

Abdulaziz Sager

President of Sager Group Holding
Chairman and Founder of the Gulf Research Center, Jeddah



A Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Jeddah with a well-established worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe.

In this capacity, Dr. Sager has authored and edited numerous publications including *Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, *The GCC's Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq and Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions*. He is also a frequent contributor to major international media channels and appears regularly on Al-Arabiya Television, France 24 and the BBC. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Sager is actively engaged in track-two and mediation meeting. For example, he has chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in December 2015 and November 2017.

In addition to his work with the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager is President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments. Furthermore, he holds numerous other appointments including on the Makkah Province Council, Advisory Board of the Arab Thought Foundation, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Faculty of Economics and Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Ministry of Education, Geneva Center for Security Policy and German Orient Foundation. Dr. Sager has also sat on the advisory group for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, and participates in the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

Gulf Research Center

Established in 2000 by Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, the Gulf Research Center (GRC) is an independent think tank dedicated to the study of the Gulf region with a focus on the region's political, security, economic, energy and social developments. GRC engages in analysis and debate in an effort to promote an in-depth understanding of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and its neighbors and foster cooperation and security.

As a non-for-profit organization, GRC injects all the income it generates back into its research programs and activities. In this way, it is able to preserve and maintain its independence and continuity.

One of GRC's main activities is the study of social science in a Gulf region context. As a result, GRC has identified more than 50 areas of critical research that are necessary to address the current information deficit. Examples of the GRC research programs include GCC Foreign Relations, GCC Defense and Security Issues, GCC Economic Issues, GCC Social Issues, Gulf Energy Program and Science and Technology in the Gulf.

Each program aims to cover a specific issue in as much detail as possible. In many cases, the Center has identified bilateral relations which may not have been fully addressed. This presents the Center and its extensive community of contributors with the significant challenge of shedding light on unexplored relationships between the GCC states and the world at large.

While the Center is particularly concerned with the international relations and politics of the GCC states, its research interests also include domestic and regional issues which affect the political, economic, security and societal life of the GCC member states and those of Iran, Iraq and Yemen.

As part of its research agenda, the GRC seeks to conduct objective and scholarly research as it relates to the GCC states in particular and the geopolitical region of the Gulf in general; secure a better future by promoting communication and cooperation among GCC citizens and disseminating information about the GCC states and the Gulf region through a series of events; publish and distribute relevant and useful information and data on the GCC states within and outside the region; interact with and answer the knowledge requirements of individuals and organizations interested in Gulf region developments, including academics, researchers, university students, the press, businessmen and decision-makers; facilitate dialogue among scholars specialized in Gulf affairs, both within and outside the region; provide education and training solutions through implementing a 'knowledge program' targeting higher management circles in the fields of politics, economics, security and business; as well as monitor and aggregate news coverage of events and developments in the Gulf region as published and broadcast by local, regional and international media, making this available for research purposes. For any financial details kindly log on to our website. More details can be referred to www.grc.net. GRC also has offices in Geneva and Cambridge.

With special research interest in Gulf strategic issues, Dr. Sager is a regular contributor and commentator to the international and regional media including CNN, BBC, Deutsche Welle, Aljazeera, Al-Arabiyya etc. He also regularly participates in regional and international forums and conferences held on issues relevant to the Gulf region including the Munich Security Conference and the IISS Manama Strategic Dialogue.

On December 9 and 10, 2015, Dr. Sager chaired and moderated a conference entitled "Extended Meeting of the Syrian Opposition Factions" (called the Syrian Opposition meeting) held in Riyadh which resulted in the Syrian opposition nominating a team for the negotiations in Geneva.

Key achievements

In 2015 Global Go-to Think Tank Report, the Gulf Research Center is ranked among the key think tanks in the Middle East and North Africa region, as one of the leading 150 think tanks in the world, and a leading think tank in the areas of foreign policy and international affairs. The GRC has consistently maintained a leading position since the first Global 'Go-To Think Tanks' survey was released in January 18, 2012.

The GRC is a member of the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC), accredited to the Governing Council of the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP); is accredited to the Global Environment Facility (GEF) of the World Bank; has served as a Knowledge Partner of the World Economic Forum. The GRC is also a member of the Council of Councils and the Think Tank Leader's Forum.

Active Membership

In November 2003, Dr. Sager was appointed as a member of the Makkah Province Council. In addition, he serves as a member on the advisory board of the Arab Thought Foundation; the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF); the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University; the Ministry of Higher Education, Saudi Arabia; the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP); the German Orient Foundation; and sits on the advisory group for the 4th Arab Human Development Report for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In May 2011, Dr. Sager was awarded an honorary fellowship from the Università Ca'Foscari in Venice, Italy. Dr. Sager is also holding a position as a Guest Professor at Osaka University, Japan. Dr. Sager is also an Active Member of the Board of Trustees for King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue.

Selected Publications and contributions

With special research interest in Gulf strategic issues, Dr. Sager is generally a contributor and commentator to international and regional media. He also regularly participates in regional and international forums and conferences held on issues relevant to the Gulf region. Munich Security Conference and the IISS Manama Strategic Dialogue among the conferences he attended.

In December 2015, Dr. Sager hosted the Conference of Syrian Revolution and Opposition Forces held in Riyadh resulting in the issuing of a Final Joint Communiqué.

He is the author of numerous publications including:

- Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Gulf Research Center, May 2004);
- GCC Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq (GRC, April 2004);
- Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions (GRC, September 2003);
- “Political Reform Measures from a Domestic GCC Perspective” in Constitutional Reform and Political Participation in the Gulf, Abdulhadi Khalaf and Giacomo Luciani, eds. (Dubai: Gulf Research Center, 2006);
- “Political Opposition in Saudi Arabia” in Saudi Arabia in the Balance: Political Economy, Society, Foreign Affairs, Paul Aarts and Gerd Nonneman, eds. (London: Hurst & Company, 2005);
- Energy Shapes new Gulf Security Architecture, Journal of Middle Eastern Geopolitics (2006); and
- “Why for all its problems, the EU is still a model for the Arab world” Europe’s World, no. 14, Spring 2010.

Dr. Sager is also the chief editor for the Gulf Yearbook (2003 to 2009, 2014 to present).

Recent publications include:

- “A Gulf Perspective on the Obama Doctrine” GRC Commentary April, 19, 2015
- “Proactive Germany a must for the Middle East” Arab News, October 13, 2014
- “Price of not heeding Kingdom’s Advice” Arab News, September 11, 2014
- “NATO and the Future of Gulf Security” Gulf News, April 30, 2014
- “Key Issues Facing the Saudi Ruling House” GRC Commentary, December 3, 2012
- “Arming the Syrian Opposition - The GCC and the Syrian Crisis” April 5, 2012, GRC Commentary
- “Reforms the Arab monarchies cannot avoid” April 23, 2011, The Washington Post; and “The Gulf’s Unfinished Spring,” April 6, 2011, Saudi-US