

UNITED STATES

Party Portrait

Since World War II, the U.S. has been a significant stakeholder in the Middle East. From WWII to the end of the Cold War, the US parried the USSR's moves under a strategy of "offshore balancing," primarily relying on partners in the region, such as Saudi Arabia, to pursue US interests as allies and clients. In this balance, each major power ordered its priorities in the region based on the other's movements. Later, from the end of the Cold War to the mid-2000s, the US reigned undisputed as the most influential power in the Middle East. However, US power has begun to wane in the past decade. US popular fatigue from military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, in concert with uncertainty born of the 2008 financial crisis, have encouraged US allies like Turkey and Israel toward warmer relations with Russia. Although the US still exerts the largest influence in the region, in recent years Russia and China have stepped up to more aggressively pursue their own interests.

Key Interests

- Promote national security/counterterrorism by degrading and deterring terrorist groups through intelligence sharing/coalitions
- Maintain balance of power/regional alliance; do not allow Russia or China to obtain dominance in the Middle East
- Enhance energy security for substantial imports of oil
- Partner with Israel to protect security and democracy in the region. Support peace between Israel and Palestinian Territories
- Encourage human rights and democracy, especially in the face of Russian and Chinese ascendance in the region

Sources of Leverage

Energy - Despite lessening dependence on Middle East oil, the US maintains access to significant energy resources in the region
Military - The US boasts the most powerful military in the world, allocating hundreds of billions of dollars more budget than its closest competitor, China.
Convening Power - Funds peace negotiations and uses its considerable motivating power to bring warring parties to peace talks
Soft Power - Exercises public diplomacy, private diplomacy and persuasion tactics, as well as exporting culture through popular music, movies, fashion, etc
Economic - Since the 1950s, the US has sent about \$170 billion in financial assistance to countries in the Middle East; Israel alone received another \$62bn
Political - The US holds partnerships and alliances with powerful local stakeholders, like Israel and Saudi Arabia, and coalitions in Syria and elsewhere
Technological - The US has the most advanced technology in the world, to be used destructively (drone strikes) or peacefully (technology transfers).

Regional Strategy

Still exerts wide influence through soft and hard power. Strong interest in maintaining energy security, resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, promoting human rights and democracy, and partnering with regional allies to combat terrorism. Lessening energy dependence by lowering consumption and developing domestic resources. New US administration's negative view toward the Iranian nuclear agreement may threaten its implementation. A new strategy has been for the US' allies to bear more of the brunt of maintaining stability in the Middle East.

Powerful Individuals

Donald Trump (President), Steve Bannon (Chief Strategist), Reince Priebus (Chief of Staff), Gen. James Mattis (Secretary of Defense), Gen. Joseph Dunford (Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff), Rex Tillerson (Secretary of State), Dan Coats (Director of National Intelligence), Earle Litzenger (Acting Permanent Representative to NATO), Nikki Haley (Ambassador to the UN)

Potential Negotiation Moves

Pursue collaboration over confrontation - US can choose to engage positively with China and Russia, and pool resources over shared interests like political stability and energy security.
Organize joint efforts around universal concerns - If US could organize efforts toward finding solutions for scarce water resources, it would benefit from the critical mass of resources and publicity

Internal Conflicts

When characterizing Democrat and Republican political parties, it is important to note that many smaller factions within the parties have differing views on U.S. interests. Nonetheless, in terms of broad strokes, the Republican party tends more toward hawkishness and hard power, while the Democratic party tends toward dovishness and soft power.

Memberships

IAEA, NATO, Quartet on the Middle East, OECD, OSCE, UN (Security Council)

Allies

BAHRAIN, EGYPT Government, EUROPEAN UNION, GERMANY, ISRAEL, JAPAN, JORDAN, KUWAIT, MOROCCO Government, TUNISIA, TURKEY, UNITED KINGDOM

Partners

ALGERIA, ARAB LEAGUE, DJIBOUTI, HOLY SEE, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, INDIA, INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS, IRAQ Secular Nationalists, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, KURDS of Iran, KURDS of Turkey, KUWAIT, LIBYA Government of National Accord, LIBYA House of Representatives, OPEC, PALESTINE Fatah, QATAR, SAUDI ARABIA, SOMALIA Government, SOUTH SUDAN, SYRIA Other Opposition Groups,

Rivals

CHINA, RUSSIA, SUDAN

Adversaries

IRAN, IRAQ Islamic Supreme Council, IRAQ Sadrist Movement, LEBANON Hezbollah, PALESTINE Hamas, SOMALIA Al Shabaab, SYRIA Government, SYRIA Jabhat Fateh al-Sham, YEMEN Houthis

Active Armed Opponents

AQAP, ISIS

Proxy

LEBANON Government, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria

External Sponsor

N/A

Aid Recipient

ALGERIA, HUMANITARIAN ACTORS, IRAQ Secular Nationalist Parties, IRAQ State of Law Coalition, ISRAEL, JORDAN, KURDS of Iraq, KURDS of Syria, LEBANON Government, MOROCCO Government, PALESTINE Civil Society, SOUTH SUDAN, SUDAN, TUNISIA

Aid Donor

N/A