

Oil, the State, and War: The foreign policies of petrostates. By Emma Ashford. Washington DC: Georgetown University Press. 2022. 365 pp. \$34.95. ISBN: 978 1 64712 237 9. Available as e-book.

Emma Ashford's book on how oil effects producer states' foreign policies fits well into the currently ongoing conversation between scholars such as Rosemary A. Kelanic and Robert Vitalis, about the role oil plays for (energy) security. She reasons that energy security concerns have overshadowed the study of the relationship between domestic oil production and foreign policy behaviour. Therefore, she looks at the oil producers' side of the story like Ibrahim AlMuhanna does in his book *Oil leaders: An insider's account of four decades of Saudi Arabia and OPEC's global energy policy* (Columbia University Press, 2022). For simplicity, she has chosen to use *oil* to indicate hydrocarbon production, notably oil and gas. Forty-eight large and small oil-producing countries are included in the study, representing all continents.

The book is written with American foreign policy makers in mind and aims to increase their insight into how states interact with oil and gas. Whilst there is a growing consensus among scholars that petrostates are more likely to start wars, an explanation for why this would be the case has been lacking. The author posits that it is because definitional questions have been overlooked that previous research on the topic has been contradictory and inconclusive. By not only offering a definition of a petrostate, synonymous with an oil-rich state, but also suggesting a further division into three types and one subtype, she is able to demonstrate that there is more to the subject than merely a question of whether oil production influences foreign policy.

Her proposed definitions are as follows: first, there are oil-dependent states, which are states where the economy is dominated by resource production and the oil rents are greater than ten percent of GDP. Second are oil-wealthy states, which are states whose economy is not necessarily dominated by resource production but receives substantial wealth from it with a revenue of over \$1000 per capita. Super-producer states are then the third type, and they are states whose oil production is greater than two percent of global oil supply. Super-exporters are a subset of super-producers, being that they are net-exporters because they produce more than they consume. These definitions allow for countries to unproblematically overlap in membership between the groups.

Through statistics based on the militarized interstate dispute (MID) dataset of the last 40 years Ashford first proves that petrostates have indeed been more likely to initiate conflict regardless of type. She also proves that there is not the same correlation between other natural resources and war. However, the different types of oil-rich states have shown varying degrees of belligerence. This discovery proves the importance of differentiating between the types of oil-producers and warns against one-size-fits-all conclusions. What strengthens her analysis further is that she has accounted for the end of the Cold War in her work. This has led to the remarkable finding that after the Cold War super-producers were more prone to initiate conflict than during it, while the subtype of super-exporters was less so.

When she explores how different factors affect petrostates' policies and propensity to initiate conflict, her findings are exemplified through the presentation of case studies that demonstrate her point. This way of presenting information generally works well. For example, in chapter three she discusses how oil-wealth can be used to purchase arms and compares the kinds of arms different petrostates like Iran, Venezuela, Kuwait, and Malaysia

have purchased. When she discusses the use of the oil weapon in chapter six, it is illustrated through the Russo-Ukrainian gas dispute of 2006. In chapter seven on soft power, she demonstrates how building additional infrastructure gave Kazakhstan more exporting options and thus increased its leverage in negotiations. The examples and case studies are presented from an American perspective and the United States is not always included among the petrostates but that is perhaps because the book is written for an American audience. However, for that very reason it could have been interesting to see more emphasis on how the US itself fits into the petrostate behavioural patterns.

Ashford successfully presents some very interesting and pertinent findings and does so in an engaging manner. Her effort to define several types of petrostates and demonstrate how the different groups have varying interests and options available offers scholars useful tools and insight for further study. Even though the book is predominantly aimed at American policy makers, it will be of interest to scholars worldwide. She provides a valuable contribution to the research on the role that domestic oil production can play in the development and execution of foreign policy.

Johanne Marie Skov, Lancaster University