

The Iraq Troop-Basing Question and the New Middle East

by [James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[James Jeffrey \(/experts/james-jeffrey\)](#)

Ambassador is a former U.S. special representative for Syria engagement and former U.S. ambassador to Turkey and Iraq; from 2013-2018 he was the Philip Solondz Distinguished Fellow at The Washington Institute. He currently chairs the Wilson Center's Middle East Program.



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An examination of allegations that the Obama administration's failure to secure a long-term U.S. troop presence in Iraq after 2011 was the "original sin" that led to the ascendance of ISIS.

The meteoric rise of ISIS has justifiably spurred an examination of what U.S. policies might have led to a less dire outcome in territories now controlled by the group. One common focus is the Obama administration's decision to forgo a troop presence in Iraq after 2011. Yet while troops would have given Washington more leverage, the question of whether they could have prevented the rise of ISIS is hardly clear-cut.

In this new Policy Note, James F. Jeffrey, who served as U.S. ambassador to Iraq from 2010 to 2012, draws on his intimate experience with the troop-basing issue to explain what really happened three years ago. By discussing complex factors such as judicial immunity for American forces, political shifts in Baghdad, and rhetorical shifts within the Obama administration, he outlines lessons that Washington can draw from the Islamic State's ascendance.

[Read Ambassador Jeffrey's accompanying *Wall Street Journal* article "Behind the U.S. Withdrawal From Iraq." \(http://online.wsj.com/articles/james-franklin-jeffrey-behind-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-iraq-1414972705\)](http://online.wsj.com/articles/james-franklin-jeffrey-behind-the-u-s-withdrawal-from-iraq-1414972705)

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