



## SMA Reach-back Report

### Iraq: Coalition or Bilateral Approach?

**Question (R6.3):** *What is most favorable for the stability and the future of Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh: continued presence of an international Coalition or normal state-to-state bilateral relations? If a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the "unifying factor" for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?*

#### Contributors

Ms. Jennifer Cafarella, Institute for the Study of War; Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed, United States Institute of Peace; Ambassador James Jeffrey, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Dr. Kimberly Kagan, Institute for the Study of War; Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, University of Akron & Case Western Reserve University; Dr. Michael Knights, Washington Institute for Near East Policy; Dr. Ian McCulloh, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory; Dr. Spencer Meredith III, National Defense University; Dr. Nicholas O' Shaughnessy, University of London; Dr. Abdulaziz Sager, Gulf Research Center; Mr. Mubin Shaikh, Independent Analyst

### Executive Summary

Ali Jafri, NSI Inc.

As the United States and its Coalition partners examine the situation in Iraq and Syria after a sustained military campaign against Da'esh, they face a significant inflection point regarding the nature of their engagement. In the United States, policymakers must decide whether continuing to work within the existing Coalition is preferable to normalizing the relationship between the United States and Iraq. The central question is whether the Coalition or a bilateral relationship would best ensure the region's stability and secure Iraq's future. A number of the respondents argued that continuing within the Coalition framework is preferable to pursuing a normalized bilateral relationship with Iraq. While there exist benefits and drawbacks of both relationships, it is important to examine the potential contributions and risks of each path for post-Da'esh stability in Iraq.

#### Working Within a Coalition

In the case of US engagement with Iraq, respondents generally preferred the prospect of continuing to work within the existing Coalition. The table displays selected responses from experts on questions related to coalition or bilateral relationships in general.

	Benefits	Drawbacks
<b>Coalition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International legitimacy</li> <li>• Unifying raison d'être</li> <li>• Combined resource pool</li> <li>• Diversified capabilities</li> <li>• US can benefit by leading Coalition, and projecting its policy objective onto the Coalition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty of achieving consensus</li> <li>• Different domestic political tolerances</li> <li>• Limits US actions</li> <li>• Risk of fracture</li> <li>• Adversaries' narrative of occupation</li> </ul>
<b>Bilateralism</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Could hasten political reconciliation</li> <li>• Resource mapping</li> <li>• Increase US freedom of action</li> <li>• Efficiency</li> <li>• Reduce infighting</li> <li>• Opportunity for Institutions to mature</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fewer resources than with coalition</li> <li>• Vulnerable to domestic political risks</li> <li>• Risk of scapegoating, marginalization</li> <li>• Iran can focus actions on smaller list of actors</li> <li>• Training will be more difficult</li> </ul>

*Figure 1: Selected benefits and drawbacks to operating within a coalition or bilateral relationship*

Experts cited resource pooling as a significant benefit of continuing to work with the Coalition. Dr. Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy suggests that a coalition, including Iranian commercial partners such as Germany and France, could limit malevolent Iranian actions that run counter to Coalition interests. Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy of the University of London also recognized that a coalition would serve as a capabilities multiplier and would be able to offer more collective military capabilities.

As already noted, Mr. Hamasaeed argues that any sincere effort to bring stability to Iraq must work beyond the just the military dimension. For this reason, he suggests that a coalition would be better equipped to handle a wider mission set. Ambassador James Jeffrey of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy also supported this point, noting that an expanded Coalition will also allow states whose polity may not support a "boots on the ground" engagement to contribute to the effort. Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler, of the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve argues that the United States can use help to develop the capacity of Iraqi security forces with a possible a second-order effect of preventing Iranian entities from filling that vacuum. He also believes a coalition effort would also be viewed more favorably and would be imminently more "sellable" to skeptical populations. Separately, leading the Coalition could give international legitimacy to the United States' objectives in Iraq, according to Dr. Kimberly Kagan and Ms. Jennifer Cafarella of the Institute for the Study of War. They argue that maintaining the Coalition would give the United States more leverage in pursuing its policy objectives. They also suggest that the domestic climate in Iraq would not favor a long-term US military commitment absent a Coalition-style framework.

Continuing the Coalition effort would not come without some drawbacks. A concern shared by a number of experts was that organization, management, and maintenance of a coalition is a complex endeavor. To that point, each member of a coalition has its own risk tolerance and domestic political limitations. Therefore, a coalition effort to stabilize Iraq may be relatively more fragile and susceptible to

rupture, particularly as the narrow goals of a battlefield victory against Da'esh become actualized (Cafarella, Kagan). Additionally, working within a coalition could also pose tactical challenges to the United States. Several experts<sup>1</sup> argue that such an environment would limit the United States' freedom of action. Specifically, a coalition could create conditions wherein the Iraqi government and its citizens fall victim to the costs associated with being perceived as a rentier state, namely the cycle of dependency that is triggered after the receipt of large amounts of foreign assistance, and the resultant stunted development of domestic political organizations.

### **Operating Within a Bilateral Context**

Despite the elucidated benefits of continuing with the Coalition, some respondents suggested that a managed bilateral relationship was a clearer path to stability in Iraq. Mr. Hamasaeed suggested that a bilateral relationship could hasten reconciliation between the Kurdistan Revolutionary Government (KRG) and the Government of Iraq because fewer stakeholders involved may result in a smoother process. It might also increase freedom of action on the part of the United States (Cafarella, Jeffrey, Kagan). To that end, a bilateral relationship could allow partners to efficiently map resources to their areas of expertise and orient towards their strategic interests (Hamasaeed, O'Shaughnessy). The primacy of this sentiment was also echoed by Dr. Abdulaziz Sager of the Gulf Research Center who argued for the efficiency of a bilateral relationship. This context also creates conditions that are favorable for Arab partners. AMB Jeffrey notes that bilateralism offers a level of credibility with those who seek an open-ended US commitment in Iraq. Similarly, a bilateral relationship can help the United States fend off allegations of occupation if it is not permanently basing troops in country (Kaltenthaler). Bilateralism also allows for local institutions to mature, particularly when a main source of discontent (i.e., the very existence and presence of the coalition) is allayed (Meredith).

The drawbacks to a bilateral context remain significant. Such an environment could create even more space for Iran to operate according to their interests (Jeffrey, Kaltenthaler). There will be attendant political risks, and the sum of bilateral efforts would, by nature of its lessened capabilities, be outpaced by a coalition effort (Hamasaeed). Focusing on a purely bilateral effort would also risk marginalizing United States efforts (Jeffrey, Meredith). The United States also opens itself up to having to negotiate a new Status of Forces agreement, a process that has been fraught in the past (Cafarella, Jeffrey, Kagan). Furthermore, it also opens up the United States to the possibility of being made a scapegoat if progress is stalled or difficult to establish (Meredith).

---

<sup>1</sup> Cafarella, Jeffrey, Kagan, Kaltenthaler, Meredith

## Expert Contributions

### Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed

The United States Institute of Peace

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:** I don't know enough about CENTCOM to say a lot about how it can foster the benefits or minimize the drawbacks, but will try offer thoughts where I can.

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1</b>	Asks and/or advice by the coalition to the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) will carry more weight if they come from the coalition, because they will have the power of the collective group. This will also demonstrate to both governments that they are not motivated by the interests and desires of one country, which in turn optically helps the GoI and KRG to respond with less concern to the risk of being perceived as serving the interests of one country (e.g. the U.S., against which many conspiracy theories and biases exist in Iraq and Middle East region).	Often, the interests of Iraq, the coalition, the U.S. and CENTCOM, converge, even if there may be disagreement about how to secure those interests. The political weight of the coalition could be leveraged objectively to get the Iraqis on board with the "what" and "how" of securing CENTCOM mission objectives.
<b>Benefit 2</b>	The coalition offers diversity of resources, experience, and execution, as well as more effective means of coordinating the timing, amount, and areas of these values, which will be extremely harder under a bilateral mechanism. Despite all the changes, the existing division of labor, beyond the military operation, has been more	There are critical non-kinetic needs, which have implications for security and stability, that need to be addressed, but CENTCOM may not be able to commit resources to, or have the expertise to deal with them. For example, local and national reconciliation, justice and accountability, community policing, and reconstruction are

	effective than the alternative of going it alone. For example, tapping into the experience and strength of different members of the coalition for military training, police training and community policing, justice and accountability, supporting reconciliation, humanitarian aid and more, all critical to the mission of defeating ISIS, and preventing a repeat, would be much harder, if not impossible, to do and coordinate under a bilateral construct.	critical areas that need uninterrupted efforts for some years to come to help stabilize Iraq, and prevent ISIS 2.0 or other forms of violence to spread. CENTCOM can benefit from resources of other members of the coalition for the needs to be addressed, through asks to the coalition and/or gaining benefit of what they do.
<b>Benefit 3</b>	Members of the coalition may feel more compelled to commit resources and act under the framework of the coalition and part of a collective global effort, when there is an articulated common vision, strategy, and plan.	

<b>Drawback of a Coalition</b>	<b>Description of Drawback</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?</b>
<b>Benefit 1</b>	Reaching consensus on issues and how to address them within the coalition is hard and takes time.	
<b>Benefit 2</b>	Members of the coalition may feel that the mission has been accomplished, or reached a stage where the Iraqis can or should handle things on their own, or their priorities shift due internal needs or other conflicts elsewhere, therefore withdraw from the coalition or reduce resources/efforts significantly.	Convey to members of the Coalition that the situation in Iraq remains ultra-fragile, and could revert to violence. The conflict produced close six million displaced persons in Iraq, and many of the youth in the areas affected have not seen peace and stability in their life. Radicalization and refugees from Iraq remain a high possibility if progress against post-ISIS is not maintained.

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Bilateralism	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1</b>	Bilateralism could offer a faster-track for discussions with the Gol and KRG, which could translate into faster implementation of decisions if there is agreement.	
<b>Benefit 2</b>	Members of the coalition could put their resources into specific areas they care about the most.	

Drawback of a Bilateralism	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Benefit 1</b>	For the fight against ISIS, and needed post-ISIS efforts, the sum of all bilateral efforts will likely not be equal or greater than the sum of all efforts under the framework of the coalition. Political sensitivities will likely be higher, and adversely affect the effectiveness of the efforts. For example, existing conspiracy theories about the U.S. and some of the legacies of the 2003 war on both U.S. and Iraqi sides, make it harder for the U.S. Government and Gol to pursue what they think are the needed approach and actions. Some countries may not even engage with Iraq bilaterally on the ISIS related issues or stability more broadly.	CENTCOM could recommend to the political leadership in the U.S. to continue investing in the coalition, and explain the value of the coalition to its mission.
<b>Benefit 2</b>		

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** The coalition and bilateralism are needed for the future stability of Iraq. Neither can substitute the other, and the sum of all bilateral efforts may not be equal or greater to the sum of all efforts under the framework of the coalition. It is easier for all countries to be engaged on the stability of Iraq as part of a global effort, but definitely a harder issue domestically for member countries in bilateral contexts. Even under the coalition, many countries, including close U.S. allies, look to the U.S. for leadership and vision. Without the coalition, those countries may stop committing efforts and

resources to advance the stability of Iraq, which serves Iraqi, regional, and global security and economic interests.

**Request:** In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq should be that the mission has made critical military progress but it is not complete, because the threat of ISIS in the known form or in a different form persists and will continue for the foreseeable future.

If members of the coalition feel that terrorism and refugees do not flow out from Iraq, therefore, then they may feel that there is no need for the coalition to continue. Re-election of Prime Minister Abadi for a second term could strengthen that feeling. The election of a different prime minister who would not maintain an institutional relationship with the coalition could also lead to dissolving the coalition. We have seen similar conditions after the “Surge” when then Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki was re-elected, and the required institutional agreements were not secured.

Political and governance failure in Iraq contributed greatly to the rise of ISIS. We have a more fragile Iraq than after the “Surge” and the years that led to the rise of ISIS. If members of the coalition want to prevent the need for liberated Iraqi cities like Falluja, Ramada, and Mosul, a third time, then the coalition needs to continue to complete the mission beyond recapturing territories from ISIS.

**Request:** What are the top three factors that could unify a post-OIR coalition in Iraq?

**Response:**

1. Agreeing that recapturing land from ISIS is a critical achievement, but not the end of the mission of defeating ISIS in Iraq
2. Preventing ISIS from regaining strength under the same or different name(s), which will require continuing the rebuilding and strengthening of critical Iraqi security and civilian capabilities
3. Helping the political process get back on track in a direction that would foster stability not further division and violence.

Iraq remains to be ultra-fragile, and far more fragmented than when ISIS controlled one-third of Iraq. 2018 and 2019 are critical years for Iraq’s political process (includes three elections) and dealing with remaining aspects and the aftermath of the conflict with ISIS. Even in the best case scenario, Iraq will need help to wind down the militarization of the society (e.g. see my piece [HARNESSING IRAQ’S DEADLY ARRAY OF ARMED GROUPS AFTER ISIL](#)), and manage a difficult but critical reconstruction process. If the members of the coalition want to avoid being dragged back into Iraq and spend billions more in the future, continuing the coalition and their engagement in Iraq, with a specific focus on the political process and strengthening security and civilian institutions, is a must.

**Request:** Of the drawbacks of coalitions listed in the previous page, which is the top-most factor that could prevent or dissolve this unity? Why? Please respond below.

**Response:** Members of the coalition may feel that the mission has been accomplished, or reached a stage where the Iraqis can or should handle things on their own, or the members’ priorities shift due internal needs or other conflicts elsewhere.

## Ambassador James Jeffrey

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1</b> Coalition will accomplish all the benefits of Bilateralism, but less effectively at one level as it will inhibit on margins U.S. freedom of action and generate 'command friction.' But a coalition's principal benefit is that it may be 'more sellable' to the Iraqi government, and more difficult for Iran to counter, than a bilateral U.S. military presence.	Essentially political. It 'covers' the primary U.S. role in Iraqi security and thus makes more likely a U.S. military presence with less constant friction with the Iraqi government, pro-Iranian groups, etc.	First, not oppose it. Second, if it is feasible, figure a way to work with it that ensures a predominant role for the U.S., without drawing too much attention to that role, tasks CENTCOM is supremely experienced to carry out.
<b>Benefit 2</b> Coalitions at times deliver significant multipliers to a military operation (German AT weapons to KRG in summer 2014, French, UK SF teams, bases in Turkey and Gulf.)	Varies from case to case.	Press for more than token contributions. Lobby State Department to ensure 'military coalition' is embedded in a larger diplomatic-reconstruction one.
<b>Benefit 3.</b> Coalition on the ground will encourage participant states to contribute in other ways—diplomatic, reconstruction, etc., because for coalition states the same 'boots on the ground' syndrome applies as with the U.S.	Diplomatic and economic assistance to complement U.S.	As above
<b>Benefit 4.</b> A coalition if broadened per last above beyond military will appeal to the Iraqi government and political parties as the desire to integrate into the region is strong. Even 'pro-Iran' elements	Self-evident	High level diplomatic and COORDINATED diplomatic engagement with Iraq and regional states by State Department to this end, supported by CENTCOM.



<p>in most case want more options.</p> <p><b>Benefit 5. Impact on U.S. public, which typically prefers the U.S. to engage militarily as part of a coalition.</b></p> <p><b>Benefit 6. If as is sensible and likely the coalition is a continuation of the ‘anti-ISIS’ coalition with the same if modified mission—now ‘prevent return of, or conditions enabling return of, ISIS or AQI, you increase chances of acceptance by US population, Iraqis, coalition members, and solve certain problems (i.e., ‘SOFA’ issues).</b></p>	<p>Self-evident as absent compelling CT justification public reluctant to keep troops on ground.</p> <p>Self-evident per last above</p>	<p>Stress support of Iraqi government, regional parties and coalition. Do not act in ways to undercut such support.</p> <p>Last above plus keep focus on anti-terrorism mission—for more sophisticated audiences and ‘off the record’ emphasize relationship between Iranian aggressive actions and rise of Sunni VEO’s as per 2013-14.</p>

Drawback of a Coalition	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Benefit 1 Limits U.S. freedom of action—ROA, commander friction dealing with allies, etc.</b>	Self-evident	CENTCOM is a master at this.
<b>Benefit 2 While a coalition by bringing in European and other outside forces can help internationally, a coalition could undercut support by key Arab nations who want to see the U.S. as directly involved as possible.</b>	Self-evident	Effective command-control of the coalition and quiet diplomacy to make that point to regional partners.

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da’esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Bilateralism	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1 More freedom of action, especially responding to threats to the force</b>	Self-evident	ditto
<b>Benefit 2 Iraqi leaders implicitly see a U.S. presence as a potential</b>	Self-evident	Designate forces and activities ‘outside’ of primary train and

<p><b>'security guarantee' including directly in extremis. Coalition format limits U.S. ability and credibility here.</b></p> <p><b>Benefit 3: As noted above, more credibility with regional partners who want an "unrestrained:" U.S. presence.</b></p>	<p>Self-evident</p>	<p>equip under CT umbrella. Afghanistan model.</p> <p>Tricky as it has to be played up in region and played down in Baghdad.</p>
---	---------------------	--

<b>Drawback of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Drawback</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?</b>
<p><b>Benefit 1 You degrade benefits 1-6 listed above for a coalition. But most importantly you risk no U.S. presence if insisting on a bilateral one.</b></p>	<p>An Iraq with a U.S. presence (bilateral or as part of a coalition) is no guarantee that Iran's influence can be contained or that VEO's will not return, but it is the single most important thing the U.S. can do to these ends. Thus it is critical that the U.S. keep forces on.</p>	<p>If a bilateral approach CENTCOM must be (this is a lesson from 2011) as modest as possible on its demands/expectations for freedom of operation, SOFA rights, etc.</p>
<p><b>Benefit 2 May have to negotiate a different "SOFA" than the 2014 paper.</b></p>	<p>Self-evident—this broke the deal in 2011.</p>	<p>See above</p>

**Dr. Kimberly Kagan and Ms. Jennifer Cafarella**

Institute for the Study of War

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

<b>Benefit of a Coalition</b>	<b>Description of Benefit</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?</b>
<b>Could add international legitimacy to US goals and policies in Iraq in the post-ISIS phase</b>	A coalition approach could provide international legitimacy to US goals and policies in Iraq in the post-ISIS phase. The coalition has retaken all of ISIS's cities in Iraq, but ISIS retains both capability and will to continue to fight. Early signs of a "post-ISIS" insurgency have already emerged in historic Sunni insurgent strongholds such as the belts around Baghdad. The US must act to address the underlying political grievances that ISIS exploited and that will fuel a renewed insurgency. The US must also block and/or contain Iran's campaign to use its Iraqi proxies to coopt Iraqi institutions, which will undermine regional security and fuel a post-ISIS insurgency. Finally, the US must de-escalate the escalating conflict between the Iraqi Government and Iraqi Kurdistan, which Iran's Proxies are supporting. A coalition approach to post-ISIS Iraq would position and enable the US and coalition forces to exert greater leverage in Iraq to set these conditions.	Identify and articulate the conditions in Iraq that coalition forces must achieve in order to create an enduring outcome that prevents a renewed insurgency
<b>Continued counter-ISIS operations</b>	The US can use a coalition approach to assert a continued international requirement to	Cease claiming victory over ISIS, even over the ISIS physical caliphate.

	conduct military operations against remaining ISIS cells and new insurgent capabilities. This in turn could enable US and coalition forces to avoid a repetition of ISIS's rise after US troops withdrew in 2011. Political conditions in Iraq do not favor serious continued anti-ISIS operations, so the US risks being ordered out of Iraq if the US dismantles the anti-ISIS coalition and resumes normal state-to-state relations.	Prioritize and resource developing an intelligence picture of remaining ISIS lethal capability and the early signs of post-ISIS insurgency
--	---	--

<b>Drawback of a Coalition</b>	<b>Description of Drawback</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?</b>
<b>Coalition could fracture</b>	The anti-ISIS coalition is united in a desire to defeat ISIS but little else. It could fracture if the US attempts to repurpose it to achieve broader required conditions for anti-ISIS success such as countering Iran	Accept a reduction in the size of the coalition. Link the ultimate success of the anti-ISIS campaign to the stability and sovereignty of Iraq. Identify Iran's malign activity as a threat to the coalition's success.
<b>Provides ISIS and al Qaeda continued justification for their narrative that the world has united against Sunnis</b>	ISIS and al Qaeda both cite the US-led anti-ISIS coalition as an "example" of what they claim to be an international conspiracy against Sunni Muslims. ISIS and al Qaeda then position themselves as defenders of the Sunni community against the alleged international oppression.	Emphasize the role of regional Sunni states such as Jordan in the coalition  Continue to stress in coalition messaging solidarity with Sunni communities oppressed by ISIS and al Qaeda

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

<b>Benefit of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Benefit</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?</b>
<b>Increases US freedom of action</b>	A return to bilateral relations with Iraq could free the US to undertake policies that the	Clearly assess and identify the nature, extend, and trajectory of Iran's malign influence in Iraq and

	wider coalition may be unable or unwilling to support, such as direct action to constrain Iran's proxy militias	its consequences for US national security and regional stability
<b>Reduces frictions inherent in coalitions</b>	A return to bilateral relations with Iraq would reduce the inherent frictions that an international coalition causes in terms of rules of engagement, resource allocation, etc.	Assume greater responsibility for tasks/resources undertaken/provided by coalition partners, or shift this responsibility onto the Iraqi government

<b>Drawback of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Drawback</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?</b>
<b>Iran could out maneuver the US in Iraq in the short term</b>	Iran has already used its proxies to coopt Iraqi institutions, including the Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense (through the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)). A bilateral approach to post-ISIS Iraq could risk Iran using its influence in Iraq to attack US forces pre-emptively or compel Abadi or his successor to order us out. This is a risk in any strategy to counter Iran in Iraq, but it increases if the US takes a unilateral approach.	Condition new US military and economic support on a ban on the further entry of Iranian proxies into government positions.  Over time, condition support on the expulsion of already-emplaced Iranian proxies from government positions
<b>Could incentivize coalition partners to downscale or withdraw their military support</b>	US forces must be present in Iraq in order to conduct the kind and scale of military operations necessary to defeat remaining ISIS capability and prevent a renewed insurgency. A bilateral approach could require the US to provide additional troops in order to offset a withdrawal of coalition forces.	Pursue a status of forces agreement to allow US and allied military advisors to continue to support the Iraqi Security Forces

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** A coalition is best for the future stability of Iraq because conditions in Iraq currently favor Iran. A coalition approach would continue to enable the US to leverage international consensus to set conditions and compel changes in the behavior of various Iraqi actors. The US and allies must constrain and reduce the military and political strength of Iran's proxies in order to set conditions for the full defeat of ISIS, to prevent its return or reconstitution, and to de-escalate tensions between Iraqi Kurdistan and the Iraqi government, which Iran's proxies are fueling. The US-led anti-ISIS coalition

afforded Iran freedom of action to set conditions in Iraq that favor its interests by focusing US and coalition troops solely on a narrow anti-ISIS mission. A transition to a bilateral approach under current conditions would risk the likelihood of a widening Iraqi civil war in which ISIS or a successor organization would thrive.

**Request:** In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The unifying factor could be the already-stated US goals in Iraq: a united, federal, sovereign Iraqi state.

The Iranians and their proxies are the largest direct spoiler. Russia could also intervene in Iraq in an effort to displace the US and/or fracture the coalition. Russia is currently supporting Iran’s campaign in Iraq indirectly, by arming, training, and leading Iran’s Iraqi proxies on the battlefield in Syria, which provides them skills, experience, and equipment for use in Iraq. Russia has also begun to develop its own influence in the Iraqi theater through political overtures and economic deals with various Iraqi and Kurdish actors. Russia and Iran’s shared interests in Iraq include the expulsion of US and coalition forces.

**Request:** What are the top three factors that could unify a post-OIR coalition in Iraq?

**Response:**

1. The need for continued anti-ISIS operations
2. Defense against threats to Iraqi sovereignty and unity
3. De-escalation of widening civil war between the Iraqi government and Iraqi Kurdistan

**Request:** Of the drawbacks of coalitions listed in the previous page, which is the top-most factor that could prevent or dissolve this unity? Why? Please respond below.

**Response:** The risk of coalition fracture. The US has failed to set diplomatic conditions to garner support for policies in Iraq that go beyond the narrow anti-ISIS military mission.

## Dr. Karl Kaltenthaler

The University of Akron  
Case Western Reserve University

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1</b> Help prevent a new Sunni/ISIS insurgency in Iraq	The benefit of permanent US/Coalition forces in the country would be that those forces can train the Iraqi security forces, focusing particularly on creating a national and professional military ethos. It would also help to keep the Iraqi officer corps professional, competent, and non-sectarian. This makes it less likely that Iraqi forces will be used to abuse Sunnis, which could re-ignite a Sunni insurgency.	CENTCOM can continue with its training missions in Iraq. It is best to keep those missions relatively low profile so as not to attract undue negative attention from Iran-leaning Shia elements in the country or Iraqi nationalists concerned about sovereignty issues.
<b>Benefit 2</b> Help prevent the Iranian military from filling the "vacuum" left by Coalition forces for purposes of training and support.	Iran clearly has the desire to dominate Iraq and remove the US-led coalition from the country. From Iran's perspective, a US presence in the country is a threat to its national security. It does not trust US intentions toward it and this sentiment is only growing. Also, a US-led coalition in Iraq complicates its hope of creating a land bridge to Lebanon. That land bridge is not secure with US and Coalition forces in Iraq. Thus, a Coalition presence in Iraq helps block Iran's desire to completely dominate that country.	CENTCOM can help to provide the benefit of blocking Iranian aspirations in Iraq by providing things that the Iraqis need and want. Chief among these would be training, material support, and mission support.
Drawback of a Coalition	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?

<b>Drawback 1</b> The presence of the Coalition after the apparent defeat of ISIS could inflame Iraqi passions, particularly among the Shia, against the US.	As of now, as evidenced by recent opinion polls in Iraq, the US is relatively popular among Iraqi Sunni Arabs and distrusted by the Shia Arabs. A continued US presence may be used by some Shia politicians as a way to mobilize Shia political support by arguing for an end to US “colonization” of Iraq. Thus, there is the possibility that the continued presence of a US-led coalition in Iraq could weaken US influence over events in Iraq because of a political backlash against it among Iraqis.	CENTCOM can minimize the chance of such a backlash against the presence of Coalition forces in the country by keeping a light footprint in the country. That means keeping Coalition forces restricted to bases in the rural areas and not allowing them to R and R in the cities.
<b>Benefit 2</b>		

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da’esh?

**Response:**

<b>Benefit of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Benefit</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?</b>
<b>Benefit 1</b> Bilateralism limits the possibility of political backlash against a US presence in the country.	By treating Iraq as a “normal” partner of the US, where the US does not permanently base troops, the US can limit the possibility the growth of anti-Americanism that may result from a permanent US presence in the country. In other words, it might be easier for the Iraqi government to stay friendly and cooperative with the US if it is not viewed as being a “lackey” of the US.	CENTCOM can foster this kind of perceived “equal partners” relationship by providing assistance and training for ISF when they ask for it and where they ask for it without keeping a permanent presence in the country. This might be likened to the kind of relationship that CENTCOM now has with the Saudis.
<b>Benefit 2</b> Bilateralism limits the possibility of a “collective action” problem in the Coalition	It is likely that the Coalition that developed during the war against IS will be difficult to sustain over the long-run. Like in Afghanistan, countries that once were major participants in the war will likely grow weary of the contribution and withdraw.	By CENTCOM focusing on bilateral relations with Iraqi security forces instead of through a Coalition framework, it eliminates the need for CENTCOM to manage and cajole Coalition partners into staying in Iraq and contributing to the



	While this would not be a huge problem for the US in terms of maintaining its mission in Iraq, it would create domestic political pressure to justify a US presence in Iraq if other countries have pulled out. Bilateralism avoids this dilemma.	mission.
--	---	----------

Drawback of a Bilateralism	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Drawback 1</b> Bilateralism limits the US's ability to train and build the Iraq security forces in such a way to prevent the re-emergence of ISIS.	It is much harder for the US to re-build the ISF in a way that will help them prevent a repeat of the past with ISIS. The lessons of 2011-2014 should be that US withdrawal from the country and dependence on bilateralism opened a path for the growth of Sunni grievances and the Shiafication of the Iraqi forces.	CENTCOM should press hard its argument to the US command authority that its permanent or at least long-term presence in Iraq is crucial to maintaining stability in the country and keeping the ISIS threat under control.
<b>Drawback 2</b> Bilateralism opens the way for more Iranian dominance in the country.	The most immediate beneficiary of a perceived US withdrawal from Iraq is Iran. It will provide an opening for that country to fill the vacuum left by the US-led coalition. This would aid Iran's goal of creating an arch of control to Lebanon. It would also surely inflame Sunni tensions in Iraq.	CENTCOM should make clear that Iran is pushing hard to get the US out of Iraq and that would strengthen Iran and endanger US interests. Bilateralism makes it easier for the Iranian government to do that.

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** As can be seen from the responses to the questions posed in the boxes above, the best course of action for the US is to keep a Coalition presence in Iraq. The dangers to Iraq, the region, and the US itself from resorting to the 2011-2014 status quo would be tremendous. Iraq needs a great deal of help in re-building its infrastructure and modes of governance as well as its capacity to defend itself from threats internal and external. That help can best come from the US, along with its international partners, directly and consistently helping Iraqis in Iraq. Iraq also needs to keep Iranian influence and presence in the country to a minimum. Some Shia elements in the country would obviously disagree with this argument but an increased Iranian presence in the country is the single best way to raise the probability that ISIS will re-emerge as a potent force in Iraq.

**Request:** In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The top unifying factor to hold the Coalition together would be a sense of common threat. While an emboldened and revisionist Iran would be perceived as a threat to the stability of the region by all of the countries in the Coalition, the threat from ISIS reappearing as a force in Iraq would likely get Coalition members to keep contributing to and maintaining the Coalition. The more time passes without ISIS re-emerging as a major fighting force in Iraq, the more likely it is that Coalition members will drop out. Time in general is an enemy of the Coalition’s unity. Fatigue among Coalition partner country publics may very well make it very difficult for governments to keep in the Coalition, much as has happened with Afghanistan.

**Request:** What are the top three factors that could unify a post-OIR coalition in Iraq?

**Response:** The top three factors that could keep a post-OIR coalition in Iraq united would be a perceived continued threat from ISIS, the threat of a destabilizing Iranian push for dominance in the region, and a perception that the US is wavering in its support of the Coalition and a continued security presence in Iraq.

**Request:** Of the drawbacks of coalitions listed in the previous page, which is the top-most factor that could prevent or dissolve this unity? Why? Please respond below.

**Response:** The perception of a lack of a continuing threat to the national security of the Coalition member countries would be most likely to dissolve the Coalition. The threat of ISIS from Iraq/Syria to Coalition member states’ homelands in terms of ISIS-directed or inspired attacks was the glue that held the Coalition together. The sense that Iraq/Syria is no longer the source of threat will likely lead to a decrease in attention being paid to the area, particularly among those countries that believe their contribution is not make-or-break for the Coalition. None of the coalition partners want to be caught holding the door if the US withdraws from Iraq. Thus, how the US signals its intentions toward Iraq will be crucial to the survival of the Coalition.

## Dr. Michael Knights

The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1 – force protection</b>	Iran will be less likely to hit headquarters or commands where its key investors – Germany, France, Italy, other Euros – are deployed. Even indirect attacks (i.e., on US-only bases or moves) could be deterred if the coalition as a whole mobilizes to protest. Results in fewer kidnappings, rockets, EFPs = lower deaths, more ability to do your job.	Mix headquarters and even training teams more thoroughly – cross-fertilize CJTF nationalities. Plan and exercise with CJTF partner nations how to react to deniable proxy warfare. Share intelligence in a timely way with CJTF and rip up the playbook on tiered intel sharing that excludes most non five eyes partners.
<b>Benefit 2 – diplomatic power</b>	The foreign and defense ministers of the many CJTF partners can reinforce key messages over and over again to Iraqi key leaders. CENTCOM can punch far harder than with just the US Embassy and State/OSD at its back.	Keep CJTF the same size it is now, with the same unrivalled collection of G20 powers. Keep the foreign and defense ministers moving through on a regular basis and make it logistically easy for them to do so.

Drawback of a Coalition	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Drawback 1 - complexity</b>	Coalition warfare involves more negotiation, communication, and all these activities are a time suck. It requires effort to keep parts in and investing. US gets stuck with the role of herding the cats.	Unavoidable. Though one useful mechanism has been the Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL. Keeping this role intact would be a good step.
<b>Drawback 2 –</b>		

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** Coalition is the strongest option for the US, and for Iraq. It offers the best force protection, the best diplomatic force-multiplier and a degree of useful burden sharing also. As the leader, the US can enjoy many of the benefits of bilateralism even with CJTF in place. There are no really significant downsides.

**Request:** In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** Good question. The unifying factor is the desire not to have the 2014 fall of Mosul happen again, even in a slightly different form. The post-2011 period showed that withdrawal doesn’t work and costs more in the long run (like millions of IDPs in Europe, tens of thousands dead, and coalition partners drawn back to Iraq again).

**Request:** What are the top three factors that could unify a post-OIR coalition in Iraq?

**Response:**

- a. Prevention of Da'esh's return.
- b. Prevention of ethno-sectarian civil war between non-Da'esh factions.
- c. Development of an independent Iraq that can resist outside influence and resettle IDPs and refugees.

**Request:** Of the drawbacks of coalitions listed in the previous page, which is the top-most factor that could prevent or dissolve this unity? Why? Please respond below.

**Response:** The key threat to unity is exhaustion and differing opinion about whether the job is done. This requires a good intelligence picture of Da'esh and other threats to be maintained and a shared understanding of this threat to be constantly reaffirmed with evidence.

**Dr. Ian McCulloh**

Johns Hopkins University, Applied Physics Laboratory

**Request:** What is most favorable for the stability and the future of Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh: continued presence of an international Coalition or normal state-to-state bilateral relations? If a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the "unifying factor" for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** I think CENTCOM has the wrong question. Based on my recent work with Iraqi politics, the most pressing political issue in Iraq is the PMF (not sure what CENTCOM is calling this – national guard or local militias?) This is a highly sectarian issue, where most Sunnis think the PMFs should be disbanded and the Shias think they should be institutionalized. CENTCOM needs to conduct focused polling on this issue throughout Iraq to better understand the impact. Polling should attempt to assess public reaction when/if the decision is against their opinion and capture (in a free-list/qualitative sense) the concerns they may have in the mid-term. CENTCOM intervention should then focus on two fronts: 1) partner capacity building must include sharing data with PMF/security forces and making them sensitive to the populations concerns and helping them develop positive info ops to reassure the population; 2) support information operations to highlight the success of whatever decision the Iraqis proceed with. In any case, we must not allow IRGC to be the only partner capacity building force with the PMF.

## Dr. Spencer Meredith III

College of International and Security Affairs  
National Defense University

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1 maintains presence on international stage</b>	Iraq has been at the forefront of much of the international discussion on VEOs, democratization, development, regional politics on the international stage. This gives it a "special" status that also gives domestic elites the ability to play the international card for scapegoating and redirecting attention from domestic "failures".	Is it a benefit for the US? The question assumes such, but this is not necessarily the case.
<b>Benefit 2 play coalition partners against each other</b>	"Getting the sweeter deal" by smaller coalition members is a tried and tested approach seen across domestic politics and international relations.	Same – this only benefits the US if playing internal factions works toward long-term US strategic goals by leveraging over coalition partners. Much harder for US to maintain coalitions than for spoilers (Russia, Iran, Turkey, internal Iraqi factions) to disrupt them.

Drawback of a Coalition	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Benefit 1 continues cycle of dependence</b>	Like commodities based rentier states, aid functions to hobble normal, necessary development (hard decisions → maturation)	Clear definitions of SFA, non-negotiables, no-go actions that reduce cooperation
<b>Benefit 2 reinforces Iraq as subservient</b>	Iraq's future remains conditioned fundamentally on decisions of outsiders	Emphasize Iraq nationalism relative to Iranian influence

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

<b>Benefit of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Benefit</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?</b>
<b>Benefit 1 normalization</b>	Iraq needs to become a normal state to foster national identity (minimize ISIS 2.0 type divisions), minimize becoming Tehran 2.0, increase perception of influence over oil prices as partner in good standing rather than either perceived/labelled as lackey of the US (earlier) or “weakling” of the region (current)	Bi-lateral MOAs – negotiation process forces Iraqis to play by rules (of the table, not necessarily once they leave), but this also gives room for compliance conversations
<b>Benefit 2 maturation</b>	Forces internal factions to grow out of anti-international coalition “coalition of discontent”; governance draws out corruption practices and forces either excuses or justifications – no longer just in the shadows	Local partnerships at the operational level percolate upwards over time, but time is a commodity not inherently on the side of either US or Iraq

<b>Drawback of a Bilateralism</b>	<b>Description of Drawback</b>	<b>How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?</b>
<b>Benefit 1 withdrawal</b>	Scapegoating run amok as all scramble to blame each other for inevitable failures to govern effectively and responsively; opens the field to IO from Iran, Russia, China even more so – “democracy doesn’t work”	Proof is in the mid-level cooperation, but as above, time necessary but not abundant for this to become successful nationalized message
<b>Benefit 2 increase influence of Iran, Russia because more voices on that side of the equation</b>	US marginalized as lender, partner, powerbroker	Stake claim to a few areas of cooperation, strategic communication that these are essential to Iraq’s survival and success as a regional power and US as willing partner in that development

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** Bilateralism for the reasons stated above – summary = clearer expectations for everyone involved, enables longer-term US strategic goal planning and harmonization of communication efforts for the same; divests US success from untenable coalition (inherent to the endeavor given loss of unifying element – ISIS); unstable (currently) partner with uncertain (currently) future.

## Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy

University of London

**Request:** What are the benefits and drawbacks of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Coalition	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1 The muscle to put down further eruptions of Da'esh</b>	The benefit of immediate response, alacrity	By being present in future, though unobtrusively
<b>Benefit 2 Reassurance to the government/ people that they do not have to face this scourge (i.e. insurrection) alone</b>	The involvement of a number of countries dissuades potential rebels and is an index of determination as well as assurance that one country will not be over-dominant.	By 'selling' the benefits of continued coalition presence to coalition partners

Drawback of a Coalition	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM minimize this drawback?
<b>Benefit 1 Negative perception by locals of foreign occupation</b>	The physical presence of foreign military inevitably arouses antagonism	By being careful to keep public manifestations of the military presence to a minimum
<b>Benefit 2 The difficulty of persuading others to join the coalition</b>	Countries wish to evade the expense and commitment via wishful thinking	Stress the fact that this is a false economy and that the curse of Da'esh would otherwise return

**Request:** Recognizing that the two are not mutually exclusive, what are the benefits and drawbacks of developing bilateral relations instead of a coalition for creating favorable conditions for stability in Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh?

**Response:**

Benefit of a Bilateralism	Description of Benefit	How can (or can) CENTCOM foster this kind of benefit?
<b>Benefit 1 No squabbling with coalition partners</b>	Less need for consultation with allies who have diverse objectives	By not seeking a coalition
<b>Benefit 2 Easier to take dynamic decisions</b>	Strategy can be implemented more efficiently	By not seeking a coalition
Drawback of a Bilateralism The	Description of Drawback	How can (or can) CENTCOM



political, financial and military burden is no longer shared and the US is perceived as going it alone	Could be seen as an instance of US exceptionalism and resented	minimize this drawback? Stress the efficiency gains
Benefit 1		
Benefit 2		

**Request:** Do you believe a coalition or bilateralism is best for the future stability of Iraq? Please write your response below.

**Response:** Definitely a coalition as this minimizes the political risk

**Request:** In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the “unifying factor” for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The unity factor is the perception of likely Da’esh resurgence. Complacency by other coalition members could sabotage this unity

**Request:** What are the top three factors that could unify a post-OIR coalition in Iraq?

**Response:** Evidence of re-emergence of Da’esh. Common agreement on the need for the symbolism of a coalition presence. Perception that Iraq is still not ready to go it alone.

**Request:** Of the drawbacks of coalitions listed in the previous page, which is the top-most factor that could prevent or dissolve this unity? Why? Please respond below.

**Response:** Complacency and the wish to move on is the key, the wishful thinking that proclaims the problem is ‘solved’

## Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

Gulf Research Center

**Request:** What is most favorable for the stability and the future of Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh: a continued presence of a Coalition or normal state-to-state bilateral relations? In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the "unifying factor" for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The preferred option here is certainly solid state-to-state relations rather than a continuation of the coalition option. State-to-State relations are more effective politically while a continuation of the coalition will prove to be less stable and less coherent. The unifying factor for better bilateral state-to-state relations is the continuing threat of terrorism. Less emphasis should be given to the idea of reforming Iraq. In this context, however, the focus should not only be the continued potential role of ISIS inside Iraq but more specifically also the Iranian role inside Iraq. This, in turn, brings back into consideration the role of militias inside the country.

## Mr. Mubin Shaikh

Independent Analyst

**Request:** What is most favorable for the stability and the future of Iraq after the defeat of Da'esh: a continued presence of a Coalition or normal state-to-state bilateral relations? In case a Coalition is the preferred option, what could be the "unifying factor" for a post-OIR coalition in Iraq and what situations could exist/emerge to prevent/dissolve this unity?

**Response:** The most favorable for the stability and future of Iraq is indeed a continued Coalition presence. The unifying factor would be sustainability and development. It will be necessary for coalition to contribute to state capacity building, the rule of law, and support of minority communities in the region.

Situations to exist and emerge that prevents or dissolves this unity, is an escalation of military conflict between Russia and the U.S., which draws in Iran. In this event, coalition in Iraq will be challenged by Iran as well as by Iraqi militias loyal to Iran up to and including coordination between Sunni and Shia groups, even some supported by Turkey.

## Biographies

### Ms. Jennifer Cafarella



Jennifer Cafarella is the Senior Intelligence Planner at the Institute for the Study of War (ISW). She is responsible for shaping and overseeing the development of ISW's plans and recommendations for achieving U.S. objectives against enemies and adversaries and in conflict zones. Previously, as a Syria analyst at ISW, she researched and wrote on the Islamic State of Iraq and al Sham (ISIS) and various opposition groups in Syria, with a particular focus on al Qaeda. She served as the lead author of the report "America's Way Ahead in Syria," which was published in March

2017 as part of the series "U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and al Qaeda." Ms. Cafarella served as a co-author on ISW's previous planning exercise reports, including: "Al Qaeda and ISIS: Existential Threats to the U.S. and Europe," "Competing Visions for Iraq and Syria: The Myth of an Anti-ISIS Grand Coalition," and "Jabhat al Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength."

Ms. Cafarella's essays have been published by The Hill and Fox News, among other outlets. She has appeared extensively in the media. Her analysis has been cited by The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, Newsweek, CNN, NPR, Voice of America, the BBC, and USA Today. She is a graduate of ISW's Hertog War Studies Program and was ISW's first Evans Hanson Fellow. The Evans Hanson Fellowship draws from the outstanding alumni of the ISW Hertog War Studies and helps develop the next generation of national security leaders. Ms. Cafarella received her B.A. from the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities in Global Studies with a focus on the Middle East. She is proficient in Arabic.

### Mr. Sarhang Hamasaeed

Sarhang Hamasaeed is the director of Middle East 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.

### Ambassador James Jeffery



Ambassador James F. Jeffrey is the Philip Solondz distinguished fellow at The Washington Institute where he focuses on U.S. diplomatic and military strategy in the Middle East, with emphasis on Turkey, Iraq, and Iran.

One of the nation's most senior diplomats, Ambassador Jeffrey has held a series of highly sensitive posts in Washington D.C. and abroad. In addition to his service as ambassador in Ankara and Baghdad, he served as assistant to the president and deputy national security advisor in the George W. Bush administration, with a special focus on Iran. He previously served as principal deputy assistant secretary for the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs at the Department of State, where his responsibilities included leading the Iran policy team and coordinating public diplomacy. Earlier appointments included service as senior advisor on Iraq to the secretary of state; chargé d'affaires and deputy chief of mission in Baghdad; deputy chief of mission in Ankara; and ambassador to Albania.

A former infantry officer in the U.S. Army, Ambassador Jeffrey served in Germany and Vietnam from 1969 to 1976.

### Dr. Kimberly Kagan

Dr. Kimberly Kagan is the founder and president of the Institute for the Study of War. She is a military historian who has taught at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Yale, Georgetown, and American University. She is the author of *The Eye of Command* (2006) and *The Surge: A Military History* (2009). She is the editor of *The Imperial Moment* (2010). Dr. Kagan has published numerous essays in outlets such as the *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, *The Weekly Standard*, and *Foreign Policy*. She co-produced *The Surge: The Whole Story*, an hour-long oral history and documentary film on the campaign in Iraq from 2007 to 2008.



Dr. Kagan served in Kabul for seventeen months from 2010 to 2012 working for commanders of the International Security Assistance Force, General David H. Petraeus and subsequently General John Allen. Admiral Mike Mullen, as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recognized Dr. Kagan for this deployment

as a volunteer with the Distinguished Public Service Award, the highest honor the Chairman can present to civilians who do not work for the Department of Defense.

Dr. Kagan previously served as a member of General Stanley McChrystal's strategic assessment team, comprised of civilian experts, during his campaign review in June and July 2009. Dr. Kagan also served on the Academic Advisory Board at the Afghanistan-Pakistan Center of Excellence at CENTCOM. She conducted many regular battlefield circulations of Iraq between May 2007 and April 2010 while General Petraeus and General Raymond T. Odierno served as the MNF-I Commanding General. She participated formally on the Joint Campaign Plan Assessment Team for Multi-National Force-Iraq - U.S. Mission - Iraq in October 2008 and October 2009, and as part of the Civilian Advisory Team for the CENTCOM strategic review in January 2009.

Dr. Kagan held an Olin Postdoctoral Fellowship in Military History at Yale International Security Studies in 2004 to 2005 and was a National Security Fellow at Harvard's Olin Institute for Strategic Studies in 2002 to 2003. She received a B.A. in Classical Civilization and a Ph.D. in History from Yale University.

### Dr. 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.

### Dr. Michael Knights

Michael Knights is a Lafer fellow at The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of [Iraq](#), [Iran](#), Yemen, and the [Gulf Arab states](#).

Dr. Knights has traveled extensively in Iraq and the Gulf states, published widely on security issues for major media outlets such as *Jane's IHS*, and regularly briefs U.S. government policymakers and U.S. military officers on regional security affairs. Dr. Knights worked as the head of analysis and assessments for a range of security and oil companies, directing information collection teams in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. He has worked extensively with local military and security agencies in Iraq, the Gulf states, and Yemen.



Dr. Knights has undertaken extensive research on lessons learned from U.S. military operations in the Gulf during and since 1990. He earned his doctorate at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, and has worked as a defense journalist for the *Gulf States Newsletter* and *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

### Dr. Ian McCulloh



Ian McCulloh holds joint appointments as a Parson's Fellow in the Bloomberg School of Public Health, a Senior Lecturer in the Whiting School of Engineering and a senior scientist at the Applied Physics Lab, at Johns Hopkins University. His current research is focused on strategic influence in online networks. His most recent papers have been focused on the neuroscience of persuasion and measuring influence in online social media firestorms. He is the author of "Social Network Analysis with Applications" (Wiley: 2013), "Networks Over Time" (Oxford: forthcoming) and has published 48 peer-reviewed papers, primarily in the area of social network analysis. His current applied work is focused on educating soldiers and Marines in advanced methods for open source research and data science leadership. He also works with various medical practitioners in the Baltimore area to improve the effectiveness of public health campaigns. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army after 20 years of service in special operations and improvised explosive device forensics. He founded the West Point Network Science Center and created the Army's Advanced Network Analysis and Targeting (ANAT) program. In his most recent military assignments as a strategist, he led interdisciplinary teams of Ph.D. scientists at Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) and Central Command (CENTCOM) to conduct social science research in 15 countries across the Middle East and Central Asia to include denied areas, which he used to inform data-driven strategy for countering extremism and irregular warfare, as well as empirically assess the effectiveness of military operations. He holds a Ph.D. and M.S. from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science, an M.S. in Industrial Engineering, and M.S. in Applied Statistics from the Florida State University, and a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Washington. He is married with four children and a granddaughter.

### Dr. Spencer Meredith III

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III is a professor of national security strategy at the US National Defense University. With a doctorate in Government and Foreign Affairs from the University of Virginia, and two decades of research and work on post-Soviet regions and the Middle East, his expertise bridges scholarly and practitioner communities. To that end, he has published widely on strategic topics related to democratic development, conflict resolution, and special operations. He is a Fulbright Scholar and a regular advisor and contributor to several DoD and interagency projects, including multiple Joint Staff Strategic Multilayer Assessments, intelligence community workshops, and JSOC efforts supporting the joint warfighter in the areas of governance, human factors of conflict, and influence operations.





## Dr. Nicholas O'Shaughnessy



Nicholas O'Shaughnessy is Professor of Communication at Queen Mary, University of London, UK and latterly director of their Marketing and Communications Group; Visiting Professor (2016- ) in the Department of War Studies at King's College London, and a Quondam Fellow of Hughes Hall Cambridge University. Earlier in his career he taught for eleven years at Cambridge. Nicholas is the author or co-author or editor of numerous books on commercial and political persuasion.

Ultimately his concern is with the 'engineering of consent'- the troubling matter of how public opinion can be manufactured, and governments elected, via sophisticated methodologies of persuasion developed in the consumer economy.

A co-authored book, *Theory and Concepts in Political Marketing*, was published in April 2013 with Sage. *Selling Hitler: Propaganda and the Nazi Brand* (Hurst) was published in September 2016, and a second volume – *Marketing the Third Reich: Persuasion, Packaging and Propaganda*- has been out since September 2017 with Routledge. 'Key Readings in Propaganda' (with Paul Baines, four volumes, Sage London 2012): Volume One: Historical origins, definition, changing nature. Volume Two: The psychology and sociology underpinning Propaganda. Volume Three: Propaganda in military and terrorism contexts. Volume Four: Advances and contemporary issues in Propaganda.

Other topics in propaganda are pursued in numerous journal articles such as *Selling Terror: The Symbolization and Positioning of Jihad* (with Paul Baines), *Marketing Theory* Volume 9 (2) (pp 207-221) 2009. *The Dark Side of Political Marketing, Islamist Propaganda, Reversal Theory and British Muslims* with Paul Baines et al, *European Journal of Marketing*. V44 3/4 2010. *Al Qaeda message evolution and positioning, 1998- 2008: Propaganda analysis re-visited*, Baines and O'Shaughnessy, *Public Relations Inquiry* pp 163-191 May 2014. *Putin, Xi, And Hitler: propaganda and the paternity of pseudo democracy*. *Defence Strategic Communications* (the official journal of NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence) Vol 2 Spring 2017. *The Politics of Consumption and the Consumption of Politics: How Authoritarian Regimes Shape Public Opinion by Using Consumer Marketing Tools*. *Journal of Advertising Research*, June 2017, 57 (2).

His perspective has always been that persuasion is the hidden hand of history, its core dynamic. And certainly, it is the case that propaganda has become again an important part of our global public and civic discourse.



## Dr. Abdulaziz Sager

A Saudi expert on Gulf politics and strategic issues, Dr. Abdulaziz Sager is the founder and Chairman of the Gulf Research Center, a global think tank based in Jeddah with a well-established worldwide network of partners and offices in both the Gulf region and Europe.



In this capacity, Dr. Sager has authored and edited numerous publications including *Combating Violence & Terrorism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia*, *The GCC's Political & Economic Strategy towards Post-War Iraq* and *Reforms in Saudi Arabia: Challenges and Feasible Solutions*. He is also a frequent contributor to major international media channels and appears regularly on Al-Arabiya Television, France 24 and the BBC. In addition to his academic activities, Dr. Sager is actively engaged in track-two and mediation meeting. For example, he has chaired and moderated the Syrian opposition meetings in Riyadh in December 2015 and November 2017.

In addition to his work with the Gulf Research Center, Dr. Sager is President of Sager Group Holding in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which is active in the fields of information technology, aviation services and investments. Furthermore, he holds numerous other appointments including on the Makkah Province Council, Advisory Board of the Arab Thought Foundation, Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Faculty of Economics and Administration at King Abdulaziz University, Saudi Ministry of Education, Geneva Center for Security Policy and German Orient Foundation. Dr. Sager has also sat on the advisory group for the UNDP Arab Human Development Report, and participates in the Think Tank Leaders Forum of the World Economic Forum and the Council of Councils of the Council on Foreign Relations.

Dr. Sager holds a Ph.D. in Politics and International Relations from Lancaster University and an M.A. from the University of Kent, United Kingdom and a Bachelor Degree from the Faculty of Economics and Administration of King Abdulaziz University.

## Dr. Mubin Shaikh



Born and raised in Canada, Mubin Shaikh grew up with two conflicting and competing cultures. At the age of 19, he went to India and Pakistan where he had a chance encounter with the Taliban before their takeover of Afghanistan in 1995. Shaikh became fully radicalized as a supporter of the global Jihadist culture, recruiting others but the 9/11 attacks forced him to reconsider his views. He spent 2 years in Syria, continuing his study of Arabic and Islamic Studies and went through a period of full deradicalization.

Returning to Canada in 2004, he was recruited by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) and worked several CLASSIFIED infiltration operations on the internet, in chat-protected forums and on the ground with human networks. In late 2005, one of those intelligence files moved to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) for investigation. The "Toronto 18" terrorism case resulted in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists after testifying over 4 years, in 5 legal hearings at the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

Shaikh has since obtained a Master of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (MPICT) and is considered an SME (Subject Matter Expert) in national security and counterterrorism, and radicalization & deradicalization to the United Nations Counter Terrorism Executive Directorate, NATO, Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA), CENTCOM, various special operations forces, the FBI and others. He has appeared on multiple U.S., British and Canadian media outlets as a commentator and is extensively involved with the ISIS social media and Foreign Fighter (including Returnees and rehabilitation) file. Shaikh is also co-author of the acclaimed book, *Undercover Jihadi*.

### Mr. Ali Jafri



Ali Jafri provides research support on issues of national security, armed groups, and human security in the defense and intelligence communities. He previously served as a member of a multi-disciplinary team of analysts, technologists, and data scientists tasked with helping bring innovative practices to customers in the intelligence community. Prior to joining NSI, he worked at Georgetown University, conducting research on emerging threats, focusing on political instability in South Asia. He is a graduate of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University, where he completed a Masters in Law and Diplomacy.