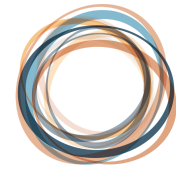


# Foreign Policy: The Middle East

## Discussion Guide



THE POLICY  
CIRCLE®

## 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. 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 brings a unique perspective. Listen first, focus on the facts, and stay curious.
- **Be respectful and engaged:** Ensure everyone has a chance to speak before adding a second comment. Support and encourage participation from all. Remember: What's said in the Circle stays in the Circle.
- **Be focused and concise:** Anchor the conversation to the issue and the Brief. Respect the timekeeper. *Use the "Table-It" Rule for off-topic ideas—note them and revisit them in a future session.*

## Let's Begin

Each member is invited to answer the following questions in a two-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 most?

## Spread the Word: Facts to share during your discussion

- Conflict in the Middle East is shaped by long-standing factors, including the creation of Israel in 1948, regional rivalries, civil wars in Syria and Yemen, and the rise of extremist groups. U.S. involvement continues through diplomacy, military presence, and alliances aimed at promoting stability.
- The region is strategically critical to the global economy, holding a large share of the world's oil and gas reserves and key shipping routes like the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, and Suez Canal, where disruptions can significantly impact global energy prices and supply chains.
- The United States maintains a strong regional presence, with 40,000–50,000 troops and roughly \$11 billion in annual assistance (FY 2022/23), including \$5.6 billion in economic aid, supporting security, humanitarian efforts, and key allies such as Israel, Egypt, Jordan, and Iraq.

## Let's Discuss

Below are questions for the group to consider and discuss.

- **Vision:** Is isolationism harmful to U.S. security interests, our allies, and Middle East stability? What is the vision for the Middle East? What should be the US' role?
- **Government:** Women and girls have no human rights in the Middle East. Should advancing women's basic rights to education, safety, and opportunity be at the center of US foreign policy?
- **Business:** How can the U.S. balance economic interests and the global supply chain when they are at odds with diplomatic or human rights policies?
- **Local:** What is the impact of conflicts in the Middle East locally? What can we do to advance women's rights in the Middle East? How are local faith-based organizations engaged?

## Let's Act

1. **Start the conversation in your own community.** Talk with neighbors, friends, and colleagues about how U.S. foreign policy connects to global and local issues. Look for opportunities to engage with community leaders and experts. You may also connect with organizations involved in humanitarian efforts abroad. Many support vulnerable populations in the Middle East, where religious minorities face ongoing persecution.
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. **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 on how to contact leaders.
4. **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](#).
5. **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. Post a meeting recap in your Circle on [the Community](#) and fill out this [form](#).
- **Dive Deeper into the issues.** If this is an area you would like to pursue further, consider taking possible steps to take action. View the [Conversation Sparks](#) for more ideas.