



## GRC Events & Activities:

### Saudi-European Roundtable



On December 10, 2024, the Gulf Research Center (GRC) hosted a roundtable in Riyadh on the occasion of the visit of Prof. Dr. Daniela Schwarzer, Member of the Executive Board of the Bertelsmann Foundation, and Christian Hanelt, Senior Expert on Middle East from the foundation's Europe's Future Program. The discussions focused on Gulf-Europe relations, addressing key challenges posed by the current regional escalations and exploring Europe's role in promoting stability and security in the Gulf region.



The event was attended by HE Mr. Christophe Farnaud, Ambassador of the European Union to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and HE Mr. Michael

Kindsgab, Ambassador of Germany to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Delegates from the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gulf Cooperation Council, the German-Saudi Arabian Liaison Office for Economic Affairs (GESALO), and leading Saudi experts on European affairs also participated in the discussions. The roundtable provided a platform to assess the challenges shaping European security and economic policies, particularly in the context of the EU's new leadership, the incoming U.S. administration, the ongoing Ukraine-Russia war, and the evolving global dynamics involving China and the Middle East.



The roundtable discussion covered how the European Union finds itself at a crossroads, navigating complex internal and external dynamics amidst global uncertainty. Internally, a new structure of informal coordination is emerging, although a formal transfer of competence remains elusive. Neither France nor Germany is willing to act unilaterally on major issues, preferring to consult with other EU member states. Externally, Europe

- ◆ **GRC Events & Activities**
  - ☒ Gulf Research Meeting (GRM) 2025: Call for Papers
  - ☒ GCC-MIKTA Roundtable: Strengthening Multilateralism in the Face of Global Challenges: A MIKTA Perspective
  - ☒ GRC Webinar: Saudi-Nordic Relations
  - ☒ GCC-Korea Cooperation Seminar
- ◆ **GRC Programs**
  - ☒ Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population (GLMM) Programme
  - ☒ Environmental Security and Sustainability Program
  - ☒ Cultural & Media Program
- ◆ **GRC Publications**
- ◆ **GRC Participations**
- ◆ **GRC in the Media**



faces a shifting geopolitical landscape as the U.S. gradually withdraws from certain roles, compounded by the unpredictability of U.S. policy under figures like Donald Trump. Concerns over U.S. tariffs, escalating tensions with China, and a potential push toward protectionism further strain Europe's economic growth, which is already under pressure.

In the Gulf and Middle East, the EU grapples with a gap between its ambitions and its capacity to act. Collective stances on conflicts like Syria and Gaza remain fragmented, with internal debates—such as Germany's position on Palestine—highlighting divisions. While the EU recognizes the strategic importance of closer Gulf relations, building meaningful partnerships is seen as a long-term process, challenged by economic nationalism and competing interests, particularly in the Mediterranean and North African regions. The EU acknowledges that it cannot engage with

its southern neighbors solely through a lens of migration and negativity.

On the broader political stage, Europe seeks a clearer strategy regarding regional security, especially concerning Saudi Arabia's role in conflicts like Syria and Gaza. While economic and energy cooperation with the Gulf continues to grow, there is a pressing need for a unified political agenda to support these ties. The EU also faces critical questions about its engagement with Russia, requiring consensus on strategic goals post-ceasefire, as well as its approach to Israel-Palestine relations, where collective action is urgently needed. Ultimately, Europe's ability to address these challenges hinges on strong leadership and member states' willingness to reconcile differences and pursue a coherent strategy in both regional and global contexts.



# 15th Gulf Research Meeting 2025

Call for Papers: OPEN NOW

Deadline: 5 January 2025



03

DECEMBER 2024

**15<sup>th</sup> GULF RESEARCH MEETING**  
Cambridge, 22-24 July 2025  
**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Deadline: 5 January 2025**

Before applying, please consult the Participants Guidelines:

Gulf Research Centre Cambridge  
Knowledge for All  
GULF RESEARCH MEETING

The Gulf Research Center (GRC) is pleased to announce that we are accepting paper abstracts for the 15th annual Gulf Research Meeting (GRM), the annual academic conference highlighting critical issues of importance to the Gulf region and providing a basis for undertaking and engaging in academic and empirical research. GRM 2025 will take place in Cambridge (UK) from July 22-24, 2025.

GRM workshops cover a wide range of topics in the fields of politics, economics, gender, culture, energy, security, and the social sciences as they relate to the GCC states and the wider Gulf region.

#### GRM 2025 Workshops:

1. GCC 2030 and Beyond: National Visions, Fintech, and the Future of Finance
2. Sustainable and Regenerative Tourism Strategies in the Gulf after COVID-19
3. Nature-Based Solutions for a Circular Economy Transformation in the GCC Countries
4. Net Zero Gulf Cities: Innovations and Sustainable Strategies
5. Great Power Competition in the Asia-Pacific: Challenges for Gulf Economic and Political Interests
6. GCC States and Non-Arab Regional Middle Powers: Opportunities and Challenges Amidst Shifting Regional Balances

7. Power Relations Between the GCC and the Horn of Africa in an Uncertain World
8. Digital and Social Media Influencers Impact on Developing Country Image in Light of GCC National Visions
9. GCC Futurescapes: Past and Present
10. Internationalization of Higher Education in the Gulf: Reality or Fantasy?
11. Highly Skilled Migrants and the GCC Countries: Drivers, Perceptions, Policies, and New Dynamics
12. Enhancing the Gulf States Security against Hybrid Threats: Building Resilience and Regional Cooperation within GCC.

We welcome applications from both established academics/scholars as well as young and emerging researchers.

#### For the descriptions of workshops and other information:

<https://gulfresearchmeeting.net>.

#### You are strongly invited to read the Participants Guidelines:

<https://gulfresearchmeeting.net/w/GRM2025-ParticipantsGuidelines.pdf>

The GRM 2025 poster can be downloaded [here](#).

#### Applications should be submitted at:

<https://www.gulfresearchmeeting.net/register-paper-user>

For questions, please contact us at [grm@grc.net](mailto:grm@grc.net).



### GLMM

The Gulf Labour Markets, Migration, and Population Programme (GLMM) is an international, independent, non-partisan, non-profit programme established in 2010 and is hosted and supported by the Gulf Research Center. The programme provides data, analyses, and recommendations contributing to the improvement of the understanding and management of Gulf labour migration, population, and labour markets, engaging with and respecting the viewpoints of all stakeholders. Visit the website [here](#).

### Workshop Riyadh, 1-2 December 2024: The Future of Labour and Migration in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf



An expert meeting was held at the Gulf Research Center in Riyadh on December 1 and 2, 2024. The two-day event was organized by the Gulf Labour Markets, Migration and Population Programme (GLMM) of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) in cooperation with the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung Foundation (KAS) Regional Programme for Gulf States.

The event gathered local and foreign academics, experts, and stakeholders from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, as well as from major migrant sending countries: India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, and Egypt and international organizations.

Key questions that were addressed included: What is the future of labour and migration in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states? How can the region better attract and retain foreign talents to meet their labour force needs, especially within the context of their various economic transformation agendas?

The meeting was the conclusion of the first phases of two GLMM/GRC projects and the Research Reports and Policy Briefs written for these projects were the basis of the discussions:

#### I. "Vision 2030 and the Socio-Economic Reform Process: The Future of Labour and Migration in Saudi Arabia"

The project has three phases:

Highly skilled labour (2024)

Saudi citizens (2025)

Global challenges in the Saudi labour market (2026)

The project has four objectives:

Enhance understanding of the Saudi labour market, migration dynamics at all skill levels, and population policies and their impact on Saudi Arabia.

Provide sound background information on the above, and policy advice for Saudi policymakers and economic actors, within the framework of Saudi Vision 2030.

Foster a network of key Saudi experts, academics, and institutions, as well as international experts on the Saudi labour market, migration dynamics, and population policies and their impact.





Create the conditions for continued research on the Saudi labour market, migration dynamics, and population policies and their impact on Saudi Arabia.

The project focuses on:

Saudi citizens' socio-economic characteristics and their possible future trends

Future labour needs and migration in and to Saudi Arabia

Challenges and opportunities created by the reforms

Data for evidence-based policy making and enhanced knowledge

In terms of project output: At the end of January 2025, 7 Research Reports and 7 Policy Briefs will be published and a webinar will be organized.

II. "Highly Skilled Migration to the Gulf States: How Do GCC Countries Fare in the Global Competition for Talent?"

The project has two phases:

Skilled and highly skilled migration to the Gulf (2024)

Skilled and highly skilled migration from the Gulf to the EU and North America (2025)

The seven objectives (first phase):

Highlight the outcomes of the multidimensional socio-economic reform processes in the Gulf countries since 2010, on the future of skilled and highly skilled migration to, within, and from the GCC region.

Analyse the size and characteristics of the stock and flow of skilled and highly skilled migrant workers in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

Analyse the policies put in place to attract and retain these workers in the region.

Assess the outcomes of these policies in attracting and retaining skilled and highly skilled migrant workers.

Provide indications of future demand for skilled and highly skilled migrant workers in the Gulf.

Analyze the role of the countries of origin and their migration-related institutions in controlling the

numbers and characteristics of skilled and highly skilled migrants to the Gulf states.

Analyze the economic and developmental effects that migration to GCC members has on sending countries through "brain-drain," remittances, and other means.

And an additional two objectives (second phase):

Assess the scale, processes, and characteristics of remigration from Gulf states to third countries in the EU and the profile of migrants.

Assess the scale, processes, and characteristics of migration from the EU to GCC countries and the profile of migrants.

In terms of project output: At the end of January 2025, 7 Research Reports and 7 Policy Briefs will be published, and a webinar will be organized.

As workshop output:

A Workshop Summary is available in English and Arabic: [\[it will be available there\]](#).

A detailed Workshop Report will be published in the beginning of January 2025.

### Data

For over a decade, GLMM has gathered, analyzed, and published official data related to labour and migration from multiple sources of all six GCC states. The database contains more than 1,000 tables.

#### Country tables

Access Bahrain Data [here](#)

Access Kuwait Data [here](#)

Access Oman Data [here](#)

Access Qatar Data [here](#)

Access Saudi Arabia Data [here](#)

Access UAE Data [here](#)

#### GCC regional tables

GLMM also constructs unique GCC regional tables based exclusively on the official country data. Access them [here](#).



## GLMM Webinar No. 5: "Aging in the Gulf countries and Implications for Migration to the Region"



On 9 December 2024, GLMM organized its fifth webinar entitled "Aging in the Gulf countries and Implications for Migration to the Region."

### Speakers

Dr Luca Maria Pesando, Associate Professor of Social Research and Public Policy at New York University Abu Dhabi (NYU-AD), UAE

Dr Idil Akinci, Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Dr Jessica T. Maluch, Director of Strategy, Research, and Impact at the Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi Foundation for Policy Research in Ras al Khaimah, UAE

Prof. Nasra M. Shah, Professor of Migration and Development at the Lahore School of Economics, Pakistan and Scientific Director of GLMM

### Moderation

Imco Brouwer, Managing Director of the GLMM Programme

The speakers in webinar discussed the current and possible future implications of aging in the Gulf states on migrants and migration dynamics and policies. It also examined how healthcare, labour and migration policies adjusted to socio-demographic changes, including the expansion of elderly, non-working resident foreign populations.

## Call for Papers: GRM 2025 GLMM Workshop on Highly Skilled Migrants in the GCC

GLMM organizes a workshop on "Highly Skilled Migrants and the GCC countries: Drivers, Perceptions, Policies, and New Dynamics" at the 15th Gulf Research Meeting which will be held in Cambridge (UK) from 22 till 24 July 2025, directed by Dr. Françoise De Bel-Air (GLMM) and Prof. Anju Paul (NYU Abu Dhabi).

For a description of the workshop, click [here](#).

To apply for the workshop, click [here](#).

## New Member GLMM Advisory Board



In December 2024, GLMM welcomed **Dr. Anna Triandafyllidou** as a new member of its Advisory Board. Anna Triandafyllidou holds the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration, at Toronto Metropolitan University. She is also the Scientific Director of a \$98.4 mln multi-university and multi-partner program entitled Bridging Divides funded by the Canada First Research Excellence Fund. Prior to joining TMU in 2019, she held a Robert Schuman Chair at the European University Institute, in Florence, Italy. She is Editor of the Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies. In 2021, the University of Liège awarded Triandafyllidou a doctorate honoris causa in recognition of her contribution to migration scholarship. Her recent work has appeared in the Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies (2024, 2022), Environment and Planning A: Economy and Society (2022), Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies (2024, 2023); Ethnicities (2024, 2023, 2022), Comparative Migration Studies (2022, 2021), International Migration (2022, 2019), Journal of International Migration and Integration (2023), and Nations and Nationalism (2020). Her most recent authored book





is What is Europe? (with R. Gropas, Routledge 2022, 2nd edition). She has recently edited the Routledge Handbook on Immigration and Refugee Studies (2022, 2nd edition) and the Handbook on Migration and Globalisation (E. Elgar, 2024, 2nd edition). Anna was part of the OECD Network of International Migration Experts from 2010 to 2018. She has co-edited with Marie McAuliffe the World Migration Report 2022. She has provided expert opinions for the Senate of Canada, Immigration Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the European Parliament and the European Commission.

For the complete list of GLMM Advisory Board Members, click [here](#).

## New GLMM Non-Resident Fellow



In December 2024, GLMM welcomed **Dr. Mehmet Ali Soytaş** as a new Non-Resident Fellow. Mehmet Ali Soytaş is a Senior Advisor for labor markets and research at the National Labor Observatory (NLO) in Saudi Arabia. He leads the strategic development of reports and

research products at NLO. Previously, he served as Associate Professor of Economics at King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals (KFUPM) and Ozyegin University in Istanbul. Additionally, he has held research roles at the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) and the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye. Dr. Soytaş has a rich history of consulting for global organizations, including the World Bank and the Energy Exchange Istanbul. Between 2018 and 2020, he directed the TUSIAD-Ozyegin University Sustainable Development Forum in Türkiye. He also served as Rapporteur for the Turkish Ministry of Development's Special Commission Report on savings and consumption trends in Türkiye as part of the 11th Development Plan of Türkiye in 2018. His scholarly work focuses on labor economics, economic policy, and corporate

sustainability, with publications in leading journals such as the Journal of Monetary Economics and Quantitative Economics among others. Dr. Soytaş has taught a wide range of courses, including labor economics and microeconomics, has supervised doctoral dissertations, presented at prestigious institutions and major economic conferences, and acted as a referee for numerous journals and science foundations. Dr. Soytaş earned his Ph.D. in Economics from the University of Pittsburgh and has been a visiting scholar at the Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, Australian National University, and Washington University in St. Louis. He is a fellow of the Economic Research Forum and the Global Labor Organization.

**Contact:** Mr. Imco Brouwer: [imco.brouwer@grc.net](mailto:imco.brouwer@grc.net)

## Environmental Security and Sustainability Program

Gulf Research Center (GRC) in COP16

The Gulf Research Center Foundation (GRCF) received the provisional accreditation from the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) based on its active role in research and activities in the field of environment and combating desertification and land degradation. GRCF is one of the very few organizations working in the Gulf that received the UNCCD accreditation. The GRC delegation to COP16 included: Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Ahmed Sager, Vice Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Mohamed Abdelraouf, Environmental Security and Sustainability research Program Director, and Ms. Yara Almajed, Research Intern, Environmental Security and Sustainability Research Program.

## GRC stand at COP16

The Gulf Research Center had a desk and banner within the stand of The Cooperative Society of Moringa and Desert Plants, in the Blue Zone area where GRC staff met and explained the GRC's mission, activities and publications to visitors especially in the environment field.



GRC organized three side events during COP16:

**The first side event: The Role of CSOs in Combating Desertification.** The event took place on 11 December 2024 at 2pm in the COP16 Blue Zone, Inspired by Faith pavilion. The event was attended by around 25 people from various civil society organizations and government representatives. Participants discussed the role of civil society, think tanks, youth, women, indigenous people, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in combating desertification, droughts and land degradation. Also discussed was the role of citizen science in collecting data from remote areas that governments and international organizations cannot reach. In addition, the side event presented an initiative by GIAA Foundation for tree planting and green certification to fight climate change and desertification



**The second side event:** The Economic Use of Desert Areas in Fighting Climate Change in Arab Countries. The event took place on 11 December 2024 at 6 pm in the COP16 Blue Zone, Room MET-06. Opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Ahmed Sager, Vice Chairman of the Gulf Research Center on behalf of Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center. Dr. Sager emphasized the urgency of addressing desertification and land degradation in Saudi Arabia and the GCC, where extreme climatic conditions and rapid socio-economic changes have intensified these challenges. He underlined the importance of initiatives like the Saudi Green Initiative—aiming to plant 400 million trees by 2030—and the Green Middle East Initiative, which fosters regional collaboration similar to the European Green Deal. He also stressed the role of international cooperation, nature-based solutions, and the active involvement of civil society, research institutions, and the private sector in combating desertification. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 underscores the nation's commitment to environmental sustainability, making COP16 a milestone for global partnerships and actionable solutions to climate change.

The second opening remarks were delivered by Dr. Quentin Blommaert, of the Hydrogen/Decarbonization Diplomacy Office (H2-diplo) of GIZ in Riyadh. Emphasis was placed on the fact that Saudi Arabia is making rapid progress in its renewable energy transition, driven by abundant solar and wind resources and supported by robust government initiatives. A key development is the ongoing decarbonization of the country's energy mix, replacing hydrocarbon combustion with solar plants and other renewables. At the forefront of these efforts is the Decarbonization Diplomacy





Office, established through a collaboration between Saudi Arabia and Germany, with implementation by the German International Corporation (GIZ). The initiative aims to decarbonize industries, accelerate economic diversification, and create value chains that integrate clean climate technologies.

The session was opened with praise for the Kingdom's progress and its commitment to achieving the best outcomes, while also fostering cooperation among the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Yemen. Emphasis was placed on the importance of civil society in its diversity and the role of increasing local and international investments in the environmental sector.

A distinguished group of experts discussed various topics, including the multiple uses of plastic, whether recycled or newly manufactured, with one surprising moment highlighting the importance of plastic. Others focused on investment opportunities and mutual interests to advance environmental safety agendas. The session also featured audience participation through questions and interactions that enriched collaboration between organizations and civil societies, promoting integration to achieve optimal outcomes.



Prof. Dr. Mohammed Alzuhairi, from the University of Technology-Iraq Al Mortaqa Foundation for Development and Accredited Member, United Nations, presented "Land Degradation & Waste Resources" (Sustainable Solutions), which focused on land restoration by plastic. He discussed using waste plastic, which includes biodegradable

hydrophilic polymers, to enhance soil properties. His analysis included pathways to reduce costs associated with manufacturing scale-up as well as renewable energy use and continued R&D.

Mr. Wassim Merheby CEO and cofounder of Verofax, presented his aim to help countries combat desertification by encouraging them to decarbonize their industries while equipping them with the necessary national tools and platforms to measure, report, and verify emissions reduction programs, particularly from industrial use cases. A notable initiative in this regard is the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which aims to prevent carbon leakage in markets exporting to the EU by creating a fair and accountable system.

He discussed the aim to promote this model globally, assisting countries in establishing robust national frameworks, including emergency systems for measuring, reporting, and verification (MRV). Such systems are essential to ensure transparency, drive decarbonization efforts, and support the transition toward sustainable industrial practices.

Dr. Daniel Krahel DIAPOL-CE- Policy Dialogue and Knowledge Management on Climate Protection Strategies, GIZ spoke on the German Ministry of Environment in global dialogues on sustainable planet protection strategies, focusing on West Asia and neighboring regions. He discussed that while [they] don't implement solutions directly, [they] facilitate political dialogue, knowledge transfer, and provide scientific and advisory support.

A key focus was nature-based solutions, which prioritize adaptation to climate challenges. However, implementation is complex due to competing land use, water conflicts, and the need to engage local communities. Involving locals from the start is essential to ensure ownership and sustainability, whether through community-based tourism, sustainable agriculture, or other economic opportunities.



Dr. Benjamin Smain shared his experience addressing climate insecurity hotspots, particularly in Iraq, where water scarcity and land degradation are major challenges.

In the Iraqi marshlands, livelihoods such as water buffalo herding and fishing face threats from overfishing, including unsustainable practices like electrofishing. Instead of criminalizing these practices, Dr. Benjamin suggested sustainable solutions through:

- Community-agreed fishing pauses to replenish fish stocks.
- Providing alternative tools like nets that protect small fish.
- Gradual introduction of sustainable practices with local support.

Broader solutions require water infrastructure development and economic diversification, which Iraq's resources can support if acted on promptly. Regional cooperation is also vital; successful examples like solar farms in Jordan or sustainable practices in Saudi Arabia can be adapted to Iraq's needs.

While scaling solutions is challenging, crises often drive innovation, especially when urgency creates opportunities for those most affected. Through local collaboration and targeted strategies, we can build resilience against climate challenges.

**The third side event:** Efforts to Combat Desertification in the Gulf Cooperation Council Countries: Case of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The event took place on 12 December 2024 at 11 AM in the COP16 Blue Zone, Room MET-02 and was moderated by Dr. Mohammed Abdelraouf of the Gulf Research Center.



Opening remarks were delivered by His Highness Prince Miteb bin Fahd bin Faisal Al Saud, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Environment and Combatting Desertification Association. His Highness Prince Miteb expressed his thanks to the Gulf Research Center for organizing this session and highlighted the importance of building effective partnerships to develop voluntary initiatives that contribute to supporting local communities to confront environmental challenges.

He presented the efforts of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in making environmental sustainability one of its main objectives. He pointed out that a previous study indicated that about 24 billion tons of fertile soil are lost annually due to desertification, with more than one and a half billion people around the world directly affected by this dangerous phenomenon.

This highlights the role of civil society organizations, universities and research centers in the Kingdom to support the efforts of the government represented by all ministries, headed by the Ministry of Environment and all its affiliated national bodies and centers, as well as government funds.





He stressed community environmental awareness to pave the way towards building a sustainable and prosperous environment for future generations.

Dr. Sager then spoke on the urgency of addressing desertification and land degradation in Saudi Arabia and the GCC, where extreme climatic conditions and rapid socio-economic changes have intensified these challenges. He underlined the importance of initiatives like the Saudi Green Initiative—aiming to plant 400 million trees by 2030—and the Green Middle East Initiative, which fosters regional collaboration similar to the European Green Deal.

He also stressed the role of international cooperation, nature-based solutions, and the active involvement of civil society, research institutions, and the private sector in combating desertification. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 underscores the nation's commitment to environmental sustainability, making COP16 a milestone for global partnerships and actionable solutions to climate change.

The session began with Dr. Haris Yousef, CEO of GIAA Foundation, who introduced the idea of giving a digital identity to the tree and called for the support of the authorities for the annual green certificate in his statement.

He referred to the efforts to obtain the green certificate "Emission Right" as a license to pollute, stating that "With the money we earn from a polluted economy, we are trying to clean the air. The question here is can environmental feasibility become a financial incentive and not a burden? The answer is yes."

He pointed out that one cubic meter gives us 70-100 thousand hectares of oxygen per year and stores about 500 grams of carbon and cools the atmosphere by the equivalent of 20 thousand deciliters per hour, in addition to other economic and environmental benefits. Using the technologies available in the Kingdom, artificial intelligence algorithms, we can confirm and measure these numbers and issue a renewable certificate that accompanies growth and contains the tree's data and measurements. Thus, he confirmed that they

can give the tree a digital identity.

He also praised that here in the Kingdom everything is ready for the birth of Eco-money or coin and the first environmental bank in the world can be born so that the tree becomes the source of this money. The KSA Green Initiative is not only a beautiful initiative but it is the foundation that enables us to build a new environmental economy.

He called on the decision makers in KSA and the Middle East Green Initiative to support the annual green certificate capable of transforming the initiative into a global model for financial afforestation with the aim of financing afforestation. This model is capable of stimulating a new green economy.

Then Dr. Nasser. Saleh Alkhalifah, Professor of Agricultural Biotechnology and Chairman of the Board of the Cooperative Society of Moringa and Desert Plants presented the application of agricultural biotechnology on desert plantation explaining that it is a group of technologies in biochemistry, microbiology, plant physiology, and biophysics working together in favor of plant micropropagation and plant development by improving the genetical or chemical components to produce new materials of great value for humans.

Then Dr. Rashad Saeed Alghamdi the Director of National Laboratories & Seed Bank at the National Center for Vegetation Development & Combating Desertification presented the concept of water reuse as a nature based management solution for plant sustainability in dry environments.

Last but not least, closing remarks were made by Mr. Mohammed Ibrahim Al-Mohaisen, the Counselor to His Highness Prince Miteb bin Fahd Al Saud. He emphasized the pioneer efforts of Saudi Arabia in combating desertification locally, regionally and globally. He also presented the idea of establishing a civil society network for environmental associations working in the six GCC countries to coordinate efforts, as well as to hold positions in international forums like COP16.



### Cultural & Media Program



مختبر الحوار الخليجي  
Gulf Dialogue Lab



GRC PODCAST  
بودكاست مركز الخليج للأبحاث

#### Publications



التجسير الثقافي بين الشرق والمغرب العربيين



#### Cultural Bridging Between the Arab East and West

December 2024

Access the full paper [here](#).

#### GRC Podcast Activities



The Cultural and Media Program at the Gulf Research Center (GRC) issued the report of the first roundtable forum in cooperation with the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), which discussed the topic: The Islamic world and the question of a common identity. To read the full report on the symposium, click [here](#). To watch the full episode on the Gulf Research Center's podcast channel, click [here](#).



As part of the Quality of Life Lab episodes, the GRC Podcast presented a panel discussion titled: The Benefits of Water Magnetization on Daily Life. The discussion was hosted by Eng. Hisham Ismail and Dr. Taher Al-Rifai participated in the commentary.





The Gulf Research Center produces various publications through its research programs, projects, and Gulf Research Meetings. The GRC's publications can be accessed on its website via this [link](#); the commentary and analyses can be found [here](#); and selected Arabic articles can be found [here](#).

## Commentary and Analysis



### GCC-NB8 Relations

Amnah Mosly

December 2024



### Extremism in the Sahel: A Region in Crisis and the Search for New Allies

Michael William Wilson\*

December 2024

### Extremism in the Sahel: A Region in Crisis and the Search for New Allies

Michael William Wilson

December 2024



### Saudi-U.S. Relations: Navigating a Second Trump Term

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager  
Chairman, Gulf Research Center (GRC)  
December 2024

### Saudi-U.S. Relations: Navigating a Second Trump Term

Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

December 2024



### The Changing World Order and GCC-SSA Relations

Hubert Kinkoh December 2024



### Strengthening Ties with the Caribbean: GCC Relations with the Dominican Republic

Hannan Alghamdi  
December 2024

### Strengthening Ties with the Caribbean: GCC Relations with the Dominican Republic

Hannan Alghamdi December 2024



### Towards a Renewed Commitment: Regional Leadership, Transitioning U.S. Policy, and the Imperative for Resolving the Palestinian Issue

Layla Ali\*  
November 2024

### Towards a Renewed Commitment: Regional Leadership, Transitioning U.S. Policy, and the Imperative for Resolving the Palestinian Issue

Layla Ali December 2024

## Selected Arabic Articles



تطور الحرب الروسية - الأوكرانية في ظل تحديث  
العقيدة النووية الروسية

(قراءة استراتيجيّة تحليلية)

يوسف كامل خطاب  
باحث أول بمركز الخليج للأبحاث



**The Development of the Russian-Ukrainian War in Light of the Modernization of the Russian Nuclear Doctrine**

**Yousef Kamil Khattab**  
December 2024

## Araa



#204 (December 2024)

**Arab Maghreb Union Countries:  
Challenges and Catalysts**

## Country Updates and Trade Reports



**TGhana - GCC Relations**

**Gulf Research Center**

December 2024





In **December 2024**, the GRC participated in numerous international events, both online and in-person, tackling issues pertaining to developments in the Gulf region and its broader neighborhood. The GRC emphasizes participating in such events, as it allows for the inclusion of a regional perspective in the debate. The following is an overview of the critical events in which the GRC participated this month.

## December 23, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), delivered a lecture titled "Analyzing the Strategic Environment and Security Threats in Light of the Current Changes" on December 22, 2024, at the National Defense University's War College in Riyadh. The session was attended by the faculty and participants of the Master's Program in Strategic Studies and the Executive Diploma in National Security.

Dr. Sager expressed his gratitude and appreciation to His Excellency Major General Mohammed bin Jadou Al-Ruwaili, President of the National Defense University, and His Excellency the Commander of the War College for their kind invitation and warm hospitality.

## December 19, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Prof. Saleh Al-Khathlan, Senior Advisor at the GRC, and Dr. Ahmed Sager, Vice President of the GRC, met with H.E. Prof. Abdullah bin Salman Al-Salman, Acting

President of King Saud University (KSU), at KSU's headquarters in Riyadh. The meeting focused on exploring avenues of cooperation between the GRC and KSU, including joint studies, research activities, collaborative scientific events, and training programs.

## December 19, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), and Dr. Ahmed Sager, Vice President of the GRC, met with Mr. Ryan Caugherty, Global Head of Talent at Forbes, at the GRC office in Riyadh. The meeting focused on exploring areas of cooperation between the GRC and Forbes in the talent sector, with an emphasis on knowledge exchange and potential joint initiatives.

## December 18, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated as a speaker in the panel session titled "The Great Powers and Security Competition in the Middle East and the Horn of Africa," organized by the Carnegie Endowment's Middle East Program. In his remarks, Dr. Sager emphasized that the Middle East and the Horn of Africa remain pivotal arenas for great power competition due to their geostrategic significance and economic importance.

## December 18, 2024



Dr. Ahmed Sager, Vice President of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), welcomed a delegation of military students from the National Defense University to the GRC's office in Riyadh on December 18, 2024. During the visit, the delegation were introduced to the GRC's research activities and studies, with a particular focus on international, military, and security relations.

## December 18, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated in a workshop organized by the Prince Saud Al-Faisal Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Riyadh on December 18, 2024. The workshop focused on the situation in Syria following the collapse of the Assad regime, exploring the current dynamics and potential future scenarios.

## December 17, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), received Her Highness Princess Nouf bint Abdulrahman bin Nasser Al Saud, President of the 'Li Ajlehum' non-profit organization, to discuss the possibility of cooperation in the field of social studies and research and providing the best services to those in need of them from people with motor disabilities. The meeting also focused on how to encourage the private sector to support these types of charitable associations and stakeholders, in line with the Kingdom's Vision 2030 in this vital and important humanitarian sector.

## December 15, 2024



On December 15, 2024, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), met with Prof. Dr. Jia Wenjian, President of Beijing Foreign Studies University, accompanied by Dr. Xue Qing Guo, Director of the Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, and Dr. HE Jing, Director and Associate Professor of the International Exchange and Cooperation Office at the GRC's office in Riyadh. The discussion focused on fostering collaboration in research activities between the two institutions.



## December 11, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), met with HE Mr. Chang Hua, Ambassador of China to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the GRC's office in Riyadh. The discussion centered on ongoing regional developments.



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), met with HE Mr. Suhel Ajaz Khan, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, at the GRC's office in Riyadh. The discussion centered on ongoing regional developments.



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), held a meeting with Dr. Thomas Volk, Head of the Middle East and North Africa Department at the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, along with his colleagues at the GRC office in Riyadh. The discussion focused on areas of mutual cooperation and key regional developments.

## December 10, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dr. Christian Koch, Executive Manager of the GRC Brussels office, and Dr. Mohamed Abdelraouf, Director of the GRC's Environmental Security and Sustainability Program, met with Dr. Daniel Krahl, Advisor at GIZ, and Dr. Benjamin Smale, Advisor for Climate and Strategic Foresight at GIZ, at the GRC's office in Riyadh. The meeting focused on exploring areas of mutual cooperation and shared research interests.





Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), hosted HE Kjersti Tromsdal, Ambassador of Norway to Saudi Arabia, and Norway's Special Representative for Yemen, Ms. Heidi Johansen, at the GRC office in Riyadh. The meeting focused on discussions surrounding regional developments in Yemen.

**December 8, 2024**



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated as a speaker in the session on the "Accountability and the Axis of Resistance" held on December 8, 2024, at the Doha Forum. This session was in partnership with Chatham House.



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated as a speaker in the session on "The Future of US Strategy in the Middle East Following the 2024 Election," at the Doha Forum. This session is held in partnership with the Atlantic Council. Watch the full session [here](#).



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated as a speaker in a session titled "EU-Iran Dialogue on Regional Stability," at the Doha Forum. This session is in partnership with the Center for International Policy Research.

**December 7-8, 2024**



Dr. Christian Koch, Executive Manager of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) Foundation Brussels office, and Layla Ali, Researcher at the GRC, participated in and attended the 20th IISS Manama Dialogue from December 7-8, 2024 in Bahrain.

**December 5, 2024**





As part of the Gulf Research Center's (GRC) Research Program on GCC-Latin America relations, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the GRC, hosted a meeting at the GRC office in Riyadh with HE Andy Rodriguez Duran, Ambassador of the Dominican Republic to Saudi Arabia. The meeting, attended by senior staff and researchers from the GRC, focused on the strengthening of ties between the Dominican Republic and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. Discussions explored opportunities for collaboration between Dominican think tanks and the GRC, emphasizing the shared interest in fostering deeper engagement between the two regions.

## December 4, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated in an interview with Silk Way TV from #Kazakhstan who visited the GRC's office in Riyadh. Dr. Sager spoke about the cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan. Watch the interview [here](#).



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), hosted a meeting at the GRC's office in Riyadh with HE Aníbal Gómez-Toledo, Ambassador of Mexico to Saudi Arabia, followed

by Guillermo Gutiérrez-Nieto, Deputy Head of Mission at the Embassy of Mexico in Saudi Arabia, and Dr. Bram Govaerts, Director General of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT). The meeting also included Dr. Christian Koch, Executive Manager at the Gulf Research Center Brussels, and Hannan Alghamdi, Researcher at the GRC. The discussion focused on CIMMYT's projects and presence in the region, food security challenges, and exploring avenues for collaboration to address these critical issues.

## December 3, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), met with Mr. Yuki Mizunoe, President and CEO of Mizuho MEA Regional Headquarters Company, Mr. Kiuotaka Shibata, Chief Strategy Officer, and Mr. Yosuke Inoue, Managing Director at the GRC's office in Riyadh and both sides discussed regional economic development.

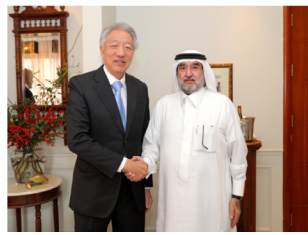


Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dr. Christian Koch, Executive Manager at the Gulf Research Center Brussels, and Prof. Saleh Al-Khathlan, Senior Advisor at the GRC, met Mr. Heiko Nitzschke, Special Envoy for the Horn of Africa from the German Federal Foreign Office at the GRC's office in Riyadh and both sides discussed the Horn of Africa relations with the Gulf.





## December 2, 2024



HE Mr. S. Premjith, Ambassador of the Republic of Singapore to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, hosted a luncheon at his residence in honor of the visit of Mr. TEO Chee Hean, Senior Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security of the Republic of Singapore. Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) attended the luncheon and engaged in discussions on issues related to international and regional development.

## December 1, 2024



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated as a speaker in the first session entitled "The Positions of the Arab Gulf States on the Palestinian Issue" at the 11th Gulf Studies Forum organized by the Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies in Doha and discussed a working paper entitled: The Saudi Position on the Israeli War on Gaza and Its Determinants.



GRC media participation can be accessed [here](#), at the GRC official YouTube channel.



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated in Al Arabiya News to discuss Ahmed Al-Shara's statements during his recent interview with Al Arabiya channel, as well as Syria's relationship with Arab Gulf countries. Watch the full interview [here](#).



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated in Al-Arabiya interview and discussed Ahmed al-Sharaa's statements in his recent interview with Al Arabiya. Watch the full interview [here](#).



Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), participated in an interview with Silk Way TV from Kazakhstan at the GRC's office in Riyadh on December 2, 2024. Dr. Sager spoke about the cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Kazakhstan. The interview can be accessed [here](#).



On December 21, 2024, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), was interviewed on the "Here in Riyadh" program on Al Ekhbariya. He discussed the tragic car ramming attack in Magdeburg, Germany, and the statement issued by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs regarding the incident.

The interview can be watched [here](#).



On December 15, 2024, the Chairman of the Gulf Research Center (GRC), Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, participated in the program "Time for Politics with Tariq Alhomayed" on Al Arabiya FM radio, discussing the future of Syria after the fall of Assad and the latest developments in the region. Watch the discussion [here](#).



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# GULF RESEARCH CENTER NEWSLETTER

## DECEMBER 2024



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