Don’t Go Where You Aren’t Wanted: Iraq

By Rebecca Sumner

***Resolved: The United States Federal Government should considerably decrease its military commitments.***

Case Summary: The U.S. currently has just over 5,000 troops stationed in Iraq, trying to protect Iraq from trouble with Iran and protect against any resurgence of ISIS. The problem is that while the U.S. and Iran exchange tit for tat, Iraq is often caught in the crossfire. Recently, the scuffles have led to escalated retaliation, culminating in an assassination of an Iranian General, on Jan. 3, 2020, through a drone strike that also killed several officials from Iraqi militias. Iraq has had enough. Their parliament voted to expel all foreign troops. President Trump has refused, insisting that US troops will remain in Iraq and angry that they don’t appreciate our “help.” It’s time to give Iraq what they ask for and withdraw US forces from Iraq.

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Don’t Go Where You Aren’t Wanted: Iraq

The U.S. currently has 5,000 troops stationed in Iraq, trying to contain Iran and prevent a resurgence of ISIS. But the problems of their presence outweigh the benefits. It’s time to remove them, and the number one advocate for doing so is the elected parliament of Iraq itself. Please join us in upholding democracy and US national security by affirming that: The United States Federal Government should considerably reduce its military commitments.

OBSERVATION 1. DEFINITIONS

Considerable

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/considerably>

1**:**worth [consideration](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/consideration) **:**[SIGNIFICANT](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/significant)

Military

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/military>

b**:**of or relating to armed forces

Commitment

Merriam Webster Online Dictionary copyright 2020. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/commitment>

c**:**the state or an instance of being obligated or emotionally [impelled](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/impel)

OBSERVATION 2. INHERENCY, the structure of the Status Quo.

FACT 1. US troops in Iraq

The U.S. has just over 5,000 soldiers in Iraq

Deutsche Welle Jan 10, 2020 (German international media organization) “US rejects Iraqi parliament's call to withdraw troops” <https://www.dw.com/en/us-rejects-iraqi-parliaments-call-to-withdraw-troops/a-51958747>

After Iraqi lawmakers voted to oust US troops, the US State Department dismissed their demand and said Washington and Baghdad should instead focus on fixing their alliance. “Any delegation sent to Iraq would be dedicated to discussing how to best recommit to our strategic partnership — not to discuss troop withdrawal,” spokeswoman Morgan Ortagus said on Friday. The US, which invaded Iraq and toppled the regime of Saddam Hussein in 2003, currently has some 5,200 soldiers on Iraqi soil.

FACT 2. Military commitment

The Secretary of Defense says: US forces in Iraq are a military commitment

US Dept of Defense press release 2020 (by Terri Moon Cronk with DoD News) 6 Jan 2020 “U.S. Continues to Deploy, Reposition Troops in Middle East, Esper Says” <https://www.defense.gov/Explore/News/Article/Article/2051305/us-continues-to-deploy-reposition-troops-in-middle-east-esper-says/> (brackets added)

The U.S. message is that the ball is in Iran's court, and the United States encourages Iran to de-escalate the situation, [Defense Secretary Mark] Esper said, adding that the United States is open to discussing issues and having a more normal relationship with Iran. "But if Iran chooses to go the other path, we are prepared to deal with that and will respond forcefully," he said. No decision whatsoever has been made for the United States to leave Iraq, the secretary said, reemphasizing the U.S. commitment to Iraq to defeat ISIS and noting the escalation of attacks by Iranian and proxy groups attacking U.S. forces.

OBSERVATION 3. We offer the following PLAN implemented by Congress and the President:

1. The President cancels the US military commitment to Iraq and withdraws all U.S. forces.

2. Congress cancels funding for any US military operations in Iraq
3. Enforcement through the normal military chain of command.
4. Timeline: Withdrawal process begins 30 days after an affirmative ballot.
5. All Affirmative speeches may clarify

OBSERVATION 4. JUSTIFICATIONS

JUSTIFICATION 1. Uphold Democracy

A. Iraq’s parliament voted to expel American troops

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 2020 (journalist Scott Peterson; graduated from Yale University with a degree in English) 7 Jan 2020 “US troops out of Iraq? What that would mean for both countries” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2020/0107/US-troops-out-of-Iraq-What-that-would-mean-for-both-countries>

Saying the United States had breached Iraqi sovereignty when it assassinated Iran’s most powerful general with a drone strike in Baghdad, the Iraqi parliament voted unanimously Sunday, albeit without minority Sunni or Kurdish lawmakers present, for the removal of the remaining 5,500 U.S. troops in the country.

B. Upholding democracy requires respecting self-determination, not forcible occupation

**Writing in context of US foreign policy in Iraq, Prof. David Beetham in 2009 said QUOTE:**

David Beetham 2009 (Professor Emeritus of Politics at the University of Leeds, a Fellow of the Human Rights Centre at the University of Essex) “The contradictions of democratization by force: the case of Iraq” 27 May 2009 <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/13510340902914338>

If the basic idea of democracy is that of self-determination – that a people should determine their own affairs – then it is self-contradictory to try to initiate that through a violation of their self-determination by a forcible invasion and occupation, compelling them ‘to be free’. Democracy shares with sovereignty the core idea of popular self-determination, of which one is the internal, the other the external, expression. The fact that the latter does not guarantee the former, as we all know, does not excuse us ignoring the intrinsic connection between them.

JUSTIFICATION 2. Counterproductive.

**While American military support for Iraq has good intentions, it is counterproductive and caused the opposite effect: hurting our ally, Iraq, and helping our enemy, Iran.**

A. U.S. military commitment has created chaos, leaving Iran the only victor

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 2020 (journalist Scott Peterson; graduated from Yale University with a degree in English) 7 Jan 2020 “US troops out of Iraq? What that would mean for both countries” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2020/0107/US-troops-out-of-Iraq-What-that-would-mean-for-both-countries>

Even the possibility of an abrupt American withdrawal from Iraq – not on Washington’s terms, but forced by Iraqi leaders – was being seen by some as a “victory” for Iran. The U.S. has invested $1 trillion and some 4,500 American lives to create, as initially envisioned, a pro-American, democratic bastion in the Middle East. Those aspirations evaporated long ago, after years of U.S. missteps in Iraq were met with violent chaos and insurgency, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis. A two-volume, 1,300-page U.S. Army study of the Iraq war published in 2018 found that “an emboldened and expansionist Iran appears to be the only victor.”

B. Impact: Iraq suffers. US intervention threatens wider conflict and Iraqi suffering.

Reuters News service 2020 (the news and media division of Thomson Reuter; the world’s largest international multimedia news. Article written by journalists John Davison and Susan Heavey) 9 Jan 2020 “Washington spurns Iraqi call to remove troops,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/washington-turns-down-iraqi-call-to-remove-troops-idUSKBN1Z80P5>

Iraq’s top Shi’ite Muslim cleric condemned the U.S.-Iranian struggle happening on Iraqi soil, saying it risked plunging his country and the wider Middle East into deeper conflict. Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said it was Iraqis who stood to suffer most from the U.S.-Iranian conflict. In a message delivered through a representative at Friday prayers in the holy city of Kerbala, Sistani said no foreign powers should be allowed to decide Iraq’s fate.

JUSTIFICATION 3. All risk and no benefit

U.S. troops are only targets for attack, and have no useful purpose in Iraq

*Katrina vanden Heuvel 2020 (graduated from Princeton with a BA in Politics. She writes a weekly column for The Washington Post; editor and publisher of The Nation magazine. She’s a frequent commentator on U.S. and international politics for ABC, MSNBC, CNN, PBS. She serves on the boards of the Institute for Policy Studies, the Institute for America's Future, the Correctional Association of New York, the Osborne Society, the Roosevelt Institute, and the Nation Institute) 4 Feb 2020 “It’s time to leave Iraq once and for all”* [*https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/)

When the State Department deflected Iraq’s request, tens of thousands of protesters filled Iraq’s streets demanding the total withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country. If the United States stays, it will remain as an occupying power in violation of international law and without the cooperation of the Iraqi government or the Iraqi people. This means that U.S. forces in Iraq will be at increased risk. An uncooperative Iraqi government together with an array of hostile Shiite militias — many of them armed not only with improvised explosive devices but also now with Iranian-supplied missiles — will make life unbearable for U.S. forces. Since the Soleimani assassination, U.S. personnel have been largely confined to bases or to the Green Zone for their own safety. As such, they can serve no useful purpose in Iraq other than being a target for angry Iraqis seeking revenge on the United States.

JUSTIFICATION 4. Reduced risk of war with Iran

A. Link: Withdrawing US forces from Iraq is the best way to reduce the risk of war with Iran

**Annelle Sheline 2020 (a Research Fellow at the Quincy Institute) 8Jan 2020 “**US military should take the Iraqi parliament's advice and leave” <https://english.alaraby.co.uk/english/comment/2020/1/8/us-military-should-take-iraqi-parliaments-advice-and-leave>

Following the assassination of Qassem Soleimani, war with Iran appears more likely than ever. Whether the conflict remains contained to proxies or escalates into full-on confrontation between US and Iranian forces, Americans are likely to die as a result of Trump's decision to kill Soleimani. The best way to reduce the risk of war is to get US troops out of Iraq. Those currently stationed in Iraq are most vulnerable to attack from Iran and Iran-allied groups. Soleimani's assassination significantly elevated the risk to Americans in Iraq, as acknowledged by the Trump administration when it [instructed Americans to leave](https://www.cbsnews.com/news/state-department-tells-americans-in-iraq-to-leave-immediately-2020-01-03/).

B. Impact: war with Iran would have massive human and economic consequences.

William Hartung 2019 (director of the Arms and Security Project at the Center for International Policy) 5 Sept 2019 “War With Iran Would Be Disastrous And Enormously Costly” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/williamhartung/2019/09/05/war-with-iran-would-be-disastrous-and-enormously-costly/#31160124ec0e>

A better course would be to re-enter the Iran nuclear deal and seek a détente that will make further conflict in the region less, not more likely. But that course may have to await a new administration. In the meantime, as Ali Vaez of the International Crisis Group has [asserted](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/feb/01/iran-trump-michael-flynn-on-notice), a war with Iran would “make the Afghan and Iraqi conflicts look like a walk in the park.” The larger strategic consequences of a conflict with Iran have been well detailed elsewhere. But it’s worth noting that a new war would also have immense economic and human consequences. Administrations routinely underestimate the price of conflict, as has been documented in detail by Brown University’s Costs of War project. Their studies of the costs of America’s post-9/11 wars have found that the funds spent or obligated on these conflicts are at [$5.9 trillion](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2018/Crawford_Costs%20of%20War%20Estimates%20Through%20FY2019.pdf) and counting. Yet in advance of the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, Bush administration officials were claiming that it would [cost](https://www.baltimoresun.com/business/bal-warcosts030303-story.html) on the order of $50 to $100 billion, not the trillions that in direct and indirect costs that it has generated to date. We can expect similarly flawed arguments to be trotted out if the Trump administration decides to take military action against Iran.

2A Evidence: Iraq

INHERENCY

A/T “US forces reduced / pulling out”

Iraq has asked the U.S. to leave and the U.S. refused

Reuters News Jan 9, 2020 (the news and media division of Thomson Reuter; the world’s largest international multimedia news provider. **Article written by**–John Davison and Susan Heavey) “Washington spurns Iraqi call to remove troops,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/washington-turns-down-iraqi-call-to-remove-troops-idUSKBN1Z80P5>

Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi made his request for preparations for a U.S. troop withdrawal in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Thursday in line with a vote in Iraq’s parliament last week, his office said. Abdul Mahdi asked Pompeo to “send delegates to put in place the tools to carry out the parliament’s decision,” his office said in a statement, adding that the forces used in the killing had entered Iraq or used its airspace without permission. The State Department said any U.S. delegation would not discuss the withdrawal of U.S. troops as their presence in Iraq was “appropriate.”

Consolidating, not withdrawing, and deploying new air defense systems. Trump threatens sanctions if Iraq rejects US troops

Middle East Eye 2020 (London-based online news outlet covering events in the Middle East) “US and Iraq to meet in June to discuss troop withdrawal: Report” 27 Apr 2020 <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/washington-and-baghdad-meet-june-discuss-troop-withdrawal-iraq>

Instead of a withdrawal, coalition forces have been consolidating troops across a number of smaller outposts to bigger bases. Coalition officials say Washington's plan is to continue operations in Iraq "from fewer bases and with fewer people". For his part, US President Donald Trump has threatened Iraq with sanctions if it were to order American troops out of the country. Trump also said that Baghdad would have to pay Washington for the cost of a US-supported airbase there if it were to kick out US forces. In March, the US set up at least [four new batteries of Patriot air defence systems](https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/us-deploys-extra-patriot-missiles-iraq-amid-troop-drawdown) in Iraq, but it was not immediately clear whether the US had ultimately received the Iraqi government's approval for the systems' deployments.

Even if troops were withdrawn, US military relationship would continue

Middle East Eye 2020 (London-based online news outlet covering events in the Middle East) “US and Iraq to meet in June to discuss troop withdrawal: Report” 27 Apr 2020 (brackets added) <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/washington-and-baghdad-meet-june-discuss-troop-withdrawal-iraq>

[Iraq military spokesman Major General Abdul-Karim] Khalaf added that at the June meeting, it is expected that both sides will discuss "relations between the two countries in the economic, cultural, political and security fields established within the Strategic Framework Agreement". "The security relationship between Iraq and the United States will continue in the context of training and exchange of experiences even if the withdrawal decision is implemented," he said.

Trump ignores Iraq’s call to remove US troops

Karen DeYoung, Louisa Loveluck, and Mustafa Salim 2020 (DeYoung–Pulitzer-prize winning associate editor and senior national security correspondent for The Washington Post. BS in journalism from UF. Loveluck–Baghdad bureau chief for the Washington Post. BA in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge; Salim–reporter in The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau) 10 Jan 2020 “Trump administration refuses to heed Iraq’s call for troop withdrawal,” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-asks-united-states-to-set-up-mechanism-for-troop-withdrawal/2020/01/10/794058ea-32f8-11ea-971b-43bec3ff9860_story.html>

The Trump administration refused again Friday to recognize Iraq's call to withdraw all U.S. troops, saying that any discussion with Baghdad would center on whatever force size the United States determines is sufficient to achieve its goals there. “At this time, any delegation sent to Iraq would be dedicated to discussing how best to recommit to our strategic partnership — not to discuss troop withdrawal,” the State Department said. The statement came after Iraq's caretaker prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, said he had asked Secretary of State Mike Pompeo during a Thursday telephone call to begin talks about a "mechanism" to implement last week's Iraqi parliamentary vote demanding the withdrawal of all foreign troops.

A/T: “Military operations in Iraq were paused” — They have been resumed

Joint operations restarted after about a ten day pause

Alissa J. Rubin and Eric Schmitt Jan. 15, 2020 (**Rubin**–American journalist; Baghdad Bureau chief for The NY Times. She joined The NY Times in Jan 2007 as a correspondent in Baghdad and covered Iraq & Afghanistan, becoming bureau chief in Baghdad. **Schmitt**– Pulitzer Prize–winning American journalist, who works as senior writer covering terrorism and national security for The NY Times. Since 2007, he has reported on terrorism issues, with assignments to Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Africa) “U.S. Military Resumes Joint Operations With Iraq” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/world/middleeast/us-military-iraq.html>

The United States military resumed joint operations with Iraq on Wednesday, military officials said, ending a 10-day pause that began after an American airstrike killed a top Iranian military commander in Baghdad. The decision to restart military operations came less than two weeks after Iraq’s Parliament voted to expel all American forces from the country. The government accused the United States of violating Iraqi sovereignty by carrying out airstrikes in Iraq, including one on Jan. 3 that killed the Iranian commander, a leader of Iraqi militia forces and eight other people. Two American military officials, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak about the missions to reporters, confirmed that the joint operations had restarted.

A/T: “General Seely’s letter saying U.S. is leaving” — Doesn’t apply

The Pentagon called Seely’s letter a mistake, denied that it represents US policy

Scott Peterson Jan 7, 2020 (graduated from Yale University with a degree in English. He covers the Middle East for the Christian Science Monitor from London, with a special focus on Iran, Iraq, and Syria. A well-traveled and experienced foreign correspondent who is also a photographer for Getty Images in New York, he has reported and photographed conflict and powerful human narratives across three continents for more than two decades. He has made 30 visits to Iran. He has also frequently reported from Iraq) “US troops out of Iraq? What that would mean for both countries” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2020/0107/US-troops-out-of-Iraq-What-that-would-mean-for-both-countries>

Defense Secretary Mark Esper denied late Monday that the U.S. had decided to withdraw its troops, despite the leak of an unsigned letter from the top U.S. commander in Iraq notifying Baghdad of force movements in the “coming days and weeks to prepare for onward movement.” “We respect your sovereign decision to order our departure,” wrote U.S. Marine Corps Brig. Gen. William Seely. The Pentagon called the letter a draft and a “mistake.”

Several top military officials repudiated the letter: There are no plans for U.S. forces to withdraw

Deutsche Welle Jan 10, 2020 (Germany’s international broadcaster and one of the most successful and relevant international media outlets. Their multimedia content in 30 languages reaches over 197 million people worldwide each week. As an unbiased, German media organization, they provide news and information to people worldwide, giving them the freedom to make up their own minds) “US rejects Iraqi parliament's call to withdraw troops” <https://www.dw.com/en/us-rejects-iraqi-parliaments-call-to-withdraw-troops/a-51958747>

In an apparent blunder, the US military's Task Force Iraq pledged to “prepare for onward movement” of US troops “in deference to the sovereignty of the Republic of Iraq” in a letter sent on Monday. However, the US officials were quick to dismiss the message as a “draft” that was sent by mistake. Several top US military officials have said there were no plans for US forces to withdraw.

JUSTIFICATIONS

Respecting Democracy- Iraq wants US troops removed

Iraqi lawmakers voted 170-0, in favor of American troop withdrawal

NEW YORK TIMES 2020. (written by Alissa J. Rubin, Ben Hubbard, Falih Hassan, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt, Vivian Yee, David D. Kirkpatrick, Edward Wong, Tess Felder, Yonette Joseph, Mariel Padilla and Maggie Haberman. **Rubin**–Baghdad Bureau chief for The NY Times. She won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting; **Hubbard**–Beirut bureau chief for The NY Times; **Hassan**–contributor to the NY Times; **Gibbons-Neff**–reporter in the NY Times Washington bureau and a former Marine infantryman; **Schmitt**–Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist who writes for The NY Times; **Yee**–international correspondent for the NY **Wong**–foreign correspondent for The NY Times. **Felder**–senior staff editor, NY Times; **Joseph**–London weekend editor for the NY Times. She’s worked at The Washington Post, The Miami Herald and The Journal News; **Padilla**–reporter for the NY Times covering national breaking news for the Express desk; **Haberman**–White House correspondent for The NY Times and a political analyst for CNN.) written 5 Jan 2020; updated 7 Jan.2020 “Outrage in Iran After Killing of Suleimani: Here’s What You Need to Know,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/middleeast/Iran-us-trump.html>

Iraqi lawmakers voted 170-0 on Sunday in favor of expelling American troops from their country, just days after a United States drone strike killed the leader of Iran’s elite Quds Force on Iraqi soil. The vote was not final and many lawmakers did not attend the session. But Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi drafted the language and submitted the bill to Parliament, leaving little doubt about his support.

Iraqi parliament voted for U.S. forces to leave - But Trump says NO

Karen DeYoung, Louisa Loveluck, and Mustafa Salim Jan. 10, 2020 (**DeYoung**–Pulitzer-prize winning associate editor and senior national security correspondent for The Washington Post, where she’s worked more than three decades. She has a BS in journalism from UF. **Loveluck**–Baghdad bureau chief for the Washington Post. She was previously based in Beirut for the Post and worked as the Cairo correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. She has a BA in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge; **Salim**–reporter in The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau. He joined the paper in 2014, covering the rise of the Islamic State and Iraq's military campaign to defeat it), “Trump administration refuses to heed Iraq’s call for troop withdrawal,” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-asks-united-states-to-set-up-mechanism-for-troop-withdrawal/2020/01/10/794058ea-32f8-11ea-971b-43bec3ff9860_story.html>

Two days later, at a parliamentary session boycotted by Sunnis and Kurds more supportive of the U.S. presence, Shiite-majority lawmakers voted to order Abdul Mahdi to “work to end the presence of any foreign troops on Iraqi soil and prohibit them from using its land, airspace or water for any reason.” Within hours, Trump said U.S. troops were not leaving and threatened sanctions against Iraq. He also demanded that Baghdad reimburse what he said were billions of dollars the United States had invested in a major Iraqi air base. He later tempered that stance somewhat, telling reporters on Wednesday that "I'm only talking sanctions if we're not treated with respect."

Iraqis wants U.S. troops out. If not, we weaken our own national security, violate international law, and lose the cooperation of the Iraqi people

Katrina vanden Heuvel 2020 (graduated from Princeton with a BA in Politics. She writes a weekly column for The Washington Post; editor and publisher of The Nation magazine. She’s a frequent commentator on U.S. and international politics for ABC, MSNBC, CNN, PBS. She serves on the boards of the Institute for Policy Studies, the Institute for America's Future, the Correctional Association of New York, the Osborne Society, the Roosevelt Institute, and the Nation Institute) 4 Feb 2020 “It’s time to leave Iraq once and for all” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/>

Viewed through the lens of national security, the case for a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq and Syria is actually simple. Begin with the most salient fact of all: The Iraqis want us to leave. In January, in the wake of the assassinations of Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, commander of Iraq’s Popular Mobilization Forces, the Iraqi parliament passed a measure calling for the end of all foreign forces on Iraqi soil. Acting prime minister Adel Abdul Mahdi then sent a formal request to the U.S. government to begin discussions to end the U.S. military presence. When the State Department deflected Iraq’s request, tens of thousands of protesters filled Iraq’s streets demanding the total withdrawal of U.S. forces from the country. If the United States stays, it will remain as an occupying power in violation of international law and without the cooperation of the Iraqi government or the Iraqi people.

Can’t accomplish their mission if US forces are in the country against the will of Iraq’s parliament

Daniel Benaim Jan. 5, 2020 (fellow at The Century Foundation. He is also a nonresident senior fellow at the Center for American Progress and part-time faculty in the Program in International Relations at New York University (NYU). Previously served as Middle East policy adviser and foreign policy speechwriter at the White House, the Department of State, and the U.S. Senate. MA in law and diplomacy from The Fletcher School and his BA in English literature from Yale Univ.) “Trump Hurts an Ally and Helps the Terrorists” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/opinion/iraq-iran-trump.html>

Iraqi politics sometimes goes to the precipice only to pull back. That could still happen here, especially given that Kurdish and Sunni leaders boycotted the vote. But it is difficult to see how American forces can stay to conduct their mission if the Iraqi Parliament, as well as inflamed Iraqi militias, now wish them gone. Iraqi political factions have previously tried to expel American forces only to fall short. But this time is different. After popular protests against corruption, Iraq’s political leadership is the weakest it has been in 15 years. So are the ties between American and Iraqi leaders.

Suleimani drone strike was viewed as a violation of the Iraq’s sovereignty

NEW YORK TIMES 2020. (written by Alissa J. Rubin, Ben Hubbard, Falih Hassan, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt, Vivian Yee, David D. Kirkpatrick, Edward Wong, Tess Felder, Yonette Joseph, Mariel Padilla and Maggie Haberman. **Rubin**–Baghdad Bureau chief for The NY Times. She won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting; **Hubbard**–Beirut bureau chief for The NY Times; **Hassan**–contributor to the NY Times; **Gibbons-Neff**–reporter in the NY Times Washington bureau and a former Marine infantryman; **Schmitt**–Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist who writes for The NY Times; **Yee**–international correspondent for the NY **Wong**–foreign correspondent for The NY Times. **Felder**–senior staff editor, NY Times; **Joseph**–London weekend editor for the NY Times. She’s worked at The Washington Post, The Miami Herald and The Journal News; **Padilla**–reporter for the NY Times covering national breaking news for the Express desk; **Haberman**–White House correspondent for The NY Times and a political analyst for CNN.) written 5 Jan 2020; updated 7 Jan.2020 “Outrage in Iran After Killing of Suleimani: Here’s What You Need to Know,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/middleeast/Iran-us-trump.html>

The drone strike that killed the leader of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Quds Force, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani, at the Baghdad airport on Friday also killed Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy head of the Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces, a coalition of Iranian-backed militias. The attack was viewed in Iraq as a violation of the nation’s sovereignty, and the country’s Foreign Ministry said on Sunday that it had summoned the American ambassador in Baghdad.

U.S. Efforts are Counterproductive

A two-volume Army study of the Iraq war finds Iran as the only real winner

Todd South 2019 (Marine veteran of the Iraq War. He’s written about crime, courts, government and military issues for multiple publications since 2004. In 2014, he was named a Pulitzer finalist for local reporting on a project he co-wrote about witness problems in gang criminal cases. He covers ground combat for Military Times) 18 Jan 2019 “Army’s long-awaited Iraq war study finds Iran was the only winner in a conflict that holds many lessons for future wars” <https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/01/18/armys-long-awaited-iraq-war-study-finds-iran-was-the-only-winner-in-a-conflict-that-holds-many-lessons-for-future-wars/>

A two-volume Army study of the Iraq war is a deep examination of the mistakes and success of the war effort that also takes aim at critics who would slough off the conflict as they shift to near-peer threats. The study, commissioned by former Army Chief of Staff Gen. Ray Odierno in 2013 and continued under current chief Gen. Mark Milley, was delayed for release since 2016, when it was completed. Some said it was due to concerns over airing “dirty laundry” about decisions made by some leaders during the conflict. The 1,300-page, two volume history, complete with more than 1,000 declassified documents, spans the 2003 invasion through the U.S. withdrawal, the rise of ISIS, and the influence of Syria and Iran. “At the time of this project’s completion in 2018, an emboldened and expansionist Iran appears to be the only victor,” authors wrote in the concluding chapter. Col. Joe Rayburn and Col. Frank Sobchak, both retired, authored the study.

Instead of strengthening Iraqi sovereignty, the U.S. has strengthened Iraq’s Shiite Muslim groups

Karen DeYoung, Louisa Loveluck, and Mustafa Salim Jan. 10, 2020 (**DeYoung**–Pulitzer-prize winning associate editor and senior national security correspondent for The Washington Post, where she’s worked more than three decades. She has a BS in journalism from UF. **Loveluck**–Baghdad bureau chief for the Washington Post. She was previously based in Beirut for the Post and worked as the Cairo correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. She has a BA in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge; **Salim**–reporter in The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau. He joined the paper in 2014, covering the rise of the Islamic State and Iraq's military campaign to defeat it), “Trump administration refuses to heed Iraq’s call for troop withdrawal,” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-asks-united-states-to-set-up-mechanism-for-troop-withdrawal/2020/01/10/794058ea-32f8-11ea-971b-43bec3ff9860_story.html>

The public disagreement between the United States and its Iraqi ally, imperiling the mission of more than 5,000 U.S. troops in Iraq to fight the Islamic State, reflects tensions that have characterized the relationship for years, as well as the deep schisms in Iraqi politics. Successive administrations have pledged to strengthen Iraqi sovereignty, a goal that has focused on diluting the influence in Iraq of neighboring Iran. But direct U.S.-Iranian confrontation over the past few weeks has sharpened the position of Iraq's powerful Shiite Muslim political blocs and armed groups, which are leading calls for coalition troops to leave.

U.S. military strategy has only opened the door to more Iranian influence

*Katrina vanden Heuvel 2020 (graduated from Princeton with a BA in Politics. She writes a weekly column for The Washington Post; editor and publisher of The Nation magazine. She’s a frequent commentator on U.S. and international politics for ABC, MSNBC, CNN, PBS. She serves on the boards of the Institute for Policy Studies, the Institute for America's Future, the Correctional Association of New York, the Osborne Society, the Roosevelt Institute, and the Nation Institute) 4 Feb 2020 “It’s time to leave Iraq once and for all”* [*https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/)

If the purpose of U.S. forces was to limit Iranian influence in Iraq, then it has clearly failed just as the proxy war against the Assad regime has failed in Syria. In both cases, a misguided U.S. military strategy has opened the door to more Iranian influence, in part because Iran has been seen by both the Iraqis and Syrians as providing protection against violent Sunni extremists tolerated or even supported by the United States.

Iraq views U.S. actions of flying drones and conducting lethal strikes without authorization of the Iraqi government as a breach of sovereignty

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR 2020. (journalist Scott Peterson; graduated from Yale with a degree in English. He covers the Middle East for CSM from London. He has made 30 visits to Iran. He has also frequently reported from Iraq) 7 Jan 2020 “US troops out of Iraq? What that would mean for both countries” <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2020/0107/US-troops-out-of-Iraq-What-that-would-mean-for-both-countries> [brackets in original]

 “The killing of Soleimani, however you look at it, and whatever you think of Qassem Soleimani, has made it impossible for American troops to remain in our country,” says an Iraqi official in Baghdad who asked not to be named. “It’s a breach of sovereignty, flying these armed drones without authorization or knowledge of the Iraqi government [and] conducting a lethal strike within our country on a foreign official,” he says. “It is seen as American overreach. It is the crossing of the boundaries of the coalition.”

Harming Iraq

Iraq is caught in the crossfire between Iran and the U.S.

Reuters News Jan 9, 2020 (the news and media division of Thomson Reuter; the world’s largest international multimedia news provider reaching more than one billion people every day. It provides trusted business, financial, national, and international news to professionals via Thomson Reuters desktops, the world's media organizations, and directly to consumers at Reuters.com and via Reuters TV. **Article written by**–John Davison and Susan Heavey) “Washington spurns Iraqi call to remove troops,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/washington-turns-down-iraqi-call-to-remove-troops-idUSKBN1Z80P5>

Seeking to tighten pressure on its foe, the United States meanwhile imposed more sanctions on Iran, responding to an attack on U.S. troops in Iraq launched by Tehran in retaliation for the death of General Qassem Soleimani. Iraq could bear the brunt of any further violence between its neighbor Iran and the United States, its leaders caught in a bind as Washington and Tehran are also the Iraqi government’s main allies and vie for influence there.

US/Iran conflict is spilling over into Iraq

Karen DeYoung, Louisa Loveluck, and Mustafa Salim Jan. 10, 2020 (**DeYoung**–Pulitzer-prize winning associate editor and senior national security correspondent for The Washington Post, where she’s worked more than three decades. She has a BS in journalism from UF. **Loveluck**–Baghdad bureau chief for the Washington Post. She was previously based in Beirut for the Post and worked as the Cairo correspondent for the Daily Telegraph. She has a BA in Social and Political Sciences from the University of Cambridge; **Salim**–reporter in The Washington Post's Baghdad bureau. He joined the paper in 2014, covering the rise of the Islamic State and Iraq's military campaign to defeat it), “Trump administration refuses to heed Iraq’s call for troop withdrawal,” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/iraq-asks-united-states-to-set-up-mechanism-for-troop-withdrawal/2020/01/10/794058ea-32f8-11ea-971b-43bec3ff9860_story.html>

But direct U.S.-Iranian confrontation over the past few weeks has sharpened the position of Iraq's powerful Shiite Muslim political blocs and armed groups, which are leading calls for coalition troops to leave. It began last month with an attack against a U.S. military installation in Iraq by a pro-Iran militia group that killed one American and wounded several soldiers. U.S. forces responded with airstrikes on militia forces near the Syrian border that resulted in 80 casualties. Outrage over what one Iraqi official called a “mother of all escalations” was quickly overshadowed by a militia-led assault on the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. President Trump then ordered a drone strike that killed Iranian Maj. Gen. Qasem Soleimani shortly after his arrival at Baghdad's airport Jan. 3, an action that led to the current firestorm. Two days later, at a parliamentary session boycotted by Sunnis and Kurds more supportive of the U.S. presence, Shiite-majority lawmakers voted to order Abdul Mahdi to “work to end the presence of any foreign troops on Iraqi soil and prohibit them from using its land, airspace or water for any reason.”

Iraq has suffered decades of war, sanctions, and sectarian conflict thanks to US intervention. Time to stop

Reuters News Jan 9, 2020 (the news and media division of Thomson Reuter; the world’s largest international multimedia news. **Article written by**–John Davison and Susan Heavey) “Washington spurns Iraqi call to remove troops,” <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iraq-security/washington-turns-down-iraqi-call-to-remove-troops-idUSKBN1Z80P5>

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani said it was Iraqis who stood to suffer most from the U.S.-Iranian conflict. In a message delivered through a representative at Friday prayers in the holy city of Kerbala, Sistani said no foreign powers should be allowed to decide Iraq’s fate. “The latest dangerous aggressive acts, which are repeated violations of Iraqi sovereignty, are a part of the deteriorating situation” in the region, Sistani said. “Iraq must govern itself and there must be no role for outsiders in its decision-making.” Iraq has suffered decades of war, sanctions and sectarian conflict, including the U.S.-led invasion of 2003.

US troops as vulnerable targets

Iran is planning revenge for the airstrikes

NEW YORK TIMES 2020. (written by Alissa J. Rubin, Ben Hubbard, Falih Hassan, Thomas Gibbons-Neff, Eric Schmitt, Vivian Yee, David D. Kirkpatrick, Edward Wong, Tess Felder, Yonette Joseph, Mariel Padilla and Maggie Haberman. **Rubin**–Baghdad Bureau chief for The NY Times. She won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting; **Hubbard**–Beirut bureau chief for The NY Times; **Hassan**–contributor to the NY Times; **Gibbons-Neff**–reporter in the NY Times Washington bureau and a former Marine infantryman; **Schmitt**–Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist who writes for The NY Times; **Yee**–international correspondent for the NY **Wong**–foreign correspondent for The NY Times. **Felder**–senior staff editor, NY Times; **Joseph**–London weekend editor for the NY Times. She’s worked at The Washington Post, The Miami Herald and The Journal News; **Padilla**–reporter for the NY Times covering national breaking news for the Express desk; **Haberman**–White House correspondent for The NY Times and a political analyst for CNN.) written 5 Jan 2020; updated 7 Jan.2020 “Outrage in Iran After Killing of Suleimani: Here’s What You Need to Know,” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/05/world/middleeast/Iran-us-trump.html>

President Trump said he had ordered the airstrikes not just as retaliation for past attacks on Americans, but also to prevent “imminent and sinister attacks” on more Americans. But Iran’s supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and its president, Hassan Rouhani, both promised that the country would take “revenge” for the killing.

Repeated attacks on American military posts in Iraq

Alissa J. Rubin and Eric Schmitt Jan. 15, 2020 (**Rubin**–American journalist; Baghdad Bureau chief for The NY Times. She joined The NY Times in Jan 2007 as a correspondent in Baghdad and covered Iraq & Afghanistan, becoming bureau chief in Baghdad. Previously, she was a correspondent for the LA Times. She won the 2016 Pulitzer Prize for International Reporting; **Schmitt**– Pulitzer Prize–winning American journalist, who works as senior writer covering terrorism and national security for The NY Times.) “U.S. Military Resumes Joint Operations With Iraq” <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/15/world/middleeast/us-military-iraq.html>

The American-led military coalition in Iraq suspended its counterterrorism mission on Jan. 5, two days after an American MQ-9 Reaper drone fired missiles into a convoy at the Baghdad airport, killing the Iranian commander, Maj. Gen. Qassim Suleimani; Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, the deputy chief of a coalition of Iraqi militias; and eight other people. The Americans were concerned that the outrage over the drone attack could lead to attacks on the American military by Iranian-backed militias in Iraq or a retaliatory attack by Iran itself. The military said that there had been repeated attacks on American military posts in Iraq in the previous weeks, including one that killed an American contractor on Dec. 27.

Risk of War with Iran

Now is the time for the U.S. to withdraw our military forces from Iraq to help build peace with Iran

*Katrina vanden Heuvel Feb. 4, 2020 (graduated from Princeton with a BA in Politics. She writes a weekly column for The Washington Post. She’s the editor and publisher of the Nation magazine. She’s a frequent commentator on U.S. and international politics for ABC, MSNBC, CNN, PBS. She serves on the boards of the Institute for Policy Studies, the Institute for America's Future, the Correctional Association of New York, the Osborne Society, the Roosevelt Institute, and the Nation Institute) “It’s time to leave Iraq once and for all”* [*https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/*](https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/04/its-time-leave-iraq-once-all/)

It is time to end this perverse cycle, and the only way to do that is for the United States to accede to the will of the Iraqi people and withdraw its military forces. It can do so confidently knowing that the Iraqis are demanding that all foreign forces leave — meaning that Iran is also under pressure to reduce its military footprint in Iraq — and that the time is ripe for real diplomacy. The Iraqis no longer want their country to be a battleground between the United States and Iran. And equally important, the Sunni Gulf states are looking for ways to de-escalate tensions with Iran after Iran demonstrated it could put their economies at risk. For the first time in almost a decade, there is a peace to build in the region, and it is time for the United States to get with the program.

DISAD RESPONSES

A/T “Iran Threat”

Iran threat is exaggerated. Turn: Hyping it makes it worse

Betsy Swan and Adam Rawnsley 2019 (journalists” 8 May 2019 “Trump Admin Inflated Iran Intel, U.S. Officials Say” <https://www.thedailybeast.com/trump-administration-inflated-iran-intelligence-us-officials-say>

“It’s not that the administration is mischaracterizing the intelligence, so much as overreacting to it,” said one U.S. government official briefed on it. Another source familiar with the situation agreed that the Trump administration’s response was an “overreaction” but didn’t dispute that a threat exists. [Gen. Qasem Soleimani](https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-the-iranian-general-taunting-trump-on-a-us-hit-list)—the head of the Quds Force, Iran’s covert action arm—has told proxy forces in Iraq that a conflict with the U.S. will come soon, this source noted. “I would characterize the current situation as shaping operations on both sides to tilt the field in preparation for a possible coming conflict,” continued the second source, who is also a U.S. government official. “The risk is a low-level proxy unit miscalculating and escalating things. We’re sending a message with this reaction to the intelligence, even though the threat might not be as imminent as portrayed.”

US is more of a threat to Iran than they are to us

Andrew Lee Butters 2019 (former Time magazine Beirut bureau chief and Middle East correspondent. He now teaches journalism at Yale College) 17 May 2019 “What the press gets wrong on the US-Iran relationship” <https://www.cjr.org/opinion/what-the-press-gets-wrong-on-the-us-iran-relationship.php> (ellipses in original)

The US, it must not be forgotten, has done its fair share to threaten Iran: encouraging Iraq to invade Iran in the 1980s and kill hundreds of thousands of Iranians, invading Iraq in 2003 and soon after eyeing Iran, selling billions of dollars worth of weapons to anti-Iranian Middle Eastern autocrats, embracing a known anti-Iranian terror cult—the MEK—in the hope of fomenting a regime change. It’s important to have that history in mind while reading paragraphs like this, [in the *Times*](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/13/world/middleeast/us-military-plans-iran.html), on the Pentagon’s Iran war plans: “…officials said they believed the most likely cause of a conflict will follow a provocative act, or outright attack, by the Revolutionary Guards’ navy. The Guards’ fleet of small boats has a history of approaching American Navy ships at high speed. Revolutionary Guards commanders have precarious control over their ill-disciplined naval forces.” No mention of the US Navy shooting down an Iranian civilian airliner over the Persian Gulf in 1988, which killed 290 civilians. For the *Times*, it’s Iran that’s unpredictable and out of control in the Persian Gulf.

A/T “ISIS threat”

ISIS has never been a threat to the US homeland

David Sterman 2019 (senior policy analyst at New America and holds a master's degree from Georgetown’s Center for Security Studies) 28 Mar 2019 “Did ISIS Ever Directly Threaten the Homeland?” <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/did-isis-ever-directly-threaten-homeland/>

Did ISIS ever pose a major direct threat to the United States homeland? And if not, what does that say about America’s larger counterterrorism posturing? The answer to the first question appears to be no, at least according to what can be gleaned from public information, and with the benefit of hindsight. The United States [initiated](https://www.wilsoncenter.org/article/timeline-us-policy-isis) its airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq on August 9, 2014, and in Syria on September 22 of that same year. Around this time, U.S. administration officials were clear that there was no direct threat to the U.S. homeland. Speaking at the Brookings Institution on September 3, then-National Counterterrorism Center Director Matt Olsen [called](https://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/05/whats-the-hot-national-security-phrase-of-this-week-seems-to-be-potential-threat/) the ISIS threat to the U.S. homeland only a “potential threat,” stating that there was no imminent threat to the United States and no credible evidence of ISIS cell structures within the country.

Cost of fighting a resurgence of ISIS would exceed the benefits because the impact of the threat to the US is so small

David Sterman 2019 (senior policy analyst at New America and holds a master's degree from Georgetown’s Center for Security Studies) 28 Mar 2019 “Did ISIS Ever Directly Threaten the Homeland?” <https://www.newamerica.org/weekly/did-isis-ever-directly-threaten-homeland/>

Still, if the counter-ISIS military campaign is justified as a preventative action, as opposed to one against a group already posing a direct threat to the United States, that raises its own questions. Most importantly: Can the United States continue to act preventatively against terrorists on a sustained basis, given the costs of such actions? Even if this particular preventative campaign was worth the costs, is it worth the cost for the United States to take an active role in mopping up the [much](https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/03/23/world/middleeast/isis-syria-defeated.html?rref=collection%2Fbyline%2Frukmini-callimachi) [warned](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/06/world/middleeast/isis-global-terrorism.html) [about](https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/isis-still-acute-threat-u-s-interpol-chief-says-n966021) potential follow-on threat of an ISIS insurgency or the various ISIS affiliated groups around the world when even the original threat from the core group did not manifest as a direct threat to the homeland? How much does the United States need to suppress the threat to declare an end to its involvement and responsibility? Is the United States forever on the hook for providing security in the unstable Middle East? These are critical questions, and the counter-ISIS campaign wasn’t without costs. The development of the Syrian Democratic Forces as a U.S. partner [harmed](http://www.gmfus.org/publications/turkish-us-strategic-decoupling-through-prism-syria) the U.S. relationship with its NATO ally Turkey, and it also [cost](https://dod.defense.gov/OIR/) more than $13 million a day. In addition, though the loss of U.S. lives was extremely limited compared to the loss of lives in the prior direct U.S. counterinsurgency wars in Iraq, Americans [did die](https://www.npr.org/2019/01/16/685827979/u-s-soldiers-killed-in-attack-in-northern-syria) in this campaign.

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