



THE POLICY
CIRCLE®

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

- **Take five minutes** to walk through the brief. Highlight the main point of each section and key statistics.
- 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?

Spread the word: facts to share during your discussion

- 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.
- As a whole, the Middle East receives [more than 50% of total U.S. global military aid](#). Of the roughly \$6 billion in global foreign military financing apportioned in 2019, over 80% went to Israel, Egypt, and Jordan.
- There are about [60,000 U.S. troops](#) in the Middle East, mainly in Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Iraq.

Let's discuss

Below are 3 questions for the group to consider and discuss, or choose your own.

- **Community:** Is isolationism harmful to U.S. security interests, our allies, and Middle East stability? Why or why not?
- **Government:** How can our leaders strengthen policies and sanctions to deter rogue regimes and human rights abuses?
- **Business:** How can the U.S. balance economic interests when they are at odds with diplomatic or human rights policies?

Let's act

1. **Take it local. Talk to your neighbors** to discuss U.S. foreign policy and share information with friends, colleagues, and family. Identify opportunities to work with other community members in your area.
2. **Explore the impact of foreign policy decisions in your community.** Keep track of [bills in Congress related to the Middle East](#), and stay up to date with information from the [House Foreign Affairs Committee](#) and the [Senate Committee on Foreign Relations](#). Organize a community gathering about aid, policy, and what your tax dollars are going to support in foreign countries.
3. **Investigate community programs** in your state or municipality. Identify programs or policies that affect migrants, refugees, or armed service veterans in your community. On your state or municipality website, try searching “immigration” or “refugees” in the search bar, or look for your state’s Department of Veterans Affairs.
4. **Research your elected representatives’ positions** on foreign policy, and foreign policy in the Middle East specifically. 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.
5. **Establish a relationship with your legislators.** It’s easy to establish a relationship with your legislators. Start by introducing yourself. You can also learn to write to your representatives or set up a meeting with a legislator on [The Policy Circle website](#).
6. **Consider writing a letter to the editor or an op-ed discussing concerns about foreign policy in the Middle East in your local paper.** Learn how on [The Policy Circle website](#).

Next Steps for Your Circle

- **Post a Recap:** Summarize your discussion to share thoughts with members not present, and share planned actions from group members. 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? Suggestions include:
 - [Foreign Policy: Asia Pacific](#)
 - [Immigration](#)
 - [Socialism: A Case Study on Venezuela](#)
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** 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. Don’t miss our [latest events](#) that help you dive deeper on this issue and more.