



Controversial exit

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Controversial exit-Donald Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops out of Syria has rattled his team and his allies

- President Donald Trump's decision to pull U.S. troops out of Syria has predictably upset both the Washington establishment and America's global allies.
- Bringing soldiers back to the U.S. was a campaign promise.
- Earlier this year he had wanted to exit Syria, but delayed the decision amid resistance within his cabinet.
- Now he claims that the physical infrastructure of the IS caliphate is destroyed and the U.S. can leave the war against the remnants of the jihadist group to the Syrian government and its main backers, Russia and Iran.
- The U.S. is already stranded in Afghanistan (for 17 years) and Iraq (over 15 years) without a way out.
- After these interventions, Presidents have been wary of deploying "boots on the ground" in West Asia.
- Mr. Trump wants to get out of the Syrian theatre.
- But the ground reality is too complex and requires Mr. Trump to be more patient and strategic in his policymaking.
- The U.S. were not directly involved in the ground battle, and were supporting the Syrian Democratic Forces, a rebel group led by Kurdish rebels who were in the forefront of the fight against the IS.
- The U.S. support for the Kurdish rebels has irked Turkey, which sees them as an extension of the Kurdistan Workers Party, the rebels on the Turkish side who have been fighting Turkish troops for decades.
- Turkey considers the military consolidation of Kurds as a strategic threat.
- When Mr. Trump pulls out American troops, he would in effect be leaving the Syrian Kurds at the mercy of Turkish troops.
- A second risk factor will emerge if Turkey launches an attack on the Kurdish militants, which President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has vowed to

do.

- The Kurds will then have to re-channel their resources to fight Turkish soldiers.
- This will weaken the ground resistance against the remaining IS militants on the southern side of the border.
- Mr. Trump would have done better to wait before deciding to pull out of Syria.
- The cost of being so abrupt is that it leaves a dangerous vacuum in northeastern Syria.

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