

Steve Monroe

## International and Regional Influences

Panel 8: International and Regional Influences presented four fascinating perspectives on international and regional relations in the wake of the Arab Uprisings. Two themes bound this panel together. The first highlighted the West's disengagement, if not retreat from the region. In its place, the second theme emphasized the emergence of regional and non-state actors.

Ariel Ahram and Ellen Lust's "Sovereignty, Nationhood, and Regional Disorder in the Arab State System" argues that the region's current instability reflects the rise of defacto and not de jure states after the Cold War. They propose that global "dissensus" towards defacto states is recalibrating the political calculus of regime stalwarts and separatist movements. This uncertainty has prompted regional and non-state actors to transgress de jure borders and contest the political landscape.

Waleed Hazbun's "Beyond the American Era? Turbulence and interdependencies in US-Middle East relations" asserts that American hegemony over the region is quickly subsiding. A disastrous war in Iraq, a faltering economy and the prospects of a shale gas revolution have pushed the US out of the Middle East. Regional and non-state actors are now filling and fighting over this vacuum. Crucially, Hazbun warns that the transnational ideologies motivating non-state actors may poorly conform to the traditional logics of the nation state.

Layla Saleh's "Bashar, Obama, and 'The People': A Tale of Two Powers" contends that the US' military campaign against ISIS is undermining its hearts and minds campaign with the Syrian opposition, to the benefit of the Assad regime. "Hard" power can weaken "Soft" power in Joseph Nye's calibration of "Smart" power. Saleh uses an array of interviews with Syrian opposition members, as well as secondary sources, to illustrate this point.

Finally, Sean Yom's "Diffusion-Proofing and the Arab Spring: New Authoritarian Strategies of Framing and Control" proposes that the Arab Spring has prompted the region's monarchs to form a new epistemic community of royals in defiance of the popular uprisings. Yom exposes the emerging ideological, political and economic cooperation between Arab monarchs.