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Most Americans Familiar with Syria Troop Withdrawal Believe it is the Wrong Decision

New USA Today/Ipsos poll shows that a majority believe the decision is damaging the United States' reputation

Washington, DC, October 18, 2019 — More Americans feel that withdrawing troops from northern Syria was the wrong decision rather than the right one, according to a new USA Today/Ipsos poll. Thirty-seven percent of Americans believe withdrawing troops was the wrong decision, because it will upset stability in a dangerous region, while 27% feel it was right because the U.S. has too many military commitments abroad. Another 36% are unsure or declined to pick a side. However, among the 49% of Americans that are very or somewhat familiar with the decision, there is a nearly two-to-one split in favor of it being the wrong decision. Fifty-eight percent of those familiar believe it was the wrong decision, compared to 30% who say it was the right move. Fewer than one in three Americans (31%) support President Trump's strategy in northern Syria, though this support breaks down largely on party lines, with 57% of Republicans supporting Trump's strategy versus just 11% of Democrats.

A majority of Americans (54%) agree that removing troops from northern Syria is damaging the U.S.' reputation as a trusted ally, including 72% of Democrats, 50% of Independents, and 44% of Republicans. Among Republicans, more agree that troop removal is damaging to our reputation (44%) than disagree (36%). Six in ten Americans (61%) believe that we have an obligation to protect the Kurds, who fought alongside U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria, though that number rises to 76% among those familiar with the decision to withdraw troops.

Regarding the reported escape of ISIS fighters from prisons in the region, 54% believe the escaped ISIS fighters will pose a terrorist threat to the region – a sentiment that Democrats and Republicans share equally (61% and 58%, respectively). Forty-four percent believe these ISIS fighters will pose a terrorist threat to the United States, though there is a 20-percentage point difference between Democrats (57%) and Republicans (38%) on this point.

For full results, please refer to the following annotated questionnaire.



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Full Annotated Questionnaire:

1. How familiar, if at all, are you with the decision to withdraw U.S. troops from the Syria-Turkey border?

| | Total (N=1,006) | Total Familiar (N=500) | Democrat (N=380) | Republican (N=413) | Independent (N=112) |
|------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Very familiar | 23% | 47% | 32% | 23% | 12% |
| Somewhat familiar | 26% | 53% | 25% | 28% | 33% |
| Heard of it, but know little | 28% | - | 24% | 34% | 28% |
| Have not heard of it | 14% | - | 12% | 11% | 21% |
| Don't know | 8% | - | 7% | 5% | 7% |

2. As you may have heard, a small contingent of U.S. troops have been withdrawn along the Syria-Turkey border, where they had been working with Kurdish troops in the fight against ISIS. Turkey has now launched military strikes against the Kurds. Which comes closer to your view?

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Withdrawing troops was the right decision because the U.S. has too many military commitments abroad. | 27% | 30% | 15% | 41% | 22% |
| Withdrawing troops was the wrong decision because it will upset stability in a dangerous region | 37% | 58% | 58% | 26% | 29% |
| Neither | 9% | 5% | 4% | 8% | 17% |
| Don't know | 27% | 6% | 23% | 24% | 33% |

3. There are reports that ISIS fighters who had been kept in prison by Kurdish guards have now escaped. In your opinion, is it likely that the escaped ISIS fighters will... (select all that apply)

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|--|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Pose a terrorist threat to the region | 54% | 68% | 61% | 58% | 37% |
| Pose a terrorist threat to the United States | 44% | 57% | 57% | 38% | 42% |
| Pose a terrorist threat to Europe | 35% | 47% | 45% | 31% | 30% |
| Not pose a terrorist threat anywhere | 3% | 4% | 2% | 3% | 6% |
| Don't know | 25% | 7% | 19% | 19% | 41% |

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4. Do you agree or disagree with the following?

Agree summary

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|---|-------|----------------|----------|------------|-------------|
| The United States has an obligation to protect the Kurds, who had fought alongside U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria. | 61% | 76% | 72% | 60% | 52% |
| The United States should impose more economic sanctions on Turkey. | 46% | 64% | 45% | 58% | 30% |
| Imposing economic sanctions on Turkey will have a significant effect on the situation. | 41% | 50% | 36% | 56% | 29% |
| I support President Trump's strategy in northern Syria. | 31% | 34% | 11% | 57% | 21% |
| President Trump is delivering on his promise to end "endless wars." | 40% | 45% | 18% | 67% | 35% |
| Removing U.S. troops from northern Syria is damaging the U.S.' reputation as a trusted ally. | 54% | 66% | 72% | 44% | 50% |

a. The United States has an obligation to protect the Kurds, who had fought alongside U.S. forces in Iraq and Syria.

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 27% | 43% | 44% | 16% | 22% |
| Somewhat agree | 34% | 33% | 28% | 43% | 29% |
| Somewhat disagree | 12% | 12% | 5% | 20% | 12% |
| Strongly disagree | 7% | 8% | 7% | 7% | 7% |
| Don't know | 20% | 3% | 16% | 14% | 30% |
| Total agree (Net) | 61% | 76% | 72% | 60% | 52% |
| Total disagree (Net) | 19% | 21% | 12% | 26% | 19% |



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b. The United States should impose more economic sanctions on Turkey

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 21% | 36% | 19% | 29% | 12% |
| Somewhat agree | 25% | 28% | 26% | 29% | 18% |
| Somewhat disagree | 13% | 12% | 12% | 13% | 17% |
| Strongly disagree | 6% | 5% | 8% | 3% | 5% |
| Don't know | 35% | 19% | 34% | 26% | 48% |
| <i>Total agree (Net)</i> | <i>46%</i> | <i>64%</i> | <i>45%</i> | <i>58%</i> | <i>30%</i> |
| <i>Total disagree (Net)</i> | <i>19%</i> | <i>17%</i> | <i>20%</i> | <i>16%</i> | <i>22%</i> |

c. Imposing economic sanctions on Turkey will have a significant effect on the situation.

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 12% | 16% | 10% | 18% | 3% |
| Somewhat agree | 30% | 34% | 26% | 38% | 26% |
| Somewhat disagree | 16% | 20% | 16% | 15% | 23% |
| Strongly disagree | 10% | 16% | 17% | 6% | 8% |
| Don't know | 32% | 15% | 31% | 22% | 41% |
| <i>Total agree (Net)</i> | <i>41%</i> | <i>50%</i> | <i>36%</i> | <i>56%</i> | <i>29%</i> |
| <i>Total disagree (Net)</i> | <i>27%</i> | <i>35%</i> | <i>33%</i> | <i>22%</i> | <i>31%</i> |

d. I support President Trump's strategy in northern Syria.

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Strongly agree | 12% | 18% | 4% | 24% | 7% |
| Somewhat agree | 19% | 16% | 7% | 33% | 14% |
| Somewhat disagree | 12% | 13% | 11% | 13% | 13% |
| Strongly disagree | 36% | 48% | 63% | 13% | 32% |
| Don't know | 21% | 6% | 14% | 18% | 34% |
| <i>Total agree (Net)</i> | <i>31%</i> | <i>34%</i> | <i>11%</i> | <i>57%</i> | <i>21%</i> |
| <i>Total disagree (Net)</i> | <i>48%</i> | <i>61%</i> | <i>75%</i> | <i>26%</i> | <i>45%</i> |



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e. President Trump is delivering on his promise to end “endless wars.”

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 15% | 21% | 6% | 28% | 8% |
| Somewhat agree | 25% | 24% | 12% | 38% | 27% |
| Somewhat disagree | 14% | 14% | 18% | 11% | 17% |
| Strongly disagree | 28% | 37% | 52% | 11% | 11% |
| Don't know | 19% | 4% | 13% | 12% | 37% |
| <i>Total agree (Net)</i> | <i>40%</i> | <i>45%</i> | <i>18%</i> | <i>67%</i> | <i>35%</i> |
| <i>Total disagree (Net)</i> | <i>42%</i> | <i>51%</i> | <i>69%</i> | <i>22%</i> | <i>28%</i> |

f. Removing U.S. troops from northern Syria is damaging the U.S.' reputation as a trusted ally.

| | Total | Total Familiar | Democrat | Republican | Independent |
|-----------------------------|------------|----------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| Strongly agree | 31% | 50% | 52% | 16% | 26% |
| Somewhat agree | 23% | 16% | 20% | 28% | 24% |
| Somewhat disagree | 15% | 18% | 7% | 25% | 18% |
| Strongly disagree | 8% | 11% | 6% | 11% | 6% |
| Don't know | 23% | 5% | 15% | 21% | 26% |
| <i>Total agree (Net)</i> | <i>54%</i> | <i>66%</i> | <i>72%</i> | <i>44%</i> | <i>50%</i> |
| <i>Total disagree (Net)</i> | <i>24%</i> | <i>29%</i> | <i>13%</i> | <i>36%</i> | <i>24%</i> |





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About the Study

These are some of the findings of an Ipsos poll conducted between October 16-17, 2019 on behalf of USA Today. For this survey, a sample of roughly 1,006 adults age 18+ from the continental U.S. Alaska and Hawaii was interviewed online in English. The sample includes 380 Democrats, 413 Republicans, and 112 Independents.

The sample for this study was randomly drawn from Ipsos' online panel (see link below for more info on "Access Panels and Recruitment"), partner online panel sources, and "river" sampling (see link below for more info on the Ipsos "Ampario Overview" sample method) and does not rely on a population frame in the traditional sense. Ipsos uses fixed sample targets, unique to each study, in drawing a sample. After a sample has been obtained from the Ipsos panel, Ipsos calibrates respondent characteristics to be representative of the U.S. Population using standard procedures such as raking-ratio adjustments. The source of these population targets is U.S. Census 2016 American Community Survey data. The sample drawn for this study reflects fixed sample targets on demographics. Post-hoc weights were made to the population characteristics on gender, age, race/ethnicity, region, and education.

Statistical margins of error are not applicable to online non-probability polls. All sample surveys and polls may be subject to other sources of error, including, but not limited to coverage error and measurement error. Where figures do not sum to 100, this is due to the effects of rounding. The precision of Ipsos online polls is measured using a credibility interval. In this case, the poll has a credibility interval of plus or minus 3.5 percentage points for all respondents. Ipsos calculates a design effect (DEFF) for each study based on the variation of the weights, following the formula of Kish (1965). This study had a credibility interval adjusted for design effect of the following ($n=1,006$, $DEFF=1.5$, adjusted Confidence Interval= ± 5.0 percentage points).

The poll also has a credibility interval plus or minus 5.7 percentage points for Democrats, plus or minus 5.5 percentage points for Republicans, and plus or minus 10.6 percentage points for Independents.

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About Ipsos

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Founded in France in 1975, Ipsos is listed on the Euronext Paris since July 1st, 1999. The company is part of the SBF 120 and the Mid-60 index and is eligible for the Deferred Settlement Service (SRD).

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