
Arab Petro-Politics

By Abdulaziz al-Sowayegh

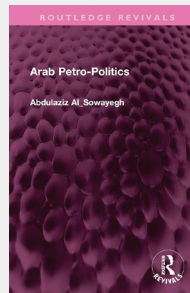
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Reviewed by Kemal Gökçay, Atatürk University

In his book *Arab Petro-Politics*, first published in 1984, Abdulaziz al-Sowayegh argues that oil is significant to the Arab world both as a means of economic development and as an element of political influence. The most important reason for the new edition to be published in 2023 is the opportunities for, and limitations on, the use of oil power in the context of the present world oil market and the potential threat to oil power posed by alternative energy sources.

Abdulaziz al-Sowayegh, an academic, bureaucrat, and deputy minister of Saudi Arabia, discusses the Middle East policy from a broad perspective concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinian cause, and oil. The author's background allows him to evaluate the Middle East from economic, political, and strategic perspectives.

Using a wide range of sources (such as oil-producing countries and their production capacities, oil companies, oil-importing countries, and import rates), the author has written an in-depth analysis of the situation of oil-producing countries and oil-exporting Western countries. The author demonstrates that oil has changed political and economic structures and policies in the Middle East, significantly affecting political arrangements both in the region and among the world's major powers. After understanding the economic importance of oil, the Arabs (primarily



ily Saudi Arabia and Kuwait) realized that it could also be used as a political weapon in the Arab-Israeli conflict and tried to use this instrument more effectively with the establishment of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC). The creation of OPEC in 1960 was the first attempt by the governments of oil-producing countries to organize themselves collectively. Later, an organization consisting only of Arabs was established in 1968: the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC).

According to the author, the Palestinian question is the fundamental cause of oil being used as a political instrument. The creation of Israel in Palestine usurped what is to the Arabs an integral part of the Arab world and encouraged Arab statesmen to band together in the face of common threats. As the author underlines, in 1948, 1956, and 1967, during the Six-Day War, the Arabs tried many times to use their ultimate weapon, but their attempts were thwarted by the hard economic and political rationale of the time.

The oil crisis in 1973 and the Palestinian cause have been directly linked since the day the countries –especially the Saudis– realized the strategic importance of oil as their primary political tool. Based on this perspective, nationalization, like other forms of action, is directed towards one political objective –the liberation of Palestine. With nationalization,

the West European nations, whose economies depended largely on Middle East oil and oil products, sensed an immediate threat to the security of their sea-borne commerce. This is because industrialized countries, especially the U.S. and European countries, needed to buy oil, and the Arabs needed to sell oil. Nevertheless, the author underlines that the West needs Arab oil much more urgently than the Arabs need to sell it to the West.

The author mainly emphasizes that with the realization of the political power of oil, as well as its economic power, the Arabs began to use oil as a vital weapon against the Western states that supported Israel in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian cause has been the primary factor determining the policies of Arabs, both individually and collectively, against both oil companies and Western states.

The Middle East had become the largest pool of oil in the world by the end of the Second World War. Moreover, by the early 1970s, oil had become not only the region's most successful commercial commodity, but also the origin of its political strength. As the author emphasizes, the Arabs tried to use the oil weapon before the war in 1973, but they used the power of oil as an instrument of Arab strategy for the first time in 1973. At the time, the oil weapon represented a significant challenge to Western countries' attitudes towards the Arab-Israeli dispute. The oil war was fought on three fronts: reduced oil production, embargoes, and steep rises in oil prices. A fourth front could also be added –the nationalization of foreign oil companies such as ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia.

Considering the nationalization of foreign oil companies such as ARAMCO in Saudi Arabia alongside the American and world energy dependency, it significantly influenced U.S.

policy toward the Middle East. With foreign oil constituting 41 percent of domestic availability and Arab oil accounting for about 47 percent of total imports, the U.S. could no longer ignore its increasing dependence on the Arab world for the bulk of its oil requirements. The situation was more drastic for Europe as a whole, with oil imports constituting over 90 percent of domestic European availability and dependence on Arab sources for over 70 percent of total imports. On the other hand, as the author rightly points out, using oil as a weapon could not be permanent. The Arab world's dependence on the industrialized countries of the West stems from a shared community of interests, with the Arabs seeking industry and technology, while the West pursues access to oil, finance, and markets.

In his book, in which he discusses the developments from the establishment of the State of Israel to 1984, the author analyzes in detail the use of oil, the most significant power the Arabs have, as a deterrent weapon against the Western states that support Israel. All in all, this book is an important historical document and a reference work for scholars and researchers about the international oil economy, Middle East politics and Middle Eastern history.

Arab Petro-Politics, which is a historical reference source, has not been updated or expanded since its first publication in 1984 until this new 2023 edition. In this context, the only criticism can be said that the book was not updated in subsequent editions. The argument expressed by the author that “the Palestine issue is decisive in the policies of Arab states” (p. 51) has begun to change in recent years. Expanding new editions, especially considering the post-1990 period (the post-Cold War period) would have made the book much more valuable for researchers and aca-

demics studying the Middle East. In present times, the Arab states' utilization of oil as a weapon in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has waned in significance. Meanwhile, Israel con-

tinues to carry out attacks against Palestine, largely without substantial reactions from the Arab states, actions that some perceive as amounting to genocide.

The EU, NATO, and the Libya Conflict: Anatomy of a Failure

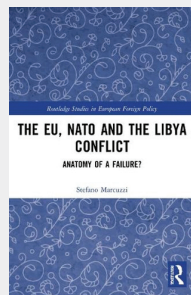
By Stefano Marcuzzi

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Reviewed by Fuat Emir Şefkatli, National Defence University

In *The EU, NATO, and The Libya Conflict: Anatomy of a Failure*, Stefano Marcuzzi offers a well-researched and comprehensive analysis of the international intervention in Libya, focusing on the roles played by the European Union (EU) and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Marcuzzi, an international relations and security studies expert, currently serves as a Marie Curie Fellow at University College Dublin, Ireland. He is also a visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe in Brussels, Belgium, and an analyst at the NATO Defense College Foundation in Rome, Italy. With a strong academic background and extensive experience in analyzing global security issues, Marcuzzi has contributed significantly to understanding international interventions, particularly in Libya.

Marcuzzi analyzes the complexities and shortcomings of the intervention, presenting a narrative highlighting the dynamics and missed opportunities that characterized the response to the Libyan crisis. This book contends that the failure originated from two primary issues shared by both organizations:



a greater “emphasis on legitimacy” over strategic planning and a reliance on existing methods (“path dependence”) without sufficient adaptation to the unique demands of the crisis (p. 5). Within a comprehensive analysis of official documents and extensive interviews with EU, NATO, UN, national government officials, military personnel, Libyan institutions, civil society, and media representatives, the book brings to light the perspectives of Libyan (ex) officials and experts from abovementioned institutions. It exposes how misguided assumptions and divergent interests within the EU and NATO hindered their efforts and how hard power’s ineffective and imprudent application in an increasingly multifaceted environment further aggravated the crisis. He defines this issue with “NATO and the EU, the overarching dilemma was why and how to use hard power in the fast-changing Libyan crisis” (p. 2).

Marcuzzi’s work is both timely and essential, providing a critical examination of a conflict that has had implications for regional stability and international security. The book is structured into well-defined sections that