

Foreword

The publication of the inaugural issue of *Gulf Affairs* marks a new departure for Arab Gulf studies in Oxford and Britain more generally. There has been a pressing need for an independent and non-partisan periodical to provide reliable research and analysis on this geostrategic region. Universities provide the neutral territory for free debate to flourish, and the Oxford Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies (OxGAPS) Forum provides the intellectual community to facilitate the discussion, bridging the UK and the member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).

Starting with this first issue, the editors intend to preserve a thematic approach, to focus on issues of greatest concern to the Arab Gulf states. Contributors will address diverse subjects related to development, the economy, politics, security, as well as other fields. They will examine recent history and consider the future of the Arab Gulf states. Combining the latest research with the analysis of seasoned observers, the articles in *Gulf Affairs* tackle major subjects with clarity and concision.

We hope that *Gulf Affairs* will encourage new scholarship and debate on the GCC and its member states. As the political and economic center of gravity shifts from the Middle East and North Africa towards the Gulf region, the need for this forum is more apparent than ever. The issues confronting the region also require new thinking—whether it is the Iranian nuclear dossier, intergroup relations, labor concerns, or falling energy prices.

The editorial policy of the journal is to encourage a cross-disciplinary exchange in the pages of *Gulf Affairs*—bridging voices of experts from the region in question and those involved in it from the outside. Complex subjects are often best approached with diverse tools. It is difficult to isolate economic affairs without reference to underlying political realities, or politics without considering social constraints, or society without treating culture. Nor, in considering the art market in the Gulf or the explosion of iconic architectural projects burgeoning across the region, is it a difficult stretch to link culture and the economy. Scholarship is increasingly interdisciplinary and this trend is encouraged in *Gulf Affairs*.

Similarly, complex issues are best addressed by authors from a wide range of professional backgrounds. The advantages of academic research only go so far. We all gain perspective from colleagues in different fields: the businessman's distinct take, the diplomat's access to overt and covert information, the journalist's instant access to news at its source. *Gulf Affairs* draws on the perspectives of scholars, professionals, and policy-makers to view the key issues affecting the region from all angles. Through scholarly analysis, expert commentary and interviews with leading public figures, the journal allows academics and regional leaders to share their insights and points of view to provide the most authoritative account of the most pressing issues of our day.

New journals are fragile, and *Gulf Affairs* is no exception. For this initiative to succeed, it will require informed engagement and word-of-mouth advertising. The excellent editorial team, and the dynamic OxGAPS Forum have the talent and network to launch this initiative, but it will take the concerted action of scholars and policy makers across the GCC and the globe for it to thrive. Reading through the articles in this inaugural issue, I have every confidence in its success.

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