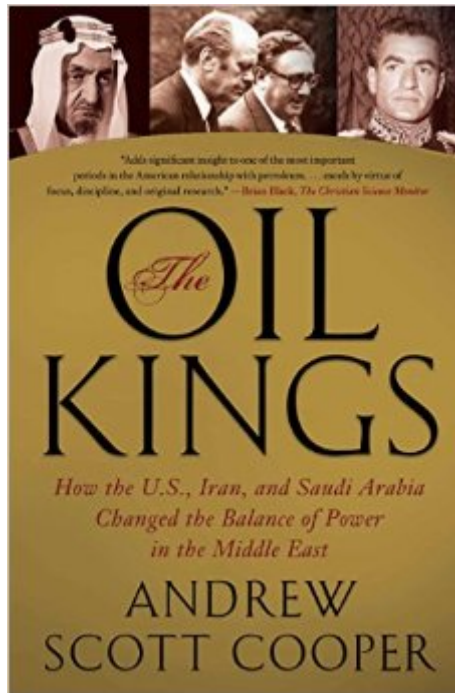


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The Oil Kings: How The U.S., Iran, And Saudi Arabia Changed The Balance Of Power In The Middle East



Synopsis

By relying on a rich cache of previously classified notes, transcripts, cables, policy briefs, and memoranda, Andrew Cooper explains how oil drove, even corrupted, American foreign policy during a time when Cold War imperatives still applied, and tells why in the 1970s the U.S. switched its Middle East allegiance from the Shah of Iran to the Saudi royal family. While America struggles with a recession, oil prices soar, revolution rocks the Middle East, European nations risk defaulting on their loans, and the world teeters on the brink of a possible global financial crisis. This is not a description of the present, however, but the 1970s. In *The Oil Kings*, Andrew Cooper tells the story of how oil came to dominate U.S. domestic and foreign policy. Drawing on newly declassified documents and interviews with some of the key figures of the time, Cooper follows the political posturing and backroom maneuvering that led the U.S. to switch to OPEC as its main supplier of oil from the Shah of Iran, a loyal ally and leading customer for American weapons. The subsequent loss of U.S. income destabilized the Iranian economy, while the U.S. embarked on a long relationship with the autocratic Saudi kingdom that continues to this day. Brilliantly reported and filled with astonishing revelations—including how close the U.S. came to sending troops into the Persian Gulf to break the Arab oil embargo and how U.S. officials offered to sell nuclear power and nuclear fuel to the Shah—*The Oil Kings* is the history of an era that we thought we knew, an era whose momentous reverberations still influence events at home and abroad today.

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Customer Reviews

Author Andrew Scott Cooper's first book "Oil Kings" is surprising well written and entertaining. The book is primary about the Shah of Iran, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, and his dealings with President Richard Nixon and the duplicitous Henry Kissinger. The book centers around a secret deal between the Shah, Nixon, and Kissinger which allowed Iran to purchase best of class U.S. weapons systems, advance jet fighters, smart bombs, etc. in any quantity desired. Basically anything weapons short of nukes were available for purchase by the Shah. In return, the President would allow the Shah to raise oil prices through OPEC to cover the costs of the weapons. The U.S. was reeling from its involvement in Vietnam. The mood of the country was against any military action abroad. The country was being torn apart by protest and incidents such as the Kent State shootings still fresh in the minds of Americans. The Shah was ambitious and saw himself as the heir to the great Persian Kings of the ancient world. The Shah would use his newly acquired weaponry to protect the Persian Gulf and Israel from Soviet influence. The first series of oil price increases implemented by OPEC shocked the economies of the west. The Shah waved aside any suggestion that the price increases were endangering the oil consuming nations especially the Europeans. The Shah was blinded by his grand vision of a modern westernized Iran. No one realized the Shah was racing against time after being diagnosed with cancer. Watergate was a disaster for the U.S. - Iran relations. With the resignation of Nixon, the Shah lost his most powerful supporter in Washington. Kissinger was still Secretary of State but more and more Kissinger was finding himself on the losing side of the debate on U.S.

No, seriously. In this well-written, well-researched book about the Shah of Iran's attempts to make himself the new Cyrus, mixed with Richard Nixon's post-Vietnam search for agents of empire by extension and mixed with the Shah and King Faisal squaring off for oil hegemony, the "captain of the USS Titanic," steering the American economy for the iceberg of doing anything to help Mohammad Reza Pahlavi ... was Henry Kissinger. This included him and Nixon writing a blank check to the Shah for unlimited arms deals, a blank check that Kissinger refused to tell either Ford or Carter about. (Kissinger refused interview requests for this book.) Others were at fault, too. Nixon himself for writing that blank check, even if on Kissinger's advice. William Simon, for leaning too far the Saudis' way. Don Rumsfeld, whose arrogance 25 years ago under Ford was no less than under Bush. But at the heart of it all was Henry Kissinger, enabling the Shah's every wrong-sized dream, while being ignorant of the inflation the Shah was inflicting on himself, and the wreckage he was inflicting on the United States, Western Europe and Japan, even while Henry claimed he knew more economics than most of Nixon's economics team. The Shah might still be in power, or his son,

rather, if we had reined him in. (Kissinger also missed the mullahs as the possible source of a revolution, seeing only Commies.) Energy shortages were happening before the first embargo of 1973, but might have been better managed to the benefit of the Shah, Faisal and other Arab oil states and the West, all alike. And, the Israel situation might have been better handled, too. The book ends soon after Carter's accession, with Faisal dead and the Shah on his way. A sequel would be wonderful.

First rate - Cooper has done a great job assembling this story (one most of the senior U.S. officials involved seem to have conveniently forgotten in their biographies) of how the United States gave the Shah carte blanche to buy any-and-all U.S. weapons (save nukes) to act as a U.S. surrogate in the Persian Gulf area: With things going rapidly down hill in Vietnam around 1970 and the Brits having announced they were pulling out "East of Suez" in 1971, the U.S. found itself with a Navy consisting of two destroyers and a sea plane tender to take care of business in the Persian Gulf and the whole Indian Ocean. Seeing, even after the fiasco in Vietnam, commies lurking behind every rock in the Mid East but with Americans less-than-eager to ramp up our military, Nixon adopted the Twin Pillars strategy - sell lots of armaments to the Saudis and Iran and they would become our friends. The Shah's appetite for ever more money (by attempting to raise the price of crude) and ever more military spending resulted in rampant inflation in Iran, a wealthy elite feeding off the billions being thrown around, and a growingly restive lower class who arguably ended up worse off under the Shah's massive development schemes, the seeds of a revolution. Kissinger is roundly pounded in this book (for good reason), but Cooper leaves out on-background another of Henry's geopolitical screw-ups: Nasser died in 1970; Sadat - like his predecessor - wanted the Sinai back, lost by Egypt in the '67 War. Sadat - unlike his predecessor - was willing to negotiate with the Israelis.

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