

# 2014 BRISMES Panel Proposal

When the Centre Cannot Hold: How the Arab Spring, Changing Global Energy Markets, and the rise of the Developing World Have Enriched the Gulf Economies and Provided New Avenues of Influence While Shattering the Foundations of Their Foreign Policies

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## CONVENORS

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## Objectives of the Panel

The panel proposes to carefully examine how the six Gulf Cooperation Council States (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) have responded to three transformative events in global affairs since 2010: Arab Spring, Changing Energy Markets, and the Rise of the Non Western World. These three events have radically altered the calculations of leaders from Washington to Berlin to Tehran to New Delhi and Seoul.

Few places have these changes been more consequential than the Gulf: these forces have simultaneously brought unprecedented wealth to the region while shattering foreign and security policies that have remained in place for decades and served it well. Time and again, Gulf leaders have found themselves with unprecedented financial, political and technical resources to pursue their foreign policy objectives but have proven unable to find global partners, either among their traditional great power allies or other great powers, such as Russia or China. Equally importantly, Gulf leaders have not been the only ones in their societies playing a role abroad, with private citizens and groups deploying resources abroad and not always to causes that are consistent with what governments see as the national interest.

We believe this transformation and its implications has not been covered adequately in the literature, and we would be particularly interested in contributions which address, for example, if and how the Green revolution in Iran 2009-2010 has affected the Arab Spring, not just in the immediate aftermath of the uprisings, but in terms of enduring legacy and forecast Middle East regional order; how the dramatic increase in the wealth in developing nations since 2008 (and their demand for oil) has brought new wealth and trade ties with nations who had little previous ties to the region; whether the rise of hydraulic fracking in North America has shifted Washington's assumptions about the importance of the Middle East; how the media and the arts have facilitated and frustrated the objective of Gulf states in the Middle East; why the Syrian revolution has proven so elusive to Gulf governments; why the Gulf states and their traditional regional partners differed greatly on Egypt and the Muslim Brotherhood; and the role of wealthy Gulf Arabs, expatriate workers and others act as potent non-state actors in the Middle East, Africa, and Asia.

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## How Our Panel Would Expand Gulf Studies

Our panel would help to expand Gulf studies by redefining the boundaries of the discussion of the region's foreign policy, which have been limited in recent years to ties with the West, the threat of terrorism, rivalry with Iran, and fear of democratic actors with Islamic credentials taking power in the Arab World. Not only do we aim to shed light on the new states that now play a key role in the region and will do for years to come, but also on the types of technology and new groups individuals who have utilized the Gulf's wealth to shape the rest of the world's culture, politics, and society. In the past, scholars have assumed that only those in the political and social elite in the Gulf counted and deserved study. But in recent decades a host of peoples with great (and even modest)

resources have proven a potent force in the agriculture, economies, politics, and sports leagues in every corner of the globe. These groups also include women, who form a small part of any foreign ministry in the region. At times these groups have pursued objectives abroad that are ran counter to official policy or to the official policy of close Gulf allies in Europe and North America.

## Papers We Would Hope To Attract:

1. Theoretical foundations of the Political Uprisings in the Middle East and foreign policy of the Gulf States in IR theory.
2. Exploration of the rise of contemporary political turmoil in the Gulf region:
  - Contextualizing and examination of the Green Revolution in Iran 2009-2010 in relation to its impact on the so called Arab Spring
  - If and how did the Uprisings change the relationship between state and society in the Gulf region?
3. Case studies of the different revolts in the Gulf region Before the Arab Spring and Foreign Policy:
  - Prologue or a Different Path? The Green Revolution, Ahmadinejad, and Rohani
  - Expatriate Labour Movements 2000-2010 and Global Labour Organizations
4. The Gulf countries as a Political Actor in the Arab Spring:
  - The role the GCC played in the Gulf (Oman, Bahrain)
  - The role gulf countries played beyond in the rest of the region -- Libya, Egypt, Yemen, Syria,
5. Qatar and the Arab Spring and/or KSA and the Arab Spring:
  - A comparison or separate chapters would be good here since the two states are the key actors.
  - We could also have a specific chapter on UAE/Kuwait versus KSA and Qatar
6. Sectarianism and Regional Change:
  - What are the Challenges for old and emergent core powers from North America to Europe? Does Sectarianism count?
7. Egypt and the Gulf States: Why do the Gulf States Care So about the Largest State in the Arab World? Why is the vision of the Muslim Brotherhood so different in Riyadh

than in capitals with which it has longstanding ties and with which it has agreed on many key regional issues?

8. **The Media, the Gulf, and the Arab Spring:**

Al-Jazeera and other Gulf Owned Media Entities were critical to the Arab Spring at numerous junctures, especially in Egypt from the January 25 revolution to the July Coup. How have the Gulf states utilized their media (broadcast television, print, and social media) to forward their objectives and to check the efforts of other powers to shape the politics of the region? How have Gulf states responded to new English channels in China, Iran, and Russia?

9. **Friend or Foe?**

Turkey, the Gulf States, and the Arab Spring: This chapter would compare and contrast how these two sets of blocks have responded to various crisis in the Arab Spring, especially Syria and Turkey, where their policies have sometimes aligned and sometimes been in opposition. The Gulf region and current Iraq.

10. **Gender, the Gulf States, and the Arab Spring:**

The Arab Spring has affected everyone and the issue of gender is not far from it. Think of Wajdah in KSA, which has already led to changes in how women can move (in public places) and is being approved to be shown on television here

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11. **Asia, the West and the Gulf:**

Exploration of the Gulf region as an emerging global order, a bridge between Europe, Asia, North America, and Africa. Does the Arab Spring Herald the End of Western Dominance in the Region and the Rise of Asia/China or Something Else? What does it mean for international affairs? How have events in the region (Syria) and those outside of the region (fracking in the USA) shaped this process?

12. **Muslim Asia and the Arab Spring:**

from Malaysia offering to send troops to Bahrain to Burma, and the government and opposition in Malaysia competing to show their support for the MB and opposition to the Egyptian coup -- this has been a rollercoaster and underreported but matters for trade, Hajj

13. **Arab Spring, the Horn of Africa, and the Gulf:** Somalia's regions are tightly linked

economically and politically – e.g. links to al-Shabab. Nigeria, Mail, etc.

14. **When “Gulf” Influence Has Nothing To Do With Government: Non State Actors From the Gulf as Dominant Global Actors:**

Non State Actors, the Gulf, and the Arab Spring: Remember that there are lots of wealthy people in the Gulf who contribute money to causes around the world, including those active in the Arab Spring.

15. **The Malacca Dilemma and the Rediscovery of Zheng He:**

How China’s Fifteenth-Century Muslim Admiral Will Define China’s Relationship With the Middle East and the Muslim World?

At the start of the twentieth century, global commerce and trade have shifted eastward, especially in oil. While the majority of petroleum in the Gulf and Saudi Arabia used to be exported to the West, the markets of Asia -- China, India, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and Taiwan -- now dominate global trade, making the Straits of Malacca, the narrow 805 kilometer (500 mile) waterway that connects the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, as important to Middle East commerce as the Suez Canal and the Straits of Hormuz. For China and its oil-exporting partners in the Gulf, the need for oil to pass through the Malacca Straits and the nearby shipping lanes presents a powerful challenge: they could be easily blockaded and are already dominated by the United States Navy, a nation potentially hostile to China. This vulnerability, which Chinese Naval planners call their “Malacca Dilemma,” has driven the interest of new Chinese President Xi Jinping in developing China’s naval power and his frequent references to Zhen He (1371-1435), the Muslim Chinese admiral who had a major base in Malacca and led Chinese naval expeditions to Africa, the Middle East, India, and Southeast Asia between 1405 and 1433. Although the admiral was neglected by Chinese historians until 1905, there is little question Zheng He will play an important role in Chinese public diplomacy in the coming years, especially in Beijing’s relations with the Muslim nations in the Middle East and the Indian Ocean that are central to China’s Energy Security.

## SUBMISSION

Proposals must be no longer than 300 words and submitted as an MS-Word attachment

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Inquiries are welcome