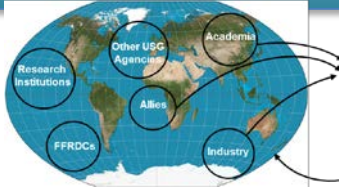


SMA Reach-back



Question (R3 QL3): What are the aims and objectives of the Shia Militia Groups following the effective military defeat of Da'esh?

Contributors: Ambassador Robert S. Ford (former US Ambassador to Syria, Middle East Institute); Dr. Randa Slim, (Middle East Institute); Dr. Elie Abouaoun (US Institute of Peace); Dr. Harith Hasan al-Qarawee (Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University); Omar Al-Shahery (Carnegie Mellon); Dr. Scott Atran (ARTIS); Dr. Monqith Dagher (IIACSS); Mr. Zana Gulmohamad, Univ of Sheffield, Dr. Anoush Ehteshami (Durham University, UK); Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler (University of Akron); Dr. Renad Mansour (Chatham House, UK); Sarhang Hamasaeed (US Institute of Peace); Dr. Diane Maye (Embry Riddle University); Alireza Nader (RAND); Dr. Daniel Serwer (Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies); Steffany Trofino (TRADOC); Christine van den Toorn (American University of Iraq, Sulaimani); Dr. Bilal Wahab (Washington Institute).

Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

Characterizing “the” Shi’a Militias

Referring to the Shi’a Militias as a unitary or homogenous entity masks the reality that what are now dozens of groups in Iraq were established at different times and for different reasons, and thus have different allegiances and goals. ¹ Dr. Daniel Serwer of Johns Hopkins SAIS puts it succinctly, “Not all ‘Shi’a militia groups’ are created equal.”

An actor’s defining characteristics have a significant impact on the objectives it pursues. The expert contributors highlight two factors we might use to differentiate the many Shi’a militia groups in Iraq, their aims, objectives and likely post-

Describing Shi’a Militia Aims and Objectives:
Who is leading? What is the limit of their concerns?

| | | Autonomy | |
|----------|------------------------|--|---|
| | | IRAN DIRECTED | AUTONOMOUS |
| Ambition | Hyper-LOCAL objectives | Iran directed – localized ambitions Promote grass-roots support for Iran outside central government | Autonomous - localized ambitions Territory and resources; cut deals with Sunni tribes |
| | NATIONAL objectives | Iran directed – national ambitions Pursue Iranian interests, influence; oppose integration into Iraq security force | Autonomous - national ambitions Expand political power and influence in government; form political parties |
| | REGIONAL objectives | Iran directed – regional ambitions Defend Iranian interests possibly beyond Iraq; serve as additional influence lever in the region | Autonomous – regional ambitions Warlordism, transnational crime |

¹ Dr.’s Karl Kaltenthaler (University of Akron) and Monqith Dagher (IIACSS) very helpfully identify three reasons Shi’a militia groups formed – only one of which has to do with ISIS: 1) in response to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq; 2) as armed wings of Shi’a political parties; and 3) following Ayatollah Sistani’s fatwa to combat ISIS.

ISIS actions. These are: 1) the extent to which the group is led by and owes allegiance to Iran; and 2) the span of its concerns and interests. How groups rate on these two factors will tell us a lot about what we should expect of them following the effective defeat of ISIS (see graphic).

Autonomy. Contributors to this Quick Look tended to differ on where the balance of control over the Shi'a militias rests. Some see the Shi'a PMF groups as primarily under the control of Iran, and thus motivated or directed largely by Iranian interests (i.e., they have very little autonomy.) If this is the case, knowing the interests of the leaders of these groups will tell us little about their actions). Other experts view the militias as more autonomous and self-directed albeit with interests in common with Iran in which case their interests are relevant to understanding their objectives. In reality, there are groups that swear allegiance to the Supreme Leader in Iran, those that follow Ayatollah al Sistani, and still other groups that respond only to their commanders. In an interview with the SMA Reachback team, Dr. Anoush Ehteshami a well-known Iran scholar from Durham University (UK) points out that Iran has "shamelessly" worked with groups it controls as well as those that it does not because it sees each variety as a "node of influence" into Iraqi society. As in previous Reachback Quick Looks², a number of the SMEs note that Iran is best served by taking a low-key approach in Iraq. Ehteshami argues that ultimately Iran has little interest in appearing to control the Shi'a militias: "the last thing that they want is to be seen as a frontline against Daesh" as this would reinforce the Sunni versus Shi'a sectarian, Saudi-Iranian rivalry undercurrents of the conflict against ISIS. In fact he argues that Iran prefers to work with the militias rather than the central government – which is susceptible to political pressure that Iran cannot control in order to "maintain grass root presence and influence ... of the vast areas of Iraq which are now Shia dominated."

Ambition. A second factor that distinguishes some militia groups is the span of their key objectives and ambition. In discussing militia objectives, some SMEs referenced groups with highly localized interests, for example groups that were established more recently and primarily for the purpose of protecting family or neighborhood. Others mentioned (generally pro-Iran) groups with cross-border ambitions. However, the major part of the discussion of militia objectives centered on more-established and powerful groups with national-level concerns.

Key Objectives

Most experts mentioned one or all of the following as key objectives of the Shi'a militia, at present and in post-ISIS Iraq. Importantly, many indicate that activities in pursuit of these objectives are occurring now – the militias have not waited for the military defeat of ISIS.

- **Controlling territory and resources**

For groups with very localized concerns this objective may take the form of securing the bounds of an area, or access to water in order to protect family members or neighborhoods. For groups with broader ambitions, American University of Iraq Professor Christine van den Toorn argues that controlling territory and resources is a means to these militias' larger political goals. As in the past, this may entail occupying or conducting ethnic cleansing of areas of economic, religious and political significance

² This point is discussed in more depth in a previous SMA Reachback report: LR2 which is available from the SMA office. The question for that report was: *What will be Iran's strategic calculus regarding Iraq and the region post-ISIS? How will JCPOA impact the calculus? What opportunities exist for the US/Coalition to shape the environment favorable to our interests?*

(e.g., Samarra, Tel Afar, former Sunni areas of Salahuldeen Province near Balad.) Here too Anoush Ehteshami suggests that different militia groups have different allegiances and motives: some are “keen to come flying a Shia flag into Sunni heartlands and are determined to take control of those areas.” A number of authors indicate that a specific project of Iran-backed militias possibly with cross-border ambitions would be to secure Shi’a groups’ passage between Iraq and Syria (van den Toorn suspects this would be north or south of Sinjar adding that Kurds would prefer that the route “go to the south, through Baaj/ southern Sinjar and not through Rabiaa, which they want to claim.”)

- **Consolidating political power and influence**

Anoush Ehteshami believes that the Shi’a militia groups are keen to gain as much “control of government as possible, as quickly as possible.” These groups are actually new to Iraqi politics and realize that once the war is over their influence and role in the political order may end. Many of the experts identified the primary objective of militia groups with broader local or national ambitions as increasing their independence from, and power relative to Iraqi state forces. Christine van den Toorn relates an interesting way that some Shi’a militias are working to expand their influence: by forging alliances with “good Sunnis” or “obedient Sunnis.” In fact, she reports that the deals now being made between some Sunni leaders and Shia militia/PMF are in essence “laying the foundation of warlordism” in Iraq and potentially cross-nationally. Many experts singled out the law legalizing the militias as making it “a shadow state force” or an Iraq version of the Iranian Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (RGC) - a clear victory for those seeking to institutionalize the political wealth, and likely economic wealth of the militias.

Dr. Harith Hasan al-Qarawee of Brandeis University agrees that the primary goal of the militia groups with national or cross-national ambitions is to gain political influence in Iraq in order to: “to improve their chances in the power equation and have a sustained access to state patronage.” As a result, he anticipates that they will continue to work to weaken the professional, non-sectarian elements of the Iraqi Security Forces, and would accept reintegration into the Iraqi military only if it affords them the same or greater opportunity to influence the Iraqi state than what they currently possess. Finally, a number of the experts including Dr. Randa Slim of the Middle East Institute, mention that an RGC-like, parallel security structure in Iraq will also serve Iran as a second “franchisee” along with Hezbollah in Lebanon, and allow export of “military skillsets/expertise/knowhow, which can be shared with fellow Shia groups in the Gulf region.”

- **Eliminating internal opposition from Sunni and Kurds**

Omar Al-Shahery, a former deputy director in the Iraqi Defense Ministry, along with a number of other SME contributors believe that after the Sunni Arabs are “taken out of the equation” the Kurds are the militias’ “next target.” Dr. Daniel Serwer (Johns Hopkins SAIS) expects that Shi’a forces will remain in provinces that border Kurdistan, if not at the behest of Iran, then certainly in line with Iran’s interest in avoiding an expanded and independent Kurdistan in Iraq. Al Shahery (Carnegie Mellon) points to this as the impetus for militias pushing the Peshmerga out of Tuzkurmato south of Kirkuk. Similarly, Shi’a concern with Saudi support reaching Sunni groups opposed to the expansion of Shi’a influence in Iraq was motivation for occupying Nukhaib (south Anbar) and cutting Sunni forces off from a conduit to aid. Finally, Al-Shahery raises the possibility that the ultimate goal of the most ambitious militia groups is in fact to form

an “integrated strike force” that can operate cross-nationally. This is evidenced he argues, by the centralization of the command structure of the forces operating in Syria.

What to Expect after Mosul

The following are some of the experts’ expectations about what to expect from the Shi’a militias in the short to mid-term. See the author’s complete submission in SME input for justification and reasoning.

Following ISIS defeat in Iraq ...

- **Re-positioning.** Iran will encourage some militia forces to relocate to Syria to help defend the regime. However, Iran also will make sure that the “Shia militias which have been mobilized, are going to stay mobilized” as a “pillar of Iran’s own influence in Iraq” (Dr. Anoush Ehteshami, Durham University, UK)
- **Inter and intra- sectarian conflict.** The PMFs will play a “very destabilizing” role in Iraq if not disbanded or successfully integrated into a non-sectarian force. The present set-up will result in renewed Sunni-Shia tensions, Sunni extremism (Dr. Monqith Dagher, IIACSS and Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron); Shi’a-Shi’a violence (Dr. Sarhang Hamasaeed, USIP); and/or violent conflict with the Kurds (Dr. Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins SAIS; Omar Al-Shahery, Carnegie Mellon)
- **New political actors.** Select militia commanders will leave the PMF to run for political office, accept ministerial posts (Dr. Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins SAIS) and/or “major political players in Baghdad” will attempt to place them in important positions in the police or Iraqi security force positions. (Dr. Diane Maye, Embry-Riddle)

SME Input

Comment on Objectives of Shi’a Militia Groups in Iraq

Ambassador Robert S. Ford, former US Ambassador to Syria, Middle East Institute

“Those Shia Popular Mobilization Units (PMU) financed previously by Iran and now financed by the Iraqi Government mostly will follow orders from Iran. This may well mean they remain deployed in Ninewah and Anbar, and that they also deploy in eastern Syria. The deployment of large numbers of foreign armed men in these communities will unavoidably generate competition with local communities in Ninewah and Anbar, whether over business rights and fees or equal justice before the law, or local political decision-making. These kinds of problems aggravated the politics of Mosul prior to June 2014, for example, and it is far from clear that Baghdad has learned lessons. Witness Tikrit now – who rules it, really?”

Comment on Objectives of Shi’a Militia Groups in Iraq

Christine van den Toorn, Director of the Institute of Regional and International Studies,
American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

While many Hashd will go home (the “Hashd” Hashd) Shia militias will seek to translate

their battlefield victories into sustained political power through territorial control and control of access to resources. They will do this through allying with “good Sunnis” or obedient Sunnis – there are already deals being made between Sunni leaders and Shia militias/ PMF currently. While you could say that some of these create some stability, they are laying the foundation of warlordism, mafia style division of territory. Sunnis are saying – which militia can I ally with, and through this form my own Sunni militia, to carve out my piece of territory (and do well in the next elections). So to combat, prevent this (... as is happening in Rabiaa and other places) there need to be political framework and actors and facilitators to move in after to challenge this development.

“they are laying the foundation of warlordism, mafia style division of territory.”

On a national level, while there is a debate, there seems to be more consensus that the new law legalizing the Hashd will make it a shadow state force, an IRGC in Iraq, that will answer at least in part to Iran. ... There are of course many reports of Asaib Ahl al Haq or Kataib Hezbollah members in federal police uniforms as happened in 2006, 2007, etc., and the commanders of the Hashd – Al Ameri and Al Mohandis are notoriously close to / loyal to Iran. The Hashd will at the very least have to be carefully vetted and combed through to determine who is eligible for “integration.” One more specific goal is the road to Syria. The Hashd/ Baghdad/ Iran want to make sure they secure a road – north or south of Sinjar – to Syria. The KDP would prefer it go to the south, through Baaj/ southern Sinjar and not through Rabiaa, which they want to claim.

Comment on Objectives of Shi’a Militia Groups in Iraq

Omar Al-Shahery
Carnegie Mellon University

There are two types of objectives for the Shia Militias, short term tactical objectives and long term strategic objectives.

Tactical objectives

- Occupying and ethnically cleansing certain areas that have economic significance. The objective is to use these areas to generate additional funding for the religious institutions that sponsor these militias and that is to ensure these militias’ sustainability. Examples:
 - a. Samarrah: The Shrine and the religious tourism revenue that it generates.
 - b. Tel Afar town (west of Mosul), which is at very close proximity to the Ein Zala oil fields.
- Expansion: Members of the Shia Militia have already moved in (with their families) to former Sunni areas in Salahuldeen Province (near Balad) after a policy of scorched earth during and after the conflict with Da’esh.

“Da’esh, if anything, has been a blessing for the leadership of these militias. The Iraqi government and parliament have granted these militias legislative immunity, government salaries, and further have declared them part of the country’s security forces, legitimizing their existence, all in the name of fighting Da’esh.”

Strategic objectives

- Replicate the Iranian model and ensuring its pervasiveness and permanence. The incredibly large numbers of these militias guarantee their influence on almost every community in the predominantly Shia areas. It would become almost impossible to depose the sponsoring religious parties and jurisprudence through any sort of elections in the future. This model of parallel authority and power resembles the IRGC in Iran and the Iranian Basij, Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthi Militia in Yemen and so on.
- Build an ever-expanding cluster of countries that redefines our perception of government. This cluster will not practice distinct and independent territorial sovereignty in the classical sense but rather act as an incubating environment for a single religious authority.
- Eliminate any internal opposition socially, economically and politically. Da'esh, if anything, has been a blessing for the leadership of these militias. The Iraqi government and parliament have granted these militias legislative immunity, government salaries, and further have declared them part of the country's security forces, legitimizing their existence, all in the name of fighting Da'esh. To ensure this objective, these militias have:
 - a. Occupied strategic areas like Nukhaib in southern Anbar province, cutting off Sunnis from Saudi Arabia
 - b. Pushed the Peshmurga out of Tuz Kurmato, an important town south of Kirkuk near the Kurdish oil fields, and within striking distance of the Kurds, which are going to be their next target after Sunnis are taken out of the equation.
- If one must make an educated guess, the leaders of these militias seek to form an integrated striking force that can operate across several nations, including Iraq, Iran, Syria and Lebanon. The sign of such a force being assembled is the change in command structure in the forces fighting in Syria. Earlier, these militias used to operate under separate chains of command, but that all changed, and now members of different militias operate under a unified command and control system.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Dr. Randa Slim
Middle East Institute

[Militia group objectives are to] 1. Consolidate Shia rule over Iraq, including maintaining hardline positions vis-a-vis Sunni reintegration into state structures; 2. Establish a parallel military structure akin to the IRGC model; 3. This parallel structure will also serve as a second Iranian Arab franchisee akin to Hezbollah in Lebanon. They will have military skillsets/expertise/knowhow, which can be shared with fellow Shia groups in the Gulf region; 4. Some will be heading to Syria post-Mosul to participate in the liberation of all of Syria per Assad's wishes; 5. Some will want to go home provided there are economic incentives. UNDP has been asked by Baghdad government to work on a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program for the PMUs. Sistani's office is interested in seeing a good number of these PMU rank and file go back home and get reintegrated in society.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Elie Abouaoun
US Institute of Peace

“... the Shia Militia Groups are now supported to become a State-recognized body that competes with the Iraqi Armed Forces and ensures strong Iranian leverage over Iraqi politics. The model is quite similar to the Iranian Revolutionary Guards (Iran), Hezbollah (Lebanon) or the National Defense Army (Syria) that exist and operate under the umbrella of a hollow and submissive state structure.”

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Alireza Nader
RAND

The various Iraqi Shia militias may have different agendas, but it does appear that key groups backed by Iran may want to create organizations that parallel the Basij and the Revolutionary Guards in Iran.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Dr. Scott Atran
ARTIS

One of the aims of Shia militia groups is to manipulate parliament and maximize power within the government. And their next war may be with the Kurds over disputed areas in both Kirkuk and Mosul (exploiting KDP-PUK rivalries as best they can). They will coordinate with Iran's Quds force in Iraq, and the PMU bill was a step in this direction.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Harith Hasan al-Qarawee
Fellow-Crown Center for Middle East Studies Brandeis University

The ultimate goal of those groups is to improve their chances in the power equation and have a sustained access to state patronage. In this respect, they will accept reintegration in the formal military structure only to the extent they can use this to influence the state from within. They will seek to weaken the professional and non-partisan elements of the army, so they become the indispensable force on which the state will rely. Given that the Iraqi army is not yet a credible force, their role remains necessary provided that the Prime Minister will be given enough support to control those militias, and marginalize the most pro-Iranian elements. For that to happen, he will also need the support of the grand Shi'a cleric, Sistani, who said in several occasions that parallel security organ is detrimental for the state and its ability to stabilize the country.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Steffany Troffino, TRADOC

Iraq remains a country in transition as multiple variables contribute to the country's deteriorating security environment. Informal power streams, ethno-sectarian political agendas, proxy influences, and perceptions of ethno-sectarian disenfranchisement prevalent throughout the country are but a few contributing factors polarizing the country. Couple these factors with endemic Iranian influence, which has capitalized on Iraq's weakened conditions and the strategic outlook for the United States' ability to remain influential throughout the country, diminishes. As the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) continues its military offenses inside Iraq, the need for the Iraqi central government to augment the country's security forces has significantly increased. In an attempt to bolster its military ranks – on November 26, 2016 the Shi'a majority Iraqi government formally legitimized Shi'a militias as part of Iraqi forces by a majority parliamentary vote of 208 out of a 327 members.

Militias formed to protect Tribes

In an attempt to understand Iraq's current security environment, it is necessary to understand the dynamics of informal power-streams throughout the country's vast tribal communities and most important - the Iranian influence throughout these tribal communities. As Iraqi security forces remain engaged in offenses against ISIL, most notably in key strategic cities, Iraq's rural communities became increasingly more isolated and vulnerable. As a consequence, tribal communities formed several militias as a means to protect tribal community members while Iraq's security forces remained pre-engaged in larger ISIL offenses.

While militias were forming in the rural communities of Iraq, Iran sought to capitalize on the opportunity to support newly established militias and use these new groups to their advantage. Iran supplied weapons and financial support to several newly developed Shi'a militias in an effort to maintain advantage over militia activity.³ When the time came for these newer militias to unify under a larger, more well-established militia organization, Iran was able to exert its influence within this unification process.

“The three most powerful militias within Iraq's PMFs -- Asaib Ahl al Haq, Hezbollah Brigades and Badr Brigades maintain well-established links with Iranian senior leadership, most notably Iranian Quds Force Commander, Qassem Soleimani.”

With the Iraqi Parliament vote in November 2016, some fifty Iraqi Shi'a militias unified under an umbrella known as the Hashd Shaabi umbrella (Arabic for the People's Mobilization Forces or PMF).⁴ Key militia organizations within the PMFs pre-date ISIL's 2014 military advancements inside Iraq. The three most powerful militias within Iraq's PMFs -- Asaib Ahl al Haq, Hezbollah Brigades and Badr Brigades maintain well-established links with Iranian senior leadership, most notably Iranian Quds Force Commander, Qassem Soleimani.⁵

³ Mansour (2015), “From Militia to State Force: the Transformation of al-Hashd al-Shaabi,” 16 November 2015.

⁴ Roggio (2016), “Iraqi militia leader wants to model PMF after Iran's Revolutionary Guard,” The Long War Journal. 22 March 2016.

⁵ Roggio (2016), “Iraqi militia leader wants to model PMF after Iran's Revolutionary Guard,” The Long War Journal. 22 March 2016.

On May 23rd 2016, Soleimani was identified in a picture reportedly taken in a meeting on then pending operations in Fallujah.⁶ Additionally, observed in the same picture were Akram al Kaabi, a Shia militia leader; and Abu Mahdi al Muhandis, who leads Hezbollah Brigades, specifically, Hata'ib Hezbollah.⁷ Both individuals are designated US terrorists.⁸ Multiple sightings of Soleimani working with Iranian backed militias in Iraq have surfaced, including support to Shi'a militias in Tikrit, Samarra (al Baghdadi's birthplace), Jurf al Sakhar, and Fallujah. Iraq's PMF's objectives align along an Iranian agenda, which seeks to influence, and exert proxy control over Iraq's central government. Recently al-Jazaeery, one of the commanders within the PMF who commands the Saraya Khorasani militia stated, "We want to be a third power in Iraq, alongside the army and police. "Why can't the Hashd be like the Revolutionary Guard in Iran?"⁹

Implications

The United States is at a crossroad with support to Iraq's Security Forces. It is a risk averse gain scenario reminiscent of support to the Free Syrian Army. The risk is the greater support we render, the greater the likelihood we are inadvertently supporting a more powerful Iranian influence within the country. The gain, the more support we render, the greater the likelihood Iraq's security forces will be able to control and ultimately defeat ISIL's advances. With as invasive and intrinsic as Iran's influence has grown within Iraq, it may very well be beneficial for the United States to withhold support in an effort to allow Iran to expend its resources. By Iran expending its resources, the United States may be in a position to observe how Russia augments this Iranian expense.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron/Case Western Reserve University
and
Munqith Dagher, IIACSS

"The most powerful commanders among the PMFs are Hadi al Amiri, Abu Madhi al Muhandis, and Qais Khazali."

The Shia Militia Groups of Iraq, of which there are dozens, are part of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMFs), an organization that was established in mid-2014 in the face of Da'esh military victories throughout the Sunni heartland of Iraq. The direct impetus to create the PMFs umbrella organization was (Shia) Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's fatwa to defend Iraq from the onslaught of Da'esh in 2014.

There are now some 40 different militias in the PMFs that have 100,000-120,000 fighters. The vast majority of the militias and the fighters are Shia Iraqis with some Sunnis, Turkmen, Yazidis, and Christians in relatively small numbers. While the PMFs are nominally under the

⁶ Weiss (2016), Iranian Qods Force Leader Reportedly in Fallujah, Threat Matrix, The Long War Journal, 23 May 2016.

⁷ Weiss (2016), Iranian Qods Force Leader Reportedly in Fallujah, Threat Matrix, The Long War Journal, 23 May 2016.

⁸ Weiss (2016), Iranian Qods Force Leader Reportedly in Fallujah, Threat Matrix, The Long War Journal, 23 May 2016.

⁹ Roggio (2016), "Iraqi militia leader wants to model PMF after Iran's Revolutionary Guard," The Long War Journal. 22 March 2016.

control of the Iraqi government and are paid by it, the PMFs are largely autonomous fighting forces, with little centralized control. The fighters of the militias mostly follow the orders of their militia commanders. The most powerful commanders among the PMFs are Hadi al Amiri, Abu Madhi al Muhandis, and Qais Khazali.

The Shia militias have different origins. Some of them have existed since the period following the US invasion in 2003 and fought against Coalition forces. Others are the armed wings of Shia political parties. Finally, there are the more recently formed militias, which were created following al-Sistani's fatwa. These most recent groups follow the Prime Minister's orders more than the others, are the least ideological, but also the weakest militarily and politically. Most of their members joined because of the fatwa and the desire to protect Shia shrines and/or for a salary because they were unemployed. The groups that are most powerful and ambitious in terms of trying to shape Iraq's political future are the two earlier forms of groups. They seek to play a very large role in Iraq's political future.

There is a serious power struggle within the PMFs between the more-Iraqi-oriented forces, such as Mukkada al Sadr's Al Mahdi army and Iranian-backed militias and political parties. The Al Mahdi army fighters only follow the commands of al Sadr and no one else. The most prominent Shia militias are the Badr Organization, Hezbollah, Al Abbas Brigade, and Asaib Ahl al Haq Brigades which, are all backed by Iran (particularly the Quds force) and look to Iran's supreme leader for orders. They are not under the control of the Iraqi government. These groups dominate the PMFs on the ground, creating a real challenge for the Iraqi government in terms of having control over what is happening in the country.

“There is a serious power struggle within the PMFs between the more-Iraqi-oriented forces, such as Mukkada al Sadr's Al Mahdi army and Iranian-backed militias and political parties ... [and] The most prominent Shia militias are the Badr Organization, Hezbollah, Al Abbas Brigade, and Asaib Ahl al Haq Brigades which, are all backed by Iran (particularly the Quds force.)

The aims and objectives of the Shia PMFs differ to an extent based on their origins and how close they are to Iran. It is clear that almost none of them are desirous of disbanding. They all see a role for themselves in a post-Da'esh Iraq.

There are two trends of thinking among the Shia PMFs about what their future should be. One trend is turn the PMFs into the Iraqi equivalent of the Iranian IRGC. This position has been most forcefully stated by Hamed al Jazaery, commander of the al Khorasani Brigade. This is a position that is strongly supported by Iran as it is seen as best way to maintain Shia dominance and a pro-Iran power base in Iraq.

The second trend in thinking is to turn the PMFs into an Iraqi National Guard. What this would mean is largely determined by an Iraqi's sectarian orientation. The Shia PMFs that support this option

see this more as a re-naming of the existing PMFs structure and it would remain a Shia-dominated force. This force could include Sunnis and others but it would maintain its current Shia numerical and command dominance. Non-Shia Iraqis would like to see the National Guard become a truly integrated organization that would bury sectarian identity in its bid to help keep Iraq secure.

Sunni Iraqis, on the whole, have deep distrust of the PMFs. The Sunni militias that are in the PMFs are small and weak and are typically the creature of a Sunni parliamentarian who is close to the Shia militias. These parliamentarians are paid handsomely for creating a militia that gives the veneer of real Sunni participation in the PMFs. Survey after survey of Iraqis undertaken by IIACSS has shown that upwards of 80% of Iraqi Sunnis distrust the PMFs. Shias, on the other hand, have the mirror opposite view of the PMFs. Shias largely trust the PMFs and believe they have done positive things for Iraq since 2014.

The PMFs stand to play a very destabilizing role in Iraq following the effective military defeat of Da'esh. In the best scenario, the fighters would be integrated into a non-sectarian National Guard. That way they could continue to be paid and could keep their sense of honor. Leaving them as they are now will almost certainly renew Sunni-Shia tensions and help re-establish Sunni extremism in the country.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Zana Gulmohamad, University of Sheffield

Their goal will be to further consolidate their footprint in Iraqi polity, especially in the political, military, and economic structure, and be able to increase their projection of power beyond Iraq's borders. The pro-Iranian Iraqi Shia militia zealous groups have ambitions both regionally and beyond Iraq's borders in regard to supporting the Shia groups and population across the Middle East. They share ideological (Wilayat al-Faqih) and revolutionary beliefs (they follow Iranian supreme leader Grand Ayatollah Khamenei and they consider themselves part of the extension of the Iranian Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's revolution).

Their rise has been augmented by the initiative of the establishment of the PMF (an umbrella for dozens of majority Shia (but not limited to as they include some Sunni, Christian, Yazidi, Turkmen) militias that are not united in their political interests and loyalties. They include pro-Iranian militias that are the most powerful and the largest, pro-Sistani close to the PM, and pro-al-Sadr militias) by former Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki and the fatwa Jihad al-Kafai of Iraq's highest Shia reference Ali al-Sistani (He adopts the quietest doctrine where religious leaders do not rule the states in contrast to the Iranian doctrine.). Recently the Shia militias have been fortified by their successes in pushing back the Islamic State from Baghdad and other Iraqi territories and then by the parliament, which passed a law on 26th of November for the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) to be a permanent security and military body.

The law passed by the majority of the Iraqi Members of the Iraqi Council of Representatives (ICR) was backed by the Shia representatives al-Itilaf al-Watani al-Iraqi (National Iraqi Alliance) with opposition by mainly Sunni Arab political forces in the ICR known as Tahaluf al-Quwa al-Iraqiya and key figures Ahmad al-Msari, Thafer al-A'ani and Usama al-Nujaifi as well as most of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) members in the ICR. Although, there is no national consensus between the Iraqis about the continuation and legalization of the PMF as a military organization, the majority voted for this law.

The law has secured the future of many Iraqi Shia militias. The law constitutes for example: Article 1, the PMF is part of the Iraqi Security Forces and directly related to the General Commander of Iraqi Security Forces, who is the PM. Article 2/1 the PMF is independent and part of the ISF and linked to the PM, This article provides legitimacy for the Shia militias including those moderate and extremists, as well as the right for the government to provide them with further equipment and financial support for its organs and members as part of Iraqi defense system without domestic opposition. Therefore, this will sustain their presence in the long-term. Article 5 of this law indicates that all the members in the PMF have to cut their links and ties with political parties and entities. This will be only theoretical and on paper as the majority will have ties with their political entities and those who have links with Iran will persist. Aws al-Khafaji, the leader of an Iraqi Shia militia Abu Fadel al-Abas that is operative in Syria, said in December 2016 in a TV interview with an Iraqi channel, "The new parliament passed a law that cannot force the major Shia armed forces such as Saraya al-Salam, A'saib Ahl al-Haq and their leaders to follow the government and the head of the PMF's orders. Only a small fraction of their forces that are integrated with the PMF will obey the government's and the PMF's orders". His statement is a clear indication that the law is only to embolden and legalize their presence not to make them a body that adheres to the state's orders.

After defeating IS all the Shia militias believe their duties are to continue to fight Salafi jihadist groups and other related Sunni radical forms that will persist after defeating IS in Iraq or even beyond its sovereign borders. For example, there is clear involvement of pro-Iranian Iraqi Shia militias in Syria and their key engagement in the latest battle of Aleppo alongside Syrian Army. Additionally, they cooperate with the Lebanese Hezbollah and have ties with Houthis in Yemen and the Shia resistance in Bahrain.

The Shia militias will be emboldened by the next Iraqi elections as the political entities that the militias are linked and affiliated to as well as a number of their key figures will enter politics to have more authority and a political say. The author expects them to have a considerable achievement in the elections (provincial and national), as they are increasingly popular among Shias.

There are plenty of similarities between the PMF and the Iranian Basij Resistance Force, which is a volunteer paramilitary organization under the IRGC. Despite the fact that in the PMF there are Sunni militias such as Hashd al-A'shari and small groups of Christian and Yazidi militias, the divided Shia militias and their leaders are dominating its trajectory and policies. Post-2003 the Shia militias' members have infiltrated Iraqi security, military and clandestine organizations because the Shia-led government have consented and turned a blind eye. The recent developments are consolidating their achievements and further developing towards their goals.

Shi'ia Militia Groups (Hash'd al Shaabi)

Diane L. Maye, Ph.D.

Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

To counter internal threats, former Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki appealed to long-standing

Shi'a militias to quell uprisings and eliminate emergent Sunni political players. Maliki also integrated Shi'a paramilitary units and militias into the Iraqi Security Forces ahead of Sunni *Sahwa* groups, then cut the funding for the Sunni Sons of Iraq, leaving tens of thousands of military-aged Sunni Arab males without work. Furthermore, Maliki strictly enforced Iraq's Justice and Accountability (de-Ba'athification) Law and Article 4 of Iraq's antiterrorism law, which imprisoned individuals accused of terrorist activity without a timeline for due process. In doing so, Maliki aggravated large portions of the Sunni Arab population. While the Hash'd al Shaabi have had enormous successes in some parts of Iraq, past grievances prevent many Sunnis from trusting the militias. It is highly likely that after the liberation of Mosul and the 2017 elections, major political players in Baghdad will attempt to reward elements of the Hash'd al Shaabi with positions in law enforcement or the official Iraqi security apparatus (under the guise of 'civil' control). It will be important for coalition forces to foresee this political move and prevent such an action from taking place.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Sarhang Hamasaeed, USIP

These groups would seek political (some already have members of parliament) and economic viability and possibly expansion in similar ways of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). They have already moved in that direction, and with the Iraqi Council of Representatives (CoR) passing the PMF law late November, they would exist parallel to the military, receive funds and training from the government, and be protected from any civilian prosecution.

Some of their elements may go to Syria to join the fight, alongside those Iraqi Shias who are already there. The PMF is already a Shia tool for protecting the Shia, and some of its elements/units have committed violations against Sunni communities. The PMF could also become an instrument of political and armed competition – even causing violence – in Shia-Shia dynamics.

All politics and regional roles aside, given the collapse of the Iraqi Army in the face of Da'esh, the Shia population would likely want to hold on to the PMF as a protecting force. Iran would be interested in preserving the PMF as a proxy tool that is easier to use inside and outside Iraq as they have done with the Lebanese Hezbollah.

The PMF and the Kurdish Peshmerga have confronted each other and fighting broke out a number of times. The PMF may be more interested in taking on the Peshmerga in the disputed areas between Baghdad and Erbil. Confrontations are most likely in mixed population areas of Kirkuk, Diyala, and Salahaddin. The PMF could become one of the tools for Iran and the Shia hawks to use against the Kurds. Former Prime Maliki tried to use the army, but they were not as loyal and responsive.

Comment on Objectives of Shi'a Militia Groups in Iraq

Dr. Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS)

Not all “Shia militia groups” are created equal. They are in general popular with the Shia population, but some are more beholden to Iran than others (especially Badr, Asa’ib al Haq and Kata’ib Hizbollah), and some are more beholden to Ayatollah Sistani. They will remain an important component of Iraq’s security forces for the foreseeable future, preferably in as a reserve force. They are also likely to gain political and economic ambition as the war against Daesh ends. Some commanders may well leave the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMFs) to become candidates for parliament (as the new law requires) as well as ministerial and other official posts. Some PMFs will also go into business, possibly as private security companies and/or organized crime syndicates.

Iran will want its militia surrogates to gain geographic as well as political weight once Mosul is taken. I would expect them to seek to remain in Ninewa, Saladin, and Diyala, which are contiguous with Iraqi Kurdistan. Iran wants to prevent the independence of Kurdistan and limit its geographic boundaries if it occurs.

Comment on Objectives of Shi’a Militia Groups in Iraq

Renaud Mansour

There are many sides to the PMU. Most of the fighters will either disband (as they're volunteers) or seek employment in an emerging state security apparatus. However, the more powerful groups, such as the League of the Righteousness, Kataib Hezbollah, and perhaps even Badr, may want to be part of a more autonomy PMU institution (see the law that was passed a few weeks ago).

Comment on Objectives of Shi’a Militia Groups in Iraq

Bilal Wahab

Washington Institute

Shia militia groups fighting Da’esh, collectively called Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), are now by law integral to Iraq’s security apparatus. Hence, they are legal entities that receive funding from the national budget. It is evident, however, that their loyalties are to their militia leaders rather than to the state. Iran will continue to play a leading role in their sustainability, evolution and growth.

The immediate goal of PMFs is to capitalize on their military victories and translate them into political power. That is, they will morph into political parties and run for office in the upcoming elections. Given their momentum, Shia parties and media offer their support and deference to PMFs, and exalt their achievements. The evolution of militias into political parties will further militarize the Shia communities. So far, parties have had a militia. After Da’esh, militias will form political platforms. Such militarization will only strengthen the role and influence of Iran in Iraqi politics, given Iran’s leverage and command of the PMFs.

Excerpts of NSI Team Telephone Conversation with Dr. Anoush Ehteshami, 12/12/2016¹⁰

Anoush Ehteshami (Durham University, UK): ... Iran is now really aware of the negative blowback in the rest of the region for its presence in Iraq, in Syria, and in Lebanon with Hezbollah. The last thing I think they want right now is, with Daesh thrown out of Iraq, for Iran to be the new bogey occupying Iraq. That provides the Saudis and the rest of the Sunni Coalition a real grand card to mobilize the Sunnis in Iraq against Iran, to get Turkey on their side finally, and again, Iran does not want to play that bogey man post-Daesh in Iraq. The only way it can avoid that is to have the Coalition continue to underwrite national security over Iraq. ...

... For the RGC, they simply are in no position to be involved against Daesh in Iraq, partly because they don't want to rile Daesh any more than they have to. The last thing that they want is to be seen as a frontline against Daesh in any shape or form because that would just crystalize this Sunni-Shia dimension to the level that Iran would then have to be seen as a defender of the Shia agenda because the Sunnis certainly will not rally around Tehran in any kind of anti-Daesh coalition. So, the RGC is fully aware that they can't really, for practical and ideological and pragmatic reasons, manage a post-Daesh Iraq by themselves, and they're not going to go away. The Shia militias, which have been mobilized, are going to stay mobilized, partly because they're an important element, a pillar of Iran's own influence in Iraq now. Iran ... is not that keen on the Iraqi government either and is much more committed to working with the Shia militias to maintain grass root presence and influence, dare I say control, of the vast areas of Iraq which are now Shia dominated. So, it wants to work below that radar level rather than at the grand state level, and so, maintaining a lower profile is always the RGC's preference in these situations. This also suits the Leader because it can always give him closeable deniability as well.

[Iran] would love the Coalition to stabilize Iraq all the way to the borders, if possible, of Syria but not force or push an agenda that would disarm the militias, for example. They would see that as a direct challenge to their authority in Iraq. So, it's a combination, if you'd like, of political issues and security issues. So long as it's the Iraqi government that makes the requests of the Coalition, I think Iranians would be finding it very difficult to challenge it, in public at least; it may do it in private with the Iraqis, but not in public. Beyond that, I can't see the Iraqi government also stepping too much out of line against Iran's interests because they recognize that Iran is going to make a lot of trouble for them in Iraq if they felt miffed by whatever Iraq does with the Coalition.

Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI): Right, okay. So, thank you, and this actually is a very similar question that we got, which is what are the aims and objectives of the Shia militia group following the defective military defeat of Daesh?

Anoush Ehteshami: I think their agenda is somewhat similar to Al Sadr's agenda in, say 2004 post-fall of Baghdad, and that was to get as much control of government as possible, as quickly as possible. Al Sadr was, for all his faults, representative of a national voice and a very credible pedigree from this other tradition. These militias have little long roots in Iraqi political order, and so they realize once the war is over, they will lose their present Daesh in a sense, and they will need to find other ones. That would be, I think, to find a niche in internal security from which they could then begin to collect rent and from which they can begin to

¹⁰ Full transcript available on request to the SMA office.

build their political base. I think in both of those instances, Iran is not going to be unsupportive of them. So, I see this Coalition...some of the Mohandis ... I think some of them are there for the money, for the fight, and for ideology and may very well go back there to the farms and what have you, but there will be others who will have tasted power will see this as an opportunity to consolidate, to build, to develop, and to enrich.

Allison Astorino-Courtois: Do you know, or can you tell at this point which particular groups those might be or who they may be led by?

Anoush Ehteshami: I can't on the top of my head, I have information on it that I can communicate to you later, because there are hot spots. Some of them don't like fighting in some places, and they don't do it. They stay back, or they go in for a clean-up job, and there are others that are much more keen to come flying a Shia flag into Sunni heartlands and are determined to take control of those areas. Iran has shamelessly worked with all of this range of groups itself because it sees them as nodes of influence in the broader part of Iraqi society and community. I don't think it would be for Iranians to decide how many of them stay how many of them go. Some of them, of course, once Iraq is free of the Daesh menace, will be encouraged to move into Syria to shore up Assad. I think Iran will be very directive in pushing some of these guys westward into Syria, and again, I think this is fluid. It will depend on how the battle for Mosul unravels and what post-Daesh fighting is left to do there. I don't think the Iraqi government is going to have much say or control over these guys. They obviously are alongside the Iraqi military units, but I don't think in terms of the chain of command, once they get in a battle situation, they'll necessarily be closely following the Iraqi government's tactic. I think they seem to be doing some of their own stuff. Some of it is very ugly as you know, some of it is kind of in keeping with the direction of travel as far as the Coalition and the Iraqi government are concerned.

Allison Astorino-Courtois: ... in Iraq, you have the different groups and parties, and the Shia militia, it's just too fluid you'd think to categorize in terms of any of the groups.

Anoush Ehteshami: I think [Shi'a Militia is] a shorthand, what we view as a Shia militia. I think, you know, some of them break down into neighborhoods or families even of individuals who get involved, and others are the ones who have spent time in Iran in the 1980s and grew up there and are not involved in the militias. It really is a very mixed bag of individuals who have come from many parts of Iraq, and some of them I suspect would just want to go back to where they came from once the call for liberation and this subsides and there isn't a battle to fight any longer in Iraq itself.

Allison Astorino-Courtois: It seems to me that there is a danger to using this shorthand.

Anoush Ehteshami: I agree with you. I think it is because some of these folks are in there for different reasons, even though normatively it might appear that they're all for the liberation of Iraq, for the Iraqi sovereignty, and the defeat of Daesh. I think they have somewhat different objectives in the last analysis, and post-Mosul liberation is when we'll begin to see this crystalize. I'm not saying that they're all under Iran's control. I think, again, post-Mosul liberation we'll see how much influence Iran has over these guys, but if there are those that want to carry on with a military campaign, I think it will be the Iraqi government which would encourage Iran to shift these guys into Syria because the government doesn't want to have a battle-hardened bunch of men carrying weapons driving back to Baghdad. ...

Author Biographies



Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois is Executive Vice President at NSI, Inc. She has also served as co-chair of a National Academy of Sciences study on Strategic Deterrence Military Capabilities in the 21st Century, and as a primary author on a study of the Defense and Protection of US Space Assets. Dr. Astorino-Courtois has served as technical lead on a variety of rapid turn-around, Joint Staff-directed Strategic Multi-layer Assessment (SMA) projects in support of US forces and Combatant Commands. These include assessments of key drivers of political, economic and social instability and areas of resilience in South Asia; development of a methodology for conducting provincial assessments for the ISAF Joint Command; production of a "rich contextual understanding" (RCU) to supplement intelligence reporting for the ISAF J2 and Commander; and projects for USSTRATCOM on deterrence assessment methods.

Previously, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a Senior Analyst at SAIC (2004-2007) where she served as a STRATCOM liaison to U.S. and international academic and business communities. Prior to SAIC, Dr. Astorino-Courtois was a tenured Associate Professor of International Relations at Texas A&M University in College Station, TX (1994-2003) where her research focused on the cognitive aspects of foreign policy decision making. She has received a number of academic grants and awards and has published articles in multiple peer-reviewed journals. She has also taught at Creighton University and as a visiting instructor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Dr. Astorino-Courtois earned her Ph.D. in International Relations and MA in and Research Methods from New York University. Her BA is in political science from Boston College. Finally, Dr. Astorino-Courtois also has the distinction of having been awarded both a US Navy Meritorious Service Award and a US Army Commander's Award.

Dr. Elie Abouaoun



Dr. Elie Abouaoun is currently the director of the Middle East & North Africa Programs at the U.S. Institute of Peace. He has served as director of Middle East Programs and senior program officer since 2013. Prior to that, he held the position of executive director at the Arab Human Rights Fund.

His previous positions include acting country director and program manager for the Danish Refugee Council in Iraq, as well as program coordinator for Ockenden International-Iraq and director of external relations for the Lebanese NGO arcenciel.

Dr. Abouaoun has served as a senior trainer and consultant for various international organizations since 1996 including for the Council of Europe since 2000. In 2001 he was appointed a member of the Reference Group established by the Directorate of Education-Council of Europe to supervise the drafting of COMPASS, a manual for human rights education.

He further supervised the adaptation and the translation of COMPASS into Arabic, and its subsequent diffusion in the Arab region in 2003.

He is a visiting lecturer at Notre Dame University-Lebanon and Saint Joseph University-Lebanon on the subjects of human rights, civil society, advocacy and citizenship, and regularly contributes to publications throughout the MENA and the US. Dr. Abouaoun also serves on the Board of Directors of several organizations in the MENA region.

Dr. Harith Al-Qarawee

Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies-Brandeis University, former fellow at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies-Harvard University.

Member of the Future of Iraq's Task Force- Atlantic Council

Member of Middle East Strategy Task Force (MEST) – Working group on Religion and Identity - Atlantic Council – (2015).

Writing a book manuscript on Shi'a religious authority in Iraq and its relationship with Iran.
Writing commentaries and briefs on the Middle East, with special focus on post-ISIS Iraq.
Briefing US government institutions on political developments in the Middle East.

Omar Al-Shahery

Experienced Consultant, Chief of Party, analyst and international leader, with a 20-year record of success, including more than 15 years of supervisory and leadership experience with multinational and national-level organizations including Aktis Strategy, RAND Corporation, Iraqi Ministry of Defense, and Coalition Provisional Authority, in providing liaison with a broad range of clients and stakeholders up to the Presidential and Prime Minister level in the Middle East, United States, and Africa on policy-level and nation-building level decisions relating to democratization, educational, and defense programs, military systems, future force structure and doctrine, and national military strategy.

Held the position of Chief of Party in North Africa during his tenure in Aktis Strategy. Former Analyst at the RAND Corporation. Prior to joining RAND, he served as the Deputy Director General of the Iraqi Defense Intelligence and Military Security. Graduated with an MC/MPA from Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Currently a PhD candidate in Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University.

Dr. Scott Atran, ARTIS

Scott Atran received his B.A. and Ph.D. in anthropology from Columbia University (and an M.A. in social relations from Johns Hopkins). He is tenured as Research Director in Anthropology at France's National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), Institut Jean Nicod – Ecole Normale Supérieure, in Paris. He is a founding fellow of the Centre for Resolution of Intractable Conflict, Harris Manchester College, and Department of Politics and International Relations and School of Social Anthropology, University of Oxford. Scott also holds positions as Research Professor of Public Policy and Psychology, University of Michigan; and he is Director of Research, ARTIS Research.

Previously, Scott was assistant to Dr. Margaret Mead at the American Museum of Natural History; Coordinator “Animal and Human Communication Program,” Royaumont Center for a Science of Man, Paris (Jacques Monod, Dir.); member of the Conseil Scientifique, Laboratoire d’Ethnobiologie-Biogéographie, Museum National D’Histoire Naturelle, Paris; Visiting Lecturer, Dept. Social Anthropology, Cambridge Univ.; Chargé de Conférence, Collège International de Philosophie; member of the Centre de Recherche en Epistémologie Appliquée, Ecole Polytechnique, Paris; Visiting Prof., Truman Institute, Hebrew Univ., Jerusalem; Leverhulme Distinguished Visiting Prof. of Anthropology, Univ. of London-Goldsmiths.; Presidential Scholar, John Jay College of Criminal Justice. Scott has experimented extensively on the ways scientists and ordinary people categorize and reason about nature, on the cognitive and evolutionary psychology of religion, and on the limits of rational choice in political and cultural conflict. He has repeatedly briefed NATO, HMG and members of the U.S. Congress and the National Security Council staff at the White House on the Devoted Actor versus the Rational Actor in Managing World Conflict, on the Comparative Anatomy and Evolution of Global Network Terrorism, and on Pathways to and from Violent Extremism. He has addressed the United Nations Security Council on problems of youth and violent extremism and currently serves in advisory capacity to the Security Council and Secretary General on combatting terrorism and on ways to implement UN Resolution 2250 to engage and empower youth in the promotion of peace. He has been engaged in conflict negotiations in the Middle East, and in the establishment of indigenously managed forest reserves for Native American peoples.

Scott is a recurrent contributor to *The New York Times*, *The Guardian* and *Foreign Policy*, as well as to professional journals such as *Science*, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, and *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*. His publications include *Cognitive Foundations of Natural History: Towards an Anthropology of Science* (Cambridge Univ. Press), *In Gods We Trust: The Evolutionary Landscape of Religion* (Oxford Univ. Press), *The Native Mind and the Cultural Construction of Nature* (MIT Press, with Doug Medin), and *Talking to the Enemy: Violent Extremism, Sacred Values, and What It Means to Be Human* (Penguin). His work and life have been spotlighted around the world on television and radio and in the popular and scientific press, including feature and cover stories of the *New York Times Magazine*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Nature* and *Science News*.



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Academic and Professional Qualification

- 2008 Diploma in Marketing Research, University of Georgia , USA
- 2005 Certificate in SPSS preliminary and advance models, Bahrain, SPSS regional office
- 1996 Ph.D. in Public Administration (human resources management), University of Baghdad, College of Administration and Economics.
- 1989 M.S.C in Public Administration, University of Baghdad, Iraq.
- 1980 B.Sc. in Administration, University of Basrah, Iraq.

Academic and Professional Appointment

- September 2003-Now CEO and founder of Independent Incorporated of Administration and Civil Society Studies.
- 2006 - Professor of Strategic Management in P.A., College of Adm. And Eco, Baghdad University
- May 2003-Sep. 2003 Head of Polling Department – IRAQ Center of Research and Strategic Studies (ICRSS).
- 2002-2003 Lecturer in Business Management Dep. College of Adm. And Eco. , Basrah University.
- 1997 Lecturer in P.A., College of Adm. And Eco, Baghdad University.
- 1997 Senior Lecturer in Administration Sciences, national defence college, AL-Bakir University for Post Graduate Studies, Baghdad, Iraq.

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12. More than 15 published articles and research in human resources, strategic management, organizational behavior, TQM and different public administration issues.



Dr. Anoush Ehteshami

Professor Anoush Ehteshami is the Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah Chair in International Relations and Director of the HH Sheikh Nasser al-Mohammad al-Sabah Programme in International Relations, Regional Politics and Security. He is Joint Director of the RCUK-funded centre of excellence, the Durham-Edinburgh-Manchester Universities' Centre for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), whose research focus since 2012 has been on the 'Arab World in Transition'. He was the University's Dean of Internationalisation, 2009-2011 and was the founding Head of the School of Government and International Affairs at Durham University (2004-9). He has been a Fellow of the World Economic Forum, and was elected in 2011 as a member of the WEF's foremost body, the Global Agenda Councils. He was Vice-President and Chair of Council of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES) 2000-2003. He has collaborative links with many international organizations, including the German-based Bertelsmann Foundation, the Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, and the Gulf Research Centre, and has acted as Advisor and consultant to the International Crisis Group, and has been Governing Board Member of the International Dialogues Foundation in The Hague.

In addition to having published 21 books and monographs, he also has over 90 articles in learned journals and edited volumes to his name.

His current research revolves around five over-arching themes:

The Asian balance of power in the post-Cold War era.

The 'Asianization' of the Middle East and the wider international system.

Foreign and security policies of Middle East states since the end of the Cold War.

The impact of globalization on the Middle East.

Good governance, democratization efforts, in the Middle East.

Editor of three major book series on the Middle East and the wider Muslim world, and is member of Editorial Board of five international journals. He is a regular contributor to global news networks – print, online, radio and television.

Robert S Ford



Robert S Ford is currently a Senior Fellow at the Middle East Institute in Washington where he writes about developments in the Levant and North Africa. Mr. Ford in 2014 retired from the U.S. Foreign Service after serving as the U.S. Ambassador to Syria from 2011 to 2014. In this role Mr. Ford was the State Department lead on Syria, proposing and implementing policy and developing common strategies with European and Middle Eastern allies to try to resolve the Syria conflict. Prior to this, Mr. Ford was the Deputy U.S. Ambassador to Iraq from 2008 to 2010, and also served from 2006 until 2008 as the U.S. Ambassador to Algeria, where he boosted bilateral education and rule of law cooperation. Ford served as Deputy Chief of Mission in Bahrain from 2001 until 2004, and Political Counselor to the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad from 2004 until 2006 during the tumultuous establishment of the new, permanent Iraqi government. In 2014 he received the Secretary's Service Award, the U.S. State Department's highest honor. He also received in April 2012 from the John F. Kennedy Library in Boston the annual Profile in Courage Award for his stout defense of human rights in Syria. He has appeared on CNN, PBS, Fox, MSNBC, NPR, the BBC and Arabic news networks as well as in the *New York Times* and *Foreign Policy*.

Education

B.A. in international studies, Johns Hopkins University; M.A. in Middle East studies and economics, Johns Hopkins SAIS; Advanced Arabic studies, American University of Cairo



Mr. Zana Gulmohamad. In February 2013 I began my PhD at the Politics Department at the University of Sheffield, UK. My research title is: "Iraq's foreign policy post-2003". I am a Research Fellow at the American University of Kurdistan. I have an MA in Global Affairs and Diplomacy from the University of Buckingham, UK, and a BA in Political Science from the University of Sulymania - Kurdistan Region of Iraq. I worked for six years (2005-2011) in the Kurdistan Region Security Council - Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq.

I had substantial responsibilities as executive manager and a security analyst in matters related to security, intelligence, data analysis, security technology, foreign relations (receiving delegations and official trips abroad) and teaching staff. My capabilities have built up over years of training and interaction with security and intelligence corporations, governments and their security and intelligence services. They include states such as the US, the UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands.

My articles have been published by journals and think tanks such as Jamestown Foundation "Terrorism Monitor", The National, Open Democracy, E-International Relations, Global Security Studies, Your Middle East, The New Arab, and Middle East online. I have presented conference papers in the UK, the US and the Middle East. Please go to my website to view the links to my articles www.zanagul.com

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Sarhang Hamasaeed

Sarhang Hamasaeed is a senior program officer for the Middle-East and North Africa Programs at the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP). He joined USIP in February 2011 and works on program management, organizational development, and monitoring and evaluation. His areas of focus include political and policy analysis, conflict analysis, dialogue processes, reconciliation and post-conflict stabilization, and ethnic and religious minorities. He writes, gives media interviews to international media, and is featured on events and briefings on Iraq, Syria, and the Middle East. He provided analysis to NPR, Voice of America, Al-Jazeera America, Fox News Al-Hurra TV, Radio Sawa, Kurdistan TV, Kurdsat TV, Rudaw, Al-Iraqiya TV, NRT TV, Skynews Arabia, the Washington Times, PBS, and CCTV. He is a member on the Task Force on the Future of Iraq, and was member of the Rebuilding Societies Working Group under the Middle East Strategy Taskforce, both initiatives by the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. He regularly gives a lecture at the Foreign Service Institute on ISIL and Challenges to Governance in Iraq.

Hamasaeed has more than 15 years of strategy, management, and monitoring and evaluation experience in governmental, nongovernmental, private sector, and media organizations.

As a deputy director general at the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (2008-2009), Hamasaeed managed strategic government modernization initiatives through information technology with the goal of helping improve governance and service delivery. As a program manager for the Research Triangle Institute International (2003-2004), he managed civic engagement and local democratic governance programs in Iraq. Hamasaeed has worked as a planning and relations manager at Kurdistan Save the Children (1997-2002). Hamasaeed has also worked for the Los Angeles Times and other international media organizations.

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Dr. Renad Mansour

Since 2008, Renad has held research and teaching positions focusing on issues of comparative politics and international relations in the Middle East. His research at Chatham House explores the situation of Iraq in transition and the dilemmas posed by state-building. Prior to joining Chatham House, Renad was an El-Erian fellow at the Carnegie Middle East Centre, where he examined Iraq, Iran and Kurdish affairs. Renad is also a research fellow at the Cambridge Security Initiative based at Cambridge University and from 2013, he held positions as lecturer of International Studies and supervisor at the faculty of politics, also at Cambridge University. Renad has been a senior research fellow at the Iraq Institute for Strategic Studies in Beirut since 2011 and was adviser to the Kurdistan Regional Government Civil Society Ministry between 2008 and 2010. He received his PhD from Pembroke College, Cambridge.



Dr. Diane L. Maye

Dr. Diane Maye is an Assistant Professor of Homeland Security and Global Conflict Studies at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida and an affiliated faculty member at George Mason University's Center for Narrative and Conflict Resolution. She also served as a Visiting Professor of Political Science at John Cabot University in Rome, Italy. Diane earned a Ph.D. in Political Science from George Mason University; her dissertation focuses on Iraqi political alignments and alliances after the fall of the Ba'ath party.

Diane has taught undergraduate level courses in International Relations, Comparative Politics, Homeland Security, American Foreign Policy, Terrorism and Counterterrorism Analysis, Beginner Arabic, and Political Islam. Her major research interests include: security issues in the Middle East and U.S. defense policy. Diane has published several scholarly works and has appeared in online and scholarly mediums including: *The Digest of Middle East Studies*, *The Journal of Terrorism Research*, *The National Interest*, *Radio Algeria*, *The Bridge*, *Business Insider*, *Small Wars Journal*, *Military One*, *In Homeland Security*, and the *New York Daily News*.

Prior to her work in academia, Diane served as an officer in the United States Air Force and worked in the defense industry. Upon leaving the Air Force, Diane worked for an Italian-U.S. defense company managing projects in foreign military sales, proposal development, and the execution of large international communications and physical security projects for military customers. During the Iraq war, she worked for Multi-National Force-Iraq in Baghdad, managing over 400 bilingual, bicultural advisors to the U.S. State Department and the U.S. Department of Defense. She has done freelance business consulting for European, South American, and Middle Eastern clients interested in security and defense procurement, and is currently the official representative of MD Helicopters in Iraq. Diane is a member of the Military Writers Guild, an associate editor for *The Bridge*, and a member of the Terrorism Research Analysis Consortium. She is a graduate of the U.S. Air Force Academy and the Naval Postgraduate School.

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III,

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His areas of expertise include democratization and conflict resolution in Russian, Eastern European and Middle Eastern politics. Most recently, he has been working with USASOC on several projects related to comprehensive deterrence, narratives and resistance typologies, and non-violent UW in the Gray Zone. His publications include research on democratic development and international nuclear safety agreements (*Nuclear Energy and International Cooperation: Closing the World's Most Dangerous Reactors*), as well as articles in scholarly

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Alireza Nader

Alireza Nader is a senior international policy analyst at the RAND Corporation and author of *The Days After a Deal With Iran: Continuity and Change in Iranian Foreign Policy*. His research has focused on Iran's political dynamics, elite decision making, and Iranian foreign policy. His commentaries and articles have appeared in a variety of publications and he is widely cited by the U.S. and international media.

Nader's other RAND publications include *Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry*; *The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran*; *Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy*; *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps*.

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Dr. Daniel Serwer

Professor Daniel Serwer (Ph.D., Princeton) directs the Conflict Management Program at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. He is also a Senior Fellow at its Center for Transatlantic Relations and affiliated as a Scholar with the Middle East Institute. His current interests focus on the civilian instruments needed to protect U.S. national security as well as transition and state-building in the Middle East, North Africa and the Balkans. His *Righting the Balance: How You Can Help Protect America* was published in November 2013 by Potomac Books.

Formerly Vice President for centers of peacebuilding innovation at the United States Institute of Peace, he led teams there working on rule of law, religion, economics, media, technology, security sector governance and gender. He was also vice president for peace and stability operations at USIP, where he led its peacebuilding work in Iraq, Afghanistan, Sudan and the Balkans and served as Executive Director of the Hamilton/Baker Iraq Study Group. Serwer has worked on preventing interethnic and sectarian conflict in Iraq and has facilitated dialogue between Serbs and Albanians in the Balkans.

As a minister-counselor at the U.S. Department of State, Serwer directed the European office of intelligence and research and served as U.S. special envoy and coordinator for the Bosnian Federation, mediating between Croats and Muslims and negotiating the first agreement reached at the Dayton peace talks. From 1990 to 1993, he was deputy chief of mission and chargé d'affaires at the U.S. Embassy in Rome, leading a major diplomatic mission through the end of the Cold War and the first Gulf War.

Serwer holds a Ph.D. and M.A. from Princeton University, an M.S. from the University of Chicago, and a B.A. from Haverford College. He speaks Italian, French and Portuguese, as well as beginning Arabic.



Dr. Randa Slim

Randa Slim is Director of the Track II Dialogues initiative at The Middle East Institute and an adjunct research fellow at the New America Foundation. A former vice president of the International Institute for Sustained Dialogue, Slim has been a senior program advisor at the Rockefeller Brothers Fund, a guest scholar at the United States Institute of Peace, and a program officer at the Kettering Foundation. A long-term practitioner of Track II dialogue and peace-building processes in the Middle East and Central Asia, she co-founded in 2007 the Arab Network for the Study of Democracy, a group of academics and civil society activists from eight Arab countries. She is a member of the advisory committee of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund's Peacebuilding program and a member of the board of the Project on Middle East Democracy. The author of several studies, book chapters, and articles on conflict management, post-conflict peacebuilding, and Middle East politics, she is completing a book manuscript about Hezbollah.

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Steffany A. Trofino

Steffany Trofino is a graduate of the University of Aberdeen Scotland having obtained her Master's Degree with honors in Strategic Studies - Global Security. Ms. Trofino also studied Russian Language at Moscow State University, Moscow Russia in 1992. She is an honor graduate of the Navy Intelligence Officers Program (NIOBC), Damn Neck Virginia as well a graduate of the Department of Defense Strategic Debriefing certification program. Ms. Trofino has published several reports on weak and failed states and the manner by which such conditions foster and support terrorist activity including an assessment of Russian FSB Operations in Dagestan. In addition, Ms. Trofino has produced several White Papers on terrorism and counterterrorism initiatives including assessments of terrorist activity in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In 2012, Ms. Trofino developed a theory, The Reverse Assessment of Asymmetric Warfare, which was used as a foundational model for an Army 5-5 study. Her assessments have been used by former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Honorable James Woolsey to support his testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. She has worked with the US Department of Justice, Sub-Saharan Africa Division as well as the US Department of Defense. Ms. Trofino specializes in research and analysis of proxy activity in weak and failed states including understudied, underdeveloped regions of the world. She has recently completed a yearlong country assessment on Iraq.

Christine van den Toorn

Christine van den Toorn is the Director of IRIS. She has over 10 years of academic and professional experience in the Middle East, 6 of which have been spent in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). She has conducted fieldwork all over the KRI, with a particular focus on disputed territories in Ninewa, Diyala and Salahddin, and has published articles and reports in leading publications like Iraq Oil Report, Inside Iraqi Politics, Daily Beast and Niqash as well as delivered talks on her research. Ms. van den Toorn has also conducted baseline reports and social impact assessments for international oil companies operating in the KRI and disputed territories, working with teams of student researchers from AUIS. She served in the United States Peace Corps in Morocco and holds an MA in Middle East History from the University of Virginia, and taught the subject at AUIS for 4 years. Ms. van den Toorn speaks Arabic, which she studied at Middlebury College, Georgetown University, the University of Damascus in Syria and the French Institute for Near East Studies in Damascus.

Dr. Bilal Wahab

Bilal Wahab is a Soref fellow at The Washington Institute, where he focuses on governance in the Iraqi Kurdish region and in Iraq as a whole. He has taught at the American University of Iraq in Sulaimani, where he established the Center for Development and Natural Resources, a research program on oil and development. He earned his Ph.D. from George Mason University; his M.A. from American University, where he was among the first Iraqis awarded a Fulbright scholarship; and his B.A. from Salahaddin University in Erbil. Along with numerous scholarly articles, he has written extensively in the Arabic and Kurdish media.