



مركز الملك فيصل للبحوث والدراسات الإسلامية
King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies



The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong, Postscript

John P. Burns

Emeritus Professor and Honorary Professor,
Department of Politics and Public Administration,
the University of Hong Kong

Masarat

August, 2023 / Muharram 1445 H



The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong, Postscript⁽¹⁾

(1) The postscript should be read together with “The Chinese Communist Party in Hong Kong,” *KFCRIS Special Report*, June 2022, <https://kfcris.com/en/view/post/385>.

The role of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in the governance of Hong Kong cannot be overstated. The party was a constant presence in late colonial Hong Kong, wielding outsized influence in the territory through the united front. The party had considerable mobilizational power. China's Leninist politicians drafted the Hong Kong Basic Law. The Basic Law laid down Hong Kong's political institutions, grafted onto unreformed colonial, political, legal, and economic institutions and social structure that continued well beyond 1997. Indeed, 24 articles of the Basic Law set out institutional and policy continuity to ensure a smooth transition. It was deceptively smooth.

In 1997 the party adopted a largely hands-off policy on Hong Kong, giving the first Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government considerable leeway, for example, not to implement Article 23 of the Basic Law requiring local Hong Kong legislation on national security matters. In 2003 the party, alarmed in the wake of widespread protest and demonstrations against official proposals to legislate on Article 23, changed the institutional architecture for Hong Kong policymaking in Beijing. Authorities set up the Central Hong Kong and Macau Coordination Group, headed by various Politburo Standing Committee members from 2003 (See Table 1). It was a large, unwieldy group comprising representatives of the many organizations with business in Hong Kong, which were mostly ministries of the State Council.⁽²⁾

The party's reach in Hong Kong gradually increased, especially after 2012 when in response to protests the newly appointed Chief Executive CY Leung abandoned local "national and moral education" for Hong Kong's schools, a move the party reluctantly agreed to. Contention over political reform in Hong Kong spilled into the streets in 2014. The party responded by publicly reasserting its "comprehensive jurisdiction" over Hong Kong in a State Council White Paper.⁽³⁾ In 2017 party authorities laid down

(2) Huang Yunna, "中央港澳辦 | 從港澳辦的前世今生 看中央為什麼五度改革 [The Central Government's Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office (HKMAO) | From the Past to the Present Life of HKMAO, Why the Central Government Has Reformed It Five Times]," *hk01.com*, June 3, 2023, <https://www.hk01.com/%E6%B7%B1%E5%BA%A6%E5%A0%B1%E9%81%93/879777/%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E8%BE%A6-%E5%BE%9E%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E8%BE%A6%E7%9A%84%E5%89-%8D%E4%B8%96%E4%BB%8A%E7%94%9F-%E7%9C%8B%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E7%82%BA%E4%BB%80%E9%BA%BC%E4%BA%94%E5%BA%A6%E6%94%B9%E9%9D%A9>.

(3) Information Office of the State Council, White Paper, "The Practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Policy in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region," June 2014, http://english.www.gov.cn/archive/white_paper/2014/08/23/content_281474982986578.htm.

the Greater Bay Area (GBA) integration plan, signaling Hong Kong's future role in the region.⁽⁴⁾ By 2018 Politburo Standing Committee member Han Zheng chaired the coordination group. Still, from 2003 to 2018 the institutional arrangements at the center and in Hong Kong for party policy making on Hong Kong remained largely unchanged.

Then came the explosive protests of 2019, and everything changed. The party signaled the change publicly in its 4th Plenum Central Committee decision of October 31, 2019.⁽⁵⁾ First, at the center the party added public security officials to the leadership team of the coordination group (See Table 1). Then, in 2020 the party reorganized and upgraded the coordination group into the Central Hong Kong and Macau Work Leading Small Group (CHKMWLSG), a smaller, more focused, and more high-powered body with the imprimatur of the Politburo to direct policy on Hong Kong. New personnel appointments followed: Xia Baolong to head the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office (HKMAO) and Luo Huining to head the local Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR/Hong Kong Work Committee (中央人民政府駐香港特別行政區聯絡辦公室/香港工作委员会) (hereafter, LOCPG/HKWC) (See Table 2). In these and other changes, the party sought to put down the protests and regain authority and control of Hong Kong government and civil society. The appointments signaled a radical departure from the party's previous policy of accommodation.

(4) See National Development and Reform Commission, "Framework Agreement on Deepening Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Cooperation in the Development of the Greater Bay Area," July 1, 2017, https://www.bayarea.gov.hk/filemanager/en/share/pdf/Framework_Agreement.pdf.

(5) See Section 12 (1–3) of "中共中央关于坚持和完善中国特色社会主义制度 推进国家治理体系和治理能力现代化若干重大问题的决定 [Decision of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Several Major Issues Concerning Adhering to and Improving the Socialist System with Chinese Characteristics and Promoting the Modernization of the National Governance System and Governance Capability]," *Xinhua News Agency*, November 5, 2019, http://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2019-11/05/content_5449023.htm.

Table 1. Central Hong Kong and Macau Coordination Group, 2019⁽⁶⁾

Position	Members	Concurrent positions
Head	Han Zheng	PBSC, Vice Premier, GBA Construction LSG Head
Deputy Heads	Yang Jiechi	PB, Central Foreign Affairs Work Committee Office Head
	You Quan	Central Secretariat Secretary, United Front Work Dept Head
	Wang Yi	CC, St C, Foreign Minister
	Guo Shengkun	Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Secretary (joined 2019)
	Zhao Kezhi	CC, Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Dep Secretary, St C, Minister of Public Security (joined 2019)
	Zhang Xiaoming (Exec)	CC, HKMAO Head, GBA Construction LSG
Members	Representatives	18 ministries, organizations mostly of State Council in 2003*

Abbrev.: PBSC = Politburo Standing Committee, GBA = Greater Bay Area, LSG = Leading Small Group, PB = Politburo, CC = Central Committee, St C = State Councillor, HKMAO = Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office

(6) Sources: Chen Jing, “中央港澳工作领导完整名单浮出水面 中央对港澳工作重心未发生明显变化[Full List of Central Leaders for Hong Kong and Macao Work Emerges; No Significant Change in Focus of Central Work on Hong Kong and Macao],” *Lianhe zaobao*, April 18, 2023, <https://www.zaobao.com/news/china/story20230418-1384281>; Wang Zhaoyang, “星島：公安部長趙克志出任港澳工作協調小組副組長 應對港亂局 [Sing Tao: Minister of Public Security Zhao Kezhi Becomes Deputy Head of the Hong Kong and Macau Work Coordination Group to Deal with the Chaos in Hong Kong],” *hk01.com*, September 13, 2019, <https://www.hk01.com/%E5%8D%B3%E6%99%82%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/374799/%E6%98%9F%E5%B3%B6-%E5%85%AC%E5%AE%89%E9%83%A8%E9%95%B7%E8%B6%99%E5%85%8B%E5%BF%97%E5%87%BA%E4%BB%BB%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%8D%94%E8%AA%BF%E5%B0%8F%E7%B5%84%E5%9%AF%E7%B5%84%E9%95%B7-%E6%87%89%E5%B0%8D%E6%B8%AF%E4%BA%82%E5%B1%80>.
*Baidu.com search 中央港澳工作协调小组 [Central Coordinating Group for Hong Kong and Macau], <https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E5%8D%8F%E8%B0%83%E5%B0%8F%E7%BB%84/10614634>.

Table 2. Central Hong Kong and Macau Work Leading Small Group, 2020⁽⁷⁾

Position	Members	Concurrent positions
Head	Han Zheng	PBSC, Vice Premier, GBA Construction LSG Head
Deputy Heads	Yang Jiechi	PB, Central Foreign Affairs Work Committee Office Head
	You Quan	Central Secretariat Secretary, United Front Work Dept Head
	Wang Yi	CC, St C, Foreign Minister
	Guo Shengkun	Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Secretary
	Zhao Kezhi	CC, Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Dep Secretary, St C, Minister of Public Security
	Xia Baolong (Exec)	CPPCC Dep Head, HKMAO Head
Members	Li Xi	PB, GD Party Secretary, GBA Construction LSG Dep Head
	Zhang Xiaoming	CC, HKMAO Dep Head, GBA Construction LSG Member
	Luo Huining	CC, HKMAO Dep Head, HKLO Head, GBA Construction LSG Member
	Fu Ziyang	CC Alt, HKMAO Dep Head, Macau LO, GBA Construction LSG Member
	Ma Xingrui	CC, GD Party Dep Secretary, GD Governor

Abbrev.: PBSC = Politburo Standing Committee, GBA = Greater Bay Area, LSG = Leading Small Group, PB = Politburo, CC = Central Committee, St C = State Councilor, CPPCC = Chinese Peoples' Political Consultative Conference, HKMAO = Hong Kong Macau Affairs Office, CC Alt = Alternate Member of Central Committee, LO = Liaison Office, HKLO = Hong Kong Liaison Office, GD = Guangdong

(7) Sources: Chen Jing, April 18, 2023; Jiang Gengyu “中央港澳工作領導小組亮相 韓正任組長 趙克志夏寶龍任副組長 [The Central Leading Group for Hong Kong and Macao Work Unveiled. Han Zheng Appointed as the Head, Zhao Kezhi and Xia Baolong as Deputy Heads],” *HK01.com*, June 3, 2020, HYPERLINK "<https://www.hk01.com/%E5%8D%B3%E6%99%82%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/481532/%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E9%A0%98%E5%B0%8E%E5%B0%8F%E7%B5%84%E4%BA%AE%E7%9B%B8-%E9%9F%93%E6%AD%A3%E4%BB%BB%E7%B5%84%E9%95%B7-%E8%B6%99%E5%85%8B%E5%BF%97%E5%A4%8F%E5%AF%B6%E9%BE%8D%E4%BB%BB%E5%89%AF%E7%B5%84%E9%95%B7>https://www.hk01.com//即時中國/481532/中央港澳工作領導小組亮相-韓正任組長-趙克志夏寶龍任副組長; (“中央港澳工作领导小组 [Central Hong Kong and Macao Work Leading Group],” 維基百科 [Wikipedia], accessed April 22, 2022, HYPERLINK "<https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E6%B8%AF%E6%BE%B3%E5%B7%A5%E4%BD%9C%E9%A2%86%E5%AF%BC%E5%B0%8F%E7%BB%84>" <https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/中央港澳工作领导小组>.

In 2023 the party revealed significant changes to the institutional arrangements for governing Hong Kong. Taken together, the changes centralized authority over Hong Kong in the party Central Committee and clarified the hierarchical relationship between the central and local Hong Kong party organizations.⁽⁸⁾

On March 16, 2023 authorities revealed that they had moved the HKMAO from the State Council to the party Central Committee, where it became the Central Hong Kong and Macau Work Office, or CHKMWO, (中央港澳工作办公室).⁽⁹⁾ The party retained the name State Council Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office as the public name of the agency (“one organization, two names” 一个机构，两块牌子). As a State Council office, the HKMAO was ranked at ministerial level, a similar status to dozens of other agencies. Now, the CHKMWO, with an upgraded status, is better able to lead and coordinate the many agencies of the State Council that previously ranked at the same level as the HKMAO and that are involved in the governance of Hong Kong. Reports have identified up to 20 ministerial bodies involved in Hong Kong matters,⁽¹⁰⁾ including many economic, finance, and trade ministries; the security and foreign affairs ministries, and organizations facilitating the development of the GBA development project, in which Hong Kong is now heavily involved. The CHKMWO will also have more clout in dealing with provincial and local governments (for example, Guangdong and Shenzhen) than it did as a State Council agency.

Moreover, the newly identified CHKMWO has more authority over Hong Kong, serving as an enhanced tool of the central party and government to exercise “comprehensive jurisdiction” over the HKSAR. The Work Office guides, directs, supervises, and inspects the HKSAR, in particular the Hong Kong government, both directly and via the LOCPG/HKWC, clarifying the line of bureaucratic accountability to the center, as was previewed in the 14th Central Committee plenum decision in 2019.

Xia Baolong, born in 1952, continues to head the CHKMWO. Xia is a very senior central party cadre and former member or alternate member of the 15th, 16th, 17th, and

(8) Huang Yunna, June 6, 2023.

(9) Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party and the State Council, “党和国家机构改革方案 [Plan for the Reform of Party and State Institutions],” Xinhuanet, March 16, 2023, http://www.news.cn/politics/zywj/2023-03/16/c_1129437368.htm.

(10) Huang Yunna, June 6, 2023.

18th Central Committees. He is much more senior than the newly appointed head of the Liaison Office/Hong Kong Work Committee in Hong Kong, Zheng Yanxiong. These two appointments clarify the hierarchical relationship between the CHKMWO and the LOCPG/HKWC. The previous head of the LOCPG/HKWC, Luo Huining, had a similar status to Xia and was a member of the 19th party Central Committee when he was appointed in 2020. Both Xia and Luo were appointed during a time of crisis in Hong Kong, the increasingly violent anti-government protests of 2019 that local authorities in Hong Kong failed to put down on their own.

Zheng Yanxiong has spent his entire career in Guangdong, taking up many posts in the propaganda system (系统). In 2020 authorities appointed Zheng to head the newly established Office for Safeguarding National Security of the Central People's Government in the HKSAR, or CPGNSO, (中央人民政府驻香港特别行政区维护国家安全公署). Zheng brings both propaganda and local security credentials to his position as head of the LOCPG/HKWC. He is also a Cantonese speaker, added value for anyone managing Hong Kong affairs. Zheng has taken over from Luo the critical position of advisor to the Committee for Safeguarding National Security of the HKSAR (香港特别行政区维护国家安全委员会) chaired by the Chief Executive. This committee vets all significant personnel appointments in Hong Kong. Zheng's lower status in the party makes clear the hierarchical relationship between central and local.

The CHKMWO serves as the secretariat for the CHKMWLSG, which directs, supervises, leads, and coordinates the governance of Hong Kong. Authorities have replaced the members of the LSG to reflect the term of the 20th National People's Congress, which met for the first time in 2023 (See Table 3). Great continuity characterizes the lineup of the 2020 and 2023 LSGs. The same bureaucratic entities are represented: united front work, security, foreign affairs, the GBA project, and we speculate, Guangdong and Shenzhen.⁽¹¹⁾ Of note is the significant role of security in the LSG. Politburo member Chen Wenqing formerly served as Minister of State Security and Wang Xiaohong currently serves as Minister of Public Security.

(11) By the time of writing, authorities had not revealed the names of the representatives from Guangdong and Shenzhen. Given the functional similarities between the 2020 and 2023 LSG lineup, I speculate that the members are Politburo member Huang Kunming, who is the Guangdong party secretary, and Meng Fanli, who is a Guangdong party deputy secretary and Shenzhen party secretary.

Hong Kong’s interests at the center continue to be represented by non-Hong Kongers. This is in keeping with the party’s notion of representation, which starts from a bureaucratic position and a national perspective. To minimize corruption, mainland senior officials do not serve in their birthplace locality. Those with the most contact with Hong Kong matters on the LSG are undoubtedly Xia Baolong (birthplace Tianjin), Zheng Yanxiong (Guangdong [Shantou]), Meng Fanli (Shandong), and perhaps Ding Xuexiang (Jiangsu). That is, Hong Kong government continues to have no direct representation at the center in the forum that matters most, the LSG. Nor is the government represented in the party Central Committee.

Table 3. Central Hong Kong and Macau Work Leading Small Group, 2023⁽¹²⁾

Position	Members, birthplace	Concurrent positions
Head	Ding Xuexiang, Jiangsu	PBSC, Exec Vice Premier, GBA Construction LSG Head
Deputy Heads	Shi Taifeng, Shanxi	PB, Secretary of Central Secretariat, CPPCC Vice Chair, United Front Work Head
	Chen Wenqing, Sichuan	PB, Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Secretary, Central Secretariat Secretary (previously Minister of State Security)
	Wang Xiaohong, Fujian	CC, St C, Central Secretariat Secretary, Pol & Legal Affairs Committee Dep Secretary, Minister of Public Security
	Qin Gang, Tianjin	CC, St C, Minister of Foreign Affairs
	Xia Baolong (Exec.), Tianjin	CHKMWO Head
Members	Huang Kunming*, Fujian	PB, GD Party Secretary, GBA Construction LSG Dep Head
	Zheng Yanxiong GD	HKLO Head, GBA Construction LSG member
	Zheng Xincong, Fujian	CC, Macau LO Head, GBA Construction LSG member
	Meng Fanli*, Shandong	CC, GD Dep Secretary, Shenzhen Party Secretary

Abbrev.: PB = Politburo, PBSC = Politburo Standing Committee, GBA = Greater Bay Area, LSG = Leading Small Group, CC = Central Committee, CPPCC = Chinese Peoples’ Political Consultative Conference, LO = Liaison Office, HKLO = Hong Kong Liaison Office, CHKMWO = Central Hong Kong & Macau Work Office, St C = State Councilor, GD = Guangdong

(12) Note: *Names not yet revealed. See footnote 11.
Source: Chen Jing, April 18, 2023.

LSGs are not part of the formal organization structure of the CCP. We learn about their existence, membership, and activities when party officials choose to reveal them publicly. A lack of transparency is a hallmark of policymaking in China at this level. Thus, it is likely that the HKMAO operated as part of the party Central Committee well before authorities revealed its party status in April 2023. By 2023 central officials saw the need to make it public.

In Hong Kong, Zheng Yanxiong, born in 1963, took over from Luo Huining, born in 1954, as head the LOCPG/HKWC on January 14, 2023. As we have seen, authorities have tasked the Liaison Office with vetting key appointments in the city, as well as guiding, directing, and supervising the HKSAR government. Accordingly, we should expect both formal and informal communication between the Liaison Office and the Hong Kong government to be frequent and dense. For example, insiders report that HKSAR government policy secretaries are in direct and frequent contact with their counterpart departments in the LOCPG, either personally, or via an administrative assistant (usually an elite administrative officer) and via WeChat. In-person meetings held in various Liaison Office premises may be as frequent as once or twice a month depending on the issue. LOCPG counterparts keep minutes of the meetings. Either the LOCPG or the bureau may initiate contact on a particular issue. For example, the Liaison Office scans the Hong Kong media – now hollowed out after the implementation of the National Security Law – and canvasses local opinion, and it may bring up issues based on these scans or relay requests for information, questions, or advice (instructions) from Beijing.

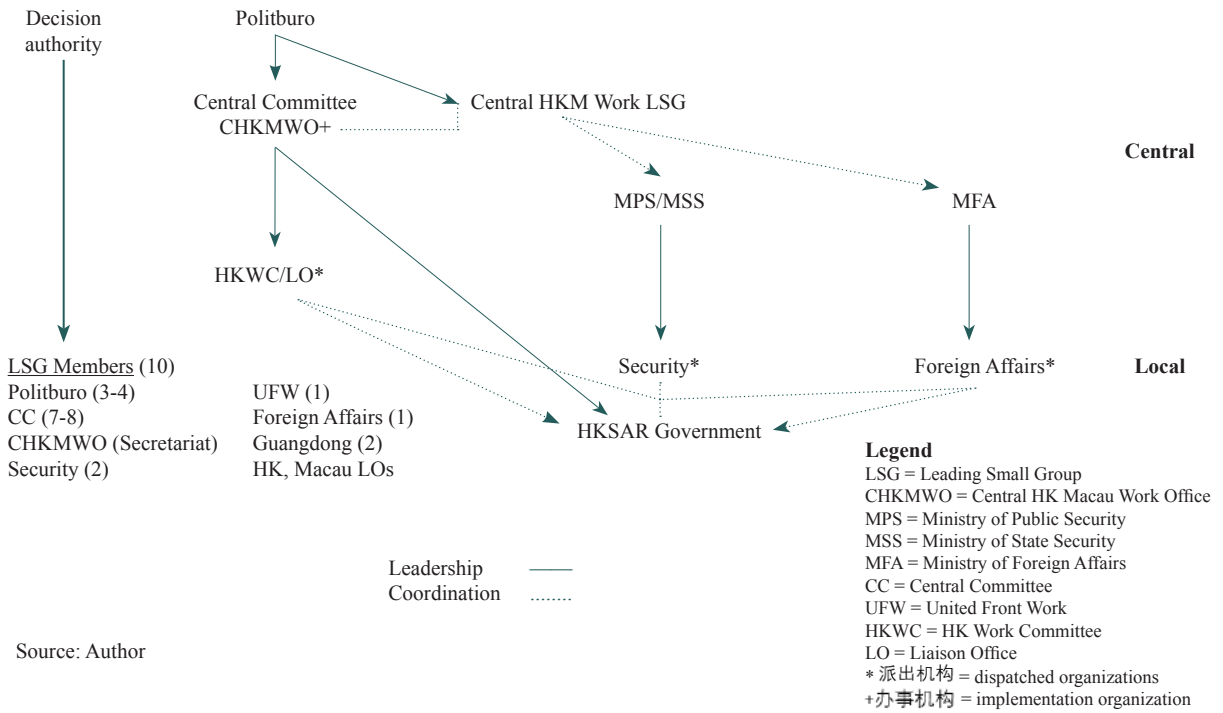
The pace and density of communication increased in the watershed year of 2012, when the newly appointed Chief Executive CY Leung abandoned the government’s “national and moral education” initiative in the face of popular protest. From then on, the scope, depth, and frequency of communication gradually increased as Beijing reasserted “comprehensive jurisdiction” over Hong Kong in 2014, and as Hong Kong weathered popular protest focused on political reform (for example, Occupy Central and rioting in Mongkok). Tighter integration with the mainland also encouraged closer communication, coordination, and exchange of information, for example with the launch of the GBA project in 2017. Since 2019 communication has also prioritized security.

Permanent secretaries, the most senior civil servants, also liaise with their counterparts in the LOCPG. The contact for the Chief Secretary and Secretary for Justice is usually of the level of LOCPG Deputy Director. Policy bureaus and heads of HKSAR government departments also communicate directly with the HKMAO in Beijing, and directly with provincial and local governments as needed.

Figure 1 identifies the key players and relationships in central–local relations for Hong Kong, focusing on party policymaking institutions. At the time of writing, the Ministries of Public Security and State Security were still publicly identified as agencies of the State Council. It seems likely that the CHKMWLSG, given its composition, has the authority to give instructions to these two bodies on Hong Kong matters, and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It seems likely that both the CHKMWO and the LOCPG have decision authority over the HKSAR government. The local security and foreign affairs agencies of the central government coordinate with both the LOCPG and counterparts within the HKSAR government, such as the national security department of the Hong Kong Police.

These arrangements indicate tighter central control of Hong Kong, increased capacity at the center to make policy on and for Hong Kong, and clearer lines of bureaucratic accountability between the center and Hong Kong in 2023 than previously.

Figure 1. Central–Local Relations and Hong Kong, 2023





King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS)

KFCRIS is an independent non-governmental institution based in Riyadh, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Center was founded in 1403/1983 by the *King Faisal Foundation (KFF)* to preserve the legacy of the late King Faisal and to continue his mission of transmitting knowledge between the Kingdom and the world. The Center serves as a platform for research, Islamic and contemporary studies, bringing together researchers and research institutions from the Kingdom and across the world through conferences, workshops, and lectures, and through the production and publication of scholarly works, as well as the preservation of Islamic manuscripts. The Center seeks to expand the range of existing literature and research to bring it to the fore in academic discussions and interests; while observing the contributions of Islamic societies in the humanities and social sciences, arts, and literature, nowadays and in the past.

The Center contains a library that preserves precious Islamic manuscripts and huge databases in the field of humanities. It also includes the Museums Department, which contains six valuable collections that the Center preserves, as well as the *Museum of Arab Islamic Art*. The Center contains the *Al-Faisal Cultural House*, its executive arm in the publishing industry, which publishes books, cultural and peer-reviewed journals. *KFCRIS* also includes *Darat Al Faisal*, which is concerned with documenting the biography of King Faisal and his family in addition to preserving his legacy.

For more information, please visit the Center's website: www.kfcris.com/en



مركز الملك فيصل للبحوث والدراسات الإسلامية
King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies

P.O. Box 51049 Riyadh 11543 **Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

Tel: (+966 11) 4555504 Fax: (+966 11) 4659993

E-mail: research@kfcris.com