

Beyrouth, lundi 24 octobre 2016

Rotary Club de Beyrouth / Hôtel Bristol

L'impact de l'élection présidentielle américaine sur le Moyen-Orient



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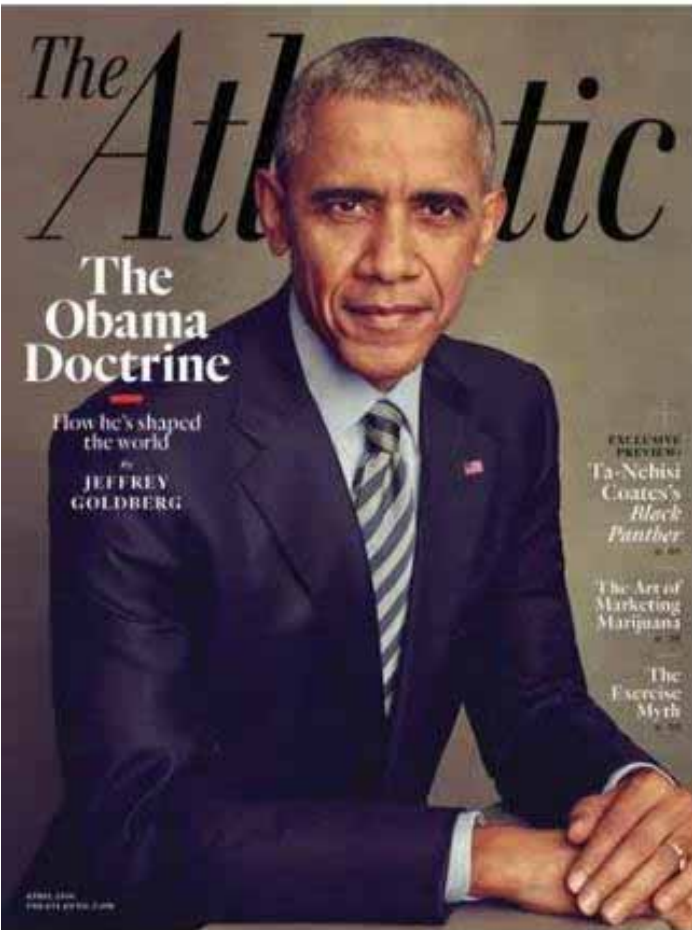
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Magazine des Actions Citoyennes de l'USA
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 **GCSP**
Geneva Centre for Security Policy
Where knowledge meets experience



Whither the Obama Doctrine?

US Foreign Policy and the Arab Revolutions:
From Maximalism to Retrenchment?



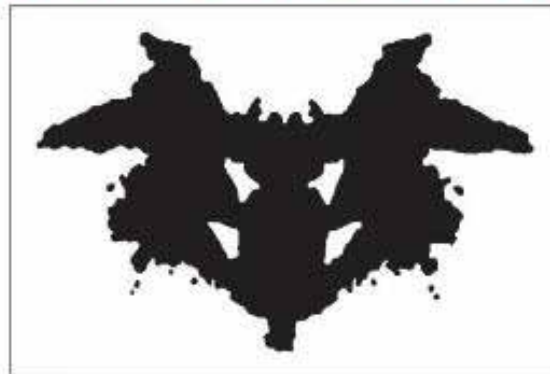
"The greatness of America lies not in being more enlightened than any other nation, but rather in her ability to repair her faults."

Alexis de Tocqueville

The landmark 2008 election:



A Human Rorschach Test?



- **A Significant Domestic Legacy**
 - Economic Growth and Job Creations
 - The Affordable Care Act
 - Marriage Equality
- **The Jury is still out on the Foreign Policy Legacy**
 - Reconciliation with Cuba
 - Myanmar transition
 - Iran deal
 - but
 - Syrian debacle
 - Libyan fiasco
 - GWOT Redux



No. 1429
14 OCTOBER
27 NOV. 2016
£1.80

PRIVATE EYE

HOW AMERICAN POLITICS HAS CHANGED

2008

2016



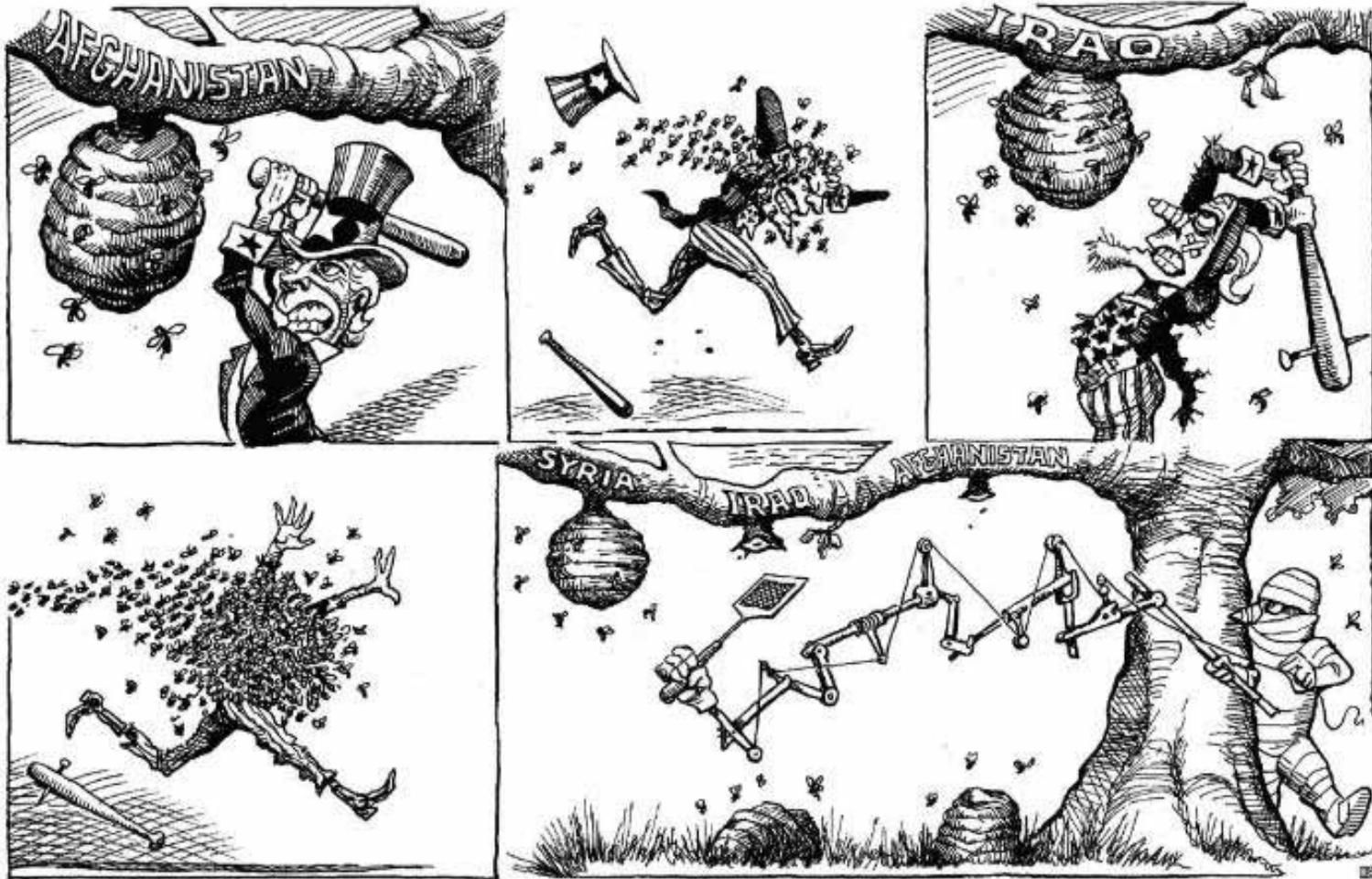
- 2008 : The first post-racial president of a post-imperial America in a post-American World?
- 2016 : A Post-American Middle East?



The Economist's Cartoonist, Kal, illustrated the understandable risk-aversion that followed the Afghan and Iraqi fiascos

The world this week

The Economist August 31st 2013



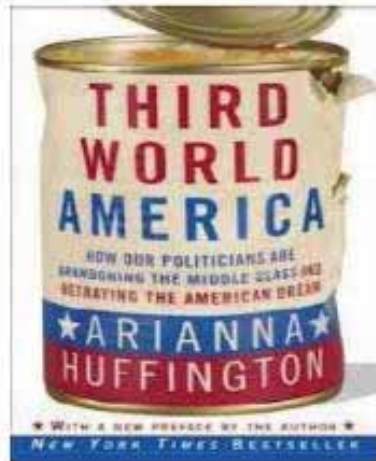
The Persistence of **Core US Strategic Interests** in the Middle East and North Africa

- Israel's Security
 - Keeping MENA oil and gas flowing to world markets at reasonable prices
 - Minimizing Terrorism Risks
 - Preventing Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and other WMD
 - Promoting pro-American liberal participatory political systems, if and only if this objective does not clash with the other core interests
- «**A constant trade off between moral aspirations and practical strategic realities**» Walt

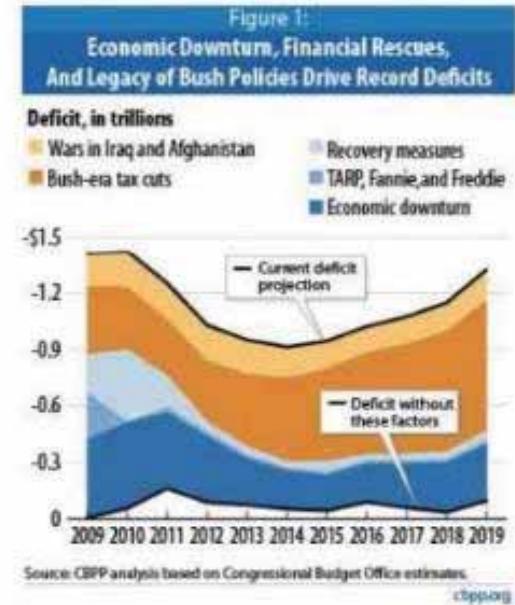
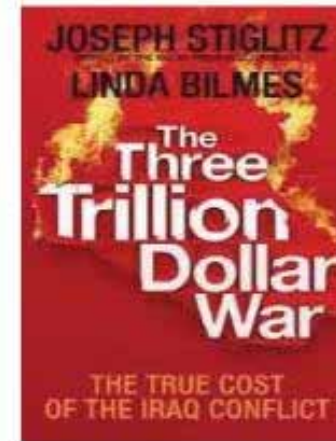


The Constraints on Obama's Foreign Policy and the 'Light Footprint' Doctrine

- **Financial Constraints:** Iraq and Afghan wars (including medical costs) ended up costing \$ 7 trillion and drove record deficits
- A **war-fatigued public opinion:** only 9 % of Americans supported an intervention in Syria
- **Congressional Constraints** and the capping of Executive War Powers: the debates over the Libya War Powers Act and the Syria vote in Congress



- **The urgency of Nation-Building at Home:**
 - Inequalities and the New Gilded Age, Decaying infrastructures, healthcare, poverty...
 - Primacy of Domestic Politics



The 'Light Footprint' Doctrine:

An attempt to solve the contradictions between end and means

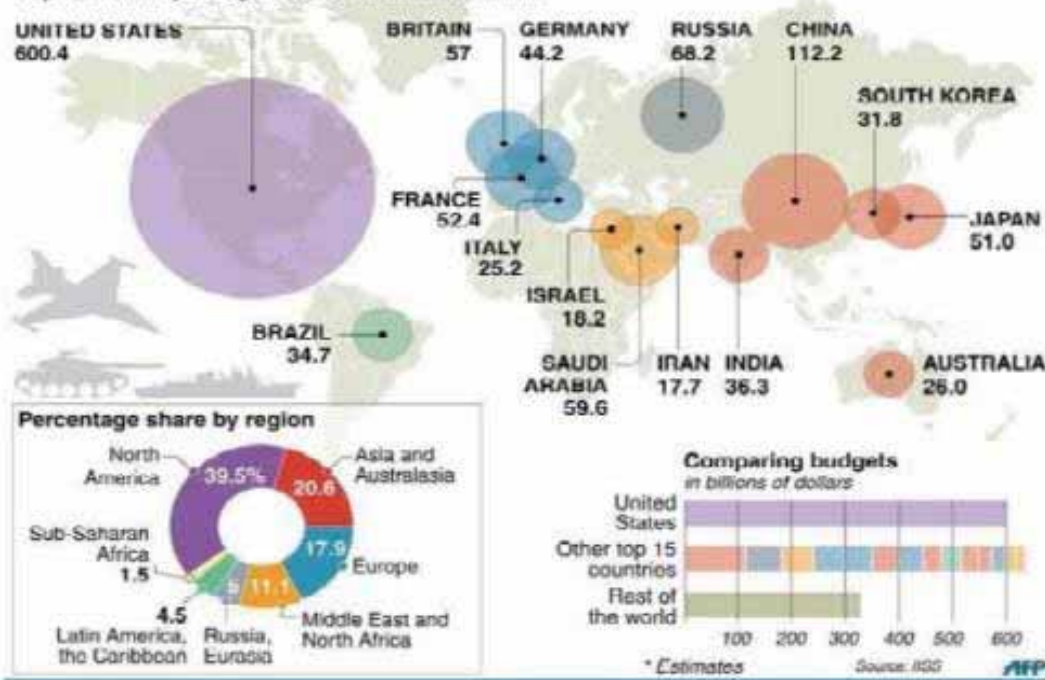
- Multiplication of Drone strikes (Obama = Bush X 10)
- Covert Operations (Syria, Yemen, Pakistan...)
- Cyberwar (Stuxnet and its impact on Iran's nuclear centrifuges...)
- Outsourcing and privatization of war (PMSC...)



US RETRENCHMENT DOES NOT MEAN ISOLATIONISM AND DOES NOT NECESSARILY TRANSLATE INTO US DECLINE

Defence budgets across the world

Budgets are rising for the first time in five years
Top 15 military budgets 2013* in billions of dollars



- Decrease in Military Budget should not be overinterpreted
- **US is NOT disengaging from the Gulf**
- Pivoting toward Asia is easier said than done
- «The US strategic position in the world remains remarkably favorable. Americans often forget how secure the US is, especially compared with other States. The Core Sources of US power remain highly robust»
- **«The US routinely blows minor threats out of all proportion: Iran has a defense budget of about \$ 10 billion (less than 2 % of what the US spends on national security)**

Stephen Walt

Patterns of Change and Continuity in the **US / Saudi Relationship**



An ailing Franklin Roosevelt met Saudi Arabia's founding king, Abdul Aziz, aboard the cruiser *Quincy* in the Suez Canal.

- A Strategic Alliance (between a liberal democracy and a absolutist monarchy) that has endured for 7 decades
- Whither the Quincy Pact ? Is the 'Oil vs Security' Equation still Pertinent?
- The geopolitical consequences of the Shale Gas Revolution



- Saudi Arabia remains the **largest US Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customer** with active and open cases valued at around \$ 97 billion
- Saudis feel vindicated because they had predicted that the Iraq War would considerably strengthen Iran
- **Saudi anger at Barack Obama:** Rapprochement with Iran, non-intervention in Syria...



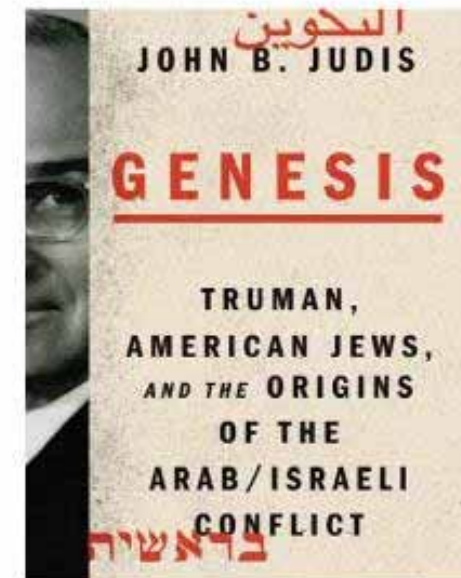
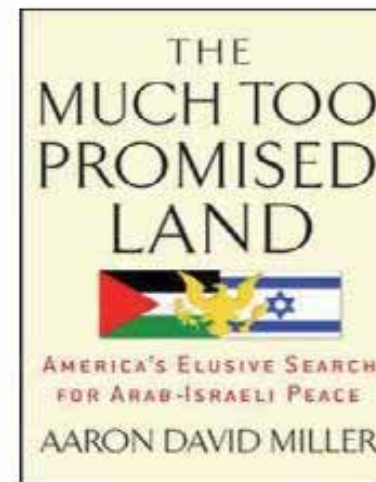
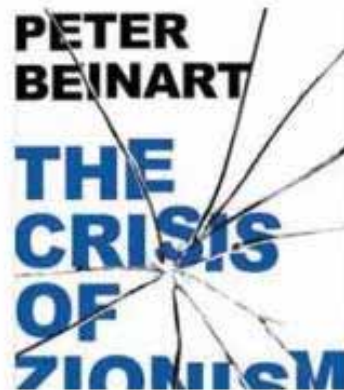
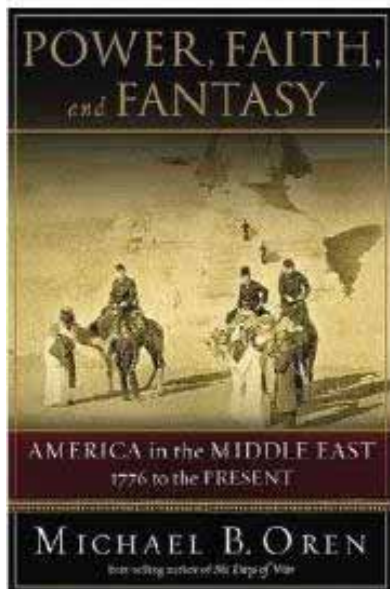
AN UNEASY RELATIONSHIP



Patterns of Change and Continuity in the **US / Israeli Relationship**



- The largest cumulative recipient of US aid in the past 70 years
- \$ 118 billion since 1949
- Military Aid and Technology Transfers have never been stronger than today
- The Obama – Netanyahu Difficult Relationship
- The Debate within the American Jewish Establishment (AIPAC, J Street...)
- 70 % of US Jews voted for Obama while 85% of Americans living in Israel voted for Romney
- Rand Paul and the Rise of a non-interventionist wing within the GOP
- Can Israel continue to be "America's aircraft carrier in the Middle East"? (Jesse Helms)
- The United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013
- Changing Public perceptions of Israel



Can an Iranian nuclear deal save Obama's Foreign Policy Legacy?

- Israel and Saudi Arabia's interests converge and they will join forces to try to torpedo the Iranian Deal
- But both the Obama and Rouhani administrations have a vested interest in the success of the rapprochement
- If it goes through, the US-Iranian nuclear deal would constitute a major paradigm shift and put an end to 35 years of animosity
- Saudi panic is understandable
- Can the Saudis go it alone?
- Can the US obtain Iranian concessions on other dossiers? (Syria, Lebanon, Iraq...) Not so sure
- **The Iranian-Saudi conflict will remain the defining factor in the coming years**



Middle East and Africa

Negotiating with Iran

A big gap to close

Some supporters of the Iran deal doubt there will be a long-term pact

AFTER several weeks of unexpectedly hard and often tetchy bargaining, six world powers and Iran reached an agreement on January 12th that sets out the details of a "joint plan of action" (JPA) to freeze Iran's nuclear programme for six months. The implementation of the JPA, originally negotiated in November, will begin on January 20th. Verification that Iran is sticking to its side of the interim deal will come from the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) through



stepped-up inspections and monitoring. In return, Iran will begin to receive, in monthly instalments, some \$4.2 billion in seized assets held in Western banks; some minor financial

sanctions will also be suspended. However, the clock is now ticking on efforts to achieve a comprehensive long-term pact. Even supporters of the interim deal rate the



THE IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: A PARADIGM SHIFT?

OBAMA'S RISKY GAMBLE

7:44 PM Sunday

Barack Obama's gamble on the future of Iran

By Edward Luce

At stake is the idea that talking to your worst enemies makes sense



President Barack Obama is poised to take the biggest foreign policy gamble of his presidency. Ignoring opposition at home, and near unanimous dissent in the Middle East, he looks likely to push ahead with an Iran nuclear deal in the coming days. His bet is that the world's most hardline theocracy can be induced to change for the better. Over time Iran's silent majority will gain sway over their ayatollahs.

At stake is the idea that talking to your worst enemies makes sense. Mr Obama's bet on diplomacy could hardly differ more from George W Bush's world view. Yet they share a weakness — the belief that one inspired move can transform the game. Mr Bush thought he could implant democracy in the Middle East by toppling its most brutal autocracy. Mr Obama hopes to create stability by engaging its most dangerous regime. In American football they call this a 'Hail Mary' pass. Will Mr Obama's fare any better?

MORE FROM THIS SECTION

4

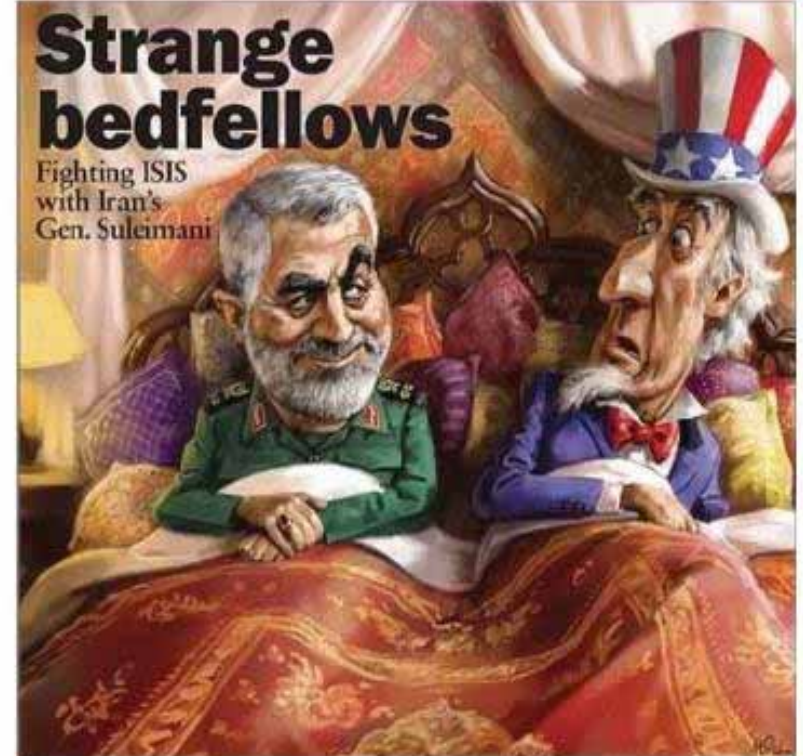


THE WEEK

THE BEST OF THE U.S. AND INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

Strange bedfellows

Fighting ISIS with Iran's Gen. Suleimani



ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT MATTERS

WWW.THEWEEK.COM

IRANIAN PARADOXES

- Islamic revolution and Secularization
- Anti-Imperialism and Westernization
- Opposition to the Mullahs vs « Rally-Round-The-Flag Effect
- Slow Economy could prompt Iran to make concessions vs National Pride
- A deal would only start a long game. Carrots and sticks would remain in place
- The paradigm shift would only come several years later



PHYSIOGRAPHY OF IRAN



- “To understand Iran, you must begin by understanding how large it is. Iran is the 17th largest country in world. It measures 1,684,000 square kilometers. That means that its **territory is larger than the combined territories of France, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain and Portugal** — Western Europe.
- Iran is the 16th most populous country in the world, with about **78 million people**. Its population is larger than the populations of either France or the United Kingdom.”
- **Iran is a fortress.** Surrounded on three sides by mountains and on the fourth by the ocean, with a wasteland at its center, Iran is extremely difficult to conquer. This was achieved once by the Mongols, who entered the country from the northeast. The Ottomans penetrated the Zagros Mountains and went northeast as far as the Caspian but made no attempt to move into the Persian heartland.”

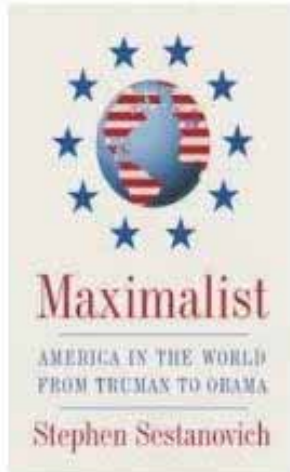
STRATFOR

A NEW COLD WAR?



US Foreign Policy from Maximalism to Retrenchment

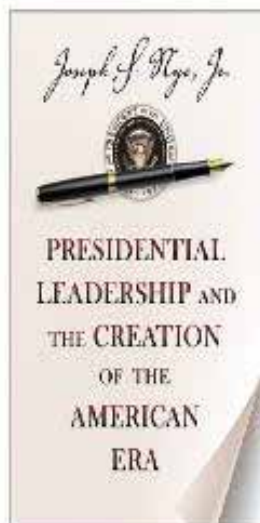
- Historians Arthur Schlesinger Sr and Jr argued that US History and Domestic politics go in cycles of conservatism and progressivism
- In a recent book, Stephen Sestanovich argues that **US Foreign Policy oscillates between Maximalism and Retrenchment**



- **Maximalists** believe in using US power to shape the world, they increase military budgets, are willing to risk war to attain their goals, they are all interventionists and some are also unilateralists:
 - Harry Truman, JFK, Lyndon Johnson, Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush Jr
- **Retrenchers** are risk-averse and conscious of budgetary constraints and of the limits of hard power, they prefer negotiations (Nixon & China), they opt for multilateralism and they focus on 'Nation-Building at Home':
 - Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, Jimmy Carter, Barack Obama
- **Mixed**: George H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton
 - Joseph Nye argues that '*transactional*', not '*transformative*' presidents were perhaps the most effective
 - **Maximalism can bring great US successes (Reagan) or huge US failures (GW Bush in Iraq)**
 - **The failures always bring forth periods of retrenchment:**
Korean war led to Eisenhower's retrenchment, Vietnam to Nixon's retrenchment, Iraq to Obama's retrenchment
- **The Arab Revolutions occurred in a period of US Retrenchment, with a war-weary US Public Opinion and a risk-averse president**
- **Iran benefited from Bush's errors, consolidated its position under Obama**



CFR fellow, Columbia IR Professor
Ex Reagan & Clinton administrations official



Soft Power Theorist Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

HOW TO DEFEAT TERROR WITHOUT SHOOTING ONESELF IN THE FOOT?

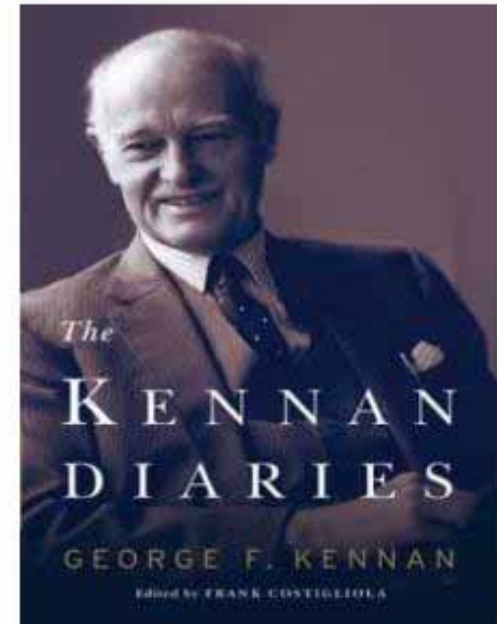




- The father of the Containment doctrine
- Arguably the most celebrated diplomat & strategist of the 20th Century
- He was deeply conservative on social and domestic issues but dovish on foreign policy, he harshly **criticized the militarization of US Foreign Policy**
- He intuitively understood that the Soviet Union would crumble from within
- He felt that the biggest threat for the US was not rival ideologies but its own «**imperial overreach**, arrogance and aggression»



- 'We have met the enemy and he is us'
- Reading the recently published Kennan Diaries in light of the hubris and overstretch of the Bush / Cheney years
- Is Obama a disciple of Kennan? Not really
- He told The New Yorker that he does «not even need Kennan», but that he understands that «**military might is not a "joystick"** that would allow him to manipulate precise outcomes."



C. P. Cavafy
Waiting For
The Barbarians

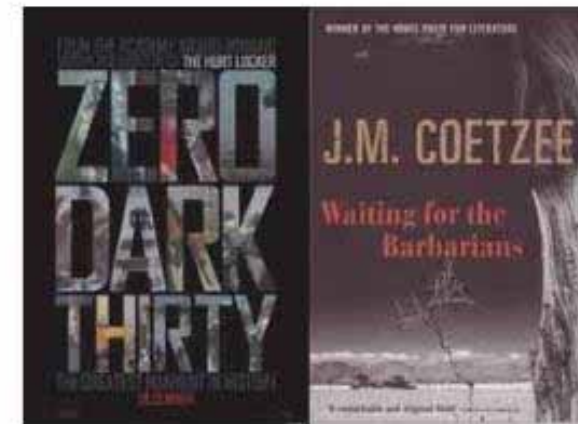
Read by
Daniel Davis

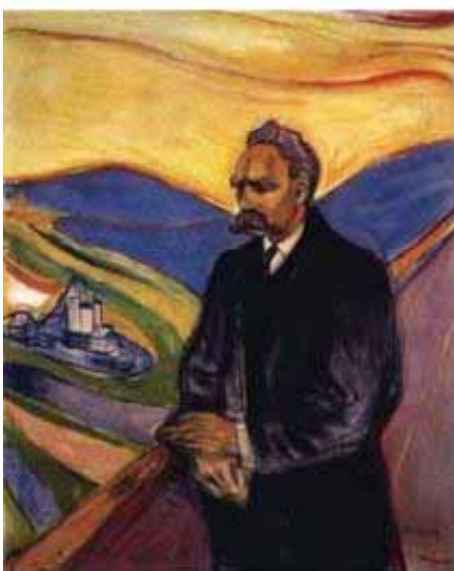
poetictouch.com



Constantin Cavafy's Poem 'Waiting For The Barbarians', and Coetzee's Novel are often read as an **allegory for the War on Terror**

*"Because night has fallen and the barbarians have not come.
And some who have just returned from the border say there are no barbarians
any longer.
And now, what's going to happen to us without barbarians?
They were, those people, a kind of solution."*





Portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche by Edvard Munch

The Consequences of the Global War on Terror on the US The Consequences of the GWOT on the Middle East & North Africa

"Beware that, when fighting monsters, you yourself do not become a monster... for when you gaze long into the abyss. The abyss gazes also into you." [Friedrich Nietzsche](#)

- In 2000, George W. Bush was elected on a program promising «Compassionate Conservatism» and a «Modest Foreign Policy» (an implicit condemnation of Clinton's Kosovo intervention)
- Bush's actual Foreign Policy ended up being a reaction / overreaction to 9/11
- Paul Kennedy: Hubris and Imperial Overstretch are always among the main causes of the Decline of the Great Powers
- Is Obama's Foreign Policy an overreaction to Bush's overreaction?

The Patriot Act, Civil Liberties and the Torture Debate

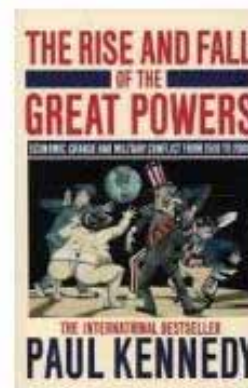
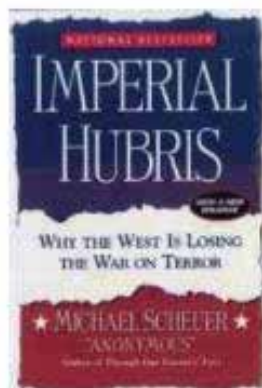
"America cannot have an Empire abroad and a Republic at home." Mark Twain



- **The Logic and Rethoric of the «War on Terror» have benefited, been internalized and adopted by most Arab dictators** (Assad, Saleh, Qaddafi...) and are still prevalent in today's Egypt...



A contemporary artist created this work in which George W. Bush's face is formed by a collage of the faces of 1,000 U.S. soldiers killed in Iraq.



- THE ANTI-ISIS COALITION
- REGIONAL POWERS AND THEIR AGENDAS



THE 15 MOST POWERFUL MILITARIES IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Middle East is undoubtedly one of the world's least predictable regions. To make sense of the ongoing conflicts, we have compiled key elements that comprise the 15 strongest militaries in the Middle East according to a ranking published by Global Firepower. Quality of equipment, training, and professionalism of each military is not taken into account.

 = Middle East leader

COUNTRY	OVERALL RANKING	ACTIVE PERSONNEL	TANKS	AIRCRAFT	NUCLEAR WARHEADS	SUBMARINES	BUDGET
TURKEY	1	410,500	3,657	989	0	14	\$18,185,000,000
ISRAEL	2	176,500	3,870	680	80-200	14	\$15,000,000,000
EGYPT	3	468,500	4,767	1,100	0	4	\$4,400,000,000
IRAN	4	545,000	2,409	481	0	31	\$6,300,000,000
SAUDI ARABIA	5	233,500	1,095	652	0	0	\$56,725,000,000
SYRIA	6	178,000	4,950	473	0	0	\$1,872,000,000
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES	7	85,000	545	444	0	0	\$14,375,000,000
YEMEN	8	68,700	1,260	181	0	0	\$1,440,000,000
JORDAN	9	110,700	1,321	246	0	0	\$1,500,000,000
IRAQ	10	271,500	357	212	0	0	\$6,055,000,000
OMAN	11	72,000	215	101	0	0	\$6,715,000,000
KUWAIT	12	15,500	368	101	0	0	\$5,200,000,000
BAHRAIN	13	13,000	180	105	0	0	\$730,000,000
QATAR	14	11,800	90	72	0	0	\$1,930,000,000
LEBANON	15	131,100	318	57	0	0	\$1,735,000,000

Sources: Global Firepower, The Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

BUSINESS INSIDER

Diminishing US influence and leverage throughout the region



- Putin's line in the sand and his determination to protect his interests at all costs, in Syria as in Ukraine
- Declining US influence on its own allies
- The US and the Sunni / Shiite rift
- Was the Iraq War the Swan Song of US MidEast power?



Puppetmasters who no longer pull the strings

The persistent «double standards» accusation



- The rise of ISIS is the unintended consequence of the US invasion of Iraq
- The unintended consequences of Libya...

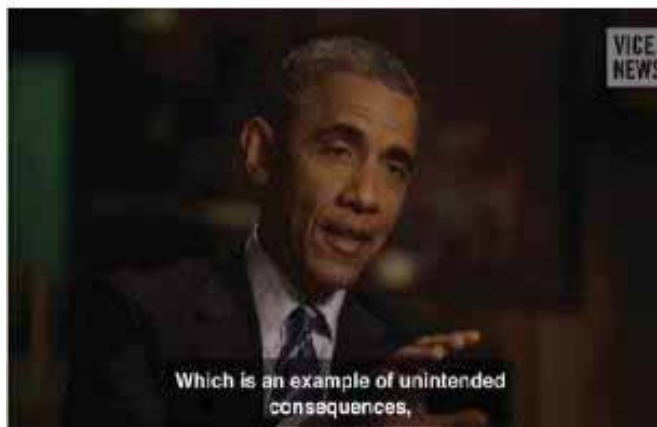


"ISIL is **a direct outgrowth of Al-Qaeda in Iraq that grew out of our invasion,**" Obama said in an interview with VICE News. "Which is an example of **unintended consequences.** Which is why we should generally **aim before we shoot.**"

Obama stated that he is "confident" a coalition consisting of 60 nations "will slowly push back ISIL out of Iraq," but added that **the challenge of stopping extremism won't stop unless there is a political solution to the internal strife affecting so many countries in the Middle East.**

"What I'm worried about" he said, "is even if ISIL is defeated, the underlying problem of **disaffected Sunnis** around the world – but particularly in some of these areas including Libya, including Yemen – where a young man who's growing up has no education, has no prospects for the future, is looking around and **the one way he can get validation, power, respect, is if he's a fighter.**"

"That's a problem we're going to have, generally. And **we can't keep on thinking about counterterrorism and security as entirely separate from diplomacy, development, education.**"



Barack OBAMA, Vice News

"The Arab awakening is a tale of three battles rolled into one:

- people against regimes;
- people against people;
- and regimes against other regimes."

Hussein Agha and Robert Malley

Nowhere is this more evident than in Syria: all three dimensions are forcefully present, simultaneously



Culture Wars: The intense polarizations and the Battle of Ideas within the Arab World



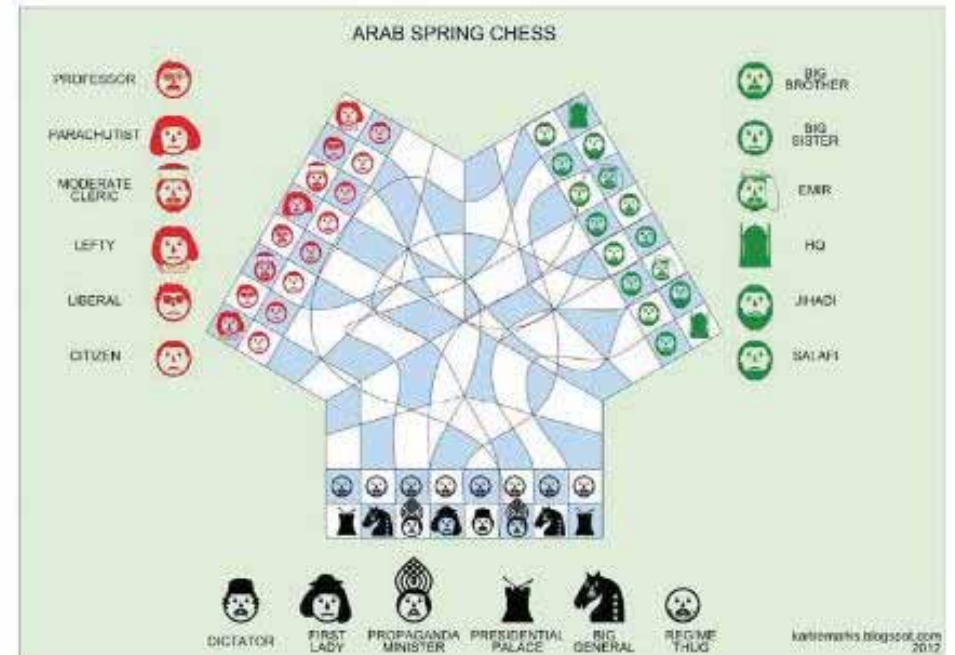
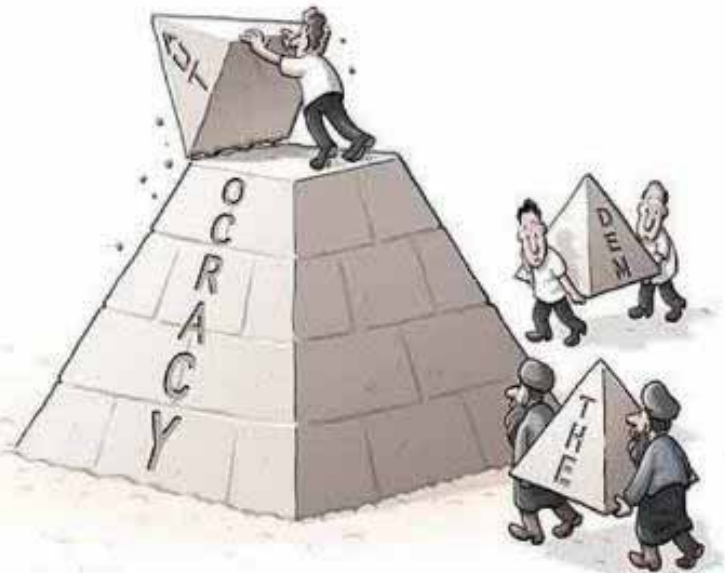
- Great ideological storms of the 20th Century (Isaiah Berlin)
- Liberal Democracy seems to have triumphed in the West but the MENA region has yet to settle the debate



- Revolutions and Counter-revolutions, panarabism, panislamism, secularism, liberalism, authoritarian nationalism, nihilism...
- The Constitutional Debates
- Tunisia's attempt to transcend polarization
- Women, minorities, pluralism, freedom of conscience...
- Similar arguments in Turkey and Iran



The forces at play



THREE PLAYERS CHESS GAME

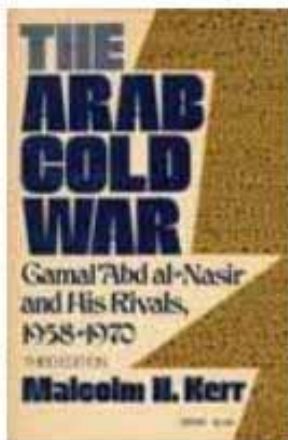
- The Armies
- The Islamists
- Civil Society Liberals and Progressives

The New Middle East Proxy Wars: Iran vs Saudi Arabia



“The best framework for understanding the regional politics of the Middle East is as a cold war in which Iran and Saudi Arabia play the leading roles. These two main actors are not confronting each other militarily; rather, their contest for influence plays out in the domestic political systems of the region’s weak states. It is a struggle over the direction of the Middle East’s domestic politics more than it is a purely military contest. The military and political strength of the parties to civil conflicts, and the contributions that outsiders can make to that strength, is more important than the military balance of power between Riyadh and Tehran.”

F. Gregory Gause, III



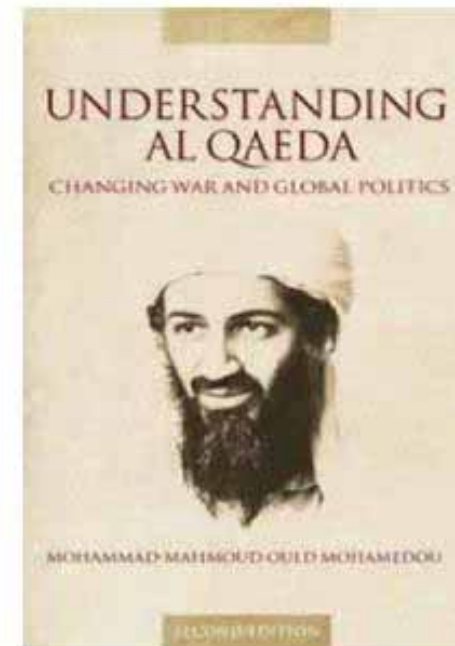
- The rising regional influence of Iran
- The roots of Saudi panic
- Consequences in Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Bahrain



- The rising regional influence of Iran
- The roots of Saudi panic
- Consequences in Iraq, in Syria, in Lebanon, in Yemen, in Bahrain

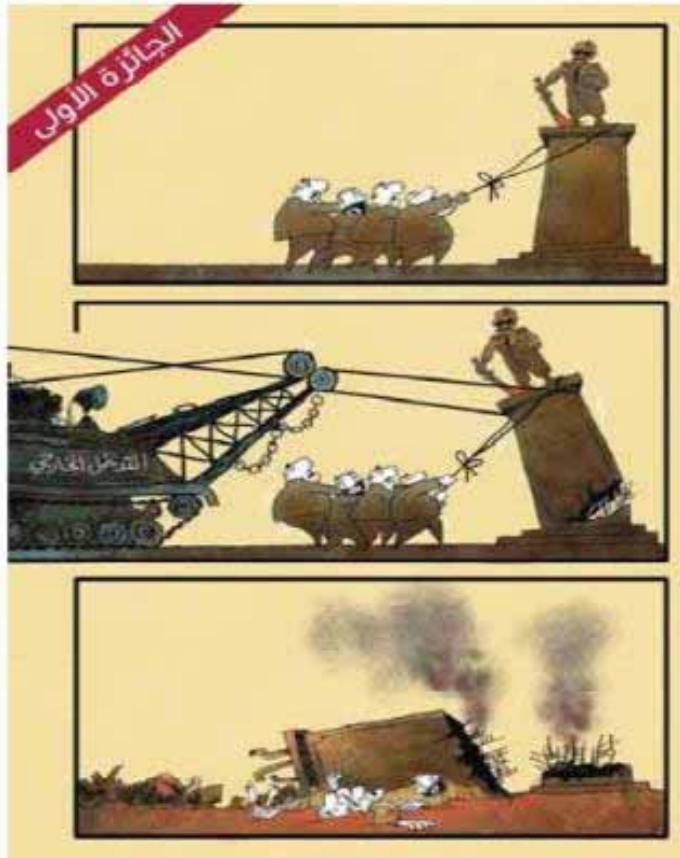
The never-ending debate on Western **interventionism**

- From Bonaparte's 1798 Egypt expedition to Bush's 2003 Iraq invasion
- The track record of interventionism
- Can the US engage in nation-building?
- Does channelling weapons to insurgencies work?
- Inevitable backlash?
- Can the strikes on ISIS be effective?



The Indigenous Revolution vs Foreign Intervention Dilemma

Was voted «best cartoon of the year »



Written on the tank in the second picture:
Foreign Intervention

- The Militarization of the Syrian Revolution
- The Debate over Intervention in Syria
- The Pitfalls of Foreign Intervention
- Arming the rebels ?
- Tunisia & Egypt vs Libya & Syria
- The conditions of a successful transition are missing

The consequences on the post-Assad configuration:
The means determine the end

5 YEARS DOWN THE ROAD ?

"If a dictator is overthrown after a peaceful civic resistance process, 28 % chance of a civil war after 5 years.

In case of a protracted armed struggle against a dictator, 43 % chance of civil war after 5 years."

"If a dictator is overthrown through peaceful struggle, there is a 51 percent chance of a successful democratic transition after five years. In case of an armed struggle, the chances are only 3 percent."

From Erica Chenoweth & Maria J. Stephan Research



Syria's Tragedy: No End in Sight

"The Syrian conflict has triggered something more fundamental than a difference of opinion over intervention, something more than an argument about whether the Security Council should authorize the use of force. Syria is the moment in which the West should see that **the world has truly broken into two.**" (...)



"The situation in Syria has mutated from an uprising in a few outlying cities into a full-scale civil war. Now it has mutated again into a proxy war between the Great Powers"

Michael Ignatieff, The New York Review of Books

THE SYRIA CONFUSION

- US light interference vs Russian/Iranian massive interference
- **US allies have their own conflicting agendas** (Israel, Qatar, KSA, Turkey, Jordan)
- Syria is the ultimate Catch 22 for the US
- The red line fiasco



THE GLOBAL EDITION OF THE NEW YORK TIMES
COMMENTARY LETTERS



Putin's Line in the Sand: Russia's Interests in the Middle East

The underlying causes of Russian support for Assad

- Economic?
- Bilateral ties?
- The Tartous military base?
- Eastern Christians?
- Energy Issues?
- Payback for Libya?
- The Caucasus and the Chechnyan prism
- Fear of Islamic Radicalism
- Psychological factors?
- Traditional Russian suspicion of the West?



Egypt between revolution, islamism and counter-revolution

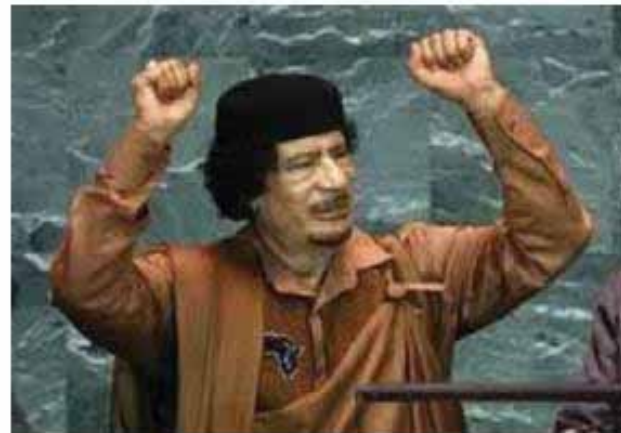


- The return of authoritarianism
- Whither the Muslim Brotherhood?
- Politically motivated external financial flows
- The US dilemma regarding Foreign Aid



Towards the fragmentation of Libya?

- The Libyan Civil War
- The role of the militias
- Ideology or economic interests?
- The unintended consequences of the intervention
- A Qatar / UAE confrontation?



Towards a competitive multipolarity?

“The increasing engagement of both powerful external actors and assertive mid-size powers in a setting marked by Saudi-Iranian rivalry bolsters the outlook of a competitive multipolarity in the MENA region among a range of big and middle powers. Rather than forming cohesive blocs and entering long-term alignments, a range of regional and external players of different sizes and weights are likely to compete in shifting, overlapping alliances. Past strategic orientations can no longer be taken for granted. In a region marked by growing insecurity and competitive multipolarity, alliances are likely to take more passing, functional forms.”

Kristina Kausch



BLOWBACK: Past mistakes and dangerous Liaisons still haunt Western decision makers



Eisenhower attempting to prop up the Muslim Brotherhood (Said Ramadan) in order to weaken Nasser's Arab Nationalism



Ben Laden praised by the Western Press for his anti-Soviet Jihad



Donald Rumsfeld visiting Saddam in 1983. US removed Saddam from the Terror List so that he could fight Iran



Reagan welcoming the Afghan Mujahideen at the White House to confront the USSR: freedom fighters?

- The law of unintended consequences
- Al Qaida was born of the 1980s Afghan War
- ISIS was born of the 2003 Iraq invasion and of the Syria War

The 2003 Anglo-American invasion of Iraq vs Crimea



CONTINUING THE CONVERSATION...

Questions or comments?



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