

essay is to offer a condensed introduction to, and précis of, the main arguments, developments and theories on a specific subject matter. By offering a self-contained analysis on a specific area, it allows one to gain a deeper understanding on a breadth of topics, ranging from the politics of oil, the role of women in politics, the influence of Islam and the rise of China. The result is a collection into which the reader can dip in and out, or use to focus on an area of interest. For those wanting to gain a holistic insight into African politics, this is an important text to read.

The *Routledge Handbook of African Politics* is a valuable addition to the existing literature on African politics. The sheer scope and accessibility of the topics covered in this collection is impressive, which ensures that this handbook on Africa is the most complete book of its kind currently available.

Matthew Graham  
(University of Dundee)

**Power and Politics in the Persian Gulf Monarchies** by **Christopher Davidson (ed.)**. London: Hurst, 2011. 203pp., £17.99, ISBN 978 1 84904 121 8

This book provides a comprehensive overview of each member state of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). The text outlines each nation's complex history, political structure and demographic makeup. Moreover, there is a thorough evaluation of each nation's economic performance and main foreign policy objectives and challenges. Of particular value are the sections that focus on each state's future prospects, especially given the tumultuous events of the Arab Spring.

In terms of domestic politics, the study demonstrates that a wide array of different, and sometimes competing, actors are involved in the governance of each state. Further to this, it is shown that in each state the traditional elites are embracing elements of modernisation – particularly in the economic realm – while simultaneously resisting other aspects, especially with regard to social change. As a result, the study posits that in future the existing political structures in each state are likely to be challenged, with Bahrain considered the most vulnerable due to its disenfranchised Shia majority ruled by an oppressive Sunni elite.

Economically, the study details the varying extents to which the GCC members have sought to diversify their economies in preparation for their post-oil

futures. A mixed picture is presented, with the United Arab Emirates – particularly Dubai – deemed the most willing to embrace economic diversification, while other GCC members, such as Saudi Arabia, are revealed to have been relatively slow in developing other industries.

With regard to foreign policy, the book demonstrates that the smaller GCC states have historically sought an external security guarantor – traditionally Britain, today the United States – against Iran and Iraq. In analysing the foreign policies of the GCC states, the study demonstrates significant nuance and understanding. Whereas the GCC is often portrayed as an anti-Iranian bloc, a much more complicated picture is presented. Saudi Arabia and Bahrain are shown to be the most suspicious of Iranian intentions, while it is argued that other GCC member states, particularly Oman, enjoy relatively positive relations with Tehran. In addition, the study demonstrates how Qatar is increasingly using its vast energy reserves to finance an active foreign policy that challenges Saudi Arabia's long-held dominance in GCC foreign policy making.

Overall, this is an important book for anyone wishing to understand the critical internal and external opportunities and challenges facing the states of the GCC. The book is thorough, balanced and well-written, and makes a worthwhile contribution to the existing literature.

Stephen Ellis  
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**External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960–1990** by **Stephen Ellis**. London: Hurst, 2012. 384pp., £20.00, ISBN 978 1 84904 262 8

In *External Mission: The ANC in Exile, 1960–1990* Stephen Ellis offers a devastating critique of the 'official' history of the African National Congress by deconstructing the myths surrounding the movement, and revealing the intriguing and fractious nature of its liberation struggle. In this powerful book, based on a wide range of new sources, including recently released files from the Chinese government and the East German security service the Stasi, Ellis provides a fresh insight and analysis into the complex and fascinating past of the ANC.

A key theme of the book is to illustrate how the South African Communist Party (SACP) managed to