Is business the solution to the problems of the Middle East? Some economists and policymakers argue that unleashing the Arab private sector is the key to sustainable growth and more liberal politics. Pete Moore's book is the first to examine, systematically and historically, relations between state authority and elite business representation in the region. By analyzing the cases of Kuwait and Jordan, he considers why organized businesses in Kuwait have been able to coordinate policy reform with state officials, while their Jordanian counterparts have generally failed. The author concludes that unleashing the private sector alone is insufficient to change current political and economic arrangements, and that successful economic adjustment requires successful political adjustment.

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Doing Business in the Middle East

Politics and Economic Crisis in Jordan and Kuwait

Pete W. Moore
University of Miami
For Watson, Ike, and Joe
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The initial inspiration for this study was familial pressure. I come from a large Arab-American family which settled in a small Southern town in the early twentieth century. Throughout my graduate career, well-meaning aunts and uncles continually asked: “Haven’t you finished school yet? When are you going to get a job? Why don’t you go into business for yourself?” Had my Southern Arab-American mother, Jerri Moore, not supported me throughout my education, I would still be facing that grilling. As it turned out, those questions led me to think more broadly about how business actually took place in the Arab Middle East and what role politics played.

This study is based upon several years of field research in Jordan and Kuwait. A Fulbright grant allowed for study in Kuwait, while grants from the Social Science Research Council, the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, and the Inter-University Consortium for Arab and Middle East Studies in Montreal provided funds to conduct research in Jordan.

To begin, I must thank my teachers and advisors. While I was a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, Pat Mayerchak and Wayne Thompson taught me a love of teaching and international affairs. My graduate education in political science and Middle East studies was guided by two of the finest advisors around. It is well known that Edmund Ghareeb is a gentleman and scholar of the highest caliber. Edmund encouraged my interest in the Middle East and guided me through the dangers of Middle East politics in Washington, DC. My advisor at McGill University, Rex Brynen, displayed great patience with an American graduate student who constantly spoke in the first-person collective when referring to the USA and Canada. Through his intellect and work ethic, Rex has institutionalized a critical mass of Middle East specialists and resources in Montreal that make it the center of Middle East studies in Canada. His guidance and insight were crucial to the completion of this book.

I would like to thank several friends and scholars who took the time to read and comment on parts of this study. Jill Crystal, Richard Doner, x
Acknowledgements

and Gregory Gause read the entire manuscript and offered important critiques and guidance. Robert Barr, Benjamin Bishin, Jason Brownlee, Louise Davidson-Schmich, Steven Heydemann, David Kang, Bassel Salloukh, Jillian Schwedler, Kenneth Shadlen, Andrew Shrank, and Marie Joelle Zahar offered invaluable advice on sections of the book and the overall argument. I am very thankful for the research assistance of Maria Silvia Costa at the University of Miami. At Cambridge University Press, Karen Anderson Howes deserves great thanks for her editing of this typescript.

A number of friends in Jordan and Kuwait gave of their time to assist my research and make me feel at home. In Amman, Riad al-Khouri taught me about business from the ground up. Mustafa Hamarneh, Mamdouh Abu Hassan, Dr. Taseer Abdel Jabber, Luay Jadoun, Hamdi Tabba, and Mohammed M. Tijani all assisted my research into business politics in Jordan. I want to thank the entire staff at the American Center of Oriental Research in Amman, in particular Kathy Nimri. I have great memories of my time in Amman due in large part to friends like Rafat Rayyan, Marc Lynch, Eric Thompson, and Jillian Schwedler. In Kuwait City, my effort to understand the politics of business was guided by Dr. Muhammed A. Al-Awadi, Dr. Hassan Johar, Abdulwahab Al-Wazzan, and Jasem K. Al-Sadoun. Mona Farouki and Barton Marcois at the US Embassy in Kuwait could not have been more helpful in managing the Fulbright program. Many of the students at Kuwait University, in particular Zekirisa Alievski and Jasmin Kantaveoic, made my stay there immense fun.

For enduring my ill-tempered behavior during the writing of this book (and beyond) and for supporting me when I was down, my greatest debt is owed to my wife Jennie. This book is dedicated to our next generation.
Note on transliteration and translation

Unless noted otherwise, all translations are by the author. Transliterations are rendered to be consistent and clear and do not adhere to a particular orthographic regime. Names of individuals interviewed are rendered as the names were given. Other historical figures and individual names from primary or secondary sources are rendered to be consistent.