Rentier-States and the Development of a Domestic Workforce: The Case of Qatar
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Qatar, like many other Gulf states with abundant natural resources, is a rentier state. As money flows to the people in the form of state-provided welfare and services instead of from the people to the government in the form of taxes, there is a leading theory stating that Qatar’s populations’ political loyalty can be commoditized and purchased. This project investigates the relationship between this theory and Qatar’s desire to increase its strength in productive activity and create domestic state revenues and workforces. In examining how rentier states affect democracy and sustainable development, I clarify common and different rentier state features in Qatar’s government system, and how these features influence the development of a Qatari domestic workforce. These issues are then critically analyzed to compare the observed practice in the rentier state model with theoretical analyses and the results of earlier studies. I use three major research strategies: (1) a quantitative analysis of past welfare provided to Qatari nationals, (2) a qualitative study identifying the citizens’ reactions to such a system and (3) a longitudinal in-depth investigation on the development of Qatar’s labor force before and after the implementation of Vision 2030, and the rise of the new regime. Data have been collected from archives, interviews, newspapers, and published reports including the Arab Opinion Index, the Qatar Labor Survey, and the Arab Barometer. In analyzing the effectiveness and significance of Qatar’s new efforts to harbor a domestic workforce as part of an era of increasingly international business, this study is part of a growing body of research on the reform-minded emir Hamad bin Khalifa’s initiatives designed to implement sustainable development in Qatar; I also provide suggestions for improving Qatar’s labor force concerning its development and sustainability recognizing the possible issue at stake.