



Feeling the Pulse of the Street: Socio-Cultural Demands and Regime Responsiveness in the Arab Monarchies of the Gulf

HDR FINAL ORAL PRESENTATION BY TONY ALLISON

In August 2021, the Kuwaiti government removed statues of Aphrodite from a Burberry shop after it received multiple complaints about them offending people's cultural and religious sensitivities. Why? While this question may seem simple, current Gulf scholarship, and authoritarian studies more generally, struggles to provide an adequate answer because of its inattention to the place of popular socio-cultural contestation in state-society relations. This study addresses this gap by examining bottom-up socio-cultural contestation in the Gulf monarchies and makes three primary contributions. First, it demonstrates that citizens in the Gulf monarchies, although often portrayed as either quiescent or motivated solely by economic and political issues, do have socio-cultural concerns that they articulate to the government. Second, it shows that not only are the Gulf monarchies aware of these demands, but that, although authoritarian, these states do respond to them in a wide variety of ways, including substantively addressing citizen socio-cultural concerns. Thus, in a region overwhelmingly conceptualised as repressive and illegitimate, this study centres responsiveness as an integral part of how Gulf citizens and regimes interact. And third, it uses these insights from the Gulf to speak to wider political science by expanding our understanding of authoritarian responsiveness, which, for example, has yet to be applied to socio-cultural contestation.

Details

10 am, Tuesday 24th
June in CAIS Lecture
Theatre

Online via Zoom

Meeting ID:
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