

scholarly paradigms of the past, including assertions of a tribal-cultural rather than a religious identity, have been used to continue the oppression of Alevi people in the post-Ottoman landscape. Countering historical misconceptions with such careful research successfully undermines the weak foundations used to deny Alevis their rights and history. The scholarly and social sensitivity Karakaya-Stump brought to bear during this work makes *The Kizilbash-Alevis in Ottoman Anatolia* an exemplary study that will inspire future scholarship, but which will not be easily equaled in scope and substance. ✨

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DAN RABINOWITZ. *The Power of Deserts: Climate Change, the Middle East, and the Promise of a Post-Oil Era* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020). Pp. 184. \$14.00 paper. ISBN 9781503609983.

If readers were not already feeling pessimistic about the planet's fate in the era of accelerating climate change, Dan Rabinowitz's *The Power of Deserts* will be a wake-up call. His subtitle includes a glimmer of optimism, referring to the "promise of a post-oil era," but the data he presents about the projected effects of climate change for the Middle East are grim. As he notes, dramatic climatic shifts "can inflict a blow on any territory. In a region as arid as the Middle East, where even minor fluctuations carry drastic consequences, they could be devastating" (5). The book is a tour of these potential changes and Rabinowitz seeks to give specific details about the ecological, social, and political fallout for the Middle East. Part of the "Stanford Briefs" series, it is an easy and accessible read, ideal for introductory undergraduate courses.

In the media and academic debates alike, climate change is frequently approached as a global phenomenon. In the abstract, it is indeed global. Yet nowhere will it have the same effects. Rabinowitz thus contributes to a regional grounding of this global discourse and shows why people in the Middle East and the region's observers should care about climate change. The first four chapters lay out this case, citing an impressive array of new, highly-localized climate models to project the impacts of rising temperatures, sea levels, and other weather disturbances for urban life, agriculture and food supply, migration and social justice, state and

sub-state security, and energy futures. We learn, for example, that nearly a fifth of the Nile delta's landmass is lower than sea level and that as the level of the Mediterranean Sea rises, Egypt could lose 45 percent of its productive soil (29). Meanwhile, the 2007–2011 Syrian draught, which devastated the country's agricultural sector, previews the economic and political collapse that states heavily dependent on farming will face as climate becomes increasingly unpredictable (50–51).

On the other hand, even highly-urbanized countries without large agricultural sectors, like the United Arab Emirates or Qatar, are not insulated from these effects. As Rabinowitz notes, based on conservative estimates of one-meter sea level rise by 2100, "UAE government sources indicate that by 2100 the sea surge could impact 85 percent of the population and 90 percent of the country's infrastructure" (23). This gets at an issue that when teaching and presenting my own research about Gulf greening initiatives, I am frequently asked about: why then has the UAE been building so many artificial islands? Aren't decisionmakers worried about sea-level rise? Like myself, Rabinowitz does not seem to have a good answer for this question. It seems that leaders do in fact have the data to act differently, but a path-dependent logic appears to have taken hold across the region. But this need not be the case, he argues.

The Power of Deserts does not explicitly claim to center the Arabian Peninsula, but it does so throughout. Toward the beginning, Rabinowitz asks:


What if instead of the planet being saved by highly educated, conscientious young environmentalists in liberal democracies, it is redeemed by a tiny group of Middle Eastern oligarchs attempting to advance their own self-interests? What if instead of lofty principles of sustainability and climate justice, the sensibility that eventually drives the renewable energy transition comes from despots seeking to protect their hypermodern, ridiculously expensive lifestyles? Could the long-awaited green revolution begin as a result of attempts on the part of the current lords of global energy to prolong and further tighten their control? (11)

These questions do not name the Arab Gulf monarchies, but they are the implied subject here and in the final two chapters that get at "the promise of a post-oil era" in the book's subtitle. Chapter 4, "Solar Prospects," and chapter 5, "Will 200 Men Save the Planet?," focus on recent efforts to green the Gulf and shift away from hydrocarbon-dominated energy systems. While outside observers rarely take these greening efforts

seriously, Rabinowitz does so in these two chapters. This move is welcome because the changes afoot in the Arabian Peninsula are dramatic and, given the Gulf leaders' focus on utility-scale solar power (i.e. rather than more diffuse, small-scale installations), they actually stand to dramatically alter the renewable energy landscape across the region.

Rabinowitz leaves readers with the same puzzle that he opens with, quoted above, but reframed in chapter 5 around the hypothetical scenario in which “the GCC six might choose to terminate the industry which brought them untold riches” – namely oil. He wonders whether this may be too optimistic, but points to the dual pressures of international political economy and local leaders' aspirational desire for honor and prestige (114–15). From my own research on this topic, I agree that both elements are indeed well on their way to transforming extraction economies in the Gulf region. The one quibble I have with this account, however, is that per standard accounts, the shift to renewable energy is presented as a cure-all for the climate disaster on the horizon. Of course, it is laudable that any actor at any scale and in any industry find a way to move beyond hydrocarbons. Yet this act alone cannot undo the damage already done. So while I too am watching with fascination as Gulf governments and national oil and gas companies start sponsoring massive new solar installations, I wonder if the spectacle of it all is designed to shift our attention (and resources) away from mitigating the horrendous effects of climate change already underway. To me, this is the real “power of deserts” – to amplify the spectacle of solar. But neither spectacle nor solar is a solution to the climate crisis. Solutions will necessarily be diffuse and region-specific, and Rabinowitz's book vividly paints this regional reality for the Middle East. ✂

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