



## **Our First Newsletter**

Gulf International Forum (GIF) is a research and studies center headquartered in DC that focuses on the Gulf region, and we are pleased to share with you our first newsletter. As members of the academic community and researchers, we believe that the discussion of critical and controversial issues related to the Gulf region lack sufficient objective and informed input and analysis. Our aim is to fill that gap by enhancing understandings; engaging in free dialogue; and promoting independent thinking from both Gulf-based scholars and in the U.S. We apply a holistic approach to research and studies on the Gulf, consequently, our region of focus includes the six GCC states plus Iran, Iraq, and Yemen. We believe you cannot fully understand the dynamics of the region without all nine countries. In the next few months, we intend to present a series of panels, roundtables, and timely articles. Within the year, we expect to kick off our first annual conference to review the year that was and the year that's coming. Additionally, we will also maintain an active social media platform (follow us @GulfIntlForum) and invite you to visit our website [www.gulfif.com](http://www.gulfif.com) to learn more about us and for up-to-date news and analysis on the Gulf.

[Visit our website](http://www.gulfif.com)

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## **Upcoming Event - Save the Date**

**March 8, 2018**

**The Gulf and Syria Crisis: With or Without Assad?**

**Venue:**

The National Press Club  
Holeman Lounge, 13th Floor  
529 14<sup>th</sup> St, NW Washington, DC.

**Time:**

**9:15am to 10:45am**



On March 15<sup>th</sup>, the Middle East marks the 7<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Syrian crisis, one of the worst armed conflict and humanitarian crisis since WWII. Since 2011, nearly 500,000 Syrians have been killed, 12 out of 14 Syrian provinces were entirely or partially destroyed, and over 65% of Syria's population has been displaced inside and outside the country. The atrocities committed in Syria and the failure of Arab states and the International Community to contain the conflict or de-escalate the violence resulted in the spillover of Syria's war fires to the surrounding countries. As a result, radical militias proliferated, and jihadists found safe-haven in war-torn Syria. This largely affected the security of the Middle East, and international peace in general. Additionally, all Gulf states -with the exception of Oman- are directly and indirectly affected and involved in the Syrian crisis, supporting one of the warring sides diplomatically and financially; or

militarily. At the same time, Syria's geopolitical location and role in the region makes the path of the conflict and its outcome a matter of national security for the Gulf region, and maybe an existential one for some Gulf states. Since the summer of 2016, Syrian President Bashar Al Assad's power has been on the rise, after it decayed between 2011-2015. Whether he remains in power or is removed, it would be a game-changer for the different interests in the Gulf region. Continued analysis of the current crisis in Syria is needed to better understand the outcome.

GIF would like to invite you to attend a panel addressing *The Gulf and the Syrian Crisis: With or Without Assad?*. Panelists will discuss the topic from several perspectives; (1) the repercussions of the Syrian crisis on the Gulf region's security (2) Iraq & Iran's role in supporting Assad government; (3) GCC's role in supporting political and armed opposition groups, including the Syrian National Coalition; (4) and how the future of Syria will affect the Gulf.

### Featured Speakers:

Mr. Hassan Hassan and Dr. Radwan Ziadeh - other speakers to be announced.

### RSVP:

- Seating capacity is limited! Email [events@gulfii.com](mailto:events@gulfii.com) by March 2nd, 2018
- Please respond with the following information: Full Name, Company/Affiliation, Title, Phone Number
- You must receive RSVP confirmation by email in order to attend

Read more [here](#) about event.

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## Analysis



### Iraq Reconstruction Conference: Increased GCC Role and Hopes for Reforms and Reconciliation

From February 12-14, 2018, Kuwait hosted an international conference to help Iraq with reconstruction. At the conference, held in the Kuwaiti

capital, Baghdad sought \$88 billion from donors to rebuild areas destroyed during the war on Islamic State (IS). According to Iraq's government, there are 70,000 destroyed houses and 140,000 partially destroyed. Donors' response was disappointing, and they pledged to support Iraq with \$30 billion in loans, credit, or direct investments, which was far less than Baghdad's request. Donors feared the failure of reconstruction plans and in the first day they only offered \$300 million of the \$88 billion requested by Baghdad. Their reluctance was linked to the failure of post-2003 reconstruction efforts because of massive waste and corruption.[1]

Turkey made the biggest pledge with \$5 billion, followed by the US at \$3 billion, Kuwait at \$2 billion, Saudi Arabia at \$1.5 billion, Qatar at \$1 billion, Germany at \$615 million, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) at \$500 million. [Read More](#)

### The Saudi-UAE Alliance Faces its Yemeni Stress Test

In recent years, the foreign policies of Gulf states, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have become increasingly assertive. Heightened perceptions of threats to security, spurred by significant changes in the global and regional geopolitical balances of power, have driven Saudi



and Emirati leaders to assert such muscular policies. However, the power nexus created by the alliance between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi has greatly underpinned this new strategic posture. The Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, Mohammad bin Salman (MbS), and the Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Mohammad bin Zayed (MbZ), have been often, and closely, coordinating. Therefore, the impact of the Saudi-Emirati alliance cracking would likely be felt across the region. The stress test of such alliance has long been the war in Yemen against the Houthi rebels and the remnants of the former regime led by Ali Abdullah Saleh and the General People's Congress. [Read More](#)



## New Dynamics: Egypt, Iran and the GCC

Last week Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi visited the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). This visit, which was the first for an Egyptian President to Oman since 2009, carried important messages about Egypt's foreign policy vis-a-vis

Gulf, and possible new role for Egypt in the Saudi-Emirati dispute with Iran. Compared to other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Oman has maintained a steady relationship with Egypt. Since the ascendancy of former President of Egypt Anwar al-Sadat and Oman's Sultan Qaboos to power in 1970, both countries have avoided confrontation. Strong relations between Cairo and Muscat grew in Egypt's period of isolation in the world when the Cairo faced a boycott by almost all Arab League members after Sadat signed the Camp David Accords with Israel. Oman rejected the Arab consensus and considered the agreement one for Egypt to make as a sovereign country with an independent foreign policy. Also, in Egypt's post-2011 revolution aftermath, Oman always maintained one policy toward the successive governments in Cairo. In contrast to Abu Dhabi, Doha, and Riyadh, Muscat's relations with Egypt during the presidencies of Hosni Mubarak (1981-2011), Mohammed Morsi (2012-2013), and Sisi (2013-present) have all been positive. [Read More](#)

## Historical Assessment of the Current Gulf Crisis

This paper studies the ongoing crisis between Qatar and the Arab quartet—Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, and Egypt—from several perspectives to better analyze potential solutions. Widespread conflict in the region along with Arab Spring uprisings and dictators' attempt to limit the effect of these events have complicated Qatar's relations with the blockading countries. Such frictions are central to understanding the ongoing Gulf Crisis. Politicians have failed to ameliorate conditions because most political parties have only crafted unrealistic plans. It would be foolish to assume that the current dispute is a new one. Rather, it is primarily the accumulation of old disputes and problems. [Read More](#)



## GCC and Russia Beyond Syria

Since 2011, discussions of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)-Russia relations have been dominated by their diverging approaches regarding Syria and Iran. There are, however, many other facets of this relationship. In fact, when it comes to Russia, the Gulf states have, at least historically, produced relatively similar foreign policies focused primarily on economic engagement. This article looks at several

dimensions of GCC-Russia relations: Investment, defense sales, energy, and Islam.  
**[Read More](#)**

## Kuwait's Foreign Policy In Context

With the eruption of the Gulf crisis, Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al Sabah has not only emerged as a kingmaker seeking to bring the five month dispute to an end but more broadly positioned himself as the region's most trusted and experienced statesman. The 88-year old monarch –



who has ruled since 2006 – is also a generation older than the leaders of the feuding parties of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), which pits United Arab Emirate Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi Mohammed bin Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, 56, and de-facto ruler, along with Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, 32, against Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani. **[Read More](#)**

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## Opportunities

**Position Title:** Internship Program

**Period:** Summer 2018

### Job Summary:

The Internship Program provides talented students and recent graduates with a training opportunity designed to encourage professional and personal development. A cover letter is required stating why you would like to intern with us and what interests you in Middle East studies, particularly the Gulf region. Interested applicants, please send an updated resume and cover letter to [info@gulfii.com](mailto:info@gulfii.com).

### Two Internship Programs Available:

*\*Please indicate which program you are applying to in your cover letter.\**

#### (1) Events and Social Media

Interns will help in all preparations for GIF's events and assist in all tasks related to events. This includes track registration, set up for events, and prepare related materials. Additionally, during the event, the interns will assist in checking registrants in, taking photos, and helping with Q&A sessions. Interns will have opportunities to interact with event speakers and guests during these events. They will also be responsible to assist in promoting GIF's events and activities. Interns will also assist in managing GIF social media accounts and add content as required.

#### (2) Research Assistant

Interns will participate in a variety of research projects as required. This includes assisting with editing articles, conducting research, and helping with content to be featured on GIF's website. Additionally, they will occasionally be required to conduct research on key organizational contacts, grant research, and assist in compiling analytics data. Interns will assist in keeping dynamic content related to the research and publication department up-to-date on the GIF website. Also, candidates with design backgrounds may assist in the creation of program books and fliers for GIF events, as well as content for GIF's website.



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