

Chapter 11: Chapter exercises

Foreign policies in flux?

In this chapter, Hinnebusch and Ehteshami present us with their concept of 'complex realism'. Focusing on the foreign policies of four Middle Eastern countries—Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Egypt—towards a number of major recent regional events, the authors explore the factors that help explain the decision-making of each state towards each situation. The extent of democratization within a country and the choices made by different leaders are identified as being important, contrary to what realists might suggest.

Within the framework of analysis that the authors provide, some factors are, if not immutable, then at least very difficult for any government to change. Bahrain, for example, will not suddenly find itself to be the size of Iran or Saudi Arabia, nor is Egypt's population likely to be matched by Lebanon or Qatar any time soon.

On the other hand, some of the components identified within the black box of decision-making are among those elements within the analytical framework which may be more flexible. Instead of looking at responses of regional actors to recent events, what might we learn about foreign policymaking in countries that have themselves experienced regime change over the past few years?

The 2003 Iraq War led to the overthrow of Saddam Hussein, while the Arab Spring saw leaders deposed in Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. In each of these cases, a successor regime has come to power that may bring with it new leaders and elites, different ideologies, and changing relations with the population. How much are these changes reflected in the foreign policies of these various states? Was Iraq's engagement with the region different under the government of Nouri Al-Maliki from what it was under the Ba'ath, and to what degree can we distinguish between Egypt policy under Mubarak, Morsi, and el-Sisi?

While Baghdad's case gives us a more than decade-long record to consider, those of Tunis, Tripoli, and Cairo are considerably shorter. Nonetheless, events such as the conflict in Syria and the 2012 Gaza War may offer us insights into how the weight of foreign policy determinants may have shifted from regime to regime, thereby contributing to the development of complex realism as an approach to regional politics.

Assess patterns of continuity and change in the foreign policy of Iraq after Saddam OR Egypt after Mubarak.

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