



THE **POLICY  
CIRCLE**<sup>®</sup>

# Foreign Policy: Middle East

## Discussion Guide

### Let's review

*At the start of each discussion, review the conversation ground rules for returning and new members alike to set the stage for active participation by all. You may want to use a timer as you go around the room.*

*And don't forget to decide who will take notes and post a discussion recap.*

- **Be open and curious:** Everyone has a unique perspective, so listen and be prepared to hear a different point of view. Remember, you do not need to share your political affiliation; this is a discussion and exchange of ideas, not politics.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Be sure that everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment or perspective. Encourage each other's participation.
- **Be focused and concise:** Keep the conversation centered on the issue and the brief.

**The "Table-it" Rule:** If the group has gone off-topic but the area is of interest, the group can table the conversation and save it for another time to be addressed in a different manner.

### Let's begin

*Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a **two-three minute reaction** to the brief.*

- Introduce yourself, and share what "lens of care" did you wear when reviewing this brief (e.g. personal, professional, community, state, nation, global)?
- What did you find most interesting or surprising from reading the brief? What matters?

### Let's discuss

*Pick 2 or 3 questions that resonate with the group and discuss, or choose your own.*

- In your opinion, what is the priority in regards to foreign policy in the Middle East?
- Were there some points with which you strongly agreed or disagreed? Was there a perspective that was missing?
- Is isolationism harmful to US security interests, our allies, and Middle East stability? Why or why not?
- How can our leaders strengthen policies and sanctions to deter rogue regimes and human rights abuses?
- How can the US continue to lead in the world and remain engaged abroad?

# Let's act

## Spread the Word: Some Facts to Share

- Through alliances or active military engagement, the U.S. is currently involved in and affected by the civil war in Syria, the civil war in Yemen, the Arab-Israeli Conflict, conflict between Hezbollah and Israel, conflict with the Taliban in Afghanistan, tension with Iran, disagreements with Saudi Arabia, and the global threat of ISIS.
- Approaching 20 years of military presence, [U.S. troops are still in Afghanistan](#) supporting Afghan troops and working to broker peace with the Taliban.
- Amnesty International designated 2018 the "[year of shame](#)" in Iran for human rights violations.
- The U.S.-Saudi Arabian relationship and business ties have been questioned since the [CIA concluded](#) Saudi officials and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman were involved in the murder of Saudi journalist and *Washington Post* columnist Jamal Khashoggi.
- After taking over large swaths of territory in Syria and Iraq, ISIS declared itself a caliphate. It suffered its territorial defeat in March of 2019.
- Between 2014 and 2016, [ISIS carried out or inspired](#) 143 attacks in 129 countries, killing 2,043 people.
- The [Global Coalition to defeat ISIS](#) consisted of 79 organizations, countries, and states.

## Engage Locally

- *Learn more:*
  - **Research your elected representatives' positions** on foreign policy, and their vision for how to tackle foreign policy challenges facing Americans and your community.
    - Your legislators, state comptroller, attorney general and other local elected officials want to know their constituents. Write to them about your interest in foreign policy.
    - You can find contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#). Your state or municipality's websites will also have information to contact leaders. Try looking at the drop-down menu for a *Government* tab.
    - Are your legislators on a committee that handles foreign policy? Find out at [Govtrack](#).
  - **Explore the impact of foreign policy in your community.**
    - Does your city or community have a large immigrant population? Search on your state or municipality's website for a community or human services, or search for terms such as "*immigration*," or in the search bar.
    - Search on your state or municipality's website for the business portal using keywords such as "trade," or look for a tab labelled "business" in a dropdown menu. Look for options such as "access to world markets," "importing and exporting," or "[your state] + international trade," or search for any of these terms in the search bar.
    - [The Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs](#) is the point of contact for state and local governments at the International Trade Administration. See if your city or state has companies that engage internationally.

- *Reach out:*
  - Explore what organizations, legislators, and journalists you could contact to ask questions, learn more and get engaged.
  - If you have trouble finding the information you are looking for on your municipality's website, consider contacting agency or department heads. You can find the contact information for federal, state, and local government officials [here](#).
  - The Policy Circle offers a number of resources for engaging on the local level. Learn how to write a letter to the editor on [The Policy Circle website](#).
  - It's easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself with. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).

### Post a Recap/Dive Deeper

- Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present. Designate who will post a meeting recap on your circle page.
- Decide your next meeting topic. Want to discuss a related brief at your next meeting? This brief is part of the Five for a World View [Conversation Series](#). Other briefs in the series include:
  - [Foreign Policy: Asia Pacific](#)
  - [Socialism: Venezuela Case Study](#)
  - [Immigration](#)
- Dive Deeper into this area. If this is an area you would like to pursue further consider taking possible steps to influence policy. The Policy Circle offers resources for [developing a message about your issue](#) and [organizing a petition](#) to amplify your voice and raise awareness.