

Panel: China, Central Asia and the Middle East (Lilac & Tulip Room)

Date/Time: Tuesday, December 11, 2012 / 14:15-15:30

Talking Points for: Diederik Vandewalle, Professor, Dartmouth College

For much of the post-World War II period, the United States has been the dominant superpower in the Middle East, constructing an intricate web of economic and security arrangements. While much of this will remain intact for the foreseeable future, the Middle East in the last decade has started to witness a rebalancing of its relations with other areas of the world, particularly China. Much of the conventional analysis has focused on China's needs for energy from the region, but its growing presence includes as well closer overall trade relations, a more visible cultural agenda, and a more muscular diplomacy. In this triangle of Middle East/China/US relations, China for now remains a junior partner. Until now it has carefully tailored its policies to promote its interests without upsetting those of local countries and of the United States. As the relationships between the three players evolve, however, China's growing presence and interests will need to be carefully calibrated against both local interests and those of the United States.

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