On November 21, 2011, CIRS hosted Fouad Ajami, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution and the cochair of the Herbert and Jane Dwight Working Group on Islamism and the International Order, to discuss the recent Arab Spring in the Middle East. The event, which was sponsored by CIRS, took place at the Georgetown University’s Qatar campus, and drew a large number of members from the Doha community.

The lecture, titled “Tracking the Arab Spring: The Best Day After a Bad Emperor is the First,” explored how the “Arab Awakening” started in Tunisia, went on to Egypt, and then on to many other countries, including Syria and Libya. Ajami described how the Arab Spring started with Mohamed Bouazizi, a Tunisian street vendor, whose act of self-immolation became the catalyst for the Tunisian revolution that led to the stepping down of the president and the spreading of riots to different countries in the Arab world.

“Arabs, for several decades walked by the wall and did nothing against these tyrannical regimes, but now they are eager to take their freedom and full rights… Luckily, now they have decided not to heed and react to these regimes,” said Ajami while addressing the audience.

Ajami is a frequent contributor on Middle Eastern issues and contemporary international history for The New York Times, Foreign Affairs, The New Republic, The Wall Street Journal, among many other journals and periodicals. He argued that, “I am all in with the Arab Spring, I believed in it and still do; however, I am worried about Egypt… If the Arab awakening did not succeed in Egypt, it will definitely affect the political, social, and economic situations in other Arab countries… The economic freedom...
A warm Doha greeting from all of us at CIRS. This academic year, CIRS has witnessed another period of productive research, publications, and public affairs programming. We are tremendously proud of two CIRS-produced edited volumes: *Innovation in Islam: Traditions and Contributions* published by University of California Press in April 2011, and *International Politics of the Persian Gulf* released by Syracuse University Press in June 2011. Look out for these books on the CIRS website as well as at the publishers’ site.

We also carry these books in our library, should any of our readers wish to borrow the books for research purposes, or simply to become acquainted with the latest findings in Gulf studies. These books are the result of multi-year research initiatives in which renowned scholars shared their original research and so I encourage you to pick up a copy.

We also look forward to the imminent publication of three upcoming CIRS books. Hurst/Columbia University Press are the publishers of CIRS-sponsored research in three separate edited volumes on *The Nuclear Questions in the Middle East*, *Migrant Labor in the Persian Gulf*, and *The Political Economy of the Persian Gulf*. All three books are due to be released in the spring of 2012, and CIRS will highlight them in the upcoming issue of the newsletter as well as on the CIRS website.

In addition, CIRS has recently published two new Occasional Papers, one on developments on “Rentier State Theory” and another on issues of free mobility within the Gulf region. We have also released a new *Summary Report* on the Political Economy of the Gulf, which contains synopses of papers delivered at the working group meetings that we held. For more information on our most recent publications, please refer to page 3 of this newsletter.

CIRS has put into action its newest research initiative on “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East.” Earlier this year, following its request for proposals, CIRS awarded funds in support of empirically-based, original research projects on the topic. As with other research initiatives, our goal is to fill in existing gaps in the literature and to contribute original knowledge to topics related to food security and food sovereignty. There are full details about this initiative on pages 9 and 12.

Along the way, I and the rest of the CIRS team look forward to hearing from you and hopefully to seeing you at our campus. For a full list of all upcoming lectures, events, and publications, I invite you to visit the CIRS website at http://cirs.georgetown.edu.

Sincerely,

Mehran Kamrava
Director of CIRS
Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar

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**About CIRS**

The Center for International and Regional Studies at the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar is guided by the principles of academic excellence, forward vision, and community engagement.

The Center’s mission revolves around five principal goals:

- To provide a forum for scholarship and research on international and regional affairs;
- To encourage in-depth examination and exchange of ideas;
- To foster thoughtful dialogue among students, scholars, and practitioners of international affairs;
- To facilitate the free flow of ideas and knowledge through publishing the products of its research, sponsoring conferences and seminars, and holding workshops designed to explore the complexities of the twenty-first century;
- To engage in outreach activities with a wide range of local, regional, and international partners.
A Theory of “Late Rentierism” in the Arab States of the Gulf
Occasional Paper
Matthew Gray

Matthew Gray is the Sheikh Hamdan bin Rashid al-Maktoum Senior Lecturer at the Centre for Arab and Islamic Studies. In this paper, he writes that rentier state theory (RST), explains the impacts of external payments—or rents—on state-society relations and governance. It has been in wide usage for over two decades, and is still routinely cited by scholars writing on the Gulf or other parts of the world. Its tenets are widely accepted, and retain a strong validity at the broader level.

However, in this paper, Gray argues that RST has not adapted enough to explain the dramatic changes in the political economies of the Gulf in the past two decades or so, including the responses of Dubai, Bahrain, Qatar, and Abu Dhabi, to globalization, new technologies, freer trade and investments, social changes, and development imperatives. In this paper Gray argues that a new phase of RST—“late rentierism”—should be applied to the wealthy Arab Gulf states. The case for late rentierism is made with an emphasis on the shortcomings or oversimplifications of other rentier approaches.

Free Mobility within the Gulf Cooperation Council
Occasional Paper
Zahra Babar

Zahra Babar, Project Manager at CIRS, is the author of CIRS’s latest Occasional Paper. She writes that stipulations within the formal protocols of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) established free movement of nationals as an essential component of the region’s movement towards full economic integration. This paper analyses the protocols within the broader construct that stresses human emancipation and freedom of mobility as fundamental human rights. Throughout the GCC states face the peculiar dilemma of supporting full freedom of mobility for citizens while also severally limiting and curtailing the mobility of the dominant, non-national population. This paper questions how normative debates on the freedom of movement apply to the GCC. It examines the policy and practice of strictly managing the movement of international migrants while at the same time freeing up movement for citizenry. This paper proposes that in the GCC the regional political economy, the processes of regionalization, and globalization have combined to tighten controls over mobility and migration.

The Political Economy of the Gulf
Summary Report

The CIRS research project on “The Political Economy of the Gulf” was launched in 2009. As with other CIRS research initiatives, after a thorough review of existing literature on the topic, certain gaps were identified meriting further original research and scholarship. Select scholars were invited to participate in a working group for focused discussions on a range of sub-topics. During these meetings the participants contributed their expertise, and began working on papers in their specialty areas. The ultimate product of this research project will be an edited book on “The Political Economy of the Gulf.” The working group meetings held in Doha, Qatar, meant that authors were able to work closely together in order for the individual chapters to cross-reference each other for better coherence and intellectual synergy of the volume.

Each study is an in-depth work of scholarship that is original, analytical, and makes a significant contribution to the field.

These economic and political reform efforts that are currently underway in most of the GCC states have attempted to enhance political stability both regionally and internationally in order to increase the region’s international bargaining power.

Explaining the different ways in which globalizing forces have shaped new dimensions to the political economy of the Gulf states, this research initiative proposes to evaluate the changes that have occurred, especially in light of the ongoing global economic crisis. Mutually beneficial rentier arrangements have guided the means in which the GCC countries have formed their oil-based economies and labor relations in the past, but will this necessarily be the case in the years to come? In order to fully realize the political economic situation of the region, the chapters in the upcoming book address key issues, including discussion on the future demographic aspects of the Gulf states; the feasibility of establishing a future GCC monetary union; the effects of rentierism on state autonomy; and comprehensive analysis of sovereign wealth funds and Islamic banking models, among other central issues.

All of the above publications can be downloaded for free from the CIRS website at http://cirs.georgetown.edu/publications
Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University, delivered a CIRS Distinguished Lecture arguing that not enough time has passed to be able to truly analyze the impact and consequences of the Arab Spring, and so he offered some preliminary observations regarding the uprisings. He argued that “this juncture may be unprecedented in modern Arab history. Suddenly, despotic regimes that were entrenched for over forty years are vulnerable.” In a short period of time, some key regimes crumbled after having clung to power for so long and as a result of the challenging efforts of ordinary people. Khalidi said that “This is a moment, when we are suddenly facing the prospect of entirely new possibilities in the Arab world. It comes after decades, when nothing seemed to change in this region.”

“\textbf{This is thus a supremely important moment, not only in the Arab World, but for how Arabs are perceived.}”

Several factors distinguish these uprisings from previous Arab revolutions, including the peaceful nature of the movements and the protesters’ insistence on abstaining from violence, Khalidi argued. Although the publics of Tunis and Egypt came out in force to air their displeasure with the status quo, they rejected the use of violence. For the first time in recent years, Western media carried images of peace-loving, middle class, and charismatic Arabs, instead of the usual portrayal of Middle East publics as violent Islamic fundamentalists. “This is thus a supremely important moment, not only in the Arab World, but for how Arabs are perceived […] in the West – a people that has been systematically maligned in the Western media for decades are for the first time being shown in a realistic and positive light,” he said.

The Arab uprisings stemmed from the public’s frustration not only with despotic Arab regimes, but also with injustices made global through corporate privatization of public resources at the expense of social welfare. “What we have been seeing across the Arab World are not just revolutions for democracy, for freedom, for dignity, and for the rule of law, they have also been revolutions against the neo-liberal world order and the free-trade market fundamentalism dogma underpinning it,” Khalidi maintained. Any new government formed after the ousting of the old regime must attempt to fulfill the economic and social needs of their populaces whilst resisting pressure from the West to engage in the very economic globalization practices that led to the revolutions in the first instance.

Khalidi pointed out that many of these Arab countries are still unstable and that nothing has been concretely decided about their future political paths. He argued that the task ahead will be daunting for the new leaders of these societies as they will have to envision new social and political forms. “Building a workable, functioning, democratic system will be much, much, harder than overthrowing Mubarak or Ben Ali,” Khalidi argued. Any new system must avoid the pitfalls of the old regime and needs to target the old centers of power and corruption which have not altogether disappeared. This, he said, is a scenario that is not unique to these Arab countries as “we know a lot about entrenched powerful interests dominating a democratic political system from the American experience. This is a problem every democratic polity suffers from.”

In sum, Khalidi explained that “we must never forget that this is the Middle East, which because of its energy resources and its unique strategic position is the most coveted region of the world and, in consequence, the region of the world most penetrated by foreign interests.”

Rashid Khalidi is editor of the Journal of Palestine Studies and was an advisor to the Palestinian delegation to the Madrid and Washington Arab-Israeli peace negotiations from October 1991 until June 1993. He is author of many books, including \textit{Sowing Crisis: American Dominance and the Cold War in the Middle East} (2009); \textit{The Iron Cage: The Story of the Palestinian Struggle for Statehood} (2006); and was the co-editor of \textit{Palestine and the Gulf} (1982) and \textit{The Origins of Arab Nationalism} (1991).
Sectarian Politics in the Gulf

Certain streams of scholarship have suggested that conflicts around sectarian identity lie at the very crux of Middle Eastern politics. Sectarianism may be broadly defined as the process through which forms of ethnic and/or religious identity are politicized. While certain scholars overemphasize the enduring ideological divides in the region and their continuing influence on socio-political instability, others downplay their significance entirely. There are those who argue that sectarian issues in the region are not the age-old dilemmas that they are often perceived as, but rather are modern phenomena, and that sectarian affiliation was not a particular marker of identification nor a cause for open conflict a century ago.

While there can be no single-factor explanation of Middle Eastern politics, the fact remains that identity on the basis of a common national affiliation has often been a contested realm in the Middle East. Sectarian identifications have impacted on the fractious course of modern politics in the region, with visible repercussions felt within both the domestic and international spheres. In one form or the other, contemporary Middle Eastern states have often had to confront transnational ideologies and identities.

There are estimated to be some 2 million Shia within the six states of the Gulf Cooperation Council. In Bahrain, the Shia citizens vastly outnumber Sunni; Kuwait has a sizeable 25–30% Shia; and Yemen’s Shia Zaydis account for about 25% of the population. The four remaining GCC states also have minority Shia populations of roughly around 10–20%.

The numbers for the Persian Gulf in total are much greater when including the Shia populations of Iran (70 million) and Iraq (22 million).

Undoubtedly, reverberations from the dramatic uprisings in the Arab world are being felt throughout the Persian Gulf. The ongoing situation in Bahrain is one recent locus that has brought the dynamics of sectarian politics to the forefront of the discussion. There is potential for the situation in Bahrain to actively enflame sectarian sentiments across the region. Questions arise around whether it may be a deliberate regime strategy to frame the Bahrain protest movement as Sunni-Shia conflict and also whether the anti-Shia rhetoric that has been vociferously spreading through Arab media outlets, particularly through the dominant Saudi news channels, may be a consequence of existing geopolitical realities and rivalries.

Scope of the Project

With the reinvigoration on the subject brought about by current events, CIRS launched a new research initiative on “Sectarian Politics in the Gulf.” The central aim of this study is to examine the dynamic ways in which evolving sectarian identities and politics in the Gulf region intersect. Encompassing Iran and the states of the Arabian Peninsula, the research project will include topics that focus on how sectarian issues play out in the realms of domestic politics within Gulf states, as well as those that address sectarianism’s impact on inter-state relations within the region. This project brings together a renowned group of scholars to examine the issues of religious, communal, and ethnic identities in the Persian Gulf, and how these impose themselves on both the domestic and international politics of the Gulf.

One of the aims of our research project will be to determine the extent to which sectarian identity is salient to the ongoing political developments within the Gulf. The dynamics of sectarianism have changed dramatically over recent decades in the Gulf, corresponding often to political upheavals within the region. The Arab revolts that began in the spring of 2011 have largely been secular in their spirit and nature. Given that the final chapters of the “Arab Spring” are yet to be written, the nature and consequences of the intersection between sectarian identities and politics in the Gulf remains to be seen. Nevertheless, our research highlights some of the most critical dynamics and patterns that are beginning to emerge in the region’s sectarian politics.

Some topics which we aim to address through this research initiative are:

- Sunnism and State-Building in the Arabian Peninsula
- Rentier Politics and Sectarian Identity in the Persian Gulf
- Shia Politics in Iraq
- Iraqi Kurds
- Ethnic Politics in Iran
- The Shia in Kuwait
- The Kuwaiti Ba’th
- Shia Identity and Politics in Bahrain
- The Saudi Shia
- The Political Consequences of Yemen’s Ethnic Mosaic.

Participants in the “Sectarian Politics in the Gulf” research initiative are:

- Abdulrahman Saleh Al-Khalifa, King Saud University
- Khalid Nahar M. Al-Rwis, King Saud University
- Zahra Babar, CIRS, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- John T. Crist, CIRS, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Taha Ellobaid, Qatar University
- Nahla Hwalla, American University of Beirut
- Mehran Kamrava, CIRS, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Suzi Mingani, CIRS Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Nadia Talpur, CIRS, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Flora Whitney, CIRS, Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Qatar
- Eckart Woertz, Princeton University

CIRS Grant Recipients:

- Elisa Cavatorta, SOAS, University of London
- Shadi Hamadeh, American University of Beirut
- Jane Harrigan, SOAS, University of London
- Karin Seyfert, American University of Beirut
- Ben Shepherd, University of Sydney
- Salwa Tohme Tawk, American University of Beirut
- Mary Ann Tétrault, Trinity University
- Deborah L. Wheeler, United States Naval Academy

Article by Zahra Babar, CIRS Project Manager
Mari Luomi, one of the 2011-2012 CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellows, gave the inaugural CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture of the Fall 2011 semester. She lectured on the topic of “Natural Resources and Environmental Unsustainability in Qatar and the GCC” to an audience of academics, students, ambassadors, and interested members of the general public.

Luomi introduced the topic by noting that her research was geared towards suggesting a new conceptual framework for understanding the relationship between sustainability, political economy, and development in the states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). She defined the term “sustainability,” as “the use of natural resources in a way that allows for welfare for humans and the environment, presently and in the future.”

Outlining the main argument, Luomi said that “the Gulf monarchies’ dependence on fossil fuels, on fossil fuel revenues, and on social contracts based on these revenues produces unsustainability.” Major issues such as, economic growth, population increase, and pressures to diversify the economy in the region, all add tremendous pressure on economic, social, and environmental sustainability. In the GCC states in particular, the rentier set-up and the need to preserve the social contract between government and citizens is a unique factor leading to long-term unsustainability. She explained that “if we step back and look at the broader challenges that the GCC states are currently facing to the ‘business-as-usual’ ways of conducting their development,” it would be counter-productive to continue with the current model. “We must not forget,” Luomi said, “that we are living in a harsh, but, at the same time, very fragile environment.”

Indicators of unsustainability include greenhouse gas emissions, of which “the GCC produces 2.5% of global carbon emissions.” In Qatar, “we are looking at a society and economy that has the highest per capita emissions in the world,” Luomi said. A second indicator of unsustainability is the idea of an “ecological footprint,” which measures human consumption in relation to the Earth’s resources, with “the Qatari footprint representing six times the biological capacity of the world – so we are living six times over the world’s current capacity here on average,” she explained. In an attempt to tackle these high energy consumption and carbon emission rates, the Qatari government has made efforts to address the problem by viewing “environmental development” as one of the main pillars that form the Qatar National Vision 2030 plan.

Luomi concluded the lecture with suggestions regarding how the GCC states could encourage their societies to be more sustainable: “What we need for things to move onward is political will and determination.” She argued that it was necessary to have open debates on the environmental impacts of current natural resource consumption patterns as well as a well-grounded infrastructure for transmitting the message of sustainability through educational campaigns, recycling initiatives, and the encouragement of public transport, among other practical enterprises.

Luomi summed up the lecture by highlighting the simultaneous privilege and responsibility we have as residents and citizens of Qatar. Currently, there is an “illusion of plenty” that is incompatible with a sustainable future. She said, “here, economically, we have the possibility to continue consuming business-as-usual, but the moral question is, if we can, should we?”

Mari Luomi holds a PhD in Middle Eastern Studies from Durham University. She has previously worked in various positions for the Middle East Project and the Programme in the International Politics of Natural Resources and the Environment of the Finnish Institute of International Affairs. She has functioned as Vice President of the Finnish International Studies Association. Luomi’s research focuses on the climate change-related responses of small Gulf monarchies, with a special emphasis on Qatar and the UAE (Abu Dhabi).
Fouad Ajami, continued from page 1

is linked to the political one; there is no political freedom in the absence of economic freedom.” Ajami believes that there will be a time when Arabs will chant in support of a great leader.

“If the Arab awakening did not succeed in Egypt, it will definitely affect the political, social, and economic situations in the other Arab countries.”

The event concluded with a question and answer session which generated a great deal of participation from the audience who posed a range of questions for the speaker.

From 1980 to June 2011, Fouad Ajami was the Majid Khadduri professor and Director of Middle East Studies at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He began his academic career after receiving his PhD in political science from the University of Washington in 1973. He is the author of The Arab Predicament, The Vanished Imam, Beirut: City of Regrets, The Dream Palace of the Arabs, and The Foreigner’s Gift: The Americans, The Arabs and The Iraqis in Iraq among other works.
On November 14, 2011, Eckart Woertz, Visiting Fellow at Princeton University, delivered a CIRS Monthly Dialogue lecture titled, “Arab Food, Water, and the Big Gulf Land-Grab that Wasn’t.” Woertz placed the question of food security within a historical and cultural context. Food, he said, has historically been a highly politicized commodity and has been subject to political maneuvering regardless of the actual resources of food available. He argued that “with rising import needs, the GCC faces increasing problems,” and so food security is important for the political legitimacy of any government in its ability to satisfy social needs now and in the future.

Historic experience shows that countries have always been dependent on imports of one kind or another and are, as such, always susceptible to any fluctuation in energy or food supplies. This relationship of interdependence where countries find themselves vulnerable within the global matrix is capitalized upon by regional and international power politics. The availability of food is considered a basic human right that all governments must provide their populaces. In the rentier arrangement of Gulf countries, the ruling elite are particularly susceptible to criticism and social unrest if social welfare is not maintained. The food price hikes and export restrictions by food exporters like Russia, India, and Vietnam caused wide-spread panic in 2008 all around the world. This prompted Middle East countries, and Gulf states in particular, to become increasingly aware of their vulnerabilities in relation to issues of food security. In order to properly sustain this livestock industry, Saudi has become one of the largest importers of barley.

Many of the domestic food security projects are not environmentally or economically rational endeavors. For example, Woertz explained how Saudi Arabia, despite water shortages and harsh desert conditions, became a wheat grower and exporter in the 1990s, placing heavy demands on already strained water supplies. Currently, Saudi has one of the largest dairy farms in the world and imports large amounts of sheep. In order to properly sustain this livestock industry, Saudi has become one of the largest importers of barley.

On the international level, many GCC governments have announced foreign land acquisitions, known to critics as “land-grabs,” mainly in nearby Sudan, but also in countries as far away as Brazil and Australia. The bulk of these land acquisitions usually take place in the poorer third world countries and so many question whether human and land rights are respected and whether international laws are being properly enforced. In the 1980s, Gulf countries wanted to develop farmlands in Sudan to serve as a “Bread Basket” to feed populations back home, but this scheme was terminated due to various problems, among them corrupt governance during the Nimeiri regime.

The discourse of food security is prone to high levels of fear-mongering. Woertz recounted the health problems that exist in the Gulf and that are caused by bad dietary habits. He explained that high levels of obesity and diabetes are generally a sign that “Gulf countries are food secure. If there’s a problem, it’s with too much food, not too little,” he said.

Eckart Woertz was former Director of Economic Studies at the Gulf Research Center in Dubai and held senior positions in financial services companies in Germany and the UAE. He is currently finishing a book about Middle East food security and has published widely on financial markets and economic development in the Gulf.
CIRS held a two-day working group meeting on November 13-14, 2011, to discuss issues related to its research initiative on “Food Security and Food Sovereignty in the Middle East.” The working group consisted of experts in the field who deliberated the historical, economic, and political aspects of the discourse as well as specific case studies of some Middle East countries. Also taking part in the meeting were some of the CIRS grant recipients who updated the other working group members on their ongoing research projects and shared some of their preliminary findings.

Due to the unfavorable natural conditions in many Middle Eastern and Gulf countries, these states have never been fully self-sufficient in terms of food and have always had a strong dependence on imported food stuff. This relationship of dependence on others for a basic human right, make issues of food and food security highly politicized areas. Historically, food and access to food have played pivotal roles in the social contract between governments and their populations and have had major effects on the domestic politics of Arab countries. Especially since the food price hikes of 2008, governments have mandated special strategies and policies to address issues of inflation and simultaneous public unrest. The participants explained how the rise in food prices in the Middle East were a direct trigger for the Arab uprisings and the toppling of entrenched governments. Availability of food is thus a way for governments to gain political legitimacy and not just an issue of healthcare or social welfare.

In the Gulf region, the ruling bargain based on rentier arrangements means that GCC governments must ensure the current and future stability of food supplies and so have invested in several long-term food security plans, both locally and internationally. The participants explained that there was no comprehensive GCC-wide strategy regarding food security, even though there are similarities in their approaches. Currently, rather than addressing the root causes of food price hikes, there is a tendency to treat the symptoms of the problem in the GCC by issuing policies that suppress food prices in order to stabilize the market.

One of the most controversial and highly publicized areas of food security initiatives is the strategy of foreign “land acquisitions.” Although many of these schemes are highly successful in terms of yield, these initiatives are problematic for a variety of political and ethical reasons. Land acquisitions in poor third world countries are not always subject to consensual international laws. It is often the case that laws ensuring land and property rights are weak and not properly enforced, thus paving the way for corrupt practices and forced takeovers of local farms.

On the global level, climate change and environmental issues is studied as an important part of the research. From a sociological perspective, changes in lifestyle and habits have increased demand for increasingly diverse types of food, and this in turn has added to increased environmental and economic strains. To the extent that Middle East and GCC countries will continue to be dependent on imports of particular foods, there is considerable scope for regional cooperation. The participants advised these countries to invest in regional or international food storages, whether actual or virtual. The Gulf states need to develop stronger relationships with foreign partners like the World Trade Organization to increase capacity-building measures, rather than rely on the idea of self-sufficiency, which, the participants argued, is ultimately unsustainable.

The participants cautioned that governments’ sudden interest in food security as an area of investment should be viewed critically. Historically, countries have always been subject to fears over future food reserves, making the idea of “food self-sufficiency” a fallacy. Storing food during times of war is part of the world’s collective memory and governments should not give in to the fear mongering inherent in the discourse of food security. Oftentimes, the fear over the availability of current or projected food supplies is used as a pretext to achieve alternative political agendas. The participants concluded that calls for greater domestic food production in the Middle East and the GCC are not always rational programs, given the limited budgets and/or resources.
Although my specialty is the history of Iran, for some time I have been working on the history of the Persian Gulf, a long-neglected yet very important topic. Until now, an inability to conceptualize the Gulf’s history as a whole has resulted in scholarly attention being focused on small pieces of it. In the western academic system, students typically specialize in Iran, the Arabian peninsula or Iraq, and learn Arabic or Persian. But very rarely will a historian of Iran have an interest in the history of Saudi Arabia, or vice versa. For this reason no one has yet written a satisfactory and comprehensive history of the Gulf. What is needed is a new historical approach in which the unit of study is the Persian Gulf in its entirety, over a very long term.

In order better to understand the subject, on behalf of Gulf/2000, a major research and documentation project on the Gulf states that I help direct, I organized two major conferences, one held in Cyprus in 2004 and the other in Sharjah in 2009. The first led to an edited book, *The Persian Gulf in History* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), which is the first new overview in many years, while papers from the second conference are being edited for publication.

In my view, the unique identity of the Persian Gulf has been clear since antiquity. For millennia it was an integrated region characterized by the constant interchange of people, commerce and religious movements. Before the modern era, peoples of the region shared a maritime culture based on pearling, fishing, and long-distance trade, and were part of an interlinked system that included agricultural villages and oases that sustained the caravan trade.

The Gulf has always been a key international trade route connecting the Middle East to India, East Africa, Southeast Asia, and China. Its orientation was outward, toward the Indian Ocean, and its society reflected this. A culture of migration prevailed. A cosmopolitan, mercantile, and tolerant society developed here, which thrived in spite of the lack of local resources. What persists is the unique role the *Khalijis* have carved out for themselves in marketing their only valuable local resource—first pearls and now oil. The role that Qatar has played in this history has yet to be clarified. For example, there is still no study of Zubara or Huwaila, two pearling and trading ports which thrived in the 18th century before Doha rose to prominence.

While part of what we today call the Middle East, the Gulf littoral and its people actually constitute a distinct region that has more in common with the Indian Ocean world than the oasis-based agricultural peasant societies that arose in the interior of neighboring states. Whereas most people in the Middle East were tied to the land, the *Khalijis* were tied to the sea, and they could easily move if dissatisfied. In a region where boats and not land constituted capital, it was easy to sail away and re-establish themselves elsewhere, and there was little a ruler could do to stop it. Historically, regional powers, including states based on the Iranian plateau, or those that controlled parts of the Arabian peninsula or Mesopotamia, rarely exercised effective political control over the Gulf littoral.

In the twentieth century, the historical unity of Gulf society was shattered. On the Arab side, British intervention led to the drawing of borders and the creation of new states. As part of the modernization process these states were determined to create national histories and differentiate themselves from their neighbors. Their differences now became more important than their shared historical legacy, which reflects more compromise than conflict.

As a historian, I have noticed that in the last quarter of a century memory has become an increasingly important subject, although so far little work has been done on this for the Middle East. The study I am conducting this year at CIRS seeks to explore ways in which memories of the past are formed and manipulated in the Gulf states. In all the littoral states, governments have produced their own version of history in order to stimulate nationalism and increase their own legitimacy. In re-writing history, they have sometimes distorted the facts in order to provide a more ideologically correct version. My assumption is that the national narratives developed since the GCC states became independent tend to overlook the cosmopolitan past of the Gulf.

I look forward to my continuing association with CIRS as I explore the history of the Persian Gulf and memories of its people, as well as joining in the important new CIRS project to better understand the divisive role that sectarianism is playing in the region.

CIRS began its 2011-2012 lecture series with a Focused Discussion given by the Director of Brookings Doha Center, Salman Shaikh. During the lecture, Shaikh outlined some significant ways in which the Libyan uprising differs from others in the region and the lessons that can be learned from the success the rebel movement has had in gaining international support. “One very important lesson that we did learn—very different from Iraq—was the importance of moving with international legality. That is why I place such emphasis on UN resolutions—something we didn't work through satisfactorily in the Iraq case,” he commented.

The Libyan revolution, which began in February 2011, followed on from other uprisings in the Arab world. Shaikh argued that “Tunisia and Egypt, in particular, acted as catalysts for unprecedented courage being exhibited by Libyans themselves in throwing off the despotic rule of Muammar Qaddafi for 41 years.” What sets this particular revolution apart from neighboring ones, however, is that it had the backing of the international community through United Nations resolution 1970, which refers Qaddafi to the International Criminal Court and resolution 1973, which sanctioned a “no-fly zone” over Libyan air space. The United States was instrumental in setting up the no-fly zone and, yet, he explained, the US government was successful at maintaining some distance from any active engagement in the fighting so as not to be seen supporting yet another war in the Arab world.

Shaikh argued that the GCC states and the Arab League paved the way for other nations to join the coalition against Qaddafi and galvanized the opposition. Such support for the fall of the regime, he said, countered the hesitancy exhibited by Russia and China to get involved in council action. The GCC and the Arab League called for the international community to support the rebels and oppose Qaddafi. Other actors who had a direct stake and played a significant role in the changes that took place in Libya include NATO, the United Nations, and the African Union. Yet, Shaikh pointed out, it is not only countries and governments that supported the ousting of Qaddafi and give legitimacy to the rebel movement, the majority of civilians in the region also gave their backing. Importantly, he said, whether through the media or on the ground, “we didn't see a single significant protest in the Arab world against the military intervention in Libya. Very different again to what we saw regarding the Iraq case.”

Concluding with some thoughts on what needs to be done for a smooth transition of leadership in Libya, Shaikh described the roles that need to be filled and the actions that need to be taken in the near future. “I suspect that there is no real appetite from NATO member states to have real ‘boots on the ground,’” he said. However, Shaikh continued, Libyans will need assistance in other areas, such as technical assistance in terms of policing and demobilization of fighters. It will also need support in constitution and electoral reformation as well as ensuring the socioeconomic welfare of the people.

An area that needs much attention during the transition is in terms of reconciliation. “It is interesting to note,” Shaikh said, “that Libya is a fairly homogenous society in terms of its ethnic and sectarian make-up, but, of course, it is a tribal society.” Thus, there needs to be real inclusivity and representation in decision-making regarding any changes made at a governmental level. He argued that “putting in a timetable for speedy elections or for a quick constitution-making process is not a panacea. This requires a much larger process of national dialogue and reconciliation.”
CIRS convened the first of its “Sectarian Politics in the Gulf” working group meetings on October 9-10, 2011. Participating in the research initiative were several experts on the issue of sectarian politics in the Middle East region in general and the Gulf in specific. This first gathering took the form of a brainstorming session, where the participants debated the importance of overall thematic issues pertaining to the project. One of the main objectives for the meeting was to identify gaps in the literature. Although sectarian issues are not new to this region, exclusive and detailed academic studies are still lacking and need to be addressed. Often, there are studies written on individual countries, but an overall comprehensive look at sectarianism in the Gulf is glaringly lacking. For many people in the Gulf region, sectarianism is still a taboo subject and so has not been addressed with the necessary academic rigor. At the conclusion of the research initiative, each participant will write a paper on their particular field of expertise. CIRS will gather these individual papers and prepare them for publication as an edited volume.

One important issue that was raised was contestation regarding the term “sectarianism” and how this should be qualified and broadened to include “identity politics,” as the participants argued that ethnicities and tribal linkages are often bound up together. Although each of these issues has a different set of variables, it is difficult to separate them along clear lines. Traditionally, sectarianism has had negative connotations in its ability to segregate people along religious lines. To unpack the term, it is necessary to submit to the idea that any form of identity, whether sectarian or otherwise, is always fluid, negotiated, and changes from one area to another and from one historical period to another.

The participants agreed that it was important to point to how sectarianism can be politically manipulated and how governments have had a direct hand in quelling or inciting sectarian strife at particular historical periods. Sectarianism therefore, plays a crucial role in the politics, economy, and social infrastructures of most countries in the Gulf. As such, some of the speakers argued for the need to locate sectarianism—as we understand it today—in its historical context to question whether it is a modern phenomenon that has its roots in colonial exploitation of regional differences, or a feature of Middle East societies that extends even further back in time. Such segregation based on sectarian identification has had lasting effects, especially in the Gulf region, on rentier politics regarding how a state’s wealth is distributed and to which sectors of society.

The obvious sectarian struggles in the region play out between the Shia and Sunni communities as they vie for political power. However, the participants argued that it was important not to view these as homogenous entities, but to point to their internal differences. Further to examining the more prominent sectarian divisions, the participants argued for the need to highlight some of the less visible sectarian struggles that have been taking place for many years and that go undetected by the larger power players. For example, there are very few studies on the socio-politics of minority groups such as Sunni and Jewish communities in Iran.

Other issues, such as how sectarianism can be a transnational as well as an international concern were clearly demonstrated with the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the political turmoil that ensued affecting domestic, regional, and international relationships. Currently, in the wake of the Arab Spring, with the rise of new media and social networking, the idea of a more globalized world has been created, but it is also one where people are more aware of their differences. In Bahrain, for example, sectarian struggle has become top of the agenda of political discourse in the Gulf as other countries with the same sectarian divisions attempt to pacify or coerce the subversive elements in their societies.

These are just some of the issues that addressed over the two-day meeting and which will be narrowed down over the course of the next working group meeting.
The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East

Middle Eastern experts, scholars, and laymen were equally caught off guard by the startling political upheaval that rippled through the Arab world like a contagious disease in early 2011. While the situation is still in flux and one cannot draw conclusions as to what will ultimately emerge, the unexpected nature of these Arab uprisings has certainly provoked debate around some of the existing assumptions of the domestic politics of the region. Over the years a robust body of scholarship has developed focusing on the durability of authoritarian rule in the Middle East, and the remarkable resilience of the regimes in power. Much of this analysis has been based on the rigorous study of the patterns of socio-political behavior in the Middle East, both at the regional level of analysis as well as that of individual states, and in particular on the carefully crafted “ruling bargains” between regimes and their citizens.

Over the decades, in the Gulf monarchies as well as in the Arab secular regimes a ruling bargain between the governed and the governing has evolved to consolidate state-society relations into a “stable” form of authoritarian rule. This implicit bargain underwriting political rule is one in which citizens surrender their political and social rights to participatory government, accept the legitimacy of the ruling regime, and in return are rewarded with a variety of socio-economic benefits. The extent of state munificence extended to citizenry is dependent on the state’s financial capacity, making the ruling bargain stronger in some states and weaker in others.

While much of the academic literature has been devoted to the intransience of these ruling bargains, current events would indicate that inadequate attention has been given to the potential causes for their erosion. It is now time to probe some of the existing analytical assumptions and develop new understanding of the drivers of change in the Middle East.

Scope of the Project
In line with this, CIRS is launching a research initiative on The Evolving Ruling Bargain in the Middle East. The purpose of this project will be to scrutinize the ways in which domestic political arrangements in the Middle East are evolving, and how the authoritarian bargains are being challenged. This project will bring together a number of distinguished scholars to examine a variety of relevant topics.

Some of the areas we hope to address through our efforts include: the need for modifying theoretical paradigms explaining authoritarian perseverance in the Middle East; the role of key actors and institutions (the role of the military, the bureaucracy, the ruling party, and opposition figures); evolving sources of political legitimacy; the dynamics of the domestic and international political economy, and the impact of the failure (or the efforts) to reform domestic economies; the social dislocations which served as drivers for recent protest movements; the impact of various social groups and networks and their engagement with domestic politics; the relevance or not of Political Islam and the role of Islamism in the opposition; and the role of traditional media, new media, and social media. In addition to various thematic issues, the project will also include specific country case studies.

Article by Zahra Babar, Project Manager at CIRS.

Focused Discussions

The Role of Universities in National Awakenings

CIRS hosted a Focused Discussion by Mohammad-Javad Zarif, Vice President for International Relations at Iran’s Islamic Azad University, on September 14, 2011. Zarif spoke to a small gathering of ambassadors and embassy staff about “The Role of Universities in National Awakenings.” He argued that the recent uprisings can be attributed, in part, to the increased level of education among the youth in the region and to their growing political awareness, leading to further social demands. In order to deal with these new developments and patterns of frustrated behavior towards leadership, it is necessary to question old political paradigms and come up with new ways of dealing with public pressures. Zarif argued that the idea of globalization can no longer be challenged; we live in an interconnected world where one country’s actions will affect another’s—whether within the same region or across the globe.

Zarif has had a long and illustrious career in the Iranian diplomatic corps. From 2002 to 2007, Zarif served as the Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic to the United Nations, and from 1992 to 2002 he was Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs.

Mohammad-Javad Zarif (center) during his Focused Discussion
Michael Driessen is a 2011-2012 CIRS Post-Doctoral Fellow. He recently obtained his PhD in Political Science from the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, and holds a position as Assistant Professor of Political Science and International Affairs at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy, where he will be teaching in the Fall of 2012. Driessen’s research interests include Islamic and Catholic political movements, democratization studies and the politics of Southern Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East.

The Doha International Center for Interfaith Dialogue (DICID) recently held its ninth annual Conference, from October 24th to 26th in Qatar. An impressive gathering of international Muslim, Christian, and Jewish leaders and scholars reflected on this year’s theme of “Social Media and Inter-Religious Dialogue.”

The setting of the conference, however, was just as interesting as its theme, and revealed how the relationship between religion and state is being re-evaluated in contemporary global politics. This re-evaluation recognizes that religious institutions continue to provide public services which further the business of statecraft in a way that the state is not always capable of doing. Whether it be through promoting inter-religious dialogue in Qatar, reconciliation processes in post-conflict societies, religious political parties in emerging democracies or faith-based initiatives in the United States, regimes are attempting to harness the power of religious projects in increasingly explicit ways. The advantages and risks of the new relationships between religion and states which form as a result, however, are not often well understood, and the DICID conference helped put both on display.

Let’s begin with the opportunities. The sponsorship of the DICID by the state of Qatar has clear advantages for advancing the success of inter-religious dialogue as well as its normative goal to build peaceful coexistence among peoples of different religions. The most important of these advantages is that the DICID guarantees that a major, inter-religious dialogue will be hosted annually in the heart of the Middle East. In this sense, the projection of inter-religious dialogue is not only good for world peace, but good for Qatar as well, and its ambitions of becoming the region’s leading diplomat-at-large and global promoter of “Muslim modernity.” As an economically powerful, Muslim-majority state, Qatar is burning to prove to the world the success of a religiously-infused model of modern Muslim society. The DICID’s opening video, replayed throughout the conference, emphasized the extraordinary promise of this vision, with moving images which recalled Qatar’s media campaign to host the 2022 World Cup.

The success of this vision, so far, endows Qatar with a unique credibility within the Muslim-majority world to act as a trustworthy interlocutor with religious others in the West. Thus, the conference was able to include religious leaders and clerics from the Muslim world who might normally be suspicious of the political agenda of an interfaith dialogue initiated in the Christian or secular West (as many such initiatives are). An eminent cleric of Mauritania echoed the skepticism of many by saying, “I do not have much hope for the success of inter-religious dialogue, but I came because of the good work of the state of Qatar.” For inter-religious dialogue to bring religious leaders to a transformative discussion, it must convince these skeptics of its neutral design towards peace. As the conference’s host, Qatar can do much to build this confidence in the Muslim world.

Yet, the very nature of the conference as a state-led political project complicates this quest for a religious consensus among the leaders that could build such peace. As its host, Qatar justifiably uses its position of power to invite religious leaders to help in the task of creating order, security, and peace. The effectiveness of a meaningful consensus among religious leaders, however, is hampered when that consensus becomes a function of a political agenda, as opposed to a religious one.

In this respect, it was interesting to note the paucity of prayer at the conference, and the lack of any organized attempt at a shared sacred ritual among participants. Although the meeting began with a prayer by an Imam, the sacred content of the meeting remained in the background. In other inter-religious initiatives which are hosted by religious organizations, the attempt by religious leaders to unify hearts and souls together and beg God for illumination, compassion, and mercy, is the explicit framework of religious leaders’ search for consensus and peace.

As the Grand Mufti Ceric argued, part of the business of inter-religious dialogue is to ensure that the “serious business of politics is not left to politicians alone.” Inter-religious dialogue can help do this by articulating universal truths about human existence and questioning, festigating, and pulling politics (and each other) towards those divine ideals. Religion, of course, is also too important a business to be left to religious leaders alone. It is the political imperative of constructing everyday peace and order which moves politicians to host initiatives such as these in the first place and to invite religious leaders to remember their vocation as mediators of divine compassion, including here on this earth. This represents a new model of religion and state in global politics, one in which religious and political leaders recognize their distinct, but dependent, universes of action and meet together in the public sphere to work towards the common good.

Qatar, therefore, has a difficult line to walk in order to encourage inter-religious dialogue, but to not set its agenda; to encourage an inter-religious framework for peace, but to set the dialogue free and to allow its religious logic and gifts to fill out the political imperative for dialogue today. If Qatar is successful in doing this, and I hope it is, it will not only further its distinctive political prowess in the gulf, but will have also contributed to the creation of a fruitful model of religion-state cooperation in the Middle East today.
Audience before a CIRS Distinguished Lecture.

Focused Discussion with Mohammad-Javad Zarif.

Mehran Kamrava’s book on the Modern Middle East was discussed at Tehran’s Tarbiat Modares University.

 Audience at a Monthly Dialogue Lecture.
Call for Occasional Papers

Georgetown University’s Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) is pleased to announce a call for contributions to its Occasional Paper series. CIRS publishes original research in a broad range of issues related to the Gulf region in the areas of international relations, political science, economics, and Islamic studies. Other topics of current significance also will be considered.

Papers should be a maximum of 10,000 words and cannot have been previously published or under consideration for publication elsewhere. Papers must adhere to the Chicago Manual of Style (16th edition) and all transliterations must adhere to the International Journal of Middle East Studies. All submissions are subject to a double-blind review process. Any copyright concerns are the full responsibility of the author. Please submit manuscripts to cirsresearch@georgetown.edu. Inquiries about the Occasional Paper series or other related questions may be directed to Suzi Mirgani, CIRS Publications Coordinator, at sm623@georgetown.edu.

Post-Doctoral Fellowship

Georgetown University’s Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) awards Post-Doctoral Fellowships. The fellowship supports a recent Ph.D. recipient in any discipline working on the area of the Middle East with priority given to those working on the Gulf. The Fellowship is for a period of one academic year. Compensation, benefits and other terms of employment are highly competitive.

Interested candidates should visit the website for more information: http://cirs.georgetown.edu/research/fellowships/114126.html

Visiting Scholar/Researcher

Georgetown University’s Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) awards nonresidential Visiting Scholar Fellowships. The position is open to scholars in all disciplines working on any area of the Middle East, with priority given to those working on the Gulf. This position is ideal for mid- and senior-level academics. Compensation, benefits and other terms of employment are highly competitive.

Interested candidates should visit the website for more information: http://cirs.georgetown.edu/research/fellowships/114127.html