

The Iranian Deal in Middle Eastern Geopolitics

by [James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#)

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In recent days, the U.S. Government reshuffled the Middle Eastern deck dramatically, signing a framework agreement with Iran but also buttressing America's traditional regional allies -- supporting the Saudi-led Arab force in Yemen, lifting arms delivery constraints on Egypt, launching air strikes against ISIS in Tikrit after Iran's effort there failed, and summoning the Gulf Arab states to Camp David. If the U.S. plays its cards right, it can capitalize on these developments to stabilize the region and correct some of its earlier mistakes. But failure to do so will generate a downward spiral. The first step to success is understanding the underlying situation in the Middle East and then finding a way to place this agreement into that situation in a way that advances security.

The nuclear agreement thus is but one part of the Middle East's political topography: A nation-state system with the loyalty of its own citizens at risk, millennial Islamic movements preaching the end to that system, and the possibility that the primary two such movements -- Sunni Islamic ISIS and the Shiite Iranian Islamic Republic -- will stumble into a regional sectarian conflict. As ISIS is so extreme that it can only be dealt with militarily, the real challenge for statecraft is dealing with Iran by resisting its hegemony and/or modifying its behavior...

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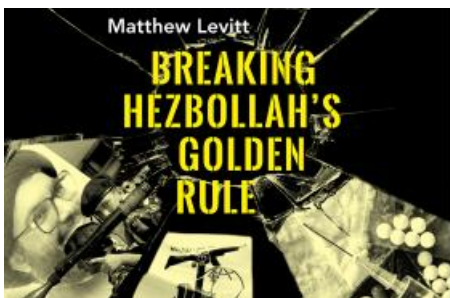
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