



Gulf Research Centre Cambridge
Knowledge for All

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Workshop 11

GCC- Iran Relations

Workshop Directors

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Abstract

Over the last few years in particular, the nature of Iran's relations with its Arab neighbors has altered in ways that has gradually caused frictions and evolving layers of distrust. In its pursuit to expand its domain of influence, foster external political enclaves and simultaneously intensify its containment of American strategies, Iran has furthered its presence and political authority in Iraq, Lebanon, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories. As Iran's confrontation with the United States has entered new domains of sanctions and security encirclement of Iran, Tehran's singular pursuit of interests to oppose Washington has caused further isolation between Tehran and many Arab governments in the region. Though Iran enjoys close relations with Qatar, UAE, the Iraqi government and Syria, relations with leading Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia and Egypt suffer from distrust and decreasing interconnectedness. Unlike the past where Iran reached out to influential Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia to coordinate matters at the regional level, such inclinations no longer hold much clout. Nonetheless, there are attempts on both sides between Iran and the Arab countries to contain tensions and promote understanding and coordination. However, strategic cooperation appears to be a far-fetched objective.

Workshop Description and Rationale

1. Divergence in Strategic Goals, Alliances and Doctrines;
2. Iraq and Its Future as a Contentious Issue;

3. The Impact of the Nuclear Program on the Relationship between the Two Sides;
4. Identity and Ideological Issues between Iran and its Arab Neighbors;
5. The Lebanese Crisis as a Challenge and an Opportunity;
6. Visions and Scenarios for the Future.

Workshop Director Profiles

Prof. Saleh A. Almani is Professor of Political Science and Dean, College of Law and Political Science, King Saud University, in Riyadh. He serves as a senior consultant to the GCC Secretariat in Riyadh, and on the Board of The Institute for Diplomatic Studies in Riyadh, as well as The Institute of Public Administration. He has published two books and about twenty five scientific papers, as well 14 chapters in edited books. He writes on Gulf security and the international relations of the Arabian Gulf , has delivered papers and presentations at regional and international forums, such as Kuwait University, King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, Georgetown, Harvard and Michigan, LSE, as well as UNESCO in Paris, and served as an Editor of King Saud University JSE (Administrative Sciences). He writes a weekly column for Okaz newspaper in Jeddah, as well as Al-Ittihad newspaper in Abu Dhabi.

Prof. Mahmood Sariolghalam is the professor of International Relations at the School of Economics and Political Science in Shahid Beheshti University (formerly Iran National University) since 1987. He received his B.A. degree in Political Science/Management from California State University, Northridge in 1980 and his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in International Relations from the University of Southern California in 1982 and 87, respectively. Professor Sariolghalam also completed a Post Doctorate program at the Ohio State University in 1997. During the 2009-2010 academic year, he taught at the Kuwait University. Professor Sariolghalam specializes in international politics of the Middle East, Iranian foreign policy and political culture and has written extensively in Persian, Arabic and English. He has made presentations in more than one hundred countries. He is a member of International Studies Association (USA), Global Agenda Council of the World Economic Forum (Switzerland) and a Non-Resident Scholar at ASERI (Italy). His last name literally means a ‘Quick Pen.’