

# America's Declining Influence in the Middle East

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*After 9/11, America unleashed their campaign to completely change the political landscape of the Middle East. Under the pretext of fighting terrorism and protecting the US national security, George W Bush and Barack Obama presided over military campaign and covert operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria, and Iran and also looked to influence the outcome of the Arab Spring in their favour. However, analysing the current situation in the Middle East, one can say with some confidence that the American policy over the last 13 years completely backfired and has played a role in declining American influence and power in the region.*

## **Iraq and Afghanistan failure**

Apart from the obvious human costs (the Lancet journal in 2006 [published](#) an estimate of 654,965 excess Iraqi deaths related to the war), there has been a monumental financial cost (Congressional Research Service estimates that the US spent almost \$802bn on funding the war by 2011). The failure of these military campaigns is so obvious that even the American mainstream media propaganda was unable to convince the American people of the worthiness of these wars. On Iraq, Americans by 52%-37% [say](#) the United States mostly failed to achieve its goals. On Afghanistan, Americans by a nearly identical 52%-38% say the U.S. has mostly failed to achieve its goals.

Afghanistan is hardly a functioning state and will require enormous amount of aid that the taxpayer will have to pay in order to prop up basic governing conditions. Furthermore, there is a high chance that the Taliban will slowly make its come back once the American troops pull out. In addition, Iraq is now [closer](#) politically to Iran than ever before, due to the Shia majority. Ultimately, the United States not only failed dismally in their self-destructive mission to coerce these two countries through force, but it has actually pushed them further away from the American orbit of influence.

## **Syria and Iran**

Despite the best efforts of the American hawks to remove Syrian President Assad from power through sponsoring and financing foreign fighters that have unleashed their radical [jihadist](#) attitude on the Syrian people, Assad will likely remain the President of Syria for the foreseeable future. The Syrian "opposition" have proven to be incapable of forming a legitimate body and have committed enough [atrocities](#) to ensure that the majority of Syrian people are supportive of Assad. Thanks to Russia's positive intervention to prevent the US from attacking Syria, in exchange for the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons, the Middle Eastern country has been spared the fate suffered by Iraq. Though the brutal civil war in Syria is likely to continue, the country is in a better shape than it would have been if American hawks prevailed in convincing Obama to attack Syria.

Iran, meanwhile, has built closer ties with Russia and China. It was announced recently that Russian President Vladimir Putin and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani [agreed](#) that Moscow would build two additional nuclear power plants for Tehran and construct new facilities next to Iran's power plant in the city of Bushehr. The Ukrainian crisis makes both Russia and the Islamic Republic much closer due to the convergence of interests and geopolitical objectives between Putin and Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in resisting Western hegemony in the Middle East. Secondly, both Russia and Iran are attempting to establish themselves as key and influential geopolitical and strategic players in the region. The consolidation of Russia's and Iran's strategic depth in the area is combined with their shared objective of withstanding the Western powers.

## **Egypt**

Recent results of the Presidential elections in Egypt declared Abdel Fattah el-Sisi as the winner. He has made it a priority to move away from American influence and build stronger ties with other global powers. El-Sisi personally [told](#) Putin that he is ready for close cooperation with Russia on bilateral issues and on the international agenda. The two leaders agreed to maintain active contacts and exchange visits at the top level. Both Russia and Egypt have put particular effort into intensifying their military-to-military contacts. Russia and Egypt have also agreed to conduct joint counterterrorism exercises involving Russian paratroopers.

## **United States is losing its influence in the Middle East**

The above analysis illustrates that American foreign policy in the Middle East has not only been a failure, but actually accelerated the inevitable decline of U.S. power and influence in the region. America's only real allies that remain are the Gulf States and Israel, though these are quickly losing their legitimacy due to their appalling human rights record. The other main actors in the Middle East, such as Iran, Egypt and Syria no longer feel the need to be coerced by America. The failures of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, coupled with the inability of America to influence the outcome in Syria, has resulted in many Arab countries choosing to ally themselves with other powers such as Russia. This outcome is to be welcomed, as American influence in the Middle East has not been a positive one for the region. The United States looked to squeeze the region dry of its resources, while propping up unelected dictators or carrying out illegal military interventions when it suited their interests. American influence was never about promoting democracy and security in the region, but further enhancing American grip on its hegemony. Fortunately, the tide has turned against America and it will not be long till Washington loses much of its support in the Middle East.

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