Question (V4): *What are the most likely post-lSIL Iraq scenarios with regards to Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT)? Where are the main PMESII-PT friction points, which are most acute, and how are they best exploited to accomplish a stable end state favorable to U.S. and coalition interests?*

Executive Summary

"The biggest danger is to assume we know the answer." Alexis Everington, Madison Springfield Inc.

"The unpredictable nature of the country's social sentiment, lessons from history, the culture, regional influencers, the corrupt political elite with their sectarian-based agendas, and lack of statesmanship and political and strategic prowess are among the factors that suggest that even the most seasoned expert on Iraq might be misled in his or her attempt to predict the next phase." Hala Abdulla, Marine Corps University

Seventeen experts contributed their thoughts about the future of Iraq and Syria in a post-ISIL environment. Summarizing their insights, warnings, and predictions in under five pages runs the risk of over simplifying and incredibly complex challenge, which is why this summary is heavily cited to encourage the reader to seek further details in the texts provided.

This summary is divided into three parts: 1) a table that describes the PMESII-PT elements essential to understand the current and future trajectory of Iraq and Syria, 2) a brief description of various friction points, the resolution of which may influence the future of the region, and 3) suggested elements that may encourage the transition to stability.

The table below lists the major PMESII-PT element critical to understanding the current and future trajectory of Iraq and Syria. Where possible, outcomes of ignoring or addressing these elements is listed in the "Potential Outcome" column. The analysis is heavily weighted toward the government of Iraq, which several experts believe to be the most critical element in re-establishing regional stability.

PMESII-PT	Iraq	Syria	Potential Outcome
Political	• Failure of political reintegration (Van den Toorn, Trofino, Sayigh) • Power blocs with no party able to get majority in Iraq (Trofino) • Deep corruption (Sayigh; Liebl) • Failure to provide essential services (Sayigh) • Lack of unified Sunni voice (Maye; Abdulla) • Kurdish expectations of autonomy and/or independence (Meredith)	• Disenfranchisement of Sunnis (Van den Toorn, Trofino)	Sunnis in Iraq and Syria will wonder why they should buy into a new government if there is no belief that real representation will happen (Sayigh) Lack of unified Sunni voice will almost surely result in continued political marginalization and the failure of the Iraqi government in a post-Daesh environment (Sayigh) Iraqi government likely to be under Iranian influence for a long time (Maye). There is too much momentum in this direction to apply the brakes now. After contributing greatly to the defeat of ISIL, Iraqi Kurds will not accept anything less than autonomy and perhaps independence (Meredith).
Military	• Tacit approval of Shia militias (Trofino) • PMF atrocities (Meredith) • Non-government sanctioned forces (Iranian militias, Kurdish forces) liberating Sunni populations. • Iraqi Special Forces (ISOF) a well-regard, integrated unit that could provide a model for all Iraqi forces (Abdulla)		PMF atrocities, especially in Mosul, could lead to another major Sunni uprising (Meredith) Shia and Kurdish groups will not easily turn over Sunni territory where they have spilled their blood to liberate from ISIL (Abouaoun; Abdulla)
Economic	• Lack of employment opportunities for youth (Trofino) • Cost of rebuilding an economic burden (Trofino) • Continued economic depression (Meredith) • Reliance on oil (Abdulla)		Baghdad is already seeing mob violence attributed to young men with no economic opportunities (Meredith) The reconstruction of Iraq will be severely hampered by low oil prices (al-Marashi)
Social	• Social, ethnic discord (Trofino) • Weak sense of nationality (Trofino) • Shia-Shia competition (Sayigh)		Shia-Shia competition for influence over the Iraqi state could lead to bloodshed (Sayigh) Tensions between ethnic groups, particularly

		following the battle for Mosul, could instigates waves of bloodshed and revenge for perceived and actual wrongs committed (Abdulla)
Information	• Media inflaming divided community in Iraq (Trofino) • Twitter Awakening (Abdulla)	
Infrastructure Physical Environment	• Iraq's infrastructure is very poor	
	• Scarce, shared water resources with Syria and Turkey (Palmer Moloney, Meredith; Abdulla)	• Scarce, shared water resources with Iraq and Turkey (Palmer Moloney, Meredith)
Time	• The longer it takes to institute meaningful government reform, the greater the chance for the re-emergence of extremism (Abdulla; Astorino-Courtois)	

Friction Points (Including Most Acute)

If the number of grievances listed in the table above are not addressed after the fall of ISIL, the fear is that the region will descend once again into a number of conflicts, including continued extremism (Van den Toorn). This section lists friction points identified by the contributors as fulcrums in the future of Iraq and Syria that could tip the scales toward stability or violence.

The Battle for Mosul

> "A victory over ISIL will not be the end of Iraq's problems, rather the beginning of an internal political battle over territory," according to CSU professor Ibrahim al-Marashi.

The way the battle for Mosul is conducted, as well as its outcome, may be the greatest determinant of the future of the Middle East (Dagher; Abdulla). If it is done wrong, it could lay the groundwork for the re-emergence of ISIL or a successor group. If it is done right, it could provide a model for integration, governance, and recovery for the region (Dagher). In a comparative study of Mosul vs. Fallujah, Zana Gulmohamad listed three major contributors to successful operations: effective coordination of Iraqi forces, coalition airpower, and intelligence from Sunni tribes and townspeople—even in the face of unauthorized incursions by Shi'a militias.

But there are many dangers along this path. First, one of the greatest fears of the Sunni population is that Shia militias will once again be allowed to dominate Sunni populations under the guise of liberation (Dagher). Second, the new governance structure in Mosul must address political grievances of diverse population groups in Mosul. The government must draw its leadership from a new political elite that is of and from Mosul. The existing sources of political power in Ninewah represent the nexus between Islamist extremists and the organized businesses that thrived during ISIL's occupation of Mosul and should not be allowed to dominate the regional government. Likewise, the new government should pay close attention to minority groups, to pose a model for integration and representation in the country and the region (Dagher, al-Marashi).

Finally, the battle for Mosul poses risks to the cohesion of the Coalition itself. There are any number of occurrences, described in a report by Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI, that could cause partial or severe fracture before, during, or after the battle. The longer cohesion is required, the likelihood of a spoiler event increases. Zana Gulmohamad notes that unless conflicting agenda among regional powers can be resolved, any victory in securing the city could be fleeting.

Transformation of ISIL from Proto-state to Insurgent Group

The battle for Mosul may effectively push ISIL out of Iraq and into Syria (Abouaoun). This will likely be the turning point of ISIL from a proto-state to an insurgency group (al Marashi; Abouaoun) with the intent to encourage violence on near and far enemies, especially through the encouragement of lone wolf terrorism. This pressure could also result in jihadists leaving ISIL for other groups or inspire some to create new ones (Abouaoun). The bottom line is that ISIL will decline, but the ideology will not.

Even after ISIL's defeat, individuals, groups and networks of fighters and terrorists will be motivated to continue violent jihad, whether against local regimes, the West, Shiites, or

apostate Sunnis. In a post-Caliphate ISIL, threats will take two main forms, according to David Gompert, a national security expert at the US Naval Academy and RAND: 1)R remnants of fanatical forces in the region, including in Iraq, Syria, and Libya and 2) radicalized individuals in or returning to the West. This former group could lead to increase terrorism in the West.

Federalization of Iraq
There were two major schools of thought regarding the idea that the federalization of Iraq is one way to address popular grievances, governance issues, and mistrust of the central government. Several experts suggested that a federalization model based on Kurdish semi-autonomy might provide a stable way ahead (Maye, McCauley). The arguments in favor of this stance include self-determination, freedom from domination by other ethnic groups, and potential for buy in from Iraqi Sunnis, Shia, and Kurds (McCauley). The primary US role in this effort would be to bring the parties to the table to negotiate and enforce an agreement (McCauley)

However, another cohort of experts argued that constitutional autonomy will not work in Iraq—particular in traditionally Sunni-held areas (Dagher; Abdulla). The people of Iraq all want unity except for the Kurds (Abdulla). Furthermore, Sunni territories in western Iraq are not economically viable (Abdulla). As people tire of sectarian conflict, one way forward may be to support a secular, technocratic party (Maye). However, the success of this kind of party would undermine all existing political actors and is likely to be undermined unless it receives strong international support.

Power Sharing in Syria
The issue is not how Assad should share power in a post-ISIL world, but the fact that he cannot share power without unraveling the entire government (Sayigh). Assad's goal in Syria is not total victory (because that only allows him to become the king of ashes); his goal is to regain access to capital and markets and get sanctions lifted (Sayigh) (Sayigh). Assad cannot do this with diplomacy, so he is using the conflict to coerce the US, EU, GCC, and Turkey to make economic concessions. Russia and China will endorse this demand as will Lebanon and Jordan in order to ease pressure on their domestic concerns.

Settlement of Intra-group Tensions
The greatest threat to long-term stability in Iraq is not tensions between Sunnis, Shias, and Kurds, but intra-Sunni, intra-Shia, and intra-Kurdish tensions (Abdulla; Liebl). Sunnis lack any kind of unified political voice and efforts to consolidate power may lead to tribal conflict. While the Kurdish government faces significant rivalry between its two main political parties, the KDP and the PUK, for power (Abdulla). However, the real determinant of stability in Iraq hinges on the settlement of Shia-Shia tensions in the country (Sayigh; Abdulla). Although Iraqi Shia present a united façade, there are serious divisions among its main blocs, leaders, and elites (Abdulla). Shia-Shia competition for influence over the Iraqi state could lead to bloodshed (Sayigh).

Environment
Long-standing tensions are often inflamed by disagreement over scarce water resources (Palmer Moloney). This is particularly true in the Tigris-Euphrates Watershed, which is shared by Turkey, Syria, and Iraq and largely controlled by Turkey (Palmer Moloney, Meredith).

Achieving a Stable End State Favorable to US and Coalition Interests

This section briefly lays out suggested actions and conditions to promote a stable end state in Iraq and Syria favorable to US interests in the days after Daesh.

New Regional Framework

The most important action the USG and the Coalition can take to promote stability in the region is to bring all actors to the table to agree on a new regional framework (van den Toorn, Trofino, Abouaoun; Meredith). Iran, Saudi, and neighboring Sunnis states must be encouraged to form a new regional framework. Real stability in the region cannot be accomplished without bringing these actors in general agreement (van den Toorn).

Economic Revitalization of Iraq & Syria

Funds for the reconstruction of Iraq and Syria are essential not only to prevent humanitarian crisis, but to shore up the economic stability of the region. How reconstruction funds are handled could either serve as a foundation for a new transparent and accountable economy system or entrench the population's perception of government corruption and negligence (van den Toorn).

Focus on Capacity, Autonomy, and Legitimacy

No matter what kind of states emerge from the post-ISIL environment—be they unified states of Iraq and Syria or federalized zone within each country—they all require three things: capacity, autonomy, and legitimacy. The Coalition can take action to support these three elements in a number of ways outlined in Spencer Meredith's contribution including the encouragement of nationalism and ensuring the reduction of violence.

Be Ready to Take Advantage of Cognitive Openings

Even if groups fight efforts to establish good governance or to lay down arms, there is often a few windows of opportunity to encourage these groups to join the fold (Meredith). These cognitive openings do occur. The USG has to be ready to take advantage of them. The Coalition should be looking for indicators of cognitive opening by conflicting parties through 1) moderated speech, 2) evidence of factional divisions within a group, and 3) failure to claim ownership for violence.

Increased Faith in Iraqi Special Forces

The fight against ISIL has proved that Iraq has at least one reliable force: the US-trained Iraqi Special Forces (ISOF) and Counter Terrorism Forces (ICTF), which includes Iraqis from all ethnic and religious backgrounds (Abdulla). The danger is that a prolonged infantry war for a unit designed for short, special operations might soon experience significant fatigue. But this unit provides a model and hope for what Iraqi forces could look like in an integrated Iraq.

US-bilateral Soft Power Engagement

The USG has soft power tools at its disposal to conduct symbolically meaningful engagement with the populations in Iraq and Syria. These tools "carry major weight in the MENA," according to van den Toorn. The USG could promote education exchanges, business opportunities, and cultural exchanges.

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Comments on CENTCOM Messaging

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What are the most likely post-ISIL Iraq scenarios with regards to Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT)? Where are the main PMESII-PT friction points, which are most acute, and how are they best exploited to accomplish a stable end state favorable to U.S. and coalition interests?

ANSWER: a) Tribalism; b) Patronage networks based on sectarian identities; and c) poor educational standards are likely to continue to impact governance challenges in the long run. The post ISIL Iraq will likely be impacted by organized crime and tribal warfare.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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Abstract: There is no detailed planning evident for a post ISIL Mosul or Iraq in general. The most pragmatic outlook is that revenge and retaliation will be part of Iraqi social fabric for decades and the sectarian bloodshed will continue promoted in part by international and regional actors such as Turkey and Iran.

> "Revenge and retaliation will be part of Iraqi social fabric for decades and the sectarian bloodshed will continue promoted in part by international and regional actors such as Turkey and Iran."

- Division and mistrust among Iraq's political players is not only among the main three factions; in fact, the more serious problem lies between the intra-Shi'a, intra-Sunni, and intra-Kurdish divisions.
- Each Iraqi faction wants to guarantee the boots of their own forces will be the first to march into Mosul as the victors.
- It is in Iraq's political players' best interests to keep the status quo, with Iraq as a loose semi-state, poorly glued together based on interests, with lots of moving and shaking parts.
- The fight against ISIL has proved that Iraq has at least one reliable force which is the semi-independent, quasi-ministerial, U.S trained, Iraqi Special Forces ISOF and Counter Terrorism Forces ICTF (the "Golden Division").
- The Kurds will not shed blood and then turn over areas to the Iraqi central government.
- The urgent involvement in the battle of Mosul extends beyond the borders of Iraq, as regional players, namely Iran and Turkey, are determined to have a role in Mosul in one way or another.

Iraq after ISIL

The face of "Iraq after ISIL," remains in the realm of the speculations for all parties involved. The question of what's next still hovers over Iraq and will most likely remain for years to come. The unpredictable nature of the country's social sentiment, lessons from history, the culture, regional influencers, the corrupt political elite with their sectarian-based agendas, and lack of statesmanship and political and strategic prowess are among the factors that suggest that even the most seasoned expert on Iraq might be misled in his or her attempt to predict the next phase. This is true, particularly if treating this topic with absoluteness as the only approach taken here. A safe assumption might be that it is in Iraq's political players' best interests to keep the status quo, with Iraq as a loose semi-state, poorly glued together based on interests, with lots of moving and shaking parts. All this uncertainty gives Iraq's political elite an advantage for what they deem as power via political pressure, sectarian, tribal and ethnic mobilization, and geographic advances and gains by fighting a common enemy, which is ISIL. Does this mean, keeping a footprint for ISIL inside Iraq as a pressure tactic is possible for these players? The answer is that everything is possible in Iraq as long as the same political faces remain in power. Will the Kurds go solo, after the defeat of ISIL, as they've been threatening to do for the last decade? They could have done it long ago, before the ISIL's crisis. What about the Shi'a in the south, who are calling for the "Federal Sumer Region," where they hope to have some control over Iraq's main resources, namely oil. Although the concept is appealing to most Shi'a, the fear of a mini-mullah region, with an official allegiance to Iran, concerns most Shi'a, especially those who oppose an Iran-like authority. Some western experts have suggested that creating a Sunni state, dependent on regional allies, and oil-rich GCC states is the only way to defeat ISIL, and satisfy the frustrated Iraqi Sunnis.[1] These calls, proposals, and threats all remain in the realm of political pressure poorly played by Iraqi politicians with no serious intentions in taking it into action and reality.

What we are witnessing today is that all this political wrangling that has been going on for the last thirteen years is approaching its boiling point because of the battle of Mosul. The

> "What we are witnessing today is that all this political wrangling that has been going on for the last thirteen years is approaching its boiling point because of the battle of Mosul."

question becomes particularly urgent as the countdown to the 'Battle of Mosul' is ticking and the zero hour is approaching, while ISIL still maintains Iraq's second largest city as its Iraq-stronghold. For Iraqis, be they Sunnis, Shi'a, other minority groups, or to lesser extent Kurds, the immediate and most anticipated goal is defeating ISIL, regardless of how and who takes the credit for it. This is mainly because they are the ones bearing the brunt of this crisis. Sunnis have been internally displaced (IDP) and living in camps or in Shi'a-dominated provinces where they have lost everything. Shi'a are accused of having dominance, though they are not really experiencing any privileges in their daily lives. At the same time, Shi'a are the sole target for terrorists' car bombs and suicide attacks. While Kurds live in relatively better conditions, the IDPs situation has added more pressure and exhausted the region's limited resources. Meanwhile the political elite, thrive as each faction aims and works on gearing any victory against ISIL to their own advantage. Each faction wants to guarantee the boots of their own forces will be the first to march into Mosul as the

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[1] John R. Bolton (2015, Nov. 24). *John Bolton: To Defeat ISIS, Create a Sunny State.* Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/25/opinion/john-bolton-to-defeat-isis-create-a-sunni-state.html?_r=0

victors. There is no doubt that the progress made by the Iraqi forces, with the assistance of the coalition, in defeating ISIL and retaking Ramadi, Fallujah, Heet, Qayyarah, and most recently Sharqat, have restored the confidence and faith in the capabilities of the Iraqi forces following its shameful defeat and withdrawal in June of 2014. These victories, with relatively minimal losses (contrary to what had been anticipated, particularly in Fallujah, Qayyarah, and Sharqat), set the tone for the battle of Mosul, encouraging all political players to put all bets on Mosul as their bargaining chip. All rivals, Sunni, Shi'a and Kurds aim to be credited for leading the Mosul operation for political gains. This urgent involvement in the battle of Mosul extends beyond the borders of Iraq, as regional players, namely Iran and Turkey, are determined to have a role in Mosul in one way or another.

Although a Sunni-dominated province, Ninawa remains a province with a very diverse and distinct social fabric, with Sunni, Shi'a, Kurd, Christian, Yazidi, Shabak, Turkoman, and Alevi populations. Hence, there have been calls to divide Ninawa province into several regions or provincial districts following its liberation, to protect the indigenous minorities that have been purged by ISIL. These calls shadow the already tense debate among players in Iraq's political arena about Mosul, the battle and the identity of the province following ISIL. Kurds are pressuring to include any geographical region fought and reclaimed by the Peshmerga to their own Kurdistan region, which will later become their long-awaited independent Kurdish state. This includes Kirkuk, and those parts of Mosul which Kurds inhabit. This is a notion stressed by Barazani's own words, where he stated "the region's new borders will be drawn in blood."[2] Simply, the Kurds will not shed blood and then turn over areas to the Iraqi central government. All this wrangling between the Kurds and Baghdad has prompted the Iraqi parliament to vote, last September, to maintain and confirm the administrative borders of Ninawa province to its status before 2003.

However, an Iraq divided into two or three entities is definitely the most talked about topic among Iraq's own political factions, by Iraqis themselves and by major regional and world players alike. The split itself, although introduced by VP Joe Biden years ago, mirrors the demographic distribution of Iraq's ethnic, religious, and sectarian fabric. However, mixed areas such as Baghdad, Kirkuk, and to some extent Mosul will remain problematic and a major flash point among the competing players. Therefore, for Iraq's political elite, the current status of Iraq is the best way to maintain their own agendas. With the absence of 'the other' who is portrayed as an enemy, political rivals will have to convince their constituency of their own legitimacy to win their votes and speak on their behalf, an effort that might derail them and distract them from making the best out of this lifetime political opportunity for their own interest and their parties. The overall sentiment of the people is to maintain the unity of Iraq. This is mirrored in the daily protests of the masses, both Sunni and Shi'a, who realize their only survival remains in their unity. However, this sentiment is not expressed by the Kurds. Realistically, a landlocked independent Kurdish state and an independent Sunni state, would be hard to maintain economically with few to no resources, and both respective political elites realize this fact.

Since last year, there have been calls and daily protests in Baghdad and all southern provinces for reform, with demands by protestors to rid the government of corrupt faces and replace them instead with technocrat and secular individuals. PM Haidar Abadi, in an

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[2] Ghassan Charbel (2015, Feb. 15). *Barzani: The region's new borders will be drawn in blood.* Retrieved from http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/security/2015/02/barzani-iraq-peshmerga-kurds-islamic-state-interview.html

attempt to appease the angry masses, called on the Parliament to make some changes and replace several cabinet members. However, Iraqis realize that these are only surface level reforms, with no intentions or serious policies to curb and fight corruption.

PMESII-PT format

Political
Most likely Iraq will remain the same with an elected central government, however, more autonomy might be given to the main competing factions following the defeat of ISIL. A divided Iraq of three independent states is not off the table; however, this should not be predicted as an outcome for the near future. It is no secret that the division and mistrust among Iraq's political players is not only among the main three factions; in fact, the more serious problem lies between the intra-Shi'a, intra-Sunni, and intra-Kurdish divisions. Although Iraq's Shi'a maintain an outer unity, there are some serious divisions among its main blocs and leading religious and political elites. However, the Pope-like figure Shi'a Grand Ayatollah Sistani remains a unifying factor among the Shi'a rivals. Meanwhile, the problem among the Sunni is that there are no prominently known or even reliable faces to represent the Sunnis either politically or tribally. There are several apparent Sunni bases, claiming to be the voice of the populations with some residing in Jordan and others in the Kurdistan region. Added to the equation are the Sunni politicians in the government, and the pro-government Sunni tribal leaders who are fighting ISIL. The fact that there are several faces and entities that represent Sunnis and most of them are rivals is extremely problematic. Sunnis do not trust or believe their own representatives in the government, and believe that these politicians have not supported them in the face of the Shi'a and Kurd domination. Therefore, some have resorted to groups, such as al-Qaeda and ISIL. Some joined ISIL, others did not object or resist ISIL, and those who did ended up in an IDP camp in a Shi'a dominated province. For the Kurds, the main rivalry remains between the two main political parties, KDP and PUK, in Erbil and Sulaymaniya respectively, under Barazani's authoritarian rule.

Military
The Iraqi forces in one way or another are tied to the political structure, mainly because of the U.S. designed ethnic/religious/gender apportionment government where each faction is promised a quota. However, the fight against ISIL has proved that Iraq has at least one reliable force. It is the semi-independent, quasi-ministerial, U.S trained, Iraqi Special Forces ISOF and Iraqi Counter Terrorism Forces ICTF (the "Golden Division") which includes Iraqis from all ethnic and religious backgrounds.[3] Maintaining a sole Iraqi identity with no religious or ethnic affiliation, the unit has spearheaded almost all of the battles against ISIL and won with minimal causalities. It proved its effectiveness at the time when the Iraqi army and other divisions lost credibility among the Iraqi people following the general collapse in the face of ISIL in 2014. With that being said, most military experts acknowledge and stress that a force that was designed for short-timed special operations and missions is now leading a prolonged infantry war might soon be burned out and exhausted.[4]

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[3] David Witty (2016). *The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service.* Retrieved from
https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/David-Witty-Paper_Final_Web.pdf
[4] Loveday Morris (2016, Jul. 26). *The Force Leading the Iraqi Army's Fight Against ISIS went from 'dirty division' to golden boys.* Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/the-force-leading-the-iraqi-militarys-fight-against-isis-went-from-dirty-division-to-golden-boys/2016/07/25/8e6b0164-389e-11e6-af02-1df55f0c77ff_story.html

Meanwhile, the Kurds have their Peshmerga, with mainly self-interested goals and also tied to the political structure in the Kurdish region. The Shi'a militia, known as the Hashd or the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), are fighting on a more ideological basis and operating in survival-mode against an apocalyptic enemy, meaning ISIL. Formed following the rise of ISIL in 2014, the PMF consists of several groups, some of whom are associated with either political or religious entities, and others directly linked to Iran. They've been accused of human rights violations; however, they've been assigned more of a supporting role to the regular Iraqi forces in the last several battles (from the battle of Falluja until now). Sunni tribal fighters are also present; some of whom fall under the PMF, and others who are associated with either pro-government tribes or political figures such as Atheel Al-Nujaifi, former governor of Mosul. Other ethnic minorities such as the Yazidis and Chaldeans in Mosul have been fighting ISIL, some classified under PMF, others with the Kurdish forces or as independent units. In an Iraq post-ISIL, it is likely each area will remain under the control of their respective federal forces/police, tribal fighters, or militia.

Economic
Maintaining the status quo in Iraq translates into maintaining the country's dependency on oil. Although the Kurdish region has been putting some serious efforts into positioning itself as a major tourism destination, which could potentially generate serious revenues, the rise of ISIL and its proximity to the Kurdistan region, combined with the wave of IDPs, has hindered that vision at least for the near future. The Shi'a areas (mid and southern Iraq) enjoy a very robust religious tourism economy, which brings in extra revenues; however, the wave of IDPs from the western provinces to these Shi'a religious provinces, has put an extra burden on these areas. Another possible and potential revenue generator is the Mesopotamian marshes and other historical sites in the south. This year, the southern marshlands and Zaqura-Ur (Ziggurat of Ur) have been named UNESCO World Heritage Sites, a resolution that could potentially transform these areas into tourist destinations. Meanwhile, the Sunni areas are not only lacking any economic opportunities, the entire provinces have been devastated by the military operations by and against ISIL.

Social
With the collapse of government institutions in 2003, and the birth of a weak sectarian government noted for its absence of the rule of law, the country has been falling back on what used to be the known system in that region, that being the tribal system. Currently there are three recognized legal frameworks that people can adhere to: civil law, tribal law, and religious (Shi'a or Sunni) law. At present in Iraq, as just stated, the most prevalent is tribal Law. It has been noted, widely discussed, and criticized in the local media, that those with no tribal allegiance can 'rent' a tribal sheikh to solve a dispute. With the liberation of what was ISIL-controlled territory, and the return of the residents of these provinces, it is safe to assume that more and more tribal councils will be held and that intra-Sunni revenge will be committed. As an example of this, a 30-minute documentary produced by VICE news named "Fighting the Islamic State with Iraq's Golden Division: The Road to Fallujah,"[5] suggests the rate of revenge and blood feud crimes will rise in these areas. In the documentary, while the ISOF/ICTF Major Salam al-Obaidi questions the locals, brothers and cousins start accusing each other as being ISIL affiliates. This is but one example in a small village in al-Anbar that gives us an idea of what awaits Iraqis, and the Iraqi government

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[5] Ayman Oghanna and Warser Jaff (2016, Jun. 13). *Fighting the Islamic State with Iraq's Golden Division: The Road to Falluja*. Retrieved from https://news.vice.com/video/fighting-the-islamic-state-with-iraqs-golden-division-the-road-to-fallujah

forces, in Mosul. Another example of the anticipated revenge wave that could take place is the Yazidis' retribution when their town of Sinjar was retaken from ISIL in late 2015.[6] Yezidi fighters went on a looting spree, burning houses of those they deemed as ISIL supporters and/or sympathizers of the Sunni Arabs.

Information
The Internet and particularly social media platforms are the basis for information exchange between Iraqis and with the outside world. For that reason, ISIL relies on social media for disseminating its propaganda. Moreover, the daily protests are all being organized and coordinated through social media and particularly Facebook. Iraqis are not particularly reliant on Twitter; however, in the last two months there has been a serious local campaign, led by 30 Iraqi influential Facebook bloggers to take on Twitter in support of the Iraqi Army and to counter ISIL's propaganda on Twitter where it lives and breathes, and disseminates its information. The number of Iraqis signing up and using Twitter was extremely significant, as 26K organic Twitter (Iraqi) users signed up and released 200K tweets with the Arabic hashtag 'Fallujah is being liberated' in just the first 48 hours of the Iraqi twitter campaign, which was launched simultaneously in support of the military operations to liberate Fallujah. The campaign was dubbed by local media and social media experts "Iraqi Twitter Awakening," and "Iraq's Assault to Twitter." Twitter daily hashtags have become the Iraqi way in fighting ISIL online and sending daily messages in support of the Iraqi Army and their military operations to defeat DAESH.

Infrastructure
As mentioned earlier, the Sunni regions are the most affected and most frequently destroyed by the military operations by or against ISIL. There is an opportunity for the Iraqi government to regain the trust of the Sunni population by launching a serious campaign to rebuild these provinces, towns and villages. All Iraqis yearn for a normal life, the right to live in dignity and to provide a roof over their family's head. Most people from the Sunni areas are returning to nothing, as their homes have been leveled either by ISIL and their IEDs or by the Iraqi military attacks targeting ISIL fighters. The opportunity here for the government in launching a well-publicized campaign of "Rebuilding" and "Reconstruction" should begin simultaneously with the start of the Mosul operations. This will not only regain the trust of the Sunni populations returning to their liberated areas and homes, it will also send a message of comfort to civilians in Mosul. The message is that reconstruction awaits them and that they will be compensated for their losses, once ISIL is defeated.

Physical Environment
With the resolution in naming of Iraq's southern Mesopotamian marshlands as UNESCO World Heritage Sites, with the purpose of protecting and preserving the site, there is a chance that Turkey will be pressured into maintaining a consistent flow of water into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which are the main feeders of the marshes. This resolution was fought for by the Iraqi government and supported by U.S., European and Iraqi experts, being specifically intended to put pressure on Turkey to regulate the water flow into Iraq's main rivers.

Time

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[6] Alice Fordham (2015, Nov. 16). *An Iraqi Town is Retaken from ISIS, and looting and retribution begins.* Retrieved from http://www.npr.org/sections/parallels/2015/11/16/456246515/after-taking-back-iraqi-town-yazidis-vow-revenge-on-isis-supporters

As Iraq is approaching the battle of Mosul, and based on the battles won by Iraqi forces in the last few months, some experts are predicting a relatively short battle. However, this is dependent on ISIL fighters, and the possibility they may choose to flee to Syria and not resist or fight. If ISIL fighters choose to stay and fight, then this could be a prolonged battle, due to the nature of the city and its civilian population. Moreover, if ISIL chooses resist, there is a possibility the PMF will be called to assist, a golden opportunity for both, ISIL to resist and fight to the bitter end, and Iran for its Shi'a militia to play a part in the battle of Mosul in any way possible. Following the defeat of ISIL, there will remain an unsatisfied faction of the Sunni population that is susceptible to recruitment and exploitation by Islamic extremists and terrorist groups. The lack of a unified political or religious entity to lead Iraqi Sunnis will remain an issue that faces that group and hinders them from assimilating into post-ISIL Iraq, the way it did following 2003 and the ousting of the Ba'ath regime.

Major friction points
These have always been and will remain about resources (oil and water), services, infrastructure, and employment. However, there are many grassroots campaigns to bring back and highlight the bonding aspect between Iraqis. Most of these social movements are initiated by Iraqis themselves with their own smartphones, and circulated and shared on the common platform of social media (Facebook and Twitter). These campaigns focus on the coexistence of Iraqis of all backgrounds, highlighting the fact that most IDPs are hosted by Shi'a dominated provinces, where they are welcomed and living side by side with other Shi'a Iraqis. With the existence of live streaming features, Iraqi soldiers have been capturing spontaneous and live positive reactions of people who were held by ISIL, who welcomed the Iraqi troops as heroes. These videos have been storming the internet, and have received positive reactions from Iraqis, turning the ISOF and ICTF soldiers into real heroes with merely one identity which is Iraqi. These include stories of Sunni heroines, such as the tribal daughter Ummaya al-Jbara, who died fighting ISIL, and Umm Qusay, a Sunni woman from Tikrit who saved the lives of 25 Shi'a soldiers from the Camp Speicher massacre when ISIL took over her town.

In conclusion, the U.S. government should promote a stable end state by urging Iraq's political elites to reconcile and integrate groups who participated in the fight against ISIL into the government's institutions. The main triggering point that led most Sunni tribal fighters of the Awakening Councils of al-Anbar aka (Sons of Iraq) from 2006, to go back into joining AQI which later became ISIL, was the failed promises to integrate them into government institutions and offer them employment. Another opportunity for the U.S. to promote a stable state is by lending support to local secular initiatives on the ground, or encourage the Iraqi government to acknowledge these calls and protests to make serious and much needed reform.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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The military operations in Iraq will probably push out most of ISIL fighters from the non-liberated parts of Nineweh province to Syria. This will make Raqqa the main territory of significant size the organization holds. This is going to have not only economic implications (access to resources) but also will also be a turning point in the life of an organization that positioned itself outside the typical cast of guerilla/insurgency type organizations and more into a valid alternative for the failing states in the Arab region.

> "The same pool of masterminds, jihadists, and other fighters will move, individually or collectively, either to existing terrorist organizations or to establishing new ones."

However, this decline will remain confined to the current "brand" or "structure". As it happened in the past, the same pool of masterminds, jihadists and other fighters will move, individually or collectively, either to existing terrorist organizations or to establishing new ones. One possibility is for some of them to change ISIL's mode of operation from a "state" to an "insurgency" type while keeping the same name. In all cases, the "comparative advantage" that ISIL built for itself (a state rather than an insurgency organization) will suffer a lot from the decline of ISIL; not the ideology though.

The region has been living on the pace of wide range of Islamist ideologies for decades and the decline of the currently branded ISIL will not affect much the Jihadist variation of such ideologies. As long as a Jihadist preachers are receiving some support from religious, political and military elites in the region, they will continue to trigger the launch of similar movements in different forms. What determined the fluctuation in the popular support to such movements is the extent to which the population in a given country feels that an Islamist movement can be a remedy to a situation of exclusion they have been subject to.

The best way to determine the weaknesses and hence exploit them is to determine the variables that can lead a local constituency from adhering to the Islamist thesis or not. In the case of Iraq, there was a set of factors that led scores of Iraqi Sunnis consider, in 2013/2014 that ISIL will rescue them from their exclusion. None of the below mentioned factors is valid alone to explain why scores of Sunnis have explicitly or tacitly supported jihadists or at least did not mind seeing them take the control of some areas. It is always a combination that drives such a change in political behavior.

To say that the Sunnis, in 2013, were poorer than the Shias in Iraq is a misrepresentation. Although what is considered to be today the Sunni region has less resources than the Shia controlled region, the status of the infrastructure, unemployment, level of education, access to health care…etc. were mostly at comparable values with insignificant differences. The major difference was in political representation and the growing feeling of a majority of Sunnis that the country was run by a "Shia controlled mafia" and that the weight (of a largely diverse) Sunni political forces in political decision was close to zero. It was also exacerbated by the perception that Iran is expanding in the region with the aim of

controlling a viable territory that goes from Iran to the Mediterranean through Iraq and Syria with the aim of consolidating Shias' influence over the populations and resources of these countries. Whether ISIL will be defeated in Iraq and/or Syria or not, this perception among Sunnis will not change soon, given the developments in Syria, Yemen, Lebanon and Iraq. This perception will lead Sunnis who are not necessarily married to Jihadism to at least provide a "justification" of why Sunni militarized communities are a necessity imposed by an "intrusive Iran".

Without a grassroot support of these Sunni Constituencies to post ISIL organizations, their operational capacity will be significantly hindered.

So one of the priority approaches should be to reverse this perception among Sunnis by pushing for the adoption of an appropriate governance model in Iraq[7] that address the concerns of non-Shias about their role in a future Iraq. This requires a heavy investment by the US and its international partners in result oriented political processes and initiatives in Iraq, something that the US has shied away from since 2011. The future of the relationship between Sunni constituencies and post ISIL jihadists will be determined, to a large extent, by their feeling that an inclusive and credible political process is in place to address their grievances. This would ideally be expanded to become a regional dialogue between Iran and the GCC, under the guidance and support of the International Community, to address the points of contention between both parties. Such a dialogue will contribute significantly to the diffusion of tension amongst Sunnis and hence encourage them to look for more constructive political approaches including in Iraq.

Another element to take into account is that post ISIL Jihadist groups will return to the insurgency mode of operations that entails indiscriminate attacks against civilians causing large numbers of casualties. As in the pre-ISIL years, the targets of these attacks can well be Sunni communities. This will also contribute to the disconnect between the Sunnis and these Jihadist groups. Obviously there is very little to be done at this level, except some work with media outlets to convey proper messaging about the indiscriminate attacks undertaken by these groups against Sunnis.

A key element in the viability of the post ISIL groups will be their access to resources. Efforts are already underway to cut off such access to resources. Some of the US key allies in the region, most prominently Turkey, have an indispensable role to play in this aspect. Looking at ISIL's deployment today, one can easily see how bad it would have been for ISIL should the Turks decide to apply more rigor in the control of the borders and the flow of people via Turkey.

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[7] And elsewhere but this question is about Iraq

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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V4: What are the most likely post-lSIL Iraq scenarios with regards to Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, Infrastructure, Physical Environment, and Time (PMESII-PT)? Where are the main PMESII-PT friction points, which are most acute, and how are they best exploited to accomplish a stable end state favorable to U.S. and coalition interests?

The Future of a post-ISIL Iraq
In the case of the expulsion of ISIL from territory within Iraq's borders, significant problems would persist, including the collapse of the neighboring state of Syria, and the lingering presence of ISIL, in Iraq and neighboring Syria, and its transformation into a state-sponsor of regional and international terrorism.

> "A victory over ISIL will not be the end of Iraq's problems, rather the beginning of an internal political battle over territory."

While the defeat of ISIL would be a significant national victory, the Iraqi government has yet to articulate a strategy to manage the end game after the battle for Mosul. A victory over ISIL will not be the end of Iraq's problems, rather the beginning of an internal political battle over territory.

Prime Minister Haider al-Abbadi will face continuing demands for reform and restructuring of the political system, which he attempted to confront so far with only marginal success. These reforms are part and parcel a larger question. Even if ISIL will be expelled, how will the Iraqi state reform and govern its territory? While the Iraqi state has survived the reemergence of ISIL, the contours of Iraqi politics, identity, and culture have been transformed since 2014. Abbadi faces the daunting challenges of a post-ISIL period in terms of the governance of Iraq, and dealing with post-conflict security issues; first, the reintegration of territory and populations under IS control, second, agreeing to Iraq's internal borders with the Kurds, third, the fluctuating price of oil and the economy, and finally presiding over a fragmented, sectarian state to deal with the aforementioned issues.

I have ordered the friction points in terms of priorities for post-conflict stabilization in Iraq. They do not follow discrete categories of "Political," "Military," "Economic," etc.
As I have highlighted below, they are interconnected. The first two are the most acute, while the last two have been longer term dynamics that have been analyzed in depth over the last couple of years.

1. SOCIO-POLITICAL FRICTION POINTS IN FORMER ISIL-HELD TERRITORY

The first paramount issue the Iraqi state faces is displacement of large swathes of the population, and how to reincorporate previously held-ISIL territories and those who lived under ISIL rule. Political battles will ensue over who is going to secure and govern these

areas, who will get to live there in the resettlement process, and how to reintegrate the IDPs. This problem will also hinge on the pace of reconstruction of the ISIL-held areas.

The political ramifications of this issue is how the central government will manage this process. For a good number of Arab Sunnis, the fear will emerge that after an ISIL victory, a Shi'a-dominated government will rule as a conqueror of this territory, largely supported by the Shi'a militias. Nowhere will this issue be more prevalent than the city of Mosul. There is no political consensus over will control the city after ISIL is expelled. In theory the central government would, however it was the central government's governance of this city that led to the conditions to allowed ISIL to find fertile ground in Mosul in the first place. ISIL's seizure of Mosul was a symptom of the failure of the Iraqi state. The question remains as to how will Arab Sunnis in this city, and Anbar and Salah al-Din provinces reconcile with the central government.

2. POLITICAL-ECONOMIC FRICTIONS BETWEEN BAGHDAD AND THE KRG
The notions of the territorial sovereignty of the central government will come to the fore not only over Mosul, but Kirkuk as well, which does not bode well with already tense relations between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). In this regard, the battle for territorial sovereignty will not only involve this city and its oil reserves, but other contested areas, such as Tuz Khurmato, one half controlled by the Kurds, the other by Shi'a militias ostensibly protecting the town's Shi'a Turkmen. The battle over territory will also involve the complex issues of resource nationalism. Resolving the issue over Kirkuk and the allocation of oil will determine whether Iraq survives in the most optimistic scenario as a loose Shia-Kurdish alliance.

3. EONCOMIC FRICTION POINTS
The state will still depend on the fluctuating price of oil, and the reconstruction of Iraq has already be handicapped by years of low prices.

4. POLITICAL FRICTION POINTS: ENDEMIC SECTARIANISM
Increasing sectarianism has have only been exacerbated by the ISIL-conflict, which will result in continued fragmentation of political blocks amongst the various sects and ethnic groups.

In terms of 1 & 2, and "how are they best exploited to accomplish a stable end state favorable to U.S. and coalition interests," the only leverage the U.S. and the coalition has at this juncture is to pressure the Iraqi parliament to <u>begin</u> the process of reaching a consensus on these disputed territories, before the actual battle for Mosul, at a time when the Iraqi state is most dependent on American and Coalition military assets to achieve this task. When put under pressure, the Iraqi state can achieve compromise in a relatively short period of time. The best case in point in the crisis of the summer of 2014. After the elections of April 2014, Iraq had failed to form a government for months. It was only when ISIL seized Mosul, that the U.S. could pressure the Iraqi state. American military engagement was made conditional on replacing incumbent Prime Minister Maliki with a more conciliatory candidate, Haider Al-Abadi and forming a government afterwards. Maliki was replaced and the Iraqi government was formed within the span of a few weeks under such pressure.

Similar leverage can compel the Iraqi parliament to come up with a draft on Iraq's governance after the expulsion of Mosul. The issues of Mosul and Kirkuk, or smaller towns

such as Tuz Khurmato will involve intense political rivalries, but at least this process needs to be dealt with before the commencement of the battle for Mosul.

The Prospects for Coalition Cohesion in the Battle for Mosul

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One of the biggest risks to the cohesion of the coalition against ISIL is <u>time</u>**.** Analysts and practitioners warn that we should expect that the coalition of actors involved in the battle for Mosul will have to hold for a significant amount of time before Mosul is wrested from ISIL (see Dagher and Kaltenhaler, SMA QL3). Given the tenuousness of the ties that hold it together currently – and the variety of competing interests and agendas of coalition

> "The longer cohesion is required, the likelihood that a spoiler event-- perpetrated by actors either inside or outside the coalition on issues either directly or indirectly related to Mosul—will increase."

members, as outlined below, there is any number of occurrences that could cause partial or severe fracture before, during or after the battle. The longer cohesion is required the likelihood that a spoiler event -- perpetrated by actors either inside or outside the coalition on issues either directly or indirectly related to Mosul – will increase.

Under which conditions might Sunni forces (e.g., Popular Mobilization Force, Mosul Tribal Police) break from the coalition? The coming battle in Mosul has been characterized as the biggest and perhaps final Sunni referendum on the sincerity of the Abadi government's intention to be inclusive of Sunni voices. This is, many believe, one of the critical steps in drawing Iraq's sects and ethnicities into a unified state. Understandably, the Sunni population in Mosul may not be particularly friendly toward Shi'a dominated Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)[8] – many of the same forces used to repress anti-government protests beginning in early 2013. In the already antagonistic environment during fighting in Mosul the risk of mistreatment – real or perceived – by Iraqi Security Forces, Peshmerga or Shi'a militias unable to distinguish civilians from ISIL fighters fleeing the city is very high.

At present, ISF are being trained for counter-insurgency operations in Mosul and elsewhere following ISIL defeat.[9] As the US military can attest, operations to degrade insurgent strength while protecting a population during counter-insurgency operations requires security forces to walk a very fine line. In the current setting missteps and mistakes will immediately gain sectarian overtones. Tactics used by ISF, the police, Peshmerga fighters or others that are perceived locally to be strong-armed or with a sectarian bias are likely to reaffirm local perceptions that the Iraqi Government has not altered its discriminatory stance regarding Sunni populations and will not seriously consider some form of

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[8] Dagher and Kaltenhaler response to SMA QL3.
[9] Associated Press. "Canadian General: Anti-IS Fight Will Grow Harder After Mosul," 10/5/2016, 2:05 P.M. E.D.T. http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/10/05/us/politics/ap-us-united-states-islamic-state.html

autonomous control in Sunni areas. In addition, it reinforces an already prevalent view that the West/US is at war with Sunnis.

Sunni Forces: Two conditions could easily push Sunni forces to break with the coalition: 1) local leaders see no evidence that the post-ISIL situation in Mosul will be other than a return to the discrimination and harassment that they suffered at the hands of the Iraqi government (particularly the eight Maliki years) prior to the ISIL crisis; and, most immediately, 2) Shi'a Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) take an active role in the fighting in or too near Mosul. True, there is general awareness of the need to keep these forces separated from the Sunni population in Mosul, and there are media reports that coalition leaders will allow Shi'a militias to participate in the coming battles from rural areas south of the base at Qayyara and west of the city[10] presumably with the mission of rounding up escaping (Sunni) ISIL fighters and families. Unfortunately, despite aid agencies' intentions[11], depending on where fighting takes place Moswalis living in neighborhoods in the city's southwest may attempt to flee by the quickest route which would be to the south – precisely the areas that the Shi'a militia are purportedly intended to patrol. Again, mistreatment of Sunni at the hands of the Shi'a could convince the tribal forces to leave the coalition in order to protect their own if not to exact revenge.

Iran: There is significant evidence that the battlefield success of much of Iraq's Shia militias is dependent on Iranian resources and expertise (Barnard, 2015; Bazoobandi, 2014; Campbell, 2014; Nader, 2015).[12] Of course this relationship aids Iran to increase its regional influence (Khedery, 2015).[13] Given local Sunni sensitivity to the Shi'a militias and their presumed Iranian backing Iran could readily spur fracture of the coalition before or during the fight by sending pro-Iran militias to "help" in Mosul. Just their presence too close to Mosul may be enough to cause a Sunni break from the coalition. As noted above, inclusion of any forces seen as associated with Iran and/or perceived maltreatment of Sunni by them is one of the conditions likely to discourage Sunni forces from remaining in the coalition.

Turkey: In many ways, the tenor of the Turkish conflict with the PKK (and any other groups it believes are associated with it), could make or break post-ISIL efforts to forge a resolution and interim authority in Mosul. Turkey has two main security interests at stake in the coming battle: avoid massive and destabilizing refugee flow from Mosul; and, avoid strengthening or the uniting Kurdish groups.

On the issue of refugees, Turkey already has seized the opportunity to create a security buffer in northern Iraq. This area could also serve as territory to house IDPs from Mosul.

[10] Knights, Michael. "How Will the Battle for Mosul Unfold," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, October 4, 2016.

[11] Newly constructed and emergency camps are mainly in the northern Kurdish areas and to the east of the city. At present international aid agencies have the balance of their assets in the Kurdish areas north and east of the city. Mosul Flash Appeal, UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (20 July 2016), https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Iraq/mosul_flash_appeal_final_web%20(1).pdf.

[12] Barnard, A. (2015, March 5). Iran Gains Influence in Iraq as Shiite Forces Fight ISIS. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/06/world/middleeast/iran-gains-influence-in-iraq-as-shiite-forces-fight-isis.html; Bazoobandi, S. (2014). Iran's Regional Policy: Interests, Challenges, and Ambitions (Analysis No. 275). ISPI. Retrieved from http://www.ispionline.it/sites/default/files/pubblicazioni/analysis_275__2014_0.pdf; Campbell, J. (2014, November 6). Iran Switching to Hard Ball in a Last Attempt to Control Iraq. Retrieved June 30, 2015, from http://www.clarionproject.org/analysis/iran-switching-hard-ball-last-attempt-control-iraq; Nader, A. (2015). Iran's Role in Iraq (Perspective). Rand. Retrieved from http://www.mashreghnews.ir/files/fa/news/1394/3/16/1066030_363.pdf

[13] Khedery, A. (2015, February 19). Iran's Shiite Militias Are Running Amok in Iraq. Retrieved from http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/02/19/irans-shiite-militias-are-running-amok-in-iraq/

This paper does not represent official USG policy or position.

While it is unlikely that Turkey would <u>publically</u> withdraw from the coalition or throw its weight clearly onto the side of anti-government forces in Iraq, President Erdogan strongly opposes any further arming of Kurdish groups willing to participate in the liberation of Mosul. The PUK is, in Turkey's view indirectly allied with the leftist PKK – the group at the top of its terrorist list – (via the PKK's alliance with the US-funded Syrian PYD.) This sensitivity could cause Turkey to balk if the PUK were armed and included as equal with the PDK during the fighting in Mosul, and particularly if it were given status as a major player the post-battle political resolution. Similarly, it is to be expected that the Erdogan government would drag its feet, or reject coalition requests outright if asked to take action that it believes would leave any Kurdish group but the PDK in control of Kurdish areas (e.g., withdrawing troops from northern Iraq following ISIL defeat in Mosul, withdrawing support of KDP aims against the Government of Iraq), even if these actions were intended to spur political resolution. In short, reconciliation among the Turkish groups is the worst outcome for Turkey.

KSA: There appears to be little in the nature of the fighting in Iraq that would push KSA to a public break with the coalition. However, perceived further encroachment or a regional "win" by Iran, e.g., in Syria, could prompt a further uptick in KSA-Iran tensions in Yemen. In the past, members of the US Congress and British Parliament have condemned KSA for human rights violations in the fighting[14]. This type of sanction especially if there were not similar treatment of Iran would further corrode US-KSA relations and perhaps convince KSA to resume connections with Sunni extremist groups in Iraq and Syria as bastions against Iranian influence. Opening up funding for Sunni tribes/ extremist forces could exacerbate in the area could not only exacerbate the KSA-US relationship, it could also spur increased proxy conflict and perhaps widen any split between the Sunni groups in Iraq, putting the US in a tight spot with very few levers of influence over KSA.

Under which conditions might Sunni and Kurdish Peshmerga forces break from the coalition? In this instance the Kurdish groups have both left the coalition and are in direct conflict with the Sunni tribes in Ninewah while the Iraqi armed forces and Shi'a militia presumably retain their initial missions.

Sunni Forces: As stated, strong-arm tactics by Iraqi forces and/or Shi'a militia especially if coupled with apparent US acquiescence or failure to respond could be enough to convince the Sunni tribes that they are the only ones willing to come to their defense and that the coalition holds no promise of change for them following the Mosul fight. If they are pushed aside by the US or not included politically by the government in Baghdad they could decide to leave the coalition *en masse* or split over the issue.

Iraqi Peshmerga (PDK and PUK): Similar to the Sunni, Kurdish fighters may be prompted to break with the coalition if they believe they are not granted the political influence and recognition they deserve for their years of holding up the fight on behalf of the West first against Saddam, Al Qaeda and then ISIL. Specifically, the Kurdish groups could decide to leave the coalition if it became clear that they were going to have to fight to keep the balance of the territorial and economic gains made over the past years of fighting. The appearance that the Government of Iraq would (or would be allowed to) renege on the

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[14] Radwan, Tarek. "Yemen Heightens Tension in Saudi's International Relations," 9/27/16
http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/yemen-heightens-tension-in-saudi-s-international-relations

recently brokered oil-revenue sharing deal, and/or the presence of uninvited ISF forces in Kurdistan would be clear indication that the Government intended to deny Kurdish gains and return to pre-ISIL disputes over territorial control and oil revenues.

However, the Peshmerga – like other Kurdish groups – is not necessarily a unified force but is led by, among others, both PDK and PUK loyalists. The PUK and PDK fought a civil war in the 1990s and although seem to have buried the hatchet, remain rivals looking to avoid dominance of Kurdish politics by the other. As a result, the Peshmerga could itself split over internal questions of leadership and control with what may appear to be little provocation from outside forces. Specifically, the PUK could split from the rival PDK over the latter's deal making with Turkey and use of the fighting in Mosul to gain leverage over other Kurdish groups including the PUK.

Under which conditions might Sunni, Peshmerga and Shi'a militia forces all break from the coalition? In light of their pivotal role in many of the factors that could impel both Sunni and Peshmerga forces to break with the coalition, it is fair to say that greatest risk to the cohesion of the coalition from the Shi'a militia would be its <u>active participation</u>, rather than withdrawal. In the recent past, Shia militia active in Sunni areas have used the fight against ISIL as a cover for violence against the Sunni population that has verged on ethnic cleansing (Fahim, 2015; Human Rights Watch, 2015; Human Rights Watch Iraq, 2015).[15] Similar actions or those perceived locally as uncurtailed overstepping by Shi'a forces – whether GOI or Iran-backed -- have the capacity to very quickly fracture the coalition along sectarian and ethnic lines for reasons already stated. What is generally forgotten however is that Shi'a activities also have the capacity to worsen what UN officials expect to be one of the worst humanitarian crises in decades as refugees flee the fighting in Mosul. The fear of revenge killings among the Sunni population is considerable[16] and may cause refugees to avoid escape routes near Shi'a forces.

Shia Militia: Still, ISIL's military operations have focused on attacking regional groups who do not submit to their ideological interpretations of Islamic law. After "apostate" Sunnis, Shi'as are their next most important target.[17] As a result, ISIL success in Mosul or ability to strike Shi'a elsewhere presents a direct threat to the Shia population, and should it look like a possibility, it should be expected that Shi'a militia fighters both within the coalition as well as those not currently included could "join" operations in Mosul. This is even more likely if, for example ISIL was able to strike against Shi'a targets in southern Iraq during the Mosul battle.

It should not be discounted that some of the nationalist Shia militia groups currently engaged in the fight against ISIL evolved from groups such as Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army which arose with the goal of ending U.S. presence and influence in Iraq. Although the U.S.-led coalition is currently coordinating with Shia militia groups, it is not at all clear that

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[15] Fahim, K. (2015, February 7). Shiite Militia Drives Back Islamic State, but Divides Much of Iraq. *The New York Times*. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/08/world/shiite-militia-drives-back-islamic-state-but-divides-much-of-iraq.html; Human Rights Watch. (2015, March 18). Iraq: Militia Attacks Destroy Villages, Displace Thousands. Retrieved June 30, 2015, from http://www.hrw.org/news/2015/03/18/iraq-militia-attacks-destroy-villages-displace-thousands; Human Rights Watch Iraq. (2015, March). After Liberation Came Destruction: Iraqi militias and the aftermath of Amerli. Retrieved June 30, 2015, from http://features.hrw.org/features/HRW_2015_reports/Iraq_Amerli/index.html

[16] Associated Press, "In battle for Iraq's Mosul, many forces with many motives," 28 Sept 2016.

[17] Braniff, W., & Pereira, R. (2014). A Tale of Two Caliphates. In Multi-Method Assessment of ISIL (pp. 156–160). Arlington, VA: Strategic Multilayer Assessment Program, Office of the Secretary of Defense.

this has or will result in a fundamental shift in the hostile attitude toward Americans in Iraq. If it looks as if they will be denied reward or recognition of their contributions particularly after the Mosul battle, some Shi'a groups or individuals could easily reject coalition restrictions on their activities in and around Mosul and act on their own to avenge Sunni violence against Shi'a, or in the name of the sectarian rivalry. This is not necessarily a stretch: Sunni grievances have worsened in recent years, fueled by "endless interventions" by Iran and the staunch support given to Maliki and Assad (Moaddel, 2014) who are seen by many Moswalis as persecuting Sunnis in favor of "serving the Shia Iran master plan." in the region

Under which conditions might the coalition be completely shattered? Finally, as the accumulation of the previous conditions, a completely shattered coalition means that the battle for Mosul has prompted a full-out, multi-sided civil war.

Iraq: At the same time that the Abadi government is attempting to signal that it intends to be more inclusive of Sunni leaders and views, it is restricted first by fears that armed Sunni militia will turn those arms against the central government, and second by its need for support from Shi'a hardliners who do not want to empower Sunnis or meaningfully incorporate them into the governance of Iraq (Arango, 2015).[18] Further, Abadi's desire to preserve the unity of Iraq puts it at odds with calls for increased local autonomy from some factions of Kurdish and Sunni Tribal leaders. In the event of the chaos that would characterize violent civil conflict among Kurdish, Sunni and Shi'a forces -- likely with proxy support from Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Iran respectively -- the multi-ethnic, multi-sect members of the Iraqi Army and police will be hard pressed to know which battles to fight and more than breaking with the coalition outright, may for reasons of confusion and self-preservation simply fall and recede as effective fighting forces.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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It has been very clear during the last few weeks that Nineveh(Mosul) will soon be freed from Da'ish(ISIS) control . Yet ,what is the best way to deal with situation on the ground after the defeat of IS which seems to be approaching quickly. As I stated many times before, the million dollar question is not how to defeat Da'ish, rather it is what comes afterward? There is no question that the so-called Islamic State will become part of history soon, yet what is crucial to ask is: Will its ideology of hate and extreme violence disappear or even stop its dissemination among people living in my region?

As an Iraqi expert in counter-terrorism and public opinion in Iraq since 2003, I don't have any doubt that the real battle will start after freeing Mosul from ISIL. The consequences will affect not only Mosul but it will extend, as it did before, to the entirety of Iraq and the region as well. The success in conducting re-construction and reconciliation in Mosul after its

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[18] Arango, T. (2015, April 30). Proposal to arm Sunnis adds to Iraqi suspicions of the U.S. New York Times. Retrieved from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/05/01/world/middleeast/proposal-to-arm-sunnis-adds-to-iraqi-suspicions-of-the-us.html

liberation from ISIL will positively reflect on the future of Iraq and the entire region while failure will have potentially have disastrous consequences. As many Iraqis looks to Al Qaeda insurgents as (moderateterrorists) in comparison with ISIL terrorists, we may witness a new version of ISIL, which will exercise much worse terrorism than we yet witnessed if, we fail in dealing with Mosul's population's needs and concerns.

> "We may witness a new version of ISIL, which will exercise much worse terrorism than we yet witnessed if we fail in dealing with Mosul's population's needs and concerns."

One thing is that is very instructive about how the forthcoming battle may play out, is to look back at how Mosul was conquered by ISIL in June of 2014. Iraq's second biggest city, with around two million residents, was taken by a group of around 400 ISIL fighters with the help of some Sunni tribesmen. The much, much larger Iraqi army force simply fled as ISIS approached. The ISIL forces were welcomed by some residents within Mosul while most certainly did not resist ISIS. The key to understanding this is to view ISIS and the Iraqi army through the eyes of Mosul's Sunni population. For them, the Iraqi army, was a Shia-dominated force, operating with the help and guidance of hated Iran, that had a record of abusing and humiliating Iraqi Sunnis. Mosul's Sunnis were still angry about how demonstrating Sunnis had been treated during the Arab Spring demonstrations of 2011. Many Sunnis were shot, beaten, or disappeared by Iraqi Shia-dominated security forces. Thus, for Mosul's Sunnis, ISIL may have seemed like a group of fanatics who were brutal and even savage, but they were Sunnis who opposed the Iraqi Shia-dominated state. Thus, Mosul residents acquiescing to ISIL taking over their city was more a vote of no confidence in the sectarian Shia-dominated Iraqi state than it was an embrace of the brutally intolerant Salafism of ISIL.

It will be a major blunder if, we fail twice in recognizing the clear signs of concern and dissatisfaction, which Mosul's public evidenced before Da'ish took over Mosul. Just a short time before that time, over 85% of the people said that the country was going in the wrong direction. 83% of households stated that they felt unsafe in their neighborhoods. Just 7 days after Da'ish took over Mosul,81% of the city households stated that they felt safe. In Mosul , and before Da'ish took over it, all my polls showed very low trust in the national government ,local government, parliament, the federal police ,and the army. Actually it was always about half of the general trust rate of other Iraqis in the same institutions. Moreover, only 20% of people in Mosul thought that human rights were respected and over 60% of them believed that the government institutions interfered in their private lives.

Freeing Mosul and running it in the same way , which it was run before will definitely generate a great deal of anger and dissatisfaction. This will be a golden opportunity and the right environment for Da'ish and \or other terrorist organizations to take over again. This time the consequences will be even worse than what we experienced during the last two years.

To avoid this, we need to follow a people-oriented approach, which recognizes all previous and current concerns, needs and hopes of the people and avoid all past mistakes. Empowering Mosul's people and giving them more authority over their lives will definitely be the right strategy. Yet this strategy needs a different approach than 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 its 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'ish and its similar organizations to take over again. Since Ottoman Empire and then British occupation after WW1, Mosul has been in a unique. It is a province with a Arab Sunni majority, yet as with many Iraqi provinces, it has a good percentage of different religious and ethnic groups. We need not only to take care of Sunni ,Shia and Kurdish concerns. For me, it is more important to give serious consideration to Christian, Yazaidi and Shabek concerns as it is not only the original pillars of Mosul social fabric that needs to be re-built, but more importantly as it will be the model of Iraqis willingness to live peacefully together.

The US official whom I met a week ago asked me how to solve this contradiction of empowering people on the ground on one hand and avoid the control of the wrong local politicians over Mosul again on other hand? The answer is quite simple. The strategy of empowering people is correct but we need, this time, to implement it via more trusted players. These can not be the same political elites who were imposed by foreign forces, whether these forces are the U.S., Turkey, Iran or any other regional or international player. 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'ish or any other terrorist group.

To achieve this we need to give the people the required space and opportunity to reorganize themselves and push up the right elite to govern their areas. This cannot be reached unless we provide impartial and independent local authorities which, can establish the right and healthy environment for honest and trusted local election. Again, current politicians 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 are:
1. Run the reconstruction process, with the allocated money, in a very transparent and professional way.
2. Provide a healthy and peaceful environment for all people to exercise their free will in organizing 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.
4. Run real integrated local election which result in a new local government within two years.

Finally, it is so important to prevent Turkey, Iran and the Kurdistan regional government or their agents from getting a freehand in the future of Mosul (Nineveh) if we really want to avoid further terrorism in the region.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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The biggest danger is to assume that it is possible to answer this question. Every conflict and post-conflict scenario in recent history has delivered surprising results. A salient example is Libya where now countries are, for political reasons more than anything else, questioning their involvement in the 2011 revolution while the country appears to head inexorably towards further division exacerbated by an almost entirely useless and counterproductive UN effort. The best answer to this question is that there should be trained, flexible and responsive civil teams that are financed and empowered to help react to the changes as they take place. The UN is not the answer, nor is OTI. The former is nowhere near flexible enough and the latter has become overly politicized.

Post-ISIL Iraq's Grim Prospects

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Post-ISIL Iraq's prospects are, sadly, quite grim, with multiple factors—including atrocities carried out by the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMFs), the prospects of another major Sunni uprising, Kurdish tensions with the central government, economics, infrastructure, and environmental devastation—converging and amplifying one another. The key factors that will influence the fate of post-ISIL Iraq will be examined in turn.

Aftermath of the fall of Mosul. The question of how ISIL loses the ground it controls in Iraq is paramount, and has already generated great friction within the anti-ISIL "coalition" prior to the advance against Mosul. Turkey has frequently warned of the consequences of majority-Sunni Mosul falling to Shia militias. As will be discussed, Turkey is right about the atrocities that have been committed by PMFs when they retook Sunni-majority territory from ISIL.

> "With no exaggeration, this [conflict between PMFs and Turkey] has the potential to set the stage for another major armed conflict on Iraqi soil."

Further, Turkish troops with their eye on Mosul have refused to leave Iraqi soil despite Iraq's request for them to get out. It is possible that after the fall of Mosul, conflict between the PMFs and Turkey could spiral out of control. Turkey has said that it won't allow the religious demographics of Mosul to be changed, and the PMFs have said that they are willing to fight the Turks in the same way they fought ISIL. With no exaggeration, this has the potential to set the stage for another major armed conflict on Iraqi soil. A flare-up between Turkey and the PMFs could in turn accentuate tensions between Turkey and Iraq's central government, as well as between Iraq's central government and the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG).

PMF atrocities. When the PMFs entered Fallujah after ISIL was pushed out, there were mass killings, detention of civilians, sectarian cleansing, torture, and abuse. There is a good reason that Sunni elites in Ninawa unanimously don't want the PMFs to enter their

territory. PMF atrocities have already created lasting grievances. Even more could be created following the fall of Mosul—not to mention major humanitarian and moral consequences.

Chances of another major Sunni uprising. Sunni disenfranchisement following the defeat of al-Qaeda in Iraq was an essential driver of ISIL's rise.[19] At this point, all the ingredients for another major Sunni uprising are in place. At the forefront of current Sunni grievances is the atrocities the PMFs have carried out against Sunni civilians as they retook territory from ISIL. Other factors should also be carefully considered. Will there be significant Sunni representation in Iraq's central government in post-ISIL Iraq? Iraqi Sunnis' view that their government is controlled by Iran is growing, as the fight against ISIL has made Iran increasingly influential in the Iraqi political sphere.

It is unlikely that Sunni elites will reconcile themselves to being part of a rump state that's under growing Iranian influence. One doesn't have to be a jihadist to find these prospects quite unappealing. Sunnis face the possibility of having their status as second class citizens in the post-Saddam order further entrenched.

Kurdish independence. The chances of the KRG becoming independent are steadily increasing. The KRG supports Turkey's military presence in northern Iraq at the same time that Iraq has requested that Turkish troops leave. The degree to which this represents the erosion of Iraqi sovereignty, and the ascendance of the KRG as an independent political entity, cannot be overstated. A domestic analogue would be the Mexican army entering Texas at the request of Gov. Greg Abbott, and the Obama administration requesting that Mexican troops withdraw from American soil. If Gov. Abbott in turn disagreed with the administration and asked Mexican troops to stay, that would be a powerful rebuke of the federal government by a state governor. In Iraq's case, regional officials in the KRG are negotiating with a foreign power, and asking foreign troops to remain in their region even when the central government has formally asked them to leave.

Though KRG now has *de facto* independence, gaining *de jure* independence would make a difference for them. KRG's lack of *de jure* independence inhibits its ability to enter into contracts for the sale of oil from its territory, and also makes it more difficult for KRG to receive military and other forms of foreign assistance. If KRG gained independence, the loss of revenue from its oil would further damage an already battered Iraqi economy.

The post-ISIL economy. The Iraqi economy, particularly with low oil prices, is in poor shape. The mob violence we have seen in Baghdad is the kind of thing that makes international investors and creditors nervous. Nobody wants to invest in something today that can be stormed and looted tomorrow. It does not appear that the government has put together any kind of substantive reconstruction process for Ramadi, Fallujah, or Tikrit. All of this, in turn, is a recipe for a lot of discontented military-age males.

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[19] See discussion in Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Sterling Jensen, "The Role of Iraqi Tribes after the Islamic State's Ascendance," *Military Review*, July/August 2015, available at https://www.joomag.com/magazine/military-review-english-edition-july-august-2015/0631518001433865170?page=104.

Infrastructure. Iraq's infrastructure has been poorly maintained, as the government has been in survival mode, and battling an existential threat, since 2014. Everything has gone into its war budget. Poor infrastructure will hamper Iraq's economic recovery further.

In contrast, KRG's infrastructure has been relatively untouched by the fight against ISIL. This will be another driver of Kurdish independence: A lot of national-level spending will be poured into infrastructure, which will disproportionately benefit the non-KRG regions.

Environment. ISIL has been a blight on Iraq's natural environment, laying waste to crops, oil wells, and factories. Many IDPs will not return to their farmlands—although some groups that are helped by outside private aid donations, such as the Yazidis and Ninawa's Christians, will be in a better position to return to their farms because they are able to implement micro-reconstruction in their traditional areas. In Sunni areas, there is an opening for Islamist-leaning—and, sometimes, jihadist-leaning—NGOs to shoulder this burden.

In short, Iraq's post-ISIL future is likely to heap bad news on top of a situation that is already bleak.

After the Caliphate: Understanding and Countering Salafist Threats

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The loss of Mosul -- and for all intents and purposes Iraq --could be the beginning of the end of the territorial Islamic State. Yet we know, and ISIL's leadership has warned, that serious threats in the region and to the West will remain. Understanding what forms these threats will take is the first step toward shaping strategies to counter them.

We now know (if we did not already know) that ISIL depends fundamentally on radicalization and recruitment of *individuals* to kill and die in the cause of Salafist extremism. Larger Sunni communities and populations tend not to sympathize with but instead are brutalized and antagonized by ISIL. This suggests that foreign occupation and large-scale counterinsurgency, in the classical sense, will be unnecessary if not also unhelpful to counter post-Caliphate ISIL.

Still, individuals, groups and networks of fighters and terrorists will be motivated to continue violent jihad, whether against local regimes, the West, Shiites, or apostate Sunnis. Since ISIL's seizure of expansive populated real estate, recruits have had a dual motivation to commit violence: the siren call of Salafist extremism and the historic creation of the Caliphate. The Caliphate's demise may lessen the intensity and the breadth of Salafist-extremist motivation.

Post-Caliphate ISIL threats will take two main forms:
1. Remnants of fanatical forces in the region, including in Iraq, Syria, and Libya
2. Radicalized individuals in or returning to the West

The persistence of violent fanaticism in the region could continue to stoke individual radicalization and terrorism in the West. Thus, the destruction of ISIL remnants in the region could in time lessen, though not end, threats in the West. (This point is important in placing responsibility within the US Government for countering these two threats – see below).

The first of these threats is likely to take the form of comparatively small units with light combat equipment, modest economic resources, minimal popular backing, and only fleeting territorial sanctuary. With suicide terrorist methods and wanton executions, they will be extremely dangerous to civilians. But they could be overmatched by well equipped, trained and led indigenous forces, e.g., Iraqi Army or Peshmerga. They may also be targets for liberated Sunni populations (e.g., tribes). Remnants might fight to the death or melt into rural or urban terrain. Some might seek a more normal life, but we should not count on this. While ISIL remnants will be hard to eliminate entirely, loss of territory will increase their vulnerability.

As for the second form of threat, individuals in or returning to the West could be American or European citizens -- inconspicuous but potentially suspicious to those who know them through work, family or mosque. They will continue to identify with the Umma and embrace Salafism mainly via websites and social media. The motivation of these individuals could ebb with the end of the Caliphate, though it takes very few of them to create havoc, as we well know. They could engage in various types of suicide terrorism. While they may be networked, they are unlikely to have significant support, direction or sophistication.

By objective standards, neither of these post-Caliphate threats on their own present as severe a danger to U.S. interests as Caliphatic ISIL has presented. However, the potential for further Salafist extremist violence in the volatile Middle East and for lone-wolf terrorism in the United States and Europe cannot be ignored.

With the notable exception of Syria, threats from ISIL remnants in the region can be destroyed by indigenous forces – possibly police but certainly combat units -- supported by U.S. ISR and U.S. or allied air power and advisors. Remaining or new high-value post-Caliphate targets could be eliminated by air strikes or SOF. Responsibility for spelling out and executing this strategy is mainly CENTCOM's.

Countering the second threat -- radicalized post-Caliphate lone-wolf (or lone-group) terrorism in the United States -- requires a different strategy, of course. Lead responsibility is the FBI's, and the "battlefield" is mainly the Internet and other information domains. Enhancements are needed in intelligence collection, data management and analytics, and cyber operations. More robust capabilities and operation are achievable with current and coming technology. However, protections of privacy and freedom of expression need to be debated, agreed, and assured.

A final note about policy. In Iraq, insistent encouragement of a non-sectarian federated democratic state is paramount for the post-Caliphate anti-ISIL strategy to work. In Syria, the strategy leaves open the difficult question of what to do about the Assad regime and its Russian and Iranian backers, though it is possible that the destruction of the Caliphate would remove an excuse for regime brutality against Sunni opponents.

Unseating the Caliphate: Contrasting the Challenges of Liberating Fallujah and Mosul

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We cannot reproduce the article from the CTC Monitor, but you can access it:

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Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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Trying to view a post-IS Iraq means looking forwards to an Iraq which may possibly be split into two or more parts. The Westphalian world is over, and the borders of Iraq dating from the 1920s up to 2014 are up for debate, despite what the coalition desires. Of course, there are vested interests within Iraq who desire to retain the "borders of Iraq" as they have been, primarily interests located in Iraq and profiting from siphoning off of resources provided by the international community largely in the form of humanitarian aid/assistance. Additionally, the Iraqi government is acknowledged to be extremely corrupt but there is also a desire to root out most of that corruption by changing the government away from the U.S. designed ethnic/religious/gender apportionment and to a "free merit-based" government which will be a primarily Shia-dominated government.

Iraq is primarily a tribal culture living within a centralized governmental system, in which the centralized government doles out resources to tribal leaders who return a loyalty to "the State." As long as the resources flow, loyalty is generally assured (that resource flow has been cut off to the Sunni tribes of Anbar and Ninawa provinces, thus the uncertainty of the status of IS in those provinces, and the manipulation of the Sunni tribes by external players such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE).

Additionally, Iraq is divided in many ways by various religions within its current borders. The obvious and major split is between Sunni and Shia. However, it is not that simple. There are Arab Sunni and Kurdish Sunni, neither of whom generally get along. As for the Shia, the Shia of Iraq are basically Akbari Shia and proud of their Arab past, while the Shia of Iran are mostly Usuli and not so fond of Arabs. It has been noted that many Iraqi Shia are thankful for the assistance of Iran in the fight against IS but once that fight is successfully won, they would like the Iranian Shia to go back to Iran. In addition to Islam, there are Christian

minorities (Nestorian and Chaldean), Cult of Angel minorities (Yezidi, Alevi, Yarsani) and still a few Mandeans (Gnostic).

So, taking into account the current fight with IS and assuming that it will be a victory of the anti-IS forces, as well as all the intervening countries (Iran, U.S., Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the GCC, and lesser players such as France, Great Britain, Russia, etc.), let me use the PMESII-PT format:

Political - If Iraq remains unitary, likely an authoritarian-style government. If not, then it may split into three parts. The Shia-dominated government will likely be the closest to a western-style governance form although heavily influenced by the Marjaya. The Kurdish government would be authoritarian, as it is now, and heavily dependent upon Turkey for its survival. The Sunni portions may remain chaotic until and unless they can be formed under an authoritarian regime, potentially linked to Turkey or the GCC, or not.

Military - It depends upon the political structures. The Kurds are easy, their military would/will likely remain a corrupted Peshmerga in which ration strength is heavily over-reported and mobilization will only be taken in dire circumstances. The Sunni areas will be tribally dominated, if there is a unified military structure. The Shia areas will retain the structures of the Iraqi Army and Federal Police.

Economic - As with today, it is all about oil. As current economic dependence on oil is 90% and government revenues is dependent on oil at 95%, such will remain the same. Both the Kurdish and Shia regions will have access to tremendous oil reserves (although Kurdistan will remain dependent upon Turkey to get the oil out). The Sunni region will be in a much more desperate situation as there is little access to oil reserves. This will make the Sunnis susceptible to external manipulation as well as leading to working abroad.

Social - Iraq will remain largely tribal in orientation, although religious divides could subsume tribal divisions. The Shia region with its greater urbanization and access externally could enjoy a greater detribalization compared to the other regions.

Information - With the retention of a strong internet infrastructure backbone, cyber information flow will only increase. With this flow, there will be adequate interaction with the greater global community but it is possible that local filtering is possible.

Infrastructure - Infrastructure in the Sunni region will deteriorate while it should improve (in the absence of conflict) in the Shia and Kurd regions.

Physical Environment there will be a continued degradation of the physical environment as long as Iraq is subject to the reduce water flow of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers due to Turkish impoundment of water in the 22-dam system of the GAP. Existing environmental damage has significantly impaired Iraq. Example, Saddam's Anfal campaign included the injection of salt water into the sweet water aquifers beneath the Sinjar area, permanently destroying the aquifer. Saddam's destruction of the Mesopotamian Marsh caused the 120 mile long Shatt al-Arab waterway to suffer saltification and uncontrolled spread of pests, thus destroying approximately 14 million date palms out of 18 million (a huge economic loss to both Iraq and Iran). There are many other environmental problems in Iraq but the major issue is water and the lack of it.

Time - In a post-IS Iraq, the factors which led to the rise of the Islamic State as well as the influence of Al Qaeda and related entities will remain. Therefore, there will be Islamic insurgent organizations who will continue to struggle against any centralized Shia-based (or Kurdish-based or Sunni Shia-dependent political entities) government. As they believe they are fighting in the way of Allah, they have an infinite amount of time. If they are an apocalyptic or millenarian insurgent movement, they will likely bind themselves to their own timeline (as the Islamic State has done today). A remaining major time-related issue will be coordinating between a western Gregorian-based calendar of 365 days versus an Islamic-based calendar of 354 days, but this is a fairly small issue.

The major friction point is the lack of water, which in conjunction with 9 years of drought has forced numerous small farmers from their land to urban areas ill-equipped to receive them. The continuing negative impact upon the national infrastructures (power, water catchment and movement, oil extraction, etc) all ultimately depend on the ability to convince Turkey to release more water as well as the stabilization and repair of Mosul Dam. Successful and equitable water management is the key to whatever successes Iraq might enjoy.

What Comes After ISIS? A Peace Proposal

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Clark McCauley publish a paper on this topic, which we cannot reprint there, but you may access it via the link below.

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Building the Framework: Exploring the Connections between the Questions

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Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to identify the areas of overlap between these related questions, and provide a framework to support the other ViTTa submissions. Accordingly, it aims to help build greater situational awareness of the complexities facing the region and US efforts there designed to shape outcomes desired by both external actors and the internal participants themselves. To do so, the arguments presented here rely on several core scholarly approaches, namely comparative politics and conflict resolution studies, as a kind of analytical "reconnaissance" of key scholarly approaches that can benefit practitioners and planners. Both academic disciplines focus on aspects of *structure and agency* – fundamental tools that shape our understanding of contexts, concepts, and categories of analysis.

Foundations of Change

To begin, we can apply these tools to the Gray Zone as both context for CENTCOM's efforts, as well as a concept itself worthy of evaluation. Yet rather than rehearse the well-used definitions present in DOD and broader USG discussions, this paper focuses instead on the Gray Zone as *undefined borders of conflict*. These can certainly mean actions short of war, committed by both *state and non-state actors*. However, an additional framework that explores multiple 2

transnational attributes gives traction to identify Gray Zone issues, actions, and responses to them, and to show their interrelations to each other. Key to this is the idea that all parties engaged in the Gray Zone have elements of transnationalism, whether through NATO coordination, ISIS propaganda via social messaging, or economic integration across borders. In addition, state and non-state participants have broad reach, finding themselves affected by and affecting geo- and regional politics, in part because of the reliance on *proxies*, *partners*, and *puppets*. Defining these groupings, 1) proxies operate on behalf of an otherwise distant party, 2) partners share responsibilities and openly support the common cause, while 3) puppets claim autonomy but have little to no capacity of independent action, to say nothing of the intentions for carrying out their own autonomous outcomes. In particular, groups hostile to the US are also often bound together in the Gray Zone by the presence of an anti-status quo *casus belli* due to the **presence of actual grievances**. These can range from common forms of economic privation and political marginalization, to all sorts of disenfranchisement due to ethnic, religious, sectarian, and interpersonal experiences. The presence of these grievances matters greatly when considering the causes of conflict and ways to resolve them. Yet since these have often been around for considerable time in most places defined within the Gray Zone, in both a general sense of widespread suffering and in particular cases that matter to anti-status quo groups, an additional factor rests on the **perception of grievances**. This is often the tinder to the kindling of actual grievances.

Perceptions matter in that they serve to identify collective and individual problems, but equally they shape the boundaries for what is really "bad" and who is really "guilty". This part of perceived grievances often addresses the sense of loss and powerlessness attributed to those who participate in anti-status quo behavior. This can apply equally to Kaiser Wilhelm II's aggressive pursuit of "a place in the sun", to Occupy Wall Street, to violent extremist organizations currently facing the US and its allies. However, perceived loss and powerlessness do not by themselves motivate aggressive action. That requires a second element of empowerment, namely that something can be done to right the wrongs. Underlying both is the persistent anger at those perceived to be responsible. The combination of anger and a sense that options exist to rectify injustice rests on beliefs of **efficacy** – the ability to impact one's life positively through action. Efficacy applies generally, coming up across the spectrum of traditional discourse between great powers and local host nations, as much as in VEO recruitment narratives. As a result, efficacy becomes a powerful tool for analyzing perceived grievances, which need not correspond directly to actual problems as defined by the angered parties; they can have basis in reality to be sure, but the extent of the problems and their perpetrators can certainly drift from established fact based on perceptions.

Yet, as valuable as the presence and perception of grievance are in giving a basic understanding of the reasons for aggressive actions, something is missing even beyond the efficacy to do something about them. There remains the need for a spark to ignite the process. Building on root causes, these kinds of **proximate factors** can be seen clearly in those that set off the Arab Spring in Tunisia – lingering doubts about the legitimacy of the Ben Ali regime, the tragic public suicide of Mohamed Bouazizi, and ultimately the ease of information sharing to connect disparate people through social media. However, in important ways those factors still relied on the active non-violent participation of security forces supporting the protestors. This removal of capacity and explicit legitimacy from the government moved the process of revolution along apace.

Additionally, to add to our understanding of the context that faces US and partner efforts in the region, the Arab Spring also shows other factors relevant to the initial CENTCOM questions in this paper. It addresses comparisons between countries whereby actions in Tunisia found ready fuel in growing anger over rising bread prices in Egypt, for example. In the latter case, efficacy for revolution, based on a general sense that change could happen, needed additional *casus belli* to set off Tahrir Square, both externally to the protestors and internally to their motivations. Externally, the loss of legitimacy in the Mubarak regime came to a head when it became clear the president would not allow open elections as promised, and instead planned to appoint his son as successor. This in itself need not have caused the effusion of discontent, as the regime suffered legitimacy problems for some time. However, in the context of rising food costs (kindling), the tinder of political betrayal created a scenario awaiting the right spark.

Internally, that spark came in Egypt, as with so many other instances of personal and collective anti-status quo actions, with a **cognitive opening**. In this case, it came through the **replication effect** of successful change in Tunisia – specifically due to military support for the protestors. More broadly, the Tunisian revolution was itself akin in process (if not in grievance) to Serbia's Bulldozer Revolution, which could be argued followed from the post-communist Color Revolutions, following the democratic revolutions in Eastern Europe, building on the third wave of democratization in Latin America the decade prior, and so on.

The broader point is that *cognitive openings build on previous phenomena, often found in catastrophe and epiphany* – some tragic event rocks the worldview and some opportunity presents itself for real change. In both cases, the spark enables mobilization by ready and able organizations, be they states or non-state actors. 5

It is also important for all of these events to note the role of state forces supporting protestors, either implicitly by not implementing violent actions decreed by regime leaders, or explicitly by manning the barricades together. Of note in many of these cases though, was the division between internal security forces/police and military units. Often the decision of the military carried greater weight, perhaps as symbols of national identity and preservation of the state against the government or even broader regime rules governing the country. This dynamic can play a pivotal role in the struggles in the Levant, not least because efforts to establish rule of law and external security remain so intangible in the current state of affairs, yet both offer the potential to build legitimacy for governance in both countries.

Foundations of Governance
These processes and factors are certainly not new to the Gray Zone, and this gives hope for solid analysis regarding Iraq and Syria. The undefined borders of conflict there can find resonance with historic cases as variations on a theme in 19th and 20th century domestic and international politics. Internal pressures on and by states towards their societies, as well as on and by external actors operating in foreign countries, reinforce the transnational geographic nature of the persistent Gray Zone. Examples of transnational actions and issues can be seen in Western divide and rule imperialism couched as "civilizing", as well as post-colonial cross border conflicts by revolutionary governments striving to maintain legitimacy while committing actions that undermined it. Additionally, Cold War spheres of influence that included proxies, partners, and puppets often employed justifications for transnational priorities with instrumental speech of liberty, while using others for "higher" purposes that made strange political bedfellows with dictators. Today, we can see similarly apparent paradoxes with the convergence of transnational criminal organizations and VEO's, to say nothing of the use of universal regime narratives claiming democracy as the rule of the day, while pursuing wholly undemocratic practices in many parts of the world.

Therefore, knowing the shared historical precedents of the contextual complexities facing US and partner nation efforts, particularly the constraints inhibiting positive lasting influence, helps to establish firm analytical grounding for addressing those challenges. Specifically, analysis benefits from reliance on two fundamental categories found in comparative politics, namely *structure and agency*. **Structure** can be defined broadly as the setting and system that constrains or enables agents to act. **Agency** would then be the individuals and groups that actually do stuff. An example from the recent past best describes both and their interaction with each other. Looking at Gorbachev's role in helping to end the Cold War, one can easily identify the structural element of hierarchical domestic power based on his position as the head of the Communist Party, and the international leverage granted that position that empowered Gorbachev to accomplish much internationally. Agency also played a role in that Gorbachev pursued policies from a clear ideological framework as a true believer in communism. Equally importantly was his norm-entrepreneurship – when the real world began not to look the way his belief system said it must, Gorbachev used his structural power to influence others to his "new thinking". The same can be said for countless leaders in general, as well as for average citizens who join and participate in organizations bent on changing the status quo. The point is not to

reinvent the analytical wheel here, but to show that these core concepts give solid footing for addressing some of the most difficult questions raised in the CENTCOM project.

That analytical role for structure and agency operates through the framework of the **state-society relationship**, where the *state* is that enduring entity that protects borders from internal and external threats. It does so according to Weber's maxim that states control the monopoly on the use of legitimate coercive force, recognizing that that monopoly is rarely absolute for long, and that contestations to legitimacy invariably rise by internal challenges and external rivals. Despite these necessary caveats, the definition still provides enough grounding to draw vital distinctions between states and *regimes*, which define the rules of the games – both codified formal rules and informal day-to-day governance procedures. These two entities differ from *governments* made up of elites who rule and make policies according to the parameters of the state and regime. However, at times these three are odds with each other, or have some variation of conflict, as can be seen in quasi-state entities like ISIS, and by extension the Assad regime today. These entities can function with a degree of internal sovereignty but without external recognition by the international community, and in the above cases, a much-deserved lack of recognition in their current forms.

On the other side in this relationship, the societal element often relies on an in-group/out-group dynamic defining how individuals and groups see themselves and others, as well as how they believe others see them. These identities follow processes of socialization among "believers", whereby ideas and interest first get *articulated,* and individuals learn what matters to themselves and others. Next, these concepts can *aggregate* as groups form around commonalities, finally leading to the *articulation* of identities and interests to those in power. Social movement theory expands this greatly and offers valid insights in the mechanisms for social mobilization, while it too rests within the context of states and their relationships to societies as a whole. However, by no means do these processes occur along deterministic paths, as many ideas and interests fall by the wayside or get squashed at various stages by social or state rivals. Instead, the basic process helps to reveal common steps by which groups, including states, can come to develop self and other identities. This can in turn allow for analysis into the processes of mobilization, something that has great significance for both sides of the radicalization-deradicalization spectrum pertaining to questions posed at the outset of this paper.

That spectrum also shares three factors that help to define structure and agency in a given context, whether states or non-state organizations: capacity, autonomy, and legitimacy. **Capacity** refers to the ability to collect resources and use specific allocation mechanisms for distributing them effectively, according to whichever schema dominates the policy decision making process. These can be paternalistic, prestige-based, retributive, democratic, religious, or rely on a host of other *norms of appropriateness* defined by and defining the state-society relationship. In turn, **autonomy** deals with decision making and enforcing power without the presence of countermanding outsiders. This often gets labeled as sovereignty in interstate diplomacy, as well as between separatist movements and governments loathe to relinquish control over state territory. The recent Colombian government negotiations with the FARC highlight the centrality of autonomy discussions with anti-status quo non-state actors. This may hold promise for comparisons to Iraq and Syria if conditions follow similar paths, and agents with the requisite structural power can pursue them; two very large conditions, but ones worth watching for and seeking to support if they do arrive. Finally, **legitimacy** can be difficult to operationalize in a research sense – "how can we know that a group or government has it beforehand" is a much more

difficult question then knowing when those actors have lost it. Accordingly, legitimacy can range from no overt opposition (tacit) to purposeful support (explicit). This captures a set of actions to indicate the presence of an otherwise difficult to ascertain belief.

In an attempt to show that these variables can provide real world measures of the state-society dynamic, the following two tables provide an example template for Iraq that includes structure and agency for both state and society. It can offer some steps to establishing the context for discussion of what victory would look like in Syria and Iraq, how to position the US and partners for engaging ISIS until the group loses traction in the "war of words" by losing on the battlefield, and ultimately what can be done to help establish stable governance that at the very least is not hostile to the US and its efforts in Syria.

Employing this template allows for engagement with two additional core concepts, specifically *cultural empathy* and *conflict resolution* paradigms. These two related approaches can greatly aid planning and implementation of policies, in terms of defining "good" outcomes beforehand and working appropriately to enable them. Both also recognize the limitations inherent to the latter, in particular, in places suffering from catastrophic, persistent violence like Iraq and Syria.

Foundations of "Victory"

Cultural empathy steps through the door of cultural knowledge to reach out figuratively and literally to the "other". By that, it allows for practitioners to use several critical topics used often in the fight against ISIS – narratives, norms, and to a lesser degree in the public fora but equally importantly, nationality. Narratives remain central to a range of DOD functions, as well as more broadly by implication, political interactions between states and within them over resources, influence, and strategic victory. Narratives play that role because they accomplish several primary tasks. First, they help to explain why people do what they do, and the meaning of events that occur outside of direct human action. Second, they also serve as keepers of collective memory passed through generations, helping individuals and communities to know their place relative to outsiders, whether hostile, indifferent, or confederates working towards common goals. Finally, narratives are themselves acts of purposive language, providing tools for groups to achieve their goals by combining collaborative stories. Those stories build on each other through central themes that often include some form of trouble and a way out of it. Therefore, as more than simply rote memory of what happened, or even why it occurred and still matters, narratives also include elements of empathy to connect the story tellers and hearers with story characters, thus giving a sense of shared humanity across time and space. Those characters can motivate present day listeners towards greater pursuits of justice, reward and fulfillment, and as a result, offer states and non-state groups a broad spectrum of powerful analogies and archetypes for action.

Yet narratives are not in themselves rigid, immutable things. Elements of internal cohesion and adaptability show tensions that can exist between *master narratives* that persist through continued traction within a community based on their meaning and usage to explain things, and *personal versions* of the story that circle the core tenets. Having room for individuation does not mean an ideational free-for-all though. Stories or meanings that move too far from the center, or peripheral ideas that seek to overcome the core beliefs are likely to draw attention, if not outright hostility. Examples from counter fatwas regarding ISIS, or the broader current meaning of the European Union highlight the contested nature

of those deviations, or more aptly, their perception as deviations by those who hold to a more "traditional" meaning of the core. In significant ways then, for Europe, the most meaningful changes in the EU can be seen in its movement from economic unity to political coordination and finally social integration of values, rather than the more easily noted geographic enlargement into Eastern Europe. These comparisons have direct application to Iraq and Syria as both polities struggle to define the narratives that establish and build the capacity, autonomy and legitimacy discussed earlier.

To make those comparisons, it is necessary to ask why some narratives become the message for violent action, while others do not, as well as the mechanisms by which those processes take place. Determining that requires a focus on aspects of *integration, coherence and fidelity*. Each of these reveals connections between core beliefs and language, while tying in experiences before people join resistance movements, as well as what members do within them. Accordingly, dialogue between rank-and-file participants, and between them and the leadership reveals points of contact either to build up or diminish the legitimacy of resistance narratives.

In particular, identifying a disconnect between what messages actually say relative to common, long-standing meanings will require a depth of knowledge that is available in different academic disciplines. Tapping into that knowledge base allows for strategic messaging to attempt plugging holes in a supported information campaign, or conversely, efforts to open new gaps or exploit existing ones in countering adversary movements. This partly focuses on the ideational space, while trustworthiness deals with the actions of leaders as moral archetypes of those narratives. As such, engaging in a typical "smear campaign" to discredit opponents has its rewards, but opposition groups retain ways to justify what could otherwise be considered deviations of character in response. Recognizing that action-reaction dynamic remains a key feature of effecting positive change in the long-term fight against ISIS and the prospects for stabilization of Syria and Iraq.

So how then can practitioners take this into practical data collection and messaging? Analysis into multiple layers of meaning gives a framework for evaluating a spectrum of issues and how people handle them cognitively, but at the same time, it also recognizes the limitations posed by *incomplete, inaccurate, and instrumental* information – people may not know, may remember or understand incorrectly, or may seek to skew the presentation of information in favor of things other than full truth claims. Accordingly, research needs realistic boundaries for what it can do in this central area of narrative analysis. Of particular note is the way individual cognition coalesces into larger group dynamics since group think can override personal decision making. Examples include things like *bandwagoning* – siding with the dominant view to ensure personal rewards; *peer pressure* – overriding emotional attachments and cost/benefit calculations to "fit in"; and *threat perceptions* – engaging in fight and flight mechanisms.

Tied to these considerations are norms of appropriateness, specifically the practical use of beliefs within society that reinforce personal and group senses of place and purpose, as well as remonstrations and reprimands for deviating away from the norms. In particular, we want to know what those norms are for Iraq and Syria, but first, can we even homogenize those two countries into single normative units of analysis? Deeper analysis into subgroups based on *objective* norms (those that exist regardless of who the "other" is or what they do), as well as *subjective* ones focusing on intergroup dynamics, can identify the friction points within the states as they currently exist, and areas of overlap in the potential future. Even

more so, these norms have undergone stress from the near constant violence plaguing both countries, but at the same time, belief systems have also adapted, whether by highlighting virtues of fighting or fleeing to protect what matters most. Those valued things span a range from life, family, ethnic identity, and to ideational notions of nationality, all of which are relatable points of empathetic connection for practitioners engaging with vulnerable populations in the region.

Specifically, nationalism offers more than just a reference point for conversations in-country between locals. It also pertains to aspirations of self-government through a sovereign state, and thus gives much more in terms of the broader concept of cultural empathy for outsider interveners. Both Iraq and Syria are deeply broken in fundamental ways. Economic disruptions, demographic dislocations, political alienation, and the ensuing violence over these and deeper ethnic and religious identity conflicts reveal a broad landscape of complex, overlapping problems. In many ways, they are similar to the Gray Zone itself with undefined borders of conflict. As such, one way to the brokenness is nationalism, an identity marker that can cross cultural and economic cleavages through a political framework. Citizenship allows for opportunities to give allegiance to broader entities, while not inherently threatening and diminishing more local identities. In return, states provide rights and "goodies.

> "One way to bind the brokenness is nationalism, an identity marker that can cross cultural and economic cleavages through a political framework."

However, even a cursory glance at the struggles facing Afghanistan calls into the question the rose-colored glasses one could assume of building nationalism. This relates back to the troika of analytical categories – *capacity, autonomy and legitimacy* – for even in places with two out of three, the absence of one may undo, or at the very least undermine nation building; Turkmenbashi remained an elusive goal despite the profusion of golden statues. What value then can nationalism bring to the discussion at hand? In one critical aspect, it provides a way forward, but as with all other aspects of this analytical foundation argument, considerations of feasibility matter as much as the efforts and paradigm undergirding nationalism.

Accordingly, **conflict resolution** strategies offer practical guidelines for setting the steps for long-term efforts that have potential to lead to successful outcomes in the region. In many ways, the tools for conflict resolution already exist across a host of USG and partner nation capacities. These include historic examples of multilateral peacekeeping, prevention efforts through negotiated settlements at all levels of governance from the local to international venues, all the way to reconciliation mechanisms found in truth commissions and microfinance. What binds these actions together is their *modularity*, their flexibility of application across issues and geographic spaces. In significant ways, conflict resolution shares similarities to the Gray Zone as a concept and in practice, making transnational actions feasible in both areas.

Specifically, reductions in violence, establishment of peace zones, and ultimately the development and embedding of non-violent resolution mechanisms in the structures and agents of the state-society relationship remain the gold standard for lasting peace. To do so obviously requires addressing the underlying causes, which the aforementioned analytical tools can provide, to say nothing of actually ending the violence itself, clearly no easy task. The relevant actions often lie across a spectrum of contexts and goals ranging from negative

peace (the absence of overt violence) to positive peace (reconciliation so fighting no longer becomes a desired option). Conflict mapping of the origins and processes of dispute lays a similar analytical foundation as structure and agency do for the state-society relationship, offering both snapshots at any given moment, as well as trend analysis for deeper analysis into causality. When combined with research into grievances, cognitive openings can emerge into view, and not just after the fact. This is partly due to a reliance on *organizational lifecycles*, a related field in business, sociology, and other related scholarly disciplines.

Recognizing that organizations progress through stages of development in similar ways to individual decisions to join and participate in those organizations, it is possible to identify markers of capacity, autonomy and legitimacy for both states and non-state groups. In particular for anti-status quo VEOs, one can examine initial incubation when narratives and norms advance into new areas of application and draw new adherents to the belief system. Strategic violence can result from those processes, in part due to rivalries within the emerging organization for power over more than just resources, to include the core identity markers of the narrative. It can also result from actions by external enemies or a lack of acceptance, or even notice, by the targeted population perceived by the organization as vulnerable and capable of mobilization by the group; violence in either case lashes out as a demand for attention and recognition. This stage also often includes expansion of logistics while seeking to avoid the threshold of decisive action by the targeted adversary. The third stage of political violence develops out of the group's efforts to usurp legitimacy from the dominant power base, often through the provision of state privileges and public goods. ISIS's current efforts in those areas have in part relied on replication effects based on successful transitions by the Iranian revolution, Hezbollah, and Fatah, despite their apparent sectarian and geographic differences.

Many revolutionary movements remain at this stage, whether through the continuation of counterrevolutionary narratives and actions as in Cuba and parts of sub-Saharan Africa, or because of de facto stalemates between themselves and their opponents. Neither of these outcomes holds much appeal for US interests in Iraq and Syria, begging the question of what can be done to prevent, if possible, enduring quagmires of political instability. Above all, conflict resolution strategies mandate **pragmatism** overlaid on solid analytical frameworks to see what is feasible. Not all conflicts are ripe for resolution, sometimes requiring *decisive victory*, despite the incumbent costs to human rights that often result. Another option with promise can be seen in Colombia with the *hurting stalemate* that incentivized conciliatory trust-building efforts that have produced a potential peace after decades of war. Obviously the same remains difficult in the case of the United States in Iraq and Syria, not least because of broader constraints facing interagency and international efforts within a deeply polarized American political process. However, certain observable reference points and steps can guide a pragmatic approach, even if it must be over the long-term.

First, organizations, including states and non-state actors in conflict, as well as individuals within them, will face cognitive openings. While difficult to predict, indicators of something moving that way can included 1) moderated speech acts – even if only inklings of conciliation, 2) factional divisions – even if these may be instrumental speech designed for effect on external adversaries rather than a realistic picture of internal dynamics, and 3) failures to claim ownership of violence – even if the same actions had previously received the group's sanction and support. These are a few of the possible indicators of openings, but they offer potential for engagement, which raises the second issue of front vs. back channel

negotiations. How, when, where, and by whom those negotiations take place have numerous historical and contemporary examples of success and failure, such that obvious pros and cons exist for both. However, outlining beforehand the second and third order effects for each remains a necessary planning step. Thus, when used together with the foundations of change and governance listed above, these approaches help to build a framework for engaging the relevant questions posed by this CENTCOM SMA, one that can support systemic evaluation in lieu of ad hoc analyses so often tied to the exigencies of urgent crises.

Conclusion

This brief review of scholarly contributions has sought to engage the connections between the questions rather than delve into specific names, dates, and places for action, as other elements of this ViTTa will likely have contributed. Those certainly carry great weight in addressing the questions raised, as does knowing the players, their histories, and relationships to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. These can all assist in identifying motivations and hopefully, opportunities for US and partner efforts. In that light, this paper offers reference points that are more than pre-mission checklists, while still providing tangible guidelines for establishing strategic analysis into core concepts that have application at the operational and tactical levels as well. However, the concepts presented here are neither exhaustive, nor the sole paradigm through which to see opportunities and constraints in Iraq and Syria. They merely give decision makers another vantage point for working to continue the progress made in Iraq, and to develop standards of capacity, autonomy, and legitimacy for a post-ISIS Syria. In that sense, this paper does not propose specific guidance on the thornier issues of whether Assad should stay, or to what degree the current Iraqi government can build greater governance as it reclaims deeply broken areas of its country. Instead, the framework shows sturdy stepping stones on which the US can stand as it wades deeper into the torrents facing the region.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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Please see image on next page.

PMESII-PT friction points in post-ISIL Iraq; Future of Syria

L. J. Palmer-Moloney, PhD
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GEOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

Watershed Considerations

When one riparian holds the most geographic and military power, equitable agreements are difficult to reach.

Unilaterial development of water resources leads to increasing tension over water.

Tigris-Euphrates Watershed...

is shared among Turkey, Syria, and Iraq. These three riparian states have co-existed with varying degrees of "hydropolitical tension" since the 1960s.

In 1975, unilateral water developments nearly led to war along the Euphrates River.

In the '90s, Syrian support for Kurdish separatists and Turkey 's military support for Israel exacerbated on-going water dispute.

By 2001 Syria and Turkey agree on protocol of cooperation for Turkey's GAP and Syria's GOLD projects.

2003 post -Hussein Iraqi leadership stated intention to reach agreement with Turkey and Syria regarding Tigris-Euphrates water allocation.

The two rivers have their sources in eastern Turkey. Both rivers drain southeast through northern Syria and Iraq to the head of the Persian Gulf. The upper courses are confined to the valleys and gorges of Anatolia. Their middle courses cross the uplands of northern Syria and Iraq, emptying onto the plain of central Iraq. Finally, their lower courses meander across the alluvial plain, which both rivers have created jointly. Near Basra, the rivers join to form the Shatt al-Arab, which empties into the Persian Gulf.

Evaluating A Watershed: Human-Environment Interaction
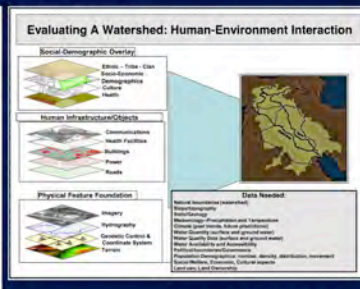
An understanding of the inextricable links between the systems of water, food, energy and climate is critical to make informed decisions regarding trade-offs between these systems, rather than suffer unintended consequences. Water security is the keystone of the water-energy-food-climate change nexus. Food production requires water and energy; water extraction and distribution require energy; and energy production requires water. Agriculture is the single largest consumer of water worldwide, and rapidly growing urban populations require safe, clean drinking water and adequate sanitation, as well as more food. Expected impacts of climate change on water resources increase the urgency of finding new ways to balance urban and rural needs in a sustainable way that ensures the continued health of freshwater ecosystems.

Issues to watch...

Water-Food-Energy Nexus

Environmentally Displaced People

Demographic Shifts - rural to urban migration

http://bit.ly/2dy7oBA
http://www.fao.org/nr/water/aquastat/basins/euphrates-tigris/index.stm

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

Diane Maye
Embry Riddle Aeronautical University

Below is an email exchange following Dr. Maye's 14 October SMA Speaker Series talk about "Iraqi Politics: Political Power, Alignment, and Alliances in Post-Ba'athist Iraq that is relevant to this question. To listen to an audio of this event, please contact Sarah Canna at scanna@nsiteam.com.

I hope this answers your questions - please let me know if you need any clarification:

Questions. Ref. a 'conclusion' or 'so what?' to Dr. Maye's research / BIG QUESTION - So what's the 'way-ahead' look like WRT upcoming elections and continuing development of Iraq? At least the possibilities based upon the trends she's seen w/I Iraqi political development?

Iraq's Sunnis have a big problem - lack of institutional longevity in their political parties as well as a lack of legitimacy. So, I predict that unless a strong Sunni political player emerges, the same situation of Sunni marginalization will emerge.

- Does it look like KRG/Kurdistan will remain a 'federated state' within the Iraqi National project?

Yes, I think so - now the push for Kurdish nationhood is strong; but it very difficult to fully break from Iraq. I think the Kurdish model would bode will for most of Iraq's provinces; a confederal state with each province in charge of their own security, and security at the local level.

- Can the previous success of the Iraqi National Movement to form an effective coalition of Shi'a and Sunni parties/candidates be replicated in future?

Yes - there will be secular party - a technocratic group; it is emerging now - these are the intellectual elite, businessmen. Their problem is that they tend to be undermined by the impoverished classes, the religious establishment, the Shi'ia street.

- Will this or the next Iraqi Administration grow closer to Iran, the US, or chart it's own 'third way'?

As it stands now -the Iraqi Administration is likely to be under the influence of Iran - the outcome of Mosul will have big play here- this is where the U.S. can undermine Iran and push the technocrats.

- Will the Iraqi religious authority(ies?) in Najaf/Karbala (the Hawza?) more actively 'advise' the Shi'a majority government to steer clear of the 'Iranian model'?

They are unlikely to steer clear of this in my opinion, the movement away towards an Iraq model is just not strong enough yet. Right now Iran has so much soft power, it will be hard to change the momentum.

What's the 'next generation' after al-Sistani general leanings WRT policies al-Sistani has taken?

Well, there is going to be huge vying for power - either there will be a declaration before Sistani dies, or there will be real chaos. There are already people trying to fill this gap. I predict chaos.

Question. Ref. slide 17 / Generalizations (Kurds)
- bullet two - while the Pesh have become legitimate, what's the impact to internal KRG politics AND external relations and development w/Iraqi Government of the multiple different 'factions' of Pesh (arguably as many as 5 different Peshmerga forces and NOT a single, unified, security force) to come to some internal and external 'agreement/accommodation' on a way-ahead?

Well - The folks in Suliyamaniah - from what I can tell they are certainly trying to align with the Baghdad govn[1]t, yet they are certainly seeking increased autonomy. Barzani[1]s faction, the KDP - they are very interested in what happens to Mosul (this is the real point of contention). There are many in Mosul that see the Kurds as running away - letting Daesh take over, doing nothing to help them. So, there is some resentment that the Kurds could take over once Mosul is taken back from Daesh. The Turks want influence in Mosul as well. This is going to be a big problem - already there are disagreements about having Turkish forces on the ground there.

- Is there any chance of another 'civil war' between KDP(West) and PUK(East) over way-ahead for the KRG and Kurdish autonomy/independence?

No, I don[1]t think so.

- While it appears to me that NEITHER KDP nor PUK want to 'support' integration of Eastern Syrian Kurds into a 'greater Kurdistan', they have supported them

materially to fight ISIS/Assad - WRT Kobani the Turks reluctantly 'allowed' this - is support of Syrian and Turkish Kurds a point of contention between KDP and PUK leadership and policies?

They are trying to establish this one big Kurdish nation - so this would certainly help in terms of geography. I can see some pushing for this and others opposing it.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

Yezid Sayigh
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1. The principal factor affecting the future of the Syrian conflict is that the Assad regime is not simply unwilling to engage in any degree of genuine power-sharing - it is unable to do so without the risk of unraveling. But the key issue here is not simply that it will therefore continue to fight for outright military and political victory. Rather, even total victory leaves the regime in command of a devastated economy and under continuing sanctions without the resources to rebuild its power or consolidate its hold over the country. So its logical goal has to be to regain access to external capital and markets, and to get sanctions lifted. In theory, it has little hope of achieving this thru normal diplomacy and will face severe reluctance from the US, EU, and GCC countries and Turkey, and so it will extend the fighting inside Syria as a means of coercing external

> "The Assad regime is not simply unwilling to engage in any degree of genuine power sharing, it is unable to do so without the risk of unraveling."

powers into accepting its demands. This is not something that will start to happen in a year or two or only after a political deal is reached; the regime is probably thinking along these lines now. I suspect that Russia (and others such as China) will endorse regime demands, arguing that the "Friends of Syria" governments can't demand a transition or peace in Syria and then be unwilling to increase its chances of success by lifting sanctions and allowing trade in goods and capital flows to resume. Turkey will also have an interest in getting back into the Syrian market, as will Lebanon and Jordan, which have suffered the most economically and are desperate to repatriate refugees and revive their flagging economies and business sectors. The regime knows this and has been adopting new laws since late 2015 designed, at least in part, to attract investors and Syrian flight capital. Securing the regime financially and economically will, I believe, become the real purpose behind much of its military operations (i.e. as leverage and coercion of external governments) and the focus of behind-the-scenes discussions with the US and EU (et al), probably mediated by Russia, once the new US administration picks up the foreign policy reins from Spring 2017.

2. With regard to the implications of the Turkish intervention in Syria, I view this primarily as a maneuver by Erdogan to display an appearance of being in charge (of the army and foreign policy) in the wake of the attempted coup, but in reality what seems to be an offensive posture is a defensive one that seeks to mask the big challenges the Turkish president faces at home. These include: 1) his continuing confrontation with the PKK (which he resumed as an extension of his domestic political agenda), 2) his need to

consolidate control over his own party as well as the general public and the civil service (it's true that he has fired 80,000 civil servants and is going after opposition or independent media, academics, activists, which consolidates his personal grip, but Turkey is a diverse, complex, modern country and these measures will also inflict a high social, political, and economic cost too), and 3) his need to worry about the army (it's true he's defeated the coup, but the army will not regain its full cohesion and effectiveness for years, during which he's implicated it in a nasty domestic war with the country's Kurdish population, and he can't be absolutely sure that it is now wholly neutralized politically.)

So in my assessment, controlling a narrow strip of land inside Syria by Turkish units is more about show and PR, as are statements about being ready to work with the US to regain Raqqa. The Turkish army can't reach Raqqa without going either thru Syrian Kurdish areas (if going directly south from the border), which would be very problematic and disruptive for US military planning, or thru or adjacent to Assad regime forces (if hooking via Aleppo East and then south of the Tabqa dam to Raqqa). This is just not real, and the Turkish defence Minister Isik has publicly said Turkey will "support" but not be part of the Euphrates Force.

The takeaway is that no single ground force operating in Syria today can take Raqqa on its own, no matter how much air support it gets: not the Assad regime, the Kurds/SDF, nor any combination of the "moderate" opposition (or non-moderate opposition for that matter). But I don't see a coalition of any two of these forces working together, either.

3. With regard to post-ISIL scenarios, the real threat is the future of the Iraqi state and of Shia-Shia rivalries. There was a brief moment when the US and others faced up to the truth of why ISIL was able to revive and then sweep thru Mosul and central Iraq in summer 2014: the deep corruption of the Iraqi state (of which army and police corruption were a part), the failure to achieve genuine political reintegration of the Sunni Arabs or to resolve any other deep political divisions within the Sunni and Shia political camps and communities, and the failure of government ministries and agencies to deliver effective services and solutions to endemic problems (electricity, poverty and unemployment which remain deepest in Shia provinces, etc.). The US understood that these issues had to be addressed, but in the face of resistance from the Iraqi actors abandoned the attempt and focused solely on immediate military needs. While understandable, the result is that nobody has confronted, let alone resolved, the above three challenges since 2014. In fact they are not even being discussed. Talk of reform in Baghdad (cabinet and parliament) had no depth and little will, and has degenerated into a power struggle between Abadi, Sadr, and the other main Shia players (Maliki, PM chiefs).

All these problems will be center stage again as soon as the dust clears from the battle for Mosul. I'm not even talking about the huge challenge of post-conflict reconstruction of towns and homes and businesses destroyed in the actual fighting. I'm referring to the basic question of what Iraqi state will emerge, and to the questions many Iraqis will pose about its purpose and nature and identity - and indeed why to have it at all. Potentially most worrying, however, will be the intensification of Shia-Shia rivalry in a post-ISIL context. This has been subsumed by the fight against ISIL, but is already apparent. With ISIL's defeat, however, the single most important issue for the powerful Shia political and military actors will be to decide who dominates their community and, given the central position of the Shia in the post-2003 government and Iraqi state, who controls Baghdad. That is likely to trigger a bloody contest in the capital and other cities and provinces.

I hope this helps. Please note that I share these views freely and do not consider them the exclusive property of the Joint Staff, CENTCOM, or any other agency and reserve the right to use or publish them elsewhere and in public.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq
Steffany Trofino

Executive Summary

Iraq remains a country in transition. Multiple variables contribute to the country's weakening security apparatus, rendering the county vulnerable to external proxy influence, most notably from Iran. The collapse of global oil markets of 2014 coupled with the Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant's (ISIL) military offensive of June 2014 are only two examples. With much attention on these two primary facilitators, little discussion has taken place regarding the country's fragmented political system or second order effects emanating from the country's weak economic condition - both of which have compounding consequences on future stability operations.

It is within the country's *political and economic sectors* that fracture points are most pronounced. These fracture points enable Iran with opportunity to support the country's fragile state, exerting Iranian influence and capitalizing on Iraq's weakened condition. It is therefore in Iran's best interest to maintain an element of weakness within Iraq's central government in an effort to hedge against US influence in the region.

Iran's support to Iraq has been both covert and overt, as Iranian leadership not only seeks to influence Iraq's political policies but also control elements within the country. Overt actions include supporting social welfare programs where the Iraqi central government is deficient due to weak economic conditions. This Iranian support fosters elements of trust between Iran and Iraqi Shi'a *communities* enabling Iran with influence at a localized level. Covertly Iran exerts influence via numerous Shi'a militia organizations most notably, Muqtada al‑Sadr's Promised Day Brigade – the successor to the Mahdi Army, Badr Organization, Asa'ib Ahl al Haqq (League of the Righteous) and Kata'ib Hezbollah (Battalions of Hezbollah).

SME Input
Political
Friction points within Iraq's political system are multi-faceted and encompass the country's political coalitions as well as sentiments of political disenfranchisement of Iraq's minority Sunni population. Iraq's government is a multi-party system comprised of executive, judicial, and legislative branches supported by various ethno-sectarian coalitions. The majority of power within the country resides with the government's three-hundred-twenty-eight member Council of Representatives (COR) who enact laws based on two-thirds COR (majority) vote. Council of Representatives members are elected by popular vote and represent the country's diverse ethno-sectarian population. This representation also includes the country's vast tribal communities.

As the majority of the country's population is Shi'a, Iraq's COR will remain Shi'a dominate for the near future. Friction arises within Iraq's political system from sentiments of

disenfranchisement of Iraq's minority Sunni population. As a consequence, Iraq's political system is fragmented resulting in weakness throughout Iraq's central government *from within* which manifests in social discord at the localized level.

Often power-blocs are formed between coalitions as no one coalition holds the required two-thirds majority vote to enact laws on their own. As a result, power-blocs (alliances between coalitions) are formed as a means to gain the necessary support to enact laws. These power-blocs are a friction point as often alliances of COR members fluctuate based on sectarian, tribal, or ethnic agendas. This results in intra-coalition tensions among coalition members due to perceived notions of disloyalty. Often, political tensions in Iraq are publically displayed through media outlets further dividing Iraq's diverse communities.

Further supporting discord among the country's deeply divided population, unsettled grievances from former Shi'a Prime Minister Nori al-Malaki's sectarian political policies continue to fuel deep sentiments of disenfranchisement and political marginalization of Iraq's Sunni population. Sunni opposition groups will require reintegration into the civil-military-political process in an effort to address legitimate grievances. This will provide a level of managed stability but *will require cooperation and concession* among the country's deeply fragmented, ethno-sectarian political leadership. If Sunni grievances are not legitimately addressed, greater divisions among Iraq's political leaders will create further social stratification which will increase tensions throughout the country.

Capitalizing on this political polarization, Iran has actively sought to exert its influence within Iraq's political system. Iran has long-standing associations with Iraq's current government officials, most noticeable through its support of Iraq's Shi'a coalitions via Qods Force commander Qassem Soleimani. Often, Soleimani serves as political arbitrator between Iraqi Shi'a parties and heads Iran's activities inside the country (disbursing funds to political leaders and overseeing soft power initiatives).

On May 23, 2016, Soleimani was identified in a picture, reportedly taken in a meeting on then pending operations in Fallujah, according to the *Long War Journal, Threat Matrix*. Also appearing in the same picture were two US designated terrorists: (1) *Akram al Kaabi*, a Shi'a militia leader; and (2) *Abu Mahdi al Muhandis*, who leads Hezbollah Brigades, specifically, *Hata'ib Hezbollah*, and Shia PMU's, in Iraq. In addition Hadi al Amir the leader of another Iranian supported militia, the *Badr Organization*, was present in the picture. Soleimani and Amir have very close personal ties dating back to the Iran-Iraq War. Multiple sightings of Soleimani working with Iranian backed militias in Iraq have surfaced. Of note, Soleimani was implicated by the US Treasury Department in a Washington DC based bomb plot to assassinate the Saudi Ambassador at a café in Georgetown.

Covertly, Iran utilizes Shi'a cleric Muqtada al‑Sadr as a conduit to implement destabilization. On April 30, 2016 al-Sadr loyalists stormed the Iraqi parliament inside Baghdad's green zone demanding the resignation of the prime minister, speaker of the COR and the Iraqi president. The protesters who staged a twenty-four hour sit-in further demanded increased responsiveness of government officials to fight corruption and address the needs of the population. Protesters demanded the government do more to alleviate economic burdens and address the lack of social services.

Using Iraq's deteriorating economic conditions as the basis to affect political change, Muqtada al‑Sadr frequently holds large rallies in opposition against Iraqi Prime Minister al-

Abadi's administration. Iran's use of Muqtada al‑Sadr as a key proxy enables Iran with opportunity to support Iraq's impoverished communities while simultaneously creating political friction within the country. Thus, Iran is controlling the mechanisms of creating opportunities within the county utilizing Muqtada al‑Sadr as a primary proxy.

Economic

Iraq's declining economic conditions stemming from collapsed global oil markets is felt most at the community (local) level. The country is suffering from the ill effects germane to rentier economies where revenue is nearly wholly contingent on uncontrollable market variables such as price fluctuations, supply/demand issues and lack of economic diversification. The latter has extensive second order effects, as job markets remain limited. Consequently, the Iraqi government employs twenty-percent of the country's total population. It is significant to note nearly sixty-percent of Iraq's population is under the age of twenty-five. As youth mature, many seek opportunity to support their families. Without viable employment opportunities, youth become despondent, increasing the risk of susceptibility to nefarious activity, most notably cooptation into the ranks of ISIL as a means to offset needed income.

The Islamic State of Iraq in the Levant's military offensive has caused the central government to prioritize its limited financial resources on military expenditures at a time when the country's revenue stream has become stagnate. In order to offset this new financial challenge wide-scale cuts to social services and government lay-offs have ensued. This has increased poverty levels, which adds to local population's financial hardships as debt burdens are increasing throughout the country.

In addition to increased military expenditures, rebuilding costs associated with ISILs destruction has placed additional strains against Iraq's central government. With little revenue coming into the country's treasury, the need to borrow funds has increased. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) indicated Iraq's deficits were expected to triple in 2015, from 5.3% of GDP in 2014 to 18.4% of GDP in 2015. In May 2016, the IMF agreed to loan Iraq $5.4 billion over a five-year period. The interest rate will vary between 1 to 1.3% depending on how much of the funds Iraq's central government borrows.

Unfortunately, loans always come with a set of conditions established by the lender. Such was the case in 2004 when the IMF loaned Iraq $50 billion. At that time, IMF officials suggested Iraq privatize some sectors and raise oil prices *in exchange for lowering the country's payments*. Iraq failed to meet the IMFs demands. With Iraq's current economic instability, it is apparent the country's immediate need to offset its financial deficits far outweighs the risk of potential IMF influence over Iraq's future policies. Companies, who wish to conduct business inside Iraq, will need to be aware of the potential for changes in Iraq's fiscal policies due to the potential of the IMF to exert influence over Iraq's central government.

Social

Iraq is a multicultural society in which members identify with different traditions. These varied traditions shape, or influence, the activities, and behavior of everyday life for Iraqis in different ways. While multiculturalism enriches Iraqi society with diversity, it also presents significant obstacles to the formation of a unified national identity. This lack of a

unified national identity is an additional friction point as often in Iraq, ethnicities clash due to perceptions of social stratification, marginalization, and political disenfranchisement.

While there are friction points among Iraq's diverse populations, a common theme intrinsic across ethno-sectarian divisions is loyalty to family. in Iraqi identity is given to the family, followed by associations with clans, which further link Iraqis with tribal membership derived from patrilineal lines of extended family. Secondary, but also important, are ethno-sectarian affiliations such as identification to Sunni-Kurd, Shi'a Arab or Christian Yazidi, etc. While diversity exists, the common theme intrinsic throughout Iraqi society is that social behaviors are consistent with the implied values of family unity, loyalty, honor, and duty. Paradoxically, these values can be both a stabilizing and destabilizing factor. It is stabilizing as ones sense of loyalty to family acts as a deterrent to aberrant behavior. It is destabilizing because affronts to one's family can only be avenged by individual action.

> "Primacy in Iraqi identity is given to the family, followed by associations with clans, which further link Iraqis with tribal membership derived from patrilineal lines of extended family."

Ethnicity is an important source of Sunni Arab, Persian Shia, Kurdish, and Turkoman, identity. Shared similarities among these diverse ethnic groups provide feelings of familiarity related to commonly held characteristics of appearance, speech, values, and experiences. Each ethnic group is proud of its respective tribal, religious, and political history. The centrality of their patrilineal bloodlines connects them to a deep historical past as descendants of an ancient and powerful ethnic and sociocultural-religious narrative central to their identity, *in the absence of a unified national identity*.

Friction Points within the Iraq PMESII-PT Construct.
Multiple variables within Iraq's PMESII-PT construct are contributing to the destabilization of the country's security environment. Most prevalent are via the country's unstable political system and its weak economic outlook. *It is via these two variables*, which Iran seeks to capitalize on most in an effort to insert Iranian influence at the local level and ultimately instill proxy control. It is therefore in Iran's best interest to keep these two variables, unstable – as noted above.

Implications for U.S. Policy
Growing Iranian influence within Iraq inhibits US opportunity to support stability operations. As Iraq continues to weaken under the strains of political fragmentation and declining global oil markets, Iran strengthens its associations throughout the country. By way of augmenting localized welfare programs and support at the community level, Iran is solidifying trust among Iraq's Shi'a population *at the localized level*. Ultimately, the localized level has the most influence within Iraq's political system as masses of Iraq's population can gather at a moment's notice in an effort to affect change through protest.

US Policy makers should understand well the dynamics of the region when assessing Iraq. Iran's influence inside Iraq provides a bridge to Syria, which further opens territory to Lebanon and ultimately, Hezbollah. Dynamically, Shi'a dominant Iran is amassing Shi'a *strategic depth* spanning large swaths of territory to its west. Couple this strategic expansion with Iran's growing nuclear ambitions and the security landscape shifts, dramatically. Sunni dominate Saudi Arabia has attempted to instill its own form of influence

inside Iraq via support to Iraq's Sunni tribes. However, to date, the majority of Saudi support inside Iraq has failed mostly due to tribal members perceptions of abandonment by Saudi supporters.

In an effort to recognize where the US may have opportunity to affect and counter Iranian influence, Washington first needs to recognize why Saudi Arabia has failed in its attempts to support Iraq's Sunni tribal communities *and assume these lessons learned* in an effort to reengage this informal power-stream. Tribal dynamics inside Iraq place a greater emphasis on loyalty rather than financial support. Loyalty in fact is the most important foundational concept throughout Iraqi society. Additionally Washington should recognize the lever which enables Iran with power inside Iraq, *ultimately stems most from Iraq's weak economy*. Iraq's economy remains weak due to declining global oil markets and the lack of economic diversification. This provides Iran opportunity to support. However, who has the ability to control global oil markets more; Washington or Teheran?

Iraq must diversify its economic base and develop plans to support private industries, which replicate pre-oil Iraq economic sectors. Agriculture, fisheries, and private industry should be a primary focus. Unfortunately, for Iraq today - it is the lack of economic diversification common among rentier-based economies, which is having the most profound effects at the local level of society, which Iran has capitalized on most.

On the other side of this equation, it may behoove Washington to remain in the background for the time being and *capitalize on the opportunity to observe* what Iran is doing by way of political support as well as assess what social services Iran is providing. These observation can provide analysts with a unique glimpse of Iran's capabilities. In assessing what Iran is capable of doing - - analysts can also notate *the lack of capabilities* and assess where Iran's efforts are falling short or are deficient in an effort to capitalize on this weakness or vulnerability. In addition, Iran's continued engagements inside Iraq will keep Iran *engaged and distracted* from other activities, most notably – its continued activities inside Yemen. Thus, there are several options available where the US has opportunity to use to an advantage in the region.

Comments on Post-ISIL Iraq

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Judging from areas liberated to-date, Iraqis will be unable to stabilize areas on their own due to competition between security and political forces, and mistrust between local populations. To date, in most but not all areas, stabilization efforts are on hold because of a lack of political and security arrangements. While the USG is pursuing a hands-off, light footprint policy in Iraq, we can play a role in trying to secure deals so that stabilization and reconstruction efforts can proceed.

Friction Points
If Iraqis are left to their own devices, at worst, it could lead to a variety of conflicts in the short and long term:
- Intra Shia conflict between militias over territory (e.g. Tuz Khormatu) especially with upcoming elections
  - Though somewhat prevented, mollified by Iran
- Intra Kurdish conflict between PUK and KDP forces (e.g. Kirkuk)
- Conflict between Kurds / Peshmerga forces and Shia populations/ PMU forces (e.g. Tuz Khormatu)
  - Though somewhat prevented, mollified by Iran
- Continuing Sunni marginalization (e.g. preventing return) by Shia (in areas of Salahddin, Diyala) and by Kurds (Zumar and areas of Dohuk/ Erbil/ Ninewa)
- Intra Sunni conflict (e.g. Anbar) Most, though not all, of those not invited to the deal-making table (by the Kurds and by Shia militia leadership) are Sunni Arabs.
- Conflict between new local forces (e.g. Yezidis) demanding autonomy and traditional state actors (Erbil, Baghdad)
- Conflict between Baghdad and Erbil over DIBs especially considering the most recent Kurdish land grab

Opportunities for USG, Coalition, CENTCOM to prevent these conflicts and help ensure stability

Politics (national and local) post ISIL
- The USG should play the role in the short and long term as mediator and facilitator, a neutral third party, alongside upper level EU and UN representatives, in local and national political and security deal-making and arrangements in post ISIL Iraq. On a local level, this could come in the form of reduced, smaller "coalition" PRTs. The USG can work by, through and with local partners to make arrangements in post ISIL territories but will have to be at the table to reinforce the deals.

- The USG should use its leverage to promote accommodationist and inclusive policies among Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish national leadership and vis a vis the demands of local populations.

- The USG should take into account that everything in Iraq is hyper-localized and fragmented and there is no blanket policy that will work even for an entire province

or district. Reasons for instability in one district are different than another. However, generally speaking political competition, mistrust among local populations, and influence of radical Iranian backed Shia militias are drivers of instability.

➢ The USG should appoint a Special Envoy for Iraq (Ryan Crocker comes to mind) who sole job is to negotiate among Iraqi and Iraqi Kurdish leadership as well as leverage national leadership to give local deal-making necessary space. The position would also serve to counter, and engage with Iranians on Iraq.

➢ The USG should prioritize local deals in the short terms, which are not achievable and will allow stability as lever is used to forge national deals.

➢ The USG should be actively engaged in the KRG – federal Iraqi Government relationship. The Kurds have an interest in maintaining chaos and instability in Baghdad and Iraq, and that interest and role needs to be tempered and mollified by the USG. Kurds need to be gives certain incentives and guarantees that Baghdad, Iraqi stability will not mean less autonomy, etc. for the Kurds.

➢ While Iraq's external borders may not change, internal boundaries and structures (provinces, districts) should be on the table.

Security post ISIL
➢ The USG should prioritize the reinstatement of the local police force and departure of Shia militias in post ISIL towns and departure of Shia militias. In many areas liberated from ISIS, Shia militias have remained. In others, local police have been reinstated. In towns where the local police force has been reinstated, local populations have mostly returned and there is some stability. However, in areas where Shia militias have remained, there has been little return and stability.

➢ The USG should pay particular attention to strengthening the legitimacy of the ISF, which will weaken the influence and support of Iran and Iraqis for pro Iranian extremist Shia militias like Asa'ib Ahl al Haq, Kata'ib Hezbullah and Saraya Khorsani.

➢ The USG should prioritize and use leverage for the plan for demobilization (and integration, especially Sunnis to prevent another Sahwa situation) of PMU forces. Those who do not wish to return to their day jobs and wish to remain in a security force should either be part of a new National Guard-like force or able to join the ISF.

Economy
➢ The most stated concern among local populations in liberated territories is about control of reconstruction funds. This could either pave a way to a new transparent and accountable economic system or be another layer on local corruption and criminal behavior regarding contracts, smuggling, and patronage around elections.

Justice/ Social
➢ While a very local indigenous issues, the USG should support or advise on local justice courts set up to determine the fate of those accused of supporting ISIL, to avoid another round of revenge, and potential AQI, ISIL 3.0.

Case Studies

(I just included these in case they are helpful – I have been following these and a couple others areas other the past year and a half or two years.)

➢ **Sleiman Beg.** (Subdistrict in Tuz Khormatu, Salahddin) The town was liberated from ISIL by Shia militias almost two years ago, but the population of 70,000 Sunni Arabs has not been allowed to return. Local Shia populations in the area, especially in Amerli, will not allow the population back, or to form a local Sunni Hashd branch. Peshmerga have also refused to let the population of Sleiman Beg form a Peshmerga unit. Some of this is history – after years of being threatened by AQI and other Sunni extremist nationalist groups, they finally have an opportunity to be rid of these groups and their perceived enablers. Some of this anti return sentiment is flamed by Shia militias, particularly those supported by Iran like Asa'ib Ahl al Haq, Kata'ib Hezbullah and Saraya Khorsani. The director of Sleiman Beg, Talib Muhammed, has been a good partner to both Kurd and the Shia leadership in Baghdad. He traveled to Najaf to met Sistani's representative and lives in Sulaimaniya. He is an example of a local partner willing to make deals.

➢ **Yathrib and Saadiya.** (Yathrib is in Salahddin and Saadiya is in Diyala, Khanaqin district) provide examples of how remaining Shia militia presence is preventing return of local Sunni Arab populations. In Yathrib, while the local Sunni population is allowed to return, only 1700 of 75,000 have gone back due to the remaining presence of extremist pro Iranian Shia militias. These militias refuse to leave and will not allow the reinstatement of the local police force. Unlike in Sleiman Beg, the local Shia tribes and populations of Balad and Dujail have mostly agreed that the Sunni Arabs of Yathrib can return. Similarly, in Saadiya, a majority Sunni Arab town in Khanaqin district close to the border with Iran, PMU forces controlled by Badr forces are in charge. While dozens of families have return, most remain displaced, and do not want to go back with the Badr/ PMU securing the town. In each place, there are local partners who are willing to make deals, that are sometimes dashed by national figures and forces with personal narrow political agendas.

➢ **Sinjar.** In Sinjar various Yezidi groups are pushed and pulled in different directions by the KDP/ KRG, the PKK/ YPG and Baghdad. There are also independent forces that have been at times aligned with Erbil and with Baghdad. While they are divided by the competing Kurdish forces, as well as by their own visions for Sinjar, there is a deal to be made among Yezidis, but it will require the facilitation of an outside, neutral third party like the United States. Sinjar is an example of a post ISIL territory where local populations have lost trust in the state and its political and security structures, and therefore want increased autonomy. It can be best addressed through a possible redrawing of internal Iraqi boundaries, and administrative "upgrades" (e.g. a district becomes a province). Sinjar can also be used as a case study for minority areas that will be liberated around Mosul (NE, E, SE).

➢ **Tuz Khormatu.** Tuz Khormatu has been plagued by violence between local Kurds and/or Peshmerga force and local Turkmen and/or Shia militiaman. The conflict is a product of the lack of security and political arrangements between PMU/ Shia militia forces present in the Shia Turkmen parts of town, and Peshmerga/ KRG forces present in the Kurdish side of town. For example, most fights start at checkpoints manned by one side which the other side deems illegitimate. Tuz is a disputed territory, so of course there are two different sets of rules, and competition

between Baghdad and Erbil over the area on local and national levels. Iran has participated in negotiating deals between the PUK (which is the overwhelming forces in the area) and Badr, the main militia in town, and other Shia militia/ PMU forces in town.

Another troubling dynamic in Tuz is that among the Shia militias here. Asa'ib Ahl al Haq and Kataiib Hezbullah are usually blamed for starting trouble to challenge Badr's control of the town. This could happen in other areas, especially in the context of an election.

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He regularly appears as an analyst on media including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-Span, Al Jazeera and GEO TV (Pakistan). His opinion pieces and research articles have been published in various leading international newspapers and academic publications. His latest book titled _The Taliban Revival: Violence and Extremism on the Pakistan-Afghanistan Frontier_ (Yale University Press, 2014) was profiled on _The Daily Show with Jon Stewart_ in August 2014. Abbas' earlier well acclaimed book _Pakistan's Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army and America's War on Terror_ (M E Sharpe, 2004) remains on bestseller lists in Pakistan and India. He also runs WATANDOST, a blog on Pakistan and its neighbors' related affairs. His other publications include an Asia Society report titled _Stabilizing Pakistan Through Police Reform_ (2012) and _Pakistan 2020: A Vision for Building a Better Future_ (Asia Society, 2011).

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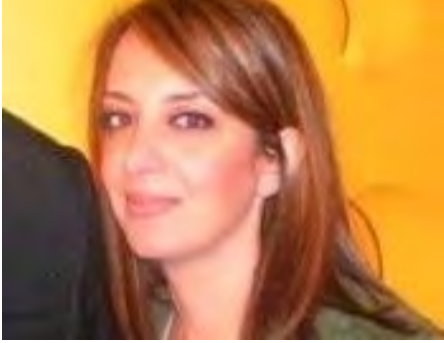
Hala Abdulla joined USMC Center for Advanced Operational Cultural Learning (CAOCL) in September 2010 as the CENTCOM regional researcher and Subject Matter Expert under the Regional Cultural Language Familiarization (RCLF) team. Prior to 2003 Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), she worked for al-Arab daily International Newspaper in Baghdad office. Following OIF, she worked for four years as a journalist and cultural advisor with the U.S. Army Joint Psychological Operations Task Force (JPOTF) in Baghdad's Green Zone. Since coming to the United States ten years ago, she has worked from (2007-2009) as an online Content Manager and team leader for Iraqi/Arab journalists and reporters under a CENTCOM-sponsored Transregional Web Initiative (TRWI), an Iraq-focused website. Hala also worked from (2009-2010) as a Social Media Analyst under USSTRATCOM's 'Foreign Media Analysis' initiative. Hala was born and raised in Baghdad, and is a native Arabic speaker, fluent in five regional dialects. She holds a B.A in English Language and Literature from al-Ma'amun University in Baghdad (1996), and an M.A. in Strategic Communications from American University in Washington D.C. (2013). She authored 'Iraq's Mosul: Battle of Psychological War. Quantico Sentry, June 2014, and Co-authored 'The Struggle for Democracy in Iraq: from the inside looking out,' American Diplomacy, April, 2010.

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11. Munqeth M.Daghir, **Relation Between Administrative Corruption & Public Employee Characteristics and traits**, Abu-Dhabi, Emirate Center for Strategic   Studies and Research, 2001.

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

Alexis Everington is the Director of Research for Madison Springfield, Inc. His qualifications include 15 years program management experience leading large scale, cross-functional, multi-national research & analytical programs in challenging environments including Iraq, Libya, Mexico, Syria and Yemen. Alexis advised both the Libyan opposition government during the Libyan revolution of 2011 and its immediate aftermath and most recently, the Syrian opposition military. He has also helped train several other foreign militaries and has taught at the NATO School. In addition, Alexis developed the Target Audience Analysis methodology that is currently employed across the US national security community and has been applied most recently in Afghanistan, Jordan, and Lebanon. His educational credentials include a Master of Arts from Oxford University in European and Middle Eastern Studies and his language skills include a fluency in Arabic, Spanish, French and Italian as well as a proficiency in Mandarin. Alexis is currently leading large-scale qualitative and quantitative primary research studies in Libya, Pakistan, Syria and Yemen.

Daveed Gartenstein-Ross is the Chief Executive Officer of Valens Global. His professional focus is on understanding how violent non-state actors (VNSAs) are transforming the world. He is also a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, as well as a Fellow with Google's Jigsaw, an Associate Fellow at the International Centre for Counter-Terrorism – The Hague, and an Adjunct Assistant Professor in Georgetown University's Security Studies Program.

Gartenstein-Ross is the author or volume editor of twenty-one books and monographs, and a member of the Editorial Board of the leading peer-reviewed journal *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. As a practitioner, some of Gartenstein-Ross's recent projects have included:

- delivering regular briefings and assessments to U.S. government agencies on such topics as ISIS's European attack network and the implications of the failed coup in Turkey;
- organizing and facilitating a conference in Nigeria, as an EU-appointed Strategic Communication Expert, helping civil society activists understand militant groups' use of social media and forge a strategic action plan for countering it;
- mapping the online counter-ISIS narrative space for a leading tech firm designing a pilot project to divert users who may be susceptible to the jihadist group's propaganda;
- and serving as a subject-matter consultant on militant groups during live hostage negotiations.

Gartenstein-Ross has testified on his areas of core competency before the U.S. House and Senate a dozen times, as well as before the Canadian House of Commons. He holds a Ph.D. in world politics from the Catholic University of America and a J.D. from the New York University School of Law. He can conduct research in five languages.

David C. Gompert. The Honorable David C. Gompert is currently Distinguished Visiting Professor at the United States Naval Academy, Senior Fellow of the RAND Corporation, and member of several boards of directors.

Mr. Gompert was Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence from 2009 to 2010. During 2010, he served as Acting Director of National Intelligence, in which capacity he provided strategic oversight of the U.S. Intelligence Community and acted as the President's chief intelligence advisor.

Prior to service as Principal Deputy Director of National Intelligence, Mr. Gompert was a Senior Fellow at the RAND Corporation, from 2004 to 2009. Before that he was Distinguished Research Professor at the Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University. From 2003 to 2004, Mr. Gompert served as the Senior Advisor for National Security and Defense, Coalition Provisional Authority, Iraq. He has been on the faculty of the RAND Pardee Graduate School, the United States Naval Academy, the National

Defense University, and Virginia Commonwealth University.

Mr. Gompert served as President of RAND Europe from 2000 to 2003, during which period he was on the RAND Europe Executive Board and Chairman of RAND Europe-UK. He was Vice President of RAND and Director of the National Defense Research Institute from 1993 to 2000.

From 1990 to 1993, Mr. Gompert served as Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush and Senior Director for Europe and Eurasia on the National Security Council staff. He has held a number of positions at the State Department, including Deputy to the Under Secretary for Political Affairs (1982-83), Deputy Assistant Secretary for European Affairs (1981-82), Deputy Director of the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs (1977-81), and Special Assistant to Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (1973-75).

Mr. Gompert worked in the private sector from 1983-1990. At Unisys (1989-90), he was President of the Systems Management Group and Vice President for Strategic Planning and Corporate Development. At AT&T (1983-89), he was Vice President, Civil Sales and Programs, and Director of International Market Planning.

Mr. Gompert has published extensively on international affairs, national security, and information technology. His books (authored or co-authored) include *Blinders, Blunders, and Wars: What America and China Can Learn; Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific; The Paradox of Power: Sino-American Strategic Restraint in an Age of Vulnerability; Underkill: Capabilities for Military Operations amid Populations; War by Other Means: Building Complete and Balanced Capabilities for Counterinsurgency; BattleWise: Achieving Time-Information Superiority in Networked Warfare; Nuclear Weapons and World Politics (ed.); America and Europe: A Partnership for a new Era (ed.); Right Makes Might: Freedom and Power in the Information Age; Mind the Gap: A Transatlantic Revolution in Military Affairs.*

Mr. Gompert is a member of the American Academy of Diplomacy and the Council on Foreign Relations, a trustee of Hopkins House Academy, chairman of the board of Global Integrated Security (USA), Inc., a director of Global National Defense and Security Systems, Inc., a director of Bristow Group, Inc., a member of the Advisory Board of the Naval Academy Center for Cyber Security Studies, and chairman of the Advisory Board of the Institute for the Study of Early Childhood Education. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Engineering from the U. S. Naval Academy and a Master of Public Affairs degree from the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University. He and his wife, Cynthia, live in Virginia and Maine.

Zana Gulmohamad is a Ph.D. candidate in the Politics Department of Politics at the University of Sheffield in the United Kingdom, where he focuses on Iraqi security and foreign relations. He was previously a senior security analyst for the Kurdistan Regional Government and has published articles in a variety of outlets including Jamestown Foundation's Terrorism Monitor.

Vern Liebl is an analyst currently sitting as the Middle East Desk Officer in the Center for Advanced Operational Cultural 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 Improved Explosives Device Defeat Organization as a Cultural SME, and before that with Booz Allen Hamilton as 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).

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.

Other Research Interests
- What does it mean to essentialize a group, our own or others, and how does essentializing enable killing by category?
- What is the role of emotions (disgust, humiliation, anger) in intergroup conflict, and what is the relation between interpersonal emotions and intergroup emotions?
- How can polling be used to track variation over time in support for terrorism?
- What is the process of radicalization that leads individuals from support for terrorism to acts of terrorism?
- [Psychology of Terrorism](#)

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.

Laura Jean Palmer-Moloney is Founder, CEO, and Sr. systems consultant for Visual Teaching Technologies, LLC. She holds two Ph.D.s—one in Coastal Resources Management with a focus in wetlands ecology and hydrology from East Carolina University; the other in Curriculum and Instruction with a focus in Geographic Education from the College of Education, University of Denver. Dr. Palmer-Moloney specializes scalable water-food-energy nexus issues. She is dedicated to working on the social justice aspects of climate change at the watershed scale.

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, an affiliated faculty member at George Mason University's Center for Narrative and Conflict Analysis, and an External Research Associate with the U.S. Army War College. 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 in 2015. 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, American Foreign Policy, 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 also done freelance business consulting for European, South American, and Middle Eastern clients interested in security and defense procurement. Diane is a member of the Military Writers Guild, an associate editor for *The Bridge*, and a member of the Terrorism Research Analysis Consortium.

Yezid Sayigh is a senior associate at the Carnegie Middle East Center in Beirut, where his work focuses on the Syrian crisis, the political role of Arab armies, security sector transformation in Arab transitions, the reinvention of authoritarianism, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and peace process.

Steffany A. Trofino is a graduate of the University of Aberdeen Scotland having obtained her Master's Degree with honors in Strategic Studies - Global Security. Ms. Trofino also studied Russian Language at Moscow State University, Moscow Russia in 1992. She is an honor graduate of the Navy Intelligence Officers Program (NIOBC), Damn Neck Virginia as well a graduate of the Department of Defense Strategic Debriefer certification program. Ms. Trofino has published several reports on weak and failed states and the manner by which such conditions foster and support terrorist activity including an

assessment of Russian FSB Operations in Dagestan. In addition, Ms. Trofino has produced several White Papers on terrorism and counterterrorism initiatives including assessments of terrorist activity in Sub-Sahara Africa.

In 2012, Ms. Trofino developed a theory, The Reverse Assessment of Asymmetric Warfare, which was used as a foundational model for an Army 5-5 study. Her assessments have been used by former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI), the Honorable James Woolsey to support his testimony before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on

Middle East and North Africa, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade. She has worked with the US Department of Justice, Sub-Sahara Africa Division as well as the US Department of Defense. Ms. Trofino specializes in research and analysis of proxy activity in weak and failed states including understudied, underdeveloped regions of the world.

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.

Sarah Canna applies her open source analytic skills to regions of vital concern to US Combatant Commands, particularly the Middle East and South Asia. To help military planners understand the complex socio-cultural dynamics at play in evolving conflict situations, she developed a Virtual Think Tank (ViTTa) tool, which is designed to rapidly respond to emergent crises by pulsing NSI's extensive subject matter expert (SME) network to provide deep, customized, multidisciplinary analysis for defense and industry clients. Prior to joining NSI, she completed her Master's degree from Georgetown University in Technology and Security Studies. She holds a translation certificate in Spanish from American University and has been learning Dari for three years.