

tillating reformist enterprise; and that domestic squabbles often distort Iranian foreign policy and deprive the state of a coherent and predictable approach to the international community. Although conveniently packaged, the book's succinct narrative fails to adjust or revise our fundamental understanding of Iran. Still, the effort is noteworthy and the evidence marshalled to support the thesis impressive. All in all, the book is an important contribution to understanding a country that defies easy classification.

Power and Politics in the Persian Gulf Monarchies

Christopher Davidson, ed. London: C. Hurst & Co., 2012.

£17.99/\$25.00. 203 pp.

The monarchies of the Persian Gulf have been the subject of much focus in recent months. From the spectre of Iran's nuclear danger to Saudi Arabia's firm stance against reform in its immediate neighbourhood, these countries are often viewed through the prism of power politics. Such calculations are easy to understand. Given the Gulf's geopolitical position, its ample oil reserves and the dangers of proliferation and instability lurking in Iran and Iraq, it is easy to focus on the strategic dilemmas of these states, as opposed to their inner workings. The questions that routinely preoccupy observers of Gulf states concern whether they may follow suit and obtain their own bomb should Iran cross the nuclear threshold; how they would respond to a rekindling of the sectarian civil war in Iraq; and the evolving nature of their relationship with the United States. Seldom is attention paid to the evolution of state structures, attempts at economic diversification or efforts to deal with the demographic bulge that has preoccupied the rulers of these unique city-states.

Christopher Davidson has sought to ameliorate our narrow focus by assembling a series of essays that take into account the history, political evolution and internal struggles of these countries. The essays all follow a rather predictable, though thoughtful, format, first addressing the nature of state formation and the ruling elite, then the peculiar political economy of these states, and finally their security and foreign-policy imperatives. The essay on Saudi Arabia is particularly illuminating, as the fortunes of the House of Saud are likely to condition the political trajectory of its monarchical counterparts. This is not to suggest that the book is Saudi-centric, as each of the sheikdoms is given its due and assessed on its own historical terms. Moreover, the essays are crafted to appeal to the general reader while adhering to scholarly standards.

In the end, anyone wishing to transcend headlines, with their sensationalistic coverage of the ebbs and flows of the oil market and the menacing nature of the Iranian threat, would be wise to read this thoughtful and informative book. All

told, it represents an important contribution to the ongoing discussion on the politics of the Persian Gulf.

War, Conflict and the Military

H.R. McMaster

The Evolution of Operational Art: From Napoleon to the Present

John Andreas Olsen and Martin van Creveld, eds. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010. £53.00/\$99.00. 273 pp.

As Sir Michael Howard observes in his foreword, ‘Strategy is about thinking and planning. Operations are about doing. Hence the phrase “operational art”’ (p. ix). The rest of this volume is devoted to explaining the development of operational art in various countries from the eighteenth century to the present. The first three essays cover Napoleonic operational warfare, Prussian–German operational art from the time of Frederick the Great to the Second World War, and Tsarist–Soviet operational art from the mid-nineteenth to the late-twentieth centuries. The final four chapters examine operational art in Britain, the United States, Israel and China. The particular value of the book lies in the high quality of the essays and the way they combine theory and practical historical experience; indeed, they seem particularly relevant to contemporary conflicts as they highlight the important role that operational art plays in connecting military campaigns to political, diplomatic and development efforts, all of which, ideally, should aim to achieve policy goals and objectives. Moreover, as militaries around the world face increasing fiscal pressure, it is vital that resource-constrained decisions are grounded in a clear understanding of operational art and its role in connecting the application of military force to the accomplishment of favourable outcomes in future armed conflict.

This book will appeal to a variety of readers. Those responsible for military readiness and modernisation might draw on it to distil essential elements of effectiveness in war. Martin van Creveld’s essay on ‘Napoleon and the Dawn of Operational Warfare’ argues for attention to organisational design; according to him, Napoleon’s *corps d’armée* system ‘burst on an unsuspecting world’ by delivering victories largely through superior logistics and command and control (p. 30). Dennis Showalter emphasises the growing importance of command and control in his chapter on Prussian–German operational art, observing that, in