

Title: *Straight Power Concepts: In the Middle East: US Foreign Policy, Israel and World History*

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Review:

Concisely Harms reviews political development within and between pre-modern, modern and post-national eras. First the book covers the inception of the Empire, most notably the Ottoman Empire and the rise of the modern nation-state. From this point, he discusses the genesis of the United States and later considers the "special relationship", this concept being of straight power itself, the nation keeps with Israel. Other topics considered about the United States include the Cold War and European influence and hegemony.

Harms reviews the modern Middle East as a European geo-political devise and invention of modern Israel as currently known. About the United States handling Israel in a "one-sided relationship", a straight-power concept of the Nixon era, most notably as a "junior" global partner, the author examines the role of US presidential leadership from the Truman administration to the Reagan administration. While Harms also examines the role of Clinton, both Bush presidents and even speculates on the role of Obama, he focuses on Truman, Nixon, Kissenger, Carter and Reagan. Bill Clinton's administration, however is more thoroughly referenced later due to his role in Oslo. Harm similarly treats the Bush administrations due to their role in the War on Terror and overall turmoil and business interests in the Gulf.

Straight Power Concepts then cultivates a sophisticated explanation of how the Middle East moved from modern concept to a real "geopolitical sub-system" consisting of modern Nation-states. He likewise continues to focus on the history of Israel's inception as a modern Nation-state, its entrance into regional and international politics and finally a detailed description of the development of the Israeli-Arab conflict; including adequate attention on Palestine. What Harms does most notably with this book is render a number of topics, often seemingly nebulous, into a cogent historical narrative that references major figures, events, and political maneuvers. For example, Harms clearly explains the existence and context from which Black September began. *Straight Power Concepts* also addresses the first Oslo agreement realistically, and honestly looks at the power dynamics involved in US-Israel relations as well as corresponding Israel-Arab relations. Soviet history and its bearing on the shift from using the concepts of "First World", "Second World", as pertaining to the USSR and its empire, and "Third World", now deemed "the global South" to World Systems Theory in

Development Studies, and its coordinated terminology “Core”, “Periphery”, and “Semi-peripheral.” For this reason, Straight Power Concepts can be said to encompass a thorough articulation of World Systems Theory and therefore represent this persuasion.

The book thus locates the Middle East's movement from having to dodge from one Super Power to the other during the Cold War Era, as a Third World geographic era, to a region comprised of rival modern nation-states that now has its own coherent capital interests in an era of nationalised petroleum. For the reason, Harms acknowledges the role the Soviet Union once played in the Middle East, both as political broker and occupier in the larger Islamic World, while likewise acknowledging the United States achieved dominance in Israel and the Middle East in general through aggression and capital dominance. Through these accomplishments the United States has, as explained by Harms, replaced not only the Soviet interest in the region, which he disregards as never having been a real threat, but also Continental interest. As Harms states. “The aim of this book has been to show the connectivity and relative consistency over the last 500 years, and specifically the last 60 or so involving the pinnacle of American power and its replacement of British and French hegemony in the Middle East (182).”

For those wondering what additional straight power concepts Harms identifies, he names the following: the triplets “security”, “credibility”, and “stability” and “Soviet monolith”, and “police power”, to name the most hegemonic. The compound concepts of “a little far afield for us” and “special relationship with Israel”, notably, pit themselves against “Soviet monolith.” Harms then identifies how the United States uses these concepts to circumscribe parameters of political action, discourse and policy. But, as related the Soviet monolith, Harms briefly references the Brezhnev and the Brezhnev Plan in particular (136). The Israelis rejected the Brezhnev Plan, a throwback to an earlier plan created in Fez, Morocco which was itself an imitation of an even earlier 1981 Saudi plan named the Fahd Plan, along with its two predecessors. The Fez and Fahd mandated complete Israeli “withdrawal” and a return to 1967 borders (135). Harms documents other Soviet involvement and scrutiny in the Middle East “peace process”, another straight power concept, such as in Carter's 1973 Geneva Peace Process and with the 1955 anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact.

The single development Harms most successfully attests to is American corporate hegemony in the Middle East, specifically in the era prior to nationalized petroleum. He does this with clear narrative descriptions of real-life, or perhaps “realpolitik”, scenarios where might make right. The story of Mossadeq, who spent the remainder of his life under police arrest for challenging “transnational” petroleum corporations is one such example. The United States, after the course of Mossadeq's leadership, reintroduced the Shah in Iran.

The message of this book, albeit from an attempt to honestly convey the reality of real world outcomes and the status quo, thus turns out a simple fact. The fact remains that capital interests dominates not only the globe in general but inter and trans-national relations, conflicts, and leadership. In other words, the powerful and their interests and language determine political reality.

Overall, *Straight Power Concepts* supplies readers with a logical, comprehensible and honest explanation of West-to-East political processes in the Twentieth Century while contextualizing the current history in larger trans-historical development, beginning at a time before modernity and the “Middle East”, this being perhaps the overarching “straight power concept” Harms points out, and reflecting upon possible outcomes in the current century. Critical without being dogmatic, the book can simultaneously introduce the novice to the basic history of US-Arab relations while informing scholarly and academic audiences of details previously overlooked. The book reaches its aim, as specified by Harms, and surpasses it through careful attention to the overall landscape to West-to-East relations over centuries, whilst not ignoring apparent anomalies like the role of the Soviet Union.

What is the history and nature of its 'special relationship' with Israel? Given the increase in tensions in the Middle East, and the United States' involvement in them, news coverage is in abundance. Yet, the reportage and discussion of American foreign policy is often narrow in scope, offering little background or context. Our final chapter addresses a subject that is roughly as old as the peace process discussed in Chapter 5, but in recent years has become increasingly contentious. The contention is predominantly academic and simply revolves around how much influence the Israel lobby wields, and to what degree it affects American foreign policy in the Middle East.

2. The United States' Foreign Policy toward the Middle East, before World War I. American trade with the Middle East dates back more than two hundred years. In fact, commercial contacts between Smyrna (an ancient city in Turkey) and Boston began as early as 1767, when Smyrna products (most notably figs) arrived. These concepts were very attractive to the Arabs' nationalistic dreams to attain independence. Moreover, the Wilsonian ideas provided a stimulus to Arab nationalism in the years ahead. Until the creation of the State of Israel (in 1948), the United States enjoyed widespread prestige and admiration in the Arab world. (Crabb, Jr., 1983: 400). The United States' political presence in the Middle East did not intensify until November 4, 2011 | History.

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