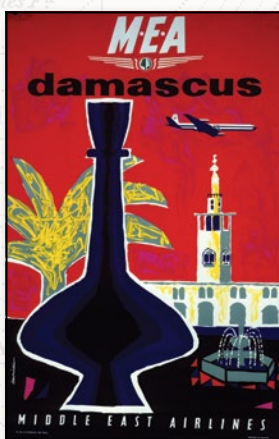
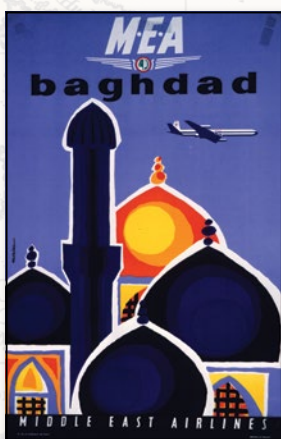


STRATEGIKA

CONFLICTS OF THE PAST AS LESSONS FOR THE PRESENT



How Might the United States Reboot Its Middle East Policy and Restore Confidence in US Power and Influence?

IN THIS ISSUE

Joshua Muravchik • Kimberly Kagan • Colonel Joseph (Joe) Felter (Ret.) • Walter Russell Mead
Barry Strauss • Thomas Donnelly • Kori Schake • Bing West • Peter R. Mansoor



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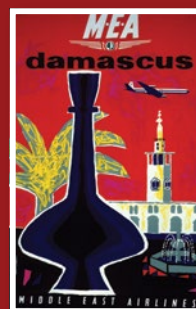
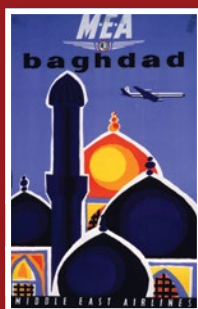
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ABOUT THE POSTERS IN THIS ISSUE

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Time to Combat the Spreading Virus of Radical Islam

Joshua Muravchik

America's clout in the Middle East is waning, but this is not the fruit of an inexorable process divorced from human will. Rather it reflects aggressive bids by other actors—Iran, Russia, Turkey, and a variety of Islamist factions—to enhance their power at the same time that America has pursued a policy of lowering its profile and shrinking its footprint. This approach was born of the belief that regional antipathy to America stemmed mostly from our own excessive assertiveness—too much military intervention and too much touting our own values.

After six years it is apparent that this strategy has failed. America's relations with half a dozen or so regional states are more strained than before and nowhere have they improved. Attitudes toward America have deteriorated not only with governments, but with publics, too. Opinion polls show that America's popularity is lower even than during the presidency of George W. Bush, whose invasion of Iraq was angrily opposed in the region.¹

Indeed, President Barack Obama's decision to authorize a prolonged air campaign over Iraq and Syria with the stated goal of "degrad[ing] and...destroy[ing]" the Islamic State (ISIS) constitutes an implicit acknowledgement that showing a more diffident and respectful face failed to advance America's interests.

A new president is likely to wish to restore America's standing in the Middle East. Some of the ground lost will be difficult to regain. Having casually dismissed allies and interests, we will find it harder to persuade others to rely on us. Nonetheless, our intrinsic strength, if exerted, is far greater than that of our foes and competitors. We can restore our position if we determine to do so.

The starting point is to identify the threats we face. The core reason for foreign policy is the existence of threats: either manifest ones that must be faced or potential ones that timely action might prevent from materializing. Were the world unthreatening, we might still engage abroad on behalf of our values, but the isolationists would have a strong case. Thanks to President Obama's experiment, the hypothesis that a diminished foreign policy would make us safer by avoiding provocation has been tested, and it has failed. The task of reconstruction begins with the question: what is the threat (or threats)?

The answer—whether we focus on Iran, al-Qaeda, ISIS, Hamas, or others—is radical Islam. This is an ideology that aims at world domination through first conquering and harnessing the Muslim world, that is, uniting the *Ummah* in a new caliphate. Radical Islam was born with the Muslim Brotherhood in 1928 (although earlier roots can be traced, notably to Indian Deobandism). While in some sense revivalist, the thrust of this movement has been from the start less toward self-improvement than toward elevating the status and power of Islam vis-à-vis the infidel world.

In its first half century Islamism gathered adherents but exerted less influence than nationalism and other Western-born ideologies and lost out in political confrontations with military and other elites. This changed, however, with the triumph of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's "Islamic revolution" in Iran, which electrified the Muslim world and infused radical Islam with immense new energy. The transition was analogous to the impact of Lenin's conquest of Russia in 1917, which transformed socialism from a secondary force in world politics to one that largely shaped the history of the rest of the century.²

The effect was both material and psychological. In each case the resources of a formidable state were harnessed to a revolutionary ideology. And in each case the appearance of a flesh-and-blood model—"socialist power" or an "Islamic republic"—fired the imaginations of ideological soul mates far and wide. In the Russian case, even socialists who condemned Lenin's methods felt renewed in their conviction that socialism was the wave of the future. Likewise, in the case of Iran, even Muslim radicals who loathed Shiism were reinforced in the belief that an Islamic theocracy, a caliphate, could in fact be created anew.

True, Sunni and Shiite Islamists are battling each other in Syria and Iraq with deadly ferocity, but each regards the Judeo-Christian world as the ultimate enemy. And each has already inflicted casualties on the United States and its allies. These casualties, even those of 9/11, might amount only to small beginnings. Should the Islamists—either Sunni or Shiite—succeed in conquering a large swath of the Muslim world, they would use it as a platform for their campaign against the West that would entail violence on a scale eclipsing anything we have experienced thus far.

What to do about it? First, we must stop Iran's nuclear program, and the only likely way to achieve this is by military means. Years of negotiations have only allowed Iran to creep ever closer to a bomb. Sanctions have damaged Iran's economy, but there is no indication that they have weakened its determination to join the nuclear club. Achieving this status would augment Iran's power enormously. Like any other regime built on a revolutionary ideology, Iran's will not forgo this out of economic considerations.

If we have not already lost the war against the Islamic State by the time a new president is inaugurated, military strategy must be revised from "no boots on the ground" to

“whatever it takes to win.” This is very likely to mean the deployment of US ground forces to Iraq. We should also strengthen ties with Kurdistan and respond sympathetically to its push for greater autonomy. The Kurds are natural allies of the United States, and the moral case for a Kurdish state is strong. The hope that Turkey might be pulled back into the role of ally to the West in substance as well as in form inhibits us from all-out support for Kurdish self-determination, which would tear Turkey apart. Nonetheless, we should be more forthcoming in our solidarity with the Kurds.

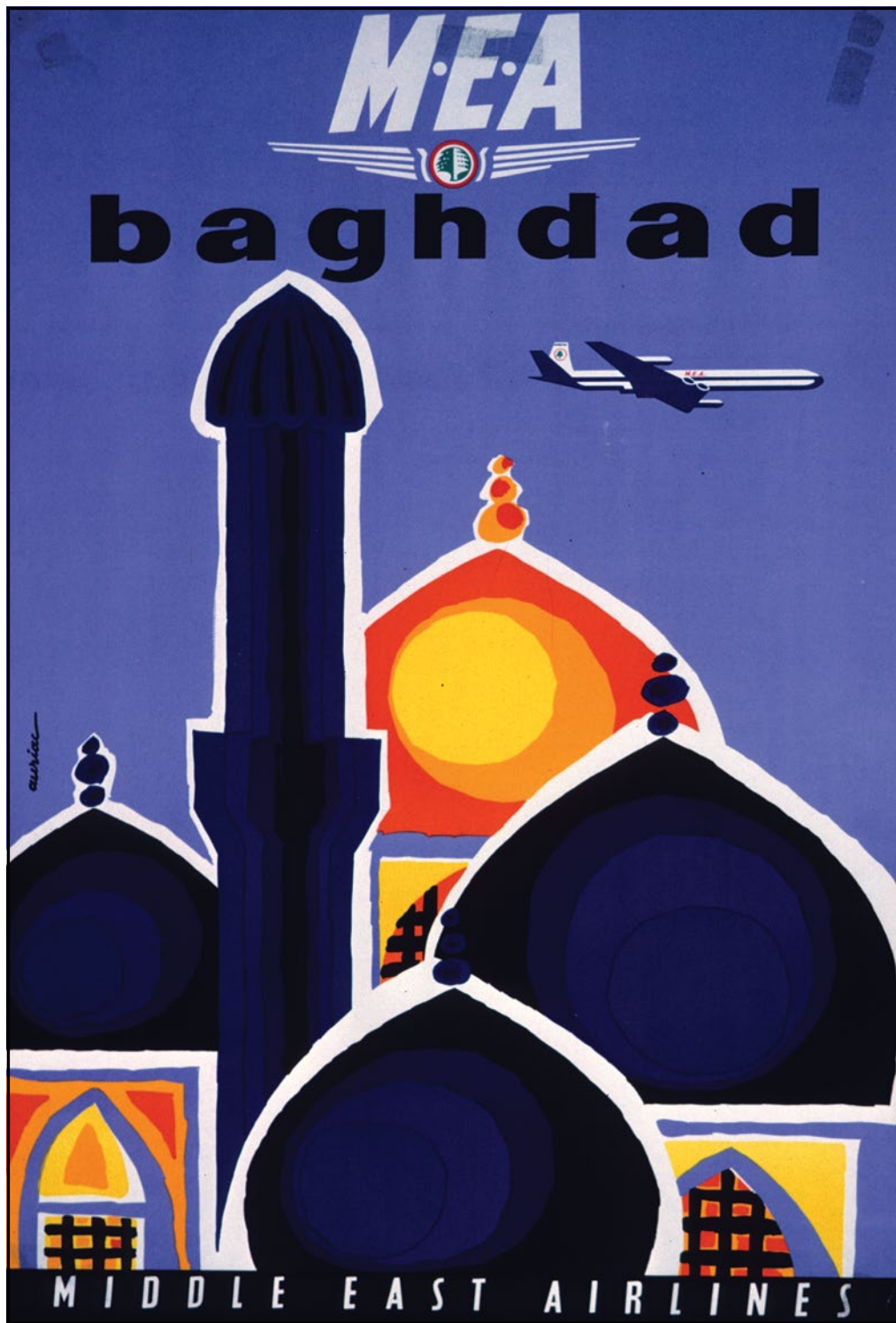
In Syria, too, where pro-Western forces have been withering on the vine for want of support, there is a danger that the war will be lost by the time of a new US administration. Nonetheless, if a base of operations can be maintained in southern Syria with the cooperation of Jordan and possibly Israel, then we can undertake a much more committed program of equipping and training a non-Islamist faction. Throughout the Iraq-Syria theater, which may soon encompass Lebanon as well, our goal cannot be to defeat one side in the war between Sunni and Shiite Islamists. We must aim to defeat both. If we cannot, it would be better to let them go on battling each other than to allow either one to consolidate power.

Our situation in this theater would be more favorable were there a friendly government in Turkey. President Erdogan has increasingly revealed himself to be a volatile, erratic, and in his own way militant, Islamist.³ Erdogan rules by dint of elections, but the body politic is closely divided. We should strive to tilt it away from the Islamists by recreating US information programs modeled after those of the Cold War. Some of these still exist but have atrophied. Of course heavy-handed propaganda can backfire, but in Italy, France, Germany, Austria, and Japan in the aftermath of World War II, the United States succeeded in waging the “war of ideas” against a formidable Soviet rival.⁴

A revitalized US information capacity would have many targets beyond Turkey, including the entire Middle East. Special

POLL: HOW BEST MIGHT THE US RESTORE ITS INFLUENCE IN THE MIDDLE EAST?

- It is now nearly impossible and we should keep out until the chaos sorts itself out.
- There are new opportunities to have a more pragmatic relationship with Iran against common enemies.
- The US needs to restore close ties with Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and the Gulf monarchies.
- The US should renegotiate with Iraq to reestablish a military base in Anbar Province.
- The US should use air power far more strongly to ensure the defeat of those we attack.



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emphasis should be given to Iran, aiming to help revive the popular movement against the regime that was suppressed in 2009.

None of this is done most effectively by the State Department where such US information programs as survive have been housed since the abolition of the US Information Agency in 2000. The demands of diplomacy and of “public diplomacy” are different and often in conflict. Discretion is the soul of diplomacy, but “public diplomacy” demands just the opposite: frankness and outspokenness. To wage the contemporary war of ideas, the United States should remove this function from the State Department and establish an agency along the lines of the USIA.

The USIA always had as part of its mission encouraging democracy and liberal values. A new agency should do likewise, notwithstanding the disappointing failure of the 2011 Arab Spring. In the long run, the propagation of liberal values is essential to weakening the appeal of Islamism among Muslims. But in the short run, we are facing a difficult struggle, and we have allies—such as the governments of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Morocco—that are neither liberal nor democratic. It would be sheer folly to push them away or to penalize them for their abuses in ways that run the risk of causing their downfall. When the shah was overthrown by Khomeini, with Washington’s acquiescence, the result was not only incalculable damage to America’s strategic position but also a reduction rather than increase in the freedom of the Iranian people.

We faced similar dilemmas in the Cold War in our alliances or friendly relations with the governments of Taiwan, South Korea, Portugal, Greece, Spain, and others. Although we were taxed with the charge of hypocrisy for keeping such allies in the name of the “free world,” and the accusation did bite, in the end our victory in the Cold War was a tremendous boon for freedom and democracy worldwide, and along the way each of these five countries as well as others sloughed off dictatorship and embraced democracy.

While acknowledging that most of the hopes raised by the Arab Spring have been dashed and dealing with the political implications of this, we should encourage the one ray of democratic hope that has continued to shine, namely, the transition of Tunisia, which could become a model for the region. We should be generous in our support for Tunisia and offer appropriate support to its secularists.

In the Cold War, we encouraged and collaborated with moderate Leftists against the Communists. It would be a false analogy to believe, as some have urged, that “moderate” Islamists offer an alternative to the more violent groups. Even the most moderate Islamists have foresworn violence only in their own countries (and usually for tactical reasons) while endorsing violence against Israel and US forces in the Middle East. And Islamism of whatever stripe is posited on a fundamental antipathy between Islam and the West. It would be to our interest to encourage the thought that one can be a good Muslim

and reject the political ideology of Islamism. To date, few voices or forces have expressed this thought, but to the extent they can be identified, we should encourage them.

In sum, America needs to build up its capacities to exercise hard and soft power, target Islamism, and do what it takes to stop Iran from becoming a nuclear weapons state.

1 Pew Research, "The American Brand," Global Attitudes Project, July 14, 2014, <http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/07/14/chapter-1-the-american-brand/>.

2 Joshua Muravchik, *Heaven on Earth: The Rise and Fall of Socialism* (Encounter, 2002).

3 Dexter Filkins, "The Deep State," *The New Yorker*, March 12, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/03/12/the-deep-state>.

4 Arch Puddington, *Broadcasting Freedom: The Cold War Triumph of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty* (University Press of Kentucky, 2003); Joshua Muravchik, *Exporting Democracy: Fulfilling America's Destiny* (AEI Press, 1996).



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The United States Must Turn Over Its Upside-Down Foreign Policy

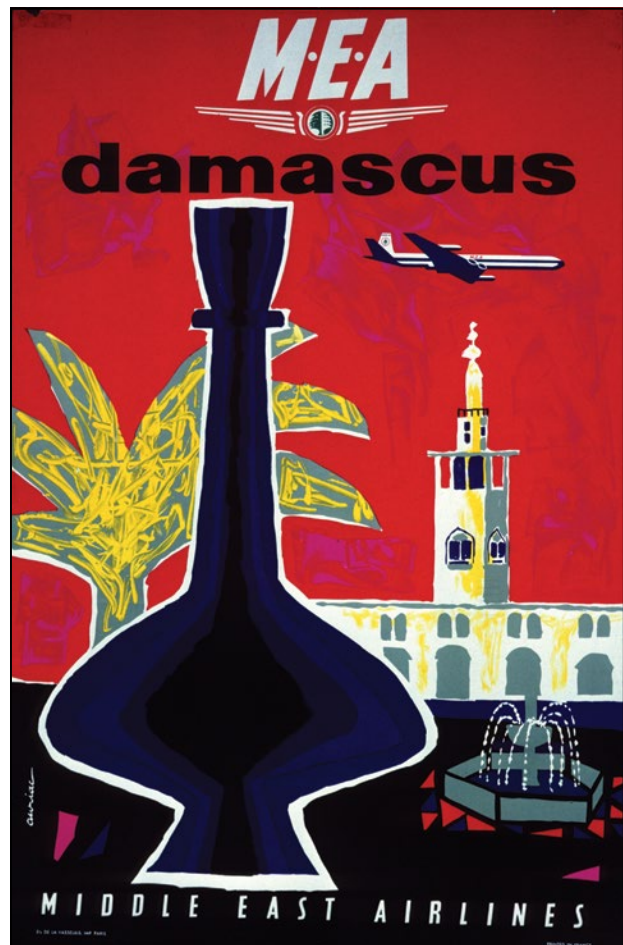
Kimberly Kagan

The United States does not have an image problem in the Middle East. It has a reality problem. The United States has lost credibility in the Middle East by abandoning its friends and reaching out to its enemies. The United States has also lost sight of its core interests, as well as its principles. America's interests in the Middle East include countering al-Qaeda, its affiliates, and its major splinters such as the Islamic State; ensuring the preservation of sovereign states and the states system; preventing Iran from achieving regional hegemony and nuclear capability; and ensuring the free flow of oil and other resources essential to the global economy. Its principles include opposing genocide and other mass atrocities, opposing and punishing the use of weapons of mass destruction, supporting international law, and standing by its allies. We have abandoned all of these, to our great detriment. Recovering our stature in the region requires recommitting ourselves to pursue our values and our needs.

Iraq is one former friend that the United States abandoned. The withdrawal of US forces from Iraq in 2011, followed by more than two years of American neglect of the country, allowed the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) to arise unchallenged. The United States took no action after ISIS captured Fallujah in January 2014, waited several months after the fall of Mosul to assess the situation, and by August 2014 reactively targeted ISIS positions in Iraq and Syria through air strikes. These engagements have

parried the Islamic State's offensive in Arbil, Iraq and Kobani, Syria. But ISIS is still on the offensive in Anbar, Iraq and Deir ez-Zour, Syria, as of December 2014.

The Syrian moderate opposition was another such potential friend. American inaction in Syria has led to the marginalization of Syria's moderate opposition and its eclipse by more effective and powerful



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radical groups. The targeting of the Islamic State and the internationally focused al-Qaeda-backed Khorasan group in Syria, in particular, have seemed to opposition elements to empower the Assad regime, which continues its brutal targeting of its population.

The narrative throughout the region, indeed, is that the United States is flipping its traditional alliance structure away from the Sunni and Arab states and toward Iran and its Shi'a proxies. The Obama administration may not have intended any such flip, but its policies in Iraq and Syria provide ample evidence to prove to fearful allies that we have abandoned them.

The Iranian regime is the chief backer of Assad and has provided advising, assistance, and proxy militias to stabilize the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Iranian media daily hails Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps—Qods Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Qassem Soleimani as the “savior of Iraq.” Iranian trainers and proxies are deeply interwoven within the ISF, which has become a highly sectarian Shi'a force since we abandoned it in 2011. The stated US policy of supporting and partnering only with the ISF looks to many Sunnis in Iraq and throughout the region like a de facto alliance with Iran. The integration of Iranian, Hezbollah, and other

proxy elements in Assad's forces make the American refusal to take any serious action against Assad look like tacit support to Iran in that theater. One does not have to be a conspiracy theorist to see in these policies a determination to back Tehran against America's traditional Arab partners.

The United States has also relaxed sanctions against the Iranian regime, accepted the principle that Iran will have a significant indigenous enrichment capability, and allowed Iran to conceal the history of its nuclear program. In doing so, the United States has adopted a negotiating position at odds with numerous UN Security Council Resolutions, the requirements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (to which Iran is a signatory), and many agreements with other members of the P5+1 about the red lines to be drawn in negotiations. Again, to the eyes of worried Sunni Arabs, it appears that the Obama administration is more concerned with some kind of rapprochement with Iran than it is with standing by its commitments under international law and treaty—to say nothing of standing by its alliances.

The United States needs to restore its credibility by pursuing its interests with strength: actually defeating and destroying the Islamic State, supporting strongly the indigenous Iraqi and Syrian Sunni resistance to this hateful ideology and militancy, targeting Assad's capabilities to attack his people, leveraging its military assistance in Iraq to remove Iranian military advisors from that country, and strongly supporting its national interests in opposing the Iranian nuclear program in accord with international law and United Nations resolutions. We must wrench ourselves away from the policy of drifting toward a chimerical rapprochement with Iran and reorient ourselves in support of our traditional partners and allies.



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Point, Yale University, Georgetown University, and American University, Kagan served in Kabul for fifteen months in 2010 and 2011 as a “directed telescope” to General David H. Petraeus and subsequently General John Allen, working on special projects for these commanders of the International Security Assistance Force. She is the author of *The Eye of Command* (University of Michigan Press, 2006) and *The Surge: A Military History* (Encounter Books, 2009).

Know the Enemy and the Nature of the Conflict We Face

Colonel Joseph (Joe) Felter (Ret.)

An important first step in rebooting US Middle East policy and more effectively addressing the roots of the problems that have manifested into threats to US and international security demands that we more holistically embrace Sun Tzu's maxim of the importance of knowing one's enemy.¹ It also requires a better appreciation of Clausewitz's dictum that political leaders

and their senior military commanders must understand the true nature of the conflict they are fighting.² Tangible threats posed by extremists from ISIS, al-Qaeda, and other violent and destabilizing radical Islamist groups can—and should—be interdicted decisively, ideally through multilateral responses, but also unilaterally when these options are not feasible.

But such overt and largely kinetic efforts, while important, are limited in their effect to the attrition of symptoms of the most serious and enduring threat that we face in the Middle East. You cannot kill, capture, or incarcerate an idea, and it is the radicalizing ideas undergirding militant Islam that inspire misguided young men from around the world to attack the United States and its interests. The hostile Islamic extremist ideology is the root cause of the most serious threats we face in the Middle East and defines the nature of the war in which we have embarked.

Early on in what would be a protracted war against ideologically motivated extremists, an American president admonished the Nation that "We face a hostile ideology global in scope...ruthless in purpose, and insidious in method. Unhappily, the danger it poses promises to be of indefinite duration." While eerily similar to the political discourse in the early years of the War on Terror, this warning was made by President Eisenhower in his farewell address to the nation on January 17, 1961. President Eisenhower continued on in this speech warning that, "To meet it successfully,



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there is called for, not so much the emotional and transitory sacrifices of crisis, but rather those which enable us to carry forward steadily, surely, and without complaint the burdens of a prolonged and complex struggle with liberty the stake.”

The United States and our NATO allies mobilized all instruments of national power in what indeed became a steady approach to the prolonged and complex struggle that eventually defeated Soviet Communism, effectively winning the Cold War almost three decades later. Notably, the comprehensive multifaceted effort to defeat Communism included concerted efforts to know the enemy we confronted. In this case the enemy included the Soviet’s military forces and those they supported around the world such as in Cuba, Vietnam, and in Soviet satellite states. But there was recognition among policy makers that the enemy also included the ruthless and insidious Communist ideology itself.

In the course of the United States and West’s victory over Soviet Communism, great efforts were made to understand the underpinnings and complexities of this hostile ideology. Entire disciplines were stood up at our finest academic institutions and other centers to study Communism, its thought leaders, and ideological roots. Through these efforts, Communism’s internal inconsistencies, ideological fractures, and other weaknesses were exposed. Scholars and policy analysts developed the expertise to identify debates over strategy, and disagreements over timing and tactics among Communist leaders and ideologues. Eventually these and other fault lines and failures of Communism were exposed and this contributed to its ultimate imploding on itself by popular demand.

The implosion of Soviet Communism is a relevant precedent to America’s challenges of rebooting its policies in the Middle East and taking a more

informed tack in our approach to addressing the roots of the most pernicious threats to US national security emanating from the region. We have failed to heed an important and hard-earned lesson from our victory in the Cold War, namely that a key component of a comprehensive policy to defeat an ideologically motivated enemy is to exploit opportunities to discredit and delegitimize the ideology itself in the eyes of its misguided adherents.

Most Americans—even those that came of age long after the defeat of Soviet Communism—recognize the names and even images of influential Communists ideologues and leaders like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Guevara, and Castro. Over thirteen years since nineteen ideologically motivated terrorists of Middle Eastern descent—fifteen of whom hailed from Saudi Arabia—attacked the United States and in the midst of a resurgent radical Islamist threat in Iraq and Syria, the average US citizen as well as a majority of our policy makers are far less likely to be familiar with the most influential thought leaders inspiring the adherents of radical Islam. The most important thought leaders dead or living in al-Qaeda, for example, are not Usama bin Laden, Ayman al-Zawahiri, or other well-known operational leaders. Instead, findings from rigorous analysis of influence in the Jihadi Salafist network shows they are Middle Easterners unknown to most Americans and Westerners, people like Abu Muhammad al Maqdisi, Abu Basir al-Tartusi, Abd al-Qadir ibn Abd al-Aziz, and Abu Qatada al Filistini.³

There is clear evidence that the grand ideas developed by these scholars and other ideologues lesser known in the West inform the content of the radicalization efforts carried out by extremist recruiters—in mosques, madrasas, and online—and inspire terrorist attacks in the Middle East and around the world.

To be clear, these radicalizing ideas are not sanctioned within mainstream Islam or maintained by the vast majority of Muslims. In fact, the most powerful weapon that can be wielded against these radicalizing ideas are the counterarguments and responses by respected Salafist clerics who may share many of the extreme views of these radicals such as establishing and governing Islamic states, but differ on critical interpretations of how to achieve these ends, namely whether it is permissible to kill innocents in the pursuit of their objectives.⁴

Prevailing against the threats we face in the region calls for a more informed appreciation of the enemy and recognition of the real nature of the conflicts we are addressing. Thus far we have largely failed on both accounts. Clausewitz acknowledges that, “The aim of war should be to defeat the enemy,” but also that, “The conquest of his whole territory is not always necessary, and total occupation of his territory may not be enough.”⁵ Denying extremists safe havens and the ability to seize territory are important parts of our strategy. The key terrain in this ideological struggle, however, may be between the ears of these extremists, their supporters, and their would-be recruits, who conspire to do us harm.

Rebooting in the Middle East and embarking on a path that restores greater confidence in US power and influence is achievable. But we must recognize that we are—once again—engaged in an ideological struggle, make concerted efforts to understand our enemy’s ideology and how best to undermine its influence, and destroy its appeal as prerequisites for long-term success going forward.

¹ Sun Tzu’s quoted passage from the *Art of War* is often translated as, “It is said that if you know your enemies and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles.”

² Carl von Clausewitz (*On War* [Michael Howard and Peter Paret, eds. and trans.] [Princeton University Press, 1984], pp. 88–89) warns: “The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish...the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.”

³ The Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point conducted a systematic mapping of ideological influence within the Jihadi Salafist movement through a citation analysis of the most read texts in al-Qaeda’s online library. This analysis identified the most influential ideologues—and their radicalizing ideas. The results of this seminal study, led by Dr. William McCants, are presented in the CTC’s Militant Ideology Atlas available online at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/militant-ideology-atlas>.

⁴ However, the United States and West are limited in their ability to overtly challenge the validity of the arguments that extremist groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS use to inspire and justify their violent and radical behavior. Identifying and amplifying the arguments of Salafist scholars, clerics, and other individuals that criticize and condemn the strategies and tactics used by extremists groups is more likely to resonate with these groups and have an effect. See Jarret Brachman and William McCants, “Stealing al Qaeda’s Playbook,” West Point Combating Terrorism Center available at <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/stealing-al-qaidas-playbook>.

⁵ See Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 577.



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Five Points for Success in the Middle East

Thomas Donnelly

To reestablish a favorable balance of power across the Greater Middle East—the region stretching from the northwest coast of Africa through the Arab lands of the Levant and Persian Gulf into South Asia—the United States must first be clear about its geopolitical goals. The most immediate should be to defeat Iran’s bid for regional hegemony, but the larger purpose must be to find a way to rebuild stable and create more decent polities in Sunni lands. This second, arguably, is a heavier lift than even America can manage—it is a mission civilatrice of the most formidable kind—but without decent governance, true stability will remain elusive. Under such circumstances, it is only possible to identify the general characteristics of a strategy. Here are the top five:

1. Be patient. In declaring war on the Islamic State, President Obama made an important admission, one that’s been hard for America to face up to: this is the Long War. Obama has thrown away in six years what it took his predecessors thirty to achieve. To get back to where we were in 2009—after President George W. Bush stopped doing “stupid stuff”—will take time.

2. Get strong. This is a war; soft power won’t cut it. It’s a big war; drone strikes and SEAL Team 6 alone won’t cut it. Osama bin Laden was right: the Middle East is a place where you must be seen as the “strong horse.” We aren’t seen as the strong horse any more, and in fact we are not. Without the military means to compel our (many) enemies to do our will—even though none of them is himself a strong horse—all we can do is whack moles.

3. Get smart. We have to see the war for what it is, in its totality. It’s not just the Islamic State, “core” al-Qaeda,

AQ’s many “affiliates,” Iran, or Pakistan, but a region that’s inherently chaotic and inherently important; the Middle East is central to the global balance of power. No more “pivots,” ever!

4. Go Sunni. Sunnis are the vast majority of Muslims. Holding together a moderate-Sunni coalition—no matter how bad the Saudis are, no matter how two-faced—is the only way to begin to win, at least from where we are now; if the Israelis can understand this, so should we. This also means we must not again make the mistake—the mistake to which American elites are most prone—of imagining a “condominium” with Iran.

5. Get real. America can do this, and Americans will do what it takes, if told the truth. No one wants to “get sucked into” a Middle East war, but every president does. The key to long-term success is to accumulate lesser wins. The most important consequence of the Iraq “surge” was its effect on American public opinion; not even President Barack Obama and Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi had the votes or the stomach to stop it. If we don’t pretend that this is easy, or quick, or, worst of all, that it doesn’t matter, we can win.

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Point the Way out of the Hole

Walter Russell Mead

The first step for the United States in the Middle East is to observe the First Rule of Holes: stop digging. The pursuit of a nuclear understanding with Iran without simultaneously acting to constrain Iran's effort to dominate the region has destabilized the Sunni world, undermined key American alliances, and contributed to the rise of ISIS and related groups.

The only possible basis for some kind of stability in the Middle East these days involves a Sunni-Shi'a balance based on a Shi'a-dominated Iraqi government and a Sunni-dominated government in Syria. In a sense this would complete the "swap" begun when the Ba'athist, Sunni-dominated Iraqi regime was replaced by a Shi'a regime after the US invasion. If the United States were seen to be moving toward establishing a majority-based regime in Syria, our relations with Sunni nations from Turkey to Saudi Arabia would begin to improve.

At this point, it is easier to point in the right direction than to trace out a path that policy makers can easily follow. But in order to avoid even worse turmoil in the region, the United States needs to link the prospect of a nuclear deal with Iran to a resolution of the future of Syria in a way that offers minority communities some basic guarantees, but ensures a government

that reflects the majority's values and concerns. The linkage doesn't need to be explicit or formal, but American allies need to know where we stand and need to feel that our approach to Iran takes their interests into account.

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Too Many Questions and Too Much Doubt

Kori Schake

That fine strategist Groucho Marx said that in politics, authenticity is everything; once you can fake that, you've got it made. The problem with US power and influence in the Middle East is that countries are rightly reading our lack of seriousness, the lack of authenticity in our claims that using chemical weapons is a red line, that we will not permit an Iranian nuclear weapons program, that Bashar al-Assad must go, that we affected a responsible withdrawal from Iraq leaving behind a stable and democratic country, and that we will stand by our friends and protect our allies.

What is needed to restore confidence in US power and influence is to state clearly what we expect and also what we will not tolerate from countries and organizations and individuals in the region, and then enforce those standards. Does anyone know what our policy toward arms sales to Egypt is? The sales were suspended with the Sissi coup, and then reinstated when we needed Egyptian support to attack the Islamic State. Does anyone believe President Obama, who blanched at enforcing his red line in Syria, would actually begin a war to destroy Iran's nuclear weapons infrastructure? Countries in the region are cynical about American policies, and with good reason.

Restoring American credibility will be the work of many years. We will be tested, and must pass the tests. We must say what we mean, and enforce what we say. That will probably require a different American president, one more serious about the use of military

force and more consistently attentive to the problems of the people in the region. We need actual strategies—not just limited military operations—if we are to understand and affect the course of events.

Helping our actual friends would be a great place to start. Jordan has borne the burden of Palestinian and now Syrian refugees despite the enormous changes it has affected in the country, continues to practice inclusive politics and has interesting ideas about how to defang the threat of political Islam. Making a success of Jordan would also be a counterweight to the Hamas and Hezbollah arguments for “resistance.”

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Rebooting the United States' Middle East Policy

Barry Strauss

To reboot its policy in the Middle East, the United States need not follow any sophisticated programs or up-to-date ideas. It needs only to act according to a rule as old as the Greeks and Romans: help your friends and hurt your enemies. America's friends in the Middle East are the pro-Western (or at least largely pro-Western) regimes, whether democracies, monarchies, or rule by strongmen, states such as Egypt, Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and the U.A.E, and the pro-Western elements in troubled regimes such as Lebanon and Palestine, as well as in outright enemies such as Iran, where the United States should support the anti-government movement. Its enemies are al-Qaeda, Iran, ISIS, and the Islamist elements in failed states such as Libya—in short, the various elements of the Islamist front. America needs to support its friends financially and militarily. Although it should exercise due caution and judge every case carefully, it needs to be ready to intervene directly in the region, with ground troops if necessary. To do so will require a military buildup, which will in turn require the support of the American people. So new policies will need sound political leadership at home to educate the public and to rally its will. America should pay due attention to the sensitivities of the region's and the world's billion Muslims, the overwhelming majority of whom are good and peaceable. By the same token, it should remember that what the world esteems above all is

strength and success. The United States should not be afraid to use force when needed; on the contrary, it should recognize that the successful application of force advances peace.

BARRY STRAUSS (Cornell University) is a military historian with a focus on ancient Greece and Rome. His *Battle of Salamis: The Naval Encounter That Saved Greece—and Western Civilization* was named one of the best books of 2004 by the *Washington Post*. His latest book, *The Death of Caesar: The Story of History's Most Famous Assassination* (Simon & Schuster, March 2015), has been hailed as "clear and compelling" by *TIME* and received three starred reviews from book journals (*Kirkus*, *Library Journal*, *Shelf Awareness*). His *Masters of Command: Alexander, Hannibal, Caesar and the Genius of Leadership* (Simon & Schuster, May 2012), was named one of the best books of 2012 by Bloomberg.

Boots Necessary to Reboot Our Influence

Bing West

America has only one commander in chief at a time. We lost credibility in the Middle East due to the calculated decisions of Mr. Obama to abandon Mubarak, bomb and then ignore Libya, antagonize Israel, threaten and then back down in Syria, walk away from and then return to Iraq, negotiate flaccidly with Iran, and promise to pull our small residual force out of Afghanistan by the end of his presidency. Mr. Obama has now set the military goal of destroying the Islamists who hold half of Iraq and Syria. Accomplishing that would certainly restore confidence in US power.

However, that objective cannot be achieved without American boots on the ground that he ruled out. You cannot systematically drive back a ground army without eyes on targets, as happened in late 2001 when our Special Forces teams directed B-52s

to smash the Taliban/al-Qaeda and followed up with tribal warlords to seize the territory. The Sunni tribes would do likewise, if our teams provided overwhelming firepower to inject confidence. In addition, raids by American battalions would be required.

Mr. Obama has no intentions of “rebooting.” He set a military objective and then applied restrictions that make it highly improbable if not impossible. The odds are he will serve out his time and bequeath to his successor a geopolitical mess.

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American Leadership, Commitment, and Perseverance in the Middle East

Peter R. Mansoor

US disengagement from Middle Eastern affairs, highlighted by the Obama administration's withdrawal of American forces from Iraq, its failure to lead an international stability force in Libya after the overthrow of the Qaddafi regime, and its unwillingness to enforce self-proclaimed red lines in Syria, has reduced US influence in the region to an all-time low. The ramifications of these policies have been a significant reduction in the US administration's ability to influence the trajectory of events, the alienation of longtime allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, a humanitarian and political catastrophe in Syria and Libya, the empowerment of Iran, and the rise of Islamist groups such as the al-Nusra Front and the Islamic State. The recent claim by an administration official that Saudi Arabia shares a long border with Syria (a simple look at the map will show Jordan in the intervening space) is symbolic of US detachment from the Middle East. US national security interests there are clearly in jeopardy.

The United States must assume three obligations in order to stabilize the downward spiral of the security situation in the Middle East and to restore the confidence of its regional partners in American leadership:

1. Lead. American leadership is essential to knitting together the broad regional and international coalitions required to deal with the instability, terrorism, humanitarian crises, and endemic violence rupturing the Middle East today. Although the Obama

administration was elected on a platform promising the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq, the events of the past six years have proven that the United States does not have the luxury of removing itself from regional affairs. The United States is a great power—now it must act like one.

2. Go "all in." Strongly worded demarches and verbal red lines are not enough to convince reluctant partners to engage in tough missions. Arab and Islamic states must cooperate in Syria, Iraq, and Libya in order to prevent the narrative of a "clash of civilizations" to take root and encourage jihadists to flock to the banners of Islamist groups stoking these conflicts. But regional actors will look to the actions of the United States to ensure that America is committed to its policies before they commit to difficult actions in turn. US airpower alone is not sufficient to show American commitment to its war against the Islamic State. If the president wants Arab regional partners to commit ground forces to the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, he will have to show US willingness to put American soldiers alongside them. Backing off the president's rhetoric of "no boots on the ground" would be a good start.

3. Persevere for the long haul. The war in Iraq and Syria will not end anytime soon, and Libya likewise will remain a regional basket case for years to come. Rather than continuing to trumpet a rebalancing of US resources to Asia, the administration needs to

recommit to a policy of stability (not democratization) in the Middle East. Given its impact on the world economy and its status as the fount of Islamist radicalism, the Middle East cannot simply be ignored or wished away. Furthermore, such a policy is likely to gain bipartisan support, a rarity these days in the nation's capital. Such support is essential, for if the last decade plus of war in Iraq has taught us anything, it is the enduring nature of conflict in the cradle of civilization.

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

HOW MIGHT THE UNITED STATES REBOOT ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICY AND RESTORE CONFIDENCE IN US POWER AND INFLUENCE?

1. Have the post–Arab Spring chaos and new gas and oil realities in the United States combined to make the Middle East less relevant?
2. What were the positive developments, if any, that followed from the Obama administration’s estrangement from Israel?
3. Can the United States develop closer relations with the Egyptian military junta while still supporting the idea of consensual governments in the Middle East?
4. Is Turkey a friend, neutral, or enemy of the United States in regard to the Middle East?

IN THE NEXT ISSUE:

WHAT ADDITIONAL FUTURE STEPS SHOULD THE UNITED STATES AND EUROPE TAKE, IF ANY AT ALL, TO COUNTER RUSSIAN AMBITIONS?



Military History in Contemporary Conflict

As the very name of Hoover Institution attests, military history lies at the very core of our dedication to the study of “War, Revolution, and Peace.” Indeed, the precise mission statement of the Hoover Institution includes the following promise: “The overall mission of this Institution is, from its records, to recall the voice of experience against the making of war, and by the study of these records and their publication, to recall man’s endeavors to make and preserve peace, and to sustain for America the safeguards of the American way of life.” From its origins as a library and archive, the Hoover Institution has evolved into one of the foremost research centers in the world for policy formation and pragmatic analysis. It is with this tradition in mind, that the “Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict” has set its agenda—reaffirming the Hoover Institution’s dedication to historical research in light of contemporary challenges, and in particular, reinvigorating the national study of military history as an asset to foster and enhance our national security. By bringing together a diverse group of distinguished military historians, security analysts, and military veterans and practitioners, the working group seeks to examine the conflicts of the past as critical lessons for the present.

Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict

The Working Group on the Role of Military History in Contemporary Conflict examines how knowledge of past military operations can influence contemporary public policy decisions concerning current conflicts. The careful study of military history offers a way of analyzing modern war and peace that is often underappreciated in this age of technological determinism. Yet the result leads to a more in-depth and dispassionate understanding of contemporary wars, one that explains how particular military successes and failures of the past can be often germane, sometimes misunderstood, or occasionally irrelevant in the context of the present.

Strategika

Strategika is a journal that analyzes ongoing issues of national security in light of conflicts of the past—the efforts of the Military History Working Group of historians, analysts, and military personnel focusing on military history and contemporary conflict. Our board of scholars shares no ideological consensus other than a general acknowledgment that human nature is largely unchanging. Consequently, the study of past wars can offer us tragic guidance about present conflicts—a preferable approach to the more popular therapeutic assumption that contemporary efforts to ensure the perfectibility of mankind eventually will lead to eternal peace. New technologies, methodologies, and protocols come and go; the larger tactical and strategic assumptions that guide them remain mostly the same—a fact discernable only through the study of history.



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