

General Principles to Guide U.S. Middle East Policy

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



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Given the unprecedented turmoil and uncertainty afflicting the Middle East, the new administration will need to devote particular care and urgency to understanding the essence of America's interests in the region, and applying clear principles in pursuing them. This is the advice offered by two U.S. diplomats with a distinguished record of defending those interests under various administrations.

As Trump and his team take office, they face a regional state system that is under assault by proxy wars that reflect geopolitical rivalries and conflicts over basic identity. Rarely has it been more important for a new administration to articulate clear goals and principles, and Ambassadors James Jeffrey and Dennis Ross outline both in this transition paper.

With 30 percent of the world's hydrocarbons still flowing from the Middle East, safeguarding that supply remains a critical U.S. national security interest, along with preventing nuclear proliferation, countering terrorism, and preserving stability. In their view, the best way to pursue these interests is to emphasize a coherent set of guiding principles, namely:

- Containing Iran and its Shiite proxies
- Defeating the Islamic State
- Combatting other radical Sunni Islamists
- Maintaining alliances and partnerships
- Exercising U.S. military power with caution
- Complementing hard power with economic and soft power
- Avoiding transformational approaches

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