

# Gulf Research Center: 20 Years of Giving and the Journey Goes On



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



**Dr. Abdulaziz Sager**

**Founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center**

**Gulf Research Center**

In this issue of Araa Magazine, as we celebrate the 20th anniversary since the establishment of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) as a non-profit think tank, we reminisce about all that the GRC has contributed over these years in its tireless and ongoing efforts to serve the Gulf region. This journey has involved numerous multi-faceted accomplishments and contributions that have been multifaceted and added rich value to the Gulf. GRC was a pioneering center in terms its broader focus on the Gulf region, including the six-member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council in addition to their neighbors Iraq, Iran and Yemen as these countries affect and are affected by the GCC states. GRC has been interested in most, if not all, domestic, regional and international issues that are a matter of concern to the region, as well as how political, economic, security, defense and strategic matters interact with these issues at the domestic, regional and international levels.

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My decision to establish the GRC at the onset of the third millennium stemmed from my own desire and motivation to foster academic research on the region, which was very much lacking at that time. I had a vision to create a center that would produce analyses and anticipate future issues of importance to the region, utilizing all tools available. Similar to developed countries worldwide, the Gulf countries should also place a high value on research-based facts and disseminate that relevant knowledge affecting our present and future. This principle of “knowledge for all”

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was the driving force behind my dream, and it was to become the GRC mission upon its foundation. This one phrase perfectly encapsulates GRC’s vision, mission and activities both inside and outside the Gulf region.

In order to achieve these goals and ensure that GRC is able to carry out its numerous global activities, I have invested all resources available to me, financial and otherwise. Despite the different obstacles throughout this twenty year journey, if I could travel back in time I would make no hesitation in taking the same steps I have taken along the way, as I now look back with pride on all of GRC’s accomplishments. GRC more than deserves its recognition as being among the most influential global think tanks. Such a ranking is evidenced in GRC’s activities, publications, forum and conferences that have been organized inside and outside Saudi Arabia. As an independent think tank in the Gulf and the Middle East, GRC also receives invitations from other reputable think tanks and institutions from around the world in addition to international and regional organizations such as the United Nations, with which the GRC has an observer status.

GRC has entered into partnerships and signed cooperation agreements with prestigious research centers from around the world as well as relevant academic departments at universities interested in the GRC's research activities in order to exchange experiences and cooperate in research studies, events and other activities.

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These endeavours have resulted in hundreds of book publications in Arabic and English on various fields and topics. The GRC has also produced hundreds of translations of books, encyclopaedias and dictionaries, made available to the public through the GRC library. Some of these publications are available in the most prominent libraries internationally, including but not limited to, the prestigious Library of Congress in the United States of America.

GRC has also established many academic chairs dedicated to research on the Gulf in various universities globally and has organized important events in this regard both in and outside the Gulf region, with the participations of heads of state and other top decision makers. For example, GRC's initiated the Africa program to explore opportunities of cooperation between the countries of the Gulf and those of Sub-Saharan Africa, which resulted in two major conferences, one of which was held in South Africa and the other in Riyadh. These conferences were attended by 35 heads of state, vice presidents, ministers, and other experts and researchers from around the world. As part of another program highlighting Saudi's efforts towards conflict resolution in Yemen, workshops were also organized in Washington, London, Brussels, Berlin, Geneva, and Paris.

GRC has also organized many specialized public events both independently and in partnership with other entities, such as ministries, government agencies and universities and with the private sector and chambers of commerce. Moreover, GRC has conducted surveys and economic studies in support of the private sector, highlighting the comparative advantage of potential investment opportunities in KSA and the other Gulf countries. Such studies have notably included research on economic diversification away from oil income dependency in the GCC, a major element of the various GCC visions such as Saudi Vision 2030. Other studies have looked at the digital economy, energy issues, including oil and gas, renewable energy, peaceful use of nuclear energy and shale oil, in addition to energy security.

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GRC takes pride in having organized the annual Gulf Research Meeting (GRM) since 2010 at the prestigious University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom. GRM hosts more than 400 researchers annually from all continents around the world whose academic specializations touch on the Gulf in one way or another. The conference has produced numerous book publications reflecting the papers presented during the conference. Such papers, which are fact-based and peer reviewed, have enriched Gulf studies research and stand as references on various issues impacting the region.

GRC's regular publications include Araa Magazine, which is GRC's monthly Arabic periodical, and which is a leading magazine in the Gulf concerned with the affairs of the region, available both digitally and in print. Araa's authors include more than 600 academics and researchers from countries around the world, and since its inception, the magazine has published thousands of scholarly articles on its various areas of focus. In 2018, Araa received the Arab Creativity Award from the prestigious Arab Thought Foundation chaired by His Royal Highness Prince Khalid Al Faisal bin Abdulaziz, Advisor to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Governor of Makkah Region, as the best Arab publication or magazine. We are proud to have received such recognition from this prestigious and independent institution.

Due to its commitment to making its research available to the public, GRC has prioritized the utilization of the most updated internet and technological platforms to disseminate its various publications and hold virtual meetings and events. Currently, GRC holds and organizes seminars and workshops with multiple international parties via closed-circuit television systems to stay updated on developments in the Gulf and the rest of the world, especially in light of the current COVID-19 outbreak.

GRC takes pride in its highly-skilled international staff, some of which are renowned for their research in and outside the Gulf, and also takes pride in its partners with which GRC has executed its many programs and activities.

GRC faces challenges similar to those of all independent research centers in the Gulf, the most important of which is the absence of a domestic legal structure for non-profits and non-governmental research centers, in addition to difficulties in financing. The latter remains a significant obstacle to the growth of

independent centers in the Middle East as a whole, due to their non-profit nature. It becomes challenging to find competent nationals to work in these centers, perhaps due to young researchers' lack of interest in devoting themselves to a cause that requires perseverance, dedication, follow-up and specialization, in addition to the lack of funding in comparison to jobs in the private sector or government.

Moreover, governments in the Gulf and Arab World more broadly, do not pay sufficient attention to these centers or rely on their research output. However, we are thankful to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, who has always stressed the need to engage with national centers and has encouraged their participation in serving the country.

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Furthermore, national centers in the Gulf tend to work independently; a mechanism to unite them under a general framework could allow for increased cooperation and coordination among them in order to carry out major research projects.

Due to the current worldwide coronavirus pandemic, the need for such projects has arisen more than ever, in order to face this virus using scientific research, whether by identifying an effective treatment by producing vaccines. Major global research centers in the West and East are already doing this, unfortunately without any active participation on the part of Arab or Gulf research centers. This applies to multiple areas of research, including production, manufacturing,

Moreover, scientific research allocations in the budgets of Arab countries are generally low, in relation to countries' GDPs, in comparison to developed nations or even the major industrial companies that rely on research in developing their industries.

Therefore, we at the GRC hope that state officials could reconsider their views on academic research and research centers. We also hope the Arab and Gulf private sector will support these centers as well as young researchers. They should be considered as part of a country's wealth that is as valuable as the productive sectors or its natural resources, such as oil and gas, especially in light of the growing role of the digital economy and knowledge economy that the states of the region seek to nationalize.

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In this context of our vision of academic research and research centers, we at the GRC will continue to strive to achieve our mission at home and abroad. We will also continue to seek ways to expand out Arab and international partnerships allowing us to cooperate with similar centers in the execution of our activities. Each year, GRC details its annual

plan, and aims to achieve it efficiently in order to reach its interim and long-term goals.

At the level of the Gulf and Arab World more broadly, we hope that governments will pay closer attention to think tanks and academic research centers, whether governmental or independent. Increased support should be given to independent centers by nominating them to conduct necessary research studies. Given the fact that these centers are closely relevant to their respective societies, they can effectively contribute to providing solutions to societal issues and forecast risks and challenges objectively. We also hope that governments will increase academic research allocations; information is the future, and economic growth and sustainable development in all areas depend on research and fact-based studies. Additionally, forecasting, prioritizing and dealing with challenges and risks require reliance on national research centers that are loyal to their countries and regions and therefore more trustworthy than foreign centers, even the large ones.

In conclusion, we hope that the research output of GRC continues to reach all relevant stakeholders. The GRC will continue carrying out its mission and opening doors through its website and library for those who wish to increase their knowledge, while always keeping in mind our mission “Knowledge for All.”



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