

undoubtedly better alternatives for students seeking to learn about the modern history of the Arab state.

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Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success by **Christopher M. Davidson**. London: Hurst, 2008. 376pp., £25.00, ISBN 978 1 85065 888 7

This book can be considered the first critical study to be published on Dubai. Christopher Davidson's work is a fascinating and highly insightful study that examines the history, politics and economic development of Dubai in the era before and after the establishment of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in 1971. It highlights several key problems that lie beneath Dubai's glittering facades (p. 2), where it uncovers some 'hidden facts'.

The book is divided into eight chapters, where each one is a study in its own right. Following a detailed historical overview of Dubai's origins in chapter 1, the author examines how the spread of Arab nationalism by expatriates in Dubai became the focal point of opposition to British rule in the lower Gulf (now UAE) (p. 39). In chapters 3 and 4 he highlights the economic development of Dubai before and after the inception of the UAE in 1971. Dubai's current economy depends, to a great extent, on light manufacturing, foreign direct investment-free zones, luxury tourism and real estate. In chapter 5 Davidson then explores how Dubai has managed to stay intact and overcome the 'sheikh's dilemma' of pursuing economic reform without succumbing to meaningful political reform (p. 137).

Chapter 7 discusses Dubai in the wider context of the UAE federation. Davidson argues that despite the emirate's ability to survive on its own under the umbrella of external support, the federation of the United Arab Emirates provides it with much-needed collective security. Furthermore, he demonstrates that Dubai is now beginning to drift further away from the federal model as it aspires to become a postmodern city state that is capable of addressing its own development needs (p. 219). However, he goes further by investigating in detail the internal problems of the other emirates. In the last chapter the author analyses the internal and external threats faced by Dubai. He assesses the emirate's defensive capability within the context of Lawson, G. (2008) 'A Realistic Utopia? Nancy Fraser, the Abu Dhabi-led UAE armed forces, and looks at the emirate's historical

and contemporary role as a hub for criminal organisation and its relationship with various terrorist groups.

Davidson tries to offer an alternative analysis and examination of Dubai by providing some unfamiliar facts. Unfortunately, there are also some inaccurate statements, information and outdated figures (for example see p. 149, p. 152, p. 224). However, the book is an excellent investigation of Dubai's political and economic aspects. Davidson's study will be of benefit for advanced undergraduate and research students, as well as academics and practitioners interested in the economics and politics of the Gulf, as it is accessible, well written and informative.

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Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty by **Ali Gheissari and Vali Nasr**. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. 214pp., £14.99, ISBN 0 19 518967 1

Democracy in Iran: History and the Quest for Liberty is an insightful historiography of democratisation in Iran from the 1906 Constitutional Revolution to the present day. It offers an inspiring analytical narrative of the emergence of the modern state which focuses, in particular, on the interaction between the politics of state building and democracy, as well as on the unique role of ideologies in creating state institutions and the implications for democratic transition/consolidation.

The purpose of the book is to trace the ongoing debate over the need to balance democracy promotion with the evolution of the state in the changing ideological context of nationalism, developmentalism, Marxism, anti-imperialism, Islamism and liberalism over the course of the last hundred years. The modern state in Iran was shaped by the objectives and aspirations of the Constitutional Revolution: its concern to restrain the monarchy, establish the rule of law (constitution) and further centralise power. It endorsed both democratisation and state building, making it possible for future regimes to pursue modernisation and developmentalism. However, the collectivist ideologies that became incorporated into state policies were not necessarily amenable to pluralistic democracy and competed with democratic values in the public sphere. The resulting societal and state processes have nevertheless allowed for democratic norms and practices to take root, generating