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The Wages Of Oil: Parliaments And Economic Development In Kuwait And The UAE



Synopsis

The contrast between Kuwait and the UAE today illustrates the vastly different possible futures facing the smaller states of the Gulf. Dubai's rulers dream of creating a truly global business center, a megalopolis of many millions attracting immigrants in great waves from near and far. Kuwait, meanwhile, has the most spirited and influential parliament in any of the oil-rich Gulf monarchies. In *The Wages of Oil*, Michael Herb provides a robust framework for thinking about the future of the Gulf monarchies. The Gulf has seen enormous changes in recent years, and more are to come. Herb explains the nature of the changes we are likely to see in the future. He starts by asking why Kuwait is far ahead of all other Gulf monarchies in terms of political liberalization, but behind all of them in its efforts to diversify its economy away from oil. He compares Kuwait with the United Arab Emirates, which lacks Kuwait's parliament but has moved ambitiously to diversify. This data-rich book reflects the importance of both politics and economic development issues for decision-makers in the Gulf. Herb develops a political economy of the Gulf that ties together a variety of issues usually treated separately: Kuwait's National Assembly, Dubai's real estate boom, the paucity of citizen labor in the private sector, class divisions among citizens, the caste divide between citizens and noncitizens, and the politics of land.

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Customer Reviews

"Herb provides a well-presented analysis of the political economies of the Gulf monarchies, with a detailed and insightful assessment of Kuwait and the UAE. This book is a welcome addition to scholarly work on the rentier economies of GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council)

states." – Lorraine Charles, Middle East Journal (June 2015) "The Wages of Oil is an absorbing book, rich in detail and nuance, that should become required reading for students and scholars of the Gulf oil states. . . . both a highly readable and very timely analysis that should dispel any lingering notion among policy-makers and lay readers that the Gulf states represent a monolithic regional bloc."

– Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, International Affairs (July 2015) "Michael Herb has written about very technical economic concepts using a plethora of graphs and advanced terminology to argue his points. The subject matter isn't for everyone; those with a background in economics and political science will appreciate the book more than others. Yet the book is lively and engaging and Herb has taken a potentially dreary subject and produced an intriguing book accessible to all."

– Charles Fraker, Middle East Policy Council (vol. 23, no. 1) "The Wages of Oil likely will be one of the best books on Gulf politics and economics in this decade and should stand the test of time. Michael Herb uses rich and original empirical material to develop a set of cogent and novel arguments about class politics in rentier countries, the origins of parliaments and constitutions in the Gulf, the history of Gulf merchant politics, and the democratic exception of Kuwait. The book should be on the reading list not only of students of the Gulf but also of anyone interested in the politics of resource-rich states and the 'resource curse.'"

– Steffen Hertog, London School of Economics and Political Science, author of Princes, Brokers, and Bureaucrats: Oil and the State in Saudi Arabia "The Wages of Oil contributes to the oil politics literature that calls into question the overwhelming, deterministic consequences of oil wealth and emphasizes institutional context as key in explaining different outcomes in similar oil states. Michael Herb's argument about the international factors affecting Kuwaiti 'exceptionalism' has not been made as clearly anywhere else."

– F. Gregory Gause III, Texas A&M University, author of The International Relations of the Persian Gulf "In his new book, The Wages of Oil, Michael Herb excels in attempting to tackle why Kuwait is so unique politically, while Dubai, as part of UAE, is so unique economically. As usual, Herb goes deeper and comes up with revealing answers."

– Ghanim Alnajjar, Kuwait University "The Wages of Oil is a sophisticated, careful, and absolutely essential exploration of the effects of oil wealth on the politics and economies of the Gulf states. Michael Herb's comparison of Kuwait and the UAE, and extension to the other GCC states, challenges dominant theories of rentier politics by digging into the precise mechanisms by which the introduction of vast oil wealth shaped national institutions. Herb shows convincingly that oil mattered differently in diverse national contexts. This is one of the best available books on the political economy of the Gulf states."

– Marc Lynch, The George Washington University, editor of The Arab Uprisings Explained: New Contentious Politics in the Middle East

Michael Herb is Associate Professor of Political Science at Georgia State University. He is the author of *All in the Family: Absolutism, Revolution, and Democracy in the Middle Eastern Monarchies*.

The book provides a unique view of Kuwait. The discussion goes beyond superficial description that existed in many books. It provides deep and rich investigation of the reasons behind the current status. Another quality of the book is its inclusion of almost all relevant literature and scholars and contextualize their contributions in a sophisticated manner. I really enjoyed the book and consider it one of the best that I read in such subject. I highly recommend to anyone interested in an analytical view of GCC countries and specially Kuwait.

This is an outstanding discussion of the damages caused to democratic rule in the rentier state.

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