

1988

The Persian Gulf and the West: The Dilemmas of Security

Franklin D. Julian

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Recommended Citation

Julian, Franklin D. (1988) "The Persian Gulf and the West: The Dilemmas of Security," *Naval War College Review*: Vol. 41 : No. 3 , Article 25.

Available at: <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol41/iss3/25>

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Rather, it is a history of Navy-Marine operations and, as such, draws no conclusions.

DAVID CLARK
Captain, U.S. Navy

Kupchan, Charles. *The Persian Gulf and the West: The Dilemmas of Security*. Winchester, Mass.: Allen & Unwin, 1987. 254 pp. \$39.95

Charles Kupchan contends that in the postwar era the most vociferous and divisive debates about national security in the West have focused on the Third World, not on Europe. He points out that it is difficult to identify those geographic areas on the periphery that are worth the effort of doing battle. Here, because of the strategic value of its oil reserves, the author has focused on the Persian Gulf region. Regional anti-Western and anticolonial sentiment, endemic conflict among local states, and the relationship between the Gulf and Arab-Israeli dispute have repeatedly threatened to throw the region into turmoil.

Historically, the interests of the United States were established between the end of World War II and 1973—we sought to contain Soviet advances in the region, we supported the security of Israel, and the oil flowed freely. However, after the 1973 war, the United States and the Western bloc were faced with the possible cutoff of Arab oil. Still, our policy toward the Arab states saw little change until the Iranian

revolution and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Both events raised America's consciousness of the importance of the region and its strategic vulnerability. The Carter Doctrine marked not only a change in U.S. security policy toward the Gulf, but brought the region within our sphere of "vital interests."

The Rapid Deployment Force came into being as a means of fulfilling the deterrence needs of the Gulf. It was an innovative and tailored plan designed to meet emerging needs in the face of an imbalance of forces. It established an American commitment to use force in defense of vital U.S. interests and it forced the Western Allies in Europe to recognize an "out-of-area" problem.

Kupchan concludes that NATO is not prepared to adequately address threats outside the NATO area, but he does point to some measure of success in the Gulf. Despite Washington's preoccupation with global concerns, the United States was able to react to Middle East developments with uncharacteristic sensitivity to interregional considerations. However, he does point out that U.S. and Western interests in the region will remain vulnerable until we are able to eliminate our dependence on Persian Gulf oil, a matter that is not likely to come to pass in an oil-dependent economy.

FRANKLIN D. JULIAN
Captain, U.S. Navy
