

2021-2022 Student Debate Series Twenty Years Later: The United States' Obligation to Democracy in Afghanistan and Around the World

Tuesday, October 26, 2021 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. Virtual Program (Zoom)

<u>Central Question:</u> "Does the United States have a military, economic, and political obligation to promote democracy in Afghanistan and other countries?"

In response to the above debate prompt, students will be divided and assigned to one of the following two teams. In preparation for the debate, students should take note of their assigned team and read through both the general background resources and all team-specific resources. Students should take notes on the resources provided and may do additional research if they choose in order to help strengthen their arguments during the debate.

Team Affirmative

"Based on our studies and research, **yes**, the United States does have a military, economic, and political obligation to promote democracy in Afghanistan and other countries."

Team Opposed

"Based on our studies and research, **no**, the United States does NOT have a military, economic, and political obligation to promote democracy in Afghanistan and other countries."

Debate Preparation & Resource Guide

Tips for Preparing

We have provided a number of **general background resources**, as well as team-specific resources below. Please read and review these resources as preparation for the program. We recommend that you come to the Debate Series program prepared with notes on these resources, as well as a draft opening statement, so you are ready to craft well-thought, detailed statements with your team members in the allotted time. It is also important to consider the other team's potential main arguments and talking points as a means of strengthening your assigned team's arguments and talking points. Finally, you may want to conduct additional research outside of these resources, but we ask that you practice good digital literacy and utilize vetted resources from reputable news or analysis organizations. Are you not sure if a site is vetted and reputable? Discuss with fellow debaters or talk to your teacher/faculty adviser.

Questions to Consider

Read the following questions prior to reading/viewing the resources below. Then, answer the questions to the best of your ability according to the information you found during your research. These questions are meant to serve as a starting point for crafting your arguments and statements during the debate.

- 1. What has the United States' promotion of democracy in foreign countries looked like historically (specifically in terms of military, economic, and political interventions)? Why has the promotion of democracy remained a cornerstone of American foreign policy for so long? How have the U.S. government's approaches to democracy promotion changed throughout the years and with different presidential administrations?
- 2. How can the U.S. war in Afghanistan serve as a useful case study for American military, economic, and political inventions conducted in the name of promoting democracy in other countries? What were some important lessons learned from the U.S. involvement in Afghanistan over the last 20 years? Based on your research, why did the U.S. remain in Afghanistan for so long, making it America's longest war?
- 3. From your assigned team's point of view, do the benefits of America's efforts to promote democracy in other countries outweigh the costs? Why or why not?
- 4. From your assigned team's point of view, should the American people care about promoting democracy in other countries? Why or why not?
- 5. From your assigned team's point of view, does the American government have the right and/or power to be promoting democracy in other countries? Why or why not?

Draft Opening Statement

After conducting your research using the below resources (and any additional resources you may find) and answering the above Questions to Consider, craft an opening statement for your team's position on the debate question. Introduce the topic in a way that supports your position. Provide supporting evidence. The last sentence of the introduction should be your "thesis" or main objective.

Rebuttal and Closing Statements

Students do not need to prepare either of these statements prior to the program, but should be aware of the statement structures.

Rebuttal Statement

Respond to and criticize the arguments presented by the opposing side. Prove that the other side's logic and arguments do not make sense. Provide sound counter-arguments.

Closing Statement

Summarize your team's main arguments. Emphasize the strongest points made throughout the debate. Make sure to include facts to support your position and address any counter arguments.

General Topic Background Resources

- The U.S. War in Afghanistan (Council on Foreign Relations) Overview/Timeline
- Longest war: Were America's decades in Afghanistan worth it? (AP News) Article
- <u>Democracy Promotion: An Objective of U.S. Foreign Assistance</u> (Congressional Research Service) Report
 *Pages 1-8 (stop at the section "Democracy Promotion in Restrictive Environments") and Pages 19-20
- After Capitol Riot, Can America Still Promote Democracy Abroad And At Home? (Forbes) Article (with option to listen to audio of interview)

Team Affirmative Resources – "Based on our studies and research, <u>yes</u>, the United States does have a military, economic, and political obligation to promote democracy in Afghanistan and other countries."

- Why Democracy Promotion is in the Strategic Interest of the United States (Truman National Security Project) - Opinion Article
- <u>Choose Freedom: Revitalizing American Support for Democracy and Human Rights in the 21st Century</u> (Nicole Bibbins Sedaca, George W. Bush Presidential Center) Publication
- America should support democracy but we have to be smarter about it (The Washington Post) Opinion Article

Team Opposed Resources – "Based on our studies and research, <u>no</u>, the United States does NOT have a military, economic, and political obligation to promote democracy in Afghanistan and other countries."

- Costs of the Afghanistan War, in lives and dollars (AP News) Article
- Americans put low priority on promoting democracy abroad (Pew Research Center) Article
- It wasn't hubris that drove America into Afghanistan. It was fear. (The Washington Post) Opinion Article