



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge

Knowledge for All

Workshop 1

The GCC States-Turkey Relations: Opportunities and Challenges

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Abstract

Turkey-GCC relations have gained a new momentum in the 2000s: not only economic and cultural relations, but also diplomatic relations have improved beyond recognition. The latter found its most visible expression on September 2, 2008 when the GCC foreign ministers declared Turkey a strategic partner. Turkey-GCC relations have improved for a number of important reasons. First of all, Turkey has become an increasing magnet for Gulf-based investors while the GCC region, led by Saudi Arabia, has become one of the leading providers of energy to Turkey. The Gulf States perceived Turkey's rising profile and its anti-Israeli rhetoric as balancing Iranian influence in the region so as to ease the security concerns of the Gulf ruling elite. The most important point worth mentioning is that the pressure for change unleashed by the Arab awakening and the uprisings in Syria has pushed both sides to build closer relations not only on the security level but also on the economic and political/diplomatic levels. Relying on interdisciplinary modes of analysis, this workshop will focus on three areas of research so as to understand the opportunities and challenges of the warming relations between the Gulf States and Turkey: security, trade and investment, and globalization.

Description and Rationale

Within the framework covered in the abstract, the workshop seeks to attract papers which will offer new approaches and perspectives concerning the sustainability of the current rapprochement between the Gulf States and Turkey. In this context, the major aim of the workshop is not only to focus on the current situation but also to open up new horizons by anticipating future opportunities and challenges. Therefore, we invite papers from scholars working in different disciplines ranging from education, terrorism, drug smuggling to energy and economy. Given the fact that the both sides are enthusiastic about diversifying their relations to cope with the newly emerging challenges on the regional and global levels, it becomes more apparent that the Gulf States and Turkey share a common interest in seeing the emergence of a stable region at a time when growing pressures for political change (the Arab awakening) sweep over the Middle East, and Iran seeks to fill the power vacuum created by the withdrawal of US combat forces from Iraq.

In this context, our major questions are as follows: what can the Gulf States and Turkey offer to each other in terms of the above-mentioned areas? What kind of policies can the both sides formulate in order to make the warming relations sustainable? What kind of tools can be utilized by the GCC states and Turkey to further grassroots relations so as to cope with the historical baggage concerning Turkey's Ottoman past that the GCC states carry and the prejudices of the Turks concerning the individual-state relations in the GCC states. This workshop specifically seeks to understand to what extent the GCC states and Turkey can further cooperation especially in soft security issues at a time when many allege that the sectarian-based hard security priorities rather than individual-based ones are the main impetus behind the current cooperative relations between Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

At a time when the Gulf States-Turkey relations are being remolded, the relations of both sides with the global actors, especially the United States are of crucial importance. Therefore, another concern of the workshop will be related to the redefinition of the role of the United States in the Gulf in accordance with the changing dynamics of the Gulf and the Middle East after the Arab awakening, especially the Syrian uprisings. Given the few academic works on GCC-Turkey relations, this workshop will mainly aim to be a vantage point from which the scholars belonging to different disciplines can initiate further questions on relations between the two regions.

Our primary objectives in organizing this workshop on Turkey-GCC relations are:

- To analyze the main drivers of Turkey-GCC relations in the 2000s within the context of broader local, regional and global developments
- To anticipate whether these relations can be sustained in the future and what implications this might have for the other regional and global players
- To explore the ways in which Turkey and the GCC can help each other overcome the challenges and realize the opportunities the two sides face
- To provide realistic and concrete policy recommendations to foreign policy-makers in Turkey and the GCC

- To give a boost to literature on Turkey-GCC relations.

Anticipated Papers

This workshop invites analytical and policy-oriented paper proposals in the following areas.

Turkey-GCC Relations: In this area, the workshop invites paper proposals exploring the question: what has historically driven Turkey-GCC relations? The papers are expected to contextualize Turkey-GCC relations within local, regional and global developments. What has Turkey hoped to gain from stronger relations with the GCC? What has the GCC hoped to gain from stronger relations with Turkey?

Opportunities Ahead: In this area, the workshop invites paper proposals which attempt to answer the question: what opportunities can be realized by Turkey and the GCC through stronger cooperation? Papers may address issues such as Security, Education, Research, State Building, Trade, Investment, Energy and International Conflicts and Organizations.

Challenges Ahead: In this area, papers may focus on the question: what challenges do Turkey and the GCC face and how can the two sides help each other face those challenges? Papers could address challenges such as terrorism, drug smuggling, weapons and human smuggling, climate change, international criminal networks, political development and sustainable economic development.

Arab Spring: In this area, the workshop invites paper proposals exploring the impact of Arab Spring on Turkey-GCC relations. Papers may analyze how the Arab Spring has changed the international political environment in the Middle East in general and the bilateral and multilateral relations among Turkey, the GCC and Iran in particular.

Miscellaneous: The workshop invites paper proposals exploring other critical issues that do not fit into any of the above headings. Papers may address topics such as transnational religious networks of religious scholars and activists in Turkey and the GCC, anti-Turkey sentiments in the GCC, anti-GCC sentiments in Turkey, Turkey-GCC relations in the context of changing regional and global balance of power, and Turkey's Kurdish problem and the GCC.

Workshop Director Profiles

Dr. Ozden Zeynep Oktav is an Associate Professor and a lecturer at Yıldız Technical University, Department of Political Science and International Relations. She obtained her BA in English Language and Literature at Bogazici University, Department of English Language and Literature in 1984. She received her MA and Ph.D. degrees from the same university in 1987 and 1992. She is the author of *Limits of Relations with the West: Turkey, Syria and Iran* (Beta, Istanbul, 2008) and *The Changing Dynamics of the Arab Gulf and Saudi Arabia-US-Iran Relations* (Beta, Istanbul, 2011); and editor of Turkey in

the 21st Century: Quest for a New Foreign Policy (Ashgate, Burlington, 2011). Besides, she has contributed various book chapters and articles including “The Limits of Change: Turkey, Iran, Syria” in Nursin Atesoglu Guney (ed.), *Contentious Issues of Security and Future of Turkey* (Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007); “The October 1998 Crisis: The Change of Heart of Turkish Foreign Policy Towards Syria?” *CEMOTI*, June 2001, no.31, 142-163, and “The Gulf States and Iran: A Turkish Perspective,” *Middle East Policy*, Vol. XVIII, no. 2 (Summer 2011).

Dr. Birol Baskan is Assistant Professor at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar. He received a B.A. in International Relations and in Economics from Koc University, Istanbul, Turkey in 1998 and a Ph.D. in Political Science from Northwestern University in 2006. Baskan taught at State University of New York-Fredonia in 2006-2007 and at Qatar University in 2007-2010. His research looks at the roles religion, religious institutions, and grassroots religious groups play in creating, maintaining, undermining, and destroying political order in the Middle East. Currently, he is working on several projects, one of which is a book project analyzing the role of religion in state and nation building in the Gulf. At SFS-Qatar, Baskan teaches courses on comparative politics, religion and politics, and methodology. He has published in *Politics and Religion*; *HAWWA: the Journal of Women in the Middle East and the Islamic World*; *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*; *Insight Turkey*; *Akademik Ortadogu*; *Arab Studies Quarterly*; *Turkish Yearbook of International Politics and Comparative Political Studies*.

Selected Readings

Unfortunately, the literature on Turkey-GCC relations is quite undeveloped. We hope that our workshop will remedy this problem. However, we find the following studies particularly useful.

Ozlem Tur, Economic Relations with the Middle East under the AKP-Trade, Business Community and Reintegration with Neighbouring Zones. *Turkish Studies*, Vol. 12, no. 4, (December 2011).

Sebnem Gumuscu, “Turkey’s Reactions to the Arab Spring,” *Yale Journal of International Affairs*, May 16, 2012, available at <http://yalejournal.org/2012/05/turkeys-reactions-to-the-arab-spring/>.

Birol Başkan, “Turkey-GCC Countries Is There a Future?” *Insight Turkey*, Vol. 13, no. 1 (2011).

Birol Başkan, “Ankara Torn Apart: Arab Spring Turns into Turkey’s Autumn,” *Turkish Yearbook of International Affairs*, v.42 (2011): 1-25.

Muhittin Ataman, “Türkiye-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri Temkinli İlişkilerden Çok Taraflı Birlikteliğe,” *ORSAM, Ortadoğu Analiz*, Eylül 2009, Cilt 1 Sayı 9

F. Stephen Larrabee, "Turkey and The Gulf Cooperation Council," *Turkish Studies*, Vol 12, Issue 4, December 2011.

Kemal Kirişçi, "Politics of Trade and Turkish Foreign Policy," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 47, no. 5 (September 2011): 705–724,.

Özden Zeynep Oktav, Basra Körfezi'nin Değişen Dinamikleri, İran-ABD-Suudi Arabistan İlişkileri, Beta, İstanbul, 2011.

Mary Ann Tetreault, Gwenn Okruhlik, Andrzej Kapiszewski (der.), Political Change in the Arab Gulf States (Londra: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011).

Veysel Ayhan, "The Yemen Issue: A Step Toward Regional War?" ORSAM, Rapor No 9, Ocak 2010.

Kayhan Barzegar, "Tehran's Interests and Values and Arab Spring," Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School, 20 Nisan 2011.

Nermina Biberovic, "Turkey and the GCC States: A New Era of Bilateral Economic Relations," *Gulf Monitor*, Issue 11 (October, 2008):15-21.

Bülent Aras, "Turkey and the GCC: An Emerging Relationship," *Middle East Policy*, v.XII, no.4 (Winter 2005): 89-97.

Lenore G. Martin, "Turkey and Gulf Cooperation Council Security," *Turkish Politics*, Vol. 10, no.1 (March 2009): 75-93.

Veysel Ayhan, "Türkiye-Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkilerinde Yeni Bir Dönem: Yüksek Düzeyli Stratejik Diyalog," *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.1, no.7-8, (July-August 2009):.114-123.

Ali Oğuz Diriöz, "Türkiye-Körfez İşbirliği Konseyi İlişkileri," *Ortadoğu Analiz*, Vol.1, no.6 (June 2009): 77-81.