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The United States, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East in the Post-Khashoggi Era

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War on the Rocks

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In addition to imperiling U.S. public support for regional relationships, neglecting human rights issues can blind policymakers to the brittleness of certain partner states.

The murder of Jamal Khashoggi has sparked a sudden soul-searching in Washington about the U.S.-Saudi partnership. Riding a wave of congressional anger, a bill that would end American support for the Saudi-led military campaign in Yemen overwhelmingly surmounted the hurdle required to advance to debate. The Trump administration, for its part, has imposed sanctions on 17 Saudis reportedly involved in the murder. Yet the administration has otherwise been stalwart in its defense of the bilateral partnership, lauding the kingdom as a “pillar of stability” and vowing to oppose further congressional efforts. For some, the partnership is simply past its sell-by date. But jettisoning it would be a mistake...

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