



Beyond America's Grasp: A Century of Failed Diplomacy in the Middle East

Stephen P. Cohen

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AN INCISIVE "WHITE PAPER" ON THE UNITED STATES'S STRUGGLE TO FRAME A COHERENT MIDDLE EAST POLICY

In this book, the Middle East expert Stephen P. Cohen traces U.S. policy in the region back to the breakup of the Ottoman Empire, when the Great Powers failed to take crucial steps to secure peace there. He sees in that early diplomatic failure a pattern shaping the conflicts since then—and America's role in them.

A century ago, there emerged two dominant views regarding the uses of America's newfound power. Woodrow Wilson urged America to promote national freedom and self-determination through the League of Nations—in stark contrast to his predecessor Theodore Roosevelt, who had advocated a vigorous foreign policy based on national self-interest.

Cohen argues that this running conflict has hobbled American dealings in the Middle East ever since. In concise, pointed chapters, he shows how different Middle East countries have struggled to define themselves in the face of America's stated idealism and its actual realpolitik. This conflict came to a head in the confused, clumsy Middle East policy of George W. Bush—but Cohen suggests the ways a greater awareness of our history in the region might enable our present leaders to act more sensibly.

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