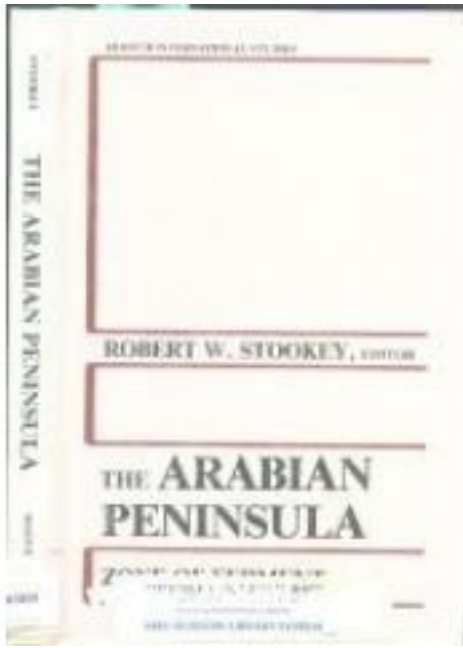


The Arabian Peninsula



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出版者:

出版时间:

装帧:

isbn:9780817978723

Considering its economic and strategic significance for our national interests the Arabian Peninsula is not well known to the general public Media report and comment are at best sporadic and usually intensify only at moments of international tension when American interests appear to be in jeopardy The public tends to regard the Arabs and Islam their predominant religion as backward morally deficient and as a threatening both economically and politically to the industrialized democracies This perception naturally colors the popular interpretation of news and other discussions of the region The question is not one of deliberately distorted reporting our journalists sent to the area are mostly competent and conscientious However since access to these countries is difficult broad and sustained coverage is impractical Editorial conceptions of what

constitutes a good news story add a further

 element of selectivity
Understanding the societies of the Arabian Peninsula

 requires an intimate acquaintance that relatively few outsiders have the oppor

 tunity or the inclination to acquire

 Since the days of our founding fathers
Americans have assumed that the

 principles on which our nation's political institutions are based are universally

 and eternally applicable
We have become convinced that if our manner of

 conducting public affairs were faithfully copied everywhere
the common

 aspiration of all humanity toward peace
material progress
justice
and civil

 liberty would be realized throughout the World
We tend to judge another

 society according to its government's resemblance to our own
We overlook

 the fact that our nation's principles evolved within a tradition of thought

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