



**Summary Report of the Conference
on
Japan's Role in the Gulf
Bahrain, November 3-4, 2009**

**Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS)
With a Grant from the Sasakawa Peace Foundation**

March 2010

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Japan's Role in the Gulf

-Summary Report of the Conference-

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Objectives of the Conference

For many years Japan, like many other modern nations, has been a great beneficiary of the Middle East's oil and natural gas resources. Indeed, Japan's modern industrialization would not have been possible without them. For example, in 2008 Japan imported about 87 percent of its oil needs and 24 percent of its gas needs from the Gulf region, adding up to about 43 percent of the country's total energy consumption. Japan's dependence upon the Gulf for energy security thus continues to be high.

In contrast, Japan's involvement in the Middle East's political and military affairs has been very limited. It has had practically no role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts. In 1991, however, it did send mine-sweeping ships to the Gulf to help clear the mines laid by President Saddam Hussein's Iraqi forces. Then, after the overturn of Saddam in 2003 Japan sent ground troops to Samawah and air force personnel to Baghdad. But Japanese forces did not engage in combat. Today Japan is most concerned about Iran's suspected development of nuclear weapons, although it has not been a part of the negotiating team to urge Iran to comply with IAEA regulations, a team which is composed of P-5 of the U.N. Security Council and Germany.

Because of its dependence on Middle East oil, Japan is concerned about the safety of the sea-lane from the Gulf to the Arabian Sea through the Strait of Hormuz. It also has a great stake in the political stability of the Gulf region, potential conflicts between the United States and Israel

and between the United States and Iran, Iran's future relations with the Gulf, and Iraq's political development. Even so, Japan does not have a significant position in the international relations of the Middle East. But as one of the world's largest economies, shouldn't Japan share responsibility for global security and stability by contributing to the peace and prosperity of the Middle East?

Likewise, as the alliance between Japan and the United States has deepened, Japan has sought new areas of cooperation on security. Accordingly, Japan sent its Ground and Air Self-Defense Forces to Iraq, and its Maritime Self-Defense Force ships to the Indian Ocean in part to support U.S. operations. Should Japan expand its security role in the Gulf area as a partner of the United States? These were the areas of interest in organizing the conference.

Discussions were conducted according to the "Chatham House rule," in which no speakers except for the initial paper presenters were identified. The following is the summary report of these discussions:

Setting and Acknowledgements

The conference was held in Manama, Bahrain, in November 2009, organized by the Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS) supported by the Sasakawa Peace Foundation. The twenty-three participants were from Bahrain, Egypt, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Qatar as well as Japan and the United States. Most of the participants were academics, but naval officers from Japan and the United States also participated. This one-and-half-day conference produced frank and useful exchanges of political, economic and cultural views, which were followed by an excellent briefing by the chief of staff of the Combined Maritime Forces, located at the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Bahrain.

Session 1: The Sociocultural Environment

Diversity and Rapid Change

The Gulf region consists of a large and conservative Muslim nation, Saudi Arabia, and a collection of five small moderate Moslem nations, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. The conference began with the discussion of the region's historical legacies. According to *Jeffrey Macris*, throughout history, this culturally diverse region has been embroiled in conflicts between the Persians and the Arabs and between the Shiites and Sunnis and also has been subject to the influence of Great Britain and the United States. Great Britain's impact can be seen in the extensive use of English, which attracts foreign guest workers from other old British and American colonies such as the Indian subcontinent and the Philippines. Macris also noted that many elites of the Gulf region have traditionally gone to England for their education, and members of their Royal families have attended British military schools.

The conference participants then reviewed the Gulf's rapid social change. In their presentations, both Macris and *Baqer Al Najjar* stressed that social changes in the Gulf region are important to understanding the region today. These changes can be seen in the increases in income, in the population, in foreign guest workers, in the social status of women, and in the number of educated people. Oil revenues soared after World War II, leading to the growth in population, the rising literacy rate owing to extensive compulsory education, and the large inflow of foreign guest workers. Najjar, however, argued that even though these social changes changed the Gulf's economic structure, they had little influence on its political structure, with the royal families playing the dominant political role and permitting only limited parliamentary participation.

Population Growth and Social Unrest

The region's population has grown rapidly: more than 5 percent for most of the states and 7 percent for the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Kuwait's population rose by 500 percent between 1945 and 1965, and its population is currently 2.7 million. The high birth rates also have led to the emergence of a young population. For example, in 2002, 43 percent of Saudi Arabians were under age fifteen. One Gulf participant observed that, according to the Population Reference Bureau, the Gulf population was likely to increase 42 to 82 percent by 2050 and expressed concern that the region might face the shortage of food and water. Another Gulf's participant noted that fast population growth stemmed from opposition to birth control among Muslims.

The social status of women has gradually risen as compulsory education through secondary schools has encouraged female students to go to college. Even in conservative Saudi Arabia, a co-ed university was recently opened. A Gulf participant remarked that he saw liberalism declining in countries like Kuwait and Bahrain, and he cited Kuwait as having banned coeducation and prohibited alcohol from being served on its airlines. Most Bahrain's coeds also now wear "hijabs" (head scarves).

The participants then turned to the wide gap in income and life style between developers, bankers, hotel owners on the one hand and the poorly paid foreign workers, on the other. The new, modern buildings contrast with the poor, shabby foreign workers. For example, about 85 percent of the UAE's workers are foreign. This growing number of foreign labor also is becoming a source of social unrest, with labor strikes organized by Indians, Bangladeshis, and Sri Lankans in countries like Kuwait, Qatar, and the UAE.

A Gulf participant observed that Iran's intention in Iraq is to disintegrate it. In response, a Japanese participant stated that the instability of Iraq would bring more immigrants to the Gulf, which would

likely to complicate the countries' ethnic and religious diversity. Another Gulf participant pointed out that a growing number of expatriates in the Gulf were causing security problems. Some of the participants then reminded the group that it was Saudi Arabia that had allowed radical Muslims, in particular Al Qaeda, to emerge.

Session 2: The Political Economy and Oil

Iran's Growing Impact on the Gulf

The Gulf region supplies 40 percent of the world's oil needs, so its political stability is very important to all importers, including Japan. What are the prospects of a stable supply in both the short and the longer term?

In her paper, *Yuka Uchida* stressed that the Gulf states cannot sustain their prominent positions in international society if they fail to maintain the region's security and stability. One of the most obvious dangers is that Iran may destabilize the region, and the Gulf states also fear that the tensions between Iran and the United States may affect their security.

Uchida concluded that because of their fear of Iran, the Gulf states are careful in dealing with Teheran and try not to provoke it. Instead, the Gulf states seek to have good relations with Iran. As examples, she cited Oman's Sultan Qabus visit to Iran in August 2009 for tax and investment agreements, and Qatar's efforts to stay on good terms with Iran, as its vast gas field is connected to Iran's undersea network. Uchida also pointed out that the UAE was by far the greatest importer of Iran's goods, amounting to \$13.4 billion or 24.1 percent in a year from March 2008.

One Gulf participant observed that the people of the region did not regard Iran as an enemy. Another mentioned that his region was passive toward Iran because it was not sure how it should act and wanted to learn

from other countries.

A Gulf scholar remarked that the importance of oil had made the Middle East rich and changed the life of its people and that consequently the Gulf states had become the center of development in the area. A few Japanese participants insisted that the region's political stability, which so far had not been affected by Islamic fundamentalism, was an important reason for Japan to maintain close relations with the Gulf countries. Some Gulf and American participants, however, cautioned about the possible rise of Islamic extremism in the region.

Alternative Energy Sources

In regard to the Gulf's sustainable, longer-term prosperity, as Uchida noted, the region fears that its oil and natural gas will eventually be depleted, as it has begun to develop alternative energy resources. Kuwait and Qatar have been working on the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and in 2008 and 2009, respectively, Bahrain and the UAE concluded agreements on nuclear energy cooperation with the United States. In cooperation with France, the UAE also has started developing nuclear power plants. French President Nicolas Sarkozy visited Abu Dhabi in January 2008.

Another alternative source that interests the Gulf is solar energy. In 2006 the UAE proposed creating "a zero carbon city," which in the future would provide all of Abu Dhabi's electricity using alternative sources like solar energy.

A Gulf participant added that because Gulf states like Bahrain were trying to end their dependence upon oil and diversify their economies and that their children should be taught technological and management skills sufficient to meet international standards. Some of the Japanese and American participants expressed skepticism on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)'s early introduction of a common currency.

Session 3: The Security Environment

Regional Views of the Gulf's Security

At the outset of the session, two Gulf presenters, *Abdulreda Assiri* and *Zafer Al Ajmi*, gave their region's views of the Gulf's security environment, and were followed by a Japanese and an American presenter.

Assiri argued that in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, there had been four new developments: greater direct American involvements in the Middle East, Iran's new geopolitical and military role, the rise of Shiism, and the rise of radicalism. Assiri maintained that after the attacks, the United States had begun actively steering Middle East governments in the Middle East toward greater liberalization and, if possible, democratization. In Assiri's view, this was because the United States believed that the underlying causes of the terrorist attacks were related to the region's economic and educational environment, and thus it wanted to change the tenor of its religious and political education. The United States also attempted to redirect the region's economic policies to satisfy larger and poorer groups in the society.

Despite his generally positive view of the United States' role in the region, Ajmi took a more critical position, stating that Western security arrangements had failed to maintain the security of the Gulf region. That is, the United States had not prevented Iran's Shah Pahlavi from occupying UAE's islands. Furthermore, the United States had failed to stop the Islamic revolution in Iran, the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, and Saddam Hussein's destruction of Kuwait in 1990.

In the past, the Gulf region was subject to the triple threat of the Shah, the Iran-Iraq war, and Saddam Hussein. Now, however, Assiri pointed out, the region's stability was beset by the new triple threat of Iran's nuclear and political ambitions, Iraq's political transition, and Al

Qaeda's attempt to secure a stronghold in Yemen. Both Assiri and Ajmi agreed that Iran and the rise of Islamic extremism were the greatest threats. Because they are Shia countries, Iran and Iraq pose threats to the Sunni-dominated Gulf region, except for Bahrain, 60 percent of whose population is Shiite.

But another Gulf participant contended that the Gulf nations should not antagonize Iran and, in fact, did not regard Iran as an enemy. A Japanese participant commented that the Gulf nations seemed to have little interest in Afghanistan, although a Gulf participant acknowledged that Afghanistan was a source of terrorism and instability for the people.

The GCC's Armed Forces

Hazem Ghorab's remarks at luncheon, are relevant here. Ghorab's main argument was that the Gulf states had been always depended on the United States to protect their royal ruling families and their oil and gas but that these countries needed to turn the Al Jazeera Shield Force (JSF) into a real and united army in order to defend the region against future threats. Because some Gulf ruling families may have been afraid to have armies, which could turn against them, the Gulf Cooperation Council's armed forces, Ghorab asserted, have been too weak to handle contingencies. Moreover, he regarded Egyptian and Syrian forces, which had offered assistance, as not being capable of quick deployment. For him, the future threats were Iraq, which invaded Kuwait in 1990, and Iran, which invaded and still occupied the UAE's three islands. Ghorab also warned that India, one of the Gulf's biggest Asian neighbors, might someday invade some of its states in order to protect the increasing number of its own nationals from "injustices and exploitation." According to a UAE official, the UAE had discovered that India's Communist Party was behind a number of sit-in strikes staged by Indian workers.

Japanese and American Views of the Gulf's Security

While presenting a Japanese perspective on the Gulf area's security environment, *Hiroataka Honda* drew attention to Iran being a major threat, especially its missile development program, on which it is suspected working with North Korea, and its nuclear program, which might drive Arab states to acquire nuclear weapons as well. Honda also discussed "unintentional confrontations" between Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps navy and the U.S. Navy, as happened with British military personnel detained at Shatt Al-Arab in April 2006 and with the provocative action taken against U.S. naval forces in the Gulf in January 2008.

Honda pointed out Iran's increasing presence in the Gulf in reference to Iran's senior military officers boasting of their ability to "close the Strait of Hormuz." He recalled that during the 1991 Gulf War, Iraqi forces laid about 1,200 mines to block the movement of foreign navies. In addition, according to Honda, Iran is likely to resort to "asymmetric tactics" such as suicide attacks and anti-surface missiles attacks on naval ships and mine-laying at the Strait of Hormuz. He believes that the international community should continue its diplomatic engagements with Iran and its efforts to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons, but he also thought that minesweeping in the Gulf during peacetime would serve as "silent pressure" on Iran.

Honda stressed the importance of the presence of the U.S. Fifth Fleet and the coalition forces, Combined Maritime Forces, which is composed of some twenty nations' navies. Although Japan is not now a part of this coalition forces, its Maritime Self-Defense Force participated in minesweeping operations in 1991.

Andrew Parasiliti talked about five factors that would affect the security environment of the Gulf states: the United States' economic liabilities that would affect President Obama's domestic and foreign policy initiatives; the United States' eventual pullout from Afghanistan, which

could be perceived as a retreat from its military commitments abroad; Iraq as a failing state with a weak central government; Iran's nuclear program; and the impact on the Middle East of the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq.

With regard to Iraq, Parasiliti contended, the place of the Kurds in Iraq's future government and the fate of its oil law will be the most divisive issues. If the Kurds are excluded from the next government, he worried that Kirkuk would become a target for provocation and possible violence. Furthermore, if Iraq has no unified legal structure for investment in its energy resources, its economic prospects will be much constrained. Parasiliti assumes that the United States' mediation in both cases would be limited.

He then turned to Iran. Despite being subject to thirty years of sanctions, it has not altered its nuclear course. Even though the United Nations' five permanent members and Germany (P5+1) have a critical forum for engagement with Iran, it has not been successful in deterring Iran's plan for uranium enrichment. Parasiliti then referred to five different timetables or deadlines for Iran's additional sanctions: Iran (the slowest), Obama (the end of 2009), U.S. Congress (faster than Obama), Russia and China (no interest in sanctions), and Israel (the fastest). Diplomacy and engagement are important, but without a diplomatic breakthrough, he believes, the United States will be forced to choose between living with a nuclear Iran and the merits of a military strike.

Finally, Parasiliti considers that major security threats to the Gulf area are Iraq as a failing state, Iran as a hegemonic power possessing nuclear arms, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A Gulf participant pointed out that a peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would have a significant impact on Gulf security, as it would reduce the threat of Iran and its support of Hizbullah and Hamas. Another Gulf participant commented that the Gulf states were being cautious about supporting the U.S. sanctions against Iran, for fear of

possible repercussions. But at the same time the Gulf states also fear Iran's unchecked power.

Session 4: Japanese Interests and Policies in the Gulf

Japanese Interests in Oil

Osamu Miyata described Japan's policy toward the Middle East and the Gulf by stating that the country's primary interest lay in political stability and thus a stable supply of Middle East oil. Japan is concerned mainly about the sources of political instability and armed conflict, such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflicts, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan, as well as Islamic extremism.

As Miyata pointed out, Japan feels a responsibility to help improve the political stability and so far has offered extensive economic and non-economic aid to trouble spots such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine. Japan sent its Ground Self-Defense Force to Iraq between 2004 and 2006, not to fight but to repair school buildings, hospitals, and roads and to supply clean water in a town called Samawah, a town in southern Iraq. Japan also constructed a hospital in Jerico and improved sewage disposal facilities in Gaza. In Afghanistan, Japan has been involved in disarming about 60,000 soldiers, building schools and hospitals, and paying salaries to border patrol policemen.

Japanese Dilemma and the Moderate Arabs

Miyata also saw Japan's dilemmas in participating in the region's peacebuilding. On the one hand it wants to support United States' efforts as its ally, but on the other hand, it wants to conduct its relations with the region independently. Japan's economic interests in the Middle East do not always match the United States' interests. For example, because of its

heavy dependence upon Iran's oil, Japan has been reluctant to give full support to the U.S.-led sanctions against Iran. Miyata observed that after cooperating with the United States to push sanctions against Iran, Japan was excluded from much of Iran's oil. On the other hand Tokyo has a much better relationship with Teheran than Washington does and also has good relations with Fatah in Palestine.

Miyata explored the possibility of Japan's help in mediating among contending Afghan groups and in building confidence among Israel, Palestine, and Arab countries. He also suggested that Japan demand that Iran end its support of Hamas in Palestine and Hizbullah in Lebanon and that it stop its anti-American and anti-Israeli posture and at the same time urge the United States to release Iran's assets there.

Another Japanese participant pointed out that it was in Japan's interest to have good relations with moderate Arab nations such as the Gulf states and Egypt. He added that it was challenging for Japan to balance its relations with Israel and the Arab nations. As a U.S. ally, Japan needs to have close relations with Israel, but as a larger importer of Arab oil it attempts to maintain close relations with the Arab nations. A Gulf participant then asked which Japan would favor: the alliance with the United States or its sources of Middle East oil. The Japanese participant replied that Japan needed both.

An American participant noted that Japan's interest in security in the Gulf was obviously very strong and asked whether Japan was willing to become a proactive player in the region. He also wondered whether Japan should work with the United States in the region. Another American argued that Japan's taking a greater role in the Gulf area would satisfy U.S. interests and that Japan could help establish a regional development program.

As China increases its presence in the Middle East, Japan will become competitive with China. An American participant stated that his

country did not want to see Japanese-Chinese rivalry in the region.

Japan's Aid to Navigational Safety

Tetsuo Kotani began by pointing out that even though security in the Gulf was vital to Japan's oil imports it had not become involved in this area until after the Gulf War ended in 1991, when it sent minesweepers to the area.

Kotani then stated that Japan had made a unique contribution to the navigational safety, environmental protection, and maritime security in the Straits of Malacca and proposed that the Malacca model be applied to the Gulf. While respecting the sovereignty of the coastal states in the Straits of Malacca, Japan has taken multilateral approaches in accordance with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Japan has helped establish several regimes that promote navigational safety and environmental protection, and it has helped strengthen maritime security by promoting information sharing and regional capacity building on such issues as the control of piracy. In addition, Kotani referred to the successful cooperation between the government and the private sector.

Kotani argued that these experiences might well be applied to the Gulf, particularly the Strait of Hormuz, which is critical to the shipment of oil. In regard to navigational safety, he proposed that Japan cooperate with the Middle East Navigational Aids Service (MENAS), a nonprofit charity registered in the United Kingdom. MENAS maintains all the aids to navigation in the Middle East for all the Gulf states. According to Kotani, Japan's possible cooperation includes financial assistance, hydrographic surveys, and joint development of enhanced navigation. Japan could also help develop plans for a regional framework to cope with intentional and unintentional oil spills in the Gulf and train the regional navies in minesweeping.

A Gulf participant suggested that Japan first work with each of the

Gulf states on bilateral basis, and then move to the GCC. Another Gulf participant wondered whether Japan's actions in the Middle East would be in accordance with its alliance with the United States. Still another Gulf participant questioned whether Japan would indeed be departing from its past passive diplomacy. An American participant asked what Japan's vision or priority of interests was in the region and whether Japan's and the United States' interests would really dovetail. He also was concerned with how much risk Japan would be willing to take as an actor in the Middle East.

Session 5: U.S. Interests and Strategy in the Gulf

Five Enduring U.S. Interests

Eric Thompson introduced five United States' five enduring interests in the Gulf: countering terrorism, ensuring access to resources and markets, maintaining key partnerships in the Gulf, preventing further proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) into the region, and minimizing the disruptive and coercive influence of regional adversaries.

According to Thompson, although the United States' first priority is to destroy Al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but there are many other "home grown" extremists in the Middle East are targeting Americans and American interests. They include Sunni extremists in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and also affiliates of Hizbullah. Successful attacks on U.S. partners and multinational corporations will undermine that country's credibility. Thompson then went on argue that whereas the United States depended upon Gulf oil for only 19 percent of its needs, assured access to oil resources and commercial markets in the Gulf region would stabilize global energy markets and encourage trade. The United States' total trade with the Gulf states amounts annually to more than \$50 billion, whereas

Japan's trade with the GCC in 2007 was \$120 billion. Because U.S. service companies such as Halliburton, Bechtel, Microsoft and Citicorp are major players in the Gulf region, maritime security also is very important to the United States.

Maintaining good partnerships with the Gulf nations, as Thompson reasoned, continues to provide bases and access for U.S. military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan and to serve as an attractive market for U.S. arms sale as well as U.S. goods, services, and direct investments. Key partnerships also ensure the United States' preeminent influence in the region. At the same time, Thompson observed, Washington has forged a strategic partnership with Israel, which has been its "major non-NATO ally" since 1989.

Another major U.S. concern is to prevent the introduction of WMD into the Gulf region. If Iran acquires nuclear weapons, other states may decide to follow suit. Thompson pointed out that the A. Q. Khan network underscored the real dangers of illicit proliferation, while the handover of WMD technology to nonstate actors like Al-Qaeda would be even more frightening. He went on to say that it was in United States' interest to minimize the disruptive impact of Iran and its Revolutionary Guard Corps, Hizbullah in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, private militias in Iraq, other terrorist organizations, and even Somali pirates. Thompson assumed that the United States would remain focused on Iran by maintaining strong partnerships with the Gulf countries and employing coalition approaches.

Walid Mubarak introduced his perspectives on President Obama's policy toward the Middle East by comparing it to his predecessor's policy. That is, President George Bush's confrontational policy had stretched U.S. resources thin through the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and that his policy had led to "self-inflicted, powerless mess" in the Middle East. For instance, the Gulf nations essentially mistrusted both the United States and Iran, fearing that their support of the United States' confrontational

policy would make them vulnerable to Iranian retaliation. This is why, he said, the Gulf countries refused to form an anti-Iranian alliance with the United States.

By contrast, President Obama advocated a clean break from the past, calling for a policy of engagement and multilateralism. Mubarak stated that President Obama rightly understood that the peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict would weaken the threat of Iran and the power of Hizbullah and Hamas. Mubarak thought that the United States would now be able to restore its image worldwide and that the Gulf states would be more willing to coordinate their efforts with the U.S. government.

Nonetheless, Mubarak found some real challenges to Obama's diplomacy in the region, such as the spillover effect of Iraq as a failing state after the U.S. pulls out its troops; Taliban's resumption of power in Afghanistan; Iran's nuclear ambitions; the hard-line Israeli government; and the United States' inability or unwillingness to engage Hamas.

When a U.S. participant drew attention to Yemen as a hotbed of terrorism, a Gulf participant answered that GCC had not closed the door to Yemen, referring to it as "a poor bother." Another U.S. participant expressed concern about Iran's lack of respect for UN resolutions and the regression of its democracy.

Session 6: The Gulf's and U.S. Perspectives on Japan's Role

Japan's Soft Power and Mediation Role

Both *Mohamed Shokeir* and *Abdulla Al-Sadiq* recommended that Japan play the role as a mediator in the Middle East. Shokeir favorably talked about Japan's Self-Defense Forces in Samawah, southern Iraq, in 2004-2006, which he described as "Japan's soft power." SDF were creatively engaged in reconstructing the city, building schools and

hospitals with the extensive use of local contractors and local workers, and cleaning the city's streets by handing out plastic bags for local people to fill with garbage and return for \$1 per bag.

Al-Sadiq talked about the need for Japan to use a holistic and multilayered approach that considers the necessity of a military presence but recognizes the equal importance of the economy, technology, and diplomacy. He suggested that Japan contribute to the region's overall security in regard to economic development, food and water supply, research and technology education, cultural exchange, and the environment as well as diplomacy.

Shokeir added that because Japan is free from the "ugly" legacy of imperial rule in the Middle East, it enjoys a much cleaner, more positive image than the United States and the United Kingdom do. Japan is respected by the people in the Middle East and the Gulf, and Shokeir proposed that Japan mediate between Iran and the UAE regarding the disputed islands. One Gulf participant even suggested that Japan mediate between Iran and the United States.

Al-Sadiq supported Japan's reconstruction and humanitarian aid in Iraq and Afghanistan and especially its diplomatic help in the Middle East peace process, referring to Japan's hosting a ministerial-level meeting and announcing its "Corridor for Peace and Prosperity" initiative in Palestine. Because of Japan's credible and neutral image among people in the Gulf, he noted, Japan could be a mediator for both Palestine and Iran.

In an earlier session a Japanese participant talked about contributing to the safety of the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. A Gulf participant suggested joint exercises between the Japanese Maritime Self-Defense Force and the Gulf navies. Another Gulf participant proposed that Japan's forces train and teach martial arts to the Gulf's armed forces as well as supply equipment.

Still another Gulf participant recalled that it took France nearly

thirty years to establish military bases in the region and that the United States did not arrive until after 1974, through its military education to Gulf officers. He warned that therefore Japan should not expect to be successful anytime soon, and he asked whether Japan could convince the Gulf states that it could be of help to them.

A U.S. participant commented that Japan and the Gulf nations shared a “mutual strategic vulnerability,” which should make them want to cooperate on such issues as finding new sources of energy, enhancing the Gulf’s maritime security, and combating piracy. He suggested that Japan support Yemen’s capacity-building for anti-piracy measures. Furthermore, he predicted that relations between Japan and the GCC would assume strategic importance and did not mind Japan’s acting independently of the United States in some areas. The question he posed was whether Japan could indeed become a strategic player.

Japan’s Economic Aid and Technology Transfer

In regard to economic relations, Al-Sadiq pointed out that in 2008, Japan’s trade with six GCC countries rose by 43.1 percent, to \$171.7 billion; its exports increased by 28.4 percent, to \$27.6 billion; and its imports went up by 46.3 percent, to \$144.2 billion. According to Al-Sadiq, in 2008 when the world was facing a financial crisis, the higher price of oil supported the economic expansion in the Gulf countries and continued to boost Japanese trade with the region. About 82 percent of Japan’s total exports to the region were machinery and equipment, with transport equipment comprising about 56 percent. Ninety-nine percent of Japan’s imports were fossil fuels. He hoped that Japan would increase its exports to the region, as this would help it become more industrialized. Japan’s helping Bahrain become the region’s first steel-exporting country was mentioned as well. A Gulf participant then asked why it was so difficult for Japan and GCC to

arrive at a free trade agreement.

Al-Sadiq stated that Japan should concentrate on its economic and technological aid to countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, and Yemen, where high rates of poverty and unemployment are leading to a large number of internally displaced persons and causing political instability.

In addition, he noted that Japan should become more involved in education and vocational training for Gulf's young people, citing the examples of the Saudi Japanese Automobile High Institute (SJAHI) and the Japanese cooperation program for the Saudi Electronics & Home Appliances Institute (SEHAI), both in Riyadh.

In this connection, Al-Sadiq stressed the importance of technology transfer, especially for resource-poor Gulf nations, like Bahrain, with rapidly growing population have to keep up with the burgeoning demand for food and water. He proposed that Japan transfer its extensive knowledge of desalination methods to the Gulf region. He also referred to the region's increasing awareness of the dangers of climate change and recommended Japan's technology transfer for low carbon emission, solar energy, and nuclear energy. A U.S. participant added that Japan transfer its energy-saving technology to the Gulf, since it was most equipped to do so.

Popular Culture and Public Relations

Shokeir drew attention to the enormous popularity of Japanese television dramas like *Oshin* and *manga* (comic books) in Arab countries. He claimed that their sales of \$5 billion in Egypt were more than two and half times the United States' annual aid to Egypt or Israel. Many *manga* are translated into Arabic and shown on Arab televisions.

But Shokeir was critical of the Japanese government's public relations. He cited first the government's poor job of presenting to the

media the success of the Self-Defense Forces in Iraq. Second, he stated that the Japanese government had promoted Japanese culture to only a small elite community of academics, intellectuals, decision makers, and politicians. Instead, he argued, most people would not attend film festivals hosted by the embassy nor subscribe to Japanese policy journals like *Japan Echo*. He observed that Arab institutions had introduced Japanese *manga* only for commercial gains. A Gulf participant also pointed out that just one school in the entire Gulf region, in Riyadh, offered Japanese language courses.

Observations

Masashi Nishihara and Osamu Miyata, Project Co-Directors

We were gratified by the free and frank exchange of views by the Japanese, the Gulf and the American participants. The relatively small size and the presence of many distinguished participants probably contributed to the meeting's success. We believe this kind of conference, bringing together Japanese, Americans, and Gulf specialists is a rare undertaking. It was useful and enlightening for the Japanese participants to hear Arabs' and Americans' views and hope this is the first of more such meetings. Although it is difficult to summarize the discussion, we note the following points:

1. We were constantly reminded of the rapid changes in the Gulf states' population and ethnic composition, social status of the women, and the gap between rich and poor. The rising numbers of young people and guest workers require new employment opportunities, as these changes often contribute to social and political tensions, which in turn can lead to labor strikes and Islamic extremism .
2. We were somewhat surprised during the conference that the Gulf participants often referred to Iran in positive terms and to the United States in negative terms. The Gulf states' views of Iran and the United States are complex. Because they fear Iran, they do not want to antagonize it, but they also do not want to see its power to proceed unchecked. Because of the Gulf states' limited defense capability, they must depend upon the United States' presence in the region. At the same time, they claim that the United States is restricting the region's contacts with Iran.

3. The Gulf participants did not seem to have a great desire to protect their countries themselves but wanted the Americans to protect them. Their dependence upon the United States, however, prevents their expanding their own defense capability, so their armed forces remain weak.
4. We learned that the Gulf states had a much higher expectation of Japan than we had expected. The Gulf participants wanted Japan to increase its assistance in education and technology transfer, as the Gulf region's oil eventually will be depleted and it will require new energy resources such as nuclear and solar energy. They also hoped that Japan would provide military training and equipment, and they even expressed a desire for Japanese support of the Gulf's collective security system.
5. The Gulf region perceives Japan as independent and neutral, and some Gulf participants even suggested that Japan mediate the tensions between the Gulf and Iran, Israel and Palestine, and even Iran and the United States.
6. Most U.S. participants welcomed Japan's active political role in the region, not just as a responsible member of the international community, but also as part of their bilateral alliance. Even though this view was not new, it led the Gulf participants to question why Japan wanted to conduct diplomacy with the United States and urged Japan to act independently. A Gulf participant even asked whether Japan should choose between oil and its alliance with the United States.
7. American participants then asked whether Japan had a strategic vision

for the Middle East and would be willing to risk becoming a strategic player in the region. We felt that this was a really challenging question for Japan.

8. We were reminded by several Gulf participants that Japan should become more active in promoting cultural programs involving movies and *manga*.
9. One subject on which all three groups in the conference agreed was maintaining maritime security in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. Free navigation there is vital to everyone, including Iran. We felt that Japan should reexamine its contribution to the maritime security.
10. Because Japan depends upon Saudi Arabia and the UAE for 50 percent of its oil, we believe that we should seek even closer ties with the Gulf nations and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Japan also should consider joining in a comprehensive development of the Gulf nations, similar to its support of Saudi Arabia's comprehensive development.

Appendix 1

Program

Monday, November 2

Participants arrive in Manama and check into hotel

1830-2030 **Reception** for the participants and invited local scholars,
government officials, embassy people, and reporters
Venue: **Skylight Lounge, fourteenth floor**

Tuesday, November 3

Breakfast is served at Olivos Brasserie

0830 **Registration at Al Andalus & Ishibilliah, first floor of the
Banquet & Conference Area**

0900 **Welcoming Remarks:**
**Masashi Nishihara, President, Research Institute for Peace
and Security**

0910 **Session 1: The Sociocultural Environment**
The Gulf region plays an important role in sustaining social
and political stability in the Middle East. But it faces many
challenges. How have sociocultural factors such as Islamic
sects, changing population structure, and educational
opportunities contributed to the stability and instability of
both the Middle East and the Gulf region? Why has the region
been relatively immune to Islamic fundamentalism?

Chair: Brannon Wheeler, Professor, U.S. Naval Academy

Presenters:

**Jeffrey Macris, Commander, USN; Professor, U.S. Naval
Academy**

Baqer Al Najjar, Professor, University of Bahrain

1030 **Coffee break**

1045 **Session 2: The Political Economy and Oil**
Because the Gulf region has abundant oil and natural gas resources, its role in supplying them to the outside world is critical. What is the outlook for the short and longer term? What is the current position of the Gulf nations in OPEC? How is the region coping with alternative energy sources like nuclear and solar energy?

Chair: Walid Moubarak

Presenters:

Yuka Uchida, Manager, International Dept., Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)

Andrew Parasiliti, Executive Director, IISS-U.S.

1215 Lunch at Restaurant Kontiki
Speech: "The Role of the GCC Armed Forces"
Hazem Ghorab, Research Producer, *Al Jazeera*, Qatar
Chair: Osamu Miyata, Professor, University of Shizuoka

1400 **Session 3: The Security Environment**
The Gulf region has survived past major regional conflicts such as the Gulf War. What are today's regional and external threats to the Gulf countries' security? How serious are the Palestine problem, Iraq's internal disturbances, Iran's nuclear programs, and terrorism? What should be the big powers' role in the region?
Chair: Osamu Miyata

Presenters of Regional Views:

Abdulreda Assiri, Dean, School of Social Sciences, Kuwait University

Zafer Al Ajmi, Colonel (Ret.), Kuwaiti Air Force.

Presenters of External Views:

Hiroataka Honda, Adviser, Japan Steel Works, Ltd.

Andrew Parasiliti, Executive Director, IISS-U.S.

1615 Coffee Break

- 1630 **Session 4: Japanese Interests and Policies in the Gulf**
What are Japan's economic and political interests in the Gulf other than keeping its supply of oil stable? Is Japan's policy toward the Middle East acceptable to the region? Is Japan interested in expanding its market in the region? If so, in which areas? Is it in Japan's interest to become a diplomatic player in the region? Is Iran's nuclear development a serious security issue for Japan? How does Japan conduct its foreign policies in the region? Does Japan have a strategy for the Gulf?

Chair: Andrew Parasiliti

Presenters:

Tetsuo Kotani, Research Fellow, Ocean Policy Research Foundation (OPRF)

Osamu Miyata

- 1830 Dinner at Restaurant Mezzaluna

Wednesday, November 4

Breakfast at Restaurant Olivos Brasserie

- 900 **Session 5: U.S. Interests and Strategy in the Gulf**
The United States has strong political and security interests in the Gulf. What is the current state of relations between the United States and the Gulf states? Is the U.S. strategy toward the Gulf changing under the Obama administration? How are the Israeli-Palestine problem, Iraqi situations, and Iran's suspected development of nuclear weapons affecting the U.S.-Gulf relations?

Chair: Masashi Nishihara

Presenters:

Eric Thompson, Director, International Affairs Group, Center for Naval Analyses

Walid Moubarak, Associate Professor, Lebanese American University

- 1030 Coffee break
- 1045 **Session 6: The Gulf's and U.S. Perspectives on Japan's Role**
 Although Japan is a major economic power, it has only a limited presence in the Gulf and the Middle East. Japan maintains a strict policy of banning arms exports. What kind of political role, then, does the Gulf expect Japan to play? Will it accept Japan's troops in the region as part of U.N. peacekeeping forces or multinational coalition forces? What does the United States expect Japan to do in the Gulf? How will the alliance between the two countries work in the region?
- Chair: Walid Moubarak**
Presenters:
Mohammed Shokeir, Program Editor, Al Jazeera International TV, Qatar
Abdulla Al Sadiq, Secretary-General, Bahrain Center for Studies and Research
Nirav Patel, Senior Adviser to the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of State
- 1215 **Closing Remarks:**
Masashi Nishihara, President, RIPS
Akira Matsunaga, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation
- 1230 Farewell Lunch at Restaurant Olivos Brasserie
- 1400 Briefing on U.S. Naval Forces Central Command, Bahrain
 Gregory Prentiss, Captain, USN; Chief of Staff, Combined Maritime Forces
- Local excursion to follow
- 1900 Dinner (Optional)

Thursday, November 5
 Participants to depart

Appendix 2

Participants

Participants from the Gulf

Zafer Al Ajmi	Retired Air Force Colonel, Kuwait
Abdul Reda Ali Reda Assiri	Professor, Kuwait University
Mohamed Hazem Ahmed Ghorab	Research Producer, Al Jazeera, Qatar
Walid Moubarak	Professor, Lebanese American University, Beirut
Baqer Al Najjar	Professor, University of Bahrain
Abdulla Mohammed Al Sadiq	Secretary General, Bahrain Center for Studies and Research
Mohammed Shokeir	Program Editor, Al Jazeera International TV, Qatar

U.S. Participants

Jeffrey Macris	Commander, USN; Permanent Military Professor, U.S. Naval Academy
Andrew Parasiliti	Executive Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS)–US
Nirav Patel for	Senior Adviser to the Assistant Secretary of State East Asian and Pacific Affairs, U.S. Department of Department

Gregory Prentiss	Captain, USN; Chief of Staff, Combined Maritime Forces, Bahrain
Eric Thompson	Director, International Affairs Group, Center for Naval Analyses
Brannon Wheeler	Professor, U.S. Naval Academy

Japanese Participants

Hiroataka Honda	Rear Admiral (Ret.), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; Adviser, Ordnance Business Headquarters, The Japan Steel Works, Ltd.
Tetsuo Kotani	Research Fellow, Ocean Policy Research Foundation
Osamu Miyata	Co-Director of the Project; Associate Professor, University of Shizuoka
Masataka Nakauchi	Project Secretary; Researcher, RIPS
Masashi Nishihara	Director of the Project; President, Research Institute for Peace and Security
Umio Otsuka	Rear Admiral, JMSDF; Vice President, JMSDF Staff College
Yuka Uchida (Ms.)	Manager, International Department, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ)

Observers

Ken'ichi Fukaya	Vice Chairman, Institution for Transport Policy Studies
Akira Matsunaga	Deputy Director, Office of Regional Funds, Sasakawa Peace Foundation
John Williams	Major, USMC (Ret.); U.S. Naval Academy

Appendix 3

Biographies of Participants

Participants from the Gulf

Zafer Al Ajmi

Colonel (ret.), Kuwaiti Air Force

Abdul Reda Ali Reda Assiri

Professor of political science and dean, College of Social Sciences, Kuwait University. PhD, international affairs and comparative politics, University of California, Riverside; former chair, political science department, Kuwait University; visiting scholar, University of Colorado; political adviser, National Assembly of Kuwait; member/adviser, multiple parliamentary visits and regional and international conferences; specialties, Gulf security and Kuwait's foreign policy.

Mohamed Hazem Ahmed Ghorab

Research producer, "News in Focus," Al Jazeera, Qatar; former news department planning producer and managing editor, Al Jazeera; news and film producer, Fuji TV network, Middle East, 1981–2000; founder, chief editor, and general manager, Ummah Press Service, 1985–2000; freelance news reporter, Yonhap news agency, Middle East; author, *TV Journalism from Japanese Experience to Al Jazeera Mode*, and *Foreign Media in Arab Countries: A Close Up Vision*.

Walid Moubarak

Associate professor of political science and director, Institute of Diplomacy and Conflict Transformation, Lebanese American University; former vice

dean, Arts and Sciences, and chair, social science division and education, Lebanese American University; PhD, political science, Indiana University; member, board of trustees, American University of Kuwait; member, Lebanese president's delegation, UN General Assembly, September 2009; review member, Middle East Research Committee.

Baqer Al Najjar

Professor of sociology, University of Bahrain; member, Gulf Research Center, Dubai; former chairman, social sciences department; dean, faculty of arts; member, Shura Council; visiting professor, Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter; award: Shaikh Zayed Award 2009; author, *The Religious Movements in the GCC Countries*, Beirut, 2007, *Social Policies in Bahrain*, Beirut, 2008, and *Democracy and Civil Society in the Arabian Gulf*, Beirut, 2008.

Abdulla Mohammed Al Sadiq

Secretary-general, Bahrain Center for Studies and Research.

Mohammed Shokeir

Program editor, Al Jazeera International TV, Qatar; former Middle East editor, Al Jazeera International; broadcast journalist, BBC World Television; senior producer, BBC World Service Arabic Online; broadcaster/journalist, Radio Japan, NHK, Tokyo; public relations, media, and research officer, Omani embassy, Tokyo; correspondent, Tokyo Bureau, *Al-Riyadh* newspaper.

Participants from the United States

Jeffrey R. Macris

Commander, U.S. Navy; permanent military professor, history department

and Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, U.S. Naval Academy. MA, PhD, Middle East studies, John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies; author, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region* (2010).

Nirav Patel

Senior adviser to assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific affairs, U.S. Department of State; former director, Asia-Pacific Security and Strategy Program, Center for a New American Security; senior member, Center for Strategic and International Studies; author, with Abe Denmark, *China's Arrival* (2009).

Andrew Parasiliti

Executive director, International Institute for Strategic Studies—U.S.; corresponding director, IISS—Middle East; member, IISS directing staff; former principal, Government Affairs—International, BGR Group; foreign policy adviser to U.S. Senator Chuck Hagel; director, Middle East Initiative, Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; program director, Middle East Institute; PhD, John Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies.

Gregory Prentiss

Captain, USN; Chief of Staff, Combined Maritime Forces, U.S. Naval Forces Central Command; a naval aviator; participants in operations for Iraq, Bosnia, and Somalia; exercise officer, Joint Warfighting Center, U.S. Joint Forces Command; executive officer for USS John F Kennedy (in the Gulf); leader, "Blue Blasters" of VFA-34 in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom; operations officer for USS George H W Bush (in the West Pacific); winner of numerous medals and decorations; holder of over 2800 tactical jet flight hours and 750 carrier landings.

Eric Thompson

Director, International Affairs Group, Center for Naval Analyses; M.A. and Ph.D., foreign affairs, University of Virginia; specialties, Middle East political/military affairs; extensive tour in the Middle East; close work with U.S. and regional and military leaders; his recent work on Iraq, Afghanistan, Islamic extremism, military cooperation with members states of the Gulf Cooperation Council, military-to-military relations with Egypt, interoperability with Turkish and Algerian maritime forces, and coalition building for military security operations in the Middle East.

Brannon Wheeler

Visiting distinguished professor of history and politics; director, Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, U.S. Naval Academy; editor, *Comparative Islamic Studies*; PhD, Near Eastern languages and civilizations, University of Chicago; senior Fulbright research fellow and visiting scholar, Kuwait, Oman, Egypt, and Jordan; author, *Mecca and Eden: Ritual, Relics, and Territory in Islam* (2006).

Participants from Japan

Hiroataka Honda

Adviser, Ordnance Business Headquarters, Japan Steel Works, Ltd.; admiral (ret.), Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; first commanding officer, Aegis destroyer *Kongo*, 1993–1994; first commander, Japanese contingent, multinational forces, Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea, 2001–2003.

Tetsuo Kotani

Research fellow, Ocean Policy Research Foundation (ORFO); former

visiting fellow, U.S.–Japan Center, Vanderbilt University; winner, 2003 Japan's Defense Minister Prize.

Osamu Miyata

Associate professor, University of Shizuoka; MA, history, Keio University and University of California, Los Angeles; author, *Coping with the 'Iranian Threat' – A View from Japan*,” *Silk Road: A Journal of West Asian Studies* (December 1997) and “Japan's Policy towards the Middle East after 9/11,” a paper submitted to Davo Congress, Erhurt, October 2008.

Masataka Nakauchi

Researcher, Research Institute for Peace and Security; PhD, international public policy, Osaka University; special research fellow, Japanese embassy, Vienna, 2002–2005; aid coordinator, Japan International Agency (JICA), Serbia; specialties, Central European politics and history.

Masashi Nishihara

President, Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS); former president, National Defense Academy; professor, international relations, National Defense Academy; director, first research department, National Institute for Defense Studies; PhD, political science, University of Michigan; member, Prime Minister Jun'ichiro Koizumi's Task Force on External Relations; specialties, East Asian security and Japan-U.S. alliance.

Umio Otsuka

Rear admiral, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force; vice president, JMSDF Staff College; former commander, 21st Escort Division; director, Directorate for Joint Intelligence, Defense Intelligence Headquarters; MA, international public policy, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced

International Studies; graduate, Joint Staff College, JSDF .

Yuka Uchida

Manager, International Department, Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ); former adjunct scholar, Middle East Institute, Washington, D.C., 1998–1999; special assistant, political affairs, Japanese embassy, Kuwait, 1999–2002; MA, Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies .

Observers

Ken'ichi Fukaya

Vice chairman, Institution for Transport Policy Studies; former commandant, Japan Coast Guard; deputy director-general, Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport (MLIT); deputy chief secretary, MLIT Secretariat; director-general, MLIT Civil Aviation Bureau; senior executive director, Development Bank of Japan.

Akira Matsunaga

Deputy director, Office of Regional Funds, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation; former visiting professor of political science, Taffacur University; senior research fellow, New York Center of East West Institute; specialties, geopolitics of Central Asia and Caucasus; Ph.D., Keio University.

John P. Williams

Major, U.S. Marine Corps (ret.); deputy director, Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies, U.S. Naval Academy; former associate chair, political science department, U.S. Naval Academy; graduate, Virginia Military Institute; MA, national security affairs, Naval Postgraduate School.

Summary Report of the Conference
on
Japan's Role in the Gulf

Research Institute for Peace and Security (RIPS)