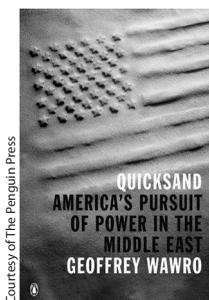


As with all of Kaplan's work, the reader will find it best to have maps available while working through *Monsoon*. The book itself has an excellent series of usable area maps, but a reader who does not want to constantly be flipping back and forth would be well advised to spread a detailed regional map on the table before opening the book's covers. A glance at a good map, for example, will immediately tell the reader why Gwadar is so important, or why on the Arabian Peninsula it is Oman, and not larger Saudi Arabia, that is the vital kingdom. *Monsoon* is a must-have addition to anyone seriously interested in international affairs; it is by turns illuminating, thought-provoking, and instructive. I recommend it without reservation.



New York: The  
Penguin Press, 2010

612 pages

\$37.95

## ***Quicksand: America's Pursuit of Power in the Middle East***

by Geoffrey Wawro

**Reviewed by Dr. Christopher J. Bolan**, Professor of  
National Security Studies, US Army War College.

*Quicksand* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of America's involvement with the Middle East. Wawro's academic background in military history and practical experience teaching at the Naval War College come through with force in a style that will particularly appeal to military professionals.

The first third of *Quicksand* is especially enlightening as Wawro offers a fresh historical perspective informed by his meticulous research of military and diplomatic archives in the United States and London. This compelling narrative begins with the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and it is perceptively written from the perspective of key American and British policymakers. This is the best part of the book and will prove beneficial to scholars, students, and foreign policy practitioners alike. These first five chapters effectively chart America's deepening relationship with Israel, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Egypt—countries that have frequently occupied center stage in American regional strategies.

The author's two chapters on Israel tell the tragic story of Britain's ultimately irreconcilable promises to the Jewish and Arab communities in Palestine. Wawro casts blame directly on British and American leaders for pursuing short-sighted strategies that left the problem of Palestine "insoluble" while providing "no practical means to intervene in Palestine and keep the peace between Jews and Arabs." At the same time, Wawro does not shy away from criticizing both Jewish and Arab leaders for their unwillingness to accept compromise, their failure to advocate mutual understanding, and their complicity in violence.

His chapter on Saudi Arabia identifies the centrality of oil to US regional interests and vividly illustrates America's transformation from one of relative energy autonomy to one of strategic dependence on oil production from the

Gulf. Faithful to his roots as a military historian, Wawro captures the essence of Saudi Arabia's importance to American strategy by describing the Kingdom in Clausewitzian terms as "The Center of Gravity of World Oil Production." Protecting these energy resources from outside intervention has been America's strategic obsession. Wawro identifies two other key American military and economic interests in the region that derive directly from this emerging dependence: namely, the expanding network of US military bases throughout the region; and the growing economic importance of "foreign sales of American weapons" to regional clients. This insightful narrative of America's evolving strategy is laced with colorful prose from such historical figures as Lawrence of Arabia who described the harshness of the Saudi desert as "Death in life." Wawro also successfully conveys the deeply seeded emotions inhibiting a solution to Arab-Israeli tensions by quoting King Ibn Saud who in 1945 responded to British Prime Minister Churchill's plea for help in "effecting a compromise" in Palestine by saying that "I will help the Allied cause, but I cannot destroy my soul and honor as a Muslim by compromising with Zionism."

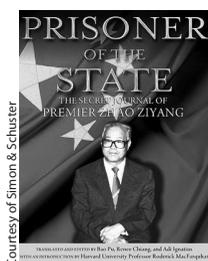
For anyone seeking to understand the palpable mistrust between present-day American and Iranian leaders, Wawro's chapter "Ajax" will provide much needed historical perspective. Operation Ajax was a jointly conceived British and American plan in 1953 to overthrow the popular and democratically elected Iranian Prime Minister Mossadeq who, like other leaders in oil-rich countries at the time, dared to advocate the nationalization of Western-owned oil companies. Wawro accurately notes that this covert operation signaled to Iranians "that the [US] priorities were to back the British, seat an anti-communist in power and secure an oil settlement that favored Western interests." Wawro keenly observes that as "Explicable as those aims were in the context of the Cold War, they were naturally taken for unpardonable meddling in Iranian internal affairs." This poisonous history helps explain why current calls from American leaders advocating democratic reforms in the Middle East can ring hollow in the streets of Tehran.

The second third of *Quicksand* outlines the development of American presidential doctrines in the Middle East. This portion will offer relatively little insight to long-time observers of US foreign policy. That said, Wawro artfully sketches the rise and fall of America's image with Arab leaders through several presidential administrations—reaching its zenith as President Eisenhower came to the defense of Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis (in the wake of the combined military attack by Israel, Britain, and France) and plummeting to its nadir with the bungled US military intervention into Iraq in 2003. One of the more salient features hastening this decline, in Wawro's view, is Washington's unbalanced political and military support to Israel. Of course, equally damaging to America's reputation in the eyes of the Arab public has been Washington's open support to Arab autocrats throughout the region—policies that have a long historical pedigree as Wawro amply demonstrates in this section.

In the last third of *Quicksand*, Wawro covers more recent regional developments including American support to the *mujahideen* in Afghanistan after the

1979 Soviet invasion, as well as the subsequent rise of al Qaeda as fueled by Saudi funding and religious inspiration and as further exacerbated by America's intrusive military presence in the region. Wawro delves into the details of the political-military strategies associated with American military interventions into Iraq and Afghanistan. While these recent events have been thoroughly investigated elsewhere, Wawro provides a useful overview for those unfamiliar with these alternative contemporary accounts. One glaring shortcoming for a book bearing a 2010 copyright is the absence of even a cursory assessment of the 2007 American "surge" strategy in Iraq.

The most disappointing aspect of *Quicksand* is Wawro's failure to suggest practical solutions to the strategic dilemmas that history has bequeathed to contemporary American policymakers. Given the strategic imperatives of fighting the Cold War and the constraints imposed by existing realities of regional and US domestic politics, Wawro in his concluding chapter asks, "what were Washington's options?" Unfortunately, this is one question not adequately explored in Wawro's otherwise superb history of America's evolving strategy in the Middle East.



New York: Simon & Schuster, 2009

306 pages

\$26.00

### ***Prisoner of the State: The Secret Journal of Premier Zhao Ziyang***

translated and edited by Bao Pu, Renee Chiang, and Adi Ignatius

**Reviewed by Dr. Larry M. Wortzel, COL (USA Retired),**  
Colonel Wortzel served two tours of duty as a military attaché at the US Embassy in China

Zhao Ziyang was the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Premier of China from 1987 to 1989. The Tiananmen Massacre, which the Communist Party prefers to call the "Tiananmen Incident," took place during his tenure. Zhao Ziyang's narrative presents his views on how and why senior CCP leaders decided to use force to suppress protests on 4 June 1989, during the demonstrations in Beijing. His censure by the CCP resulted in house arrest until his death on 17 January 2005, at the age of 85. He also provides important insight into factional struggles inside the Communist Party and how these struggles manifest themselves at the top of Chinese politics.

In telling Zhao Ziyang's story, the editors and translators provide fascinating insight into the secret inner workings of the CCP. In addition, *Prisoner of the State* confirms much of what Zhang Liang, Andrew Nathan, and Perry Link said about the machinations inside the CCP related to the Tiananmen in their edited work *The Tiananmen Papers: The Chinese Leadership's Decision to Use Force Against Their Own People-In their Own Words*.

Zhao Ziyang took over as General Secretary of the CCP in 1987, at the age of 68. His role, circumscribed and supervised by senior Party elders like Deng Xiaoping and the Politburo Standing Committee of the Party, was