Making Middle East Strategy Great Again

Multipolarity in the Middle East
Abstract

The unipolar moment that has defined the international sphere since the fall of the Soviet Union is coming to a close. The United States can no longer effectively impose its agenda unilaterally. Specifically, we will examine the growing multipolar dynamic in the Middle East. The United States should facilitate increased regional, collaborative leadership on the part of its allies by reducing its military presence and increasing its diplomatic pressure for reform and cooperation. This could provide an avenue for Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states to begin reconciling relations with Iran. Unconditional US support emboldens GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, to take provocative actions. Increased diplomatic pressure provides leverage to ensure they begin cooperating with each other and potentially with Iran. This could create avenues beyond direct cooperation that gradually warm relations between these States. A more cooperative Middle East would solve a host of issues outlined. Most importantly, this would decrease the probability of a direct conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. It would also prevent escalation of proxy conflicts, all of which would likely exacerbate instability in the region and potentially even draw in the US and Russia. Even if cooperation fails, our proposal puts the US in a better position to balance its allies against Iranian regional hegemony. We will be addressing President-elect Trump as he prepares to transition and implement his own Middle East strategy.
Moving Toward a Multipolar Moment

The concentration of power within the international structure has been known to ebb and flow with time, requiring global players to adopt different patterns of behavior in order to effectively maintain their security. During the Cold War, the world spun into a state of bipolarity, “a system of chronic overreaction.” Russia and the United States were fiercely competitive, all their actions distinctly connected and intensely reactive, with neither state facing a security threat nearly as great as the one existing within their quietly hostile relationship. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the world took on an unexpected unipolar form. The United States assumed the role of the sole great power, able to model the international system after its own interests, with all lesser powers acknowledging its power, focusing on the implications of its behavior, and acting in accordance with it. By most standards, the United States continues to maintain a significant margin of superiority that no other state has the capability to overcome at this point. Despite the currently unrivaled strength of the United States, the unipolar world is giving way to a different power structure. The international power structure is on the verge of a multipolar moment.

The coming of the multipolar world is marked in four compelling developments. The first is the economic rise of emerging powers, most notably Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (the BRICS), drawing the global economy’s point of balance toward the Pacific. Though these powers are experiencing serious growing pains as a consequence of their remarkable progression, as a combined bloc, the BRICS will warrant a reconfiguration of established powers, if not a complete structural change in global power. The second development is related to the first: the world’s economy has become increasingly globalized, heightening the importance of free trade and creating a complex system of interdependence. Third, the transfer of wealth and economic power from west to east is occurring at a rate unprecedented by modern history. Russia and the Gulf States receive windfall gains from increases in oil prices and manufacturing has found a highly profitable home in Asia, driving the transfer. The final development heralding the multipolar moment is the evident and growing influence of non-state actors on international affairs, primarily in the form of corporations and terrorist groups. The world order is changing, and all roads lead to multipolarity.

The Place of the United States in the New World Order
Our proposal centers on what is changing, and how to most effectively tailor the behavior of the United States to be successful under different conditions. This is not to say that nothing will remain the same. The decline of power of the United States is a relative one, allowing time for necessary adaptation to retain as much political and economic power as possible in the international sphere.

The comparative decline can be seen in the economic troubles prevalent in the last decade and the consolidation of power elsewhere that narrows the lead the United States has held since the Cold War. Regardless of this economic adversity, the United States continues reign supreme in terms of “the qualitative criteria of ‘competitiveness.’” As an established economic superpower, the US is a world leader in research and development of science and technology, innovation, and corporate strength. As far a military strength goes, “the United States is able to mobilize the military manpower [...] to every corner of the earth,” and is in no danger of relinquishing its primary international position. Its strong alliance network is another manifestation of the wide breadth of variations of American power, providing security in exchange for cooperation. Even in a time of global power shifts and relative economic decline, the United States is poised to lead with substantial authority. With this prevailing influence, it is important to consider how the United States can maximize its power to protect its interest’s overseas taking into account the global power dynamic.

In the past, the United States has relied heavily on its military strength to influence international affairs. In the new multipolar world, the United States needs to employ an offensive paradigm shift to better achieve the interests of the nation. Whereas unipolarity enabled the United States to conduct its interstate relations largely without concern of major repercussions, in the emerging multipolar world of evenly distributed capabilities, cooperation and consideration of other state’s interests will become the most effective pattern of behavior. “The arithmetic of coalition building will affect all matters great & small.” Diplomacy then, as a means of creating strong coalitions, will play a key role in accomplishing the goals of the United States in the Middle East within the multipolar structure. With this in mind, the United States can no longer attempt to unilaterally impose its agenda on the Middle East. The methods currently employed to pursue U.S. interests will ultimately be rendered ineffective if the region remains unstable. Instead, the United States
should facilitate increased regional, collaborative leadership on the part of its allies by gradually reducing its military presence and increasing its diplomatic pressure for reform and cooperation.

**A New Leader, A New Strategy**

We live in an international order of anarchy and uncertainty. The violence and instability that permeates throughout the Middle East will undoubtedly exacerbate the inherent uncertainty of the international realm. We have already seen such effects – economic instability and turmoil throughout Europe, massive changes in refugee flows, aggressive Russian actions, and terrorism are pervasive. These threats require a shift in US strategy in the region that underwrites and solidifies a US-led world order. However, a new strategy must take into account the growing multipolar nature of the world. President Trump has already elucidated his desire to craft new approaches that reaffirm US power, and the recommendations outlined here provide a framework for him to do so.

Considering specifically foreign relations in the Middle East, two key issues that presidential elect Donald Trump spoke on were the issues of free riding, and the use of military intervention. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, “The staple of American involvement...should be the provision or withholding of various forms of diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and military support, to influence a country's foreign policy.” Keeping his “America First” approach in mind, the policy of diplomacy proposed here is of prevalence to the Trump administration because it addresses these issues.

The use of diplomacy and ‘deal-making’ in the multipolar moment becomes a major issue of salience. Despite conventional wisdom, “the United States should come to the realization that its military might is not capable of bringing about peace in the Middle East.” This leverage is flexible, and therefore President Trump could choose to advance the US approach in a variety of ways under this new model of engagement.

**Allied Freeriding**

One clear benefit is challenging the current freeriding tendency of our allies in the region. Many of our closest allies, namely Saudi Arabia, freeride off unconditional US support. As a result,
they are emboldened to take provocative action under seemingly inevitable United States security guarantees. The United States floods the Saudis with cash and cutting edge weaponry; military-to-military trainings, exercises, and more. This fuels Saudi Arabian involvement in disparate conflicts throughout the region, often exacerbating them. These actions ultimately serve to undermine US influence in the region through their destabilizing effects.

The war in Yemen is one example of how small conflicts escalate to destabilizing proxy-wars.\textsuperscript{xix} The Saudi government also funds rouge terrorist organizations throughout the region. To demonstrate US strength as an international leader and to exemplify the United States’ moral values in combatting and condemning terrorism, it is imperative to challenge the actions of our allies.

**Toward a Cooperative Regional Framework**

The benefits of our proposal go beyond simply undermining our allies’ provocative action in any one instance. In fact, this new approach to the region provides an opportunity for reconciliation, or at least de-escalation, of tensions between GCC and Iran.\textsuperscript{xx} Saudi Arabia and Iran are, in many ways, at the epicenter of a regional standoff. This standoff, if improperly balanced, could spark widespread conflict and instability between Iran and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.\textsuperscript{xxi} Such conflict would have reverberating effects throughout the Middle East and the globe. Beyond a specific proxy conflict, reconciling relations between GCC states and tempering their adventurous action can provide avenues towards cooperative regional frameworks that actively include Iran.

It may seem unlikely, even impossible. However, qualified experts believe that the Iran deal has opened a window for reconciliation between these allies.\textsuperscript{xxii} There is common ground for such cooperation to occur. The United States, GCC, and Iran all have “common interests in […] combating drug trafficking […] and ultimately eradicating the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS)”\textsuperscript{xxiii} However, “presence of […] American military forces in the Middle East has served to disrupt the cordial relationships between regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Turkey, and Egypt.”\textsuperscript{xxiv} If the US perceptually leads from behind, pushing the agenda instead of pulling reluctant leaders, it is possible that these tensions can be resolved.
Furthermore, the history of conflict between the GCC and Iran is not as old as some would believe, and a closer look at history proves changes in United States policy could pave the way for more active cooperation. US mistrust within the region and our oil-centric agenda is alienating and ineffective. Phasing back active military presence would soothe Iranian fears of an aggressive American-led anti-Iranian coalition. There is no doubt that Iran’s deepest concerns about security come from the US and fear of regime change should they fail to meet the deal or American policy leaders decide to switch approaches. Interestingly, this concern is largely mirrored by the American security community with respect to Iran. Nevertheless, Iran fears United States military presence as a constant threat of regime change and intervention. It sees manipulation of Saudi Allies as a large impediment to cooperation that contributes to the conflict between those countries. Additionally, the United States has come across vast, formerly unknown, oil reserves within its own territory, allowing it to resurface as a major oil player and diminishing, though not completely eliminating, much of the concern surrounding the stability of Middle Eastern markets. With the world experiencing an overabundance of oil, a higher oil price now benefits American producers and renders the spare capacity of the Middle East irrelevant in the short-term. There will be no return to a strained oil market within the foreseeable future, putting the US in the perfect position to leverage its influence because it is no longer fully dependent upon these actors for oil.

Aggressive Iran: An Inevitability?

Perhaps an aggressive Iran is inevitable. Perhaps these countries will never reestablish relations. Perhaps President Trump will go through with his decision to undermine or fundamentally alter the Iran deal. Even under those scenarios, there are still real benefits from regaining control of our newly strengthened allies through the strategy suggested here. The United States will have effectively turned unstable, uncontrollable, weak allies into a strong coalition to counter-balance growing Iranian regional hegemony. The United States would still play a large role in pressuring governments and setting the agenda for the region. Regardless of US desire, Iranian hegemony is inevitable. Iraq has been left in shambles, and it provided the only real counter weight to Iran in the region. In the gulf, Saudi Arabia and GCC states can balance Iran. However, even in such a scenario, Iran would still occupy a chief position in the direction of the region. This is true regardless of their ability to obtain nuclear weapons, which means the Iran deal itself is
immaterial to the success of our strategy. The United States, “must find a way to counterbalance Iran without maintaining its current deployment […] and without actually increasing the military power devoted to the region.” President Trump’s best option, then, is to tailor US military presence in a measured, calculated way, instead of the current unsustainable, blunt strategy.

Even if it came to war with Iran, military presence as it exists now is not essential to winning such a war. In fact, military presence only emboldens and justifies Iranian aggression in the region. The United States, under our proposal, would not abandon the region. The US would constantly maintain the possibility of redeploying troops and presence in the event of contingencies. This is done through maintaining skeletal base infrastructure for rapid redeployment. Particularly because withdrawal would be conditional and a slow, phased out process, it would allow military response if needed. Furthermore, renewed diplomatic pressure like reintroducing sanctions could provide additional forms of pressure. The existence of large scale military presence only intensifies the situation without providing a useful remedy.

**Domestic Constraints and Political Maneuvers**

When considering the constraints of foreign policy making, it is beneficial to consider the partisan and institutional scales. In terms of the proposal itself, Partisan will be measured in terms of public perception and institutional in terms of Congress.

The partisan constraint in terms of public perception derives from the fact that a less interventionist policy for the US in the Middle East is largely unprecedented. This policy, as well as President Trump’s foreign policy view in general, is not something the domestic and international community is used to from our government. The policy becomes a constraint for the Trump administration because no precedent has been set in terms of taking a less interventionist and humanitarian approach in the Middle East. The caveat here is that although no precedent has been necessarily set, it is of importance to keep in mind that current strategies have not garnered the results in the Middle East needed for to protect our security: stability. A fresher perspective may be what is needed in the case of public perception, and that is what this proposal provides.
This ties into the institutional aspect. The next step in the process would be obtaining support from Congress. A policy that aims to protect the national security of the US through counterterrorism efforts and the promotion of stability in the Middle East is in the best interest of Congress; coalition building and the eradication of free riding from our allies removes a large financial burden from the US.

**International Constraints: Perceptions and Reactions**

There are a variety of constrains and considerations at the international level to consider when crafting such a paradigm shift. How actors within the region, namely Saudi Arabia will act, how Western allies and Israel will act, and how perceived competitors like Russia will act.

With regards to Russia, some have suggested attempting to establish cooperative coalitions will play into Putin’s hand, allowing him to taking advantage of a ‘weak’ American strategy. But, this misunderstands Russian motivations. Putin has openly supported the idea of coalition building between the US, Russia, and other nations as a form of counterterrorism. This should be particularly likely given Putin’s public statements suggest his support for warming relations with President Trump. Considering the argument brought forth by Posen, coalition building is a major aspect of the multipolar world, and has been continuously proposed in regards to action in the Middle East. The creation of a counterterrorism coalition like that proposed by Vladimir Putin would create that stability, and thus ensure protection from security threats.³³³ Posen argues that “isolation is perhaps the most dangerous situation in multipolarity, so states will pay close and constant attention to the game of coalition building.”³³³ Posen further argues that diplomacy is a major factor in coalition building in a multipolar world; for this reason, diplomacy remains to be the best tactic to employ in the Middle East. Although the United States may have the resources and the capability to unilaterally end the conflict, participation in the coalition becomes a must when ensuring long-term stability.³³³ The methods currently employed to pursue U.S. interests will ultimately be rendered ineffective if the region remains unstable. Instead, the United States should facilitate increased regional, collaborative leadership on the part of its allies by gradually reducing its military presence and increasing its diplomatic pressure for reform and cooperation.

There is a legitimate concern among policymakers that such a strategy would cause fear and insecurity on the part of Western allies, particularly in Europe, as well as Israel. This is not the
case, however. First of all, to the extent credibility exists and can be measured, the United States’ credibility is already low. Failure to quickly resolve the Syrian crisis, plus the quagmire that resulted from the war in Iraq already undermined our regional, potentially global, credibility. Nevertheless, our allies have largely remained behind us and would do so under our current proposal as well. In fact, they may support it. This proposal allows more pressure and control over the direction of the region, and facilitates stability. The United States and our allies benefit from stability in the region above all else. This means any strategy that helps shore up those security commitments and produce greater stability will be popularly perceived by allies. This is particularly true of European powers who are grappling with massive refugee flows and instability from the region. Our policy would not change our stance toward Israel because its identity as a Jewish and Democratic state make it perceptually a separate issue for Middle East leaders from US involvement with various Arab States.

Some may argue that Saudi Arabia will abandon the US, turning to Russia or China as an alternative supporter. Such a response is unlikely. Despite Saudi Arabia’s posturing, they are weak because of low oil prices and already upset about the Iran deal. The time to abandon the United States and reinvest in new allies has passed. Furthermore, the idea that the only perception of abandonment in the region is tied to quantitative military capabilities is inaccurate. Much of the problem with President Obama’s strategy was not that he tried to lead from behind, it was that he did so ineffectively, without threatening or pressuring allies about changing their current activities. It resulted in a seemingly weak and inconsistent foreign policy that undermined credibility in the region. Further proof that allies do not solely perceive abandonment in military terms is demonstrated through their history of opposing US intervention.

At their core, these arguments rest on the fear of allies feeling abandoned by the United States. A closer look at the specifics of our proposal further puts to rest fears of undermining allied assurances. It would be a phased, slow drawdown. Of course, we would never rapidly pullout overnight. Plus, we would leave a ‘light footprint strategy’ in place. A light footprint strategy would “provide reassurance without encouraging moral hazard, and stability without entanglement or local irritation.” This would also allow for redeployment in the event of contingencies and provide assurance to our allies. However, it would make clear this is not a
timeless, unconditional commitment. If they want the support of the United States, they have to reciprocate that process through cooperative behavior. Events in the Middle East have repeatedly been shown to have an effect on the US economy and level of security, and for this reason the area has commanded much of the attention of our foreign policy since 1991. xlvi This attention has been arguably misplaced, as US involvement in Middle Eastern conflict has drawn on even as reasons for more limited involvement have surfaced. xlvii With the importance of past US interests dwindling, the most beneficial end the US can help bring to the region is stability. This new approach, then, is essential to prevent overstretched our military presence or committing to unsuccessfully, destabilizing attempts and intervention and regime change. xlviii

Making Middle East Strategy Great Again

The policy proposals outlined here are essential to the long-term policy agenda of the United States in the Middle East and beyond. This is not a withdrawal, and this is certainly not defeat. This strategy does not require assuming the best intentions of potential competitors like Iran or Russia within the region. Instead, it is a smarter, more aggressive approach in the region that factors in changing dynamics on the ground. Our current strategy outdated: It is a relic of the cold war, when we needed to have bases throughout the world to counter Soviet influence. However, bases have now become redundant and ineffective. Not to mention that reducing our presence could save billions, even if just applied to the Middle East. xlix

The unipolar moment is coming to a close. The United States must develop a new set of tools and acquire more finesse when dealing with the international realm. Brute force and overt military threats are no longer effective at setting the agenda and coercing allies. A successful, offensive strategy that regains popularity with a war-torn, force skeptical populace at home starts here. A strategy that puts an end to allied free-riding starts here. A strategy that reclaims the United States position as a global power, underwriting world order, starts here.

---

i Posen (454) “In fact, bipolarity is a system of chronic overreaction, internal and external.”

ii Ibid. “Although some predicted the demise of one or another superpower, theorists did not anticipate the unipolar world. Scholars had to figure it out as it unfolded. The United States is the only ‘unipole’ we have ever seen,”

iii Posen (452) “The United States still enjoys a very comfortable margin of superiority over other nations in both military power and economic underpinnings that make those capabilities possible… It is difficult
for the moment to envision a plausible combination of nation-states that could truly stand against the United States in a hot war [...], or even sustain the costs of a cold war.”

iv Posen (451) “a multipolar world – that is, a world characterized by multiple centers of power – is gradually emerging. The report attributes this to ‘the rise of emerging powers, a globalizing economy, an historic transfer of wealth and economic power from west to east, and the growing influence of non-state actors.’”

v Vanaik. “The economic success of China and other south-east Asian nations means the centre of gravity of the world economy is shifting towards the Pacific. Besides East Asia, India has witnessed average annual growth rates of 5-6% since the 1980s, while the petro-economies of West Asia have performed well, as have South Africa and Brazil by average global standards. The global ‘middle class’ is growing substantially, and it is here that the South is becoming of increasing economic importance to global capitalism.”

vi Vanaik. “But economic growth in these newly emerging economies is accompanied by obscene disparities between rich and poor. South Africa and Brazil are among the most unequal societies in the world while China, Russia and India are also experiencing lopsided growth.”

vii National Intelligence Council. “By 2025 a single “international community” composed of nation-states will no longer exist. Power will be more dispersed with the newer players bringing new rules of the game while risks will increase that the traditional Western alliances will weaken. Rather than emulating Western models of political and economic development, more countries may be attracted to China’s alternative development model.”

viii Cox (485) “We also have to judge economic power not only in terms of the size of an economy but also by the qualitative criteria of ‘competitiveness’. Economies like China, India, and Brazil are undoubtedly large and will no doubt get larger over time. But this does not necessarily make them competitive in relationship to most Western countries or the United States.”

ix Cox (485-486) “In terms of cutting edge research in science and technology, for example, the United States continues to hold a clear lead.”; “Innovation is also an American strength.”; “the United States is still well ahead in one other vital respect: corporate strength.”

x Cox (486) “the fact that the United States is able to mobilize the military manpower it can (currently it has more men and women under arms than it have on the ever of 9/11), can project power to every corner of the earth, is still the main provider of security in Asia and Europe and spends as much as it still does on ‘defence’ – about 45 per cent of the world’s total – suggests that the country has a very long way to go before one can talk about it becoming less of a superpower.”

xi Posen (455) “The relatively equal distribution in a multipolar world, with three of more consequential powers, produces on basic pattern of behavior: The arithmetic of coalition building influences matters great and small. The overall balance of capabilities, and the military balance in particular, are easily altered in a significant way depending on who sides with whom.”

xii Ibid.

xiii Morgenthau (175) “Diplomacy offers the best means of preserving peace which a society of sovereign nations has to offer”
xiv Morgenthau (169-173) The fundamental rules to effective diplomacy Morgenthau outlines supports the idea that we need to effective leverage diplomacy to peacefully achieve our objectives. Specifically, Morgenthau argues we cannot allow weaker ally states to make decisions for us, as currently happens. We also cannot put ourselves in a position where we cannot act freely (e.g. decided to either leave the region or further invest). Our proposal allows such flexibility, the current approach does not.

xv Posen (540) As it relates to military use of force, “The cost of US efforts to make the world over in its image, relative to the benefits of such efforts, will ultimately begin to tell, however. America will gradually be inclined to do less.” This means the United States will need an alternate approach to getting its desired ends.

xvi Posen (537) “despite Western military-technological prowess, the gap appears to be narrowing”

xvii Mousavian.

xviii Walt (158) “excessive confidence in allied support will encourage weak states to free-ride”

xix Laub. The Yemen civil war began as - and largely still is - a political conflict between the dissatisfied Houthi rebels and the current government. The Saudis logically fear the instability produced on their border by such a conflict, which may seem to provide a justification for intervention. However, there are legitimate concerns that the conflict will become a sectarian proxy-war between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as each side invests in the conflict to counter the other side’s escalation. Saudi Arabia’s involvement is being implicitly supported by broad US support, and explicitly supported by US air strikes. Saudi Arabia and the United States both believe they are taking actions to ensure their security, as does Iran, which demonstrates the tragic nature of this security dilemma. This is also an example of the direct kind of instability that freeriding on US support produces, as well as how robust US presence can escalate direct conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The conflict in Yemen is already devastating and lengthy, and continued US support for involvement only ensures prolonged instability. Our primary concern should be stabilizing such conflicts; the US benefits from a stable region above the outcome of any one conflict.

x Mousavian.

xx Walt (153) “Balancing is defined as allying with others against the prevailing threat” Which means crafting a proper balance of power to counter growing Iranian influence will be essential.

xxi Mousavian.

xxii Ibid.

xxiii Ibid.

xxiv Ibid.

xxv Ibid. Iranian mistrust of the United States dates back to the United States’ decision to overthrow Mohammad Mosaddegh and replace him with Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to secure oil interests. To the people of Iran, this symbol of regime change looms large, and a lead from behind approach with less military presence would make them more amenable to cooperation.

xxvi Ibid.

xxvii Ibid. “America’s oil-centered involvement in the Middle East is becoming less strategically important as the United States moves toward becoming the leading exporter of oil and gas.”

xxviii Byman. “The United States itself has reemerged as a major oil player, going from 8 million barrels per day in 2004 to a world-leading 14 million barrels per day in 2014. In addition, the world itself has an oil glut, with prices having plunged from a West Texas Intermediate (WTI) peak of $133.88 per barrel in
June 2008 to $31.68 per barrel in January 2016. A higher price helps U.S. producers, a significant part of the U.S. economy, while the glut makes the Middle East’s spare capacity less important.”

Smith. “The surplus in global oil markets will last for longer than previously thought, persisting into late 2017 as demand growth slumps and supply proves resilient, the International Energy Agency said.”

Jervis (127) The expansion of power “often operates with the increase of less tangible power and influence.” So even if Iran is currently unable to challenge the United States, they still pose a threat.

Posen (540) Even if it’s a slow process, these regimes will gain power, “A multipolar order may gradually creep up on us, rather than emerge with a crash.”

Friedman.

Ibd.

Jervis (135) “The belief that an increase in military strength always leads to an increase in security is often linked to the belief that the only route to security is through military strength.”

Mousavian.

Rovner.

Lukyanov. Russia has also been involved within the region, providing military assistance under the guise of combating extremist groups. In a speech to the UN General Assembly and during a televised interview, Vladimir Putin expressed the idea of multilateral cooperation in regards to expelling terrorism. In 2016, after pulling his troops from the ground in Syria, Vladimir Putin called for the creation of a coalition between the United States, Russia, and Europe to combat ISIS and the Islamic State within the Middle East. Russian military troops had been previously deployed to Syria earlier in the year to fight ISIS and other extremist groups.

Haass.

Posen (455) “The arithmetic of coalition building will affect all matters great & small”

Walt (574) Part of the reason they would support our proposal is because they need a new approach to change the instability that exists, “The EU is buffeted by serious instability on its frontiers. State failures in Libya, Syria, Yemen, and parts of Africa have produced a growing flood of refugees” Even if they do not support our actions, they are currently too weak to pressure the United States to act on their behalf.

Cox (564) “even those who have doubts about American leadership skills, still find that they have no alternative but to ally themselves with it.”

Nye (47) “Smart power goes to the heart of the problem of power conversion.” This is important because the Obama administration was (at least perceived as) unable to convert our hard power advantage into advancing diplomacy. Our approach, therefore, is needed to ensure we can utilize our military advantage to effectively result in forwarding our agenda. There is no value to a tool you cannot use effectively.

Mousavian. Many GCC allies were feverishly opposed to the intervention in Iraq precisely because it was perceived as destabilizing the biggest counter-balance to Iranian influence and, in essence, ceded that territory to Iran for the taking. As Mousavian describes, “Many Arab countries perceived and continue to perceive that the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan paved the way for the steady rise of Iran’s
influence in the region at their expense.” This demonstrates the ineffective results of US intervention, while also showing that GCC states can be persuaded non-intervention is a more effective approach to the region.

Rovner.

Ibid. ‘Reassurances’ here refers to providing assurance to allies that we will follow through on our security commitments and are committed to their security. This is the strategy needed to balance between proving assurances and keeping our allies in-line.

Auerswald. “The Middle East, as virtually everyone knows, is the repository of half of the world’s proven oil reserves, the locus of vital shipping lanes and the heartland of Islamic fundamentalist terrorism. Events there directly affect the U.S. economy and its national security, which is why we almost universally view this region as one of paramount importance. That the U.S. military presence has declined since the end of the Cold War in every part of the world except this one is a natural reflection of the region’s strategic centrality.”

Haass. “The United States retains important and in some cases vital interests in the Middle East, including a deep commitment to Israel's security, opposition to terrorism and the spread of nuclear weapons, and a commitment to safeguarding access to the region's energy resources. But today, the region is not an arena of decisive great-power competition, as it was at times during the Cold War, nor is it home to any major power. In addition, it is a part of the world where local realities can and often do limit the utility of military force, economic sanctions, and diplomacy. The fact that the United States is moving toward energy self-sufficiency gives it some added cushion (although not independence) from the consequences of the region's turbulence.”

Downes (440) “The record of foreign-imposed regime change over the last two centuries is not a happy one. The promise of a quick, all-in-one solution is an illusion.”

MacGregor.


