

Islam as leftist. The provincial government of Azerbaijan in 1945–46 is depicted as the “socialist republic.” This government never declared itself either to be a “republic” or “socialist.” The fall of Mossadeq is linked as much to economic difficulties as to the CIA-MI6 military coup even though it is mentioned in passing that the British at the time concluded that the nationalist premier could weather financial problems mainly because Iran was still basically an agricultural country enjoying two consecutive good harvests. The book on numerous occasions credits the shah for wresting control of the oil industry from foreign oil interests and reducing the Consortium to a mere service company. Yet a later chapter declares that it was not until the 1979 revolution that “for the first time in Iran’s history the government gained full authority over the country’s foremost asset, its petroleum endowments” (p. 468).

Ideological biases also appear in the discussion on the nuclear crisis. The book is meticulous in describing every possible misstep and mistake Iran has supposedly and possibly made over the years. It is especially concerned with its “adventurism abroad.” The book, however, tends to gloss over any such possible mistake or misdeed made by the United States. For example, little is made of how President George W. Bush’s infamous “Axis of Evil Speech” undermined President Khatami who had stacked his future on developing a *détente* with the United States. Little is made of the Bush administration’s refusal to give a counter offer to Iran’s temporary cessation of nuclear enrichment in the hope of jump-starting negotiations. Little is made of the well-known Iranian “grand bargain” offer as well as the US rejection of the European willingness to explore the offer. What is more, little is made of the Bush administration’s insistence that there could be no negotiations until Iran ceased all enrichment and that there was no difference between “peaceful” and nonpeaceful enrichment. President Obama, by dropping this demand and distinguishing between the two types of enrichment, paved the way for the recent settlement. Without discussing such nuances, the book ends up being very one-sided. There was a time when the Brookings Institute was deemed to be a liberal counterbalance to the imposing array of conservative thinktanks in Washington. It now seems to have become their poor echo.

MICHAEL HERB, *The Wages of Oil: Parliaments and Economic Development in Kuwait and the UAE* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2014). Pp. 256. \$35.00 cloth. ISBN: 9780801453366

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Are rentier states doomed to remain trapped in eternal authoritarian government? Is a democratic transition conceivable in countries that export large volumes of oil? The weakness of the so-called rentier state theory has always lain in its static character: a rentier state is more likely to be authoritarian (or, to put it another way, an authoritarian political regime, in particular a patrimonial monarchy, is more likely to survive if the state is rentier); and as long as the state remains rentier there is little reason to expect that authoritarianism will be questioned.

In his important contribution to the debate of authoritarianism vs. democratic transitions in rentier states, Michael Herb addresses this fundamental issue and presents the reader with a number of thought-provoking hypotheses. He does so by concentrating on two case studies: Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Both are, in his characterization, “extreme rentiers,” in the sense that they are large producers of oil but have relatively limited populations, resulting in a very large oil rent per capita (where only nationals count, not expatriates). The book also frequently comments on the situation of Qatar (also an extreme rentier), Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Bahrain (middling rentiers), but the emphasis of the argument is on the contrast between the UAE, where

the Federal National Council is elected by restricted suffrage and has very limited powers, and Kuwait, where the National Assembly is elected by universal suffrage and enjoys comparatively extended powers—but not the power to appoint the Prime Minister and cabinet. In contrast with the tendency to privilege statistical analysis, which obliges one to blur the lines of rentierism in order to have a sufficient number of observations and relies on questionable indices to turn essentially qualitative variables (such as democracy) into quantitative series, Michael Herb prefers in depth case studies to capture the complex relationship between parliaments and economic development in two leading oil-exporting countries.

How can we explain that Kuwait, the country that more than any other inspired the formulation of the rentier state paradigm, has an assertive National Assembly that has played a clear role in shaping the country's economic development (or lack thereof)? Herb attributes much importance to international influences, in particular the troubled relationship with Iraq. He directly relates the formulation and promulgation of the 1962 Constitution to the threat that came from Iraq under Qasim—supported at the time by the Soviet Union, which for two years after Kuwait's independence vetoed the admission of the emirate to the United Nations. Following the quantum jump in oil rents beginning in 1973 (which Herb does not discuss), the National Assembly was disbanded between 1976 and 1981, and then again from 1986 to the Iraqi invasion of 1990. Following the invasion, Herb argues, the ruling family was forced to restore the National Assembly “to demonstrate to the powers that protected it, and to international public opinion, that it enjoyed the support of Kuwaiti citizens” (p. 103).

The author also acknowledges the importance of personal factors. He underlines, for example, the fact that ‘Abd Allah al-Salim Al Sabah, the amir at the time the 1962 Constitution was promulgated, was genuinely a liberal, while most other members of the Al Sabah have subsequently been very reluctant to share power with an elected parliament. However, the argument is not, in my opinion, sufficiently followed through, including in the comparison with Dubai and the other emirates of the UAE. Herb does not mention the fact that, following an attempt on his life in 1985, Shaykh Jaber al-Ahmad became a recluse and effectively ceased being a leader (while at the same time disposing of the National Assembly); he barely mentions that the amir and almost all of the ruling family precipitously fled the country, leaving their people to the mercy of invading Iraqi troops, in this way destroying much of their legitimacy; and completely overlooks the fact that the current amir, Sabah al-Ahmad, owes his position to the National Assembly which, upon the death of Jabir al-Ahmad in 2006, cooperated in sidestepping Crown Prince Sa‘ad al-Salim, and putting an end to the alternation in power of the al-Ahmad and al-Salim branches of the ruling family. More broadly, the Al Sabah are a notoriously fractious lot, and their internal divisions have allowed the National Assembly a degree of influence that a more cohesive family—such as Dubai's Al Maktums—could have resisted.

In the case of Dubai, it seems that Michael Herb does not sufficiently recognize the entrepreneurial spirit of Shaykh Rashid bin Sa‘id (whose name is not even mentioned in the book) and later Shaykh Mohammad bin Rashid in transforming the physical and economic reality of Dubai. Although as political scientists we are keen to find broad explanations for political developments, in the context of the patrimonial monarchies of the Gulf the importance of the character and leadership of the ruler seems inescapable. It is very difficult to explain why Dubai is Dubai while none of the other UAE emirates (not even Abu Dhabi, where almost all of the oil wealth is concentrated) are like it unless we acknowledge the determining impact of the personality of the amir.

The contrast between the visionary development of Dubai and Kuwait's stagnation before and after the Iraqi invasion mirrors that between the entrepreneurial leadership of Dubai and the practice of power in Kuwait, characterized by the recluse tenure of Jaber al Ahmad and aloof attitude of Sabah al-Ahmad, the current amir.

The latter has done nothing to solve the constitutional impasse that is gripping Kuwait. Sabah Al-Ahmad has insisted on appointing a member of the ruling family to the position of prime

minister, and numerous other members to ministerial positions. The dichotomy between ruling family and National Assembly has therefore persisted, creating an impasse that shows no sign of being resolved. Michael Herb believes that “Parliamentarism in Kuwait—that is to say, parliamentary appointment of the Council of Ministers—might alleviate the paralysis that currently besets the Kuwaiti political system” (p. 207). A development in this direction would, however, require significant leadership on the part of the amir to limit the impact of rivalries within the ruling family and to provide stability and balance to a “managed democracy” along the lines of Morocco’s.

At the same time it must also be acknowledged that the National Assembly has weakened the legitimacy of its bid for a different equilibrium of powers between itself and the amir by displaying an extraordinary inclination to promote populist policies that favor rent redistribution based on citizenship, rather than entrepreneurship or productivity. If more of the policies advocated by the Assembly, and resisted by the Kuwaiti government, were implemented, the outcome would certainly not be closer to the example of Dubai.

Herb sympathizes with critics of the Dubai (or UAE) model because of the extreme dependence on expatriate labor, but openness to expatriate labor is an essential component of any developmental policy aiming at countering the Dutch disease. One can argue that the pace of transformation in Dubai has been too rapid—although normally the oil-exporting countries are criticized for being too slow in diversifying their economies—but very few UAE nationals would seriously opt for returning to the reality of the backwater villages that made up the country no more than fifty years ago. It is not the case that Kuwait has more successfully managed the trade off between transformation and dependence of expatriate labor than the UAE. Considering the lack of economic diversification in Kuwait, the country’s dependence on expatriate labor is possibly even more troublesome—the only difference being that the bulk of expatriates in Kuwait are personal services providers rather than productive workers.

Herb underlines how the large number of expatriates constitutes a problem for any democratization scenario in the region. He asserts that the readiness of the ruling families to accept such a large number of expatriates is, in a sense, an implicit threat to the national population: remain loyal or you may lose your country altogether. All Gulf rentier states have official policies to promote the employment of nationals and limit the number of expatriates, but in no case have these been very effective. The main motivation for relying on such a large number of expatriates is probably economic, but the role of the amir in mediating between the interests of nationals and the various groups of expatriates has surely been enhanced—a role that no elected institution could play as effectively. In fact, the system of informal consultation (*shūra*), which is characteristic of amiri rule, allows some voice to the expatriate population through mediators informally chosen by the amir, while formal democracy, based on “one person, one vote” for citizens only, would marginalize expatriates entirely. As naturalization in large numbers—even restricted to other Arabs—is essentially unthinkable, there hardly is an alternative to the status quo.

Herb makes many more important points in the book that cannot be taken up here. The debate on the possible paths to democratization of rentier states is bound to continue for decades, and Michael Herb’s book will remain essential reading for all who are interested.

PIERRE RAZOUX, *The Iran–Iraq War*, trans. Nicholas Elliot (London: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015). Pp. 640. \$39.99 cloth. ISBN: 9780674088634

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The importance of the Iran–Iraq War (1980–88) cannot be overstated. Two major countries in the Middle East, one of which was in the middle of a revolutionary transformation, engaged