

Cranbrook Affirms

Contention 1 Stability

The regional organization meant to uphold peace in the Middle East, the Gulf Cooperation Council, or GCC, is in crisis.

Harb 17 of the Arab Center reports that recent disputes between the members have quickly developed into an intro-GCC split.

Importantly, a US withdrawal cools alliances in two ways.

First is alliances

Ashford 18 from the Cato Institute finds that American predominance in the region prevents states from balancing in the face of threats as they can afford to prioritize ideological factors over security concerns.

That's why **Ashford** concludes that US backing means ideological factors will continue to inhibit alliances.

Second is stopping Iranian alignment

The US does not provide military assistance equally, as **Harb** continues that Trump has backed Saudi Arabia and called to sever ties with Qatar.

Bandow '18 continues that the disproportionate alliance has become a mechanism for Saudi Arabia and the UAE to force their agenda on neighbors.

This prevents cooperation as **Martini '16** of Rand explains that the smaller states' fear of Saudi hegemony acts as the forefront obstacle to GCC cohesion.

In addition, **Bandow** continues that this encourages other countries to compete against Saudi for regional power and cede to Iran to promote regional balance.

Both of these reasons are why **Frailat 19** from Aljazeera explains that after the US began withdrawing Saudi Arabia and the UAE were de-escalating within the GCC.

However the status quo is reversing this solvency as **Parsi '20** reports that recent increased military action from the US is erasing diplomatic progress.

Failing to bolster these alliances leads to a **regional war**.

The GCC is the only viable Iran deterrent as **Dougherty 20** from Defense One notes that US forces don't alter the calculus of Iran since its strategy is to provoke and exhaust the US.

Importantly, **Vakil 18** finds that Iran has begun pursuing bilateral relations with GCC members, capitalizing on internal tensions, which has enabled Iran to protect itself from past containment efforts.

If Iran is able to circumvent containment, the ensuing expansion will lead to war as **Watson '18** of SWJ explains that in the previous status quo, tensions were reaching a boiling point with Saudi Arabia and Iran nearing direct conflict.

Fisher from NYT concludes that a war on this scale would risk at least 80 million lives in Iran alone and many million more in other areas.

Contention 2 is Iraq

The US is placing Iraq at risk for 2 reasons.

Subpoint A is a Diplomatic Reset

Jiyad 20 from War on the Rocks reports that the Iraqis believe US priorities are diverging from the Iraqi government, going as far as to threaten the expulsion of US troops.

Importantly, **Heuvel 20** from the Washington Post finds that this misguided US military strategy has opened the door to more Iranian influence.

Fortunately, a military withdrawal would set the stage for a reset in relations which is necessary to reverse current trends.

Jiyad continues that if the US drew down troops then both countries can resolve differences and meet their strategic obligations.

The Impact is a Hezbollah Takeover

Knights 15 of the Washington Inst. finds that if Iran can achieve the growth of Hezbollah in Iraq it will achieve control of a state containing 36 million people

Importantly, Hannah continues that these groups historically tortured, and killed thousands of Iraqi civilians in every city they reached.

Subpoint B is Terror

The US fuels terror in 2 ways.

First is by increasing radicalism.

Bowman 12 from The Middle East finds that the US military foments radicalism and popular unrest against the U.S. and the host government that condones it.

He concludes that a dramatic withdrawal would significantly reduce the radicalization of future generations

This reduced incentive has big effects as **Trevor '17** from the Hoover Institute finds terror attacks rose 1,900 percent in the nations the US invaded or conducted strikes in, while others only saw a 42 percent increase.

Second is inflaming sectarianism

Dalay 20 from the Middle East Eye finds that the rising tensions between the US and Iran is further deepening the sectarian framework of Iraqi politics

Pillar 20 from the National Interest furthers that the biggest impediment to an ISIS resurgence in Iraq is good governance, however, by making Iraq into an arena for battling Iran, the U.S. presence fuels sectarianism that makes Iraq favorable for ISIS.

The Impact is ISIS attacks.

Mother Jones '7 concludes that there was a 607% increase in attacks per year and 237% rise in fatality after previous US counter-terror operations in Iraq

Burke 17 from the Guardian furthers that at ISIS's peak they controlled 8 million people and perpetrated a genocide against Iraq's Yezidi minority

Additionally, **Boniteti 14** explains that ISIS would ignite a civil war which would then other countries as they try to protect their interests.

Thus we affirm

Removed Content

C1

Importantly, the US has taken a side as Harb continues that Trump has backed Saudi Arabia and both blamed Qatar for funding terrorism and called to sever ties with Doha.

The GCC is essential **UANI** finds that Concerns over Iran's aggressive expansionist goals were the driving factor behind the 1981 creation of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC),

The solvency is clear **Parsi** concludes that as the United States appeared poised to back out of the region, its allies' calculations tilted toward diplomacy.

Jayamaha 19 from middle east forum finds that Iran and Saudi use proxies to advance their own interests

Ostovar 17 notes that any conflict between these two states, certainly involves other states as a result of transnational alliances.

Bandow 18 finds that This was a stance that the Saudis and the emirates welcomed as the US alliance would become a mechanism for them to enlist Washington to fore their agenda on their neighbors.

However, Trump's moves to disengage from the region have reversed this

Walsh 19 from NYT finds that Trump's tepid response to the 9/14 attacks drove home the reality that SA could no longer count on the United States to come to their aid. Worried about having to fend for themselves in a tough and unpredictable neighborhood the Saudis have quietly reached out to their enemies to de-escalate conflicts.

That's why **Fraihat 19** from Aljazeera finds that Signs of de-escalation have recently started to appear in the Gulf, suggesting that after more than two and a half years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) could finally be moving towards a resolution.

He continues that since Trump has failed to deliver on regional security, Saudi Arabia definitely needs a strong and united GCC to deal with the enormous regional challenges.

This is why Bandow finds that Saudi Arabia was able to press Bahrain, and Egypt to support the efforts to isolate Qatar.

Unfortunately, US involvement has reignited the gcc squabble

Ibish 20 finds that after the January strikes, Saudi Arabia claimed that the missile launches were from a US air base in Qatar and accused Qatar of being complicit in this destabilizing attack.

Which is why Al Jazeera in february 2020 reports that talks to end the crisis ultimately collapsed **Al Jazeera 17** finds that if the current crisis continues, the collapse of the GCC will ensue.

Subpoint B is Forcing Diplomacy

This can be seen empirically, as **Parsi 20** of Foreign Policy reports that In the case of the Yemen conflict, once SA and the UAE recognized that the US military was no longer at their disposal, they began exercising diplomatic options that had always been available to them.

Since then the level of violence in the region has overall decreased, quantifying an 80% reduction in Saudi Airstrikes

Tisdal 20 from the Guardian finds that the Saudis and the smaller Gulf states would be incentivised by American disengagement to take a more conciliatory line towards Tehran.

The GCC needs to come together Vakil 18

GCC countries could facilitate shuttle diplomacy between Iran and Saudi Arabia. But this would first require the Gulf states to resolve the Qatar crisis and address their own differences

O'Connor 18 from Newsweek furthers that there are 9 potential flashpoints right now that could explode into a proxy war.

C2

Sub A Terror

Dimant '17 finds that US military commitment indeed leads to more anti-American terrorism.

Sub B Iran

Indeed, **Hannah 17** from Foreign Policy finds that there are now Iranian backed militias in Iraq that include Hezbollah and the Badr Organization.

By dividing up authority based on ethnic and religious identity, Zunes 06 from FPIF finds that US occupation in Iraq led to great instability with political parties breaking down along sectarian lines.

Ali 20 of the Washington post furthers that the new system that the US placed exacerbated social and political tensions, contributing to the rise of the Islamic State.

Scahill 19 from the Intercept finds that the US played a critical role in the rise of sectarian politics in Iraq.

With the damage now done, Pillar 20 from the National Interest finds that the dominant Iraqi sentiment in the government is that the US troops should leave.

He warns that resistance to foreign occupation has traditionally been one of the chief motivations for terrorism.

Additionally, Zunes finds that because of US maltreatment, many Sunnis later joined Sunni terrorist groups following their release.

Indeed, Alzadi 15 from Aljazeera finds that Sectarianism and terrorism can be considered two sides of the same coin; one cannot be addressed without the other.

Additionally, Kabalan 19 from the Arab Center finds that sectarianism can transform a weak state into a failed one

He continues that the era of grey zone politics that allowed Iranian and US forces to operate next to each other in Iraq is almost over and all actors will be forced to pick a side

This is detrimental as Pizaza of UNC concludes that failed states suffer from 15 times more terrorism than stable states

Noak warns that If the Islamic State were to return to some parts of Iraq then the humanitarian effect will be devastating, putting these people back under ISIS rule, causing major displacement of people again.

Indeed, Dettmer 20 from VOA reports that the killing of Iranian general Soleimani may trigger a Sunni-Shi'ite conflict amid heightened sectarian tensions

Card Index

Harb

Harb

Imad K. Harb, 9-18-2017, The US and the GCC: A Steep Learning Curve for President Trump, No Publication,

http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/the-us-and-the-gcc-a-steep-learning-curve-for-president-trump/, accessed 4-10-2020, //HR

If President Trump saw that a close relationship with the GCC was a net gain for the United States (considering continued military sales or fighting extremism, for instance), his early advocacy for Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt in the ongoing GCC crisis was ill-advised, shortsighted, and ultimately dangerous. **By taking sides against another GCC member, Qatar, the president**

threatened both to undo decades of American foreign policy in the Gulf, the Arab world, and the Middle East and to collapse the very front he hoped to strengthen against Iran—a double calamity that remains possible.

Lacking basic knowledge of the region and the intricacies of intra-GCC relations, Trump fell victim to his own bravado and the machinations of errant GCC leaders eager to weaken Qatar and strip it of its independent foreign policy. Starting as a UAE-sponsored hacking of Qatari official websites to disseminate false reports attributed to Qatar's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, the GCC spat quickly developed into an intra-GCC split when Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Bahrain (along with Egypt) severed diplomatic relations with the peninsular nation on June 5, 2017.

President Trump quickly took credit for the development, tweeting that when he was at the summit in Saudi Arabia, those in attendance pointed to Qatar as financing terrorism. He also wished that the severance of relations with Qatar would signal the beginning of the end of the despicable scourge of terrorism;

he repeated this accusation over a period of a few weeks. Meanwhile, America's diplomatic and military officialdom went into hyperdrive to prove Qatar's cooperation in fighting terrorism and to prevent the deterioration of relations with the country that hosts 10,000 troops at the Al Udeid American air base, which houses CENTCOM and associated military installations. Besides his initial, dangerous, and divisive intervention in the GCC crisis, Trump further boasted that the United States could move Al Udeid easily to other countries that would be happy to build a replacement facility "and pay for it." This and other assertions were always contradicted by counter-pronouncements by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, and by officials in both departments who know the importance of the base to US military operations against the Islamic State and understand the significance of the GCC's unity of mission and purpose. This situation did not only highlight the divisions within the administration and point to misdirection and confusion, but it also threatened three interconnected issues.

Ashford

Emma Ashford, Nov 2018, Strategic studies quarterly, "Unbalanced: Rethinking America's Commitment to the Middle East "

<https://www.cato.org/sites/cato.org/files/articles/ashford-ssq-november-2018.pdf>, accessed 3-17-2020, //HR

Yet perhaps the biggest problem is the fact that **American predominance in the region prevents states from balancing or bandwagoning in the face of threats, as they would do in the absence of US presence.** As

many scholars have noted, the Middle East has typically exhibited "underbalancing," meaning that states that might be expected to form alliances have rarely done so. **The most obvious example is the antilranian axis of Turkey, Israel, and Saudi**

Arabia, but the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has also repeatedly failed to build joint military infrastructure.

The recent GCC crisis between Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates likewise suggests that these states prioritize ideological factors over security concerns. **As long as the United States continues to act as a regional**

security guarantor, theory suggests that ideological factors will continue to inhibit alliances. In fact, though

the **Obama administration's pivot away from the Middle East was more rhetoric than reality, it did**

encourage tentative attempts to build better regional alliances. Private rapprochement and cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Israel on the issue of Iran has been growing. The two countries disagree on a variety of issues, the most problematic of which is the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet when retired top Saudi and Israeli officials spoke about the issue at a 2016 forum in Washington, DC, they were keen to highlight that cooperation is possible even if these issues go unresolved.⁴⁸ The two states regularly hold informal meetings on security issues. Even the relative lack of criticism expressed by the Gulf States during the 2006 Israeli war against Hezbollah may be indicative of shifting opinion within the region.⁴⁹ In providing security guarantees and by acting as a third party cutout, US involvement inhibits these developing ties.

Bandow

Doug Bandow, 11-26-2018, "Why America Should Say No to an Arab NATO," Cato Institute, <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/why-america-should-say-no-arab-nato>

In fact, **such an alliance appeals to Saudi Arabia and the Emirates precisely because it would become a mechanism for them to enlist Washington to force their agenda on their neighbors.** Of the states suggested for

MESA membership, they possess the largest economies, most active militaries, and closest relationships with Washington. They already have Bahrain and Egypt on their payrolls. Riyadh and Abu Dhabi also have led an unsuccessful effort to isolate Qatar to end its independent foreign policy. An "Arab NATO" could formalize their

objectives. Finally, Turkey, **currently vying with Saudi Arabia for regional leadership, might lean toward Iran in an attempt to promote more balance.**

Martini

Martini xx-xx-xxxx, ", " No Publication,

https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR1400/RR1429/RAND_RR1429.pdf

Territorial disputes over land and water rights have plagued the Gulf since the creation of modern states, notably Bahrain and Qatar over the Hawar Island, the UAE and Saudi Arabia over rights to territorial waters and the adjacent coastline, and a disagreement among tribes from Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman over the Al Buraimi Oasis. These disputes test the cohesiveness of the GCC, albeit in the form of political tensions and diplomatic flare-ups as opposed to actual saber rattling. 11 Anthony Cordesman, The Gulf Military Balance: Volume I: The Conventional and Asymmetric Dimensions, Center for Strategic & International Studies, January 2014. 12 The GCC states still face considerable challenges to interoperability. But the common platforms sold to the six states, such as F-16s and Patriot Air Defense Systems, create a baseline that would not exist if the United States was not the traditional equipper

of choice. 13 Kristian Ulrichsen, "Gulf Security: Changing Internal and External Dynamics," London School of Economics, May 2009. 10 The Outlook for Arab Gulf Cooperation **At the forefront of the obstacles to cohesion is the smaller GCC states' fear of Saudi hegemony. Simply put, Saudi Arabia is an outlier in the GCC** based on the size of its territory, population, military might, and economy, as well as the soft power it derives from its role as the custodian of the two holiest sites in Islam. As such, Saudi Arabia expects to play a leadership role in the GCC as a whole and the PSF specifically. Befitting the Saudis' weight in the organization, the GCC secretariat is located in Riyadh, the PSF has traditionally been based at Hafr al-Batin and headed by a Saudi major general, and the Saudis are not shy at drawing attention to their country's influence, with some proclaiming that its recent initiatives have elevated it to "the capital of Arab decisionmaking."14 Not surprisingly, **that sentiment can rub other GCC states the wrong way, spurring fears that Saudi Arabia has designs to relegate the other five to junior members of the club.** These anxieties tend to be strongest when the external threat environment is most benign. For example, it was in the mid- and late 1990s when Saddam Hussein was 14 Khalid bin Nayef al-Habas, "al-Sa'udiya wa Mas'uliyat al-Qiyada al-Iqlimiya" ["Saudi Arabia and the Responsibility of Regional Leadership"], al-Hayat, May 13, 2015. Box 2.1. An Illustration of Sovereignty Concerns An ongoing dispute between Saudi Arabia and Kuwait over oil production in the "Divided Zone" is one example of where sovereignty concerns are evident among GCC states.

Fraihat

Ibrahim Fraihat, 5-30-2019, "Is a resolution of the GCC crisis imminent?," No Publication,

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/resolution-gcc-crisis-imminent-191117130706801.html>,
3-16-2020 LS

Signs of de-escalation have recently started to appear in the Gulf, suggesting that after more than two and a half years, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) could finally be moving towards a resolution.

Earlier this month, **Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain,** which have imposed a blockade on Qatar since June 2017, officially **announced they will participate in the Arabian Gulf Cup football tournament to take place in Doha later this month. "This football decision is a very political decision,"** commented Abdulkhaleq Abdullah, a political science professor known to be close to decision-making circles in Abu Dhabi. "It is preparation for bigger things," he added. Furthermore, a senior Saudi official told reporters that Qatar is taking "encouraging positive steps" to mend relations with its neighbours. In recent weeks, confrontational social media campaigns on both sides have also been toned down as a confidence-building measure to create a more favourable environment for talks between the parties. All of this came on the back of Qatari Prime Minister Abdullah bin Nasser bin Khalifa Al Thani's visit to Saudi Arabia to attend the emergency GCC summit in Mecca in the aftermath of the attacks on oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman. It was the highest-level visit by a Qatari official to the kingdom since the siege began. **These de-escalatory steps are not happening in a vacuum and are related to regional factors, including the war in Yemen, tension with Iran and the Trump administration's policies towards the Middle East.** While there have been several developments that have affected the situation in the region and made it more conducive to renewed dialogue, **it seems the September 14 drone attacks on the Saudi Aramco oil processing facilities have had a significant effect on Riyadh. They mark a turning point in Saudi foreign policy on many levels, including the GCC crisis.** The impact of the attack on Aramco was much bigger than the financial losses the company incurred as a result of the damage to its facilities and the temporary reduction of daily oil output. Regardless of where the drones came from - Yemen, Iraq or Iran - the fact that they were able to reach Aramco's facilities represents the biggest American failure in the Gulf since Donald Trump came to power. As a result, it has upset what many assumed to be strong relations between Riyadh and the Trump administration on at least two levels. **First, the successful attack put under question the ability of Saudi Arabia to protect itself through an alliance with the US and deployment of US military technology. That is, since the advanced American anti-missile defence system, the Patriot, was unable to protect a vital national asset like Aramco from drones, then the question**

arises: why should the Saudi leadership seek to purchase more weapons and military technology from the US? Thus not only did the attacks seriously undermine the value of the \$110bn-worth of arms deals that Trump promised to the Saudi leadership in the spring of 2017, but more importantly, **they revealed the security vulnerability of Saudi Arabia and raised serious concerns over any possible escalation with Iran or the Houthis in the future.** Second, the September 14 incident also demonstrated the disloyalty of the Trump administration to its allies. **Washington refused to attack Iran in response and instead started bargaining with Saudi Arabia over who should cover the costs of a US military deployment.** Almost one month after the attack, the US sent 3,000 soldiers to the Gulf with the US president declaring triumphantly: "Saudi Arabia, at my request, has agreed to pay us for everything we're doing." **Shortly after came Trump's decision to pull out of northeast Syria, effectively abandoning its ally in the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL or ISIS), the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), to face a military operation launched by Turkey, which considers it a terrorist organisation. In Riyadh, these events were interpreted as further proof that the US cannot be trusted.** These two realisations - **that no amount of US military weaponry can protect the country and that the US is no longer a reliable partner - seem to have necessitated a revision of Saudi foreign policy and national security strategy.** Its results are already clear. In late October, Saudi Arabia oversaw negotiations between Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi and the secessionist Southern Transitional Council, which had been fighting for control of southern Yemen. In November, a peace deal was announced which Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) described as an important step towards "a political solution in Yemen". **Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has also sought to de-escalate its conflict with Iran. The New York Times recently reported that "Saudi Arabia and Iran have taken steps toward indirect talks to try to reduce the tensions"** between them. Its main regional ally, the UAE, has also been involved in de-escalation efforts. Earlier this month, Emirati Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said further escalation with Iran "serves no one" and that there is room for "collective diplomacy". **In this context, the overtures of blockading countries to Qatar should not be surprising. A breakthrough in the frozen regional dispute is quite possible. After all, since Trump has failed to deliver on regional security, Saudi Arabia definitely needs a strong and united GCC to deal with the enormous regional challenges.** Kuwait's persistent mediation efforts over the past two and a half years have ensured that the door for direct negotiations has remained wide open. It is unclear yet whether these early signs of re-engagement are going to lead to a full restart in relations between Qatar and its blockading neighbours. Nevertheless, it is safe to say that the upcoming GCC summit, to be held in mid-December in the UAE, is already set to be substantially different from the 2017 one which lasted only two hours instead of two days and further deepened the rift.

Parsi

Trita Parsi, 1-6-2020, "The Middle East Is More Stable When the United States Stays Away," Foreign Policy,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/01/06/the-middle-east-is-more-stable-when-the-united-states-stays-away/>

It has been a mantra of U.S. foreign policy for a decade or more that, without the United States, the Middle East would descend into chaos. Or even worse, Iran would resurrect the Persian Empire and swallow the region whole. Yet when U.S. President Donald Trump opted not to go to war with Iran after a series of Iranian-attributed attacks on Saudi Arabia last year and declared his intentions to pull troops out of the region, it wasn't chaos or conquest that ensued. Rather, nascent regional diplomacy—particularly among Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab

Emirates—and de-escalation followed. To be sure, the cards were reshuffled again in January, **when Trump ordered the assassination of Qassem Suleimani, one of Iran's most important military figures. Courtesy of Trump, the region is once more moving toward conflict, and the early signs of diplomatic progress achieved during the preceding months have vanished.**

Dougherty

Chris Dougherty, Kaleigh Thomas, 1-17-2020, Sending Troops Back to the Middle East Won't Stop Iran, Defense One,
<https://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2020/01/sending-troops-back-middle-east-wont-stop-iran/162523/>, accessed 4-12-2020, //HR

Sending back the Patriots perfectly captures the whip-sawing nature of the administration's policy. In 2018, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis pulled four batteries out of the region to better align U.S. force posture with the priorities of the NDS. After Iran's September attacks on two Saudi oil facilities, the Pentagon sent two of them back to Saudi Arabia. **None of this appears to be working. Despite the additional forces, Iranian-sourced provocations have continued and escalated.** The Iranians or their proxies have attacked oil tankers, a U.S. drone, a critical Saudi refinery, and in December an Iraqi military base, killing an American contractor. After Soleimani's killing this month, Iran launched missile strikes at two military bases in Iraq. **Adding conventional forces to the region will not alter the calculus of an adversary whose strategy is to provoke and exhaust the United States** and our allies and partners while avoiding all-out conflict. Even when surrounded by 150,000 to 200,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan and Iraq between 2004 and 2011, Iran continued to pursue nuclear weapons and kill Americans in Iraq with explosively formed penetrators. More worrying, the Trump administration's lurching from crisis to crisis has consequences for America's readiness to deal with great-power competition and other threats. In the short term, it has derailed the campaign to defeat ISIS, degrade regional terrorist threats, and shift the burden of dealing with them to local security forces. Over the long term, the larger concern is the ability of the Defense Department to deal with China and Russia.

Vakil

Sanam Vakil, sept 2018, No Publication,
<https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/default/files/publications/research/2018-09-13-iran-gcc-vakil.pdf>, accessed 4-12-2020, //HR

Over the years, instead of dealing with the GCC as a bloc, **Tehran has pursued bilateral relations with Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and the UAE, capitalizing on internal GCC tensions**, which have escalated since the 2017 Qatar crisis. **These ties have enabled Tehran to protect itself from past US-led isolation and containment efforts**, but have not graduated beyond reactionary, pragmatic engagement.

...

Similarly,
fragmentation within the GCC has provided Iran with an opportunity to buffer against calls for its economic and political isolation. Iran's ties to the smaller Gulf countries have provided Tehran with limited economic, political and strategic opportunities for diversification that have simultaneously helped to buffer against sanctions and to weaken Riyadh. However, Tehran does recognize the limitations to its links in the Gulf. Above all, these relationships ultimately highlight internal GCC tensions, as acutely demonstrated by the Qatar crisis, and the constraints on Iran's Gulf policy. That said, the extent of Iran's ties with these states and their leaders could promote de-escalation and détente. For example, **the other GCC countries could facilitate shuttle diplomacy between Iran and Saudi Arabia. But this would first require the Gulf states to resolve the Qatar crisis and address their own differences – two very lofty ambitions that in the absence of regional will and US pressure will be hard to achieve in the short run.**

Penny Watson, xx-xx-xxxx, "From Proxy Wars to Direct War Between Iran and Saudi Arabia: America's Options," No Publication,

<https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/proxy-wars-direct-war-between-iran-and-saudi-arabia-americas-options>

The proxy wars between the fundamentalist regime in Iran and the Saudi government appears to be reaching a boiling point. Saudis, confident of American support since the election of Trump, are more

stridently standing up to Khamenei's aggressive moves in the region. One of the main flashpoints might be in Lebanon, perhaps others in Bahrain or Syria. There are reports that Saudis are encouraging Israel to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon and in Syria. It is not clear what Israelis would want from Saudis. Would Israelis want the Saudis and Jordanians to send troops into Syria and create zones free from Hezbollah, IRGC, and Assad forces? Of course, Israel has its own reasons for confronting Iran. Israel has repeatedly attacked convoys carrying Iranian weapons for Hezbollah through Syria. Now, with the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Israel fears that Iran has a land bridge connecting Iran to Lebanon and Israel whereby it may easily supply Hezbollah with heavy weaponry. If there were such attacks on Hezbollah, then Khamenei would have the following options: (1) do nothing and accept the crushing of Hezbollah by Israel and Saudi Arabia; (2) merely resupply Hezbollah with weapons and fighters; (3) open a new front in an area more favorable to his forces such as in Bahrain or the United Arab Emirates; (4) unleash the Shia terrorists in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province such as the so-called Saudi Hezbollah to carry out terrorist attacks on the oil facilities (e.g., fields, depots, terminals, refineries), water desalination plants, and American bases; and (5) drastically increase supplies to Houthis. **Many in the Middle East believe that a direct war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the most**

Watson

Penny Watson, xx-xx-xxxx, "From Proxy Wars to Direct War Between Iran and Saudi Arabia: America's Options," No Publication,

<https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/proxy-wars-direct-war-between-iran-and-saudi-arabia-americas-options>

The proxy wars between the fundamentalist regime in Iran and the Saudi government appears to be reaching a boiling point. Saudis, confident of American support since the election of Trump, are more

stridently standing up to Khamenei's aggressive moves in the region. One of the main flashpoints might be in Lebanon, perhaps others in Bahrain or Syria. There are reports that Saudis are encouraging Israel to attack Hezbollah in Lebanon and in Syria. It is not clear what Israelis would want from Saudis. Would Israelis want the Saudis and Jordanians to send troops into Syria and create zones free from Hezbollah, IRGC, and Assad forces? Of course, Israel has its own reasons for confronting Iran. Israel has repeatedly attacked convoys carrying Iranian weapons for Hezbollah through Syria. Now, with the defeat of ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Israel fears that Iran has a land bridge connecting Iran to Lebanon and Israel whereby it may easily supply Hezbollah with heavy weaponry. If there were such attacks on Hezbollah, then Khamenei would have the following options: (1) do nothing and accept the crushing of Hezbollah by Israel and Saudi Arabia; (2) merely resupply Hezbollah with weapons and fighters; (3) open a new front in an area more favorable to his forces such as in Bahrain or the United Arab Emirates; (4) unleash the Shia terrorists in Saudi Arabia's Eastern Province such as the so-called Saudi Hezbollah to carry out terrorist attacks on the oil facilities (e.g., fields, depots, terminals, refineries), water desalination plants, and American bases; and (5) drastically increase supplies to Houthis. **Many in the Middle East believe that a direct war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the most likely possibility.**

Fisher

Max Fisher, 1-3-2020, Is There a Risk of Wider War With Iran?, No Publication, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/03/world/middleeast/us-iran-war.html>, accessed 3-14-2020, //HR

The greatest stakes are not purely political. **It can be easy for Americans to forget that Iran is not just an adversary, it is also home to over 80 million civilians, many of whom are already suffering under sanctions. Millions more across the Middle East, where proxy**

fights are likely to play out, would also be at risk. The burdens of any conflict are likely to fall overwhelmingly on those regular families, as they always do.

Bowman

Bradely Bowman, 2012, "The Middle East," No Publication,
<https://www.vashonsd.org/cms/lib8/WA01919522/Centricity/Domain/120/USMilitaryMidEastNO.pdf>,
4-10-2020 LS

reliable flow of oil from the Persian Gulf region, the United States must promote domestic stability and protect land-based infrastructure as well as maritime assets. With respect to domestic instability or revolution, the U.S. military plays a limited role. **If domestic instability or revolution threatens an oilproducing government, this is most effectively confronted by the respective government.** Although U.S. special forces and intelligence services may assist covertly, **in nearly every conceivable scenario, existing U.S. bases and conventional military forces offer little assistance and may actually exacerbate conditions by fomenting radicalism and popular unrest against the U.S. military presence and the host government that condones it.** The United States should take nonmilitary steps in advance of such crises. **By significantly reducing the U.S. military footprint that often fuels radicalization and by using U.S. political and economic power to encourage oil-producing governments to diversify their economies, invest in their people, and progress gradually toward constitutional liberalism, the United States can reduce the likelihood of domestic instability or revolution that would threaten an oilproducing ally....**

The third and final vital U.S. interest in the Middle East is the creation of a region that does not spawn, suffer from, or export violent Islamist extremism. Ironically, **a robust U.S. ground troop presence in the region undercuts this interest, serving as a major impetus for radicalization.** Yet, a large U.S. military presence is by no means the only source of radicalization and terrorism directed against the United States. Polling data and anecdotal evidence suggest that other factors, such as the Arab-Israeli crisis and the authoritarian nature of most Middle Eastern regimes, also play a role. Moreover, U.S. ground forces do have a constructive role to play in the region. The U.S. military can help train allied military forces to secure their borders, reduce "ungoverned areas," and confront insurgents or terrorist cells. **The vast majority of this training, however, can occur out of the public eye using small, low-visibility U.S. military and CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] teams temporarily deployed to the region. Although a dramatic reduction in the number of permanently based U.S. troops in the Middle East would not immediately eliminate the threat from Islamist terrorist groups, it would significantly reduce the radicalization of future generations** s. Admittedly, there is rarely a single explanation for any phenomenon, and it would be extremely difficult to definitively and quantifiably rank the causes for al Qaeda's emergence and its attacks on the United States. Yet, **for purposes of developing the future U.S. strategy and force posture in the region, one only needs to establish that the U.S. military presence was and continues to be one of a handful of major catalysts for anti-Americanism and radicalization.**

Trevor

A. Trevor, 6-26-2017, "Step Back: Lessons for U.S. Foreign Policy from the Failed War on Terror," Cato Institute,
<https://www.cato.org/publications/policy-analysis/step-back-lessons-us-foreign-policy-failed-war-terror>,
3-12-2020 LS

Finally, the third possible interpretation of the data is that **the War on Terror inadvertently fueled more anti-American terrorism.** The argument here is that, had the United States conducted a limited intervention to disrupt al Qaeda, withdrawn quickly from Afghanistan, and not

invaded Iraq, many, if not most, of the post-9/11 attacks would not have taken place. **Without an ongoing American presence and an active military campaign helping to further radicalize and motivate potential jihadists, observers point out, it is reasonable to expect that there would have been far less incentive for al Qaeda and related groups to attack the United States.** Further, had the United States not invaded Iraq, it is doubtful that ISIS would even exist.⁴⁶ Table 1: Number of Islamist-inspired Terror Groups and Fighters Media Name: 1.png Source: Department of State Country Reports on Terrorism 2000 through 2015, Stanford University's Mapping Militant Organizations Project. This is not to argue that al Qaeda and ISIS would not still have some desire to strike at American targets even if the United States were not active in the Middle East, but as noted above, it is clear that the **Islamic State, at least, is using the American presence in the Middle East as a justification for anti-American terrorism.** If nothing else, continued American military action in the Middle East ensures that ISIS will remain highly visible in the news and in the minds of Americans, providing potential lone wolves in the United States inspiration to carry out future attacks. Although the level of terrorism aimed at Americans has increased only slightly since 2001, the number of Islamist-inspired terrorist groups and terror attacks in the Middle East and elsewhere has skyrocketed.⁴⁷ Analysts might rightly question how global the reach of some of these new organizations truly is, but the government's rhetoric over time suggests that we should include any terrorist group capable of launching or even inspiring attacks outside their own home nation. By this measure, the United States has failed to achieve its stated objective. Although American military intervention in Afghanistan and Pakistan effectively put the central al Qaeda organization out of business for some time, al Qaeda affiliates have proliferated around the world, one of which — al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula — is routinely identified as the most dangerous group operating today.⁴⁸ Most troubling on this score, as noted, is that the war in Iraq inadvertently helped pave the way for the emergence of the Islamic State. **The growth of the jihadist terrorist enterprise since 2001 has been stunning. When the War on Terror began, there were roughly 32,200 fighters comprising 13 Islamist-inspired terror organizations. By 2015, as Table 1 shows, the estimate had ballooned to more than 100,000 fighters spread across 44 Islamist-inspired terror groups.**⁴⁹ **This growth has led to an even more explosive rise in violence — most of which has occurred in the Middle East and Africa.** As Figure 2 indicates, **there were 1,880 terror attacks worldwide in 2001 when the U.S. began its War on Terror. In 2015 the number was 14,806. Fatalities caused by terror attacks have also increased.** As the below figure indicates, fatalities worldwide have risen to unprecedented levels. In 2015, 38,422 people were killed by terrorism — a staggering 397 percent increase from 2001. **These figures strongly suggest that the War on Terror has not only failed to defeat al Qaeda and other major terrorist groups, but has also failed to contain the growth of Islamist-inspired terrorism more generally. The argument that things might have been worse in the absence of such an aggressive American effort rings hollow, especially given the manner in which the war in Iraq produced the chaos that gave ISIS room to operate and provided additional motivation and justification for anti-Western attacks.** Further, a closer analysis of the chronology of the War on Terror provides support for the conclusion that the United States has made things worse rather than better. As Figure 3 shows, **terror attacks rarely occurred before 9/11 in the seven countries in which the U.S. executed military operations as part of its War on Terror.** Figure 2: Worldwide Terror — Attacks and Fatalities Media Name: figure_2.png Source: Global Terrorism Database at the University of Maryland. To investigate the impact of U.S. military intervention, we compared the terror rates between War on Terror states, other Muslim majority countries, the United States, and the global average. Additionally, we created regression models to examine the significance, if any, of U.S. military strikes when controlling for other variables often used in the study of terrorism such as a state's GDP per capita, economic growth rate, social fractionalization, polity, and education levels (see Appendix 1). As Table 2 reveals, **the number of terror attacks rose an astonishing 1,900 percent in the seven countries that the United States either invaded or conducted air strikes in, while other Muslim majority states saw a much more modest 42 percent increase.** The regression models also found that countries where the United States conducted air or drone strikes saw a dramatic increase in terror attacks compared to countries where the United States did not conduct strikes.⁵⁰ Even more startling, the models showed the greatest effect when comparing drone strikes conducted in year one with the number of terror attacks carried out two years later, a finding consistent with the theory that U.S. strikes have a catalyzing effect on terror groups. In short, contrary to the intentions of the U.S. government, **as the War on Terror has expanded, it has led to greater levels of terrorism. Data show that the United States has failed to diminish the conditions that the government has argued produce terrorism.**⁵⁴ **Afghanistan and Iraq have become even more corrupt since the United States began pouring in resources. In Afghanistan and Iraq's first year in the Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index (2003 and 2005), they occupied the 26th and 15th percentile, respectively. By 2016, they had plummeted to the fourth and sixth percentile. The average corruption percentile ranking for the seven countries in which the U.S. has conducted military operations has deteriorated by 14 percentage points.**⁵⁵ Additionally, six of the seven

countries remain mired in Freedom House's worst category — not free — although political rights and civil liberties have improved negligibly.⁵⁶ Finally, in terms of weak and failed states, the State Fragility Index's characterization of Afghanistan and Iraq remains unchanged. Before the War on Terror began, Afghanistan was in the worst category (extreme fragility) and Iraq was in the second worst (high), and they remain there today. Of the other five countries, three have worsened and two remain unchanged.⁵⁷ **Instead, the United States should take a step back from the fight.** Though we do not attempt here

to consider all of the potential strategies or tactics, **we argue that the right general direction for the United States is to reduce the level of military intervention, suspend efforts at nation building, and end direct efforts to dictate political outcomes in the Middle East. This approach would seek to reduce the incentive for anti-American terrorism by disengaging from what are primarily civil wars in the Middle East.**

Dalay

Galip Dalay, 1-13-2020, "US-Iran tensions are set to widen Iraq's sectarian divide," Middle East Eye, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/opinion/iraqs-sunnis-and-kurds-must-pick-side-iran-us-battle>, 4-9-2020 LS

Thirdly, the rising tensions between the US and Iran is further deepening the sectarian framework of Iraqi politics, which was shaken by the protests. While these protests have mostly been an intra-Shia affair, with little Kurdish or Sunni participation, the demands are post-sectarian, putting pressure on the sectarian framework of Iraqi politics. **But as the recent vote in the Iraqi parliament on the US military presence illustrated - the non-binding resolution to expel US troops passed almost exclusively due to Shia votes - the sectarian framework of Iraqi politics is likely to be strengthened by recent incidents. In addition, while Abdul Mahdi's government made modest progress in reducing the political gap between Iraq's constituent communities - Shia, Sunnis and Kurds, including on the question of governing the contested, oil-rich city of Kirkuk - this gap is set to widen, as the future of the US military presence in Iraq becomes a new political fault line.** Future US presence While Shia factions push for a US withdrawal, the Kurds and Sunnis - fearful of Shia domination of the central government and the spectre of a larger Iranian influence in Iraqi politics - are worried about the prospect of a complete US withdrawal. Such new, issue-based realignments in Iraqi politics are an irony of history. Post-invasion Iraq was premised on Shia and Kurdish cooperation, while Sunnis felt marginalised and left out. **As the future presence of US forces increasingly becomes the central item of debate, the gap between the Kurds and Sunnis is likely to decrease, while the gap between the Kurds and Shia widens. But overall, the political space between Iraq's three constituting communities will only continue to widen. With this, the era of grey-zone politics that previously facilitated the ability of pro-Iranian and pro-US forces to operate next to each other in Iraq is almost over. All actors will be forced to pick a side.** Fearing the consequences, this is a choice that the Kurds and Sunnis would prefer to avoid making publicly and clearly. The Kurds in particular - learning from costly lessons prior to, and in the aftermath of, the 2017 independence referendum and their abandonment by the US - want to tread a fine line.

Pillar

Paul R Pillar ., 1-14-2020, "The U.S. Military Is Now Occupying Iraq. Its Time To Leave.," National Interest, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/paul-pillar/us-military-now-occupying-iraq-its-time-leave-113741>, 4-10-2020 LS

Today, two U.S. administrations later, it is clearer than ever that the U.S. military presence in Iraq is, in fact, an occupation. **Although the Trump administration still uses rhetoric about helping the Iraqi people, it is actively opposing what has become the dominant Iraqi sentiment, as expressed by the Iraqi government and parliament, that U.S. troops should leave.** President Trump has gone so far as to threaten Iraq with sanctions if it does not acquiesce in the continued presence of U.S. troops on its soil. The administration has moved to make good on that threat by warning Iraq that it will shut down the Iraqi central bank's access to its account with the Federal Reserve if Baghdad continues calling for the departure of U.S. forces. Foreign military

occupations are mostly bad, and it is generally bad for the United States to be an occupier. There are, at a minimum, the direct costs of maintaining such a presence in a foreign land. U.S. troops also can become targets of unfriendly foreign powers—a vulnerability that last week's Iranian missile attacks against U.S.-inhabited military bases in Iraq underscored. At least as likely is violent opposition from indigenous elements opposed to foreign occupation. Finally, such arrangements send an unhelpful message to other nations about how the United States runs roughshod over the wishes and interests of countries it claims to be helping. **U.S. troops ostensibly are still in Iraq to help combat ISIS. But since the recent escalation of the U.S. confrontation with Iran, such help has not been happening. Anti-ISIS operations have been suspended and U.S. troops have been hunkering down to protect themselves. To impose an anti-ISIS U.S. troop presence against the will of a reluctant Iraqi government ignores how any re-emergence of an ISIS mini-state would be more of a threat to Iraq than to the United States.** This is not a situation in which dangers specific to the United States must override the sentiments and interests of a local partner. For ISIS, building and maintaining a so-called caliphate in the Middle East has been more of an alternative to overseas terrorist operations than a complement to such operations. **The biggest impediment to any resurgence of ISIS in Iraq would be good governance and stability in Iraqi politics. U.S. troops are not contributing to those goals. Instead, by making Iraq into an arena for battling Iran, the U.S. presence fuels the sorts of instability and sectarian tensions that make Iraq a more favorable playing field for ISIS.** Moreover, **resistance to foreign occupation has traditionally been one of the chief motivations for terrorism.** The administration's current stubborn insistence on keeping American troops in Iraq exhibits several damaging patterns of thought. It shows that much of the mindset that led to the Iraq War—probably the most misguided and damaging U.S. foray in the Middle East ever—has not yet dissipated, despite the enormous costs and failures of that war. It exhibits arrogance of power, with apparent blindness to how resentful reactions to some exercises of that power redound to the disadvantage of the United States. It mistakenly equates U.S. influence with a U.S. military presence. It entails misunderstanding of the sources of terrorist threats and what is required to diminish those threats. It is another example of how the administration's obsession with promoting conflict with Iran leads it to ignore or misunderstand many realities of importance to U.S. interests. In this case, what is most ignored is the complex nature of Iraqi-Iranian relations. Both sides want a stable and even cordial relationship because neither side wants a repeat of their very destructive war in the 1980s. But Iraqis don't want Iranian domination any more than they want American domination. **Iraqi nationalism is the most effective check on Iranian influence on Iraq—if only the United States does not mess up this dynamic with actions that turn that nationalist sentiment against itself.** The Bush administration messed up with its invasion in 2003, and the Trump administration has messed up with its lethal attacks on Iraqi militias and its assassination in Iraq of Qasem Soleimani and a senior Iraqi security figure.

Mother Jones

Mother Jones, 3-1-2007, "Iraq 101: Aftermath – Long-Term Thinking,"

<https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/03/iraq-101-aftermath-long-term-thinking/>

In fact, as Rumsfeld knew well, there are plenty of publicly available figures on the incidence and gravity of jihadist attacks. But until now, no one has done a serious statistical analysis of whether an "Iraq effect" does exist. We have undertaken such a study, drawing on data in the mipt-rand Terrorism database (terrorismknowledgebase .org), widely considered the best unclassified database on terrorism incidents. Our study yields one resounding finding: **The rate of fatal terrorist attacks around the world by jihadist groups, and the number of people killed in those attacks, increased dramatically after the invasion of Iraq. Globally there was a 607 percent rise in the average yearly incidence of attacks (28.3 attacks per year before and 199.8 after) and a 237 percent rise in the fatality rate (from 501 to 1,689 deaths per year).** A large part of this rise occurred in Iraq, the scene of almost half the global total of jihadist terrorist attacks. But even excluding Iraq and Afghanistan—the ther current jihadist hot spot—there has been a 35 percent rise in the number of attacks, with a 12 percent rise in fatalities.

Burke

Jason Burke, 10-21-2017, "Rise and fall of Isis: its dream of a caliphate is over, so what now?," Guardian,

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/oct/21/isis-caliphate-islamic-state-raqqa-iraq-islamist>,

4-1-2020 LS

Yet when we recall Isis at the height of its powers, the scale of its decline is impressive. **By mid-2014 the group controlled a taxable population of some seven or eight million, oilfields and refineries, vast grain stores, lucrative smuggling routes and vast stockpiles of arms and ammunition, as well as entire parks of powerful modern military hardware**. Its economic capital was Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Isis was the most powerful, wealthiest, best-equipped jihadi force ever seen. Its success sent shockwaves throughout the Islamic world. What al-Qaida, founded by Osama bin Laden in Pakistan in 1988, had talked about doing decades or centuries in the future, an upstart breakaway faction had done in months. Its blitzkrieg campaign and the refounding of an Islamic caliphate – announced from the pulpit of a 950-year-old mosque in Mosul in a speech by its leader, Ibrahim Awwad, the 46-year-old former Islamic law student better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi – easily eclipsed the 9/11 attacks as Islamist extremists' most spectacular achievement. In 2014 and 2015, I interviewed young men, and some women, who had found the call of Isis irresistible. They came from Belgium and the Maldives, both thousands of miles from the Levant. A few returned to their homelands to proselytise or, in Europe, to carry out some of the most infamous terrorist attacks ever. Isis inspired others who had not travelled to execute their own attacks, too. From Bangladesh to Florida, hundreds died in a new wave of terrorist acts. A dozen or so Isis "provinces" were established, from West Africa to eastern Asia.

Boniteti

Od Boniteti, xx-xx-xxxx, "The Wider Impact of the ISIS Rebellion in Iraq," BonLine.HR News, <https://bonlinehr.com/2014/06/26/349/>, 4-5-2020 LS

The rapid advance of the Sunni Muslim militant group ISIS in Iraq has completely changed the balance of power in the country; this threatens not just the integrity of Iraq itself but could also lead to the redrawing of borders across the wider region. We expect the situation to deteriorate further in the short term, as Shi'a in the south form their own militias, are armed by the

Shi'a-led government, and join forces with the regular army. **The resultant civil war is highly likely to draw in other countries trying to protect their religious, political, security and commercial interests, as well as jihadi fighters from other countries.** In order to attempt to resolve the issue the unlikely pairing of Washington and Tehran will have to join diplomatic forces and even possibly co-operate militarily. A successful resolution will also require Iraqi Sunni leaders to support any US-Iran initiative; this is highly unlikely at present, but if ISIS adopts a fundamentalist interpretation of Islam (which appears highly likely) this could push moderate Sunnis towards the US-Iran camp in the medium term.

Jiyad

Sajad Jiyad, 1-29-2020, "Iraq Still Might Force the United States Out," War on the Rocks, <https://warontherocks.com/2020/01/iraq-still-might-force-the-united-states-out/>, 4-12-2020 LS

As the fallout continues from the airstrikes that killed Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani of Iran and Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis in Baghdad on Jan. 3, **relations between Iraq and the United States are at a pivotal point. Considerable anger over the attacks led to political pressure for the Iraqi government to force out foreign troops, ostensibly in Iraq to provide training, advice and support for the campaign against ISIL.** On Jan. 5, the Iraqi Council of Representatives voted for a resolution demanding the Abdul Mahdi government "end the presence of foreign forces" and cancel military assistance for the fight against ISIL. Condemnation of the killings came swiftly, with Iraq's outgoing Prime Minister Adil Abdul Mahdi calling it "an aggression against Iraq ... a flagrant violation of Iraqi sovereignty," along with denunciations by leaders of the biggest blocs in parliament. The pro-Iran Bina coalition immediately called on parliament to act to restore Iraq's sovereignty by ejecting the United States and preventing it from using Iraq's territory and airspace to conduct such operations. Parliament convened on Sunday, Jan. 5, despite the absence of nearly all members from northern and western Iraq, areas where the battle against ISIL was fought and where the group might resurge if U.S. military support ends. Speaker Mohammed Al-Halbousi also made it clear there could be significant ramifications for Iraq if the United States was forced to withdraw. **Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi made his case for why parliament should vote to expel U.S. forces, noting that neither Iraq or the United States could guarantee the safety of troops, and that Iraqi and U.S. priorities were diverging, to the point that the United States would violate Iraq's sovereignty to pursue its own agenda.** A draft of the text that members of parliament were being asked to vote on was circulated at the start of the session. It listed four obligations for the government: cancel the request for assistance from the coalition, end the presence of foreign troops and prevent them from using Iraq's territory and airspace, submit a formal complaint to the United Nations about the U.S. violation of Iraq's sovereignty, and investigate the Baghdad Airport airstrikes. As the government had not drafted legislation (it would not have been able to due to its caretaker

status) and parliament had not prepared for it, the vote would be to approve a resolution rather than a bill of law. There is some discussion of whether such resolutions are binding on government or merely express parliament's wishes and advice, but previous discussions of this by the Iraqi Federal Supreme Court have not been conclusive and any legal challenge this time around would probably be unsuccessful as the court tends to favor the government. After some statements by MPs, including one by the Sairoon party representing Muqtada Al-Sadr in favor of the vote, the resolution passed with 172 votes for and 0 against, with some MPs who declined to attend claiming they had been sent threatening messages telling them to either avoid the session or not to vote against the resolution. The prime minister now had the authority and also the responsibility to order foreign troops out of Iraq. How Did U.S. Troops Return to Iraq in 2014? So for American troops to be ordered out of Iraq all that is required is for the Iraqi government to notify the United States government through formal notice by the Foreign Ministry that the request for assistance from June 2014 is rescinded — essentially a second piece of paper cancelling the first one. Though Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and others in the Trump administration have alluded that Abdul Mahdi as an outgoing prime minister does not have power to do so, this has not been established. Abdul Mahdi went to parliament for two reasons: Firstly, as a resigned prime minister he wanted the assurance of authority as the constitution states that caretaker governments discharge day-to-day affairs and there could be a question of whether that provision covers terminating a bilateral agreement. Secondly, he sought to place the pressure on parliament and parties that wanted such a move, so that he would merely be acting on their wishes rather than initiating a hugely risky political move. Where Do the Iraqi and U.S. Governments Stand on Withdrawal? On Monday, Jan. 6, the Iraqi prime minister met with the U.S. Ambassador Matthew Tueller and conveyed to him his intention to comply with the parliamentary resolution. Abdul Mahdi did not order the Foreign Ministry to formally notify the United States to withdraw. This signals that he is trying to work out an amicable agreement that achieves some sort of withdrawal without forcing a full and immediate one. One Iraqi official floated the prospect of the withdrawal applying to combat troops and not military trainers. Are There Any Good Outcomes? At the time of writing no formal notice has been given by the Iraqi government for U.S. troops to withdraw from Iraqi territory. It is likely forthcoming in the weeks and months ahead, unless the United States makes an effort to prevent it. This could be done by avoiding further threats and adopting a more cooperative posture with Iraq to relieve some of the pressure on the Iraqi government. Reducing the non-essential military footprint of forces in Iraq would be a positive step. Iraq has invited the United States to assist with the counter-ISIL campaign — withdrawing American troops who do not contribute to that mission would reduce fears that the priorities of the United States in Iraq are focused on countering Iran. **The United States could commit to not undertaking any military action in Iraq without approval of the Iraqi government, thereby restoring confidence in Iraq being able to exercise sovereignty with the presence of foreign troops. A series of de-escalatory measures with Iran would also positively impact Iraqi-U.S. relations.** Lastly, new agreements to support Iraq's economy and other such bilateral deals would reinforce the potential of America's positive role to the Iraqi public. My assessment, which concurs with that of other analysts, is that the United States will begin withdrawing troops from Iraq in 2020. The manner in which that happens will be the decisive factor in setting Iraqi-U.S. relations for the medium term. **There may be a huge difference between Iraq expelling American troops and the United States withdrawing from Iraq.** If the United States punishes Iraq in one way or another then it may make the choice between Iran and the United States as the preferred partner a foregone conclusion: Iraq may not always be an American ally, but it will always be Iran's neighbor. **Withdrawing troops from Iraq may not be the current policy of the United States but losing Iraq completely would be a disastrous outcome.** Perhaps a good period to which relations could be reset is 2015–2017, when Iraq seemed to successfully balance U.S.-Iran ties. During that time Iraq managed to prevent Iran and the United States from clashing inside its territory while maintaining strong relations with both and receiving acknowledgement that it would not choose one over the other. It was also a period when Iraq's foreign relations with the Middle East and Europe developed tremendously, and the U.S.-Iran détente contributed to that. Iraq knows the value the United States brings to Iraq, but maybe the United States doesn't. It would be wise for policymakers on both sides to keep in mind that Iraq's stability has implications for the wider Middle East, and difficult decisions need to be taken to prevent Iraq's myriad crises from exploding under the weight of a new one. If Iraq's senior politicians use a pragmatic approach — that satisfies demands for protection of sovereignty without endangering Iraq's security or incurring the wrath of the United States — **and the United States uses the opportunity to draw down some troops while keeping strong political, economic, and military ties with Iraq, then both countries can achieve the right signaling to their national audience while meeting their legal and strategic obligations.** That's a win-win situation out of a very difficult set of lose-lose ones and the one that both governments should be working toward.

Heuvel

Katrina Heuvel, 2020, "Opinion,"

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all//>, 4-10-2020 LS

When the State Department deflected Iraq's request, tens of thousands of protesters filled Iraq's streets demanding the total withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country. **If the United States stays, it will remain as an occupying power in violation of**

international law and without the cooperation of the Iraqi government or the Iraqi people. This means that U.S. forces in Iraq will be at increased risk. An uncooperative Iraqi government together with an array of hostile Shiite militias — many of them armed not only with improvised explosive devices but also now with Iranian-supplied missiles — will make life unbearable for U.S. forces. Since the Soleimani assassination, U.S. personnel have been largely confined to bases or to the Green Zone for their own safety. As such, they can serve no useful purpose in Iraq other than being a target for angry Iraqis seeking revenge on the United States. The handful of U.S. troops in northeast Syria “guarding” Syrian oil from the Syrian government are in an even more precarious position. In Iraq, as in Syria, the United States would need to increase the number of U.S. forces on the ground just to keep the current deployment of troops safe. That means more money and potentially more casualties and more blowback. No president will want to take that unpopular decision without a strong national security rationale. The official rationale is that U.S. military presence is needed to prevent the return of the Islamic State. This of course ignores that U.S. forces were previously only able to operate effectively with the active cooperation of Iraqi army units and with the tacit cooperation of Shiite militias guided by Soleimani’s Iranian Quds Force, both of which were essential to the defeat of the Islamic State over the past several years. AD The real reason for the Trump administration wanting to maintain the U.S. military presence in Iraq is to limit Iranian influence and to block the “Shiite Crescent,” the stretch of Iranian aligned states from Iran in the east to Syria and Lebanon in the west. Iraq represents a strategic land bridge between Iran and its allies in Syria and Lebanon, and, under this theory, the United States must prevent it from firmly falling under Iranian influence. If the purpose of U.S. forces was to limit Iranian influence in Iraq, then it has clearly failed just as the proxy war against the Assad regime has failed in Syria. In both cases, a misguided U.S. military strategy has opened the door to more Iranian influence, in part because Iran has been seen by both the Iraqis and Syrians as providing protection against violent Sunni extremists tolerated or even supported by the United States. It is time to end this perverse cycle, and the only way to do that is for the United States to accede to the will of the Iraqi people and withdraw its military forces. It can do so confidently knowing that the Iraqis are demanding that all foreign forces leave — meaning that Iran is also under pressure to reduce its military footprint in Iraq — and that the time is ripe for real diplomacy. The Iraqis no longer want their country to be a battleground between the United States and Iran. And equally important, the Sunni Gulf states are looking for ways to de-escalate tensions with Iran after Iran demonstrated it could put their economies at risk. AD

Hannah

John Hannah, 8-26-2017, "Iran-Backed Militias Are In Iraq to Stay," Foreign Policy,

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/07/31/iran-backed-militias-are-in-iraq-to-stay/>, 3-31-2020 LS

In total, the PMF numbers about 130,000 to 150,000 fighters. Groups directly answerable to the IRGC make up a significant portion of that force and are far and away its most powerful element. These include the U.S.-designated terrorist militias Kataib Hezbollah and Hezbollah al-Nujaba, as well as the Badr Organization and Asaib Ahl al-Haq. In the wake of the 2003 Iraq War, several of these groups worked hand in glove with the IRGC to kill over 600 U.S. troops. They also systematically intimidated, extorted, terrorized, tortured, and killed thousands of Iraqi civilians with the aim of forcing the population to bend the knee to their vision of a pro-Iranian, Islamist Iraq. The PMF sprung into existence when Iraq’s most venerated Shiite religious leader, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, put out a call for all able-bodied men to defend Iraq after the Army melted away in the face of the Islamic State’s 2014 invasion. Their role and sacrifice in preventing the fall of Baghdad and helping to drive the Islamic State out of key terrain are indisputable and are widely lauded by the Iraqi public. The PMF took on a new flavor, though, when IRGC proxies—already in Iraq, well supplied, and battle-hardened from years of fighting Saddam and the Americans—attached themselves to the project and quickly came to dominate its command. The Iran-backed militias have been exploiting the group’s popular legitimacy ever since in a systematic effort to consolidate and expand their military, political, and economic power. They got the Iraqi parliament to declare the PMF an independent arm of the Iraqi security forces in late 2016. In 2018, they ran candidates in national

elections, and today the PMF forms one of the strongest blocs in Iraq's parliament. They earn millions of dollars through various forms of racketeering and extortion.

Knights

Michael Knights, 2015, ", " Washington Institute,

https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyFocus137_Knights4.pdf, 4-5-2020
LS

A parallel security structure is thus emerging that could lead to the "Hezbollahization" of Iraq's security structure. If Iran can repeat the trick it achieved with the growth of Hezbollah in Lebanon, in Iraq it will achieve substantive control of a state containing 36 million people (not Lebanon's EXECUTIVE SUMMARY n ix four million) and an oil power that intends to build the capacity to export oil on the same scale as Saudi Arabia within a decade. **The Hezbollahization of Iraq would not just affect Iraq: in an echo of Iraqi Shia militia support to the Assad regime since 2011, greatly strengthened Iranian-backed Iraqi militias would probably redeploy in force into Syria in 2016 to back the Assad regime.** U.S. ability to contain or shape the conflict in Syria would be decisively undermined, in full view of U.S. allies in the Gulf and elsewhere. The much-narrated fear of a "Shia Crescent" stretching from Iran to the Mediterranean coasts of Syria and Lebanon would become a real prospect. If the United States loses Iraq in the process of defeating ISIS, it will have achieved a Pyrrhic victory on a monumental scale.

Cut Cards

Kristiam Ulrichsen, feb 2020, baker institue,

<https://www.bakerinstitute.org/media/files/files/de9f09e6/cme-pub-persiangulf-022420.pdf>, accessed 4-10-2020, //HR

Just as shocking to leaders in Saudi Arabia and the UAE as the need to urgently reassess threat perceptions and defense capabilities was the Trump administration's reactions to the pattern of attacks between May and September 2019. **The lack of a visible U.S. response to the attacks on**

shipping or to the assault on the nerve center of the Saudi economy made the Saudis and other American partners in GCC states reassess the nature of the U.S. security guarantee they had until then (largely) taken for granted.⁴⁷ Trump denied he had offered the Saudis any pledge of protection after the Aramco attacks and added pointedly that "That was an attack on Saudi Arabia, and that wasn't an attack on us."⁴⁸ The inaction was all the more pronounced when compared with Trump's response to the downing of the U.S. drone in June 2019, when the U.S. launched a cyber attack against Iran's electronic warfare capabilities,⁴⁹ or after the killing of an American contractor and the storming of the U.S. embassy compound in Iraq in December, when Trump ordered the drone attack that killed Qassim Soleimani on January 3, 2020.⁵⁰

Statements by officials and prominent commentators in late 2019 and early 2020 illustrated the concerns many in GCC states felt at U.S. decision-making and prompted policymakers in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to re-examine their own hitherto assertive approaches to regional affairs. A delegation from the UAE traveled to Iran in late July 2019 to discuss coast guard and related maritime security issues, shortly after the UAE had announced a troop redeployment and drawdown in Yemen as well.⁵¹ **In the weeks after the Saudi attacks in September, the Saudi leadership made discreet approaches to their counterparts in Pakistan and Iraq in a bid to open back-channels of dialogue with Iran to de-escalate tension.**

Iraq's prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, stated in late September that "There is a big response from Saudi Arabia and from Iran and even from Yemen, and I think these endeavors will have a good effect."⁵² Ali Larijani, the speaker of the Iranian parliament, appeared to endorse such sentiment, telling Al Jazeera that "Iran is open to starting a dialogue with Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region."⁵³

Murtaza Hussain, 1-19-2020, Amid Coronavirus Chaos, U.S. and Iran Edge Closer to War, Intercept, <https://theintercept.com/2020/03/15/coronavirus-iraq-us-iran/>, accessed 4-10-2020, //HR

Today, even amid a cataclysmic public health crisis that is said to have killed hundreds of Iranians, including several top political and military leaders, the **Iranians show no sign of relenting on what they view as their primary geopolitical interests.**

Their continued attacks on American targets in **Iraq suggest that they are pushing forward toward their main strategic goal: ejecting American troops from Iraq.** In an article about the recent violence, Afshon Ostovar, a professor at the Naval Postgraduate School and author of "Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards," wrote that the Iranian-backed militia attack on Camp Taji and the U.S. military response "fits right into the aims of Kata'ib Hezbollah and Iran." **The attacks by U.S. aircraft help increase public anger in Iraq against U.S. military activity there and lay the groundwork for a broader confrontation that might force the United States to leave for good.** Iran and its Iraqi allies "have more Iraqi deaths and destruction to fuel their effort to expel U.S. forces from the country," Ostovar wrote. "They also have cause to respond further, if they wish, in order bait the U.S. into additional aggressive acts on Iraqi soil. Yet, doing so would compel the U.S. to respond in kind, and the cycle of escalation would continue toward certain conflict." Despite its overwhelming military advantages, that would be a conflict the United States would be poorly positioned to win. The U.S. public is already exhausted and disillusioned with years of seemingly pointless fighting in the Middle East. Most Americans are also anxious over the impact of Covid-19 at home and unlikely to be thrilled with the idea of diverting more resources to fighting another war with no clear end goals.

Dina Esfandiary, 1-8-2020, Opinion, No Publication,

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/08/opinion/iran-missile-attack-us.html>, accessed 4-10-2020, //HR

Iran is patient, famous for playing the long game. It has vowed to continue avenging General Suleimani's death. **Tehran's goal of ridding the Middle East of American troops hasn't changed, and President Hassan Rouhani made that clear, stating Iran's "real revenge and the ultimate response by regional nations is when America is expelled from this region and its hand of aggression is cut off forever."**

Americans in the Middle East are still at risk, and will be for a long time to come. After the initial shock of the past week's events wears off, there will be a return to a sustained pace of sporadic attacks, likely with greater intensity than before. Bases, assets and shipping in Iraq and the Persian Gulf will all be considered fair game. Cyberattacks against American computer systems and infrastructure are also likely to increase. And don't expect a resolution soon. Despite Mr. Trump's supposed willingness to negotiate, it's unlikely: There is much bad blood and few channels of communication. **Meanwhile, it is once again the people of the Middle East who will be caught in the crossfire as the United States and Iran refuse to back down.**

A war with Iran would potentially be more calamitous than the US invasion of Iraq in 2003, which led to hundreds of thousands of deaths, bogged the US down in a costly and lengthy war, and helped catalyze the rise of the Islamic State group. Iran has a population of about 82 million people, and its military is ranked as the 14th most powerful. According to recent estimates, Iran has 523,000 active military personnel in addition to 250,000 reserve personnel. Comparatively, Iraq had a population of about 25 million people, and the Iraqi military had fewer than 450,000 personnel when the US invaded over a decade ago. Iran is also much bigger than Iraq geographically. It has 591,000 square miles of land versus Iraq's 168,000 square miles, and its influence has grown as the power of its rival Iraq collapsed in the wake of the US war there. If the US launched an attack against Iran, it would also reverberate across the Middle East. Iran has proxies throughout the region and is allied with militant groups, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon. A revised Pentagon estimate released in April found Iranian proxy forces killed at least 608 US troops in Iraq between 2003 and 2011. Moreover, Iran shares a border with a number of countries the US considers allies and has a military presence in, including Turkey, Iraq, and Afghanistan. None of these countries are especially stable at the moment, as they all continue to deal with ongoing conflicts and their consequences (including millions of displaced people). In terms of other geopolitical blowback,

Iran is allied with Russia and China, and it's unclear how these major powers might react if conflict breaks out. Key US allies such as Israel and Saudi Arabia, which are adversaries of Iran and just a stone's throw away from it, would also likely get sucked into a US-Iran war. A war with Iran could also be extraordinarily disruptive economically, given it borders the Strait of Hormuz, a narrow route that roughly one-third of the world's oil-tanker traffic travels through. Experts have predicted that if the route were blocked, it would quickly lead to a 30% drop in daily global oil exports, and prices would rapidly go up, The Washington Post reported. Iran's forces would likely be defeated by the US but could exact a heavy toll with cruise missiles, naval mines, and fighter jets. Any troops that survive could blend into the population and lead a brutal insurgency against the US occupation force. That was the scenario that unfolded for the US in Iraq, a country one-third the size of Iran, and proved to be an insurmountable challenge. In short, though the US has a military that is consistently ranked the most powerful, evidence suggests a war with Iran would be devastating in myriad ways.

No Author, 5-23-2017, Qatar blockade: Five things to know about the Gulf crisis, No Publication, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/06/qatar-blockade-gulf-crisis-190604220901644.html>, accessed 4-10-2020, //HR

Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt issued statements announcing the severing of diplomatic relations with Qatar. Saudi Arabia then shut its land border with Qatar, and together with three other countries imposed a land, sea and air embargo on its neighbour. The four countries claimed that Qatar worked to support "terrorism", maintained intimate relations with Iran and meddled in the internal affairs of their countries. Qatar responded by saying that there was "no legitimate justification" for the actions taken by the four countries. It added that the decision was a "violation of its sovereignty" and that it would work to ensure that it would not affect citizens and residents.

US cant mediate the problem

Charles W. Dunne, 12-27-2018, No American Traction on Resolving the GCC Crisis, No Publication, http://arabcenterdc.org/policy_analyses/no-american-traction-on-resolving-the-gcc-crisis/, accessed 4-11-2020, //HR

To be sure, as Qatar has repeatedly rejected the 13 original demands made by the Saudi-Bahraini-Emirati coalition at the start of the crisis in June 2017, the United States has expressed its satisfaction with Doha's work to address American concerns. Qatar worked with the United States on terrorism issues and began a strategic dialogue with it, signing in January 2018 a memorandum of understanding aimed at "increasing information sharing, disrupting terrorism financing flows, and intensifying counterterrorism activities." Back in June 2017, then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson expressed optimism that the Gulf dispute could be resolved quickly, but soon grew frustrated with the evident intransigence of the anti-Qatar bloc. **Efforts to resolve the crisis by two US envoys, former CENTCOM Commander General Anthony Zinni and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Arabian Gulf Affairs Timothy Lenderking, who were sent to the Gulf in August 2017 to work toward a solution, failed to make any real progress.**

Hussein Ibish, 1-9-2020, U.S.-Iran Crisis Promotes Sudden GCC Unanimity and Common Purpose, Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, <https://agsiw.org/u-s-iran-crisis-promotes-sudden-gcc-unanimity-and-common-purpose/>, accessed 4-11-2020, //HR

The GCC squabble did slightly reassert itself in the middle of the efforts to avert a larger crisis between Washington and Tehran when some Saudi media outlets made much of the claims that the drone strike that killed the Iranian commander and his allies was launched by U.S. forces from Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. The implication is that there was a form of duplicity in Qatar's supposed complicity in the attack followed by

statements of sympathy and calls for restraint. But, in fact, even if the strike **was launched from Al-Udeid, it is extremely unlikely that Qatari officials played any role in the decision making at any stage.**

Mohammed Alkhereiji, 2-16-2020, Doha's policies upend Qatari-Saudi talks, AW,
<https://thearabweekly.com/dohas-policies-upend-qatari-saudi-talks>, accessed 4-11-2020, //HR

When the crisis erupted in June 2017, the Arab Quartet issued 13 demands for Qatar, including an end to support for the Muslim Brotherhood movement and the curtailing of ties with Iran. **Doha, however, maintained close ties with Tehran triggering suspicion of Qatari complicity in Iran's attempts at destabilising the region, especially in Yemen.** The Qatariis also boosted relations with the government of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to include the stationing of **5,000 Turkish troops on their territory.** Mohamed Al Hammadi, editor-in-chief of Alroeya newspaper, recently noted that "Turkey's president met his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rohani and Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim," on the sidelines of last year's Islamic Summit in Kuala Lumpur. "It is claimed the trio agreed at this meeting to 'heat up' matters in Yemen by bringing Muslim Brotherhood or Al Islah factions closer to the Iran-backed Houthi rebel group, with the aim of exhausting coalition forces in the country, Hammadi wrote.

Pre dec, things were good, (lack of commitment collapsed talks)

Mohammed Alkhereiji, 2-16-2020, Doha's policies upend Qatari-Saudi talks, AW,
<https://thearabweekly.com/dohas-policies-upend-qatari-saudi-talks>, accessed 4-11-2020, //HR

LONDON - **Talks between Saudi Arabia and Qatar aimed at ending the 3-year-old diplomatic conflict were abruptly halted without tangible progress towards reconciliation. The development came as no surprise considering Doha's unchanged alignment with Turkey's Muslim Brotherhood-friendly government and Iran. Thomson-Reuters reported that talks between Doha and Riyadh, which began last October, had collapsed.** The report, which quoted six unidentified sources, **attributed the failure to a fundamental lack of commitment by Qatar.** A Gulf diplomatic source said, despite initial expressions of willingness to compromise, Doha "failed to capitalise on a golden opportunity" that would have returned it to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) fold. A November report by the Wall Street Journal said Qatari Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani made an unannounced trip to Riyadh in October to meet with top Saudi officials. Sheikh Mohammed was quoted as saying that Qatar was "willing to sever its ties with the Muslim Brotherhood." Ending links with the Brotherhood was among chief demands issued by the Arab Quartet — Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates — involved in the dispute with Qatar. **In December, ahead of the annual GCC summit, an invitation to Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was viewed with optimism in some circles, particularly among Kuwaiti officials who have been working to resolve the dispute since June 2017 when the Arab Quartet severed ties with Doha.**

Talks collapsed

Al Jazeera, 2-15-2020, Qatar says talks to end GCC crisis were suspended in January No Publication,
<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/02/qatar-talks-gcc-crisis-suspended-january-200215163349731>.
html, accessed 4-11-2020, //HR

Qatar's foreign minister has said efforts to resolve a years-long Gulf diplomatic crisis were not successful and were suspended at the start of January. The discussions began in October last year over a rift that saw Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain, along with Egypt, severing political, trade and transport ties with Qatar in June 2017. The quartet continues to impose a land, air and sea blockade on Qatar, accusing it of "supporting terrorism" - a charge repeatedly and vehemently rejected by Doha.

Adam Segal, xx-xx-xxxx, The Unwanted Wars, Foreign Affairs,
<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/2019-10-02/unwanted-wars>, accessed 4-12-2020,
//HR

A conflict could break out in any one of a number of places for any one of a number of reasons. Consider the September 14 attack on Saudi oil facilities: it could theoretically have been perpetrated by the Houthis, a Yemeni rebel group, as part of their war with the kingdom; by Iran, as a response to debilitating U.S. sanctions; or by an Iranian-backed Shiite militia in Iraq. If Washington decided to take military action against Tehran, this could in turn prompt Iranian retaliation against the United States' **Gulf allies, an attack by Hezbollah on Israel, or a Shiite militia operation against U.S. personnel in Iraq. Likewise, Israeli operations against Iranian allies anywhere in the Middle East could trigger a regionwide chain reaction. Because any development anywhere in the region can have ripple effects everywhere, narrowly containing a crisis is fast becoming an exercise in futility.**

Washington Post, 1-23-2020, "U.S. military to maintain expanded Mideast presence, for now at least, following Iran strikes,"

https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/us-military-to-maintain-an-expanded-presence-in-the-mideast-following-iran-strikes-general-says/2020/01/23/4b1972e0-3e05-11ea-baca-eb7ace0a3455_story.html

ABOARD THE USS BATAAN IN THE RED SEA — **The United States hopes to avert a conflict with Iran but will maintain an expanded military footprint in the Middle East amid heightened tensions,** the head of U.S. Central Command said Thursday during a visit to the region. Gen. Kenneth "Frank" McKenzie Jr. said that new air, naval and troop deployments were intended to restore deterrence and send a signal to Tehran following a period in which tit-for-tat Iranian and U.S. attacks pushed the region to the brink of war. "The message is, we don't seek war with you. You should not seek war with us. And we would like to de-escalate to a lower level of tensions, if that's possible," McKenzie told reporters after visiting the USS Bataan, an amphibious assault ship operating in the northern Red Sea. The general's public remarks were his first since an American airstrike killed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad on Jan. 3. The U.S. government viewed Soleimani, who was the leader of Iran's elite Quds Force, as the mastermind of years of violence against American personnel. After that attack, Tehran launched ballistic missiles at two sites populated by American soldiers in Iraq, the first time Iran has conducted an overt military assault on a base housing U.S. troops. Speaking earlier in the day after touching down on board the Bataan, McKenzie told troops they may be asked to remain in the region for an extended period. The Bataan and its sister ships, carrying troops of the 26th Marine Expeditionary Unit, were diverted this month from a scheduled mission in the U.S. European Command zone and made a hasty passage to the Middle East. "We're in a very delicate time in the Central Command theater as a result of the events of the last couple of weeks," McKenzie said. "What we want to do is we want to convince the Iranians that now is not a good time to do something goofy." The Pentagon has increased its overall Middle East footprint by more than 20,000 troops since last spring amid a number of events blamed on Iran or its proxies, including the use of mines to strike commercial ships, an attack on Saudi oil facilities, the downing of an American surveillance drone and several rocket attacks on bases in Iraq housing U.S. troops, including one that killed a U.S. contractor on Dec. 27. McKenzie did not say how long the U.S. military, which is looking to reorient its force toward challenges from China and Russia, would maintain its enhanced presence in the Middle East.

Tensions are high in the Middle East right now as **Segal 19** explains that conflict is on the verge of breaking out in many places with many actors from Iran retaliatory attacks on Gulf Allies, Hezbollah attacks in Israel, and Israeli operations against Iran allies.

