

“The U.S. Pivot to Asia: Strategic Rebalancing and Its Consequences for the policy toward the Middle East”

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Middle East**

التحوّل الأميركي نحو آسيا: إعادة التوازن الاستراتيجي وتبعاته على السياسة
تجاه الشرق الأوسط

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Abstract:

This article examines the strategic pivot of U.S. foreign policy from the Middle East to the Indo-Pacific, initiated under the Obama administration and sustained through successive presidencies. Prompted by China’s rise, regional fatigue, and resource constraints, the pivot marked a shift from direct interventionism to a strategy rooted in great power competition, offshore balancing, and burden-sharing. Through a comparative policy analysis, the study evaluates changes in military deployment, diplomacy, aid, and crisis management. It finds that while the pivot reoriented U.S. priorities toward the Indo-Pacific, it additionally led to diminished influence, strategic vacuums, and allied skepticism in the Middle East —developments that, if effectively leveraged, could create opportunities to foster greater regional strategic autonomy and stability. The article contributes to debates on grand strategy and strategic prioritization, assessing whether the pivot represents a tactical adjustment or a lasting transformation.

Key words: U.S. Foreign Policy, Pivot to Asia, the Middle East Strategy, Strategic Rebalancing,

Introduction:

The shift in the focus of American foreign policy towards Indo-Pacific region represented a critical point in the early 21st century when a strategic move was made to restore the global position of the U.S. in the wake of the dominance of the Middle East. The shift itself became labeled as the pivot to Asia, as a result of over-commitments of the military forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, growing budget pressures, and the ever-swelling economic and regional military threats posed by China. The pivot was not merely a geographical matter, however a reflection of deeper strategic concerns regarding the viability of U.S. world leadership in a multipolar world that now begins to be characterized by the intensification of great power rivalry.

The pivot was theoretically supported by the strategic rebalancing framework where the emphasis was laid on the elements of deterrence, economic integration, multilateral diplomacy, and burden-sharing. It was informed by the theory of offshore balancing and strategic economy, favoring a reduced development of U.S. presence in conflict-prone areas and focusing resources in areas critical to the long-term geopolitical competition in the world, which is Indo-Pacific. In such a manner, this position marked a departure on the active interventionism policies and an

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indicator of favoring such resilience-development and alliance-oriented activity and limited application of force.

Going back into history, the post-9/11 era U.S. policy had been about counterterrorism and state-building operations, however, by the late 2000s, the increasing unpopularity of the methods led to a re-evaluation of the entire sector. It was a turning point that represented a new era of innovation- rivalries, economic realignment of weight and the dawn of a new reality, that the systemic threats were no longer limited to the non-state or regional instabilities however rather the strategic agendas of state competitors such as China.

It was critical defining moment when the pivot was articulated by Obama administration in 2011. With the framing of a grand strategy, it made Asia prioritized not just in the military and economic arena, however as the setting of norms-institutions-influence competition in the 21st century. Although the approach of ensuing administrations, Trump and Biden changed in terms of tones and strategies, they kept the pivot on the same basic path, incorporated it into the U.S. national security conceptions and strategic planning.

One of the key questions that the study explores in this article is: What were the key strategic factors that led to the U.S. shift to Asia and how has the reorientation transformed American engagement in the Middle East? It says that not only was the pivot not a mere response to the rise of China, however a wholesale rebalancing responding to economic as well as technological requirements, regional exhaustion, and new visions of world order. It stipulates that such reorientation has caused significant implications-not only to Asia, however to the U.S. commitments, alliances and notions of credibility in the Middle East.

The article is methodologically qualitative, case-based in terms of documentary analysis of the official strategies, policy, and scholarly evaluation. It connects the history of U.S. strategic thought in a comparative study with essential turning points under Obama, Trump, and Biden Administrations. The justification of this argument has been predicated on analysis of implementation of policies, the allocation of resources, and the results of the regions especially with case studies of Libya, Iran nuclear deal, and the anti-ISIS campaign.

The perspective of analysis is not limited to military action or trade arrangements however to diplomatic consensus, technology competition and institutional changes. This expansive meta-framing demonstrates that the pivot is not a separate policy transformation however a structural transformation in U.S. grand strategy. Learning its causes and effects provides critical insight of how the great powers readjust priorities in the light of a systemic transformation and the persistent conflict between global and regional ambitions.

1. Strategic Drivers Behind the U.S. Strategic Reorientation Toward Asia:

One of the driving forces behind the strategic pivot of the US to Indo-Pacific region was the fast-paced emergence of China as an engine of economic growth and military developments. The longstanding modernization of the armed forces that is promoted in China, namely the improvement of the naval, cyber, and missile capabilities, substantially changed the regional status quo. This shift brought a challenge and a strategic incentive to the U.S. to remind its presence in the Indo-Pacific area. The U.S. strategy was reconsidered to ensure stability in the region and support international norms and defending deterrence in possible Chinese coercion¹. It was not just the increasing capabilities of China that were of a concern, but also the aggressiveness with which Beijing followed up on territorial claims especially in South and East China seas.

The second influential force of the U.S. pivot was the rise of the region to become the locus of the world economic development. the Indo-Pacific has constituted a significant portion of international gross domestic product and trade flows because almost half of world trade and energy flows traversed its strategic maritime lines². The economic centrality increased the geopolitical status of the region. Upon realizing this transformation, Obama administration focused on

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deepening involvement with such initiatives as Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), which strived to not only enlarge economic connections but also define trade regulations dependent on American interests and values. The reorientation of its power, therefore, was not mere posturing in military sense, it included redesigning the economic landscape of the region that can be made to express liberal, rules-based norms.

The demographic dynamism and flourishing technological advancement additionally increased the stature of Asia worldwide. The region was full of countries with high youthful population and fast growing into industrial hubs, especially in the field of information technology, electronics and renewable energy. Such tendencies supported the idea of Asia being a decisive force of the future economic prowess and technological accomplishment³. To Washington, this was critical to continue working closely with this vibrant region in order to ensure its competitive advantage in innovation and access to newer markets and resources in the pool of talent.

Lastly, the reorientation was additionally caused by an increasing intervention fatigue and the high price of long-term U.S. military operations in the Middle East, especially in Iraq and Afghanistan. Having lost more than ten years of counterinsurgency warfare and nation-building with highly minor strategic returns, U.S. policymakers attempted to reevaluate international priorities. The recalibration involved cutting the military engagements most of all within the Middle East and relocating of the region-area concern opposite and resources to areas of strategic importance, that is, the Indo-Pacific⁴. the pivot was not merely a geographical shift however a strategic recalibration in a manner that would facilitate U.S. foreign policy suits the changes that have taken place in world dynamics.

2. The Obama Administration’s Pivot to Asia (2011):

The official description of the strategic re-pivot towards Indo-Pacific was set out at that time by now Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in her well-known Foreign Policy article, America’s Pacific Century (October 2011). Clinton did not discuss the pivot as a military move however as an elaborate shift in the U.S. global policy and method to ensnare and preserve its leadership in the XXI century⁵. Article was a conceptual breakthrough as it prioritized the Indo-Pacific region making it the new strategic priority of the U.S. and the way toward a multi-dimensional strategy including diplomacy, economics, and security.

The core of the pivot was the awareness of increased strategic and economic importance of Asia. By definition, according to one of the main constructors of this policy, Kurt Campbell, the pivot was not viewed as a policy of containment, however only as an attempt to enforce a rules-based regional operating system. This order focused on standards, organizations, and cooperation that favored openness, stability, and prosperity with each other⁶. It was a pivot that echoed the commitment of the U.S. to enforce freedom of passage, peaceful resolution of disputes and economic convergence supported by high standards.

In spite of its strategic lucidity, the pivot was faced with significant bureaucracy and implementation challenges. It had to be executed well and that necessitated smooth coordination of the defense, diplomatic, and economic machinery of American government. Nevertheless, the differences in the priorities of various agencies and uneven distribution of resources and other competing crises in the world, especially in the Middle East and Ukraine, hindered its coherence and continuation⁷. Criticizers cited the lack of equilibrium between the ambitious rhetoric of the pivot and the real capabilities that have been utilized to sustain the pivot.

The pivot was received widely positively in U.S. strategy and policy communities, especially by those promoting American return to Asia. however, there were interests in Congress and by some quarters of the society about its sustainability. All these suspicions were fueled by financial limitations after the 2008 financial crisis and the continued responsibilities elsewhere, such that it cast doubt as to whether the pivot would be able to be sufficiently funded and maintained⁸. The

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theme that emerged in the criticisms of the policy was the disparity between the strategic desire and the resources at disposal.

3. Core Components of Asia Pivot:

The most critical aspect of the pivot was the adjustment of the U.S. military forces in the Indo-Pacific so that aggression could be deterred, and allies could feel reassured. This encompassed extending rotational deployments of the U.S. Marines to north of Australia, improving the naval operations in Pacific and creating close defense partnership with critical allies namely Japan, South Korea and Philippines⁹. These relocations were aimed to convey the sense of future staying power, better interoperability, demonstrated a commitment to regional stability, however to do therefore without the political issues that some still have when the commitment carries with it a physical presence in the form of new permanent bases.

The TPP was the anchor of the U.S. pivot strategy, economically. The TPP sought to consolidate the US economic influence in the trade agreements in the region by encouraging a high-standard comprehensive trade pact to dominate regional trade arrangements and neutralize the emerging Chinese influence in the region¹⁰. The TPP was a strategic instrument as well, carrying its liberal economic standards and offering an alternative to state-dominant development patterns existing in Beijing. Despite the later withdrawing of the U.S. out of the agreement, the making of TPP showed how trade could be strategically used as an instrument of geopolitical involvement.

Under the pivot strategy, diplomatic outreach was additionally highly increased. Obama administration increased the levels of U.S. engagement with ASEAN, made a stronger strategic partnership with India, and prioritized multilateral institutions to fora like East Asia Summit and the Indo-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The repeated top-level visits (and even by President Obama himself) showed how serious the U.S. commitment was and was expected to establish trust, uphold norms, and enhance institutional interrelatedness¹¹. These initiatives were meant to integrate the U.S. further in the regional diplomatic structure.

Being aware of the strategic aspect of technological competitiveness, the U.S. attached importance to innovation as one of the stakeholders of the pivot as well. This involved an expansion of partnering with technologically ready partners in Asia that is Japan, South Korea, and Singapore in the area of cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and advanced manufacturing. Meanwhile, the U.S. tried to respond to strategic investments of China in strategic industries by means of an increased range of export controls, shared research efforts, and assistance in intellectual property rights¹². The pivot was therefore an indicator of a greater understanding of technology as a sphere of economic rivalry as well as national security.

4. Immediate Policy Adjustments in the Middle East Strategy:

It was not only about the reassertion of the geopolitical centrality of the Indo-Pacific region, with Obama administration reorienting itself toward Indo-Pacific; this was also a strategic rebalancing that required the redistribution of U.S. resources, which were not numerous when dealing with the Middle East. It was not a wholesale disengagement however reordering of the priorities and was predicated on building in the popular impression that the key strategic rivalry in the 21st century would be with China. Therefore, we could see immediate policy changes in the realms of military, diplomacy, intelligence, and development, and signs of long-term disengagement and an increasing range of the mechanisms of shared security responsibilities between regions and allies.

4.1. Resource Re-allocation:

One of the most critical signs of the material effect of the pivot was the diversion of defense spending and planning operations of the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) (covering the Middle East) in favor of Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM). This shift in budget came at the

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expense of counterinsurgency as well as stabilization operations exemplifying the features of the military campaigns prevalent in the post-9/11 era and in favor of maritime and aerospace capabilities deployed in high-intensity competitions of a state-on-state nature¹³. The reallocation was indicative of a wider shift in U.S. defense planning doctrine where the focus on counterterrorism would shift to background and the major concern would be the strategic competition with near-peers, especially China.

The diplomatic sphere was additionally forced to transformation as well. Although not as dramatic as the redeployments of troops back to military units, the U.S. embassy patterns across Southeast Asia and the whole of Indo-Pacific were adjusted to ramp up diplomatic capability. More diplomats and program resources were deployed to embassies in countries like Vietnam, Indonesia and Philippines and certain diplomatic missions in the Middle East were either slashed or reorganized¹⁴. These redistributions were associated with an attempt to adjust the instrument of diplomacy to new geostrategic requirements such as nurturing of regional alliances; and the assertion of institutional presence within Asia.

The evolution of the strategic pivot required an overhaul of the sequence of intelligence gathering and analysis priorities. The intelligence agencies within the U.S. were mostly concentrating in post-9/11 on counterterrorism in South Asia and the Middle East. Nonetheless, the pivot to Asia forced it to once again pay attention to segments inside Chinese military modernization, cyber activities, as well as the extremeness in the region¹⁵. There was an escalation in the number of intelligence resources devoted to learning about anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) approaches, seaborne capabilities of China, and online infrastructure, frequently to the detriment of the resources that had been set aside to monitor non-state actors operating in the Middle East¹⁶. This shift reflects the evolving character of perceived challenges the transition of irregular warfare to strategic competition.

The pivot strategy additionally transformed the patterns of foreign assistance. U.S. assistance was becoming focused on promoting the governance reforms, economic integration, soft-power interactions in Southeast Asia countries, which were perceived to be crucial in maintaining U.S. influence after China economic influence in the region had been rapidly growing¹⁷. Contrastingly, developmental assistance to the segments of the Middle East was halted or decreased, specifically in the nations hitherto considered unimportant to counterterrorism or peace process endeavors¹⁸. This redistribution represented a more expansive shift of U.S. foreign aid toward geopolitical rivalry and instrumental, strategic investment in Indo-Pacific alliances.

4.2. Strategic Disengagement Indicators:

Perhaps the most obvious evidence of de-prioritization of strategy was the withdrawal of the U.S. military in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Although there are periodic shifts back towards the offensive because of the resurgence of threat (e.g. the emergence of ISIS), Obama administration has continued to pursue its policy of reducing the major-scale military involvement in the region¹⁹. These drawdowns were not only tactical choices however rather a rebalancing of overall U.S. military strategy in the direction of lighter presence and more focus on rapid air-and-sea-based force dispositions more preference in the region.

The pace and volume of combined training efforts with the countries of the Middle East reduced during the pivot years, especially as operations in Iraq and Afghanistan became slightly less driven. Conversely, the existence of military operations in the Indo-Pacific region has grown enormously, frequently becoming involved with new frontiers, including cyber and space, and has taken on a direction towards high-end manifestations of warfare²⁰. The physical manifestation of the secondary shift of the security exposure in the U.S. in both the Middle East and Asia sides played out in the cutting down of exercises in the Middle East and additionally characterized the ramped-up training in Asia.

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Presidential and cabinet-level visits to the Middle East additionally decreased drastically in the pivot period. In comparison, Japanese intensified their visits in the Indo-Pacific capitals, including such cities as Hanoi and Manila, as well as New Delhi and Tokyo²¹. These changes were not being done symbolically rather, it signified some deliberate steps to build stronger relationships with rising powers and regional stakeholders that will be crucial in the formation of future Indo-Pacific framework.

4.3. Burden-Sharing Initiatives:

Following its strategic downsizing plan, the U.S. shifted more of its burden on Gulf allies in ensuring regional stability. Washington pushed these states especially Saudi Arabia and the UAE to spend more on their own defense capacities and become proactive in regional security matters, such as counterterrorism and inter-Gulf conflict resolution²². This changed was part of a wider move to transformation the model of a direct interventionist to one of strategic enabler and facilitator.

The U.S. involvement in Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) grew ever more focused with capacity-building, interoperability, and mutual defense projects. The huge deals in arms sales and the improved defense conversations were not only used to deter aggressions but also played the role of motivating the regional block into taking collective responsibility in addressing the regional security issues²³. This differed with the previous U.S. policy of unipartite approach in handling the crisis in the gulf.

The same could be seen with regard to the U.S. policy towards Israel which was additionally pushed to evolve its operational independence. The U.S. aid was additionally progressively tilted towards sophisticated weaponries, including missile security systems (a.k.a. Iron Dome), cyber hardware, and first-warning systems, which could serve Israel as a self-sufficient force in reaction to security threats²⁴. The strategy followed a pattern of the wider Washington strategy, which was to have a decreasing direct defense responsibility and additionally have regional capabilities more than enough.

Lastly, the U.S. went out of its way to support a greater involvement of European partners - mostly United Kingdom and France - in Middle Eastern security and diplomacy. The arrival of more European naval forces in Persian Gulf and a more direct engagement in Syria and Libya are examples of attempts to spread the strategic burden of providing regional order²⁵. This was a transatlantic partnership that was supposed to make sure that the U.S. was able to turn to Asia without causing security vacuum, which destabilized the Middle East.

5. Case Studies: Policy Transformation in Action:

In order to determine the full operational meaning of the U.S. strategic reorientation towards Indo-Pacific, one ought to explore the fact how the recalibration of American foreign policy was reflected in the specific reaction to major Middle Eastern crisis. The case studies presented below focused on Arab Spring, Iran nuclear agreement, and the war on ISIS showing that Obama administration have redefined the rules of engagement laying stress on multilateralism, strategic restraint, and the collective security responsibilities rather than direct military activities.

5.1. The Arab Spring Response (2011–2012):

Arab spring came as the first major test about Obama administration to challenge the emerging strategy of strategic restraint about the Middle East. The American reaction to the wave of revolt in North Africa-the Middle East region was different than the broad and unilateral interventions in the early 2000s tension, serving instead as a move towards restraint, selective intervention, and pragmatism in the diplomacy.

The operation carried out against Libya in 2011, officially launched in the name of humanitarian protection went a long way in breaking a previous precedent. It was implemented by NATO, on a solid European backing and the main method was solely air and not boots on the

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ground. Such a multilateral and rather constrained military operation was in sharp contrast to mass, unilateral invasion of Iraq in the year 2003²⁶. It was the opposite of what Obama administration focused on avoiding by not getting involved into the therefore-called wars of choice and lowering American involvement into the complicate regional wars.

The U.S. policy in Egypt was more reserved and conditional. Instead of direct support of a specific political camp, the administration employed economic assistance and influencing tools of its diplomacy in setting the course to the post-Mubarak transition. This symbolized a transformation in Bush-era of promoting democracy by force and regime transformation to one that relied on inducements, conditionality and persuasion predicated on norms²⁷.

The approach the administration took with Syria, perhaps, is the most informative sign of rebalanced policy. Although Obama administration made the statement, that the use of chemical weapons will result in a red line, the fact that military action was not initiated in response to the chemical attack by Syria in 2013, when a negotiated agreement was entered into with Syria and Russia to disarm Syria, indicated great ambivalence in the administration. This episode showed not only the internal divisions but also the general unwillingness to increase U.S. military presence in the region²⁸. Although this self-limitation was in line with the intentions to shift the focus of the pivot, it caused worries regarding American strategic reliability and deterrence.

Unlike Bush administration which held more interventionist and ideologically-based form of democratization, as observed during Arab spring, Obama was rather reactive, cautious and aimed at not overstretching his resources. It was the end of a prescriptive course of foreign policy and a shift towards a more agile and risk-aversion policy²⁹.

6.2. Iran Nuclear Negotiations (2013–2015):

The Iran nuclear talks that led to the birth of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2015 have become synonymous with Obama administration and its preference of a diplomatic approach to engaging rather than coercing another power and its adherence to a multilateral framework in the management of regional threats. The agreement was not only a policy transformation but also a fundamental shift in the U.S. policy of non-proliferation and the Middle East relations.

In contrast to Bush-era policy predicated on unilateral sanctions and rhetoric of regime transformation, Obama administration aimed at the negotiated solution, enlisting the support of P5+1 (the U.S., UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany) in order to boost the legitimacy and sharing the enforcement capabilities³⁰. This group effort was an indication of a general policy of collective security obligations and diplomatic support with European partners, which was projected to strengthen the liberal international order.

JCPOA additionally marked a shift of resources that could have been used in a possible military conflict towards hard diplomacy. The agreement had placed heavy restrictions on the nuclear capabilities of Iran in exchange of a phased lifting of sanctions thus establishing a framework that attempted to contain the nuclear ambition of Iran without using force. The deal was hailed as a success on the diplomatic front; however, the deal produced a substantial wave of opposition among regional allies like Israel and Saudi Arabia which saw it as a concession that would empower regional actions on Iran³¹. These divergent responses were portraying the natural conflict between international relations purposes and local security interests.

The JCPOA was additionally about the strategic economy by which the administration tried to apply the strategic economy, the approach that consisted of decreasing military costs and political capital by means of releasing tensions and solving conflicts with diplomacy. It emphasized a larger pivot-era rationale, that is that the Middle East ought to develop an understanding that security dangers could, where feasible, be kept under control honorably to diplomacy thus enabling the U.S. to boost its attention on systematical issues in Asia.

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6.3. ISIS Crisis and Coalition Building (2014–2017):

The rise of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) was a prominent threat to the stability of the region and a challenge to the strategy of counterterrorism of Obama administration. In spite of increased transnational exposure, the U.S. response was faithful to the strategic restraint and coalition-based approach that prevailed in the doctrine of the pivot era. Instead of intensively sending in ground troops, like what was done in Iraq and Afghan occupations, Obama administration resorted to the limited-footprint approach. In this strategy, the targeted airstrikes, intelligence actions, the use of special forces, and the empowerment of local partners were used. The policy commonly referred to as leading from behind, put the primary responsibility of the frontline combat on the regional players, including Iraqi Army, Peshmerga, Kurdish forces, and Syrian parts of the opposition, followed by United States, which would support them with airpower, training, and logistics^{32,33}.

The strategy became a sharp contrast to the other past models of counterinsurgency and began with the premise that an outright U.S. military engagement cannot be sustained politically or strategically. It additionally aimed to reduce American loss of life and expenditure, which fitted into minimalist military doctrine which emphasized operational effectiveness and reduction of risks³⁴. In addition, the fight against ISIS was organized in terms of a multilateral coalition including NATO allies and states of the region. Not only did this focus on collective responsibility spread the costs of the fight, it enabled the U.S. to use power without the need of taking direct positions or occupations, which was part of the larger rationale of the shift to Indo-Pacific that required flexibility of resources and a global recalibration of posture.

7. Trump Administration: Pivot Continuity and Divergence:

The foreign policy of Trump administration vis-a-vis the Middle East depicted continuity as well as discrepancy with the strategic readjustment that had been in effect since the presidency of Barack Obama. Even though preserving the previous general direction of U.S. strategic de-emphasis of the region to engage in systemic rivalry, primarily with China, Trump era brought some dramatic changes in style and tone as well as some policy results. It featured transactional style of diplomacy, renewed use of coercive tactics, and an acceleration of rearrangement of alliances in the region.

7.1.Strategic Competition Framework :

One feature of Trumpian strategic orientation was additionally the unconcealed systematization of the U.S. foreign policy as the struggle against the systemic rivalry. This transformation was formalized with the unleashing of the 2017 National Security Strategy (NSS), which, instead of the menace of terrorism, described China and Russia as the greatest long-term challenges to U.S. interests and international order. By refocusing the world on Indo-Pacific and Eastern Europe, the NSS downgraded the Middle East to a secondary set-piece in a bigger geopolitical-competitive contest³⁵.

Within this paradigm, it became clear that the policy toward the Middle East was no longer a goal per se however a means to influencing the determination of world-wide rivalry, specially making Iranian influence a priority but also addressing incursions by Chinese and Russians into the Middle East. This region turned into a territory of strategic signaling, and partnerships, arms sales, and economic relations were viewed as tools of greater influence in the world. The tone of diplomacy was rather transactional, and the matters of collective security and cost-benefit analysis took preeminence. Allies were to significantly build on their own security and the security of their region, which is additionally part of the reduced footprint discussion.

7.2.Policy Continuities :

Although the administration rhetorically broke with the years of Obama presidency, some critical factors of Trump's policy toward the Middle East indicated tremendous similarities:

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Trump continued the retreat of American forces in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan—a trend started by Obama. On the one hand, this was highly abrupt, at times politically driven; on the other hand, it followed a bipartisan strategic calculus of overcoming the forever wars and resettling the U.S. military position to the levels of non-massive and unlimited ground commitment³⁶.

Following Obama's pressure to allies, Trump put much additional pressure on allies in NATO and Gulf region to boost military expenditures and dissolve to more participation in their operations. The rhetoric was intense, and the remaining motive was analogous: to decrease the U.S. spending except maintain the strategic end products with regional and allied capacities.

The government was not willing to spend money on constructing a country or in post-conflict building, especially, Iraq, Syria, and Yemen. This austere economic stance correlated with a more general set of ideas that entailed trying not to obtain mired in costly ventures and investing heavily into key strategic projects, such as the competition with China. With the administration giving strategic and domestic attention over to Asia and focusing national interests on domestic issues, the Middle East diplomatic resources were spread thin. Policy bandwidth and institutional attention were additionally being diverted to Indo-Pacific in what can be described as the pivot logic even though implementation remained spotty.

7.3.Policy Divergences :

Another noticeable difference in Trump's policy toward the Middle East was the deviation compared to Obama predecessors primarily in terms of direction and its approach, tone, and certain organizational novelty.

Among the most significant exits was brokerage of Abraham Accords that normalized relations between Israel and several Arab states including the UAE, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. These were strategic shifts in the region, undermining decades-long Arabs united in support of Palestinian statehood as a prerequisite of normalization and convergent interests of both Gulf states and Israel into one common front against Iran³⁷. The Accords were additionally regarded as the tool into limiting Iranian influence and demonstrating U.S. diplomatic strength, despite wider decreased presence.

Maybe the most apparent departure to Obama legacy was the rejection of JCPOA by Trump and the initiation of a course of therefore-called maximum pressure to isolate Iran on the international scene and in terms of economy. Unilateral sanctions re-imposition and focusing on key Iranian entities were a culmination of the use of coercive diplomacy and a sharp turn to the use of multilateralism as outlined by Obama³⁸. Although supposed to strengthen the position of Iran in the region, the strategy created more tensions with European allies and a high degree of regional instability.

The Trump administration raised the sale of arms heavily to its gulf partners particularly Saudi Arabia and UAE³⁹. These sales were sold under the banner that solutions are economical to America, as well as increase self-sustainability of the region in case of Iran aggression. Although this was in keeping with the shared security responsibilities ethos, the focus on weapons transfers became a matter of ethical and strategic concern especially with regards to Yemen conflict and civilian casualties.

A peculiar distinction of Trump times is customized diplomacy, which is particularly evidenced by the role of Jared Kushner in developing the policy toward the Middle East⁴⁰. Kushner was credited with successfully negotiating Abraham Accords and handling the relationships between Gulf and Israel. He did much of this back-handedly through informal channels and was circumventing established ways of diplomacy. Although this strategy yielded certain concrete results, this was a manifestation of an overall marginalization of the institutions involved and a greater obscurity in policy making.

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8. Biden Administration : Pivot Institutionalization :

The strategic environment that was left to Biden administration revolves around the growing global competition, fewer resources to conduct lengthy foreign interventions, and the ever-growing distrust of military entanglements on part of the population. Here, Biden has gone a step further and made Asia pivot a structural part of U.S. grand strategy by institutionalizing what had remained merely a rhetoric and figurative policy of Obama and selective-of-implementation policy of Trump. The strategy developed by the administration is the fruit of more than 10 years of shifting strategic thinking with an emphasis on resource control, diplomacy predicated on the alliances and offshore balancing as a way of adjusting American global positioning.

8.1.Strategic Competition Codification :

Both the 2022 National-Security Strategy (NSS) and 2022 National-Defense Strategy (NDS) issued by Biden administration formulate, in writing, a competitive worldview that designates China as the most consequential long-term challenge to the international order. This is an advancement of the logics of pivot into a systemic doctrine of great power rivalry. The therefore-called paradigm of Compete, Cooperate, Confront implies an active and mutable approach to China the recognition of which knows that though confronting China is at the focus, zones of collaboration (climate transformation, arms control) cannot be ignored and are inevitable.

In this newly-laid out world perspective, the Middle East is no longer discarded, however is now merely a subordinate theater. Instead of being the center of the U.S. foreign policy, It is being viewed as the field that can and needs to be stabilized at a minimal cost so that resources and bandwidth could be opened up to be deployed to Indo-Pacific. This tactical debasing is not a verbal concept only, however was embedded in planning documents, resourcing, and operation cadence of American military and diplomatic affairs.

This reorientation is related to the global strategy of resources efficiency where the planning of the involvement of the U.S. is prioritized by the strategic returns and the needs to react to global systemic threats especially the ones related to the emergence of new technologies in China and regional aggression in Russia.

8.2.Afghanistan Withdrawal and Strategic Messaging:

Although the U.S. military withdrawal in 2021 in Afghanistan was predicated on previous bipartisan commitments, it soon became a classic case in institutionalization of the pivot. The administration described it as a prerequisite to a strategic readjustment that closed an era of large-scale, open-ended military interventions and doubled down in the ongoing rebalancing of the U.S. focus to priorities elsewhere.

In a symbolic sense, the withdrawal signaled the spirit of the central goal of the pivot: to relieve the U.S. of the expensive regional quagmires and redistributing strategic attention. The actual logic of the exit, especially the deterioration of Afghan regime and the deadly bombing of Kabul airport largely compromised the strategic messaging carried out ⁴¹. It provoked bipartisan scorn in England of planning shortcomings; it gave rise to a profound doubt of American strategic stability, stability and unity of alliance in Europe.

To some regional allies, particularly in the Middle East, the withdrawal was not seen as a wise disengagement, however a possible forsaking causing more strategic nervousness in the capitals such as Riyadh, Tel Aviv and Abu Dhabi. Such an incident has precipitated debates, both in circles of policy analysis and academia, on whether the re-posturing toward Indo-Pacific is a strategic rebalancing or the untimely pullback which will lead into strategic holes and destabilization.

8.3.Offshore Balancing Implementation:

The even more extensive the policy toward the Middle East of Biden displays an evident turn to offshore balancing policy that focuses on the restricting of direct action however still being able to impact the region by using technological enablers, diplomatic cooperation, and ally

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strengthening. Rather than keeping massive forces on the ground, the administration has taken to over the horizon tactics, such as: drone strikes, special forces operations, and intelligence, to deal with lingering terror threats that originated in Syria, Iraq, and Horn of Africa⁴². Such a strategy will enable U.S. to exercise force in a non-permanent manner posing a minimal threat to domestic politics and at a low cost.

At the same time, Biden administration has stepped efforts to develop regional capability, in particular by selective weapons transfers, combined training and technical support⁴³. These are to establish a self-sustaining security framework whereby day-to-day stability can be achieved by the local partners hence relieving the strategic burden to the U.S.

Further, diplomatic mediation has been hiked as a technique of choice. The government has additionally focused on de-escalation and multi-lateral diplomacy including text-based negotiations to resolve the crisis between Saudi Arabia and Iran, normalization between Israel and Arab world, deconfliction of the situation in Syria and Yemen⁴⁴. This approach implies the shift towards orchestration: the administration of adversarial events without authority, the ethos of a networked theory of regional power, including responsiveness and swiftness. Notably, such a posture is not contradictory to the spirit of the pivot but also to the overall rebalancing of U.S. grand strategy in post-post-9/11 world a world in which grand strategy is all about strategic restraint, disciplining of resources, and competing to win the system, over the long-term.

9. Regional Responses and Adaptations:

The U.S. plan to shift to Indo-Pacific however away the Middle East is not an act of mere isolation. It has precipitated major changes by both friends and revisionists, as well as empowered the role of non-state players functioning in more vulnerable and disputed areas. The reactions speak of a region in transition--patching itself up with the understandings of the U.S. abandoning its strategic interests, the emergence of multipolarity, and continuing internal weaknesses. This section will discuss the strategies of adaptation by major stakeholders in the region that emphasize recent ties of realignments of diplomacy, security policy and strategic partnerships.

9.1. Traditional Allies' Strategic Adjustments:

GCC states have reacted to the changing U.S. engagement and global energy transitions by embarking upon massive economic diversification programs that are meant to lessen their dependence on producing hydrocarbons. Nation-wide plans, including Vision 2030 of Saudi Arabia, UAE Centennial Plan, and Qatar National Vision 2030, illustrate a strategic endeavor to invest in such spheres as tourism, financial services, logistics, and digital innovation^{45,46}. These policies are not purely economic however geostrategic hedges and are aimed at developing resilience when Western security guarantees are eroded, and when oil prices fluctuate. Simultaneously, Gulf countries have been expanding their diplomacy with Asia, Europe and even Israel, and the concomitant development has been strategic independence through multi-vector projection.

In achieving this, Israel has exploited the changing regional circumstance, notably the common perception of threat to Iran, to normalize its relations with several Arab nations via Abraham Accords. These are agreements that were initially negotiated under Trump and continued under Joe Biden and helped make way to greater collaboration in the fields of defense, cybertechnology, intelligence and trade⁴⁷. This normalization does not only go hand in hand with the U.S. interests in trying to make regional shared security responsibilities however is additionally a step taken by Israel so that it secures itself regional legitimacy and economic integration as it prepares itself to future decoupling of security with U.S.

Egypt has applied the balance approach to its foreign policy, having close military relations with the U.S. at the same time, they have been increasing sustainable cooperation with Russia and China. The capital of Egypt, Cairo, has diversified its weapons purchase, in addition to buying

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fighter jets and air defense systems in Moscow, and has embraced investments in Egypt infrastructure from Beijing as part of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) ⁴⁸. The multi-alignment approach of Egypt indicates a realistic response to the must maintain strategic international space and bargaining power in the perceived seclusions in U.S. commitment. This strategy will allow Cairo to diversify therefore as to not rely overly on a particular power, however instead to maximize aid, investment, and diplomatic capital.

The kingdom of Jordan preserves its positions of the main regional moderate and pro-Western pillar and passes the transitions of the region reordering by simultaneously emphasizing both the stabilization of its economy and the cooperation in combating terrorism ⁴⁹. Amman is still dependent on western and Gulf donors to control monetary burdens and heavy influxes of refugees, particularly those of Syrian origin ⁵⁰. Meanwhile, it additionally serves as a critical country of security complexes in the region, serving as the main country guarding its region against terrorism and extremism. Stability-driven policies and centrist diplomacy entrenched in Jordan illustrate the country remains a value as a strategic partner, despite the U.S. tendency to focus attention in the eastward direction.

9.2. Revisionist Powers' Opportunity Exploitation:

Iran has strategically taken advantage of the power vacuums of the region to cement its positions both in Levant and Gulf. Asymmetric warfare and a large chain of proxy organizations that comprise Hezbollah in Lebanon, Houthis in Yemen, and Popular Mobilization Forces in Iraq have allowed Iran to expand its depth and deterrence configuration ⁵¹. Tehran model of engagement is highly focused on low-cost high leverage influence, which takes advantage of weak state institutions, sectarian split, and lessening of the U.S. presence. This localization may become a source of institutionalizing instability in major states.

Russia seized the opportunity precipitated by the U.S. dimmed presence and has emerged once again as a regional power broker, particularly its military intervention in Syria in 2015 that propped up Assad regime and gave Russia a permanent military right of use basing. The formula followed by Moscow consists of a combination of military presence, arms export, and energy diplomacy maintaining a healthy balance with adversaries (e.g., Iran and Israel) as well as wooing partners on both the sides of the spectrum (Egypt, Algeria, and the UAE) ⁵². Russia additionally presents itself as a predictable, non-directive player that does not come with strings attached, as sometimes is the case with Western approach.

China's Middle East strategy revolves around infrastructure diplomacy and economic statecraft, primarily through its BRI ⁵³. Chinese capital has been invested in infrastructure projects such as ports (e.g., Gwadar, Duqm, and Haifa), industrial zones, and energy transactions, thereby enhancing its presence in regions critical to its energy security ⁵⁴. While China avoids overt political engagement, it presents itself as a non-threatening partner—an image that appeals to regional regimes wary of Western conditionalities. However, China's growing presence in the region raises long-term geopolitical questions about alignment and the potential for strategic competition with the United States.

Turkey has pursued a more forceful foreign policy that is predicated on the mixture of nationalism, political Islam and neo-Ottoman identity with the aim of becoming a leader in the region of Sunni Muslim communities. Ankara has beefed up its military presence in Syria, Libya, and Iraq, it additionally sent drones and supported Islamist groups to comply with its projection strategy ⁵⁵. Its activism has occasionally put it at loggerheads with the U.S. as well as classical powers of Arabs. Nevertheless, Turkey presents itself as an independent middle power that draws on its geographical capabilities and hard power aspects as instrumental in affecting balances in the region.

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9.3. Non-State Actors and Proxy Conflicts:

It is a case of the withdrawing central authority and a spreading out of power in the Middle East where nations like Yemen, Syria, and Libya have become fields of proxy warfare between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Such wars are the matter of larger rivalries, usually with external financing and weaponry, and have matured, as attempts to establish peace are regularly undermined by tactical considerations⁵⁶. The issue of proxies leads to volatility in the nature of states and instability in regions.

Though significant parts of the territory under ISIS have been lost ISIS has been able to spread to splinter militant groups and al-Qaeda oriented affiliates that may operate ungoverned or weakly governed areas of Syria, Iraq and Sahel. These organizations have evolved to new forms of insurgency and terror practices as a response to the right-of-center allies in the war against terrorism as they are, still, a major threat to the region and the whole world⁵⁷.

Militias have in effect emerged to act as parallel powers to the national governments in states like Iraq, Libya and Lebanon, and become deeply rooted in sectarian or political commitments. Such groups are supported by outside patrons and lead to the interference with the political processes and the impossibility to reconstruct the institutions⁵⁸. Their existence promotes the undermining of centric power, the lighter of peacebuilding, and strengthens the cycles of violence.

The continued armed violence and political breakdown have provoked prolonged humanitarian crises, and the worst cases of it are Syria and Yemen. Due to these crises, there have been mass displacement situations that create a tremendous burden on other countries, like Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey, and require prolonged humanitarian intervention on the international scale⁵⁹. The magnitude of such crises demonstrates that the strategic reduced footprint alone is no longer enough to cover humanitarian duties.

10. Consequences and Unintended Effects:

Although the U.S. strategic shift to Indo-Pacific has been motivated by the long-term power redistribution considerations and calculations, the resulting complex set of unintended outcomes has emerged in the Middle East. Although meant to minimize American overextension and focus on systemic competition against China, the pivot has led to instability in the region in a direct and indirect way and areas of strategic confusion among the allies and the reemergence of the competing great powers in the region. These have altered the security landscape of the Middle East.

10.1. Regional Instability:

Slow embracing of direct U.S. military and political involvement has been accompanied with, and even hastened the process of state failure in unstable settings, especially in Libya, Syria and Yemen. Cases of lack of sustained structures to stabilize situations or post-conflict mechanisms enabled non states actors, local militia, and criminal groups to occupy those vacuums of power⁶⁰. Decentralized governance has institutionalized the rule of the warlords, undermined national institutions and diluted the possibilities of inclusively oriented peace processes. These examples demonstrate the dangers of the withdrawal without wholesome exit planning and follow-up at multilateral levels.

While earlier U.S. intervention played a role in intensifying proxy conflicts, the subsequent reduction of American presence has further exacerbated these dynamics, particularly the strategic rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Yemen and Syria have evolved into principal theaters of ideological and geopolitical contestation, where Iranian-backed militias and Saudi-supported forces engage in protracted wars of attrition⁶¹. This fragmentation has not only prolonged the duration of civil wars but also generated new fault lines that complicate diplomatic mediation efforts and aggravate sectarian polarization throughout the region.

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Disruption of the state institutions and the conflict prolongation have resulted in one of the gravest humanitarian crises of the 21st century. The exodus of Syria, Iraq and Yemen has created streams of refugees that national territories: Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey and international aid channels are struggling with⁶². These crises underscore the human toll of unresolved conflicts and the lack of sincere intent to pursue conflict resolution in the post-war period.

10.2. Alliance Relationships and Trust Deficits:

The pivotal local actors such as Jordan and Gulf monarchies have developed a serious doubt regarding the pledge of the U.S. credibility. The perception of U.S. unpredictability and strategic indecision developed through such events of the 2011 Iraq withdrawal, the perceived lack of action in Syrian civil war, and the sudden departure in Afghanistan in 2021⁶³. Such trends have diminished diplomatic capital which Washington was traditionally supposed to enjoy and this has resulted in re-aligned expectations regarding American support.

To this, most of American allies have implemented a hedging approach aiming to establish a stronger relationship with Russia, China, and European Union (EU)⁶⁴. Such alignments do not align, by definition, to the replacement of the U.S. alliance, however act as a hedging insurance policy against diversification of security and economic reliance. This redistribution creates problems to American strategy consistency in and to the region and reduces its capability to play a leadership role to the coalition-based responses.

Most of Washington partners lack political unity, institutional capabilities, or military force to efficiently deal with a conflict or prevent revisionist elements, though Washington has asked its partners to take a bigger responsibility regarding the stability of the region. The shared security responsibilities model has therefore produced scanty returns especially in weak or war-torn states, where the local players will be left with no capacity to occupy the vacuum created by U.S. reduced out.

The rapid and ill-coordinated exit out of Afghanistan in 2021 inflicted a huge wound to American strategic credibility. The scenes of Taliban rapid advances and the panic evacuation of Kabul supported the view of the world that Americans cannot be depended upon and made enemies even bolder and further divested Washington of its long-term commitments of its partners in other hotspots. Such a credibility gap may limit coalition-formation in the future and reduce deterrence capability.

10.3. Great Power Competition in the Middle East:

China has taken advantage of American unplugging by gesturing in its financial influence with the BRI⁶⁵. Having invested into large-scale infrastructure, developed ports, and signed bilateral trade agreements in Gulf, North Africa, and Levant, Beijing has established a profile of itself as an indifferent economic partner. This has become popular among regimes that need investment however with no conditions attached to governance. Consequently, China is gradually replacing Western forces in such areas of national economic foundations as telecommunications, energy logistics, and therefore forth.

Russia too has seen its strategic re-entry into the region with its action in Syria acting as its launch pad to greater interaction. Russia has established a multidimensional presence through the sale of arms, energy partnership, as well as diplomatic mediation, especially with Egypt, Iran, and Algeria⁶⁶. In contrast to the approaches of the U.S. that are concentrated on the alliances and conditional aid, Russia markets itself as a transactional, adaptable actor, and becomes quite influential in even the states that are allied with the west.

With the U.S. pull out, EU has sought more strategic independence in the policy toward the Middle East. This comprises strategies to maintain Iran nuclear deal (JCPOA), offer postwar rebuilding facilitate to both Syria and Lebanon, and a diverse power supply that is not reliant on Russian and Middle eastern turbulences⁶⁷. The EU tends to be confined by internal division;

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however, the practice indicates an emerging appreciation that It is down to their own devices that regional stability cannot be continuously out-sourced to Washington.

The shift in America has seen diminished influence on the U.S. resulting in regional influences becoming more vocal especially Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. They both want to be a regional leader combining military intervention, ideology, and proxy wars. Power parametrizations are Turkish military action, Sunni nationalistic discourse; Iranian Shia militancy and revolutionary discourse, and Saudi Arabian Gulf diplomacy with economic and military hard power ⁶⁸. The interaction is associated with the formation of multipolar regional order and growing escalation prospects.

11. U.S. Pivot to Asia: Assessment – Successes, Failures, and Mixed Outcomes:

Over 10 years since this was first announced, the U.S. pivot to Asia is still one of the key aspects of American foreign policy, however its consequences are highly controversial. Although the policy was intended to rebalance American involvement in the Middle East toward the more critical Indo-Pacific, application of the policy has resulted in a complicated picture of success, failure, and unintended outcomes.

11.1. Strategic Objectives Achievement:

One of the fundamental objectives of the pivot was to prevent and offset Chinese rise particularly in South and East China Sea. The U.S. increased military collaboration with its main Indo-Pacific allies, involving the participation of adjacent exercises, basing arrangements, and arms sales to Japan, Australia, Philippines and India. The activities enhanced interoperability and strengthened collective deterrence. Nevertheless, with these transitions, the pivot failed to control not only the economic but also the infrastructural extension of China, especially due to the BRI and its activity in South Pacific, Southeast Asia, and even the Middle East ⁶⁹. A significant extension of Chinese assertiveness in Indo-Pacific was observed, such as militarization of islands and coercive diplomacy, which serve as highlights of the weakness of American influence and influence without any closer economic integration.

One of the benefits behind one of Pivot was to minimize the strategic and financial cost of the U.S. engagements in the Middle East. The pullout of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the decrease in the number of troops and the commitment of aid, had to conform to the general mood of the people against a long-term military engagement.

These withdrawals created destabilizing ripple effects, like power vacuums, resurgence of insurgencies and the renewed diplomatic crises ⁷⁰. Consequently, although certain business expenses have been slimmed as a side effect, the rebalancing has not paid off in either strategic or monetary terms.

The pivot aimed at getting ally and partners to take more responsibilities regarding security. There was significant development in such nations as Japan, which was easing its constitutional restrictions on collective defense, and Australia, which was broadening its military infrastructure and Indo-Pacific capabilities. however, the larger initiative on shared security accountability was uneven and this was especially true of Southeast Asia and the Middle East. A large number of the partner countries of the U.S. were over-reliant on the U.S. security guarantees, and they had minimal indigenous capability to enforce restraint or crisis management on their own ⁷¹.

The pivot was able to leverage on the domestic weariness with long-standing conflicts by getting support of both the congress and the people on the re-alignment of strategy. The policy addressed increasingly bipartisan calls to exercise restraint and strain concealed as global competition had been reframing and scaling down ground-deployments. Nevertheless, the popular backing was weak and responsive this was losing its competitive advantage during the crisis like the withdrawal of Afghanistan or the revival of ISIS when the demand to resume intervention came

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up once again ⁷². It emphasizes how It is hard to maintain lengthy strategic changes in a random and media-dominated security paradigm.

11.2. Unintended Consequences and Costs:

The result of rapid drawdowns and lack of post-conflict stabilization led to state failures, long-run civil wars and humanitarian catastrophes, the most notable being Syria, Libya, and Yemen ⁷³. Such crises used enormous resources on regional states and international relief structures, and in numerous situations involved Western movement once more, regardless of the tendency of pivoting.

As ISIS went off the map as a territorial caliphate, its fragment additionally evolved, and their survivors learned to adopt insurgent methods that are decentralized, even more therefore than in the Middle East and Africa. The counterterrorism in the U.S. was increasingly turning to over-the-horizon capabilities and intelligence liaisons, yet the threat was still a problematic element in new forms, and policymakers needed a reminder that measured withdrawal would not mean strategic irrelevance ⁷⁴.

The most crucial allies (such as Saudi Arabia, and Jordan in the Middle East and Philippines and Thailand in Asia) started to doubt American commitments ^{75;76}. This encouraged hedging actions such as a move to strengthen the diplomatic, defense, and economic relationships with Russia, China, and the EU that consequently watered down the long-term alliances.

U.S. decreased presence gave spaces to the influence of Russia and China. Russia was able to regain its presence militarily in Syria and diplomatically in Levant and China managed to increase its economic power in Gulf by signing large infrastructure contracts and energy agreements. Such intrusion made U.S. re-entry more difficult and the unipolarity of the region decreased.

Conclusion:

The U.S. strategic pivot to Asia represents a significant realignment in American grand strategy—shifting from the post-9/11 model of direct interventionism in the Middle East to a framework rooted in great power competition, alliance diplomacy, and strategic prioritization. This study has demonstrated that the pivot was not merely a reaction to China’s rise but a broader recalibration prompted by economic constraints, technological change, and intervention fatigue. While it partially succeeded in reorienting U.S. focus toward the Indo-Pacific, it also generated complex unintended consequences in the Middle East—chief among them, power vacuums, alliance strain, and increased space for rival influence.

This realignment has exposed a core dilemma in U.S. foreign policy: how to reconcile finite strategic bandwidth with expansive global commitments. As the U.S. reallocates resources toward Indo-Pacific priorities, regional actors in the Middle East must adapt to a more selective and distant American presence. Rather than viewing this shift solely as a strategic loss, Middle Eastern nations should seize it as an inflection point to strengthen their own regional agency.

To that end, the following measures are essential for advancing strategic autonomy and regional stability:

- **Revitalizing Regional Institutions** such as the Arab League, GCC, and OIC through reforms, operational planning, and mechanisms for consensus-building.
- **Establishing a Regional Security Architecture** based on joint exercises, intelligence-sharing, and crisis management protocols to reduce reliance on external powers.
- **Institutionalizing Diplomacy and Conflict De-escalation**, especially through sustained Saudi-Iranian dialogue and facilitation by neutral actors like Oman and Qatar.
- **Fostering Economic Interdependence** via infrastructure connectivity, sovereign investment, and shared post-conflict reconstruction frameworks.

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- **Advancing Collective Diplomacy in Global Forums**—leveraging platforms like BRICS+ and the G20 to assert regional interests on issues such as climate change, migration, and technological sovereignty.
- **Codifying Norms of Sovereignty and Non-Intervention** to shift the regional order from transactional rivalry toward principles-based coexistence and mutual security.

In embracing these priorities, Middle Eastern states can move from reactive roles in global competition to becoming proactive architects of their own future. While the U.S. pivot to Asia reshapes the strategic landscape, it also presents a critical opportunity for the region to assert autonomy, resilience, and long-term stability rooted in regional cooperation.

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