

The end of ambition

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Résumé ou extrait : Following a long series of catastrophic misadventures in the Middle East over the last two decades, the American foreign policy community has tried to understand what went wrong. After weighing the evidence, they have mostly advised a retreat from the region. The basic view is that when the United States tries to advance change in the Middle East, it only makes matters worse. In *The End of Ambition*, Steven A. Cook argues that while these analysts are rightly concerned that engagement drains US resources and distorts its domestic politics, the broader impulse to disengage tends to neglect important lessons from the past. Moreover, advocates of pulling back overlook the potential risks of withdrawal. Covering the relationship between the US and the Middle East since the end of WWII, Cook makes the bold claim that despite setbacks and moral costs, the United States has been overwhelmingly successful in protecting its core national interests in the Middle East. Conversely, overly ambitious policies to remake the region and leverage US power not only ended in failure, but rendered the region unstable in new and largely misunderstood ways. While making the case that retrenchment is not the answer to America's problems in the Middle East, *The End of Ambition* highlights how America's interests in the region have begun to change and critically examines alternative approaches to US-Middle East policy. Cook highlights the challenges that policymakers and analysts confront developing a new strategy for the United States in the Middle East against the backdrop of both political uncertainty in the United States and a changing global order.

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