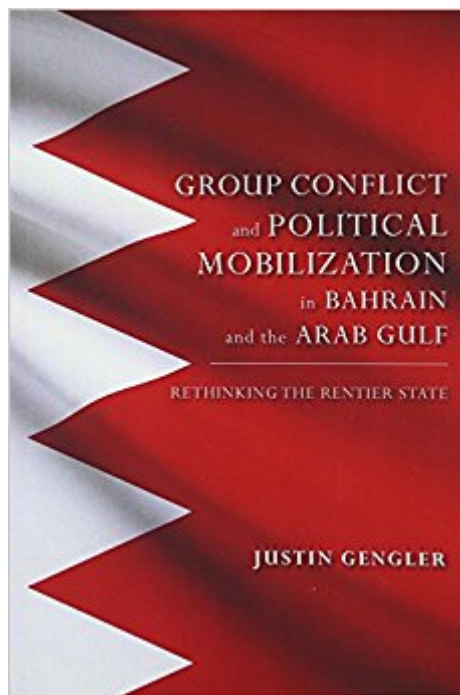


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Group Conflict And Political Mobilization In Bahrain And The Arab Gulf: Rethinking The Rentier State (Indiana Series In Middle East Studies)



Synopsis

The oil-producing states of the Arab Gulf are said to sink or swim on their capacity for political appeasement through economic redistribution. Yet, during the popular uprisings of the Arab Spring, in Bahrain and all across the Arab Gulf, ordinary citizens showed an unexpected enthusiasm for political protest directed against governments widely assumed to have co-opted their support with oil revenues. Justin Gengler draws on the first-ever mass political survey in Bahrain to demonstrate that neither is the state willing to offer all citizens the same bargain, nor are all citizens willing to accept it. Instead, shared social and religious identities offer a viable basis for mass political coordination. Challenging the prevailing rentier interpretation of political life in the Gulf states, Gengler offers new empirical evidence and a new conceptual framework for understanding the attitudes of ordinary citizens.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[C]onducting a political survey including sensitive questions in a country like Bahrain is a tour de force which the author has managed brilliantly, making him one of the best analysts of contemporary Bahraini politics. The result is an invaluable contribution to our knowledge not only of Bahrain but of how ascriptive identities determine political behaviors." —Laurence Louër, Sciences Po
Using information gleaned from the first-ever mass political survey in Bahrain, Gengler challenges the assumptions underpinning rentier-state theory as applied to the Gulf nations. Reflecting on the Arab Spring uprisings, he argues that economic fulfilment does not inevitably

breed political apathy." â Survival "This book is definitely unique and invaluable to anyone wanting a fuller understanding of the economic, political, and religious tensions within Bahrain that media outlets and published reports have scarcely revealed." â The Sociological Imagination "Justin Gengler's work makes a new and valuable contribution to the study of the Gulf, countering both the common but superficial narrative that the Gulf monarchies escaped the Arab spring, and the more robust narrative that they ensure legitimacy through a rentier bargain with their citizens. Gengler's analysis of group competition in Bahrain indicates that an alternative strategy for a resource-constrained government is to concentrate benefits among an in-group that then has a strong interest in defending a non-democratic status quo. To this end, it marshals unique empirical survey data, which is rare in the Gulf context because of the political constraints on the collection of information on public opinion. The book is also informed by detailed analysis of the varied and fragmented political mobilisation that exists in Bahrain, including the activism of Sunni groups who are caught between their suspicion of the Shia-led opposition and their own criticisms of the government--an under-explored area where Gengler's research has taken the lead. A must-read for anyone interested in understanding the socio-economic and political factors that help to shape and drive the current wave of sectarianism afflicting the Middle East." â Jane Kinninmont, Chatham House "[O]ffers a comprehensive and compelling counter-argument to the prevailing assumptions of rentier state theory.... Gengler demolishes the theory that economic satisfaction leads inevitably to political indifference, and illustrates this with examples of how the ruling elite in Bahrain have manipulated and utilized group conflict to reinforce their position vis-Ã -vis society." â Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, Rice University "Gengler presents a critical analysis examining the conventional wisdom of the rentier state theory and questions Bahrain's ability to buy the loyalty of its citizens despite its lagging political legitimacy... Recommended for upper-division undergraduate students of Middle Eastern studies." â Choice

Justin Gengler is Senior Researcher at the Social and Economic Survey Research Institute (SESRI) at Qatar University.

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