



# **Sectarian Politics in the Gulf: From the Iraq War to the Arab Uprisings (Columbia Studies in Middle East Politics)**

*Frederic M. Wehrey*

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Beginning with the 2003 invasion of Iraq and concluding with the Arab uprisings of 2011, Frederic Wehrey investigates the Shi'a-Sunni divide now dominating the Persian Gulf's political landscape. Focusing on three states affected most by sectarian tensions -- Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait -- Wehrey identifies the factors that have exacerbated or tempered sectarianism, including domestic political institutions, the media, clerical establishments, and the contagion effect of external events, such as the Iraq civil war and the Arab uprisings.

In addition to his analysis, Wehrey builds a historical narrative of Shi'a activism in the Arab Gulf since 2003, linking regional events to the development of local Shi'a strategies and attitudes toward citizenship, political reform, and transnational identity. He finds that, while the Gulf Shi'a were inspired by their coreligionists in Iraq, Iran, and Lebanon, they ultimately pursued greater rights through a non-sectarian, nationalist approach. He also discovers that sectarianism in the Gulf has largely been the product of the institutional weaknesses of Gulf states, leading to excessive alarm by entrenched Sunni elites and calculated attempts by regimes to discredit Shi'a political actors as proxies for Iran, Iraq, or Lebanese Hizballah. Wehrey conducts interviews with nearly every major Shi'a leader, opinion shaper, and activist in the Gulf Arab states, as well as prominent Sunni voices, and consults diverse Arabic-language sources.

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