

Journal of American Studies, 44 (2010), e26. doi:10.1017/S0021875810000575

Tore T. Petersen, *Richard Nixon, Great Britain and the Anglo-American Alignment in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula – Making Allies out of Clients* (Brighton: Academic Press, 2009, \$79.95). Pp. 172. ISBN 978 1 84519 277 8.

This is a timely study of UK and US policymaking in the early 1970s with regard to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Peninsula during Britain's withdrawal. There followed an attempt to safeguard Western security interests and maintain and strengthen economic cooperation. This is an interesting area, not yet covered in great detail in the historiography, and the author makes the most of recently declassified files to show the intricate, delicate and not so delicate transition of the Arab and Persian Gulf States from "clients to allies." The book is judiciously researched and makes a number of revealing insights into affairs. The countries in question did not always act as independently as might be assumed despite nationalist pride, finding it difficult to cast off a structural dependency on the UK and the US, particularly in the security and economic fields.

Petersen looks closely at the Libyan and Iranian nationalization of oil interests and why (in part) the US and the UK acquiesced in these moves (much to the chagrin of the oil companies), beginning the significant shift in power between producer countries – oil companies – and consuming nations that was well in motion by the "oil shocks" of 1973. One is struck by the resigned, uncritical response adopted by the US and the UK, and in the US administration's case, a facilitating approach, partly for unfettered access and the overwhelming desire to benefit via trade and investment through the increased revenues, not least in huge arms sales. Iran soon became one of the world's largest arms buyers, with the US balance of payments being the main beneficiary. This development also fit the purpose of turning these clients into nominally independent regional allies by arming them to resist any local radical or Soviet-directed encroachment. Throughout there was much tacit Anglo-American cooperation and agreement over strategic goals. Also covered in detail is the covert British involvement in fighting the Dhofar rebellion in Oman between 1970 and 1975.

Of special recommendation are the descriptions of the UAE's formation and the trouble, largely made by the Iranian shah, over the sovereignty of the islands of Abu Musa and Tunbs and the Buiraiyma Oasis, nominally claimed by Saudi Arabia. Britain was forced into very delicate diplomatic manoeuvres to avoid taking on commitments to defend the islands whilst at the same time not alienating the Saudis or Iranians in order that withdrawals were carried out smoothly and in a way that maximized future economic cooperation. Petersen states that the Labour Party was committed due to practical and ideological reasons to wind up Britain's overseas commitments; however, whilst this is part of the story, some other explanations of the debates which took place and the often contradictory nature of Labour's rhetoric and actions would have been useful. In addition, there could have been more said on the differences between the State Department and the White House, greater exposition of the Middle East's place in US international strategy and more on the reactions to the oil nationalizations, such as the studies on a potential energy crisis and need for debate with allies which took place within the US administration prior

to the 1973 shocks. The conclusion could also be more reflective of the issues raised in the content and how policy affected the US in the medium to long term thereafter. Nevertheless, overall this is a very useful and engrossing contribution to the literature on the period.

University of Aberdeen

ALEX SPELLING