

***The Pragmatic Superpower.* Takeyh, Ray and Simon, Steven.  
New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2016, 396.**

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*The Pragmatic Superpower* is a latest work produced by two of Washington's renowned foreign policy experts — Ray Takeyh and Steven Simon. The book spread over 10 chapters and deals with reframing the legacy of the US involvement in the Middle East from the end of the World War II till the disintegration of the United Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1991. The book sheds light on the making of the contemporary Middle East from a new perspective. The authors provide undaunted re-examination of how the US was able to spread its influence in this region during the Cold War era.

The Middle East was engulfed with crisis throughout the Cold War. The Soviet encroachment in the Gulf's fragile governments and the growing radical tendencies posed grave threats to the stability in the Middle East. This book adopted a realistic approach in explaining how the US managed to achieve its strategic goals in the region without much effort and cost unlike it did in other regions that it was engaged in during the Cold War.

Takeyh and Simon, in this book, have taken a position that cuts through the conventional wisdom and argue that the US was totally naive and inexperienced regarding the dynamics and functionality of the Middle Eastern politics. The authors stated that it was only through hard-headed pragmatism that the US was able to achieve victories in the region and secure its position as a global hegemon.

Since the end of the World War II, the US and USSR engaged in a constant struggle as to who will fill the power vacuum in Europe that was left after the war. Both the powers had their eyes on the global conflict that they had with each other. In order to win the Middle East, America shrewdly navigated the rise of Arab nationalism, the founding of Israel and

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seminal conflicts including the Suez war and the Iranian revolution. The authors of the book have tried to propagate the idea that the American objectives in the Middle East were mostly uncomplicated but hardly modest. The authors are of the view that unlike the Soviet Union, whose main goal was to increase the jurisdiction of the 'Iron Curtain,' the US' main concern was to maintain stability in the Middle East but not the spread of democracy.

The US deployment of adroit diplomacy prevented Soviet expansion in the Middle East, maintained regular and smooth flow of petroleum resources and resolved the conflict between Israel and the Arab states.

Takeyh and Simon provide fascinating insight and a fresh perspective into the American manoeuvres in its battle for global dominance. *The Pragmatic Superpower* offers a unique reassessment of the Cold War policies adopted by the US in a fragile region like the Middle East. The authors argue and suggest that it is high time for the US to re-evaluate its policies and draw lessons from the past when America was making the right decisions. According to the authors, this is the only way the US would be able to better understand the challenges and get it right.

The division of chapters is conflict and area specific which is good as it helps the reader to better understand. Aids in remembering the chain of events and developing a perspective. One negative point about the book is that it is highly biased towards the US. The authors go out of their way in praising and commending the American policymakers and their particular policies in the Middle East during the Cold War era. In the book, there is a total disregard for the Soviet policy makers and policies with regards to the Middle East.

*The Pragmatic Superpower*, however, did manage to puncture entrenched myths about the Middle East during the Cold War and offers insightful and comprehensive account of all the events and the region during that time.