

# The Gulf Research Meeting Ten Years of Excellence in Gulf Studies Promoting Scholarship and Knowledge about the Gulf Region 2010-2020



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



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At the Gulf Research Center (GRC), the most important goal remains scholarly research on the Gulf region and dissemination of the knowledge that results from such research throughout the international community.

**Created by GRC to reinforce links between scholars from different regions by bringing together hundreds of specialists, policy practitioners, aspiring academics and students from the Arab region and the rest of the world**

The vision is to conduct high quality research and foster greater understanding of the Gulf region and the challenges the region faces. The Gulf Research Meeting (GRM), a leading event that is hosted annually at the University of Cambridge, was created by GRC to reinforce links between scholars from different regions by bringing together hundreds of specialists, policy practitioners, aspiring academics and students from the Arab region and the rest of the world to discuss and debate the key challenges and transformations the Gulf region is facing and enrich their knowledge about this unique part of the world.

**In 2019, the GRCC reached a milestone and was pleased to organize the tenth Gulf Research Meeting**

The Gulf Research Centre Cambridge (GRCC) was established in August 2009 through a cooperative effort between the Gulf Research Center Foundation in Geneva and the Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. The GRCC was created to focus on Gulf studies and establish strong links with one of the leading educational institutions in the world, the University of Cambridge. The main activity of the GRCC is organising the Gulf Research Meeting, which has been organised annually since 2010. In 2019, the GRCC reached a milestone and was pleased to organise the tenth Gulf Research

Meeting. These ten meetings brought together 3358 participants, from 34 institutions, gathering in 127 workshops, in which more than 1900 research papers have been presented and discussed by over 1700 paper presenters, with participants from 60 nationalities, of which 40% were from the Gulf region. The GRM provides a platform for discussion and dissemination of research in a wide variety of Gulf-related fields, including education, economic & financial issues, international relations & politics, environment, security & defence, energy & renewable energy and social issues.

Out of this, more than 50 edited volumes of research on the Gulf region have been published, guaranteeing that together with the GRM Paper

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Series, the outreach spreads far beyond the meetings themselves. After the ten years, the GRM has more than 3358 alumni that have participated in one or more the annual Gulf Research Meetings.

The goal of the Gulf Research Meetings is to create a network through which people from all over the world can come together and exchange views, present their work and enhance their understanding on topical issues related to the Gulf region, as well as plan for future projects and cooperative research. The GRM encourages deeper research collaborations and looking at ways to address further development of the Gulf region, consequently providing a platform for the exchange of views and analysis of the issues which are impacting the developments of the Gulf regions and its integral societies. At a time when the understanding of the Gulf region is more important than ever, the Gulf Research Meeting delivers a platform through which the challenges the region is facing can be addressed and potential future development policies can be debated.



## Advancing Knowledge

The Gulf region continues to increase in strategic significance and importance, thus there is an increased urgency to develop knowledge about the Gulf region and to become more aware of the issues that are defining its overall development. The promoting of scholarly and balanced research about the six member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Oman, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates) and its neighbours that constitute the wider Gulf region (Iraq, Iran and Yemen) as well as their relations with another and with the wider external environment.

The Gulf Research Meetings address specific topics in the fields of politics, economics, energy, security and the wider social sciences to deliver insightful and balanced information regarding the region and to promote shared understanding between the Gulf and the rest of the world.

**“After the ten years, the GRM has more than 3358 alumni that have participated in one or more the annual Gulf Research Meetings”**

## Producing Output

The GRM is committed to a high-level academic standard and its objectives are to produce policy input and construct solutions to many of the regions pressing challenges. Each year, the GRM workshops are selected for both their capacity to add to the development of the literature on the Gulf and their applicability to current issues of importance. Through the intensive debates and discussions during the individual workshops,

**“The GRM encourages deeper research collaborations and looking at ways to address further development of the Gulf region”**

concrete initiatives and concepts are produced that can be circulated to a wider audience through publications, whether as short policy briefs, extended essays or books. Beyond the framework of the GRM, such discussions also lead to great collective efforts among the participants and their institutions. The Gulf Research Meetings provide an academic environment to foster Gulf studies and encourage academic and scholarly exchanges. During the first 10 years over 57 GRM publications have been produced, covering topics related to such fields as science and technology, labour markets, energy and environment, security and defence, foreign relations, societies and culture, and many more.

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## Creating Networks

Through the interactions among the participants in the individual workshops, the GRM also promotes extensive research efforts between different institutions from within the Gulf and other parts of the world in order to increase awareness of Gulf-specific issues. At the core of this lies the corporation between the Gulf Research Centre Cambridge and the Centre of Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge. This partnership is characterised by a strong commitment to nurture cooperation and events such as the Gulf Research Meeting. Such collaboration promotes the ongoing development a worldwide network of leading researchers and research initiatives.

The GRM has brought together individuals from a multitude of institutions from dispersed throughout the world, thus creating additional opportunities to advance networking and cooperation. Particular importance and emphasis is given to inspire young scholars, particularly from the GCC countries – including those studying abroad – , to participate in research collaborations. In this way, the GRM is opening the doors for the future generation and the role it will play in shaping the region's developments. The Gulf Research Meeting is a pioneering and progressive project

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that the Gulf Research Center is proud to be at the forefront of.

#### Workshops

The GRM workshops cover a wide range of topics in the fields of politics, economics, energy, security, and the social sciences as these relate to the wider Gulf region which includes the GCC countries as well as Iraq, Yemen and Iran. These workshops bring together participants to present and discuss their research relating to topics of shared interest and concern in the region. The average number of participants that attend each annual GRM per year is approximately 300.

2010

The first Gulf Research Meeting in 2010 hosted 12 workshops that focused on various areas of research and highlighted the following topics:

- Natural resources, accountability and democracy
- Formal and informal mechanisms of political participation
- The role of the private sector in promoting economic and political reform
- The GCC banking and financial sector
- Population, labour markets and national identity
- The impact of migration on Gulf development and stability
- Developing an agenda for security studies in the Gulf
- The governance of higher education in the Gulf Cooperation region
- Environmental policies in the Gulf
- EU-GCC relations
- Gulf-China relations
- Islamic politics in the Gulf

One of the workshops focused on natural resources, accountability and democracy. This workshop aimed to re-examine both the generic linkages between natural resources and

'democratisation' and the specific case of the oil exporting states of the Gulf.

The topic on the impact of migration on Gulf development and stability analysed the ways in which migration and the international mobility of labour have made the Gulf States a unique part of the world. This workshop focused on a multidisciplinary approach that examined the disciplines that were relevant to migration studies, such as political science, economics, demography, law, contemporary history and sociology. The main goal of the workshop was to develop the Gulf migration studies community.

Another area of discussion focused on the issue of EU and GCC relations. This workshop studied the role of global issues that had particular relevance to the relationship of the GCC and the EU and examined various themes such as the suspension of negotiations on the GCC-EU free trade agreement, as well as the economic and commercial relationships that needed to be re-examined.

**One of the areas that were analysed in the workshops focused on educational reform, public policy and students of the Gulf region**

2011

The Gulf Research Meeting in 2011 hosted 16 workshops that addressed the following areas of research:

- Impact of climate change on the Gulf region
- The transformations of rentier states and the provision of public and common goods
- Educational reform, public policy, and the students of the Gulf region
- WTO and globalization: GCC impact
- Modernisation and socio-economic changes in the Gulf Arabic cities
- India and the Gulf: What next?
- Shaping the Gulf national innovation
- Potential and limits of civil society in the Gulf region
- Media in the GCC
- GCC-Iran relations
- Migration in the Gulf
- Human resource development in the Gulf region
- The role of business women in the economies and societies of the Arab region
- The EU and the GCC in the Mediterranean
- Soft power in the Gulf: the politics of the energy and security.



post-rentier state

One of the areas that were analysed in the workshops focused on educational reform, public policy and students of the Gulf region. This workshop studied the importance of educational reform in the national development strategies of the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the types of reforms that fostered knowledge-based economies throughout the GCC region, and prepared young nationals for employment.

Another workshop focused on the impact of climate change in the Gulf region. This workshop examined the various regional climate change policies and the impact they had on the region, relating specifically to issues such as water,

**“ The workshop also provided a platform for participants from the Gulf and outside the region to discuss the key challenges the Gulf region was experiencing in meeting their medium to long-term domestic energy needs ”**

2012

The third Gulf Research Meeting in 2012 gathered leading academics, policy practitioners and students in 19 workshops focused on various aspects of Gulf development, including:

- The Arab Spring: impacts and consequences on the GCC
- Asia and the Gulf: comparative analysis of the role of Asian countries
- Gulf charities in the 'Age of Terror' and the 'Arab Awakening'
- Socio-economic impacts of the GCC migration
- A growing Gulf: public and private sector initiatives and the realities of youth employment outcomes
- International tourism development in the GCC countries: opportunities and challenges
- The impact of globalisation on women and the GCC

- An assessment of opportunities and possibilities: the Gulf and Latin America
- Visual culture in the GCC
- The impact of large-scale datasets on evidence-based educational policymaking and reform in the Gulf States
- Environmental cost and changing face of agriculture in the Gulf States
- Gulf energy challenges
- Housing markets and policy design in the Gulf region
- Structure, conduct and performance: case of GCC banks
- State-society relations in the Arab Gulf region: religion, intellectuals and new media
- The political economy of clean energy solutions in the GCC
- Healthcare policies in the GCC: challenges and future directions
- Islamic finance in the GCC
- The India-Gulf strategic partnership in a Pan-Asian cooperative paradigm

One of the workshops in GRM 2012 focused on the impact of globalisation on women in the GCC. This workshop examined the ways in which the GCC responded to the demands of globalisation and the impact this had on the position of women in the GCC societies and what were the outcomes of these diverse forms of interaction.

Another workshop examined the energy challenges in the Gulf and discussed climate change implications. Specifically, it addressed these challenges for each of the Gulf countries and the ways in which each aspired to play a more important role in the transition to a world with cleaner energy. The workshop also provided a platform for participants from the Gulf and outside the region to discuss the key challenges the Gulf region was experiencing in meeting their medium to long-term domestic energy needs.

Healthcare policies in the GCC was another topic that was examined. This workshop focused on the social, economic and demographic changes taking place in the region that posed great challenges for the healthcare systems of the GCC countries.

2013

The fourth Gulf Research Meeting gathered paper presenters and participants in 11 individual workshops that discussed developments in the region and their implications. The topics covered by the workshops included:

- The GCC States-Turkey relations: opportunities and challenges
- The relationship between the Gulf countries and Latin America: the role of non-state actors
- The Gulf and Asia political relations and strategic options in a developing scenario (China, India, South Korea and Japan)
- Saudi Arabia and the Arab uprisings: national, regional and global responses
- The rentier state at 25: dismissed, revised, upheld?
- Gulf cities as interfaces
- Sustainable development challenges in the GCC
- Educational challenges in the GCC in the 21st century
- GCC relations with post-war Iraq: a strategic perspective
- Boundaries and territory in the Gulf region
- Challenges facing the GCC oil & gas industry

The topic on the Arab uprising was a key topic related to the start of the 'Arab Spring' in early 2011. The workshop on Saudi Arabia and the Arab uprisings focused on the pivotal role of Saudi Arabia both regionally and globally, as Saudi Arabia preserved a high level of domestic stability and regional influence. In this context, the main purpose of the workshop was to examine how Saudi Arabia responded to the Arab revolts at the national, regional and global level, and what impact these responses had.

Another workshop explored the sustainable development challenges that faced the GCC. The outcomes of the workshop helped decision-makers in both public and private sector organisations to better understand and develop appropriate policies and practices related to sustainable development. Three GRM edited volumes were published in 2013. These books were titled "India and the Gulf: What

Next?", "Asia-Gulf Economic Relations in the 21st Century: The Local to Global Transformations" and "The Gulf and Latin America: An Assessment of Expectations and Challenges."

2014

**“ This GRM provided the opportunity to understand regional issues both from the Gulf perspective and through an international lens ”**

The fifth Gulf Research Meeting took place from August 25-28, 2014 at the University of Cambridge, UK. This meeting hosted enthusiastic participation from academics, researchers and policy makers. This GRM provided the opportunity to understand regional issues both from the Gulf perspective and through an international lens. The following 14 workshops took place:

- Social media and the changing context of politics in the Gulf
- The United States and the Gulf: towards a reassessment of Gulf commitments and alignments?
- Representing the nation – the use of heritage and museums to create national narratives and identity in the GCC
- The future of Yemen
- Employed, yet underemployed and underestimated: leadership, ownership and work motivation in the Gulf
- Green economy in the Gulf region
- Enhancing the learning ecosystem in the GCC: learning outside the classroom
- The GCC States' foreign and security policies after the Arab Spring
- Science & technology education, research and innovation in the GCC countries
- Determinants of future migration in the Gulf
- The changing energy landscape in the Gulf: strategic implications
- Iran and the GCC: prospects for change?
- Doctoral symposium: addressing the

sustainability agenda in the Gulf region

- Gulf-Africa relations: past and present trends

Various discussions on a range of topics relating to the Gulf region took place in the workshops. One of the workshops was a doctoral symposium that brought together Ph.D. students working on dissertations related to sustainability issues in the Gulf region.

Another key workshop examined the GCC states' foreign and security policies after the Arab Spring. The discussion in this workshop revolved around the transformation of the GCC states' foreign and security policies prior to and after the Arab Spring. In particular, it theoretically examined the drivers of small states' behaviour changes and the role that small GCC states played in the changing dynamics in the Middle East over the four year period. This workshop looked at the impact of domestic, regional and international factors on foreign and security policies and changes of the regional structure at that time that led to the rise of a new balance of power.

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2015

The sixth Gulf Research Meeting gathered around 282 participants from the Gulf region and around the world in 11 workshops that discussed the developments in the region and their implications. The following workshops took place:

- Egypt and the GCC: renewing an alliance amidst shifting policy pressures
- Building an institutional process of socio-politics in the Gulf
- The gulf cooperation council and the BRICS
- The role of legislation, policies and practices in irregular migration to the Gulf
- Intellectual property in the new era in the

GCC states: enforcement and opportunity

- Transnational knowledge relations and researcher mobility for building knowledge-based societies and economies in the Gulf
- Higher education in the GCC: linkages and independence
- The arms trade, military services and the security market in the Gulf: trends and implications
- Economic diversification: challenges and opportunities in the GCC
- The future of Yemen's unity
- Iran-GCC energy cooperation

The workshop on the future of Yemen's unity was a key workshop, as the ongoing Yemen civil war began in 2015. This workshop focused on the situation in Yemen and analysed the state's structure in terms of the political, economic and social demands from the south of Yemen, which had been an independent state prior to 1990. The workshop also examined the basic trust, legitimacy, and consensus that the Yemeni state was lacking.

Another workshop focused on Iran-GCC energy cooperation. This workshop examined the potential areas of energy cooperation between Iran and its Arab neighbours. It provided a platform for scholars and decision makers to discuss and analyse strategies to promote cooperation in areas such as pricing, shipping and pipelines. The participants in this workshop also addressed energy challenges, such as protecting energy infrastructure and facilities from terrorist attacks. Discussions about improving cyber security also took place.



2016

The seventh Gulf Research Meeting gathered around 297 participants in 11 individual workshops that discussed recent developments in the Gulf region and their implications. The following workshops took place:

- Challenges facing GCC oil and gas exports
- Collective security in the Gulf: prospects for pan-Gulf cooperation
- Nuclear energy for the Gulf: key questions and opportunities
- Towards a sustainable lifestyle in the Gulf
- Yemen and the GCC: future relations
- Arab Gulf cities in transition: space, politics and society
- Exploring the dynamism of Islamic finance in the GCC region
- The future of GCC labour market reform: towards a multi-disciplinary, sustainable, evidenced-based and practical understanding
- New security dynamics in the Gulf and the transformation of the GCC states' security agenda
- Foreign relations of the GCC countries amid shifting global and regional dynamics
- The economics of migration to the Gulf: perspectives from countries of origin and destination

One of the important workshops that took place during GRM 2016 was the workshop on the new security dynamics in the Gulf and the transformations of the GCC states' security agenda. This workshop examined the ongoing changes in the GCC states' security agendas and discussed theoretically the drivers of such changes and the roles played by the five dimensions of security, politics, military issues, economics, and social/environmental issues. The workshop published an edited volume based on the individual papers presented.

Another GRM 2016 workshop focused on the foreign relations of the GCC countries amid shifting global and regional dynamics. This workshop contributed to critically discussing existing theoretical works on foreign policy analysis. This

was achieved through the submitted research papers on the Gulf countries, that provided new insights into a pivotal topic for the future of the MENA region in general and the GCC countries in particular.

**“ Another key workshop examined the GCC states' foreign and security policies after the Arab Spring ”**

2017

The eighth Gulf Research Meeting took place from August 1-4, 2017 at the University of Cambridge, UK. This GRM gathered together about 175 participants from the Gulf region and around the world to participate in 9 research workshops. The following workshops took place:

- Smart cities in the Gulf: current state, opportunities, and challenges
- Private delivery of infrastructure services in the GCC: the new political economy of PPPs
- Brexit and the GCC
- The GCC and the Indian ocean: economic opportunities and political challenges
- Electoral frameworks, party systems, and electoral outcomes: comparing elections in the Gulf
- Transforming business education in the GCC: transitioning from theoretical to applied, and applied to impactful
- Gender identity in the Gulf: cultural constructions and representations
- The Arab Gulf in the West: perceptions and realities; opportunities and perils
- Migration policies in the Gulf: continuity and change

The workshop on the Arab Gulf in the West: perceptions and realities; opportunities and perils, created a forum that dissected successes and failures of Arab Gulf states' foreign relations with Western countries.

The workshop tackled both the material and the symbolic in the efforts and initiatives launched by the Arab Gulf states to re-create themselves in the Western imagination. The papers presented at the workshop explored questions that employed a number of angles, theoretical frameworks, as well as research methods. The key objective of the discussions was to analyse previous and current Arab Gulf states' outreach efforts to the West and understand how the Arab Gulf states and their citizens are perceived and imagined from the West. Another workshop topic at GRM 2017 was on Brexit and the GCC. This workshop addressed the inter-connected issues of trade and investment flows, as well as cooperation on political and strategic concerns, including counter-terrorism and other security issues. This workshop also highlighted the complexities of the relationship between the UK and the EU on one hand and between the UK and the Gulf States as well as the GCC on the other.

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2018

In 2018, GRC Cambridge hosted the ninth Gulf Research Meeting at the University of Cambridge, UK. The meeting gathered together around 241 participants who participated in 10 workshops dedicated to specific topics in the fields of politics, economics, energy, security and the wider social sciences. The following workshops took place:

- Gulf Cooperation Council culture and identities in the new millennium: resilience, transformation, (re)creation and diffusion
- The Gulf and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization
- The Gulf States in East Africa: security, economic and strategic partnerships?

- The rise of international sport on the Arab Peninsula: politics, art, ethics
- Iraq and Arab Gulf countries: rapprochement?
- The future of population and migration in the Gulf
- Shaping the future of the GCC countries through language policy and planning: concepts, challenges and aspirations
- Fintech, digital currency and the future of Islamic finance in the GCC-strategy, operational and regulatory issues
- The Gulf post-Syrian-crisis political architecture and the roles of the external actors: the USA, Russia and China
- A debate on economic sustainability: in the GCC and elsewhere

One of the GRM 2018 workshops looked at the relations of the Gulf States with East Africa, in terms of security, economics and strategic partnerships. The workshop focused on contextualising the role of Gulf state relations with East Africa and also examined the developing relations with certain states in West Africa. The workshop also looked at key GCC partners on the African continent more generally and the impact that partnerships have had through multilateral mechanisms to effect change. Motivations behind the engagement in the Horn of Africa were also analysed.

Another workshop focused on the relationship between the Gulf countries and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). This workshop was used as a platform for Gulf researchers to branch out into areas not previously analysed, in particular relations with the states of Central Asia and the Caucasus. It was also important to examine the engagement of other organisations associated with the SCO, such as the Eurasian Economic Community and the Collective Security Treaty Organisation. The relations of these organisations with the Gulf States were therefore also given specific attention.



**GRC reached an important milestone with the tenth Gulf Research Meeting that took place on July 2019, 18-15 at the University of Cambridge, UK**

2019

GRC reached an important milestone with the tenth Gulf Research Meeting that took place on July 15-18, 2019 at the University of Cambridge, UK. About 321 participants were gathered in 14 workshops that addressed a wide range of topics relating to the Gulf region. The following workshops took place:

- A peace process for the Gulf: international initiatives and Gulf conflict resolution
- Artificial intelligence in the Gulf: prospects and challenges
- Business-state relations in the Gulf
- Domestic policy making and governance in Saudi Arabia
- Emerging challenges in international relations and transnational politics of the GCC
- Family changes in the context of social changes in the Gulf region
- Post-Brexit Britain, Europe and Policy towards Iran and the GCC states: Potential challenges and the possibility of cooperation
- Quality of higher education in the Gulf: Quo Vadis?
- Quotidian youth cultures in the Gulf peninsula: changes and challenges
- Re-engaging with the Gulf modernist city: heritage and repurposing practices
- The consequences of the Kurdistan independence referendum: relations between KRG, Iran and the GCC
- The role of sovereign investments vehicles in the GCC
- Towards sustainable consumption and production in the Gulf
- Women, nation building and modernisation projects in the Gulf: explorations in state instrumentalization of women

The workshop devoted to domestic policy making and governance in Saudi Arabia focused on ways of reaching a balanced understanding of the processes of domestic policy making and governance in Saudi Arabia. The participants analysed the factors that facilitated or constrained effective domestic policy making and governance. The wide range of academics and practitioners that participated was drawn from a broad set of backgrounds and institutions, thus facilitating in-depth analysis and understanding of domestic policy making and governance in Saudi Arabia. Another interesting topic that was addressed in one of the workshops related to quotidian youth cultures in the Gulf Peninsula. This workshop analysed quotidian youth cultures in the past decade that contributed to the construction of a 'Khaleeji' identity based on wider social, cultural and political processes. The workshop also discussed the current realities and challenges facing youth in the Middle East.







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