Reflecting broad foreign policy themes dating to World War I, U.S. grand strategy in the Middle East since the Cold War has focused on establishing and managing a global security system to contain and deter outside threats. Given Eurasia's demographic and economic/technical strength, a dominant power or powers arising from that region, using modern military technology, could eventually project force against the United States. Whether the United States will continue the laborious task of maintaining regional security and deterring the threats to it is an open question. And just as these threats are growing, the collapse of the Arab Spring movement has led to disintegrating stability throughout the region. Learning the lessons of past U.S. military interventions will be vital to securing American interests in the region, and upholding the global security system it created after World War II. This comprehensive two-part study examines U.S. military engagement from both historical and strategic points of view.

In Part I, "Historical Overview of U.S. Military Operations," James F. Jeffrey examines the chronology of U.S. military engagement and intervention in the Middle East, the causes of its past military successes and failures there, and how America's military engagement in the region has bolstered its global security system.

In Part II, "Winning Battles, Losing Wars: Rethinking U.S. Military Strategy," Michael Eisenstadt argues that America's military interventions in the Middle East in the past two decades have often failed to effectively advance American interests and have exacerbated the region's pathologies and conflicts. To rectify these shortcomings, Washington needs to reassess how it thinks, organizes, and acts militarily in the Middle East; to better align "ways," "means," and "ends" of strategy; to develop "ways of war" tailored to the operational environment; and to improve its performance of critical national security tasks. In this way it may more effectively employ the military instrument to advance its interests in a region that is still of critical importance to the United States.

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