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Bahrain In Focus (Gulf States In Focus)



Synopsis

In the wake of the 2011 protests, culminating in the dismantling of the iconic Pearl roundabout statue, the focus on Bahrain has grown steadily. Sandwiched between Iran and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain occupies a vital strategic location, and hosts the main US naval base in the Middle East. The country has often been a bellwether for trends elsewhere in the Gulf: it was the first of the GCC countries to find commercially viable quantities of oil, the first to build a refinery, the first to educate women and the first to experience protests and demonstrations. It remains a regional leader in terms of diversifying the economy away from oil and, most recently, trying to reduce its dependence on foreign labour. However it also faces its own specific political dilemmas; the ruling family is not an indigenous tribe, and Bahrain is now the only Arab country where a largely Sunni government rules a largely Shia population. Drawing on extensive field research, Kinninmont examines the modern political and economic development of Bahrain, including the recent years of tentative political reform, and the country's diverse opposition movement.

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