

# The Trump Administration and the Middle East: A Washington Institute Guide

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## A compendium of Institute analysis on the evolving challenges and opportunities that will face the Trump administration in the Middle East.

**H**ow will American Middle East policy change in the administration of President-Elect Donald J. Trump? And how will America confront the region's evolving challenges and opportunities? The Institute presents this compendium of original research and analysis which will be continuously updated throughout the presidential transition period. Entries include [Transition 2017 papers \(#Transition 2017\)](#), [published analysis \(#Analysis\)](#), [podcasts \(#Podcasts\)](#), and [videos \(#Videos\)](#).

### Transition 2017 ()

► (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/defeating-ideologically-inspired-violent-extremism>)

#### Defeating Ideologically Inspired Violent Extremism

(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/defeating-ideologically-inspired-violent-extremism>)

*Bipartisan Washington Institute Study Group*

The United States should adopt a strategy to prevent and counter U.S. violent extremism that empowers communities on the frontlines of defense against homegrown violent extremism and builds trusting partnerships with and within local communities to reduce terrorist recruitment. [Read more](#)

(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/defeating-ideologically-inspired-violent-extremism>).

► **Deterring Tehran:** (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/deterring-tehran-an-iran-policy-for-the-new-administration>) **An Iran Policy for the New Administration**  
(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/deterring-tehran-an-iran-policy-for-the-new-administration>)

*Michael Singh*

The United States should adopt a strategy on Iran that erects daunting defenses to dissuade the Islamic Republic from challenging the interests of the United States and its allies and that imposes sharp, painful costs should Iran do so nonetheless. [Read more](#) (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/deterring-tehran-an-iran-policy-for-the-new-administration>)

[iran-policy-for-the-new-administration](#)).

► **Combating Terrorism and Alleviating Human Suffering in Syria** (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/combating-terrorism-and-alleviating-human-suffering-in-syria>)

*Andrew J. Tabler*

The Trump administration's most expedient course of action would be to establish safe zones in non-Assad-controlled areas, recognizing that Syria is already de facto partitioned. [Read more](#)

(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/combating-terrorism-and-alleviating-human-suffering-in-syria>).

► **Rebuilding Alliances and Countering Threats in the Gulf** (</policy-analysis/view/rebuilding-alliances-and-countering-threats-in-the-gulf>)

*Lori Plotkin Boghardt and Simon Henderson*

For the United States, expanded security cooperation and coordination in the Gulf could be a force multiplier in campaigns to achieve key policy goals. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/rebuilding-alliances-and-countering-threats-in-the-gulf\)](/policy-analysis/view/rebuilding-alliances-and-countering-threats-in-the-gulf).

► **Strengthening Stability in Northwest Africa: Ideas for U.S. Policy toward Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia** (</policy-analysis/view/strengthening-stability-in-northwest-africa>)

*Robert Satloff and Sarah Feuer*

It would be a mistake for American policymakers to overlook western North Africa, a corner of the Middle East that doesn't attract the same attention as areas facing more acute crises. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/strengthening-stability-in-northwest-africa\)](/policy-analysis/view/strengthening-stability-in-northwest-africa).

► **Toward a New Paradigm for Addressing the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict** (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/toward-a-new-paradigm-for-addressing-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>)

*David Makovsky and Dennis Ross*

The Palestinian-Israeli conflict has faded in significance in the Middle East against the backdrop of the conflict in Syria, the rise of ISIS, and the regionwide clash of Sunni and Shiite powers. Both the likelihood for a return to the negotiating table and the prospects for a two-state solution are growing dim. [Read more](#)

(<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/toward-a-new-paradigm-for-addressing-the-israeli-palestinian-conflict>).

► (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/general-principles-to-guide-u.s.-middle-east-policy>) **General Principles to Guide U.S. Middle East Policy** (<http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/general-principles-to-guide-u.s.-middle-east-policy>)

*Ambassadors James F. Jeffrey and Dennis Ross*

By all accounts, the Middle East will be a priority for the Trump administration, given its concerns about terrorism, current U.S. military operations, and the long history of American successes and failures in the region. Unsurprisingly, much of the foreign affairs debate in the presidential campaign revolved around the region...[Read more \(http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/general-principles-to-guide-u.s.-middle-east-policy\)](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/general-principles-to-guide-u.s.-middle-east-policy).

## ► [How the United States Should Help Protect Jordan from the Chaos Next Door \(/policy-analysis/view/how-the-united-states-should-help-protect-jordan-from-the-chaos-next-door\)](/policy-analysis/view/how-the-united-states-should-help-protect-jordan-from-the-chaos-next-door)

*David Schenker*

A comprehensive look at the concrete steps the Trump administration can take to secure a vital ally that has shown signs of struggling under the weight of refugees and numerous other challenges. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/how-the-united-states-should-help-protect-jordan-from-the-chaos-next-door\)](/policy-analysis/view/how-the-united-states-should-help-protect-jordan-from-the-chaos-next-door).

## ► [\(/policy-analysis/view/moving-the-u.s.-embassy-to-jerusalem-from-campaign-promise-to-policy-challenge\) Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: From Campaign Promise to Policy Challenge \(/policy-analysis/view/moving-the-u.s.-embassy-to-jerusalem-from-campaign-promise-to-policy-challenge\)](/policy-analysis/view/moving-the-u.s.-embassy-to-jerusalem-from-campaign-promise-to-policy-challenge)

*Robert Satloff*

If President Trump decides to honor his commitment to relocate the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, he should move quickly to consult with Israel, assess and prepare responses for potential security challenges, and engage key regional and international partners in the context of a broader adjustment of U.S. policy. [Read more. \(/policy-analysis/view/moving-the-u.s.-embassy-to-jerusalem-from-campaign-promise-to-policy-challenge\)](/policy-analysis/view/moving-the-u.s.-embassy-to-jerusalem-from-campaign-promise-to-policy-challenge)

## ► [\(/policy-analysis/view/us-policy-on-turkey\) U.S. Policy on Turkey \(/policy-analysis/view/us-policy-on-turkey\)](/policy-analysis/view/us-policy-on-turkey)

*Soner Cagaptay and James F. Jeffrey*

The Trump administration should revamp policy toward Turkey to emphasize a transactional approach to critical bilateral issues, counsel two leading experts on U.S.-Turkish relations. [Read more. \(/policy-analysis/view/us-policy-on-turkey\)](/policy-analysis/view/us-policy-on-turkey)

## **Analysis ()**

## **[Donald Trump Should Isolate Iran Immediately \(/policy-analysis/view/donald-trump-should-isolate-iran-immediately\)](/policy-analysis/view/donald-trump-should-isolate-iran-immediately)**

*Jeb Bush and Dennis Ross*

Iran's destabilizing presence throughout the region has grown in the year since the nuclear deal, so the new administration should take firm steps to curb it. [Read more. \(/policy-analysis/view/donald-trump-should-isolate-iran-immediately\)](/policy-analysis/view/donald-trump-should-isolate-iran-immediately)

## **[Trump's First Foreign Policy Win Could Be in Syria \(/policy-analysis/view/trumps-first-foreign-policy-win-could-be-in-syria\)](/policy-analysis/view/trumps-first-foreign-policy-win-could-be-in-syria)**

*David Pollock*

The incoming Trump team has a quick shot at averting worse disasters in Syria, with its new Russian gambit. [Read more. \(/policy-analysis/view/trumps-first-foreign-policy-win-could-be-in-syria\)](#)

## **Tillerson's Task: Mastering Mind-Numbing Expectations at State (/policy-analysis/view/tillersons-task-mastering-mind-numbing-expectations-at-state)**

*James Jeffrey in Cipher Brief*

The next secretary of state cannot effectively marshal his staff or respond to nations who challenge the global security system until President-elect Trump clarifies his seemingly unconventional foreign policy priorities. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/tillersons-task-mastering-mind-numbing-expectations-at-state\)](#).

## **How Trump Could Surprise the World on Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking (/policy-analysis/view/how-trump-could-surprise-the-world-on-israeli-palestinian-peacemaking)**

*Dennis Ross in the Washington Post*

Reconciling Israeli security with Palestinian sovereignty will likely require a fresh U.S. approach, so the incoming administration would be wise to heed certain lessons from past failures. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/how-trump-could-surprise-the-world-on-israeli-palestinian-peacemaking\)](#).

## **What Should Trump Do About Syria? (/policy-analysis/view/what-should-trump-do-about-syria)**

*Andrew J. Tabler for PBS Newshour*

Establishing safe zones, pursuing a tougher line of negotiation with Russia, and limiting Iran's destabilizing presence are the best ways of addressing the country's de facto partition. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/what-should-trump-do-about-syria\)](#).

## **Strength in a Tougher World (/policy-analysis/view/strength-in-a-tougher-world)**

*Michael Singh in National Review*

Some foreign policy guidelines for the incoming administration as it prepares for a world that has become more competitive and less susceptible to U.S. influence. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/strength-in-a-tougher-world\)](#).

## **A Syria Policy for Trump: How Washington Can Get to a Settlement (/policy-analysis/view/a-syria-policy-for-trump-how-washington-can-get-to-a-settlement)**

*Andrew J. Tabler and Dennis Ross in Foreign Affairs*

Continued passivity would only reinforce the perception that the United States is acquiescing to Russia and Iran's regional plans, so the incoming administration should prepare a series of robust diplomatic and military steps. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/a-syria-policy-for-trump-how-washington-can-get-to-a-settlement\)](#).

## **What Trump's Victory Might Mean for US-Russia Relations (/policy-**

## **analysis/view/what-trumps-victory-might-mean-for-us-russia-relations)**

*Anna Borshchevskaya in Forbes*

Given his campaign rhetoric about Russia, Putin, and NATO, Trump could decide to pursue a number of problematic policy moves, such as lifting Crimea-related sanctions in exchange for Moscow's cooperation in Syria. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/what-trumps-victory-might-mean-for-us-russia-relations\).](#)

## **A Trump Presidency: Short-Cut to Iraqi Kurdistan's Independence or a Wrong Turn? (/policy-analysis/view/a-trump-presidency-short-cut-to-iraqi-kurdistans-independence-or-a-wrong-tu)**

*Michael Knights*

The most reliable road to Kurdish sovereignty still runs through Baghdad, not through Ankara or the Trump White House. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/a-trump-presidency-short-cut-to-iraqi-kurdistans-independence-or-a-wrong-tu\).](#)

## **Behind the Trump Transition Headlines, the Yeoman's Work of Building Foreign Policy (/policy-analysis/view/behind-the-trump-transition-headlines-the-yeomans-work-of-building-foreign)**

*Michael Singh in the Wall Street Journal*

Well before his inauguration, the president-elect can take steps to calm foreign allies and build domestic support by conveying a sense of his strategy and priorities overseas, both in private and, to some degree, publicly. [Read more \(/policy-analysis/view/behind-the-trump-transition-headlines-the-yeomans-work-of-building-foreign\).](#)

## **Trump and the Middle East: Between Hope and Apprehension (/fikraforum/view/trump-and-the-middle-east-between-hope-and-apprehension)**

*Fikra Forum*

Although most everyone in the region badly wants to turn the page on present-day failures, uncertainties about the next administration abound. [Read more \(/fikraforum/view/trump-and-the-middle-east-between-hope-and-apprehension\).](#)

## **Podcasts ()**

### **Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices with Amb. James Jeffrey (/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-with-amb.-james-jeffrey)**

There's no stopping Iranian ambitions if Moscow has Tehran's back unless the United States is prepared to "get real" about its Middle East engagement in the next presidential administration. A former American ambassador to Iraq and to Turkey explains the importance of setting, and upholding, national strategy, and discusses the implications of several alternative strategic approaches to U.S. interests in the region. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-with-amb.-james-jeffrey\).](#)

### **Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices - Syria with Andrew Tabler**

## **(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-syria-with-andrew-tabler)**

How the next president deals with the conflict in Syria will shape American foreign policy in the Middle East for years to come, and American decisions in Syria will determine the course of American relations with our regional allies, with Iran, and even with Russia. Syria in the late 2010s will likely resemble Iraq in the 1990s, with Libya right behind it. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-syria-with-andrew-tabler\)](/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-syria-with-andrew-tabler).

## **Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices - Egypt with Eric Trager (/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-egypt-with-eric-trager)**

Politics has become a life-or-death struggle for several of America's important partners in the Middle East, and their leaders increasingly perceive even mild U.S. encouragement on human rights issues as support for domestic enemies. The next president will face a decision about how to prioritize America's strategic and security interests against our commitment to liberal and democratic values in countries such as Egypt, Turkey, and Iraq. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-egypt-with-eric-trager\)](/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-egypt-with-eric-trager).

## **The Middle East 2017: Choices and Challenges with Ambassador Dennis Ross (/policy-analysis/view/the-middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-with-dennis-ross)**

"Syria is going to hit the next president very hard," warns Ambassador Dennis Ross. A veteran of five administrations, under presidents of both parties, Ross shares his insights into the decisions that will face the next commander in chief as well as the planning that must take place before Inauguration Day to create an orderly process for making choices. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/the-middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-with-dennis-ross\)](/policy-analysis/view/the-middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-with-dennis-ross).

## **Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices - Russia with Anna Borshchevskaya (/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-russia)**

Is Russia's recent military foray into the Middle East a permanent move, and what if anything can the 45th president of the United States do to limit Moscow's mischief in the region without risking open confrontation and war between the world's leading nuclear powers? Hear a studied look into Vladimir Putin's motives and objectives and concrete advice for how the next American administration can disrupt Russia's dangerous Middle East adventurism. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-russia\)](/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-russia).

## **Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices - Terrorism with Matthew Levitt (/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-terrorism)**

From al-Qaeda to the Islamic State, the global terrorist threat has evolved rapidly in recent years, and will likely change further still in the next president's term. A counterterrorism expert looks ahead to the next administration and the choices the 45th president will have to face to keep Americans safe from this adaptive global menace. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-terrorism\)](/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-choices-and-challenges-terrorism).

## **The Middle East 2017: Challenges and Choices - Strategy with Michael Singh (/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-**

## strategy)

Where does the Middle East fit into America's global strategy, and is the rise of Russian and Chinese great-power competition in the region a permanent new reality or an anomaly that the next president can reverse? This conversation tackles regional challenges to America's interests, the policy choices necessary to overcome them, and the personnel and management decisions that can help the next president avoid the foreign policy blunders common to most new administrations. [Listen \(/policy-analysis/view/middle-east-2017-challenges-and-choices-strategy\)](#).

## Videos ()

### **A New President and the Middle East (/policy-analysis/view/a-new-president-and-the-middle-east)**

*Jamal Khashoggi, Jumana Ghunaimat , David Horowitz , Norman Ornstein, and Dennis Ross*

How will the election's outcome shape the direction of U.S. Middle East policy, and how do America's friends in the region view the prospect of a new administration? Read or watch a conversation between leading Middle Eastern journalists and U.S. policy experts. [Watch \(/policy-analysis/view/a-new-president-and-the-middle-east\)](#).

### **A Conversation with General John Allen and Admiral James Stavridis (/policy-analysis/view/stavridis-allen-assess-global-strategic-threats)**

In a candid conversation, recently retired American military leaders assessed the foreign policy challenges confronting the United States as President-elect Donald J. Trump prepares to take office. [Watch \(/policy-analysis/view/stavridis-allen-assess-global-strategic-threats\)](#).

### **President-Elect Trump and the Middle East (/policy-analysis/view/president-elect-trump-and-the-middle-east)**

*Robert Satloff*

In this short video, Institute Executive Director Robert Satloff explores implications of the election of Donald J. Trump for America's role in the region. [Watch \(/policy-analysis/view/president-elect-trump-and-the-middle-east\)](#).

### **General Principles to Guide U.S. Middle East Policy (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz9Oq8YvvSk)**

James F. Jeffrey

Former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq James Jeffrey lays out guiding principles that should inform President Trump as he reassesses US policy in the Middle East. Jeffrey, who also served as deputy national security adviser under President George W. Bush, argues that while defeating ISIS is critical to regional stability, containing Iran is the most important regional issue. This video is part of a series of transition papers designed to provide recommendations for the incoming Trump Administration. [Watch \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz9Oq8YvvSk\)](#).

### **A New Approach to Resolving the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz9Oq8YvvSk)**

*Dennis Ross*

Ambassador Dennis Ross proposes a new US approach to the Israel-Palestine conflict that can break the current stalemate, avert violence, and support a two-state solution. Amb. Ross's video complements a policy paper on Middle

East peace co-written with fellow Institute scholar David Makovsky. [Watch \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz9Oq8YvvSk\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dz9Oq8YvvSk).

## Moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem: From Campaign Promise to Policy Challenge ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_WqGLEYSaqw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WqGLEYSaqw))

*Robert Satloff*

Washington Institute Executive Director Robert Satloff explains how President Trump can fulfill his campaign pledge to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in the context of a net assessment of US policy in the region. [Watch \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_WqGLEYSaqw\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_WqGLEYSaqw).

## Strengthening Stability in Northwest Africa: U.S. Policy toward Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb7qKkOzMWM&t>)

*Robert Satloff and Sarah Feuer*

Birthplace of the Arab Spring and gateway to the Mediterranean, Northwest Africa -- Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria -- has geopolitical significance for the United States. In this video, Sarah Feuer and Robert Satloff discuss how Washington can use bilateral and regional initiatives to maintain stability, prevent extremism, and ensure maritime security in the area. [Watch \(https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb7qKkOzMWM&t\)](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yb7qKkOzMWM&t). ❖

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### RECOMMENDED

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ARTICLES & TESTIMONY

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Anna Borshchevskaya

([/policy-analysis/how-make-russia-pay-ukraine-study-syria](#))



BRIEF ANALYSIS



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Simon Henderson

(/policy-analysis/bennetts-bahrain-visit-further-invigorates-israel-gulf-diplomacy)



BRIEF ANALYSIS

## Libya's Renewed Legitimacy Crisis

Feb 14, 2022



Ben Fishman

(/policy-analysis/libyas-renewed-legitimacy-crisis)

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