



The Pragmatic Superpower: Winning the Cold War in the Middle East

By Ray Takeyh, Steven Simon

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A bold reexamination of U.S. influence in the Middle East during the Cold War.

The Arab Spring, Iran's nuclear ambitions, the Iraq war, and the Syrian civil war—these contemporary conflicts have deep roots in the Middle East's postwar emergence from colonialism.

In *The Pragmatic Superpower*, foreign policy experts Ray Takeyh and Steven Simon reframe the legacy of U.S. involvement in the Arab world from 1945 to 1991 and shed new light on the makings of the contemporary Middle East. Cutting against conventional wisdom, the authors argue that, when an inexperienced Washington entered the turbulent world of Middle Eastern politics, it succeeded through hardheaded pragmatism—and secured its place as a global superpower.

Eyes ever on its global conflict with the Soviet Union, America shrewdly navigated the rise of Arab nationalism, the founding of Israel, and seminal conflicts including the Suez War and the Iranian revolution. Takeyh and Simon reveal that America's objectives in the region were often uncomplicated but hardly modest. Washington deployed adroit diplomacy to prevent Soviet infiltration of the region, preserve access to its considerable petroleum resources, and resolve the conflict between a Jewish homeland and the Arab states that opposed it.

The Pragmatic Superpower provides fascinating insight into Washington's maneuvers in a contest for global power and offers a unique reassessment of America's cold war policies in a critical region of the world. Amid the chaotic conditions of the twenty-first century, Takeyh and Simon argue that there is an urgent need to look back to a period when the United States got it right. Only then will we better understand the challenges we face today.

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Editorial Review

Review

“An insightful, comprehensive account.” (Rajan Menon - The New York Times Book Review)

“A singular take on U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“The authors puncture entrenched myths. . . . Lucid and accessible.” (Publisher's Weekly)

“Takeyh and Simon, both preeminent scholars of the Middle East, have written a lively and provocative challenge to conventional wisdom about U.S. policy toward this tumultuous region during the Cold War. They argue that by excluding the Soviet Union, supporting conservative Arab allies, and exploiting the emergence of Israel as a major power, American policymakers secured their Cold War interests in the region. Their study is a must-read for policymakers and students of American policy, a major contribution to our ongoing debate about the role of the United States in the Middle East.” (Robert Kagan, author of *The World America Made*)

“A fascinating tale of America’s tangled involvement in the Middle East, told by two of Washington’s sharpest and most seasoned regional experts. Eerie echoes of today’s headlines resound throughout this gripping look at the history of a crucial theater of the Cold War. Faulkner said the past is never dead; in fact, it’s not even past. Nowhere is this truer than the Middle East, and Takeyh and Simon’s excellent book shows you why.” (Gideon Rose, editor, *Foreign Affairs*)

About the Author

Ray Takeyh is a Senior Fellow at the Council on Foreign Relations and previously served in the State Department. He lives in Washington, DC.

Steven Simon is a visiting lecturer in the Department of Government at Dartmouth College and has served in senior positions at both the State Department and the White House. He lives in Norwich, Vermont.

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