

Integrated Analysis of U.S.–Iran Relations, Hegemonic Shifts and Middle Eastern Dynamics: A Review

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Introduction

The fifteen sources reviewed in this project collectively examine U.S. foreign and domestic policy, Iran's international posture, and broader Middle Eastern dynamics. Although they range from case studies on energy security and think tank politics to literature reviews on regional discord, a set of interconnected themes emerges. This integrated analysis draws connections across the sources, showing how declining U.S. hegemony, domestic political forces and regional realignments influence each other. Rather than summarizing each study in isolation, the narrative traces how the topics intersect and reinforce broader geopolitical trends.

Energy, Hegemony and the Erosion of U.S. Influence

The alignment of U.S. and U.K. energy strategies in the Persian Gulf demonstrates how traditional allies have cooperated to secure maritime routes and oil supplies; this partnership underscores the historical foundations of U.S. hegemony: control over energy resources and strategic chokepoints. However, several sources reveal that the

effectiveness of U.S. hegemony is diminishing. A critical essay on the collapse of American hegemony points to military defeats (e.g., in Vietnam and Afghanistan), economic shifts toward financialisation and social unrest as signs of decline. Interviews with experts emphasize that shifting alliances and domestic political shifts have weakened Washington's position in the Middle East, creating space for other actors. One such actor is China : its rapid economic ascent and extensive Belt and Road investments allow it to mediate regional conflicts and cultivate partnerships without overt military presence; These developments suggest that energy security is no longer the exclusive domain of Anglo American power; instead, multipolar competition is emerging.

The waning of U.S. dominance also affects domestic politics. Think tank research shows that U.S. policymaking has become more polarized and partisan, with conservative and liberal organizations promoting divergent economic agendas. This ideological divide influences not only budgetary decisions but also foreign policy choices. The Trump administration's unilateral policies toward immigration and national security—as explored in the review of the so called Trump Doctrine—can be seen as an outgrowth of a domestic environment shaped by polarized think tanks and populist rhetoric; thus, the decline of U.S. hegemony abroad coincides with ideological fragmentation at home, limiting Washington's ability to formulate coherent long term strategies.

Domestic Politics, Social Dynamics and Foreign Policy

Several sources highlight the interplay between domestic sociopolitical factors and foreign policy. The U.S. domestic economic strategies shaped by think tanks have direct foreign policy consequences: partisan agendas can lead to inconsistent approaches to sanctions, trade and immigration. For instance, the Migration Policy Institute report shows that Iran's repressive political climate and mismanagement drive highly educated Iranians to emigrate . This brain drain reduces Iran's capacity to innovate and negotiate effectively. On the U.S. side, debates over immigration—including those associated with Mexican migrants—reflect broader identity struggles. Research on Mexican Americans demonstrates that darker skinned and well educated individuals face greater discrimination . These domestic fissures—

racial tensions, debates over national identity and economic inequality—inform political narratives and, in turn, influence the willingness of U.S. politicians to engage diplomatically or impose sanctions. The Trump administration’s focus on immigration control and skepticism toward multilateralism can thus be read as symptomatic of domestic anxieties and the influence of ideologically driven think tanks.

Iran’s Strategic Behavior in a Changing Geopolitical Landscape

Understanding Iran’s foreign policy requires situating it within this shifting global context. The detailed historical analysis of Iran–U.S. relations since 1979 shows that ideological narratives (U.S. exceptionalism and Iranian revolutionary identity) have entrenched distrust and hindered diplomacy. Iran has compensated for its international isolation by developing a proxy strategy: through support for militias in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, it seeks deterrence against adversaries and regional influence. Yet these proxies also contribute to regional instability and sectarian conflict, complicating U.S. efforts to build coalitions. As U.S. hegemony wanes and China ascends, Iran has found new avenues for engagement. Beijing’s mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia signals a potential realignment where China facilitates regional détente while pursuing its own energy interests.

Modeling work using fuzzy structural equations provides a quantitative perspective on Iran’s negotiation behavior. By surveying experts, researchers identify domestic government variables and informal influential groups as the strongest determinants of negotiation outcomes, whereas sanctions have a weaker direct effect. This finding aligns with historical accounts showing that internal factionalism and elite networks shape Tehran’s strategies. It also suggests that foreign pressure alone may be insufficient to change Iran’s policies without addressing domestic drivers. Foresight studies on obstacles to U.S.–Iran negotiations (though partially inaccessible) reinforce this view by listing mutual mistrust, ideological divergence and regional rivalries as primary barriers.

Regional Dynamics: Discord, Realignment and Policy Innovations

The Middle East itself is characterized by deep historical and socio economic cleavages. The review *Unraveling the Enigmas: Deciphering the Causes of Discord*

in the Middle East synthesises literature on colonial borders, sectarian divisions, authoritarianism, foreign intervention and unequal resource distribution . It concludes that resolving these conflicts requires inclusive dialogue, respect for diversity and equitable development. This normative prescription resonates with calls for balanced engagement and humanitarian considerations in U.S. and Iranian policies. However, the emergence of new regional actors complicates the landscape. The UAE's post 2018 foreign policy demonstrates how small but wealthy states navigate this environment: by normalizing relations with Israel, expanding feminist policies and pursuing trade agreements across Asia and Europe, the UAE seeks to hedge against regional turbulence and diversify its economy . The BTI 2024 report confirms that the UAE simultaneously maintains cordial relations with Iran and supports international climate diplomacy, illustrating the multipolar and transactional nature of contemporary Middle Eastern diplomacy.

Literary and cultural analyses add another layer to this regional portrait. The examination of the adventure novel *Adventures of Two Captains* suggests that fiction can serve as an informal think tank, shaping public perceptions of American exceptionalism and global engagement while such analogies are speculative, they remind scholars that cultural narratives influence policy discourse, public support for interventions and national self images. Similarly, the review of Mexican immigrants' challenges underscores how identity politics at home impact attitudes toward multiculturalism, refugees and foreign policy engagements.

Intersecting Narratives: Toward a Multipolar Future

Putting these elements together reveals a complex picture of U.S. and Iranian policies in a changing world. Domestic polarisation, think tank influence and social divisions weaken Washington's capacity to formulate consistent strategies, just as U.S. hegemony faces external challenges from Chinese mediation and regional assertiveness. Iran's strategic behavior—whether through proxies, nuclear negotiations or diplomatic outreach—cannot be understood without reference to domestic politics and the broader decline of U.S. influence. The Middle East is more than a site of U.S.–Iran rivalry; it is a contested space where smaller states like the

UAE pursue innovative foreign policies, where regional discord is rooted in historic injustices, and where new alliances are brokered by non Western powers.

This integrated analysis suggests several insights. First, the erosion of U.S. hegemony does not simply produce a vacuum; it invites other actors to shape regional order. China's role as mediator and investor, and the UAE's active diplomacy, illustrate how multipolarity is taking shape. Second, domestic factors—from think tank ideologies to demographic trends—play a decisive role in shaping foreign policy outcomes. Policies toward Iran, migrants or energy security cannot be understood in isolation from internal political dynamics. Third, interdisciplinary approaches—ranging from fuzzy mathematical modeling to literary criticism—provide complementary lenses for understanding the region's complexities. Such diverse methodologies encourage scholars to move beyond narrow disciplinary silos and to consider how culture, identity and quantitative modeling intersect.

Conclusion

The fifteen sources reviewed here offer a rich tapestry of insights into the intersection of U.S. foreign policy, Iranian strategic behavior, and Middle Eastern geopolitics. By weaving these sources together, this integrated narrative highlights how global hegemonic shifts, domestic social dynamics and regional realignments are intertwined. Declining U.S. power, rising Chinese influence, and the assertiveness of regional actors like the UAE collectively reshape the landscape in which U.S.–Iran relations unfold. At the same time, ideological polarization and identity politics at home shape the policies pursued abroad. Future research and policy efforts should therefore adopt a holistic perspective, recognizing that energy security, migration, cultural narratives and diplomatic strategy are part of a single interconnected system.

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