

COMPLETE A FULL

IRAQ WITHDRAWAL AND END ENDLESS WARS



The War in Iraq has been a strategic blunder from the beginning. The conflict has cost America dearly in lives and resources, but it has not made us safer and benefitted our rivals. With ISIS' territorial caliphate defeated, it is time to bring our troops home. Keeping U.S. troops in Iraq exposes them to frequent and unnecessary risk. The very Iraqi security forces our service members have been sent to train and equip frequently work with and have even supplied the same Iranian-backed militia groups carrying out regular attacks on our troops.¹

Iraq is not the only open-ended war U.S. troops are stuck in that is not crucial to our vital national interests. It is time to draw down these deployments and reduce our broader Middle Eastern military footprint as we focus on bigger challenges elsewhere and ensure we produce lessons learned about past strategic mistakes.

POLICY SOLUTIONS

Bring our troops home from Iraq: Whether or not we call our service members' deployment in Iraq a "combat mission," staying there regularly forces our troops into combat situations when they are attacked. ISIS' territorial caliphate has been extinguished for years, and every major power in the region has a clear interest in preventing its return, making our presence unnecessary. U.S. troops should not continue to put themselves at risk on behalf of a government all too happy to offer public support to [Iranian-backed militias who attack us](#).

Focus on vital interests and avoid overextension: Policymakers should pursue a strategy of realism and restraint by prioritizing our defense resources on vital U.S. interests. To achieve this, America should avoid new security commitments, such as admitting Ukraine into NATO, which create long-term strategic liabilities without advancing core U.S. interests. The U.S. should also draw down from open-ended conflicts in Syria, Yemen, and the horn of Africa. These missions are similarly disconnected from our interests, lack clearly achievable objectives, and make our troops easier to target.

Reevaluate the U.S. Middle Eastern footprint: The United States has limited strategic interests in the Middle East at this point, chiefly, preventing major disruptions to global energy supplies and foiling terrorists with both the intent and capability to strike America. Our deployments in open-ended conflicts and extensive basing agreements across the region are not crucial to preventing either but use limited defense resources that could be put to better use supporting modernization, in more strategically important theaters, or growing our economy at home.

Afghanistan Accountability: Congress should pursue accountability for the strategic mistakes of America's longest war and ensure that future generations of Americans don't repeat them by supporting the efforts of the [Afghanistan War Commission](#) to produce its report.

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