

Arming for Peace?

Syria's Elusive Quest for 'Strategic Parity'

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Under the leadership of President Hafez al-Assad, Syria has emerged as the leading Arab military power. With Egypt at peace with Israel and Iraq weakened and isolated, Syria remains the only Arab state which currently poses a military threat to Israel. Future decisions concerning war or peace in the region are thus likely to be made in Damascus. Syria's decision in July 1991 to join the U.S.-sponsored peace process indicates, however, that at least for now Syria has opted for a diplomatic approach to achieving its objective in the conflict. It has, nonetheless, embarked in a major military build-up and continues to devote significant resources to its armed forces, raising questions about the depth of its commitments to the peace process, and its ultimate intentions.

In this Policy Paper, Michael Eisenstadt, Military Affairs Fellow at The Washington Institute, examines the evolution of Syria's strategic doctrine, the course of its military build-up and the role that Syria's military calculations play in its political and diplomatic maneuverings.

- 106 pages

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