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The Gulf Monarchies and Climate Change: Abu Dhabi and Qatar in an Era of Natural Unsustainability

Mari Luomi

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At the heart of Mari Luomi's salutary book is whether oil- and gas-dependent authoritarian monarchies can keep their natural resource use and the environment in balance. She argues that the Gulf monarchies have already reached their limits of 'natural sustainability', given that several of them are dependent on natural gas imports. Water resources are dwindling, and food import dependence is high and rising. Qatar's per capita emission of CO2 is ten times the global average. As a result of their booming economies, the Gulf monarchies' surging electricity and water demand have exerted unexpected pressures on domestic energy supply. Simultaneously, the consolidation of climate change on the international agenda has created a new uncertainty for local rulers whose survival depends on sales of oil and gas. Meanwhile domestic resource consumption, together with climate change, are putting unprecedented stress on the region's fragile desert environment. The Gulf is under stress, but so too are its states' power, wealth and ecosystems. Luomi reveals how Abu Dhabi and Qatar have responded to these new natural re- source-related pressures, particularly climate change, and how their responses are inextricably linked with elite legitimacy strategies and the 'natural unsustainability' of their political economies.

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