



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

Workshop 2

Asia and the Gulf: Comparative Analysis of the Roles of Asian Countries

Workshop Directors:

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Abstract

There has already been considerable research and writing done on the relations between Gulf countries and those of East Asia, South Asia, West Asia and South-East Asia. Most of this work, however, is focused narrowly on the relationship between an Asian country and one or more Gulf countries. This workshop is intended to foster a comparative and interactional approach. On the one hand, the character, extent and quality of each major Asian country's involvement in the Gulf need to be assessed and analyzed. This needs to be done within a common framework for each Asian country, so that every element can be compared across the board (i.e., from one Asian country to another). On the other hand, attention needs to be given to how the Gulf involvement of each Asian country is perceived by, impinges on, and affects the roles played by other Asian countries. How, for example, do India and China see each other's roles in the Gulf? In the light of these perceptions, is it likely that their roles will be complementary to each other (and thereby conducive to a cooperative and stable Gulf), or is there an inherent conflict of attitudes and interests? Will Turkey's expanding presence in the Gulf affect what Far Eastern and

South Asian states are seeking to achieve there? How will Pakistan react to India's growing presence in the Gulf? And how will the Gulf States themselves handle the varying roles of different Asia countries? The workshop will seek to provide a space for dialogue and discussion on such issues – seen as critical to the future of the area – and if possible create some realistic projections for the future.

Description and Rationale

Within the framework covered in the Abstract, the workshop seeks to attract papers which are closely targeted on the specific concerns of the workshop. Papers should only cover one Asian country, focusing on the characteristics of its involvement in the Gulf (and how it sees the roles played by other Asian countries). Given that there is a substantial range of major Asian players which need to be covered, there will only be space for two (and often only one) paper to be devoted to each country. Each paper, therefore, will either have to cover all of the issues related to the Asian country concerned, or else will need to cover a discrete part of that country's involvement. In the latter case, the easiest arrangement would be for two paper-proposers to work together in making their proposals complementary – such that all topics of interest are covered. In most cases, the convenors will be able to supply data on trade relating to a country's trade with the Gulf, so as to ensure that a common basis of comparison is present.

“Asia” is being used here to refer to all Asian countries apart from the Gulf countries themselves (despite the fact that they themselves form part of Asia). Turkey is included within this definition. The countries which the convenors see as being most central to the concerns of the workshop are China, India, Japan, Pakistan, South Korea and Turkey. It would, however, also be valuable to have consideration given to one or other of the countries of South-East Asia (perhaps Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore or Thailand), or perhaps a composite paper covering all SE Asian countries. Taiwan, placed within whichever context is most appropriate, could also be covered. A case could also be made for including Russia, by virtue of its straddling Europe and Asia, and perhaps one or other of the central Asian republics.

“The Gulf” is used here to denote not only the GCC states but also Iraq and Iran. While papers may give consideration to the possibilities of GCC expansion (involving Yemen, Jordan and Morocco), it is not expected that this should play a central role in the analysis.

All papers need to follow a common pattern (or, where two papers are being presented on the same country, part of the common pattern). The sections of papers should be divided as follows:

1. Perspective: how the Gulf fits into the wider global strategy and foreign relations of Country X.
2. Expansion and Composition of Economic Links between Country X and the Gulf: trade, investment, labor and contracts (contemporary, but with a perspective from the last two decades to show path of expansion).

3. Number of country X nationals currently present in the Gulf states, and projections for the future.
4. The Dynamics of Political and Strategic Relations (including the possibility of the Asian country concerned playing a significant strategic role in the Gulf).
5. Country X and other External Players in the Gulf: to what extent does Country X see other Asian powers as pursuing complementary roles to its own in the Gulf region, and to what extent does it see the roles as potentially conflictual? How this relates to the roles played by Western powers can also be considered.
6. Conclusion: in what ways can it be expected that the role of Country X will enhance the well-being of the Gulf region in the future?

The intention is to move quickly to publication after the workshop. The topicality of the issues, and the breadth of coverage, should ensure that publishers have a substantial and pressing interest to carry the publication forward.

Research Contribution and Bibliography

The major research contribution which is sought from this workshop is to provide comparative information/analysis covering the totality of Asian/Gulf relations. That is to say, the workshop should enable readers of the published book (which will stem from the workshop) to be able to understand how each of the major Asian countries compares with the others in its relationship with Gulf States – and how the strategy pursued by each one may affect the strategies pursued by others. No existing work adopts this broad and integrated approach.

Equally, the focus is on the whole Gulf – all 8 Gulf States. Again, other earlier works have been narrower in focus, making it difficult to understand the overall dynamic of Gulf-Asian relations.

It is for these reasons that the adoption of a common framework for the papers is essential.

There has, of course, been considerable writing on individual country relationships (China-Saudi Arabia, India-Iran etc.), and that will be known to those working on specific countries (whether at the Asian or Gulf ends). It would not be useful here to provide a listing of such writing, partly because it will most likely be known to those working on particular countries, but also because the key element in this workshop will be on creating a new and comprehensive framework for analysis.

Workshop Director Profiles

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 British Society for Middle Eastern Studies, and 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).

Monica Malik has over 15 years of experience as an economist specializing in the MENA region. Monica is the Chief Economist and heads the Economics team of EFG-Hermes. Prior to joining EFG-Hermes in 2007, she was the Senior Economist for the MENA region in Standard Chartered (Dubai) and at Dun & Bradstreet (London). Monica has presented at a number of high profile conferences and policy round table discussions. In her current work, she deals extensively with investment links between the Gulf countries and the major economies of Asia. Monica holds a Ph.D. in Economic Development in the Middle East from the University of Durham, focusing on private sector development in Saudi Arabia. She is based in Dubai.