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7 The Shifting Sands of State Power in the Middle East

■ *Alastair Crooke*

Three key events that took place more than 20 years ago are still overturning Middle Eastern conventional state politics, economics, and Islam, requiring analysts and policymakers to reconceptualize what they think they know about Israel–Palestine, Iran, and the rest of the region.

21 Counterinsurgency's Impossible Trilemma ■ *Lorenzo Zambardi*

Counterinsurgency involves three main goals, but in practice a counterinsurgent needs to choose two out of three. This is the impossible trilemma of counterinsurgency.

35 Strategic Engagement's Track Record ■ *Thomas Wright*

The evidence thus far suggests that strategic engagement has largely succeeded in meeting its ambitious goals in only one category—engaging civilizations—while ambitions in four others have been scaled back given geopolitical realities.

61 Diplomacy Derailed: The Consequences of Diplomatic Sanctions

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Despite being politically popular and normatively satisfying, diplomatic sanctions against problem states today lead to U.S.

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losses in intelligence and communications. Most politically important and ironically, they undermine coercive strategies, such as economic sanctions.

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Beijing's approach to Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has to date pursued a relatively narrow conception of China's interests, is proving increasingly unsuccessful. But a debate in China has started about whether its policies require a strategic reassessment.

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The United States has a unique opportunity to shape the world's approach to the commons. No other country has the ability to project military power into the commons, and none can challenge the U.S. legacy of building global institutions to advance shared goals.