

*U.S. Foreign Policy in the
Middle East*

Assessing the Biden
Administration's Policy
Approach at the Midterm



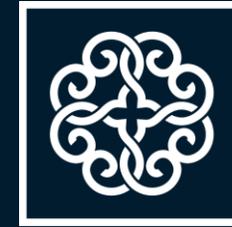
What We Do:

1. Our experts shape diplomatic, legislative, and public discourse through publications, private briefings, testimony, and media.
2. Our Center for Arts & Culture promotes a more integrated understanding of the Middle East, forging people-to-people connections and creating a destination for exploring the role of the arts in the region.
3. Our international conflict resolution dialogues bring together civil society and political leaders to achieve impact through cooperation both in and outside of the region.



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Three Phases of Biden's Middle East Policy 2021-2022

1. Transition from Trump; January 2021 - April 2021
2. Turbulence; May 2021 - April 2022
3. Reengagement; May 2022 - Present



Phase 1: Transition from Trump

- Middle East issues are lower priority than:
 - COVID-19 response
 - Economic revival
 - China
 - Climate change
- Main Goals for the Biden team in the Middle East:
 - Reengage Iran to revive the JCPOA
 - End conflicts regional (with an emphasis on Yemen Diplomacy)
 - “Recalibrate” relations with Saudi Arabia and other Middle East partners



Phase 1: Transition from Trump[✓] (Cont.)

- A focus on restoring a normal policy process inside the administration (no more foreign policy by Tweet)
- "Back to basics": Prioritizing and setting realistic and achievable goals for U.S. policy in the Middle East
- Biding time to properly analyze the long-term effects of Israeli elections in the spring of 2021



Phase 2: Turbulence

- The 2021 Gaza war: Biden's "Michael Corleone moment" for the Middle East (Just when I thought I was out, they pulled me back in)
- Crisis management diplomacy aimed at doing the bare minimum
- The focus was on keeping Biden's priority on the Europe trip and first meeting with Putin
- Slow to fill the staff positions on the Middle East



Phase 2: Turbulence (Cont.)

- The August 2021 Afghanistan withdrawal
- The negative impact it had on America's image in the Middle East
- The damage it did to Biden's domestic political standing



Phase 2: Turbulence (Cont.)

- The plans on Iran and Yemen set out at the beginning of the administration not bearing fruit
- The continued slog in the fight against ISIS in Syria and Iraq
- Watershed moment: February 2022 raid that took out ISIS leader



Phase 2: Turbulence (Cont.)

- Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 upends the world
- Impact of the invasion on the Middle East and North Africa: energy and food crisis
- The broader Middle East's importance in geopolitics increased once again



Phase 3: Reengagement, May 2022 - Present

- Biden's July 2022 trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia announced in late spring
- US intensive efforts on the Israel-Lebanon maritime deal that was signed in October
- October A shift in Iran policy away from nuclear talks and more focused on deterrence and response to protests
- Biden's visit November 2022 to COP 27



Biden's Middle East Policy 2021-2022 Analytical Assessment

1. Grounded in pragmatism and aimed at placing more responsibilities on regional partners
2. Aimed at avoiding military and diplomatic quagmires
3. Trying to "right size" America's military footprint in the region
4. Sending a different message than the Trump and Obama administration did



A look over the horizon: 2023 and beyond

- Challenge 1: How to balance renewed reengagement in the Middle East with other geopolitical priorities
- Challenge 2: Dealing with additional turbulence from Iran, Israel, and conflicts like Syria
- Opportunity 1: Promoting de-escalation and greater regional integration
- Opportunity 2: Supporting a shared prosperity agenda in the region



Thank you
for your time.

