



PF Topic Analysis April 2015

The April topic for Public Forum debaters is **Resolved: Committing United States ground combat troops to fight ISIL is in the best interest of the United States**. This resolution promises to be complex and fascinating, with a wealth of available research. This is a topic that demands you understand the current situation in the Middle East, as well as the historical circumstances that brought us to where we are today. This guide will serve as a primer to help you begin to find your footing on this challenging topic.

As always, we begin by looking at the **key terms** in the resolution.

“United States ground combat troops” is probably the most important phrase for us to consider. In President Obama’s [letter to Congress](#) regarding his drafted [Authorization to Use Military Force \(AUMF\)](#), he writes:

“My Administration’s draft AUMF would not authorize long-term, large-scale ground combat operations like those our Nation conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan. Local forces, rather than U.S. military forces, should be deployed to conduct such operations. The authorization I propose would provide the flexibility to conduct ground combat operations in other, more limited circumstances, such as rescue operations involving U.S. or coalition personnel or the use of special operations forces to take military action against ISIL leadership. It would also authorize



the use of U.S. forces in situations where ground combat operations are not expected or intended, such as intelligence collection and sharing, missions to enable kinetic strikes, or the provision of operational planning and other forms of advice and assistance to partner forces.”

The implication from that paragraph is that ground combat troops *may* occasionally be used for literal ground combat, but that are intended to be used for more indirect purposes, such as intelligence gathering, rescue missions, etc. The Obama administration has been insistent that they do not intend to become enmeshed in a lengthy ground war.

However, the resolution also contains the word “**fight.**” The primary [definition of fight](#) usually includes “violent conflict” and/or “physical force.” This seems to suggest that the pro should defend the usage of US troops for direct, physical, violent encounters with ISIL, rather than constraining their advocacy to just minor efforts like intelligence collection.

Some tricky pros may choose to define “fight” using one of its other possible meanings, such as “to struggle or campaign against” or “to repress.” In this sense, they could argue that they only have to defend that the troops are used in effort to stop ISIL, but not necessarily in a direct physical/violent way. Under that interpretation, pros could theoretically choose to defend only the type of limited commitment described by President Obama. This tactic poses its own risks, though, since the limited engagement of the status quo is clearly not working. If you want to play around with a tricky pro case, you’ll want to strike a balance between doing more than we are now, but less than a full-fledged ground war.



In this guide, though, we will choose to ignore those kinds of shenanigans and focus instead on the core of the topic: should the US put “boots on the ground” to wage an actual battle against ISIL? Nevertheless, you should be aware of the aforementioned potential pro strategy.

“ISIL” refers to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, also often called either ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syrian) or IS (Islamic State). They are also known as Da’ish or DAESH in Arabic. These terms all refer to the same group, so it is appropriate to read any evidence that uses any of those names.

Chances are, you have already heard much discussion of this group in the news. However, you may not be completely clear on who exactly they are, how they differ from other insurgent groups, and the history behind the situation unfolding now. In the interest of space, we won’t be going over all of that in this guide. It is advisable to be fluent in background information before you begin debates on this topic, though. The [ISIL Wikipedia page](#) is a pretty good place to start.

Finally, we must consider the phrase “**best interest of the United States.**” This is a nebulous term that allows a significant degree of flexibility. The pro may choose to argue that it refers only to America’s national security and direct material interests, in competition with other states, as supported by [realist IR theory](#). Under this interpretation, only impacts that advance America’s global power, wealth, and status would be relevant.

On the other hand, other pro teams may prefer to broaden their definition of what constitutes the interests of the United States. They might argue that spreading peace, democracy, human rights, etc. are in America’s interest, even if these things don’t necessarily have direct material consequences for



the United States itself. They might support this using ideas like [democratic peace theory](#), and/or discuss the importance of global economic security and prosperity, and/or discuss the importance of respect for universal human rights, and/or any number of other options.

Which way you choose to interpret “best interest of the United States” is up to you, but make sure to clearly define it in your first speech, and stick with that interpretation throughout the debate. You should take care to always weigh all impacts through the lens of your definition of this term.

So, the topic as a whole is asking us to debate whether or not it would be beneficial (in some way) for the United States to send our military into a direct physical battle with ISIL’s fighters. While (as previously mentioned) it could be possible to bend the resolution in a different direction, we are going to explore just this core topical question.

Before moving on to strategic considerations, I want to provide a little **background**. In the status quo (at time of publishing) the US is not currently engaging in ground combat operations. However, the US military is participating in airstrikes against ISIL, and may have conducted a number of special operations. President Obama has requested Congress pass an AUMF for combatting ISIL, but so far (again, at time of publishing) no such legislation has been passed. However, the Obama administration is justifying current operations using an existing AUMF initiated under President Bush in the wake of 9/11, which gives the president broad authority to combat al Qaeda. [This justification is controversial](#), since ISIL arose from al Qaeda, but is not precisely the same group. The new AUMF, if passed, would not invoke a large-scale ground war (as discussed above), but it’s important to note that it also does not specifically *disallow* one.



To repeat an instruction frequent readers are probably tired of hearing me say by now: debaters are encouraged to get a good handle on the background information pertinent to this topic, and to stay abreast of the news. International conflicts, and nations' responses to them, can and do change on a daily basis. The easiest way to beat your opponent is almost always to *know more than they do*.

Now, let's get into the **substance** of this topic.

On the **pro**, there will be 3 main things you need to win: (1) ISIL poses some kind of threat to America's interests, (2) committing troops reduces this threat, (3) this outweighs any other concerns raised by the con.

On the **con**, it is possible to win by undercutting any of the 3 pro burdens listed above. You can say America's interests are not at risk, or that committing troops fails to solve (or perhaps even worsens) threats, or that America's interests are more substantially threatened by committing troops than they are by staying out. In this sense, it may be easier to be con on this topic. You will likely have more strategic flexibility.



The most obvious argument for the pro to make is that ISIL represents a direct threat to America's national security, and thus must be destroyed. Not only do they aim to kill Americans and our allies, but they also provide safe-havens for the growth of terrorist cells. Here is **evidence** supporting that claim:

(Colin Dueck & Roger Zakheim, associate prof. at George Mason University & former deputy staff director and general counsel on the House Armed Services Committee and visiting fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, The National Interest, "Unleashed: America must pummel ISIS," <http://www.nationalinterest.org/feature/unleashed-america-must-pummel-isis-12457?page=3>, 3/21/2015)

ISIS cannot be contained, because as its leaders and followers have made very clear, they aim at continuing violent attacks on the citizens of the United States and its allies. The containment of the USSR worked only insofar as Soviet leaders wished to preserve nuclear-armed peace with the United States. ISIS has no interest in any such peace. It will attack until it is destroyed.

An effective U.S. strategy would therefore not only verbalize the destruction of ISIS as a fitting end goal, as Obama has, but implement that goal with some seriousness—and this Obama has not done.

The concern of many is that a U.S.-backed ground war against it, is precisely what ISIS wants—that these sickening videos of beheadings, for example, are deliberately intended to provoke Americans into a ground campaign that then becomes another "bleeding war" by violent jihadists against U.S. forces in the region. Skeptics of intervention against ISIS, including the president, further suggest this will be yet another mistake America—and specifically, Republicans—made in Iraq during 2003.

This is certainly a legitimate concern, but the answer to it is the following. Of course ISIS hopes to defeat the U.S., by whatever tactic it can imagine. But ISIS may get more than it bargained for. The lesson of Iraq 2003 is not that the U.S. must avoid overseas interventions regardless of circumstance. Rather, the proper lesson is that having undertaken a military campaign, as a matter of life and death, it is absolutely incumbent to get it right. Prudence in such matters requires taking great care before intervening, but then doing so, once settled, with full capability, competence, decision and determination. Since Obama incorrectly believes prudence and whole-heartedness to be incompatible in military affairs, he does not understand this simple truth, and probably never will.



In one international crisis after another, Obama operates on the premise that if only the U.S. holds back from robust action, others will step up to fill the gap and promote American interests. After six years of experimentation, we have learned the untruth of this assumption. Iraq's Sunni Arabs do not yearn to be ruled by ISIS. They do however fear ISIS, and they cannot stand up to ISIS without some outside material support. Sunni Arab forces from outside Iraq can and should provide that support. But again, U.S. allies in the region are not impressed when the White House talks yet refuses to get skin in the game. Local populations will rally only if ISIS is physically defeated. And one indispensable actor in ensuring that defeat is the United States of America. This is not simply a matter of regional interests. It's a matter of U.S. interests, because ISIS threatens and kills Americans, as well as threatening regional stability.

A whole-hearted and genuinely prudent campaign against ISIS is not impossible. Thoughtful non-partisan experts in strategy such as Steven Metz of the U.S. Army War College have suggested the United States could participate in a punitive ground expedition against ISIS, not to be tied down in endless nation-building, but to batter ISIS and then withdraw major American combat units.

Obviously this would require extremely careful thought as to what follows any subsequent U.S. drawdown. The outcome of U.S.-backed intervention cannot be simply to empower Shia militias, allied as they are to Iran and hated by Sunni Arabs. Nor is it likely that Iraq is suddenly about to become a flourishing, peaceful, multi-ethnic democracy. We should make no such promises. But from an American point of view, the chief purpose of a U.S.-backed ground campaign would be to push ISIS back from holding vast amounts of territory in the heart of the Middle East that today function as a safe haven for terrorist attacks on the United States and its allies.

The U.S. and its allies can and should initiate a truly serious campaign against ISIS by providing more weapons to Iraq's Kurds, increasing material support for Jordan, and making it clear to regional actors that if they provide tacit support to ISIS there will be a price.

This will further require a much more fully resourced effort to train, advise and assist Iraqi government forces. The U.S. ground component will need to be considerably enhanced - not on the scale of previous wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, but at least sufficient to back up Special Operations. Larger ground raids and assaults against ISIS will sometimes be appropriate. The CIA and other American intelligence capabilities should certainly be unleashed.



U.S. airstrikes could also be considerably more devastating, to pin ISIS down, disrupt its supplies, and keep it off balance. The administration likes to tout the number of air sorties conducted thus far against the Islamic State. These numbers appear intended mainly to impress people who do not really know what an air sortie is. In truth, the U.S. air campaign against ISIS has operated under excessive, unnecessary, and sometimes even absurd restrictions, insisted upon by the White House. U.S. Special Operations forces need to be empowered to call in American airpower against ISIS. They need to be able to operate on the front line in combat, to maximize their effect. If Canada can do this—and it is—then so can the United States.

Altogether, the U.S. and its allies need to bring overwhelming force to bear at key locations to literally destroy the forces of ISIS. We should fully expect the Islamic State to utilize every diabolical tactic it possesses, including terrorism and civilian human shields, to try to frustrate the U.S. and its allies. ISIS' forces will use irregular tactics from the very beginning, and increasingly so as they are set back and displaced.

The operation will be complicated and protracted. But throughout its long history, the United States has never avoided difficult military operations simply by refusing to plan for them. Let's listen to the professional military, and get this right for once. This is a mission that our national security demands, it is what our military is trained to do—what is lacking is the authority to complete the mission. The shadow of Iraq is not grounds for ceding swaths of territory to ISIS, nor should we delude ourselves into believing that deploying brigade combat teams translates into a military occupation. Such cloudy and specious reasoning is dangerous.

With this kind of argument, how ISIL affects US interests is obvious. As previously discussed, some other impacts might be a bit more subtle.



Another reason why ISIL must be defeated is their gross violations of human rights. The UN has released a report accusing them of genocide, torture, enslavement, rape, and more. Here is **evidence**:

*(Washington Post, "Mass grave found as UN says IS group suspected of genocide,"
http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/un-cites-alleged-war-crimes-genocide-by-islamic-state-group/2015/03/19/c0d16266-ce31-11e4-8730-4f473416e759_story.html,
3/19/2015)*

More than a dozen bodies were unearthed from a mass grave near the northern Iraqi city of Tikrit on Thursday, as a new U.N. report said Islamic State militants may have committed genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity during their rampage across the country.

The grim discovery and the report's findings -- detailing mass killings, torture and rape -- raised fears that more atrocities could be uncovered as Iraqi security forces and Shiite militias claw back territory from the extremist group.

Iraqi authorities in Salahuddin province unearthed 13 bodies in the district of al-Boajeel, east of the city of Tikrit, where security forces and Shiite militias are engaged in a large-scale offensive against the militants. Associated Press video shows police digging up bodies and loading them onto trucks in plastic bags.

A government official and a senior military official told the AP that an investigation is underway to identify the dead. They said the site is not believed to be linked to the mass killing last summer of captured Iraqi soldiers from Camp Speicher, a nearby military base. The militant group had released photos of the soldiers being lined up in front of shallow trenches and shot dead.

The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief media.

Iraqi troops backed by powerful Shiite militias are currently in a holding position on the edges of Tikrit as they wait for any remaining civilians to leave before pushing toward the center of the city. The Islamic State group captured Tikrit and Iraq's second largest city Mosul during its rapid advance across north and west in June. The extremists now rule a vast area straddling the Syria-Iraq border in which they have imposed a harsh version of Islamic law and beheaded and massacred their opponents.

The U.N. report, published by the Human Rights Office, draws on the testimony of 100 people who survived attacks by the militant group in Iraq between June 2014 and last month. The accounts detail killings, torture, rape and sexual slavery, forced religious conversions and the conscription of children.



The report also details alleged crimes committed against Iraq's minority Yazidi community, viewed as apostates by the Islamic State extremists. The report said that when the militants captured Yazidis they killed the men and enslaved women and children. Witnesses said militants raped children as young as six, and women interviewed by the U.N. said they were raped, impregnated and given abortions by Islamic State doctors.

Iraqi and Kurdish officials say the extremist group has captured hundreds of Yazidi women. In a recent issue of the Islamic State group's online magazine the militants boasted of enslaving them.

As callous as it might seem, though, this topic concerns only American interests. So, in order to make arguments about human rights, you will need to establish how violations abroad affect the United States.

One way to do so is to argue that human rights violations threaten American national security. The argument here is that states that abuse their own citizens are much more likely to commit acts of aggression against the United States directly. Additionally, they are also more likely to generate ever more intractable conflicts that America will eventually have to get involved in—conflicts that would be much more costly than a ground operation now.



Here is some **evidence**:

(William W. Burke-White, Lecturer in Public and International Affairs and Senior Special Assistant to the Dean at the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Princeton University and Ph.D. from Cambridge, "Human Rights and National Security: The Strategic Correlation", The Harvard Human Rights Journal, Spring, 249, Lexis)

For most of the past fifty years, U.S. foreign policymakers have largely viewed the promotion of human rights anti the protection of national security as in inherent tension. Almost without exception, each administration has treated the two goals as mutually exclusive: promote human rights at the expense of national security or protect national security while overlooking international human rights. While U.S. policymakers have been motivated at times by human rights concerns, such concerns have generally been subordinate to national security. For example, President Bush's 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy speaks of a "commitment to protecting basic human rights." In the same document, President Bush makes it clear that "defending our Nation against its enemies is the first and fundamental commitment of the Federal Government."¹ This subordination of human rights to national security is both unnecessary and strategically questionable. A more effective U.S. foreign policy would view human rights and national security as correlated and complementary goals. Better protection of human rights around the world would make the United States safer and more secure. The United States needs to restructure its foreign policy accordingly. This Article presents a strategic—as opposed to ideological or normative—argument that the promotion of human rights should be given a more prominent place in U.S. foreign policy. It does so by suggesting *a correlation between the domestic human rights practices of states and their propensity to engage in aggressive international conduct.* Among the chief threats to U.S. national security are acts of aggression by other states. Aggressive acts of war may directly endanger the United States, as did the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941, or they may require U.S. military action overseas, as in Kuwait fifty years later. Evidence from the post-Cold War period indicates that states that systematically abuse their own citizens' human rights are also those most likely to engage in aggression. To the degree that improvements in various states' human rights records decrease the likelihood of aggressive war, a foreign policy informed by human



rights can significantly enhance U.S. and global security. Since 1990, a state's domestic human rights policy appears to be a telling indicator of that state's propensity to engage in *international aggression*. A central element of U.S. foreign policy has long been the preservation of peace and the prevention of such acts of aggression. If the correlation discussed herein is accurate, it provides U. S. policymakers with a powerful new tool to enhance national security through the promotion of human rights. A strategic linkage between national security and human rights would result in a number of important policy modifications. First, it changes the prioritization of those countries U.S. policymakers have identified as presenting the greatest concern. Second, it alters some of the policy prescriptions for such states. Third, it offers states a means of signaling benign international intent through the improvement of their domestic human rights records. Fourth, it provides a way for a current government to prevent future governments from aggressive international behavior through the institutionalization of human rights protections. Fifth, it addresses the particular threat of human rights abusing states obtaining *weapons of mass destruction (WMD)*. Finally, it offers a mechanism for U.S.-U.N. cooperation on human rights issues.

Another way pro teams might choose to link human rights violations to United States interests is by making arguments about international credibility and human rights leadership. Essentially, as the argument goes, we have to fight against horrific abuses such as those ISIL is committing, or other nations' trust in our ability to lead will be eroded, and we will not be able to lead the international discourse on human rights. US leadership on human rights is good for a number of reasons, including democracy promotion, security, and economic interests, as well as the intrinsic value of stopping atrocities.



Here is **evidence**:

(Brian Griffey, human rights consultant who has worked for the United Nations, Human Rights Watch, & Amnesty International USA, The Hill, "U.S. leadership on human rights essential to strengthen democracy abroad," <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/150667-us-leadership-on-human-rights-essential-to-strengthen-democracy-abroad>, 3/18/2011)

Nonetheless, U.S. leadership on human rights offers clear opportunities to advance not only international peace and security – a fundamental purpose of the U.N. – but also conjoined US political and economic interests at home and abroad.

The U.S. is presently demonstrating exactly how crucial such involvement is as an elected member of the Human Rights Council, participating in vital negotiations on how best to mitigate widespread abuses responding to ongoing unrest in the Middle East and North Africa, including by strategic US allies in global security and trade.

As Secretary Clinton expressed en route to Geneva to participate in recent talks on human rights violations in Libya, joining the Council has "proven to be a good decision, because we've been able to influence a number of actions that we otherwise would have been on the outside looking in."

In its first submission to the body, the U.S. likewise recognized that participation in the Council's peer-review system allows the U.S. not only to lead by example and "encourage others to strengthen their commitments to human rights," but also to address domestic human rights shortcomings.

By leading international discourse on human rights, the U.S. will be in a better position both to advance observation of human rights abroad, and to take on new treaty commitments that demonstrate adherence of our own system to the vaulting principles we identify with our democracy.

While the U.S. is party to more than 12,000 treaties, it has dodged most human rights treaties drafted since World War II through the U.N., and has ratified only a dozen.



Upon transmission of four core human rights treaties to the Senate in 1978, President Carter observed: “Our failure to become a party increasingly reflects upon our attainments, and prejudices United States participation in the development of the international law of human rights.”

The Senate ratified two of those treaties 15 years later. The others continue to languish in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, still awaiting ratification after 32 years. It likewise took the Senate almost 40 years to approve a treaty punishing genocide, after signing it in 1948 following the Holocaust.

Other human rights treaties U.S. presidents have signed – but the Senate has yet to agree to – include U.N. conventions protecting the rights of women, children, and persons with disabilities.

The U.S. is the only nation in the world that hasn’t ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child, with the exception of war-torn Somalia, which lacks a functioning government and control over much of its territory.

As we watch the contours and nature of power being reshaped in the Middle East and North Africa, the U.S. must have a singular message on human rights – both at home and abroad:

Human rights go hand-in-hand with a healthy democracy, and demand a concerted and collective effort to be upheld, especially in times of crisis.



Finally, here is a piece of **evidence** that discusses how ISIL impacts American interests as well as commits horrific atrocities against others. It draws a Nazi analogy, which (for once!) seems pretty apt:

(David Coates, Worrell professor of Anglo-American studies at Wake Forest University department of politics, The Huffington Post, "Weighing the arguments on US military action against ISIS," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-coates/weighing-the-arguments-on_b_6830606.html, 3/9/15)

so why should the US military be engaged in a sustained air campaign against ISIS strongholds in Syria and Iraq? The official justification for that engagement was the one given by the President in his September address launching the anti-ISIS coalition and announcing limited military action in the Middle East. It was that "if unchecked, these terrorists could pose a growing threat beyond that region - including to the United States. While we have not yet detected specific plotting against our homeland," Barack Obama told his national audience, "ISIL leaders have threatened America and our allies" and "posed a threat to the people of Iraq and Syria, and the broader Middle East - including American citizens, personnel and facilities." Hence our determination "to degrade and ultimately destroy" ISIS.

Behind those generalities stand at least these six specific reasons for military action against the Islamic State.

*ISIS constitutes a new level of horror. This threat is not like any other. It is even more barbaric than al Qaeda before it. If unchallenged, its regimen of beheadings, burnings and crucifixions will take us all back into the worst practices of the Middle Ages. As the President put it in that September address: "In a region that has known so much bloodshed, these terrorists are unique in their brutality." Or, to follow Graeme Wood in his recent influential [article](#) in *The Atlantic*: the "fighters of the Islamic State" are "authentic throwbacks to early Islam and are faithfully reproducing its norms of war" (which happen to include "slavery, crucifixion and beheadings.") Something uniquely nasty is afoot in the world - something not really seen since the 1930s and the Nazis, and something that has already taken American lives in a grotesque way - something that needs to be dealt with effectively and with all due speed.*

ISIS is determined to build a caliphate. That affects directly the interests of more moderate Arabic forces that are allies of ours. It even threatens non-Arabic countries way beyond its



borders. As Graeme Wood said in that Atlantic article, ISIS "already rules an area larger than the United Kingdom," and if his reporting is right, because it is a caliphate, "It has already taken up what Islamic law refers to as 'offensive jihad,' the forcible expansion into countries that are ruled by non-Muslims." "Following takfiri doctrine," Wood argues, 'the Islamic State is committed to purifying the world by killing vast numbers of people.' If true, the parallels with Hitler - which Wood draws - are obvious, and the required response equally unavoidable.

Con teams really only have one option for impact defense on this topic—they can say “ISIL is not a threat to American national security.” It is possible to find cards suggesting ISIL is unlikely to attack the U.S. on American soil. However, smart pros will not need to win that such an attack will occur in order to win that ISIL’s defeat is in America’s best interest. For this reason, I would advise cons to develop their key arguments elsewhere.

Instead, con teams are better off attacking the second part of the pro’s burden: that committing US ground forces would help the situation. This is the most fertile ground for con attacks.



One option for the con is to argue that ground troops are not needed, because US drones alone are capable of defeating ISIL. Here is a compelling piece of **evidence** on how the battle might be won without putting any boots on the ground:

(Arthur Herman & William Luti, senior fellow at Hudson Institute & VP at Hudson Institute and former special assistant to President G.W. Bush for defense policy and strategy, Defense One, "How America's drones can defeat ISIS," <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2015/03/how-americas-drones-can-defeat-isis/107565/?oref=d-skybox>, 3/15/2015)

Critics inside and outside the Pentagon have repeatedly warned that our current limited use of air power makes that goal virtually impossible to achieve. But too little credit has been given to the success of America's drone fleet against ISIS so far, and too little has been said about the kind of sustained drone mission that is needed going forward to secure U.S. gains against ISIS.

Indeed, in five months of bombing by U.S. and allied air forces have run on average five to 10 sorties a day against ISIS targets. That's barely a pinprick compared to the more than 1,100 sorties per day conducted during Desert Storm, or even the 87 per day U.S. Central Command ran during Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan.

Yet here Carter will face a painful dilemma. On one hand, increasing the number of air strikes by F-16s and F-18s also increases the chances of a plane being shot down or experiencing mechanical failure. It also risks an American being captured and facing the same horrific fate as Jordanian pilot Maaz al-Kasasbeh. The other alternative—sending large numbers of American ground troops into a country where the United States already sacrificed more than 4,400 lives—is even more unpalatable.

Fortunately, Carter will have at hand the perfect tool for delivering a series of mortal blows against ISIS without putting a single American soldier on the ground: America's fleet of unmanned aerial vehicles, or UAV's.

Of course, UAV's now fly routinely over the ISIS battlefield conducting reconnaissance and combat. However, instead of launching occasional missile strikes as they do now, the key to defeating ISIS must be a systematic and sustained drone air campaign in support of Kurdish and Iraqi forces—in effect a high-tech upgrading of a



proven battlefield strategy first employed by George Patton’s Third Army during World War II and by U.S. Marines in Korea.

This unmanned air campaign—the first in history—would use the deadly and precise firepower of our UAV fleet to find, fix and devastate ISIS troops, vehicles and buildings on a 24/7 basis, so that Kurdish Peshmerga and other troops can advance and retake cleared territory.

Something similar happened more recently, almost by accident, in Kosovo in 1999, when persistent NATO air strikes so cleared away Serbian resistance that Kosovar militias were able to come down from surrounding hills and retake lost ground. In Iraq and Syria, the first step would be to increase to at least 10 the number of GPS-guided round-the-clock orbits used by UAV’s covering ISIS strongholds. This would enable UAV reconnaissance craft like the Global Hawk and Sentinel, and armed drones like the Predator and Reaper, to enter the battle space in numbers large enough (for example, 30 to 40 at a time) for systematic and unrelenting air strikes.

Second, U.S. special operations teams with Global Hawks and Sentinels would then search out and identify suitable targets in those ISIS concentrated areas.

Third, since ISIS lacks any sophisticated air defense system or any other way to challenge unmanned air supremacy, dozens of armed drones could enter the air space at 15-20,000 feet—above ground fire weaponry but low enough for precision target identification and strike— and in coordination with Kurdish and Iraqi security forces strike at those targets at will, without letting up, day and night.

Finally, as ISIS is steadily degraded by the unrelenting unmanned air strikes, Iraqi security forces with American advisors will be able to move up and regain cleared ground. Then special operations forces would help the next echelon of reconnaissance UAV’s to identify brand-new enemy concentrations, even as the UAV strike fleet rearms for battle—and the cycle begins again.



The UAV air campaign option is particularly attractive because it uses these aircraft's most important virtues: their round-the-clock situational awareness, their persistent flight time (an armed Reaper can stay aloft 27 hours without refueling compared to a couple of hours for a typical F-16 sortie), their capacity for sudden precise strike and maneuver with 16 Hellfire missiles or four 500-lb. bombs for every Reaper.

Perhaps just as importantly, they are entirely expendable if they crash or are shot down—while their operators are safe far from the battlefield.

A systematic air campaign also can quickly clear the way for relief workers to move freely into liberated areas and offer help to refugees like the Izidis. Indeed, in a matter of weeks most would be able to return home as the dangers of an Islamist victory fade—and the destruction of ISIS forces becomes a reality.

Far from being a Jules Verne fantasy, the technology for such a campaign is all but ready to deploy. By using it, Carter could guarantee the defeat of ISIS and save thousands of lives. By giving UAV's the mission of defeating a conventional armed enemy on the battlefield for the first time in history, he will also change the face of modern war.



Another option for the con is to suggest that armies of Middle Eastern nations should lead the fight, with the US simply providing intelligence and support, but not combat troops. Here is **evidence** describing one such proposal, along with another useful argument—that the US sending forces into the fray is exactly what ISIL wants, so we shouldn't give it to them:

(John B. Alexander, Ph.D., retired senior military officer and retired Los Alamos National Laboratory, Huffington Post, "Defeating ISIS without American ground forces," http://www.huffingtonpost.com/john-b-alexander-phd/defeating-isis-american-forces_b_6739138.html, 2/23/15)

While ISIS can, and must, be defeated as soon as possible, it is wrong to suggest that America should lead the fight. In fact, it must be done without further U.S. ground units as even the threat of intervention by American troops plays directly into the enemy's strategy. Psychologically attuned and media savvy, ISIS employs tactics specifically designed to push Western emotional hot-buttons and are used with the sole purpose to draw us further into the fray. Unfortunately, we continually play their game thus exacerbating the situation and assisting in their sophisticated recruitment efforts.

The first step is to acknowledge that this is a religious war, albeit predominantly intra-Islamic in nature. It is most important to note that it is those nations in the region that have the most to lose if ISIS continues its barbaric aggression. Thousands of Muslims have been ruthlessly slaughtered while only a handful of foreigners have died, albeit in very high profile cases.

Therefore, this war must be fought by the Islamic nations of the Middle East. Strategically, there is both a long and short game, and it may take intervention by strange and uncomfortable bedfellows to accomplish the mission.

To understand the issues, a great description of the threat is found in Graeme Wood's article "What ISIS Really Wants," published this week in *The Atlantic*. Two critical issues stand out. First, in order to establish their caliphate, ISIS must hold territory. The second is their apocalyptic vision; one that anticipates near extermination of their fighters before final victory. Rather than fearing death, as do most Westerners, ISIS combatants view it as a reward. While acknowledging you cannot kill an idea, the requirement to hold land is the Achilles heel of ISIS. What can be done is to physically eliminate the ISIS occupation of all lands they have subjugated. Air power alone is insufficient and waiting to retrain the Iraqi army requires too much time.



As an alternative, a coalition of ground forces from Islamic countries should be established to completely defeat all ISIS elements. Over the past decades the U.S. and our European allies have spent billions of dollars equipping and training many of the military forces of the region. Egypt has over 460,000 active duty troops and the second largest armored force in the region.

Traditionally oriented to the east, they currently are not under threat from Israel and could send divisions west into Libya to overwhelm and destroy the ISIS threat in Northern Africa. From the south, Jordan has an active duty force of over 90,000 with 12 tank battalions and 10 mechanized infantry battalions. They have already joined the air campaign and are plagued by huge numbers of refugees. On the north, Turkey, with at least 43 combat regiments, has sat idly on the sidelines and watched ISIS come to their borders. They too have been impacted by refugees fleeing ISIS.

Iraq must be prepared to accept assistance from old enemies. Iran, a predominantly Shia nation, has more than half a million troops including nearly 3,000 tanks and armored fighting vehicles that could provide a formidable force. They have already engaged ISIS with air power and created some interesting and counter-intuitive command, control and coordination problems. The UAE, while smaller, has contributed air power. They could send some of their armored brigades as well. Then too there is Saudi Arabia with an armored force of well over 6,000 fighting vehicles. Although Sunni, the Saudi Arabian rulers are viewed as apostates by ISIS and thus it poses a direct threat to them.

Acknowledging the enormity and complexity of the existing geopolitical circumstances in that volatile area, the ISIS threat is sufficiently grave to each and every participant that accommodations could be worked out. It is not necessary for all of the nations to participate. However, they are all at risk and have domestic stability issues. Destroying this incipient nominal caliphate will aid their internal equilibrium. Recognizing there are disaffected elements in most countries in the Middle East, ISIS is only a real danger as long as they have the perceived legitimacy that comes with holding territory. With that coveted space eliminated, potential recruits have no place to go and can be



dealt with individually which is far less dangerous than engaging a modestly cohesive body that ISIS now provides.

Another important step should be for the U.S., and every other Western country, to terminate the passports of anyone who has joined ISIS. The idea that we allow citizens to actively engage in terrorism or war with ISIS and then return home is specious. We probably cannot stop all potential recruits from going, but we can make it a one-way trip.

The U.S. should not lead this inevitable conflict and we must resist the urge to do so. With unparalleled intelligence capabilities we can provide an Islamic coalition with a vastly enhanced advantage. Additional logistical support can be afforded. Our domestic efforts should be focused on countering ISIS recruitment and eliminating any residual threats that may have been imported already. The bottom line is we need to transition the fight to an Islamic military coalition and have no American combat units on the ground.

Here is more **evidence** that explains why American ground intervention is exactly what ISIL wants, and adds some helpful analysis about how US ground troops may actually inflame the situation and make things much worse:

(Ali Mamouri, researcher & professor on religious affairs, societal transformations, and sectarianism in the Middle East, Al Monitor, "IS eager to confront US ground forces in Iraq," <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/03/iraq-islamic-state-ain-al-asad-us-ground-forces.html#>, 3/4/15)

Since first seizing Iraqi territory in June 2014, the Islamic State (IS) has carefully selected targets based on a strategic vision of the regional conflict and global repercussions, often broadcasting its intentions in videos released online. Chief among the messages related to its vision and



battlefield goals is a call for direct confrontation with the United States on the territory of Muslim countries, directly challenging President Barack Obama and emphasizing points that draw attention to the American presence in Iraq.

In one of its first media productions after taking control of Mosul, IS announced its goal of creating a new Middle East by wiping away the recognized borders of the current nation-states. It did so by proclaiming the annulment of the Sykes-Picot agreement and eliminating the boundary between Iraq and Syria. It also declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate to which all Muslims supposedly belonged.

Subsequently, the IS member who was videotaped beheading captured foreigners addressed Obama directly in the recorded killings, even before the United States assembled an international coalition to conduct military operations against the group, launching its first strikes Sept. 19, 2014. Before killing a Kurdish captive in late January this year, the executioner announced that IS would slaughter Obama in the White House and turn the United States into a “Muslim province.”

IS has insisted on framing the current conflict as a struggle between Islam and the West, invoking the word “crusaders” to refer to Westerners. In a video posted Feb. 15 showing the mass beheadings of kidnapped Egyptian Copts, the narrator links the killing of the Christians to the death of Osama bin Laden at the hands of US commandos and vows to mix their blood with the sea in which they disposed of bin Laden's body.

On Feb. 12, IS fighters had attacked Ain al-Asad, a base west of Ramadi in Anbar province. It is Iraq's largest military base and the site at which more than 300 US Marines are training Iraqi military and security forces for the fight against IS. The attack was the first IS offensive after a lull of two months. The offensive began after Obama's request to Congress the preceding day to authorize an expansion of the fight against IS by sending “limited” ground troops to Iraq. Perhaps the attack was in part aimed at inflaming US public opinion and prompting Congress to vote in favor of the proposal,



thus opening the door to possible direct confrontation with broader US participation in the fighting.

Although Iraqi forces protecting the base repelled the attack, IS troops remained nearby, in the city of al-Baghdadi, some five kilometers (3 miles) away. Fighting continued in al-Baghdadi, with IS in control of most of the city and besieging the rest. IS' capture of the city exposes Ain al-Asad to continuous threat.

IS appears to be planning, or hoping, to challenge the United States in a ground fight in the vast areas of Iraq and Syria. IS believes that no matter how strong and numerous US regular forces are, they will not be able to win against its trained irregular fighters who have been

confronting Iraqi forces in northwestern Iraq. The organization wants a repeat of the battle of Fallujah in 2004, when the United States failed to overwhelm the militia fighters in the city and lost a number of Marines before retreating. With the quantitative and qualitative progress it has made, IS envisions causing even greater losses among US troops.

Direct participation by US forces in a war against IS would be used to provide legitimacy to IS propaganda portraying the fighting as evidence of the ongoing Western crusade against Islam.

This could help the group mobilize more supporters in majority Muslim countries and among Muslim communities in the West. It could also help expand the combat zone by activating IS cells to carry out attacks in the West and eventually lead Western states to withdraw from the region, enabling IS to impose its will.

Additional US troops might also result in confrontations with pro-Iranian Shiite militias, as Iraqis allied with Iran oppose the presence of US ground forces in the country. Some Iraqi parties have been

spreading conspiracy theories about US planes airdropping food aid and gear to IS forces based on one incident of a delivery of supplies to Kurdish peshmerga inadvertently ending up in IS hands. The Hezbollah Brigades, a Shiite militia, even went so far as to announce "its intention to target US helicopters providing IS elements with weapons, gear and food by using advanced anti-helicopter missiles across the military fronts facing IS."

No quick or definitive solution to the problem of IS appears to be on the horizon. The eventual resolution of the crisis must, however, involve some sort of agreement among regional powers and the US-led international coalition. Meanwhile, the United States sending ground troops to Iraq unilaterally will likely only contribute to deepening and expanding the chaos.



The pro, of course, will want to argue that a conventional ground offensive is necessary to defeat ISIL. Here is **evidence** on that:

(Max Boot, Jeane H. Kirkpatrick senior fellow in national security studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, Newsweek, "ISIS can only be defeated by boots on the ground," <http://www.newsweek.com/isis-can-only-be-defeated-boots-ground-311177>, 3/3/15)

ISIS, in short, is in the process of making a very unusual transition, going from a terrorist organization to a state of sorts with a burgeoning conventional army. While some guerrilla groups have made this transformation in the past—the Red Army of Mao Zedong and the Vietnam of Ho Chi Minh are prime examples—only one other terrorist organization has so far pulled off this feat.

That would be Hezbollah, which is in many ways ISIS's mirror image—an extremist Shiite group that began by carrying out suicide bombings in Lebanon in the early 1980s and now exerts control over the entire Lebanese state and fields its own army equipped with more than 50,000 rockets and missiles. Hezbollah pulled off this accomplishment with considerable support from Iran; indeed it is a virtual adjunct of Iran's Quds Force. ISIS is, in many ways, even more impressive (or dismaying) for having attained its success without any serious state sponsorship.

What this means is that low-level counter-terrorist operations, consisting of dropping bombs on a few selected leaders, will not succeed in defeating ISIS, any more than Israel succeed in defeating Hezbollah by killing its previous secretary-general in 1992.

ISIS has grown strong enough that it will need to be defeated by a conventional offensive, whether by the U.S. military or by American allies in the region. The good news: As Graeme Wood has argued in *The Atlantic*, because so much of ISIS's legitimacy depends on controlling its self-proclaimed caliphate, the loss of territorial control would be far more devastating to ISIS than it would be for a smaller, less ambitious terrorist organization.



Additionally, the pro needs to win that this ground offensive should be led by US forces, rather than some other actor. Here is **evidence** arguing that the US must intervene, because regional forces are too weak and inexperienced to achieve victory:

(Bobby Ghosh, managing editor & seasoned writer on war and terrorism, former writer for Time, Far Eastern Economic Review, BusinessWorld, etc., Quartz, “Let’s not kid ourselves: Arab armies are not going to defeat ISIL,” <http://qz.com/348737/lets-not-kid-ourselves-arab-armies-are-not-going-to-defeat-isil/>, 2/23/15)

Many in the West will take heart from the news that Egypt’s dictator, Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, is calling for a joint Arab military force to take on Islamist extremism in the region. Coming shortly after his air force carried out bombing runs in Libya against groups that have pledged fealty to ISIL, it is tempting to take Sisi’s proclamation as a call to arms against the monstrous terrorist organization that calls itself the Islamic State. It raises the prospect of Arab boots on the ground in Syria and Iraq, taking on, with the help of Western planes and drones—
ISIL.

Ready for the reality check?

It is one thing for the Egyptian air force to bomb ISIL—aka ISIS—from the air. But when it comes to ground troops, the ability of Arab militaries to fight an organized, motivated enemy is highly suspect. (That may explain why, only last week, Sisi was calling for a United Nations force to bring order to Libya.)

It has been decades since the Egyptian military has fought a full-fledged war, and the last time it was deployed in another Arab country—in Yemen in the 1960s—it was humiliated. Since then, Egypt’s rulers have used their army mainly to bully and beat up unarmed civilians protesting against oppression, and to fight homegrown terrorist groups in the Sinai Peninsula. They’ve been pretty good at the former, but not especially effective at the latter. Despite official claims of successes in the Sinai, terrorists attacks have been on the rise, and it is a bad sign that the Sisi regime feels it necessary to exercise strict censorship on reporting from the peninsula.



If Egypt's recent track record is dismal, the history of Arab military cooperation isn't especially reassuring, either. Some Western analysts hope that the GCC Peninsula Shield, a 40,000-strong force made up of countries in the Persian Gulf, can be brought to bear against ISIL. But like the Egyptian military, this mini-military was built mainly to protect Gulf regimes from internal political unrest. The Peninsula Force was most recently deployed in Bahrain in 2011, to stamp down civilian rallies against the royal family.

It's worth remembering, too, that one of the most powerful Arab militaries—Syria's—has been fighting against ISIL for nigh on four years. The forces of Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad enjoy home-field advantage, and are not restrained by any concern for civilian casualties or such niceties as the Geneva conventions. Assad's planes and tanks have flattened entire towns and cities, and still have failed to defeat ISIL, much less recover territory under the terrorists' control.

The other Arab military in the war against ISIL, Iraq's, seems to be leaving the hardest fighting to Kurdish militias and Iran-backed Shi'ite gangs. Last week, as the Pentagon talked up an Iraqi-led, US-guided offensive against Mosul, many Iraqi leaders were skeptical that their troops would be ready.

None of this is to suggest that the fight against ISIL will not require Arab military involvement—it will. But just as in the current air campaign against the terrorists in Syria and Iraq, regional forces can at best be expected to put in a token effort. When the time comes for a ground offensive against ISIL, expect the heavy lifting to be done by battle-hardened Western troops, rather than the tin soldiers who make up most Arab militaries.

Another important question debaters for debaters to grapple with is whether or not the situation is a **quagmire**. Could the US put in ground troops and achieve a quick victory, or would we be staring down yet another endless war in the Middle East?



If the con wins that any ground effort would be a lengthy one, this sets them up to discuss the economic/budgetary problems associated with a protracted military campaign, which we have already seen played out in Iraq and Afghanistan. War is expensive. Wars that last many years are *really* expensive. It may not be in America's interest to spend perhaps billions of dollars on this complicated and seemingly intractable conflict. Beyond that, longer wars lead to the deaths of ever more US soldiers.

Here is **evidence** making that very point. It discusses how the underlying dissatisfaction and instability cannot be resolved militarily, resulting in either failure or more endless nation-building:

(Jim Newell, political analyst & writer, Salon, "ISIS ground war insanity: GOP hopefuls and a new poll- frighten,"

http://www.salon.com/2015/02/20/isis_ground_war_insanity_gop_hopefuls_and_a_new_poll_frighten/, 2/20/15)

In other words, we'll see the war proposal sold, as they always are, as the ever-elusive "short war" or "weekend war." We just send ~10k of our boys in there — into Iraq, into Syria — to kill a bunch of people and then ISIS will be destroyed and the region will be peaceful and we can hightail it out.

Consider Ohio Gov. John Kasich. He's been slow to put together a pre-presidential bid but appears to be getting started with a visit to South Carolina this week. Kasich was a congressman before serving as Ohio governor, so unlike several of the other governors considering running, he has had to think about foreign policy in a professional capacity before. But he admits he's a little rusty and recently has been "studying up on foreign policy and beginning to outline his worldview." As soon as he's finished Outlining His Worldview, he will presumably give a speech Laying Out His Foreign Policy Vision.



In any event, he has studied enough thus far to know that we need to send ground troops into Iraq and Syria to fight a land war against ISIS. But don't worry, he cautions: it's not like such a thing would be difficult:

"It is probably something that can be addressed without an extended affair and without nation-building or any of that," he said.

Yeah, probably. It'll take 72, 96 hours, tops. It won't require any nation-building, either. We can just leave a vacuum there and be certain that it remains a vacuum. American ground troops — a few thou, give or take — can quickly and cleanly solve the long-term problem of regional political disaffection that's fueling ISIS.

This was the sort of oversimplification that helped the Bush administration build strong majority support for the Iraq war at first — until people saw that that was all [expletive] and would actually go on eternally and require many more troops and dollars than estimated.

If a politician really thinks that the United States needs to send in ground troops to stop ISIS from consolidating power and spreading, go ahead and make the arguments, but don't assume that it will be easy to prevent from escalating in troop numbers and duration. How will "victory" be defined? Especially since, just as happened in the Iraq war, terrorists worldwide are going to flock to the front lines as soon as the Americans show up, to get a piece of the action. Et cetera and so on. List the worst-case scenario for such a war. And *then* let's see how it polls.



Here is more **evidence** arguing that the situation can only be stabilized and resolved for the long-term when local forces are able to bear the burden themselves:

(Daniel Halper, The Weekly Standard, "Power: 'Ground Troops Are Necessary' to Defeat ISIS," http://www.weeklystandard.com/blogs/power-ground-troops-are-necessary-defeat-isis_849456.html, 2/12/15)

The U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, says that "ground troops are necessary" to defeat ISIS. "But," Power insisted this morning on MSNBC's *Morning Joe*, "they're not going to be American ground troops."

"The president has been very clear: the form of struggle against ISIL is not going to look like the deployment of thousands of American ground troops and so forth. Right now we do have some troops on the ground but they're performing a training and advising role," said Power.

"Ground troops are necessary but they are not going to be American ground troops. You have to get the Iraqis and ultimately the Syrian moderate opposition groups up so they can fight the fight on the ground. There has to be a fight on the ground. You can't do this by air. Everybody acknowledges that.

"We also saw having deployed so many troops over so many years that unless the Iraqis congeal and have a kind of inclusive political system and have the military capability on the ground, anything we do is going to be stop gap. So it requires more patience and it's really is going to require more time because the troops are not in a state yet to do the full rollback and to sustain the gains that they make. But they have to get there. There's no work around the fact that the Iraqi army has to be the central part of this solution."

Power went on to say that "at this point" she doesn't see a scenerio where American ground troops would need to be in an "enduring" effort to defeat ISIS.



Here is still more **evidence** on the impossibility of resolving the root causes the conflict with military action alone:

(H.A. Goodman, author and journalist who studied International Relations at USC, The Hill, “Why McCain is wrong about sending ground troops to fight ISIS,” <http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/foreign-policy/231170-why-mccain-is-wrong-about-sending-ground-troops-to-fight>, 1/30/15)

However, with all due respect to McCain, he's wrong about sending more Americans into yet another counterinsurgency conflict.

While ISIS might be no match for U.S. ground troops in a conventional battle, the lessons of both Iraq and Afghanistan have taught us that simply winning military engagements won't guarantee an end to the chaos and bloodshed in the region. Counterinsurgency wars aren't pitched battles and according to Daniel Bolger in his book titled *Why We Lost*, “This enemy wasn't amenable to the type of war we're good at fighting, which is a Desert Storm or a Kosovo.”

In his book, General Bolger goes on to state some of the other reasons why we failed to achieve many of our objectives in Iraq:

We then added to our troubles by misusing the U.S. Armed Forces, which are designed, manned, and equipped for short, decisive, conventional conflict. Instead, certain of our tremendously able, disciplined troops, buoyed by dazzling early victories, we backed into not one but two long, indecisive counterinsurgent struggles ill suited to the nature of our forces.

Now, Sen. McCain is calling for more American to be sent to fight ISIS, even though a decade of the Iraq War should have already provided Iraqis with a stable enough government to protect their own country.

Like all counterinsurgency conflicts, especially the one General Bolger writes about, victory lies just as much in a lasting political solution as it does in winning military battles. With ISIS, the U.S. still faces the same Sunni and Shia rivalry that tore apart Iraq. According to Brookings, ISIS is fueled by the sectarian conflict:

This central facet of IS's military strategy aims to spark or sustain sectarian conflict— to “provoke [the Shia] to radicalize, join Iranian-sponsored militias and commit similar atrocities against Sunnis.” With both the Shia-led government in Iraq and the Alawi-led one in Syria perceived as



repressive by many ordinary Sunnis, IS aims to present itself as the protector of true and pure Sunni ideals.

Thus, without a solution to the sectarian violence and animosity between Sunni and Shia in Iraq, no amount of U.S. ground troops will be able to implement a lasting peace. According to the Georgetown Journal of International Affairs, both Iraq's Nouri al-Maliki and Afghanistan's Hamid Karzai utilized U.S. support to further their own political goals rather than ensure American interests.

Who in the Iraqi government does McCain believe will help us alleviate sectarian tensions and Sunni vs. Shia bloodshed in the region?

Similarly, the con may want to argue that the American military is overstretched and/or that soldiers are tired from the last decade of conflict in the Middle East. Impacts here could be anything from hegemony (when we are overstretched, we look weak) to more personal arguments about abusing and overworking soldiers.

The pro, on the other hand, will need to establish that a US ground war would be effective and likely to help the fight against ISIL, or even end it completely.



Here is some **evidence** saying the ground forces will not become enmeshed in a lengthy war, and that the US military has the troops and resources necessary to complete the task:

(John T. Bennett, writer & analyst covering security issues, DefenseNews, "Blumenthal: Only SpecOps troops for IS war," <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/congress/2015/02/18/isis-ground-troops-iraq-syria/23612619/>, 2/18/15)

Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Airland Ranking Member Richard Blumenthal, D-Ct., on Wednesday dismissed any notion that the US military is too worn out after over a decade of war to fight Islamic State.

"As a member of the Armed Services Committee, what I'm hearing is this military is far from exhausted," Blumenthal said on MSNBC's "Morning Joe" program. "We have tremendous resources."

Blumenthal called the US military "ready for this challenge."

But, he said, under the Obama administration's current strategy, only a small fraction of the military actually will participate.

"It's not going to be the same challenge of massive numbers of US combat troops on the ground," he said.

"It's going to the ... special operations in these countries that provide intelligence, that protect American citizens, that enable the kinetic attacks and strikes, and that make sure we're safe in the homeland."

The pro can also use warrants from the "ground war solves" cards provided above to answer con claims about quagmire. They should also weigh their impacts against the impacts associated with lengthy war, and argue that the importance justifies the price tag.



Another significant argument for the pro is that, absent significant US involvement, Iran will become the region's de facto hegemon, which is something that most people agree is very much not in America's interest.

The following **evidence** speaks to this concern, and also counters the claim that it would inevitably be a long, costly war:

(Gary Anderson, retired Marine Corps Colonel with peacekeeping experience in Lebanon and Syria and lecturer at George Washington University's Elliot School of International Affairs, Foreign Policy, "In Tikrit, no matter who wins, we lose," <http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/03/19/in-tikrit-no-matter-who-wins-we-lose/>, 3/19/15)

In the months that we have been halfheartedly attacking the Islamic State, we have waged war in a way that has alarmed our allies to a point where the Iraqis have turned to the Iranians for mentorship. In the meantime, President Obama's tepid strategic approach to war has done the impossible. It has gotten the Middle East's most bitter rivals, Sunni's and Shiites, to agree with their mutual Israeli enemy on one thing, that America's leadership is lacking.

The present Iraqi offensive to retake Saddam Hussein's home town of Tikrit is a good example. The United States is not a part of it. We were not consulted before it started, nor was our air support requested. The attack is being led by Shiite militias effectively commanded by Iranians. By all reports, over two thirds of the forces attacking the city are Shiite non-state actors. If Iraq is not a vassal state of Iran, it is certainly a failed state which will effectively be dominated by Iran if the Shiite led militias triumph. Amazingly, the Obama administration is touting this as a triumph of its strategy to defeat the jihadists. The pig isn't even holding still while the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and his flacks try to paint lipstick on it.



However, it is also possible that the Shiites will bog down into a World War I-like slugging mass in Tikrit. According to Baghdad, there are nearly thirty thousand Iraqi soldiers and militias attacking Tikrit arrayed against a few hundred Islamic State fighters. By all odds, the government and allied forces should win; but if they fail to take the whole city, or if the jihadists turn it into their version of the Alamo, we will likely be blamed for inadequately supporting the government forces which did not ask for our help in the first place. Either way, we lose.

Effectively ceding the war against the Islamic State to Iran is a mistake that will make Iran the Mid-East's de facto hegemon and virtually ensure a regional Sunni-Shiite conflict zone with global impact. It will ensure a partition of Iraq that will precipitate a war over the nation's resources between the Kurdish, Sunni, and Shiite rump States. The major Sunni powers in the region will likely feel compelled to ally themselves with whatever entity leads Iraqi Sunnis, even if that is the Islamic State. Northern Iraq and Syria will likely become the equivalent of the western front in World War I.

Absent our military presence, and bombers and drones don't count; there will be very little chance of a diplomatic solution to either the fate of Iraq or the disposition of the Assad regime in Syria. Even if they lose Tikrit, the jihadists will have the holy war that they desire, while the Iranians portray themselves as the regional champions against the excesses of the jihadists. Our current incremental approach to the regional problem is also achieving Osama bin Laden's cherished goal of ridding the Middle East of American influence as the American public will eventually tire of the cost of waging an open-ended shadow war where only the Iranians profit.

We can still recover from the debacle that Iraq and Syria are becoming with a massive combined arms strike to destroy the army of the Islamic State on the ground and liberate the cities it has taken decisively. We need not stay in large numbers, but it would give us the leverage to keep Shiite death squads backed by Iranians out of Sunni majority regions and restore us as a diplomatic leader in the region. President Obama's plan to rebuild the regular Iraqi security forces and arm



moderate Syrian rebels could allow us to withdraw combat forces and allow the Iraqis and Syrians to determine their own future absent the dark domination of the Iranians; but only if we forcefully intervene. It would also give us the leverage to work on an Iraqi future that is free of sectarian domination by anyone, but the president won't likely do that.

If you want to make arguments about Iranian regional hegemony, don't forget to clearly describe the impact. There is no shortage of authors writing articles about the dangers of an emboldened Iran, so you should have no trouble finding some impacts that suit your liking.

One obvious choice would be that it is in America's interest to hold on to a leadership role in the Middle East. Logically, one can also assume that a hostile regime such as Iran's would work against America's interests, should they become the region's superpower. Here is **evidence** on that:

(Michael Pizzi, Al Jazeera America, "Why is US is sitting out Iraq's most important assault on ISIL," <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2015/3/6/what-it-means-for-the-us-to-sit-out-tikrit-offensive.html>, 3/6/15)

"We're seeing far more open, direct Iranian involvement in Iraq than even in Syria," Smyth said. Taken with the recent Shia Houthi takeover in Yemen, "from a big-picture perspective, **the Iranians are projecting themselves regionally, while the U.S. is looking quite impotent.**"

The specter of Iranian expansionism was raised by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his address to Congress on Tuesday, in which he warned against a nuclear deal with Iran. Several Saudi officials and hawkish members of Congress, including Republican Sens. John McCain of Arizona and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, have echoed that view. In a statement Tuesday, McCain and Graham argued that President Barack Obama's unwillingness to expand U.S. military involvement in Iraq could have lasting implications for the country's influence in Baghdad and beyond. "Success in



this mission will not be achieved by capitulating to Iran’s ambitions for regional hegemony," they said.

“We’ve come to the unfortunate conclusion where if the U.S. really and truly wants to preserve its power, it has to project itself,” Smyth added.

Here is more **evidence**, suggesting demographic instability in Iran will lead it to rapidly seek power while it still can, but it will soon collapse into chaos and war:

(David P. Goldman, senior fellow at the London Center for Policy Research and the Wax Family Fellow at the Middle East Forum, PJ Media, “The world bows to Iranian regional hegemony,” <http://pjmedia.com/spengler/2015/03/05/the-world-bows-to-irans-hegemony-cross-posted-from-asia-times-online/>, 3/4/15)

The Israeli prime minister asserted that the alternative to a bad deal is not war, but a better deal. I do not think he believes that, but Americans cannot wrap their minds around the notion that West Asia will remain at war indefinitely, especially because the war arises from their own stupidity.

Balance of power in the Middle East is inherently impossible today for the same reason it failed in Europe in 1914, namely a grand demographic disequilibrium: Iran is on a course to demographic disaster, and must assert its hegemony while it still has time.

Game theorists might argue that Iran has a rational self-interest to trade its nuclear ambitions for the removal of sanctions. The solution to a multi-period game – one that takes into account Iran’s worsening demographic weakness – would have a solution in which Iran takes great risks to acquire nuclear weapons.



Between 30% and 40% of Iranians will be older than 60 by mid-century (using the UN Population Prospect's Constant Fertility and "Low" Variants). Meanwhile, its military-age population will fall by a third to a half.

Belated efforts to promote fertility are unlikely to make a difference. The causes of Iranian infertility are baked into the cake – higher levels of female literacy, an officially-sanctioned culture of sexual license administered by the Shi'ite clergy as "temporary marriage," epidemic levels of sexually-transmitted disease and inbreeding. Iran, in short, has an apocalyptic regime with a lot to be apocalyptic about.

Henry Kissinger is right: peace can be founded on either hegemony or balance of power. Iran cannot be a hegemon for long because it will implode economically and demographically within a generation. In the absence of either, the result is war. For the past 10 years I have argued in this space that when war is inevitable, preemption is the least damaging course of action. I had hoped that George W Bush would have the gumption to de-fang Iran, and was disappointed when he came under the influence of Condoleezza Rice and Robert Gates. Now we are back in 1938, but with Lord Halifax rather than Neville Chamberlain in charge.



In response, the con can argue that Iran is already the regional hegemon (so allowing them to influence events poses no new danger), or that having Iran lead the region is desirable (because they can “police their own neighborhood” without the US having to invest resources, so to speak), or that Iran’s active participation is needed to successfully defeat ISIL. Here is **evidence** that supports all 3 of those arguments:

(Ranjit Gupta, distinguished fellow at the Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies and former Indian ambassador to Yemen and Oman, Eurasia Review, “Saudi Arabia and evolving regional strategic dynamics- analysis,” <http://www.eurasiareview.com/03032015-saudi-arabia-and-evolving-regional-strategic-dynamics-analysis/>, 3/3/15)

Iran is, has been and will remain the leading regional power in West Asia. Saudi Arabia is not and cannot be an equal power. Carried away by strong US animosity towards the new revolutionary Iran and its own ‘special relationship’ with the US, Saudi Arabia considered the new Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979 as a multi-pronged challenge and chose to respond by adopting a policy of unmitigated opposition to Iran. The US, shortsightedly, also adopted a similar approach which became progressively unsustainable in an increasingly inter-connected world in which Iran has become the preeminent strategic player in West Asia to the increasing disadvantage of the US and its regional allies. There is absolutely no possibility of any improvement in any of the conflict theatres in West Asia without Iran being an active participant in any such endeavours. The region is now caught in the vise of multiple crises forcing the US to finally recognise the reality of strong Iranian regional influence. If Iran becomes a partner then there is every possibility that negotiated political solutions can be arrived at in Syria and Yemen and of the ground situation improving in Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, including in Gaza.

Saudi Arabia has to realise that the challenge posed by the Islamic State is far more fundamental and lethal to the Saudi regime, State and system than Iran. Its first and overriding priority must be to ensure



the defeat of the Islamic State, both militarily as well as ideologically, though the latter will take a long time. Given current political ground realities in Iraq and Syria and the enormous assistance that Iran has been giving to Iraq in fighting the Islamic State, Iran is the best placed regional country which can help ensure the defeat of the Islamic State.

Of course, the con can also say that the negative impacts of an American ground war outweigh the impacts of an empowered Iran.

On this topic, both sides need to be sure to pay close attention to the impact debate—both in terms of framing and calculus. You should invest some time in both places. Explain to your judge how you define “the best interest of the United States,” and then establish why your impacts outweigh the others side’s within that framework. Many rounds will come down to who does a better job of defining America’s most significant interests, so don’t neglect that part of the debate!

That concludes our introduction to the basics of the April 2015 PF topic. You should be ready to build some solid cases!

Remember that this is a currently-developing issue with a rich historical background. There is no way this guide could even begin to cover all of the possible angles, so you must take responsibility for continuing to conduct research on your own. There is much to learn!

And don’t forget that you can always email completed cases to **Rachel.Stevens@NCPA.org** for a free, confidential case critique! We’ll get them back to you, with personalized comments, as soon as we can.



More Sources of Useful Evidence & Ideas for Research

Contains a run-down of all of the best arguments from both sides:

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/david-coates/weighing-the-arguments-on_b_6830606.html

Instead of a US ground offensive, America should arm and support the Kurds:

<http://www.newrepublic.com/article/121300/us-should-arm-kurds-fighting-isis>

The majority of Americans support the use of ground troops:

<http://www.politico.com/story/2015/03/support-troops-ground-islamic-state-poll-115746.html>

10 reasons to oppose US involvement: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/h-a-goodman/10-reasons-why-america-should_b_6734016.html

Airstrikes alone fail; US ground troops are needed to destroy ISIL:

<http://blogs.berkeley.edu/2015/03/02/how-to-defeat-isis-and-why-it-probably-wont-happen/>

Iran's "suffocating embrace": <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/03/17/absent-us-forces-iraq-turns-to-iran-militias-for-isis-fight-in-tikrit-mosul>