SMA Reach-back Report

R3 Question #1: Are Government of Iraq initiatives for political reconciliation between the sectarian divide moving in step with military progress against Da'esh, and what conditions need to be met in order to accommodate the needs of the Sunni population?

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Executive Summary
Winning the War, but Losing the Peace[1]

> *"With every step of the military operation, the gap is widening between Shia and Sunnis." – Scott Atran, ARTIS*

The general consensus among contributors to this essay is that not only is political reconciliation lagging behind military progress, but that the gap is widening every day (Atran, Dagher & Kaltenthaler, Hamasaeed, Mansour). The government is not focused on reconciliation, it is focused on the anti-ISIL fight, budgetary issues, and Shia in-fighting (Slim). Furthermore, among the Shia population, there is a general sense that Sunnis lost twice already and that there is little need for reconciliation with them (Slim).

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[1] This subtitle is borrowed from Munqith Dagher and Karl Kaltenthaler: "*The Iraqi government, army, police, and its Shia militia allies are winning the war against Da'esh, but are poised to lose the peace.*"

So why are national reconciliation efforts failing? It is not due to lack of initiatives; in fact, there are so many that they are perceived to be more like pronouncements rather than planned, meaningful efforts (Abouaoun, Al-Qarawee, Ford, Wahab). Furthermore, many of these initiatives are being led by international organizations (Liebl). Lack of meaningful national reconciliation efforts have convinced some Sunni Arabs that the Iraqi government intends to revert to the political status-quo ante after ISIS is defeated militarily (Dagher & Kaltenthaler).

The Myth of the Iraqi State

The successful containment of ISIS will erode the single unifying incentive holding the diverse domestic and regional actors in Iraq together. The idea of a territorial sovereign state in Iraq is an illusion. Iraq is divided along ethnic and sectarian lines. It's economy is fragmented and reliant on personalist patronage networks that emerged from and reinforce clan, tribal, sectarian and ethnic loyalties. It goes without saying that the Iraqi government is fractured, but even within the Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish factions, competing forces (and militias) are dividing internal loyalties and interests. Regional countries also have competing interests while USG goals have not been clearly stated. Without a common enemy, it is unlikely that there will again be a confluence of interests to bring these actors together as (reluctant) allies. The risk is that Iraq descends into a failed states, which is particularly concerning as neighbors are more fearful of Iraqi unity than Iraq's dissolution. (Buddhika, Petit, Reno).

The "Historical Settlement" initiative announced at the end of October seemed to hold promise of a post-ISIS reconciliation until parliament passed a law in November legalizing and recognizing Shia Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), which Sunnis find an abhorrent form of government-sanctioned sectarian violence (Atran, Hamasaeed). Other unhelpful actions have included the failure to pass the National Guard Law and stripping the amnesty law of important content, according to Hamasaeed. Because of this, other GoI "initiatives" have largely been perceived as lip service to vague promises of reconciliation. These kinds of efforts will not address Sunni Arab or Kurdish grievances (Abouaoun).

One expert pointed out that reconciliation cannot just take place at the national level, it must also occur locally (Hamasaeed). Local efforts will be needed to remediate revenge violence among tribes as well as prepare for the return of over three million displaced people that could undermine military gains (Hamasaeed, Natali, Yahya). "Tribal and other forms of local violence could become a game changer" and should not be ignored, according to Hamasaeed.

However, other experts noted—without discounting the daunting challenges of reconciliation—that there are a few positive signs. First, there is a group of advisors around Prime Minister Abadi who believe that a new compact must be struck with the Sunnis, but this group is not powerful enough to effect change by itself (Slim). Second, two experts noted that in speaking with people on the ground that there is a general sense that reconciliation efforts have proceeded better than expected (Natali, Serwer). Third, in general, Sunni Arabs continue to largely see themselves as Iraqi nationalists and are committed to Iraq's territorial integrity (Natali). Finally, while Sunnis are completely opposed to the presence of Iranian-backed PMFs in their communities, many expressed a willingness to cooperate with Iraqi Security Forces (Natali).

Experts mentioned five underlying barriers to effective reconciliation.

- PM Abadi **lacks the support of his Shia alliance**, which he has not been able to secure due to intra-Shia rivalries (Abouaoun, Al-Qarawee, Ford, Liebl, Natali, Serwer). It is not clear that Shia hardliners will ever agree to reconcile or share power with the Sunni population (Hamasaeed).
- **Intra-Sunni competition** means that Sunnis are not united behind a single, clear agenda and likely will not be until free elections can be held (Al-Qarawee, Al-Shahery, Liebl, Maye, Natali, Wahab, Serwer).
- **Regional powers** are taking advantage of the power vacuum to promote their own agendas under the guise of protecting the Sunni population (Al-Qarawee).
- **Budget:** Iraq has an 18 billion dollar budge deficit (Yahya). Iraq's huge financial outlay combined with an inadequate inflow of funds means the Iraqi government cannot afford reconciliation initiatives (Liebl).

Conditions for Reconciliation

Sunnis do not speak with a single voice and do not have a unitary agenda, but the list below comprises some of the most frequently mentioned grievances. Experts noted that these grievances are not sectarian in nature—like most populations, they desire elements of basic good governance: security, justice, jobs, and equality under the law (Natali, Liebl). Furthermore, the Sunni population has to *feel* that they have a secure, just, and prosperous future in the country (Dagher & Kaltenthaler, McCauley, Natali, Serwer). The failure to deliver these demands may lead to further instability and unrest.

The list below touches on the most frequently noted demands from the Sunni population. For more detail, please refer to the cited contributions.

1. **Security.** Perhaps the most frequently mentioned issue is security (Serwer, Van Den Toorn). This encompasses many elements: freedom from tribal-based revenge and retribution for offenses committed during ISIS's rule (Serwer, Van Den Toorn) and removal and disempowerment of Iranian-backed militias, which Sunnis consider to be a bigger threat than ISIS (Abouaoun, Al-Shahery, Atran, Liebl, Nader, Natali, Yahya).
2. **Justice.** Reconciliation efforts must address forms of structural discrimination against Sunnis (Al-Shahery, Meredith). This broad category emphases many complaints: 1) need to moderate retributive justice (Meredith), 2) national policies that discriminate against Sunnis in government and military positions (Al-Shahery), 3) due process for those accused of supporting ISIS (Al-Shahery, Slim, Yahya), equal treatment under the law (Natali, Yahya), and 4) insistence on public accountability for those guilty of government abuses and corruption (Ford).
3. **Self Determination.** Local reconciliation efforts are just as important as national ones (Hamasaeed). Sunnis want more control over their lives (Maye, Wahab). Sunnis desire the authority to control their own territory and resources, determine local power sharing arrangements, provide security through local police force, hire for local government positions, and have meaningful participation in decision-making (Al-Shahery, Hamasaeed, Ford, Maye, McCauley, Natali, Serwer, Van Den Toorn)
4. **Humanitarian Assistance.** Experts agreed that humanitarian assistance must be an immediate priority following the liberation of ISIS-controlled territory (Al-Shahery, McCauley, Natali, Slim). Assistance will be needed far beyond what has already been promised by the international community.
5. **Reconstruction Aid**. It is clear that areas liberated from ISIS control will need massive and immediate reconstruction aid; however, there is deep skepticism about the political will to provide this assistance (Al-Shahery, Ford, Maye, Serwer, Yahya). There was a plan to rebuild Fallujah, but no progress has been seen on the ground yet (Al-Shahery, Natali).

The failure of the GoI to seriously address the grievances of the Sunni community could lead to a three-fold threat of destabilizing outcomes: a power vacuum where regional powers and their proxies escalate the fight (Mansour); a failed state where warlords, extremist groups, and transnational criminals thrive (Buddhika, Petit, Reno); or the rise of a ISIS 2.0 (Dagher & Kaltenthaler, Natali, Yahya). Hamasaeed underscored the severity of the political climate in Iraq by stating that "today Iraq has more ingredients for violence than before Da'esh took over one-third of the country."

What Can Coalition Partners Do?

Contributors outlined a few actions that the US government and its coalition partners could do to facilitation reconciliation.

1. Do not approach reconciliation through an **ethno-sectarian lens**—it not only ignores complex political realities on the ground, but it threatens to reverse important political and societal shifts that have happened in the last two years (Natali).
2. Demonstrate **genuine and firm support for PM Abadi** if he adopts an effective and detailed plan for re-integrating Sunni communities. If he fails to do so, threaten the withdrawal of this support. However, this must be communicated in a way that recognizes the pressure he is facing from Shia hardliners (Al-Qarawee).
3. The USG and its partners can allow Sunni areas the **protected breathing space to reorganization** themselves and hold election of new, local leaders (Dagher & Kaltenthaler, Meredith, Serwer). This also includes acting as a neutral intermediary to bring together international, regional, national, and local leaders to facilitation communication and reconciliation (Hamasaeed, Meredith, Van Den Toorn).
4. Reinforce Iraqi state capabilities and **sovereignty** by preventing regional powers from impeding the stable future of Mosul and other Sunni-majority areas (Dagher & Kaltenthaler, Natali).

Conclusion

Contributors noted that reconciliation efforts need to begin now while there is still military cooperation against a common enemy (Mansour, Yahya). As ISIS is defeated, local and regional actors may devolve into violence if a political vacuum emerges. One danger is that if legitimate Sunni grievances are not acknowledged and addressed, the emotions that gave rise to nationalism may once again become a powerful source of political mobilization in Iraq (McCauley). The intractable nature of the challenges listed in this essay led at least one contributor to conclude that there is little-to-no chance for reconciliation in Iraq at this time (Liebl). We may be in a situation where many of the actors' interests are better served by continued conflict than resolution (Liebl, Astorino-Courtois).

SME INPUTs

Elie Abouaoun, USIP

The current initiatives by the Government of Iraq focus on a national accord around vague headlines and, in their current form, will not address much of the grievances of Sunnis and Kurds. Therefore, it is not expected that they will yield significant results. What is really missing is a clear decision by major Shia militarized factions to endorse inclusive policy options that would dismiss concerns by Sunnis and Kurds. The current dialogue initiatives remain in the realm of optics rather than genuine political will to find an acceptable governance model. The Shia parties' entrenchment is aggravated by an Iranian support to maintain a parallel military structure in the form of the Popular Mobilization Forces.

Dr. Harith al-Qarawee, Brandeis University

The initiatives of Iraqi government for reconciliation are not sufficient yet. On the one hand, PM Abadi needs the support of his Shi'a alliance in order to move forward. He has not secured this support because of the intra-Shi'a rivalries and the accusations directed at him by Shi'a hardliners who view such initiatives as a concession and a show of weakness.

On the other hand, the intra-Sunni competitions make it hard to identify a serious and genuine Sunni negotiator. Sunni groups, competing for recognition and patronage, are not united behind a single and clear agenda, and this will be the case as long as a large Sunni territory remains insecure for conducting any type of free election. Regional powers that claim to be backers of Sunnis, such as Turkey, are also taking advantage of power vacuum in Sunni areas to promote their own agenda under the excuse of protecting Sunni population.

There is a need to demonstrate genuine and firm support for the Prime Minister if he adopts an effective and detailed plan for re-integrating Sunni communities. If he fails to do so, he should clearly understand that he might lose this support. But this should be communicated in a way that takes into consideration pressure he is facing from Shia hardliners and his need to not publicly associate himself with anti-Iranian policy. He will need the US support in order to face Shi'a hardliners and deal with Sunni-Sunni rivalries.

Omar Al-Shahery, RAND

Are Government of Iraq initiatives for political reconciliation between the sectarian divide moving in step with military progress against Da'esh, and what conditions need to be met in order to accommodate the needs of the Sunni population?

To put the answer in proper context we should rewind to the point in time when Da'esh had not yet gained any significant presence in Iraq, and most of the fighting was still confined to Syria; there were a number of public demands stated by the Sunnis that represented the minimum that would keep them from picking up arms against the government. None of these demands were truly addressed by the Iraqi government then, and things only deteriorated further since. The simple answer to this question is no, however, preventing Maliki's third term after he foisted Allawi (elections winner) out of office, was perceived as a step in the right direction.

The problem since Da'esh took hold of Mosul the first time has now been compounded by the integration of the popular mobilization militias into Iraq's national security forces, including the army and the federal police. To begin with, the ranks of the Iraqi army were already unjustifiably favoring Shias after integrating the Shia militias in 2004, and later the assimilation of the predominantly Shia National Guard into its ranks in 2005. Other persistent political grievances include, but not limited to, the reform of the justice system, prosecution procedures, the implementation of the notorious counter terrorism law[2], the lack of social accountability that actually works, the return of internally and externally displaced people, and last but not least, public employment and participation in decision making. Any initiative that falls short of alleviating these aforementioned complaints will likely continue to stoke violence in the future.

More important than all that is the lack of vision with regards to how areas that are liberated from Da'esh are going to be governed. One potentially effective way is implementing some form of decentralization. That said, Sunnis lack political maturity and leadership despite the fact that they possess, or have the ability to implement, what is potentially the most effective bureaucracy in the country. Moreover, putting any form of decentralization into effect would require a natural resources sharing legislation, something the Iraqi parliament has failed to pass since 2007[3]. One thing worth mentioning is that the Iraqi government is not keen on decentralization and granting any sort of autonomy to Sunni areas, and Sunnis themselves are divided on that matter as well. Sunnis perceive the Iraqi government's efforts at reconciliation as an effort to coerce Sunnis to accept the de-facto Shia political hegemony, one they feel is based on a false claim of majority.

Another initiative that hasn't yet been implemented is addressing the lack of funding or will to rehabilitate and rebuild the highly damaged former Da'esh held areas. The initiative was announced by the Prime Minister, and it was planned to start in Fallujah, yet no significant improvement has yet been seen on the ground.

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[2] In particular section 4 of that law that has been used to persecute Sunnis.
[3] The Iraqi Hydrocarbons Law

Dr. Scott Atran, ARTIS

1. Are Government of Iraq initiatives for political reconciliation between the sectarian divide moving in step with military progress against Da'esh, and what conditions need to be met in order to accommodate the needs of the Sunni population?

With every step of the military operation the gap is widening between Shia and Sunnis. The ruling Shia national alliance (Iraqi gov't) announced at the end of October an initiative called "the historical settlement" document. They say they've been working on it for quite a while, and the aim is to reach some sort of final historical settlement for all issues in the post-ISIS era. The UNAMI was involved with drafting the last version of the document, but most of the Sunni Arabs are not happy with it (the UN representative in Iraq met with Sunni Arab leaders):

Here's a link to the document in English:
Caution-http://rawabetcenter.com/en/?p=1307 < Caution-http://rawabetcenter.com/en/?p=1307 >

The document lost much of its meaning and force after the parliament passed a law at the end of November legalizing and recognizing the majority Shia PMU (al-Hassad al-Shaabi) as an independent military entity, operating outside the effective control of the Iraqi army. That outraged the Sunni.

Amb. Robert S. Ford, Middle East Institute

Reconciliation is not an "initiative" or a set of meetings and speeches.

Little sign that the key authorities in Baghdad – security authorities– are willing to take steps to promote reconciliation, such as transparency in detention decisions, holding security personnel accountable for abuse of prisoners and civilians or providing substantial resources to local community leaders to foster reconstruction. I see the UN and Shia political figures visiting Jordan and Egypt, but Jordan and Egypt don't much influence the sentiments of people in, say, Fallujah or Hawija or Baquba.

Best example: PMU cut off ISIS escape route from Mosul to compel ISIS to fight and die in Mosul, guaranteeing higher civilian casualties and greater destruction of Mosul housing/infrastructure. Another example: what happened to the 600 mens till missing from Saqlawiyah in Fallujah last summer? Doubt the locals have forgotten about that.

In terms of reading conditions to accommodate needs of Sunni population, these are unchanged: (1) reliable security, including a large element of locally generated security that is not itself factional; (2) resources to local communities, including resources for rebuilding and decisions about government hiring; (3) insistence on public accountability for those guilty of abuses/corruption on all sides. In other words, communities in Sunni Arab areas need a sense of security and justice.

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Political Reconciliation Lags Behind

Political reconciliation lags significantly behind the military progress against Da'esh, and this lag puts sustaining the military gains at risk. It was hoped that Iraqis uniting against a common enemy, Da'esh, in addition to fatigue from the violence, would translate into political collaboration to address grievances that created the space for Da'esh to advance. While Sunni and Kurdish collaboration with Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, and the regrouped Iraqi military, against a common adversary has made significant progress, Iraqi leaders across the political spectrum do point out the lack of an agreed political path forward, and express concern that an opportunity is being missed and lessons from the conflict with Da'esh are not heeded.

There are a number of initiatives for political reconciliation in Iraq, and they fall into two related categories: National and Local. The National Reconciliation Committee (NRC), which reports to Prime Minister Abadi's Office, is working on reconciliation with international organizations such as the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the Crisis Management Initiative (CMI), and the U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP).

National Reconciliation

UNAMI and CMI are focused on national reconciliation, including trying to bring in the armed opposition (not Da'esh) into the political process. The road has been very bumpy so far, and the efforts have not culminated in a workable framework agreed to by the relevant actors. These initiatives include attempts to unify the Sunni voice, but they had limited to no success so far. The NRC's document on reconciliation, which calls for a "historic settlement" among the key communities of Iraq, has attracted public attention in recent weeks. The Iraqi National Alliance (Shia), now headed by Ammar al-Hakim, is more vocal and active to advance reconciliation based on some core principles. However, it is uncertain that the hard core conservative Shia forces – especially the militia leaders – would agree to reconcile with the Sunni population.

The Sunnis remain divided and unable to speak with one voice. UNAMI, CMI, and NRC efforts have not been able bring more Sunni unity, let alone Sunni-Shia reconciliation. Abadi's constraints in responding to Sunni demands, as well as actions by powerful Shia actors have only worsened Sunni division, and distrust in the Shia-led government in Baghdad. Unhelpful action include, but are not limited to: failure to pass the National Guard Law, stripping the Amnesty Law from important content, and passing the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) Law.

Local/Community Reconciliation

Da'esh has complicated political reconciliation in Iraq, and added the need for local reconciliation to address potential for revenge violence among tribes and other actors at the local level, help with removing barriers to the return of over three million displaced persons, and address other sources of local tension, which could undermine military gains. Tribal and other forms of local violence could become a game changer.

USIP and UNDP are working at this level, and have brought in the NRC to ensure that the Government of Iraq is aware, uses its resources – as limited as they may be – and connect initiatives at this level with national level ones. USIP has made progress in Tikrit (after the Speicher Massacre in which 1700 Shia servicemen were killed by Da'esh), Yathrib, and Ramadi. Other efforts in Fallujah, Nineveh Province, and other places are underway.

Common Needs
It may seem that the Sunnis, and other Iraqi communities, have different needs and issues. It is true that there may be different nuances, but the reality is that the core needs/issues of the Sunnis, the Kurds, the Shia, and the religious minorities are very similar: they distrust the others, they need security and feel it has to be provided directly by themselves (in some cases they seek some sort of international protection e.g. minorities), they seek neutralizing the risks that may come from the others, etc. They feel the other sides are not sticking to agreements, plot against them, and seek a status and share of power/resources that are not commensurate to their size in Iraq. For example, each community has a different view of how to secure itself militarily, economically, and politically.

Gaps in the Political Process
Political reconciliation needed to sustain gains post-Da'esh requires a mediated political process where international and regional actors, alongside the Iraqi leaders, work toward the same goals. The Iraqis cannot lead such process on their own, and the U.S. and other international actors say such process should be Iraqi-led and owned. As a result a gap exists, which poses a risk to the whole effort, because today Iraq has more ingredients for violence than before Da'esh took over one-third of the country.

Additionally, once a political process exists and it produces agreement – or a historic settlement as the NRC seeks – there will remain deep-rooted concerns about the implementation of agreements. All sides are seeking guarantees, which are not on the table. They all say they entered agreements in the past which the other side did not uphold.

Buddhika B. Jayamaha, Northwestern Univ, Lt Col Kevin S. Petit, George Washington Univ and Professor Will S.K. Reno, Northwestern Univ

The Day After

We face a daunting challenge at the moment of our success. Our Iraq First strategy is about to be vindicated, as our allies in the Nineveh plain move to cut off Syria and isolate the Islamic State. At that moment, the common enterprise that thus far bound together our Iraqi and regional allies will disappear. Once the Islamic State has been contained, we will face a new challenge: how to hold Iraq together, when Iraq as we imagine it simply does not exist?

The idea of Iraq as a territorial sovereign state is an illusion in many respects. The idea that Iraq can capitalize on this success against the Islamic State is based on the assumption that there is an Iraqi state that has the capacity and a government with the political will to provide security to its citizens — an assumption that is fundamentally at odds with the intense fragmentation of Iraqi state, society and its politics.

Geographically as well as politically, Iraq is divided along ethnic lines (between Kurds and Arabs) and along sectarian lines (between Sunni and Shia). Ethnic separation is especially stark, notwithstanding the 1.3 million internally displaced Arabs currently taking refuge inside Kurdish regions. The sectarian divisions are not so clearly delineated, and many cities have mixed sectarian populations. But at the local level, the violence associated with twenty years of intermittent war has created sharp sectarian divisions, neighborhood by neighborhood and even within families.

Iraq's economy also exhibits this intense fragmentation. Many people are reliant on handouts from the cash-strapped state. Though these resources are distributed through state institutions, access to them depends on the favor of local political and military leaders with ethnic and sectarian hues. This dependence in turn solidifies the personal authority of these men, establishing neo-traditional personalist networks based on clan, tribal, sectarian, and ethnic loyalties.

All the combatants — Iraq's government, the Kurds, Iran, Turkey, and the U.S. — responded to the Islamic State's unexpected success by allying with various (non-state) armed groups and by creating new ones. These militia-like groups tend to work at cross purposes, harboring their own parochial agendas dictated by these neo-traditional networks. Regional partners are at odds with one another as well. Iraq's government and the Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga, long-standing antagonists, both fought the Islamic State. The Syrian Kurdish PYD work with the Turkish Kurdish PKK; both have secessionist goals that pose threats to Syria and Turkey respectively. The governments of Iraq and Iran sponsor Shia popular mobilization forces that, though they are now formally part of the Iraqi government, divide their loyalties between their political patrons (in the Iranian and Iraqi governments) and their spiritual leaders (members of clerical patronage networks in Baghdad and Tehran). For its part, Turkey supports multiple Sunni militias. Other mini-militias are similarly divided along territorial, sectarian and ethnic lines: Sunni, Yazidi, Turkoman, and Shabak, for example. Focused on the security of their home communities, they have managed to mask their mutual distrust with a shared hatred of the Islamic State. Without a common enemy, it is unlikely that there will again be a confluence of interests to bring them together as (reluctant) allies.

The Kurdish, Shia, and Sunni sectors are themselves internally fragmented, with overlapping and interconnected patronage networks defined by political, clerical, ethnic, and external allegiances.

The Kurdistan Regional Government in northern Iraq has a parliament and presidency that are theoretically representative, though firmly under the control of its two main ruling parties. Beneath the veneer of unified government in Iraqi Kurdistan, there is a deep-rooted economic, political, military, and geographic division between the Green Zone, run by the PUK (and allied with Iran and regional Kurdish groups), and the Yellow Zone, run by the KDP (and allied with Turkey). Turkey has made long-term investments in Iraqi Kurdish territory, to include a fifty-year oil agreement. Despite their differences, KDP and PUK elites share Kurdish national aspirations. In private, however, they recognize that peaceful independence will come only when their Iranian and Turkish patrons say so, with the blessing of the Americans and Europeans. For now, they worry that, despite the close military cooperation between Baghdad and Kurds against the Islamic State, the Kurds' territorial gains will eventually be challenged by Baghdad with the use of force. Some Shia militias openly clamor for war against the Kurds the moment the Islamic State is defeated.

Politics in Baghdad, often portrayed as a Shia hegemony, are similarly fragmented. Shia ruling parties with direct access to oil revenue have not missed their opportunity. These funds support a series of shifting political alliances among patronage networks, involving regional political bases, national political party affiliations, deep-rooted Shiia clerical networks that double as political parties, and political networks connected to patrons in Iran. The Iranian patrons, whether from the revolutionary guards or the Iranian clerical hierarchy, bring their own agendas, resources, and styles.

Former Prime Minister Maliki's position is instructive in this regard. His sectarian political program not only invited Saudi and Gulf meddling in Sunni politics, but also alienated Iraq's Sunnis, allowing the Islamic state to gain a foothold. Maliki's authoritarian streak indeed alienated his own Shia constituency. He continues to rally his domestic network of loyalists, while playing the part of the useful spoiler for his Iranian patrons by undercutting the programs of Prime Minister Abadi.

But political dysfunction in Baghdad is not purely a function of cynical politics and external meddling. There are built-in incentives in the political system that create perpetual dysfunction.

Iraq's political system gives primacy to *representation* over *stability*. Iraq's proportional and consociational system is as representative as Belgium's and just as dysfunctional. Belgium can afford political dysfunction and survive without a government; it has functioning institutions, and neighbors that want it to survive. In Iraq, however, the political, economic and military patronage systems that constitute a dysfunctional government directly threaten to turn the country into a failed state — and its neighbors are more fearful of Iraqi unity than of Iraq's dissolution.

Politics in Iraq is violent, as the political parties have their own militias. Some militias, such as the Badr organization sponsored by patrons in the Iranian Revolutionary Guards, remain as formidable as the armed forces of Iraq. Iraqi lawmakers formalized the popular Shia militias, by government edict. In the absence of order, groups with capacity for violence become formidable political actors with their beholden constituencies. Men with guns, well organized, can have immense convincing power.

In this milieu, Sunnis have very limited leverage, and they twice got burned, in allying first with Al-Qaeda and later with the Islamic State. The Sunni political center resembles a tattered tapestry, scattered around the Sunni regions of Iraq, with most leaders in exile.

Inhabiting a state with no real political center, the Sunnis cannot be said to be reverting to ancient tribal affiliations. In reality, they represent "neo-tribes" — recent creations of economic, political, and military patronage networks, using labels developed first under Saddam (during the sanctions decade), and then by the U.S., when we used the Sunnis to fight the al-Qaeda through the Awakening Councils. Those two periods drastically altered Sunni society, and the Islamic State has nearly destroyed what remains of it. The ablest Sunnis that were part of the Maliki government were forced into exile, and the rest were given the "option" to stay and ally with the Islamic State. Now the exiled Sunni elites are attempting to reactivate their old networks, which now barely exist. In its place are a new breed and a group of actors: the Kurds and Iraqis empowered by the U.S. to fight the Islamic State. These Sunni militias are hardly national organizations. They are regional and even neighborhood vigilantes, most of them fired with conviction and good hearts. For the moment, most believe, just as they did last time, that the Americans will work to make sure that Baghdad will not turn against them, this time. Not without irony, Sunnis in Iraq rely on their former enemies, the Americans and the Kurds, as the only hope of having any leverage vis-a-vis Shia-dominated Baghdad, and of course Tehran.

We must recognize the reality that Iraq's domestic political and military travails, and its deep divisions, are inescapably linked to the geopolitical struggles of regional powers — Saudi Arabia, Iran, and now Turkey. It is doubtful that there is a shared Iraqi interest powerful enough to escape the centrifugal pull of the geopolitical contestations, anchored in Riyadh Tehran and Ankara.

Rivalries between Saudi Arabia and Iran for regional hegemony are about regime survival, and they play out through proxies, including in Iraq. Regime proxies propagate their explicitly politicized, extremist interpretations of Sunni and Shia Islam in the form of a virulent political ideology. The philosophical foundations of the Islamic State and al-Qaeda can be traced to the curricula taught in Saudi and Gulf school textbooks and in their state-funded mosques. Similarly, the philosophical foundations of the many Shia militias in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq are derived from the ruling ideology propagated by Tehran, through proxies and state-funded mosques. Both Saudi Arabia and Iran rely on their politicized extremist interpretations of Islam to create a legitimizing political ideology. A series of kingdoms and sheikhdoms have hijacked religion to serve as a totalizing ideology to legitimize their exclusivist Sunni regimes, as Iran mirror their Sunni brethren in their Shiite totalizing ideology constructed to legitimize an exclusivist regime. Neither Saudi Arabia nor Iran can compromise on their ideology or their foreign policy, crucial for the survival and domestic legitimacy of their respective regimes. Turkey is a latecomer, with the resuscitated Ottoman dreams of Erdogan suggesting a redefinition of the Turkish state along politicized Islamic lines. This regional jockeying allows Erdogan to keep his domestic base in a constant state of mobilization. Iraq is stuck in the middle, and most Iraqi politicians, of all ethnic and sectarian hues, are forced to recognize this reality and navigate it.

So, the moment Nineveh plain is closed to Islamic State traffic flowing out of Syria, our Iraq First military strategy will be vindicated. But that event will also blow up the single incentive uniting the diverse domestic and regional actors. Their parochial and regional agendas in a post-IS Iraq will not be congruent with American desires. Indeed, we have never explicitly stated our own post-IS goals. With any luck, we will soon be forced to make those goals clear.

- The authors are currently conducting field research in Iraq on the Politics of Security Sector Reform.

Karl Kaltenthaler (University of Akron/Case Western Reserve University) and **Munqith Dagher** (IIACSS)

The Iraqi government is not taking the necessary steps to achieve reconciliation among the Sunnis, Shias, and other Iraqi groups that is in step with the military progress against Da'esh. The military campaign against Da'esh has moved along relatively well over the last year, but attempts at creating policies and institutions that breach the divide of distrust between Sunnis and Shias have not been achieved. The Iraqi government, army, police and its Shia militia allies are winning the war against Da'esh, but are poised to possibly lose the peace. In order for Iraq to win the peace, all of its citizens must believe that they have a secure, just, and prosperous future in the country.

Freeing Mosul and the rest of Sunni-majority Iraq and running it in the same way it is run before Da'esh took this territory, will definitely generate a great deal of anger and dissatisfaction among the Sunni population. This will be the right environment for Da'esh and \or other terrorist organizations to re-establish themselves. Unfortunately, reverting to the political status quo ante seems to be the game plan of the Iraqi government at this time.

Empowering Sunnis and others since freed from Da'esh and giving them more authority over their lives will definitely be the right strategy to win the peace. While going back to political business as usual as it was before Da'esh swept through Sunni Iraq is not a viable strategy for peace, a federalism strategy is also fraught with dangers. Federalism is what some local politicians are demanding. These politicians have been promoting federalism as the right solution for all Sunnis' problems in Iraq. Unfortunately this is also what some US officials believe in. Due to the fact that Nineveh (Mosul) and the other Sunni Arab provinces lack significant energy resources and the leverage they provide, Kurdish-style constitutional autonomy is not a viable option. More importantly, as the Islamist movements and their businessmen supporters in Nineveh are the most organized and well-funded powers currently, then they will be the ones who control the suggested semi-autonomous government. This will, for sure, lead not just to friction with much of the populace but also to a lot of tension with the Iraqi federal government and expansion of Turkish influence in the region. A Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish power struggle will potentially take place. Again, this is the right environment for Da'esh and similar organizations to take over again. The new elite who should run Mosul must emerge from and really represent the people of Mosul if, we really want to avoid any reappearance of Da'esh or any other terrorist group.

To achieve this, the Iraqi government needs to give the people in the liberated areas the required space and opportunity to reorganize themselves and push up a local technocratic elite to govern their areas for a period of time. This would give way, over time, to elected officials drawn from local civil society. This cannot be reached unless the Iraqi government can establish an environment for fair and legitimate local elections. The current politicians, which are part of the old Shia-dominated national power structure, will never provide such conditions. The only feasible alternative is to make all stakeholders agree on an interim local government with no more than a 2 year mandate. All members of this government should publically announce that they will not stand for the next election as candidates or represent any political group's interests. They should really be technocrats. The interim government's main tasks should be:

1. Run the reconstruction process, with the allocated money, in a very transparent and professional way.

2. Provide a secure environment for all people to exercise their freedom to organize political parties and NGO's.
3. Work with the federal government and the international community to develop the local economy and the provision of public services. These services should be provided by the *local* authorities and there should not be any federal police or army in the city itself. These institutions are deeply distrusted.
4. Run real integrated local elections which result in a new local government within two years.
5. Establish a secure environment where citizens can live their lives without fear. This security should be achieved by local government forces.
6. Create judicial institutions that are as apolitical as possible and guided by a mandate of fair administration of justice for all.

Finally, it is very important to prevent Turkey, Iran and the Kurdistan regional government or their agents from getting a freehand in the future of Mosul and other Sunni-majority areas if we really want to avoid further terrorism in the region.

Vern Liebl, Center for Advanced Operational Culture, Marine Corps University

Response: The Government of Iraq (GoI) is still deadlocked in Baghdad, with the Sadrist Ahrar Bloc, the Al-Muwatin and the State of Law Coalition all at loggerheads (these are the three main Shi'a political coalitions). The previously powerful Kurdish Alliance has devolved, with the PUK and Goran joining with each other (loosely allying with the Baghdad government in order to obtain financial assistance) in opposition to the KDP (who are seeking an independent Kurdistan). Further complicating the political situation is the lack of a Minister of Interior and an interim Minister of Defence, due to fierce attacks by VP Maliki's Dawa Party. Combined with a huge outlay of funds with an inadequate inflow of funds, the Iraq government can't really afford any reconciliation initiatives.

The great majority of reconciliation initiatives/efforts is being done by international organizations and NGOs. One of the most prominent, as an example, is the International Organization for Migration (IOM, since September 2016 affiliated with the UN), which is working via the Community Revitalization Program (CRP, a multi-sectoral program that aims to contribute to stabilization in Iraq by improving the conditions for sustainable economic and social inclusion of vulnerable individuals in communities with significant populations of displaced persons and returnees). The United States alone has contributed over $1 billion in refugee aid/assistance just in 2016.

Despite the primarily internationally funded Iraqi reconciliation efforts, this are in essence doomed to fail as long as the sectarian issues of Iraq remain dominant. The numerous Hashd al-Shaabi PMUs/PMFs engaged in re-establishing Baghdad's authority in the rear of the Iraqi Army forces engaged against Islamic State (Da'esh) elements in and around Mosul to Tal Afar are working primarily in Sunni inhabited regions. In addition, most of these Shia Hashd forces are funded and materially supported by Iran, to the point they are often corseted by Iranian officers and specialists. Iran has been seeking to essentially establish Basij-like forces in Iraq, approved by the Baghdad government, which they now have been, and to be mobilized as support to Shia political organizations such as the Badr Organization (heavily represented among the Federal Police).

So, the Sunnis of Iraq have repeatedly stated that they do not want to be under the domination of Shias, specifically ones they deem are controlled by Iran. Current events are seeing the use of the Shia Hashd not only providing extensive rear area security, they are also the western most "military" arm of the Baghdad government as they have outflanked the Mosul-based Da'esh forces and driven to the Iraq/Syria frontier west and south of Tal Afar. This has brought in the Turks, who have pointedly warned Iran, as Turkey sees the Hashd al-Shaabi as Iranian proxies, that if Tal Afar is taken by these Hashd elements, that Turkey views this as a direct threat to themselves. Iran views capture of Tal Afar necessary in order to protect the approximately 1 million Shia Turkmen in and around the city.

So, with the current military operations and the ongoing IGO/NGO/PVO reconciliation efforts not linked to the Baghdad government deadlock, there is no real chance of sectarian reconciliation. Additionally, with Kurdish aspirations for independence conflicting with other Kurdish realizations that maybe independence isn't appropriate in the current regional political situation, Kurdish and Turkish support to ethnic and religious minorities as they contest for their survival against not only Da'esh but the Baghdad government and Iranian encroachment. The situation is intractable at this point in time, as numerous conflicting entities seek to freeze the conflict(s) in place or to inflame the conflict(s).

Kurdish aspirations, whether in the KRG, in the PYD or with the PKK, ultimately depend heavily on Kurdish homogeneity. Iraqi Shi'a do not want to be governed by Iranian Shi'a nor do they want to ever again be dominated by the Sunnis or Iraq. The Iraqi Sunnis believe they should be dominant, or at least co-equal (unfortunately for them, anything less than a return to dominance leaves them without significant hydrocarbon reserves, which is unpalatable). The various minorities have their own issues. The Turkmen, both Sunni and Shi'a, would like to be autonomous (if not independent of Baghdad, also of Turkey). The Assyrians, with a history of 5,000 years in Mesopotamia, want to re-establish an Assyrian presence, if not a mini-state. The Yezidi and Shabaks would like to just be left alone but have been subject to the depredations of Sunni (and on occasion Shi'a) for over a thousand years. They also do not want to be dominated by the Kurds, who are seeking to assimilate them somewhat forcibly.

So, with all these outstanding religious and ethnic issues, how is there a possibility to accommodate the Sunni population of Iraq? Many of these Sunnis are currently refugees at the mercy of the Baghdad and Irbil governments, or are under the domination of Da'esh (some obviously voluntarily in order to contest Shi'a dominance, others involuntarily).

It is an American belief that all situations have a solution, or solutions. The current situation in Iraq is one that has evolved for well over 3,000 years, although I grant that the last 120 years have really piled on the pressure. So, in reference to the stated question, the Sunni population of Iraq cannot be accommodated sufficiently to preclude future conflict without severely impinging upon the Shi'a, Turkmen, Yezidi, Assyrians, etc. The situation in Iraq, and the larger Middle East, has become zero-sum (actually has been zero-sum for centuries). Looking at this in a big-picture manner, compromise and accommodation are "western" concepts in which we are desperately trying to apply to cultural situations which have long left such concepts behind.

Not the answer you wanted but is based in reality. Am now prepared to be assaulted by those suffering from a positivity bias.

Mr. Renad Mansour, Chatham House

Unfortunately, the military battle has brought the sides together and facilitated quick consensus, but the political solution is not present. The worry is that if no political solution for reconciliation
if established now (while there is military cooperation), it is less likely that such a process would succeed after ISIS is defeated and a power vacuum emerges in Mosul and elsewhere.

Diane L. Maye, Ph.D., Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Political Reconciliation

Iraq's central government has a legitimacy problem: the Sunni Arabs of Iraq do not have an abundance of mature political parties. The challenge for the U.S.-led coalition is to develop a viable political alternative to the Islamic State for Iraq's Sunni population. The coalition is working to liberate Mosul, an initiative that is likely to gain great accolades from the Iraqi people if the efforts are successful. The narrative on the Iraqi street is that the liberation of Mosul is likely end as an urban street fight that can only be fought with Special Operations Forces. **Therefore, Iraq's Special Operations Forces are likely to emerge as heroic figures after the liberation.** To show Mosul's population that the liberation was in good faith, it will be critical that the Iraqi government and coalition forces immediately begin reconstruction efforts. Equally important will be ensuring self-governance and supporting police and law enforcement personnel that are from the local area.

Dr. Clark McCauley, Bryn Mawr College

What Comes After ISIS? A Peace Proposal

Abstract

This proposal develops the following points: (i) Emotions are an important part of mobilizing for violent conflict, especially ethnic conflict. (ii) Sunni versus Shi'a in Iraq and Syria is more an ethnic than a religious conflict. (iii) Sunni in Syria and Iraq join ISIS for a job and for defense against humiliation and domination by Shi'a; religious ideology has little to do with recruitment. (iv) Sykes-Picot is dead; peace in the Middle East depends on development of some degree of self-determination and security, not only for Sunni and Shi'a but for Kurds, Alawites, Christians, and Druze. (v) There is a pressing need for a vision of the Middle East after ISIS; I briefly describe one possibility that Western countries might wish to support. **Keywords**: *ISIS; Syria; Iraq; Sykes-Picot; peace; ethnic conflict*

Introduction

ISIS is more than violence, it is a brand name. We need to fight the brand in a war of ideas that is just as important as the war on the ground in Syria and Iraq. In this text, I suggest a diplomatic initiative to describe the world we want to emerge in Syria and Iraq. I begin with a brief review of emotions in intergroup conflict, then assess the current situation, then describe a view of the future that the U.S. could offer for discussion, and end with some estimates of likely reactions to the initiative.

Emotions in Intergroup Conflict

Rational choice is not absent in intergroup conflict, especially in tactical choices, but emotions are important, especially for taking risks for a group or cause. Ethnic conflicts are fraught with emotions.

The idea of nationalism is that an ethnic group, a perceived descent group and its culture, should have a state. Nationalism was the most powerful source of political mobilization in the 20th century, despite punditry predicting that economic interest would supplant ethnicity. The weakness of economic interest and the power of ethnic nationalism was already apparent at the beginning of WWII, when the members of 'international' labour unions rallied vociferously for what union leaders denounced as a 'capitalist' war.

For ethnic majorities, domination by a minority is associated with the experience of humiliation. Here I understand humiliation to be a corrosive combination of anger in response to injustice and shame for not fighting injustice. Anger calls for revenge, not taking revenge because of fear is cause for shame, shame leads to additional anger at those who have shamed us—and the cycle continues. Shi'a in Iraq and Sunni in Syria experienced years of humiliation as majorities repressed by minorities.

Particularly humiliating is sudden reversal of status. In Iraq, the U.S. intervention against Saddam Hussein turned Sunni minority dominance into Sunni minority subjugation by Shi'a. In Syria, civil war turned large parts of the country from the original Alawite-Christian-Druze minority dominance of a Sunni majority to Alawite-Christian-Druze subjugation and ethnic cleansing by Sunni Muslims. In the incipient state of Kurdistan, made possible by U.S. support, Sunni minority dominance has turned to Sunni subjugation by a Kurdish majority. Roger Petersen's book, *Western Intervention in the Balkans:*

The Strategic Use of Emotion in Conflict, which traces the emotional consequences of status reversals in the Balkans [1] is a guide to the power of emotions that are also at play in the Middle East.

Viewing the Sunni - Shi'a Divide as Ethnic Conflict

Although often referred to as sectarian conflict, the conflict between Shi'a and Sunni in Iraq and Syria is not about religion. ISIS wraps itself in a particular fundamentalist form of Islam, but it is not the interpretation of the Koran that is at issue. ISIS wants political power, land, oil, money—wants to be the new Sunni caliphate, wants to be a state.

Sunni versus Shi'a in Iraq and Syria is no more a sectarian conflict than Loyalist vs. Republican in Northern Ireland was a sectarian conflict. The issue in Northern Ireland was not Catholic versus Protestant religious practice or doctrine, but two groups defined by perceived descent at war over land and political power.

Similarly the conflict between Jews and Palestinians is not a sectarian conflict, is not about Muslim versus Hebrew religious practice but about two perceived descent groups at war over land and political power.

Are Shi'a and Sunni ethnic groups? Are they defined by descent? Under Saddam Hussein's repression of Shi'a in Iraq, from 1979 to 2003, intermarriage between Shi'a and Sunni was not uncommon. Intermarriage as we know, means the dissolution of groups defined by descent. But after the U.S. deposed Saddam Hussein, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi began a campaign of attacking Shi'a in order to incite Shi'a revenge on Sunni, which would turn complacent Sunni into warriors bent on revenge against Shi'a. This campaign succeeded in its aims after Zarqawi blew up the Shi'a mosque in Samarra: Shi's and Sunni began a cycle of violence and counter-violence in which no one was safe. Militias arose on both sides to offer protection, and violence escalated. [2]

It is fair to say that Shi'a and Sunni were declining as ethnic groups in Iraq as perceived descent distinctions were blurred by intermarriage in the last decades of the 20th century. But violence and ethnic cleansing have strengthened group boundaries so that today intermarriage is rare and existing Shi'a-Sunni marriages are strained and breaking. [3] This is not a case of ethnicity causing war, this is a case of war building ethnicity.

The Roots of Violence in Syria and Iraq

ISIS is successful to the extent that the Sunni of Iraq and Syria see ISIS as their only effective defense against domination and humiliation by Shi'a. [4]. As Charlie Winter pointed out at a conference, ISIS communications in the territory they control emphasize the horrors of Shi'a retribution against Sunni if ISIS loses. For many in Iraq and Syria, ISIS is also the only source of jobs. [5].

But ISIS protection and ISIS jobs are currently welded together with an extremist form of Islam that many Sunni would rather do without. [6] To undermine Sunni support for ISIS, the U.S. must show Sunni in Syria and Iraq a path to security from Shi'a humiliation that does not depend on ISIS. Thus John Bolton, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, has argued that the creation of a Sunni state is required to defeat ISIS.
[7]

Similar issues of security and status exist for other ethnic groups in Iraq and Syria. Kurds are seeking security from subjugation and humiliation by both Arabs and Turks. Alawites and Christians seek security from revenge and humiliation by the Sunni majority they previously dominated. Russians seek to continue Mediterranean port and airbase facilities and the survival of their ally Bashar al-Assad. Turks want good relations with the Sunni majority in Syria and no Kurdish state on their border. Iran wants to extend its influence and protect Shi'a Arabs. Sunni tribes in both Syria and Iraq have been both perpetrators and victims of violence; tribal sheiks have both welcomed and fought ISIS.

Denise Natali (National Defense University), who has been studying ISIS and related security issues in Syria and Iraq, recognizes the complexities of local actors in her February 2016 report, *Countering ISIS: One Year Later*. The last section of her report, titled Post-Da'ish stabilization, is worth quoting here.

Even if the U.S. defeats Da'ish tomorrow, there will be a day-after problem in much of Iraq and Syria. U.S. aims to stabilize Iraq and Syria should address the larger problem of weakened states and the emergence of strong, violent non-state and sub-state actors. This effort will demand a stable set of political security arrangements that can avoid the emergence of another Da'ish in the future. It should also assure that liberated areas are successful and stable so that people can return. This effort should include providing massive refugee assistance, immediate resources and humanitarian aid, developing local power sharing and security agreements, building local institutions, and mitigating regional spillover. [8]

What comes after ISIS? What would it mean to develop "local power sharing and security agreements, building local institutions"? The U.S. needs a diplomatic initiative that can promise at least a degree of security and status to all the major actors. This initiative would describe a world the U.S. would like to see emerge from the current violence in Iraq and Syria, and include a statement of willingness to talk with anyone and everyone about how to reach this world or something like it.

A Future for Syria and Iraq

The U.S. goal should be recognition of political units providing security and status for the groups identified below. Security and status would be assured to the extent that each unit has its own police and court system and controls a population-proportionate share of oil revenues in Iraq and Syria. The units may initially be thought of as states in a federal government responsible for allocating water and oil resources, but other descriptions of the units are possible: provinces, departments, or cantons. The U.S. would talk with any group or power about how to get to these or similar units. The U.S. should try to enlist EU/NATO allies to support the initiative. There should be no pre-conditions for the discussion, all borders and conditions being up for negotiation.

In particular, the lines drawn by the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 are on the table for reconsideration. Giving up the Sykes-Picot division of Syria from Iraq will be necessary because Sunni fears will not countenance a continuing division of Sunni into a Syrian majority and an Iraqi minority.

The initiative would raise for discussion the following as possible federal states with local institutions of governance and security:

- IS territory becomes a state of Sunni who want ISIS governance. U.S. will cease attacks on ISIS and cease opposing foreign volunteers for ISIS, including volunteers from the U.S.

- Tribal state for Sunni who do not want ISIS governance.

- Alawite state on the Mediterranean north of Lebanon (~Latakia, French Mandate 1920-1936).

- Turkman areas near the Turkish border annexed to Turkey.

- Kurdish state around Erbil.

- Shi'a state around Baghdad and south of it.

- Druze state next to Jordan (~French Mandate 1920-1936).

- Damascus Federal District with police but no military.

- Christians who wish to emigrate will be accepted as refugees in Europe and the U.S.

Likely Reactions to such a Peace Initiative

- ISIS will oppose the initiative because it threatens ISIS's claims to represent an international caliphate. But if ISIS loses more territory it may become ready to negotiate to save the remaining caliphate. At a minimum such an initiative would generate conflict inside ISIS between power pragmatists (localists) and international Islamist radicals (globalists). [9] Such a conflict would weaken ISIS from the inside.

- Sunni who do and do not want ISIS will be in conflict. The Awakening of 2007 showed the potential power of this conflict; in 2016 it would weaken ISIS from the outside.

- Tehran would likely oppose the initiative because any movement toward a peaceful solution in the area would reduce Iran's influence in Iraq and Syria.

- Hizballah would likely oppose the initiative and follow Iran, its supporter.

- Some Baghdad Shi'a may welcome the initiative as a way to reduce threat from ISIS, even at the cost of more self-determination for Sunni areas of the old Iraq. Others in Baghdad would be against any initiative that does not continue their revenge posture against the Sunni who dominated Iraqi Shi'a for so long. This is a split already evident in reactions to Prime Minister al-Alabadi's efforts to represent Sunni more in Iraqi politics.

- Moscow should welcome saving Bashar and de facto Western recognition for its Mediterranean air and sea bases in the Alawite state. Russia might welcome a division of territorial influence that can limit potential conflict between Russian and NATO armed forces.

- Israel would be satisfied with a devolution movement of Syria and Iraq from strong centralized states into militarily weaker federal states.

- Kurds would welcome recognition of their statelet.

- Turkey would strongly oppose recognition of the present de facto autonomous Kurdish territory but would see some sweetener in transfer of Turkman areas along the Syria/Turkey border to Turkey.

- Druze would be pleased at the prospect of recognition and a degree of self-governance.

- Christians, who are by now too few for effective self-defense, would be glad for an escape hatch to immigrate to Christian-majority countries.

- The United States would get credit in the Muslim world for seeking peace without Western domination and for putting an end to the Sykes-Picot colonial boundaries.

- France and U.K. should not oppose the initiative; these countries lost the benefits of Sykes-Picot decades ago.

- Arab oil countries will likely oppose the initiative because it does not promise to crush ISIS; however, they might be glad to see limiting Iran's power in Syria.

- U.S. sympathizers with ISIS would more likely go to join ISIS than perform attacks on U.S. soil.

- Refugees from Syria are likely to welcome an initiative that might permit some of them to return.

Conclusion

The proposed initiative should, in public relation terms, be positive for the United States and help to reduce Sunni support for ISIS. It should shake up all sides by shifting the narrative from who is winning at the moment to a realistic vision of a future worth working for. Even opposition from Turkey, Iran, and the oil states might be tempered by a desire to avoid being seen putting self-interest above the welfare of millions who prefer peace. With such an initiative the U.S. government could seize the moral high ground that brings new friends and new opportunities.

What comes after ISIS? The old states of Syria and Iraq have dissolved in violence. The U.S. needs, and the people suffering civil war in these areas need even more, a vision of how peace can emerge from violence. Unfortunately there is currently no appetite in the U.S. for thinking beyond defeating ISIS. Similarly there was little thought for what would come after defeating Saddam Hussein. I have described one possible future in an effort to get the future in our sights. If this or a similar initiative were announced, and diplomatic efforts and material resources were committed to it, there is a chance of failure. However, if we do not think about what comes after ISIS, failure will be certain and new rounds of fighting will be all but certain–with no peace in sight.

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Dr. Spencer Meredith, NDU

Question 1:
"The Structure of Responsive Governance"

The central task for governance under conditions of conflict is to communicate *progress* and *patience* to the populace. This task is fundamentally unresolvable without two factors: 1) the presence of tangible successes, and 2) the communication of supporting (and reliable) interpretations of those successes. At the heart of those factors are narratives and the means to understand them in a time of change. What does that look like practically?

The Iraqi government maintains a message of national effort, yet struggles with legacies of retributive justice – both in terms of *legal provisions* (and the structures built around them) designed to give a sense of righting the wrongs suffered by the Shia community in the past, and in the *perceptions* of the Sunni as they increasingly came to view themselves as outsiders. At the core has been the challenge of building democracy in a time of war.

As a means of non-violent conflict resolution through political reconciliation, democratization requires its goals and methods to be both *sacrosanct* (inviolable rules of the game to ensure majority values and interests are met, while also preserving minority protections) and *adaptable* (the state maintains a space for public debate with clearly defined borders of what cannot be negotiated, but also recognizing that those boundaries can change). To do so requires a consensus that must include, but also transcend ethnic, religious, communal, and individual goals and approaches often currently at odds with the national compact   in   Iraq.

Iraq struggles to find the consensus because none now exists at a fundamental level throughout the country. Inherently, internecine violence remains too present, with ample memories of suffering during the democratization period of the past decade. As a result, any government effort to increase "buy-in" will continue to be met with skepticism at best, or at least the potential for that skepticism will remain high for some time, with each perceived infraction of the national compact latching on to anti-government messaging.

To overcome this, patience must be communicated and channeled through the election process. This is the hallmark of democratic government – the idea that losing now does not mean losing again in the future. Yet the concept must also have real world evidence that today's electoral losers have a realistic chance of winning in the foreseeable future. Seminal events when opposition parties have power resonate in more than the new policies they bring; they establish the core content of a democratic order.

Can Iraq today include a faithful opposition, whether defined by ethnic, religious, or communal identities? Rather than try to make an amalgam of those core identities for the country, it seems more realistic first to build confidence in the democratic system itself, as a compact established on tangible successes (in the marketplace and farmlands as much as on the battlefield), with narratives that reinforce patience in the process.

One way would be to *increase the frequency of local elections for a given period of time* – this reinforces the norms of non-violent conflict resolution by giving more regular opportunities to air grievances, as well as for elected officials to proclaim successes and be responsive to failures. The provisions for more frequent local elections should also *include more referenda on specific issues of local concern*. This approach does three things: 1) it increases the presence of democratic practice, and 2) by doing so, it also shapes expectations for what needs to be done – defining the successes governance is supposed to produce. Finally, 3) it also gives a direct "shortcut" for popular sentiment, while also having boundaries on the kinds of issues under consideration – these are established by higher levels of government designed to keep the disparate, conflicting goals within the boundaries of a national system.

Above all, this means *prudence* – doing what is feasible, not just desirable. International partners can assist with the inculcation of that concept into the democratic political order by *anchoring aspects of cultural, religious, and local values as aspects of prudence,* as both a concept people adhere to in their daily lives, as well as the foundation of the national compact to build a <u>responsive government</u> in Iraq. Given the progress mentioned in the initial question, absent this multi-layered ideational and governmental approach, Iraq could see its own version of what happened in Bulgaria in the 1990s – the democratic process yielded a confused policy orbit that vacillated wildly between pro-Western marketization and EU membership, and pro-Russian historic leanings resting on socialist economic promises of stability. The result was a deeply disaffected population susceptible to counter-democracy messaging from external actors. Yet even that period of uncertainty was better than the effusion of violence in the Balkans after the collapse of the national compact in the former Yugoslavia. In that regard, the worst case of the above course of action for Iraq would likely be better than the best case of continuing on the current path without it.

Ali Nader, RAND

1. Are Government of Iraq initiatives for political reconciliation between the sectarian divide moving in step with military progress against Da'esh, and what conditions need to be met in order to accommodate the needs of the Sunni population?

It is not clear that this is happening. The sectarian divide is more historical and structural, and it doesn't seem like the Iraqi government can do much to alleviate divisions between the various sects, especially as the Popular Mobilization forces gain more power in Iraq.

Denise Natali, NDU

Dr. Natali's inputs were based on her 16 November 2016 article "**Stabilizing Iraq With and Without the Islamic State"** published in the War on the Rocks journal and can be accessed at the following website:

http://warontherocks.com/2016/11/stabilizing-iraq-with-and-without-the-islamic-state

Additional input was gleaned from her 24 October 2016 trip report "**Beyond Mosul: The Battle for Borders and Authority in Post-ISIL Iraq**" which was FOUO, so contact her at denise.natali@ndu.edu for further details.

Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins University

The Iraqi Government has committed itself in principle to political reconciliation and the behavior of its security forces (including the Popular Mobilization Forces) towards the civilian populationhas been better than many expected. Abuses have not been widespread. Screening of suspected Islamic State fighters has proceeded in a fairly orderly fashion, though with significant variations depending on which forces are doing the screening. Trials are ongoing, but how well they meet reasonable standards of due process is unclear.

Unforced errors like the Council of Representatives October prohibition of alcohol country-wide have offended non-Muslim minorities in the north and made relations with Baghdad more difficult. Sunnis view the law legalizing the majority Shia Popular Mobilization Forces as problematic, even if it arguably regularizes them and attempts to limit their participation in politics.

More than avoiding abuses and mistakes is required, however. The Sunni population feels defeated. It needs to revive socially, politically and economically. Displaced Sunnis are returning to their previous towns and villages, but the conditions they find there are far from ideal. They face the prospect of revenge violence, especially in Ninewa, and difficulties in recovering their property. UNDP has been doing a good job of initial reconstruction work—clearing rubble, emergency repairs—but massive challenges remain to restore homes, businesses, commerce, and social life. The Iraqi government compensation arrangements available at present are woefully inadequate.

The governors and provincial councils of Anbar, Saladin and Ninewa are playing a stronger role than at times in the past, sometimes in competition with the ministries in Baghdad, but they still lack resources with which to provide adequate services and remain far from achieving consensus on what the future of their provinces should be. Sentiment in Anbar leans towards making the province a region, like Iraqi Kurdistan. Saladin tried to become a region several years ago but Prime Minister Maliki blocked the move. In Ninewa, there are questions about whether some of its territory should be transferred to Iraqi Kurdistan and about whether Sunni-majority territory should form its own province or region.

Ninewa and especially Mosul will be particularly challenging, because they are mixed, unlike the overwhelmingly Sunni towns of Anbar and Saladin. While Baghdad has stated unequivocally its commitment to a united, non-sectarian and democratic Iraq, none of Ninewa's many sects and ethnicities have confidence in Baghdad's ability to deliver even rudimentary physical protection, never mind dignity and prosperity.

If I had to bet on a single factor that will determine the success or failure of political reconciliation in northern Iraq, it would be this: can Baghdad find legitimate representatives of indigenous forces and negotiate with them decent and respectful solutions to how power, including responsibility for repression of ISIS, and resources will be distributed in liberated areas? Ideally, the choice of political representatives should be up to the people living in the northern governorates liberated from Daesh, but it is still unclear whether provincial council elections will be held in 2017 as scheduled or will be postponed to 2018. Nor is it clear that anything like free and fair elections could be held in Ninewa, Saladin, and Anbar as early as 2017.

Dr. Randa Slim, MEI

1. Are Government of Iraq initiatives for political reconciliation between the sectarian divide moving in step with military progress against Da'esh, and what conditions need to be met in order to accommodate the needs of the Sunni population?

    RS: Baghdad is not focused on reconciliation. The government is consumed by its anti-ISIS fight, its budgetary woes, and by Shia elite infighting. A mindset still prevails among the majority of the Shia governing elites that Sunnis are in their majority Baathists or Daesh. They believe the Shia are the victors and the Sunnis have lost twice already, hence there is no need for reconciliation with them. There is still not enough recognition in Baghdad over the depth of Sunni, Kurdish, and minority grievances in Iraq. There are ongoing talks between Baghdad and Erbil over resource sharing, partly driven by anticipation of post-ISIS, intra-Kurdish competition.

    There is a group of advisors around Abadi (and Abadi himself is sympathetic to this idea) who believe a new compact/relationship must be struck with the Sunnis, but they say there are no authentic Sunni leaders to deal with - especially ones who have influence over their co-religionists in Mosul and other former ISIS strongholds. This group talks of the need to fill the Sunni leadership vacuum.

    Re. conditions that must be in place to accommodate Sunnis' needs: 1) a surge in humanitarian aid – beyond the pledges of the July 2016 conference, including rapid infrastructure/ reconstruction projects in Sunni-majority liberated territories to enable refugees to go home ASAP; 2) due process to be

afforded to Sunnis accused of ISIS membership and have been either stuck in jail for a long time without trial or are still in detention after being taken from liberated territories; 3)SME programs to create jobs; 4)passage of the National Guards Law, which will go a long way in reassuring the Sunni communities that they will not be left without protection post-ISIS; 5) try some of the PMU members who have been accused of flagrant human rights violations. Whether Abadi & co. can achieve that in the current climate of intra-Shiite power competition is questionable.

Christine Van Den Toorn, AUIS

There are certain initiatives from the GOI that are having success, but I think they need more resources, attention, bolstering. The main initiative at the local (tribal, district, provincial) level is the National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) out of PM Abadi's office. Then there is also the work of USIP and their local affiliates Sanad and Network of Iraqi Facilitators (NIF). The UNDP through the stabilization find has not prioritized such reconciliation work (funding, resources wise), and focuses on the return of key services. UNAMI could be doing more on this, they need heavier hitters and to be more active. I think they don't have a strong team right now (off the record…) Also what is missing is the participation of powerful international players like the USG and EU in terms of acting a facilitating neutral actor (where possible) in political reconciliation between local actors and between the center and periphery. It is definitely true that in many areas, lack of political arrangements/ reconciliation and/or social trust between communities is preventing return and stabilization process from taking place.

I would say that the number one condition that needs to be met with regard to the Sunni population on a local, return level is security. There are huge fears of revenge and retribution (intra Sunni and also from Shia tribes) and also fear of militia forces. Local police need to be reinstated, and to be in control. These forces should be vetted, and representative of local populations and the Hashd/ militias must leave towns. This has happened some, but not all places. Mechanisms like security committees (inclusive, representative) that decide who gets to go back and who does not are important. There should also be similar committees (with NRC, NIF, Sanad, ideally US/ EU/ UN representation) to facilitate negotiations before and after return with local populations. Last, there should be inclusive, and representative committees to identify and allocate reconstruction funds. This is a major concern of Sunni and other local populations.

These processes and committees need buy-in at the local and national level. Examples to date shows that without one of the other, deals are not sustainable. For example, if a deal is made by local populations to return, but there is not buy in from leadership in Baghdad, attempts will be made to scuttle or at last no support the deal. And vice versa is true – if a deal is made between national leaders about the return of a group without buy in from the local populations. Timing is also a key factor here – people cannot go back before certain deals have been made because this will most likely be opposed through a violence that will destroy the whole process.

A couple case studies: While there has been progress in non-mixed, homogenous areas like Tikrit, Fallujah and smaller towns like Dour, Dhuluiyah and Adheim, there has not been in mixed areas that are strategically important to Iraq and to Baghdad's Shia parties such as Sleiman Beg and Yathrib (and Diyala). If there is not resolution, these towns and areas will continue to destabilize Iraq. There has been some progress lately in these difficult areas though – for example, recently, talks between Dr Abdul Latif Al Humayem, the head of the Sunni Endowment, and PM Abadi and the local sub-district director have started to show progress (real, substantive talks about return of the local population after 2 years of really empty promises and talks) toward return of that population to Sleiman Beg. They are now "waiting for Hadi al Ameri to get back from Mosul" to support/ enforce the deal. Sleiman Beg is an area that is an example of a need for serious political/ social reconciliation as well though – it is close to the Shia Turkmen town of Amerli, which remains opposed to the return of the 70,000 Sunnis to Sleiman Beg. This will require serious attention, facilitation to local deal

making on tribal, social and political levels to sustain a stable return process.

Similarly, a place like Rabiaa, which is mostly homogenous with the Shammar (Sunni Arab) tribe – which usually aligns with the State (GOI), could have been a beacon of post ISIS stability but now the tribe is divided between some who have joined Peshmerga and are somewhat pro KDP, and the majority who are still pro Baghdad and joining the Hashd. This situation has deteriorated and become more contentious over the past year and half since liberation of the area because there are no political interlocutors. A similar situation exists in Sinjar, and will exist in Sunni and minority areas in Ninewa province around Mosul that are now being liberated. Rabiaa and some of these other areas are also good examples of how a lack of resolution of the DIBs issue will continue to destabilize Iraq – as the DIBs are fault lines, flashpoints and powder kegs – and are areas that have, or had, large Sunni Arab populations who are now displaced.

Dr. Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute

It would be inaccurate to say that the Iraqi government lacks initiatives for societal reconciliation. In fact, there might too many such initiatives that lack coordination. Hence, unlike the military campaign against Da'esh that has brought together opposing factions—Iraqi military, Kurdish Peshmarga and Shia Popular Mobilization Forces—the political track may amount to pronouncements rather than planned initiatives.

The reconstruction would be a case in point. To date, the Iraqi government has not produced a plan or made reconstruction funds available for liberated towns like Falluja, let alone Mosul. Iraq did receive some international humanitarian aid, thanks in part to U.S. fundraising support. The government itself, however, is cash-depleted due to large government expenditures, including the war effort, amid plunging revenues due to low oil prices.

Ultimately, the path to political reconciliation is through economic development and inclusive governance. Given the diversity of the forces against Da'esh, the vision for post-Da'esh Iraq remains unclear. Defeating Da'esh is a cause that has united groups with long standing fault lines.
Moreover, the weakness and internal divisions within Sunni community opens them up for political interference by Kurds and Shia groups as well as by regional powers. While some call for devolution of power into an autonomous Sunni region, others call for administrative decentralization at the provincial level. Iraq's politics is marred with wielding patronage networks, and Shia and Kurdish parties have the financial means to coopt Sunni leaders. Ultimately, the Sunni community needs to feel empowered through governing their own affairs and running their cities, otherwise their continued grievances—sectarian and economic—will continue to be subject to exploitation and radicalization. The prospects for stability through reconciliation in Sunni regions in Iraq have a deadline: upcoming provincial and national elections, expected to run simultaneously in 2018.

Dr. Maha Yahha, Carnegie MEC

Once the Islamic State is defeated, Iraq will have to mend a divided society.

- December 08, 2016

As the campaign to retake Mosul continues, Iraqis are celebrating it as an embodiment of national unity. The offensive has brought together the Iraqi Army, the Kurdish Peshmerga, and paramilitary groups, including the Popular Mobilization Forces (*Al-Hashd al-Shaabi)*, or PMF, as well as Sunni tribal fighters. Early on this heightened expectations of a swift military victory.

In recognition of this, both Prime Minister Haidar al-Abadi and the president of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region, Masoud Barzani, stated after the Mosul offensive began that it was the first time in Iraq's history that the Peshmerga and the Iraqi Army were cooperating militarily. Abadi declared, "All peoples are here to fight with us, Kurd with Arabs, Shia with Sunnis, and all the minorities are here with us—Christians, Yezidis, and Turkmen all fighting shoulder-to-shoulder." His comments were echoed by Jan Kubiš, the United Nations' special representative to Iraq, who stated in a briefing to the Security Council, "We witness the birth of a new Iraq and its security forces, who are welcomed by civilians as liberators."

Such optimism aside, even if the Islamic State is defeated, which seems likely even though progress is slow, Iraq will face several key challenges. They include a crisis of confidence between the state and citizens, a crisis of trust among Iraqis, a struggle for political leadership within the main ethno-sectarian communities, the financing of reconstruction, and the future of Iraq's disputed territories.

A GAP BETWEEN THE STATE AND COMMUNITIES

The crisis of confidence between the state and Iraqi citizens is the result of decades of exclusionary practices and violent repression as the central authorities targeted specific ethnic and sectarian communities.

The fierce repression of the Sunni community under former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki was a key trigger in the transition from the 2012–2013 protests in Sunni-majority provinces towards a violent jihadi insurgency. The ease with which large swaths of Iraqi territory fell to the so-called Islamic State in June 2014, like the abandonment by the Iraqi Army of key areas, further widened a preexisting rift between many Iraqis and their state.

Preventing the return of the Islamic State means addressing the principle demands of Sunnis—including political inclusion, reform of the counterterrorism law, and amnesty for the tens of thousands of Sunnis who have been imprisoned under the law, often without appropriate judicial review. Government cooperation with the Sunnis, particularly Sunni tribes, will also be an important factor in reassuring the community.

At stake in a post-Islamic State Iraq are changes in the power structures governing Baghdad's relations with the provinces and sectarian and ethnic communities. Three separate entities now coexist within Iraq's borders: Iraqi state-controlled areas where Shia factions mainly hold sway; the Kurdistan Regional Government; and the territory ruled by the Islamic State. Each of these areas has developed specific forms

of governance, against a backdrop of escalating regional competition for power and external interventions by Iran and the Western-led coalition.

In this context, the relationship between Baghdad and the different regions is at the heart of discussions of what comes next after Mosul. While both the Kurds and the Sunnis would prefer to limit the central government's role in Mosul and other liberated provinces, the Shia-dominated leadership seeks to maintain such authority. A non-inclusive political process in a post-Islamic State environment and a refusal to decentralize power to the governorates as enshrined in the constitution are likely to spur more communal violence.

At best, the presence of the PMF in mainly Sunni areas may fuel support for the Islamic State—whose legacy will linger in Iraqi society—or for other extremists.

THE CRISIS BETWEEN IRAQIS

A crisis of trust exists not only between Iraqi citizens and their state but also between Iraqi communities themselves. In the last two years, Iraq has witnessed the increasing militarization of ethnic and sectarian communities seeking protection. Following the advances of the Islamic State in 2014, the rapid growth of the Shia-dominated PMF to some 50 groups and around 150,000 fighting men is one aspect of this, as is the establishment of militias composed of minorities, including Christians and Yezidis. The latter are operating under the auspices of the PMF or the Kurdish Peshmerga.

Even though many Sunnis did not support the Islamic State, and the Sunni community has suffered considerably at its hands, members of Iraq's other sectarian groups felt betrayed by how some of their former Arab Sunni neighbors compromised with the group. A Yezidi mother who escaped with her family remarked, "We don't cry only for ourselves, but for all Yezidis. They tortured us, attacked our honor, our religion. We have lived together with our Muslim Arab neighbors during the Iran-Iraq War [and] during the first Gulf War. We protected each other. Now they became our enemies."

An activist working in the refugee camps of Dohuk told me last February, "Yezidis are refusing to go back to areas liberated from the [Islamic State] until they know how they will be governed. They want to have a say in the running of their own affairs."

Meanwhile, the actions of the Islamic State and the cycle of sectarian blame and distrust have led to revenge killings of Arab Sunnis by Shia militias. These militias have been accused of slaughtering Sunnis with impunity, as have Yezidi militias. In other areas, Kurdish militias have been blamed for massacring and expelling Arab citizens, under the pretext that they collaborated with the Islamic State. In reality, the Kurds are also driven by an attempt to consolidate their control over disputed territories.

Such actions will drive further wedges into Iraqi society. Without an overhaul of communal relations through the adoption of more inclusionary policies, the potential for peace in a post-Islamic State Iraq will be in doubt.

THE DANGERS OF INTRA-SECTARIAN CONFLICT

However, communal tensions are not limited to contestation between the Kurds, Shia, and Sunnis. There are also worrying signs of increasing intra-sectarian conflict, particularly in the Shia and Kurdish

communities. Among the Shia, rivalries have increased, accentuating conflicts within the Dawa Party, Iraq's largest, which has effectively ruled the country since 2005 and is split into two feuding camps.

While political strife and internal divisions are not new to Dawa, the removal of prime minister Nouri al-Maliki in 2014 and his replacement by another Dawa official, Haidar al-Abadi, has given these divisions a harder edge. The Mosul offensive allows Abadi to appear as a strong national leader, while Maliki's control over a portion of the PMF has given him additional leverage on the ground to challenge his political rivals in ways that were not possible before. He is using the groups affiliated with him to both undermine Abadi and strengthen himself before provincial council elections in 2017 and parliamentary elections in 2018.

This intra-Shia struggle will also be shaped by the rising power of the PMF. Parliament's recent passing of a [law](#) officially recognizing the coalition of armed groups as a part of Iraq's armed forces had a number of objectives. Not only was it an attempt to acknowledge the PMF's efforts in fighting the Islamic State, it was also designed to place its forces more squarely under the authority of the state and impede the political ambitions of its leaders.

Yet many PMF leaders are connected to political parties, and are unlikely to lay down their arms quietly. They have become powerful warlords, commanding large numbers of troops, exploiting considerable resources, and enjoying political clout. These leaders' growing ambitions mean that it is not inconceivable that rivalries will emerge leading to conflicts among some of the PMF's armed groups themselves.

The Kurdish region is not faring much better. The mandate of Masoud Barzani, Kurdistan's president, which had already been extended for two years by the Kurdish parliament, expired in August 2015. Parliament has been inactive since then and the government is dysfunctional. The historic struggle between the two principle Kurdish political dynasties—the Barzani-led Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), which controls the city of Irbil, and the Talabani-led Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), based in Suleimaniyya—is giving way to feuds within the ruling families of both areas, and between them and other influential Kurdish officials. These low-level partisan tensions could spill over into renewed conflict between the KDP and PUK.

Meanwhile, the salaries of Kurdish civil servants have not been paid for months, triggering [multiple demonstrations](#) across the different cities of the Kurdistan Region by the civil servants and [police](#). These grievances are driving a broader sentiment of support among Kurds for remaining within the Iraqi state, which would at least guarantee payment of their salaries.

RECONSTRUCTION AND DISPUTED TERRITORIES

The realities of the Mosul battle are generating a third challenge for the Iraqi government, namely rebuilding cities and towns liberated from the Islamic State at a time when state coffers are empty.

The 2017 budget, [ratified](#) recently by parliament, highlighted a budget deficit equivalent to $18 billion. In April, the World Bank forecast [that the deficit would represent](#) around 14.2 percent of GDP. Moreover, around 22 percent of budget spending is financed by borrowing or financial assistance. Around 25 percent of spending has been allocated to military activities, including funding for the PMF. Meanwhile, disagreements have emerged among Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish politicians over what share of this money would go to their respective armed groups.

This deficit raised questions about the government's ability to undertake reconstruction activities, estimated to be anywhere between $14 billion and $25 billion. Areas previously liberated from the Islamic States have yet to be rebuilt or their services restored. The slow pace of reconstruction efforts will prolong the suffering of Iraqi displaced by the Islamic State, making it impossible for them to rebuild their lives and livelihoods. Popular anger at the lack of services may, with time, provoke new insurgencies.

A fourth challenge will be what happens with regard to territories liberated from the Islamic State and that are disputed by the Iraqi state and the Kurds. Haidar al-Abadi has affirmed that an agreement exists for the Peshmerga to withdraw from such areas once the Islamic State is defeated. However, Masoud Barzani and other Kurdish officials have suggested that they would not implement such withdrawals.

The tense situation could pave the way for open conflict between the Kurds and Baghdad, belying the optimism that surrounded the start of the Mosul offensive. This will only further complicate the process of reconstruction and the future of any potential political settlement for a post-Islamic State governance system in Iraq.

AN OPENING FOR A HOLISTIC VISION OF IRAQ

With the Iraqi state facing multiple challenges, civil society actors who have organized protests during the past year and a half across Iraqi cities and provinces, including Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, Erbil, and Suleimaniyya, have an opportunity to present a holistic vision for Iraq's future. United by their demands for a reform of governance mechanisms and an end to corruption, among others issues, these actors can look towards the upcoming provincial and parliamentary elections to advance an inclusive platform of change.

In light of Iraq's powerful political and military realities, this may be an uphill battle. However, it is one that is urgently needed to create a framework for national reconciliation between the country's diverse communities.

To help do so, civil society actors, divided until now by ethnic and sectarian belonging, must offer a vision that addresses several requirements. They must recognize that discussions over the redistribution of resources are fundamental for addressing power inequalities among sects and ethnicities, for rebuilding the bonds of trust between Iraqis, and for addressing the traumas inflicted on Iraqis by the Islamic State.

This process of healing would also include mechanisms for working with hundreds of thousands of Iraqi children, who, according to the Iraqi High Commission for Human Rights, have been brainwashed by the Islamic State. It includes the challenge of reintegrating women who have been violated by the Islamic State's militants, as well as their offspring, into conservative Iraqi society. In addition, improving the prospects for transitional justice mechanisms would permit further healing. If left unaddressed, such a situation could lead to a new incarnation of the Islamic State.

The Islamic State may have unified the Iraqis, but it has not created a consensus over Iraq's future. As the prominent Shia cleric Sayyed Jawad al-Khoei put it, "We do not have one Iraq, we have an Iraq of the Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds, as well as the Iraq of persecuted minorities of Yezidis, Sabians, and Mandaeans." The opportunity to create a broader vision is now and it is up to civil society groups and others invested in Iraq's future to attempt to do so.

Dr. Elie Abouaoun

Dr. Elie Abouaoun is the director of Middle East Programs with the Center for Middle East and Africa at the U.S. Institute of Peace. Elie served until recently as a senior program officer for the Middle East and North Africa programs and the acting director for North Africa programs. Previously, he held the position of Executive Director at the Arab Human Rights Fund after an assignment as a Senior Program Officer at the U.S. Institute of Peace – Iraq program.

Prior to 2011, Dr. Abouaoun managed the Iraq program of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and worked as the program coordinator for Ockenden International-Iraq. He is a senior trainer and consultant with several local, regional and international organizations on topics such as human rights, program development/management, displacement and relief, capacity development, Euro Mediterranean cooperation; and is a member of the pool of trainers of the Council of Europe since 2000. Dr. Abouaoun regularly contributes to publications related to the above mentioned topics. 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 regularly writes articles for the French speaking Lebanese daily newspaper L'Orient du Jour as well other publications in the Arab region. He is a visiting lecturer at Notre Dame University-Lebanon on the subjects of human rights, civil society, advocacy and at Saint Joseph University-Lebanon on the subjects of human rights and citizenship. Dr. Abouaoun serves as a member of the Board of Directors of several organizations in the Arab region.

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

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

Regions of **Expertise**
Syria, Iraq, North Africa

Issues of **Expertise**
US foreign policy, economic and political development, Islamist movements

Languages
Arabic, French

Mr. 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.

He holds a Master's degree in International Development Policy from Duke University (2007) and is a Fulbright alumnus.

Buddhika B. Jayamaha

Buddhika B. Jayamaha is a PhD candidate in Political Science at Northwestern. He is a veteran of the 82nd Airborne Division with deployment to Iraq.

Karl Kaltenthaler

Karl Kaltenthaler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University. His research and teaching focuses on security policy, political violence, political psychology, public opinion and political behavior, violent Islamist extremism, terrorism, and counterterrorism. He has worked on multiple research studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, and the United States. He is currently researching the radicalization and recruitment process into Islamist violent extremism in different environments as well as ways to counter this process (Countering Violent Extremism). His work has resulted in academic publications and presentations as well as analytic reports and briefings for the U.S. government. He has consulted for the FBI, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Intelligence Community and the U.S. military. His research has been published in three books, multiple book chapters, as well as articles in International Studies Quarterly, Political Science Quarterly, Studies in Conflict and Terrorism, as well as other several other journals.

VERNIE LIEBL, Marine Corps Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

Vernie Liebl is an analyst currently sitting as the Middle East Desk Officer in the Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL). Mr Liebl retired from the Marine Corps and has a background in intelligence, specifically focused on the Middle East and South Asia.

Prior to joining CAOCL, Mr. Liebl worked with the Joint Improvised Explosives Device Defeat Organization as a Cultural SME, and before that with Booz Allen Hamilton as a Strategic Islamic Narrative Analyst. He has also published extensively on topics ranging from the Caliphate to Vichy French campaigns in WW2.

Mr Liebl has a Bachelors degree in political science from University of Oregon, a Masters degree in Islamic History from the University of Utah, and a second Masters degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College (where he graduated with "Highest Distinction" and focused on Islamic Economics).

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. Clark McCauley

Clark McCauley (B.S. Biology, Providence College, 1965; Ph.D. Social Psychology, University of Pennsylvania, 1970) is a Professor of Psychology and co-director of the Solomon Asch Center for Study of Ethnopolitical Conflict at Bryn Mawr College. His research interests include the psychology of group identification, group dynamics and intergroup conflict, and the psychological foundations of ethnic conflict and genocide. He is founding editor of the journal Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict: Pathways toward Terrorism and Genocide.

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III, PhD

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III, PhD, is an Associate Professor in the Joint Special Operations Master of Arts program for the College of International Security Affairs at the National Defense University. After completing his doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs at the University of Virginia in 2003, he served as a Fulbright Scholar in the Caucasus in 2007 working on conflict resolution, and has focused on related issues in Eastern Ukraine for several years. He has also served as a subject matter expert for several DOS public diplomacy programs in South and East Asia dealing with the role of religion and democracy in US foreign policy.

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 journals ranging from *Communist Studies and Transition Politics*, *Peace and Conflict Studies*, to *Central European Political Science Review*. He has also published in professional journals related to UW, SOF more broadly, and the future operating environment, with articles in *InterAgency Journal*, *Special Warfare*, *Foreign Policy Journal*, and the peer-reviewed *Special Operations Journal*. He is currently participating in SOCOM SMAs on Intellectual Motivators of Insurgency and a Russian ICONS simulation.

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.

Prior to joining RAND, Nader served as a research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses. He is a native speaker of Farsi. Nader received his M.A. in international affairs from The George Washington University.

Dr. Denise Natali

Dr. Denise Natali is a Distinguished Research Fellow at the Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS) where she specializes on the Middle East, trans-border Kurdish issue, regional energy security, and post-conflict state-building. Dr. Natali joined INSS in January 2011 as the Minerva Chair, following more than two decades of researching and working in the Kurdish regions of Iraq, Turkey, Iran, and Syria.

Dr. Natali is the author of numerous publications on Kurdish politics, economy and energy, including *The Kurdish Quasi-State: Development and Dependency in Post-Gulf War Iraq* (Syracuse University Press, 2010) and *The Kurds and the State: Evolving National Identity in Iraq, Turkey and Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), which was the recipient of the Choice Award for Outstanding Academic Title (2006) (trans. to Turkish *Kurtler ve Devlet: Iraq, Turkiye ve Iran'da Ulusal Kimligin Gelismesi* (Istanbul: Avesta Press, 2009). Dr. Natali is currently writing a second edition of *The Kurds and the State* to include Syria.

Dr. Natali also specializes in post-conflict relief and reconstruction, having worked on the Gulf Relief Crisis Project for the American Red Cross International Division in Washington D.C., as director of cross-border operations for a non-governmental organization (INGO) in Peshawar Pakistan, and information officer for the U.S Agency for International Development's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in northern Iraq in support of Operation Provide Comfort II. Dr. Natali returned to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq from 2005-2010, where she engaged in research, teaching and university start-ups, including positions as the Head of the International Politics Department at the University of Kurdistan-Hawler (UKH) and Associate Professor, Dean of Students, and Director of International Exchanges at the American University of Iraq-Sulaimaniya (AUI-S).

Dr. Natali received a Ph.D in political science at the University of Pennsylvania, a Master of International Affairs (MIA) at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs and a B.A. in government at Franklin&Marshall College. She also has studied at the L'Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales in Paris, the University of Tehran (Deh Khoda Language Program) and Tel Aviv University. Dr. Natali speaks French, Kurdish and conversational Farsi.

Dr. Natali provides frequent commentary on national and international media sources. She is an adjunct professor at Georgetown University's Center for Security Studies, columnist for *al-Monitor,* member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and member of the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Petit

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Petit is a PhD candidate in Political Science at George Washington University, and has multiple tours in Iraq with the US Army's 173rd Airborne Brigade and the 101 Airborne Division.

Will Reno

Will Reno is a Professor of Political Science at Northwestern University.

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.

Serwer blogs at www.peacefare.net and tweets @DanielSerwer

Randa Slim

Randa Slim is Director of the Track II Dialogues initiative at The Middle East Institute and a non-resident fellow at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced & International Studies (SAIS) Foreign Policy Institute . 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, a program director at Resolve, Inc, 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 is the author of several studies, research reports, book chapters, and articles on conflict management, post-conflict peacebuilding, and Middle East politics.

Education
B.S. at the American University of Beirut; M.A. at the American University of Beirut; Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina Languages Arabic, French Countries of Expertise Syria, Iraq, Lebanon Issues of Expertise Peacebuilding, Peacemaking, Negotiation, Track II Dialogue, Democratization, Post-Conflict Reconciliation

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.

Maha Yahya

Director
Middle East Center
Yahya is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, where her research focuses on citizenship, pluralism, and social justice in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

PhD, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

PhD, Architectural Association School of Architecture

Maha Yahya is director of the Carnegie Middle East Center, where her research focuses on citizenship, pluralism, and social justice in the aftermath of the Arab uprisings.

Prior to joining Carnegie, Yahya led work on Participatory Development and Social Justice at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA). She was previously regional adviser on social and urban policies at UN-ESCWA and spearheaded strategic and inter-sectoral initiatives and policies in the Office of the Executive Secretary which addressed the challenges of democratic transitions in the Arab world. Yahya has also worked with the United Nations Development Program in Lebanon, where she was the director and principal author of *The National Human Development Report 2008–2009: Toward a Citizen's State*. She was also the founder and editor of the *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*.

Yahya has worked with international organizations and in the private sector as a consultant on projects related to socioeconomic policy analysis, development policies, cultural heritage, poverty reduction, housing and community development, and postconflict reconstruction in various countries including Lebanon, Pakistan, Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, and Iran. She has served on a number of advisory boards including the MIT Enterprise Forum of the Pan Arab Region and the Lebanese Center for Policy Studies.

Yahya is the author of numerous publications, including most recently *Great Expectations in Tunisia* (March 2016); *Refugees and the Making of an Arab Regional Disorder* (November 2015); *Towards Integrated Social Development Policies: A Conceptual Analysis* (UN-ESCWA, 2004), co-editor of *Secular Publicities: Visual practices and the Transformation of National Publics in the Middle East and South Asia*

(University of Michigan Press, 2010) and co-author of *Promises of Spring: Citizenship and Civic Engagement in Democratic Transitions* (UN-ESCWA, 2013).