

New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE

Dina Esfandiary, *New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE*; (I.B. Tauris: 2023, 193)

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Dina Esfandiary is known for her stimulating writing and thinking on Middle Eastern affairs. Her two books “*Triple-Axis: China, Russia, Iran, and Power Politics*” and “*New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE*” primarily highlight the transformation taking place in the Gulf region, which will have long-term repercussions for the region and the world. In this context, “*New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE*,” by Dina Esfandiary is an insightful and well-researched exploration of the United Arab Emirates’ (UAE) meteoric rise, and its growing influence in the Gulf region. Esfandiary, an expert in Gulf politics and security, offers a comprehensive analysis of the UAE’s foreign policy, internal dynamics, and regional ambitions.

One of the book’s greatest strengths lies in its thorough examination of the UAE’s historical trajectory, and the factors that have shaped its rise to prominence. Esfandiary delves into the country’s transformation from a small Bedouin society to a significant global player, highlighting key milestones such as the discovery of oil, the establishment of the federation, and the visionary leadership of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan.

The author skillfully explores the UAE’s strategic positioning in the Gulf and its quest for regional dominance. Esfandiary sheds light on the UAE’s efforts to diversify its economy beyond oil, the development of its military capabilities, and its emergence as a hub

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for business, finance, and innovation. Through meticulous research and analysis, the book reveals how the UAE has successfully leveraged its resources and geographical location to become an influential actor in the region. Overall, through its economic strength, stability, diplomacy, military capabilities, foreign aid, and regional alliances, the UAE has successfully positioned itself as an influential actor in the Gulf region, playing a key role in regional affairs and shaping dynamics in the broader Middle East.

Moreover, "New Order in the Gulf" offers valuable insights into the UAE's foreign policy approach and its engagement with key regional actors. Esfandiary examines the country's complex relationships with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) members. She explores the UAE's active role in the Yemeni conflict, its stance on the Arab Spring, and its involvement in the blockade against Qatar. The UAE has actively forged alliances and partnerships with other countries in the Gulf region, such as Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Egypt. These alliances have been aimed at strengthening collective security, countering common threats, and promoting shared interests. Through these alliances, the UAE has been able to exert influence on regional affairs and contribute to shaping regional policies. The book presents a nuanced understanding of the UAE's motivations, strategies, and challenges in navigating these complex dynamics. Esfandiary's book offers insights into the UAE's foreign policy choices, its interactions with neighbouring countries, and its efforts to shape the evolving regional order.

The author has pointed out that the UAE has actively employed soft power strategies to increase its influence in the region. It has invested in cultural initiatives, international sports, and media outlets, such as *Al Arabiya* and *Sky News Arabia*, to project its image and values. Additionally, the UAE has pursued an assertive foreign policy. It is engaged in an active diplomacy, and is fast becoming a key player in the regional forums by fostering relationships with various countries.

Likewise, The UAE has modernised its military and acquired advanced weaponry, enhancing its military capabilities in the Gulf region. The country has actively participated in the military interventions and coalitions, such as the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen, contributing to its regional influence. The UAE has also established military bases abroad, including in Djibouti and Somaliland, expanding its reach beyond its borders.

The author argues that the UAE's growing influence extends beyond the Gulf region, as it actively engages in global affairs. Understanding the UAE's rise and its regional aspirations is crucial for comprehending the evolving dynamics of international politics. The Gulf region is characterised by complex geopolitical rivalries, particularly between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The UAE's rise has added another dimension to these rivalries, as it seeks to balance its relationships with both regional powers while pursuing its own interests. Esfandiary's book delves into the UAE's interactions with Saudi Arabia, Iran, and other Gulf states, shedding light on the intricate web of alliances and rivalries in the region.

Esfandiary's writing style is accessible, making complex political concepts and historical events easily understandable for both experts and general readers. She presents her arguments in a clear and concise manner, supported by a wealth of evidence and primary sources. The book strikes a balance between academic rigour and engaging storytelling, ensuring that readers remain captivated throughout.

While the book is an invaluable resource for anyone seeking to understand the UAE's rise and its impact on the Gulf region, it is worth noting that it primarily focuses on the UAE's perspective. As a result, readers seeking a more balanced analysis of the region might need to supplement this book with additional sources.

In conclusion, "New Order in the Gulf: The Rise of the UAE" is a compelling and illuminating account of the UAE's remarkable journey

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from a modest desert nation to a major regional power. Dina Esfandiary's expertise and meticulous research are evident throughout, offering readers a comprehensive understanding of the UAE's rise and its implications for the Gulf region. This book is a must-read for anyone interested in the Middle Eastern politics, international relations, and evolving dynamics of the Gulf States. ■