

This is the first work in English to examine the twentieth century economic history of the principal Arab countries of the Middle East (Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States) as well as what is becoming the Palestine National Authority, together with Turkey and Israel. Focusing on the state as an important economic influence, it charts the growth of national income in the countries of the region during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Important trends are explored, including the patterns of colonial economic management, import substitution, the impact of the 1970s oil boom and the present process of liberalization and structural adjustment.

The authors base their inquiry on general questions of political economic theory. What makes an economy grow? Why do some economies grow faster than others? What is the role of the state? And how does growth impact on different social groups in terms of income and welfare?

They contend that what has happened in the Middle East has been largely shaped by the great changes in the global economy produced by two world wars and the two prolonged depressions of the 1930s and the 1970s. The oil boom of the 1970s meant that, for many Arab states, the impact of the second depression was postponed. As a result the pressures for economic reform were experienced much later than in Africa or Latin America.

This book is indispensable to students and others interested in the history and international relations of the Middle East but with little or no background in economics. Its emphasis on the role of the state and its country-by-country treatment of economic history makes this a unique addition to the literature on the Middle East.