

# A Brief Historical Overview of the Gulf Research Center



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



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## The Gulf Research Center – Knowledge for All

The idea of establishing an independent research center to study issues important to the Gulf region from within the Gulf region itself was conceived by Dr. Abdulaziz Sager and motivated by his desire to make solid, research-based knowledge about the strategic Gulf region easily available to all. This is the ultimate origin of the Gulf Research Center (GRC) and its maxim – “Knowledge for All”.

### “ High quality, scholarly research on all aspects of the wider strategic Gulf region ”

Dr. Sager's vision was to fill an important void and to conduct high quality, scholarly research on all aspects of the wider strategic Gulf region, including the GCC countries as well as Iran, Iraq and Yemen. GRC operates on an independent, non-profit basis. Its belief is that everyone has the right to access knowledge, so it makes all its research easily available through publications, workshops, seminars, conferences, and meetings. As a non-profit organization, GRC injects all income back into its programs and activities.

The work of the Gulf Research Center has been and continues to be founded on three solid pillars:

- Vision: To be the leading think tank on Gulf affairs worldwide.
- Mission: To provide an Arab Gulf perspective on regional and global developments in order to promote regional peace and stability and positively influence the policy processes of local, regional and external actors.
- Values: The belief that peace, security, prosperity and sustainability in the Gulf region is the right of its people, and that this is inseparable from the right of everyone to have easy access to knowledge about the Gulf region.

To realize its vision, mission and values, the GRC focuses on a number of specific key objectives, which include the following: promoting communication and cooperation among GCC

citizens to facilitate reforms in the region and secure a better future for all; publishing and distributing relevant and useful information and data on the GCC states within and outside the region with the goal of enhancing knowledge and understanding; providing education and training solutions through the implementation of a 'Knowledge Program' targeting higher management circles; and preparing studies and offering expert consultations to governmental and non-governmental organizations on subjects linked with the Center's primary areas of focus.

The primary GRC activity is research on the Gulf region (the GCC countries as well as Iraq, Iran and Yemen). GRC research programs can be grouped into six key areas – foreign relations; economics and energy; labor markets and migration; environmental security and sustainability; politics

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and society; as well as security and defense. All the research programs strive to better understand different aspects of development in the GCC countries and facilitate positive transformations in the region. To achieve this, GRC promotes communication, collaboration, and dialog, focusing particularly on bringing together Gulf scholars, both within and outside the region. One way of enhancing this is through joint research, outreach, and consultancy projects, which constitute an important part of the work GRC carries out.

GRC publishes a wide range of materials which include: books of research and studies on specific topics; edited volumes of research papers; Gulf yearbooks; noteworthy books translated into Arabic; as well as bulletins, reports, analyses, commentaries, and Araa magazine.



GRC has also implemented many educational activities, including: executive learning programs focusing on global leadership as well as understanding the Gulf region and the European Union; social sciences and humanities forums on education and e-learning; Gulf studies and international relations programs; and orientation and training programs for school and university students.

## “ Signed more than 100 cooperation and partnership agreements with research organizations from around the world ”



Outreach and networking activities have been important for GRC since its inception. It has signed more than 100 cooperation and partnership agreements with research organizations from around the world and offers regular interviews and briefings related to Gulf issues. GRC has been accredited as a non-governmental organization with a number of global organizations, including: the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations; the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP); and the World Bank Group's Global Environment Facility (GEF) Program. These accreditations afford GRC additional outreach opportunities.

The success of GRC during its first twenty years is based on a wide range of strengths and competencies, which include - a unique and unparalleled perspective from within the Gulf region; in-depth regional knowledge and resources; a results-driven and results-oriented approach; an excellent record of successful project completion; solid government consulting; a proven track record with extensive experience; a strong institutional think tank culture; and a worldwide

network with global recognition.

The Gulf Research Center – Structure and Timeline  
The Gulf Research Center was initially registered in Dubai in June 2000 and in Jeddah in January 2003. The work of GRC in Dubai began in a small office but quickly expanded to a large, well equipped office that accommodated over 80 people. With the passage of time, the work of GRC also extended significantly at the Jeddah office. Expansion continued and GRC offices were also opened in Geneva, Switzerland (GRC Foundation) and Cambridge, UK (GRC Cambridge).

GRC Foundation (GRCF) was established in 2007 as a non-profit, non-governmental organization under the Swiss Civil Code relating to foundations. Its location in Geneva facilitates outreach and cooperation not only with Switzerland, but also with Europe and globally.

GRC Cambridge (GRCC) was established in 2009 with the cooperation of the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. In 2011, GRCC was registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales as a non-profit UK charity organization. One of its main goals is to facilitate integration with the global academic community studying Gulf issues, primarily through the Gulf Research Meetings, which GRC Cambridge organizes annually.

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## GRC Foundation

The establishment of the GRC Foundation was an important step in facilitating research on the Gulf, promoting academic excellence both in and about the Gulf region, and ensuring objective and comprehensive information and analysis about this vital part of the world. The main work of GRCF can be divided into research-related and events-related activities.

On the research side, one of the main areas of focus is the changing geopolitics of the Middle East, with particular attention to the foreign and security policies of the GCC states, Gulf security issues, and efforts to establish a regional security system. GRCF is an active participant in policy discussions and debates concerning the Gulf region throughout the world and engages with governments and the policy community at all levels. Significant research and development project work has also been carried out with the European Commission, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Development Research Council (IDRC), Canada.

On the events side, with its seat in international Geneva, GRCF actively participates in UN-sponsored events in addition to conducting its own programs. This includes the Think Tank Security Forum and the Gstaad Middle East Conference (together with the Geneva Center for Security Policy and the Crown Center, Brandeis University). The GRCF is also part of the Think Tank

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Leader's Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils, which brings together the leading think tanks of the G20 countries.

In 2012, the GRCF, together with the Migration Policy Centre (MPC) of the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, established the Gulf Labour Markets and Migration (GLMM) Programme to promote better

understanding and policies in these key domains for the Gulf countries and the countries of origin of the migrants.

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## GRC Foundation Asia

The GRC Foundation operated a branch office in Tokyo, Japan from 2012 to 2014, which was known as GRC Foundation Asia and had three key **objectives**:

- Develop and promote closer relationships and mutual understanding, at both governmental and private levels, between the Gulf and the East Asia regions.
- Develop and facilitate academic research relating to Gulf - East Asia regions and disseminate the results of this research through workshops, conferences, forums, seminars and publications.
- Provide advisory assistance to the public and private sectors, particularly relating to economic and strategic issues, including investment and trade, as well as political and energy security matters of importance to both regions.

GRCF Asia made an important contribution to better understanding the interaction between the two dynamic and rapidly transforming regions of East Asia and the Gulf. GRCF Asia organized a significant visit by Gulf Research Center to South Korea and Japan in September 2012, which focused on the fast developing and wide-ranging relations between the Gulf region and East Asia. This visit included workshops, seminars, and meetings with government officials, the academic and policy community, as well as business and corporate leaders.

## GRC Cambridge

At a time when the Gulf region continues to gain in strategic relevance and importance, it is more urgent than ever to expand knowledge about this critical part of the world and to become more familiar with the issues that are defining its overall development. The primary goal of GRC Cambridge is to advance research and education on political, economic, social, environment, security, and energy issues relating to the Gulf region. As part of its work to organize the annual Gulf Research Meetings (GRM) at the University of Cambridge, the GRCC identifies subjects of importance to the Gulf region, stimulates research in these subject areas, and provides a forum for broad dissemination of the research results. The objectives are to help generate solutions to many of the challenges facing the Gulf region, strengthen links between scholars from different parts of the world who are carrying out research relevant to the Gulf region, and promote mutual understanding between the Gulf region and the rest of the world.

The Gulf Research Meetings are based on a multiple-small-workshop format, which facilitates the presentation of research results. Through the intensive discussions and debates that are part of the individual workshops, concrete recommendations and initiatives are often formulated. After each GRM, these are disseminated to a wider audience through publications, whether as short policy briefs, extended essays or broader edited volumes of research papers. The workshops often lead to additional collaborative efforts among the participants and their institutions beyond the framework of GRM. Particular emphasis is placed on encouraging young scholars, in particular from the GCC countries – including those studying

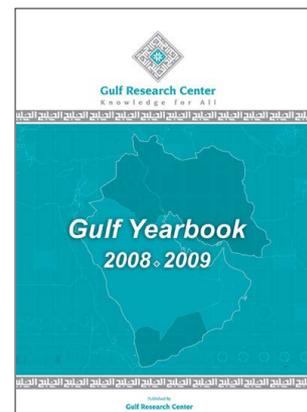
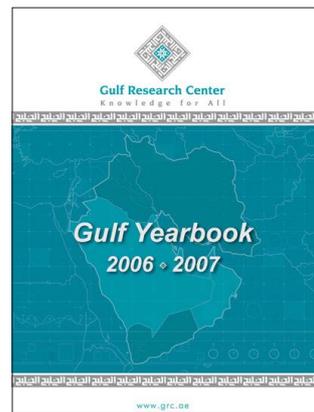
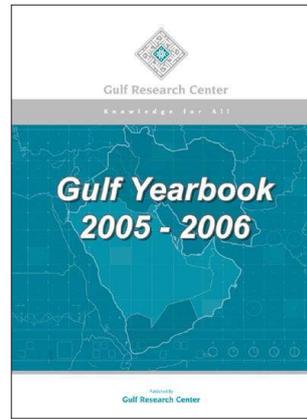
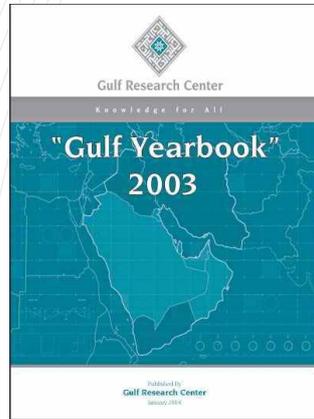
abroad - to take part in research collaboration and engage in the GRM process. In this way, the Gulf Research Meetings provide a path into the future for the next generation and help to define the role it will play in shaping the Gulf region's development.

In the period 2010-2019, GRCC has organized 10 annual Gulf Research Meetings, which have involved 127 workshops, hosting 1,726 research paper presenters, and an overall total of 3,358 participants, with the publication of 52 edited volumes of research papers.

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In the past twenty years, the Gulf Research Center has grown from a creative idea to become a globally recognized research center that has contributed much to the understanding of the Gulf region - never losing sight of its maxim – “Knowledge for All” and its ultimate mission of promoting peace, security, prosperity and sustainability, not only in the Gulf region, but also globally. The Gulf Research Center extends a sincere thank you to everyone who has contributed to its success during the past twenty years!





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