for the fall of these institutions and the significant decline in the cultural scene in Kuwait beginning in 1990, a decline that continues to this day, concluding that the same factors that led to the rise of cultural institutions in Kuwait also led to their downfall. The paper employs process tracing to analyze the state of cultural institutions in Kuwait in their rise and decline, using primary sources featuring the pioneers of Kuwait's cultural experiment, including Ahmed Zaki Akef, the Egyptian founder of al-ʿArabī magazine; Ahmed al-Adwani, the first Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters; Fouad Zakariya, advisor and cofounder of the Ālam al-Maʿrifa [World of Knowledge] series; and Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, who was Head of the Publications and Publishing Department in the year that al-ʿArabī magazine first came out, among others. The study is also based on a number of studies on Kuwaiti cultural institutions and their varied historical aspects.



Lehbib Bellia

Assistant Professor on the Policy, Planning, and Development Program of the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University. He holds a PhD and a master's degree in Political Science and International Relations from the University of Algiers 3. He has participated in several academic conferences and is a member of multiple research projects. Some of his publications include: "The Algerian Approach to Quality Assurance of Higher Education Institutions" (2021); "Total Quality Management: Concept, Fundamentals, Application Conditions" (2019); and "The Function of Formation and Training in Human Resources Management: Public Administration in Algeria as a Model" (2018).

Management of the Legislative and Policy-Making Structure in Qatar: The Challenges of Cultural Diversity and Globalization

This paper explores the question of how Qatar governs the cultural affairs despite facing many challenges. To address this question, the paper relies on the literature on social transformations in the Arab Gulf states, particularly the writings on identity, tribe, and development, as well as available resources, and evidence and data available at various related governmental bodies. The paper is based on the premise that Qatar, in response to the requirements of development driven by the oil boom, has been a major migration destination for decades now. This has assigned the country significant cultural challenges that have had profound impacts on its national identity, such as imbalanced demographics, cultural diversity, the decline of Arabic's status, and balance between globalization and its subsequent cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and adherence to authenticity on the other. While decision makers are fully aware of how serious the implications are, Qatar has worked to adopt adaptive policies. The paper utilizes a qualitative approach to analyse the policies adopted to confront these challenges, including strategies, plans, programmes, legislation, and guidelines, and present the institutions concerned with methods to formulate and implement these policies.

Maryam Alhajri

Research and Teaching Assistant of Political Science and International Relations at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and PhD candidate in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom. She holds a master's degree in Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She is responsible for the Research and Awareness Committee of the Qatar Youth Against Normalization group.

"Gulf Culture" as a Tool of Hegemony: Toward a Compound Understanding of Cultural Pluralism in the Gulf

This paper explores the following question: What is meant by "Gulf culture"? In so doing, it first examines the cognitive load borne by the concept of "culture", drawing on sociological and anthropological literature that questions traditional approaches to ethnographic investigation, and specifically, beyond the moment of the "cultural turn". In this context, the paper addresses two endeavours: First, it re-examines the function of concepts and the ways in which they are used and exploring alternative strategies for writing about social realities uninfluenced by cultural interpretations. It then discusses the evolution and function of the concept of "culture/cultural" in the Gulf context. It traces the formation of the concept of "the Gulf" as a homogeneous political and cultural unit, a process which is inseparable from the Gulf's relationship to the British Empire and its colonial legacy in the region. It then examines the implications of this formation, rhetorically and materially, for the relationship between states in the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula on the one hand, and the societies located on their periphery, i.e., those societies that define the Gulf as what it is not. The paper concludes with two propositions. The first is that there is no such thing as a single "Gulf culture". Rather, there are "cultures" that inhabit the Gulf region and the Arabian Peninsula, and which intersect and differ with respect to the diverse historical/social realities that define the region. The second proposition is that the concept of "Gulf culture" has been used to serve and reproduce modernist/colonial hegemonic projects by conjuring fanciful notions about what is part of Gulf "culture" and what is "alien" to it, that is, who is entitled to belong politically and culturally to the project of the modern State in the Gulf, and who is to be excluded from it.



Mohamed Alyahyai

Omani journalist and novelist. He holds a PhD from Sultan Qaboos University in Muscat and a master's degree in Globalization and Communications from the University of Leicester, UK (2022). He works as a TV presenter for *Al-Araby*. He previously headed the cultural section of *Oman* newspaper and supervised the editing of its cultural supplement (1988-1999). Among other cultural initiatives, he helped launch the quarterly cultural magazine *Nizwa* in 1994, and was a member of the Board of Directors of the Omani Cultural Club (1995 -1999). He has published a number of books, including the fictional *War* (2022); *Marshall's Outing* (2016); and *White Birds, Black Birds* (2007). His academic works include *The System of Government in Oman: From Elected Imamate to Hereditary Sultanate* (2021).

State Management of Identity in its Cultural Dimension: The Case of Oman

This paper investigates the approach that has been taken by the Omani state to reformulate the national identity since 1970, the way it has managed the question of identity, the tools and symbols that have been employed, and how it has been able to formulate a national cultural identity that serves the state. When Sultan Qaboos bin Said (r. 1970-2020) assumed power in Oman, the state found itself confronted by what might be described as a "national identity crisis" both politically and culturally. A series of conflicts found some expression in Omani cultural production during the second half of the twentieth century, especially in historical records and juristic and poetic texts. This study assumes, contrary to what might be expected to occur in a case of fragmented identity, that the political dimensions of Oman's identity crisis enabled the emerging authority in 1970 to formulate a new national identity. What was needed at the time was a "unifying identity". However, the state's use of the Ibadi heritage, including its political aspect, was a decisive factor. The study adopts the descriptive analytical approach to the issues and references related to national identity found in the speeches of Sultan Qaboos, especially during the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the policies that were adopted with the aim of formulating a national identity under slogans such as "preserving customs and traditions" and "preserving and protecting the national heritage".



Mohamed bin Salim Al-Mashani

Professor of Linguistics at Sultan Qaboos University. He holds a PhD from the University of Manchester, UK and master's and bachelor's degrees from Sultan Qaboos University. He headed the Arabic Language Department at Sultan Qaboos University (2014-2019). His research interests focus on the linguistic dynamics of Oman, Yemen, and the regions of southern Arabia. He has published several academic texts, including, *Dimensions of Identity in the Contemporary Omani Poetic Text* (2017), and *Standard Arabic and the Linguistic Landscape in the Arabian Gulf* (2012).

The Cultural Formation of the Gulf Citizen: Between the Authority of State and Religion

Religion is an essential actor in the life of the Gulf citizen given its powerful influence on ideas, perceptions, values, behaviour, family and social relations, and the cultural formation of both individual and society. In view of culture's supreme importance in shaping individual and collective awareness, as well as the various values and national identity, the Gulf states have lent it significant attention and included it in their development plans and policies, believing in its importance in forming a sense of belonging and loyalty, building the state, unifying society, creating civil peace, and forming national identities. Arab Gulf states' interest in culture has increased with their growing numbers of foreign workers, who now outnumber citizens several times over (the exceptions being the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia), and the broad cultural impacts that have accompanied this phenomenon. Similarly, has prompted the Gulf countries to redouble their interest in culture and its affairs as a result of the perceptions, values, and tangible and intangible cultural products it has introduced. This study examines the sources and types of cultural formation in the Arab Gulf states, their cultural policies, cultural institutions and their roles, and the strengths and weaknesses of cultural formation policies and practices. More specifically, the study seeks to answer the following questions: What is meant by the cultural formation of the Gulf citizen? How does it take place? What are the roles of religion and the state in this formation? And what is the nature of the relationship between the authority of religion and the authority of the state?



Mohamed Reda Soltani

Professor of International Affairs in the Department of International Affairs at Qatar University. He holds a PhD in Science, specializing in Comparative Political Studies, from the University of Algiers 3 and the University of Leipzig, Germany. He is a member of a research project on hate speech and the culture of violence in cyberspace and its implications for national security, in addition to following up on a research project on cyber threats and its implications for societal security. He previously worked as a resident research assistant at the European International Studies Center in Germany. He has participated in several academic conferences, and his publications include: "The Nation State in the Arab Regional System: From the Unity Project to the Dilemma of Disintegration".

Management of the Legislative and Policy-Making Structure in Qatar: The Challenges of Cultural Diversity and Globalization

This paper explores the question of how Qatar governs the cultural affairs despite facing many challenges. To address this question, the paper relies on the literature on social transformations in the Arab Gulf states, particularly the writings on identity, tribe, and development, as well as available resources, and evidence and data available at various related governmental bodies. The paper is based on the premise that Qatar, in response to the requirements of development driven by the oil boom, has been a major migration destination for decades now. This has assigned the country significant cultural challenges that have had profound impacts on its national identity, such as imbalanced demographics, cultural diversity, the decline of Arabic's status, and balance between globalization and its subsequent cosmopolitanism on the one hand, and adherence to authenticity on the other. While decision makers are fully aware of how serious the implications are, Qatar has worked to adopt adaptive policies. The paper utilizes a qualitative approach to analyse the policies adopted to confront these challenges, including strategies, plans, programmes, legislation, and guidelines, and present the institutions concerned with methods to formulate and implement these policies.



Mohammad Al-Rumaihi

Professor of Political Sociology in the Department of Sociology and Social Work at Kuwait University. He has held several positions at the same university, the most recent of which was Director of the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (2016-2017). He has served as a consultant for the 'Alam al-Ma'rifa book series issued by the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters in Kuwait, and as editor-in-chief of *al-'Arabī* magazine, and a number of daily newspapers such as Sawt al-Kuwait and Awan. He has authored a number of books in both Arabic and English on Gulf societies and Arab culture.

Arab Gulf States' Cultural Policies

As a determinant of behaviour, culture is one of the developmental foundations of any society. There is no national project without a cultural project. In the Gulf, the elites have yet to take serious note of the importance of culture in its general or operational sense in advancing Gulf societies and leading the desired development. The discovery of oil in the Gulf unleashed conflicting, and perhaps even contradictory, forces. It also unleashed social tensions that led to the simultaneous existence of polar opposites in society, such as educating women and allowing them to work, and isolating them at the same time; launching rich new publications while at the same time maintaining strict governmental or societal censorship; the provision of plentiful education, yet much of which lacked the desired quality; or the aspiration for development in the midst of a conservative, tradition-bound culture. Therefore, this paper discusses Gulf states' experiments in cultural activity, and concludes with a recommendation that culture be taken into consideration at the core of development plans.

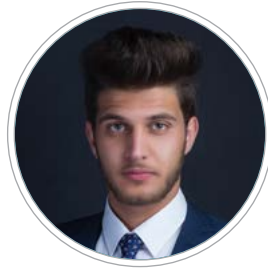


Mostafa Al-Bazergan

Head of the Centre for Energy & Environment Information and Research in London since 2017. He became an economic consultant and researcher at the Iraq Centre for Information and Research in 2004 and served as economics editor and daily columnist for the international newspaper *Al-Arab* since 1991. Al-Bazergan has given numerous lectures on oil and gas at international conferences in the Arab region as well as in Europe. He has published studies in many journals, including a study on the shale gas revolution in the United States. A frequent guest in many television economics programs, al-Bazergan has 40 years of academic and applied geological experience in monitoring the oil and gas sector upstream and downstream.

The Importance of the Gulf States' Position in China's Global Ambitions

Energy sources of all kinds – whether fossil, renewable or nuclear – represent a strategic bridge to sustain and strengthen relations between the countries of the world, given their importance for economic activity, bolstering political positions, and ensuring military superiority in a multipolar world. This has presented a timely opportunity to strengthen relations between the Gulf states and China, whose economy is projected to become the world's largest economy in the coming years. China is also the largest oil consumer and the third largest consumer of gas worldwide. This paper draws attention to the significance of the first Gulf-China summit in Jeddah, which demonstrated that China is seeking out an active strategic role in the region; in the subsequent months, Chinese efforts bore fruit through the achievement of Saudi-Iranian reconciliation. It argues that the UAE, Iran, and Saudi Arabia's entrance to BRICS was an essential step in support of the Gulf states becoming a regional and international pole, pursuing its interests alongside those of other states at an important stage in the world's history. The Gulf states are taking up a special position on the global energy map that could serve as the foundation of a new Middle East, as a prelude to the Gulf region becoming an energy gateway to European countries. In particular, the paper will show that it is in the interest of the Gulf countries to aim for what the writer calls "integrative competition" that the region may witness for the first time. The paper indicates that the relations of the Gulf states, individually or collectively, with China can be best described as "gas contracts", which are often long-term strategies that adds stability to the policies of all parties.



Mothanna Al-Masri

Researcher in Sociology and Anthropology. He holds a master's degree in Sociology and Anthropology from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a bachelor's degree from Yarmouk University in Jordan. His research interests include migration, cultural diversity, social and economic incorporation, and oral heritage in the Arab region. He is currently working on a set of research projects, including: "Diving Projects in Qatar: History, Culture, and Suffering" and "Ethnic Sanctions Faced by Syrian Refugees in Jordan".

Policies of Identity Building and the Re-Production of Heritage: The Cultural Status of Diving in Qatar

This paper approaches the study of culture and identity by proposing that identity does not function in isolation from the official and informal spheres of the State, but rather is in continuous interaction with official policies, as some countries seek to shape identity via the narrative they wish to promote. To this end, countries reinforce certain cultural concepts in order to maintain the cohesion of "national identity". Such policies may be necessary to maintain this identity, as they express the country's past, heritage, language, and shared values, customs, and traditions. In the context of the Arabian Gulf, and the Qatari context in particular, policies adopted by the State in relation to management of the cultural sphere take several forms, including official discourses. Therefore, this paper seeks to interact with the policies adopted by the State of Qatar with the aim of linking the past to the present, as the State deals with this challenge by designing policies to shape Qatari identity and culture, and to stimulate interaction between Qatar's history, specifically in the pre-oil period, and the present day. Given the central place of pearl diving in Qatar's history, this study focuses on the pearl diving community and culture as a means of delving deeper into how Qatar deals with its ancient cultural heritage. The paper observes the impact of these policies on the content of exhibitions, forums, and conferences related to the culture of pearl diving. It also examines the role of education as a means of transmitting heritage and culture by looking at educational curricula and laws related to heritage and culture.



Muhammad Al-Musfir

Retired professor at the University of Qatar, he obtained his PhD in political science from New York State University in 1984. Previously served in the diplomatic corps of the State of Qatar. He has published many research papers in Arab journals as well as books, most recently *International Organizations: History, Politics, Economics, Law, and Administration* (Qatar University, 2021) and "Gulf-Gulf Relations: The Problem of Strategic Vacuum and Partition, 1971-2018" (A Jazeera Centre for Studies, 2018). Al-Musfir contributes frequently to Qatari and Arab press.

Qatar-China Relations, 1988-2023

This study sheds light on the development and challenges of Qatar-China relations from 1988 to 2023. It focuses on the State of Qatar's interest in establishing distinct relations with the People's Republic of China while accounting for the fact that its ties with Western powers, especially the US, are of greater priority in terms of security, due to bilateral agreements, the presence of what is regarded as the strongest US military base outside the NATO countries, as well as Qatar's being a non-NATO US ally. The paper argues that the crises Qatar has faced as a small state oblige it to adopt multilateral diplomacy in terms of economics and security and in the realm of soft power: media, culture, sports, tourism, and so on. Thus, Qatar-China relations are marked by dynamism, rapid development, and promoting mutual confidence. The paper also discusses the challenges facing bilateral relations and how to overcome them.



Nasser bin Saif Al-Saadi

Assistant Professor occupying the UNESCO Chair for Aflaj Studies at the University of Nizwa in the Sultanate of Oman. He holds a PhD in History from Sultan Qaboos University. His research interests focus on social and cultural history and the image of the Other in Omani culture. His numerous articles and studies include: "Scholars and Authority in Oman: 1749-1913" (2022), "The Seeb Agreement of 1920: Political and Economic Implications" (2016); "The *Taghriq* System in Omani History: 1482-1915" (2017), and "Society and Politics in Oman through the Answers of Imam Muhammad bin Abdullah al-Khalili" (2018).

Cultural Identity Narratives in Humanities Curricula Adopted for Grades 5-12 in the Sultanate of Oman

This paper discusses the issue of cultural identity in the curricula adopted in the Sultanate of Oman for the 2022-2023 academic year, specifically the humanities curricula. The discussion focuses on the theme of belonging in relation to national identity, Gulf identity, Arab identity, and Islamic identity. Relying on a statistical and analytical approach, the paper makes use of several sources, the most important of which are official documents issued by the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, including the document on the philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman (2017), the document on general concepts in school curricula (2019), and textbooks for Arabic, Islamic Education, and Social Studies for Grades 5-12. These sources are examined across three axes: first, the role of the educational system in enhancing cultural identity; second, Omani and Gulf identity; and third, Arab and Islamic identity. The paper's main conclusions are that: (1) educational policy makers in the Sultanate of Oman have been keen to include identity-related vocabulary and concepts in school curricula; (2) vocabulary and concepts relating to Omani and Arab identity figure powerfully in school curricula; (3) Gulf identity receives only minor attention; and (4) concepts and vocabulary relating to Islamic identity are scattered throughout most school curricula.



Omar Abdin

Researcher in Sociology and Anthropology. He holds a master in Sociology and Anthropology from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a bachelor's degree in Political Science and International Relations from Marmara University in Turkey. He worked as a research assistant in several research centres, including Population and Social Policies Application Center at Marmara University and Ibn Khaldon Center for Humanities & Social Sciences at Qatar University. He also worked as an independent author for a number of electronic platforms and scientific journals. His research interests include issues of migration, identity, and citizenship. He is currently working on a number of research projects, including: "Social Incorporation of Egyptian Youth in Istanbul" and "The Social History of the State of Qatar: The Era Before the Discovery of Oil".

Policies of Identity Building and the Re-Production of Heritage: The Cultural Status of Diving in Qatar

This paper approaches the study of culture and identity by proposing that identity does not function in isolation from the official and informal spheres of the State, but rather is in continuous interaction with official policies, as some countries seek to shape identity via the narrative they wish to promote. To this end, countries reinforce certain cultural concepts in order to maintain the cohesion of "national identity". Such policies may be necessary to maintain this identity, as they express the country's past, heritage, language, and shared values, customs, and traditions. In the context of the Arabian Gulf, and the Qatari context in particular, policies adopted by the State in relation to management of the cultural sphere take several forms, including official discourses. Therefore, this paper seeks to interact with the policies adopted by the State of Qatar with the aim of linking the past to the present, as the State deals with this challenge by designing policies to shape Qatari identity and culture, and to stimulate interaction between Qatar's history, specifically in the pre-oil period, and the present day. Given the central place of pearl diving in Qatar's history, this study focuses on the pearl diving community and culture as a means of delving deeper into how Qatar deals with its ancient cultural heritage. The paper observes the impact of these policies on the content of exhibitions, forums, and conferences related to the culture of pearl diving. It also examines the role of education as a means of transmitting heritage and culture by looking at educational curricula and laws related to heritage and culture.



Rory Miller

Professor of International Politics and Director of the Small States Research Program and the Energy Security Program at Georgetown University in Qatar. Previously, he served in the Department of War Studies and later as the Head of the Middle Eastern and Mediterranean Studies Program at King's College London. He was a Visiting Professor in the Department of War Studies at King's College London (2014-2017) and a Visiting Research Professor at Trinity College Dublin (2020-2021). Notably, he is the author and editor of several books, including *Desert Kingdoms to Global Powers: The Rise of the Arab Gulf* (Yale UP: 2016); *The Gulf Crisis: The View from Qatar* (HBKU Press, 2018); and *Overcoming Smallness: Challenges and Opportunities for Small States in Global Affairs* (HBKU Press, 2022).

China-Gulf Security Relations: The Maritime Dimension

China is increasingly active in the Gulf maritime domain. This paper examines rising Chinese engagement in terms of the fast-moving reconceptualization of maritime security across the region. It charts the maritime ambitions and capabilities of China since it deployed its first naval vessels to the Gulf of Aden in response to Somali piracy in 2008-09. It then contrasts the Chinese role in the provision of maritime security with the contributions of the US and European navies – in terms of participation in bilateral and multilateral joint exercises and taskforces, personnel exchanges, or standardization of practices and logistics. Great power tensions and intra-Asian competition in the Gulf maritime domain are likely to increase as the US and its Asian allies become more and more preoccupied with containing Chinese naval ambitions in the waterways around the Gulf; and as the 'geopolitics of ports' intensifies and basing access for extra-regional actors become even more important. Yet this paper argues that in hard power terms, the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) is still very much a secondary player in meeting the security needs of local actors in the Gulf maritime domain. However, it then assesses the no less important contribution made by China to Arab Gulf priorities in terms of cooperation with the Gulf states in developing the maritime domain into a soft power asset that can foster interdependence across the international system and contribute to national resilience.



Saad Albazei

Professor of Comparative Literature at King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. A critic and translator, he received his doctorate in American and English Literature from the Purdue University in Indiana in 1983. He was a member of the Saudi Shura Council in 2009. During his career, he served as Editor-in-Chief for the English language newspaper *Riyadh Daily* and Chairman of the jury for the International Booker Prize for Arabic Fiction for the year 2014. He received the Sultan Qaboos Award for Culture, Arts and Literature (2017). He has published many books, including *Landmarks of Modernity: Western Modernity in Sixty Foundational Texts from the 17th to the 20th Century* (2022); *The Migration of Concepts: Readings in Cultural Transformations* (2021); *The Jewish Component in Western Civilization* (2007); and *Receiving the Other: The West in Modern Arab Criticism* (2004).

Humanities in the Gulf: An Institutional Crisis

This lecture explores the crisis facing the humanities and social sciences in higher education and research centres in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula region. It argues that this crisis is a worldwide phenomenon and that the Gulf is experiencing a part thereof, but that the problem takes on some particularities in light of political, economic, and cultural differences. The most obvious manifestation of this deterioration is the downturn in humanities disciplines at universities – either by merging departments like history, sociology, and literature or by closing them, whether due to a lack of demand or the diversion of interest toward other disciplines. All of this comes in the context of a tendency to prioritize the labour market in planning. It also affects research centres, some of which are suffering from diminished funding for reasons such as attention being diverted to various research topics, a transformation in public policy, or a lack of faith in the value of such institutions.



Said Al Tarshi

Director of the Research, Translation, and Publishing Department at the Omani Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, and editor-in-chief of *Thaqafa* magazine, issued by the Omani Ministry of Culture. He is a PhD student in Islamic Studies. His publications include "Scholastic Theology between Religion and Politics" (2016), and "The Production of Critical Knowledge in Oman between the Frugmentation of the Authority of the Jurist and the Emergence of the Critical Intellectual" (presented at the Sixth International Conference of the Arab Council for the Social Sciences, 25-28 May 2023). Al-Tarishi has translated several studies, the most recent of which was published in *the World Culture* magazine: "Sad Songs of Annual Remembrance".

Gulf and Omani Cultural Strategies: A Comparative Critical Analysis

The question of culture is of great importance, because it is linked to human beings' identity and values, their worldview, and their destiny. Therefore, the Gulf countries, including the Sultanate of Oman, have been keen to lend culture the attention it deserves over the past few decades. Planned action in this regard has been marred by numerous shortcomings, the most serious of which, we contend, is the ambiguity of the concepts that underlie both the cultural strategy of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries (2020-2030), and the Omani cultural strategy (2021-2040). The paper raises the question: What is the definition of culture (as well as the concepts added or related to it) that underlies the two strategies? What are the similarities and differences between the two aforementioned strategies on the one hand, and between them and the cultural strategy of the Islamic world (ratified in 2004 by the Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) on the other hand? Lastly, do these two strategies meet the requirements of the coming phase in the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC countries? The paper carries out a critical analysis of social discourse in which it invokes the rules of formal logic regarding definition and division. The paper draws a comparison, not only between the two strategies, but also between the two strategies and the cultural strategy of the Islamic world, which it views as a text marked by a high degree of clarity and consistency between its underlying concepts and its component elements.



Said al-Hashimi

Omani researcher at the Center for Arab Studies at the University of Houston, United States. He is a PhD researcher in the Department of History at the same university and a human rights activist who holds a master's degree in Strategic Studies from the University of Aberdeen, United Kingdom (2006), and a bachelor's degree in Political Science and Economics from Kuwait University (1999). His research interests include anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism, and revolution and resistance in Oman and the Arabian Peninsula. His publications include: "Oman: Man and Power, An Explanatory Introduction to the Contemporary Omani Political Scene" (2014).

Omani Culture after the 2011 Arab Revolutions

This paper highlights cultural protest in selected literary and artistic texts, in comparison with cultural policies in the post-2011 period. It focuses on three texts written in the Sultanate of Oman which were published and circulated immediately after the protests. The first text is from a literary novel, the second is taken from a short story, and the third is a theatrical text. The paper also references other works that confirm the diversity that marked the act of cultural protest in the period under consideration. In parallel to the foregoing, the paper examines legal texts issued by the State immediately before the events in answer to the question of protest, which erupted in the form of literature, art, and new ways of thinking and coming together as a society. The study approaches the period between 2012-2020 as a highly controversial time, concerning which certain generalizations circulated to the effect that society enjoyed freedom of expression, organization, and thought when in fact, this was not the case. The paper consists of three main axes: the first discusses the nature and forms of cultural protest; the second is a general survey of the cultural situation in Oman in terms of policies, institutions, and texts in the forty-year-plus period that preceded the protests; and the third is an exploration of how protest was expressed through the presentation and analysis of two sets of texts: the first being artistic and literary texts, and the second, the responses of the central authority in the form of legal texts.



Saif bin Adi Al-Maskari

Omani researcher and educator. He holds a master's degree in Modern History from Sultan Qaboos University (2012). He supervises History curricula at Oman's Ministry of Education. He previously worked as an assistant researcher in the strategic project "Sources on the History of Omani Relations with East Africa during the Period 1624-1888: A Critical and Analytical Study" at Sultan Qaboos University, and as a researcher on the team for the project "Omani Personalities Working in Trade and Industry in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate before 1970" for the Academic Research Council (formerly) in the Sultanate of Oman (2020-2022). His numerous academic contributions include "Omani Ports in the Historical Record of the Gulf, Oman, and the Central Arabian Peninsula: Importance, Status, and Roles" (2019); "The Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf Guide" (2016); and, "The Imamate and the Struggle for Power in Oman in the Late Ya'rubid State" (2015).

Cultural Identity Narratives in Humanities Curricula Adopted for Grades 5-12 in the Sultanate of Oman

This paper discusses the issue of cultural identity in the curricula adopted in the Sultanate of Oman for the 2022-2023 academic year, specifically the humanities curricula. The discussion focuses on the theme of belonging in relation to national identity, Gulf identity, Arab identity, and Islamic identity. Relying on a statistical and analytical approach, the paper makes use of several sources, the most important of which are official documents issued by the Ministry of Education in the Sultanate of Oman, including the document on the philosophy of education in the Sultanate of Oman (2017), the document on general concepts in school curricula (2019), and textbooks for Arabic, Islamic Education, and Social Studies for Grades 5-12. These sources are examined across three axes: first, the role of the educational system in enhancing cultural identity; second, Omani and Gulf identity; and third, Arab and Islamic identity. The paper's main conclusions are that: (1) educational policy makers in the Sultanate of Oman have been keen to include identity-related vocabulary and concepts in school curricula; (2) vocabulary and concepts relating to Omani and Arab identity figure powerfully in school curricula; (3) Gulf identity receives only minor attention; and (4) concepts and vocabulary relating to Islamic identity are scattered throughout most school curricula.



Saif bin Nasser Al-Maamari

Associate Professor in the College of Education at Sultan Qaboos University in the Sultanate of Oman. He holds a PhD in the Philosophy of Education from the University of Glasgow, Scotland. He has worked with a number of international institutions, including the Carnegie Center, UNESCO, the Adyan Foundation, and the Lebanese Association for Educational Sciences. He has published research in Arab and foreign periodicals, and articles in Omani and Arab newspapers and magazines, in addition to numerous books on education and curricula and their relationship to citizenship, including: "Citizenship in the Sultanate of Oman: Starting Points, Origin, and Prospects for Development" (2018).

How Gulf Countries Depict Culture to School Students Via Social Studies

The political discourse of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries emphasizes the cultural foundation on which the modern Gulf state is based. Despite the modernity which Arab Gulf states vie to establish in various aspects of life, they continue to affirm their determination to preserve the authentic culture on which the region's societies are based. This paper seeks to identify the mental image of the cultural symbols that constitute national identity in some Gulf countries' Social Studies curricula, the aim being to ascertain how the Gulf countries depict their culture to their students, as well as the similarities and differences between these cultural symbols across various curricula. The methodology of the paper is based on the theory of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes that through educational institutions, students acquire ideas, meanings, impressions, and mental images of society and its culture, which in turn shape individuals' attitudes toward their culture. This theory posits three images of cultural symbols: a perceived image representing the past, a present image reflecting the current situation, and a desired image representing what is hoped for in the future. An analysis of these three types of images can help us understand the nature of the national identity which Gulf countries strive to instill in their students.



Sundus Al-Rashid

Head of the International Committee of Museums - ICOM, Kuwait branch, and a member of the Board of Directors of ICOM Arab. She holds a PhD from Brunel University in London (2021) and a master's degree in Museums, Exhibitions, and Contemporary Culture from the University of Westminster, United Kingdom. Her research interests focus on the role of museums in shaping societies, especially in the Gulf countries.

Museums in the Arab Gulf States: Cultural Symbols, or Political Forces?

There has been an ongoing debate over the existence, role, and influence of museums in the Arab Gulf countries, especially over the past two decades as the cultural scene has evolved with the opening of museums in various countries in the region. One of the main criticisms that has faced museums is that they emerged as a product of Western influence, and that their formation and management also reflect Western values and ways. In their early days, museums in the Arab Gulf states were modest and simple, their main concern being to highlight national identity and popular folklore, and their administrative system being based on input from Western specialists. However, these museums' goals have witnessed a noticeable change over the last two decades as they have expanded beyond the scope of the region, and as competition to come up with the most splendid design has taken on increasing importance, since museums have come to be cultural symbols that reflect the country's identity and place it on the map of the global cultural scene. Here, the question arises: To what extent did Gulf museums achieve their goals vis-à-vis their own citizens before shifting their focus to achieving a global reach? Do Gulf museums still see themselves as national symbols, or have they become political tools? It bears noting here that museums are associated with "soft power" in the sphere of international politics. For example, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar have sought to acquire global cultural power by investing in museums and pushing to create a cultural brand capable of competing with the cultural capitals of the world. This research discusses the museums of the Arabian Gulf as cultural institutions which were created to tell the national story, and how their goals have broadened in such a way as to render them political forces at the forefront of the State. It also examines the content of museums, and whether it meets citizens' need to enhance their sense of belonging and national identity.

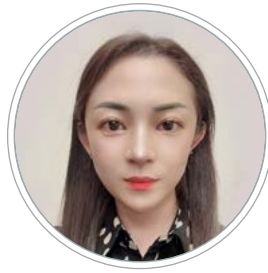


Ulrike Freitag

Historian of the Modern Middle East, Director of the Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient in Berlin, and Professor at the Free University of Berlin since 2002. She obtained a State Doctorate (Habilitation) in Islamic Studies from the Rheinische Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, Germany, and a PhD in History from the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität, Freiburg. Her research focuses on modern Hijaz historiography, the history of Muslim societies from a trans-local perspective, forms and spaces of participation in Arab societies, and modern cultural and urban history of the Arabian Peninsula. Her publications include: "Indian Ocean Migrants and State Formation in Hadhramaut" (Brill, 2003); and "A History of Jeddah: The Gate to Mecca in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (Cambridge University Press, 2022).

The Development of Cultural Policies in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

This paper looks at the development of cultural policies in the Kingdom in Saudi Arabia with a view to the long durée, but a specific focus on the period since 2015. It unpacks the different motives behind the massive investment in cultural affairs, from art (a certain focus of the paper) to music and sports. The paper argues that, beyond investing in a sector long neglected and even considered illegitimate, cultural policies are seen as a way to diversify the Saudi economy by developing local talent and attracting international tourism and entertainment industries. This will, in the medium term, also be used to brand Saudi Arabia, clearly in competition with such regional players as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Qatar, etc.



Si Liu

Assistant Professor at Georgetown University in Qatar, specialized in data science and quantitative analysis in Political Science. Her research interests encompass the politics and economy of contemporary China, the energy security dynamics of Gulf countries, and the evolving economic relationships between China and the Gulf states, particularly under the framework of the Belt and Road initiative.

China's Policy towards Gulf Security: Hedging Strategy

Current scholarly and policy research highlights that the strategy of hedging is usually applied by small powers in face of great power politics. This article argues that the strategy can be implemented by great powers in face of conflicts among lesser powers as well. The hidden logic of Beijing's hedging strategy is seeking a zero-enemy policy in the Persian Gulf by building a network of partnerships in order to dilute the US military alliance system. The author identifies five pathways that have defined China's hedging strategy to respond to the Gulf security environment. First, Beijing tries to avoid a cold war with the US in the Gulf by cooperating with the US on selected issues to rebuild mutual trust. Second, China's multilateral efforts at resolving conflicts in the Gulf offers a sharp contrast to US hegemonism; the former has attempted to contribute to resolving the Iranian nuclear issue, the Yemeni conflict resolution, the sectarian disputes in Iraq, and terrorism. Third, Beijing encourages the Gulf countries to apply a balanced policy lest they choose sides between China and the US: to maintain security partnerships with the US while maintaining political and economic partnerships with China. Fourth, China proposes collective security for "a Community of Shared Future for Mankind" raised in 2012 by the work report of the National Congress of the Communist Party of China and is against the US-led collective defence practice which is criticized as the cause of the security dilemma. Fifth, China seeks pragmatic cooperation with all the Gulf countries and is against the US politicization of Beijing's high-tech cooperation with the Arab countries (including 5G, nuclear power plants, solar energy, and drones) and energy and defence cooperation with Iran, as the model of South-South cooperation. China's hedging strategy has so far successfully de-linked the global cold war (US-China and US-Russia rivalry) with the Gulf cold war (Saudi-Iranian confrontation), and has avoided the US-led Middle Eastern strategic alliance targeting China.



Yagoub Al-Kandari

Professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Kuwait University, and editor-in-chief of *Ḥawliyyāt al-Ādāb wa-l-‘Ulūm al-Ijtimā’iyya*. He holds a PhD in Anthropology from Ohio University, United States. He has held a number of positions, including Dean of the College of Social Sciences at Kuwait University, Director of the Center for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies, and Editor-in-Chief of *Majallat Dirāsāt al-Khalīj wa-l-Jazīra al-‘Arabiyya*.

Similarities and Differences Between Urban and Tribal Cultures in Gulf Society and their Impact on Social Integration: Kuwait as a Model

The issue of similarity and difference is closely related to the concept of social integration. Anthropological studies support the notion that similarity and difference are a feature of human societies, which highlights what we might term sub-identities within society. The issue of similarity and difference poses no problem in human societies that have achieved an appropriate degree of social integration under the umbrella of a state in which the concept of citizenship is well understood, a state that applies the law and achieves social justice for all cultural groups. However, the opposite may occur in other societies, in which differences among sub-identities are so acute that they lead to conflict and, in the most extreme cases reinforced by a sense of class identity that rejects the "Other" within the framework of society, even physical liquidation. Social integration in the presence of different sub-identities is the basis for the stability and growth of society, while the inability to create such integration at all levels is certain to have an impact on this stability to one degree or another. The questions this paper attempts to answer are the following: To what extent has the state succeeded in promoting social integration in the presence of different subcultures within the local community? To what extent does cultural difference reinforce sub-identities over societal identity? To what extent has societal cultural similarity played a role in enhancing this societal identity? This paper seeks to answer these questions by focusing on two sub-identities within Kuwaiti society: urban identity, which traces its roots back to the traditional maritime and semi-sedentary urban society, and tribal identity, whose members are descended from desert dwellers.



Yousuf bin Hamad Al-Balushi

Economist with more than twenty years of academic and applied experience in economic institutions, the Central Bank of Oman, the Ministry of Economy, the Supreme Council for Planning, and Oman Vision 2040. He has also worked as a consultant for foreign direct investment statistics affairs within the framework of the IMF's technical assistance program and as a strategic advisor to the World Bank for Business Development. He holds a doctorate in political economy from King's College, London and a master's degree in management and economic policy from the University of Strathclyde, Scotland. He has published numerous studies, research papers, and chapters in books, such as *The Omani Economy: Globalization and the Winds of Change*, and *Oman Vision 2040: The Pressures of Questions and the Entitlements of Answers*. He also contributed to editing *Economic diversification in Gulf countries: The Private Sector as an Engine of Growth*, and *Economic Diversification in the Gulf Region: Comparing Global Challenges*.

Gulf-China Relations from a Strategic Perspective

The paper discusses Chinese-Gulf relations and the need for this cooperation to progress from a strategic perspective. It takes into account the nature of growth in the Gulf and China's pivotal economic, social and political importance, as well as the many justifications for Chinese-Gulf convergence. Four of these justifications relate to the nature of future Gulf development visions. This calls for and is based on economic diversification and expanding the production base, an endeavour in which China has pulled off efficient success, from which many lessons that can be learned. Geopolitical changes, the decline of the US role in the Gulf countries, and the necessity of finding new balances in the region are also important reasons for the Gulf countries to strengthen their relations with China. The strategic location of the Gulf countries represents a trade link between Asia and Europe – a potential centre from which to launch Chinese trade worldwide. Furthermore, the Gulf represents the most important source of energy for China, and the latter is considered one of the main drivers in the global transition to renewable energy. The paper addresses the importance of China as a major player in the global economy and its recent transformations, concluding with recommendations on how to maximize benefits from Chinese investments in Gulf countries.



Zaid Ali Al Fadeil

Writer and Director of the Cultural Program at the Gulf Research Center in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. He holds a PhD in Modern History from the Department of History at King Abdulaziz University in Jeddah. He writes for the daily newspaper *Şahifat Makkah*. He headed the cultural program at the 2014 International Book Fair in Riyadh and the 2015 International Book Fair in Jeddah. He has taken part as a member of the Board of Trustees in numerous cultural awards, including the Imru' al-Qais Award at the Qassim Literary Club and is the founder of the Arab National Identity Award in Cairo. He has participated in television and radio work in the "Human Memory" program on Al-Thaqafiya channel, and the "Cultural Orbits" radio program on Jeddah Radio. He contributed the Culture and Media volumes to the *Jeddah Scientific Encyclopedia*. His publications include: "The Cultural Movement in Yemen and its Political Implications" (2012).

Cultural Shifts in Saudi Arabia: A Reading of Contemporary Policies

Shifts represent milestones in any societal scene, whether political, economic, or cultural. Shifts are not necessarily positive, nor are they connected to a specific time or era. It is difficult to separate one shift from another, as a political shift may result in an economic shift, the features of which may then be reflected in the cultural context, with influence extending to the societal aspect. This paper examines shifts in the Saudi cultural scene from the twentieth century to the present, and how this scene has been affected by various political and economic conditions, including the impact of the practice of sending Saudi students to study abroad during the latter half of the twentieth century, which resulted in the emergence of a discourse of modernity as a model of enlightenment. The reaction to this discourse by the Islamic Awakening movement was harsh and shrill, resulting in a conflict between the Enlightenment movement as a whole, and political Islam, whose proponents became known as the "Awakening" movement (al-Şahwa). However, this has changed in the last five years, during which Saudi Arabia has witnessed a major social shift whose effects have become apparent in the cultural sphere as well. In light of the striking features of social change at present and the emergence of elements of modernization in Saudi cultural discourse, several questions arise, namely: What is the extent of the cultural challenge prevalent in the Saudi scene? What are its most prominent features? How have Saudi intellectuals interacted with the Arab cultural vision? What kinds of shifts took place in cultural discourse in Saudi Arabia during the twentieth century? What distinguishes the cultural shifts currently taking place under the auspices of the Saudi Ministry of Culture? Finally, what features have marked the Saudi cultural scene during the first two decades of the twenty-first century?



Zainab bint Muhammad Al-Gharibi

Educational expert at the Omani Ministry of Education. She is a PhD student at the University of Glasgow, Scotland, where she earned a master's degree in Education. She currently runs an Omani publishing house that has produced dozens of books in various branches of knowledge. She has worked as a member of research teams in locally-funded research projects and has published a number of academic works and children's stories, in addition to academic research in Arabic and English.

How Gulf Countries Depict Culture to School Students Via Social Studies

The political discourse of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries emphasizes the cultural foundation on which the modern Gulf state is based. Despite the modernity which Arab Gulf states vie to establish in various aspects of life, they continue to affirm their determination to preserve the authentic culture on which the region's societies are based. This paper seeks to identify the mental image of the cultural symbols that constitute national identity in some Gulf countries' Social Studies curricula, the aim being to ascertain how the Gulf countries depict their culture to their students, as well as the similarities and differences between these cultural symbols across various curricula. The methodology of the paper is based on the theory of symbolic interactionism, which emphasizes that through educational institutions, students acquire ideas, meanings, impressions, and mental images of society and its culture, which in turn shape individuals' attitudes toward their culture. This theory posits three images of cultural symbols: a perceived image representing the past, a present image reflecting the current situation, and a desired image representing what is hoped for in the future. An analysis of these three types of images can help us understand the nature of the national identity which Gulf countries strive to instill in their students.

Participants

Ostour Symposium



Abdulrahman Al-Marri

Research Assistant at the Ibn Khaldon Center for Humanities & Social Sciences at Qatar University. His research focuses on culture, society, and politics in the Arabian Gulf.

The *Ghutra* Pinning Down the *Agal*: The Limits of Historical Writing about Qatar

There are two major questions that are inseparable to the question of historical writing in Qatar. The first touches on the constraints around writing history in the country, while the second revolves around the structure of that writing. A major feature of Qatari historical writing is that it takes place within a closed framework: the narration of facts and events in a chronological way. However, it has distanced itself from evoking any dimension of writing about history: criticizing methods of historical writing with the aim of deepening them and moving them to a more serious form of structure and methodology. Without doubt, profound constraints have limited – and continue to limit – the prospects of transitioning to more varied forms of historical writing. The deepest is tied to the implicit internal conflict between different social and intellectual blocs and trends, in what can be considered narrative competition, which stops short of conflict. This paper examines the two major related questions of determinants and of structure, both highly influential but little discussed when writing history in Qatar. By collecting, presenting, and framing the main texts on the history of the emirate's development and the formation of its modern society, starting from the 1960s when awareness of the value, impact, and demands of recording history was growing, as well as various texts on sub-historical topics such as education and others, the paper seeks to lay out the determinants of historical writing in Qatar, its nature, and the guidelines governing it. It also attempts to explain the structure of historical writing itself, as this resembles the pattern of political society and its temporal manifestations, assuming that the issue inherent in writing Qatari history may be cultural, political, or economic and structural in effect. In any case, it has a temporal, i.e., historical, basis, and this is what the paper explores.



Abdulrahman Albaker

Faculty member at the College of Law at Qatar University. He holds a master's degree in History from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He is a collaborating researcher in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit at the ACRPS. He worked as a researcher in the Committee for Recording National History in Qatar. His research interest focuses on the legal and social history of the Arab Gulf states, in addition to collecting and classifying local oral memory.

How the Left in the Gulf Chronicled its Uprisings: The Case of the 1965 Uprising in Bahrain

This paper analyses accounts by the Bahraini Left of the uprising of 5 March 1965, which mainly portray it as the product of ongoing outburst of anger over poor economic and political conditions. These accounts were written either by participants in the uprising, by figures from the contemporary leftist movement in Bahrain, or by others who lived through the uprising. They are unique in that they are the only source for analysing the uprising, assuming absolute authority over the narrative surrounding it. No other narrative exists, either from other political movements or from the state itself, which chose to deal with the uprising as if it never happened and has no existence in historical memory. This vacuum is accompanied by a lack of critical academic interest in the uprising and other popular movements in Bahrain. This poses a problem: The writings under discussion diagnose the uprising as leftist in nature, meaning that leftist frameworks dominate the narrative. This, however, fails to adequately address the (Gulf) regional dimension of the uprising, which is presented as local and national despite the participants' cross-border identities and their ideological and political connections with groups and parties in neighbouring countries, which both influenced and were influenced by them. These writings also fail to place the uprising in the context of a broader popular movement across the Gulf region, and strip it of its character as a regional movement, despite the political developments that have rocked the Gulf region this century. These writings therefore are not the chronicle of a Gulf-wide Left, but rather a local Left with a directed and integrated narrative that does not reach beyond national borders.



Abdulrahman Alebrahim

Kuwaiti independent researcher and academic. He obtained a PhD from the University of Exeter, United Kingdom (2017). He specializes in the history of the Arabian Gulf and related studies, especially marginalized groups. His research interests include the history of the northern Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula, such as the sheikhdoms of Najd, Kuwait, and Zubayr until the middle of the twentieth century; society, culture, and religion; and the marginalized in the modern and contemporary history of the Arabian Gulf. He has published many research papers, including: "Kuwait's Politics Before Independence: The Role of the Balancing Powers" (2019); "The Neglected Sheikhdom at the Frontier of Empires and Cultures: An Introduction to al-Zubayr" (2020); and "History is not Written Once" (2022).

Between Marginalization and Narratives in the History of the Arabian Gulf: Kuwait as a Model

Most histories of the Gulf states in Arabic today, especially those written by the region's people about their own history, take on a narrative form. They focus on certain aspects of these countries' history, such as politics and the history of rulers and notables, while ignoring other cultural, social, and religious aspects. This narrative style of writing has created a methodological problem on which a one-perspective history has been built. This has contributed greatly to keeping active social elements marginalized, removing them from the historical context and perpetuating their marginalization. This paper discusses causes and motivations for this downplaying of social, cultural, and religious aspects and social forces. It focuses on the case of Kuwait and the way history has been written there since 1926, when the first book on the country's history was published. It also examines academic writings and the publications of Kuwaiti research institutions over the years. The paper focuses on two issues. First, it examines the motives involved in writing Kuwaiti history and the factors that contributed to it being written in this narrative form, rather than an analytical or critical approach. Secondly, it attempts to address this shortcoming by demonstrating the gaps that have been left by this approach, sheds light on the marginalized, then tries to develop solutions by highlighting the sources that could cover this gap. It also argues that the absence of critical history from academic and official historical writing is one of the reasons for this imbalance.



Amal Ghazal

Professor of History and Dean of the College of Social and Humanities at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She holds PhD and master's degrees in History from the University of Alberta, Canada and a bachelor's degree from the American University of Beirut. She was a Professor of History and served as Director of the Centre for Comparative Muslim Studies at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada. Her research interests include Ottoman history, the modern Middle East and North Africa, and Islam in the Sahara and sub-Saharan Africa. Among her publications: *Islamic Reform and Arab Nationalism: Expanding the Crescent from the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean (1880s-1930s)* (Routledge, 2010).

How the Left in the Gulf Chronicled its Uprisings: The Case of the 1965 Uprising in Bahrain

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Fahad Bishara

Associate Professor in the Department of History at the University of Virginia, United States. He holds a PhD in History from Duke University in North Carolina (2014), and a master's degree in Arabian Gulf Studies from the University of Exeter, United Kingdom (2006). His research interests focus on legal history and the history of capitalism, primarily in the Islamic world but also beyond. His publications include *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780-1950* (2017), which won the Law and Society Association's James Willard Hurst Prize, the World History Association's Jerry Bentley Prize, and the American Society for Legal History's Peter Gonville Stein Book Award.

Writing in the Bazar: The Micro, the Macro, and the Ocean in Gulf History

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, there existed a robust trade in dates from the Gulf to markets around the Western Indian Ocean – principally India, but also South Arabia and East Africa. The dates of Southern Iraq were carried in dhows from Persia, Arabia, and India, involving actors who wrote in multiple languages, and drew together merchants, mariners, and political entrepreneurs across the Indian Ocean world. This world of Indian Ocean trade was far-flung and open-ended, and generated a rich trail of paperwork that literally sailed across the sea. But "trade" is perhaps too broad of a category to write with. Rather, the paper suggests Gulf historians ought to begin at a more manageable, and ultimately more productive scale: the micro. The paper grounds its reflections on the maritime bazaar in the archives of one merchant Mohammed bin 'Abdullah Al-Matrook, a Kuwaiti based in Basra. Through his archive of letters, accounts, and business ephemera, the paper reflects on the possibilities of a "thick" transregional history – to explore the textual infrastructures that enabled the circulation of goods and capital and their conversion from one form to another, on multiple scales, and around the ocean's shores. The paper offers thoughts on writing more granular transregional history of the Gulf that toggles between micro and the oceanic, the intimate and the world-historical, written along the path of circulation. And ultimately, we arrive at a better sense of the macro: what made "trade" possible was a coming together of merchants, mariners, and brokers, but also very specific contractual forms and mercantile practices, and a shifting vocabulary that actively vernacularized the changing technologies of empire and capitalism.



Hala Fattah

Iraqi historian. She previously served as a Visiting Assistant Professor at Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies and its Department of History. She holds a PhD in Modern Middle Eastern History from the University of California. Her research interests focus on the intersection of social and economic issues with oral history, as well as memory studies and questions of identity in the Indian Ocean region. Among her publications: "A Brief History of Iraq" (2009); and "The Politics of Regional Trade in Iraq, Arabia, and the Gulf, 1745-1900" (1997).

A Different Paradigm for Arab Gulf Studies

Over the years, Arab Gulf Studies has been transformed from small introductory courses taught at universities in the Arab Gulf as well as at universities in the West to a field all of its own. Well-funded and well-attended, it has generated enthusiasm for a region that has too often been overlooked in wider academic circles. However, by ignoring historical realities in favour of national priorities, does Arab Gulf Studies in its present form perpetuate a restricted and narrow perspective on an area that has long formed part of a large and continuously changing region? The answer is yes. This paper, therefore, propose a different paradigm for Arab Gulf Studies that focuses on the following three interrelated themes. First is a wider appreciation of the history of the Gulf both from an internal perspective as well as from a regional and area-wide standpoint. This perspective would be demonstrated in new textual evidence and oral histories as well as in evidence of linkages with neighbouring districts and territories that are at present considered outside the national purview. This approach would also focus on a larger definition of what history is, and what it is not, in the Arab Gulf. Second, the paper proposes to chart all the different ways that the Arab Gulf interacted with the wider region, as well as the communities it interacted with. Finally, the paper would like to propose that Arab Gulf Studies immerse itself in the broader expanse of Indian Ocean history, the study of which forms the most exciting academic fields today. For various reasons detailed in the larger paper, why Arab Gulf Studies has the world to gain and nothing to lose by joining in the exploration of a common past through Indian Ocean Studies will be explored.



Khalid bin Ghanim Al-Maadheed

Researcher in Gulf Modern History. He holds a master's degree in History from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies (2023) as well as master's and bachelor's degrees in Atmospheric Science from St. Louis University, United States (1991). He is a member of the Qatari Shura Council since 2021. He has held several administrative and political positions in the State of Qatar since 1986. He has participated in many local and international conferences and seminars. His publications include: "Faisal bin Turki's Campaign Between Local Sources and British documents".

Collective Memory and its Role in Creating Historical Writing in the Arabian Peninsula: Ibn Bishr as a Model

This paper examines the role of collective memory and its impact on historical writing, attempting to explain how psychological, sociological, political, and cultural dimensions, whether declared or implicit, affect such writing. The background of collective memory is saturated with the centrality of the self and does not place sufficient distance between subjectivity and objectivity. This phenomenon is at the heart of this paper, which examines it through the campaign of Faisal bin Turki on the Qatar peninsula and Bahrain in 1851, a campaign narrated in an important Najdi historical source. The work "The Title of Glory in the History of Najd", has on its cover the name of historian Sheikh Othman bin Abdullah Ibn Bishr al-Najdi al-Hanbali (1795-1873). The paper examines this work to determine how much collective memory has influenced histories of this episode, and the extent of its influence on later academic researchers, to answer the following questions: How did Ibn Bishr address Faisal bin Turki's campaign against Qatar? On what memory does his historiography of the campaign rely? What is the impact of the collective memory of his era on this writing? Is his narration of the campaign accurate? How do his writings resonate with academic studies today? The paper concludes that the influence of collective memory in historical writing must not be underestimated, and that it can easily seep into academic scientific curricula, consciously or unconsciously. In both cases, historical writing has been distorted, whether intentionally or unintentionally. The serious historian must therefore refuse to accept historical writing from any source uncritically, because it is vulnerable to distortion. Rather, historians must strive to contrast and critique various texts, in order to correct what has been added to them and to draw out a narrative that is as close as possible to the historical truth.



Mustafa Aqeel

Professor of Modern and Contemporary History of the Gulf States. He holds a PhD in History (1985), a master's degree in History from Ain Shams University (1980), and a bachelor's degree in History from Al-Azhar University (1975). He was the first Qatari professor at Qatar University's history department, where he previously served as head of department. He is an advisory member of the Arabic journal "The Arab Historian" and "History and Archaeology in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries". He is also a member and former president of the Society of History and Antiquities in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, a member of the Arab Historical Society and a founding member of the Union of Arab Historians in Cairo. He has authored many books on the Gulf region and particularly Qatar, including: "The Arab Gulf: Studies in Historical Origins and Political Development" (2013); and "Qatar and the Union of the Nine Emirates in the Arabian Gulf (1969-1971)" (1998).

Historians in Qatar: From Narrators to Pioneers

This study presents the very earliest academically disciplined historical writings in Qatar, during the transition from oral to written narration of this history. When the British left Qatar with the establishment of the emirate in the early 1970s, history became a social and political tool to help writing a national narrative, as was the case in other countries that had recently gained independence. Many writers emerged during this period, presenting narratives in various literary forms ranging from prose to poetry. Their novels contained new and useful information about the history of Qatar, becoming an essential source on the history of Qatar. Indeed, they have become as indispensable as British and Ottoman documents and archives. They stand as evidence that foreign texts, no matter how high their status, can in no way match local texts in understanding and comprehending the events taking place in a given space. Hence, these texts also became the mainstay of foreign researchers, historians, and anthropologists who have taken an interest in Qatar.



Nasser bin Saif Al-Saadi

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Trends in Historical Writing in Oman: From the Traditional Approach to the Academic

The first indigenous Omani account of social and political change dates back to the twelfth century AD, although the origin and history of the text, "The Genealogies", remain surrounded in academic controversy. Subsequently, there was a long gap in the recording of Omani history, and no known historical texts appear until five centuries later, with a text entitled "The Biography of Ibn Qaysar". This tome established the form of historical writing in Oman, and a number of historical writings followed, some of which were published, while others are still in manuscript. These writings varied in their approaches, the backgrounds of their writers and the political contexts in which they appeared. Moreover, the launch of Omani postgraduate programs in history came very late. The first intake of master's students joined the Department of History at Sultan Qaboos University in 2002. However, many academic theses discussing of Omani history were published prior to this date, having been prepared at Arab universities by Omani and other Arab researchers. This study examines the paths and stages traversed by historical writing in Oman, starting with *The Biography of Ibn Qaysar*, and subsequent works that took more traditional approaches to historical writing, moving towards more academic approaches, especially writings completed at academic history departments, whether at Arab universities elsewhere or at the History Department of Sultan Qaboos University, where the country's first master's thesis in history was written in 2006. The study adopts statistical and analytical methods, notably statistical methods to study theses at academic departments, to identify, analyse, and interpret trends in statistical data.



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Uthman Ibn Sanad: Historian of the Birth of the Arab Emirate on the Gulf Coast

The period between 1750-1820 witnessed the emergence of new states in the Middle East, including Arab emirates such as Kuwait and Bahrain. However, we still have a limited understanding of how those living in the Gulf at the time viewed these developments. How did they see these coastal cities, their ruling elites, and their relationships with the dominant powers in the region? The book *Sabā'ik al- 'Asjad fī Akhbār Aḥmad Ibn Rizq al-As'ad* by Sheikh Othman bin Sanad examines such questions as they relate to the now-abandoned city of Al-Zubarah in northern Qatar, demonstrating that it was Arab merchants who made Al Zubarah a thriving port city and a hub that was integrated into the wider region. The book reflects the views people at the time had of the ruling political elite, as well as demonstrating that Al-Zubarah was able to thrive despite its involvement with the region's four dominant powers. The book also reveals several episodes in this clash, then shows the importance of Sheikh Othman bin Sanad in the memory of Al-Zubarah in Qatar, Kuwait, and Bahrain, as well as the importance of Al-Zubarah as the site where the Gulf states first appeared. Thus, the paper is divided into three parts, the first focusing on the political entity of Al-Zubarah, the second on the wider world around the city and the third on memory of the city after its population abandoned it. These themes give important keys to understanding the roots of the contemporary Gulf states, as well as finding alternatives to the Euro-centric concepts still used in the academic arena. Likewise, the paper shows the city's political experience as its contemporaries understood it and recognized its importance – not merely as a period of transition to modernity, Western influence, or British hegemony.



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Saudi Historiography: Observations from Writing the History of a City

This paper draws on the author's experience of writing the history of the Saudi Arabian port city of Jeddah, trying to bring as much as possible the local historical perspective, as drawn from local sources and local historiography, into the picture. In the course of this work, which lasted about 12 years (2006-2018), the author would argue that a number of major changes in local historiography took place. The paper will focus on two topics: the writing of urban history, and the archival situation. The paper first sketches the development of local history writing, and then comments on the archival situation for this task. A lot of effort has been and is currently being put in collecting state papers, particularly by the King Abdul Aziz Foundation for Research and Archives in the Centre of Riyadh, the King Faysal Foundation, and the Institute of Public Administration. The overall situation of archives suggests a somewhat haphazard and often serendipitous process which reflects, in some manner, the genesis and institutional development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This archival situation, together with the foreign training of many professional historians, might explain the preference of professional historians for foreign archives. These of course also follow certain general notions of the respective national "interests" of their countries and hence rules of what is and is not preserved, and what is declassified when. Nevertheless, their preferred use gives these foreign archives a privileged role in the writing of Saudi history, something which cannot be in the long term interest of the country itself.

Chairs

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Professor of Modern History at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and Editor-in-Chief of the *Ostour* journal for historical studies. He was a professor at Mohammed V University in Rabat. His publications include "Paradise of the Infidels: An Ottoman Ambassador in Paris, 1721" (2017); "The Ottomans: Institutions, Economics, and Culture" (2008); "A Moroccan Ambassador in Madrid at the End of the 17th Century" (2005); and "Morocco and Sublime Porte Between the mid-17th Century and the End of the 18th Century" (1998).

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