

political systems through democratic reforms, which should then lead to less militant forms of Islamism.

Overall, this book does several things quite well. It engages the nonspecialist with a wide variety of examples of the Islamic political experience. It is particularly illustrative of the diversity of Muslim political viewpoints and the contexts in which Islamic identity becomes politicized. Its focus on identity, human rights, and gender issues provides a useful lens through which to examine the author's remarkably diverse cases. However, the case studies ultimately sacrifice some of the benefits of the book's conceptual framework in order to provide descriptive background to the most uniquely compelling contemporary issues in each country or region. As the book progresses, its early arguments fade increasingly into the background and are not systematically integrated into the discussion. For those interested in a conceptual framework for understanding the different political identities and interests of Islamic actors, *Muslims in Global Politics* proves both very useful and thoughtful. For those interested in the dynamics of Islamist political movements and political parties, it has much less to say.

CHRISTOPHER DAVIDSON, *The Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia: From Indifference to Interdependence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010). Pp. 145. \$60.00 cloth.

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Christopher Davidson has written a very timely and incisive book packed with a wealth of information about the increasing multidimensional ties between the Persian Gulf and the Pacific Asia region. In just approximately 100 pages of text, Davidson has managed to capture the complexities of strong linkages emerging between two of the world's most critical regions in the areas of trade, investments, construction, and labor contracts, as well as diplomacy. Buttressed by trade in hydrocarbons, the two regions have a "comprehensive, long-term mutual commitment" that is being further deepened through massive, two-way flows of investment, official state visits, and trade in advanced technologies.

Focusing on the monarchies of the Persian Gulf (Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar, United Arab Emirates [UAE], and Oman) and the three primary Pacific Asia powerhouses of China, Japan, and South Korea, Davidson begins by tracing the evolution of the two regions' relationship since the 1950s and 1960s and especially after the independence of the Persian Gulf states from Britain in the early 1970s. Given its energy needs, Japan took the lead, followed—at first with some hesitation—by China in the 1980s, and finally by South Korea beginning in the 1990s. All three Asian powerhouses have since grown increasingly dependent on imports of Persian Gulf oil and gas. Unlike the United States and Europe, which have tried to diversify their sources of energy imports, Asia has done little to reduce its dependence on the Persian Gulf for its energy needs.

Over the last decade or two, trade in hydrocarbons has been complemented by non-hydrocarbon imports from Pacific Asia to the Persian Gulf, the value of which Davidson calculates at around \$63 billion annually (p. 33). Japan is now the biggest exporter to the Persian Gulf, having overtaken the United States and Germany. Investments between the two regions have also grown exponentially in recent decades and, backed by robust sovereign wealth funds throughout the Persian Gulf and in China, are likely to continue to grow in the coming years. Davidson argues that the setbacks that trade and investment between the two

regions suffered as a result of the 2008 credit crunch are likely to be only temporary and without lasting effect.

The one glaring absence in the relationship between the Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia is in security and military cooperation, with the Gulf Cooperation Council states remaining firmly within the Western orbit. Three reasons underlie this absence, according to Davidson: the Pacific Asian states themselves see no credible alternative in the near future to the Western role in providing security in the Persian Gulf, the Persian Gulf monarchies do not yet see a proven and reliable alternative to the Western security umbrella, and there is “simply still some lingering distrust between the two regions” (p. 71). There have on occasion been some indications of Chinese military cooperation with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, though it is by no means clear how extensive or coordinated these instances of cooperation might be or whether they may in any way supplant deep-seated security arrangements between all of the Arabian peninsula states and the West, especially the United States.

Based on recent and current trends, Davidson predicts that multifaceted cooperation between the Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia is only likely to improve in the coming years. Future areas of cooperation are likely to be in proxy hydrocarbon reserves, whereby Persian Gulf oil and gas are stored in facilities located in China, Japan, or South Korea, as well as in continued infrastructural development and the alternative-energies sector. Most notably, South Korea has already made significant inroads insofar as the region’s moves toward nuclear energy are concerned with its milestone agreement with the UAE to build the Emirates’ first civilian nuclear power plant: “South Korea’s success has undoubtedly signaled to the United States, Britain, and France that it is a serious competitor for contracts in the Persian Gulf, in both the nascent nuclear sector and far beyond” (p. 105).

One of the book’s main strengths is the thorough and in-depth research that has gone into it. The text offers a wealth of new information on various aspects of the relationship between the Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia. Many of the charts and tables, for example, offer invaluable original data from foreign or economic ministry sources in the countries under review. Throughout, moreover, Davidson demonstrates, as he has in his previous publications, the in-depth familiarity that has established him as one of the keenest observers of the Persian Gulf region. All in all, this is a terrific book.

If there is a shortcoming from which the book suffers, it is in its overly descriptive nature. Amid the wealth of data and the thick descriptions offered on the complex and multifaceted relationships between the Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia, the reader is often left wondering what theoretical conclusions can be drawn from the arguments presented. Insofar as the broader study of international relations is concerned, are there any conclusions to be drawn for international relations theory from the growing interdependence of these two key regions? What, if anything, does this tell us about possible shifts in the global center of economic (and perhaps diplomatic) gravity? Do insights offered by neorealism and constructivism figure into this relationship? Similarly, does the nuanced relationship between the Persian Gulf states and their trading partners in the East, on the one hand, and their military protectors in the West, on the other hand, tell us anything about their domestic politics?

Such criticisms should not detract from the overall value of the book as an original contribution that sheds perceptive light on an increasingly important, and steadily deepening, relationship between two of the world’s most important regions. *The Persian Gulf and Pacific Asia* is a must-read for anyone wishing to gain a better understanding of one of the most robust trading relationships in today’s global economy.