



# The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

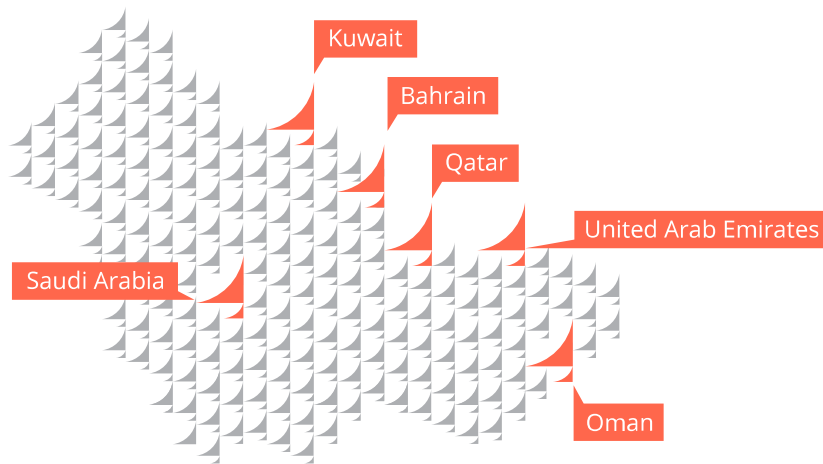
Building bridges of understanding

## Annual Report 2020





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# Letter From the Chair



## A Message From AGSIW Board Chair Ambassador Frank G. Wisner

Institutions are tested in times of crisis, with adversity providing the circumstances, indeed the necessity, for growth and development. The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington has confronted the coronavirus pandemic with resourcefulness and determination, quickly retooling our operations with virtual programming while increasing our coverage and reach on the pressing issues facing the Gulf Arab states.

AGSIW has highlighted how the Gulf region has charted its own new course since the beginning of the pandemic, coping with public health challenges, the oil price rout, and key leadership transitions. At the same time, the Gulf states navigated an increasingly multipolar world – anticipating a new administration in Washington – requiring them to carefully review and adjust their partnerships. The institute assessed carefully the motivations behind and prospects for the momentous Abraham Accords, signaling the normalizing of relations between Israel and key Gulf Arab countries. Such developments, ripped from the headlines but shaped by history and longer-term trends, place a premium on informed and timely analysis, performed with dispatch and objectivity.

This impressive work helps explain why U.S. policymakers, business leaders, scholars, and journalists look to AGSIW as the source of first and last resort for informed, thoughtful analysis about developments in the Gulf. In addition to acknowledging the team at AGSIW – well known scholars, former diplomats, and professionals from a range of backgrounds – for these achievements, I also want to express appreciation for our donors and corporate sponsors, whose support is absolutely indispensable for this effort.

The critical link between these two efforts is provided by AGSIW's board of directors, with whom I am delighted to serve. Board members come from a variety of backgrounds, united by their impressive records of achievement and commitment to making AGSIW the strongest, most effective institution of its kind. AGSIW regretfully bade farewell to its immensely talented long-serving executive vice president, Ambassador Stephen Seche, in 2020 but has been delighted to welcome his successor, Ambassador William Roebuck.

AGSIW confronted the turbulent year of 2020 with impressive resourcefulness. Through it all, AGSIW grew stronger as an institution and positioned itself for continued excellence and further growth in 2021.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frank G. Wisner". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



# Letter From the President



## A Message From AGSIW President Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic challenged the fundamentals of how we do business. I am proud of the way that AGSIW staff handled what the pandemic threw at us. We were among the first think tanks to move to 100% virtual programming. This protected our speakers and audience and also facilitated new programs that brought speakers from across the world together in our virtual space.

Because of a generous contribution, we ramped up our Arabic translations and improved the Arabic content on our website. This made our analysis more accessible to Arabic-speaking audiences and more than tripled the size of our Arabic-language readership.

The pandemic highlighted the need for a broader definition of national security by considering overall human security, including access to food, energy, and health care, as well as sustainable development in the face of climate change. AGSIW deepened our focus on these themes in our research, analysis, and programs.

The year also saw political upheaval in the United States, with civil rights, unequal access to resources, and the need for gender equality and diversity appearing on the national stage. AGSIW remains committed to diversity in our programming, hiring, and recruiting for our board of directors. For the first time, AGSIW matched donations from our staff to charities that supported equal access to education, social justice reform, and disaster relief.


I want to sound a note of thanks to Ambassador Stephen Seche, AGSIW's founding executive vice president, who retired at the end of 2020. His efforts helped build AGSIW into the solid and respected institute it is today. While Steve has been sorely missed, I am very happy that Ambassador William Roebuck, a veteran of nearly three decades as a U.S. diplomat in the Middle East, took over the reins in January.

Throughout 2021, AGSIW will strive to consolidate our gains from what proved to be a challenging year in 2020, develop a post-pandemic new normal, and strengthen our commitment to bringing first-rate research, analysis, and programming to ever broader audiences in new and creative ways.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doug Silliman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

# Resilient Economies, Resilient Societies



While discussions around Gulf security have traditionally focused on political and military threats, emerging global phenomena, such as pandemics and climate-related events, can have similarly devastating effects on political and economic stability. The coronavirus pandemic is just the latest challenge to the resilience of Gulf Arab states, disrupting daily lives, shuttering businesses, and devastating the tourism and hospitality industries.

Through its programming and publications, AGSIW examined the need for a more complete approach to resilience that includes people-centered dimensions, such as public health, food and water security, and environmental security, and examined Gulf states' responses to 2020's concurrent crises.

Photo by Abdulrahman al-Bedah

## Featured Programming

### ▶ **Toward a Green Recovery in the Gulf States**

Aisha Al-Sarihi, Mari Luomi, Grzegorz Peszko, and Samantha Gross discussed how the coronavirus crisis emphasizes the importance of regional economic diversification programs aimed at reducing oil dependence and highlights lower carbon, technology, and human capital-intensive businesses as the sectors that are most sustainable and resilient to economic shocks.

### ▶ **Citizens, Expatriates, and the Future of Gulf Labor Markets**

Eman Alhussein, Tariq A. Haq, Steffen Hertog, Afshin Molavi, and Robert Mogielnicki analyzed Gulf government labor market interventions aimed to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic and how key industries are adapting to the economic crises confronting the region.

### ▶ **Low Oil Prices, Coronavirus, and the Future of Gulf Economies**

On the heels of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent drop in oil prices, Ziad Daoud, Nasser Saidi, Areije Al Shakar, and Robert Mogielnicki examined the resulting spending needs and constraints and how these crises will affect the fiscal health of the Gulf states.

## Featured Publications

### ✦ **Redefining Gulf Security Begins by Including the Human Dimension | Emma Soubrier**

The coronavirus pandemic has come as a reminder of the urgent need for a renewed approach to security that no longer focuses merely on the political and military aspects of security but includes a broader look at people-centered dimensions.

### ✦ **The Coronavirus Redefines Responsibility in the Gulf | Eman Alhussein**

The coronavirus outbreak has redefined the responsibilities of citizens and the business community, impacting the already evolving rentier state structure and highlighting economic and religious challenges.

### ✦ **Gulf Youth and Civil Society Mobilize to Fight the Coronavirus | Mohammad Al Yousef**

While most Gulf Arab countries have tackled the coronavirus pandemic through state-led initiatives, Kuwait and Bahrain engaged youth significantly through quasi-independent civil society organizations.

## Related Publications

- Gulf Humanitarian Diplomacy in the Time of Coronavirus
- Ramadan Adapts to the Pandemic in the Gulf
- Mental Health in the Gulf: Reforms and Challenges

## Related Programming

- The Gulf's Economic Policy Response to the Crises of 2020
- Webinar with UAE Minister of State for Food Security H.E. Mariam Almheiri
- Roundtable with H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa



## AGSIW's Fifth Annual UAE Security Forum 2020

Held on December 15-17, UAESF brought together a diverse group of officials, practitioners, and researchers for discussions focused on the social and economic disruptions of the coronavirus pandemic in Gulf Arab countries.

Forum speakers highlighted human security issues and provided concrete recommendations to improve preparedness for future health crises, invest in the knowledge economy, and incorporate climate change mitigation efforts in regional economic revival plans that will advance long-term economic resilience.

### Sessions included:

- Opening Remarks by Ahmed Al-Mandhari, Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, World Health Organization
- Harnessing Momentum To Build Global Public Health Security
- Education and Innovation in the Gulf
- The Way Forward Toward a Green Recovery and Sustainable Future

**Learn more at [uaesf.org](https://uaesf.org).**

# Succession and Transitions



In the Gulf region and the United States, 2020 brought about several major political transitions. Coming at a time of heightened regional tension, these shifts are likely to have major implications for the Gulf states and U.S.-Gulf relations. AGSIW analyzed the impact of these transitions at the domestic, regional, and global levels as well as how new leaderships in the Gulf states and a new U.S. administration will likely affect foreign and domestic policies in the years to come.

Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/Pool via AP

## Featured Programming

### ▶ Kuwait After Emir Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah

Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm, Jr., Ambassador Deborah K. Jones, Bader Al-Saif, Alanoud Al-Sharekh, and Kristin Smith Diwan reflected on Emir Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah's defining role and legacy in domestic, regional, and global politics and examined the likely implications of Nawaf al-Ahmed al-Sabah assuming the role of emir.

### ▶ Oman After Qaboos

AGSIW hosted a roundtable discussion with Tim Lenderking, Kristin Smith Diwan, and Robert Mogielnicki on the future of Oman following the passing of Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

### ▶ Succession in Kuwait

In July, Kristin Smith Diwan, Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm, Jr., and Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman discussed the implications of a transition in leadership in Kuwait at the domestic, regional, and global levels.



## Featured Publications

### ▶ **Kuwait's Patient Statesman | Kristin Smith Diwan**

The death of Kuwait's emir, Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah, marks the passage of a seasoned diplomat, cunning politician, and valued humanitarian. Will his successor preserve Kuwait's democratic political culture and independent foreign policy?

### ▶ **What a Joe Biden Presidency Might Mean for Gulf Arab Countries | Hussein Ibish**

Gulf states may find plenty to work with to strengthen ties with Washington in a Biden presidency.

### ▶ **Death of Bahrain's Prime Minister Promotes Reformer, But Perhaps Not Reforms | Kristin Smith Diwan**

The death of the traditional and uncompromising Khalifa bin Salman al-Khalifa clears the way for the reformist crown prince to head the government. Still, state and financial security will continue to top Bahrain's priorities.

## Related Publications

- Oman's New Sultan Unlikely To Pursue Qaboos' Monopoly of Power
- 100 Days In, Sultan Haitham Charts a New Course for Oman
- Kuwaitis Vote for Change
- How Saudi Arabia Can Mend Fences With Biden and the Democrats

*"My favorite thing about the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington is that it genuinely wants to give a platform to people who don't usually get a chance to express their views to Western audiences. That includes normal Gulf citizens who want nothing to do with the power struggles in the region. As a result, I think that it produces research that is far more balanced in its assessment of the region's developments than what is produced by more agenda-driven organizations. Sadly, even the world's top newspapers have been incredibly politicized in their coverage."*

– **Omar Al-Ubaydli**, Non-Resident Fellow, AGSIW; Program Director, International and Geopolitical Studies, Derasat



AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

## Remembering Emir Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah

In a video, AGSIW offered reflections on Kuwait's late Emir Sabah al-Ahmed by former U.S. ambassadors to Kuwait, Deborah K. Jones, Douglas A. Silliman, Lawrence R. Silverman, and Edward W. Gnehm, Jr., as well as former U.S. Ambassador and Representative to the United Nations Thomas R. Pickering.

# The Abraham Accords



On September 15, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed the Abraham Accords, committing to a process of normalizing relations with Israel. This marks a shift in Israel-Gulf relations and has strong implications for the Palestinian national movement, which has tied its strategy for years to the Arab Peace Initiative and the commitment of Arab states to link diplomatic openings with Israel to a two-state solution and an end to the occupation begun in 1967.

AGSIW analyzed the developments that made these agreements possible as well as the varied reactions to this shift within the Gulf, the broader Middle East, and the United States.

AP Photo/Alex Brandon

## Featured Programming

- ▶ **What Motivated the UAE-Israel Agreement and What Comes Next?**  
Experts from the UAE, Israel, and the United States examined crucial issues raised by the UAE-Israel agreement, including the role the United States played in convincing the UAE to take this step, what's in it for all sides, and whether other Arab countries are likely to follow the UAE's lead.
- ▶ **Gulf-Palestinian Relations After the Abraham Accords**  
Following the historic signing of the Abraham Accords, Abdulkhaleq Abdulla, Shibley Telhami, Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba, and Hussein Ibish examined whether this development may fundamentally alter Palestinian strategic calculations, or simply expose existing weaknesses, and whether Palestinians can use this opening to their benefit.
- ▶ **Roundtable With David Schenker, Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs, U.S. Department of State**  
David Schenker provided his perspective on the announcement of the groundbreaking Israel-UAE agreement to normalize relations, a deal brokered by the United States.

## Featured Publications

### Why Bahrain is Embracing Normalization With Israel | Hussein Ibish

While the UAE had a complex range of goals, Bahrain is focused on Iran.

### UAE-Israel Economic Ties Proliferate in the Wake of Normalization | Robert Mogielnicki

Economic ties between the UAE and Israel are moving rapidly in many different directions, but the hard work lies ahead.

### Public Debate Over the Abraham Accords Reflects Range of Views on Normalization in the Gulf | Kristin Smith Diwan

While political narratives on Israel are shifting under the influence of some determined state leaders, resistance to normalization remains across Gulf societies.

## Related Publications

- After the UAE, Who Will and Won't Be Next To Normalize With Israel?
- Multilateral Platforms Built Framework for Ties With Israel
- Iran Chooses a Harsher Tone as it Reacts to the Bahrain-Israel Rapprochement
- Ramadan Series Have Provoked an Internal Gulf Debate on Social Normalization With Israel

## Ambassadors Series

With its *Ambassadors Series*, AGSIW provides a unique platform for international leaders to engage in thoughtful debate and inform the U.S. and Gulf foreign-policy, business, and academic communities about events shaping their respective societies, economies, and political systems.

- Roundtable With Alina L. Romanowski, U.S. Ambassador to Kuwait
- Discussion With H.E. Fareed Yasseen, Ambassador of Iraq to the United States
- Roundtable With H.E. Sheikh Abdullah bin Rashid Al Khalifa, Ambassador of Bahrain to the United States
- Roundtable With Timothy A. Lenderking, Then-Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Gulf Affairs, U.S. Department of State
- Roundtable With Lise Grande, United Nations Resident Coordinator for Yemen
- Roundtable With Elliott Abrams, Special Representative for Iran and Venezuela, U.S. Department of State



H.E. Fareed Yasseen (left), ambassador of Iraq to the United States, and AGSIW President Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman



# Security Across the Gulf



In early 2020, U.S. and Gulf tensions flared with Iran following the killing of Quds Force commander Qassim Suleimani, the Islamic Republic's influence continued to dominate Iraqi political and security affairs, and there was still no end in sight for the war in Yemen – and its humanitarian crisis.

Throughout 2020, AGSIW closely followed developments across the region that are key to U.S. and Gulf foreign policy.

Iraqi Parliament Media Office via AP

## Featured Programming

### **Inherent Uncertainty: The Future of the U.S. Presence as Iraq Confronts Multiple Crises**

Mina Al-Oraibi, Linda Robinson, Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman, and Hussein Ibish discussed tensions between Iraq and Iran, the future of the U.S. military and diplomatic presence in Iraq, internal Iraqi power dynamics and the scope of Iranian influence, and how Iraq's Gulf Arab neighbors can help it develop a consolidated national government independent of sectarian militias and Iranian hegemony.

### **Roundtable With Martin Griffiths, United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen**

As part of AGSIW's continuing coverage of the war in Yemen and the humanitarian crisis it has spawned, Martin Griffiths, the United Nations special envoy for Yemen, provided his unique insights into the U.N.-led effort to bring the principal combatants to a negotiated cease-fire and move the country toward a sustained political solution.

## AGSIW in the News

As tensions between the United States and Iran escalated in early 2020, AGSIW's experts provided balanced and informed analysis of a very complex and fluid situation in nearly a hundred media appearances and references in less than three weeks. AGSIW experts reached tens of millions of viewers and listeners with broadcast interviews, including: CNN, NPR, Fox, MSNBC, BBC, and Al Jazeera.



## Featured Publications

- ▶ **To Leave or Not to Leave: The U.S. Security Dilemma in Iraq | DB Des Roches**  
The United States does not have attractive options as far as its military presence in Iraq, but it has workable ones to achieve its strategic and security goals.
- ▶ **Who is the New Chief Commander of Iran's Quds Force? | Ali Alfoneh**  
Under the leadership of Brigadier General Ismail Qaani, there is likely to be greater continuity than change in the Quds Force.
- ▶ **U.S. Political Transition Weighs Heavily on Yemen Peace Process | Ambassador Stephen A. Seche**  
Critics worry that the Trump administration's threat to designate the Houthis as terrorists would also undermine humanitarian efforts, while President-elect Biden is expected to return to more robust diplomacy.

## Related Publications

- The Art of the Possible: Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi's Cabinet
- How Oil Sanctions Spurred Iran To Reconsider Regional Trade
- The Quds Force After Suleimani
- Deepening Poverty Threatens the Social Contract in Iran
- Will Reviving the Riyadh Agreement Quell Conflict in South Yemen?
- Rebuilding Yemen's Maritime Forces Hobbled by Internal and External Rivalries

## Related Programming:

- Strategic Implications of Iraq's Multiple Crises
- After the Embargo: Iran's Weapons Agenda and Its Regional Impact
- The Conflict in Yemen in its Sixth Year
- A New Iraqi Government and the Future of the Popular Mobilization Forces
- The IRGC Quds Force After Suleimani

### ***Political Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran: Demise of the Clergy and the Rise of the Revolutionary Guard Corps***

What will happen after Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's passing? How is the factional struggle for power in Iran over succession of Khamenei, between technocratic elites within the regime led by President Hassan Rouhani on the one side, and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and its allies on the other, likely to impact the trajectory of the Islamic Republic and future of U.S.-Iranian relations?

This book by Ali Alfoneh answers these questions and more.

**POLITICAL  
SUCCESSION**  
IN THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN:  
Demise of the Clergy and the Rise  
of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps



**ALI ALFONEH**

# Energy and Economies in Transition



Gulf Arab states announced billions of dollars in emergency stimulus packages and other support measures to help offset the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Spending needs increased over the short term, and regional governments had to simultaneously manage the fiscal repercussions of significantly reduced oil prices.

AGSIW examined how, amid these crises, Gulf Arab states worked to stabilize their energy markets and economies, forge a path toward recovery, and ultimately resume their ambitious economic diversification agendas.

AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

## Featured Programming

### ▶ Economic Prospects and Policy Challenges for the Gulf Arab Countries

AGSIW partnered with the International Monetary Fund on the launch of its Gulf Cooperation Council report. Daniel Kanda, Monica Malik, John Sfakianakis, and Robert Mogielnicki discussed how Gulf governments are preparing budgets that continue to meet coronavirus-related health and economic needs amid fiscal constraints and the impact of fiscal consolidation on efforts to strengthen private sector-led growth and job creation.

### ▶ After Agreement To Cut Production, What's Next for Oil- and Gas-Producing Countries?

In partnership with Columbia University's Center on Global Energy Policy, energy and economics experts analyzed the historic agreement to cut output by nearly 10 million barrels per day by government ministers, including the OPEC+ alliance and the G-20, and discussed its potential impact in stabilizing oil prices amid the pandemic.

## Next Gen Gulf

AGSIW's *Next Gen Gulf* series explores how the latest trends in technology are shaping the economies and governments of Gulf Arab states. Featured publications include:

- As the Gulf's Digital Economy Accelerates, Speed Bumps Await
- Oman Jump-Starts Its Slow-Moving Technology Initiatives
- The Boutiqaat Saga: Balancing Innovation and Corporate Governance

## Featured Publications

### Is This Time Different? The Gulf's Early Economic Policy Response to the Crises of 2020 | Robert Mogielnicki

As Gulf Arab policymakers continue to confront an ambiguous future, they will rely heavily on familiar economic policy measures and avoid straying from the status quo as long as possible.

### Amid a Pandemic, a Global Oil Alliance Emerges | Kate Dourian

The dramatic crash in oil prices has led the global energy community to coordinate production cuts to stabilize market conditions.

### Gulf States' Climate Change Policies Amid a Global Pandemic | Mari Luomi

The coronavirus pandemic represents an opportunity to reevaluate existing policies and tools, and climate change provides the needed lens for redirecting development onto sustainable trajectories.

## Related Publications

- Oil Outlook, Coronavirus Challenge Gulf's Economic Diversification
- Sovereign Data: The Development and Marketing of Bahrain's Digital Domain
- Protracted Negotiations Yield Solution to Saudi-Kuwaiti Neutral Zone Dispute
- Oman's Tradition of Environmental Protection Runs Into Economic Headwinds

## Related Programming

- The Collapse of OPEC+ and the Oil Price Crash
- Saudi Arabia and the G-20

## AGSIW's Petro Diplomacy Conference

The sixth annual Petro Diplomacy conference, held virtually from October 20-22, focused on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the energy sector and the transition to a low carbon economy. The conference convened as lockdowns and travel restrictions to contain the coronavirus tipped the global economy into recession and energy demand plummeted. Experts and practitioners explored the impact of the pandemic on the oil and gas sectors and the geopolitical implications of these developments on OPEC's relationship with Russia and U.S. relations with Gulf Arab states.





# Rivalries and Competition



With their increased regional clout, Gulf Arab countries have become entangled at the diplomatic and strategic levels across the region and sometimes have found themselves on opposite sides of ongoing disputes. At the same time, the Gulf Arab states are increasingly seeking to diversify their partnerships with world powers.

AGSIW analyzed a number of complex, interlocking disputes that have created a volatile regional environment, from tensions in the eastern Mediterranean over access to natural gas resources to hostilities in Libya and the Horn of Africa, and considered how Gulf states are engaging with a diverse array of partners to pursue their foreign policy goals.

AP Photo/Malak Harb

## Featured Programming

- ▶ **Competition or Cooperation: The Horn of Africa and Broader Red Sea Basin at a Crossroads**  
Kate Almquist Knopf, Abdul Mohammed, Ambassador Alexander Rondos, Abdulaziz Al Sager, and Ambassador Frank G. Wisner examined the risks associated with competition for influence as well as opportunities for increased cooperation in the Horn of Africa and Red Sea basin, a strategic area that has become a magnet for regional and global powers, including the Gulf states.
- ▶ **Tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean: Where Do the Gulf States Fit In?**  
Ali Bakeer, Cinzia Bianco, Michael Tanchum, and Hussein Ibish explored how and why relatively distant Gulf Arab countries have become involved in several eastern Mediterranean disputes pitting NATO and European Union members against each other, what's in it for Gulf countries, and how this affects their relations with other Middle Eastern and European states.
- ▶ **Gulf Security in a Multipolar World: New Defense Ties Reflect Competition for Influence**  
Jon Alterman, Alexandra Kuimova, Shana Marshall, Bilal Saab, Pieter D. Wezeman, and Emma Soubrier examined Gulf defense and security partnerships with regional and global powers.

## Featured Publications

### ✦ **Gulf Security in a Multipolar World: Power Competition, Diversified Cooperation | Emma Soubrier**

The international relations of the Gulf Arab countries increasingly have been characterized by a diversification of partnerships, including in a field that has historically been deemed the preserve of the United States and European allies: arms trade, and defense and security cooperation.

### ✦ **Regional and Global Power Competition Deepens Fault Lines Across the Southern Mediterranean | Anna L. Jacobs**

North Africa has become a site of great power competition among the United States, Russia, and China; the location of one of the region's most protracted violent conflicts; and the scene for regional and Gulf Arab rivalries.

### ✦ **China's Gulf Partnerships Likely To Weather Current Global Crises | Jonathan Fulton**

The complementary nature of China's Belt and Road Initiative and Gulf "vision" development programs has established another pillar of China-Gulf cooperation.

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## Related Publications

- Gulf Rivalries and Great Power Competition in Libya
- Competition for Mediterranean Natural Gas Deepens as Gulf, European States Join the Fray
- Qatar-Tunisia Ties Spur Competition With Gulf Arab Neighbors
- China's Balancing Act in the Gulf Relies on Ties to Iran and Arab States
- Russian-Saudi Breakup May Not End in Divorce



AP Photo/Kamran Jebreili

# Societal Changes



The coronavirus pandemic and the global economic slowdown brought many social issues to the forefront of public awareness and forced the arts, culture, and social sectors to find new ways to operate and thrive in a virtual world.

AGSIW analyzed the shifts within these sectors as well as the role they can play in the pandemic recovery and in strengthening national identities, catalyzing social change, and supporting economic diversification efforts.

AP Photo/Amr Nabil

## Featured Programming

### Key Elements of Saudi Social Transformation Post-Coronavirus

AGSIW partnered with the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies to host a panel discussion with Ghadah Alharthi, Hanaa Almoaibed, Ahmed Alowfi, Kristin Smith Diwan, and Mark C. Thompson examining the driving forces behind Saudi Arabia's rapid social reform programs and how the twin blows of the coronavirus pandemic and declining oil revenue are affecting progress.

### The Arts and Culture Sectors in the Gulf: Reimagining the Future in the Midst of a Pandemic

Alia Alghanim, Antonia Carver, Vilma Jurkute, Manuel Rabate, and Hanan Sayed Worrell analyzed how cultural institutions are continuing to engage with the public at a moment when museums and galleries are shuttered, how the experience of this pandemic will continue to reshape the thinking of artists and institutions, and whether the creation of more resilient business models will ensure these sectors thrive in the face of similar challenges in the future.



## Featured Publications

- ▶ **Saudi Arabia Champions “Moderate Islam,” Underpinning Reform Efforts | Eman Alhussein**  
Moderate Islam can be seen as a comprehensive strategy to tackle the kingdom’s regional and domestic concerns while at the same time reshaping the religious and social scene in line with the leadership’s new sociopolitical objectives.
- ▶ **Public Messaging’s Role in Shaping the Global Narrative of Coronavirus Outbreak | Mohammed Al-Sudairi**  
Both China and Gulf states employ propaganda in their campaigns to reassure international public opinion, and each other.
- ▶ **Populism on the Rise in Kuwait as Elections Loom | Kristin Smith Diwan**  
Under the strain of the coronavirus pandemic and the political imperatives of upcoming elections, populism is raging in Kuwait. It colors public discourse high and low, from elite campaigns to root out corruption to grassroots demands to expel guest workers.

## Related Publications

- Popular Omani Novel Joins Others Exploring Gulf States’ Shift to Modernity
- One Year On, Saudi Public Decency Law Still Meeting Resistance
- Kuwait Appoints Female Judges, Triggering Parliamentary Debate Over Women’s Role in Society
- Hidden Hands or Inspiring Example? Gulf Perspectives on the “American Spring”
- The Business Diplomats: The Power of Bania Traders in Oman

## Related Programming

- Young and Male: Identity and Politics in Saudi Arabia
- After the Pandemic: The Future of Higher Education in the Gulf
- Navigating the Gulf Ecosystem for Startups

In early 2020, AGSIW hosted Mark Thompson (far left), professor and author of *Being Young, Male and Saudi: Identity and Politics in a Globalized Kingdom*, for a discussion of his work on the generational shift in attitudes of Saudi men. He was joined by Sultan Althari (right), founder of the Harvard Saudi Student Association, and Kristin Smith Diwan (center) moderated the discussion.

## Millennial Gulf

AGSIW’s *Millennial Gulf* series reports on youth-led initiatives in the realms of culture, politics, technology, and entrepreneurship in the Gulf Arab countries. Featured publications include:

- Mudhawi’s List: Advocating for Kuwaiti Women in Politics
- Controlling the Narrative: Censorship Laws in the Gulf
- Engage 101: Stimulating the UAE’s Grassroots Art Scene



# Building Bridges

## AGSIW Goes Global

Responding to health and safety restrictions imposed by the coronavirus pandemic, AGSIW quickly adopted a virtual platform for its programs. This enabled AGSIW to continue hosting discussions with officials and experts on timely and relevant issues and at the same time reach new heights, attracting record audiences across the world.

## Responding to 21st Century Challenges

With the pandemic disrupting societal well-being and economic activity around the Gulf, AGSIW further examined emerging threats that could pose long-term challenges for Gulf security and economic stability. This has led AGSIW to increase research and programming on climate change mitigation, food and water security, education, labor and employment, and health care.



## AGSIW.org in Arabic

Arabic translations present an avenue for AGSIW to make its expertise and analysis accessible to an even wider range of stakeholders. In 2020, a modest investment in AGSIW's translation budget and recruiting a new Arabic editor enabled the institute to more than double its publication translations. This helped AGSIW to achieve a 260% increase in its Arabic-speaking visitors and a 212% increase in its Gulf audience from 2019 to 2020.

In 2021, AGSIW aims to further expand its Arabic content by launching a fundraising drive to fully fund its Arabic translation program, aiming to provide all of the institute's publications and videos in Arabic.



# Informing

AGSIW remains a go-to source for prominent outlets for expert commentary on the Gulf. AGSIW experts have frequently appeared on major broadcast networks such as CNN, BBC, NBC News, France 24, and Al Arabiya, in addition to being interviewed by prominent media outlets such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, Reuters, Financial Times, AFP, The National, and Bloomberg.



## Highlights from AGSIW's U.S., Gulf, and International Outreach

- ▶ **AGSIW Meets With Saudi Foreign Minister and Saudi Ambassador to the United States**  
In February, Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman, AGSIW president, met with **Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud** in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Silliman and Prince Faisal discussed U.S. and Saudi foreign policy and the role of think tanks in building understanding between the United States and the Gulf. Silliman and **Princess Reema bint Bandar al-Saud, Saudi ambassador to the United States**, discussed the history of U.S.-Saudi relations on the 75th anniversary of the meeting between President Franklin D. Roosevelt and King Abdulaziz al-Saud.
- ▶ **Bonds and Loans**  
Robert Mogielnicki spoke about sovereign debt dynamics in the Gulf Arab states for the “Bonds, Loans & Sukuk Middle East 2020” conference.
- ▶ **Institut Francais Des Relations Internationales**  
Kristin Smith Diwan spoke on a conference panel on foreign policy under the Biden administration.
- ▶ **Emirates Policy Center**  
In a panel, Hussein Ibish discussed the conflict in Syria in light of the Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act.

# Collaborating

AGSIW believes in the importance of collaborating with like-minded partners to support relevant research and expand its reach around the world. In 2020, AGSIW worked with a number of organizations, such as the International Monetary Fund, Columbia University, the Lebanese American University, the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, and the U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council, to highlight important studies, deepen expertise on topics of mutual interest, and reach new audiences.

## Featured Program Collaborations

- ▶ **International Monetary Fund**  
Economic Prospects and Policy Challenges for the Gulf Arab Countries
- ▶ **Columbia University School of International and Public Affairs**  
After Agreement To Cut Production, What's Next for Oil- and Gas-Producing Countries?
- ▶ **King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies**  
Key Elements of Saudi Social Transformation Post-Coronavirus
- ▶ **U.S. Chamber of Commerce**  
AGSIW co-hosted a roundtable discussion with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce's U.S.-Iraq Business Council on developments in Iraq and the region.
- ▶ **Lebanese American University New York Academic Center**  
The U.S.-Iran-Gulf Arab Triangle and the JCPOA Five Years On
- ▶ **U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council**  
Webinar with UAE Minister of State for Food Security H.E. Mariam Almheiri

## AGSIW on the Hill

In 2020, AGSIW embarked on a campaign to engage with congressional leaders and bipartisan staff members of the House and Senate Foreign Relations and Armed Services committees on a broad range of issues including U.S. policy in Iraq, the status of U.N.-led peace efforts in Yemen, and U.S. policy toward the Gulf. AGSIW also participated in programs designed to better inform the U.S. Congress on issues critical to U.S. foreign policy, including events hosted by the Middle East Policy Council and the Partnership for a Secure America.

# Growing

## AGSIW Announces Leadership Changes

AGSIW's founding executive vice president, **Ambassador Stephen A. Seche**, stepped down from his position at the end of 2020. Seche helped guide the institute for nearly six years, a period marked by considerable growth in staff, programming, and output. In 2021, **Ambassador William Roebuck** assumed the role of executive vice president. Roebuck most recently served as the deputy special envoy to the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS and a senior advisor to the Special Representative for Syria Engagement Ambassador James Jeffrey. Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman, AGSIW president, commented, "Bill Roebuck spent his career on the front lines of American diplomacy. His deep experience working in the Gulf and across the Arab world gives him unparalleled knowledge and experience that he will bring to bear to support AGSIW's mission."

## AGSIW Welcomes New Board Members

In 2020, AGSIW welcomed to the board of directors **Christopher J. Davis**, former president of Raytheon International Inc.; **Lamya Al Haj**, a researcher in biodiesel alternatives to oil and one of the leading women in the science, technology, engineering, and math ecosystem in the Gulf; **Ahmed Al Musalmi**, chief executive officer of Sohar International; and **Ambassador C. David Welch**, who joined after 10 years with Bechtel and 32 years with the U.S. foreign service. Ambassador Frank G. Wisner, chair of the board, said, "They hail in equal numbers from the United States and the Gulf region, but each brings an enviable track record in international affairs, commerce, and science, making them uniquely qualified to support the institute's mission of 'building bridges of understanding' between the United States and the Gulf Arab states."



### Team Spotlight: Joud Al Marar

Joud Al Marar is a research associate at AGSIW. Al Marar previously worked for the Louvre Abu Dhabi museum for four years, handling strategic institutional and government relations. As a spokesperson for the project, she presented at local and international conferences and forums. At AGSIW, Al Marar conducts research on Gulf politics and societies and contributes to AGSIW's *Millennial Gulf* series highlighting youth initiatives in the Gulf.

On her experience at AGSIW, Al Marar said: "At AGSIW, I gain firsthand practical experience working in a research institute in the United States. The working environment is very inclusive and energetic, encouraging stimulating and lively discussions about the Gulf. My research interests focus on studying the relationship between development projects and the sociocultural fabric in the Gulf. As a research associate, I have the chance to expand on my research while being challenged to explore new topics outside my specialization area. I consider my experience at AGSIW transformative because it has helped me rethink my future career goals."

# Partnering

Membership in AGSIW's Corporate Circle provides unique access to exclusive programming and bespoke briefings on the major issues shaping the Gulf Arab states that have direct implications for U.S. political and commercial interests in the region. Members receive opportunities to attend invitation-only discussions with U.S. and Gulf policymakers and experts and may request briefings with AGSIW scholars to dive deeper into areas of interest. For more information, please contact Michela Roberts, development manager, at [michela.roberts@agsiw.org](mailto:michela.roberts@agsiw.org).

## Chairman's Circle

**Raytheon**



## President's Circle



## Friends of AGSIW



## AGSIW's Private Roundtable Series

Each month, AGSIW hosts a private discussion with scholars and external experts, creating a nonpartisan, off-the-record environment where policymakers, thought leaders, academics, and the business community gather to formulate, test, and debate the most salient issues relating to the Gulf states and U.S. foreign policy in the region. Sessions in 2020 focused on key issues affecting the Gulf, including coronavirus recovery, economic impacts of multiple concurrent crises, and ongoing conflicts in the region. For more information on this series, please contact Raymond Karam, chief program and development officer, at [raymond.karam@agsiw.org](mailto:raymond.karam@agsiw.org).

## Special Thanks

AGSIW extends a special thank you to the Embassy of the United Arab Emirates in Washington, DC for its important support of AGSIW's Arabic translation work.

# About

The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington (AGSIW), launched in 2015, is an independent, nonprofit institution dedicated to providing expert research and analysis of the social, economic, and political dimensions of the Gulf Arab states and key neighboring countries and how they affect domestic and foreign policy. AGSIW focuses on issues ranging from politics and security to economics, trade, and business; from social dynamics to civil society and culture. Through programs, publications, and scholarly exchanges the institute seeks to encourage thoughtful debate and inform the U.S. foreign-policy, business, and academic communities regarding this critical geostrategic region.

## Board of Directors

**Abdel Monem Said Aly, PhD**, Founding Director and Honorary Chair; Chairman/CEO, Regional Center for Strategic Studies in Cairo

**Ambassador Frank G. Wisner**, Chair of the Board; Foreign Affairs Advisor, Squire Patton Boggs

**Fatima Al-Shamsi, PhD**, Vice Chair of the Board; Faculty Member and Former Secretary General, UAE University

**Ambassador Douglas A. Silliman**, President, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

**Ambassador Marcelle M. Wahba**, President Emeritus and Distinguished Fellow, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

**Christopher J. Davis**, Former President, Raytheon International Inc.

**H.E. Yousef Al-Ebraheem, PhD**, Chairman, Investcorp

**F. Gregory Gause, III, PhD**, John H. Lindsey '44 Chair and Head of the International Affairs Department, Texas A&M University

**Ambassador Edward W. Gnehm, Jr.**, Kuwait Professor of Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Affairs; Director, Middle East Policy Forum, George Washington University

**Nabil Habayeb**, Chief Executive Officer, GE in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey

**Lamya Al Haj, PhD**, Associate Professor, Sultan Qaboos University

**Bernard Haykel, PhD**, Director, Institute for the Transregional Study of the Contemporary Middle East, North Africa and Central Asia, Princeton University

**Fatima Al Jaber**, Chief Operating Officer, Al Jaber Group, Abu Dhabi

**Ebtesam Al-Ketbi, PhD**, Founder and President, Emirates Policy Center, Abu Dhabi

**Ibrahim Al-Muhanna, PhD**, Founder, Saudi Energy Consultants

**Ahmed Al Musalmi**, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International

**Ambassador Thomas Pickering**, Vice Chairman, Hills & Company

**George R. Salem**, Strategic Advisor, DLA Piper

**Khaled Sifri**, Former Chief Executive Officer, Emirates Investment Bank

**Ambassador C. David Welch**, Former Senior Vice President, Bechtel

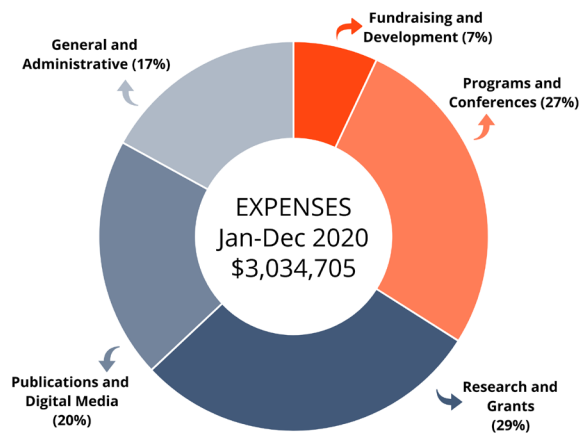
# Financials

## Statement of Financial Position

As of year ended December 31, 2020

ASSETS	2020
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	
Cash and short-term investments	4,060,283
Grants and accounts receivable	3,109,155
Property and equipment, net	209,245
Other assets	68,883
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>7,447,566</b>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	150,440
Deferred rent and other liabilities	117,165
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>267,605</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	
Without donor restrictions	3,899,961
With donor restrictions	3,280,000
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>7,179,961</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<b>7,447,566</b>


## 2020 Expenses by Function



## Statement of Activities and Changes in Net Assets

For January 1 – December 31, 2020

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	Unrestricted	Temporary Restricted	Total
Grants and contributions	303,596	3,269,438	3,573,034
Membership	80,000	-	80,000
Interest income	34,545	-	34,545
In-kind contributions	-	-	-
Net assets released from donor restrictions	3,069,095	(3,069,095)	-
<b>TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE</b>	<b>3,487,236</b>	<b>200,343</b>	<b>3,687,579</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
<b>PROGRAM SERVICES</b>			
Programs and Conferences	809,176	-	809,176
Research and Grants	873,028	-	873,028
Publications and Digital Media	611,000	-	611,000
<b>TOTAL PROGRAM SERVICES</b>	<b>2,293,204</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>2,293,205</b>
<b>SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>			
General and Administrative	517,418	-	517,418
Fundraising and Development	224,083	-	224,083
<b>TOTAL SUPPORTING SERVICES</b>	<b>741,501</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>741,501</b>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>3,034,705</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>3,034,706</b>
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>452,532</b>	<b>200,343</b>	<b>652,875</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF THE YEAR</b>	<b>3,447,430</b>	<b>3,079,657</b>	<b>6,527,087</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2020</b>	<b>3,899,961</b>	<b>3,280,000</b>	<b>7,179,961</b>



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# معهد دول الخليج العربية في واشنطن

لبناء جسور التفاهم

