

Book Peer Reviews

“Concise and penetrating, Dr. Riad Aisami’s latest book, *As the Sand Shifts: Reevaluating the U.S. Strategy in the Middle East*” unravels the complex geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East and provides a framework for reshaping American foreign policy. Examining the evolution of the Middle East in the past century, the author nimbly moves from the Balfour Declaration to UN resolutions, to Arab-Israeli wars, to thriving and failed U.S. peace initiatives, to growing Iranian nuclear power, to increasing Russian and Chinese ambitions in the region. He gives particular attention to the importance of stability in Syria and the need for constructive American involvement in the region, once envisioned by Barack Obama. He offers such a practical analysis of the deep-rooted issues and stubbornness of the participants that one wonders if it would even be feasible for the U.S. to adopt his five-point list of recommendations: Resolving the Arab-Israeli conflict, addressing Iran's nuclear program and growing influence, countering the Russian challenges, containing China's competition, and stabilizing Syria and the region.”

Patricia Ali, Ph.D. Professor Emerita, Morris College, Sumter, South Carolina.

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“Dr. Riad Aisami presents readers with a concise overview of recent U.S. involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. In doing so, he offers many valuable insights, the most important of which is that in order to understand U.S. foreign policy, one must first pay attention to domestic politics. More specifically, the decisions of U.S. Presidents who play an outsized role in dictating the course of foreign policy. Zeroing in on President Obama’s initiatives, Aisami extends his evaluation into the Trump administration, as well as into the actions of the current Biden presidency. The book clearly explains the strategic importance of the Middle East, not just for the U.S., but also for other world powers, such as Russia and China, who are also advancing their own economic, military, and political interests in ways that conflict with U.S. national security concerns. Although the book is written primarily for an academic audience, it is nonetheless accessible for readers who have only a cursory interest in foreign affairs. Historical facts merge with current events, as Aisami leaves us with several recommendations that have the potential to alleviate tensions in the region, and also help the U.S. maintain its ability to lead the world by promoting peace and diplomacy. The focus is largely on the U.S.’s Executive Branch, but in reality, there is also a burden placed on the Legislative Branch, and voters in the US, to find a way to become unified in support of coherent, long-term commitments to the economic, social, and political development and cooperation of nation-states in the Middle Eastern region.”

Richard Ledet, Ph.D. Associate Professor and Associate Chair of the Political Science Department, Troy University.

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