



Will the Middle East Rise Again?

In politics, as in life, the only constant is that there is no constant. The fates of nations are as shifting as the seasons.

While the United States has now enjoyed approximately three-quarters of a century as the world's top superpower, and the West has dominated global affairs to varying degrees since the 15th century, there's no reason to believe that this is a permanent condition.

The tide will inevitably turn, and we are already seeing the signs of global and political hegemony moving eastward. But as the fortunes of China and Russia rise, what can we expect of the cradle of civilization — the Middle East? Will the region that birthed the world's first great cultures and empires see a resurgence of power?

And if the Middle East does rise again, how will that affect the current balance of power in the world?

In contemporary geopolitics it can be easy to write off the Middle East as a lost cause that is consumed by both war and poverty and stuck in the Middle Ages.

But the fact that the region fell behind Europe in the first place is proof of the principle that the state of any given nation changes drastically over time. The area that is now considered barbarous and dangerous was the home of mighty kingdoms such as the Sumerians, Babylonians, Persians, and Phoenicians — with all of their contributions to civilization. At the time that these empires prospered, Europe was a relative backwater where civilization was still in the embryonic phase.

If Europe and the West swapped places before, it is likely that it will happen again. Moreover, the Russo-Sino alliance, and the rapid rate at which it is outpacing the United States and her allies in military and economic relevance, clearly shows that the East is on the ascendant.

While Russians are Europeans, historically they have had a distinct culture that has caused them to see themselves, and other Europeans to view them, as being separate from Europe — a break exacerbated by the Cold War.

Indeed, Russia's unique geographic position has always made it a unique mix of east and west, and historically Russia has walked in both worlds.

In contemporary geopolitics, with Western institutions such as the European Union and NATO dominated by neoliberals who are hawkish on Russia, Moscow has increasingly identified itself with Asia. This can be seen even in seemingly trivial choices such as Russia's recent decision to abandon the European Chess Union in favor of the Asian Chess Federation.

Moreover, Russia has historically had close interactions with the Muslim world and today has the



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largest Muslim population in Europe. It's not surprising that Russian President Vladimir Putin has in recent years made overtures about inclusivity regarding Islam — as he seeks to broaden his empire eastward, he doesn't want to alienate his potential Muslim partners and subjects.

On the other side of the Russo-China alliance is China, which, of course, has always been a major power in East Asia — a role Beijing wants to affirm and expand, including by weakening American influence in the region.

Together, Russia and China are building a new global ecosystem that offers nations who are dissatisfied with the United States an alternative world order in which to operate — one in which they no longer have to fear American airstrikes and sanctions or even trade in the dollar.

It is precisely this new ecosystem being created by Russia and China that will likely pave the way for a resurgence of the Middle East.

As we've seen, the Middle East is the birthplace of civilization and remained the center of civilization through the Middle Ages. Up through the early modern period, entire empires — from the Venetians to the Dutch — were built, and wars fought, over being able to acquire the wealth and splendor of Asia and sell it back to Europe.

The problems for the Middle East were, first, that they failed to innovate when European advances in agriculture, manufacturing, and technology — plus European conquest of the Americas — made Europe no longer dependent on the East.

Second, the Middle Eastern nations were then largely unable to defend themselves militarily against the now-advanced Europe and thus were further set back by becoming the pawns of European states. The instability of the region today is partially the result of the way national borders were divided up by the European powers in ways that pits enemy religious groups (Sunni and Shia) against each other vying for power in the same country.

And can Middle Eastern countries be expected to advance when they're constantly the objects of bombing and turbulent, chaos-inducing regime change by the United States?

Russia and China are growing their ties to and presence in the Middle East. This will likely bring more stability into the region, as these two regimes are more interested in working with foreign powers to promote common economic interests than in sponsoring regime change for the sake of "democracy." With Beijing and Moscow giving their backing to these governments, the United States will be less likely to invade.

That solves the region's stability issue. The other issue already has its solution — oil reserves are one of the most powerful capital instruments in the modern world and the Middle East is sitting on a lot of petroleum.

Already, we have seen how oil has transformed countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates into economic powerhouses. These states are wisely investing these oil earnings to diversify their economies and remain competitive on the world stage independent of changes in the ever-evolving energy sector.

The stable environment created by the multipolarity of Russia and China's competitiveness with the United States could be one conducive to the prosperity of states such as oil-rich Iraq and the further growth in power of regimes such as Iran's.

Under such a future, if the western world continues its current trajectory of falling birth rates, mass



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migration, and gender dysphoria, the eventuality will be an age in which Asia and the Middle East rule the world while Europe becomes nothing more than a collection of insignificant vassal states for the East.



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