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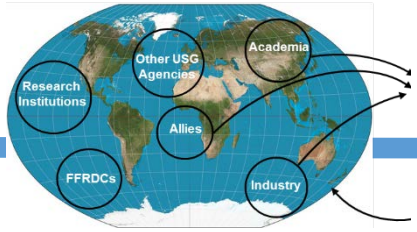

SMA Reach-back Report

R4 Question 5: Does US foreign policy strike the right balance in supporting US interests and its role as a global power? Or, should the US consider a more isolationist approach to foreign policy? What impact could an isolationist policy have on Middle East security and stability, balance of influence by regional and world actors, and US national interests?

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Executive Summary

US foreign policy makers struggle to find the right balance in supporting US interests particularly in the Middle East. Unbalanced policies, those focusing solely on defense while marginalizing diplomacy and development, are diminishing trust in the US and decreasing its influence—challenging US ability to maintain global stability and continue to support the security of its allies. Experts agree that the United States' ability to use statecraft has diminished due to two long-term conflicts and continued spread of the Iraq conflict into Syria.

The Middle East is a particularly challenging area of operations for the United States. Historically, military interventions in the region have resulted in rising instability and competition between states leaving many of the weaker parties—Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Yemen, and the Palestinian territories—subject to interference from the Arab Gulf countries and Iran, terrorism, and internal conflict. It is a region that is often misunderstood by most Americans due to differences in culture, disunion, religion, and group (families, clans, tribes etc.) identities and dynamics. Additionally, the region is increasingly difficult to understand due to radical group destabilization efforts.

Our contributors agree that US interests in the Middle East are focused on the free flow of oil, safeguarding allies and partners, ensuring continued nuclear nonproliferation, and combating terrorist groups that target the US and its allies. Specific US narratives in the region focus on improving democracy and human rights; however, actions like the intervention in Iraq, the focus on regime change in countries like Libya and Syria, and the inability to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict debunk those narratives across populations.

In response to the question regarding reverting to a policy of 'isolation," experts feel that this is not a plausible alternative since the world is becoming more interconnected. However, this does not mean the US must continuously intervene. More precisely, the US must reevaluate *how* it intervenes with

smarter, more comprehensive policy beyond the extensive use of the military. A US isolationist policy would likely increase instability and tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran while opening doors to their continued use of proxy sources to engage in protracted conflict ensuring that Middle East stability would become unattainable. On the other hand, those that feel US policy is contributing to marginalization of groups and support of brutal dictatorships and monarchies would most likely welcome a US exit.

Fred C. Hof, Director, Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East, Atlantic Council, reminds us that the issue is not a theoretical question of 'balance' [or isolationism]. The issue is one of competence, with the emphasis on decision-making and communication." I would add a well thought out comprehensive policy and strategy to improve conditions in the region giving the youth opportunities to prosper instead of fight would be beneficial. Hof also states, "The thesis of intractable ancient conflicts rooted in religion and ethnicity is as faulty in the Middle East as it was in Europe." The US insistence that this is true and that policy must therefore focus on these issues handicaps its ability to remain influential there.

Finally, US policy has been predominantly lethal military action over the last several decades with little diplomatic effort—exacerbating, not easing, one of the worst humanitarian crisis in history as well as economic hardships and the spread of terrorism. Look no further than US aid entering the region. Essentially it is all military support—one can point to Israel, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and other Gulf countries. There is little done to balance military action with other forms of statecraft. Our experts point out the need for economic, financial, or multilateral cooperation tools in order to change the current situational environment.

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Perry Cammack, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Summary: The United States has obvious national security interests in the Middle East. However, in order to create a better balance of global priorities, the U.S. should take care not to overextend itself in the MENA region. There are three reasons for this.

- ***Premise 1:*** **U.S. core interests in the Middle East are more easily supported than is commonly assumed.**

- ***Premise 2:*** **Other geographic regions are more important to American national security than the Middle East.**

- ***Premise 3:*** **The tools of US statecraft are not well suited to Middle East challenges in comparison with challenges elsewhere.**

Background: **Defining U.S. Interests in the Middle East**

- There are commonly understood to be four core U.S. national security interests in the Middle East:
    1. Supporting the free flow of oil
    2. Safeguarding allies and partners, including Israel
    3. Nuclear nonproliferation
    4. Combating terrorist groups that target the U.S.

- Promoting democracy is sometimes considered as a fifth interest, but experts disagree on whether it constitutes a core interest. Both the Trump and Obama administrations have explicitly stated democracy promotion is a secondary interest, so it will not be further considered.

- The salience of these interests ebbs and flows over time. For example, during the Cold War, protecting oil infrastructure was indubitably the foundation of U.S. involvement in the Middle East. Before the 1979 Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty, Israel faced significant conventional military threats and had not yet fully attained a Qualitative Military Edge (QME). Prior to the 1983 bombings in Beirut against the Marine barracks and US Embassy, MENA terrorism was a nuisance, not a strategic threat.

Premise 1: **U.S. core interests in the Middle East are more easily supported than is commonly assumed.**

- ***Oil:*** Global oil markets are less susceptible to MENA price spikes than at any point since the 1973 oil embargo, for two reasons: 1) The rapid emergence of U.S. shale gas and tight oil has created swing production in the global marketplace. 2) Global energy markets are proving more resilient to MENA crises than anticipated. Between 2014 and 2016, oil prices collapsed from $115 to $35 a barrel, despite unprecedented MENA turmoil, including in key producers such as Iraq and Libya.

- **Implication:** Protecting Middle East oil infrastructure has proven easier and less costly than anticipated.

- ***Protecting allies:*** Partners and allies such as Israel, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia are at low risk of conventional external military attack. In light of weakness of Syria and Iraq and the strategic convergence between Israel and moderate Arab states, the only significant conventional military threats are Iran, Hezbollah, and, to a diminishing degree, ISIS. Israel and to a lesser extent GCC partners have vastly greater conventional military capability than do Iran or Hezbollah. However, most Middle East states face significant nonconventional threats: including terrorism, political upheaval, refugees, environmental distress, and economic underperformance.
  - ***Implication:*** Protecting allies and partners from traditional military threats can be achieved relatively cost-effectively. However, US tools of statecraft are less well suited to helping these states deal with the nonconventional and internal threats they face, which explains why countries like Israel, Egypt, and the GCC feel insecure.

- ***Nuclear proliferation:*** The risk of MENA nuclear nonproliferation is currently low. The JCPOA has dealt with the region's most pressing nonproliferation crisis and dramatically reduced the likelihood of a MENA nuclear arms race. However, the JCPOA has not diminished Iran's malign regional activity, which many in the region believe is increasing over time.
  - ***Implication:*** If the JCPOA can be preserved, the Iranian nuclear program will not pose a regional threat for the next 2-4 years. However, more attention must be paid to Iranian regional interference.

- ***Terrorism:*** Even after the collapse of ISIS, Islamic terrorism will remain the biggest threat to U.S. interests in the Middle East. From the PLO in the 1970s to Hezbollah in the 1980s to al-Qaeda in 2001 to ISIS today, each iteration of MENA terrorism has been progressively more extreme. 26+ years of US military action in Iraq suggest that there is no military-only solution to problem of terrorism, though there certainly is a military component.
  - ***Implication:*** Counterterrorism efforts are the most pressing U.S. strategic interest in the Middle East. The defeat of ISIL can reduce the threat, but ultimately wholesale changes to Arab countries' political and economic governance are required, which the US has only limited ability to support.

- ***A Note on Syria:*** A traditional realist outlook would argue that the U.S. has little interest in Syria, but such a perspective underestimates the risk of the Syrian civil war to the global order. While it is true that Syria does not pose an untenable threat to the four MENA interests outlined above, the Syrian crisis poses a significant threat to broader global interests, some of which are of a less tangible nature. These include U.S. military "credibility," global norms (such as international humanitarian law), the efficacy of the UN system, Russia's role in the global order, etc.

Premise 2: **Other geographic regions are more significant to American national security than the Middle East.**

- ***Asia:*** 6 of the top 15 trading partners are Asian. The U.S.-China relationship is likely to be the most important relationship of the 21st century, while North Korea is the biggest current global threat.

- ***Europe:*** 6 of the top 15 trading partners are European. European countries are primary partners on most international issues (MENA, Russia, CT, economic governance, global commons). European challenges require considerable attention (the EU after Brexit, refugee crisis, Ukraine and Russia, NATO).

- ***North America:*** In addition to geographic proximity, Canada and Mexico are the number 2 and 3 trading partners. However, North American relationships require relatively less attention as national security issues.

- ***MENA:*** No MENA country is among the top 15 trading partners. As shown above, core U.S. can be supported relatively modestly.

- ***Implication:*** Although the Middle East remains strategically important, it is relatively less important than Europe and Asia. In considering its Middle East policies, the U.S. needs to maintain sufficient "headroom" so that it remains capable of substantive engagement on these other more critical geographic areas.

Premise 3: **The tools of US statecraft are not well suited to Middle East challenges in comparison with challenges elsewhere.**

- The traditional tools of statecraft include 1) the use and threat of military force; 2) bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, 3) military cooperation and alliances; 4) economic assistance, and 5) financial sanctions. These tools were designed for a Westphalian order in which states are the basic units of foreign affairs. Such an order still applies in Asia, Europe, and North America.

- However, the MENA regional architecture has collapsed amidst multiple civil wars, failed and failing states, the fraying of borders, transnational terrorism, and non-state actors. In such a pre-(or post-)Westphalian Middle East, the traditional tools of statecraft have significantly lost their efficacy. This is in large part because the internal political weaknesses of Arab states have become a greater risk than their relative military strengths.

- For example, it was the external behavior of Qaddafi's Libya, Saddam's Iraq, and Hafez al-Assad's Syria that was problematic to U.S. interests, not their internal composition. Thus, traditional U.S. tools could be used to shape their behavior, sometimes effectively, often not so. Today, it is the internal nature of these states that is problematic. But the U.S. has very little ability to shape the internal composition of these countries, as demonstrated by the U.S. experience in Iraq from 2003 to 2011.

Conclusion: The MENA region is strategically important, but care must be taken to ensure that U.S. attention to the MENA region does not crowd out attention to other strategically more important regions. This is not an argument for retrenchment – the military campaign against ISIL is strategically important to the U.S. and conflicts in Syria, Libya, and Yemen merit close U.S. attention. However, care must be taken to avoid becoming "bogged down" as happened in Iraq in the 2003 to 2008, which detracted from U.S. attention to other regions and only benefitted potential adversaries like China and Russia.

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"Policy is fragmented into a series of ad hoc decisions which make it difficult to achieve a sense of direction. It is as if in commissioning a painting, a patron would ask one artist to draw the face, another the body, another the hands, and still another the feet, simply because each artist is particularly good in one category." -- Henry Kissinger

Executive Summary

U.S. foreign policy architects struggle significantly with day-to-day issues, which inhibit the development of a long-term comprehensive policy. Policy is often conducted through ad hoc reactions or courses of action defined by political influence usually in the form of foreign or domestic lobbying. The U.S. has significant interest in the Middle East. Although these interests are specifically outlined the supply of oil and the freedom of movement throughout the waterways of the region, combating terrorism, and protecting allies, the continued instability, including the Israeli-Palestinian conflict permeate global governments and populations influencing their perception of the U.S. governments intentions. Politically, the supply of arms and the increase of military used in lieu of diplomacy are constant indicators that the U.S. is a defense driven actor. Although, U.S. policy makers message human rights and democratic values, U.S. policy does not match that message leaving U.S. influence in a precarious position and its ability to influence severely limited.

To strike the right balance between interests and global supremacy, the U.S. must revisit several of its "go to" policies and political alliances. Further, it must streamline and depoliticize the international policy decision-making and implementation process, which is siloed through agency and power inherently making it unbalanced or disjointed (See Kissinger quote above). Finally, civilian agencies that are essential to formulating economic, diplomatic and development components to solutions are extremely marginalized so they are unable to contribute knowledge of or voice in the decision making and implementation process. Thus, many policies have sadly become excessively militarized.

Go To Policies

The U.S. has several "go to" outdated policies that have contributed to a piece meal foreign policy. Unless the same painter is painting the picture from beginning to end you are going to have major disconnects in planning, process, implementation, and identifying next steps depending on various outcomes.

Regime Change: The first is regime change. Regime change itself sets a precedent that is counter to the current international order not to mention promotion of democracy, and further creates distrust and constant insecurity for the sovereignty of nations and their peoples. Most recently, the support to unseat four leaders in Middle Eastern countries over the last six years – these include Libya, Syria, Egypt and Yemen (Iraq is omitted here since it was prior and Afghanistan is not forgotten) has contributed substantially to an already unstable region, one of the worst humanitarian crisis in history, and the rise of a deadly insurgent group calling itself the Islamic State. The war and chaos continue with no end in sight.

Further the U.S. foreign policy apparatus is not structured to address such complex maneuvering. It lacks congruent planning, cooperation, implementation and any consensus for policy continuity. The US policy

process is disconnected, mismanaged, understaffed and under resourced. There are bright competent people in the U.S. government however they are just not set up to succeed in today's arena of managed chaos. Finally, if one were to dissect each U.S. attempt at regime change, it would not be difficult not to see the long-term destabilization effects on the wellbeing, economy and political systems of those countries and their traumatized populations.

Reliance on military – most notably Airpower: Foreign policy does not rely on military might alone. Yet, the U.S. continues to use lethal force as the primary actor to deter, coerce, and convince others to heed their will. This usually comes in the form of air defense. Air defense litters countries with bombs that emit devastating effects on the people and the environment taking generations for populations to move forward from the destruction. American policy makers, planners and implementers must reincorporate Statecraft into decision-making. Further, during this volatile time, it would behoove them to foster closer relationships with allies and enemies alike giving decision makers a more creative and versatile course of action.

Isolationist or Engagement

Taking the path of an isolationist is a difficult one in today's world. The globe has increased it interconnectedness two fold. In a recent article for *Strafor*, Parag Khanna writes, "the rumors of globalization's demise have been drastically overstated. Today's reality — and the megatrend of the 21st century — remains a massive expansion in the volume of cross-border connectivity within and across the regions of the world, and in the scale of movements of people and transactions of goods, services, capital and data." Further, Khanna continues, "The system ... doesn't care which power is the most connected, but the most connected power will have the most leverage. It will supply the security, infrastructure and other public goods that the world desires. China has become a welcome and popular power in Africa and Latin America because it has sold them (and often built for them) the foundations of better connectivity. They have demand for infrastructure and China supplies it. Ethereal concepts such as "soft power" are a pale substitute for the power of connectivity."[1]

In the case of the U.S. military, DoD is highly connected across the globe. There are some 800 bases in more than 70 countries. In addition, DoD runs numerous train and equip programs and provides other support to many nations defense. U.S. alliances are vast and in many cases, like Japan, the U.S. is responsible for its sustained security. A more isolated foreign policy would impede this reach and may result in many allies seeking security assistance from other countries like China or Russia. In some cases, this is already happening.

Although the military does not formulate U.S. foreign policy, it often finds itself an implementer of not only defense and security, but diplomacy and development as well. Of course this puts an immense amount of pressure on our forces especially while the U.S. is instilled in so many conflicts particularly in the Middle East.

An isolationist strategy in today's world it is almost impossible thus the question should be: how should the U.S. restructure its foreign policy apparatus – quickly - in order to engage in the current highly volatile, chaotic and interconnected global environment in order to reestablish itself as a primary power of global influence?

[1] Khanna, Parag, Connectivity, Not Primacy, Is the Way of the World, *Strafor*, March 9, 2917, http://www.paragkhanna.com/home/2017/3/9/connectivity-not-primacy-is-the-way-of-the-world

U.S. Primacy

U.S. influence in the Middle East has been waning over the last twenty five years. From the inability to bring a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the most recent rise of the Islamic State after the invasion of Iraq and destabilization of Syria, trust and influence is at an all-time low. A turn to a more isolationist foreign policy will be welcome by many due to the extensive destabilization that has occurred over the last fifteen years by the populations and even some governments. U.S. policy over the years has been very uneven, has not kept stability and, more importantly, the U.S. government turns a blind eye to human rights abuses and the struggle for self-determination that is brutally quelled by harsh dictatorships and monarchies, and, notably, the Israeli continued occupation and expansion. The population is well aware of the continued U.S. support of Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries despite the explicit support they are providing or allowing to be provided to, the Takfiris and the brutal destruction the Saudis are leading in Yemen with U.S. assistance. Dropping the MOAB in Afghanistan further stoked the fire that the U.S. is the one to fear.

The ongoing instability has provided a playground for the international geopolitical battle of wills at the expense of the population. That fight that includes the U.S., Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and others give little room for U.S. to be a primary power influence. Iran is the power that seems to be maneuvering and finding a foundation in this gap pointing out American ineptness in the region.

This brings us back to the premise that the more connected one is, the more powerful its influence. It is not war, but relationships that allow countries like Iran and China to “win.” They win with infrastructure, economic alliances, diplomacy, a sovereign focus on security and public good. The U.S. should heed this if it wants to continue its primacy or, at this point, reestablish it, in the future.

Summary Conclusion

The inaugural pledge of Thomas Jefferson contained the statement, "Peace, commerce, and honest friendship with all nations-entangling alliances with none" is key to the future of U.S. engagement in global affairs. The world is increasingly connected, chaotic, and not easily managed or solved without partners. It is time to restructure its tools so they too become interlinked and can address complicated problems. Whole of governance is not the answer. Combining government efforts and creating teams to tackle problems are required. Teams that are quick to process information, comfortable with exponential change, lighting fast technological movement of ideas and resources and a vision for an America that is militarily strong, but does not forsake its other tools– economic, diplomatic and information– for power that does not create a prosperous stable global future.

Fred C. Hof, Atlantic Council

Does U.S. foreign policy strike the right balance in supporting U.S. interests and its role as a global power? Or, should the U.S. consider a more isolationist approach to foreign policy? What impact could an isolationist policy have on Middle East security and stability, balance of influence by regional and world actors, and U.S. national interests?

Notwithstanding the end of conscription over 40 years ago and the narrowing of uniformed military service to a tiny percentage of the citizenry, many Americans seem to be exhausted by the post-9/11 commitments of U.S. forces to Iraq, Afghanistan, Syria and elsewhere. Arguably this exhaustion should be the exclusive property of uniformed personnel subjected to multiple overseas deployments and their families. Yet even if some of the broader popular grievance has an "I just want to change the channel" aspect to it, it has real political salience, as demonstrated by the 2016 presidential campaign. Moreover, it is rooted in traditional American pragmatic thinking.

For many Americans – perhaps the majority – the balance between global and domestic focus is seriously out of whack. For many of our countrymen the scale is decisively tipped toward foreign entanglements: much of the weight represented by U.S. involvement – mainly militarily – in the greater Middle East. Public opinion reflects a dollars-and-cents conflict between domestic fiscal priorities (infrastructure, health care, education, social security) and open-ended American involvement in countries where (it is argued) ancient, intractable disputes are being played out violently by fanatics who are incapable of reason and compromise. Many see American blood and treasure being poured uselessly onto sand.

On the other hand, many Americans – perhaps also the majority – recognize that significant foreign policy retrenchment – perhaps all the way to isolationism – cannot be entirely squared in today's connected world with the defense of American citizens and the American homeland. The two oceans no longer serve as moats, and static defense cannot adequately secure North America from transnational terror threats embedded in places where political vacuums opened up (most notably Syria, Iraq, and Yemen).

Indeed, despite the growth in the U.S. of identity politics and hyper-partisanship, Tocqueville's 1838 observation about the American mind being rooted in pragmatism – fixed "upon purely practical objects" – remains relevant. Most Americans seem not disposed, as a matter of principle or ideology, to try to raise a nonexistent drawbridge. They do, however, have limited patience for multi-year foreign projects inadequately explained by political leaders, often bereft of plausible, credible good news, and notably lacking a coherent sense of what would constitute success and how it would be achieved.

Neither is pragmatic, traditional American skepticism about ill-defined, open-end foreign undertakings a function of provincialism or poor education. As a Vietnam veteran, this writer experienced personally the corporate incompetence – indeed, the dereliction of duty - of American political leaders. The personal consequences of bad leadership were repeated on a smaller, but equally intense manner in Lebanon in the early 1980s. And Iraq 2003 was, on multiple levels, a case study in foreign policy malfeasance. Popular skepticism about 'engagement' abroad is rooted in American pragmatism, itself a key part of our national DNA. Vietnam, Lebanon, and Iraq demonstrated that it is very well-founded.

At issue is not a theoretical question of 'balance.' The issue is one of competence, with the emphasis on decision-making and communication. Several American Presidents during the lifetime of this writer have made and doubled-down on profoundly bad decisions on matters not requiring an instant, snap

judgment in the face of an existential emergency. Several displayed an inability or disinclination to explain clearly and truthfully what they had in mind with an overseas endeavor.

With the political 'brake' represented by national conscription removed in 1973 – a brake that had already been partially disabled by the discriminatory way the draft was administered during the Vietnam War – Presidents desiring to deploy forces abroad knew that the burden of deployment and execution would fall only on the few who volunteered, thereby encouraging a measure of passivity among many citizens and their representatives in Congress. Notwithstanding the War Powers Act, a lower than adequate domestic political bar was set for careful, disciplined decision-making and for informative and persuasive public communications. Yet we are today discovering that mass anesthetization itself wears off over time.

Those of us professionally molded in the uniformed services take for granted procedures and processes designed to compensate for the fact that not every unit commander is a Napoleon or MacArthur. Indeed, both of those geniuses would have been better served by disciplined staffs rather than adoring courts. Commander's intent and concept of operations are, among other things, drilled into the minds of lieutenants. We think of these things in decision-making processes as being as natural as breathing, and it is not only uniformed personnel who get exposure to these best practices. Yet many politicians do not so benefit in their education and experience. And few of them rise to the level of a Washington, Lincoln, or Roosevelt in terms of judgment and communication.

Americans across-the-board might support active American engagement in the Middle East – including at times military – if they thought that their political leaders knew what they were doing and were able to explain their intent and their operational concept in convincingly clear English. This writer, for example, has been focused heavily on Syria for the past seven years, both in and out of government. He has neither heard nor can explain what the USG has in mind in eastern Syria with respect to Daesh. OK: defeat it militarily in Raqqa. Then what? The boys (and girls) come home? Same deal in Iraq? What is the endgame in Afghanistan and how – plausibly speaking – do we intend to get there?

If a so-called regional specialist – a 'Middle East hand' – cannot understand his own government's objectives and strategies, what chance does the average American voter have in comprehending what his leaders intend to do, and how? Sadly, the weight of public anger and frustration over incomprehensible overseas commitments has fallen not on leaders who cannot lead, but on 'experts' who presumably maneuver clueless, credulous politicians into bottomless quagmires.

The Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East recently published the Final Report of the Middle East Strategy Task Force, headed by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and ex-National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley. The bipartisan report conveys a sense of optimism about the Middle East, one rooted in the positive potential of a very young, energetic, and promising population base.

It recommends a new strategy based on partnership, with the region itself taking the lead in establishing a new political trajectory based on citizen empowerment. It encompasses a pragmatic approach that would capitalize on promise and avoid regarding the Middle East as a place condemned to conflict and dissolution. This report is garnering significant support in Congress – where the American people are represented directly – and is reportedly having some positive impact on executive branch national security deliberations. It is absolutely required reading.

Albright and Hadley place their policy bet squarely on the people of the Middle East. They reject external 'nation-building' and policy dictates from abroad, and counsel a partnership approach with regional reformers and with like-minded external actors. Just as the era of externally imposed strategies and mandates is, in their view, finished, so "There is nothing in or about the Middle East that condemns it to failure . . . The thesis of intractable ancient conflicts rooted in religion and ethnicity is as faulty in the Middle East as it was in Europe." The two authors acknowledge that sustained commitment to the region "will be a tough sell in the United States. Americans are tired of seemingly unending wars in the Middle East. But we believe the approach we outline ultimately will make the Middle East more stable, and, as a result, will make the United States – and the world – more secure."

There is a global crisis that has erupted from the Middle East, a region where many countries still wrestle with the question of what follows the 400-year Ottoman Sultan-Caliph system as the source of political legitimacy. It is a crisis directly impacting American interests with respect to keeping Americans safe from terrorism, protecting the U.S. economy, empowering friends and allies to step up to mutual challenges, enabling American global military operations, preventing the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and averting destabilizing humanitarian disasters.

Most Americans are potentially persuadable that a patient, long-term U.S. commitment to the region is essential if American interests – starting with national security – are to be served. That they are not now so persuaded is not the product of some objective imbalance. Rather it derives from perception that the region is cursed, our leaders are unskilled and unclear, and the track record of intervention – with Iraq 2003 as the 'original sin' - is not good.

If American political leaders cannot demonstrate competence in decision-making and communicating, a sustained commitment to the region will itself be unsustainable, and the 'balance' will swing decisively in a direction not good for American security. The great asset of American pragmatism is not necessarily a self-correcting mechanism for American foreign policy. Under conditions of bad leadership it can impose 'cures' more deadly than the 'illness.' Retreat from the Middle East could be one such 'cure.'

Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron/Case Western Reserve University &

Munqith Dagher, IIACSS

An isolationist US foreign policy would be very dangerous to peace and stability in the Middle East. American interests in the region are economic, political, and security-focused and only the United States can secure those interests to the maximum possible well-being of our country. We have no allies or proxies who can guarantee our interests are secured in the region.

American withdrawal from the region would create a vacuum that would lead to more serious, violent contention between states and states and violent extremist organizations such as ISIL and Al Qaeda. American isolationism would encourage adversaries such as Iran and Russia to further expand their power and influence in the region and that would come at great cost to American interests. U.S. isolationism could also lead to conflict between Israel and its adversaries if those adversaries believe Israel is on its own. It may also encourage more intemperate voices within Israel to engage in aggressive military action if they believe the United States no longer cares what Israel does or that Israel must strike preemptively because its security is now more seriously threatened.

American isolationism would be viewed by the domestic enemies of our allied governments as we have abandoned support for those allies, significantly weakening them in their domestic domains. American isolationism would lead to grave short-term harm to U.S. interests in the Middle East but would be even more serious in the long-term as few countries would take American promises of support or its role as a stabilizer seriously into the future.

Isolationism, is, and always has been a movement in American politics to gain domestic political advantage among Americans who do not understand the complexity of international relations and have a general aversion to things foreign. Playing to these impulses would be an unethical abandonment of a duty to uphold America's national security interests.

Having said this, the US must play a constructive role in the Middle East that is viewed by our allies as strong, smart, clear, consistent, and multi-faceted. That means that the United States must remain engaged in the Middle East in ways that help to re-build politics and society in Iraq and Syria after ISIL's battlefield defeat. The U.S. must use its resources to both support and leverage the government in Iraq to build a new political status quo that is viewed as fair and legitimate to Sunnis, Shi'as, Kurds, and all other groups in Iraq. It must engage in Syria to find a political solution to the civil war there that creates space for ISIL and Al Qaeda to flourish, grow, and threaten the region and the U.S. homeland. This same logic applies to the U.S. remaining engaged in Libya, Yemen, and Somalia. It means that the United States must help to manage the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran in a way that promotes stability, balance, and an image of the United States as a trusted friend to allies and a promoter of justice in the Middle East.

This means that the United States must balance our support with allies with our values as a democracy that stands against supporters of violent religious and political extremism and oppression. Our soft power in the Middle East should be just as important as our military power in the region. A sole emphasis on kinetic operations would be highly counterproductive for the U.S. We must use our military, diplomatic, and political means to help solve, as best as possible, the underlying political sources of instability in the Middle East.

Mark N. Katz, George Mason University

There are many ways in which a more isolationist U.S. foreign policy, especially in the Middle East, might be appealing. First and foremost, it could save America from the vast expenses, as well as the significant American casualties, that active U.S. involvement in this region has been incurring. Second, the Middle East is arguably less important to the U.S. now than it was believed to be in the past.

One of the main reasons why the Middle East was seen as important to Washington in the past was for its vast oil reserves there. Now, though, it is known that there are other areas of the world where petroleum exists in abundance, including vast shale reserves in America itself. The Middle East, then, is simply not as important a source of petroleum for America now as it used to be. Some of America's allies, as well as others, that do not have shale reserves, or are unwilling to exploit them due to environmental concerns, remain dependent on Middle Eastern oil. But there is no reason why the U.S. should go to the trouble and expense of defending Gulf oil reserves for these other countries. They can either defend this area themselves, or buy petroleum from other sources (including the U.S.) if they are unwilling or unable to do so.

Another reason why it was believed to be important for the U.S. to remain influential in the Middle East during the Cold War was the fear that if the U.S. was not, then the Soviet Union would become the most influential actor there instead. And so long as the region's oil was seen as necessary for the West, this was unacceptable. The situation now, though, is quite different. Not only is the region less important to America (and possibly the West) for its oil, but there is not just one other power vying for influence in the region, but several. These include Russia, China, India, and some European states. There are also contenders inside the region, including Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt. An isolationist American approach to the Middle East, then, will not lead to the region falling under the influence of just one power, but to a competition for influence among external and internal powers that will balance against each other (and in which the U.S. could judiciously act to support some contenders against others to prevent any from gaining predominance).

Indeed, a Machiavellian American approach to the Middle East might even see greater advantage from a more isolationist approach than continued engagement. A complete U.S. withdrawal from Iraq, for example, would immediately set up a confrontation between two forces hostile toward the U.S.: Iran and its Shi'a militia allies on the one hand and Sunni jihadists such as ISIS on the other. Similarly, if a complete U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan led to the Taliban regaining power throughout that country, it is doubtful that they would leave the neighbors in peace but would seek to support Islamist forces in them as well (as they did when they ruled from 1996 to 2001). Russia, China, and Iran in particular would either have to undertake the burden of containing the Taliban and their allies, or suffer the consequences of not doing so.

A third reason why the U.S. has been actively involved in the Middle East relates to its desire to protect Israel. The most ardent proponents of American support for Israel argue that this is vital for pursuing America's larger goals in the Middle East. But if America no longer has these larger goals, than it clearly does not need Israel to pursue them. Of course, if the U.S. still wanted to support Israel, this would be a much narrower goal than the larger commitments it has in the Middle East now. On the other hand, a lesser American commitment to Israel might sharpen the understanding of both Israel and Arab states

who fear Iran that cooperating with each other is vital for defending themselves against Tehran and other common threats.

Despite the possible benefits and opportunities that an isolationist American policy toward the Middle East would lead to, there also important drawbacks and risks of such an approach. Pro-American governments will feel increasingly vulnerable and may seek protection from some of America's adversaries. Whether they do so or not, some pro-American regimes may succumb to forces hostile toward the U.S. Any withdrawal from the region is not going to lead to stability, but either to continued or even increased instability.

One country where this is a special concern is Saudi Arabia. While the U.S. may no longer be as dependent on Saudi oil, it benefits from the fact that the government with the guardianship of Islam's two holy cities—Mecca and Medina—is willing to cooperate with the U.S. and its allies. Should the Saudi monarchy fall and be replaced with a regime openly hostile to America and the West, its guardianship of the two holy cities might serve to legitimate hostility toward America and the West to the extent that any cooperation with it by Muslims is considered apostasy. In other words, despite whatever hostility there exists in the Muslim world toward the U.S. at present, it could increase enormously through being further legitimized by a hostile regime controlling the two holy cities. A hostile Arabia (which would no longer be called Saudi) might even compete with Iran to demonstrate which is more hostile toward America and the West.

There are undoubtedly many drawbacks to the current level of American involvement in the Middle East. A more isolationist U.S. approach toward it might lower the cost of this involvement and could leave some of America's adversaries worse off than they are now. But an isolationist American approach toward the Middle East would not lead to greater stability there, and would probably encourage increased instability. The impact of a hostile regime replacing the current Saudi monarchy could have very grave consequences. While the current level of American commitment toward the Middle East is costly, an isolationist approach American policy in the region could be even more so in the long run.

Spencer B. Meredith III, National Defense University

The question presents a false dichotomy between engagement and isolation. US foreign policy has never been either of those two poles, and therefore not more or less one way or the other. Instead, it has been a Janus-faced mix of liberal rhetoric and realist interests. Both of these call for traditional foreign policy means (diplomatic, economic, military) with the language of Western civilization as the justifying terminology; human rights are the latest narrative of free enterprise, self-determination, making the world safe for democracy, etc.

Furthermore, what may appear as "isolationist" in 19th century "regionalism" was still a form of "engagement" with others (Native American nations, Mexico and European competitors in the North American region, expanding global involvement inside and beyond the Western Hemisphere). Even during the post WW1 and later Depression era, US foreign policy was still engaging others – economic autarky (what some argue is the predecessor to the current "America First" motto) was not about ignoring the rest of the globe, but rather redefining priorities for which community mattered in the hierarchy of needs and interests based on conditions of the time. It thus meant reassessing those conditions rather than assuming everyone was playing by the same definitions of the rules, or that they had a sincere other-centered interpretation of trade relations (and not first and foremost for their benefit.) Therefore, to say the US faces a choice between more or less engagement and isolation misses the nuance inherent to US foreign policy and its role in the world.

First, the United States is a global power, not just a regional one. This is Russia's aspiration and China's growing identity. As such, the question above is really asking about priorities and vision, not policies per se. In that regard, the past 25 years of idealism have crashed into the reality that convincing other governments and societies is not so easy as first argued in the heady days of post-Cold War "Democratic Peace". Nor have military operations been able to secure the peace, stability and prosperity held out as the dividends of US-led democratization; foreign aid has had an equally questionable effectiveness over an even longer period of time. Even more destabilizing have been the past decade's social reengineering efforts to redefine core identities and beliefs along globalist, cosmopolitan ideals that conflict with local identities and interests. The growing "localism" (nationalism, states' rights, religious rebirth, conservative swing, etc.) across Europe, the US, the Philippines, and other countries and groups pushing back against the "liberal ideal", will likely continue as the pendulum swings to correct itself.

Second, the US has obligations and interests that require pragmatism, not utopianism. This is the role of a mature great power, one that has tried its strength and found where it endures, as much as where it is lacking. In that regard, setting the idealistic bar high and failing to reach it, through audacious (and often costly) aid, training, and human rights rhetoric, has value in moving the range of what is beneficial, but it must also take into account what is possible. Pragmatism must therefore be guided by that curious mix of American values and interests that create the identity and actions of a Global Democratic Power.

Third, for the Middle East, this means more than supporting anti-ISIS operations, criticizing human rights violations, and sanctioning anti-democratic practices across the region. More importantly, more paradigmatically, it must start with an assessment of what has failed to occur over the past two and a half decades – the transformation of a single Middle Eastern country to a stable, functioning, consolidated democracy through US efforts. Critical to this acknowledgement is that time is not on the side of idealist foreign policy that seeks to accomplish in a few years what took far longer to accomplish elsewhere. Such hubris has no place in the policies of a country with as much reach and power as the United States. In contrast, the few truly consolidated, long-standing democratic polities took centuries,

several civil wars, and social convulsions to arrive at wherever they are today. When combined with being global powers, those same countries experienced periods of foreign conquest and surrender, with shifting patterns of influence as part of becoming democratic polities and societies. This process is long, slow, sometimes violent, and always contested.

Therefore, retaining its identity as a Global Democratic Power requires the United States to re-center its core paradigm away from wishful thinking or frantically plugging all the holes before the dam bursts.

For Syria, that could mean accepting the reality of Assad's enduring presence as an interim step – the same has happened in other post-authoritarian transitions – while also setting timelines (debated with other regional players) for different stages of transition after his rule. These stages need options that consider both the will of the people, and the realistic avenues available to meet them in the foreseeable future. For example, repatriation would be desirable to restore the "brain drain" and social mass necessary to begin the debates about the options for a different Syria. Regrettably, these are hard to accomplish in the near term, not least because of the endemic violence and complexities facing their termination in the current "war of all against all", which has potential to escalate through patron states and further factionalization among the disputants.

For Iraq, that could mean accepting Shia dominated government and governance, with the concomitant Iranian influence, while also highlighting institutional arrangements that 1) refocus "democracy" to the local level before jumpstarting (and making hollow) national democratic identities – as has happened to date, 2) protect current and likely ongoing US partners in the Kurdish regions, and 3) take advantage of the post-ISIS deliverance sentiment among Sunnis by advocating for their cultural autonomy/protections in the Shia-dominated Iraq.

For Libya and Yemen, it could mean waiting until the disputants have either reached a "hurting stalemate" or moved closer to decisive victory for one side – time is necessary to see how things shake out before applying a clearer operational approach. These diverse options for US policy in the region are at the heart of a pragmatic, mature foreign policy.

Time is on the side of the patient, and US enduring interests are not so complicated, nor expansive to require maintenance of hegemony in every area of the globe. Re-centering to a Great Power role, be it balancer or a more focused global player with acknowledged (and limited) areas of interest and influence, is more in line with historic (and still current) US identity and interests. Now is the time for prudence in foreign policy, not least because the current US domestic political climate looks to limit adventurism as much as compromise. Under those conditions, it would better to do some things very well, defend key interests and allies, and maintain core identities rather than do neither well, as has been the case for the recent past.

Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins School of International Studies

It is a mistake to ask foreign policy experts about isolationism, which they will all condemn, but I'll go this far: U.S. interests in the Middle East are not as salient as they once were and we should be thinking and planning about reducing our commitments and burdens there.

The main U.S. interests in the region apart from counter-terrorism are generally defined as these: non-proliferation, oil, maintenance of alliances, and human rights/democracy. The only significant proliferation risk in the region (Iran) is on hold for 10-15 years or so, the U.S. is far less dependent on Middle East oil than once it was, our allies are mostly interested in military assistance, and we appear to have mostly given up on human rights and democracy in the region.

I think it is arguable that a) deterring Iran could be (maybe better be) accomplished with a much reduced U.S. presence in the Gulf, b) we should not be spending as much American treasure as in the past or risking American lives for oil flowing out of the Gulf to China and Japan (which should share that burden more than in the past), c) our allies should be taking on more of the burden of defending themselves with the enormous amount of kit we've sold them, and d) human rights and democracy will gain traction in the region better with less U.S. military presence.

Janet Breslin Smith, *Crosswinds International Consulting*

The first step in strategy is understanding the nature of the war at hand.

The second step is to balance ends, ways and means. While we may live in an era of unlimited military budgets, the growing debt may force a rethinking.

As Fred Ikle, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Reagan years, wrote in his important book, Every War Must End that a nation must watch not to overextend and waste away its blood and treasure in never ending war. He made the comparison between treason when you weaken the country through espionage and what he called treason of the hawks, when you weaken the country by creating more enemies, thus exhausting the nation.

While it is hard to imagine the United States withdrawing from the world stage, it is possible to have a sage policy, more in the lines of Sun Tzu rather than George Patten. Indeed, we should reflect on the strategy of containment. Following the end of WWII, as Stalin became more aggressive, many advisors to Truman and Eisenhower argued for preemptive strike, push back, military engagement to block Soviet ambition. All of those policies risked atomic and later nuclear destruction, with the attendant destruction and loss of life.

Containment was designed to leverage the internal weaknesses and rigidity of the Soviet system against itself. It was an assertive, active, controlled policy of patience and persistence. This strategy had bi-partisan support over 40 years. And indeed the Soviet Union crumbled in its own rigidity. Containment was a patient, active strategy. It was not isolationism.

I think we must look to that model again, but in the context of the struggle at hand, which is the violent outgrowth of the war within Islam. Once again we are watching a rigid ideological system, culture and political system that struggles to deal with change. It is a culture in crisis.

The leaders in the Middle East are aware of the tensions within their own countries and look for ways to defuse these tensions or distract their populations. Traditionally conspiracy theories and power politics often fit the bill. It was someone else's fault for the despair, the problems in society. Asking for US leadership by Middle East leaders was especially effective in shifting responsibility for change on our shoulders and off theirs.

It is time to put the burden for intellectual leadership, elder responsibility, back where it belongs. As I have said before, this is their region, their religion, and these are their children.

I believe we need to acknowledge just how hard social and political change is, and respect the crisis within Islam. I also think we need to lay it on the table. That ,in and of itself, would mute the concern about the United States pulling back, and redirect the focus on THEM.

Biographies

Perry Cammack

Perry Cammack is a fellow in the Middle East Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, where he focuses on long-term regional trends and their implications for American foreign policy. Prior to joining Carnegie in August 2015, Cammack worked on issues related to the Middle East as part of the policy planning staff of Secretary of State John Kerry from 2013 to 2015 and as a senior professional staff member for then senator Kerry on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) from 2009 to 2012. From 2003 to 2006, he worked on the SFRC staff of then senator Joseph Biden, Jr.

Cammack has a master's degree in public administration from the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and bachelor's degrees in economics and philosophy from the University of Maryland. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the International Institute for Strategic Studies and a part-time adjunct professor at the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University.

Munqith Dagher

Dr. Munqith Dagher conducted Iraq's first-ever public opinion poll and since that time has been responsible for undertaking 1,500,000+ interviews for a range of agencies and topics. Munqith established IIACSS in 2003 while he was a Professor of Public Administration/ Strategic Management at Baghdad University. He has managed more than 300 public opinion and various market research projects. He has lectured widely and published several articles and books in different countries in the world.

Since ISIL took over Mosul in June of 2014, Munqith has dedicated most of his time to exploring the reasons behind the sudden uprising of this terrorist organization and how to defeat it. In the course of this project, he has run three rounds of quantitative and qualitative research in Iraq. Munqith has since published some of these results in the Washington Post and has given several talks and presentations in some of the most well known think tanks in the world, such as the Centre of Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington and King's College in London.

Munqith holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Baghdad, College of Administration and Economics, a Masters degree in Human Resources and War Sciences respectively. He was professor of public administration and strategic management in the Baghdad, Basrah and National Defence Universities. Munqith has also completed a course in Principles of Marketing Research from the University of Georgia, US.

On June 16th 2015, Munqith was awarded the Ginny Valentine Badge of Courage, on behalf of the Research Liberation Front for Bravery in keeping the research alive in multiple conflict zones.

Fred Hof

Frederic C. Hof is the director of the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East and specializes in Syria. Prior to becoming director, he was a resident senior fellow with the Center.

On March 28, 2012 President Obama conferred on Hof the rank of ambassador in connection with his new duties as special adviser for transition in Syria. Hof was previously the special coordinator for regional affairs in the US Department of State's Office of the Special Envoy for Middle East Peace, where he advised Special Envoy George Mitchell on the full range of Arab-Israeli peace issues falling under his purview and focusing on Syria-Israel and Israel-Lebanon matters. He joined the State Department in 2009 after serving as the president and CEO of AALC, limited company, an international business consulting and project finance firm formerly known as Armitage Associates LC.

Hof's professional life has focused largely on the Middle East. In 2001 he directed the Jerusalem field operations of the Sharm el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee headed by former US Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell and was the lead drafter of the Committee's 2001 report. In 1983, as a US Army officer, he helped draft the "Long Commission" report, which investigated the October 1983 bombing of the US Marine headquarters at Beirut International Airport. Both reports drew considerable international praise for fairness and integrity.

A 1969 graduate of the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service, Hof began his professional career as an Army officer. He is a Vietnam veteran and served as a US Army Middle East Foreign Area Officer, studying Arabic at the Foreign Service Institute in Tunisia and receiving a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School. He served as US Army attaché in Beirut, Lebanon and later in the Office of the Secretary of Defense as director for Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and Palestinian Affairs.

Hof has written extensively on Arab-Israeli issues. He is the author of *Galilee Divided: The Israel-Lebanon Frontier, 1916-1984* (Westview Press, 1985); *Line of Battle, Border of Peace? The Line of June 4, 1967* (Middle East Insight, 1999); and *Beyond the Boundary: Lebanon, Israel and the Challenge of Change* (Middle East Insight, 2000). He has also written many articles on Jordan Valley water issues. His writing on the Israel-Syria, Israel-Lebanon, and (by virtue of his work on the "Mitchell Committee") Israel-Palestinian tracks of the Middle East peace process has contributed positively to the body of literature promoting Arab-Israeli peace.

His awards include the Purple Heart, the Department of State Superior Honor Award, the Secretary of Defense Meritorious Civilian Service Medal, and the Defense Superior Service Medal. He resides in Silver Spring, Maryland with his wife, Brenda.

Karl Kaltenthaler

Karl Kaltenthaler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University. His research and teaching focuses on security policy, political violence, political psychology, public opinion and political behavior, violent Islamist extremism, terrorism, and counterterrorism. He has worked on multiple research studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, and the United States. He is currently researching the radicalization and recruitment process into Islamist violent extremism in different environments as well as ways to counter this process (Countering Violent Extremism). His work has resulted in academic publications and presentations as well as analytic reports and briefings for the U.S. government. He has consulted for the FBI, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Intelligence Community and the U.S. military. His research has been published in three books, multiple book chapters, as well as articles in International Studies Quarterly, Political Science Quarterly, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, as well as other several other journals.

Mark Katz

Dr. Katz earned a BA in international relations from the University of California at Riverside, an MA in international relations from the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies, and a PhD in political science from M.I.T. He writes on Russian foreign policy, the international relations of the Middle East, transnational revolutionary movements, and other subjects. He has been a research fellow at the Brookings Institution, held a temporary appointment as a Soviet affairs analyst at the U.S. Department of State, was a Rockefeller Foundation international relations fellow, and was a Kennan Institute research scholar and research associate. He has also received a U.S. Institute of Peace fellowship and grant, and several Earhart Foundation fellowship research grants. Recently, he was a visiting scholar at the Hokkaido University Slavic Research Center, and at the Kennan Institute.

Dr. Katz is the author of *The Third World in Soviet Military Thought* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), *Russia and Arabia: Soviet Foreign Policy toward the Arabian Peninsula* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), *Gorbachev's Military Policy in the Third World* (Center for Strategic and International Studies, 1989), *Revolutions and Revolutionary Waves* (St. Martin's Press, 1997), and *Reflections on Revolutions* (St. Martin's Press, 1999). He is also the editor of *The USSR and Marxist Revolutions in the Third World* (Wilson Center/Cambridge University Press, 1990), *Soviet-American Conflict Resolution in the Third World* (U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 1991), and *Revolution: International Dimensions* (CQ Press, 2001).

Spencer Meredith III

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III, PhD is an Associate Professor of National Security Strategy in the Joint Special Operations Master of Arts (JSOMA) program for the College of International Security Affairs (CISA) at the National Defense University (NDU). After completing his doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia in 2003, he served as a Fulbright Scholar in the Caucasus in 2007 working on democratic development and conflict resolution, and has focused on related issues in Eastern Europe for several years. He has also served as a subject matter expert for US Department of State public diplomacy programs in South and East Asia dealing with the role of religion and democracy in US foreign policy.

Dr. Meredith has areas of expertise that address "4+1" challenges in the Gray Zone through the frameworks of democratization and conflict resolution. His regional focus has been on Russian, Eastern European and Middle Eastern politics. Accordingly, he has supported US Special Operations Command projects on countering Russian influence operations in Ukraine and the Baltics, US Central Command programs analyzing and supporting effective governance in Iraq and Syria, and other US Army Special Operations efforts in analyzing narratives, deterrence, and a range of violent and non-violent conflicts. He has also worked with partner nations to establish effective governance in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.

Dr. Meredith's publications include his first book on democratic development and international nuclear safety agreements (*Nuclear Energy and International Cooperation: Closing the World's Most Dangerous Reactors*), as well as articles in scholarly journals ranging from *Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, to *Central European Political Science Review*. He has also published in professional journals related to unconventional warfare and the future operating environment, with articles in *Small Wars Journal, Inter-Agency Journal*, *Special Warfare*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, and the peer-reviewed *Special Operations Journal*.

Daniel Serwer

Daniel Serwer is a Professor of the Practice of Conflict Management, director of the Conflict Management Program and a Senior Fellow at the Center for Transatlantic Relations, at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. Also a scholar at the Middle East Institute, Daniel Serwer is the author of Righting the Balance (Potomac Books, November 2013), editor (with David Smock) of Facilitating Dialogue (USIP, 2012) and supervised preparation of Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction (USIP, 2009). Righting the Balance focuses on how to strengthen the civilian instruments of American foreign policy to match its strong military arm. Facilitating Dialogue analyzes specific cases and best practices in getting people to talk to each other in conflict zones. Guiding Principles is the leading compilation of best practices for civilians and military in post-war state-building.

As vice president of the Centers of Innovation at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Serwer led teams working on rule of law, peacebuilding, religion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance and gender. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, overseeing its peacebuilding work in Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq and Sudan and serving as executive director of the Hamilton/Baker Iraq Study Group. As a minister-counselor at the U.S. Department of State, Serwer directed the European office of intelligence and research and served as U.S. special envoy and coordinator for the Bosnian Federation, mediating between Croats and Muslims and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton Peace Talks; from 1990 to 1993, he was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, leading a major diplomatic mission through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War. Serwer is a graduate of Haverford College and earned Masters degrees at the University of Chicago and Princeton, where he also did his PhD in history.

Janet Breslin Smith

Dr. Janet Breslin-Smith travels across cultures, both bureaucratic and geostrategic. As President of Crosswinds International Consulting, she draws on her 30-year career in public service, including leadership roles in the United States Senate, the National War College, and in Saudi Arabia, where she focused on higher education and outreach to women in the Middle East. She has written and lectured on strategy and culture, macro-economics and Islam, Women, Islam and Saudi Arabia. Her article, “The Struggle to Erase Saudi Extremism” appeared in November 2015 in the New York Times. She is the co-author of The National War College: A History of Strategic Thinking in Peace and War.

Dr. Breslin-Smith a Professor of National Security Strategy for 14 years at the National War College in Washington, DC, was the first woman to Chair the Department of National Security Strategy. She was named Outstanding Professor at the College in 2006. Prior to her academic career, she was Legislative Director for Senator Patrick J. Leahy and Deputy Staff Director of the Senate Agriculture Committee.

She resided in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 2009 through 2013, with her husband, Ambassador James Smith. Dr. Breslin-Smith developed extensive contacts with Saudi women leaders in higher education, medicine, business, banking, philanthropy, sports, and on-line entrepreneurship. She lectured at al Faisal University, the Diplomatic Studies Institute, and CellA+ women’s business networks. She consulted with Saudi women members newly appointed to the Shoura Council.

Dr. Breslin-Smith earned her Ph.D. from the University of California at Los Angeles and her undergraduate degree in International Relations from the University of Southern California.

Patricia DeGennaro

Patricia (Tricia) DeGennaro is a Senior Geopolitical Risk Analyst for Threat Tec., LLC. She currently supports the US Army TRADOC G27 as an analyst in the Advanced Network Analysis/Attack the Network Directorate. DeGennaro has lectured at West Point and New York University on International Security Policy and Civilian and Military Affairs. She was selected as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on the Middle East, Iraq, and Afghanistan for various projects under the TRADOC G2, the commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, commander of the Special Operations Command Central, and the US Department of Defense Strategic Multilayer Assessment program. In 2013, she was accepted into the US Department of State Franklin Fellows program where she served in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance - Office of Civilian and Military Cooperation (DCHA/CMC) as a Senior Policy Advisor to support the Office and an Agency-wide Civilian-Military Cooperation Steering Committee in an extensive revision to the Agency's Civilian-Military Cooperation Policy. DeGennaro capitalizes on over twenty years of experience as an academic, author and consultant in international security. Much of her work focuses on stabilization in the Middle East and surrounding region, countering violent extremism, and transitioning nations from war.

During her tenure, she has also consulted with the Asia Foundation, Director of National Intelligence Office, Department of Homeland Security, The Conference Board, World Bank, Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee chaired by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, and several organizations that support the Middle East Peace Process. She also spent four years in Albania as a Small and Medium Enterprise volunteer with the Peace Corps and, later, as a contractor with US Agency for International Development. Regionally, DeGennaro continues to focus on the Balkans, the Middle East and South Asia where she travels often.

DeGennaro has published several articles on US foreign policy and national security topics. Her focus is to encourage an integrated international policy that looks beyond war and the use of force. She is often an expert commentator for CNN, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, Fox News, BBC and various nationally and internationally syndicated radio programs.

DeGennaro holds an MBA in International Trade and Finance from George Washington University and an MPA in International Security and Conflict Resolution from Harvard University. She speaks fluent Albanian and has a basic knowledge of Italian, Arabic and Dari.