

As the Sand Shifts

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Reevaluating the U.S. Strategy in the Middle East



Riad S. Aisami

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By: Riad S. Aisami, PhD

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About the Author



Dr. Riad Aisami is a distinguished academic scholar. He is a Professor of Education at Troy University, Troy, Alabama, with a notable presence in instructional technology and Arabic literature. He has numerous publications in the instructional technology field, including a book on online learning published in 2020. Additionally, he is an accomplished author in Arabic literature, having written three books. The first, released in 2017, focuses on Barack Obama's presidency, while the second, published in 2022, delves into the U.S. and geostrategic competition over the Middle East. His contributions include over 150 articles and analyses in Arabic, establishing him as a respected authority in political and strategic analyses. He participates actively in Arabic Thinktank Groups, frequently sharing insights on current events. His engagement in these forums contributes significantly to informed discussions and analyses.

Dr. Aisami's multifaceted expertise and extensive work underscore his influence on instructional technology, Arabic literature, and political analyses.

About the Book

Why is this book, and how is it different?

The primary reason for writing this book is to express concerns about the prevalence of wars, particularly in the Middle East. I have experienced conflict firsthand in Syria and Iraq for much of my early life, and subsequently, living in the United States, I have the sentiment of war fatigue shared by many around the world. In this book, I advocate for a shift in focus toward peace. Despite the pervasive influence of interests in international relations and the complexity of the geopolitical landscape in the Middle East, the cost of achieving and sustaining peace is significantly lower than the devastating toll of war.

I have written two books in Arabic about the United States and the Middle East in the last seven years. These are best translated as: "The United States and the Evolving Events in the Middle East: The Geostrategic Global Revelry and the New World Order," which was released in mid-2022, that builds upon a previous book, "Obama Departing and the Middle East in Flames," published on January 1, 2017, just three weeks before President Obama left the White House. This book, "As the Sand Shifts," is the best translation and updated extensive summary of the last Arabic edition. It delves into the complex dynamics of U.S. involvement in the Middle East since World War II. It focuses on five principal issues: The Arab-Israeli conflict, Iran's Nuclear Program and its influence in the region, the Russian Challenge, the Completion with China, and the international and regional conflict in Syria.

Through a strategic planning lens, I address four key questions related to these issues: Where are we, how did we get here, where are we heading, and how do we navigate forward?

Using a social science perspective and employing a scholarly approach, I analyze historical events using principles from geography, history, economics, and politics. Rather than merely recounting past events, I aim to anticipate future challenges and propose strategic approaches. The book underwent rigorous peer review by experts in political science to ensure comprehensive analysis and accuracy.

The Middle East is the most significant geostrategic region in the world, historically shaped by global powers. The United States has been the sole dominant power in the Middle East for over three decades since the end of the Cold War. Today, challenges from Russia demand a fresh perspective beyond the outdated strategies of the Cold War. By understanding past mistakes and adopting a forward-thinking approach, the United States can successfully navigate the Middle East's complexities and safeguard America's position on the world stage.

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As an American Citizen with roots in the Middle East, I am concerned about the current situation there and the status of the United States not only on the world stage but also here in the country. I hope this book finds its way to as many readers as possible, which will be my biggest reward. Books are written to be read. Otherwise, as the Chinese proverb says, "A closed book is nothing but a pile of paper."

Riad S. Aisami, Professor and Author

Augusta, Georgia, USA

January 2024

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.

December 2023

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“Dr. Riad Aisami presents readers with a concise overview of recent US involvement in Middle Eastern affairs. In doing so, he offers many valuable insights, the most important of which is that in order to understand US foreign policy, one must first pay attention to domestic politics. More specifically, the decisions of US 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 US, 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 US 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 US maintain its ability to lead the world by promoting peace and diplomacy. The focus is largely on the US’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.

January 2024