



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

The Eleventh Annual

Gulf Studies Forum

- Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question
- The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent

30 November – 1 December 2024

[About the Forum](#) | [Timetable](#) | [Forum Participants](#) | [Abstracts](#) | [Chairs](#)



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About the Forum

Track I – Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question

The Palestine question has occupied a centre stage in Arab politics since the early years of the twentieth century. As the conflict over Palestine intensified due to increased Jewish immigration in the 1930s and the rise of Arab resistance, the Palestine question began to echo more forcefully in the Arab Gulf, particularly beginning in April 1936 with the protests in Jaffa against the British government's decision to approve an increase in Jewish immigration to Palestine, paving the way for the Great Palestinian Revolt. The British feared that developments in Palestine would negatively impact their presence in the Gulf.

The Nakba of 1948, and the rooting of the cause of Palestine in Arab consciousness as the central Arab issue, contributed to Arabs' sense of themselves as a single nation, even though the Arabs ultimately lost the war and failed to prevent the establishment of the State of Israel.

After the Nakba of Palestine, the Arab Gulf states, most of which were still under British protection, began to attract large Palestinian communities, whose social, political, economic, and developmental role soon became apparent, and they played a prominent role in developing education, media, and government services at a time when these countries were preparing to launch a major development and modernization process, which accelerated when oil revenues began flowing into the Gulf states.

During the Tripartite Aggression against Egypt in 1956, Gulf involvement in the Arab conflict with Israel became more prominent. Saudi Arabia joined the rest of the Arab world in supporting Egypt by providing financial aid and cutting diplomatic ties with France and Britain, to whom they also cut off oil supplies. The subsequent emergence of the "Arab Cold War" between Egypt and Saudi Arabia made no dent in these countries' position on the Palestine question, and the situation remained unchanged until the June 1967 War, which marked a watershed development in contemporary Arab history. At the Arab Summit held in Khartoum in August 1967, Saudi Arabia, Libya, and Kuwait established the "Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development" to support Arab countries that had lost their lands in the war with Israel. During the summit, all Arab countries pledged not to make peace with Israel, not to negotiate with it, and not to recognize it.

The October War of 1973 saw direct Gulf involvement in the Arab war effort against Israel. Saudi Arabia sent forces to support the Syrian front, and Kuwait sent forces to both the Syrian and the Egyptian fronts. On 17 October, Kuwait convened a meeting of the Arab oil-exporting countries, which included all the Gulf states with the exception of the Sultanate of Oman. Those who attended the meeting agreed to reduce oil production, while there was a notable increase in the volume of donations by the Arab Gulf states to the Palestine Liberation Organization, which the Arabs recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people at the Eighth Arab Summit in Rabat in 1974.

In 1979, Ayatollah Khomeini announced the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The new government announced its intention to export the revolution and bring down Western-allied regimes. With support and assistance from the Arab Gulf states, Iraq subsequently declared war on Iran. The war lasted eight years, decimating the capabilities of both countries and relegating the Palestine questions to the margins.

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on 2 August 1990 was a turning point in contemporary Arab history. After Iraq's defeat in the war to liberate Kuwait, the PLO was isolated in the Gulf because its head, Yasser Arafat, supported Saddam Hussein in the war. Given the PLO's isolation, its loss of an arena for confrontation in Lebanon in 1982, the collapse of the socialist camp, and the exhaustion of the First Intifada five years after its outbreak, the PLO had no choice but to accept the proposals by the United States after the Gulf War at the Madrid Conference (1991). It was this process that led to the Oslo Accords in September 1993.

The events of 11 September 2001 and the United States' declaration of what was termed the "War on Terror" impacted the Gulf states' attitudes toward the Palestinian issue. The Arab Peace Initiative proposed in 2002 by Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its fourteenth regular session in Beirut. This initiative proposed the possibility of establishing normal and direct relations with Israel if it withdrew from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and granted the Palestinian people their legitimate rights.

After Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005 and Hamas took control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 after a conflict with the Palestinian National Liberation Movement (Fatah), Israel launched a military assault on the Gaza Strip in December 2008-January 2009. In response, Qatar sought to hold an Arab summit on Gaza in Doha to formulate a position on the latest Israeli aggression. However, the boycott of the summit by Egypt, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states revealed deep divisions among the Arab Gulf states over the Palestinian issue. These divisions began to crystallize particularly after the Israeli war on Lebanon in July 2006, for which Saudi Arabia held the Lebanese resistance responsible.

During the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, attempts to return the Palestine question to the centre of regional and international attention met with little success. When Donald Trump came to power in 2017, there were escalated attempts to liquidate the Palestine question; and on 15 September 2020, representatives of the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain went to the White House to sign peace agreements with Israel dubbed "the Abraham Accords", while Operation Al-Aqsa Flood and the war of extermination Israel has launched since then have had no effect on this ongoing normalization process.

Given the importance and current relevance of the topic, Arab Gulf states' relationship to the Palestinian issue will be one of the two discussion themes at the Eleventh Gulf Studies Forum.

Track II – The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent

Cities of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula have been the subject of numerous studies. This interest is undoubtedly linked to the fact that several cities in the region have gained broad international attention due to the rapid growth in their architecture and urban planning, rendering them global points of attraction. Research interest in Gulf cities is due not only to their growth and global rise, but also to the prevailing sense that Gulf cities have formed in the context of the rentier Gulf state's reliance on consumption and importation, and that their developments have aimed primarily to attract the global flow of goods and capital. These cities have therefore drawn largely from globalization and the importation of architectural and urban styles, which means that they lack an internal source of permanence.¹

Most research on Gulf cities has been concentrated in the fields of architecture and urban studies (the latter of which focuses on sustainability), and to a lesser extent in history, sociology, and cultural studies, with very little in political science.² There is a clear trend in some of these studies to "de-exceptionalize" the cities of the region, that is, to test notions that see them as following economic, political, and cultural trajectories common to other world metropolises.

One of the main factors contributing to the global rise of Gulf cities has been their openness to modernity and globalization, and the states' reliance on Western architects and planners. However, this tendency has created a fundamental knowledge gap associated with the architects' lack of knowledge of the region's traditional architectural and urban heritage.

The global nature of the Gulf city lies in its existence at the heart of dualities that have controlled the social dynamics in the region, most prominently its place in opposition to the desert, the other main end in these dualities. Some may argue that the Gulf region has never had major metropolises in the same manner as in the Arab Levant, however, Gulf cities have played a fundamental role in the region's social development

1 Some academics argue that contemporary Gulf city planning lacks elements of sustainability. See: Ali A. Alraouf, "Contemporary Gulf Cities' Urbanism: The Dilemma of Unsustainable Developments and Energy Conservation," in: Giacomo Luciani & Rabia Ferroukhi (eds.), *The Political Economy of Energy Reform: The Clean Energy Fossil Fuel Balance in The Gulf States* (Berlin/London: Gerlach Press, 2014), pp. 183-204.

2 See, for example: Yasser Elsheshtawy, *Dubai: Behind an Urban Spectacle* (London: Routledge, 2009); Nelida Fuccaro, *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Mehran Kamrava (ed.), *Gateways to the World: Port Cities in the Persian Gulf* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016); Ahmed Kanna, *Dubai: The City as Corporation* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); Pascal Menoret, *Joyriding in Riyadh: Oil, Urbanism, and Road Revolt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Farah Al-Nakib, *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Florian Wiedmann & Ashraf M. Salama, *Demystifying Doha: On Architecture and Urbanism in an Emerging City* (London: Routledge, 2013). For traditional references that preceded contemporary literature, see: Hassan Al-Khayyat, *Al-Madīna al-ʿArabiyya al-Khalījīyya* [The Arab Gulf City] (Doha: Center for Documentation and Humanitarian Studies, Qatar University, 1988).

by embracing a lifestyle different from that of the desert, with most being coastal cities with connection to the sea rather than to the desert and, by extension, to the particular cultural, economic, and social ties. Thus, as sociological formations, Gulf cities have been a positive factor in development, and not merely a theatre in which this development takes place.

No one can claim that all the cities of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula reflect a global character. While this is true of the region's major cities, some of which are home to large populations, other cities (some of which are significant in the region's history) still adheres to the traditional style, or, at least, have not taken on a global character. These cities are also undoubtedly worthy of study and attention.

At the same time, Gulf cities that have taken on a global character have begun to resemble other global cities, especially in Asia (Malaysia and Singapore, for example) in architectural and urban structures. In this global resemblance, some Gulf cities differ from cities in the same Gulf region that still experience apparent historical or cultural continuity with the past.

The emergence of the modern state in the region coincided with the discovery of oil there in the 1930s, which had a radical impact on the city. At the same time, tribalism and coastal affiliation continue to enjoy importance because they are a type of symbolic capital, which continues to leave its mark on cities' construction and planning. Hence, Gulf cities have become major magnets for individuals, ideas, goods and commodities, services, academic institutions, and social development both for their citizens and for immigrants, in addition to their openness to the world in a way that has enabled them to outdo cities with long histories in the region. Also, the rise and rapid growth of a number of Gulf cities into global symbols cannot be separated from the national Gulf state's quest to create a national brand.

When Gulf cities became global points of attraction, they became incubators, sources, and bridges for a worldwide movement which includes the flow of information, capital, symbols, elements of power, and demographics. As a result, the project of the national state in the Gulf to "manufacture" some of its cities and export them to the world as national brands has led to these cities becoming transnational points. These dynamics led to the development of multicultural societies due to the financial and economic boom after the emergence of the oil industry.

The Eleventh Gulf Studies Forum seeks to highlight the importance of Gulf cities for global research.

Timetable

Day 1, Saturday, 30 November 2024

8:30-9:00	Registration	
9:00-9:30	Opening Remarks (Main Auditorium) His Excellency, Dr Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi Chair: Alanoud Al-Khalifa	
9:30-11:00	Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question (Main Auditorium)	
	The Attitudes of the Gulf States toward the Palestine Question Chair: Ghanim Al-Najjar Abdul Aziz bin Othman bin Saqr: The Saudi Position on the Israeli War on Gaza and Its Determinants Abdullah Al-Ghailani: Palestine and the Gulf States: Multiple Approaches and Positions Sultan Al Khulaifi: Qatari Foreign Policy toward the Palestinian Question during the Rule of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972-1995)	
11:00-11:15	Coffee Break	
11:15-12:45	Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question (Auditorium 2)	The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)
	The Gulf States and the Palestine Question: Trends and Models Chair: Hatim Al-Shanfari Asaad Saleh Al-Shamlan: "The Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution": A Reading of the Saudi Perspective on Solving the Palestine Question Shireen Mubarak: The Palestine Question in US-Saudi Relations 1933-1953 Hossam Elsayed Zaki Shalabi: The Trucial States, Oman, and the Palestine Question 1917-1948 "Indications of Early Gulf Interaction on the Matter"	The City and Nation-Building (1): The Saudi Case Chair: Saad Albazei Ulrike Freitag: Cities as Nodes of Identities: Some Considerations Alanoud Al-Khalifa: Memory, Trauma, and the Political Identity of the City: Diriyah as an Example Rufei Li: The Role of Urban Transformation in Saudi Nation-Building: The Case of <i>al-Balad</i> , Jeddah

12:45-13:45	Lunch Break	
13:45-15:15	<p>Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question (Auditorium 2)</p>	<p>The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)</p>
	<p>The War on Gaza, the Day After, and the Future of US-Gulf Relations</p> <p>Gulf International Forum</p> <p>Chair: Dania Thafer</p> <p>Kristian Ulrichsen: The War on Gaza and the US Foreign Policy in the Gulf After the 2024 Presidential Election</p> <p>Mohammad Ghanem Al-Rumaihi: Challenges and Balances in Gulf-US Relations since the War on Gaza</p> <p>Inderjeet Parmar: Implications of US Election Results for the Gulf and Middle East</p>	<p>The City and Nation-Building (2): Khaliji Cases</p> <p>Chair: Amal Ghazal</p> <p>Sundus Al-Rashid: The Status of the Museum in the Contemporary Structure of the Gulf City: Between Urban Planning and National Symbolism, The Case of Kuwait</p> <p>Saoud Abdulaziz Al Ahmad, Amnah Abdullah Alshammari & Betul Uzun: Utilizing Space in Shaping National Identity in Qatar: A Case Study of Msheireb and Souq Waqif</p> <p>Djamel Boussaa: Urban Regeneration in a Global World: Cases from the Historic Cities in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula: Dubai, Doha, and Jeddah</p>
15:15-15:30	Coffee Break	
15:30-16:45	<p>The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)</p>	
	<p>Urban Modernization Structures as a Social Agent</p> <p>Chair: Yagoub Al-Kandari</p> <p>Yasser Mahgoub: Transformative Gulf Cities: The Role of Urban Structures as Agents of Social Change in Kuwait and Doha</p> <p>Mahdi Laadhari: Modernization and its Urban Consequences: A Critical Review of the Academic Literature on the Kuwaiti Diwaniya</p>	
16:45-17:00	Coffee Break	

17:00-18:15	The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)
	<p data-bbox="621 414 1076 447" style="text-align: center;">The Gulf City and Modern Urbanism</p> <p data-bbox="681 478 1016 505" style="text-align: center;">Chair: Abdulrahman Albaker</p> <p data-bbox="405 527 1294 589" style="text-align: center;">Davide Ponzini: Gulf Cities' Planning from a Transnational Perspective: Limitations and Opportunities for Critical Learning</p> <p data-bbox="367 611 1332 673" style="text-align: center;">Mustapha Ben-Hamouche: Fast Cities and Mega-Urbanism: Planning for Wealth, Welfare, and Well-Being in the Gulf City</p>

Day 2, Sunday, 1 December 2024

9:00-10:30	<p>Keynote (Main Auditorium)</p> <p>Nelida Fuccaro: The Literature and Life of Gulf Cities: Area Studies, Arabism, Westernism, and the Conundrum of the Global</p> <p>Yasser Elsheshtawy: Transience and Temporality in Arab Gulf Cities</p> <p>Chair: Abdulrahman Alebrahim</p>	
10:30-10:45	Coffee Break	
10:45-12:15	<p>Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question (Auditorium 2)</p>	<p>The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)</p>
	<p>Gulf Normalization with Israel: Implications for the Palestine Question</p> <p>Chair: Abdul Hadi Alajmi</p> <p>Abdullah Baabood: From Rejection to Normalization: How Have the Gulf States Changed Their Stances on Palestine?</p> <p>Nouf Abdulatife Aljassar: The Role of the United States of America in Consolidating the Abraham Accords with the GCC States: Proposed Initiatives and Future Challenges</p> <p>Dana El Kurd: The Impact of Arab-Israeli Normalization on Authoritarianism</p>	<p>The Gulf City: Modernization and Dystopia</p> <p>Chair: Abdulla Mohammed Al Sulaiti</p> <p>Baqer Al Najjar: Cities or Resorts: Escaping the Bustle of Overcrowded Gulf Cities</p> <p>Federico Cugurullo: Cyberpunk Urban Fantasies in the Gulf: The Line as an Incubator of Modernization in Saudi Arabia and Beyond</p>
12:15-13:15	Lunch Break	

13:15-14:45	Arab Gulf States and the Palestine Question (Auditorium 2)	The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)
	<p>Gulf States and the War on Gaza</p> <p>Chair: Yousuf Hamad Al-Balushi</p> <p>Dhafer Al Ajmi: The Positions of the Gulf States on Israeli Aggression in Gaza</p> <p>Naji Abi-Aad: Impacts of the Gaza Crisis on the Energy Sector in the Middle East</p> <p>Khalid Hamad Abaalzamat: Gulf Public Opinion regarding Qatari Foreign Policy toward the Israeli War on Gaza</p>	<p>The Gulf City: Globality and Globalism</p> <p>Chair: Said Al-Hashimi</p> <p>Mehran Kamrava: Urbanism and Globalization in the Gulf</p> <p>Safa Sobh Sababheh: Gulf Cities as a Global Phenomenon: The Case of Saudi Eastern Coast Cities</p> <p>Simona Azzali: The Gulf City, Rapid Urban Transformations, and Globalization: A Critical Review of Current Urban Planning Practices</p>
14:45-15:00	Coffee Break	
15:00-16:30	<p>Popular and Official Attitudes in the Gulf States toward the Palestine Question</p> <p>Chair: Ibtihal Al-Khatib</p> <p>Nasser Saif Alsaadi & Saif Adi Al-Maskari: The Omani Approach to the Palestine Question from the Nakba to Camp David</p> <p>Reham Amro: Kuwaitis and The Cause: A Study of Political Awareness Transformations Toward the Palestine Question (1929-1975)</p> <p>Yara Nassar: Forgotten Chapters: Palestinian Liberation Movements in their Gulf Cradle</p>	<p>Climate Change and Environmental Balance in the Gulf City</p> <p>Chair: Hasan Madan</p> <p>Nabil Khaldoun Grissa: The Origins of the Historical Gulf City and Environmental Balance</p> <p>Arshad Mahmood: Resilience Strategies in Gulf Smart Cities: Addressing Climate Change and Urban Policy Challenges</p> <p>Alaa AlShehabi & Noor Alshaikh: Sacrifice Zones on Oil Frontiers: Indigenous Struggles for Environmental Justice in the Bahraini Villages of Sitra and Ma'ameer</p>

16:30-16:45	Coffee Break
16:45-18:00	The Gulf City as a Structure and Social Agent (Meeting Room 003)
	<p style="text-align: center;">The Gulf City: Toward a Sustainable Future</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Chair: Haider Saeed</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Ali A Alraouf: A New Paradigm in Gulf Cities' Emerging Urbanity: The Inevitability of Moving Toward Inclusive, Just, and Liveable Cities</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Alawi Almshahur & Ghassan Al-Qalhati: Cities on Shifting Sands</p>
18:00-18:15	Concluding Remarks

Participants

Abstracts



Abdul Aziz bin Othman bin Saqr

International Relations Scholar, holding a PhD from Lancaster University and a master's from the University of Kent, focused on advancing the Gulf region's role regionally and internationally. He founded an independent, non-profit research institution in 2000 dedicated to studying the GCC states, Iraq, Iran, and Yemen. He has taught as a lecturer and visiting professor at various universities and contributed to research initiatives on Gulf, Iranian, Syrian, Yemeni, and Iraqi affairs. Additionally, he has published research on political, military, and strategic topics and regularly writes on regional issues in local and international media. He serves as Editor-in-Chief for two publications on Gulf affairs and has received several honours, including the French National Order of Merit (Knight rank) in 2024.

The Saudi Position on the Israeli War on Gaza and Its Determinants

The paper highlights the consistency of Saudi Arabia's position on the Palestinian issue from the Nakba in 1948 to the present day. This is rooted in its support for the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent state within the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital. Since King Abdulaziz's 1945 meeting with US President Roosevelt, Saudi Arabia has adhered to the Arab consensus on Palestine, employing its political and Islamic influence, including the "oil weapon", to advocate for the cause. Saudi Arabia has consistently linked recognition of Israel to reciprocal recognition of a Palestinian state, as articulated in the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which frames peace as a strategic option contingent on justice and Palestinian rights. The paper also examines the positions of current Saudi leadership, including the Crown Prince's remarks that normalization with Israel depends on establishing a Palestinian state based on international law and UN resolutions. Additionally, Saudi diplomatic efforts include launching the "International Coalition to Implement the Two-State Solution" and advocating for freezing Israel's UN participation while entrenching Palestine's membership. The paper concludes that Saudi Arabia's core principles on Palestine remain unchanged, and the Gaza War has further clarified and reinforced its demands for Palestinian self-determination and the establishment of a viable, sovereign state within the 1967 borders.



Abdullah Al-Ghailani

Omani Researcher focusing on strategic affairs in the Gulf. He holds a PhD in International Relations from Durham University, UK. He has participated in numerous international forums and conferences in the Gulf and beyond. His research focuses on political thought, US foreign policy and Gulf states' strategic concerns.

Palestine and the Gulf States: Multiple Approaches and Positions

Gulf approaches to the Palestine question have undergone several stages since the 1948 Nakba. Operation Al-Aqsa flood imposed new facts that the countries of the region (including the Gulf states) dealt with, through contrasting approaches that reflect the strategic positioning of each country and its political and moral perspective. This paper argues that the Gulf stance towards the Palestine question has come to be governed by geostrategic factors, including attitudes towards political Islam, led by the Palestinian resistance movement (Hamas), which in turn drives the protest movement in the Arab region, as well as the security dimension in the relationship with Iran. These factors combined have distorted the image of the Palestinian cause in a way that justifies rapprochement with Israel. The paper dissects the different positions of the Arab Gulf states towards the Palestine Question and the role of the relationship with Iran. It concludes that Al-Aqsa Flood has had major geopolitical repercussions and continues to overturn regional equations, with the Gulf states in the crosshairs of these transformations. The outcome will depend on the strategic awareness of policy makers and their ability to be objective in understanding the facts on the ground instead of being dependent on wishful thinking and an unconscious bias towards the US and Israeli vision of a regime security for normalization trade-off.



Abdullah Baabood

Omani Researcher. He holds the Qatar chair 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 economic, social, and political developments and 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.

From Rejection to Normalization: How Have the Gulf States Changed Their Stances on Palestine?

The interest of the Arab Gulf states in the Palestine question has transformed significantly, especially in the past two decades. While it once represented one of the most important fundamental matters of interest to the Arab Gulf states, this interest began to wane for many reasons. This paper analyses the developments in recent years that have contributed to influencing the policies of the Gulf States regarding the Palestine question and the wider Arab Israeli conflict, starting with the Iranian Revolution in 1979 and the subsequent policy of interference in some Arab countries, its support for some non-state actors, and the sectarian conflict it has triggered. The paper also examines the impact of the Egyptian Israeli peace treaty of 1979, other Arab peace agreements and the impact of the Palestinian leadership's support for the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and the internal Palestinian division. It considers the repercussions of the Arab Spring, the emergence of the Muslim Brotherhood, and intra-Arab conflicts, which increased some Gulf states' apprehensions about increasing instability in the region. The study concludes that these events and their repercussions, in addition to the trend towards economic diversification, have led the Arab Gulf States to amend their policies towards Palestine and embark on a process of normalization with the occupying state. However, while the events of 7 October have shuffled the cards, the future of Gulf States' positions on the Palestine question remains unclear.

Alaa AlShehabi

Associate Professor of Economics at UCL, United Kingdom. She is a transdisciplinary and mixed methods researcher focusing on public goods, infrastructure and development, energy justice, participatory action methods, and citizen scholarship through citizen science and citizen assemblies with a Middle East area focus.

Sacrifice Zones on Oil Frontiers: Indigenous Struggles for Environmental Justice in the Bahraini Villages of Sitra and Ma'ameer

This paper argues that on the oil frontier in Bahrain, "sacrifice zones" have left indelible health and environmental impacts and are the cause of radical resistance in this small Gulf state. On the eastern side of the Bahrain archipelago lies the island of Sitra, containing the largest industrial complex of oil refineries – the largest belonging to BAPCO, Bahrain's national oil company, desalination plants, and factories. The Sitra port and the navigation of vessels within that area are of highly strategic national importance. Surrounding the refinery are the villages of Ma'ameer, the closest village to the industrial area, as well as Nuwaidrat, Al Eker, East Riffa, and Sanad. Historically, these villages have formed a rural island periphery – relatively distant from Manama's urban and political centre. Lying 3 km from the existing Bapco discharge points, is Fasht Al-Adham, known for the country's best fishing and shrimping grounds. The indigenous community relies on fishing as a way of life and livelihood but in recent years fish stocks have dwindled. This paper conducts archival research to understand the colonial logic of placing an oil refinery in the middle of these villages. Second, it looks at the environmental and political impact on the residents of the villages through ethnographic storytelling using photography and oral testimony so that subalterns may speak. Finally, it explores the long struggle for justice that ties environmental degradation directly to the radical political views that the people of Sitra have become known for.

Alanoud 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.

Memory, Trauma, and the Political Identity of the City: Diriyah as an Example

Memory and history play a critical role in shaping the political identity of cities, as their heritage sites reflect the collective memory of the nation and document pivotal turning points in its trajectory. Diriyah exemplifies a distinctive case among Gulf cities, deriving its symbolic significance from its status as a witness to momentous historical events. This research focuses on the role of Diriyah as an open museum that showcases a transformative shift in political narratives, separating itself from traditional religious frameworks, thereby establishing itself as a unique paradigm in the Gulf. The study elucidates how the historical narrative of Diriyah, including its experiences of siege and its material heritage, is employed to affirm political legitimacy and reinforce the vision of the contemporary nation-state. It underscores the Saudi state's strategy of activating collective memory through Diriyah, aiming to cultivate a national identity that fosters loyalty and belonging by reinterpreting the past within new political contexts. While most museums in the Gulf adopt an integrative approach that intertwines heritage, authenticity, and modernity, Diriyah uniquely emphasizes the utilization of memory and trauma to construct a political narrative that resonates with the modern state agenda. Consequently, it emerges not only as a symbol of Saudi Arabia's future but also as a tangible monument that encapsulates its foundational memory and political evolution.



Alawi Almshahur

Researcher in Politics and International Relations. He works as a researcher in Geopolitical Economics and a member of the 11th Five-Year Plan at the Ministry of Economy in Oman. He holds a Master of International Relations and Security Studies from Sultan Qaboos University, and completed his Bachelor's at the University of Canberra in Australia. He writes for several Omani and Arab research and cultural platforms and is a co-founder of the Tadafor Research Center. His research interests focus on Politics, Economics, and Urban Planning.

Cities on Shifting Sands

This paper discusses the history of the modern Gulf city, its transformations, and the temporary character that results from its demographic composition and reliance on foreign labour. It examines the nature of the Gulf city's funding, tied to temporary oil reserves, for projects and its evolution as a transit city seeking the status of a global logistics hub through airports, ports, and flows of trade, tourism, and people. The paper addresses the significant horizontal expansion in the modern Gulf city and analyses land acquisition in Kuwait and the first five-year plan in the Gulf, which ushered in a modern approach to urban development. Here, the state emerged as a key player in the planning and management of the city, while the individual diminished after the oil boom. The study reviews several cases in different Gulf cities to illustrate planning distortions and the absence of human considerations, primarily referencing three important texts: *Roots of Displacement: Real Estate Projects and Population Imbalance in the Gulf Cooperation Council* by Omar AlShehabi, *Temporary Cities: Resisting Transience in Arabia* by Yasser Elsheshtawy, and *Humans, Urbanization, and Language: The Decline of Patterns in the Arab City* by Driss Makboul. While the paper focuses on the history and transformations of the modern Gulf city, it also offers a critical reading of new city projects in the Gulf, such as The Pearl and Lusail in Qatar, NEOM and King Abdullah Economic City in Saudi Arabia, Masdar and Palm Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates, and Madinat al-Hareer in Kuwait, along with Duqm and Sultan Haitham City in Oman.



Ali A Alraouf

Visiting Professor at Hamad Bin Khalifa University, and Consultant of Capacity Building, Research, and Development at the Urban Planning Department in Qatar. He has received several local, regional, and international awards in architecture, planning, criticism, teaching, and scientific research. His research interests include contemporary Gulf cities, creative knowledge, cities, post-oil urbanism, the creative value of architectural and urban heritage, and architectural and urban criticism. His published works include: "Architecture and Urbanism in the Post-Covid-19 City" (2022); *The Arab City: Challenges of Urbanization in Transformative Societies* (2020); and *From Mecca to Las Vegas: Propositions in Architecture and Sacredness* (2014).

A New Paradigm in Gulf Cities' Emerging Urbanity: The Inevitability of Moving Toward Inclusive, Just, and Liveable Cities

This paper presents a historical and contemporary interpretation of the dynamics that have shaped Gulf cities, offering a new perspective on the future of these cities that moves beyond reliance on oil and the spectacle of urbanization. It introduces a range of strategies and tools that develop Gulf cities as urban contexts for all in a safe, fair, and sustainable manner, countering the criticisms that often label them as mere airport cities or amusement parks. The paper assesses the production of urban spaces within this new model, where the transition is from building glittering cities to creating fair, sustainable, resilient, and liveable urban environments in the Gulf. As urban theories often fail to account for the remarkable and rapid urbanization of these "new" Gulf cities, the paper adopts a new perspective on the value of Gulf cities, challenging traditional and contemporary forms of urbanization. It explores these cities in light of concepts such as dissolution, justice, hybridity, and unpredictability in their interpretive models, looking at what lies beyond the classical interpretation of Gulf city morphology and aiming to dismantle biases. The paper accounts for a broader global and regional context that raises new challenges and examines projects from selected Gulf cities to illustrate the dynamics and composition of the urban landscape in these cities.

Amnah Abdullah Alshammari

Master's student in the Sociology and Anthropology program at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She graduated from Public Policy at Qatar University.

Utilizing Space in Shaping National Identity in Qatar: A Case Study of Msheireb and Souq Waqif

This paper examines the strategic use of urban spaces in shaping national identity in Qatar, focusing on Msheireb and Souq Waqif. By employing visual ethnography, it explores how these spaces embody and project the dual aspects of Qatari heritage – traditional and modern. Msheireb integrates contemporary architecture with traditional elements, symbolizing a modern yet rooted cultural identity, in contrast with Souq Waqif, a revived traditional market, creating vibrant social and commercial interactions. The study utilizes Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production to understand how these spaces are not merely physical locations but are containers with significant sociopolitical narratives that contribute to the collective national identity. The findings highlight the essential role of designed urban environments in reinforcing and reinterpreting national heritage and identity, offering insights for future urban and sociological studies.



Arshad Mahmood

Senior Lecturer at FOM University of Applied Sciences in Essen, Germany. He holds a PhD in Management (Entrepreneurship) from Universiti Sains Malaysia and has over eight years of research experience. He has worked with the Deanship of Scientific Research at Imam Abdul Rahman Bin Faisal University in Saudi Arabia. He has been awarded prestigious grants, such as the Sumitomo Foundation Grant in Japan and the Fundamental Research Grant Scheme (FRGS) by Malaysia's Ministry of Education. His research interests include climate change and circular economy practices. He has published extensively in reputable journals, with a research focus on management, entrepreneurship, climate change, and circular economy.

Resilience Strategies in Gulf Smart Cities: Addressing Climate Change and Urban Policy Challenges

This paper investigates whether Gulf smart cities in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates are resilient enough to counterbalance climate change challenges, focusing on urban planning and policy implications. By conducting semi-structured interviews with urban planning experts, academics, and international sustainability experts, the research reveals the challenges and offers an appropriate solution to increase urban resilience. The paper's findings unveil three primary concerns: infrastructure vulnerability, technological and resource limitations, and social-economic and policy challenges. The most critical problems include poor stormwater and drainage systems, non-renewable energy sources, and poor public involvement in the decision-making process. Among the critical solutions to the problems, the key informants enumerated new holistic approaches to infrastructure implementation, including green infrastructure, better and more efficient data analytics, and updated policies and institutions contributing to sustainable practices and technologies.



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. He holds a PhD and an MA in Political Science from the University of Exeter, He is a member of the International Political Science Association (IPSA). Al-Shamlan has published widely 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).

"The Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution": A Reading of the Saudi Perspective on Solving the Palestine Question

This paper discusses "The Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution", announced by Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, on 27 September 2024, during the 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly. This represents the latest in a string of efforts undertaken by Saudi diplomacy over more than four decades towards a two-state solution. The paper addresses the of continuity and transformation of this initiative from earlier efforts, arguing that it reinforces the relationship between the Saudi approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and Arab and international tradition that emphasizes the centrality of the two-state solution for a peaceful and just settlement of the conflict, while also indicating elements of a shift away from the traditional approach. The paper analyses the transformations in the Arab approach to the conflict with Israel, especially after the 1978 Egyptian Israeli peace agreement, when the Arab approach to the issue was reframed from an existential struggle as a border conflict. This development also produced a new framework for the idea of the balance of power with the Israeli side, derived from the ability of the Arab and Israeli sides to effectively employ their relationship with Washington either by maintaining or enhancing their strategic superiority, or by forcing the other side, through Washington, to submit to the requirements of the two-state solution. The paper concludes that this approach has hit a dead end that necessitates creating a new prospects through the new Global Alliance.



Baqer Al Najjar

Advisory Board member for the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies Unit at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He holds a PhD in Sociology from Durham University, United Kingdom (1983), a Postgraduate Diploma from Alexandria University (1978), and a Bachelor of Arts from Kuwait University (1976). He has worked as a visiting professor at Kuwait University, Qatar University, and at the University of Exeter's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, and as a visiting researcher at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Harvard University. He was a member of the Bahraini Shura Council (2000-2002) and has held several other positions. His published works include: *Contemporary Religious Movements in the Arabian Gulf* (2019); *The Inhibited Modernity in the Arabian Gulf* (2018); and *The Stubborn Democracy in the Arabian Gulf* (2008), among others.

Cities or Resorts: Escaping the Bustle of Overcrowded Gulf Cities

This paper describes the case of some new Gulf cities or parts of them. Some, or perhaps most, of these cities are located along the coast, while others have been built deep into the desert. These cities have emerged because of the growing consumer behaviour patterns of a significant segment of the population, creating a demand for resorts where high-income groups, as well as the upper strata of the new middle class (both locals and expatriates), can find leisure. Some people frequent these cities every weekend as "weekend homes", which, in reality, are settlements with a specific social structure that does not represent society as a whole. These settlements have fewer social constraints related to dress, food, and perhaps behaviour, which are more pronounced in local neighbourhoods and public spaces that dictate what is socially acceptable and punishable in terms of conduct and attire. These settlements tend to be bustling with activity during weekends but remain quiet during the rest of the week. Many of them have a prominent presence of foreigners, which sometimes grants them a significant degree of social freedom. In other words, these cities offer their residents – both locals and expatriates, whether permanent or temporary – a space to engage in social and recreational activities and enjoy a wealth of social freedoms that are not available in their original residential areas.

Betul Uzun

Researcher and student of Sociology at Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul and of Sociology and Anthropology at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. She holds an undergraduate degree from Ibn Haldun University (2022). Her academic interests focus on migration, identity, and gender studies.

Utilizing Space in Shaping National Identity in Qatar: A Case Study of Msheireb and Souq Waqif

This paper examines the strategic use of urban spaces in shaping national identity in Qatar, focusing on Msheireb and Souq Waqif. By employing visual ethnography, it explores how these spaces embody and project the dual aspects of Qatari heritage – traditional and modern. Msheireb integrates contemporary architecture with traditional elements, symbolizing a modern yet rooted cultural identity, in contrast with Souq Waqif, a revived traditional market, creating vibrant social and commercial interactions. The study utilizes Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production to understand how these spaces are not merely physical locations but are containers with significant sociopolitical narratives that contribute to the collective national identity. The findings highlight the essential role of designed urban environments in reinforcing and reinterpreting national heritage and identity, offering insights for future urban and sociological studies.



Dana El Kurd

Assistant Professor of Political Science at the University of Richmond and Senior Nonresident fellow at the Arab Center Washington. She holds a PhD in Government with concentrations in Comparative Politics and International Relations and has focused her work on authoritarian regimes in the Arab world, state-society relations in these countries, and the impact of international intervention. She has published in peer-reviewed journals such as *PS Political Science & Politics*, *Journal of Global Security Studies*, *Middle East Law and Governance*, *Siyasat Arabiya*, *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, *Parameters*, and more. Her book *Polarized and Demobilized: Legacies of Authoritarianism in Palestine* was published in 2020 with Oxford University Press.

The Impact of Arab-Israeli Normalization on Authoritarianism

What is the impact of Arab-Israeli normalization on Arab countries? Normalization that does not address the root causes of conflict, and maintains structural violence, can facilitate authoritarian practices through both material and discursive mechanisms. I examine this dynamic across the Gulf Cooperation Council states with varying authoritarian practices and ties to Israel. The paper contributes to our understanding of the impact of illiberal peace and how it functions, transnationally and at varying levels within and outside state authority.



Davide Ponzini

Full Professor of Urban Planning at Politecnico di Milano, Italy, and the Director of the Transnational Architecture and Urbanism Lab. He has been a visiting scholar at Yale, John Hopkins, Columbia University, and Sciences Po, and Visiting Professor at Technical University Munich. His research interests focus on planning theory, urban and cultural policy, architectural design, and heritage preservation. *He edited The Faces of Contemporary Cities (2024)* and a co-editor of the book *The New Arab Urban: Gulf Cities of Wealth, Ambition, and Distress (2019)*. His latest authored book is titled *Transnational Architecture and Urbanism: Rethinking How Cities Plan, Transform, and Learn (2023)*.

Gulf Cities' Planning from a Transnational Perspective: Limitations and Opportunities for Critical Learning

In the last twenty years, the largest cities of the Arabian Peninsula experienced dramatic growth combined with great exposure of their projects on the international scene. The outstanding speed, scale, and exuberance of plans and projects in cities like Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Doha, and, more recently, Riyadh, represented the great ambitions and means of local leaders. These cities became the testing ground for international planning and design firms to experiment with new technologies and solutions under extreme conditions. Despite this abundant experimentation, there is limited space for critically learning from experience, for openly discussing what worked and what did not, and for generating and sharing usable planning knowledge across the GCC region. This paper briefly presents recent plans and mega-projects in relevant Gulf cities. It highlights reasons why there are limitations and, as well, unique opportunities to advance planning knowledge in the Gulf region and beyond.



Dhafer Al Ajmi

Executive Director of the Gulf Monitoring Group. A retired Colonel in the Kuwait Air Force, he has published widely on Gulf security and is a regular contributor to the Gulf press. In Arabic, he has authored, among other works, *Arabian Gulf Security: Its Evolution and Dilemmas in Regional and International Relations*. He holds a doctorate in Arabian Gulf Security from the British Staff College, Camberley.

The Positions of the Gulf States on Israeli Aggression in Gaza

This paper discusses the support of the Gulf states for the Palestinian cause in the Israeli war on Gaza. It begins by clarifying their political role in supporting the International Criminal Court case against Israel, pushing for the prosecution of Israeli officials against the backdrop of the attacks in Gaza, and influencing the Security Council and the United Nations to issue resolutions condemning and calling for an end to the Israeli occupation. It also highlights the Islamic Conference, hosted by Saudi Arabia, which brought together Muslim-majority nations to support Gaza and reject the Israeli aggression. The conference affirmed the Kingdom's firm position on the Palestine question, making normalization conditional on the two-state solution and an end to the Israeli occupation. The paper also discusses Qatar's role in the ceasefire negotiations, several rounds of which were held in Doha. It looks at the economic role of boycott campaigns and the provision of humanitarian relief and discusses the pressure exerted by the Gulf states on countries to stop arming Israel through diplomatic and commercial influence, in addition to the diplomatic efforts in the Security Council to issue resolutions condemning the use of excessive force by Israel and demanding an immediate ceasefire. Finally, it addresses the media's role supporting the Palestinian cause. The paper concludes that the political and diplomatic dimensions of the Gulf movement, in addition to humanitarian aid, has played a role in unifying Arab and Islamic positions to support the Palestinian cause.



Djamel Boussaa

Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning in Qatar University, where he has worked since September 2009. He holds a PhD in Urban Conservation from University of Liverpool, United Kingdom, a Master of Philosophy in Architecture from the University of York, United Kingdom, and a Bachelor of Architecture from the University of Algiers. He has previously taught as an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Architecture in University of Blida, Algeria, the United Arab Emirates University, and the University of Bahrain. He has published numerous conference and journal papers, a book, and book chapters on Urban Conservation in North Africa and the Gulf.

Urban Regeneration in a Global World: Cases from the Historic Cities in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula: Dubai, Doha, and Jeddah

During the last three decades, cultural heritage and tourism have become dynamic arenas of development worldwide. The idea of heritage is crucial to the critical decision-making process for how irreplaceable resources are to be utilized by the contemporary public or conserved for future generations in a fast changing and global world. In view of the importance of heritage to the development of a tourist destination, the emphasis on developing appropriate adaptive reuse strategies cannot be overemphasized. Cultural tourism and historic towns and cities are important for sustainable development. Inadequate rehabilitation actions to ensure a sustainable future for these historic resources may lead to their complete disappearance. The growth of heritage tourism and its role in dispersing heritage to everyone is developing rapidly. Historic centres in the Gulf are now being recognized as valuable resources for sustainable development. Therefore, this paper focuses on the role of heritage tourism and its implications for urban regeneration in the context of Doha, Jeddah, and Dubai to demonstrate how the resilient historic urban centres are struggling to survive in a fast global environment.



Federico Cugurullo

Associate Professor in Smart and Sustainable Urbanism at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland. He holds a PhD in Urban Geography and Ecological Urbanism from King's College London (2014). He has done extensive research in the Middle East and Southeast Asia, including on Masdar City, Hong Kong, and The Line. He is interested in unpacking the notion of AI from an urbanistic perspective, and in fleshing out the conceptual implications of AI-mediated urban spaces, such as the "end of the city" hypothesis introduced in his monograph *Frankenstein Urbanism* (2021). He is a co-editor of *Artificial Intelligence and the City: Urbanistic Perspectives on AI* (2023).

Cyberpunk Urban Fantasies in the Gulf: The Line as an Incubator of Modernization in Saudi Arabia and Beyond

This paper examines the genesis and development of The Line, an ambitious Neom megaproject, emphasizing its role as an incubator of modernization. It discusses three waves of modernization triggered by The Line. First, how the new linear city is supposed to be permeated by novel AI technologies and robotics. Second, how the governance of The Line is planned to be mediated by a large-scale AI in charge of controlling most urban systems and services. Third, how the new city is advancing revolutionary ideas of citizenship, by envisioning a polity composed of both humans and robots. The paper interprets The Line's modernization as a process that is changing not simply Saudi Arabia, but will likely have broader social, cultural, and urban repercussions beyond the Kingdom and the Gulf, given its experimentation with AI technologies and ideas of robotic citizenship that resonate with an emerging global interest in AI. Drawing on empirical data collected in the field, the paper notes how The Line's aspirations are genealogically based on a Western cyberpunk imaginary picturing hypermodern cities populated by robots. It reveals the influence that cyberpunk fiction had in Mohammed bin Salman's vision of The Line and in the conceptualization of the project. The paper critically analyses the role that modernization, as a double-edged sword, plays in advancing novel ideas inspired by Western culture while undermining the roots of traditional Saudi culture.



Ghassan Al-Qalhati

Mechanical Engineer and a graduate of the Caledonian College of Engineering in Oman. He works at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in Oman. His research interests focus on urban renewal, sustainable planning, and humanizing cities. He contributes to the development of media and awareness content that enhances community awareness of the importance of transitioning to a sustainable lifestyle.

Cities on Shifting Sands

This paper discusses the history of the modern Gulf city, its transformations, and the temporary character that results from its demographic composition and reliance on foreign labour. It examines the nature of the Gulf city's funding, tied to temporary oil reserves, for projects and its evolution as a transit city seeking the status of a global logistics hub through airports, ports, and flows of trade, tourism, and people. The paper addresses the significant horizontal expansion in the modern Gulf city and analyses land acquisition in Kuwait and the first five-year plan in the Gulf, which ushered in a modern approach to urban development. Here, the state emerged as a key player in the planning and management of the city, while the individual diminished after the oil boom. The study reviews several cases in different Gulf cities to illustrate planning distortions and the absence of human considerations, primarily referencing three important texts: *Roots of Displacement: Real Estate Projects and Population Imbalance in the Gulf Cooperation Council* by Omar AlShehabi, *Temporary Cities: Resisting Transience in Arabia* by Yasser Elsheshtawy, and *Humans, Urbanization, and Language: The Decline of Patterns in the Arab City* by Driss Makboul. While the paper focuses on the history and transformations of the modern Gulf city, it also offers a critical reading of new city projects in the Gulf, such as The Pearl and Lusail in Qatar, NEOM and King Abdullah Economic City in Saudi Arabia, Masdar and Palm Jebel Ali in the United Arab Emirates, and Madinat al-Hareer in Kuwait, along with Duqm and Sultan Haitham City in Oman.



Hossam Elsayed Zaki Shalabi

Assistant Professor in the Department of History and Civilization at Al-Azhar University. He holds a PhD in Arts from Tanta University, an MA in Arts from Mansoura University, and a Bachelor of History and Civilization. He has published many books, the most recent of which is: *The Sultanate of Oman in the US and Australian Press during the Reign of Sultan Said bin Sultan (1806-1856)*. His published papers include: "The Historical Roots of Kuwaiti-Indonesian Relations in the Nineteenth Century and the First Half of the Twentieth Century".

The Trucial States, Oman, and the Palestine Question 1917-1948 "Indications of Early Gulf Interaction on the Matter"

This paper posits that the assumption that the conflict in Palestine began to resonate in the Gulf in April 1936 must be reconsidered given revelations in Gulf civil documents, contemporary sources such as Palestinian newspapers, and British documents. These sources reveal early Gulf interaction starting with the Balfour declaration once news of it reached the region, which necessitates a study of the early Gulf vision of the matter, revealing the position of the Trucial States and the Sultanate of Oman. This study explores the position of the Trucial States and Oman on the Palestine question between 1917 and 1948, its transformations during that era, and its resonance in these territories, It examines the response of the Trucial States and Oman to the Balfour Declaration, the subsequent developments that led to the outbreak of the 1936–1939 Arab revolt in Palestine, the Sultan of Oman's stance on the Palestine question, and the visit to Palestine in 1944. It also addresses the response of the Trucial States and Oman to the decision to partition Palestine in 1947, and their role in the 1948 war.



Inderjeet Parmar

A Professor of international politics and Associate Dean of Research in the School of Policy and Global Affairs at City, University of London, a fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences, and a columnist at The Wire. He is an International Fellow at the ROADS Initiative think tank, Islamabad, and author of several books including *Foundations of the American Century*. He is currently writing a book on the history, politics, and powers of the US Foreign Policy Establishment.

Implications of US Election Results for the Gulf and Middle East

The result of the 2024 US presidential election is not so much a resounding victory for Donald Trump as it is a debacle for the Democratic Party, a major boost to far right forces, and a resounding blow to popular-democratic forces. This paper argues that Trump's election will have serious implications for geo-political rivalries, increasing the danger of great power conflicts, and further diminishing the influence of US-led liberal international order including the US regional role. It signals a deepening crisis of the US system and increased domestic political instability will cast further doubt on the global role the US foreign policy establishment has forged since 1945. While the US remains a global empire, its methods, tactics and some policies will change under the new administration. In particular, Trump II will see a return to transactionalism, and bilateralism; opposition to international institutions in general, climate change agreements; realist-nationalism, unilateralism. China is now braced for increased tariffs and intensified superpower rivalry. China will focus on expanding influence in Global South and via the Belt and Road strategy. The situation in the Middle East is probably the most dangerous, as Trump will strengthen support for Israel and back Israeli aggressions in Lebanon and ultimately Iran, which will also impact China's energy supplies. The paper concludes in its analysis that the world is now living in an age of danger.



Khalid Hamad Abaalzamat

Associate Professor in the Department of Humanities, Qatar University. He holds a PhD in Political Geography from the University of Glasgow, UK and a BA in Geography and Political Science from University of Kuwait. He has published widely including "Democratic Life in Qatar: The Shura Council", for *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences journal*.

Gulf Public Opinion regarding Qatari Foreign Policy toward the Israeli War on Gaza

This paper evaluates public opinion regarding Qatari foreign policy toward the war on the Gaza Strip during the period 2023-2024 in three Gulf Cooperation Council member states: Qatar, Kuwait, and Oman, where the survey was distributed to a random sample of (1300) citizens. Undertaking a statistical analysis, the paper concluded that there is a positive awareness in Gulf public opinion about the dimensions of the war and its effects on the Gaza Strip and the Arab world. Public opinion has responded positively to the role of Qatari foreign policy in seeking a ceasefire, Qatari mediation on the matter of prisoners and detainees, and finally the role of the Qatari media in presenting the developments of the war. The study concludes with the importance of educating Gulf and Arab citizens about the reality of Arab positions, and the determinants of these positions, towards the Israeli war on Gaza.



Kristian Ulrichsen

Senior Non-Resident Baker Institute Fellow for the Middle East. Working across the disciplines of Political Science, International Relations, and International Political Economy, his research examines the changing position of Persian Gulf states in the global order, as well as the emergence of longer-term, non-military challenges to regional security. Previously, he worked as Senior Gulf Analyst at the Gulf Center for Strategic Studies and as Co-Director of the Kuwait Program on Development, Governance and Globalization in the Gulf States at the London School of Economics.

The War on Gaza and the US Foreign Policy in the Gulf After the 2024 Presidential Election

This paper analyses the implications of the 2024 US presidential election on Washington's foreign policy in the Gulf region. As the political landscape in the US shifts with a new administration, key aspects of US engagement in the Arabian Peninsula are poised for re-evaluation. It assesses how the incoming administration's priorities will influence defence cooperation, security partnerships, energy strategies, and diplomatic relations with Gulf states. A central element of the discussion will be the potential shifts in US commitments to the region, especially amid the evolving global order and the US strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific. The paper explores whether the new administration will uphold traditional alliances or recalibrate its approach to align with emerging global priorities. A particularly timely focus will be the potential for US-facilitated normalization talks between Gulf states and Israel. The new administration's stance on this issue could be pivotal in shaping the future of Gulf-Israel relations, with broader implications for regional stability and security. The paper also discusses how Gulf states might respond to these shifts, whether by strengthening ties with global powers or by adjusting their own policies to maintain strategic autonomy. The analysis provides crucial insights into the possible trajectories of US-Gulf relations under the new administration, offering a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.



Mahdi Laadhari

Master's student in Sociology and Anthropology at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. Graduate of the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Tunis El Manar. He has worked in Tunisian civil society organizations as a coordinator of projects on youth and local politics and research programs on the discourse of violence and religious anthropology.

Modernization and its Urban Consequences: A Critical Review of the Academic Literature on the Kuwaiti Diwaniya

This paper explores the changes tied to urban and societal development in Kuwaiti society from the late 19th century to the present day, focusing on the Diwaniya and the modernization process it underwent. It argues that modernization has impacted both the Kuwaiti city and society on several levels. In this context, the Diwaniya serves as a sociological subject that has been the focus of numerous studies, reflecting societal transformations and changes occurring in the city. The paper examines the extent and scale of these changes through a critical reading of literature primarily addressing the topic, as well as secondary writings that reference it, highlighting the scope of the changes on both the spatial and temporal aspects of Kuwait City.



Mehran Kamrava

Professor of Government at Georgetown University, Qatar, and Director of the Iranian Studies Unit at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. He is the author of a number of journal articles and books, including, most recently: *How Islam Rules in Iran: Theology and Theocracy in the Islamic Republic* (2024); *A Dynastic History of Iran: From the Qajars to the Pahlavis* (2022); *Triumph and Despair: In Search of Iran's Islamic Republic* (2022); *A Concise History of Revolution* (2020); *Troubled Waters: Insecurity in the Persian Gulf* (2018); *Inside the Arab State* (2018); and *The Impossibility of Palestine: History, Geography, and the Road Ahead* (2016).

Urbanism and Globalization in the Gulf

For the countries of the Gulf, globalization – in the form of deepening economic, commercial, diplomatic, and even demographic engagement and exchange with the world – has emerged as part of the state- and nation-building projects being deliberately pursued by political leaders. An important consequence of these profound processes of globalization has been the emergence of regional cities as important regional hub and critical nodes in global networks. This paper examines the transformations of three Gulf cities – Doha, Abu Dhabi, and Dubai. At the national level, the cities constitute comparatively successful urban spaces that appeal to citizens and expatriates alike. At the regional level, all three cities have become transportation hubs, and Dubai's success in logistics and tourism is matched by Doha and Abu Dhabi's successes in becoming university and museum hubs. At the global level, however, only Dubai has succeeded in becoming a key node in global networks of finance, commerce, services, telecommunications, logistics, and transportation, with the global aspirations of the other two undermined by their continued reliance on oil and gas revenues. On balance, while the new port cities of the Gulf are comparatively successful national urban spaces and regional hubs, their position as global cities is far from.



Mohammed bin Abdulaziz Al-Khulaifi

Qatar Minister of State tasked with leading mediation and conflict resolution. Prior to that Khulaifi served as Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Regional Affairs and Dean of the College of Law at Qatar University. Dr. Al-Khulaifi earned both his Master's and Ph.D. degrees in Law from the University of California, Berkeley, USA. He has authored and published numerous articles and research papers in the field of law. Throughout his career, Dr. Al-Khulaifi has been a member of various state councils and committees, including the Board of Directors of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development, the Board of Directors of the Qatar Financial Markets Authority, the Board of Directors of Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue, the Permanent Committee on the Law of the Sea at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Permanent Committee on Legislative Affairs at the Council of Ministers. In 2018, he served as Legal Advisor to the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar and represented the State of Qatar as its Agent before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Additionally, Dr. Al-Khulaifi has practiced as a lawyer before the Qatari Court of Cassation and was an adjudicator at the Qatar Financial Center Regulatory Authority in 2017.



Mohammad Ghanem Al-Rumaihi

Professor of Sociology at Kuwait University, specializing in Political Sociology, Social Development, and Cultural Sociology. He holds a PhD in Social Sciences from Durham University. He served as Editor-in-Chief of Awan newspaper and Al-Hewar Magazine, Beirut. He established and served as Editor-in-Chief of *Al-Funun* Newspaper and many other magazines and newspapers. He served as Secretary-General of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters in Kuwait. He is also the founder and Editor-in-Chief of *Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies journal*, published by Kuwait University, from which the Center for Gulf Studies was established. He was a Member of the Supreme Planning Council for Kuwait 2004-2008. He served as Advisor to the Prime Minister of Kuwait 2005-2007, and as Member of the Advisory Committee 1996-2000.

Challenges and Balances in Gulf-US Relations since the War on Gaza

The Gulf States face major repercussions from the ongoing changes in the international balance of power, especially given the competition between the East, represented by China and Russia, and the West, led by the US and its allies. These countries are trying to find a strategic balance that enables them to be linked to both camps as far as possible, despite the complex political challenges involved. The paper argues that this difficult balance requires major efforts from the Gulf states to pursue their interests without showing absolute bias towards any party, as the safest policy in light of rapid global changes. The analysis contends that the relationship between the US and the Gulf states represents an "asymmetric alliance", as some Gulf states have expressed their desire for direct military cooperation with Washington. This has encouraged some states to accept the presence of US forces on their territory, which others have declined, whether due to internal or regional pressures. Some countries may have declined due a desire to maintain a degree of distance so that relationship with Washington not based on complete dependence, but rather on a calculated balance that takes into account independence in decision-making.



Mustapha Ben-Hamouche

Professor in architecture and Urbanism and director of OVAMUS, a Research Laboratory at the Institute of Architecture and Urbanism, at the University of Blida, Algeria. He holds a PhD from Paris VIII University, an MPhil degree from Newcastle University (1986), and an architect-planner's degree from EPAU, Algiers (1983). He was previously an associate professor at the University of Bahrain and an expert planner at the United Arab Emirates. He is Head of Medina Foundation, a private company in architecture, planning consultancy, and Urban Heritage, and Editor-in-Chief of *Medina*, a local magazine in Algeria. His fields of interest cover GIS, Urban History, and Urban Regulations in North African Cities and the Arab Gulf.

Fast Cities and Mega-Urbanism: Planning for Wealth, Welfare, and Well-Being in the Gulf City

Since the 1930s, Gulf cities have witnessed a dramatic shift in both size and morphology, driven by oil revenues and amplified by regional competition and the region's heavy involvement in globalization. At the spatial level, this has given rise to suburbanization, megaprojects, and iconic buildings, influenced by interweaving factors. Politically, the sheikhdom governance model established a new system of management reliant on social justice and public welfare, initiating housing and private projects for citizens through which locals receive their share of national wealth. A side effect of this is the rapid sprawl due to irrational land-use. Financially, reliance on oil-incomes permitted GCC countries to engage in mega-project and giant developments at a rapid pace, presenting challenges for urban planners, the placemaking process, and the residents' sense of belonging, particularly given the predominance of expatriates. Citizen participation and community involvement remain a major challenge in GCC urbanism and planning. Environmentally, major works have dramatically changed the landscapes and engaged huge energies and natural resources at the expense of natural coastlines, creating artificial urban entities. This paper critically examines the future of GCC cities through urban planning frameworks, referencing the "Life Cycle of Cities" hypothesis that relies on the works of Ibn Khaldun, Fernand Braudel (1958), and Doxiadis (1968), as well as "The Limits to Growth" theory.



Nabil Khaldoun Grissa

Vice-President of Manouba University, Tunisia, and Professor of Medieval History at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences. He graduated from the Sorbonne University in Paris and served as the Director of the Higher Institute for the Contemporary History of Tunisia. He has published several studies on Arab-Islamic civilizational history, medieval Arab-Islamic history and archaeology, and Islamic-European cultural relations in the medieval period. He is the author of *The Nature of Arab Society in the Arabian Peninsula Before and at the Beginning of Islam: A Study in Historical Anthropology* (2024) and *Ibn Khaldun: The Mirror of the Giocondo* (2006).

The Origins of the Historical Gulf City and Environmental Balance

This paper addresses urban patterns in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, starting from the historical roots of urbanization in the area. It methodically discusses the foundations of settlement and the available options, particularly the direct relationship with the geographical environment and social and cultural specificities. Urbanization in the Gulf region began early in ancient history, with its roots extending back to the end of the Stone Age and the formation of the first oases, influenced by major climatic changes and the spread of desertification, as well as the emergence of early villages. This gradual and varied trajectory has continuously raised the issue of maintaining environmental balance in a fragile ecological context with successive demographic changes. In this regard, the inhabitants of this region offer archaeological findings and narrative sources (such as geography and history books) that demonstrate unique experience, rooted deeply in history. This expertise requires careful and systematic study to extract scientific frameworks, free from preconceived notions, ready-made templates, and biases, particularly concerning the role of nomadism and its position within the map of human civilizational development. Such insights could be beneficial for future urbanization or settlement projects, not only in the Gulf region but across the world.



Naji Abi-Aad

General Manager of the Lebanese company PETROLEB, which is active in the field of oil and gas exploration off the coast of the Eastern Mediterranean. He has also worked with Tellurian as a senior consultant, and worked for seven years at Qatar Petroleum (QP) and sat on its Board of Directors. Prior to this, he worked in the office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy and Industry of Qatar, before being appointed as a senior advisor to the CEO of Qatar Petroleum International. He studied law at Saint Joseph University and Petroleum Studies at the American University of Beirut before being awarded a PhD in Energy Economics from the University of Grenoble in France.

Impacts of the Gaza Crisis on the Energy Sector in the Middle East

This paper reviews the effects of the ongoing Israeli war on Gaza on the energy sector in the Middle East. It analyses the security of oil and gas supply from the Middle East in light of the maritime security threats in the Red Sea and the Bab Al-Mandeb Strait and their impact on the flow of oil and liquefied natural gas (LNG) from the region to world energy markets, especially those in Europe. It also analyses the long-term impacts of the war on Gaza on the transportation of oil and gas from the Middle East to the world market, especially the major consumers in Europe, predicting a growing reliance on petroleum pipelines linking the producing countries to consumer nations rather than on tankers passing through exposed maritime chokepoints. However, the performance of the international oil pipelines in the Middle East, assessed in the present piece, has been mediocre at best. Moreover, in the long-term, the war on Gaza could well lead to a decreased dependency of the global oil and gas market on the Middle Eastern petroleum industry. In addition, the paper provides a comprehensive review of the impact of the Gaza crisis on the prospects of energy cooperation between Israel and other Middle Eastern countries, especially those which have already signed peace agreements (Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, the UAE). This section includes an assessment of the current and prospective involvement of Middle Eastern energy companies in the East Mediterranean petroleum industry and particularly in its promising gas sector.



Nasser Saif Alsaadi

Assistant Professor for the UNESCO Chair on Aflaj Studies at the University of Nizwa. 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. He has published many books, articles, and studies, including: *Scholars and Power in Oman: 1749-1913 AD*, published by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies; "Europeans in Omani Heritage Records 1498-1950 AD", published by Nizwa journal; and *Oman and British Knowledge: A Study of the Colonial Legacy*, published by Nathr Publishing House.

The Omani Approach to the Palestine Question from the Nakba to Camp David

This paper discusses Omani positions towards the Palestine question, specifically from the Nakba to Camp David, at the popular and official levels and in opposition circles. First, it examines popular positions towards the Palestinian cause through angles that include donations, participation in the struggle, and the representation of Palestine in the literary and poetic conscience. Second, it traces the developments of the official government positions and the impact of political transformations. Third, it studies the positions of the Omani opposition and analyses its political ideologies regarding the issue. The research relies on official documents, press releases, statements, literary texts, and interviews with figures active during that period. The paper concludes that the precedence of Omani popular awareness of the Palestinian cause is evident through statements of condemnation, symbolic donations, volunteering in the struggle, and poetry supporting the resistance. Despite Oman's isolation and the conditions of the diaspora, popular interaction remained strong, especially in the 1970s. The paper also explores the impact of the political division in Oman before 1970 on the official handling of the Palestine Question, and the impact of political transformations in 1970, when the Omani authorities showed clear interest in the Palestine Question by passing the Israel Boycott Law (1972) and supporting the October 1973 War.



Nelida Fuccaro

Professor of Middle Eastern History at New York University Abu Dhabi. She holds a PhD from the University of Durham, United Kingdom. She previously worked at the University of Exeter and SOAS University of London. She is a specialist of the Gulf and Arab region and has published on urban history, the history of public violence in oil cities, and recently on the visual and material cultures of oil and modernity in the Gulf, Iraq, and Arabian Peninsula. Her publications include *Histories of City and State in the Persian Gulf: Manama since 1800* (2009); "Histories of Oil and Urban Modernity in the Middle East" (thematic issue in *Comparative Studies in South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, 2013); and the edited volumes: *Violence and the City in the Modern Middle East* (2016) and *Life Worlds of Middle Eastern Oil: Histories and Ethnographies of Black Gold* (2023).

The Literature and Life of Gulf Cities: Area Studies, Arabism, Westernism, and the Conundrum of the Global

This keynote critically assesses the place of the city in Gulf Studies. While continuing to argue against Gulf exceptionalism and the rigid intellectual and spatial categories that have tended to typecast the region as a "periphery", I make an argument for cities as microcosms and vantage points to observe the past, present, and future. An increasing "awareness" of the urban has structured state policies, socio-cultural practices, and imaginaries of city life that have become strongly identified as Khaliji. After a discussion of the genesis and development of Gulf Studies as area studies in Anglophone and Arabophone academia, I highlight the influence of mobility and the spatial turn in the study of Gulf cities, and its implications for a reading of the state, urban margins, and what Arjun Appadurai has famously termed "global cultural flows". While recognizing the importance of the trans paradigms that have recently informed the study of Gulf cities (trans-local, trans-national, and global), I highlight how the idea of "transfer" (technology and otherwise) and the material politics of the urban is a useful analytical tool to understand productive processes of city formation and transformation from the perspective of both structure and agency. In contrast to the classic political economy understanding, the meaning of material is more often assemblage of physical objects, material and consumer cultures, and technologies and infrastructure that have made up urban living (inclusive of spectacular architecture and cultural sites). It is in this context, for instance, that we can read the past and ongoing glitzy urban revolution in Qatar, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia as a result of the influence of oil as a commodity and industry, a revolution dominated by an aesthetics of luxury and hyper modern modes of consumption but also (inevitably) defined by profound dissonances and distortions.



Noor Alshaikh

Independent researcher. She holds a Master's degree in Arab Studies from Georgetown University, with a thesis titled "Everyday Leisure Spaces in Sitra: Challenging Precarity and Performing Healing". She is an educator of topics related to urbanism and its intersection with indigeneity, class, and ethnicity.

Sacrifice Zones on Oil Frontiers: Indigenous Struggles for Environmental Justice in the Bahraini Villages of Sitra and Ma'ameer

This paper argues that on the oil frontier in Bahrain, "sacrifice zones" have left indelible health and environmental impacts and are the cause of radical resistance in this small Gulf state. On the eastern side of the Bahrain archipelago lies the island of Sitra, containing the largest industrial complex of oil refineries – the largest belonging to BAPCO, Bahrain's national oil company, desalination plants, and factories. The Sitra port and the navigation of vessels within that area are of highly strategic national importance. Surrounding the refinery are the villages of Ma'ameer, the closest village to the industrial area, as well as Nuwaidrat, Al Eker, East Riffa, and Sanad. Historically, these villages have formed a rural island periphery – relatively distant from Manama's urban and political centre. Lying 3 km from the existing Bapco discharge points, is Fasht Al-Adham, known for the country's best fishing and shrimping grounds. The indigenous community relies on fishing as a way of life and livelihood but in recent years fish stocks have dwindled. This paper conducts archival research to understand the colonial logic of placing an oil refinery in the middle of these villages. Second, it looks at the environmental and political impact on the residents of the villages through ethnographic storytelling using photography and oral testimony so that subalterns may speak. Finally, it explores the long struggle for justice that ties environmental degradation directly to the radical political views that the people of Sitra have become known for.

Nouf Abdulatife Aljassar

Assistant Professor in the Department of Political Science at Kuwait University. She holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Florida (USA), and a Master of Political Science from the same university. She has another Master of Political Science, specializing in International Relations, from Kuwait University. Her research interests focus on the US political system and foreign policy, and the security of the Middle East region.

The Role of the United States of America in Consolidating the Abraham Accords with the GCC States: Proposed Initiatives and Future Challenges

This paper analyses the US role in consolidating and deepening the Abraham Accords, focusing on the role of President Trump in persuading some Gulf Cooperation Council states to sign these agreements, in a process completed by President Biden. The study uses a descriptive analytical method to assess the US administration's approach to concluding these treaties and the historical method to analyse events and their effects in the present. The study finds that despite some countries concluding these treaties with Israel and US attempts to integrate Israel into the region and create bilateral relations with some GCC countries, the completion of this project faces widespread rejection and future challenges from some countries. The events following Operation Al-Aqsa Flood have revealed the true intention of Israel and its US backer; These treaties seek geopolitical changes in the region that serve the interests of Israel first. The absence of the Palestine question in the folds of these treaties and the disregard for the principle of justice between the conflicting parties have helped clarify that behind the disregard for Palestinian rights is a desire to create a large umbrella in which Israel would dominate. The study concludes that the US will not hesitate to continue supporting these treaties even in light of the challenges and repercussions of the Al-Aqsa Flood. However, the main threat lies in the escalation of tension in the region given the repercussions of the war on Gaza, which has led to popular Arab rejection of these treaties.



Reham Amro

Program Coordinator at the Arab Political Science Network (APSN) and Editor for Al-Salon. She received a PhD in History from Istanbul Medeniyet University. She previously worked as a lecturer and research assistant in the History Department at the University of Jordan (2009-2015). Her interests include political and social history and political awareness transformations in the Arab region.

Kuwaitis and The Cause: A Study of Political Awareness Transformations Toward the Palestine Question (1929-1975)

This paper argues that the Palestinian cause is a fundamental pillar of Arab political awareness and has thus represented a matter of huge interest for the people of Kuwait over the past century. Although many historical studies have addressed the relationship between Palestine and Kuwait, they have often lacked any analysis of political awareness on the matter according to modern theories. This paper presents a reading of the transformations in this awareness from the 1920s to the 1970s. It draws on John Zaller's theory of political awareness, and Benedict Anderson's theory of "imagined communities", which posit that reading and interacting with media written in the mother tongue contribute to shaping awareness, especially among colonized peoples. The paper adopts a historical and narrative approach to trace development in political awareness of the Palestinian cause. It analyses a selection of articles published in Kuwaiti and Arab magazines and newspaper, in addition to Palestinian newspapers. The study thus traces the features of political awareness among Kuwaitis, individuals and groups by reviewing news and newspaper articles and evaluating the reflections of this awareness and their solidarity with the Palestinian cause during the specified period.



Rufei Li

Master's student at the Department of Arabic Language and Culture in Peking University, China. He studies the contemporary Middle East, with a special focus on the social and economic transitions of the Gulf states, while his research interest also covers the nuclear proliferation in the Middle East and North Africa. He authored "Saudi Arabia's Space Programme: Evolution, Drivers and Approaches", published by the Middle East Institute of the National University of Singapore (2024).

The Role of Urban Transformation in Saudi Nation-Building: The Case of *al-Balad*, Jeddah

Jeddah Historic District, also known as *al-Balad*, has been through multiple stages since the mid-19th century and received several rounds of conservation efforts. By combining field research with study of standing literature, this paper argues that the urban transformation process of *al-Balad* is the outcome of state-building and nation-building processes, which in turn impacted *al-Balad* significantly regarding its role in Saudi Arabia's nation-building. Although the rapid modernization and urbanization process has sidelined serious efforts to conserve *al-Balad*, causing profound changes to the district, the need for a national identity and an indigenous "Saudi" culture emerging in the new century transformed the role of *al-Balad* from a recipient of socio-economic changes into a donor of cultural symbols.



Safa Sobh Sababheh

Associate Professor of Economic Geography in the Department of Geography at AlHussain Bin Talal University, Jordan. She holds a PhD in Economic Geography from the University of Jordan. She worked as an Associate Professor at the University of Hail, Saudi Arabia (2008-2016), where she served as the head of the Department of Geography. Her research interests focus on food security, water security, and energy security. She has authored several specialized publications and has participated in local, Arab, and international conferences and has received training in GIS, remote sensing, and statistical analysis.

Gulf Cities as a Global Phenomenon: The Case of Saudi Eastern Coast Cities

Gulf cities are a central factor in urban and economic development within the Gulf Cooperation Council states, particularly in the eastern coastal regions of Saudi Arabia, and are characterized by rapid growth and notable development. This paper explores the factors contributing to the growth of these eastern coastal cities and the challenges they face, aiming to guide policies for sustainable development in these areas. It posits that the eastern coastal regions of Saudi Arabia represent a global phenomenon that transcends local boundaries, with their rapid growth presenting both challenges and opportunities that necessitate effective urban and planning interventions. The paper relies on secondary data analysis from government reports and previous research, along with interviews with urban experts and officials. It aims to inform policies and future decision-making to achieve sustainable development in eastern coastal cities in Saudi Arabia by enhancing infrastructure, directing public and private investments, and promoting community participation in planning and decision-making processes.



Saif Adi Al-Maskari

Omani researcher and teacher. He holds a Master of Modern History from Sultan Qaboos University. His publications include: "The Imamate and Orientalist Visions: The Ya'aribi State as a Model" (Omani Studies Unit, Al al-Bayt University, Jordan, May 2024), "Historical Systems: Omani Models" (Nizwa journal, October 2024), *The Sultanate of Oman in the Gulf Guide* (2016), and *The Imamate and the Struggle for Power in Oman at the End of the Ya'aribi State* (2015).

The Omani Approach to the Palestine Question from the Nakba to Camp David

This paper discusses Omani positions towards the Palestine question, specifically from the Nakba to Camp David, at the popular and official levels and in opposition circles. First, it examines popular positions towards the Palestinian cause through angles that include donations, participation in the struggle, and the representation of Palestine in the literary and poetic conscience. Second, it traces the developments of the official government positions and the impact of political transformations. Third, it studies the positions of the Omani opposition and analyses its political ideologies regarding the issue. The research relies on official documents, press releases, statements, literary texts, and interviews with figures active during that period. The paper concludes that the precedence of Omani popular awareness of the Palestinian cause is evident through statements of condemnation, symbolic donations, volunteering in the struggle, and poetry supporting the resistance. Despite Oman's isolation and the conditions of the diaspora, popular interaction remained strong, especially in the 1970s. The paper also explores the impact of the political division in Oman before 1970 on the official handling of the Palestine Question, and the impact of political transformations in 1970, when the Omani authorities showed clear interest in the Palestine Question by passing the Israel Boycott Law (1972) and supporting the October 1973 War.



Saoud Abdulaziz Al Ahmad

Researcher in Sociology and Anthropology and a student on the Master's programme at the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies. He previously studied Culture and Politics at Georgetown University in Qatar, graduating with a minor in History and Arabic. His research interests focus on space and identity formation within the Gulf region, exploring how different factors shape and reflect cultural identities.

Utilizing Space in Shaping National Identity in Qatar: A Case Study of Msheireb and Souq Waqif

This paper examines the strategic use of urban spaces in shaping national identity in Qatar, focusing on Msheireb and Souq Waqif. By employing visual ethnography, it explores how these spaces embody and project the dual aspects of Qatari heritage – traditional and modern. Msheireb integrates contemporary architecture with traditional elements, symbolizing a modern yet rooted cultural identity, in contrast with Souq Waqif, a revived traditional market, creating vibrant social and commercial interactions. The study utilizes Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production to understand how these spaces are not merely physical locations but are containers with significant sociopolitical narratives that contribute to the collective national identity. The findings highlight the essential role of designed urban environments in reinforcing and reinterpreting national heritage and identity, offering insights for future urban and sociological studies.



Shireen Mubarak

Assistant Professor of Modern and Contemporary History, Faculty of African Postgraduate Studies, Cairo University. She holds a PhD in African Studies from Cairo University, where she also earned an MA in African Studies and a diploma in African Studies. She is specialized in modern and contemporary East African history and the history Nile Basin relations, with a special focus on the history of Ethiopia in the twentieth century. Her research interests include Ethiopian history and its relations in the first half of the twentieth century education and the history of Arab-African relations, as well as language, water, and energy.

The Palestine Question in US-Saudi Relations 1933-1953

Several factors have bolstered the relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia, but the Palestine question has long represented a point of tension between both countries. While the US supported the establishment of a national homeland for the Jews in Palestine, Saudi Arabia rejected this outcome and defended the rights of the Palestinians in their land. This paper explores the impact of intellectual and political visions regarding the Palestine question on the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the US from 1933-1953. It attempts to measure how much space has been occupied by the Palestine question in the Kingdom's foreign policy, and how the Kingdom adapted its calculations regarding its interests in its relationship with the US in light of its position on Palestine during that period. This is based on a historical analysis that uses documents from the British Foreign Office and US documents, in addition to Arab sources.



Simona Azzali

Associate Professor at the Department of Architecture in the Canadian University Dubai. She holds a PhD in Urban Planning and Design from Qatar University and a Master of Visual Design from the School of Design in Politecnico di Milano, Italy. She held previous positions in Prince Sultan University, Riyadh and James Cook University, Singapore. She received the Early Career Researcher Award from James Cook University, Singapore, and the GSRA from Qatar National Research Fund. Her research interests cover urban spaces in the Middle East and tropical Asia, liveability and social sustainability of public spaces, and mega sporting events and their impact on the built environment.

The Gulf City, Rapid Urban Transformations, and Globalization: A Critical Review of Current Urban Planning Practices

The Gulf city represents one of the fastest growing cases of urbanization, posing serious sustainability challenges. Current spatial practices in the region focus greatly on urban megaprojects carried out by the state or state-linked agencies, creating spatial forms that exclude medium- and low-income migrants who are precisely the pillar of the Gulf economic model. In search of prestige and rent redistribution, developers have often neglected the fact that housing should be the core driver of integrated urbanism, attracting individuals' long-term investment, and a crucial factor in the construction of shared urban identities. Using Dubai as a case study and based on site visits, observations, and interviews, the paper reveals the limitations of contemporary urbanism in the region by unpacking the paradox of increasing land prices and the resulting lack of affordable housing, hyper-vacancy rates, and overcrowding in the Gulf cities. Indeed, capital-driven globalization is pushing Gulf cities into a shortsighted competition to attract investment, to the detriment of its own small cities and residential neighbourhoods, preventing the integration of many migrant communities. The paper argues for the need of a "city for all" and calls for paradigm shifts in its urban planning practices toward socially and environmentally just urbanism. Changes need to be commensurate in city planning and design, along with changes addressing the grand challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, inequality, and poverty.



Sultan Al Khulaifi

Qatari Researcher. He holds a PhD in International Relations from the University Glasgow and a Master of International Relations from the University of Essex. His research interests include Qatari foreign policy, small state policies, and conflict resolution and mediation

Qatari Foreign Policy toward the Palestinian Question during the Rule of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani (1972-1995)

This paper examines the intricacies of Qatari foreign policy towards the Palestinian cause under the rule of Sheikh Khalifa bin Hamad Al Thani from 1972 to 1995. This period is critical for understanding how Qatar positioned itself towards the Palestinian issue. The paper thus examines the motivations behind Qatar's foreign policy decisions during this era and analyses the performance of Qatar's diplomatic efforts and initiatives. Employing a single case study methodology, this research delves into the British archival documents and Qatari newspaper sources published during Sheikh Khalifa's rule to outline Qatar's foreign policy manoeuvres. This approach not only aids in drawing a comprehensive picture of Qatari diplomatic activities but also enables an evaluation of their impact and significance in the broader context of Middle Eastern politics. The findings are a significant empirical contribution to the field of Qatari foreign policy studies, which has yet to thoroughly explore the foreign policy initiatives of Sheikh Khalifa. By focusing on this less examined period, the paper aims to fill a crucial gap in the existing literature, providing fresh insights and a deeper understanding of Qatar's role and extends the field of Qatari foreign policy studies. This study not only enriches our historical understanding but also informs contemporary analyses of Qatari foreign policy.



Sundus Al-Rashid

Head of the National Committee of Museums – ICOM, Kuwait. She is an independent researcher and holds a PhD in Museum Sociology from Brunel University of London (2021) and a Master's degree in Museums, Exhibitions, and Contemporary Culture from the University of Westminster, United Kingdom. She is an advisory member of the International Committee of Museums–ICOM, co-founder of the Cultural Experience Design company. Her research interests focus on the role of museums in shaping societies, social engagement, communication, using senses, and educational practices.

The Status of the Museum in the Contemporary Structure of the Gulf City: Between Urban Planning and National Symbolism, The Case of Kuwait

Urban planning and architectural development have significantly increased in Gulf cities over the past two decades. The primary reason for this growth is the discovery of oil, rapid economic expansion, and the desire of post-1940s Gulf leaders to leave their mark on the map after achieving independence. Given that a city is the core of any nation, reflecting its identity, heritage, and culture, key institutions and organizations are concentrated in the city centre, guided by deliberate urban and architectural planning that mirrors the state's economic, political, and social character. Museums have played an essential role in this urban fabric, as they preserve the collective memory of nations and showcase history, heritage, and culture. Planning for museum construction in Kuwait began in the early 1960s, coinciding with the urban transformation of the city. This paper particularly discusses the history of the Kuwait National Museum, beginning with its location in the city and its relationship with surrounding facilities as a cultural and social institution, its national symbolism amidst rapid urbanization, and its social role in a context of change and cultural diversity.



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 has worked on historiography in Syria, Hadhrami migration in the Indian Ocean, and the urban history of Jeddah. Her research focuses on the modern 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* (2003); and *A History of Jeddah: The Gate to Mecca in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (2022).

Cities as Nodes of Identities: Some Considerations

Taking as its starting point the historical experience of an old cosmopolitan city such as Jeddah, this paper discusses the different ways in which people have created affective links with cities, and what cities offer for people to create affective links. The paper argues that, while the old city Jeddah became almost a trope after it was left by most inhabitants for the more affluent and comfortable suburbs, many types of local sociability have persisted to this day, creating a particular identity which goes beyond the official celebration of the urban heritage. This has been expressed through certain types of civic engagement in sectors such as charity. Building on research by authors such as al-Turki, Yamani, Maneval, Derbal, and others, the paper argues that this has also allowed for modern developments and transformations, not least through local capital investment, as well as for a specific situatedness within the Saudi nation-state. In contrast, the appeal of many new urban developments instead lies in their spectacular architecture, promises of a different lifestyle, or indeed of environmental benefits. Thus, Dubai has become a global paradigm for a particular type of hypermodern capitalist development, serving as a model for cities in and far beyond the Peninsula. The paper aims to initiate a discussion about the relation of such different models of cities to their environment, as well as to the states which create them, and to the different people who live there.



Yara Nassar

Researcher and Coordinator of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies at the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. She is the Editorial Secretary of *Al-Muntaqa*. She holds a Master of Political Science and International Relations from the Doha Institute for Graduate Studies and a Bachelor of International Relations from Qatar University. Her research interests focus on the intersection of Palestinian Studies and Gulf Studies through examining the history of Palestinian political movements and the formation of the Palestinian diaspora in Arab Gulf countries and exploring Palestinian-Gulf relations.

Forgotten Chapters: Palestinian Liberation Movements in their Gulf Cradle

Between 1956 and 1965, many founders of Fatah and the Palestine Liberation Organization were present in the Gulf states, particularly in Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. They were employed in multiple sectors and established relationships and networks with the Palestinian communities there, which developed into organized efforts, as well as connections with the Gulf populations that supported Palestinian political work. The founders who documented their experiences recalled the freedom and support these Palestinians found in the region, as they conducted their activities freely, despite the prevailing need for secrecy to avoid scrutiny or confrontation with the Gulf governments. This paper traces the emergence of the Palestinian liberation movements in the Gulf states and depicts the Gulf as the cradle of the revolution through the memoirs and biographies of the movement's leaders, official state narratives regarding their relations with Palestinian organizations, and the local elite's interactions with the revolution at its inception. The paper examines the historical context of a period often overlooked in Palestinian studies to answer the following questions: What was the general intellectual and political context that allowed the initial ideas of the Palestinian revolution to take shape at national, Arab, and Islamic levels in the Gulf? What favourable conditions contributed to the emergence of the Palestinian revolution in the Gulf states? What relationship existed between Palestinians and the Gulf nations and governments that facilitated the movement's emergence and support? Why was the focus primarily on Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia?



Yasser Elsheshtawy

Adjunct Professor of Architecture, Planning and Conservation at Columbia University, GSAPP, United States. He holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, United States. He is an Advisory Board member of the Arab Urban Development Institute, Riyadh and a Non-resident Fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, DC. He previously worked in several academic positions in distinguished institutions such as Université Sorbonne Paris Cité, United Arab Emirates University, and Pennsylvania State University. His publications include: *Riyadh: Transforming a Desert City* (2022); *Temporary Cities: Resisting Transience in Arabia* (2019); *Transformations: The Emirati National House* (2016).

Transience and Temporality in Arab Gulf Cities

Are Arab Gulf cities on their way to extinction? Is their fate obsolescence? Or, are they the model for our urban future? Can a city whose very existence is predicated on an imported labour force who build and operate these gleaming urban centres remain a viable urban entity? Could the transient nature of this urban model, its temporariness and precariousness, also be its doom? This keynote will take on these tough, but necessary, questions aiming to examine the very nature of the Arab Gulf city and whether it can sustain its existence throughout the 21st century. The talk will show how "temporary people" can live in a place that inherently refuses to recognize them as full citizens, highlighting those people's resilience and defiance against the forces of the hegemonic city. Using subtle acts of resistance, these temporary inhabitants have found a way to sustain and create a home, to set down roots, in the midst of a fast-changing and transient urbanity. Transience is not a *fait accompli*. Rather the actions of citizens, residents, and migrants – even in the highly restrictive spaces of the Gulf – show us that the future metropolis may very well not turn out to be a "utopia of the few and a dystopia of the many". Instead, it will be open, just, and accessible for all. The main thesis underlying this interrogation is to show that migrants and marginalized residents have agency and that they can form attachments and create a sense of permanence, thus undermining the transient nature of the city.



Yasser Mahgoub

Architect, academic, and scholar. He holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Michigan, United States. Throughout his career, he has held various academic and administrative positions at esteemed institutions such as Ain Shams University, United Arab Emirates University, Kuwait University, Qatar University, Dar Al Hekma University, and Galala University. His research interests cover social and cultural aspects, sustainable architecture, architectural education, and the impact of globalization. He has numerous published research papers and book chapters and actively participates in international conferences.

Transformative Gulf Cities: The Role of Urban Structures as Agents of Social Change in Kuwait and Doha

In recent decades, the Gulf region has witnessed a rapid urban transformation powered by economic prosperity and geopolitical significance. This paper explores the complex interplay between urban structures and social dynamics in two prominent Gulf cities: Kuwait City and Doha. It investigates how urban development shapes and is shaped by social processes, contributing to our understanding of the Gulf city as both a physical entity and a social agent. Both cities epitomize the multifaceted nature of Gulf urbanism, having experienced early planning decisions and rapid urban growth driven by economic forces, migration patterns, and political structures. However, their trajectories diverge, reflecting distinct historical, political, and cultural contexts. Drawing on a combination of urban studies literature, historical analysis, and personal experience, this paper analyses the spatial organization, architectural landscape, and socio-economic dynamics of Kuwait City and Doha. It examines how the physical layout of these cities reflects power relations, socio-economic disparities, and cultural identities. Furthermore, the research investigates the contemporary role of Gulf cities as hubs of globalization and transnational connections, attracting a diverse array of expatriate workers, investors, and tourists. This paper underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of urban development in rapidly changing contexts, highlighting the intricate relationship between physical urban landscapes and social dynamics.

Chairs

Abdul Hadi Alajmi

Former member of the Kuwaiti National Assembly and researcher of Islamic history and the concept of political systems and legitimacy. He has published widely in Arabic and English, with research contributions to international encyclopaedias such as the Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden, Oxford, and many projects related to Islamic documents and manuscripts. He has held numerous academic positions, including Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Head of the History Department at Kuwait University, and President of the GCC History and Antiquities Society. He also won several local and international awards, including the State Encouragement Award in Historical Studies (Kuwait), and the Shield of the Distinguished Arab Historians Award.

Abdulla Mohammed Al Sulaiti

Heritage and antiquities expert. He holds a PhD in Geographic Information Systems from the University of Portsmouth, United Kingdom. He has over 20 years of experience in the fields of heritage, antiquities, and museums. He has held numerous administrative positions within the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, including Director of the Antiquities and Heritage Department, as well as Deputy Director for Collections and Research at the National Museum of Qatar. He has authored several books relating to heritage and culture, including *The Precious Jewels of Egypt's Alawiyya Dynasty* (2024); *Sultan bin Hamoud Al Busaidi from the Sultanate to Exile* (2023); *Photos and Memories of Bahrain* (2017); *Forts in Bahrain* (2009); and has presented lectures at international conferences on related topics.

Abdulrahman Albaker

Faculty member at the College of Law at Qatar University. He holds a Master of 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 Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies. 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.

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