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Mideast Challenges Mount for U.S. as China and Russia Make Gains

The Middle East's shifting geopolitics are complicating Washington's plans to pull back

By Dion Nissenbaum in Tel Aviv and Jared Malsin in Istanbul / March 24, 2023

U.S. forces in Syria are coming under renewed pressure from Iran-backed militias, illustrating Washington's challenges as it seeks to pull back from the Middle East while of the influence of geopolitical rivals China and Russia is growing in the region.

[...]

Assaf Orion, a senior researcher at Israel's **Institute for National Security Studies**, said the U.S. needs to flex more military muscle in the Middle East if it wants to regain some of its lost political clout. Under the Biden administration, the U.S. has used military force to strike back at attacks on U.S. bases in the region when an American has been killed.

Since 2021, according to U.S. Central Command, Iran-backed forces have attacked U.S. personnel in the Middle East 78 times. The U.S. has responded with military force three times.

"If any two guys with a rocket can shoot at a U.S. base and get away with it, it doesn't say much about your readiness to use force to stand for your policies," Mr. Orion said.

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