

Shifting Power and Policy in U.S.–Iran Relations and Middle Eastern Geopolitics: A Study of the past studies and investigations

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Introduction

This synthesis draws from a broad collection of recent scholarly works that examine the intersections of U.S. foreign and domestic policy, Iran's international posture, and the evolving dynamics of the wider Middle East. Rather than isolating each study, the analysis interweaves their insights to show how declining American influence, domestic political currents and regional realignments intersect. The narrative illustrates how energy security, ideological polarisation, migration, proxy conflict and emerging multipolarity are part of a shared geopolitical story.

Energy and Hegemony

For decades, U.S. power in the Middle East rested on control of critical energy resources and maritime chokepoints. Cooperation between the United States and the United Kingdom in securing the Persian Gulf illustrates how long-standing allies worked together to protect oil flows and sea lanes. Yet today the foundations of U.S. hegemony appear less secure. Military setbacks in conflicts like Vietnam and

Afghanistan, economic shifts toward financialisation and domestic unrest have eroded Washington's prestige. Analysts note that shifting alliances and political turmoil in the United States have weakened its position in the Middle East, creating openings for other players. China, for example, has rapidly expanded its economic footprint and offers mediation services between regional rivals. These trends point to a world where energy security and regional influence are contested among multiple actors rather than dominated by a single hegemon.

Domestic Politics and Policy Intersections

Domestic sociopolitical dynamics often shape foreign policy outcomes more than grand strategy. The proliferation of ideologically oriented think tanks in the United States has produced polarised economic agendas and competing visions of America's role abroad. Populist rhetoric and partisan divisions have made it difficult to pursue consistent long-term strategies, as seen in the immigration and national security policies associated with the Trump administration. On the other side of the globe, Iran's own domestic constraints influence its negotiation behaviour; economic mismanagement and political repression drive skilled citizens to leave, reducing the country's capacity to innovate and negotiate effectively. Meanwhile, debates over immigration within the United States—particularly those involving Mexican migrants—underscore how identity politics at home resonate with attitudes toward refugees and foreign policy engagement. Such domestic fissures influence whether leaders pursue sanctions, diplomacy or isolation, demonstrating that internal conditions often direct external actions.

Iran's Strategic Posture in a Changing Landscape

Understanding Iran's foreign policy requires appreciation of ideological narratives and historical grievances that have defined its relationship with Washington since 1979. Tehran has responded to international isolation by fostering proxy forces in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen, using them both to deter adversaries and to exert regional influence. While these proxies provide strategic depth, they also fuel sectarian tensions and complicate diplomatic efforts. As American clout wanes and Chinese engagement rises, Iran has sought new partners and benefactors. Beijing's involvement in brokering détente between Iran and Saudi Arabia suggests a shift in the diplomatic

landscape, with China acting more as mediator than military power. Quantitative modeling of Iran's negotiation behaviour supports the view that domestic factors—government cohesion and elite networks—outweigh external pressures such as sanctions in shaping policy choices. Foresight analyses anticipate that mutual mistrust, ideological divides and regional rivalries will continue to hinder U.S.–Iran negotiations, though flexible and imaginative diplomacy could open new avenues.

Regional Complexity and Realignment

The Middle East is a mosaic of cultures, religions, historical grievances and socio-economic inequalities. Scholars highlight how artificial colonial borders, authoritarian rule, external interventions and uneven resource distribution contribute to persistent instability. Resolving these conflicts requires inclusive dialogue and equitable development, yet the region's trajectory is also shaped by assertive local actors. The United Arab Emirates, for instance, has moved beyond traditional Arab and Islamic commitments to pursue an assertive foreign policy: normalising relations with Israel, promoting gender reforms, and forging trade deals across Asia and Europe. At the same time, it maintains practical relations with Iran and champions climate diplomacy, signalling a pragmatic embrace of multipolar engagement. Cultural and literary analyses remind us that narratives—whether in novels or media—shape public perceptions of exceptionalism, multiculturalism and national identity, influencing support for intervention or restraint.

Synthesis: Toward a Multipolar Order

When viewed together, these strands portray a world in flux. Declining American dominance and rising Chinese influence have created a more contested geopolitical environment. Domestic polarisation and demographic shifts within the United States and Iran profoundly affect foreign policy choices, while think tanks and migration debates shape narratives that extend beyond national borders. Iran's use of proxies and its pursuit of nuclear negotiations cannot be separated from the broader decline of U.S. power or the rise of new mediators. The Middle East is not merely a theatre for U.S.–Iran rivalry; it is a dynamic region where smaller states like the UAE chart their own courses, regional conflicts stem from deep structural causes, and new alliances are

formed outside the West's orbit. A holistic understanding of these factors is essential for navigating an increasingly multipolar world.

Conclusion

The intertwined themes explored in this synthesis—energy security, domestic sociopolitics, proxy warfare, regional realignment and narrative framing—underscore the complexity of contemporary geopolitics. U.S. influence is waning but far from irrelevant, Chinese engagement is rising but not yet hegemonic, and regional actors are asserting independent strategies. Policies that ignore the links between domestic divisions and foreign ambitions, or that view the Middle East as a monolithic conflict, risk misreading the moment. Future research and policy design should embrace interdisciplinary perspectives, recognising that cultural narratives, economic structures and political institutions are inseparable components of global order.

Disclaimer: *the contents are analysis of previous exiting materials, and they don't reflect the author's personal political/social perspectives by any means.*

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