

# Development of the Gulf Research Center's Security and Defense Research Program



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



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When the Gulf Research Centre (GRC) was established as a think tank in the year 2000, focused academic research in the areas of security and military affairs was not extensively developed in the Arab world. Traditionally, these domains had been confined to research centers closely linked to governments and/or the military, and any research findings were not circulated to the public or used for the specific purpose of enriching knowledge, which inevitably created restrictions to access any research findings.

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It was in that context that the GRC introduced a new concept that at the time was uncommon within research centers in the GCC that dealt with security studies. The GRC put forward the idea that security has a geographical element and is not confined to specifically political or legal questions. The issues and challenges facing the six GCC states cannot be studied in isolation from the geopolitical environment in which they exist. Furthermore, security challenges facing the GCC states cannot be looked at in isolation from the geopolitical context of the Arab Gulf region as a whole.

At that time, the GRC undertook various research studies in these areas, extending the Gulf region to the “Geopolitical/natural” Gulf, including the GCC member countries in addition to Iraq, Iran and Yemen. Hence, the 6+3 Gulf became the general rule for all activities of the GRC. Since then, the GRC has made significant advances in providing and exchanging knowledge on security and military affairs.

Since its establishment, GRC's specific research program dedicated to security studies made it its mission to work in a non-traditional and informal way in dealing with issues of the national security,

regional security and terrorist challenges, all of which have experienced rapid growth since the beginning of the 20th century.

In order to define issues of priority in terms of research on Gulf security, the GRC, upon founding its Security and Defense Research Program, undertook a survey on security challenges facing the Gulf states. At the time, researchers and scholars categorized security challenges in the Gulf according to their type and nature:

The first category was related to the security challenges attributed to activities of organized (and petty) crime, which pose both real and potential increased threats to the Gulf, and include issues such as money laundering, drug trafficking, human trafficking, fraud, forgery and cybercrime. GRC's Security and Defense Research Program has made valuable contributions in this regard, including but not limited to publishing research studies and books on drug trafficking and maritime piracy, in addition to other topics that directly affect the security and stability of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula.

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The second research priority category identified was focused on challenges emanating from the non-state political actors, especially those of terrorist groups and militias. This field lies at the heart of concerns of the GRC’s Security and Defense Research Program. Terrorism has been one of the biggest challenges for the countries, societies and citizens of the Gulf and the Arabian Peninsula. Furthermore, the threats emanating from this phenomenon are not limited to the region but affect the entire world. GRC has made extensive efforts to fill the knowledge gap in this area. Prior to the founding of the GRC, most research published on terrorism came from Western institutions and experts who were keen to frame terrorism in a purely “Islamic” context, yet this research unfortunately tended to lack important nuanced analyses on regional developments and other political and social factors that have led to the escalation and growth of terrorism as a phenomenon, and in particular the influence of Western imperialism and occupation in the Middle East on the growth of terrorism and extremism.

GRC, as an Arab-Gulf think tank, along with its Security and Defense Research Program took on the difficult mission to influence these concepts as adopted by Western academics and the media. Such Western notions link Arab Muslims to terrorism without understanding the role played (and which continues to be played) by the foreign policies and interventions of Western governments in the region and how that impacts the spread of this dangerous phenomenon that ultimately affects

regional and international security. Throughout its twenty year history, GRC analysis on terrorism and security has emphasized the importance of the distinction between the resistance of occupation and terrorism.

The GRC’s Security and Defense Research Program has widely contributed to the terrorism studies, by holding seminars and conferences with the participation of senior specialists, researchers and other terrorism experts. The Program’s dedicated researchers have also taken part in a variety of seminars and discussions held around the world and hosted by diverse research institutions focused on this area, providing the Program with an influential presence globally, at both the academic and governmental levels.

Program activities have included numerous publications, among them notably a regular

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periodical on “Security and Terrorism Studies” published in both Arabic and English on a quarterly basis, and which became one of the most important references for studies of terrorism in the Arab world. Both Arab and non-Arab specialists contributed to the publication, which covered many issues in the field of counter-terrorism studies. This included sometimes controversial topics such as a special edition that dealt with suicide operation methodology in terms of equipment and techniques used in carrying out these operations, the complications of choosing targets and the motivations for these operations and other dimensions that were usually excluded from traditional research on the topic.

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Another issue dealt with the recruitment of women for suicide operations, which was also a groundbreaking study in this area of research. Furthermore, another special edition presented a comprehensive study of the phenomenon of the restructuring the oil industry in the Arab world by terrorist groups as a tactic of economic warfare against the relevant countries implicated. This issue was based on detailed statistical analysis on the type of oil objectives and the extent to which these attacks affected the economies of these countries and the international oil market.

Another significant contribution of the program was the publication of a volume that detailed all counter-terrorism laws and legislations issued by the GCC states, which compared these legislations in both Arabic and English. The volume has since become a reference for law enforcement agencies, judicial institutions and international institutions concerned with counter-terrorism missions.

GRC's Security and Defense Research Program has also dedicated much of its research activities to analyzing the phenomenon of extremism as the primary step leading to the transformation of individuals to carrying out terrorist activities. In this context, the GRC carried out a study looking at potential factors that cause youth in the Arab world to deviate towards embracing extremist ideologies. The study also made an effort to emphasize the importance and effectiveness of reform programs inclusive of young people who have been misled towards the paths of intellectual extremism and terrorist activities.

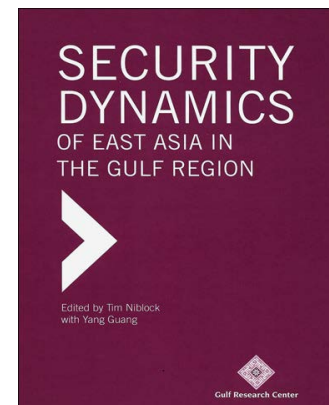
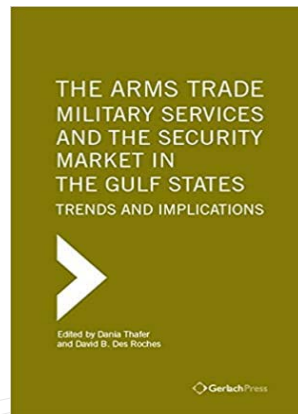
The Security and Defense Research Program's third priority focus area has been the study of

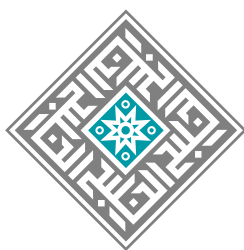
challenges, threats and risks emanating from the state level, and international peace and conflict studies. This has not been limited to dealing with the regional nuclear issues, but covering the study of expansionist and interventionist policies that have become a source of regional destabilization. One of GRC's most significant contribution in this regard was its 2004 proposed draft resolution for the establishment of a WMD Free Zone in the Gulf including the six GCC states, Iran, Iraq and Yemen. GRC held three Track II meetings and discussion panels involving high level officials from the six GCC states in addition to Iran, Iraq and Yemen in the context of this proposal. The Track II meetings were successful in placing the project on the regional agenda. Under this project, the GRC published the book "Case for Weapon of Mass Destruction Free Zone in the Gulf" which explores the possibilities of building upon the successful experiences of other nations establishing nuclear free zones.

On the occasion of the 20th Anniversary of the GRC's establishment, we are proud to say that the GRC and its activities and achievements have received wide appreciation from scholars and

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decision-makers throughout the Gulf region. GRC attributes its successes to its dedication to independent and fact-based research, and its ongoing mission to provide knowledge for all, subsequently allowing decision-makers to implement informed policies. For two decades, GRC has concerned itself with these decision-making processes, which directly affects the lives of citizens across the region.





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