



# Trump's First 100 Days in the Middle East

By Daniel Benaim

April 26, 2017

The 10th week of Donald Trump's presidency began with his aides' declaration that America no longer sought the departure of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad.<sup>1</sup> It ended with missile strikes on Assad's bases.<sup>2</sup>

The sharp shifts in Trump's approach were a reminder that, even under the best of circumstances, the first 100 days of any presidency represent a work in progress—a moment of fluidity as campaign rhetoric gives way to governing realities; policy reviews give way to articulated strategy; and, if a president hopes to succeed, a vital window to reflect on early lessons learned.<sup>3</sup>

To date, President Trump's actions in the Middle East have told a starkly different story from his bombastic rhetoric. While his process has been erratic, his initial policy approach to the region as president has been marked less by wholesale departures from former President Barack Obama's policies than by shifts in emphasis that, unless corrected, risk longer-term damage to U.S. interests and regional stability.<sup>4</sup> Trump's limited strikes in Syria in early April are illustrative: While many cast the decision to launch limited strikes in Syria as a stark departure, Trump rushed to reassert his earlier hands-off policy regarding Syria's civil war.<sup>5</sup>

---

## 5 trends in Trump's Middle East policy

One hundred days is too early for definitive pronouncements, but five common themes have emerged in President Trump's approach to the Middle East.

### Reckoning with reality

Explaining his strikes against Syria, President Trump said, "I like to think of myself as a very flexible person. I don't have to have one specific way, and if the world changes, I go the same way."<sup>6</sup> In several key areas of Middle East policy, President Trump has set aside, at least for now, the destructive policy proposals he road tested on Twitter during last year's

presidential campaign.<sup>7</sup> This includes pledges to rip up the Iran nuclear deal and restart torture and a plan apparently considered to designate the worldwide Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization.<sup>8</sup> The most glaring exception was the so-called travel ban of Trump's opening days—an ill-conceived and poorly executed measure of dubious legality.<sup>9</sup>

### Strikes without strategy

In Iraq, Syria, and Yemen, the Trump administration has intensified and loosened restrictive oversight on military strikes without articulating a broader strategy or set of realistic goals that force should help achieve.<sup>10</sup> Meanwhile, a troubling rise in civilian casualties risks eroding American credibility with local populations; and the Islamophobic rhetoric of Trump and his aides risks violating the first principles of effective counterterrorism by intentionally conflating large Muslim populations with the violence of a relative few.<sup>11</sup>

### Reassurance without responsibility

President Trump has sought to repair relations with Sunni Arab leaders, who have been cautiously encouraged by his initial approach.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to his self-image as a hard-nosed dealmaker and to his treatment of allies such as Germany, Trump has offered reassurance to regional partners without receiving much in return or pressing these rulers to take tangible steps to address domestic and regional drivers of instability.<sup>13</sup> This represents a missed opportunity to drive a hard bargain in service of long-term U.S. interests.

Trump has been conspicuously silent on the domestic repression and human rights abuses of America's authoritarian partners and, worse still, has questioned America's moral authority to champion human rights—"We've got a lot of killers. What do you think—our country's so innocent?," he told one interviewer.<sup>14</sup> He welcomed Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, for instance, with little evidence of a tangibly expanded agenda for counterterrorism cooperation but also without any public mention of repression. Moreover, Trump's administration lifted human rights restrictions on arms sales to Bahrain despite that country's continued abuses.<sup>15</sup> His top diplomat broke with tradition and did not attend the release of the U.S. State Department's annual human rights report.<sup>16</sup> Without American pressure, regional leaders may feel freer to repress their populations with greater impunity.<sup>17</sup> In Iraq, too, Trump seemingly has offered U.S. support without pushing hard for steps toward reconciliation or reform.<sup>18</sup> Last October, the Center for American Progress, or CAP, called for repairing ties to America's partners in the region, while also asking for concrete steps in return to address repression, end proxy conflicts, and deepen regional cooperation. There is little indication such steps are underway.<sup>19</sup>

### Lack of clarity

In both message and concept, President Trump's team faces unique challenges. Never before has a president taken office behind such a tangle of contradictory, unrealistic, and inflammatory utterances. Trump called the Middle East "one big, fat quagmire" but also boldly promised to extend U.S. power to "quickly" defeat the Islamic State,

counter Iranian ambitions, and pursue Israeli-Palestinian peace.<sup>20</sup> Trump's reckless words and improvisatory process may yet back America into a preventable crisis.<sup>21</sup> Worse is the prospect that these stray rhetorical sparks reflect a lack of coherent underlying policy, putting immense pressure on aides to shape Trump's impulses, gestures, and jaundiced ideas into a strategic approach.<sup>22</sup>

One hundred days in, neither Trump nor any of the experienced professionals on his national security team have offered a comprehensive Trump administration strategy for the Middle East, nor has anyone on his team demonstrated an ability to represent Trump's views.<sup>23</sup> Foundational questions remain unanswered, such as how and where Trump plans to meaningfully undercut Iran's regional power, which exploits internal conflicts and weak state institutions that Trump seems uninterested in improving; how to stabilize territories liberated from the Islamic State; or how to address the region's deep crisis of political legitimacy.<sup>24</sup>

### Dismantling diplomacy and development

So far, President Trump and his team have shown a troubling lack of interest in the non-military tools needed to advance America's interests in a chaotic region—just when those tools are needed most in places such as Iraq to lock in progress on the battlefield. Trump has slow-walked the naming of a leadership team at the State Department and proposed a 30 percent cut in the State Department's budget, which would include devastating reductions in diplomatic personnel, U.S. assistance, and funding for international organizations and other entities that support America's goals in the region and lessen its burden.<sup>25</sup> Demoralized, understaffed, and likely soon-to-be underfunded, America's national security workforce faces a morale crisis that could result in an exodus of talent and a hollowing out of capacity and institutional memory from which it would take decades to recover.

---

## The Trump administration's Middle East policy shifts

The following offers a closer issue-by-issue look at President Trump's policies in the region.

### Anti-Islamic State fight

Trump promised the American people a new strategy for defeating the Islamic State—also known as ISIS—in the first 30 days of his administration. None has surfaced. Instead, the Trump administration has largely continued President Obama's military strategy in Iraq and seems poised also to follow the previous administration's plan to retake Raqqa working with Syrian Kurds.<sup>26</sup> The administration has escalated direct U.S. military action. Diplomatic, political, and economic efforts needed for long-term stabilization post-Islamic State remain ill-defined and in need of greater investment.

As significant progress is made against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, the Trump administration will need to define the next phase of the campaign and sustain the anti-Islamic State coalition to deal with Islamic State affiliates elsewhere, the return of foreign fighters, or the inevitable shift to greater dependence on expeditionary terror operations against U.S. allies and partners in the region, Europe, and elsewhere.

## Syria

Missile strikes could prevent further Syrian regime chemical attacks without escalation. But no plan is evident to link the use of force to a strategy to end Syria's war.<sup>27</sup> Trump is learning the limits of Assad and Russian President Vladimir Putin as counterterrorism partners given their radicalizing brutality.<sup>28</sup> Having used force on behalf of the Syrian people, it remains morally indefensible that America should keep its doors shut to Syrians fleeing violence. In Syria, a sustained strategy to deliver peace and stability—not one-off missile strikes—should be the measure of presidential leadership.

## Iraq

President Trump inherited significant military momentum and a painstaking battle to retake the Islamic State's last major Iraqi stronghold, Mosul. The Trump team has taken initial steps to shore up Iraqi partners, bolster the anti-Islamic State coalition, and lay the groundwork for a longer-term post-Islamic State military mission, consistent with CAP's recommendation.<sup>29</sup> However, the disgraceful attempted ban on Iraqis entering the United States even as they fought alongside American forces undercut America's standing in a volatile security and political environment.<sup>30</sup> Going forward, Trump's team will need to exercise care to avoid three major pitfalls: first, a failure to invest in nonmilitary measures to prevent Iraq from sliding into chaos once the Islamic State is defeated; second, treating Iraq as a zero-sum battlefield for U.S.-Iranian competition at the expense of Iraq's stability and the fight against the Islamic State; and third, political or even violent blowback from additional offensive comments from Trump.<sup>31</sup>

## Iran

Although the Trump administration put Iran "on notice," it remains unclear how it plans to make good on its pledge to address Iran's destabilizing regional policies without sowing further conflict and instability.<sup>32</sup> Despite calling the nuclear deal with Iran "terrible," the administration has prudently kept it in place, promised vigorous implementation, and even certified Iran's compliance.<sup>33</sup> As it seeks out venues to escalate pressure against Iran, it is not clear that the administration has prepared for potential retaliation from Iranian proxies elsewhere in the region—for example, against U.S. troops stationed in Iraq—nor has it asked Gulf partners to take difficult steps in divided societies to shore up institutions that would reduce vulnerabilities to Iranian revolution. It should do both.

## Yemen

President Trump has offered Gulf leaders support for their campaign and ramped up U.S. military operations in Yemen, dropping more bombs in a single week than President Obama did in all of last year.<sup>34</sup> Further escalation against Iranian-backed Houthi forces is reportedly under consideration.<sup>35</sup> Serious questions remain as to whether an expanding U.S. mission can help check Iran's influence, much less end Yemen's civil war and assist in addressing humanitarian emergency.<sup>36</sup> Absent good answers, the administration should not deepen its involvement.

## Israel-Palestine

After initial hints at a radical departure, President Trump's evolving approach has veered in the direction of his predecessors.<sup>37</sup> Trump has reaffirmed his desire for a negotiated peace, sent an envoy to meet with Israelis and Palestinians, urged Israeli restraint on settlements, sought Arab partners to sweeten the deal, and backed off campaign pledges to move the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.<sup>38</sup> If Trump invests the political capital to persuade Israel to cooperate, many steps are also available to create economic opportunity in Palestinian territories.

## The Gulf

Warm initial meetings with Arab Gulf partners make clear the desire on both sides to achieve closer ties.<sup>39</sup> Significant common ground exists given mutual mistrust under President Obama and President Trump's closer alignment on Iran, Islamists, and his apparent lack of interest in human rights.<sup>40</sup> The question confronting both sides is whether goodwill can help end conflicts, stabilize areas ravaged by war and Islamic State rule, or advance an effective counterterrorism agenda—or whether, absent President Obama's restraints, America's partners will intervene in ways that fragment an already polarized region even further.

## Egypt

The warm words exchanged between Trump and Egyptian President Sisi have set the stage for a new opening.<sup>41</sup> But significant work lays ahead to repair a broken U.S.-Egyptian relationship and deliver tangible benefits that can sustain the relationship over time. Otherwise, a friendly photo opportunity for leaders risks atrophy into a missed opportunity for their countries. From security aid to Sinai strategy to countering extremist ideology, the administration has an opportunity to push to deepen counterterrorism cooperation while resisting draconian overreach.<sup>42</sup> Reports of quiet White House intervention to encourage the release of Egyptian-American aid worker Aya Hijazi, if accurate, are encouraging but must be built upon.<sup>43</sup> The Trump administration has so far held off on an ill-considered, overly broad, and politicized designation of the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization under U.S. law. Improved technical cooperation would do far more to help Egypt fight terrorism.

## Libya

Trump and his team have said little on Libya. The international context, however, is shifting in ways that may encourage the administration to undercut power-sharing diplomacy in favor of the country's would-be strongman, the controversial General Khalifa Haftar.<sup>44</sup> Russia's newly assertive support for Haftar, its deployment of forces into Egypt, and the Trump administration's warmer ties with Haftar's Arab champions, focus on counterterrorism over conflict resolution, hostility to power-sharing with Islamists, and sympathy for autocrats all suggest the prospect of a shift in U.S. policy.<sup>45</sup> Championing one party in Libya's civil war risks deepening Libya's conflict and collapse.

## Turkey

President Trump, like his predecessor, must contend with Turkey's descent into authoritarianism and deep-rooted differences over the anti-Islamic State campaign. Trump's reported decision to follow President Obama's path and support the Kurdish-led coalition most prepared to retake Raqqa risks Turkish blowback.<sup>46</sup> Trump's congratulatory call after a referendum that will eviscerate Turkish democracy may ingratiate him to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who praised Trump's strongman-style rhetorical assault on U.S. press freedoms.<sup>47</sup> But praising the dismantling of Turkish democracy represents a troubling departure. Erdoğan's consolidation of power at the expense of Turkish institutions hurts U.S. interests, as does Trump's cynical response. Still, the combination of volatile personalities and conflicting national interests involved suggest a rocky path ahead.

---

## New risks and opportunities

President Trump's Middle East policy offers short-term fixes to generational challenges. When it comes to enduring drivers of instability, Trump has offered no vision, no plans, and little interest. Better relations with rulers may be short lived. And in the Middle East, reality has a way of intruding. Before too long, significant course corrections will be required to address the problems Trump so far has ignored.

For all Trump's volatility and damage to U.S. standing, a new administration also brings significant opportunities. The rush to visit Washington by Arab and Israeli leaders eager to cement their standing and explore opportunities suggests that an opening exists to repair fraying U.S. partnerships.<sup>48</sup> Trump can set a new tone, but success will depend on whether friendlier relations can deliver results by channeling Arab leaders' initial enthusiasm into responsible cooperation—all without reversing Obama-era achievements, such as the Iran deal. Conversely, the United States and the region must now contend with a new risk that Trump's draconian, repressive tendencies could prove mutually reinforcing to those of U.S. regional partners—in turn leading both sides down a path of escalating militarism, repression at home, and further fragmentation as wars worsen and regional dialogue and cooperation wither.<sup>49</sup>

The first 100 days of the Trump administration featured significant, substantive causes for concern, above all the alarming combination of escalating militarism and diminished diplomacy.<sup>50</sup> But some of the worst fears arising from Trump's rhetoric have yet to materialize, offering reason for cautious hope that Trump's experienced national security aides may yet prove able to mitigate his worst shortcomings. A pragmatic path exists if Trump's team can summon the president's better judgment to take it.

But after 100 days in office, the greatest question mark injecting volatility into the system remains Donald Trump himself: an American president who approaches Middle East policy almost completely without empirical curiosity, deep convictions, or previously held positions arrived at through sustained reflection. Such an unmoored approach may create freedom of maneuver, and indeed, Trump brags about not telegraphing his approach. But Trump's style brings far greater dangers arising from lurching inconsistency; severe mismanagement of America's national security institutions and workforce, as well as his own team; disinterest in running an orderly process of deliberation and decision-making; and self-defeating policies and rhetoric. From Iranian theocrats less threatened by the appeal of American democracy now tarnished by association with Trump, to wary U.S. partners no longer sure of the value of American commitments, to the risk of a hollowed-out civilian capacity, the costs of Trump's presidency are broad, unpredictable, and likely to outlive his tenure.

One lesson of Trump's early days is that, for better or worse, the Middle East still looks to the United States for leadership but will not stand still to await a coherent strategy from President Trump.<sup>51</sup> Trump has made clear that "if the world changes, I go the same way."<sup>52</sup> Despite the hole he has already dug, Trump retains meaningful opportunities to advance U.S. interests in the Middle East—but only if he uses the 100-day milestone to reassess his approach and consider carefully what has worked and what has not.

*Daniel Benaim is a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress, where he researches U.S. policy in the Middle East, as well as a visiting assistant professor at New York University. He previously served as a Middle East adviser to Vice President Joseph Biden and a member of Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's policy planning staff.*



## Endnotes

- 1 Reuters, "US changes its policy on Assad staying in power," *New York Post*, March 31, 2017, available at <http://nypost.com/2017/03/31/us-changes-its-policy-on-assad-staying-in-power/>.
- 2 Michael Gordon, Helene Cooper, and Michael Shear, "Dozens of U.S. Missiles Hit Air Base in Syria," *The New York Times*, April 6, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/06/world/middleeast/us-said-to-weigh-military-responses-to-syrian-chemical-attack.html>.
- 3 Blake Hounshell, "Trump's Syria Whiplash," *Politico Magazine*, April 6, 2016, available at <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/trumps-syria-whiplash-214997>.
- 4 *The Economist*, "Donald Trump's foreign policy looks more normal than promised," April 15, 2017, available at <http://www.economist.com/news/united-states/21720625-two-big-caveats-donald-trumps-foreign-policy-looks-more-normal-promised>.
- 5 Derek Chollet, "Easy There, Blob. With Obama, We Faced A Different Syria," *Defense One*, April 9, 2017, available at <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2017/04/easy-there-blob-obama-we-faced-different-syria/136874/>.
- 6 The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference," Press release, April 5, 2017, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2017/04/05/remarks-president-trump-and-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-jordan-joint>.
- 7 Donald J. Trump, "9:24 a.m., September 7, 2011," Twitter, available at <https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/111429608502607873>.
- 8 Sina Azodi, "What Happens to the Iran Nuclear Deal Under Trump?," *The Diplomat*, February 2, 2017, available at <http://thediplomat.com/2017/02/what-happens-to-the-iran-nuclear-deal-under-trump/>; Adam Serwer, "Can Trump Bring Back Torture?," *The Atlantic*, January 26, 2017, available at <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2017/01/trump-torture/514463/>; Mokhtar Awad and Samuel Tadros, "The Muslim Brotherhood: Terrorists or Not?," *The Hudson Institute*, March 1, 2017, available at <https://www.hudson.org/research/13398-the-muslim-brotherhood-terrorists-or-not>.
- 9 Ken Gude, "Trump's Reckless Muslim Ban Makes Americans Less Safe," *Center for American Progress*, January 30, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2017/01/30/297634/trumps-reckless-muslim-ban-makes-americans-less-safe/>.
- 10 Ben Hubbard and Michael Gordon, "U.S. War Footprint Grows in Middle East, With No Endgame in Sight," *The New York Times*, March 29, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/29/world/middleeast/us-war-footprint-grows-in-middle-east.html>; Colin Kahl, "Like Middle East Wars? You're Gonna Love President Trump," *Politico Magazine*, April 5, 2017, available at <http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2017/04/like-middle-east-wars-youre-gonna-love-president-trump-214985>.
- 11 Loveday Morris and Liz Sly, "Panic spreads in Iraq, Syria as record numbers of civilians are reported killed in U.S. strikes," *The Washington Post*, March 28, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/panic-spreads-in-iraq-syria-as-record-numbers-of-civilians-are-reported-killed-in-us-strikes/2017/03/28/3cbce7f8-13bb-11e7-bb16-269934184168\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.6a6cb0259305](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/panic-spreads-in-iraq-syria-as-record-numbers-of-civilians-are-reported-killed-in-us-strikes/2017/03/28/3cbce7f8-13bb-11e7-bb16-269934184168_story.html?utm_term=.6a6cb0259305); Yoram Schweitzer and Hardin Lang, "Trump Needs to Understand and Respect These 6 Basic Rules of Counterterrorism," *Center for American Progress*, March 29, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/news/2017/03/29/429251/trump-needs-understand-respect-6-basic-rules-counterterrorism/>.
- 12 Peter Baker and Mark Landler, "Trump May Turn to Arab Allies for Help With Israeli-Palestinian Relations," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2017, available <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/world/middleeast/trump-arabs-palestinians-israel.html>; Joshua Keating, "Why Arab Leaders Love Trump," *Slate*, April 3, 2017, available at [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_slatest/2017/04/03/why\\_arab\\_leaders\\_love\\_trump.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slatest/2017/04/03/why_arab_leaders_love_trump.html).
- 13 Bill Powell, "How Trump is Alienating Allies and Making China Great Again," *Newsweek*, February 3, 2017, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/donald-trump-allies-china-trade-trans-pacific-partnership-552193>.
- 14 Jake Sullivan, "The Slippery Slope of Trump's Dangerous 'Whataboutism,'" *Foreign Policy*, February 7, 2017, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/07/the-slippery-slope-of-trumps-dangerous-whataboutism-russia-putin-american-exceptionalism/>.
- 15 Associated Press, "Trump administration drops human rights conditions to sell fighter jets to Bahrain," *The Guardian*, March 30, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/30/trump-administration-human-rights-fighter-jets-bahrain>; Elliott Abrams, "Bahrain Slips Further into Repression," *Council on Foreign Relations*, June 18, 2016, available at <http://blogs.cfr.org/abrams/2016/06/18/bahrain-slips-further-into-repression/>.
- 16 Carol Morello, "Rex Tillerson skips State Department's annual announcement on human rights, alarming advocates," *The Washington Post*, March 3, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/rex-tillerson-skips-state-departments-annual-announcement-on-human-rights-alarming-advocates/2017/03/03/7fbf8584-002d-11e7-8f41-ea6ed597e4ca\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.dd9836b7c777](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/rex-tillerson-skips-state-departments-annual-announcement-on-human-rights-alarming-advocates/2017/03/03/7fbf8584-002d-11e7-8f41-ea6ed597e4ca_story.html?utm_term=.dd9836b7c777).
- 17 Nathan Brown, "Egypt is in a state of emergency. Here's what that means for its government," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/13/egypt-is-in-a-state-of-emergency-heres-what-that-means-for-its-government/?utm\\_term=.dd0a5a16a39e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2017/04/13/egypt-is-in-a-state-of-emergency-heres-what-that-means-for-its-government/?utm_term=.dd0a5a16a39e); *Los Angeles Times*, "President Trump wastes his power when he doesn't speak out on human rights abuses," April 6, 2017, available at <http://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-human-rights-trump-20170405-story.html>.
- 18 Daniel Benaim and Jeff Prescott, "Will Trump Scuttle the Success of Retaking Mosul?," *Foreign Policy*, March 20, 2017, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/20/will-trump-scuttle-the-success-of-retaking-mosul-iran-abad-islamic-state/>.
- 19 CAP Middle East Team, "Leveraging U.S. Power in the Middle East" (*Washington: Center for American Progress*, 2016), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2016/10/19/146283/leveraging-u-s-power-in-the-middle-east/>.
- 20 ABC News, "'This Week' Transcript: Ben Carson and Donald Trump," November 8, 2015, available at <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/week-transcript-donald-trump-ben-carson/story?id=35044135>; Dan de Luce and Paul Mcleary, "Trump's Promises to Defeat ISIS 'Quickly' Run Into Syria Buzzsaw," *Foreign Policy*, March 3, 2017, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/03/trumps-promises-to-defeat-isis-quickly-run-into-syria-buzzsaw-russia-terrorism/>; Liz Sly and Loveday Morris, "Trump wants to push back against Iran, but Iran is now more powerful than ever," *The Washington Post*, February 5, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle\\_east/trump-wants-to-push-back-against-iran-but-iran-is-now-more-powerful-than-ever/2017/02/05/9a7629ac-e960-11e6-903d-9b11ed7d8d2a\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.4c5456163d04](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/trump-wants-to-push-back-against-iran-but-iran-is-now-more-powerful-than-ever/2017/02/05/9a7629ac-e960-11e6-903d-9b11ed7d8d2a_story.html?utm_term=.4c5456163d04); Tovah Lazaroff, "Trump: Israeli-Palestinian Peace Would Be 'Ultimate Deal,'" *The Jerusalem Post*, November 12, 2016, available at <http://www.jpost.com/Israel-News/Trump-Israeli-Palestinian-peace-would-be-ultimate-deal-472404>.



- 21 Michael Wahid Hanna and Daniel Benaim, "How Do Trump's Conspiracy Theories Go Over in the Middle East? Dangerously," *The New York Times*, August 16, 2016, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/17/opinion/how-do-trumps-conspiracy-theories-go-over-in-the-middle-east-dangerously.html?mtrref=www.google.com&assetType=opinion&r=0&mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=C4EEE5D7D69F84EA61E162850E02A4&gwt=pay&assetType=opinion>.
- 22 Michael Gerson, "The struggle to give a soul to a soulless presidency," *The Washington Post*, April 10, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-struggle-to-give-a-soul-to-a-soulless-presidency/2017/04/10/a3fc4b66-1e15-11e7-a0a7-8b2a45e3dc84\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.a24bac0af45c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-struggle-to-give-a-soul-to-a-soulless-presidency/2017/04/10/a3fc4b66-1e15-11e7-a0a7-8b2a45e3dc84_story.html?utm_term=.a24bac0af45c).
- 23 Jonathan Stevenson, "Bannon's Out. But Did H.R. McMaster Win?," *The New York Times*, April 5, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/05/opinion/did-hr-mcmaster-win.html?mtrref=undefined&gwh=A3EB6E4E26AC8A6C88802B8AF22C8E95&gwt=pay&assetType=opinion>.
- 24 Brian Katulis and Muath Al Wari, "Iran Is 'On Notice'—What's Next?" (Washington: Center for American Progress, 2017), available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/security/reports/2017/04/06/430008/iran-notice-whats-next/>.
- 25 Nancy Cook, Josh Dawsey, and Andrew Restuccia, "Why the Trump administration has so many vacancies," *Politico*, April 11, 2017, available at <http://www.politico.com/story/2017/04/donald-trump-white-house-staff-vacancies-237081>; Kim Soffen and Denise Lu, "What Trump cut in his budget," *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-presidential-budget-2018-proposal/?hpid=hp\\_hp-top-table-main\\_b-graphic-desktop-tablet-12am:homepage/story&utm\\_term=.9f27f954c8ac&wpisrc=a1\\_alert-COMBO-politics%252Bnation&wpmk=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/politics/trump-presidential-budget-2018-proposal/?hpid=hp_hp-top-table-main_b-graphic-desktop-tablet-12am:homepage/story&utm_term=.9f27f954c8ac&wpisrc=a1_alert-COMBO-politics%252Bnation&wpmk=1); Carol Morello, "State Department's 28 percent cuts hit foreign aid, U.N. and climate change," *The Washington Post*, March 16, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/state-departments-28-percent-cuts-hit-foreign-aid-un-and-climate-change/2017/03/15/294d7ab8-0996-11e7-a15f-a58d4a988474\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.ef8666eeb9d](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/state-departments-28-percent-cuts-hit-foreign-aid-un-and-climate-change/2017/03/15/294d7ab8-0996-11e7-a15f-a58d4a988474_story.html?utm_term=.ef8666eeb9d).
- 26 Cynthia McFadden and William Arkin, "Trump's Pentagon Presents ISIS Plan That Looks Much Like Obama's," *NBC News*, March 17, 2017, available at <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/trump-s-secret-plan-beat-isis-looks-lot-obama-s-n735171>; Sam Fouad, "Trump's Syria Policy is Aggressive, but Is It Effective?," *Atlantic Council*, April 13, 2017, available at <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/syriasource/trump-s-syria-policy-is-aggressive-but-is-it-effective>.
- 27 Michael Kofman, "No plan? No strategy? No problem! Syria and why Trump's Russia policy is off to a rough start," *War on the Rocks*, April 11, 2017, available at <https://warontherocks.com/2017/04/no-plan-no-strategy-no-problem-syria-and-why-americas-russia-policy-is-off-to-a-rough-start/>.
- 28 Yoram Schweitzer, "After the Syria strike, it's time to put Putin right on terrorism," *Newsweek*, April 7, 2017, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/after-syria-strike-its-time-put-putin-right-terrorism-580737>.
- 29 Hardin Lang, "Written Testimony by Hardin Lang for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee Hearing," *Center for American Progress*, February 28, 2017, available at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/ext/2017/02/28/427174/written-testimony-by-hardin-lang-for-the-senate-foreign-relations-committee-hearing/>.
- 30 Mythili Sampathkumar, "Trump removed Iraq from travel ban in recognition of fight against Isis, State department says," *Independent*, March 7, 2017, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/iraq-muslim-travel-ban-removal-trump-a7617106.html>.
- 31 Soffen and Lu, "What Trump cut in his budget"; Michael Knights, "Memo to Trump: Iraq Is Too Big to Fail," *Foreign Policy*, February 13, 2017, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/02/13/memo-to-trump-iraq-is-too-big-to-fail/>.
- 32 Katulis and Al Wari, "Iran Is 'On Notice'—What's Next?"
- 33 Ashley Parker, "Trump to Iran: Be thankful for 'terrible' nuclear deal," *The Washington Post*, February 2, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/02/02/trump-to-iran-be-thankful-for-terrible-nuclear-deal/?utm\\_term=.5a78480a40ae](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-politics/wp/2017/02/02/trump-to-iran-be-thankful-for-terrible-nuclear-deal/?utm_term=.5a78480a40ae).
- 34 Zack Beauchamp, "What Syria taught us about Donald Trump," *Vox*, April 13, 2017, available at <http://www.vox.com/world/2017/4/13/15229246/syria-strike-trump-dctrine>.
- 35 Akbar Shahid Ahmed, "Trump Inches Toward A Bigger U.S. Role In Another Middle East War," *The Huffington Post*, April 12, 2017, available at [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-yemen-civil-war\\_us\\_58ee795be4b0da2ff85dab5c](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/trump-yemen-civil-war_us_58ee795be4b0da2ff85dab5c).
- 36 Iona Craig, "Yemen: Trump Expands U.S. Military Role in Saudi War as Yemenis Brace for Famine," *Democracy Now*, March 30, 2017, available at [https://www.democracynow.org/2017/3/30/yemen\\_trump\\_expands\\_us\\_military\\_role](https://www.democracynow.org/2017/3/30/yemen_trump_expands_us_military_role).
- 37 Julian Borger and Peter Beaumont, "Donald Trump says US not committed to two-state Israel-Palestine solution," *The Guardian*, February 16, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/15/trump-says-us-not-committed-to-two-state-israel-palestine-solution>.
- 38 Michael Wilner and Adam Rasgon, "Palestinian authority official welcomes Kushner as envoy," *The Jerusalem Post*, January 16, 2017, available at <http://www.jpost.com/American-Politics/Palestinians-welcome-Kushner-as-peace-envoy-hope-hell-be-balanced-478618>; Elliot Hannon, "In a Shift, Trump Warns Against New Israeli Settlements as Netanyahu Plots Major Expansion," *Slate*, February 2, 2017, available at [http://www.slate.com/blogs/the\\_slate/2017/02/02/trump\\_warns\\_against\\_new\\_israeli\\_settlements\\_as\\_netanyahu\\_plots\\_expansion.html](http://www.slate.com/blogs/the_slate/2017/02/02/trump_warns_against_new_israeli_settlements_as_netanyahu_plots_expansion.html); Peter Baker and Mark Landler, "Trump May Turn to Arab Allies for Help With Israeli-Palestinian Relations," *The New York Times*, February 9, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/09/world/middleeast/trump-arabs-palestinians-israel.html?mtrref=www.google.com&mtrref=www.nytimes.com&gwh=CDD64C94F3D23759E8835D3A765A8486&gwt=pay>; Jonathan Broder, "Why Trump won't move the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem—at least for now," *Newsweek*, January 25, 2017, available at <http://www.newsweek.com/trump-jerusalem-embassy-move-tel-aviv-netanyahu-kushner-friedman-palestinians-548185>.
- 39 Joyce Karam, "Arab leaders flock to Washington: Trump meets El-Sisi and King Abdallah next week," *Arab News*, April 1, 2017, available at <http://www.arabnews.com/node/1077361/world>.
- 40 William Maclean, "Glad to see Obama go, Gulf Arabs expect Trump to counter Iran," *Reuters*, January 23, 2017, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-gulf-idUSKBN1571VN>; Peter Baker, "In a Shift, Trump Will Move Egypt's Rights Record to the Sidelines," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2017, available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/31/world/middleeast/in-major-shift-trump-taking-egypts-human-rights-issues-private.html>.
- 41 Karam, "Arab leaders flock to Washington."
- 42 Emily Tamkin and Robbie Gramer, "For Trump and El-Sisi, Counterterrorism Makes the Heart Grow Fonder," *Foreign Policy*, April 3, 2017, available at <http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/04/03/for-trump-and-el-sisi-counterterrorism-makes-the-heart-grow-fonder/>.
- 43 Philip Rucker and Karen DeYoung, "Freed Egyptian American prisoner returns home following Trump intervention," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freed-egyptian-american-prisoner-returns-home-following-trump-intervention/2017/04/20/d569fe1e-2608-11e7-bb9d-8cd6118e1409\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.648b0f1745b9&wpisrc=nL\\_headlines&wpmk=1](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/freed-egyptian-american-prisoner-returns-home-following-trump-intervention/2017/04/20/d569fe1e-2608-11e7-bb9d-8cd6118e1409_story.html?utm_term=.648b0f1745b9&wpisrc=nL_headlines&wpmk=1).
- 44 Alec Luhn, "Russian special forces sent to back renegade Libyan general—reports," *The Guardian*, March 14, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/14/russian-special-forces-deployed-in-egypt-near-libyan-border-report>.

- 45 Aidan Lewis, "East Libyan factions see possible boost in Trump Victory," Reuters, November 10, 2016, available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-election-libya-idUSKBN13522X>.
- 46 Fouad, "Trump's Syria Policy is Aggressive, but Is It Effective?"
- 47 Ben Westcott, "Trump stresses 'close' relationship with Turkey first in call with Erdogan," CNN, February 8, 2017, available at <http://www.cnn.com/2017/02/08/politics/trump-erdogan-call/>; Amanda Erickson, "Amid Turkey's media crackdown, Erdogan praises Trump for putting CNN reporter in his place," *The Washington Post*, January 12, 2017, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/12/amid-turkeys-media-crackdown-erdogan-praises-trump-for-putting-cnn-reporter-in-his-place/?utm\\_term=.149aff685d0f](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/01/12/amid-turkeys-media-crackdown-erdogan-praises-trump-for-putting-cnn-reporter-in-his-place/?utm_term=.149aff685d0f).
- 48 Karam, "Arab leaders flock to Washington."
- 49 Baker, "In a Shift, Trump Will Move Egypt's Rights Record to the Sidelines."
- 50 Jeremi Suri, "Blustering Toward Armageddon," *The American Prospect*, January 3, 2017, available at <http://prospect.org/article/blustering-toward-armageddon>.
- 51 BBC, "Syria 'chemical attack': What we know," April 7, 2017, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-39500947>; Julian Borger and Spencer Ackerman, "Trump's response to Syria chemical attack exposes administration's volatility," *The Guardian*, April 5, 2017, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/05/syria-chemical-attack-trump-administration-response-assad>.
- 52 The White House, "Remarks by President Trump and His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan in Joint Press Conference."