



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 3

The Gulf and Asia Political Relations and Strategic Options in a Developing Scenario (China, India, South Korea and Japan)

Workshop Directors:

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Abstract

The focus of this workshop is on the medium- and long-term: a scenario which looks at how political and strategic relations between the Gulf and leading Asian powers may develop over the coming 10 years. The external countries covered are those Asian countries which have, or are most likely to have, a significant political and perhaps strategic presence in the region: China, India, South Korea and Japan. On the Gulf side, all Gulf and Arabian peninsula states have to be taken into consideration. The studies, however, are not intended to be purely speculative. The intention is to look at the existing political and defense strategies being pursued by all the states and powers concerned, take into account the extent to which their economic development depends and will depend on what the other states/powers can provide, assess whether the Gulf States will in fact need external strategic support, compare the potential Asian strategic contribution with that which can be obtained from elsewhere, and assess the potential for different non-Gulf powers to work together under a common security umbrella. Some papers will need to

focus on perspectives from the Gulf/Arabian peninsula side, others will cover perspectives from the Asian side, and yet others will examine the extent to which non-Gulf and non-Asian powers may relate to a growing Asian political and strategic presence in the region.

Description and Rationale

Considerable work has now been done on the relations between Gulf and Asian states. Some of this work provides a perspective into how these relations may develop in the future, and what the political and strategic implications of this may be. There has, however, been no concerted attempt to provide an overall scenario of how relations may develop over the medium- to long-term (i.e., an overarching scenario, rather than isolated perspectives on individual countries). The workshop seeks to fill this gap, building on the Asia and the Gulf workshop in GRM 2012, and creating medium- and long-term perspectives which may be valuable for policy-makers in the Gulf, Asia, the Western world, and rising powers in other parts of the world. It is to be expected that the workshop would witness fruitful exchanges between academic researchers and personnel with policy-making responsibilities.

As indicated in the abstract, the papers should be based on concrete developments (defense plans, economic projections, ongoing global strategies, political stability, population movements, environmental considerations etc.) rather than being simply speculative. Emphasis will be placed on attracting contributions from all “sides” – i.e., Asian perspectives, Gulf and Arabian perspectives, and Western/other perspectives. In the past it has often been easier to obtain perspectives from Asia and the West than from the Gulf itself. Every attempt will be made to ensure that Gulf perspectives are articulated, creating an interactive discourse among participants.

While it is important to ensure that future relationships are examined in a manner which integrates political, economic and defense dimensions, it is nonetheless clear that it would be difficult to build all of these dimensions into every paper (at least not if a paper covers more than one country). Papers may, therefore, focus primarily on one of these dimensions, as long as the significance of that dimension for the overall relationship is made specific. Papers which focus on the perspectives of particular Asian countries would need to relate to the Gulf as a whole rather than limit concern to one Gulf country. It is the relationship with the region which is important. Nonetheless, it may be appropriate to have case studies in which developments relating to one Gulf country fit into the wider Gulf framework.

In the light of what has been said already, the ranges of topics which would be suitable are:

1. The Gulf in the Developing Global Strategies of Asian Countries (China, India, Japan and South Korea): comparative study of medium- and long-term perspectives to 2023.

2. The Gulf in the Developing Global Strategy of Asian Country X (China, India, Japan or South Korea): perspectives to 2023.
3. The Developing Military/Naval Capabilities of Asian Countries (China, India, Japan and South Korea) in the Indian Ocean and Gulf Region: comparative study of current plans and future projections to 2023.
4. The Developing Military/Naval Capabilities of Asian Country X (one of same countries) in the Indian Ocean and Gulf Region: perspectives to 2023.
5. The Economic Needs of Asian Countries (same countries) in their Relationships with Gulf Countries: comparative study of medium- and long-term perspectives to 2023.
6. The Economic Needs of Asian Country X (one of same countries) in its Relationships with the Gulf Countries: perspectives to 2023.
7. Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Perspectives on Medium- and Long-term Strategic, Military/Naval and Economic Relations with Asian Countries: comparative study of Asian Countries (same countries) to 2023.
8. Perspectives of Individual Gulf Countries on Medium- and Long-term Strategic, Military/Naval and Economic Relations with Asian Countries, to 2023.
9. Gulf Perspectives on the Need for an External Asian Strategic Presence in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula: comparative study, to 2023.
10. Non-Gulf and Non-Asian Perspectives on External Security Involvement in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula, to 2023.

Anticipated Papers

As indicated, the intention of this workshop is to move beyond what has previously been undertaken in this field of studies. Perspectives on security in the past have been focused mainly on what role Western powers can and will play in upholding the security of the Gulf. While that dimension remains important (and needs to form part of the backdrop of this workshop), there is a need to consider the security roles which the main Asian powers could seek to play over the coming 10 years. No such study has been undertaken in the past. There have, moreover, been relatively few studies which have placed all of the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula within a common security context.

Workshop Director Profiles

Prof. Tim Niblock is Emeritus Professor of Middle Eastern Politics at the University of Exeter and Chair of the Management Board of the University's Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. He also serves as Vice-President of the European Association for Middle Eastern Studies. He began his academic career at the University of Khartoum in Sudan (1969-77), where he served as Associate Professor on secondment from the University of Reading. He has since worked at the Universities of Exeter and Durham. Between 1978 and 1993, he was at Exeter, establishing the Middle East Politics Programme there. In 1993, he was appointed Director of the Centre for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies at Durham. In 1999, he returned to the University of Exeter and served as Director of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies there from 1999 to 2005. He has written widely on the politics, political economy and international relations of the Arab world. Among his books are: *The Political Economy of Saudi Arabia* (2007), *Saudi Arabia: Power, Legitimacy and Survival* (2006), *'Pariah States' and Sanctions in the Middle East: Iraq, Libya and Sudan* (2001), *Muslim Communities in the New Europe* (edited, with Gerd Nonneman and Bogdan Szajkowski, 1997), *Economic and Political Liberalisation in the Middle East* (edited, with Emma Murphy, 1993), *Class and Power in Sudan* (1987), *Iraq: the Contemporary State* (edited, 1982), *State, Society and Economy in Saudi Arabia* (edited, 1981), and *Social and Economic Development in the Arab Gulf* (edited, 1980).

Yang Guang is Director-General of the Institute of West Asian and African Studies (IWAAS) of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS) in Beijing, China, President of the Chinese Associations of Middle East Studies, Executive President of the Chinese Society of African Studies, and editor-in-chief of the academic journal *West Asia and Africa*.

Selected Readings

ASIA-GULF ECONOMIC RELATIONS IN THE 21ST CENTURY: The Local to Global Transformation, edited by Tim Niblock with Monica Malik