

**Editor's Preface for the Special Feature
Gulf Studies in Japan: New Trend, Perspective, and Approach.**

HOSAKA Shuji* and HORINUKI Koji**

Six-Persian/Arabian Gulf States—Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, the UAE, and Oman have been attracting global attention over the past decade. On September 11th 2001, some “terrorists” from Saudi Arabia and the UAE hijacked and flew passenger airplanes into the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Since this notorious 9/11 incident, the situation in countries neighboring the Gulf has become unstable, especially in Iraq and Iran. Saddam Hussein’s Iraq was destroyed in 2003 and the 2009 presidential election in Iran highlighted democracy and the potential role of new technologies such as Twitter and Facebook in politics. In addition, the international crude oil price has soared since 2004 and reached \$147/b in 2008, producing huge oil revenues for these countries. Oil boosted Gulf economies during the first decade of the 21st century, and so-called sovereign wealth funds have become new global economic players. Emerging Asian countries such as South Korea and China have advanced into the Gulf as a potential and sustainable market, the most symbolic case in recent years being the UAE’s ordering of a nuclear plant project from a South Korean Consortium.

However, Lehman’s fall and the ensuing global financial crisis of 2008 triggered another crisis in the Gulf region—the Dubai debt crisis, and investors and creditors from all around the world now pay careful attention not only to the financial centers of New York and London, but also to Dubai in the UAE. Today, both positive and negative situations in the Gulf are global concerns. No longer can these Gulf countries be characterized by old images of oil wealth, controlling monarchies, and “rentier states.” A new perspective and approach is necessary to understand the new realities in the Gulf.

Historically, Gulf studies have been much less popular than other areas of Middle Eastern studies in Japan, even though more than 80 percent of its crude oil comes from the Gulf including Iraq and Iran. However, it can be said that this trend has changed in line with recent circumstances. The number of young scholars and students interested in Gulf countries are on the increase. Additionally, there are so many demands for information and research from both the business and academic communities. Accordingly, we are working to establish a firm basis for Gulf studies in Japan.

This new trend of Gulf studies has progressed steadily and a workshop on Gulf studies with the title “Globalization, Politics and Economy in the Contemporary Gulf States” was held at Kyoto University on 26th September, 2009. During the workshop, six papers were

* Senior Research Fellow and Assistant Director, JIME Center, The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan.

** Research Fellow, JIME Center, The Institute of Energy Economics, Japan.

presented and this Special Feature is based on five of those presentations: HOSAKA Shuji's description of the historical relations between Japan and the Gulf reveals very rich and multilateral relations between them. ONO Motohiro discusses tribal ties in the United Arab Emirates through the case of Abu Dhabi. While many scholars have been interested in the tribal structure of society in the Gulf, it has been difficult to analyze the actual conditions. Nevertheless, he has attempted to trace contemporary tribal ties based on his fieldwork in the 1990's in Abu Dhabi. HORINUKI Koji seeks reasons why "Emiratization," the naturalization of labor policy in the UAE, has not been successful in spite of the government's prolonged struggle with this huge problem. HIRAMATSU Aiko focuses on women's participation in the Kuwaiti parliament. Kuwait is always described as the most "democratic" of the Gulf states and she explores the possibility for Kuwaiti women to become new political actors. MATSUO Masaki attempts to elaborate on the idea of "Civic Ethnocracy" originally presented by Anh Nga Longva. He examines the application of this concept as a new analytical tool in the expatriate and labor markets of the Gulf regimes

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