"Perspectives on Current Events in the Arabian Peninsula" Symposium

Date::
September 18, 2017

Part of the Fall 2017 Middle Eastern and North African Studies Colloquium Series

Panel Abstract:

"Perspectives on Current Events in the Arabian Peninsula" Symposium will explore the origins of the current crises in Qatar and Yemen. Dr. Thomas Stevenson will look at the ongoing crisis in Yemen and explore the actions of Houthis, and Saudi Arabia. Dr. JE Peterson will give background to the crisis in Qatar through an examination of Qatar’s relations with its fellow Gulf Cooperation Council members. Dr. Leila Hudson will consider how the current crisis in Qatar is impacting the conflict in Syria. Professor Gokce Gunel will serve as discussant to tie all these varied themes together.

"The Problem with Qatar: Background and Implications of the Current Gulf States Crisis" by JE Peterson, Associate of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies, UA

There are both longstanding antagonisms and current factors that contribute to the standoff between Qatar and fellow Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. Qatar’s relations with all of its immediate neighbors have been troubled over the decades, in part due to the "leapfrog" effect: neighboring states are typically at odds with each other and so develop friendly relations with the states on the other side of their neighbors. At the same time, a key factor in the eruption of the crisis appears to have been the forming of a strong alliance between the crown prince of Abu Dhabi, Muhammad bin Zayid Al Nahyan, and the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Muhammad bin Salman Al Sa’ud. While differences between Gulf States have been shelved or even resolved in the past, the drastic actions taken by Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Bahrain in this instance bodes ill for quick resolution and raises the prospect of the breakup of the GCC.

"The Impact of the Gulf States Intervention in Yemen" by Thomas Stevenson, Professor Emeritus, Ohio University

According to the United Nations, Yemen today is the world's largest humanitarian crisis ahead of those in Syria and South Sudan. In March 2017, 69 percent of the population were estimated to need aid, particularly in terms of food, water and health care. Of these 10.3 million (38% of the population) were considered in serious need. Although these numbers represent a slight improvement since 2015, the situation remains dire.

Yemen, consistently the poorest Arab country, teetered along on donor assistance, until the Arab Spring in 2011-2012. In early 2012, Ali Abdallah Salih, Yemen's leader for 33 years, stepped down relinquishing the office to his vice president, Abdu Rabbo Hadi. A new government was to be negotiated between the political parties and interest groups but more
than a year past with no significant reconciliation or new constitution. In 2014 Ansar Allah AKA the Houthis, a rebellious Zaidi Shia element from the far north but with broader support launched a war that deposed Hadi and seized control of much of the country and fomented a civil war.

In March 2015, a Saudi led coalition of Gulf States began bombing Yemen to stop the Houthi aggression. They also imposed a naval blockade that has prevented food and fuel reaching those in need. This presentation will examine the background issues leading up to the Gulf intervention and its consequences on the Yemeni population.

"Gutter Politics: Implications of the Qatar Crisis?" by Leila Hudson, Associate Professor of Modern Middle East Culture and School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies, UA

The Qatar crisis crystallizes long running rivalries among the Gulf monarchies with direct impacts for the conflict in Syria and the exacerbated fracturing of the opposition. The implications of the feud for that conflict, the region and the texture of Sunni Islamist movements will be considered.

Panel Discussant: Gökçe Günel, Assistant Professor of Anthropology of Energy and Climate Change, UA

*Symposium will be from 2-4 pm with a reception to follow*

**When:** Friday, September 29th from 2-4PM

**Where:** Marshall Building, Room 490 (845 N. Park Ave., Tucson, AZ 85719)

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