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The global role of the U.S. military

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In his Feb. 25 op-ed, “Into the global leadership vacuum,” former senator Joseph I. Lieberman (I-Conn.) argued that a lack of U.S. leadership has made the world more dangerous. By failing to get tough militarily with America’s adversaries, he argued, the United States has “encouraged and exacerbated” international instability. In fact, the opposite is true. Much of the instability that has swept over the Middle East has resulted from overly zealous (and overly militaristic) U.S. “leadership.” By deposing the regimes in Iraq and Libya, for instance, the United States created the power vacuums that spawned the ongoing ethno-religious conflict in those countries.

The Obama administration consequently deserves credit, not scorn, for resisting the temptation to funnel arms to Ukraine or the Syrian rebels to “impose a heavier military cost on Russia for its adventurism.” Rather than catalyzing conflict resolution, such actions would merely prolong the killing. The United States should continue to focus on trying to broker political solutions to ongoing international conflicts. The prospects that those efforts will yield immediate dividends are certainly dim. Yet true leadership entails recognizing (and accepting) that the United States cannot solve every problem with military force.

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