

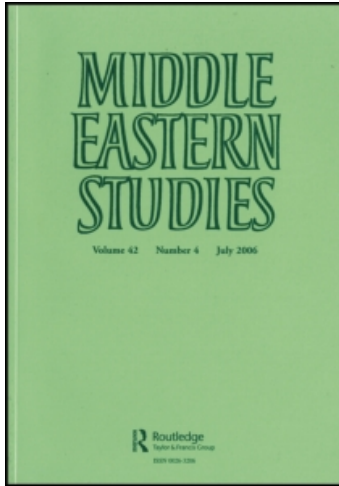
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Abu Dhabi: Oil and Beyond

Paul Rivlin

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economic relations with the Arabs of Palestine and criticized the liberal attitude of some of his Zionist colleagues. He also believed that most Arabs in Palestine did not have genuine nationalist motivations but rather operated by local factionalism and the political infighting of the feudal elite (p.153). The Zionists did not see the Palestinians as the latter saw themselves – with the same political and cultural aspirations as other Arabs.

At the same time, things could have turned out differently if the Arabs had accepted Zionism as a political movement, one whose struggle for a national home demanded political autonomy and perhaps eventually statehood (p.168). But Arab nationalism was exclusive and thus there could be no accommodation with it unless Zionism was prepared to abandon its dream of an independent Jewish existence. It was also unfortunate that the political class in Palestine was dominated by conservative families whose fortunes were tied to feudal social and economic structures. They saw Zionism as the spearhead of a social revolution with the potential to undermine their political order (p.169). Finally, given the Palestinian popular hostility to Zionism the Jews were unwilling to free themselves from dependence on the English.

Menahem Klein

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Notes

1. B. Wasserstein, *Israelis and Palestinians Why do They Fight? Can They Stop?* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
2. J.S. Migdal and B. Kimmerling, *The Palestinian People A History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).
3. B. Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist–Arab Conflict 1881–2001* (Vintage, 2001); A. Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (W.W. Norton, 2001).
4. N. Massalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of 'Transfer' in Zionist Political Thought 1882–1948* (Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

Abu Dhabi: Oil and Beyond

Christopher M. Davidson

London, Hurst & Company, 2009, Pp.244, index, £30 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-85065-978-5

This book is about the history, politics and economy of Abu Dhabi. For many years, Abu Dhabi has been overshadowed by the dramatic development of Dubai, one of its main partners in the United Arab Emirates. As the property boom in Dubai bursts, Abu Dhabi stays out of the headlines but its importance remains. It has about 9 per cent of the world's oil and only 0.02 per cent of its population, which translates into very high per capita oil income. At current production rates, Abu Dhabi's output could be maintained for nearly 100 years. As a result of the recent combination of high prices and production levels, income may have reached \$80

billion a year and it has accumulated huge financial reserves. The Abu Dhabi Investment Authority, a sovereign investment fund, has an estimated \$750 billion of assets. These have been used to buy a stake in Citigroup and other strategic investments and so Abu Dhabi has become a major player in financial as well as energy markets.

The book begins with a history of the emirate from the beginning of the eighteenth century, including an analysis of how the ruling dynasty came to rule. The intricacies of external threats, both from within the region and from Britain are looked at in detail. The emphasis of much of the book is on Abu Dhabi's economic history and this begins with the pearl industry. The other main theme in the early part of the book is the successful attempt to increase the ruling family's legitimacy by expanding its network of patrimony and co-opting wider sections of the population into administrative and public sector posts.

The development of the Abu Dhabi economy was delayed for many years by the ruler Shaykh Shakbut bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, who in the 1950s and early 1960s hoarded the oil revenues and refused to spend them on education, health and welfare services. This resulted in the extraordinary phenomenon of Abu Dhabi citizens leaving the country, despite its enormous wealth. In 1966, he was eventually succeeded by his brother, Shaykh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, after much manoeuvring and with the support of the British who were until 1967 the colonial power in control of what were called the Trucial states.

The most interesting chapters are the last two, which touch on some controversial issues. The first of these deals with the ways in which the monarchy has been legitimated. These include the expansion of the formal government, including the civil service and the public sector. The development of what is called the 'allocative state' is examined: the increase in government spending on education, health and welfare under Shaykh Zayed. It also covers the enforcement of dress codes that from the 1970s became much stricter for Abu Dhabi nationals (citizens). Male nationals in Abu Dhabi are allowed to marry freely while women are restricted to nationals. The emphasis on protecting nature and developing a green economy are also listed as steps designed to strengthen national identity.

The final chapter, on unresolved problems, is harsh in its criticism of the education system. This has, according to Davidson, who was a professor at the Shaykh Zayed University, failed 'abysmally'. The national population (as opposed to the large number of immigrant workers) has been molycoddled with welfare benefits and well paid public sector jobs. The incentives to get a good education have been lacking and the public education system has been inadequate. As a result, unemployment among nationals has been estimated at between 17,000 (7 per cent) and 35,000 (14 per cent), very high figures for a state with such wealth. As in other Gulf States, employment in the productive private sector is dominated by foreigners. The book lacks data to reinforce many of its arguments and this is particularly noticeable in the discussion of economic issues. Presumably the reason for this is the lack of data on Abu Dhabi rather than the author's preference.

There are also short sections on the plight of domestic workers, prostitution, the beatings of those arrested; the existence of a blacklist of those with HIV/AIDs and the treatment of homosexuals; the lack of freedom in modern Abu Dhabi; the socio-economic effects of the growing wealth gap. The book concludes with a brief

discussion of another very sensitive issue: Abu Dhabi's relations with Dubai since the downturn in the latter's economy in 2008. Davidson suggests that Abu Dhabi has provided much discreet help to shore up Dubai's economy.

Like Davidson's previous book on Dubai,¹ this volume was reported to have been banned in the UAE. The reasons are thought to be his remarks about the lack of freedom in the Emirate as well as the mistreatment of foreign workers and others. This book is a valuable addition to the literature on this unjustly neglected state.

Paul Rivlin

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Note

1. Christopher M. Davidson, *Dubai: The Vulnerability of Success* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 2008).

Inter-Arab Alliances: Regime Security and Jordanian Foreign Policy

Curtis R. Ryan

Gainesville, University Press of Florida, 2009, Pp.x + 264, bibliography, index, \$56.00 (hardback), ISBN 978-0-8130-3307-5

Curtis Ryan has written extensively on Jordan and his present book on Jordan's foreign policy is another example of his consistently solid scholarly work and his truly important contributions to what is a relatively under-studied subject. This book is about Jordan's foreign policy in relation to its Middle Eastern neighbours, the Arab states and Israel, and is an effort to establish a systematic set of explanations for Jordan's constantly shifting alliances.

The book is divided into three main parts. The first delves into international relations theory and into the discussion of the extent to which the theory that has been devised mostly on the basis of the experience of Western states is at all applicable to the Middle East scene. Ryan's key argument is that, as opposed to Western states, where foreign policy alignments are driven predominantly by perceptions of external security threats, inter-Arab alignments 'cannot be adequately explained without examining the domestic political arena' (p.9). The theory guiding Ryan's study is that, in the Arab world, alignments are made and utilized by ruling political elites in order to maintain their own security and survival (p.12).

Arab states 'align and realign according to relatively narrow interests of regime security'. They often had 'far more intense vulnerabilities and weaknesses' than states in the West, and not surprisingly, they had 'different conceptions of national security, and hence different approaches to foreign policy and international interaction'. Since the same could be said of many states in Africa, Asia and Latin America, this regime security approach was not only applicable to Jordan and other Arab states but was 'specifically intended as a theory of non-Western alignments', and hence could be more broadly applicable to the 'Third World' in general (pp.13, 26).