

Einladung zum Vortrag

"Musandam: Creating a New Region across the Water"

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Donnerstag, 17. Juni 2010, 15.00 Uhr s.t.
Raum S 017, Neues Seminargebäude, Universitätsstraße

The Musandam Peninsula is separated from the rest of Oman by a strip of territory belonging to the United Arab Emirates. It is this tip on the Gulf coast that has given Oman the status of a Gulf state and secured it a birth in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Most importantly, Oman and Iran share joint control over the Strait of Hormuz, which links the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman. Roughly 30,000 people live on this small area measuring 1,800 square kilometres. Since the Islamic Revolution in Iran, there is a booming trade going on from there to the Iranian coast. The trade is illegal in Iran, but legal in Oman. Goods worth \$250,000 to \$500,000 are estimated to cross the Strait each day. The volume was reported to be five times as much a few years back, and may again register an upswing as the sanctions on Iran intensify. A wide variety of commodities go from Oman and loads of livestock come from Iran. The trade represents over half the total economy of the Peninsula.

There could be three tentative explanations for the phenomenon. One, the Omani oil is peaking and the domestic economic considerations count. Two, the internal dynamics within the Gulf Cooperation Council have consistently put Oman on the other end of the issues vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia. Three, co-sharing the Strait of Hormuz with Iran has resulted in a certain "special relationship" between the two. During the Iran-Iraq war, Oman was the only Arab country to maintain an ambassador in Tehran; during the war's tanker war phase, the Omani navy was ordered not to intercept the Iranian speedboats; at the end of the war, Oman proposed a GCC-funded "Marshall Plan" to reconstruct Iran and Iraq both. More recently, Oman's official position on Iran's nuclear programme is that "it is no cause for concern". The two countries share gas reserves off the Peninsula; have agreed to develop the Kish Island gas reserves together, and construct a petrochemical unit in Iran's South Pars region.

Gulshan Dietl is Professor at the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. She has served as the Chairperson, Centre for West Asian and African Studies and Director, the Gulf Studies Programme at her University. Her areas of teaching and research are domestic developments, foreign policies and security issues in the Gulf and West Asia. Currently she is a Visiting Professor at the University of Southern Denmark. Her publications include *Through Two Wars and Beyond: A Study of the Gulf Cooperation Council* (1991), *Saudi Arabia: People, Politics and Policies* (2006), *Contemporary Saudi Arabia and the Emerging Indo-Saudi Relations* (Co-edited, 2007), and *Democracy and Democratization in the Gulf* (Edited, Forthcoming).

Der Vortrag findet im Rahmen des DFG-finanzierten Forschungsprojekts "Zwischen arabischer Welt und Indischem Ozean: Die regionalwirtschaftlichen Orientierungen Omans", in Ergänzung des Internationalen Workshops "Regionalizing Oman - Political, Economic and Social Dynamics" von März 2010 und im Zuge des Moduls "Geographien neuer sozialer Räume" im Master-Studiengang Arabistik am Orientalischen Institut statt.