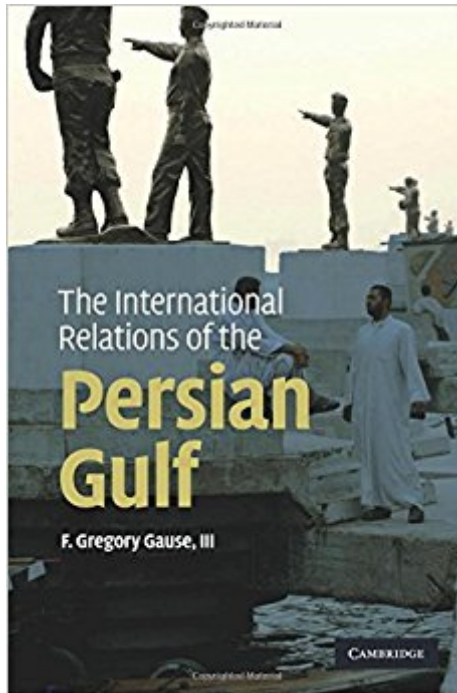




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The International Relations Of The Persian Gulf



Synopsis

Gregory Gause's masterful book is the first to offer a comprehensive account of the international politics in the Persian Gulf across nearly four decades. The story begins in 1971 when Great Britain ended its protectorate relations with the smaller states of the lower Gulf. It traces developments in the region from the oil 'revolution' of 1973-4 through the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf war of 1990-1 to the toppling of Saddam Hussein in the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, bringing the story of Gulf regional politics up to 2008. The book highlights transnational identity issues, regime security and the politics of the world oil market, and charts the changing mix of interests and ambitions driving American policy. The author brings his experience as a scholar and commentator on the Gulf to this riveting account of one of the most politically volatile regions on earth.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[Gause's] organizing theme is the concern of all Persian Gulf states, great and small, for regime security, but he also treat other matters, from the role of oil to transnational issues....[With] his deep knowledge of the region, careful scholarship, and judicious attitude, Gause offers consistently sound interpretations." L. Carl Brown, *Foreign Affairs*"The most authoritative account to date of the tumultuous events that marked the transition from British to American predominance in the Persian Gulf. Gause's meticulous reconstruction of regional political interactions illuminates and informs, while gently puncturing a handful of myths that have sprouted during the past half century to explain

the many twists and turns of revolution, war and struggles for power in one of the most turbulent regions in the world." Gary Sick, Senior Research Scholar and Director of the Gulf/2000 research project on the Persian Gulf at Columbia University"Finally a book on the recent crises of the Middle East that is neither sensationalist nor ideologically driven. Gause instead tries to inform and explain, placing events such as the Iranian revolution and Iraq's various wars in a regional security context. Foreign policy of the Gulf states is more about managing domestic vulnerabilities than rational pursuit of national interests. The reader gets just enough theory to challenge some conventional assumptions, and lots of strong narrative to make sense of the events being discussed. Teachers, students and general readers will welcome this excellent book." William B. Quandt, University of Virginia

Gregory Gause's book offers a comprehensive account of the international politics in the Persian Gulf across nearly four decades. It traces developments from the oil 'revolution' through the Iranian revolution, the Iran-Iraq war and the Gulf war to the toppling of Saddam Hussein in the American-led invasion of Iraq.

This trim and functional book is about a region that (before it was gripped by modern history) might be called picturesque. Until the twentieth century, the Persian Gulf was a region of pearl-fishing and piracy. Along its Arab shore were small sheikhdoms, none big enough to control all the others. Along its Persian shore were small cities, likewise none big enough to control the others. The indigenous pattern of sporadic contention over resources and political systems has continued to this day but is now on an enormous scale. In the 19th century the British saw the Gulf as a link to their great prize, India. They drove other Europeans out and by 1853 had established a system that protected sheikhs from pirates and tribal bands from the interior of the Arabian Peninsula while imposing few controls on them. In 1971 the British departed, their budget no longer adequate to maintain an overseas presence. (At least one sheikh was willing to support their continued presence by paying for it himself but the British would have none of it.) A new defense policy from the US replaced the British role. Iran and Saudi Arabia were the twin pillars. Iran, the senior pillar by virtue of size, could procure large amounts of weapons by means of its oil revenue. The seventies were a relatively peaceful period in the Gulf. With the Revolution in Iran, trans-border conflicts broke out almost immediately. There were riots among the Shiites in the shrine cities of Iraq, an assassination attempt on the Iraq minister Tariq Aziz, and rioting among Shiites in Saudi Arabia. Iran appointed "representatives" (actually functioning as agitators) to Shi'i communities in

Bahrain and Kuwait. There were Iranian broadcasts about "exporting" Islamic revolution over the region. The takeover of the American embassy in Tehran was a cue to the more extreme Islamist elements. "With the victory of the more radical forces around Khomeini there was a marked turn in Iranian government rhetoric against the Baathist regime." (p.61) About this time (1981) the Saudis consolidated their position among the other monarchies by forming the Gulf Cooperation Council. The Iran-Iraq war was Saddam Hussein's responsibility, but the author states the deeper cause: "... a threat on the domestic stability of all the neighboring Arab states." The war was really an attempt by Iraq to assert its leadership in the face of Iranian subversion. The length of the war and the number of casualties indicates the importance of this conflict that to an outsider might seem gratuitous. After the end of the war, Saddam tried to re-assert leadership by forming the "Arab Cooperation Council" (ACC), but the members he was able to enlist turned out to be unwilling to follow his initiatives. The US had responded to the collapse of one of the "twin pillars" by assuming an expanded military presence in the Gulf. This was the "Carter Doctrine": additional bases in Arabia and the Gulf states, and a Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force with elements from all the military services that could be deployed without the use of forward bases. (This was an essential force in a series of engagements to protect Gulf shipping, narrated in "The Twilight War" by David Crist.) The author offers a number of explanations why Saddam, after the inconclusive war with Iran, turned to war again with the Kuwait invasion. For one thing, the ineffectiveness of the ACC had become clear. For another, "Domestic discontent was rising, evidenced by a number of coup attempts against himthe fall of the Soviet empire in 1989 ended the bipolar international system in which he had successfully played and brought down East European regimes which were not dissimilar to his own. Voices in Israel, Europe, and the United States were calling greater attention to Iraq's efforts to attain nuclear and other non-conventional weapons and to Saddam's human rights abuses." (p. 90) Other factors such as a collapse in oil prices in 1990 also played their part in prompting Saddam to war, but all the same his behavior seems irrational. Following the First Gulf War there was an Iraqi intifada but it gained no assistance from the US. Washington feared that Iran would benefit from the upheaval and did nothing to encourage it. The author covers the period from 9/11 to the date of writing (mid-2009) with even greater detail than he covers the period from 1971 to 9/11. Because the later period is such recent history, it was not quite so interesting to me. But with a talent for synopsis the central issue is clear: "... [Saddam] made the decision during the early to mid-1990s to suspend his nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons programs. He wanted to maintain the infrastructure for such programs, so he would have the option to renew them if circumstances

changed, but the combination of international pressures and intrusive weapons inspections led Saddam to believe he had to suspend [i.e., dismantle] the programs themselves." The Coalition ended up being embarrassed by a failed search for weapons rather than a dazzling military success. The war on terror is obsessively mental. Locating the bombs and the individuals behind them and their schemes are what counts. Cyberwarfare is similar. Victory is for the person with the best knowledge of centrifuges, encryption keys, and other "technical details". The backdrop to anti-terror efforts is the boredom of combing through everything from recently vacated hotel rooms to thumbnail drives in search of significance. Usually the searches are inconclusive. There is no large-scale "theatre of war" and no satisfying conclusion because the enemy is locked in a fight against you to judgment day. There is only one country, Israel, whose population is involved in a terror war, but the European population may be next. Sometimes I wonder how the Westerners who sign petitions for "Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions" would cope with an intensive terror war directed against them.

THE AUTHOR F. Gregory Gause, III is the John H. Lindsey '44 Chair, professor of international affairs and head of the International Affairs Department at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University. He also is a non-resident senior fellow at the Brookings Doha Center. He is the author of three books and numerous articles on the politics of the Middle East, with a particular focus on the Arabian Peninsula and the Persian Gulf. He was previously on the faculties of the University of Vermont (1995-2014) and Columbia University (1987-1995) and was Fellow for Arab and Islamic Studies at the Council on Foreign Relations in New York (1993-1994). During the 2009-10 academic year he was Kuwait Foundation Visiting Professor of International Affairs at the Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. In spring 2009 he was a Fulbright Scholar at the American University in Kuwait. In spring 2010 he was a research fellow at the King Faisal Center for Islamic Studies and Research in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

THE REVIEW "The International Relations of the Persian Gulf" written by distinguished professor F. Gregory Gause, III of international affairs and head of the International Affairs Department at the Bush School of Government and Public Service, Texas A&M University, is a book that will appeal to both laymen as well as scholars. It will appeal to the layman because it is well written and contains a lot of facts and it will be read by scholars because what the book reveals is only ten percent of the huge undisclosed "iceberg of knowledge" that is needed to create such a brilliant gem of wisdom. Professor Gause takes the reader on a guided tour where he explains the Persian Gulf as a security region; he continues to broaden the picture by explaining the emergence of the Gulf

regional system from 1971-1978; the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq-Iran war. The reader will get detailed insight into the Gulf War and the following years, the impact of 9/11 and the Iraq War as well as thoughts about the future of the Persian Gulf. Professor Gause sums up his book by explaining American decision making with regards to the Iraq War and concludes with some "scratches on the surface" about war and alliances in the Persian Gulf. The book's title "The International Relations of the Persian Gulf" seems to reveal that the author has knowingly chosen to emphasize the historic correct labeling of the area. Historically the Gulf is called the Persian Gulf, but as seen from the Arab side of the Gulf today it is always named the Arabian Gulf. A minor detail perhaps, but one that brings together two completely different point of views with regards to this particular geographical and political area. The Gulf, that is all the water from Iraq in the North to the Oman Sea in the South, means different things to different people. Point of view and perspective are two guide-lines when reading this book. Undoubtedly being one of the sharpest written and thematically condensed literary works on the subject today from a writer that I understand has also traveled extensively in the Gulf-area, the reader ought to bear in mind the revealing words of the cousin and son-in-law of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad, Ali Ibn-Abu-Talib, the fourth Caliph of the Muslims: "He who has Thousand Friends has not a Friend to Spare." Ali ruled over the Rashidun Caliphate from 656AD to 661AD. Anyone can look up in Google and see for himself how vast geographically that "friendship based" Caliphate was. Am I implying something here? Yes, in fact there has been Empires who on several times in the history have understood more about how to "govern" the Gulf area than what modern-day politicians has; the Ancient Persian Sassanian culture, for instance, which lasted from 224BC till 636AD covered both sides of the Gulf of what is today Oman, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan and a portion of Western India. Not to forget the birth of Islam 500AD. It stretched through Egypt, Libya and Algeria to Spain. Although our times are the most technical advanced in the history of mankind, our reasoning can sometimes be questioned; was it right to go to war on Iraq on totally falsified premises? Is it right and proper that Iran might very well suffer the same fate? And what country will be next in line? Shouldn't the United States start to make more friends in the region, including Iran, or will war-mongering remain as the highest expression of the Western Culture? The book surprisingly enough does not concern itself with good or bad, right or wrong, moral or immoral, lawful or not lawful. It is nowhere written that an historian cannot have an opinion about these subjects. The U.S. Military operated Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and the scandal that followed expose a darker, dehumanizing side within the military system. I therefore view the absence of initiative to address these issues as the book's weakest structural point. Many people

today are of the opinion that the United States should, instead of criticizing other countries and punish them with sanctions, look into its own, domestic problems first. In 1961 Erich Fromm, the German Jewish social psychologist who lived and worked as a psychologist, philosopher and writer in Mexico and in the United States, published "May man Prevail? An Inquiry into the Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy" in which he analyzed the Cold War noting that "both countries, the United States and the Soviet Union, used the same projections to experience the other as an enemy and arguing for an end to this dangerous confrontation. It is in many ways analog to the situation in the Gulf-region of today, and the ongoing escalating confrontation between NATO and Russia over Ukraine. To be quite honest, I had expected from a man the caliber of professor Gregory Gause to have included at least some of the same thoughts in his other-vice excellent book. Also I would have preferred to read a bit more "temperament" towards the end. The book is well written, no doubt about that, but academically "dry" and somewhat "lifeless". A much stronger emphasis on ethnic "values" would be desirable, and open up a chapter dedicated to creating "dialog and common ground" in the area would cap the theme like a roof on a house. A sharper search-light on "the international responsibility for" and pointing out a "call to action", to paraphrase President Barack Obama's Nobel lecture in Oslo in 2009. Understandably, there is a limit to how much material the author and the publisher deem relevant to put between two covers. Distinguished Professor Gregory Gauss's five star book is highly recommendable reading. Four detailed Geographical maps are supportive to the text and three Tables explains the Oil Revenues of the Gulf states, 1969-1978; nominal and real oil prices, 1974-1981 and the result of the Iraqi election of 2005.

THE BOOK REVIEWER

The writer of this review was employed by IBM in the early 1970's. He continued to work for Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) which is an American oil company with operations in the United States as well as in Indonesia, the North Sea, and the South China Sea. The writer has his own company working as consultant to large energy companies. He spent five years, from 1998-2003 in the Persian Gulf creating dialog and common ground on the highest level with the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Peoples Republic of China and Norway on behalf of the three-national consortium mapping the entire seabed of the Gulf on the Iranian side. The project was called Persian Carpet 2000 (PC2000) and stretched from north of the Persian Gulf from the sea border with Iraq, all the way to the Oman Sea. At the time it was the world's largest 2D seismic project. He worked in Tehran and traveled by car from the refinery city Abadan, Bandar-e Imam Khomeini, Mah-Shahr in Khuzestan province. Then further on to Hendyjan and finally to Busher at the coast. Dubai, with its huge deep water Jebel Ali Port, was also the operational center for this part of the Gulf, though the neighboring state Sharjah also played an important role. He flew to the Iranian

island of Kish, forty minutes flying time from Dubai. There he visited the supply base of the French oil giant TOTAL and made filmed interview. He attended two conferences held at the University of Kish. Late, the writer stayed on board, for shorter or longer period of time, the three Chinese, two Norwegian and one Iranian vessel, thus monitoring progress of deep water seismic shooting, shallow water seismic shooting and shooting in the Transition Zone One, directly on the beach at Hendyjan. There was top performances of all the seismic vessels, trawling the Iranian waters in a 2Km by 2Km dense grid, North to South and east to West. The project was a huge success with respect to the quality of the seismic data, which, after test processing on board the Chinese mother ship Bin Hai 504, would be further finalized in the CRAY number cruncher at the Imperial College, Royal School of Mines in London where clients would come and view the data as maps on computer screens. The seismic data were then sold to oil companies. They in turn, would need them if they were to drill on the Iranian side of the Persian Gulf after Iran had released new search "blocks". Please see the pictures.

I have used this as a college text several times now. It is one of the best, most succinct books on the region. I wish Gause and Cambridge would release a second edition.

I have not completed the book, but thus far I find it to be a well-written account of the international politics of the region.

product was as described.

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