

1) RESOLUTION

Resolved: The United States should remove nearly all of its military presence in the Arab States of the Persian Gulf.

This is a classic debate with a new phrasing. Due to length constraints I'll keep the background short – at the absolute minimum before you even think about arguments make sure you know which states are at stake in this debate, the (at least) recent history of the region in terms of politics, internal foreign affairs, and US policy, and the ins and outs of the present American involvement. I won't cover those topics much but researching them is essential to doing well in a knowledge-heavy resolution like this. One thing I will say, though, is that this debate is super reliant on the model – that is, what pro says “remove nearly all” means and thus what the debate ends up being about. I encourage both teams to be reasonable in their interpretations, and believe that both pro and con have their strongest cases when the model is literal and the withdrawal is effectively 100% - if a sizable presence remains it's hard to, say, make claims about regional instability on con or anti-American sentiment on pro. All impacts get watered down if the model is small in scope, and that's both bad for your win-rate and your education.

With that said, let's look at a few arguments. Note that these are not intended as a case – rather, these are meant to flesh out some ideas that you should learn and introduce into your own cases in logical ways. I hope this is useful and, more importantly, that you learn and have fun debating this month! Remember: enjoyment and education is what all this is about, not the wins.

2) PRO POINTS

1) This saves American lives

- There are two warrants to this claim. First is the obvious – US troops are out of harm's way. Second, though, is that this lessens anti-American sentiment and the likelihood that acts of terror or other violence are committed against the US and its soldiers. Long-term US presence in the region stokes the flames of hatred, so to speak, such that removing that presence can put a better face forward and diminish the cause to hate America.
- Impacts are twofold. First is again obvious – US lives saved is good. However, this debate *should not* be from only America's perspective (it is not “as the US, remove...”). With that in mind, the second impact is that averting lost American life averts bad US foreign policy which makes *everyone* worse off. For example, in 1994 images of US soldiers' corpses being dragged around by mobs after the Somali Battle of Mogadishu prompted public outrage and basically forced President Clinton to withdraw US presence from Somalia when it was vitally needed; basically, US deaths

can cause extreme public reactions and make US policy worse in a way that hurts everyone – maybe it withdraws too early, or maybe escalates too hard.

- In terms of Con responses, two things to note. First, anti-US sentiment might be non-unique at the point which there still exist decades of history where the US did bad stuff in the region. Terrorist cells can still recruit and motivate followers off of those facts, so on the comparative withdrawal might not matter much. Second, a lot of this argument is dependent on other arguments' outcomes; that is, it depends on there not being more conflict in the pro world. If Con proves that there is a higher likelihood for war and the US needs to just go in later, then, *by this argument's own logic* about public reactions, that rushed re-intervention would lead to worse results and it's better to just stay in the region and avert bad things from happening in the first place.

2) Enhances regional stability

- Two warrants again. First, this encourages regional actors we currently back to seek non-military solutions to their problems. Basically, without the massive American army backing them actors like Saudi Arabia might be more willing to seek peace with, say, Iran – they feel like they're on their own, and have to make things better quickly because of it. Second, there might be a greater incentive for Iran to itself be less aggressive – for the same reason as above, but also because the new general Esmail Ghaani (after General Solemeini, who Trump had controversially killed a while ago) will have less of a reason to stick it to the US by creating trouble in the region if we adopt a conciliatory tone and back off. Basically, if we're there, Iran is likely to create trouble to look good to its public and assert dominance. By leaving, we extend an olive branch and lessen that probability.
- Responses to this should be straightforward. On the one hand, countries might just build up their militaries without the US– this increases everyone's paranoia and the chance of conflict. On the other, Iran might be *likelier* to create problems without us there. Ghaani would still have to prove himself, and without us there his job doing so gets easier. This sort of analysis into what Iran is likely to do is key to the debate, so make sure to read up on Iranian politics.

3) Averts a forever war

- This argument will be short because it's primarily a burden on Con. The US has been in the region for a long, long time now – each new administration tends to pledge that we're going to draw down our presence because no one wants to admit that this looks like an indefinite commitment. It's a "forever war."
- This is bad at the point which it holds back countries' fixing their problems themselves – by active involvement in Iraq we may be encouraging corruption, for example, and we need to get out now. Moreover, it is a slow, steady loss of US life and money. Basically Con needs to prove *either* a.) that this situation will be *finally* fixed by remaining in the region, and you can try to make them perform the impossible task of explaining *just how long* we need to be there to do that, *or* b.) that

the situation will get so much worse without the US in the short-term that it's worth the forever war to stop bigger conflicts from happening.

- The responses to this are twofold. First, states just aren't ready for withdrawal – Iraq is in need of administrative, military, and financial support still, while the Kurds still also need help holding off ISIS because they remain in a two-front war against them and Assad in Syria. Second though, it's again a path-dependent argument – if conflict is likelier and eventually breaks out, the US will just get pulled back in and then the forever war resumes with a very brief and ultimately-harmful break.

3) CON POINTS

1) ISIS (and regional terror broadly) returns

- Three warrants. First, actors fighting ISIS – like the Kurds and Iraq – are not very able to do so if they lose US support. Second, ISIS can still keep recruiting, as we talked about, off US history in the region (roughly 300,000 people died in the Iraq war, after all). Third, ISIS is weak but not gone – they still have around 18,000 troops and about \$400mn in resources. If the people fighting them lose American troops and the information we can uniquely provide with our technology, then ISIS has a golden opportunity to resurge. That means chaos.
- Responses would have to draw on the incentives and ability of other countries to fight ISIS – Syria's Assad still wants to stop ISIS' resurgence, as does Turkey's Erdogan. Moreover, anti-US sentiment may exist, but would likely be less in a Pro world even if it's still a thing. I think a good direction you can take this point on Con is to let Pro make those responses and then emphasize that regional actors can likely *only* take on ISIS with help from some *other* actor like Russia or China. Those states have given a host of evidence that they'd love to expand their influence in the region, and you can go far on impacting why that'd be bad.

2) Iran expands

- The warrants here are basically the ones we talked about earlier about the general's incentives, but also as a second warrant it's important to emphasize how easy it would be for Iran to expand. They have a lot of influence in the region – built up networks in Iraq, for example, as well as the sizable Quds force and other proxy groups like Hezbollah. It wouldn't be hard to expand, and you argue as to why US presence *uniquely* stops that extension – we discourage aggression and can quickly respond to attempts at hostility, etc.
- Even if that isn't true, you can still make arguments about how Saudi Arabia may feel pressured to showboat without the US – it may feel cornered without American support and feel that flashy shows of strength are needed to intimidate Iran. This increases the chance of conflict, and the US could end up just coming back anyway. Also, make sure to describe the importance of oil security. While the US doesn't rely

as much on oil imports as it used to, Iran still can easily shut the Strait of Hormuz – this would block ~20% of global oil outflow, and 50% of oil inflow to China and India. While Iran might not *actually* do that because of the fallout that would occur, it's a very, very bad possibility that you should argue is *so* scary that we want to keep presence there to make it as unlikely as possible.

3) This creates a power vacuum

- Two states are worth noting. First, Iraq might collapse. This draws on the ISIS arguments, but is also because Iraq relies on US training and aid right now. Even if the collapse isn't immediate we still train Iraqi *leadership* such that the state doesn't fall during the next catastrophe in the region. Poorly trained leadership and soldiers is, after all, why ISIS so easily took the city of Mosul – and hundreds of millions of dollars, enabling their regional expansion – in 2014; Iraqi police and soldiers saw ISIS coming and literally ran away.
- Second, Jordan is rather fragile right now. Its government has been strained by refugee inflows from Syria for a while and, more recently, Coronavirus is hitting the economy. There has been talk of Jordan's collapse for years, so Pro might say that this isn't likely to ever *actually* happen. However, it's worth noting that even if it doesn't collapse, there is a risk that the state turns to a worse actor than the US like Russia or China. Jordan's explicit requests to the US are, importantly, one of the key reasons that America has any troops left in Syria – withdrawing them would not only be really cruel in Jordan's eyes, but also leave the state in a tough position. It's also very vulnerable to Iran's influence: Jordan is quite close to two states, Lebanon and Syria, which are chummy with Iran – it would not be hard to extend forces in and make Jordan yet another site of proxy conflict in Iran's grand strategy.
- In terms of responses, the Pro side needs to give the judge extreme confidence that Iraq can stand on its own and Jordan is okay. Moreover, Pro needs to handle arguments that these states will only survive with help from China or Russia. Those states might not be stable enough right now to operate far from home – Russia is still economically unstable and China is reeling from the Coronavirus and Hong Kong protests. There are a lot of things to think about with those countries and their potential role in the region, so make sure you've thought it through. On Jordan, one thing to note is that Jordan's alliance is likely most dependent on how aggressive Iran is in the region; if the US withdrawing pacifies Iran, Jordan might like that enough to be okay with the troop withdrawal.