SMA CENTCOM Reach-back Reports

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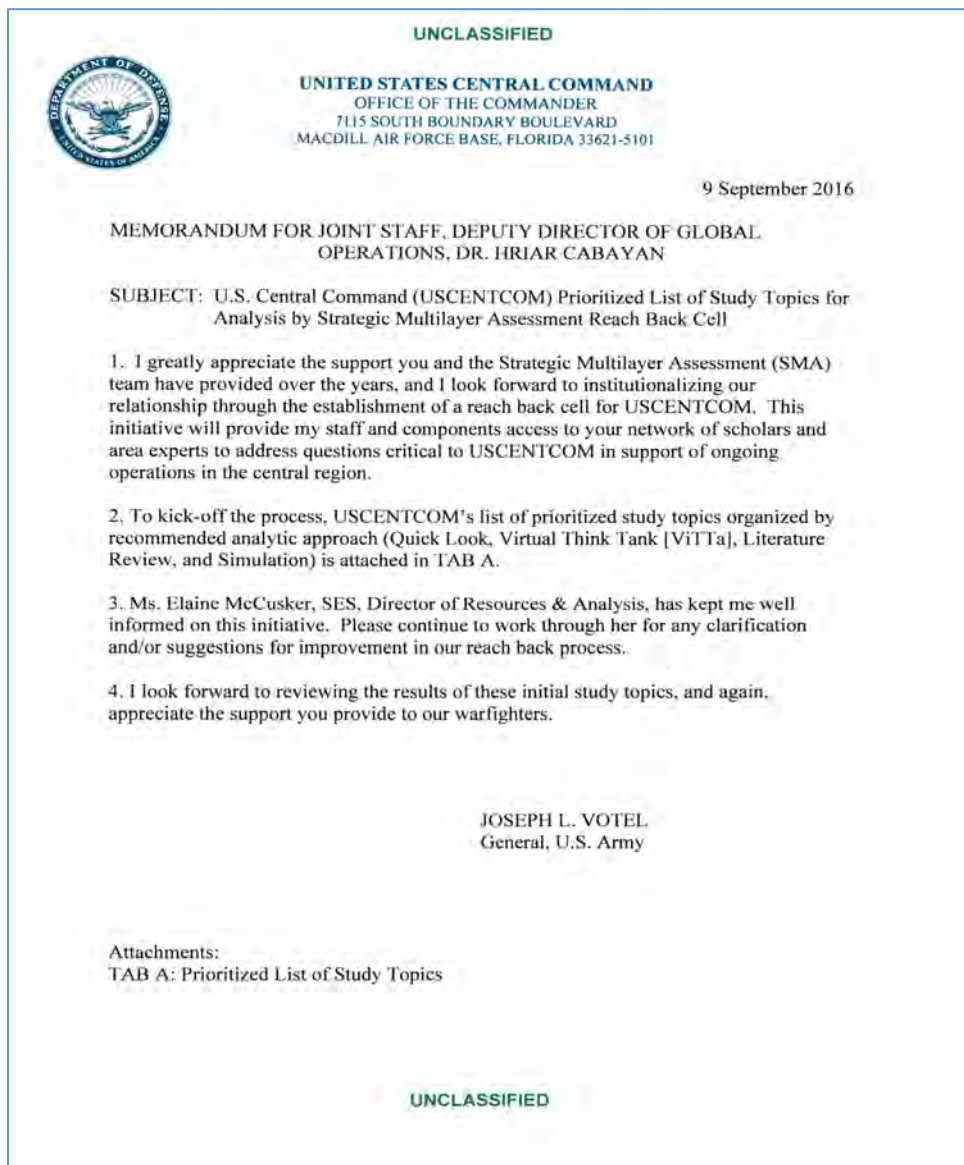
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This is Part 2 of a 9 part series of SMA Reach back responses to questions posed by USCENTCOM. Each report contains responses to multiple questions grouped by theme. Parts 1, 3-9 are available on request from Sam Rhem in the SMA Office at samuel.d.rhem.ctr@mail.mil

At the request of United States Central Command (USCENTCOM), the Joint Staff, Deputy Director for Global Operations (DDGO), jointly with other elements in the JS, Services, and U.S. Government (USG) Agencies, has established a SMA virtual reach-back cell. This initiative, based on the SMA global network of scholars and area experts, is providing USCENTCOM with population based and regional expertise in support of ongoing operations in the Iraq/Syria region.

The Strategic Multi-Layer Assessment (SMA) provides planning support to Commands with complex operational imperatives requiring multi-agency, multi-disciplinary solutions that are NOT within core Service/Agency competency. Solutions and participants are sought across USG and beyond. SMA is accepted and synchronized by Joint Staff (JS/J-3/DDGO) and executed by ASD(R&E)/EC&P/RRTO.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNITED STATES CENTRAL COMMAND
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9 September 2016

MEMORANDUM FOR JOINT STAFF, DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF GLOBAL OPERATIONS, DR. HRIAR CABAYAN

SUBJECT: U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) Prioritized List of Study Topics for Analysis by Strategic Multilayer Assessment Reach Back Cell

1. I greatly appreciate the support you and the Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA) team have provided over the years, and I look forward to institutionalizing our relationship through the establishment of a reach back cell for USCENTCOM. This initiative will provide my staff and components access to your network of scholars and area experts to address questions critical to USCENTCOM in support of ongoing operations in the central region.

2. To kick-off the process, USCENTCOM's list of prioritized study topics organized by recommended analytic approach (Quick Look, Virtual Think Tank [ViTTa], Literature Review, and Simulation) is attached in TAB A.

3. Ms. Elaine McCusker, SES, Director of Resources & Analysis, has kept me well informed on this initiative. Please continue to work through her for any clarification and/or suggestions for improvement in our reach back process.

4. I look forward to reviewing the results of these initial study topics, and again, appreciate the support you provide to our warfighters.

JOSEPH L. VOTEL
General, U.S. Army

Attachments:
TAB A: Prioritized List of Study Topics

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Part 2: Consolidated Responses to CENTCOM questions based on the fight against ISIL

Responses were submitted to the following CENTCOM Questions:

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SMA Reach-back

Question (QL2): What are the strategic and operational implications of the Turkish Army's recent intervention in northern Syria for the coalition campaign plan to defeat ISIL? What is the impact of this intervention on the viability of coalition vetted indigenous ground forces, Syrian Defense Forces and Jabhat Fatah al-Sham (formerly ANF)?

Executive Summary – Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

There is general consensus among the expert contributors that the strategic and operational implications of the Turkish incursion are minimal: each sees the incursion as consistent with previous Turkish policy and long-standing interests. Turkey's activities should be viewed through the lens of its core strategic interest in removing the threat of Kurdish separatism, which at present has been exacerbated by renewed Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) insurgency inside Turkey, its influence in northern Iraq, and the expansion of Kurdish territories in Syria more generally. As one commented, "Turkey will prioritize itself. This means preventing the strengthening of Kurds at all costs (including indirect support to those fighting them). It also means patrolling borders, harsh treatment of those who try to get through and/or corrupt practices such as involvement in smuggling." One implication of note however is the increased risk of escalation between Turkey and Russia and Turkey and the US-backed Peoples Protection Units (YPG) that the incursion poses.

Establishing a Turkish zone of influence in northern Syria accommodates multiple Turkish interests simultaneously: from the point of view of the leadership, it should increase domestic support for President Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP); it should allow Turkey to gain control of costly and potentially disruptive refugee flows into Turkey and reduce the threat of ISIL or PKK activities in Turkey; it prohibits establishment of a unified Kurdish territory in northern Syria; and, it secures Turkey's seat at the table in any Syrian settlement. In addition, a Turkish-controlled zone could establish a staging area from which Syrian Opposition forces could check PYD expansionism, secure the Aleppo corridor and clear ISIL from Turkey's borders.

In terms of the impact of the intervention on the viability of coalition-vetted ground forces, Ramazan Kilinc (University of Nebraska Omaha) believes that while Turkey's activities in Syria will not necessarily undercut Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, they will strengthen coalition vetted indigenous groups with the exception of the YPG.

Alexis Everington (MSI) argues that in order for the campaign against ISIL to succeed in Syria two conditions must be met: 1) that opposition forces in Syria believe that the effort to defeat ISIL goes hand-in-hand with defeat of the Assad regime; and 2) that there are moderate, "victorious" local Sunni

opposition fighters that mainstream society can support. If not, the general population is likely to support more extreme alternatives (like Jabhat Fatah al-Sham) simply for lack of viable Sunni alternatives.[1] Hamit Bozarslan (EHESS) suggests that unfortunately the ship may have sailed on this condition. He argues that the Free Syrian Army of today, that Turkey backs, has little resemblance to the Free Syrian Army of 2011: many of its components hate the US, are close to radical jihadis and most importantly, in his view are a very weak fighting force. He explains that they succeeded recently in Jarablus because ISIL did not fight (organizing a suicide-attack and destroying four Turkish tanks, simply showed that ISIL could retaliate).

Finally, Bernard Carreau (NDU) argues that "the U.S. should welcome the Turkish incursion into northern Syria and could do so most effectively by reducing its support of the SDF and YPG." Doing so he believes could make Turkey "the most valuable U.S. ally in Syria and Iraq." Additionally, the experts suggest that it is important to remember that the Turkish leadership has seen and will continue to see the fight against ISIL through the lens of its impact on Kurdish separatism and terrorism inside Turkey including Kurdish consolidation of power along the Syrian border. The impact on Opposition forces depends on the degree to which they see that the Turkish moves, as well as the campaign against ISIL address their objective of toppling the Assad regime

Contributors: Denise Natali (National Defense U.). Sonar Cagaptay (Washington Institute), with additional comments from Alexis Everington (Madison-Springfield, Inc.), Bernard Carreau (NDU), and Hamit Bozarslan (Ecole des hautes estudes en sciences sociales), MAJ Shane Aguero, DIA, Max Hoffman (Center for American Progress), Yezid Sayigh (Carnegie Middle East Center), Zana Gulmohamad (University of Sheffield, UK), Ramazan Kilinc (University of Nebraska Omaha)

Editor: Allison Astorino-Courtois (NSI)

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[1] It is for this reason that Everington believes providing "international support to Kurdish fighting forces will only push local Sunni Syrians more into the arms of extremist groups. Supporting Kurdish armed groups to the detriment of support to local Sunni ones is one of the most significant errors of the conflict in the past year."

SME Input

Turkey's Kurdish Redline in Syria and the Fight Against ISIL

Denise Natali

Institute for National Strategic Studies (INSS), National Defense University

Published: War on the Rocks, September 14, 2016

http://warontherocks.com/2016/09/turkeys-kurdish-red-line-in-syria-and-the-fight-against-isil/

Turkey's military intervention in northern Syria (Operation Euphrates Shield) has raised both hopes and concerns about defeating the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). While some regard it as a positive turning point in the anti-ISIL fight, particularly after Turkish and Free Syrian Army (FSA) forces quickly expelled ISIL from the strategically important border town of Jarablus, others see the incursion as a further setback. Turkish attacks on the U.S.-backed Kurdish People's Protection Forces (YPG) — the military wing of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), an affiliate of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) and the most effective anti-ISIL force in Syria — may leave Washington trapped between allies fighting each other in Syria. Underlying these scenarios are assumptions that Ankara has fundamentally changed its strategy, that Syrian Kurds are vital to defeating ISIL, and that a portending U.S. "betrayal of the Kurds" will undermine their will to fight and thus the effectiveness of the campaign.

> "Ankara's intervention in Syria is neither surprising nor game-changing."

Neither of these predictions is fully accurate. Turkey's incursion in Syria represents continuity of policy rather than dramatic change. While becoming more engaged against ISIL over the past year, Turkey still prioritizes the PKK and its affiliate**s** as a strategic threat just like it did at the war's outset. Nor does Turkey-YPG fighting create a new dilemma for the United States. The U.S. strategy of defeating ISIL "by, with, and through" local partners has meant balancing competing interests and differentiating between tactical and strategic allies. CENTCOM commander Gen. Votel made this distinction clear by affirming continued U.S. backing for the YPG while requesting its forces depart the territories west of the Euphrates. This upholds Ankara's redline and keeps the Kurdish communities of northern Syria from linking up a geographically contiguous zone of territory along Turkey's border. Vice President Biden did the same by warning Kurds that they "cannot, will not and under no circumstances will get American support" if they do not keep their commitment to withdrawing to the other side of the Euphrates. These dynamics are unlikely to undermine the YPG's will to fight — they benefit greatly from U.S. support — but they could forge regional alliances committed to keeping Syria's borders intact while further embroiling Turkey in Syria's cross-border quagmires.

Turning Point or More of the Same?

Ankara's intervention in Syria is neither surprising nor game-changing. Operation Euphrates Shield is not the first time Turkey has entered neighboring states to pursue terrorist threats — particularly the PKK kind — and it is unlikely to be the last. The incursion not only reveals Turkey's increasing vulnerability and willingness to engage against ISIL, but a deeply rooted threat perception of Kurdish separatism that dates to the early state period. This perception has been reinforced by the breakdown of the Iraqi and Syrian states, renewed PKK insurgency in Turkey, growing PKK influence in northern Iraq, 186 percent increase in Kurdish-controlled territories in Syria since the anti-ISIL campaign commenced, and the failed Turkish coup. Any attempt to effectively counter ISIL with Turkey cannot be separated from its strategic priority of countering PKK threats, even if the United States insists otherwise.

The difference now is that Turkey no longer has allies in strong states to help control the PKK, and has to rely on sub-state actors to do so. During the Iran-Iraq War, for instance, Ankara negotiated an agreement with Baghdad that allowed it to search and seize PKK terrorists across Iraqi borders. When Ankara and Damascus were on the verge of war in 1998, they negotiated the Adana Agreement, which led to PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan's ouster from Syria after years of refuge, as well as other anti-terrorism measures. Turkey's efforts to check the PKK continued after the post-Gulf War breakdown of the Iraqi state. Instead of Baghdad, however, Ankara turned to Iraqi Kurds, and particularly Mas'ud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which assumed de-facto control of northern Iraq. This alliance helped create a Kurdish buffer zone that has permitted intelligence-sharing and border security, airstrikes against PKK bases in the Qandil Mountains, military incursions, and the creation of Turkish military bases in Iraqi Kurdish territories. Yet, it has not uprooted the PKK from northern Iraq. Barzani and other Kurdish officials may oppose the PKK presence, but after nearly 20 years, they have been unable and perhaps unwilling to expel PKK forces militarily. Turkish penetration in the Kurdistan Region has also instigated and embroiled Ankara in Kurdish power struggles between the KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), the latter of which gained support from Iran, and the PKK.

Similar dynamics are unfolding in the hyper-fragmented Syrian state. The zone of influence that Ankara seeks to create near Jarablus is similar to earlier plans for a buffer zone that overlaps with territories that PYD Kurds had claimed. This zone would not be controlled by the Syrian government, which has residual forces in some parts of Hasaskah, but by a patchwork of local militias and non-state actors such as the FSA and Sultan Murad forces — mainly Sunni Arab and Turcoman groups. Under Turkish influence, this zone could establish a space for the Syrian opposition to check PYD expansionism as well as to secure the Aleppo corridor, clear ISIL from its borders, and control refugees.

Indeed, Turkey is likely to revive regional strategic alliances to further secure its borders and check PKK and ISIL terrorism. Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim has indicated the need for stability in Syria and Iraq for successful counter-terrorism efforts, to include normalizing relations with Syria. In his visits to Moscow and Tehran after the failed Turkish coup, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan indicated his readiness to enhance cooperation and desire to restore regional peace. In fact, Turkey's engagement against ISIL has involved greater regional cooperation, to include support for the recent but tenuous

ceasefire brokered by the United States and Russia which would permit the United Nations to establish aid corridors into Aleppo via the Turkish border.

Still, Turkey's effort to re-establish regional alliances, although important, will not necessarily stabilize Syria, control the PKK or YPG, or help defeat ISIL and other jihadists anytime soon. Ankara ultimately depends on fractious local proxies to hold territories and ward off ISIL, radical jihadists, and PKK groups. Syrian Kurds worried about losing territories and influence, in turn, have reacted by creating another militia to resist Turkish forces. Numerous battles in Syria are also playing out on different fronts that have distinct problem sets. Alongside the PKK/YPG issue and ISIL, the general threat is Jabhat al-Nusrah, renamed Jabhat l-Sham (JFS), as well as separating moderates from extremists and the mixing of different extremist groups. The hyper-localized nature of the Syrian war also means that tactical gains or losses in Jarablus do not diminish the ISIL threat in other localities or for neighboring states. If the political order after the fall of key towns and cities such as Raqqah and Aleppo is unacceptable to Turkey, Gulf States, Iran, and Russia, then ISIL, radical jihadism, and PKK operations will continue.

These complex dynamics challenge the notion that Turkish-YPG conflicts place the United States on a "treacherous fault line" that will undermine the anti-ISIL campaign. From the outset, U.S. support to Syrian Kurds has remained tactical and situated around the parameters of its strategic partnership with Turkey and Syrian state sovereignty. Instead of directly or solely backing the PYD, the United States has channeled support to Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), comprised largely but not exclusively of PYD Kurds. After complaints from Turkey that U.S. special operations troops were wearing uniform patches bearing the YPG insignia, U.S. military commanders ordered the patches to be immediately removed. Further, at no point has the United States officially recognized the Syrian Kurdish cantons or self-declared Kurdish federal autonomous zone, or permitted the PYD to attend the Geneva negotiations apart from the Syrian National Council (SNC), backed by Turkey and Arab Gulf states.

While Kurds and some western pundits can turn to history and charge the United States with betrayal, the current circumstances in Syria are nothing of the sort. On the contrary, PYD/YPG forces have been the biggest beneficiaries of the anti-ISIL campaign and have much to gain from an ongoing U.S. alliance. Some YPG fighters may continue to over-reach territorially, however, other Syrian Kurds, including some PYD members (I have spoken to) know full well of the transactional nature of their partnership with the U.S. and the limitations of their role in the anti-ISIL campaign. Many Syrian Kurds recognize that they cannot realistically connect all of their cantons given Turkish opposition and Sunni Arab populations in the area, and realize the need to reconcile with Ankara to keep borders open. This is why, instead of snubbing U.S. support or pushing west of the Euphrates *en masse*, YPG forces vacated areas around Jarablus, even if they insisted that they have the right to remain "as Syrians."

Implications for U.S. Policy

Turkey's intervention in Syria has reinforced Ankara's red lines, clarified the conditions of U.S. support to Turkey and Syrian Kurds, and revealed opportunities and challenges to regional cooperation in Syria. It underlines a shared commitment to Syrian territorial integrity by all groups, including Kurds, even if

internal boundaries and the status of the Assad regime remain disputed. As the United States moves forward with its anti-ISIL campaign in Syria, it should more carefully calibrate the following issues:

Don't Mirror Image. Washington should more carefully consider Turkey's threat perceptions and those of local Sunni Arab groups. Insisting that the PKK and PYD are distinct — even though everyone knows they are not — and telling Turkey to prioritize ISIL will not change Turkey's strategic calculus or red lines in Syria. It is also a mistake to think that Turkey and the PYD will "put away their differences" to focus on ISIL — particularly as the PKK insurgency continues, the Kurdish problem in Turkey remains unresolved, and opportunities to assert influence exist in the weak Iraqi and Syrian states.

Clarify Conditions of Support. Encourage Local and Regional Pacts. Washington should continue to openly clarify the parameters of support to Syrian Kurds and other partners, including Turkey, and avoid sending mixed signals, such as high profile visits to PYD leaders in Syria, which are largely symbolic but can deepen local and regional resentments. While continuing to support Syrian Kurds, the United States should not enable them to the point where they do not think that they have to negotiate with local and regional partners. These measures should focus on lessening fears of Kurdish empowerment and preventing backlash against Kurds by Turkey and Sunni Arab populations who regard the YPG as encroaching on their territories and as the United States as seeking to divide Syria.

Recognize the limitations of Syrian Kurdish influence. While the YPG has been the most effective anti-ISIL force in Syria, its effectiveness is confined to Kurdish territories where ISIL no longer has a presence. As the campaign seeks to expel ISIL from strategic Sunni Arab strongholds such as Raqqah, the YPG role will be limited. Given reactions by Arab groups to Kurdish territorial gains, direct engagement by the YPG in such an effort could be counterproductive.

These dynamics have implications for countering ISIL and eventually stabilizing Syria. As long as Iraq and Syria remain weak and fractured and Turkey's Kurdish issue remains unresolved, Ankara will continue to prioritize the PKK as a strategic threat, even as it engages against ISIL. Telling Turkey that it should do otherwise or underestimating the effects of Kurdish territorial expansion on local and regional actors will only fuel these threat perceptions. The United States should pay more careful attention to these regional security priorities and how they are impacted by the second and third order consequences of the anti-ISIL campaign.

Turkish Bridgehead in Northern Syria

Soner Cagaptay

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Turkish incursion into Jarablus could not have taken place without Turkish-Russian normalization. After Turkey downed a Russian plane in November 2015, Russia had declared northern Syria a no-go zone for Turkish military. Russian reaction to Turkey after November seems to have intimidated Turkish President Erdogan.

> "Erdogan has been running on a strong-man, right-wing, nationalist platform to boost his own and AKP's popularity. This is why he will not stand down against the PKK until he defeats the organization militarily."

Russia is Turkey's historic nemesis and in the aftermath of the plane incident, the Russians terrorized the Turks in the intelligence, cyber and military realms. Russia also started to provide weapons to the Democratic Union Party (PYD)'s Afrin enclave in Syria. It was not a question of if, but when Russian weapons would end up in the hands of the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK).

Erdogan wants to become an executive-style president and he needs to change the Turkish constitution to that end. To do this he needs to win a referendum or new elections for his AKP. In two recent elections, the AKP has maxed out at 49.5 % popular support. Erdogan has been running on a strong-man, right-wing, nationalist platform to boost his own and AKP's popularity. This is why he will not stand down against the PKK until he defeats the organization militarily. This makes Turkey by extension hostile towards the PYD until Erdogan achieves his presidential agenda. Erdogan has realized that if Russia is providing weapons to the PKK, he can never defeat that organization, and that is why he decided to normalize relations with Putin, sending him a letter of apology before the July 15 failed coup in Turkey.

Never wanting to completely alienate Turkey and push Turkey fully to NATO's fold, Putin used the post-coup dark mood in Ankara to accelerate normalization with Turkey. Ankara seems to have gotten not only the green light from Moscow to go into Syria, but also Putin's (and potentially Iran's) blessing for the Assad regime to bomb the PYD near Hasakah. It is to be expected that Erdogan will want to cultivate better ties with Russia moving forward.

The Turkish incursion also shows that Ankara is reshuffling its priorities in Syria. For nearly five years, Turkey has been nearly obsessed with the goal of ousting Assad. Now, Ankara seems to have seen the writing on the fall. Anticipating the survival of the Assad regime, and even a potential U.S.-Russia settlement on Syria, Turkey has decided to prioritize two other objectives in Syria, namely pushing ISIL away from its border and blocking Kurdish People's Protection Forces (YPG) advances, simultaneously. The incursion into Jarablus allows Turkey to do both at the same time. At least for the time being, the

Turkish bridgehead not only blocks the PYD efforts to create their own bridge between Afrin and Kobane, but also increases Turkey's value to the US as a partner in fighting ISIL.

Turkey seems to be pivoting towards the Jordanian model in Syria in terms of managing the refugee issue. For five years, Turkey had an open door policy regarding the Syrians whereas Jordan, after allowing some refugees in, decided to manage the flows on the Syrian side of its border in an informal zone. By creating an informal safe haven on the Syrian side of its border, Turkey is replicating the Jordanian model, which means that Ankara will house future refugee flows in this area, as well as potentially moving some refugees from inside Turkey to this informal zone. Needless to say, this policy would find strong support in Europe when fully implemented.

Finally, establishing a bridgehead in northern Syria allows Turkey to be invited to any future and formal talks on Syria. And if these talks fail, Turkey can try to turn this bridgehead into a staging ground for anti-Assad rebels, boosting its support for US-vetted groups, and others in this area. Whichever way the Syrian war works out, Turkey seems to have gained a permanent bridgehead in northern Syria in the short to mid-term.

Turkey's incursion into northern Syria

Max Hoffman

Center for American Progress

Turkey's direct intervention into the Jarabulus-Azaz gap increases the military pressure on ISIL, reduces the likelihood of Kurdish unification along the border, and gives rise to several crucial longer-term questions, particularly regarding the desired relationship between the SDF and the Assad regime, and Turkey and the regime. Most of all, the incursion heightens the risk of escalation between Turkey and Russia/the regime, and Turkey and the SDF/YPG. Coalition efforts to clear ISIL from Dabiq and Al-Bab should be conducted with an eye towards reducing the risk of Turkish-Russian and Turkish-Kurdish escalation, either of which could significantly complicate the overall effort to eradicate ISIL and stabilize Syria.

Immediate effects of the incursion

In the near-term, the Turkish incursion has a number of important effects. First, the offensive further insulates Turkey's border from ISIL infiltration, adding defense-in-depth to a section of the border which had proven particularly porous and where the new border wall had not been completed. This should increase the difficulty of moving people and supplies between Turkey and ISIL territory. Despite a recent ISIL counterattack north of Dabiq and subsequent rocket attack on Kilis, the Turkish-controlled buffer zone along the border should also end cross-border shelling and rocket attacks from ISIL territory. The attacks, which had previously hit Kilis and Karkamis, have been politically volatile within Turkey.

Second, the direct Turkish military intervention and Turkey's support for Arab and Turkmen rebel groups between Azaz and Jarabulus has reduced the odds that Kurdish forces associated with the PYD will establish territorial continuity between Afrin and the eastern cantons of Kobane and Jazira. Turkey's stated aim is to drive ISIL from Al-Bab, but the capture of Al-Bab would also give Ankara effective control of the corridor and major roads linking Manbij and Tall Rifat, the nearest points of Kurdish control. The Turkish offensive should therefore also be seen as a wedge meant to prevent Kurdish control across the length of the border. It is far from clear if Turkey and the array of rebels they support (of decidedly mixed capabilities and intentions) will be able to take and hold Al-Bab, short of a major infusion of Turkish ground forces. But it is likely that Turkey has done enough to prevent Kurdish territorial continuity simply by demonstrating their willingness to directly intervene militarily to prevent it. (That is the likely explanation for Turkey's

> "it is likely that Turkey has done enough to prevent Kurdish territorial continuity simply by demonstrating their willingness to directly intervene … It will take time for the YPG/PYD to come to terms with this reality, but they have proven to be pragmatic actors over the past four years …"

initial air and artillery strikes on YPG forces north of Manbij.) It will take time for the YPG/PYD to come to terms with this reality, but they have proven to be pragmatic actors over the past four years, avoiding fights with powerful adversaries, and will be under U.S. pressure to avoid clashes with the Turks. That does not lessen the potential for local clashes or miscalculation leading to conflict between the YPG and Turkish forces or, more likely, Arab and Turkmen rebels backed by Turkey and the YPG or its affiliated local military councils (e.g. Manbij Military Council).

The Turkish offensive puts further military pressure on ISIL. Dabiq has special ideological and theological importance for many ISIL fighters. Al-Bab is a major logistical hub and, reportedly, where ISIL manages much of their foreign recruitment and external operations. This means ISIL is likely to fight to defend the towns; opening up this new front against Dabiq and Al-Bab may force the diversion of ISIL fighters and resources from other fronts. This may, in turn, lead to opportunities for gains against ISIL in Ain Issa or in Deir Ezzour, in addition to offering a chance to further degrade ISIL militarily and strike a damaging propaganda blow.

Turkey's push toward Manbij and Al-Bab also raises tensions with the SDF, particularly the YPG and the Manbij Military Council. While the U.S. has managed to secure an uneasy truce north of Manbij, Turkey continues to view the SDF as a fig-leaf for the YPG and, they argue, the PKK. While some of the Turkish-backed rebels have said they have no quarrel with the Kurdish forces, other groups regard the SDF as separatists and/or apostates and have said they will "take back" Manbij. Turkey continues to reinforce this anti-YPG sentiment, seeing it as a useful counterweight to prevent long-term Syrian Kurdish autonomy. Given the heavy losses SDF took in the Manbij offensive; it is unlikely they will hand the city over to Turkish-backed groups. The best the U.S. can hope for here is uneasy détente, which would be

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aided by consistent pressure on the YPG to withdraw east of the Euphrates—leaving the town to elements of the SDF more acceptable to Turkey—and the continued presence of U.S. special operators north of Manbij along the Sajur River to deter clashes.

Despite these efforts and the relative calm since the first week of Euphrates Shield, the prospect of wider conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish-aligned forces remains very real, as is the risk of conflict between the Syrian Arab Coalition fighting alongside the YPG and the Turkish-backed rebels. Turkey has deployed rebel units from Idlib as part of Euphrates Shield, and the SDF-backed militias from Jarabulus and Manbij view them as something approaching occupiers. Regarding the YPG and the Turks and their proxies, powerful factions on both sides view the standoff in the context of a wider ethno-nationalist struggle (which includes the PKK insurgency within Turkey). A widening of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict would be very damaging to the counter-ISIL effort; it could also lead to fighting and attacks along the length of the Turkish border with the Kurdish cantons and a further escalation of PKK attacks within Turkey. For these reasons, it is unlikely that Turkey will launch a direct offensive on U.S.-backed SDF/YPG forces, even if it cannot be ruled out. (President Erdogan has repeatedly said Turkey will not allow the establishment of a "terror corridor" in northern Syria, referring to the YPG.) But Turkey might carry out punitive strikes should they see continuing Kurdish efforts to push west from Manbij, or in response to any attacks along the border or within Turkey. If they feel particularly threatened, Turkey might launch military operations against the YPG in Tel Abyad, an area they consider to be outside "traditional" Kurdish purview. Ankara might also view such a move as a useful forcing mechanism to

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force the U.S. to abandon its support of the YPG. Turkey is also likely to pursue its goal of weakening the YPG/PYD by other means, and there are suspicions surrounding the recent assassinations of a YPG commander and several members of the SDF-affiliated military councils. Finally, on the Kurdish side, the forces operating from Afrin canton remain a wild card. The U.S. seems to have minimal leverage on this branch of the YPG, while Russia has offered arms and other support to the Afrin Kurds. Clashes in Tall Rifat and Marea have already created a climate of hostility between the YPG and the non-Kurdish rebels, and the U.S. should use its ties to the other cantons to urge the Afrin Kurds to exercise restraint.

Finally, the Turkish-backed offensive may lead to two other developments. First, it may provide a focal point for the disparate rebel groups operating in northern Aleppo province and, potentially, allow for some partial military consolidation. Second, the Turkish buffer zone may allow for the return of some Syrian refugees to Syrian border areas (and has done so already, in Jarabulus), with attendant humanitarian needs within Syria.

Second-order questions arising from the incursion

Turkish officials have consistently said Al-Bab is the primary target of the incursion. If that is true, the offensive raises a number of important second-order strategic and operational questions. The effort to take Al-Bab and the aftermath of its potential capture could recast relations between several major belligerents in the Syrian war beyond the immediate Al-Bab front. The coalition should consider the desired end-state while shaping operations to liberate Al-Bab from ISIL.

It is unclear if the patchwork coalition of rebel groups Turkey is supporting will be able to take and hold Al-Bab without direct Turkish military support in the form of tanks, armored vehicles, and special forces soldiers, along with air support and indirect artillery fire support. Turkey seems to have secured Russia's acquiescence to the offensive thus far, likely as part of the two countries' recent rapprochement. Russia's position—or perhaps Russian pressure—appears to have led the Assad regime to tolerate the open deployment of Turkish forces onto Syrian territory. (In any case, the regime has little ability to resist the Turkish incursion and also views ISIL as a threat.) The exact terms of Turkey's deal with Russia and the regime are not clear; nor is it clear if there is an explicit "deal" or merely passive acquiescence, though Turkish Prime Minister Yildirim has hinted at a deconfliction arrangement with Russia. But it is unlikely that Russia and Assad will continue to tolerate direct Turkish military operations or a Turkish-backed rebel offensive should they become a direct threat to the regime (and Russia's interest of regime survival). Indeed, it was a similar rebel offensive in Latakia and Idlib—supported by Turkey and Saudi Arabia—in 2015 that provoked Russia's direct military intervention.

The capture of Al-Bab, then, should also be considered in this light – whoever takes the city will then be in close contact with regime forces around Aleppo, effectively opening another front in the multi-sided battle for the crucial city. Russia and the Assad regime have both shown themselves willing to go to great lengths (including regularly bombing civilians, hospitals, schools, and markets) to win the fight for Aleppo. The coalition should therefore expect Russia and the regime to react if they conclude that the Al-Bab offensive will threaten their efforts to secure Aleppo. Indeed, the imminent threat of a push on Al-Bab may be contributing to the recent escalation of Russian/regime efforts to clear the rebels from Aleppo (to preempt any second front).

If it is the Turkish-backed rebels (with or without direct Turkish military support) who take al-Bab, they will be extremely tempted to attack regime forces around Aleppo, whom they have long viewed as their primary enemy. Even if Ankara reaches a policy decision to avoid a direct confrontation with regime forces, Turkey may not be able to control the rebel groups they are supporting. How will the coalition respond if the regime or the Russians strike those forces, which include U.S.-backed groups? What if the regime or the Russians hit Turkish forces embedded with the rebels? Would Turkey seek NATO intervention (with the attendant negative consequences of NATO's likely rejection of such a request)? What would this mean for the involvement of U.S. special operators accompanying these forces? And how would Washington respond to U.S. casualties in that circumstance? And, of course, how will these developments shape any eventual political negotiations or settlement?

Similar questions arise if it is the SDF that takes Al-Bab. What will their relationship be with the regime? How will the coalition respond if the regime or the Russians attack SDF forces? What would this mean for the involvement of U.S. special operators accompanying these forces? Additionally, if the U.S. supports an SDF offensive against Al-Bab, it will increase the likelihood of future conflict between the SDF and Turkey and the rebels they support; in this context, Turkey and the non-Kurdish rebels would see the SDF as part of the blockade of Aleppo, as well as fear the establishment of Kurdish territorial continuity along the full-length of the border.

It is unclear how the Turkish incursion will affect the timeline of any offensive to liberate Raqqah. The Turkish and rebel push on Dabiq and Al-Bab is likely to tie down ISIL forces, potentially preventing the group from shifting fighters and resources to counter offensives in other sectors, including around Raqqah. If the SDF are considered capable of pushing further towards Raqqah, simultaneous offensives might meet weaker ISIL responses in both areas. On the other hand, given the importance of having non-Kurdish elements of the SDF at the head of any offensive on Raqqah, these groups may be stretched thin, given the simultaneous need for their presence in Manbij. As a corollary, because the SDF feels threatened by Turkey, they may be reluctant to redeploy forces away from the Turkish front towards Raqqah.

There is also the issue of where ISIL fighters may go and how they may react to any potential capture of Dabiq and Al-Bab. In the past, fleeing ISIL fighters have offered open targets for coalition airstrikes, but the group now uses human shields to deter such strikes. This is likely to happen again in the wake of any successful offensive on Al-Bab. ISIL is also likely to turn increasingly to asymmetrical tactics as it loses ground, including trying to melt into the civilian population fleeing combat and resorting to hit-and-run tactics and assassinations. Ensuring restraint on the part of the Turkish-backed forces and the SDF will be important to securing any lasting calm in liberated areas.

Risks

The most obvious risk is that the Turkish offensive becomes bogged down, and Turkish forces incur increasing casualties from ISIL attacks. This is among the most likely outcomes, as the rebel groups Turkey is backing have shown limited military capabilities in the past, and much of the success thus far has been due to direct Turkish military (particularly armored) support. With their credibility on the line, Turkish forces will face pressure to expand their deployment – this mission creep is a serious risk. There is also the accompanying risk that the Turkish-backed rebel coalition splinters, especially if the push on Dabiq and Al-Bab drags on for an extended period. Many of the groups included in "Euphrates Shield" share little beyond a reliance on Turkey for military support, and they may withdraw or even turn on each other if they grow frustrated (or, conversely, in the wake of a rapid victory over ISIL, which would remove a common enemy and shift focus to the local political end-state).

The second—and more consequential—risk is of a widening of the Turkish-Kurdish conflict, either as a result of unplanned escalation or due to conscious policy decisions by either party. Such an outcome could further destabilize NATO-ally Turkey, where there are already 400,000 people displaced from renewed fighting with the PKK. The worst-case scenario is that Turkey, confident after the initial success

of Euphrates Shield and the lack of a response from Russia and the regime, sees an opportunity to further impose its will in Syria. This could manifest in a "Euphrates Sword" operation aimed at Manbij and/or Tel Abyad, meant to weaken the YPG/PYD and force the U.S. into picking a side and, Ankara would hope, abandoning the Kurds. Such an escalation would be devastating to the coalition efforts against ISIL and could possibly inaugurate fighting along the length of the Turkish border with the Kurdish cantons, including in sensitive Hatay province, as well as potentially increasing PKK terrorist attacks within Turkey.

Priorities

Both of the risks outlined above would damage the anti-ISIL effort and put U.S. special operators in danger. Therefore, the U.S. should continue to try and balance between its two partners on the ground (Turkey and its rebel alliance; and the SDF). Tactical efforts against ISIL should be subordinated, when necessary, to the broader strategic need to prevent Turkish-Kurdish and Arab-Kurdish escalation. Essentially, the U.S. must convince Turkey that its intervention has already achieved its goal of preventing PYD control of the length of the border in the hopes of preventing further escalation.

The YPG and their allies have bravely fought ISIL and have a legitimate right to self-defense; the U.S. should fully support the SDF in securing their current territory. But U.S. interests would not be served by a contiguous Kurdish territory along the full-length of Turkey's border; the ethnic makeup of the region would likely lead to clashes, and Turkey would view such a development as an existential security threat. Therefore, the U.S. should try to channel further SDF military efforts south, into Raqqah, using air support and the carrot of further military support as leverage. Further SDF expansion to the west, from Manbij, should be discouraged through political pressure and the threat of withholding the support outlined above. The YPG is likely to continue pressing for an offensive west towards Al-Bab, both due to their basic goal of unifying the cantons and as a tactic to secure other concessions from the U.S. – this should be resisted. The U.S. should ratchet up pressure on the PYD/YPG to incorporate non-Kurdish and non-PYD groups into the military coalition and the administration of the cantons, as well as allow non-Kurdish residents to return to their homes. This will reduce the risk of Arab-Kurdish conflict and may make it easier for Turkey to, eventually, accept some level of Kurdish autonomy as part of a larger bargain in Syria. The military effort against ISIL is a useful mechanism to advance these efforts at inclusion and cooperation.

The U.S. should continue supporting Turkish operations toward Al-Bab and against ISIL by providing intelligence, surveillance, and air support. But the U.S. should consistently reinforce to Turkey that any operations toward Manbij or against SDF would be highly damaging to the overall coalition effort and should be avoided. At the same time, the U.S. should reiterate that it supports inclusive local administration along the entire length of the Syrian-Turkish border and opposes Kurdish separatism. It should, however, make clear that Kurds must be given assurances regarding their status in a post-war Syria, as part of any eventual political settlement. All this may help reassure Ankara that the U.S. will not ignore Turkish interests. Of course, at some point in a putative settlement process, the U.S. would have to confront the politically difficult question of federation or some other form of Kurdish autonomy,

vigorously opposed not only by the Turks but by many of the U.S.-backed rebels as well; given the sharply differing views of its two sets of Syria-based allies, Washington may want to postpone consideration of that question for as long as possible.

Regional Implications of the Turkish Incursion into Syria

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The strategic and operational implications of the Turkish incursion into Syria cannot be simply seen as a Turkish – Coalition issue, but has to be understood in the context of the wider problem set. Therefore, the following paper will address the current situation from the point of view of each of the actors affected (Syrian regime, Coalition vetted indigenous ground forces, the US and its coalition partners, Iran, the Kurds (collectively), Iraq, Russia, ISIL, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, and Turkey), followed by a possible US/Coalition reaction to enhance the US/Coalition's influence/advantage *vis a vis* that actor.

The Turkish incursion was primarily driven by an attempt to gain leverage as a stakeholder in the eventual post-conflict Syria. The Kurdish insurgency in Turkey is a perennial issue, and by attempting to limit Syrian Kurdish gains along their southern border, Turkey hopes to stymie any potential pan-Kurdish movement arising in post-ISIL Syria and Iraq if there arises a partitioning of Syria and/or a redrawing of Iraqi Kurdistan borders. The operational goal of building a buffer area outside of Turkey which will ostensibly draw ISIL/Kurdish attention away from Turkey proper is an understandable assumption, especially when viewed as a military action designed to draw attention away from the recent coup and the exceptional response by President Erdogan. The strategic goal of gaining credibility as a stakeholder in a post-ISIL Syria will most likely be successful, as there is little probability of Turkey returning to pre-incursion borders prior to an internationally recognized peace settlement.

> "The strategic goal of gaining credibility as a stakeholder in a post-ISIL Syria will most likely be successful, as there is little probability of Turkey returning to pre-incursion borders prior to an internationally recognized peace settlement."

The US and Coalition members response should continue to be muted and to act as close, but ultimately uninvolved mediators in Turkish/Syrian Kurdish affairs. The reason is to ensure that outside groups do not reinforce the idea that Syrian Kurds are a separate state. A separate Syrian Kurdish autonomous region or proto-state would only serve to further fragment the region.

The Coalition had been expecting a Turkish action of this type for several years, and the timing was the only unknown. Operationally, the opening of a true "northern" front against ISIL is a welcome addition to the battlefield geometry which places a higher caliber threat against ISIL than the YPG forces they were accustomed to fighting. Strategically, the difficulty will

be in limiting Turkish gains to make them as temporary as possible. A worst case scenario would be a deep Turkish incursion into Syria, and then Turkey retaining that land post-conflict as a permanent, if non-official addition to Turkey. The Coalition must attempt to ensure that this scenario does not occur, as it will be seen as a Turkish action against Arabs, Kurds, and Iran (Persians). That will lead to possible regional ethnic issues as Arabs, Kurds and Persians find a common enemy in Turks.

Coalition vetted indigenous ground forces should be kept as far from the Turkish offensive as possible, since battlefield command, control and coordination will become problematic with additional actors involved. Operationally, with Turkey being a credible threat to the northern ISIL-controlled area, Coalition vetted ground forces can be better utilized for small scale offensive actions thereby forcing ISIL to conduct wide area and rear area defense within ISIL-controlled southern areas, dispersing ISIL forces and allowing for large scale anti-ISIL offensive actions to be conducted by combined arms forces such as Turkey in the north, Syrian government forces (including Russian and Iranian elements) in the west, and the YPG (considered to be light motorized forces supported by Coalition enablers) to the north-east. Strategically, the Turkish offensive could be a major issue if the Coalition vetted ground forces are able to be coopted by Turkey for use post-conflict, or if the Coalition vetted ground forces are drawn from areas that fall within the Turkish occupied territories post-conflict.

The US and Coalition should again strive to ensure that the Turkish controlled areas are a temporary condition in order to ensure a post-conflict peace instead of a temporary ceasefire prior to a regional conflict occurring along more ethnic lines.

Russia most likely has no issues with the Turkish intervention, either operationally, or strategically. Operationally, the inclusion of another capable offensive element against ISIL is welcome, as the shorter the conflict can be made, the better off Russia will be with regard to blood and treasure, not to mention domestic and international prestige. Strategically, although Russia and Turkey have had a long history of discord, there is an opportunity for Russia and Turkey to find common ground. This common ground may be used to widen the gap between Turkey and NATO. The threat of Turkey leaning East presents a strategic choice to either support Turkey or some faction of Kurds, and regardless of which way the US and Europe decide, Russia has the ability to support the other side either overtly (Turkey) or covertly (a Kurdish faction).

Due to this, the US and the Coalition must find a way to publicly support Turkey, while at the same time limiting any permanent anti-Kurdish initiatives. This is essential in that the Kurds are the fourth largest stateless nation with 32 million people. It will take a concerted effort across the region to ensure a popular pan-Kurdish movement does not materialize if Iraqi Kurdistan increases in size and a partitioned Syria becomes a reality with an autonomous Kurdish region. If the US and the Coalition were to support the Kurds in Syria and Iraq, Turkey would move incrementally towards Russia, whereas if the Syrian Kurds are slighted, Russia would be in a position to surreptitiously aid the PKK and Syrian Kurds due to increasing Russian influence in Iran, Iraq and Syria.

Syria has the most to gain operationally, and the most to lose strategically due to the Turkish incursion. Operationally, the inclusion of Turkey into the conflict increases the threat against ISIL, and should posit

a faster resolution to the conflict as ISIL controlled territory is eroded until Raqqah is liberated, and delivering a death knell to the idea of the ISIL caliphate in the near- to mid-term. Strategically, however, the Turkish incursion into Syria shows the mid-term inability of Syria to maintain control of the entirety of their territory, and the relative strength of Turkey. This show of force, whether or not Turkey withdraws to pre-conflict borders will almost assuredly lead to an arms race between Syria (supported by Russia and Iran) and Turkey. Turkey will be emboldened by this intervention and the support of the US/NATO, and may feel the need to maintain this buffer zone in Syria which will lead to a difficult position for the US/NATO/Coalition as they will be tacitly supporting an action which is difficult to defend under international law.

The Coalition must not allow the Turkish incursion zone to become permanent and incur the wrath of the Syrian populace if there is a Syrian regime change. Due to the influence of both Russia and Iran, it would be difficult to imagine a pro-Western regime, but if the new regime is nationalist, or even Arabic, it would be a bitter pill to accept a Turkish owned disputed area in Syria.

ISIL views the Turkish incursion as an operational defeat as they were quickly displaced from their forward positions, and did so quickly without defending. This can viewed as pragmatism, fear or advance warning. Regardless of the reason, the fact remains that the Turkish incursion was remarkably successful in gaining a large amount of territory relatively quickly. Strategically, the question of advance warning becomes much more pressing. If there was collusion between some element in Turkey and ISIL, that will make the campaign against ISIL more difficult if partnered operations with Turkish forces become a reality. If there is no collusion between these forces, then it makes ISIL much more desperate as they are increasingly pressured on all fronts, and their defeat becomes much more inevitable as they will not have the ability to defend against a concerted offensive against the forces arrayed against them. Their most likely strategic goal is simply to prolong the conflict until fatigue sets in for the Coalition forces, and then attempt to fracture the Coalition and other opposing forces while moving their upper echelons of leadership and as many forces as they save to another theater of operation in order to maintain the viability of the ISIL brand. Alternately, it is possible that ISIL could attempt to simply return to being the resilient insurgent network that they evolved from, returning to a phase I/phase II insurgency.

Iraq, due to the support given by Iran can view the Turkish incursion as operationally welcome, but strategically problematic. This is due to the Iranian view that Iraq, Syria and Lebanon are within their sphere of influence. If the Turkish incursion becomes permanent, it will be seen as direct attack on Iranian influence in the region, possibly causing an outbreak of violence as Iran seeks to use proxies to dissuade Turkey from retaining that area. The Iraqi government may have a different view but, due to the increasing Iranian influence, the minority view may be quickly vilified into acquiescence using the recent ISIL/Sunni collusion.

Iran most likely views the Turkish incursion as a setback, since Turkey is another element on the battlefield that they cannot control and is hostile to Iran. The biggest issue is that operationally, the Turkish incursion points to the fact that Iranian support to the Syrian regime was not sufficient to stop

ISIL. This is a narrative defeat for Iran, since the narrative they were attempting to spin was that they were able to support the Assad regime and save Syria. With the their inability to defeat the anti-Assad forces, the expansion of ISIL into Iraq, Coalition operations into Syria, Russian aid to Syria and finally the Turkish incursion, it will be difficult to spin the Syrian campaign into a victorious narrative.

The US and the Coalition should once again attempt to ensure that the Turkish incursion is only temporary, and build a narrative showing that it was global assistance that was necessary for the dissolution of ISIL in both Syria and Iraq, and that all who participated in the campaign were necessary. This will prevent a loss of face for Iran, Turkey, Iraq, the Kurds and Russia, which is necessary for a peaceful post-ISIL Syria.

Jabhat Fatah al-Sham views the Turkish incursion as an operational boon that will make their conflict against ISIL and the Syrian regime easier as both ISIL and Syria will have an existential threat to worry about. This makes the strategic victory over ISIL and Syria more probable, but the strategic context of the Turkish incursion depends upon the length of the occupation. If the occupation is temporary, that will allow Jabhat Fatah al-Sham to gather strength in the security vacuum of a post-conflict Syria. If the incursion results in a permanent Turkish presence in the country, then Jabhat Fatah al-Sham has to determine if they will continue to accept surreptitious Turkish assistance in exchange for becoming a loose proxy of Turkey, or if they will return to their ideological roots and conduct offensive actions against apostate and Western backed governments.

The US and Coalition governments should continue to urge all state actors to refrain from using forces that are unaccountable under international law as proxies in this conflict, since doing so will inevitably lead to further conflict as heavily armed, and trained proxy forces will be unwilling to cede power to another party that may or may not have been an enemy during the previous conflict. The desire to create proxy forces that are easily controllable is strong, but ultimately misplaced unless placed under effective command and control by the supporting nation. Barring that, these groups will be free to cause conflict until they are disbanded or destroyed.

In conclusion, the Turkish incursion into Syria affects multiple actors including the Syrian regime, Coalition vetted indigenous ground forces, the US and its coalition partners, Iran, the Syrian and Iraqi Kurds, Iraq, Russia, ISIL, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, and Turkey. Each of these actors has an operational and strategic view of the Turkish intervention. Those that view the Turkish action as operationally beneficial are Turkey, the US, the Coalition, Russia, Iraq, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, the Syrian regime, and Coalition vetted indigenous ground forces. The forces operationally hindered by the Turkish incursion are the Syrian Kurds, Iran and ISIL. Strategically, Turkey and Russia have a positive view of the Turkish operations, whereas the Syrian regime, Iran, Iraq, Jabhat Fatah al-Sham, ISIL, the US and the Coalition, the Syrian Kurds and the Coalition vetted indigenous ground forces all will be negatively affected by the Turkish actions.

Comments on Turkish Incursion

Yezid Sayigh
Carnegie Middle East Center

With regard to the implications of the Turkish intervention in Syria is primarily 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 through or adjacent to Assad regime forces (if hooking via Aleppo East and then south of the Tabqa dam to Raqqa). 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.

Comments relative to Turkish Incursion

Zana K. Gulmohamad

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There are two major militarized powers in Iraqi Kurdistan: the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), which is the largest Kurdish party in Iraq and allied with Turkey (particularly the AKP). The KDP is not opposing Turkey's intervention in Syria. The KRG's President Masoud Barzani and the KDP leader said in an interview with France 24 on September 10 2016, "We cannot condone an attack on the Kurds by any country. But at the same time we don't agree that a number of Kurds should take up arms to fulfill their demands… This group which is the Democratic Union Party [PYD], has monopolized the situation in

Syria… This party has pushed out other parties [other Syrian Kurdish parties allied with the KDP] and become part of the PKK… They should not have done that, they angered the Turks."[2] There are old rivalries between the PKK and the KDP. Rivalries have also now developed between the KDP and PYD and its armed wing the YPG. The KDP closed the borders between the PYD controlled Syrian Kurdish side and Iraqi Kurdistan. They have been opening it for short periods selectively allowing things through (mainly humanitarian) after indirect pressure from the PUK elite and US recommendation.

The Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) is the second largest ruling party in Iraqi Kurdistan. It is fragmented in nature and allied with the PYD and its military wing the YPG. The PUK have provided logistic support to this group since its inception.[3] The PUK were the first actors to mediate and coordinate between the PYD, YPG and the US.[4] The majority of the PUK leaders do not agree with the Turkish intervention and they view it as a threat to their allies. Thus, there are two contradicting foreign policies towards Syrian Kurdistan "Rojava". One is support for the PYD by the PUK, the other is opposing it by the KDP. This is despite the fact that the KDP leadership have in the last years tried to unify the Kurdish Syrian forces in a summit in Erbil that included: the PYD, and Kurdish Syrian forces backed and equipped by the KDP which are now based in Iraqi Kurdistan. These efforts failed. Nevertheless, the KDP has superiority in governmental bodies as it controls most vital bodies. The KRG is dominated by the KDP, which competes with the PYD and is allied with Turkey. Therefore, there is no formal opposition towards Turkish intervention in Syria from the KRG.

Comments relative to Turkish Incursion

Ramazan Kilinc

University of Nebraska Omaha

> "The psychology of Turkey being in a war contributes to the government's hegemony in the country and being a dissident becomes increasingly difficult ... Turkey's involvement in Syria will not undermine Jabhat Fatah al-Sham although it helps coalition vetted indigenous groups except the Kurdish YPG elements."

The July 15 coup attempt facilitated the AKP's transformation toward a more hegemonic, nationalist and populist Islamism that was already underway. In the days after the coup, the AKP increased its control over the system further. Holding Fethullah Gülen and the soldiers affiliated with his religious movement solely responsible for the coup from the very first moments of the coup attempt, the AKP fired tens of thousands of public employees for being affiliated with the movement, redesigned Turkish bureaucracy, and increased control over media and civil society. Despite its support for the elected government and stance against the coup, the Kurdish HDP was excluded by the AKP in the post-coup period. While President and Prime Minister met with all political party leaders

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[2] France 24 Arabic. (2016). Retrieved from: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MXBcLlrExMQ
[3] Author's interviews with the PUK's senior security and intelligence officials. (2015 & 2016).
[4] Author's interviews with the PUK's senior security and intelligence officials. (2015 & 2016).

and sought their support in the post-coup period, the leader of the HDP was not invited to many of the official meetings. Populism mostly in the form of anti-Westernism also rose as the AKP officials pointed to the U.S. as being behind the coup. In short, the coup attempt completed the process of Turkish Islamism's evolution to its new version.

The intervention in Syria contributed to this process by strengthening the AKP's domestic hegemony, increasing nationalist discourse, and revamping its anti-Westernism. Its stance against the Kurdish fighters in Syria boosts anti-Westernism and nationalistic zeal in the country. The psychology of Turkey being in a war contributes to the government's hegemony in the country and being a dissident becomes increasingly difficult. Given this tendency, I think Turkey's involvement in Syria will not undermine Jabhat Fatah al-Sham although it helps coalition vetted indigenous groups except the Kurdish YPG elements. It definitely helps the removal of ISIL from bordering areas with Turkey –which is a key legitimizing element for the AKP's domestic considerations.

Author Biographies

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

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

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

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

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

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Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute. He has written extensively on U.S.-Turkish relations, Turkish domestic politics, and Turkish nationalism, publishing in scholarly journals and major international print media, including the *Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Jane's Defense Weekly*, *Foreign Affairs*, *Atlantic*, *New Republic*, and *Newsweek Türkiye*. He has been a regular columnist for *Hürriyet Daily News*, Turkey's oldest and most influential English-language paper, and a contributor to CNN's *Global Public Square* blog. He appears regularly on Fox News, CNN, NPR, Voice of America, BBC, and CNN-Turk.

A historian by training, Dr. Cagaptay wrote his doctoral dissertation at Yale University (2003) on Turkish nationalism. Dr. Cagaptay has taught courses at Yale, Princeton University, Georgetown University, and Smith College on the Middle East, Mediterranean, and Eastern Europe. His spring 2003 course on modern Turkish history was the first offered by Yale in three decades. From 2006-2007, he was Ertegun Professor at Princeton University's Department of Near Eastern Studies.

Dr. Cagaptay is the recipient of numerous honors, grants, and chairs, among them the Smith-Richardson, Mellon, Rice, and Leylan fellowships, as well as the Ertegun chair at Princeton. He has also served on contract as chair of the Turkey Advanced Area Studies Program at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute. In 2012 he was named an American Turkish Society Young Society Leader.

Bernard Carreau

Bernard Carreau is the Deputy Director of the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) at the National Defense University. He established and currently supervises a lessons learned program focusing on the operational and strategic effectiveness of the military and interagency teams in overseas contingency operations. He has led numerous collection and analysis teams to Afghanistan and Iraq. Mr. Carreau is the author or supervisor of recent reports related to the strategic effectiveness of special operations forces, stability operations, transitional public security, civilian stabilization capabilities, and socio-cultural intelligence analysis. He is currently completing a study on behalf of the Joint Staff/J7 on the question of whether the national security decision-making and strategic planning processes were effective in achieving U.S. national objectives in Syria. Mr. Carreau was an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Washington and Baghdad on private sector development and an advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Trade. He has a Master's degree from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Alexis Everington

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.

Prof. Hamit Bozarslan

Prof. Hamit Bozarslan has obtained his PhD degrees in history at the Ecole des hautes etudes en sciences socials in 1992 and in political sciences at the l'Institut d"etudes politiques de Paris in 1994. He is author of La question kurde. Etats et minorities au Moyen-Orient (1997), Une histoire de la violence au Moyen-Orient: de la fin de l'Empire ottoman à al-Qaïda (2008), Conflit kurde (2009), Le luxe et la violence : domination et contestation chez Ibn Khaldûn (2014), Révolution et état de violence : Moyen-Orient 2011-2015 (2015).

Max Hoffman

Max Hoffman is the Associate Director for the National Security and International Policy team at the Center for American Progress, where he focuses on Turkey and the Kurdish regions. He has organized and undertaken many recent research trips to the region.
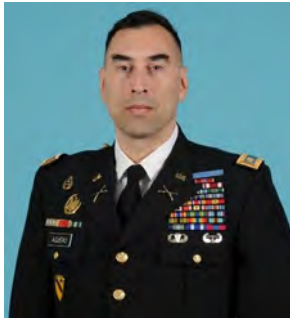
MAJ Shane Aguero

Major Shane Aguero is a counter-terrorism strategic intelligence officer with the DIA. He has previously been the Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) Joint Intelligence Support Element (JISE) officer in charge, and prior to that he was the US Army Central (US ARCENT) intelligence fusion desk chief for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. Major Aguero also has over five years of deployed combat experience in both Afghanistan and Iraq working at all levels from infantry squad to Combined Joint Task Force, with experience conducting joint, special and combined operations.

Major Aguero has a Master of Strategic Intelligence from the National Intelligence University, an MBA from Webster University and a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from St. Edwards University.

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

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

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

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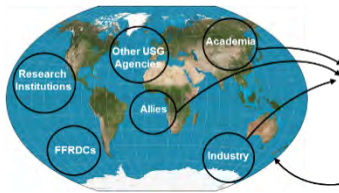
SMA Reach-back

Question (LR 4): What is the strategic framework for undermining ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate?"

Contributors*: Hassan Abbas (National Defense University), Larry Kuznar (NSI, Inc. and Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne), MAJ Patrick Taylor (7th Military Information Support, USASOC)*

Editor*: Sarah Canna (NSI)*

Executive Summary

Shifting to a Virtual Caliphate

As ISIS loses ground in Syria and Iraq, the organization seems to be evolving to emphasize the information battlefront to both maintain and gain support from sympathetic Sunni Muslims across the globe and open a new front against its far enemies. Research conducted by Dr. Larry Kuznar, NSI, showed a marked shift in Abu Bakr al Baghdadi's and Abu Mohammed al Adnani's (before his death) speeches in 2016 indicating a shift towards the virtual caliphate. Adnani's speech first signaled a turn towards virtual caliphate in May 2016. Baghdadi, whose speeches have traditionally focused on the near enemy, signaled a turn toward the virtual caliphate in November 2016 as indicated by more frequent mentions of Libya and Tunisia, decreased mentions of an apocalyptic showdown in Dabiq, and the beginning of the expression of an alternative conceptualization of the caliphate.

Strategies to Undermine the Virtual Caliphate

ISIS has adeptly used social media, information operations, and propaganda to recruit foreign fighters, to encourage skilled individuals to migrate to ISIS-held Iraq and Syria, and to gain sympathy and support. But the Virtual Caliphate implies more than just an impressive command of cyber-based information tools—it sows the irretrievable ideas of violent jihad that will be accessible on the internet for generations, inspiring others long after ISIS has ceased to hold territory. Contributors to this write up suggested a number of ideas that do not easily combine into a seamless strategic framework for undermining the virtual caliphate, but present components for consideration.

Dr. Hassan Abbas, a professor at National Defense University, suggested that the most powerful thing the coalition can do is to support the development of a legitimate, credible Sunni Muslim voice—such as the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC)—to provide a counterweight to ISIS. "For many Muslims, especially those vulnerable to ISIL recruitment, lack of Muslim unity and weak 'Ummah' is seen as the biggest challenge," he argued. Furthermore, Muslim collaboration on a larger scale (e.g., economic,

educational, etc.) is likely to be very well received globally, particularly by young Muslims. This would also help counter the narrative that Muslims are weak and have been humiliated by the West, which drives support for ISIS.

Dr. Kuznar suggested five lines of effort that focus on increasing pressure on ISIS as it transitions from the physical to virtual caliphate to reduce its chance of lasting success.

1. Continue to defeat ISIS militarily to discredit them and to force them to force a new narrative

2. Continue to target top ISIS leadership, especially ideologues who are responsible for narrative generation

3. Work with and enable credible alternative voices in Islamic world that can divert vulnerable recruits away from violent jihadist movements and inspiration

4. Beware of alternate jihadists capturing ISIS's market share of the virtual Caliphate as ISIS is further discredited

5. Plan for cooperation with DHS and allies to mitigate persistent effects of lingering ISIS messaging in cyberspace

MAJ Patrick Taylor, 7th Military Information Support Battalion, USASOC, suggested that a new framework for undermining ISIS's virtual caliphate is not needed. "[W]e do not require new doctrine or a new approach, we must simply apply current doctrine in creative ways as a framework for response. This is a return to first principles," MAJ Taylor concluded. He argued that Psychological Operations is uniquely positioned to operate in the virtual battlespace using Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW). He suggested thinking of the virtual domain as contested borderland filled with neighboring states, tribes, and communities with various competing interests. Successful operations require developing relationships with online digital natives to enable the USG and its allies to compete for functional capability in the information environment. As in other domains, It is essential to understand the viewpoints of these online tribes and communities in order to understand and combat the interests the drive mobilization.

Conclusion

ISIS's shift from physical to virtual caliphate is extremely dangerous as it is a threat that will continue in perpetuity even after ISIS, the organization, is defeated. Violence seekers will be inspired by ISIS's hateful rhetoric, other insurgent groups can learn from ISIS's successes and failures, and the threat of homegrown violence may continue to rise. These conditions are unlikely to change, but we can perhaps limit the scope of the threat by considering some of the suggestions proposed here among others.

Response to Literature Review 4

Dr. Hassan Abbas
National Defense University

1. What is the strategic framework for undermining ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate?"

ANSWER: By projecting a counter idea – such as empowering Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) etc. as a counter weight to ISIL led Caliphate. For many Muslims, especially those vulnerable to ISIL recruitment, lack of Muslim unity and weak "Ummah" is seen as the biggest challenge. An evidence of Muslim collaboration at a wider scale (for economic or educational purposes) is likely to receive huge support among young Muslims globally. Muslims in most countries are routinely fed the narrative that overall Muslims are weak and being humiliated by the West, etc. etc. Muslim leaders have failed to come up with a counter argument to this. That's why ISIL idea to build a Caliphate (to regain lost Muslim glory) gains currency.

Daesh Discourse Analysis for Review Question 4: Strategic Framework of ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate"

Lawrence A. Kuznar
NSI, Inc. and Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne

Summary

The Strategic Framework of ISIL's "Virtual Caliphate"

- Abu Bakr al Baghdadi continues to focus his attention on near enemies (apostates, Shia, Kurds, Middle Eastern leaders, especially Saudis, Alawites), but mentions Libya and Tunisia more often in 2016.
  - o Earlier research identified a significant shift in Baghdadi and Abu Muhammed al Adnani's focus on enemies during the summer of 2014, with Baghdadi concentrating on near enemies in the Middle East region, and Adnani focusing on far enemies in the West and Russia. Baghdadi's focus on near enemies continues, despite Adnani's announced death 30 Aug 2016.
- Baghdadi's use of judgment day themes actually declines in past year, possibly indicating a pivot away from the narrative of an apocalyptic showdown at Dabiq and toward and alternative conceptualization of the Caliphate.
  - o This contrasts with an increase in judgment day themes in 2015, and appears to be a response to the Turkish / FSA capture of Dabiq on 16 Oct 2016.
- Adnani signals a significant pivot away from a Syria/Iraq physical Caliphate and to a virtual Caliphate in May of 2016.

- Baghdadi signals a similar pivot away from Syria/Iraq and toward North Africa in November 2016.
- Daesh online messaging, despite its overwhelmingly greater volume, has been no more influential in inspiring attacks on the U.S. homeland.
- However, the persistence of messages in cyberspace means that the threat they represent will continue to in perpetuity, and therefore Daesh will continue to inspire long after it ceases to exist in any physical way.

Undermining the Strategic Framework

- Continue to defeat Daesh militarily to discredit them and to force them to force a new narrative
- Continue to target top Daesh leadership, especially ideologues who are responsible for narrative generation
- Work with and enable credible alternative voices in Islamic world that can divert vulnerable recruits away from violent jihadist movements and inspiration
- Beware of alternate jihadists capturing Daesh's market share of the virtual Caliphate as Daesh is further discredited
- Plan for cooperation with DHS and allies to mitigate persistent effects of lingering Daesh messaging in cyberspace

Introduction

CENTCOM posed Literature Review Question # 4:

*LR 4 What is the strategic framework for **undermining ISIL'**s "Virtual **Caliphate**"?*

CENTCOM provided further guidance: "the virtual caliphate is any and all virtual means of influencing potential recruits and sympathizers…internet chat rooms, videos, social media, email, apps, online training. It would be useful to get a response that casts a wide net across all virtual areas, and it would also be useful for a more targeted study on a specific topic. We don't want to restrict responses, but allow the author to use their expertise and experience to answer as they see fit."

This report provides information based on primary research on Daesh messaging over the past three years, and includes the most recent major speeches by Abu Muhammed al Adnani (killed 30 Aug 2016) and Abu Bakr al Baghdadi. Shifts in key themes in the past year provide insight into a pivot away from a physical and toward a virtual Caliphate that would exist in distributed form around the world, as well as in cyberspace.[5]

The "Virtual Caliphate" entails many manifestations, both in physical forms as well as online, and this report focuses on specific aspects of message content and its online persistence.

2016 Trends

Adnani

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[5] Cyberspace refers to a combination of social media, standard websites, and less accessible websites in the dark web, or through mobile devices connected through cellular networks.

Adnani's last major speech (That They Live by Proof) was released by al Hayat media arm of Daesh in May of 2016. The speech was primarily a call to faith in the Caliphate and the jihad, and an indictment of Western policy as well as an indictment of U.S. decapitation strategies of killing leaders.

Adnani performs his role as a predominant organizer and inspirer of attacks against the West, which in light of his death is now largely academic.

> If one of you wishes and strives to reach the lands of the Islamic State, then each of us wishes to be in your place to make examples of the crusaders, day and night, scaring them and terrorizing them, until every neighbor fears his neighbor. If one of you is unable, then do not make light of throwing a stone at a crusader in his land, and do not underestimate any deed, as its consequences are great for the mujahidin and its effect is noxious to the disbelievers.

However, he also signals an **important pivot** by generalizing how a hypothetical loss of Mosul or even Raqqa would not stop the Caliphate.

> "Would you be victorious if you were to kill ash-Shishani, Abu Bakr, Abu Zayd, or Abu 'Amr? No. Indeed, victory is the defeat of one's opponent. Or do you, O America, consider defeat to be the loss of a city or the loss of land? Were we defeated when we lost the cities in Iraq and were in the desert without any city or land [referring to AQI's losses 2006 - 2010]? ***And would we be defeated and you be victorious if you were to take Mosul or Sirte or Raqqah or even take all the cities and we were to return to our initial condition?*** [Emphasis added] Certainly not!"

> We fight in obedience to Allah and to become closer to Him. And victory is that we live in the might of our religion or die upon it. It is the same, whether Allah blesses us with consolidation ***or we move into the bare, open desert, displaced and pursued*** [emphasis added].

Adnani exhibits only two shifts in language use in 2016.

In his last major missive, he introduces the concept that their difficulties are **tests** of faith sent by Allah.

His use of intensifying language (measured as Density = # intensifiers/words) increases exponentially in the past year, indicating that he was in an **increasingly emotional state, which could have been influencing his decision calculus**.

Adnani Use of Intensifiers
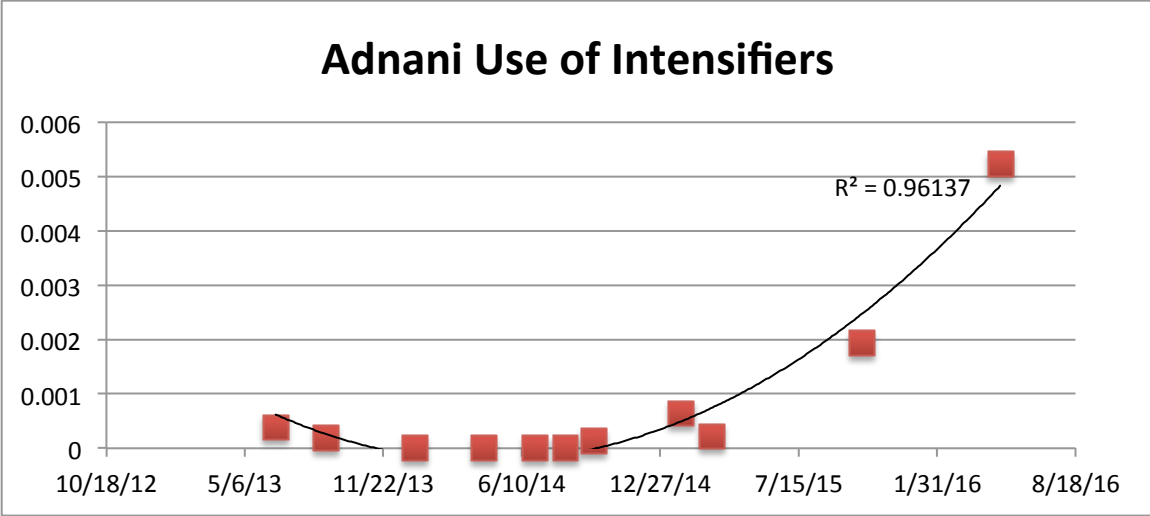
Baghdadi

Baghdadi exhibits a few qualitative shifts in his use of language, even though the majority of his language use exhibits no statistically significant change.

Within the past year (26 Dec 2016, 2 Nov 2016), a topic that never surfaced in his speeches before, **fitna**, begins emerging as a relatively common concern. **Fitna** refers to internal discord among Muslims, and carries deep religious significance, associated with historic periods of disarray and collapse of unified Muslim rule (especially with regard to the original schism between Shia and Sunni Muslims in the 7th Century). Fitna is not a concept taken lightly in Islam and Baghdadi's reference to fitna may signal serious concerns with internal divisions within Daesh.

Since March of 2015, the theme that Daesh's **difficulties are tests sent by Allah** is introduced, and becomes persistent in 2016. This could very well be a response designed to bolster morale in light of the past year's losses and especially to the assault on Mosul. Some Muslim clerics regard **fitna as an actual test from Allah,** therefore these two concepts could be interrelated in Baghdadi's use of them.

In Baghdadi's most recent major speech, delivered 2 Nov 2016, he calls for continued patience on the behalf of Daesh fighters everywhere, but *singles out Libya in particular,* praising them as the basis of the Caliphate and encouraging them to fight on in the face of opposition.

> "To the soldiers of the caliphate in Khurasan [Afghanistan, Pakistan region], Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Caucasus, the Philippines, Yemen, the [Arabian] Peninsula, Sinai, Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Somalia, and West Africa: Know that you are the pillars of Islam on earth, the tent stands of the caliphate upon it. ….
>
> "To the mujahideen who are patient with war and adversity in Surt: With your patience you have forced lessons upon your enemies; you have written pages of glory and perseverance with your pure blood. Europe was Crusader and remains so, avariciously seeking to invade the cradle

of the caliphate and fortress of Islam in Iraq and the Levant, until your activity shook its security and your jihad flipped their political calculations. You became an insurmountable obstacle, the solid stone against which their will broke and agendas shattered. Your enemy hurts, as you do; but you have hope from your Lord that they do not. Beware of departing your battle stations and posts, for your enemy is on the verge of flagging, or being driven back and fleeing.

The Persistence of the Virtual Caliphate

The trends and shifts in messaging from Daesh leaders detailed above can inform anticipation of Daesh's shorter-term strategic goals and operational concerns such as likely targets and methods. However, in a world of tweets and social media reposts, these immediate concerns are easily swamped by the persistence of messages in cyberspace. The following cases illustrate the point.

	2014 Queens Hatchet Attack	2015 Dallas Prophet Cartoon Attack	2015 US Merced Stabbing	2015 San Bernardino Shooting	2016 Orlando Pulse Nightclub Shooting
Incident	Man attacks police with a hatchet	Two men try to open fire on a Prophet Muhammed Cartoon context sponsored by American Freedom Defense Initiative (AFDI) also known as Stop Islamicization of America	Student stabbed 2 students, an employee and a construction worker	Couple enters their workplace during Xmas party and kill 14 people with AR-15s	Gunman enters Gay bar and kills down 49 people with an AR-15
Date	23 Oct 2016	3 May 2015	4 Nov 2015	2 Dec 2015	12 Jun 2016
Perp(s)	Zale H. Thomson (Zaim Farouq Abdul-Malik) shot dead by police	Elton Simpson, Nadir Soofi, shot dead by police	Faisal Mohammed, shot dead by police	Syed Farook, Tashfeen Malik , shot dead by police	Omar Mateen, commits suicide during attack
Details	1 officer critically wounded, another cut, woman shot in cross-fire	1 Wounded school security officer; Daesh takes credit for inspiration, for first time	4 people stabbed, Wanted to murder study group and cut a head	14 killed, 22 injured. Radicalized couple, wife possibly radicalized in	49 killed, 50 wounded. Security officer, domestic abuse,

			off	PAK, husband possibly radicalized by wife, no previous criminal record, afterward, Daesh claims them as soldiers	allegations of mental instability, may have had sexual identity issues, would get drunk and allegedly try to pick up men at Pulse
Inspiration	Black power movement, al Qaeda, al Shabab, Daesh	Simpson: teenage convert, ties to jihadist Navy leakers, previously investigated, cyberlinks to Awlaki, al Shabab, and Daesh Soofi: Child of immigrant father, raised Muslim, lived in Pakistan, issues w alcohol and drugs	Anger over being excluded from a study group, and Daesh propaganda	Various jihadist websites, incl. Daesh and Awlaki	Motivated by death of Abu Waheeb, Daesh, Awlaki, Hezbollah
Pledge of Bayah	None	None	None	Pledged to Baghdadi during/immediately before the attack	Pledges to Baghdadi during attack

There has been no case of a directly Daesh-organized attack upon the U.S. homeland. There have been five cases of Daesh inspired attacks, however, the details of these attacks shed light both on Daesh's irrelevance as an organization and their likely persistence as a meme, even long after their destruction.

As we often warn young people, "Be careful what you post, because it will be there forever." Messages live on forever in cyberspace, and because of the cut-and-paste nature of reposting, specific themes, or memes, can take on a life of their own forever.

Daesh's Irrelevance

In the three first Daesh-inspired attacks on the U.S., the perpetrators did not even pledge allegiance to Daesh. In each case, other jihadist online influences, and personal issues (personal discrimination, substance abuse, social exclusion) were probably at least as influential.

In the other two incidents, which are among the worst terrorist attacks in recent U.S. history, the perpetrators only pledged their allegiance to Daesh immediate to or during their attacks (hardly premeditation). And in both cases, other online jihadist inspirations were probably as influential. In the case of Omar Mateen (Orlando shooter), he even sought inspiration from Hezbollah, a Shia group that represents Daesh's most mortal enemy (Kuznar & Moon, 2014), completely contradicting his stance viz. Daesh.

In this sense, Daesh's rhetoric is irrelevant, since those inspired by Daesh are inspired by *any* hateful rhetoric that fuels their hatred. However, the lack of logical connection for any sustained and supported argument also represents the ability for messages that inspire hate and violence to persist.

Daesh's Persistence in the Virtual Caliphate

Daesh's massive volume of hateful messages (measured in 100s of thousands of messages per day and reposts compared to 10s of thousands per day from Awlaki, or less from Zawahiri) will persist in cyberspace and, along with messages from other jihadists, past, present and future, will continue to inspire those vulnerable to jihadist recruitment. The persistent influence of messages from Anwar al Awlaki (killed 2011) is testimony to the persistence of jihadist messages, well after the death of their generators.

Undermining the Strategic Pivot

Continued physical losses undermine Daesh's legitimacy since they continue to rely on their record of and imagery of successes to bolster their claim that they are the only true jihadists.

Continued loss of top leadership undermines Daesh's administrative capability to effect a shift to a virtual Caliphate.

A central theme in Daesh messaging is that they are the only legitimate jihadist movement and therefore the only true Muslims, and they have viciously attacked their jihadist market-share competitors such as AQC, AQAP, al Nusra. pointing out that other jihadists have been as and more successful at inspiring attacks undermines Daesh's legitimacy. Daesh's insistence that they are the only legitimate alternative boxes them into a rhetorical corner.

A Caution

All extremist organizations rationalize failures, changes in policy, and even whole scale strategic shifts. Daesh is particularly well-suited to make this shift in light of their end-times eschatology: They have explicitly stated that the establishment of the Caliphate, and even its near-destruction and deaths of nearly all of its fighters are necessary prerequisites to the final apocalypse. Therefore, those who want to believe in Daesh, will have a ready explanation for failures. However, this placed Daesh's virtual

existence on the horns of a dilemma: the recent losses are foretold, but if the Mahdi and Isa (Jesus) do not return and fight the final battle of good versus evil, then their narrative will sound hollow to those not already committed to Daesh, allowing alternative organizations to soak up Daesh's market share. This logically leads to two cautions:

The demise of Daesh creates opportunities for other jihadist organizations if valid alternatives to violent jihad are not provided by credible sources in cyberspace. Therefore, USG must identify and enable those non-violent alternatives that can guide the disgruntled, oppressed, or perhaps just plain bored away from violent ideologies and organizations and toward more peaceful alternatives.

Finally, cyber objects potentially exist in cyberspace indefinitely. Therefore, messages of hate and violence that can inspire will never be completely eliminated from cyberspace and the threat will always exist, even if at a lower level than is experienced today.

A further consideration is that Daesh membership is not monolithic and this analysis focuses on the ideologically committed leadership. Less-ideologically committed members' resolve and allegiance may be eroded if counter-messaging is effectively directed at drawing them away from the central messages upon which Daesh has based its narrative (Ligon & Spitaletta, 2016).

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We do it for the LOLZ: Cyber Enabled Special Warfare to Counter the Virtual Caliphate

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Abstract:

A revolutionary state for the purpose of this discussion will be defined as a result of a state which is, "hostile to prevailing international norms and uses ruthless violence to eliminate or intimidate rivals and demonstrate their power to a wider world."(Walt, 2015)

The urgent question is how do we counter or disrupt this revolutionary state, specifically its ability to contextualize its positions and actions? The virtual domain is "contested borderland" with neighboring states. This contested area is filled with "tribes" and communities opposed to the action of the current revolutionary state and in some cases view it is an occupying power, which is antithetical to the interests and objectives of their own communities.

 US Special Operations Forces and specifically the Psychological Operations Regiment, is uniquely suited to apply current Special Warfare and its subset Unconventional Warfare to the virtual domain through the application of Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW). "CE-SW can use information and psychological means as a coercive tactic to change, modify, and punish an adversary's behavior." (Dugan, 2014) Using Cyber enabled Special Warfare will allow US Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) to force the Islamic state, via the virtual caliphate, to compete for functional capability in the information environment. In order to effectively do this, Special Operations Forces must develop relationships with "online digital natives." We must view these relationships as meetings with the underground portions of a nascent resistance movement. Psychological Operations should have the lead role in developing, cultivating, and advising the underground portion of these actions. In short, we do not require new doctrine or a new approach, we must simply apply current doctrine in creative ways as a framework for response. This is a return to first principles.

Introduction:

Jürgen Todenhöfer, a German journalist who visited territory in Iraq and Syria controlled by ISIS, said in 2014, "We have to understand that ISIS is a country now." As mentioned before, a revolutionary state will be defined as a result of a state which is "hostile to prevailing international norms and uses ruthless violence to eliminate or intimidate rivals and demonstrate their power to a wider world."(Walt, 2015) Key in this definition are two elements, the ruthless use of violence and demonstrations of power to the wider world. These elements push IS into a unique position predicated on narratively contextualized violence. This predilection presents an overmatch based the US military's preference for competitions of

violence and decisive action. Within this competitive space we must define the area of operations, concentrated around the epicenters of Raqqa and Mosul, and the area of interest which has in part centralized around the "virtual caliphate." The Islamic state has consistently lost in the area of operations in terms of land, resources and ability to govern, however they continue to maintain relevance in the area of interest. This allows them to contextualize and export their violence for the purpose of support and recruitment.

Understanding Special Warfare:

How do we counter or disrupt this area of interest for a revolutionary state such as IS? We must view the virtual domain as "contested borderland" with neighboring states. This contested area is filled with "tribes" and communities opposed to the action of the current revolutionary state. These conditions closely resemble Special Warfare and more specifically Unconventional Warfare (UW). US Special Operations is uniquely suited to apply current doctrine to the virtual domain. In order to apply this doctrine effectively, we must understand the nature of this type of warfare. The Tompkins model, popularized by United States Special Operations Command (USASOC) G3X division Chief Paul Tompkins, provides a pictorial model to clearly do just that.
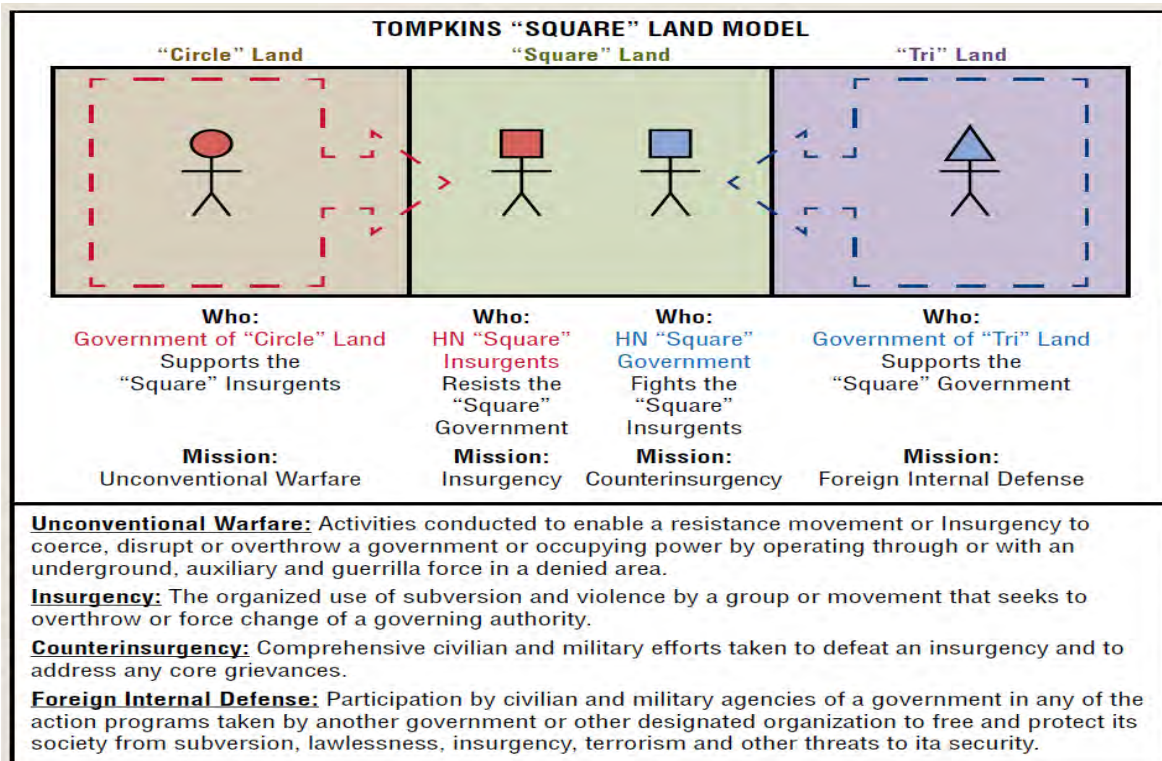

Figure 1: Tompkins Model

The Tompkins model provides a clear understanding of key tactical and operational concepts at the strategic level, allowing multiple organizations, agencies, and more importantly, the Special Operations Force Solider to understand their roles, missions, and authorities in a potential conflict.

Cyber Enabled Special Warfare

With this basic understanding of Special Warfare, we can apply these concepts to affect the Cyber domain and specifically, the "borderland" of the Islamic State, which exists in the virtual caliphate. The goal is to utilize cyber capabilities coupled with Special Warfare doctrine to degrade the adversary's ability to effectively use the information environment to support their objectives. COL Patrick Dugan addresses this concept in his Small Wars Journal article "Man, Computers and Special Warfare." He states:

"The Cyber Enabled Special Warfare (CE-SW) pyramid (figure below) borrows under-utilized tactics, capabilities, and tools from previously labeled conflicts, and unexpectedly fuses them together to open new 'attack surfaces' against an adversary. The new opportunities target humans, networks, and narratives in decentralized and disaggregated operations and uses a mix of both virtual and physical practice." (Dugan, 2014)
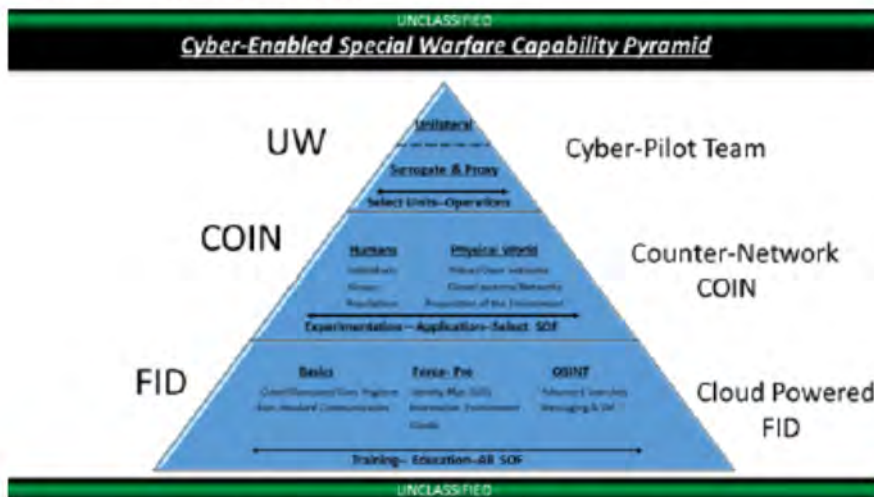

Figure 1. Cyber-Enabled Special Warfare Pyramid

FIG 2: Dugan's Cyber-Enabled Special Warfare Pyramid

Allies and Potential Actions

Col Dugan goes on to state unequivocally, "CE-SW can use information and psychological means as a coercive tactic to change, modify, and punish an adversary's behavior." (Dugan, 2014) Using Cyber enabled Special Warfare will allow US Army Special Operations Forces (ARSOF) to force the Islamic state, via the virtual caliphate, to compete for functional capability by providing and developing access to information and a narrative that is counter to the interest of the adversary. The ability to impact the access to and amount of information that key target audiences have access to will directly impact the functional defeat of the information capability of the virtual caliphate. This can be accomplished through

the traditional application of Special Warfare techniques by developing and influencing the interpersonal relationships of those "tribes" such as GHOSTSEC, or other like-minded online personae in order to support our goals and objectives and share the digital domain that borders the Islamic State. The building of these relationships with "online digital natives" will be key to the success of defeating the virtual caliphate. We must view these relationships as meetings with the underground portions of a resistance movement.

These "digital tribes" understand local languages, such as 'lite speak, and have essential placement and access to further develop an online proxy force, as well as execute their own actions. These actions, as outlined by COL Dugan, could include,

"Coordinating sit-ins, directing 'swarm stream attacks,'or spreading social media whisper campaigns, CE-SW can use 'cyber-smash mouth tactics' to amplify its physical and virtual activities. CE-SW can vet and leverage sympathetic 'privateers', vigilante, crowd-sourced, as well as, employ false flag efforts to "create believable deceptions in cyberspace over a protracted period of time." (Dugan, 2015)

The actions defined above are the preview of the underground in a classic Unconventional Warfare scenario. Of all the AROSF "tribes," only one owns the underground's propaganda and messaging function: Psychological Operations. PSYOP planners must be integrated into the planning and execution of any type of "underground" action. This will help to ensure that the informational effect is exploited for wider success and directly advances the operational narrative.

ARSOF's ability effects these systems of personal relationships to manipulate and develop permissive, pressure (adversarial/conflicting) and neutral viewpoints. Key to understand these viewpoints is to identify the component factors behind mobilization. Jesse Kirkpatrick and Mary Kate Schneider discuss these factors in their article, "I3M: Interest, Identification, Indoctrination, and Mobilization." Their article lays out four key factors that make up the potential active or passive mobilization of support; they are identification, interest, and indoctrination. Of the four factors the most important, is Interest: which can be defined as the emotional motivation or incentive to participate. As stated by Mancur Olsen in his seminal work "The Logic of Collective Action "Simply put without interest there is no group." The ability to effect the emotional motivations is the ability to effect the "WILL" and directly relates to influencing a target audience desire to act. ARSOF will utilize the target aaudience, increasing access to information to encourage and exploit the dissolution of a hostile narrative via saturation of neutral and pressure narratives, which widens the aperture of information available. Propagation of neutral narratives will start to break down the head-to-head narrative competition, which currently exists, and force the adversary into a competitive marketplace. Choice and competition will degrade the overall capability of the Islamic State to promote their narrative. Permissive and pressure viewpoints directly affect the will of neutral parties to align with IS ideology by providing a mechanism to question it.

Conclusion:

Through effecting the components of will and capability via Cyber Enabled Special Warfare, we achieve functional defeat of the Virtual Caliphate. Line for line, countering of this hostile narrative is a losing battle because the virtual caliphate understands the audience better than we could hope to, but by joining forces with a cyber-underground, we can dilute the impact of their narrative by increasing the scope of the information environment.

Recommendations

- Cyberspace domain should be viewed is an "exposed flank" and an area of interest to the overall battlefield geometry.
- Developing a competitive marketplace is essential.
- Relationships are a key aspect of Special Warfare.
- PSYOP is the force of choice to develop and support underground in Unconventional Warfare.
- The virtual domain may alter application but does not always alter principles. .

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Biographies

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• MALD and Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of
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Research Interests

• Politics, Security and Religion in South Asia
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He regularly appears as an analyst on media including CNN, ABC, BBC, C-Span, Al Jazeera and
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2014) was profiled on *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart* in August 2014. Abbas' earlier well
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Pakistan 2020: A Vision for Building a Better Future (Asia Society, 2011).

A detailed list of his publications is available here.

Dr. Lawrence Kuznar has a background in discourse analysis, decision theory, and mathematical and computational modeling. He has supported many SMA projects, as well as work for AFRL, the Army Corps of Engineers, and our private customers. His discourse work has been used to provide anticipatory insights into violent non-state actors such as ISIL and the Taliban, and state actors as varied as Iran, Pakistan, India and North Korea. He also contributed to NSI's computational modeling of social conflict. In addition to his position at NSI, he is also a professor of anthropology at Indiana University – Purdue University, Fort Wayne, and his published work can be found in journals such as American Anthropologist, Political Studies, Current Anthropology, Evolution and Human Behavior and Social Science Computer Review.

Major Patrick B. Taylor graduated from the University of Maine in 2004 and was commissioned a 2LT in the U.S. Army as an Air Defense Artillery (ADA) Officer.

In 2004, he graduated the ADA Officer Basic Course and was assigned to Bravo battery 2nd Battalion 44th Air Defense Artillery, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) as a Stinger/Avenger Platoon Leader. In early 2005, he deployed to Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and redeployed in 2006. During his tour in Iraq, Major Taylor was approved for a branch transfer to the Military Intelligence corps. Upon his return to Fort Campbell he served as the assistant battalion intelligence officer before moving to 7th Squadron 17th US Cavalry (AIR) of the 159th Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault)

Major Taylor became the Squadron Intelligence officer, and deployed with his squadron to El Centro, California in support of Joint Task Force-North in 2008. While deployed, he assisted US Border Patrol intelligence units, and helped develop an integrated intelligence support plan which was key in the success of the squadron's mission.

Major Taylor was selected by the ARSOF board to become a Psychological Operations Officer in 2007, then attended the Maneuver Captains Career Course in 2008. He graduated from the Psychological Operations Qualification Course in November 2009 as a 37A and was assigned to A Co., 8th Battalion, 4th Psychological Operations Group (Airborne) as a Detachment Commander for detachment 8A30. He deployed his detachment to Pakistan from 2010 to 2011 in support of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM, then redeployed and was assigned as the detachment commander for 8A20. In 2011, he deployed to Egypt to support US Embassy Cairo. Upon his return, he then transitioned to the 4th Military Information Support Group and served as the Future and Current Operations officer. He then deployed in support of the Joint Information Support Task Force from July 2013 to February 2014 and served as the Special Operations Command-Central Liaison to US Central Command's Web Operations program. Upon graduation from the US Army Command and General Staff College, MAJ Taylor was then assigned to 7th Psychological Operations Battalion as the Operations officer. He is currently the Executive officer of 7th Psychological Operations battalion (Airborne).

Major Taylor's military schooling includes Airborne School, Unconventional Warfare Operational Design Course, Psychological Operations Qualification Course, Military Deception Planner Course, Joint and Army Cyber Planner Courses, Information Environment Advanced Analysis Course, Mobile Force Protection Course, Advanced Pistol Marksmanship Course, Advanced Rifle Marksmanship Course, US Army Combatives Program, Air Defense Artillery Officers Basic Course, Maneuver Captains Career Course and US Army Command and General Staff College.

His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star Medal, the Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal with V device, the Army Commendation Medal with four OLCs, the Army Achievement Medal with three OLCs, the Joint Meritorious Unit Citation, the Meritorious Unit Citation with one Oak leaf, the National Defense Service Medal, the Iraq Campaign Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Expeditionary Medal, the Global War on Terrorism Service Medal, the Humanitarian Service Medal, the Army Service Ribbon, the Overseas Service Ribbon with numeral 2, the Combat Action Badge, the Parachutist Badge, and the German, and Italian Army Parachutist Badges.

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.
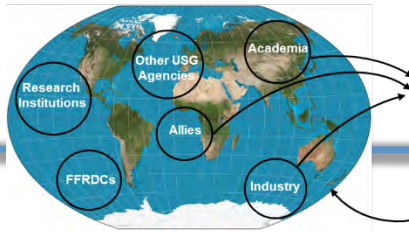
SMA Reach-back Report

Question (V3): What long-term actions and processes should U.S. government (USG) institutions, the Coalition and the international community examine to position ourselves against a long term ISIL threat? How can the private sector be effectively engaged by government institutions to optimize the effects needed for success?

Executive Summary

Expert contributors agree that terrorism will remain a long-standing global threat. In addition, there is emphasis on the leadership of the USG as a whole of nation concept. The military alone cannot position parties against lasting terrorism threat but it certainly can shape and influence them through stability operations and other people centric maneuvering. It must work in close cooperation with other USG colleagues and coalition partners to do this while mitigating not only ISIL global impact, but other people and groups that strive to commit the devastating acts of violence. Further the USG should take deliberate measures to lessen underlying factors that lead parties to terror responses. Some specific ideas from this group of contributors include:

As war perpetuates and airstrikes continue the USG and its partner's further loose legitimacy.

There already a strong narrative present in the region that the USG instigated the rise of ISIL in order to manipulate governments it did not support and, as necessary, depose them. The USG would be better suited to take its narrative and support it by action. Some examples may include bringing in foreign direct investment that will jump start reconstruction and economic prowess, stabilize Iraqi and Syrian government institutions, and supporting local initiatives that find creative ways to resettle, rebuild and resume ways of life.

Learn to maneuver in the narrative space

It is not a necessity to engage ISIL or other actors on in the social sphere. Simple counter messaging is not going to deter opponents in the battle space. However, it is essential to know what is being said in this space and understanding its impact. Learn the stories and acquire the knowledge about those stories in the historical, cultural, religious and lingual context of the people as a whole. The USG should not take sides, it must operate in site and transparent while working with the host countries to directly solve problems. If people do not feel empowered they will not take ownership, this is how ISIL and others grow. Keep in mind that the narrative space has its threats, but there are also friendly and neutral players that can help the USG show itself under its own narrative of a "moral and democratic" proponent.

Data is your friend

At the CENTCOM reach back center, experts can work with you to streamline real-time data for the warfighter and help enhance decision making and improve the visual battle ground. This is also an area where the military can cooperate directly with the private sector. TRADOC G-27 is increasing improving tools for advanced data and network analysis as it the private sector by researching and looking for partners in the private sector. IBM has introduced Watson, a computer that can complete immense amount of data and information for analysis, visualization, and decision making. Finally, in addition to companies conducting biological and neurological research, some small companies are focusing on sentiment analysis that can support the translation of motivations in populations. For example, one would be able to read popular emotions to see if people support or despise ISIL.

Everything is local

The ongoing conflict in the region has increased fragmentation in society. There are splits between families, tribes, and religions. Mitigation of ISIL must begin first and foremost at the local level empowering individuals to take charge of their own security and stability. In CENTCOM planning, it will be difficult to do much more than ensure wide area security so the Iraqi government can take the lead to incorporate wayward militias into the Iraqi forces, build strong community policy enforcement, and create space for reconciliation and rebuilding of these fractured nations.

Summary

Taking a realistic view of the expectations of current Arab governments in identifying and alleviating the causes that gave birth to ISIL is essential. It is beyond the existing regimes' capacities to address the socioeconomic and political conditions of their societies, however, they must be strongly encouraged to do so. To be sure, these regimes can no longer postpone tackling the roots of their citizens' grievances, which resulted in political violence we see today. In addition, response to these grievances has been brutal leading to injury, jail and death. These collective choices by all governments, for what has been decades, in the region to marginalize or destroy those who do not directly conform or stay silent will plague USG and coalition forces in any long-term defeat of terrorism disseminating from the regions.

It is difficult to see how the above recommendations might be implemented while USG policy in the Middle East policy lacks clarity or cohesiveness. Further the West, most notably the USG, already lacks credibility and what is left continues to dwindle as military maneuvers continue in Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Finally, allowing Israel to also join in their own air campaign deteriorates what is left of USG credibility and the most recent $37 billon US aid package awarded by USG to Israel will no doubt further corrode America's credibility in the region.

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SME Input

Positioning the Coalition against a long term ISIL threat

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Executive Summary

Nations will no doubt continue to experience terrorist violence as has been the case throughout history. The concern in today's global environment are that those who strive to commit violent acts against others can create global networks to facilitate and execute attacks on targets that are continents away. USG institutions, the Coalition and international community must be vigilant in order to identify, classify, and recognize potential threats. More importantly, stakeholders must organize, not only to focus on identifying threats, but also engage friendly and neutral parties that can be used to shape the operating environment (OE) by other than lethal means.

To do this, it is necessary to maintain strong relationship and communication networks between USG agencies, partners in the OE and host country colleagues. The USG, international community, and the Coalition are parties to long-term initiatives that position themselves against the ISIL as well as other terrorist threats.

Currently, many of the long-term cooperative efforts are funneled through the United Nations and are focused on intelligence monitoring, gathering, and sharing. Other mechanisms are also put in place to encourage internal actions of nationals to improve conditions on the ground through diplomatic efforts and tools in development are often dedicated to lengthy in country projects to improve civil society. However, when operating in areas that are so lethally volatile, diplomatic and development efforts cannot be properly supported nor can local implementation partners while combat remains high and safety is questionable.

Therefore, the campaign against ISIL and other terrorist groups lies primarily with military operations. To date coalition aircraft, U.S. fighters, bombers and drones have conducted some 15,000 airstrikes on related ISIL targets while approximately 6,000 US troops support Iraqi forces against ISIL strongholds. Additionally, regional partners are receiving US military training and tactical advice and assistance. This ad hoc process of eliminating the longer terrorism threat must be reorganized, inclusive and formalized for enduring impact.

Terrorist acts executed by ISIL and other non-state actors cannot be solved by military means alone. In fact, the continued bombardment seems to be the main factor ISIL is maintaining momentum in drawing recruits. In response the USG has an opportunity to solidify USG and coalition cooperation while implementing other efforts to stabilize and shape the region.

Recommendations

Years of war in Iraq and Afghanistan, continued air operations in Libya, Syria, Lebanon, and Somalia, and other foreign military engagements are stressing this nation's ability to become proactive in long-term strategic planning for a durable US international security policy formulation and implementation. Therefore it is time to get ahead of the game and considering enforcing the following:

Administer the Guidance in Joint Publication 3-57

The recently published national defense strategic guidance states, "Whenever possible, we will develop innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches to achieve our security objectives, relying on exercises, rotational presence, and advisory capabilities.[6] Although the military tends to focus on hard power, it is essential to utilize additional resources to fill gaps small teams cannot possibly address. With lean teams, political constraints and numerous participants in the coalition a necessary long-term ISIL strategy does not come easy. Engagement is essential. JP 3-57 outlines in detail specific guidance for Civil-Military Operations. Yet the planning and operationalization of civilian and military operations is lacking. Often, boxes are checked and commands move on. Historically, lack of a holistic Civil-Military operations (CMO) frustrates mission success. A well thought out CMO will "focus on larger and long-term issues that will be part of a Department of Defense (DoD) global campaign, or United States Government (USG) reconstruction, economic development initiatives, and stability operations in failing or recovering nations." The U.S. Army War College concluded after nine months of research on Gray Zone threats, "Without a coherent approach to reasserting U.S. leadership, the United States risks losing control over the security of its core interests and increasing constraints on its global freedom of action."

Standardize civil military operations center (CMOC) as part of the CMO

Each country's leadership looks at creating a CMOC differently, many see the value and have well-functioning CMOCs while others do not. A well run CMOC is the center of facilitation on the tactical level CMO among the military, the local populace, NGOs, and IGOs allowing greater access to what is happing in order to shape the human terrain.

Bolster MISO IE fusion cells

The information environment (IE) is central to the OE. Because of its central position within the OE, the IE also warrants new thinking about its relevance in shaping mission activates. To support these cells, the knowledge of central reach back centers and the establishment of a centralized data access facility to support network analysis and maneuvering in the narrative space can support those small teams who lack skills or time to create timely and actionable information for better decision making. Information and data overload is not new, the IE is far larger than social media, and it will only become more complicated to analyze. Fusion cells must a robust center integrating expert information and recommendations from the sociocultural, neurocognitive, and network analysis communities in a way that enables the Warfighter to shape the OE for mission success. The application to ISIL, and future

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[6] Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense, 3.

operations in the Gray Zone, the IE is the key to overcoming the challenges of conducting successful operations in in order to shape the IE correctly, it is necessary to understand which sociocultural factors and aspects of cognition will affect human perceptions in ways that are likely to influence desired human behavior.

It's all about relationships

Former Chief of Staff of the Army, Raymond Odierno, never hesitated to remind forces that relationships are the key to mission success. Today's combat space is littered with players, State, non-state, and proxy participants. In Syria, the complications of operations are multi-fold due to the numerous players on land and sea as well as in the air. The Department of State lists 66 coalition partners. Each contributes military and/or non-military assistance in a manner commensurate with its national interests and comparative advantage.[7] The advantages must be aligned with CENTCOMs and leveraged. It is also important to understand who is contributing what where. The joint force is aware of much of the movement. There is no reason, however, that these reinforcing a processes by which relationships are cultivated and nurtured cannot be further improved and official institutionalized. Strong relationships will entail less guess work about intentions and actions of other parties. Finally, assigning liaison officers or military civilians to maintain strong affiliations with these groups will show the USG is in support of the populations at risk and increase the ability to influence friendly and neutral parties.

Streamline bureaucratic organizations, processes and implementation

A June 2016 study written by a team of experts during nine months of research at the U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute recommends that because there is no reasonable expectation for the USG to provide either a grand strategy or a campaign-like charter guiding U.S. defense efforts against specific gray zone challenges, the DoD should "lead up" and develop actionable, classified strategic approaches to discrete challenges and challengers. According to CSA General Mark Milley, there will be "no clear front line, no secure supply lines, and no big bases" so forces will have to become less ridged and more apt at developing "networks with simultaneous, coordinated attacks against every possible weak point in all domains — land, sea, air, space, cyberspace, and the electromagnetic spectrum."[8] Meaning the force has to be quick, adaptable, and small teams may not have time to follow exact command chain in order to act quickly to prevent incident. It is time for forces to be lean and mean by streamlining outdated organizational structures, processes, and improving implementation success with expert information and talent- both civilian and military.

Private Sector Partnering

Law enforcement officials have historically engaged the private sector to counter money laundering, human trafficking, narcotics smuggling and the like. DoD also has a history of engaging the private sector in the technology industry. More recently, the Secretary of Defense, Ash Carter, has reached out directly

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[7] McInnis, Kathleen J., *Coalition Contributions to Countering the Islamic State*, Congressional Research Service, August 24, 2016

[8] http://breakingdefense.com/2016/10/miserable-disobedient-victorious-gen-milleys-future-us-soldier/

to the private sector to create the Defense Innovation Unit Experimental (DIUx). DIUx is a bridge for the US military and companies operating at the cutting edge of technology. DIUx aims to "identify, contract, and prototype novel innovations through sources traditionally not available to the Department of Defense, with the ultimate goal of accelerating technology into the hands of the men and women in uniform."[9] This is not the first time DoD has used funding to help bring accelerated innovation into defense operations. In the case of further terrorist threats, one might consider some of the following efforts:

Partner with Private Sector Elements to Financially Support Requirements

A private equity investment firm in Britain helped to construct a National Firearms and Tactical Training Center with state of the art weapons ranges and live fire houses. These buildings can be converted for scenario training. The training includes realistic hostage, siege and terrorism exercises. The Center will increase the capacity for military, police officials and others to train due to increased demand due to global terrorist threats. This is one way that the private sector led a security requirement in order to support worldwide efforts to fight terrorism and other asymmetrical threats.

Engage private sector associations working on security related issues

The Canadian arm of The Conference Board (TCB) developed its own National Security and Public Safety initiative to address the increasingly globalized world. To quote TCB, "As our environment becomes more globalized and interconnected, individuals, organizations, and nation states are becoming more vulnerable. Dynamic risks and challenges place unprecedented demands on organizational decision-making and public policies affecting [*Sovereign Nations*], businesses, and its citizens." With its vast executive network, TCB brings custom research services and *Strategic Foresight Training*[10] to identify issues like planning for catastrophic events, challenges in coordinating responders during terrorist attacks, projecting change global security landscape and other topics, all areas where public-private cooperation is paramount for the future. In essence, the private sector is perfecting what the military knows as a fusion cell in order "to clearly outline the need for horizon scanning or a foresight tool, to "stay ahead of new or changing threats and vulnerabilities."[11] TCB and other private sector efforts directly compliment those of the USG and its partners in an uncertain world.

Encourage Foreign Direct Investment with Corporations who value responsible public investment

Aligning US interests and priorities to those of their private sector partners helps shape behavior by bringing economic investment aligned with population centric ventures with it will influence potential terrorist recruits. Knowing, for example, that there are alternatives and that there is a tangible USG effort to actually improve lively hoods and empower people goes a long way when trying to influence the human environment. It takes minimal effort to encourage nations to welcome companies that

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[9] https://www.diux.mil/

[10] http://www.conferenceboard.ca/topics/security-safety/default.aspx

[11] Also see United Kingdom's 2011 Strategy for Countering Terrorism (CONTEST) and Shell Scenarios http://www.shell.com/energy-and-innovation/the-energy-future/scenarios.html

improve infrastructure, commit to clean environmental standards or couple an investment with a health care facility. All will provide firsthand experience for "the people" and reinforce that the USG is in fact concerned about them. Change starts at the human emotional level and positive reinforcement through civil society opportunity will act to mitigate and/or diminish the reasoning behind joining networks that promote terror.

Summary

Comprehensive cooperation on international policy and security has long been a problem for the USG stovepipe system that is heavily bureaucratic and prone to the dysfunctional use of resources. By default, much of policy, formulation, planning and implementation has fallen to the military. Noting that this is the case, it is imperative to build the foundation for long term actions and processes by guiding cooperation from all partners to address the a holistic approach to achieve US interests and encourage populations at home and abroad to curb the desire to join groups that are committed to globalized terror.

Positioning the U.S. Government for Long-term Success

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QUESTION: What long-term actions and processes should U.S. government (USG) institutions, the Coalition and the international community examine to position ourselves against a long term ISIL threat?

ANSWER: The USG and Department of Defense (DoD), in close collaboration with the Coalition and international community, should examine relevant conclusions and recommendations from recent DoD studies to guide development of actions and processes that will position our nation and our allies for success against a long-term ISIL threat. This paper describes needed capabilities that can best be met by a specialized force.

BACKGROUND

DoD has conducted in-depth studies and assessments to determine lessons learned from past conflicts and has recommended ways forward. These include: the 2012 Joint Staff (JS), J-7 "Decade of War" study; the 2014 Army Operating Concept; the JS, J-39 series of strategic multi-layer assessments (SMA); and the Army War College 2016 gray zone study report titled, "Outplayed".

INITIAL EXAMINATION OF RECENT STUDIES AND ASSESSMENTS

The 2012 JS, J-7 Decade of War study provides four key lessons learned that are essential to defeating ISIL and similar threats, but they have not yet been fully integrated into the Joint Force as capabilities:

1. The USG must determine its approach to a campaign based on understanding of the OE.
2. Conventional warfare approaches, alone, aren't likely to achieve desired effects in non-conventional conflict.
3. The USG must align the narrative with our goals and desired end states and must win the battle for the narrative.
4. Well-executed, multiple, simultaneous operations with integrated special operations forces (SOF) and general purpose forces (GPF) create desired effects.[12]

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[12] Joint Staff, J-7, Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis (JCOA), "Decade of War, Volume 1", 15 June 2012. Excerpted below are four of 11 overarching lessons learned: The Volume I report of the Decade of War study discusses the eleven strategic themes that arose from the study of the enduring lessons and challenges of the last decade:
- Understanding the Environment: A failure to recognize, acknowledge, and accurately define the operational environment led to a mismatch between forces, capabilities, missions, and goals.
- Conventional Warfare Paradigm: Conventional warfare approaches often were ineffective when applied to operations other than major combat, forcing leaders to realign the ways and means of achieving effects.

The Army Operating Concept (AOC) highlighted the Army's need for a capability to provide dynamic combinations of conventional and unconventional forces, as described in item four above.[13] These dynamic force combinations would provide the Joint Force commander with multiple ways to shape the security environment using a global landpower network that combines regionally engaged Blue forces. These forces would apply the tenet of simultaneity by conducting simultaneous operations in multiple domains, both physical and non-physical.[14]

A June 2016 study report written at the U.S. Army War College (AWC) determined that the U.S. is being "outplayed" by Russia, China, Iran, ISIL, and others in the gray zone (the area between peace and war). The study concluded that without a coherent approach to reasserting U.S. leadership, the United States risks increasing constraints on its global freedom of action. The study recommended that the DoD should not wait for top-down guidance in responding to gray zone threats, but should "lead up" and develop actionable strategic approaches to discrete gray zone challenges and challengers.[15]

A March 2016 Joint Staff white paper on a biopsychosocial science approach for understanding the social, cultural, physical, informational, and psychological elements that influence human behavior

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- Battle for the Narrative: The US was slow to recognize the importance of information and the battle for the narrative in achieving objectives at all levels; it was often ineffective in applying and aligning the narrative to goals and desired end states.
- Special Operations Forces (SOF) – General Purpose Forces (GPF) Integration: Multiple, simultaneous, large-scale operations executed in dynamic environments required the integration of general purpose and special operations forces, creating a force-multiplying effect for both. One possible way forward towards achieving this capability would be to invest heavily in the civil affairs (CA) / military information support operations (MISO) activities (FM 3-57 CA and JP 3-57 Civil Military Operations (CMO)), and particularly the Civil Information Management (CIM) effort to more fully integrate SOF and GPF.

[13] TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1, "The U.S. Army Operating Concept", dated 31 October 2014.

[14] IBID. For example, a global landpower network could simultaneously conduct a combined arms attack in one region in coordination with wide area security operations in another region, and both operations could be supported by synchronized global information operations.

[15] A June 2016 study report was written by a team of experts during nine months of research at the U.S. Army War College (AWC) Strategic Studies Institute (SSI). It determined that the U.S. is being "outplayed" by Russia, China, Iran, ISIL, and others in the gray zone (the area between peace and war). The study concluded that without a coherent approach to reasserting U.S. leadership, the United States risks increasing constraints on its global freedom of action. The study adds that responding to the demands of gray zone threats will be even more challenging because the U.S. military is called to meet these objectives in a globally connected and real-time responsive *information environment* that connects all five domains – air, land, sea, space, and cyber.

noted that populations are: becoming increasingly connected through modern communications technology; demanding change from their respective governments; and increasingly able to quickly mobilize and create opportunities for exploitation by outside state or non-state actors. The paper also noted that success in the human domain depends on understanding the social, cultural, physical, informational, and psychological elements that influence human behavior, and that achieving such understanding requires an integrative, multi-disciplinary bio-psychosocial approach.[16]

An October 2016 follow-on white paper discussing biopsychosocial applications to cognitive engagement described cognitive engagement as a data-driven approach to operations that evaluates actors' psychological, cultural, and behavioral attributes in order to influence decision-making, information-flow, objective reasoning, and ultimately, behavior of key individuals and groups. In other words, in order to understand human influence and behavior, we must understand what happens: in the human brain; between specific people and groups; and in the environment.[17] This implies that the value of biopsychosocial applications is that they combine all three aspects of human cognition - internal,

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[16] During March 2016, the Joint Staff, J-39 published a white paper on a bio-psycho-social science approach for understanding the social, cultural, physical, informational, and psychological elements that influence human behavior. It noted that populations are: becoming increasingly connected through modern communications technology, demanding change from their respective governments on a range of grievances, and are increasingly able to quickly mobilize and create opportunities for exploitation by outside state or non-state actors. The paper described how the utilization of "domains" for military operations has shifted among state and non-state actors, which has given rise to the cyber domain and has re-empowered the human domain – populations – apart from the state. Success in the human domain depends on understanding the social, cultural, physical, informational, and psychological elements that influence human behavior, and achieving such understanding requires an integrative, multi-disciplinary bio-psychosocial approach that acquires, analyzes, informs, and develops responses to interacting factors to the operational challenges our Nation faces – a complexity the Joint Force must address in earnest.

[17] During October 2016, JS J-39 published a follow-on white paper discussing bio-psycho-social applications to cognitive engagement. The authors described cognitive engagement as:
> a data-driven approach to operations that … evaluates the psychological attributes, cultural and behavioral attributes, as well as the ne*ural correlates of those attributes* in order to influence decision-making, information-flow, objective reasoning, and ultimately, behavior of individuals and groups in any state or organization.

The October white paper described the application of neuro-cognitive techniques and technologies based on studies of interactions between individuals, groups, and environments, because these relationships affect human cognition, perception, psychology, decision-making, and behavior. In other words, to understand human influence and behavior, we must understand not only what happens in the brain, but also what happens between people and groups, and the environment.

relational, and environmental – to enable holistic understanding. Therefore, the term "holistic understanding of the human domain" will be used below to describe "biopsychosocial applications".

Common themes in the studies and assessments discussed above point to four needed capabilities. To position ourselves against a long term ISIL threat, and similar follow-on threats, the Joint Force needs capabilities to: 1) develop campaign approaches based on understanding the OE, and specifically the human domain; 2) implement an integrative, multi-disciplinary biopsychosocial approach to holistically understand the human domain; 3) win the narrative, and 4) effectively integrate SOF and GPF for operations to achieve desired end states.

SPECIALIZATION OF FORCES

The four capabilities above are interrelated, and all are essential; however, implementing the second capability requires specialization that is not extant in the Joint Force. A USSOCOM white paper titled, "The Gray Zone", dated 9 September 2015 discussed the need for specialization to manage fundamentally different approaches to high-end warfare and other types of conflict, such as in the gray zone. The idea put forth was to have two categories of forces; Category One forces focused on conventional warfare and newly established Category Two forces focused on other types of threats, such as those in the gray zone. The requirement for a reach-back capability as discussed below represents one type of needed specialization that is required to implement an integrative, multi-disciplinary approach to achieve holistic understanding of the human domain. This could become one of several capabilities that, when combined, would constitute Category Two forces.

INTEGRATED REACH-BACK SUPPORT

The challenge in implementing an integrative, multi-disciplinary approach to achieve holistic understanding of the human domain within the Joint Force is in developing a process that integrates expertise from the neuroscience, network analysis, and sociocultural communities. Because it will require years for the Army and the Joint Force to build and integrate adequate expertise into the Force, an interim capability is needed now. An interim, integrated reach-back capability will provide integrated outputs that the Warfighter can readily use within the operations process. This would be far better than expecting commanders and staffs to integrate individual recommendations from each community of experts. The integration of inputs will be challenging, but it is the most efficient way to include all aspects of human cognition (internal, relational, and environmental) in order to facilitate holistic understanding of the human domain.

To accomplish this level of integration, the core experts from the sociocultural, neuroscientific, and social network analysis communities should have the best possible understanding of how military organizations operate. Ideally, the process should include experts with military backgrounds, or who are currently working in military organizations or in military-related organizations. The most efficient way to produce integrated reach-back input is to produce it within integrated teams led by uniquely qualified team leaders. This would enable the core experts to exchange information, ideas, and opinions as they develop integrated input. The team leader could keep the process moving when potential delays occur

and could ensure that disagreements between core experts are noted within reach-back products.[18] Developing this process should begin with a proof of concept within an appropriate exercise.[19]

CONCLUSION

There is much to be gained and minimal risk for DoD to "lead up" by further developing the concept of integrated reach-back as one requirement for specialization within the future Category Two force. Recent in-depth studies have described why the DoD needs to better understand and engage the human domain in complex operational environments. These studies do not explain how to implement these

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[18] An example of how a COCOM could apply integrated reach-back in support of a cognitive engagement campaign is based on the requirement to develop and deploy a master narrative as part of IO. The master narrative is the highest level of narratives - one that spans a very broad population base from which multiple local narratives emerge.[18] Each COCOM, therefore, could potentially develop and deploy a master narrative tailored to influence the populations within its area of responsibility in support of achieving a desired end state. The regional master narratives would be nested under the U.S. global strategy. At the operational and strategic levels, the narratives would be developed and deployed mainly by military information support operations (MISO) personnel.[18]

Integrated reach-back support could greatly assist MISO personnel in assessing the influence of narratives on a target audience (TA) throughout the development and deployment process. During master narrative development and deployment, a team of sociocultural, neurocognitive, and network analysis experts could assess how to best achieve intended effects by identifying sociocultural factors that best resonate with the TA; master narrative content that yields the intended neurocognitive responses when presented to personnel who best represent the TA; and key nodes and pathways within human networks that most directly influence key actors and groups to achieve desired end states.[18] Obviously, the integrated reach-back team concept would need to be further developed and expanded in order to train, man, and equip Category Two forces to succeed during future engagements.

[19] One strength of implementing integrated reach-back as proposed above is that minimal resources are required to verify its viability. That is an important characteristic in today's resource-constrained environment. Another positive aspect is that implementing integrated reach-back allows the Joint Force to have the capability almost immediately and to scale it quickly by simply employing more experts. While that is occurring, the Services could go through the process of integrating needed expertise into their ranks.[19]

The Joint Staff J-39 SMA Group is a potential lead organization for implementing integrated reach-back as a proof of concept. J-39 supports Combatant Commands (COCOMS) in collaboration with a network of experts from supporting communities of experts. J-39 is skilled at melding the outputs from academia, the USG, and military organizations in order to inform COCOMS.[19]

TRADOC G-2 has an Operational Environment Enterprise (OEE), which is ideally suited to oversee efforts to implement concepts such as integrated reach-back – concepts that help Warfighters better understand complex OEs. TRADOC G-2, therefore, would be well positioned to support the day to day analytical efforts for a proof of concept in collaboration with J-39 as the lead organization.

new approaches into military planning. It is left to the DoD to craft an initial implementation plan and refine it over time.

The proposed proof of concept seeks to operationalize one element of needed support – integrated reach-back – to enable cognitive engagement based on holistic understanding of the human domain. It provides one element of what will be needed to achieve long-term success against ISIL and similar groups. If the proof of concept is successful, it will guide the Services and the Joint Force in developing interim and durable solutions for this needed capability.

The Fall of Mosul, the Next Sunni Insurgency, and Iran's post-JCPOA Role in Iraq

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Executive Summary

Neither the JCPOA nor the eventual defeat of ISIL in Iraq will likely prove game changers. The future of the nuclear agreement remains uncertain, and Iran will probably continue the more assertive regional policy it adopted in its wake. And barring major changes in Iraqi politics, the defeat of ISIL will most likely herald the rise of "the next Sunni insurgency."

Historically, developments in Iraq have been the main driver of Iranian actions there, though U.S. actions have also shaped Iranian behavior. Accordingly, the more the U.S. steps back in Iraq, the more Iran will step forward. Accordingly, the U.S. should lock-in the multinational Coalition's support for Iraq via a multi-year ITEF II package, rethink how to be a more effective Security Force Assistance partner, help Baghdad resist pressure by Tehran to institutionalize the PMUs as a separate, parallel military organization, and bolster deterrence against Iranian-sponsored proxy attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq.

The JCPOA has not altered the fundamentals of the U.S.-Iran relationship, or Iran's policy toward Iraq and the region; in fact, post-JCPOA, the IRGC has succeeded in moving Iran in a more assertive direction, ramping up support for the Assad regime (in part by convincing Moscow to intervene and by deepening cooperation with Russia), increasing harassment of U.S. ships in the Gulf, conducting highly publicized missile tests, and continuing with arms shipments to regional allies (the last two in violation of the spirit, if not the letter of UNSCR 2231, which gave international legal force to the JCPOA). Tehran, moreover, still hopes to diminish the threat posed by a U.S.-backed government in Baghdad or by U.S. forces there (a threat that it fears may increase once ISIL is defeated), and it continues to work to ensure the predominance of the Shiite community, to minimize the influence of the Sunni Arab states, and to be the most influential outside power in Iraq.

Iran, Iraq, and the JCPOA. The negotiations with Iran over the JCPOA are not over. Rather, the "negotiations after the negotiations" are likely to continue, with ambiguities in the implementation of the JCPOA being ironed out, while Iran presses forward in other areas in order to see what it can get away with. A decision by the new U.S. administration to take a tougher line after January 2017 regarding JCPOA implementation or to support the Syrian opposition with arms, safe havens, or no-fly zones could cause Iran to respond with countermoves in Iraq (once Mosul has been "liberated") or elsewhere in ways that might put the JCPOA under pressure. A new Iranian administration that could take office in the wake of the May 2017 elections might likewise take steps that could further strain the fragile nuclear accord.

Iran's strategic style in Iraq is subtle and thrifty. It does not push on closed doors: it rarely asks Iraqi leaders to take actions that are clearly opposed to Iraqi interests. Instead it works with the grain as often as possible, helping Iraqi leaders to achieve their objectives where they broadly coincide with Iran's. This strategy of pushing on open doors or half-open doors has served them well, and will continue.

The IRGC, which oversees policy in Iraq, has many commercial interests there, particularly in religious tourism, but Iran does not have ambitious economic goals in Iraq. Development of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) into an IRGC equivalent would be a plus for Tehran, giving it more leverage in Baghdad, but it is not a driver of Iranian policy. In this sense, Iranian policy in Iraq is "solution-agnostic." As long as the aforementioned objectives are furthered, the Iranians will work with (and if need be, abandon) any faction in Iraq.

One area to watch are the so-called Iranian "red lines" that Tehran's allies like Hadi al-Amiri regularly communicated to the United States in 2015. One red line was U.S. involvement in combat operations in Iraq; this line seems to have been crossed when the U.S. launched special forces raids and artillery fire missions from Iraqi territory. Another red line was U.S. unilateral bases, but this line was substantively crossed in locations like the Kara Soar Base (previously Firebase Bell). But Tehran's non-response to the crossing of these "red lines" has more to do with the Iraqi government's urgent needs and stated policies (and Iran's desire to see the most urgent of these needs met), rather than any constraints imposed on Iran by the JCPOA.

If Iran-U.S. relations were to deteriorate significantly, perhaps due to a JCPOA-related crisis, Iran might double down in areas where it (or its proxies and partners) are already challenging the U.S. and its allies: harassing U.S. vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa; providing arms and EFPs to Shiite militants in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia; and transferring advanced weapons (such as antiship cruise missiles) to Shiite militias in Lebanon (Hizballah) and Yemen (the Houthis). In Iraq too, the driver of Iranian conduct is likely to be related to Iraq or, after the fall of Mosul, internal power struggles in Iran, with the IRGC flexing its muscles abroad to demonstrate that it remains in control of Iran's regional policies and to show that "the age of missiles" has not passed, as former president Rafsanjani recently claimed. The U.S. knows how Iran tends to escalate in Iraq, which is likely to use proxy warfare to try to hasten a U.S. drawdown in Iraq after the battle of Mosul. Iran's leaders are creatures of habit, and generally operate from a well-worn playbook. Their repertoire of actions is fairly predictable, even if the course of action they decide on in any particular case is not.

Impact of the eventual fall of Mosul. The success of the coalition campaign against ISIL in Iraq will likely result in their being driven underground, rather than out of Iraq; this will create opportunities for Iran. To the degree that ISIL has a fair amount of Baathist DNA in its makeup (a significant number of its leaders are former Iraqi military and intelligence officers), it will likely go to ground to fight another day—as previous generations of Baathists did after the 1963 pro-Nasserist coup, the 2003 U.S. invasion, and the 2007 U.S. surge—rather than fight to the death. ISIL has shown that it can function very well as an underground terrorist network (as it did between 2011-2014) and that Baghdad lacks the capabilities to deal with this threat. Unless there is a fundamental change in the nature of Iraqi politics, the fall of Mosul (and its potentially messy aftermath) may simply pave the way for "the next Sunni insurgency"—

whether ISIL 2.0, son of al-Qaida in Iraq, a revived neo-Baathist JRTN organization (the Army of the Men of the Naqshabandi Order), or something else. This will be especially so if ISIL remains ensconced in Syria, and can use its presence there to stage operations in Iraq.

Such an outcome will likely ensure that there is an enduring need on the part of Iraq for a capable security assistance partner/provider, whether Washington or Tehran. The United States has a keen interest in being that partner of choice, but the realities of geography and questions about America's steadfastness ensure that Iraq will hedge with Iran in any case. Meanwhile, Tehran's local proxies will continue to engage in the sectarian cleansing of "liberated" areas in order to secure critical lines of communication and safeguard isolated or beleaguered Shiite communities.

Iran will also try to supplement its air corridor to Damascus, which it uses to resupply Hizballah and the Assad regime and to project power in the Levant, with an overland route through Iraq to Syria. Iran generally seeks redundant lines of communication to provide resiliency to its network of proxies and partners. And while the air corridor will, in most circumstances, remain its route of choice, a land corridor will broaden its options in the (unlikely) event that the U.S. eventually establishes a no-fly zone over Syria, or that Israel closes down Damascus airport during a future war with Hizballah.

Drivers of Iranian Conduct. The key driver of Tehran's conduct in Iraq will not be a change in Iran's perception of the U.S. threat there; the IRGC already considers America a threat but is unlikely to act as long as Iraq needs America as an ally. Instead of being threat-focused, Iran will likely be opportunistic. The U.S. should therefore focus on the kinds of opportunities in Iraq that might present themselves to Iran in the years ahead. These might include:

- The defeat of ISIL in Mosul and their elimination as an overt threat might lessen Baghdad's need for the U.S. and hence Tehran's incentive to restrain its proxies in Iraq. Thus, the post-Mosul phase could bring with it certain dangers for U.S. personnel in Iraq. This may especially be the case if the defeat of ISIL is seen as a triumph for the kind of professional military forces that the United States is trying to create in Iraq, versus Iran's militia proxies.
- A surge of popular support for PMU-linked politicians in Iraq, including former premier Nouri al-Maliki, in the 2017 provincial elections and 2018 national elections (assuming they are held as planned) might cause Iran to provide them money, media and political support.
- A repeat rapid drawdown and disengagement of Coalition forces from Iraq (as occurred previously in 2009-2011) might tempt Tehran to become more assertive in Iraq. Moreover, if the multinational aspect of CJTF-OIR were to dissolve in the wake of the fall of Mosul and to once again become a unilateral U.S. effort, Iran would find it easier to foment domestic opposition to the U.S. military presence in Iraq.
- The death of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani could offer opportunities for Tehran to support actors in the political and religious establishment who are closer to it. This is a moment that Iran has been preparing for, though it is possible that less change may occur during a post-Sistani transition than expected.

The above analysis suggests that developments in Iraq will be the main driver of Iranian actions there, though the defeat of ISIL may reduce Tehran's incentive to restrain itself, and may create the potential

for events in Iraq to be influenced by developments elsewhere—for instance, as a result of changes in U.S. policy toward Syria, or Iran's evolving perceptions of the benefits that the JCPOA has, or has not yielded.

U.S. Actions and Options. In this respect, U.S. actions are one of the most important shapers of Iranian behavior in Iraq. The more the U.S. steps back, the more Iran will step forward. The less the U.S. is cloaked within the multinational effort of CJTF-OIR, the more Iran can afford to treat the coalition as a U.S. proxy rather than as an assembly of the world's most powerful economies and diplomatic actors, as it currently is (including EU countries that Tehran hopes will invest in and transfer technologies to Iran, post-JCPOA). Finally, Iraq's government and religious establishment is the key shaper of Iranian policies in Iraq. The stronger the U.S. relationship with Baghdad, the better protected U.S. equities in Iraq will be.

For these reasons, the U.S. should consider four steps to counter Iranian influence in Iraq and prevent the return of ISIL:

First, the United States should lock in the international Coalition's commitment to Baghdad, helping it to secure its borders (especially with Syria) and to deal with the heightened terrorism threat that is almost certain to emerge in the wake of ISIL's defeat as a quasi-conventional military force, to create the basis for a multi-national security venture that will outlast the current phase of the war against ISIL. CJTF-OIR should be extended and maintained as a broad-based multinational coalition, and not be allowed to shrink back into a U.S. mission with a few minor allies as "window dressing." A new three-year Iraq Train and Equip Fund II funding package for the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) should be approved to cover 2017-2020, to supplant the first three-year ITEF which covered 2014-2017.

Second, the CJTF should rethink its approach to Security Force Assistance, building on the training successes of the last year to create a more effective ISF counter-insurgency force by considering new approaches that do not try to create a miniature U.S. military but that account for local cultural realities, and that deal more effectively with an incentives structures that breeds corruption and prevents the ISF from training and preparing properly for combat and stabilization operations. Beyond political change in Baghdad, this would be the best way to stave off the return of ISIL, and the growth of Iranian influence via the PMUs.

Third, Washington should help Baghdad resist inevitable pressure from Tehran and its Iraqi proxies to institutionalize the pro-Iranian PMUs as a large, well-funded parallel military force as a rival to the ISF. The continued presence of a robust and effective SFA effort is probably the best way to accomplish this. U.S. attention to the situation of the many Counter-Terrorism Service officers in the senior ranks of the ISF is important. The U.S. will have no greater long-term partners than these U.S.-trained officers and they need to be listened to, protected against militia intimidation, and supported in their careers.

Finally, Washington should seek to deter Tehran by quietly indicating that it will not tolerate attacks on its personnel in Iraq by the latter's proxies there, and that doing so will have adverse consequences for Iran's own trainers and advisors in the region, as well as for the future of the JCPOA. To bolster the credibility of such warnings, the United States should continue to push back against the destabilizing

activities of Iranian partners and proxies in the region, such as Houthi efforts to disrupt freedom of navigation in the Bab al-Mandeb.

To this end, an inform and influence campaign documenting malign Iranian activities in Iraq—including unfair business practices, undue influence in politics, and sponsorship of violence against Iraqis—might provide leverage against Tehran, especially if such information were used as warning shots and released via non-U.S.-leaning media outlets. In particular, Iraqis might be interested to know how expensive Iranian military support and gas and electricity imports can be, the violence that underpins Iranian domination of the religious tourism industry, or the impact on Iraqi farmers of customs-free Iranian food exports to Iraq.

Comments on Engagement

Hassan Abbas
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What long-term actions and processes should U.S. government (USG) institutions, the Coalition, and the international community examine to position ourselves against a long term ISIL threat? How can the private sector be effectively engaged by government institutions to optimize the effects needed for success?

ANSWER: *a) Strong and effective counter-narrative that is seen as emerging indigenously; b) financial empowerment of progressive elements; c) nurturing arts and creativity through quality education; and MOST importantly capacity building of rule of law associated institutions – police, judiciary and rehabilitation/prison system.*

Comments on Engagement

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1. The US government can no longer rely on attributable programming as it has lost the perception war. Anything labeled US will be seen as an attempt to cajole or manipulate locals to further US interests in the region, rather than for the benefit of locals. The only exception is tangible improvement of quality of life through the provision of basics – security, food, services etc. However even here, heavy local cynicism and distrust should be expected.
2. The US government can no longer rely on politics. Politics has become a byword for negotiation, which has become a byword for non-engagement, which has become a byword for ensuring division to exploit it for political interests. Action must be technocratic and focused on visible, tangible improvements

3. This does not mean that there is no room for countering VEO propaganda. To the contrary, this space must be filled to prevent VEOs from monopolizing the narratives. However, these efforts must be carried out by deployed teams of locals (to ensure local granularity and quickness in response) overseen by trained internationals (to ensure professional quality and correct message). Some private firms provide this although most are too consumed with MoP instead of MoE. Furthermore, USG continues not to understand the differences between these offerings often choosing to go with incumbents and/or cheaper options. As such, most of these efforts simply resound in the 'echo chamber', reaching anti-Isil activists who do not need persuading…instead of reaching fencesitters on the ground who do.

Comments on Engagement

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ISIL is and will be defeated. Unfortunately, that won't end terrorism; it is an on-going world condition. I'd like to see more activity on the use of data in near real-time. In order to be effective both visual and non-visual data needs to elicit and emotional reaction leading to GIS and location based information. This has to relate to observable events on the ground and needs to be on-going. Optics are important and our media specialties don't seem to realize how that matters or how to respond.

Private partnerships have promise. I'm speaking at a conference next week bringing together about 300 innovative visual media companies. I doubt VR has much to do with this effort but AR (real time) holds promise. Plus, there are a couple very interesting technologies enabling personal storytelling which, if used properly, can be very powerful and should be deployed before there is need to respond. Finally, in addition to neuro research, there are a couple small companies focused on sentiment analysis. This may be a massive breakthrough in visual predictive analysis and exactly how media such as ISIL recruiting videos impact their audience, who that audience is, and how they may or may not be motivated.

Comments on Engagement

Noureddine Jebnoun

Center for Contemporary Arab Studies

Georgetown University

-Working on formulating a coherent definition of VE that dissociates Islam from extremism in order to deny ISIL any religious legitimacy or ideological victory.

-Encouraging --rather than forcing-- Arab countries to develop educational systems that provide youth with the critical skills needed to better sift through and assess the information they come across both online and offline. Radical narratives should be challenged and deconstructed by acknowledged religious leaders, educated youth and legitimate policymakers.

-Helping local state institutions build trust with their citizens through accountability, rule of law, and the safeguarding of human rights. The fight against ISIL and its affiliates ought to be within the framework of law enforcement and criminal justice. This entails democratic governance of the security sector, shifting from state-security survival to citizen security and safety.

-Being realistic about the expectations of current Arab governments in identifying and alleviating the causes that gave birth to ISIL in the first place. It is beyond the existing regimes' capacities to address the socioeconomic and political conditions of their societies. To be sure, these regimes can no longer postpone tackling the roots of their citizens' grievances, which resulted in political choices pursued by these governments for decades.

It is difficult to see how the above recommendations might be implemented while the Middle East policy of the country supposed to help in their implementation (i.e., the United States) already lacks credibility and coherence. The $37 billon US aid package awarded by the Obama administration to Israel will no doubt further corrode America's credibility in the region.

"Building the Framework: Exploring the Connections between the Questions"

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III, Ph.D.

College of International Security Affairs

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What long-term actions and processes should US government institutions, the Coalition, and the international community examine to position ourselves against a long term ISIL threat?

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 US and Coalition interests?

What are the factors that will influence the future of Syria and how can we best affect them?

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 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.

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.

<u>Foundations of Governance</u>

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 <u>in-group/out-group</u> 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: <u>capacity, autonomy, and legitimacy</u>. **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.

Structure: strengths, vulnerabilities	State	Agency: strengths, vulnerabilities
S: international support, oil revenue V: weak infrastructure, uncertain tax base	Capacity	S: ethnic/religious ID ←→ political patronage V: intra-elite competition
S: centralized d-m, fear based compliance V: international props required	Autonomy	S: personal connections, clientelism V: militias require goodies not just ideas
S: compelling narrative with external support V: hypocrisy apparent to those who know	Legitimacy	S: in-group protects its own V: corruption, backlash for retributive justice

Structure: strengths, vulnerabilities	Society	Agency: strengths, vulnerabilities
S: education, core beliefs @ place in region V: atomized by violence, ↓ $ & opportunities	Capacity	S: survival motif – empowers to endure V: limited employment mobility, growth
S: religious norms shape politics V: low efficacy (political in particular)	Autonomy	S: live in spite of state not because of it V: little access to real change mechanisms
S: neighbors abroad reinforce in-group V: out-group equally potent and motivated	Legitimacy	S: beautiful suffering – justifies enduring V: no end to suffering leads to radicalization?

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 <u>norms of appropriateness</u>, 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 <u>nationality</u>, 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 bind 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.

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 <u>incubation</u> when narratives and norms advance into new areas of application and draw new adherents to the belief system. <u>Strategic violence</u> 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 <u>political violence</u> 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 include 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. Instead, they 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. This can assist with the thornier issues of whether Assad should stay, and to what degree the current Iraqi government can

build greater governance as it reclaims deeply broken areas of its country. As such, the framework shows sturdy stepping stones on which the US can stand as it wades deeper into the torrents facing the region.

Comments on Engagement

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Economy/ Education   (Iraq/ MENA)

The USG (and the international community) should ramp up its diplomatic, economic and cultural engagement in Iraq and the region. USG soft power tools carry major weight in the MENA. Iraqis, for example, care about education and have a strong work ethic and are anxious to engage in business opportunities and educational programs with the United States. This is important to defeating a long term ISIL threat because the corrupt political economy (contracts, patronage, marginalization) of Iraq is one main reason for the rise of ISIL and other such extremist forces. The USG can capitalize on Iraqi interest in education and business through existing programs and engaging with the private sector (PPPs). For example, USG could re-initiate trade delegations like those which existed pre-2014 through Department of Treasury and Department of Commerce. As part of this there was a US-Iraq Business Dialogue run by former Commerce General Counsel John Sullivan which was composed of the 10 largest U.S. companies operating in Iraq and the 10 largest Iraqi companies. Similarly, the USG can initiate and expand educational/ business oriented programs like Commerce's "Commercial Law Development Program." Similar work can be done with elementary, secondary and tertiary teacher trainings in-country or in the U.S. The USG should also increase the number of Iraqis who come to the U.S. (e.g. the Fulbright program) to study for their BA, MA and PhD degrees, who will return to Iraq to develop the education system and private sector economy. Iraq is starved for good teachers, professors and business people to lead these sectors.

Diplomacy/ Policy   (Iraq/ MENA)

In terms of Iraq, at the end of the day, ISIL was formed and fueled by political, social, economic, and security marginalization, mainly of the Sunni Arab community. So in addition to initiatives targeting economic and educational development, in terms of diplomacy and policy, in a nutshell, the US must use its leverage to promote accommodations and inclusive policies among national leadership in Iraq (and countries of the MENA region). Yes, squabbling and sectarian Iraqi actors and parties led to the rise of

ISIL, but we may have been able to use our leverage (as we finally did to remove Maliki from power) to prevent or at least lessen the impact and breadth of the attack.

Regional Geopolitics   (Iraq/ MENA)

Iran and Saudi and neighborhood Sunni states must be brought into a new regional framework. A good, working relationship between U.S. and Iran will have positive effects on Iraq – Iraqis consistently mention stability in Iraq will not come without a U.S. Iranian deal. But real stability will not be achieved without bringing Sunni powers, Saudi and other Gulf, and populations, to the table and into the fold.

Comments on Engagement

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Top of mind when I think of this question (really a dream list):

- The USG is structurally organized to defeat the Soviet Union. The US Patriot Act and IRTPA did nothing to change this. Until we can admit this and institute necessary change, we will continue to struggle in the 21st Century strategic ecosystem of interacting and overlapping Complex Adaptive Systems. The implications here are huge and include Congressional oversight structural reform in the legislature and similar executive overhauls that begin with actively working to delegate and divest decisions downward from the NSC and thus unburdening it from tactical noise, allowing it think and act strategically again.

- Consistent with my first bullet, we need to seriously consider a "theory of change" that encompasses the tectonic global shifts that are rewriting the old rule sets and most importantly our place as a principal actor...if we even know what being a Great Power means anymore. This would provide the strategic framing and anchors that prevent untethered "random acts of strategy" and the never-ending procession of Type I errors of commission.

- We need to take some time to thoughtfully consider all of the ways (flawed intellectual framing, anachronistic OAAs, overinflating the threat, etc.) that we and our allies are actively making things worse and actually strengthening ISIL not diminishing it.

- Other national governments and their citizens are mostly unwilling partners and have grown tired of our indecisiveness, unreliability, and singular focus, and don't respect our leadership. [Todd] This is particularly true in the MENA. Instead they have a choosing to just "play us." The real and untapped opportunity, as I see it, is with non-state actors and civil society with supranational reach and

impact. This is a reflection of the changing nature of power and our actual versus perceived ability to affect the system.

- Properly resource prevention activities like seriously tackling climate change, governance (both local, national and global), relative deprivation, infrastructure, etc. This is Moon Shot, Manhattan Project level thinking and RESOURCING.

Understanding ISIL Using Captured Records

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Abstract

The U.S. government (USG) can take proactive steps now to leverage the private sector (specifically the academic community) in two areas. First, by making primary adversary materials (specially, but not limited to, captured records) available to the current generation of scholars, the USG can maximize the value the nation's intellectual capital in a way that is both cost effective and impactful. More importantly making these materials available builds on and incentivizes that intellectual capital for the long term. It would foster the development of a deep bench of talent that, much like investments in the 1950s to build expertise in Soviet studies, provides the expertise necessary inside and outside the USG for this struggle. A proven model for such a program exists but was shuttered in 2014 due to budget cuts and a reorganization. Recommend USCENTCOM support the rejuvenation of the Conflict Records Research Center by having it restored and transferred to a non-government institution to ensure academic access.

Key Points

- The USG holds a large collection of unclassified captured records from ISIL, related groups, and governments.
- These records should be made available to scholars in the interest of developing new insights and building the intellectual capital necessary for success over the long term.
- A USG program to accomplish the above operated very successfully for almost four years but closed due to a lack of sponsorship.
- USCENTCOM should engage OSD to reopen the CRRC project and seek to move the existing records/database to an appropriate civilian institution as soon as possible.

Understanding the Threat

Positioning the U.S. government and other institutions for the future requires, first and foremost, a clear-eyed understanding of the environment and threats. However, understanding the threat environment and shaping the response to it has been a challenge for the USG since the early days of post 9-11 wars. The problem is not a lack of subject matter experts or even a lack of data – i.e., primary source material about an adversary such as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

The major challenge is structural. Scholarship blooms where evidence and data are readily available. As terrorism scholar Marc Sageman noted in 2014:

> *A serious impediment to scholars, whether fully dedicated to terrorism studies or only occasionally participating in such a study, is the lack of the availability of comprehensive and reliable data. The U.S. government has neither released relevant data about terrorist plots nor funded the methodological accumulation of detailed and comprehensive data that might shed some light on the question of the turn to political violence* (Sageman, 2014, p. 570).

There are two groups of subject matter experts that policy makers can call upon to develop insights into the threat group dynamics of a region - the intelligence community or the academic community. Each has its own well-known advantages and disadvantages in terms of expertise, standards, responsiveness, and biases. As Sageman noted, one of the biggest differences (and obstacles to overcome) is access to primary materials. Yet this is a divide that, with some exceptions, can be bridged.

Bridging the Divide with Captured Records

Building the intellectual capital to address national security threats requires the investment of resources and the fostering of relationships. The USG can maximize the value of the nation's intellectual capital in a way that is both cost effective and useful. Making primary source material available would foster the development of a deep bench of talent that, much like investments in the 1950s to build expertise in Soviet studies, provides the expertise necessary inside and outside the USG for this long-term struggle.

Captured enemy records (e.g. Iraqi regime, Taliban, al-Qaeda, al-Qaeda in Iraq, ISIL) have been scanned and stored in an Intelligence Community (IC) database from the earliest days of the post 9-11 wars. The IC program, known as *Harmony*, stores millions of pages of text and images files as well as digital audio and video records accessible through classified networks. Most of these records (well over 90%) are default marked UNCLASSIFIED/For Official Use Only. Moreover, these records have been triaged, categorized, and indexed for easy search and retrieval. Making this primary source material -- that includes everything from administrivia of government, planning documents, logistics, theology, and propaganda -- available to academics is the essential step.

Before dismissing this notion as impracticable for security, cost, or other reasons - consider that a small program to make such records available to scholars, without onerous restrictions, operated at the

National Defense University (NDU) for almost four years. Unfortunately this program, despite its early success, was closed as part of an NDU reorganization and cost-cutting effort.

The Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC) was chartered by the Department of Defense (OSD (Policy), 2009) with the mission to "…facilitate research and analysis of records captured from countries, organizations, and individuals, now or once hostile to the United States. In addition, the CRRC conducts research and analysis to increase the understanding of factors related to international relations, counterterrorism, and conventional and unconventional warfare." The center owes its origins to Secretary Robert Gates' efforts in 2008 to expand the department's tools for a "long-war," which included the establishment of the Minerva Initiative. The original intent was to make materials available (after a common-sense screening process) to scholars without restriction, caveat, or "pre-publication" review. This, as the Secretary understood, was necessary to develop an honest, productive, and long-term relationship with the academy (Gates, 2014).[20]

The CRRC model was very simple. Cleared researchers (originally from the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) and later government staff at NDU) screened captured records in the Harmony database for potential inclusion in the CRRC (or open) database. The criteria for screening followed an Office of the Secretary of Defense (Policy) (OSD(P)) and IC approved standard operating procedure. Using the approved procedures, the CRRC screening staff determined that more than ninety percent of records screened are deemed eligible for the open database.

One final comment on the public use of captured records is worth noting. Given the complex regional and social context documented by these records, the issue of the privacy and security of innocent persons is a valid concern. To minimize this risk, the CRRC employed the standard USG and academic protocols for safeguarding personally identifiable information (PII). During the years the CRRC was open, this requirement was not seen as burdensome because it is a widely accepted academic and archival practice.

There have been other efforts by the USG to foster or leverage contributions from scholars with regard to captured records. In addition to the now closed CRRC, the Combating Terrorism Center (CTC) at West Point has made tremendous contributions to the field of terrorism study based on captured records. The CTC model leveraged selected collections of records placed into the hands of contracted scholars. In many cases there records underpinning various monographs are made availed on the CTC website for others to use. The limitation of the CTC model is that it is a somewhat closed model where both the scholars and the material are "selected" by the government.

A similar model has been the ability of Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDCs) to use their direct access to the Harmony dataset to produce directed classified or unclassified studies of interest. Two examples are early work in this area by IDA and RAND on the former Iraqi regime and terrorism. While these kinds of studies are useful in augmenting or expanding the work of government

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[20] As noted in his speech, the USG needed to be proactive in this regard since "Too many mistakes have been made over the years because our government and military did not understand—or even seek to understand—the countries or cultures we were dealing with."

analysts, they actually do little to develop the capacity to tackle these kinds of issues over the long term. Although the work itself is of high quality, the inherent biases of scholars working in national security think-tanks deprives the USG of the full perspective of the academy. Some examples of these studies are provided at the end of this submission.

Recommendation

In 2014, after having developed and operated the CRRC, OSD(P) asked IDA to develop a set of recommendations for how the shuttered CRRC and existing database might be opened (under the same general operating conditions it had at NDU) and resurrected at a private, non-government institution. In August 2015, IDA identified a prioritized list of potential candidate institutions who expressed an interest in hosting the records. A lengthy legal and policy review of the recommendations in OSD followed but, as of this date, no action has been taken and the CRRC collection remains inaccessible to scholars in the private sector.

The CRRC model (as described above) requires, over the long-term, the restoration of the full program – the accessibility of the records and the review and screening data already in the Harmony Database. This full program would allow new records to be added to the collection as combat operations progress over time. The screening process for new records would be subject to the same (or new) requirements as before, but the objective should remain the same – if there is not security reason to withhold the material every effort should be made to get the records into the hands of scholars.[21]

Returning to the larger question of how can the US and its partners position themselves for the "long term ISIL threat," one answer would be to leverage best practices when it comes to taking on long-term national security challenges, such as the forces of extremism and authoritarianism that will continue to shape the region for the foreseeable future. A recognition of the complexity, depth, and dynamic nature of this challenge requires more than hiring the "best and brightest" from the academy. Without some effort on the part of the USG to make the unique material captured from its adversaries available to the scholarly community, external scholarship may be hamstrung and of limited value.

Recommendation: USCENTCOM should engage OSD to review the status of the CRRC project and seek to move the existing records/database to an appropriate civilian institution as soon as possible. Furthermore, USCENTCOM should work to restart the captured records review and translation process put in place to support the CRRC.[22] This will ensure that the current collection will both continue to grow and remain current with the changes in the operational environment.

Reference List

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[21] For a reference point – the process of screening and translating records is human capital intensive. For a point of reference, during the last year that IDA managed this process under OSD(P) contract the cost was just under $1 million/year.
[22] The review process can operate as a part of an existing USG activity or (as was the case prior to 2011) it can be executed as a part of a research contract with an FFRDC.

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Examples of Previous Captured Document Studies

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Stout, M., Huckabey, J., Schindler, J., & Lacey, J. (2008). *The Terrorist Perspectives Project: Strategic and Operational Views of Al Qaida and Associated Movements*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press.

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Comments on Engagement

Amy Zalman

Strategic Narrative

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I have taken a few days to think about this and in brief, I think my own response to the query is that it is not appropriate for a two page response. Unlike some of the other questions (which are challenging enough!), this query asks the broadest possible question about U.S. strategy and Coalition strategy. It is widely recognized that the longer term ISIL threat lies outside the scope of communications alone to address, and in the most difficult of all realms, the quiet activity at community and regional levels of building more resilient communities, workplaces, schools and opportunities. Yet it is difficult to fund those efforts, and relatively more simple to generate resources for military activities. Meaningful changes of this sort would have to engage Congress.

As for engaging the private sector, again, what are we really talking about? If it is social media engagement of the sort recently reported in the press, then there is possibly not much that an external observer could add that is not already known, although it remains to be seen how and in what circumstances messaging is a useful tactic. A broader effort to engage the whole of society to defend against ISIL (as per the question, rather than defeating it), is probably best answered in terms of resilience, both of spirit and infrastructure, as well as continued efforts on issues like information sharing across borders and international cooperation.

You probably did not want to invite this kind of response, but I feel the real answer must start with a discussion about what CENTCOM is really seeking. If you would like me to expand any of this, I'd be pleased to, but you might be seeking a really different kind of response.

Author Biographies

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Education

• MALD and Ph.D. from the Fletcher School of
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Research Interests

• Politics, Security and Religion in South Asia
• Politics, Islam, and U.S. Relations with Muslim States
• Law Enforcement and Police Reforms in Developing States

Hassan Abbas is Professor of International Security Studies and Chair of the Department of
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after having been a Research Fellow at the Center from 2005-2009. He was the Distinguished
Quaid-i-Azam Chair Professor at Columbia University before joining CISA and has previously
held fellowships at Harvard Law School and Asia Society in New York.

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
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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).

A detailed list of his publications is available here.

Bernard Carreau is the Deputy Director of the Center for Complex Operations (CCO) at the National Defense University. He established and currently supervises a lessons learned program focusing on the operational and strategic effectiveness of the military and interagency teams in overseas contingency operations. He has led numerous collection and analysis teams to Afghanistan and Iraq. Mr. Carreau is the author or supervisor of recent reports related to the strategic effectiveness of special operations forces, stability operations, transitional public security, civilian stabilization capabilities, and socio-cultural intelligence analysis. He is currently completing a study on behalf of the Joint Staff/J7 on the question of whether the national security decision-making and strategic planning processes were effective in achieving U.S. national objectives in Syria. Mr. Carreau was an advisor to the Coalition Provisional Authority in Washington and Baghdad on private sector development and an advisor to the Iraqi Minister of Trade. He has a Master's degree from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS).

Patricia (Tricia) DeGennaro is a Senior Geopolitical Risk Analyst for Threat Tec., LLC. She currently supports the US Army TRADOC G27 as an analyst in the Advanced Network Analysis/Attack the Network Directorate. DeGennaro has lectured at West Point and New York University on International Security Policy and Civilian and Military Affairs. She was selected as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on the Middle East, Iraq, and Afghanistan for various projects under the TRADOC G2, the commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, commander of the Special Operations Command Central, and the US Department of Defense Strategic Multilayer Assessment program. In 2013, she was accepted into the US Department of State Franklin Fellows program where she served in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance - Office of Civilian and Military Cooperation (DCHA/CMC) as a Senior Policy Advisor to support the Office and an Agency-wide Civilian-Military Cooperation Steering Committee in an extensive revision to the Agency's Civilian-Military Cooperation Policy. DeGennaro capitalizes on over twenty years of experience as an academic, author and consultant in international security. Much of her work focuses on stabilization in the Middle East and surrounding region, countering violent extremism, and transitioning nations from war.

During her tenure, she has also consulted with the Asia Foundation, Director of National Intelligence Office, Department of Homeland Security, The Conference Board, World Bank, Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee chaired by Senator Edward M. Kennedy, and several organizations that support the Middle East Peace Process. She also spent four years in Albania as a Small and Medium Enterprise volunteer with the Peace Corps and, later, as a contractor with US Agency for International Development. Regionally, DeGennaro continues to focus on the Balkans, the Middle East and South Asia where she travels often.

DeGennaro has published several articles on US foreign policy and national security topics. Her focus is to encourage an integrated international policy that looks beyond war and the use of force. She is often

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DeGennaro holds an MBA in International Trade and Finance from George Washington University and an MPA in International Security and Conflict Resolution from Harvard University. She speaks fluent Albanian and has a basic knowledge of Italian, Arabic and Dari.

Michael Eisenstadt

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's [Military and Security Studies Program](). A specialist in [Persian Gulf]() and [Arab-Israeli security affairs](), he has published widely on irregular and conventional warfare, and [nuclear weapons proliferation]() in the Middle East.

Prior to joining the Institute in 1989, Mr. Eisenstadt worked as a military analyst with the U.S. government.

Mr. Eisenstadt served for twenty-six years as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve before retiring in 2010. His military service included active-duty stints in Iraq with the United States Forces-Iraq headquarters (2010) and the Human Terrain System Assessment Team (2008); in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan with the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC) for Israel and the Palestinian Authority (2008-2009); at U.S. Central Command headquarters and on the Joint Staff during Operation Enduring Freedom and the planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom (2001-2002); and in Turkey and Iraq during Operation Provide Comfort (1991).

He has also served in a civilian capacity on the Multinational Force-Iraq/U.S. Embassy Baghdad Joint Campaign Plan Assessment Team (2009) and as a consultant or advisor to the congressionally mandated Iraq Study Group (2006), the Multinational Corps-Iraq Information Operations Task Force (2005-2006), and the State Department's Future of Iraq defense policy working group (2002-2003). In 1992, he took a leave of absence from the Institute to work on the U.S. Air Force *Gulf War Air Power Survey*.

Education

Mr. Eisenstadt earned an MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and has traveled widely in the Middle East. He speaks Arabic and Hebrew, and reads French.

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.

Dr. Garry Hare. Garry teaches *Political Psychology* on the doctoral faculty at Fielding Graduate University's Media Psychology PhD Program and is Director of the *Social Impact of Immersive Technology and Real Time Media* doctoral concentration. He focuses on the junction where cognitive science, information design and immersive technologies impact persuasive media. He advises selected companies, foundations and public agencies on strategy and the creative use and impact of immersive media, mobile augmented reality and the disruptive impact of real time media on social problems. His current focus in on the rapid prototyping of real time solutions to complex problems, particularly environmental and social issues.

Background

Over two decades, Garry has founded and/or held senior management positions with companies creating rich media content and enabling technologies. These solutions usher in new forms of entertainment, mobile communications and social impact. He was President and CEO of Amiga, Inc., Executive Vice President of Into Networks with worldwide responsibility for Broadband Media, President and COO of OZ.com, the creators of Helsinki 2000 (the first virtual world) and the Intel virtual museum project. Garry was founder and CEO of the award winning digital publisher, Fathom Pictures Inc., specializing in sports and education simulations. He was founding Managing Director and CEO of Philips Media Europe on behalf of Philips N.V. As head of this European digital publishing company he built management and creative teams to support the creation and distribution of digital products throughout Europe. He has created digital products and/or advised companies such as LucasFilm, the Griffin Group, Philips N.V., Ericsson, ABC Sports, the PGA, and Apple Computer, among many others, on new media content creation and strategy. Garry has held faculty positions at INCAE (an international campus of The Harvard Business School and The Harvard Institute of International Development), The University of Washington Graduate School of Public Policy and The University of Southern California Graduate School of Public Administration. He began his career at the Walt Disney Company and holds a Ph.D. in the Applied Behavioral Sciences from the University of Southern California.

Noureddine Jebnoun teaches at Georgetown University's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies-Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service. He has previously served as a professor of strategy and geopolitics at the National War College, the Command and Staff College, and the National Defense Institute (1998-2004) in Tunisia. He is co-editor and contributor to *Modern Middle East Authoritarianism: Roots, Ramifications, and Crisis* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013 & 2015), author of *L'espace méditerranéen: les enjeux de la coopération et de la sécurité entre les rives nord et sud à l'aube du XXIème siècle [The Mediterranean Region: the Implications of Security and Cooperation between the Northern and Southern Shores at the Dawn of the Twenty First Century]* (Rome: NATO Defense College, 2003) and author of the upcoming *Tunisia's National Intelligence: Why Do the 'Rogue Elephants' Lag Behind Reform?* (Washington, D.C.: New Academia Publishing). His works have appeared in *The Journal of North African Studies*, *Center for Contemporary Arab Studies' Occasional Papers Series*, *Center for Muslim-Christian Understanding Occasional Papers*, as well as in many book chapters among the most recent is "State and Religion in the Aftermath of the Arab Uprisings," in Rainer Grote and Tilmann J. Röder (eds.), *Constitutionalism, Human Rights, and Islam after the Arab Spring* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press 2016). He holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Paris I-Pantheon Sorbonne (1996).

Michael Knights

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

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

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

Dr. 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

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

Randall Munch

Randall Munch works as an independent contractor supporting the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), G27 Attack the Network Training Directorate. He has a Bachelor's degree from West Point and Master of Public and International Affairs degree from the University of Pittsburgh. A retired U.S. Army officer (Infantry/Foreign Area Officer) with service in the 82nd Airborne Division, 10th Mountain Division, Joint Special Operations Command, Defense Intelligence Agency, Joint Staff J2, and the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. His Deployments include Iraq, Haiti, and Somalia. After retirement in 2005, he worked as Chief of Intelligence for the Joint IED Defeat Organization; then in TRADOC G2 Training Brain Operations Center (now G27).

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.

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Kevin M. Woods

Kevin M. Woods is the Deputy Director of the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division at the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). As a defense analyst and historian he has led numerous multi-disciplinary research projects looking a subjects ranging from military concept development and experimentation, capability analyses of recent conflicts, and red team studies of defense policy and strategy.

For over a decade, Dr. Woods has led a major research project designed to understand the former regime of Saddam Hussein through the analysis of captured records and interviews with former senior Iraqi officials. This research spawned numerous studies as well as the establishment of the Conflict Records Research Center (CRRC) – a public repository of records for future research.

Prior to joining IDA, Dr. Woods was an officer in the US Army and served for more than 21 years in a variety of operational Army aviation and staff assignments. A graduate of Auburn University, he also holds a Masters Degree in National Security and Strategic Studies from the Naval War College. In 2011 he earned PhD in History from the University of Leeds in the United Kingdom where his dissertation focused on institutional changes in the US Army during the early Cold War.

Dr. Woods is the lead author of several books including: *The Iraqi Perspectives Report: Saddam's Senior Leadership on Operation Iraqi Freedom* (2006); *The Mother of all Battles: Saddam Hussein's Strategic Plan for the Persian Gulf War* (2008); *The Saddam Tapes: The Inner Workings of a Tyrant's Regime 1978-2001* (2011); and *The Iran-Iraq War: A Military and Strategic History* (2014).

Amy Zalman. I am a global security futurist dedicated to leveraging the power of storytelling to accelerate innovation by leaders and organizations. I own the Strategic Narrative Institute LLC, which provides consulting services and training to leaders and institutions seeking to strengthen their ability to understand, manage and leverage future change. I am also currently also an adjunct Professor of Strategic Foresight Methods at Georgetown University in Washington DC, and a member of the Board of Visitors of Air University and a Board Director of the Council on Emerging National Security Affairs.

I specialize in helping others understand and address the impacts of change in the global security environment, such as shifts in global balance of power, and similar mega-trends, as well as on the critical roles of cultures, communication, narrative and myth in generating change and innovation.

These are frequent topics in my role as a keynote and public speaker, and as an author. In the past several years, my briefings have included the Atlantic Council Global Strategy Forum, Forbes Mexico Summit, KBS Korea Future Forum, the G20 Young Entrepreneurs' Alliance Summit in Istanbul, Global Reporting Initiative Corporate Sustainability Trends, the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs, US Congress, USSOCOM, TEDx, and others.
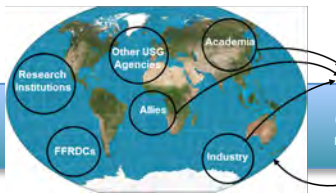
SMA Reach-back

Question (V6): What are the strategic and operational implications of the Iran nuclear deal on the US-led coalition's ability to prosecute the war against ISIL in Iraq and Syria and to create the conditions for political, humanitarian and security sector stability?

Executive Summary

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI

Prior to the signing of the Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in July 2014, Iran watchers tended to anticipate one of two outcomes. One camp expected a reduction in US-Iran tensions and that the JCPOA might present an opening for improved regional cooperation between the US-led coalition and Iran. The other camp predicted that Iran would become more assertive in wielding its influence in the region once the agreement was reached.

Implications of JCPOA for the Near-term Battle: Marginal

Iran experts in the SMA network generally believe that JCPOA has had negligible, if any, impact on Iran's strategy and tactics in Syria and Iraq.[23] While Iran does appear to have adopted a more assertive regional policy since the agreement, the experts attribute this change to regional dynamics that are advantageous to Iran, and Iran having been on "good behavior during the negotiations" rather than to Iran having been emboldened by the JCPOA. Tricia Degennaro (TRADOC G27) goes a step further. In her view, the impact of the JCPOA on the battle against ISIL is not only insignificant, but concern about it is misdirected: "the JCPOA will not impede the Coalition's ability to prosecute the war … and create the conditions for political, humanitarian and security sector stability. Isolation of Iran will impede the coalition's mission."
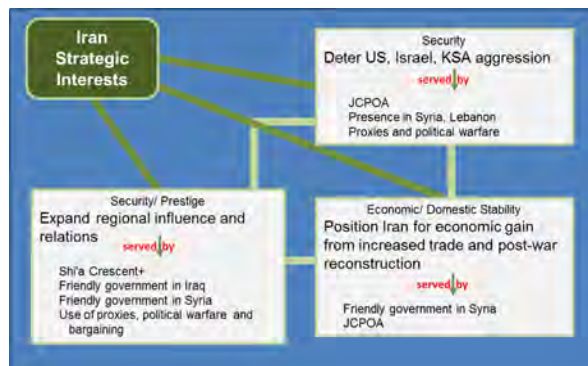
Richard Davis of Artis International takes a different perspective on the strategic and operational implications of the JCPOA. He argues that Saudi, Israeli and Turkish leaders view the JCPOA together with US support for the Government of Iraq as evidence of a US-Iran rapprochement that will curb US enthusiasm for accommodating Saudi Arabia's

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[23] Alireza Nader (RAND) explains that the reason we are unlikely to see a "cooperation dividend" emerge from the agreement, and why Iran's regional strategy will not change even following the Spring 2017 election is that Rouhani and moderate voices are simply unable to overcome the power wielded by the Ayatollah Khamenei and the Revolutionary Guards and other "reactionary or conservative forces in Iran."

and Turkey's own regional interests. Davis expects that this perception will "certainly manifest itself in the support for proxies in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Specifically, it means that Saudi Arabia and Turkey will likely be more belligerent toward US policies and tactical interests in the fight to defeat ISIL."

Implications of JCPOA for Post-ISIL Shaping: Considerable Potential

The SMA experts identified two ways in which the JCPOA could impact coalition efforts to stabilize the region in the mid- to longer-term: 1) if Iran were to use it as a means of generating friction in order to influence Coalition actions for example by convincing Coalition leaders that operations counter to Iranian interests (e.g., in Syria) could jeopardize the JCPOA; and, 2) indirectly, as having created the sanction relief that increases Iranian revenue and that can be used to fund proxy forces and other Iranian influence operations.

Provoking Friction as a Bargaining Chip. A classic rule of bargaining is that the party that is more indifferent to particular outcomes has a negotiating advantage. At least for the coming months, this may be Iran. According to the experts, Iran is likely to continue to use the JCPOA as a source of friction – real, or contrived – to gain leverage over the US and regional allies. The perception that the Obama Administration is set on retaining the agreement presents Tehran with a potent influence lever: provoking tensions around implementation or violations of JCPOA that look to put the deal in jeopardy, but that it can use to pressure the US and allies into negotiating further sanctions relief, or post-ISIL conditions in Syria and Iraq that are favorable to Iran.   However, because defeat of ISIL and other groups that Iran sees as Saudi-funded Sunni extremists,[24] the experts feel that if Iran were to engage in physical or more serious response to perceived JPCOA violations, they would choose to strike out in areas in which they are already challenging the US and Coalition partners (e.g., at sea in the Persian Gulf and Red Sea; stepping up funding or arms deliveries to Shiite fighters militants in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Yemen) rather than in ways that would actually impede ISIL's defeat.

Increased Proxy Funding. Iran has often demonstrated a strategic interest in maintaining its influence with Shi'a communities and political parties across the region, including of course, providing support to Shi'a militia groups (Bazoobandi, 2014).[25]   Pre-JCPOA sanctions inhibited Iran's ability to provide "continuous robust financial, economic or militarily support to its allies" according to Tricia Degennaro (TRADOC G27). An obvious, albeit indirect implication of the JCPOA sanctions relief for security and political stability in Iraq in the longer term is the additional revenue available to Iran to fund proxies and conduct "political warfare" as it regains its position in international finance and trade.[26]   It will take time

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[24] Nader clarifies that because of its ambitions for pan-Islamic leadership, Iran is careful to identify ISIL and like groups that they oppose as "takfiris" – Wahhabis that maintain that Shi'a are not true Muslims.
[25] 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
[26] An expert in the Iranian business sector, reports that with the signing of the JCPOA "after years of sanctions and limitations on business interactions" the agreement has engendered "a new hope in Iran for a revival" of its pre-1979 economic vitality. Still, the economic situation in Iran has yet to improve as a result of JCPOA and "there's a lot of public dissatisfaction."

for Iran to begin to benefit in a sustainable way from the JCPOA sanctions relief. As a result it is not as likely to be a factor in Coalition prosecution of the wars in Iraq and Syria, but later, in the resources Iran can afford to give to both political and militia proxies to shape the post-ISIL's region to its liking.

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Implications of JCPOA on the Fight against ISIL

Tricia Degennaro, Threat Tec, LLCI

The Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) is the international agreement to halt the nuclear program in Iran.[27] Under the agreement Iran contracted to eliminate programs that the international community suspected could lead to the production of nuclear weapons. The agreement does not prevent Iran from producing, purchasing or refurbishing weapons as long as they are not of categories under the WMD guidelines.[28]

Iran does have forces in the operating environment (OE) along with the US, US Arab partners, Russia, Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon (Hezbollah), and Israel. Iran's forces are specifically to advise, train and assist military maneuvers that directly support Syria's Assad regime. In Iraq, Iran is also supporting the Iraqi military fight against ISIL.

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Many of the pre-JCPOA sanctions on Iran inhibited its ability to give continuous robust financial, economic or militarily support to its allies. If the US-led coalition's strategic aims are focused on regional stability, it is important to consider that Iran can now constrain efforts to foster political, humanitarian and security sector stability. It can do so by continuing to support the Assad regime in combat, targeting U.S.-backed rebels fighting against Assad, and making cohesive operational implementation an impossibility. The upside is that coalition members do not have to be concerned with Iran using WMD.

In light of the situation in theater, it would behoove coalition partners to work with Iran to conduct stability operations that lead to conditions for political, humanitarian and security sector stability in the region. The challenge for the coalition is current US policy on the Syrian leadership not the JCPOA. The question that remains is: in what way can the coalition engage Iran in order to find a path to stability when the field is cluttered with parties with opposing end games.

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[27] The agreement was signed in Vienna on14 July 2015 between China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and Germany, http://www.state.gov/e/eb/tfs/spi/iran/jcpoa/

[28] Iran is signatory to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and can be held accountable for its obligations to halt all production of WMD. This is reiterated in the JCPOA.

It is in Iran's immediate and long-term interest to bring stability to the combat operations of all parties in Syria. Iran, however, has no interest in losing its alliance with Syria, Iraq, Turkey or Russia. Iran is situated in a Sunni-dominated region which exerts pressure on the Iranian regime.[29] More importantly, Iran is at odds with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf partners not about religion, although religion is used quite strategically by both parties to create divisions; rather, it is about the ability to be seen by the region's population as a legitimate authority. Again, the Shi'ite/Sunni card is often used to exert power to shape and influence the behaviors of regimes, monarchies, populations and non-state actors alike.

For its part, ISIL is no fan of Iran. In fact, many ISIL followers view Iran as an entity worse than Israel. The ideology ISIL preaches is opposed to all people of any faith, including Muslims, who do not follow the strict ISIL interpretation of Islam. Although monies from Gulf countries are funneled to this ruthless organization, ISIL does not view any of the monarchies as legitimate either. What can the US and coalition forces do in order to help stabilize the region?

For the purposes of this paper, I am assuming that some U.S. leaders are in contact with their Iranian counterparts in order to avoid direct chaotic military confrontation. Therefore, US and coalition forces may want to consider a few of the following:

Consider leveraging Iran's relationship with Turkey

Iran has three main objectives in Syria: 1) keeping Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in power, 2) preserving the structure of governance in Syria, and 3) combating terrorism, which includes ISIL, Jabhat Fatah al Sham (formerly Jabhat al Nusra) and any other non-state actors fighting against the Syrian regime. Turkey's main objectives include maintaining the integrity of Syria and preventing a Kurdish state form forming there. This is also a main strategic interest for Iran. Turkey may not want Assad in power, however they are willing to consider leaving him in power for a time based on talks with Iran,

Turkey has a very strong relationship with Iran. It could be beneficial to conduct operations that mirror some of the Iranian initiative by strengthening the Turkish partnership to assure Ankara that the US is committed to Syrian and Iraqi sovereignty. The implication is that CENTCOM would focus its efforts on helping to liberate towns from ISIL, both in Syria and Iraq. Further CENTCOM can move quickly to ensure that people have the ability and support to enhance security so people feel safe and can return home and, more importantly support Baghdad's legitimacy by restoring government services (e.g., water, electricity etc.). This will signal that the US is working to support the populace in opposition to the reputation it currently has on the ground.

Pay attention to narratives and Iranian leadership rhetoric

Narrative is powerful in many domains. In the Middle East the feeling that the US has rejected the desires of the people and has abandoned them is paramount. The American withdrawal of support to

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[29] The American backed coup against democratic elected Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh is fresh in the Iranian regimes mind. To date, right or wrong, Iranian leaders are convinced that U.S. intentions are to overthrow the regime. This is reinforced with the rush to remove Saddam Hussain and now Bashar al-Assad.

the Kurds during the Clinton Administration, US ardent support for Israel, and the continued meddling in government leadership (Hussain, Assad, Ghaddafi, Mubarak, Saleh and others) has directly reinforced these beliefs. Reading into the greater narrative can inform actions.

For example, the when the Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Ghasemi, welcomed the US-Russia deal, he told reporters in Tehran that "Iran has always welcomed a cease-fire in Syria and the facilitation of humanitarian access to all people in this country." He added, "The cease-fire needs to be sustainable and enforceable, not providing the terrorists with any opportunity to beef up [their forces] and [re-equip]."[30] Interpreting these words, one can surmise that Iran will continue to fight non-state group actors fighting against Assad whom they are labeling terrorist much like the US labels Hezbollah (although one can argue that Hezbollah is legitimately part of the Lebanese government, this argument cannot hold true with the non-state anti-Assad groups in Syria). Further, Iran expected that the US will halt any support given to anti-Assad groups and hold them to the cease fire. This did not happen. Perhaps the halt of hostilities is not within US control; however, the flow of US arms to the region and the fact that non-state groups are using them is all the information they need.

Further, the Khan Touman battle on May 6, following the Feb. 27 cease-fire, saw dozens of soldiers fighting under Iranian command being ambushed, killed and some captured. Back then, Iranian officials thought that the cease-fire was "merely an opportunity for the recruitment and reinvigoration of the terrorist groups by the governments that support them."[31] The "governments that support them" refers to the US and Israel by proxy much like the Iran is blamed for arming of the Houthis in Yemen. Foreign military assistance is one thing arming rebel groups is another. This should be rethought if populations are going to be influenced by US and coalition forces and, in return, weaken Iran's hold in the region or, move to strengthen Iraq, to equalize Saudi and Iranian influence so it is less destructive.

Please note that the coalition is in an information environment (IE) where it is not about judging if these impressions are right or wrong, it is about how forces look outside of themselves and engage this narrative reality to shape and influence actors.

Commit to Iraq and Syria sovereignty

Supporting a unified Iraq creates a safeguard between Iran and Saudi Arabia and proves that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was not in vain. It will weaken ISIL and reinforce that the US is not a party to creating the violent group. Moves to reinforce unity, which is desired by a majority of the Iraqi population, will give Iran less reason to fear Saudi Arabia and weaken their ability to ramp up their influence in Iraq. Despite our efforts, Iran will have influence in Iraq. The two countries are interlinked by economic, cultural, and familial ties. The challenge will be to reinforce these ties and deter military alliances from gaining ground. The coalition must look at how to inform this situation by immediate integration of forces

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[30] http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/us-russia-syria-agreement-iran-unfazed-collapse-truce.html#ixzz4N4FR8Agh
[31]http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/us-russia-syria-agreement-iran-unfazed-collapse-truce.html#ixzz4N4Fm10Sv

supported by Iran, pushing the Kurds back to territorial integrity with Iraq, and reintegrating Baathist into the governance fold.

Summary

The US is at a disadvantage due to its separation of policy and current reliance on military power. The JCPOA is an opportunity for the U.S. and coalition forces to find new and innovative ways of engaging Iran and positioning themselves to prevent further defensive military engagement in the region. The JCPOA itself will not impede the coalition's ability to prosecute the war against ISIL in Iraq and Syria and create the conditions for political, humanitarian and security sector stability. Isolation of Iran will impede the coalition's mission. Only when aligning interests can nations move forward to greater security or stability. Therefore, it benefits commanders to structure a well thought out, comprehensive, and strategic mission to influence areas that can strengthen the US and steer its policy from the top down and the bottom up. It will take time and patience; however, a solid strategy can reduce the stages of continued combat.

Transcript of 9/29/2016 SMA Speaker Series Telecon with Alireza Nader (RAND Corporation)

Moderated by Meg Egan, SRC

Meg Egan, SMA Office: Today, we have Mr. Alireza Nader, and he is a senior international policy analyst at the Rand Corporation and an author of *The Days After the Deal with Iran: Continuity and Change in Iranian Foreign Policy*. His research is focused on Iran's political dynamics, elite decision making, and Iranian foreign policy. Prior to joining Rand, Nader served as a research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses. He is a native speaker of Farsi. He also received his MA in International Affairs from the George Washington University. Today, Ali is going to discuss Iran's regional policy after the nuclear agreement.

So Ali, I'll turn it over to you now.

Alireza Nader, RAND: Thank you very much, and Good Morning. I want to give a brief presentation, then we will open up the discussion to questions and answers so we can have more of a discussion. I want to briefly talk about Iran's approach towards the United States after the joint comprehensive plan of action (JCPOA or the nuclear

> "We often think of the conflicts in the Middle East as being between the Shia and the Sunni, but Iranian officials see it differently. They don't like to emphasis the difference between the Shia and Sunni … Iran is very careful not to emphasize sectarian divides in the region because the Shia are a minority, and Iran still aspires to leadership of the Muslim world -- the entire Muslim world, especially the Muslim Middle East and not just the Shia."

agreement) and then really focus on what Iran has been doing in the Middle East, Iran's threat perceptions, its military and national security doctrine, and what we could potentially expect in the future.

There was a lot of talk after the nuclear agreement that either Iran's approach to engaging the United States would change after President Hassan Rouhani became president and delivered the nuclear agreement. A lot of people, in Washington DC especially, argued that the nuclear agreement provided a ripe opportunity for Iran and the United States to engage each other and cooperate in the Middle East, whereas a group of people argued that Iran would be emboldened or empowered by the nuclear agreement and that it would gain more power in the Middle East. I don't think either approach is entirely correct. The nuclear agreement hasn't provided the dividends that were expected in terms of US-Iran cooperation, and there are a number of reasons, but, I think, largely, Hassan Rouhani in Iran has not been able to reshape Iran's foreign policy. Iran's political system is largely led by the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the revolutionary guards and a number of other reactionary or conservative forces in Iran, and they have been driving Iran's policy from the very beginning. The Supreme Leader in Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, stated his belief that even with the nuclear agreement, the relationship with the United States would not change, that fundamentally, the Islamic Republic and the United States had major ideological and national differences. We see today that the United States and Iran may have reached some sort of a détente, if you will, in the region, but they are still opposed to each other on a number of issues.

But I don't want to really focus too much on the US-Iran relationship but instead talk about how Iran sees the region. I would argue, for now anyhow, that Iranian leadership does not view the United States as the most immediate threat to Iran's interests in the Middle East but rather, the biggest threat from Tehran's perspective is Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism (or Takfirism as Iran defines that), and Daesh or ISIS or the Islamic state, whatever you want to call it (I'll call it Daesh). Those are the most immediate threats to Iran's national security interests, and today, we see that the conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran is increasing every day, and I think Iran's focus is very much on defeating jihadi forces in the Middle East through a variety of means. Today, I'll talk more about Iran's use of political warfare to combat Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism. We often think of the conflicts in the Middle East as being between the Shia and the Sunni, but Iranian officials see it differently. They don't like to emphasis the difference between the Shia and Sunni; rather, the divisions for them are between what they call *takfiris* or Saudi-supported Wahhabis that maintain the Shia are not true Muslims. So, Iran is very careful not to emphasize sectarian divides in the region because the Shia are a minority, and Iran still aspires to leadership of the Muslim world -- the entire Muslim world, especially the Muslim Middle East and not just the Shia. However, Iran's strategy is often dependent on the Shia; it's very much isolated in the Middle East among the Sunnis, and it relies on Shia militant groups to expand its power. But, I think it's important to remember that the Islamic Republic of Iran has always had pan-Islamic aspirations and sees itself more than just the Shia revolutionary power.

Now, I'd like to focus on two specific areas where Iran is very active in terms of its political warfare strategy and expanding influence: Iraq and Syria. I'm sure many of you are very familiar with both, and some of the information I'm going to present is not going to be new to you, but in terms of Iran's

strategy in Iraq, as you know, Iran has gained a lot of power in Iraq since the 2003 US invasion and the ascendance of Shia parties are in Baghdad. I argue that the rise of Daesh actually has been beneficial to Iran because it has allowed it to expand its power in Iraq. The failure of the Iraqi Shia-led military forces in countering Daesh in the very beginning … really helped Iran expand its power in Iraq because a lot of the Shias turn to Iran for support, and Iran was really one of the first countries or parties to directly get involved in the fight against Daesh. If you remember, in the Kurdish regions, Iran really stepped up its support for the KRG or the Kurdish regional government, and there were reports even of Iran sending troops and military equipment into those areas in Iraq, and both the Shia in Iraq and the Kurds were very much appreciative of that.

Iran is pursuing a multi-prong warfare strategy in Iraq. It has cultivated relations with a number of Shia and even non-Shia political parties, and I think when you look at Iran's strategy, it plays kind of a divide and conquer game because a lot of Iraqi Shia are suspicious of Iran; they don't approve of the Islamic Republic, … or rule of the supreme leader. But, Iran does rely on a few key Iraqi Shia militias to maintain power, and whenever one party gets too powerful, Iran expands support for another Shia militia. Overall, Iran does not want the Iraqi Shia to be a monolithic force that might oppose Iran. Although Iran's sponsors political parties and wants them to vote in a bloc, Iran knows that it has certain vulnerabilities in Iraq and faces a lot of opposition. Iran isn't particularly worried that if Ali al-Sistani passes away that a more anti-Iranian figure will take power in Iraq; so, it has, in addition to sponsoring militias, has trained many junior Iraqi clerics and has expanded its religious influence … something it's been doing since 2003. So, I've been working on this for a very long time, and I think when Sistani passes away, then Iran is going to have a large role in shaping who succeeds him because it has so much soft and hard influence in Iraq.

When we look at Iraq today, the many Iraqi Shia militias in that country are going to play a very big role once ISIL or Daesh has been defeated from Mosul and has been mostly conquered in Iraq. If you look at Iraq today, there are many Iraqi militia leaders who look to Iran as a model and even talk about emulating the paramilitary forces and the revolutionary guards in Iraq, and many of them have very close ties to the revolutionary guards … So, I wouldn't be entirely surprised if a parallel state structure or militia structure like the revolutionary guards emerges in Iraq, and I think that we're witnessing that today actually. My guess is that it's going to become much stronger in the future, and you can make the argument that the United States doesn't have a plan really to address that in the future. You can argue against me on that point.

I'm going to briefly turn to Iran's strategy in Syria in terms of political warfare. I think, in terms of Iran using political warfare and religious influence in Syria, it has faced many more challenges than it has had in Iraq. Syria has been tough for Iran in terms of expanding its ideological influence, but it has done certain things in Syria that we find in other places, like Iraq. For example, Iran played a big role in setting up the national defense forces in Syria, and it has attempted to indoctrinate the national defense forces with Iran's revolutionary ideology, probably not with much success. As you know, Syria has a very, very small Shia population, about 300,000 people (that is an estimate). The Alawites are not really truly Shia; they're depicted as being Shia, but religiously, they're very different than the Iranian Shias … The Alawite elite tend to be secular, so Iran has had a difficult time indoctrinating the largely Sunni and

Alawite and Christian populations in Syria. It has even tried indoctrinating some of the Christian forces fighting with the Syrian regime. However, one area in which Iran has been very successful is using religious appeal to attract foreign fighters to Syria. One of Shia Islam's holiest sites is near Damascus, the Zaynab shrine, and Iran has used the Zaynab shrine to motivate Shia fighters from Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and of course Iran to come and fight on behalf of the Syrian regime. So, in that regard, Iran's political warfare has been relatively successful because it has created what I call a foreign legion in Syria to fight for it.

Iran has also taken advantage of Syria's terrible economic situation to create an economic dependency on Tehran; there have been reports of Iran providing billions of dollars to the Assad regime. I haven't found very precise figures, but I think it would be safe to assume that Iran is providing a lot of economic assistance to Syria, and if the conflict ends in Syria, I think the Syrian government is going to be economically dependent on Iran to a large extent.

In terms of public diplomacy, I think Iran has had less success than it has in Iraq … I think even though Iran faces popular hostility in Iraq, Iraqi Shia to some extent identify with Iran, whereas I don't think Syria's population naturally would identify with Iran in any shape or form. So, overall, Iran has been more successful in terms of political warfare in Iraq and less so in Syria, but it has made some inroads into Syria. Once the conflict ends, we're going to see a weak Syrian central government with many militias funded and trained by Iran, which tends to be Iran's MO throughout the region.

Now, what can we expect in the future? I made the argument that Iran's policies are largely driven by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the revolutionary guards. I think, even if President Rouhani is reelected in 2017, his chances of reshaping Iran's foreign policies are very minimal, and I would expect US-Iran relations to actually potentially become more hostile with the next US president coming and with the fact that forces that shape Iran have not changed. It will be interesting to see what happens when Ayatollah Khamenei dies and his successor is chosen. Right now, there are not any major indications of radical change after Khamenei, although I don't really think we can predict what happens after him. So, that will be interesting to watch. In terms of the Saudi-Iran competition, once Daesh recedes and becomes less of a threat, we can actually expect the Saudi-Iran rivalry to heat up even more. Looking at the Saudi leadership, there is really very little enthusiasm for engaging Iran or even communicating with it, and while figures in Iran like President Rouhani were in the past eager to engage Saudi Arabia, I don't think chances of that are high even if Rouhani is reelected. With that, I'd like **to** open the discussion to questions on any issue that you may have. Thank you.

Meg Egan: Great, thank you very much, Ali. Alright, at this point, we're going to go into our questions and answers session. If you have a question, please state your name and your organization.

Question 1: Sir, …. [could you] speak a little on the IRGC's role in the Syrian conflict, just kind of a general question?

Alireza Nader: Sir, I think the revolutionary guard is really the premiere force shaping everything Iran does in Syria, from military strategy to economic assistance to intelligence cooperation to political warfare. We've seen them appear repeatedly in key battle fields … Iran is in a lot of ways driving the

Syrian regime's military strategy against the opposition in tandem with Russia. … So, the revolutionary guards play a huge role in shaping Iran's policies in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere, and when we look at the guards, this is a very important institution in Iran. It is the most powerful internal intelligent security force in Iran. It has huge business interests in Iran, and it's also the most powerful military force. It gets a large share of the budgets, the military budget, and big resources to develop missiles and a number of other equipment. So, really, the guards are the key to understanding Iran's regional policies and also a lot of its domestic politics as well, even though there is a "moderate" president in Iran today.

Question 2: I am originally from Syria, and I have two questions. First is do you think that the rival of Shia militias, like the NPUs in Iraq, are an answer for the rise of Sunni extremists like ISIS and AQ? Second, talking about the economic dependency, many articles in Arabic are stating that the Iranians are buying land in the heart of Damascus and are resettling Shia Iraqi families. In that regard and the Russian of taking over the airport, do you think that along the way, if we manage to stop the armed conflict, do you see along the way some kind of clash between Iran and Russia on a piece of the cake? Thank you.

Alireza Nader: Those are both very good questions, and yes. There are many reasons for the rise of Daesh and Sunni jihadism, and not all of them have to do with Iran and the Shia, but I think Iran sectarian policies in Iraq and Syria and throughout the Middle East do contribute to the rise of Sunni jihadi groups. I can never really separate the factors and say what Iran does contributes the most, but it is a big factor, and when we look at Iran's involvement and Iraq's especially, but to a smaller extent in Syria, Iran does use religion as a motivating force to get people to fight for it. So, that's definitely a factor. I've also read that Iranians are buying a lot of land around Damascus and probably close to the Zaynab shrine, part of it is probably because Iran wants to have a lot of influence after the conflict.

In terms of differences with Russia, I think right now, Iran is more of a junior partner to Russia and Syria. Iran tried to keep the military balance against the opposition, but it didn't really succeed before the Russian era of intervention in Syria. So, Iran is very much dependent on Russia and Syria, but I'm not sure if the differences between the two countries are going to lead to an overt clash because even before the conflict in Syria, both Russia and Iran had a lot of influence in Syria, and they were able to coexist and respect each other's sphere of influence. So, I'm not necessarily sure that they're going to clash over Syria once the conflict ends.

Question 3 (Doc Cabayan): Thank you so very much for briefing us today; it's much appreciated. My question to you is, I guess, very simplistic. What is Iran's long term view of itself and its neighbors, particularly to the West? I mean, does it realistically believe, and you mentioned all the moves they were making in Syria, is it realistic for them to expect to have that degree of influence that they would like to have in Iraq through Syria and Lebanon? Do they believe that's sustainable or are they trying to get the best they can during this turmoil so when this situation stabilizes, say years from now, they have a pretty good geopolitical position in the region? What are they thinking long term?

Alireza Nader: That's a great question, and the short answer is yes. They think they can be predominant in the region or in places like Iraq, Syria, Lebanon… areas where the Shia are either a majority or have a lot of influence or are a strong minority. I would argue right now that because of the weakness of central states like Iraq and Syria and Lebanon, Iran is able to gain a lot of influence in those countries. So, it's not so much because Iran is very strong because Iran also has its own problems; economically, the situation hasn't really improved since the nuclear agreement, the country is divided, there's a lot of public dissatisfaction in Iran, but because the surrounding states are so weak, and that gives Iran a lot of leverage. I think Iranian officials are at a point where they're very comfortable with their position in Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. I would make the argument actually that right now, the military balance is tipped in Iran's favor in Syria and Iraq, of course, and in terms of negotiating Assad's departure, Iran can maintain a much more firm position and not really have to give in. It's not really because of the nuclear agreement per say; I don't think that has empowered Iran as much as the regional dynamics.

I think Iranian officials are still very worried about Saudi Arabia. There's a genuine fear in Iran that Wahhabi forces and *Takfiris* pose a major threat to Iranian national security. So, yes; Iran sees itself as a natural power in the Middle East, but also, there's a major sense of insecurity because when we think of Iran, we have to remember that it fought an 8-year devastating war with Iraq, and during that war, the Saudis and a lot of other gulf states supported Iraq. You can debate who deserves blame for that conflict, but Iran worries that in the future, a major Sunni bloc is going to wage war against them, and it was to make sure that places like Iraq and Syria and Lebanon don't fall to Sunni forces backed by Saudi Arabia. So, Iran's strategy is defensive but in a sensitive way, if you will. Iranian officials, a lot of them have talked about fighting Saudi Arabia and the Wahhabis in Syria and Iraq so they don't have to fight them on Iran's borders or even within Iran.

Question 4: You mentioned how, well, we've heard for a while that Khamenei has had terminal cancer, and he said that the situation would be interesting given who his successor is, are there any inklings in Iran as to who has been chosen to be or groomed to be his successor, or is that something that has yet to be determined?

Alireza Nader: That is something that has to be determined. There is not a lot of public discussion about Khamenei's successor, and I think if Khamenei indicated who would succeed him, it would undercut his authority right now. It's not clear if he has terminal cancer; there have been rumors about his health. He had a prostate surgery, which was very much publicized 2 or 3 years ago, but there's an expectation that like everyone else, he's going to die one day, and that might be soon. Now, one figure that's often mentioned lately is Ayatollah Raisi, who just took over the shrine foundation in the city of Mashhad, but there have been other figures like Ayatollah Shahroudi who have been discussed as a potential successor to Ayatollah Khameini. Shahroudi is an Iraqi, Ayatollah, former head of the judiciary in Iran, but also former head of the Islamic supreme council of Iraq. Although, some argue that he can't become Iran's leader because he's not even really Iranian; he's Iraqi, but I think that both the process and the outcome are very unpredictable. If you're interested, a few years ago, I wrote a study on this called "The Next Supreme Leader." It's on RAND's website, and I describe or discuss some of the factors that would shape succession in Iran. This study's a little dated, but it will give you a good idea of how succession has worked in the past and how it might work once Khamenei passes away.

Question 5: What do you believe Iran sees in terms of the effectiveness of the United States to make a difference in the region from its perspective? How do you see it evaluating the US as an adversary?

Alireza Nader: I think that there is a great amount of respect and fear and distress for the United States among Iran's elite. I think that there are different approaches toward the United States. For example, Khamenei and much of the guards and more conservative forces think that Iran should be aggressive towards the United States, whereas president Rouhani and foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif argue for a more diplomatic, pragmatic approach towards the United States and see the United States more as a traditional rival than a hardcore ideological competitor, which is really Khamenei sees in the United States. I don't get any indications that the Iranian leader still thinks the United States is about to go away from the Middle East, that its position is fundamentally in decline in the region necessarily, although Iranian officials have exploited opportunities in Iraq and Syria to extend their power. In terms of the next US president, Iranian officials are not hopeful that major changes will come. Khamenei always says that it doesn't matter who is president of the United States, whether it's a democrat or republican; the fundamental US position towards the Islamic Republic will not change. So, I think for the immediate future and for the long term future, Iran's leadership views the United States as a rival to be countered, and that rivalry is not going to go away any time soon. So, a lot of Iran's approach toward developing its military is going to be focused on combatting the United States and US allies like Saudi Arabia and Israel in the future.

Questioner: Yes, a follow up. What I'd really like to try to understand is how you believe how effective they think the United States is in the region in taking on their own interests.

Alireza Nader: I think they believe the United States is still very effective. I mean, in the United States, there's this discussion of the US withdrawing from the Middle East and not being interested in the region. That's not the way that Iranian officials really perceive the United States because they still believe the US maintains a very strong alliance with Saudi Arabia and Israel and that the US is still a worthy competitor in the region. So, I think they still view the Unites States as being very effective, but they also believe they have effective ways of countering the United States through political warfare, ideological warfare, soft power, supporting "proxy militias." So, yes, the United States is powerful, but so is the Islamic Republic.

Question 6: I wondered… our speaker used the term political warfare a couple of times. I'm wondering as to how he defines it so that we can define how it differs from other types of warfare, military particularly.

Alireza Nader: Well, in terms of political warfare, I'd define it basically as anything non-kinetic, so, Iran's support for political parties for non-governmental organizations throughout the Middle East, Iran's economic activities, its support for religious institutions … its use of the Zaynab shrine in Syria. So, it's, you know, a very broad description, but really, anything non-kinetic Iran does in the region. So, I didn't really talk about what kind of weapons Iran provides to the various militias or how it's fighting the military or it's conducting its military strategy in Syria and Iraq.

The Fall of Mosul, the Next Sunni Insurgency, and Iran's post-JCPOA Role in Iraq

By Michael Eisenstadt and Michael Knights

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Abstract: Neither the JCPOA nor the eventual defeat of ISIL in Iraq will likely prove game changers. The future of the nuclear agreement remains uncertain, and Iran will probably continue the more assertive regional policy it adopted in its wake. And barring major changes in Iraqi politics, the defeat of ISIL will most likely herald the rise of "the next Sunni insurgency." Historically, developments in Iraq have been the main driver of Iranian actions there, though U.S. actions have also shaped Iranian behavior. Accordingly, the more the U.S. steps back in Iraq, the more Iran will step forward. For this reason, the U.S. should lock-in the multinational Coalition's support for Iraq via a multi-year ITEF II package, rethink how to be a more effective Security Force Assistance partner, help Baghdad resist pressure by Tehran to institutionalize the PMUs as a separate, parallel military organization, and bolster deterrence against Iranian-sponsored proxy attacks on U.S. personnel in Iraq.

> "The negotiations with Iran over the JCPOA are not over. Rather, the 'negotiations after the negotiations' are likely to continue, with ambiguities in the implementation of the JCPOA being ironed out, while Iran presses forward in other areas in order to see what it can get away with."

The JCPOA has not altered the fundamentals of the U.S.-Iran relationship, or Iran's policy toward Iraq and the region; in fact, post-JCPOA, the IRGC has succeeded in moving Iran in a more assertive direction, ramping up support for the Assad regime (in part by convincing Moscow to intervene and by deepening cooperation with Russia), increasing harassment of U.S. ships in the Gulf, conducting highly publicized missile tests, and continuing with arms shipments to regional allies (the last two in violation of the spirit, if not the letter of UNSCR 2231, which gave international legal force to the JCPOA). Tehran, moreover, still hopes to diminish the threat posed by a U.S.-backed government in Baghdad or by U.S. forces there (a threat that it fears may increase once ISIL is defeated), and it continues to work to ensure the predominance of the Shiite community, to minimize the influence of the Sunni Arab states, and to be the most influential outside power in Iraq.

Iran, Iraq, and the JCPOA

The negotiations with Iran over the JCPOA are not over. Rather, the "negotiations after the negotiations" are likely to continue, with ambiguities in the implementation of the JCPOA being ironed out, while Iran presses forward in other areas in order to see what it can get away with. A decision by

the new U.S. administration to take a tougher line after January 2017 regarding JCPOA implementation or to support the Syrian opposition with arms, safe havens, or no-fly zones could cause Iran to respond with countermoves in Iraq (once Mosul has been "liberated") or elsewhere in ways that might put the JCPOA under pressure. A new Iranian administration that could take office in the wake of the May 2017 elections might likewise take steps that could further strain the fragile nuclear accord.

Iran's strategic style in Iraq is subtle and thrifty. It does not push on closed doors: it rarely asks Iraqi leaders to take actions that are clearly opposed to Iraqi interests. Instead it works with the grain as often as possible, helping Iraqi leaders to achieve their objectives where they broadly coincide with Iran's. This strategy of pushing on open doors or half-open doors has served them well, and will continue. The IRGC, which oversees policy in Iraq, has many commercial interests there, particularly in religious tourism, but Iran does not have ambitious economic goals in Iraq. Development of Iraq's Popular Mobilization Units (PMUs) into an IRGC equivalent would be a plus for Tehran, giving it more leverage in Baghdad, but it is not a driver of Iranian policy. In this sense, Iranian policy in Iraq is "solution-agnostic." As long as the aforementioned objectives are furthered, the Iranians will work with (and if need be, abandon) any faction in Iraq.

One area to watch are the so-called Iranian "red lines" that Tehran's allies like Hadi al-Amiri regularly communicated to the United States in 2015. One red line was U.S. involvement in combat operations in Iraq; this line seems to have been crossed when the U.S. launched Special Forces raids and artillery fire missions from Iraqi territory. Another red line was U.S. unilateral bases, but this line was substantively crossed in locations like the Kara Soar Base (previously Firebase Bell). But Tehran's non-response to the crossing of these "red lines" has more to do with the Iraqi government's urgent needs and stated policies (and Iran's desire to see the most urgent of these needs met), rather than any constraints imposed on Iran by the JCPOA.

If Iran-U.S. relations were to deteriorate significantly, perhaps due to a JCPOA-related crisis, Iran might double down in areas where it (or its proxies and partners) are already challenging the U.S. and its allies: harassing U.S. vessels in the Persian Gulf and the Horn of Africa; providing arms and EFPs to Shiite militants in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia; and transferring advanced weapons (such as anti-ship cruise missiles) to Shiite militias in Lebanon (Hezbollah) and Yemen (the Houthis). In Iraq too, the driver of Iranian conduct is likely to be related to Iraq or, after the fall of Mosul, internal power struggles in Iran, with the IRGC flexing its muscles abroad to demonstrate that it remains in control of Iran's regional policies and to show that "the age of missiles" has not passed, as former president Rafsanjani recently claimed. The U.S. knows how Iran tends to escalate in Iraq, which is likely to use proxy warfare to try to hasten a U.S. drawdown in Iraq after the battle of Mosul. Iran's leaders are creatures of habit, and generally operate from a well-worn playbook. Their repertoire of actions is fairly predictable, even if the course of action they decide on in any particular case is not.

Impact of the eventual fall of Mosul

The success of the coalition campaign against ISIL in Iraq will likely result in their being driven underground, rather than out of Iraq; this will create opportunities for Iran. To the degree that ISIL has a

fair amount of Baathist DNA in its makeup (a significant number of its leaders are former Iraqi military and intelligence officers), it will likely go to ground to fight another day—as previous generations of Baathists did after the 1963 pro-Nasserist coup, the 2003 U.S. invasion, and the 2007 U.S. surge—rather than fight to the death. ISIL has shown that it can function very well as an underground terrorist network (as it did between 2011-2014) and that Baghdad lacks the capabilities to deal with this threat. Unless there is a fundamental change in the nature of Iraqi politics, the fall of Mosul (and its potentially messy aftermath) may simply pave the way for "the next Sunni insurgency"—whether ISIL 2.0, son of al-Qaida in Iraq, a revived neo-Baathist JRTN organization (the Army of the Men of the Naqshabandi Order), or something else. This will be especially so if ISIL remains ensconced in Syria, and can use its presence there to stage operations in Iraq.

Such an outcome will likely ensure that there is an enduring need on the part of Iraq for a capable security assistance partner/provider, whether Washington or Tehran. The United States has a keen interest in being that partner of choice, but the realities of geography and questions about America's steadfastness ensure that Iraq will hedge with Iran in any case. Meanwhile, Tehran's local proxies will continue to engage in the sectarian cleansing of "liberated" areas in order to secure critical lines of communication and safeguard isolated or beleaguered Shiite communities.

Iran will also try to supplement its air corridor to Damascus--which it uses to resupply Hizballah and the Assad regime and to project power in the Levant--with an overland route through Iraq to Syria. Iran generally seeks redundant lines of communication to provide resiliency to its network of proxies and partners. And while the air corridor will, in most circumstances, remain its route of choice, a land corridor will broaden its options in the (unlikely) event that the U.S. eventually establishes a no-fly zone over Syria, or that Israel closes down Damascus airport during a future war with Hezbollah.

Drivers of Iranian Conduct

The key driver of Tehran's conduct in Iraq will not be a change in Iran's perception of the U.S. threat there; the IRGC already considers America a threat but is unlikely to act as long as Iraq needs America as an ally. Instead of being threat-focused, Iran will likely be opportunistic. The U.S. should therefore focus on the kinds of opportunities in Iraq that might present themselves to Iran in the years ahead. These might include:

- The defeat of ISIL in Mosul and their elimination as an overt threat might lessen Baghdad's need for the U.S. and hence Tehran's incentive to restrain its proxies in Iraq. Thus, the post-Mosul phase could bring with it certain dangers for U.S. personnel in Iraq. This may especially be the case if the defeat of ISIL is seen as a triumph for the kind of professional military forces that the United States is trying to create in Iraq, versus Iran's militia proxies.
- A surge of popular support for PMU-linked politicians in Iraq, including former premier Nouri al-Maliki, in the 2017 provincial elections and 2018 national elections (assuming they are held as planned) might cause Iran to provide them money, media and political support.
- A repeat rapid drawdown and disengagement of Coalition forces from Iraq (as occurred previously in 2009-2011) might tempt Tehran to become more assertive in Iraq. Moreover, if the multinational aspect of CJTF-OIR were to dissolve in the wake of the fall of Mosul and to

once again become a unilateral U.S. effort, Iran would find it easier to foment domestic opposition to the U.S. military presence in Iraq.

- The death of Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani could offer opportunities for Tehran to support actors in the political and religious establishment who are closer to it. This is a moment that Iran has been preparing for, though it is possible that less change may occur during a post-Sistani transition than expected.

The above analysis suggests that developments in Iraq will be the main driver of Iranian actions there, though the defeat of ISIL may reduce Tehran's incentive to restrain itself, and may create the potential for events in Iraq to be influenced by developments elsewhere—for instance, as a result of changes in U.S. policy toward Syria, or Iran's evolving perceptions of the benefits that the JCPOA has, or has not yielded.

US Actions and Options

In this respect, U.S. actions are one of the most important shapers of Iranian behavior in Iraq. The more the U.S. steps back, the more Iran will step forward. The less the U.S. is cloaked within the multinational effort of CJTF-OIR, the more Iran can afford to treat the coalition as a U.S. proxy rather than as an assembly of the world's most powerful economies and diplomatic actors, as it currently is (including EU countries that Tehran hopes will invest in and transfer technologies to Iran, now that nuclear sanctions have been lifted). Finally, Iraq's government and religious establishment is the key shaper of Iranian policies in Iraq. The stronger the U.S. relationship with Baghdad, the better protected U.S. equities in Iraq will be.

For these reasons, the U.S. should consider four steps to counter Iranian influence in Iraq and prevent the return of ISIL: First, the United States should lock in the international Coalition's commitment to Baghdad, helping it to secure its borders (especially with Syria) and to deal with the heightened terrorism threat that is almost certain to emerge in the wake of ISIL's defeat as a quasi-conventional military force, to create the basis for a multi-national security venture that will outlast the current phase of the war against ISIL. CJTF-OIR should be extended and maintained as a broad-based multinational coalition, and not be allowed to shrink back into a U.S. mission with a few allies as "window dressing." A new three-year Iraq Train and Equip Fund II funding package for the Iraq Security Forces (ISF) should be approved to cover 2017-2020, to supplant the first three-year ITEF which covered 2014-2017.

Second, the CJTF should rethink its approach to Security Force Assistance, building on the training successes of the last year to create a more effective ISF counter-insurgency force by considering new approaches that do not try to create a miniature U.S. military but that account for local cultural realities, and that deal more effectively with an incentives structures that breeds corruption and prevents the ISF from training and preparing properly for combat and stabilization operations. Beyond political change in Baghdad, this would be the best way to stave off the return of ISIL, and the growth of Iranian influence via the PMUs.

Third, Washington should help Baghdad resist inevitable pressure from Tehran and its Iraqi proxies to institutionalize the pro-Iranian PMUs as a large, well-funded parallel military force as a rival to the ISF.

The continued presence of a robust and effective SFA effort is probably the best way to accomplish this. U.S. attention to the situation of the many Counter-Terrorism Service officers in the senior ranks of the ISF is important. The U.S. will have no greater long-term partners than these U.S.-trained officers and they need to be listened to, protected against militia intimidation, and supported in their careers.

Finally, Washington should seek to deter Tehran by quietly indicating that it will not tolerate attacks on its personnel in Iraq by the latter's proxies there, and that doing so will have adverse consequences for Iran's own trainers and advisors in the region, as well as for the future of the JCPOA. To bolster the credibility of such warnings, the United States should continue to push back against the destabilizing activities of Iranian partners and proxies in the region, such as Houthi efforts to disrupt freedom of navigation in the Bab al-Mandeb.

To this end, an inform and influence campaign documenting malign Iranian activities in Iraq—including unfair business practices, undue influence in politics, and sponsorship of violence against Iraqis—might provide leverage against Tehran, especially if such information were used as warning shots and released via non-U.S.-leaning media outlets. In particular, Iraqis might be interested to know how expensive Iranian military support and gas and electricity imports can be, the violence that underpins Iranian domination of the religious tourism industry, or the impact on Iraqi farmers of customs-free Iranian food exports to Iraq.

Comments on the Implications of JCPOA
Alex Vantanka
Air University

The analytical point of departure in this context has to be that all power factions in Iran – including the IRGC generals that oversee Iran's extensive military operations in Iraq and Syria – are committed to keep the JCPOA alive. All fundamental Iranian decisions involving the US (i.e. posture toward US military operations in Iraq or Syria) will be reached with this simple objective in mind. In other words, to keep the nuclear agreement alive, the Iranian actors are incentivized not to act (the extent possible) recklessly in other arenas involving the US. This includes Iranian behavior toward the US military presence in Iraq.

As long as the US military campaign is by and large in tandem with the Iraqi central government, which Tehran supports, then it is hard to see how the Iranians will want to be a major spoiler. While they will continue the propaganda war against the US – including propagating the nonsense that the US is keen to have ISIS flee from Mosul to Syria to keep the movement alive, they will in terms of tangible action be disinclined to confront head-on US operations.

From their perspective, that could well be crossing an American red line, which in turn could jeopardize the nuclear deal and any other gains in US-Iran relations in recent years. In fact, they might be willing –

for example in the case of humanitarian efforts – to cooperate closely with the US if and when there is mutual interests at play.

Comments on the Implications of JCPOA
Richard Davis
Artis International

The leadership in Saudi, Israel and Turkey believe that the rapprochement by the US to Iran through the Nuclear Deal and to a lesser extent, support for Baghdad, means that the US is less interested in accommodating regional policies coming out of Ankara or Riyadh. This will certainly manifest itself in the support for proxies in Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Specifically, it means that Saudi Arabia and Turkey will likely be more belligerent toward US policies and tactical interests in the fight to defeat ISIL.

What is more challenging to the US approach in the region comes from the fact that hardliners in Iran and Saudi Arabia want the Iran Nuclear Deal to fail… At a time in which sub-state and trans-state groups are emerging and consolidating gains within states that are failing or weak, the great nations are embroiled in proxy warfare in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Mortal enemies like Iran and Saudi Arabia are deeply involved in these conflicts, both believing that the outcome may determine the survivability of their respective regimes. In discussion with leaders from Iran and Saudi Arabia, we have learned that both believe that nuclear capability,

> "… leaders in Israel told us … that the Iran Nuclear Deal ensures that there will be war with Iran at some-point in the future. Leaders from Saudi Arabia say that the Deal ensures a nuclear Iran and that when this happens they will have no choice but to build a weapons program."

including weaponization, is essential to their nation's future and regime survival if the other seeks such capability. Layered on top of this, the leaders tell us that aggression by the other across the region represents the danger to their own regime and proves that the other cannot be trusted. The international community has attempted to prevent nuclear proliferation within Iran by negotiating a nuclear deal that normalizes relations between Iran and the West in exchange for Iran scaling back its nuclear program. But, leaders in Israel told us in face-to-face interviews that the Iran Nuclear Deal ensures that there will be war with Iran at some-point in the future. Leaders from Saudi Arabia say that the Deal ensures a nuclear Iran and that when this happens they will have no choice but to build a weapons program.

The signatories of the Nuclear Deal (P5+1) state that the agreement strengthens the moderates within Iran and provides a bulwark against hard-liners wanting to end the rapprochement with the West, particularly the United States, and their quest to achieve nuclear weapons capability. This premise is based upon the construct that the international community will open investment into Iran and reduce the sanctions that were choking the Iranian economy, resulting in improving productivity and significantly increasing GDP. Naturally, the hard-liners in Iran were skeptical of the agreement and the economic outcomes that it promised. Low oil and natural gas prices and little investment from the West have undermined the good intentions behind the agreement and have prevented the Iranian economy, largely dependent upon petroleum exports, from benefiting as a result of the thawing of relations with the West. Hardliners in Iran claim that Saudi Arabia and the West have manipulated the oil and gas markets to depress petroleum prices and prevent investment in Iran; that both are using economic

warfare against Iran and are actively trying to undermine the agreement. As a result, the Iranian hardliners have been growing in power and have recently had a key member of the Iranian negotiating team arrested on espionage charges.

> "… factions and spoilers have an outsized role in international security and the affairs of many states, particularly in the fight to defeat ISIL and to stabilize Syria and Yemen."

Concurrently, hardliners in Saudi Arabia also represent a significant threat to the Iran Nuclear Deal. If the deal collapses, Saudi Arabia will be seen to have legitimacy to purse a nuclear weapons program that counters the nuclear breakout capability of the Iranians. The emergence of "anti-Nuclear Deal factions" in Iran and Saudi Arabia underscore the critical problem in understanding the implications of these influences on regional conflict and international stability. The complex alignment of interests and alliances in Iran, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Syria and Yemen demonstrate that factions and spoilers have an outsized role in international security and the affairs of many states, particularly in the fight to defeat ISIL and to stabilize Syria and Yemen.[32]

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[32] Artis is collecting data as we speak on this issue in Saudi Arabia and Iran and should have more relevant data in the coming weeks, including much more information on the hardline groups that would like to see the deal fail.

Author Biographies

Tricia Degennaro

Patricia (Tricia) DeGennaro is a Senior Geopolitical Risk Analyst for Threat Tec., LLC. She currently supports the US Army TRADOC G27 as an analyst in the Advanced Network Analysis/Attack the Network Directorate. DeGennaro has lectured at West Point and New York University on International Security Policy and Civilian and Military Affairs. She was selected as a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on the Middle East, Iraq, and Afghanistan for various projects under the TRADOC G2, the commander of the Multi-National Forces in Iraq, commander of the Special Operations Command Central, and the US Department of Defense Strategic Multilayer Assessment program. DeGennaro was nominated by the US Department of State as a Franklin Fellow where she served in USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict, and Humanitarian Assistance - Office of Civilian and Military Cooperation (DCHA/CMC) as a Senior Policy Advisor to support the Office and an Agency-wide Civilian-Military Cooperation Steering Committee in an extensive revision to the Agency's Civilian-Military Cooperation Policy. DeGennaro capitalizes on over twenty years of experience as an academic, author and consultant in international security. Much of her work focuses on stabilization in the Middle East and surrounding region, countering violent extremism, and transitioning nations from war.

DeGennaro has published several articles on US foreign policy and national security topics. Her focus is to encourage an integrated international policy that looks beyond war and the use of force. She is often an expert commentator for CNN, MSNBC, Al Jazeera, Fox News, BBC and various nationally and internationally syndicated radio programs. She holds an MBA in International Trade and Finance from George Washington University and an MPA in International Security and Conflict Resolution from Harvard University. She speaks fluent Albanian and has a basic knowledge of Italian, Arabic and Dari.

Michael Eisenstadt

Michael Eisenstadt is the Kahn Fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Military and Security Studies Program. A specialist in Persian Gulf and Arab-Israeli security affairs, he has published widely on irregular and conventional warfare, and nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East. Prior to joining the Institute in 1989, Mr. Eisenstadt worked as a military analyst with the U.S. government.

Mr. Eisenstadt served for twenty-six years as an officer in the U.S. Army Reserve before retiring in 2010. His military service included active-duty stints in Iraq with the United States Forces-Iraq headquarters (2010) and the Human Terrain System Assessment Team (2008); in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan with the U.S. Security Coordinator (USSC) for Israel and the Palestinian Authority (2008-2009); at U.S. Central Command headquarters and on the Joint Staff during Operation

Enduring Freedom and the planning for Operation Iraqi Freedom (2001-2002); and in Turkey and Iraq during Operation Provide Comfort (1991).

He has also served in a civilian capacity on the Multinational Force-Iraq/U.S. Embassy Baghdad Joint Campaign Plan Assessment Team (2009) and as a consultant or advisor to the congressionally mandated Iraq Study Group (2006), the Multinational Corps-Iraq Information Operations Task Force (2005-2006), and the State Department's Future of Iraq defense policy working group (2002-2003). In 1992, he took a leave of absence from the Institute to work on the U.S. Air Force *Gulf War Air Power Survey*. Mr. Eisenstadt earned an MA in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and has traveled widely in the Middle East. He speaks Arabic and Hebrew, and reads French.

Dr. Michael Knights

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

Dr. Knights has traveled extensively in Iraq and the Gulf states, published widely on security issues for major media outlets such as *Jane's IHS*, and regularly briefs U.S. government policymakers and U.S. military officers on regional security affairs. Dr. Knights worked as the head of analysis and assessments for a range of security and oil companies, directing information collection teams in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen. He has worked extensively with local military and security agencies in Iraq, the Gulf states, and Yemen.
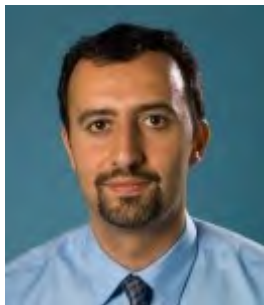
Dr. Knights has undertaken extensive research on lessons learned from U.S. military operations in the Gulf during and since 1990. He earned his doctorate at the Department of War Studies, King's College London, and has worked as a defense journalist for the *Gulf States Newsletter* and *Jane's Intelligence Review*.

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

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

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

Alireza Nader

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

Nader's other RAND publications include *Israel and Iran: A Dangerous Rivalry; The Next Supreme Leader: Succession in the Islamic Republic of Iran; Saudi-Iranian Relations Since the Fall of Saddam: Rivalry, Cooperation, and Implications for U.S. Policy; The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.*Prior to joining RAND, Nader served as a research analyst at the Center for Naval Analyses. He is a native speaker of Farsi. Nader received his M.A. in international affairs from The George Washington University.
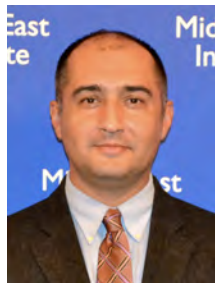
Alex Vatanka

Alex Vatanka is a Senior Fellow at the *Middle East Institute* and at *The Jamestown Foundation* in Washington D.C.

He specializes in Middle Eastern regional security affairs with a particular focus on Iran. From 2006 to 2010, he was the Managing Editor of *Jane's Islamic Affairs Analyst*. From 2001 to 2006, he was a senior political analyst at Jane's in London (UK) where he mainly covered the Middle East. Alex is also a Senior Fellow in Middle East Studies at the US Air Force Special Operations School (USAFSOS) at Hurlburt Field and teaches as an Adjunct Professor at DISAM at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base.

He has testified before the US Congress and lectured widely for both governmental and commercial audiences, including the US Departments of State and Defense, US intelligence agencies, US Congressional staff, and Middle Eastern energy firms. Beyond *Jane's,* the *Middle East Institute and The Jamestown Foundation*, he has written extensively for such outlets as *Foreign Affairs, Foreign Policy*, *The National Interest*, the *Jerusalem Post, Journal of Democracy* and the *Council of Foreign Relations.*

Born in Tehran, he holds a BA in Political Science (Sheffield University, UK), and an MA in International Relations (Essex University, UK), and is fluent in Farsi and Danish. He is the author of "*Iran-Pakistan: Security, Diplomacy,* and *American Influence*" (2015), and contributed chapters to other books, including "*Authoritarianism Goes Global*" (2016). He is presently working on his second book "*The Making of Iranian Foreign Policy: Contested Ideology, Personal Rivalries and the Domestic Struggle to Define Iran's Place in the World*."

Richard Davis

Richard Davis is the Chief Executive Officer and Co-Founder of Artis International. Artis is an interdisciplinary field-based scientific research and development institution working with various governments, NGOs, universities and private sector entities in risk management and conflict resolution and mitigation efforts across the globe through four divisions: 1) Field Based Conflict Research, 2) Energy & Natural Resources, 3) Cyber Defense and 4) Health & Medicine.

Richard holds several active appointments, which include: Founding Fellow at the Centre for the Resolution of Intractable Conflict at the University of Oxford; Senior Research Fellow, Harris Manchester College, University of Oxford; Senior Research Associate, Centre for International Studies, Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford; Senior Research Associate, Department of Anthropology, University of Oxford; Professor of Practice, Arizona State University; Member, Permanent Monitoring Panel on Terrorism, World Federation of Scientists; Chairman, Black Mountain Private Equity; and Chairman, WG Henschen (aerospace).

Richard served at The White House as the Director of Prevention (terrorism) Policy. Prior, he was the Director of the Task Force to Prevent the Entry of Weapons of Mass Effect (framework for the prevention of the smuggling of nuclear materials) and the Director of the Academe, Policy and Research Senior Advisory Committee for two different Secretaries at the United States Department of Homeland Security.

Richard has been a Senior Policy Fellow at RTI international, a Senior Associate at the Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress, led a non-profit international development organization dedicated to the education and development of youth, including crime prevention, prevention of radicalization and conflict mitigation, and a school administrator and teacher. Richard has authored or co-authored articles and publications on energy, international security, political violence and terrorism. He is the author of a book entitled: Hamas, Popular Support & War in the Middle East that was published by Routledge in February 2016. Richard has a PhD from the London School of Economics; an MPA from Harvard University; an MA from the Naval War College; and an MA from Azusa Pacific University. He holds Baccalaureate Degrees in Finance and Social Science from Hope International University.
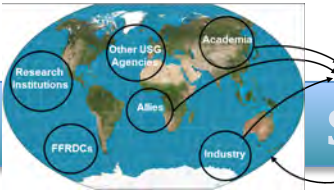
Question (R2.1): Have sentiments changed since the December 2014 polling? Have recent IO efforts in Mosul influenced these sentiments? What other means can we use to influence?

Contributors: *Dr. Munqith Dagher (IIACSS Research), Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi (Middle East Forum), Ms. Sheila Young (USAID), and Dr. Ian McCulloh (Johns Hopkins University).*

Editor: *Dr. Ian McCulloh, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Lab.*

Executive Summary

Data suggests that sentiment toward DA'ESH[33] has changed since the December 2014 polling conducted by USCENTCOM. The SMA team cannot adequately assess recent IO efforts in Mosul due to lack of clarity on programs conducted, their specific objectives, and an understanding of the associated assessment plan. A limited assessment of DA'ESH online propaganda and impacts of US Government (USG) and coalition efforts to restrict this propaganda is provided. Insights for future influence operations are recommended.

USCENTCOM understanding of the population on the ground is significantly hampered by a lack of continued polling and survey research in critical areas of strategic significance. It is clearly possible to conduct this type of research throughout DA'ESH controlled territory as well as other non-permissive environments with proper risk mitigation measures in place. While polling in these environments is dangerous and should not be left to inexperienced staff officers to plan and manage, it provides critical insights for effective operations in the Gray Zone. The first and foremost recommendation in this report is for the Commander, USCENTCOM to personally intervene to obtain the necessary authorities and resources for on-the-ground polling in areas of strategic importance.

Dr. Munqith Dagher of IIACSS, a polling and research firm in the Middle East, has provided independently funded data collected in Mosul between the December 2014 poll and March 2016. These data show that general popular support for DA'ESH increased through December of 2015 and then dropped sharply. As of March 2016, popular support for DA'ESH in Mosul had nearly returned to pre-invasion levels. The SMA could not identify more recent data to support objective assessment.

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[33] DA'ESH is also referred to as "The Islamic State", "Islamic State in the Levant", "Islamic State in Al-Sham", or by the acronyms IS, ISIL, ISIS. This organization will be referred to as DA'ESH throughout this report.

Atmospherics from IIACSS pollsters indicate that the decline in popular support to DA'ESH is primarily due to increased harsh treatment of the local population by DA'ESH in response to fears of locals providing active support to the Government of Iraq (GoI) and the coalition. They also cite deteriorating economic conditions as a result of low oil prices, closed borders, and economic sanctions against DA'ESH.

DA'ESH's internet presence has changed over the last year. Their focus has shifted from highlighting positive messages of "Life in the Caliphate" to messages of battle statistics and a narrative that losses on the ground do not translate into the elimination of the Caliphate. It is the opinion of the authors that this shift in narrative is less effective for DA'ESH securing popular support, but may be more effective at reducing military defection and maintaining a source of foreign fighters for their ground campaign.

The USG campaign to remove DA'ESH cyber personas from the internet (e.g. Twitter suppression) may make it more difficult for potential recruits to find, however, it makes it equally difficult to collect information on the DA'ESH narrative, priorities, objectives, and lines of persuasion. Given DA'ESH guidance to members to limit individual accounts suggests that they may be attempting to limit their online footprint as a matter of strategy and not in response to online information operations activities by the USG. Increased restrictions on the internet has resulted in on-the-ground distribution of offline media (CDs, DVDs, etc.). There is insufficient data to understand the nature or effectiveness of these materials. It is the opinion of this author that USCENTCOM should pursue a more sophisticated campaign of operational preparation of the environment (OPE) to support a wider range of options for military engagement and foreign policy.

An assessment of individuals who have joined, defected, or provide tacit support to DA'ESH reveal two major reasons for support: governance and ideology. People throughout Iraq seek economic prosperity free from sectarian prejudice. They seek an equitable distribution of government services. The coalition must be prepared to fill the governance vacuum with micro-economic development programs, restore oil revenues, and most importantly ensure that non-local sectarian militias do not take control of former DA'ESH occupied areas. Governance will be more successful if it is decentralized at the local level. As a matter of ideology, Iraqis culturally value dignity and family. Fears of reprisal, treatment of civilians, and the inappropriate use of Islam are cultural levers that can quickly turn the population away from reconstruction efforts. The coalition must prioritize efforts to create checks and balances that monitor and prevent corruption and reprisals.

Although not included in this report, Johns Hopkins University and University of California Los Angeles recently conducted social neuroscience experimentation in Amman, Jordan. One of the findings was that Jordanians and Iraqis in the study resented the use of Islam in persuasive messaging. They also found that the use of Islam provided a more effective influence channel. The coalition must be very careful in whether they use Islam and how they use Islam in any information operations activities. While Islam can provide an effective line of persuasion, it may also develop resentment toward the

messenger. It is the opinion of the authors that messaging involving Islam should be left to Muslim non-governmental organizations.

The remainder of this report is organized into four chapters. The first chapter provides on-the-ground data for popular sentiment in Mosul since 2014. The second chapter provides an assessment of DA'ESH propaganda online.   The third chapter offers recommendations for future operations in Iraq. Biographies of contributors are provided. These authors can be contacted through the DDGO.

SME Input

1. Recent polling

Author: Dr. Munqith Dagher and Dr. Ian McCulloh

IIACSS is a population research company that conducts regular polling throughout Iraq and other countries in the region. They have done the majority of Iraq polling work for the US Department of State and USCENTCOM. Although the US Government has not permitted US funded polling in opposition held areas, IIACSS has graciously provided results collected from projects funded by other customers.

IIACSS conducted 120 face-to-face interviews in Mosul in December 2015 and March 2016. The poll uses respondent-driven sampling (snowball) for safety and security reasons. Figure 1 shows responses to the question, "Thinking about life in general, is it better or worse today than eighteen months ago?" Through years of research conducted by the Special Projects Operations Center (SPOC)[34], this question was found to be the best predictor of strategic success/failure for operations aiming to influence the Iraqi population to support US objective and reject Al-Qaeda in Iraq.
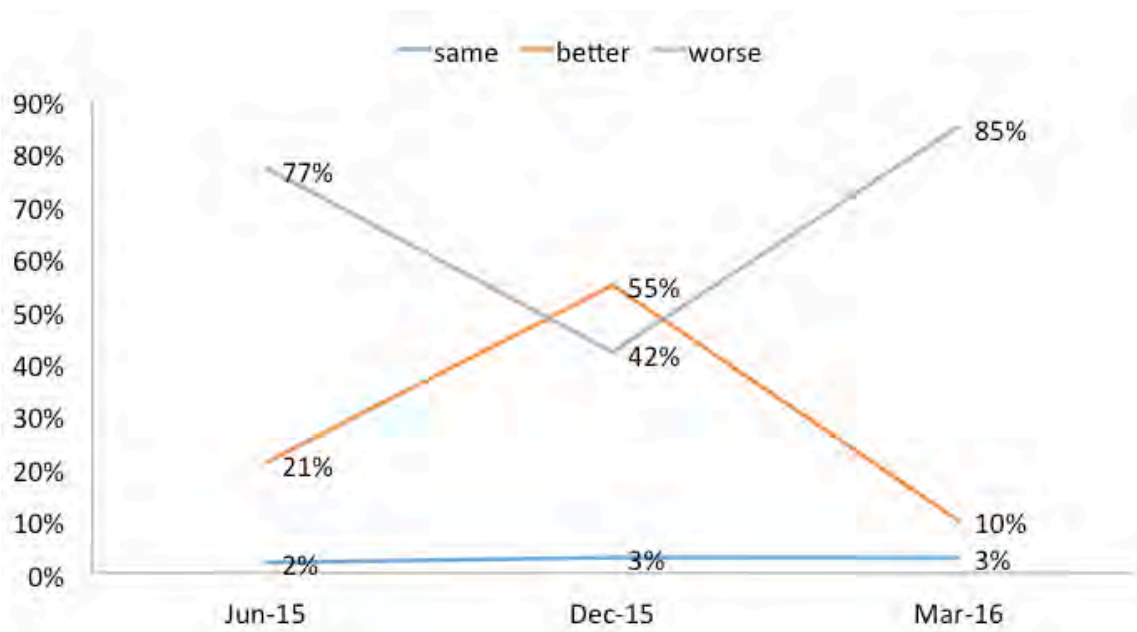

Figure 1. "Thinking about life in general, is it better or worse today than eighteen months ago?"

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[34] The SPOC was the largest and most successful psychological operations campaign conducted by the U.S.A. since WWII. It was a data-driven operation consisting of multiple lines of effort in support of Multi-National Force Iraq and US Force Iraq.

It is difficult to draw clear conclusions for the population sentiment for or against US interests. Had territorial control been under US or GoI control, we could conclude that the change in sentiment from December 2015 to March 2016 was in the coalition favor. Give the losses on the ground for DA'ESH, it could be that the population holds a negative opinion of the return of GoI control in areas of Iraq.

Other data suggests that popular support for DA'ESH is in deed dropping. Another polling question asked in Mosul is, "In your opinion, to what extent does DA'ESH represent the views and interests of people like you?" The data show that people increasingly identified with DA'ESH as an organization from the time of their invasion through December 2015, however, that has significantly fallen between 2015 and March of 2016.
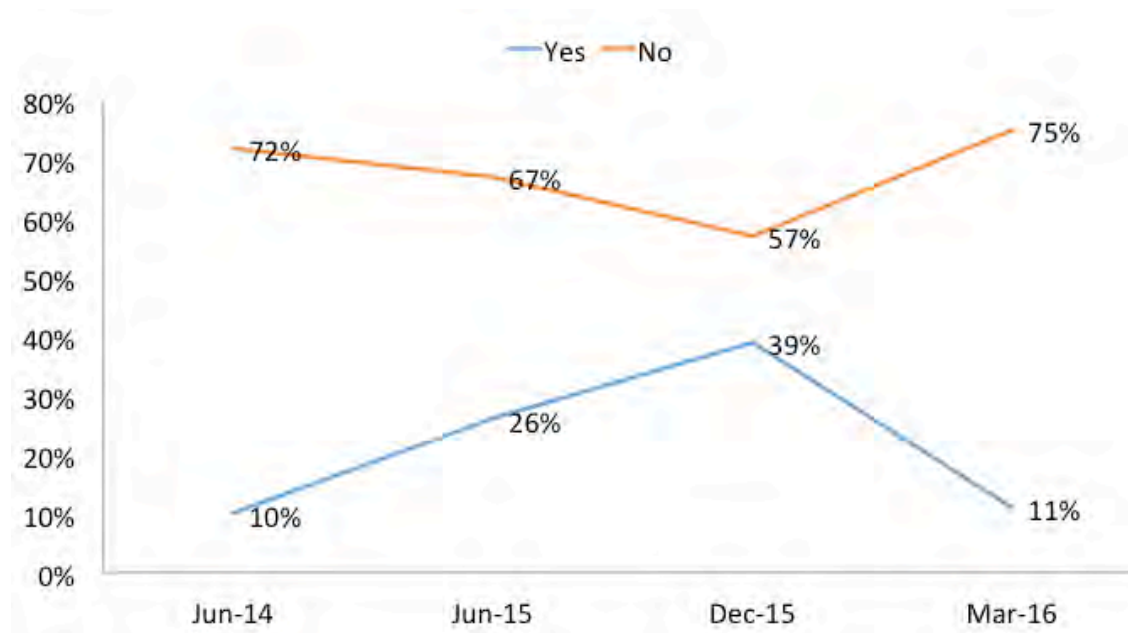

Figure 2. "In your opinion, to what extent does DA'ESH represent the views and interests of people like you?"

It is difficult to attach causation to the downturn in popular support. Atmospherics on the ground in Iraq indicate that DA'ESH was running out of money and resources. There are many potential reasons for this ranging from effective global sanctions, close monitoring of borders to limit oil smuggling, and the sharp drop in oil prices during this time. The loss of DA'ESH resources has resulted in a decreased ability for DA'ESH to provide the same level of services and subsidies that it provided between June 2014 and December 2015. DA'ESH has also become more violent toward the local people, accusing many of being agents of the US or GoI, as coalition attacks increased in frequency and effectiveness. It is the opinion of Iraqi pollsters living in the region that the two statistics are a result of DA'ESH's increasingly harsh treatment of the local population more than anything else.

An October 2016 poll in the newly freed areas from DA'ESH in Anbar showed optimistic attitudes about the future among the people living there with high expectations about the future. This attitude is expected in Mosul following DA'ESH defeat, as it has been in all cities freed from DA'ESH in the last year.

This means that the population is focused on the future and not the past. Strategic communications messaging should focus on the future as a main theme, since it resonates with the population and counter's the DA'ESH narrative that focuses on the past.

While popular support for DA'ESH in Iraq never reached a majority and is now dropping, it is important to recognize some of the key conditions that allowed the legitimate government to deteriorate so quickly. Popular expectations were high for their economy, civil infrastructure, and social opportunity. These expectations were not met and conditions declined sharply following the withdrawal of US forces in 2011. Concerns over government corruption and sectarian mistreatment of Sunnis by Shi'a were consistently reported in US DoS and USCENTCOM polling between 2012 through 2014 to include polling conducted during the DA'ESH invasion of Mosul. DA'ESH was able to rapidly gain popular support by addressing these long-held grievances more rapidly than the coalition or GoI had been able to do.

Sending positive messages via mass coordinated communication can help in the current battle in Mosul. It is important to convince people that there will not be any revenge actions in the city following the defeat of DA'ESH. They must believe that new (non-local) militias will not enter and control the city. The level of civil infrastructure and economic opportunity must be maintained or improved. Popular expectations must not exceed the GoI's ability to deliver.

The post-DA'ESH era will be critical for Iraq's long-term stability. Corruption and the lack of trust in local leaders are a principal reason for the relative ease of DA'ESH occupation. The former local leaders lack legitimacy and must not be allowed to return to power. Civil military operations and Department of State partners must focus on developing new trusted leaders at the local level.

2. Da'esh Media Propaganda

Author: **Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi**

Means of reception of DA'ESH propaganda

On the macro level (e.g. outside CJOA), audiences are primarily receiving DA'ESH propaganda via the Internet, consisting of dozens of items of official propaganda on a daily basis such as videos, photo series, magazine publications, a radio broadcast, books and pamphlets- all alongside output from supportive but unofficial media outlets like al-Battar media and al-Nusra al-Maqdisia. Prior to late summer 2014, this meant prolific use of open access social media platforms, in particular Twitter, where DA'ESH operated multiple official accounts for central media outlets like al-Itisam and the media offices for their various declared 'provinces' (wilayas) within Iraq and Syria. Since being kicked off Twitter though, DA'ESH has tried various other means to aggregate information. Sometimes, this has involved the setting up of websites that feature the group's media releases, such as Isdarat ('issues/releases') and Akhbar al-Muslimeen ('News of the Muslims', a website that claims to be officially 'independent') and 'Come to Success News.' Though able to operate with a degree of impunity at first, these sites too have

been increasingly shut down over the period 2015-2016, such that the web addresses to locate them now can be very complicated if they exist at all.

The present trend has been to migrate to the more closed platform of Telegram, where channels aggregating DA'ESH propaganda were initially able to operate with total impunity until the Paris attacks, when pressure came on the platform to take action. While DA'ESH propaganda accounts are now increasingly being deleted, aggregate channels, which are normally accessed via finding 'invite links' that expire after a limited amount of time, normally create multiple copies of themselves in a bid to remain one step ahead of deletion. That said, certain DA'ESH propaganda accounts and supporters do remain persistent in trying to open accounts on Twitter and other more open platforms.

Alongside the trend in deletions has been the disappearance of most social media accounts operated by individual members, which was an important means for sympathetic audiences on the macro level to establish personal connections and either join the ranks of DA'ESH within Iraq and Syria or perhaps plot to conduct attacks in home countries. Alongside action against these accounts on social media, DA'ESH has issued at least two internal communiques warning members against operating individual accounts on social media: General Governing Committee directives no. 8 and no. 94, the latter essentially being a repeat of the former's contents after reports of continued violations of directive no. 8.

Looking more specifically at the content on the macro level, one can distinguish general themes in the propaganda and also messages aimed at a particular demographic. The former has varied over time alongside the fortunes of DA'ESH: that is, at the height of DA'ESH's success, the messaging gave big weight to advertising the supposed success of the statehood project of DA'ESH. This would mean photo and video releases, for example, which display normal daily life under the Caliphate as well as the functioning of DA'ESH's various bureaucratic departments on the ground within Iraq and Syria in particular. Over time though, as the statehood model has increasingly faced challenges and suffered territorial losses, the propaganda has increasingly become military in nature, providing daily updates from the frontlines and producing infographics with battle statistics. That is not to say that propaganda advertising life under the Caliphate and governance does not exist anymore, only that it is much less prominent. Increasingly on the macro level perhaps, one could say that the messaging is being directed more at those who already are sympathetic to the organization, as recruitment to come to Iraq and Syria has also been made logistically difficult and DA'ESH tries to explain how its losses do not translate to the end of the Caliphate project.

Particular demographics were also targeted on the macro level in the form of media campaigns. This concept was alluded to in an internal text called Principles in the Administration of the Islamic State, a position paper discussing organization of media and other aspects of the DA'ESH project. These media campaigns typically involve the production of multiple videos over a short time period from the organization's various provincial media offices all revolving around messages to people in a particular

place. Target locations have included Somalia, the Maghreb and the Palestinian territories. A specific agenda is normally apparent in each campaign: for example, in the case of Somalia, the aim was to secure as many allegiance pledges as possible, gearing up for the defection of Abdiqader Ma'mun from al-Shabaab, Somalia's al-Qa'ida affiliate. Since al-Shabaab had not openly spoken out against DA'ESH (though internally prior to the Caliphate declaration, it seems efforts had been made to ban circulation of DA'ESH propaganda material among al-Shabaab members), the language of the video campaign was very conciliatory in the spirit of 'brotherhood', emphasizing that not pledging allegiance to the Caliphate is a missed opportunity. In contrast, the messaging to the Maghreb was more open in attacking al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb.

On the micro level (i.e. within DA'ESH-controlled territories in Iraq and Syria), the online propaganda is distributed in multiple forms on the ground to the local populations: this includes broadcasting of video releases at designated *nuqtat ilamia* (media points), distribution of pamphlets, books, CDs, DVDs and newsletters on the street and at designated offices, and the radio broadcasting. However, there is also plenty of propaganda not available online that is disseminated on the ground to the local population, permeating most aspects of life through the extensive bureaucracy. For instance, the Diwan al-Da'wa wa al-Masajid (Da'wa and Mosques Department) organizes Friday sermon themes in the mosques, and has distributed multiple pamphlets not published online. The department also helps organize 'Shari'i courses' (dawrat shari'ia) to reinforce ideological indoctrination, issuing certificates for those who complete such courses. In a similar vein, the school curricula has been revamped with the publication by the Diwan al-Ta'aleem (Education Department) of a new set of textbooks for children. In part, these textbooks act as a platform for DA'ESH propaganda through normalizing DA'ESH concepts of jihad, warfare and an Islamic way of life (e.g. English language education discussing the prohibition on smoking, math problems involving weaponry etc.).

Considering the increasing restrictions on Internet access within DA'ESH territory in Iraq and Syria, whereby attempts have been made to restrict private Internet access and monitor Internet use as far as possible short of being able to develop the necessary technology, distribution and dissemination of DA'ESH propaganda material on the ground must be considered the primary means of reception for the micro-level audience, rather than online broadcasting.

An internal text discussing Da'wa: external vs. internal

The DA'ESH strategist and dissenter Abu al-Faruq al-Masri, who was based in Raqqa but has since been disappeared by the organization's security apparatus following a critical pamphlet he disseminated earlier this year, wrote a text (subsequently banned) called al-Manhaj al-Sayasi wa al-Tandhimi lil-Dawlat al-Islamiya ('The political and organizational program for the Islamic State'), which contains a specific section on da'wa (outreach work/proselytization) that is of interest here, as da'wa is an integral concept of DA'ESH propaganda outreach.

Abu al-Faruq al-Masri makes a similar distinction to what we have considered here regarding the distinction between the macro and micro level audiences. He distinguishes 'internal da'wa' and 'external da'wa': the former he defines as directed towards the audiences of Arab and Muslim countries. This da'wa, he says, must aim to 'show the strength of the Islamic State and that it is capable today of protecting the Muslims, gathering their banner together, and ridding them of the bonds of humiliation and tyrannical rule that have stripped them of their religious and human rights. External da'wa he defines as directed at "the idolaters", in particular those residing in places like Europe, U.S. and Russia. This da'wa, he says, is directed to show that the Islamic State is a "powerful rival state and not sects in conflict that appeal to the West for rule to resolve their issues and disagreements." He adds that this da'wa must also be intended to show that the religion of Islam is great, because the citizen of those countries will not convert to a religion seen as weak. The aim should be to create media noise that attracts attention.

The da'wa here must therefore rely on "a media da'wa office independent from the media of the wilayas [provinces of DA'ESH], with media production centers overseen by "specialists in the Majlis al-Shura [consultation council that advises DA'ESH leader Baghdadi] and the office of the distant provinces [provinces outside Iraq and Syria]." Design and production in this case is to be delegated to those who came to the Caliphate from Europe and America, utilizing media production in their languages. Of course, the most obvious reflection of this approach is the al-Hayat Media center that was set up primarily to disseminate propaganda in English, French and other non-Arabic languages.

Abu al-Faruq al-Masri says that the messaging in this case should focus on the injustice and evils of the Western governing systems, highlighting for example the Islamic State's disregard for skin color/ethnicity and borders as opposed to historical racism in Western societies. In addition, he suggests highlighting the gold dinar currency as something that protects the wealth of its citizens rather than being beholden to the monopolies of international currencies and banks.

The relevant pages of the text are produced below.

وأنَّ الدعوة التي لاتقوم على إظهار عزّة المسلمين هي دعوة باطلة، فكيف دعوة الى دين الإسلام أن تُنبِذ الخلافة الإسلامية وتُذُمُّ المجاهدين وتصفهم بـ " التطرف" والـ " إرهاب" وتدعو المجتمع الغربي إلى عدم اعتماد الدولة الإسلامية منهجاً سليماً في الإسلام.

ومن ثمّ إنَّ نتائج الدعوة الى الله يجب أن تقضي بالنهاية الى تنفيذ أوامر الله وأحكام كتابه والتي تتمثّل في الحكم بشريعة الله والامر بالمعروف والنهي عن المنكر والعيش بدولة إسلامية تكفل حقوق الجميع حسب الكتاب والسنة.

فالدعوة الى الله يجب أن تنتهي بالخلافة الإسلامية وهو ذروة الدعوة الى الله، فالدعوة في عهد النبي أفضت الى قيام الدولة الإسلامية والتي بدأت تنشر الدين الإسلامي بالدعوة والقوة، وكان أن أخذت الدعوة الى الله شكلاً جديداً بعد اقامة الدولة الإسلامية ، حيث اقبلت وفود العرب والعجم الى النبي تخلع عنها ثوب الشرك وتلبس ثوب الإيمان وتبايع النبي على السمع والطاعة.

واجب الدولة الإسلامية تجاه الدعوة :

يأخذ الإعلام اليوم نصف الدعوة الى الله وهي الدعوة الداخلية والخارجية :

١ ــ الدعوة الداخلية :

هي الدعوة الموجهة الى المسلمين أو كما تعرفون عنها اليوم " الدول العربية ورابطة الدول الإسلامية" وهي الدول التي ينتشر فيها الإسلام

بنسب عالية، وهنا الدعوة تكون بإظهار قوة الدولة الإسلامية والتي هي قادرة اليوم على حماية المسلمين وجمع رايتهم وتخليصهم من عقود الذل والحكم الإستبدادي الذي جرّدهم من حقوقهم الدينية والدنيوية.

وأن الدولة الإسلامية هي جامع المسلمين اليوم على اختلاف ألوانهم وجنسياتهم التي فرقتهم حسب اللون والعرق.

وأنَّ المنهج هو منهجٌ واحدٌ وأنَّ الدين هو انتماء وواجبٌ وليس مصلحة ومطيّة كما فعل الإخوان المسلمون.

٢ ــ الدعوة الخارجية :

وهي الدعوة الموجهة للمشركين عموماً أو من يقصد بهم اليوم " أوربا ــ أمريكا ــ روسيا" وهذه الدول التي تحكم العالم.

فالدعوة فيها تُوجّه نحو اظهار الدولة الإسلامية كدولةٍ قويةٍ منافسةٍ وليست طوائف متفرقة متنازعة تحتكم الى الغرب لحل قضاياها وخلافاتها.

كما يقصد من الدعوة فيها الى اظهار عزّة الإسلام لا فؤائه، فالمواطن في تلك الدول لاقبل أن يدخل في دينٍ ضعيف لايحميه أحد ولا يرفع رايته أحد بل ينظر الى الدين من طرق مختلفة عن المسلمين، فيهئ بداية بالقوة والعزّة وتاريخه وإنجازاته إن صحّ التعبير فلابدّ هنا من إحداث ضجّة للدولة الإسلامية تُلفِت النظر اليها والى الدين الإسلامي الصحيح،

وهذا ما فعلته الدولة الإسلامية وما نصحت به مجلس الشورى ومكتب الولايات البعيدة ، هي أن تهتم الدولة في مسيرها في البداية لإحداث نقلة نوعية وتكثيف الجهد على لفتِ الإنتباه اليها وجعلها قضيّة عالمية.

فبهذا يلتقون الى منهج الدولة ومسيرها وليس الى دعوات المرجئة والمهادنين الذين يدعون فقط لتطبيق أحكام الطهارة والصلاة والصوم، دون أن يذكروا عن هذا الدين جوهره وأوتاده وتاريخه الحافل ومسيرة الصالحين الصحيحة التي مزّجت بين الدعوة والتراحم والقوة والعزّة لنصرة الدين.

ويفضل الله ستشهد تحولاً كبيراً في دول الغرب ونقلة نوعية في تواجد المسلمين هناك بحيث يكونون العنصر المؤثّر والصانع للتاريخ والذي يحول أوربا وأمريكا من الدعوة السرّية وتحت اشراف مخابراتهم الى الدعوة الإسلامية التي ترعاها دولة الخلافة.

وتعتمد الدعوة هنا بشكل مطلق على الإعلام الذي يجب أن يكون في مكتب اعلامي دعوي مستقل عن اعلام الولايات، ويكون في مراكز اعلامية ومؤسسات إنتاج خاصة يشرف عليها أخصائيين في مجلس الشورى ومكتب الولايات البعيدة، ويكون عمدة التصميم والانتاج فيها لرعايا الخلافة ممن أتوا من أوربا وأمريكا، حيث يكون الإعلام بلغاتهم شتّى

ويركّز الإعلام هنا على مساوئ الحكم العلماني والرأسمالية الأوربية والأفريكية والضرائب والقوانين الظالمة، كما يبين منهج الدولة الإسلامية في الحكم والعدل أمام القضاء والمساواة بين المسلمين على اختلاف

أشكالهم، فلا أبيض ولا أسود كما فعل طواغيت أمريكا الذين جعلوا البشر طبقاتٍ متفاوتة في الحقوق حسب ألوانهم.

ويبين الإعلام الدعوي أن لاحدود في دولة الإسلام فالأرضُ كلُّها لله وحده ولا فرق بين مسلم عربي أو أوربي أو أمريكي أو حتى أفريقي فكلهم اخوة في الله وجميعهم أمام الشريعة مُتساوون.

كما يَتَفَرَّقُ الإعلام في هذا على حرص الإسلام والخلافة على أموال المسلمين من الضياع أو التلف، حيث تُدرَسُ الدولة الإسلامية في التمكين مشروع صَكّ الدينار الذهبي الذي لاتلغى قيمتُه بعكس أوراقهم النقدية التي يصبح المرء عندهم على ثروة ويمسي مفلساً ، كما أن قوانين البنوك والإفلاسات والربى كلُّ ذلك يمحق الأموال عاجلاً أم آجلاً، بينما تحفظ الدولة أموال رعاياها في قيمتها وزكاتها.

3. Neutralizing DA'ESH and Preventing a Governance Vacuum

Author: **Sheila Young**

Neutralizing the immediate threat from DA'ESH by clearing territory alone will only have a temporary impact on stability in Iraq and Syria because the extremist's center of gravity is less territorial than it is ideological. Root causes for people from the region to join DA'ESH include promises of improved living conditions, a gained sense of belonging, marriage, or to gain a deeper understanding of Islam. Root causes for their defections are due to failed realization of those promises and distaste for the brutalities against fellow Arabs. People provide passive support to DA'ESH as a result of ideology as well as governance (e.g., the provision of services such as water, electricity, health, and education in local communities). While the current strategy to diminish DA'ESH is to reduce or eliminate its territorial control, that strategy alone will not effectively address ideology and governance. DA'ESH has already proven in Iraq that it can rebound from territorial losses. Therefore, diminishing the desire of people to join DA'ESH, or to passively support it, will require several interventions, including: improved governance; a safe and secure environment to provide governance services; Muslim-led counter messaging through the media that shows DA'ESH atrocities and tempers radical religious rhetoric; and, economic development opportunities. Civilian and military decision makers need to understand these issues in order to reduce the likelihood a group such as DA'ESH will regain strength in the future.

The DA'ESH Center of Gravity

DA'ESH is distinct from other extremist groups in several ways: its success in mobilizing a diverse group of Muslims from a broad spectrum of society, self-recognition that they need the will of the people to maintain control and attract recruits, and the ability to spread its ideology rapidly.[35] The group's ideology calls for them to: maintain control of the territory of the caliphate to experience 'pure' Islam; expand territory; ensure unfettered authority over the population; and, win an apocalyptic war against Western countries.[36] Several scholars contend that the DA'ESH center of gravity is the territory that it holds. This possession allows DA'ESH to demonstrate its ability to govern, to maintain a captive audience to spread its ideology and train fighters, and to obtain a reasonable amount of revenue to continue to operate.[37] The group has such strong convictions about the need to defend the territory of the declared caliphate that it is willing to fight other Islamic groups to maintain that control.[38] In addition to its ideological platform, DA'ESH is also representing its self-declared caliphate as a land of

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[35] On the issue of ISIS and their vision of governance, see Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, www.ctc.usma.edu, West Point, NY, Dec 2014, p. 66.

[36] Cafarella, Jennifer, Gambhir, Harleen, and Zimmerman, Katherine, *U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and Al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength*, Institute for the Study of War, American Enterprise Institute, Feb 2016, pp. 9 and 12.

[37] Cafarella, Jennifer, Gambhir, Harleen, and Zimmerman, Katherine, *U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and Al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength*, p. 142.

[38] Cafarella, Jennifer, Gambhir, Harleen, and Zimmerman, Katherine, *U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and Al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength*, p. 16

plenty where recruits can come to join the fight, live in peace, and find a mate. This vision appeals to many foreign recruits as well.[39] Ultimately, denying DA'ESH of territory without addressing governance and ideology will only provide temporary gains by reducing the group's attractiveness to potential recruits. The group could still reestablish itself in another governance-poor area.

The sheer size of DA'ESH, if estimates are to be believed, is cause for concern both in terms of neutralizing its threat in the region as well as in how to manage the estimated tens of thousands of foreign fighters. One estimate shows that the size of DA'ESH once reached from between 35,000 and 70,000, with foreign fighters reaching 25,000-30,000.[40] Governing the communities in which they reside is a key factor in maintaining needed public support; DA'ESH recognizes this.[41] The group learned from past challenges in Iraq and adapted to the current situation by trying to win favor or at least passive support, of the local population.[42] DA'ESH understands the governance element of its organization so well that it actively recruits from professions that it needs in order to support its governance requirements. In an attempt to utilize personnel in the best possible way, DA'ESH actively tries to match skill sets of recruits to the needs of its organization. Those recruits with needed governance skills are used for general governance or administrative positions, while others are used as active fighters.[43] In 2014, Al-Baghdadi, the former DA'ESH leader, made a general appeal for foreign fighters with skills in needed areas such as public administration, judiciary, medicine, engineering, among other areas.[44] DA'ESH has proven its ability to rebound from a previous territorial loss in Iraq, rebuild its numbers, and to gain more territory in another area by improving its ability to govern. Territorial loss alone is not the group's center of gravity.

Motivation of a DA'ESH Recruit

In 2015, several Arab DA'ESH defectors, mainly from Syria, were interviewed about what motivated them to join and to defect. Factors for joining included the promise of: a paying job – in many cases paying more than they had for jobs prior to DA'ESH; food and basic necessities in addition to the salary; marriage; and, a deeper understanding of Islam. A report in 2016 found that some of the reasons cited

[39] Bergen, Peter, *Jihad 2.0: Social Media in the Next Evolution of Terrorist Recruitment*, Testimony for the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, May 7, 2015, p. 7.

[40] Speckhard, Anne and Yayla, Ahmed, *Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit*, Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol 9, Issue 6, Dec 2015, p. 96.

[41] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, www.ctc.usma.edu, West Point, NY, Dec 2014, p. 66.

[42] Byman, Daniel, *Understanding the Islamic State: A Review Essay*, International Security, Vol 40, No 4, Spring 2016, p. 133.

[43] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, www.ctc.usma.edu, West Point, NY, Dec 2014, p. 74-75.

[44] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, p. 75.

by young Syrians of why they join radical organizations include: a degradation of their educational system; a lack of economic opportunities; and, experiences of violence.[45] Another report from 2015 found that foreign fighters who left DA'ESH stated their reasons for joining were: the promise of marriage, a large salary, nicer living quarters than the Syrian cadres, and female slaves.[46]

The local defectors (i.e., Arab Sunni defectors from Syria and Iraq) also noted that if they refused to join DA'ESH, they were denied all of that and even allowed to starve.[47] Another study of several dozen DA'ESH defectors released in 2015 identified three main reasons that people joined the group: to assist their Arab (Sunni) brothers fight the Assad regime against perceived genocide; to have the opportunity to experience pure Islamic living, a duty of all Muslims; and, for personal or material reasons such as food, obtaining luxury items such as cars and houses, to fight, and for brotherhood (i.e., a sense of belonging to a greater cause).[48] Those same defectors gave several reasons for defecting; the most prominent reason given was that there was too much fighting against other Arab (Sunni) groups such as Al-Nusra[*] and not enough defense of Muslims in general against the Assad regime. Other reasons given for defecting included: the shear brutality with which Sunni Arab civilians were treated (they did not object as much to brutality of non-Sunni Arabs); the ad hoc mistreatment or favoritism of DA'ESH followers from some DA'ESH commanders; and, the living conditions (e.g., lack of electricity, water, or limited food) did not live up to the standards of foreign fighters; or, they were not deployed in positions where they could experience what they perceived as the glory of fighting.[49]

All of these reasons for joining and defecting the group have roots in governance and ideology, not territory. While coalition forces may be able to defeat DA'ESH militarily, it will not be able to win the war on ideology through a demonstration of military might alone. Ideology must be countered with ideology, and supported by the provision of services and sound governance structures. Failure to address governance structures can result in a governance vacuum, which will cause that vacuum to be filled by other groups.[50] There are other groups in the region ready to step into DA'ESH' place, including but not limited to, al-Nusra, whose primary goal is to support the Syrian rebel resistance against the

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[45] Tonnessen, Truls Hallberg, *Destroying the Islamic State Hydra: Lessons Learned from the Fall of its Predecessor*, Countering Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, August 2016, p. 5 footnote.

[46] Speckhard, Anne and Yayla, Ahmed, *Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit*, Perspectives on Terrorism, Vol 9, Issue 6, Dec 2015, p. 111.

[47] Speckhard, Anne and Yayla, Ahmed, *Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit*, p. 102.

[48] Neumann, Peter R., *Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors*, the International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence, London, 2015, p. 9.

[*] Al-Nusra refers to another Sunni group with alleged ties to Al-Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra. One source reported that Jabhat al-Nusra changed its name in July 2016 to Jabhat Fetah al-Sham and broke its formal affiliation to Al Qaeda. Source: Al-Tamini, Aymenn, *Al-Qaeda Uncoupling: Jabhat Al-Nusra's rebranding as Jabhat Fetah Al-Sham*, CTC Sentinal, West Point, New York, August 2016, p. 16.

[49] Neumann, Peter R., *Victims, Perpetrators, Assets: The Narratives of Islamic State Defectors*, p. 10-11.

[50] Muggah, Robert and O'Donnell, Chris, *Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*, Stability: International Journal of Security and Development, 4(1): 30, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs, 2015, p. 5.

Assad regime.[51]   The military can provide the safe and secure environment in the region for local authorities to immediately begin to restore and oversee management of services of the population, but the key to taming radical views is to address ideology and governance.

The Expansion and Contraction of Ideology

Addressing the root causes of why people support extremist organizations – whether they participate actively or support them passively – is crucial to preventing the ideology of these groups from taking hold in the future.   While DA'ESH has had successes in using the media to highlight its governance successes, the media can and should be used to diminish it as well by airing footage of the destruction left in DA'ESH' wake and interviews of defectors.   Social media and regular media outlets are only tools in the war on ideology.   Not all ideology is radical and radicalization does not occur overnight or as a result of a single event.   It occurs, instead, over a period of time as a result of triggers that impact an individual's experiences in society.[52]   The environment in which someone lives influences how an individual interprets these triggers by either reinforcing or rationalizing negative connotations associated with the triggers.[53]   Some speculate that foreign fighters are likely to remain mobile and seek other radical organizations within which to work.[54]   In other words, if there is no alternative for foreign fighters (i.e., nothing to temper their radicalization and motivation), such as reintegration in the societies of their countries of origin, they would likely seek to affiliate themselves with another group in another fragile state.

The media plays a key role in encouraging the spread of ideology.   Even prior to DA'ESH declaring a caliphate in northern Iraq and Syria, the Islamic State of Iraq established a network of media outlets.[55]   Social media outlets not only play a significant role in spreading DA'ESH ideology, they also are the principle methods of recruitment to DA'ESH and to al-Nusra.[56]   DA'ESH has used written materials as well as photos and video on social media to get out its message that it provides governance services to the local population.   In northern Iraq, for example, DA'ESH revealed photos of its cadres repairing electricity systems, distributing food aid, and providing 'normal' policing services to the local

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[51] Speckhard, Anne and Yayla, Ahmed, *Eyewitness Accounts from Recent Defectors from Islamic State: Why They Joined, What They Saw, Why They Quit*, p. 96.

[52] Air Force Research Laboratory, various authors, *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies*, https://publicintelligence.net/arl-countering-violent-extremism/, revised on July 2015, p. 7.

[53] Christmann, Kris, *Preventing Religious Radicalization and Violent Extremism: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence*, Youth Justice Board of the UK, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/396030/preventing-violent-extremism-systematic-review.pdf, accessed on Nov 11, 2016, 2012, pp. 19-21.

[54] Tonnessen, Truls Hallberg, *Destroying the Islamic State Hydra: Lessons Learned from the Fall of its Predecessor*, Countering Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, August 2016, p. 5

[55] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State,* p. 47.

[56] Bergen, Peter, *Jihad 2.0: Social Media in the Next Evolution of Terrorist Recruitment*, Testimony for the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, May 7, 2015, pp. 4-5.

communities.[57] This projected image of the provision of stability and a safe governance structure has achieved a couple of goals: the attraction of more fighters from outside of the region and the ability to maintain control and passive support of the local population.[58] Messaging, or content and source of the message, must be credible. Words must match actions on the ground and the source of those words must be from a reliable source, in order for the new ideas to take root in the general population.[59]

In 2014, coalition air strikes in Mosul and Raqqa disrupted the provision of electricity and influx of food causing prices to increase. The local population complained of lack of services more than they complained of the brutalities of DA'ESH' governance tactics.[60] In fact, DA'ESH also published photos of beheadings and public floggings, actions that outrage the West, but which many inside the DA'ESH area of control agree are part of sharia law and allowable forms of governance.[61] DA'ESH understands what the local population wants, i.e., the provision of services and stability, and for now, the population turns a blind eye away from brutalities of rule. Denying these services as a means to get the local population to turn away from the DA'ESH might work to some extent in the short run, but that tactic also runs the real risk of starving the local population thereby reinforcing an DA'ESH message of the need for an apocalyptic war against the West.

Ideology can be manipulated in several ways such as the provision of opportunities, denial of benefits or rewards, and punishment.[62] By denying DA'ESH the opportunity to manipulate the general public, they are being denied a source of power of their ideology. Denial of territory is important to denying DA'ESH the opportunity to manipulate the general public, however, denial of territory alone will not end the DA'ESH behavior. They could find another fragile state within which to operate or the ideology could continue to flourish through social media absent physical territory until territory is available. In order for sustainment of military territorial gains, ideology and governance must be addressed.

Military power alone will not sustainably end violent extremism and radical ideology. Depending on the circumstances, foreign military may not be seen as a credible source of information. Military power, combined with governance, in order for both the denial of opportunity and reduction of support to DA'ESH to take hold, is key to starting to build credibility with the local population. The longevity of development refers to sustainability, which is measured in the long-term. It is not uncommon in the development world to encourage short-term and medium-term gains in order to demonstrate

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[57] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, pp. 67-68.

[58] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, pp. 69.

[59] Air Force Research Laboratory, various authors, *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies*, https://publicintelligence.net/arl-countering-violent-extremism/, revised on July 2015, p. 5.

[60] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, pp. 69.

[61] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, pp. 70.

[62] Air Force Research Laboratory, various authors, *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies,* pp. 192-193.

legitimacy of actions.[63] This is where the military and development professionals need to work together to design activities, which need to be led by local authorities, to address the provision of government services in areas formerly controlled by extremists.

To erode DA'ESH support from within, the less radical fighters should be provided with an alternative to remaining with the group.[64] Credible messaging coming from DA'ESH defectors of the dDa'eshlusion of the original DA'ESH promises could help to dissuade people from joining. In addition, as a means of convincing additional current fighters to defect, there needs to be a place for them to go, whether to return to their original countries of origin or another location. In addition, disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration processes have proven successes under certain circumstances. Further, an exit strategy for fighters who are not part of the DA'ESH inner circle may not be successful unless the local population is convinced that some kind of reparation has been paid for their crimes against the general population. For example, the FARC in Columbia failed to receive support for a peace deal from the general population because they deemed that reparations for perceived atrocities were not enough.[65] Deeper analysis of the effectiveness of disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs and what would appease the general population in Iraq and Syria in order to aid the reintegration process is a topic of future research.

Another method to address radical ideology is through religion. Though religion was not listed as the first reason to join DA'ESH, it remained among one of several reasons. The idea to use religion as a platform to address perceived social justices has been around for centuries.[66] To maintain credibility, the message of a more peaceful interpretation of Islam needs to come from within the Muslim community.[67]

Filling the Governance Vacuum

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[63] Everington, Alexis, *Prevention of Violent Extremism: What Are the People Saying?,* International Advisory Services, found in Air Force Research Laboratory, various authors, *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies*, https://publicintelligence.net/arl-countering-violent-extremism/, revised on July 2015, p. 82.

[64] Tonnessen, Truls Hallberg, *Destroying the Islamic State Hydra: Lessons Learned from the Fall of its Predecessor*, Countering Terrorism Center, West Point, New York, August 2016, p. 4.

[65] Quintana, Ana, *The Columbia-FARC Peace Deal: Why it Failed and how the US can Support a Responsible Renegotiation*, http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2016/10/the-colombianfarc-peace-deal-why-it-failed-and-how-the-us-can-support-a-responsible-renegotiation, Oct 26, 2016.

[66] Radicalizing Reformation, http://www.radicalizing-reformation.com/index.php/en/about-radicalizing-reformation.html accessed on Nov 12, 2016

[67] Hamid Tawfik, *A Strategic Plan to Defeat Radical Islam*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, found in Air Force Research Laboratory, various authors, *Countering Violent Extremism: Scientific Methods and Strategies*, https://publicintelligence.net/arl-countering-violent-extremism/, revised on July 2015, p. 72-75

Once enough members of DA'ESH are neutralized from Mosul and Raqqa, a governance vacuum will ensue.[68] DA'ESH learned from its experience in Iraq that governance is a key factor to maintaining authority. In the territory it controls, DA'ESH is taking more care to work with the local communities to set up governance systems.[69] There are several governance challenges to the provision of services in Mosul and Raqqa including, but not limited to: identifying who among Iraqi and Syrian Governments will provide those services right away; addressing disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration of former combatants from the region; ensuring no other illicit groups (e.g., Al-Nusra in Syria, Shia militias in Iraq members of the opposition in Syria, Kurdish rebels, among others) fill the vacuum; appeasing Turkish, Iranian, and Syrian Governments that their interests in the region will be addressed; and, identifying what to do with surviving former foreign fighters. There are rumors among former fighters of abuses against Sunnis from the Kurdish and Shia militias that have caused some to passively accept DA'ESH in their communities.[70] The general population in those areas also needs to be comforted that some form of stability will be ensured.

Summary

The solutions to addressing radical ideology of DA'ESH and neutralizing the threat of the organization lie in a series of interventions with roots in military interventions to build the secure environment and in development interventions to ensure rapid and sustainable rooting of governance. Four issues must be addressed to provide stability and reduce the possible resurgence of DA'ESH in Syria and northern Iraq: stable governance with provision of services, the safety and security to operate those services, economic development opportunities in the region so people will not need to see a group such as DA'ESH to provide monetary support, and Muslim-led efforts to address extreme, radical religious ideology. Timing is a factor – in order to gain and maintain support of the population, the security of the environment and perceived provision of services need to occur as soon as possible when the immediate security threat is neutralized.[71] DA'ESH, Al-Qaeda, and Al-Nusra call for an end to Western influence in the region.[72] Therefore it is crucial that Muslim organizations remain in the lead of efforts to provide security, stability, and the provision of services in the region.

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[68] Muggah, Robert and O'Donnell, Chris, *Next Generation Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration*, Stability: International Journal of Security and Development, 4(1): 30, DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/sta.fs, 2015, p. 7.

[69] Al-Ubaydi, Muhammad, Lahoud, Nelly, Milton, Daniel, and Price, Bryan, *The Group that Calls Itself a State: Understanding the Evolution and Challenges of the Islamic State*, p. 74-75.

[70] Tonnessen, Truls Hallberg, *Destroying the Islamic State Hydra: Lessons Learned from the Fall of its Predecessor*, p. 3.

[71] Tonnessen, Truls Hallberg, *Destroying the Islamic State Hydra: Lessons Learned from the Fall of its Predecessor*, p. 4.

[72] Cafarella, Jennifer, Gambhir, Harleen, and Zimmerman, Katherine, *U.S. Grand Strategy: Destroying ISIS and Al Qaeda, Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS: Sources of Strength*, pp. 12 and 17.

Biographies

Dr. Ian McCulloh Biography

Ian McCulloh holds joint appointments as a Parson's Fellow in the Bloomberg School of Public health, a Senior Lecturer in the Whiting School of Engineering and as chief scientist in the Cyber Warfare Systems Group of the Applied Physics Lab, at Johns Hopkins University. His current research is focused on strategic influence in online networks and understanding the cognitive dimension of the information environment. He is the author of "Social Network Analysis with Applications" (Wiley: 2013), "Networks Over Time" (Oxford: forthcoming) and has published 40 peer-reviewed papers, primarily in the area of social network analysis. He retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the US Army after 20 years of service in special operations, counter-improvised explosive device (C-IED) forensics and targeting, and weapons of mass destruction (WMD) defense. He founded the West Point Network Science Center and created the Army's Advanced Network Analysis and Targeting (ANAT) program. In his most recent military assignments as a strategist, he led interdisciplinary PhD teams at Special Operations Command Central (SOCCENT) and Central Command (CENTCOM) to conduct social science research in 15 countries across the Middle East and Central Asia to included denied areas, which he used to inform data-driven strategy for countering extremism and irregular warfare, as well as empirically assess the effectiveness of military operations. He holds a Ph.D. and M.S from Carnegie Mellon University's School of Computer Science, an M.S. in Industrial Engineering, and M.S. in Applied Statistics from the Florida State University, and a B.S. in Industrial Engineering from the University of Washington. He is married with four children and a granddaughter.

Dr. Munqith Dagher

Dr. Munqith Dagher conducted Iraq's first-ever public opinion poll and since that time has been responsible for conducting over 1.5 Million interviews for a range of agencies and topics. Munqith established IIACSS in 2003 while he was a Professor of Public Administration/Strategic Management at Baghdad University. He has managed more than 300 public opinion projects and various market research projects. He has lectured widely and published several articles and books in different countries around the world.

Recently, and since ISIL took over Mosul on June 2014 , Munqith has dedicated most of his time to studying the reasons behind the sudden uprising of this terrorist organization and how to defeat it. For this reason, he has run three rounds of quantitative and qualitative research in Iraq. Munqith published the some of these results in the Washington post and gave number of talks and presentations in the

most well known think tanks in the world, such as the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Washington and King's College in London.

Munqith holds a Ph.D. in Public Administration from the University of Baghdad, College of Administration and Economics, Master degree in Human resources and Master degree in war sciences. He was professor of public administration and strategic management in Baghdad, Basrah and the National Defense Universities. Munqith has also finished the course in principles of marketing research at the University of Georgia, USA.

On June 16th 2015, Munqith was awarded the Ginny Valentine Badge of Courage, on behalf of the Research Liberation Front, for Bravery in keeping the research alive in multiple conflict zones.

Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi

Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi is a research fellow at the Middle East Forum, a U.S.-based think-tank. His work primarily focuses on Iraq and Syria, including an archive project of hundreds of Islamic State internal documents. His work has been published in Jihadology, Syria Comment, The Daily Beast and the BBC, among other outlets. For his insights, he has been quoted in a range of international media outlets, including the New York Times, the Washington Post, the Guardian, AFP, Associated Press, El Mundo, Le Monde and other outlets. His website is http://www.aymennjawad.org

Sheila Young Biography

Ms. Young is a career Foreign Service Officer with over 14 years of experience with USAID in designing and implementing development and humanitarian aid activities in Latin America, Asia, the Middle East, Eastern Europe, and Africa. Most nota-bly is her programming leadership on the U.S. Government's response to the Asia Tsunami of 2004, support for the stand-up of the anti-money laundering unit for the Government of Azerbaijan, the design of the USAID close-out strategy from Iraq, and the design of over $1 billion in foreign assistance in Mozambique. Ms. Young served as an Energy Specialist to the Government of Indonesia on energy efficiency in power gener-ation from 1996-2002, through the US Department of Energy. Prior to that, she worked with USAID in Washington to de-sign energy activities throughout the world, including the first energy activities in support of the New Independent States, following the breakup of the Soviet Union. She was also a Marketing and Agreement Specialist with the US Department of Agriculture, and an Agriculture Extension Agent in Maurita-nia, West Africa, with the US Peace Corps. She holds a BA from Hope College with concentrations in philosophy, political science, music, and a MS from George Mason University in environmental science and policy.
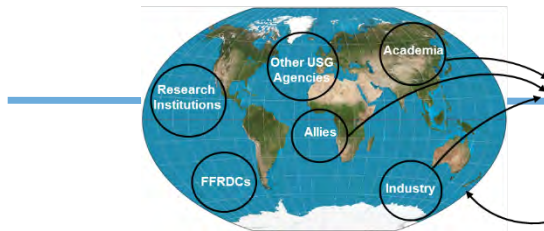
SMA Reach-back Report

Question (R2.5): What are potential unanticipated complications or reactions (or "black swans") with respect to defeating ISIL in al-Raqqah?

Contributors: *Kathleen Reedy (RAND), Birol Yeşilada (Portland State University)*

Editor: *Kathleen Reedy, RAND*

Compiler: *Sam Rhem, SRC*

Executive Summary

Predicting the unanticipated is always a challenge, but contributors have identified a couple of considerations for thinking about both potential complications involving external actors such as Turkey (Yeşilada) and what is likely to happen with the combatants themselves (Reedy).

External Factors and a Lack of Stability

One of the main complicating factors in Syria has been, from the outset, the wide variety of external influence on and support for the combatants and groups. Regional countries, world powers, and transnational organizations have all had a hand in shaping the conflict. Turkey in particular has been a volatile player, but has been consistent on its stance on the Syrian Kurds—Erdogan has strongly stated that he will not allow a single bridge of Kurds across the north of Syria. He has also promised, however, that it will be "his forces" and not the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Council/Forces (SDF) will be the ones to liberate Raqqah. It is unclear, though, whether he means the Free Syrian Army (FSA) or Turkish forces, though. In any case, apart from the FSA, there are no anti-Assad groups currently operating in Syria that could hold Raqqah even if they could clear it, because they would not have the organic support of the population there. It is possible, then, that if one of these groups is predominantly involved in removing ISIL from Raqqah, they will not have the ability to stabilize the region, and given the animosity between the Turkish forces and the Syrian Kurdish forces, it could lead to outright fighting in the area between them (Yeşilada).

ISIL Fighters and Leaders

The other potential black swan contributors note involves the fighters themselves. There are two broad options for ISIL fighters and leaders: to leave Syria or to stay. There have already been leaders who have fled the Levant when things began to look somewhat bleak for ISIL, primarily fleeing to North Africa. As they are slowly pushed out of Syria, more leaders and fighters may begin to follow them there. This creates follow-on problems in Africa, as increasing fighters and expertise arrive and challenge already fragile-situations there. However, the fight in North Africa is often more local than that in the Levant in its perspective, and fighters may be reluctant to commit to conflict there because of that and because the territory lacks the ideological impetus of the historical home of the Caliphate. Yemen might be another option to flee to, but given the current conflict and related factors such as food shortages there, that seems a less likely option (Reedy).

The other alternative is to stay in Syria. This may be a more viable option for rank-and-file fighters than leaving because they may not have the resources to flee safely and/or, since many of them are foreign fighters, they may be on watchlists that prohibit them from returning home. Leaders who stay are more likely to do so for ideological reasons. Within this option are two possibilities, which are by no means mutually exclusive. One is that some combatants are likely to either join other groups that continue to oppose the regime and go underground as part of a long-term insurgency scenario. The other scenario is that fighters, feeling backed into a corner, attempt to do as much damage to life and property as they can before they are killed or captured (Reedy).

What Can Coalition Partners Do?

Contributors outlined or implied a few actions that the US government and its coalition partners could do to address these black swans.

1. Keep a **tight rein on allies** within and outside Syria to ensure they do not fall to fighting among themselves (Yeşilada).
2. Ensure that the **clearing and holding of Raqqah are coordinated** and that no single force is primarily responsible for its liberation or stabilization (Yeşilada).
3. **Coordinate and communicate closely** between CENTCOM and AFRICOM to attempt to track, detain, and understand the capabilities of leaders and fighters fleeing from Syria and Iraq to North Africa (Reedy).
4. Prepare to deal with a long-running insurgency, for allies and international organizations involved in stabilizing Syria (Reedy).
5. To deal with levels of extreme violence, **more heavily secure civilian populations and key infrastructure** to protect them (Reedy).
6. Find methods and means to **repatriate foreign fighters** to remove them from the battlefield in Syria or elsewhere (Reedy).

Conclusion

Contributors note that unexpected results can involve both external actors and allies (Yeşilada) and the ISIL combatants themselves (Reedy). Ensuring that U.S. forces and partners are ready to address the wide variety of potential complications and are agile enough to adapt to the unexpected rapidly will be essential to minimize the impacts from these types of concerns. Communication and the ability to rapidly react politically and militarily will be paramount.

SME Input

Dr. Birol Yeşilada, Portland State University

This is going to bring two anti-Assad coalitions face to face for control of the region. (1) The Free Syrian Army (FSA) and Al Qaeda affiliates supported by Qatar, Saudis, Turkey, Libya and for FSA France and USA; and (2) Syrian Democratic Council/Forces (SDF) and Federation of Northern Syria – Rojava led by the Kurds (YPG) and supported by Western Allies excluding Turkey. The Turkish government of Erdogan is determined to prevent the Syrian Kurds from controlling the corridor in Northern Syria and will do everything possible to crush the YPG which it sees as an arm of the PKK. Erdogan has total support of the Turkish political parties (except the HDP Kurds) in this. So far, Erdogan has provided limited support for the FSA and al-Nusra in the Euphrates Shield Operation. The Turks are reserving their military force in a "wait and see" strategy and will exercise more forceful intervention depending on the outcome of al-Bab and al-Raqqah operations. On several instances while speaking about Raqqah, Erdogan emphasized that that his forces, not the SDF, will liberate Raqqah. By "his forces" it is not clear whether Erdogan means the FSA or Turkish armed forces. Here lies a major problem. Neither the Turks nor the Kurdish led SDF have significant Sunni Arabs in their ranks to be perceived favorable by the Arabs of Raqqah. Even if they take over the city, it is going to be very difficult for them to hold on to it. I suspect that the Turks and their allies in the FSA and SDF will end up fighting each other.

Dr. Kathleen Reedy, RAND

If ISIL falls in Raqqa, the most glaring black swan will be what happens to the fighters who are not killed or do not surrender. There are two major categories of possibilities there. One is that the fighters and leadership flee Syria. There has already been some indication that ISIL leaders have fled at various points to proclaimed wilayats in North Africa. While they are likely to be valued for their combat experience there, however, a lot of the extremist violence in North Africa is realistically more locally focused than the grand schemes of ISIL. North Africa also holds less ideological credibility than a fight in the territory of the historical caliphates and so may hold less attraction for many of the foreign fighters from outside the Middle East in particular. Yemen might be another location people would flee to, but given the current complexities there, that seems less likely to be desirable than some of the slightly less contested areas in North Africa. In this case, the problem shifts from the Levant and Iraq to North Africa. Combatting this will take an immense amount of intelligence gathering to track and limit the movement of leaders and fighters. It will also require coordination and communication between CENTCOM and AFRICOM to identify key leaders in particular and what capabilities they bring with them.

An alternative option is that fighters stay in Syria and Iraq. This seems more likely to occur for many rank-and-file members of ISIL who have less access to resources to safely move. Also, foreign fighters who have come to Syria to fight may be more likely to stay because they may not be allowed to reenter their home countries. For these fighters, they will likely contribute to on-going insurgency. Some may go underground or try to blend in with other opposition groups, but some, again especially foreign fighters, they may reach a point where they are backed into a corner and rather than going underground, they

may decide to destroy as much as they can in the name of their cause before they are caught or killed. In other words, fighters that stay may contribute to long-running insurgency and/or may be explosive in the short-term, attempting to cause extreme amounts of damage. Combatting the former will require whatever government eventually controls Syria to engage in extended counterinsurgency operations, while the latter are more difficult to handle as the ball is always in the court of the someone willing to commit extreme violence in these kinds of cases. Ensuring that civilian populations and key infrastructure are secured to the greatest extent possible will be important to help limit damage. Also, finding ways to repatriate foreign fighters would be challenging, but could reduce some of this sort of attempts at catastrophic damage if people feel that they can actually return home.

Author Bios

Kathleen Reedy, Ph.D.

Kathleen Reedy is an anthropologist and mixed methods researcher at the RAND Corporation. Her background is in Middle Eastern culture and politics. In particular, her research has focused on nationalism, political identities, governance, rule of law, and the gaps between policy and practice in war zones. Prior to joining RAND, she served as a CENTCOM SME for the USAF and as a social scientist for the Army's Human Terrain System, embedding with BCTs in Iraq and Afghanistan. Her graduate fieldwork included 13 months of ethnographic research in Syria, and she has also worked in and on Egypt, the Gulf, China, and Japan.

Since joining RAND in 2014, Dr. Reedy has led or participated in studies on strategic posture and presence; Islamic extremism; right-wing nationalism; the human domain in remote sensing operations; policy options for Syria, Yemen, and Iran; military education and training; and military gender integration.

Dr. Reedy received her Ph.D. from the University of Edinburgh, and her undergraduate degree from Penn State.

Birol Yeşilada, Ph.D.

Birol A. Yeşilada is professor of Political Science and International Studies at Portland State University (PSU). He is the Vice President of the Board of TransResearch Consortium and holder of the endowed chair in Contemporary Turkish Studies in the Mark O. Hatfield School of Government. He is the Director of the Center for Turkish Studies as well as Director of the Middle East Studies Center of PSU. He came to PSU in September 1998 from the University of Missouri-Columbia where he was Chair of the Department of Political Science.

Dr. Yeşilada received his B.A. degree in 1977 in Neurobiology from the University of California at Berkeley, his M.A. in Political Science in 1979 from San Francisco State University and his Ph.D. in Political Science in 1984 from the University of Michigan.

His current research interests include: Global power transition, PI for the World Values Survey (Cyprus), the European Union, political and economic development of Turkey, radical Islam and terrorism, the Cyprus negotiations and international conflict resolution, and politics of economic reform in the emerging markets. His recent publications include several books, latest *EU-Turkey Relations in the 21st Century, Islamization of Turkey Under the AKP Rule, The Emerging European Union* and over 30 articles and book chapters. His is the former co-editor-in-chief of *International Studies Perspectives* and former Associate editor of *Middle East Studies Association Bulletin*.

Dr. Yeşilada has been an invited policy consultant at various Departments of the US government including the CIA and the State Department, the Council on Foreign Relations, the U.S. Institute of Peace, the RAND Corporation, Booz Allen Hamilton, the Nathan Associates, Barclays Capital, the World Bank, and is an Academic Associate of the Atlantic Council. He was invited by the White House to take part in a panel study at the RAND Corporation on "Politics and Islam in the New Constitution of Afghanistan" as part of the commission that drafted the new Constitution of that country.

Dr. Yesilada received numerous awards and grants including the Fulbright fellowship and a grant from the Joint Committee on the Middle East of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council. At the University of Missouri, he received a campus-wide William T. Kemper Fellowship in Teaching Excellence in 1996. He is the past-president of the Rotary Club of Tigard, Oregon and president of the Rotary Club of Tigard Foundation, past chair of New Generations Committee and co-chair of District 5100 Peace Conference (2012) and is co-Chair of the Peacebuilder Clubs Committee.

SMA Reach-back Report

Question (R3.2): How does Da'esh's transition to insurgency manifest itself, and what actions should the Coalition take to minimize their ability to maintain either military effectiveness or popular support?

Contributors: Elie Abouaoun, USIP; Scott Atran, ARTIS, Harith Hasan Al-Qarawee, Brandeis; Omar Al-Shahery, RAND; Patricia DeGennaro, TRADOC G-2; AMB Robert S. Ford, MEI; Sarhang Hamasaeed, USIP; Gina Ligon, University of Nebraska Omaha; Michael Logan, University of Nebraska Omaha ; Renad Mansour, Chatham House; Diane Maye, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University; Clark McCauley, Bryn Mawr College; Spencer Meredith, NDU; Vera Mironova, Harvard, Daniel Serwer, JHU, Randa Slim, MEI; Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute; Craig Whiteside, Naval Postgraduate School

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Executive Summary

The self-proclaimed Islamic State (IS) or Da'esh, as the group has become known, transition to insurgency is underway. They may not see it like this since Iraq and Syria are struggling with their own sovereignty and trying to restructure governance to support the basic necessities of the populations.

Daniel Serwer of Johns Hopkins University says we can already see this manifesting "in overt terrorist attacks, which are already frequent, as well as more covert intimidation." IS is conducting suicide, IED and infrastructure attacks daily.   The group will continue to be active in organized crime activities - protection rackets, smuggling of oil and antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, and violent intimidation – against any effort to restore law and order. "Daesh will not fold its tent. It may even spawn a new organization to carry on its campaign for the caliphate and seek to embed with other less brutal Salafists," says Serwer.

In light of the possibility that U.S. backed Iraqi and Peshmerga forces are pushing IS out of its territory in Iraq and beginning to tackle some locations in Syria, Harith Al-Qarawee, professor at Brandeis

University, says, "ISIS insurgents who will survive the Mosul battle will return to underground insurgency and seek to secure safe passages between Iraq and Syria." He and other experts agree that there must be an effective intelligence effort in urban centers to keep abreast of any movements IS may make if another gap in security and governance should open up. Renad Mansour, an expert at Chatham House, reminds us they IS will continue, even underground to "make sure that Iraq's political elite are unable to come up with a political solution," so if a political solution is not found, IS will use this as a reason to resurface. Former Syrian Ambassador Robert Ford and Elie Abouaoun, at USIP, feel that in order to prevent this from happening, "a genuine and organic national reconciliation effort" must commence by investing in political reconciliation initiatives that combine both top-down and bottom-up approach and include a regional dialogue between Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

SMEs agree that IS will not disappear. They will most likely go into hiding with sleeper cells in Iraqi and Syrian cities. Many may also remain silent in other Western countries looking for future opportunities to act. Noted anthropologist Scott Atran believes IS "will retreat to its pre-Caliphate tactics, as they did during the Iraqi surge, when they lost 60-80% of their foot soldiers and more than a dozen high-value targets each month for 15 consecutive months, yet still survived with a strong enough organization to seize the initiative in the chaos of the Syrian Civil War and roar back along the old oil-for-smuggling routes that Sunni Arab tribesmen and Saddam loyalists." Randa Slim of the Middle East Institute states that, "there will be post-ISIS territorial and ideological challenges. On the territorial side of the equation, given the range of actors involved in the Mosul fight, there will be increasing stakes, post-liberation, of competing territorial claims between Baghdad and Erbil but also among different ethnic groups. She continues, "Kirkuk is likely to be a major point of competition in the future and will complicate the relationship between Erbil and Baghdad" and losing territory will undermine ISIS's caliphate narrative."

All agree that the Iraqi leadership must find a way to bring the Sunni population into the political decision making by cultivating local leaders who have legitimacy and credibility. Sunni groups, that are particularly fragmented, must contribute to reconstruction of liberated territories and participate in security, police and military, to ensure that their grievances are met. These grievances are rooted in divisions that are embedded by continued attacks on their communities by IS, who are dividing Sunnis as well as Sunnis and Shia populations, and Shia forces perceived to be targeting not only Iraqi Sunnis, but all Sunnis as a proxy for Iran.

Many "IS members are Iraqis," says Bilal Wahab of the Washington Institute, who were brutally coerced to join IS or had little economic choice, they too should be a focus for immediate reintegration into society to help quell animosities perpetuated in this conflict. Remember, says Atran, "many of the leaders of the Sunni Arab militia in Mosul supported IS at the outset (as "The Revolution" - al Thawra - to win back Iraq from Shia control) and turned against IS when they encourage Sunni to go against Sunni. "Military action and humanitarian assistance are critical, but they are mostly addressing the symptoms, and need to be supplemented by civilian initiatives" says United States Institute of Peace expert Sarhang Hamasaeed. In Diane Maye's words, "An important element of denying regrowth is to use targeting in conjunction with a broader movement to engage the population against the terrorist network." In other words, take advantage of an IS retreat by rebuilding and improving the livelihoods of people. That is the main IS deterrent.

Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute, encourages coalition members to take into account several lessons from the past when planning next steps. First, "If grievances continue—mass arrests, kidnappings and economic sidelining, insurgency will remain legitimate in the eyes of the population" and second, "cash speaks louder than ideology, be it foreign funds pouring into Iraq, or Sunni politicians funneling money into violent groups to gain leverage in Baghdad. Finally, "in addition to sectarianism, a chronic malaise of Iraq's security forces is corruption and has impunity." This must be addressed immediately. Trust in security forces is the only way populations will support and report ongoing IS activities.

SME Inputs

Elie Abouaoun, USIP

2. How does Da'esh's transition to insurgency manifest itself, and what actions should the Coalition take to minimize their ability to maintain either military effectiveness or popular support?

In the absence of a genuine and organic national reconciliation effort, there is very little that can be done to curb down the efforts of transitioning ISIS fighters/cells to an insurgency mode. The only way to reverse the situation is to invest heavily in a political reconciliation initiative that combines both top-down and bottom-up approaches that goes hand in hand with a regional dialogue between Turkey, Iran and Saudi Arabia. This is where the international pressure on regional powers should focus.

Harith al-Qarawee, Brandeis

Most likely, ISIS insurgents who will survive the Mosul battle will return to underground insurgency and seek to secure save passages between Iraqi and Syria. Some will remain hiding in the cities waiting for a better moment to operate, and others will operate in orchards and desert areas. It is important to install effective intelligence system in the urban centers, accompanied by a strategy appealing to the locals. Crucial in this effort is to convince locals that terrorists will not return again and their defeat is final, which requires rapid efforts to normalize situation in those areas. Also, important to make sure that security forces tasked with securing those cities will have the confidence of locals. This is why staffing them with personnel from same areas and finding working frameworks of cooperation with Iraqi military is crucial. At the same time, it is important to avoid the repetition of having people with double loyalties inside security forces. This requires establishing an effective mechanism for vetting and clearance before appointing any person in security forces.

Omar Al-Shahery, RAND

Da'esh is the dominant militant group in the Sunni areas of Iraq as well in Syria; that said, it is by no means the only militant group, nor the only group antagonizing the central government in Iraq. Most Sunnis in Iraq and Syria are extremely motivated to push back on the Iranian – Shia Arab influence in these two countries.

Moreover, while most of the non-Da'esh groups have not antagonized the West, some see the West acting upon two increasingly variable standards when it comes to Iraq and Syria. They see the West supporting Iraq's democracy that enables the Shia (as an alleged majority), and omitting the same practice in Syria, or at least being lightly motivated when providing such support. This perception is

extremely strong with the Iraqi Sunnis and could be enough motive that opposition to the central government might take the form of an insurgency. We should remember that Da'esh is unlike any other insurgency with the exception that it holds an unmatched resentment to the West, and people of other faiths.

If the motivations to oppose the central government for groups that are dissatisfied with Da'esh within the Sunni areas are identified, and possibly neutralized as a first step, new counter Da'esh groups or political structures might emerge powerful enough to ensure Da'esh displacement. The US and even local authorities in Iraq should see to empower such groups and consolidate a solution or a political contract that ensures the sustainability of an initial fragile peace. The political popular momentum against Da'esh might just have a chance to prevail.

The most potentially effective approach to sustain Da'esh displacement is to identify potentially capable leaders who have local public support and improve their governance craftsmanship. The success of such individuals (given the proper support) will be based on their skills, the support they get and above all on legitimizing their leadership, a process that will require the decentralization of security, justice and services.

The second step, which is equally hard, is improving the livelihood in areas that are liberated from Da'esh. The main economic activities in areas that are, or have been, under Da'esh control have deteriorated to a point that has resulted in a different awful reality, far worse than before. Reports from Da'esh controlled areas indicate that infrastructure, industries, services and agriculture are all paralyzed or destroyed. People in Da'esh controlled areas are mostly surviving on boiled wheat alone, and they're running out. Such devastation, if not reversed, will certainly ignite or catalyze armed opposition.

More important than all that is the lack of vision with regards to how areas that are liberated from Da'esh are going to be governed. One potentially effective way is implementing some form of decentralization. That said, Sunnis lack political maturity and leadership despite the fact that they possess, or have the ability to implement, what is potentially the most effective bureaucracy in the country. Moreover, putting any form of decentralization into effect would require a natural resources sharing legislation, something the Iraqi parliament has failed to pass since 2007[73]. One thing worth mentioning is that the Iraqi government is not keen on decentralization and granting any sort of autonomy to Sunni areas, and Sunnis themselves are divided on that matter as well. Sunnis perceive the Iraqi government's efforts at reconciliation as an effort to coerce Sunnis to accept the de-facto Shia political hegemony, one they feel is based on a false claim of majority.

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

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[73] The Iraqi Hydrocarbons Law

Dr. Scott Atran, ARTIS

My guess is that ISIS simply will retreat to its pre-Caliphate tactics (as during the Iraqi surge when they lost 60-80% of their foot soldiers and more than a dozen high-value targets each month for 15 consecutive months, yet still survived with a strong enough organization to seize the initiative in the chaos of the Syrian Civil War and roar back along the old oil-for-smuggling routes that Sunni Arab tribesmen and Saddam loyalists knew so well and rapidly gained control of). They are likely to try to build more sleeper cells inside big cities in Syria and Iraq (and Europe), but especially in recently liberated Sunni areas. ISIS will lose the state but not necessarily the cities (unless, like Ramadi and à la Grozny, they are flattened and gutted). The surviving leadership will rethink and revise the way it built alliances with communities, especially with local tribes, and likely to attempt to offer more power to tribal leaders instead of marginalizing them. And as long as Shia forces are perceived to be a danger to the Sunni Arabs, that strategy will work if the insurgents make costly displays of willingness to cooperate with the tribesmen.

The primary short-term goal of the Sunnis in post-ISIS is to wrangle from the gov't less presence of central security forces in their cities, and more independence. It is unlikely that the gov't will give more than lip service to the demand, and the Sunni know it and will plan for that.

But the major circumstance that continues to destabilize the Sunni territories and keep open future possibilities for insurgency to flourish is the internal fragmentation of the Sunni political community and the extreme animosity within and between their factions and tribes. Indeed, many of the leaders of the Sunni Arab militia we talked to on the Mosul front supported ISIS at the outset (as "The Revolution" - al Thawra - to win back Iraq from Shia control) and turned against ISIS only when ISIS encouraged other members of the same or different tribes to seize the possession of the sheikhs who eventually joined the coalition. We witnessed ISIS and anti-ISIS from the same tribal segments and villages fighting one another, and their likely will be a bloody reckoning (as is already occurring in places). ISIS and other local insurgent groups can always find people to host them in such an environment.

Amb. Robert S. Ford, MEI

ISIS will target recruitment on disenfranchised. For example, tribes and clans targeted by Popular Mobilization, Shia and Sunni, because those tribes & clans had members who supported ISIS. ISIS will also assassinate security and political figures to promote insecurity and fear. To gain popular support, those tribes/clans that had helped ISIS instead must help the Iraqi authorities and the Coalition against ISIS and that can only happen if they sense there is a possibility of justice and reconciliation.

Sarhang Hamasaeed, USIP

Obviously, losing territory does not mean the end of Da'esh. They already execute all kinds of attacks in Baghdad, and liberated areas through suicide bombers (human or vehicle borne) or a small group of fighters. These attacks signal their continued presence, and cause significant casualties and damages.

The more they strike in Shia communities and the PMF the higher the risk of triggering retaliatory action by the PMF, which could help with pushing the Sunni population in the direction of violence through Da'esh or otherwise.

Continued training to increase the capacity of Iraqi security and intelligence institution would help with disrupting plans, and preventing attacks, which would help with minimizing the sparks/triggers of Sunni-Shia violence. Further, providing technical capacity to the Iraqi police and security forces to bridge relations with the communities they are to serve could help with minimizing the existing distrust. The Iraqi police and security forces would find themselves in places where tensions will exist for many reasons: continuation of political competition, continued Da'esh and/or PMF attacks, tribal fights, public protests against corruption and lack of services, etc. The Iraqi security forces would benefit from community policing and conflict resolution techniques to manage issues with a conflict-sensitivity lens.

To reduce popular support for Da'esh or any other anti-Iraqi Government force, the non-military grievances of the Iraqi Sunnis should be addressed. Military action and humanitarian assistance are critical, but they are mostly addressing the symptoms, and need to be supplemented by civilian initiatives.

Da'esh Degradation: Attacking Two Organizational Nodes to Reduce Military Capability and Popular Support

Gina Scott Ligon, Ph.D. and Michael Logan, M.A.

University of Nebraska Omaha

While Da'esh has built and organizational structure that is somewhat resilient to traditional leader decapitation and other kinetic exogenous shocks, understanding the organizational structure and leadership decision making functions have potential for degradation of the organization. Specifically, one element of military capability resides in the Security and Intelligence Council (SIC). Identifying the key leaders in this group throughout the Provinces will reduce the central leadership's capacity for command and control, as these individuals also serve as the central couriers between the Provinces and the Top Management Team. Second, one organizational weak point the group has resides in its inability to decouple the military from the administrative control in the positions of the Governor[74]. Moreover, these regional leaders are responsible for either city or provincial commands, and have authority over both military and civil administration in their geographic area of responsibility. There are implications for this decision-making structure that can diminish popular support of Da'esh in regions it controls. In the following section, we will provide an overview of how the mission of Da'esh drives its form. Next, we will discuss two organizational nodes *(1) SIC, and (2) Governorship* that, if targeted, are central to Da'esh military capability and popular support[75].

Brief Overview of Da'esh Mission and Organizational Structure

From a review of leader speeches[76], the dataset of Aymenn Tamimi[77], a review of the primary training doctrine[78], and other archival material provided by Aaron Zelin[79], we have identified a four-part mission of Da'esh: 1) establish and maintain the Caliphate (essentially providing Da'esh ideological jurisdiction to redefine Islamic Law to fit its strategic objectives), 2) build an Islamic State (and all the administration that comes with it), 3) engage in sustained and barbarically escalating violence, and 4) perpetuate the narrative of an imminent apocalypse. To support this multi-pronged mission, the Da'esh organization—similar to the training doctrine and digital narrative[80] that regales it—is bifurcated around its puritanical, extremist religious intolerance and the prioritization of the ambitions that differentiate it. While many of its administrative offices were in place since 2006, the organization has been structured in a way for

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[74] UNCLASS reports by the Novetta group have specified the individuals who most likely fill these roles.

[75] On December 19, Ligon briefs the SMA network on the organizational structures of Da'esh that have garnered the most popular support from tribal elites and the populace at large.

[76] Pelletier, I., Lundmark, L., Gardner, R., Ligon, G.S., & Kilinc, R. (2015). Why ISIS Messaging Resonates, Studies *of Conflict and Terrorism Journal.*

[77] Aymenn Tamimi has the largest open source website of Da'esh primary documents.

[78] Jacob Olidort (2016) published a RAND report detailing the Da'esh educational system.

[79] Jihadology.net

[80] Derrick, D.C., Sporer, K., Church, S., & Ligon, G.S. (in press). A cyber profile of the Islamic State. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict* Journal.

maximum resilience since 2010. The Da'esh Top Management Team operates in a matrix structure, or an organization with complex command system characterized by multiple lines of authority[81].

Some senior leaders occupy more than one role, and most lines of authority are more advisory and theoretical than punitive or directive in nature. The structure is echoed throughout the regional provinces, which allows for a resilient, autonomously staffed organization. The compartmentalization of Da'esh means that it can sustain significant human capital loss in one theater without much impact on adjacent regions nor the top management team. Because the broad strategic objectives are already outlined and internalized by members (see mission areas 1-4 above), and the structure is in place to support this mission, its implementation can be unambiguously executed by local leaders who will continue to work toward the strategic objectives even if their superior dies or is captured[82].

The decentralization of the execution of the strategic mission allows for greater customization of the mission to fit the needs and demands of a local populace and key elites. Similar to counter-intelligence work done by the KGB operatives who trained the former Baathists[83], Da'esh began each of its campaigns by intelligence gathering on key elites (e.g., powerful local tribal leaders, armed groups, influential families) and marking them for either cooperation or elimination. This can take the form of identifying vices, such as infringements of Sharia (e.g., homosexuality, alcohol or drug use), or inducements (e.g., money or power) of these elites. This has another benefit in that the leadership of Da'esh is behind the scenes, particularly in Syria where locals are already weary of oppressive outsiders, and the implementation of the strategic objectives of Da'esh is implemented by local elites who are either committed or simply compliant to Da'esh. This structure, similar to a franchise organization, allows for firewalls between regional leaders where integration is loose and interdependence is minimal.

<center>Two Organizational Nodes of Vulnerability</center>

Security and Intelligence Council: The Communication Backbone. While regional provinces are relatively isolated from each other, directives from the Central leadership team and Caliph still need to be communicated. There is much evidence of coordination and collaboration within Da'esh and across these regional boundaries[84]. In a review of several members of Da'esh leadership[85], it was noted that one group of leaders in particular served as a communication node across the Provinces. The SIC, modeled after Saddam Hussein's intelligence services, is a small, nimble organization that does initial intelligence work leading up to Da'esh taking a region (as described above, SIC identifies elites' vices or virtues to be used for later influence of them) as well as provides security to the top management team of Da'esh. Similar to functions in State Military Structures, the SIC is central to the counter-intelligence (CI) mission and function of Da'esh, ensuring that plots to overthrow the central leadership are undermined. In addition, the SIC oversees communications to ensure that the top management team a) has direct knowledge of potential plots, and b) can deliver critical messages across geographic boundaries. Some evidence exists that wives are used in this communication mechanism, but always in direct relation to members of the SIC[86]. Implications from a military capability of this structure are as follows. First, geographic leaders are almost entirely dependent on these individuals for information

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[81] Davis and Lawrence (1977) seminal work on the matrix organization.
[82] Orton, 2016
[83] Weiss and Hassan (2015) identified the Baathist influence internal to Da'esh.
[84] For a review of Da'esh Collaboration, please see the SMA talk by Ligon in June of 2016.
[85] Kyle Orton's UNCLASS work on Da'esh leader profiles provides much evidence about SIC functions
[86] Yousseff & Harris (2015) described the roles of wives in ISIS in their story in the *Daily Beast.*

from central leadership. While the autonomous fief-like structure of the provinces allows for resilience from leader decapitation at the regional level, it also creates a dependency on the SIC members for information and strategic direction. Second, given the role these individuals play in creating alliances with tribal elites and local leaders via blackmail and traditional CI work, their elimination or capture would likely reduce their influence in the region to some degree, as many of the tribal leaders appear to be aligned based on compliance to deter personal loss versus commitment to the cause[87].

Governorship: Unwieldy Organizational Dependencies. One benefit that local populations have described about Da'esh is their capacity to provide basic services and maintain order where government services—particularly in Syria—have failed[88]. A central key to this governance is the imposition of civil administration security forces who investigate transgressions and mete public punishment as a deterrent. One benefit of their presence is the distribution of resources in a more equitable, predictable manner. In addition, they are charged with enforcing rulings from the Central Office for Investigating Grievances[89], which allows for mediation among the local population members about issues such as land disputes, theft, and other criminal acts. Thus, the Hisbah, while deemed the "religious police" by popular media, also serve an important role in delivering on the promise of governance on which Da'esh depends.

Here is where the problem lies: the Hisbah fall under the civil authority of the Governor of a given regional area, but so do the military commanders. Thus, if a field military leader has expended an undesirable amount of his front-line fighters (as was the case in Raqqa during summer of 2016), the Governor can and will activate the Hisbah to join the military fighting units. The Hisbah can act as civil criminal justice professionals under one "title authority" directed by the governor, and then be activated to serve as front line military fighters when needed. When we first began examining Da'esh, we thought this rotation among military and administrative units allowed for greater collaboration, reduced siloes and other organizational benefits—and it did during times of steady state. However, under concerted attack by the Coalition, this "rotational" organizational structure has a significant limitation. As the Hisbah "changes assignment" to military roles, the governance function they afforded to their regional home station is also diminished. In Raqqa, specifically during June and July 2014, reports of civil unrest and inability to govern effectively may have been a direct result of this organizational structure deficit.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Given the question posed for this effort, we have two recommendations flowing from our analysis of Da'esh organizational vulnerabilities. First, identify members of the SIC. They provide multiple related military capabilities, most importantly the flexible capacity for Command and Control from strategic decision makers and collaboration across the regional mini-organizations. Second, draw the Hisbah into fights in key areas. The conflict of interest that the Governors will face when pressed militarily will ultimately result in lack of control and deterrence of civil crimes in the communities in which Da'esh still holds and degrade residual support from the local populace it governs.

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[87] Foerstl, K., Azadegan, A., Leppelt, T., & Hartmann, E. (2015). Drivers of supplier sustainability: Moving beyond compliance to commitment. Journal of Supply Chain Management, 51(1), 67-92.

[88] A 2014 report by the Institute for the Study of War describes ISIS' capacity to govern in Raqqa, al-Bab, and Manbij

[89] As described in Issue 1 of *Rumiyah*, the online English Da'esh publication

Renad Mansour, Chatham House

Daesh will treat its loss in Mosul as a test from God. They will then go underground, and use the insurgency to make sure that Iraq's political elite are unable to come up with a political solution - without this, the grounds may be ripe for a return.

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

Western powers routinely use the advantages of superior airpower, battlefield intelligence, and precision strikes to target terrorist organizations. Oftentimes, however, terrorist organizations are more like a hydra, and quickly regenerate a new head after an attack. **An important element of denying regrowth is to use targeting in conjunction with a broader movement to engage the population against the terrorist network.** Because Mosul is under siege and the population sees that Daesh is losing territory, the momentum is now with Iraqi Special Operations and coalition forces. For instance, pockets of dissenters have been filtering information on Daesh to Iraqi Special Forces. As Daesh loses momentum, the coalition needs to capitalize on the opportunity to hold ground and rebuild the city.

Spencer Meredith, NDU

"Daesh and the Ladybugs"

How can the Coalition and Iraq quiet the discontent among self-selecting, anti-status quo norm entrepreneurs and supporters? Should those with power seek to eliminate those sources of discontent, if that is even possible, or would redirection yield better results for the disaffected themselves, not to mention the Iraqi community as a whole? Rather than either exclusively, the Coalition needs to find and support "ladybugs" as part of the larger effort in Iraq.

If farming is an appropriate metaphor for influence operations, capacity building, and democratic governance, it can certainly apply to Iraq. At the start, the soil requires nutrients where not already fertile, and Iraq does have the resources needed to reinvigorate political reconciliation.

1) *The clear presence of negative alternatives* ("fertilizer") – principally, sectarian violence as a means of bringing justice and establishing political order within a narrower/non-national context. This does not need to mean everyone or even a critical mass of the masses directly opposes violence, as justice and honor-driven violence can often resonate deeply among any violated people groups, as found in Iraq and beyond. Rather, like the Donbass in Eastern Ukraine, the writing is clear to see that going that route does not bring lasting goods (peace, stability) despite the promises of victory.

2) *Motivated domestic change agents*, who, when given resources, have proven their ability to mobilize populations around a variety of goals and methods ("farmers"). Some goals certainly have deep anchor points in anti-Iraq/anti-West beliefs, with equally long and durable chains bound with a multitude of interlocking identities and interests. However, the presence of these change agents bodes well for Coalition and Iraqi efforts because society accepts the presence of this kind of social mobilization, which may allow for rebranding of the concept and practice along more beneficial lines. In other words, the pattern exists for any to use with the right message and results.

3) *Effective weeding mechanisms are available*, despite the profusion of violent anti-status quo groups and actors ("dandelions") spread broadly because of their ease of messaging and low nutrient requirements from whatever soil they encounter. Practically speaking, the key then is to find and support the friends of the reconciliation process ("ladybugs"), rather than douse the ground with herbicides, which ends up harming the healthy seedlings. To push the analogy, ladybugs eat the aphids that would otherwise consume healthy plants and give dandelions space to grow in their place. Thus, when combined with nutrient replenishment activities and good seeds (as discussed in the answer to question 1), "ladybugs" help healthy plants grow and push out the weeds. This can be an effective long-term strategy for denying openings for Daesh to recruit and find resonance with its message in Iraq. Finding these social groups and personnel is not as difficult as it may seem – they are the ones that neither actively support either side, nor turn away from the needs of the day. As a result, this otherwise neutral part of society is not by nature marginalized or politicized; they are simply pursuing stability. Their pursuit of livelihood, often at the local level, is the key factor leading them to participate in a responsive government.

(This answer is meant to step outside the regular modes of analysis and show an example of messaging that uses familiar imagery applied to political, economic, and social contexts. It also presents an alternative to the four limited archetypes of the RAND summary of options – "Rolling Back the Islamic State" December 2016 – a study that misses the role of local change agents in its scenarios.)

Summary Articles[90]

Vera Mironova

International Security Fellow

Harvard Kennedy School's Belfour Center

Baghdad will have to manage increased tensions at the local level, both between different ethnic and religious communities and within the particular groups that constitute them. Once ISIS-held territories are liberated, the vacuum will encourage more groups to jostle for power and thus generating more violence.

Consider the case of Suleiman Bek, a medium-sized town near the border between Diyala and Salah ad Din Governorates that was recaptured from ISIS in the second half of 2014 by Iraqi Kurdish fighters and Shiite militiamen. Nearly two years after the area's liberation, armed Shiite groups are still preventing many of the Sunni civilians who fled the fighting from returning to their homes, leaving them to languish in camps for the internally displaced. "I followed all required procedures to return people to their homes, but at the end of the day I could not make the militias comply with the Iraqi government's regulations," Taleb Muhamed, a director of the sub-district, told us. The local government's impotence reflects a broader dynamic in Iraq: Baghdad's reliance on Shiite militias has allowed those groups to gain undue power.

As for Iraq's Shiite Arabs, like Mosul's Sunni Arabs, they are represented by a variety of armed groups that receive support from different sources, chiefly Iran and the Iraqi government. The struggle among them has already produced violence in territories liberated from ISIS.

That Iraq will build a strong and united military to resolve these problems seems unlikely, thanks in part to Baghdad's dependence on Shiite militias. Yet so long as Iraq's central government lacks the power to enforce order on its own, the country will be prime territory for nonstate armed groups. That is troubling, since the more armed groups appear in Iraq, the harder it will be to bring the country's competing factions to the table to reach political solutions to their problems.

Prisons holding detainees are another concern. According to Human Rights Watch, over the past two years, more than 9,000 have been sent to jail on ISIS-related charges, and most of them are housed in Iraqi Kurdistan because of its relatively tighter security. It might seem like good news that so many terrorists have been taken off the battlefield, but the number of prisoners is becoming a serious problem, especially as Iraqi and Western forces push deeper into ISIS' territory[91] and make even more

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[90] This is a summary of two of Ms. Mironova's articles on Foreign Affairs.
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2016-12-01/overlo;
https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2016-11-03/iraq-a
[91]] https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/middle-east/isis-revolutionary-state

arrests. The vast number of inmates is putting enormous pressure on Iraq's and Kurdistan's[92] economies and criminal justice systems and may create a whole new set of ISIS threats.

Long-term ISIS inmates are all housed together; moreover, they are free to interact with short-term ISIS prisoners as well as with people incarcerated for crimes unrelated to terrorism. "All the terror-related prisoners are in one section of Muaskar Salam," Burhan told me. "They interact with one another within the section, but in common spaces of the prison, like the prison's only mosque, they also interact with prisoners [detained] on non-terrorism charges."

Not attending to Iraq's prison problem could hurt the fight against ISIS and facilitate the mobilization of terrorist groups in the future.

Daniel Serwer, Johns Hopkins University

Daesh's transition to insurgency manifests itself in overt terrorist attacks, which are already frequent, as well as more covert intimidation. Daesh is especially expert at suicide and IED attacks. But you can expect it also to be active in organized crime activities like protection rackets, smuggling of oil and antiquities, kidnapping for ransom, and violent intimidation, especially against security forces or political leaders who show determination to restore law and order. While its popular appeal will be reduced due to defeat, Daesh will not fold its tent. It may even spawn a new organization to carry on its campaign for the caliphate and seek to embed with other less brutal Salafists.

The main factor in minimizing Daesh's ability to maintain military effectiveness *is* to limit their popular support, by reducing grievances and increasing benefits that come from cooperation with Iraqi government authorities, including the provincial governors and councils. Most reconstruction to date has been emergency repairs, conducted mainly through UNDP. Little or no compensation has been paid. The governors and provincial councils lack a reliable and sufficient flow of resources to make them major players in the reconstruction process. Providing them with resources is problematic, as it increases the probability of corruption, but it is also vital to enabling them to bring the Sunni population to accept Baghdad's authority.

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[92] https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/iraq/2015-09-22/iraq-pieces

Randa Slim, MEI

There will be post-ISIS territorial and ideological challenges. On the territorial side of the equation, given the range of actors involved in the Mosul fight, there will be increasing stakes, post-liberation, of competing territorial claims between Baghdad and Erbil but also among different ethnic groups. Kirkuk is likely to be a major point of competition in the future and will complicate the relationship between Erbil and Baghdad. On the ideological side of the equation, losing territory will go a long way in undermining ISIS's caliphate narrative. The coalition must push Baghdad to avoid imposing collective punishment on Sunni Arabs and not cast an entire community as sharing the intolerant and murderous ideology of a few among them. The worst outcome is the onset of permanent victim mentality among the Sunni and lingering feelings of marginalization and exclusion. Sunnis must be brought back into the state. Cultivating local leaders, including some tribal leaders who have legitimacy and credibility in these communities and can make these arguments to their constituents, is an essential next step. Sunni regionals must be brought into the post-ISIS liberation compact, including stemming recruitment efforts by Jihadi groups, and contributing toward reconstruction of liberated territories.

Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute

Despite the presence of foreign fighters, the majority of Da'esh members are Iraqi nationals. As such, Iraq's young men will weigh in their options. Having a stake in governance, power and the economy would blunt the urge of resurfacing as insurgents. This is the lesson we learned from the Surge and Sons of Iraq. However, if grievances continue—mass arrests, kidnappings and economic sidelining, insurgency will remain legitimate in the eyes of the population. Another lesson learned from the Surge is that cash speaks louder than ideology, be it foreign funds pouring into Iraq, or Sunni politicians funneling money into violent groups to gain leverage in Baghdad. In addition to sectarianism, a chronic malaise of Iraq's security forces is corruption and impunity. Corruption breeds mistrust. No surprise that some polls carried out in Mosul after Da'esh incursion linked initial popular support for the terror group to accountability, albeit brutal and inhumane. As its security and intelligence officials are quick to admit, the better security of the Kurdish region hinges on public trust and support and willingness to report any suspicious activities.

Dr. Craig Whiteside, Naval Postgraduate School

I'll push back on the question, acknowledging that I understand the intent. ISIL is already fighting an insurgency (Maoist Ph2) in many places of Iraq and Syria outside of areas where it maintains territorial control (i.e. Ph3). In other places, it is (Ph1) merely building and maintaining organizational capability to eventually surge into open guerilla warfare. These transitions are hard to discern and after 2014 there isn't a time or place that ISIL isn't conducting revolutionary warfare in all three phases somewhere in the AO. Mao wrote that these concepts are fluid and location/condition dependent, meaning different phases of progress can happen in different locations - simultaneously.

There are places in the ERV and Diyala province that Da'esh is already back in Phase 2 activities, whereas in Mosul you will see the group (assuming its elements are defeated in the city proper) slowly regress back into Ph2 mobile warfare before collapsing into Phase 1 reorganization and reconsolidation – most likely by recruiting and infiltrating new sleeper/clandestine cells. This is assuming that they don't have an organizational collapse due to a high % of leader losses (if this happens, look for other Salafi groups to surge to pick off the best and brightest).

The coalition can monitor areas outside of the Mosul fight carefully for signs of activity (assassinations, extortion activity, IEDs, mortar strikes, etc.) in Sunni areas that demonstrate ISIL capability and the possibility of controlling territory in the future. In other areas (say Baghdad), ISIL interests will be focused simply on terrorist acts as a way to tie down resources, fill propaganda stats, and demoralize the IG/ISF/population. Once these patterns are understood, look for their resumption in and around Mosul to determine the success ISIL might have in their infiltration back into the fabric of the population in the future.

Three steps can be taken to limit/mitigate this future success in Ph1 (building/maintain):

1) Political – while there is little chance the IG will be able to present a reconciliation package acceptable to its Shia hardliners (who view most Sunnis as complicit in the return of ISIL), this issue is a bit of a red herring. Sunni provinces have been run in the past by Sunni leadership just like the Kurds have run Kurdistan. The problem is that this leadership has been seen as tainted and illegitimate, and corrupt. There is evidence (open source) that Nujaifi was implicated in captured IS documents as a bribery target for their extortion network. CENTCOM could stop worrying a bit about the macro level (too hard to do) and focus on helping build local (and legitimate) Sunni governance of the multi-ethnic (but Sunni dominated) province of Ninewa and other Sunni provinces. This is how IS does it and they were successful in getting buy in by a Sunni population disinterested by their local political leadership and disdainful of their national government. Our attitude last time was that this was Iraqi business. That wasn't a productive attitude for long term stability.

2) Economic: since IS has experience in the underground economy in Mosul, any real governance has to address controlling and monitoring illicit networks of trade. IS domination of this is what made past governance almost impossible at the local level. Our focus on kinetic activities (or lack thereof) in the past blinded us to how important this area was. There is a need for assistance to the local government in the form of a counter-mafia task force, using U.S. Treasury tools to peel back some of the fog here.

3) Intelligence: the Iraqis need help identifying the IS network and piecing together who were the IS collaborators and sleeper cells that had to rise up and openly administer the "state" after 2014. Now that it has collapsed, there is a great opportunity to put this picture together using captured documents and a shared intelligence function that makes sure that innocents aren't kept in prison and recruited by IS, and hard core killers released (as happened regularly from 2007-2012) because of a lack of knowledge of who they really are (example – Abu Ali al Anbari) and what they did in the organization. It is not an exaggeration to say that the difficult piece ahead is not in Mosul or Raqqa; the future of ISIL is already in the prisons since 50k IS members are already dead, along with scores of key leaders. There is

quite a bit of research that demonstrates that almost any ISIL figure out there spent time in our prison camps already. It would be wise to avoid this mistake again.

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Biographies

Dr. Elie Abouaoun

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

Prior to 2011, Dr. Abouaoun managed the Iraq program of the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and worked as the program coordinator for Ockenden International-Iraq. He is a senior trainer and consultant with several local, regional and international organizations on topics such as human rights, program development/management, displacement and relief, capacity development, Euro Mediterranean cooperation; and is a member of the pool of trainers of the Council of Europe since 2000. Dr. Abouaoun regularly contributes to publications related to the above mentioned topics. In 2001, he was appointed a member of the Reference Group established by the Directorate of Education-Council of Europe to supervise the drafting of COMPASS, a manual for human rights education. He further supervised the adaptation and the translation of COMPASS into Arabic and its subsequent diffusion in the Arab region in 2003. He regularly writes articles for the French speaking Lebanese daily newspaper L'Orient du Jour as well other publications in the Arab region. He is a visiting lecturer at Notre Dame University-Lebanon on the subjects of human rights, civil society, advocacy and at Saint Joseph University-Lebanon on the subjects of human rights and citizenship. Dr. Abouaoun serves as a member of the Board of Directors of several organizations in the Arab region.

Dr. Harith Al-Qarawee

Fellow at the Crown Center for Middle East Studies-Brandeis University
Former fellow at Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Studies-Harvard University.
Member of the Future of Iraq's Task Force- Atlantic Council
Member of Middle East Strategy Task Force (MEST) – Working group on Religion and Identity - Atlantic Council – (2015).

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

Omar Al-Shahery

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

Held the position of Chief of Party in North Africa during his tenure in Aktis Strategy. Former Analyst at the RAND Corporation. Prior to joining RAND, he served as the Deputy Director General of the Iraqi Defense Intelligence and Military Security.

Graduated with an MC/MPA from Harvard Kennedy School of Government, Currently a PhD candidate in Engineering and Public Policy at Carnegie Mellon University.

Scott Atran, ARTIS

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

Previously, Scott was assistant to Dr. Margaret Mead at the American Museum of Natural History; Coordinator "Animal and Human Communication Program," Royaumont Center for a Science of Man, Paris (Jacques Monod, Dir.); member of the Conseil Scientifique, Laboratoire d'Ethnobiologie-Biogéographie, Museum National D'Historie Naturelle, Paris; Visiting Lecturer, Dept. Social Anthropology, Cambridge Univ.; Chargé de Conférence, Collège International de Philosophie; member of the Centre de Recherche en Epistémologie Appliquée, Ecole Polytechnique, Paris; Visiting Prof., Truman Institute, Hebrew Univ., Jerusalem; Leverhulme Distinguished Visiting Prof. of Anthropology, Univ. of London-Goldsmiths.; Presidential Scholar, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

Scott has experimented extensively on the ways scientists and ordinary people categorize and reason about nature, on the cognitive and evolutionary psychology of religion, and on the limits of rational choice in political and cultural conflict. He has repeatedly briefed NATO, HMG and members of the U.S. Congress and the National Security Council staff at the White House on the Devoted Actor versus the Rational Actor in Managing World Conflict, on the Comparative Anatomy and Evolution of Global Network Terrorism, and on Pathways to and from Violent Extremism. He has addressed the United Nations Security Council on problems of youth and violent extremism and currently serves in advisory capacity to the Security Council and Secretary General on combatting terrorism and on ways to implement UN Resolution 2250 to engage and empower youth in the promotion of peace. He has been engaged in conflict negotiations in the Middle East, and in the establishment of indigenously managed forest reserves for Native American peoples.

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

AMB Robert S Ford

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

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

Regions of Expertise
Syria, Iraq, North Africa

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

Languages
Arabic, French

Sarhang Hamasaeed

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

Hamasaeed has more than 15 years of strategy, management, and monitoring and evaluation experience in governmental, nongovernmental, private sector, and media organizations.
As a deputy director general at the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government of Iraq (2008-2009), Hamasaeed managed strategic government modernization initiatives through information technology with the goal of helping improve governance and service delivery. As a program manager for the Research Triangle Institute International (2003-2004), he managed civic engagement and local democratic governance programs in Iraq. Hamasaeed has worked as a planning and relations manager at Kurdistan Save the Children (1997-2002). Hamasaeed has also worked for the Los Angeles Times and other international media organizations.

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

Dr. Gina Ligon

Dr. Gina Ligon is an Associate Professor of Management and Collaboration Science at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. She received her PhD in Industrial and Organizational Psychology with a Minor in Measurement and Statistics from the University of Oklahoma. She is a member of the National Consortium of Studies of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Since arriving at UNO, she has been awarded over $3,000,000 in National Security-related grants and contracts. She currently is the Principal Investigator on a grant from Department of Homeland Security (DHS) examining the leadership and performance of transnational Violent Extremist Organizations (VEOs,) and is the originator of the *Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovative Results* (LEADIR) database. Her research interests include profiling leaders from afar, violent ideological groups,

expertise and leadership development, and collaboration management. Prior to joining UNO, she was a faculty member at Villanova University in the Department of Psychology. She also worked in St. Louis as a management consultant with the firm Psychological Associates. She has won the Best Paper award from the Center for Creative Leadership and *The Leadership Quarterly Journal*, the Dean's Merit for Outstanding Research, and the NSRI Team and Leadership awards. She has published over 50 peer-reviewed publications in the areas of leadership, innovation, and violent groups, and she is the incoming editor to the academic journal *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*.

Michael Logan

Michael Logan is a second-year doctoral student in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at the University of Nebraska Omaha. He holds a master's degree in criminal justice from Radford University and a bachelor's degree in criminology from Lynchburg College. His research interests focus on leadership and performance of violent extremist organizations (VEOs), individual-level risk factors for participation in violent extremism, and far-left extremism more broadly. Michael has worked on projects funded by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and the National Consortium of Studies of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START). Michael is currently working alongside Dr. Gina Ligon on the *Leadership of the Extreme and Dangerous for Innovation Results* (LEADIR) database on research that explores markers of malevolent creativity and attack innovation of VEOs.

Renad Mansour

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

Dr. Diane L. Maye

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

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

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

Dr. Clark McCauley

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

Dr. Spencer B. Meredith III

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.

Ms. Vera Mironova

I am a Pre-Doctoral Research Fellow with the Belfer Center's International Security Program and a PhD candidate in the Political Science Department at the University of Maryland. My research explores individual level behavior in conflict environments. I am interested in how violence affects individual attitudes and decision making. I conducted field work in active conflict zones (Yemen, Iraq, Ukraine, and Palestinian territories) and post-conflict regions: Balkans (Bosnia, Kosovo, and Croatia), Africa (DR Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi), Central Asia (Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan), and Caucasus (Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan). others. Also, I am a contributor to the Political Violence @ a Glance blog.

Daniel Serwer

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

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

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

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

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

Randa Slim

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

Education
B.S. at the American University of Beirut; M.A. at the American University of Beirut; Ph.D. at the University of North Carolina

Languages
Arabic, French

Countries of Expertise
Syria, Iraq, Lebanon

Issues of Expertise
Peacebuilding, Peacemaking, Negotiation, Track II Dialogue, Democratization, Post-Conflict Reconciliation

Dr. Bilal Wahab

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

Dr. Craig Whiteside

Dr. Craig Whiteside is an Associate Professor at the Naval War College Monterey, California where he teaches national security affairs to military officers as part of their professional military education. He is a senior associate with the Center on Irregular Warfare and Armed Groups at the Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island and a fellow at the International Centre for Counter-terrorism – the Hague. Whiteside's current research focuses on the doctrinal influences on the leadership of the so-called Islamic State movement and its evolving strategies. He has a PhD in Political Science from Washington State University and is a former U.S. Army officer with combat experience. His recent publications on the Islamic State can be found here.
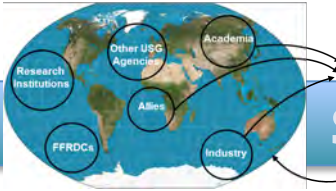
Question (R3.7): How does Da'esh's transition to insurgency manifest itself in Syria; which other jihadist groups might offer the potential for merger and which areas of ungoverned space are most likely to offer conditions conducive for Da'esh to maintain some form of organizational structure and military effectiveness?

Contributors: Dr. Joshua Landis (University of Oklahoma); Vern Liebl (Center for Advanced Operational Culture, USMC); Dr. Sabrina Pagano (NSI, Inc.); Mubin Shaikh (University of Liverpool)

Editor: Dr. Sabrina Pagano, NSI

Executive Summary

Da'esh Transition in Syria

The contributors varied in their discussions of what a Da'esh transition—or the future of Syria more broadly—would look like. Drawing on work by Gelvin, Pagano suggests that three scenarios are most likely for Da'esh's transition in Syria. These include the complete destruction and disappearance of the group and its ideology; transition into an insurgent group capable of conducting limited operations in Syria and/or inspiring attacks abroad; or disintegration into a loose collection of former fighters and free agents conducting attacks, in some cases without organizational support. Finally, University of Oklahoma ME expert, Dr. Joshua Landis, indicated that while it is difficult to generalize, the extreme factionalization that characterized Syria prior to Da'esh's involvement would likely come back into play. As such, we may expect a revived emphasis on the clan or tribe, with ongoing resistance to central government. Landis continued by suggesting that sufficient weakening of Da'esh will eventually enable the Syrian government led by Assad to regain broad control.

The contributors to this Quick Look indicated that we may observe the following for Da'esh in Syria and abroad:

Ongoing actions in Syria

- continued agitation and exploitation of the uncertainty and dysfunction in Syria
- ongoing efforts to be present and to expand

Change in strategy and associated tactics

- reorientation toward increasing attacks abroad
- shift from acquisition and maintenance of territory to insurgent methods aimed at weakening enemies

- increased emphasis on both terrorist and insurgent tactics (e.g., recent attacks in Paris and Brussels)
- movement away from direct attacks toward scorched earth defensive strategy combined with aggressive insurgency tactics
- return to indiscriminate urban violence, using lone wolves and small militant groups
- increased use of two-tiered attacks (first soft civilian targets, then first responders)
- use of "mobile, dispersed, and flexible units" that operate on behalf of Da'esh

Da'esh Alliances

Views among the contributors on the groups with whom Da'esh might align demonstrated some degree of consensus. Both Shaikh and Pagano indicated that a merger or strong alliance between Da'esh and other groups would be highly unlikely. This was due in part to Da'esh's history of denouncing others as apostates when they failed to conform to its strict rules and interpretations of Islam. Da'esh's rigid approach has resulted in eventual isolation and the creation of enemies among groups with which it might under different circumstances have allied. Shaikh also emphasized the breadth of the ideological divide between Da'esh and other groups, which would in turn make it difficult for Da'esh to justify any future cooperation with so-called deviant groups. While Pagano cites possible points of Da'esh ideological convergence with either Jabhat Fateh al Sham or the quietest Salafists, the likelihood of collaboration between these groups remains very low. These points of convergence would be dependent on a shift in Da'esh's goals and subsequent motives as it is faced with the fall of the caliphate, which might make previously unlikely alliances necessary for the sake of survival and future goal pursuit.

Use of "Ungoverned Spaces"

Liebl put forth the view that 'ungoverned space' does not truly exist given that formal or informal political institutions will always exist where there are people. Shaikh however focused on likely future contests for "ungoverned" spaces in Syria, suggesting that that the primary competition would be between Da'esh and Al Qaeda given their rivalry and different organizational purpose and approaches. Landis briefly addressed the topic by suggesting that the proportion of ungoverned space in Syria will decrease as Da'esh is weakened, and the Syrian regime retakes the west and parts of eastern Syria. Pagano emphasizes areas of strategic or symbolic importance to Da'esh and the existing or potential loss of these resources. She reviews the status of northern Aleppo province, Raqqa, and Deir el-Zour, as well as the recent retaking of Palmyra, and concludes by briefly listing the conditions under which these spaces would provide the greatest utility or opportunity to Da'esh.

Comments on Da'esh Transition in Syria

Dr. Joshua Landis

University of Oklahoma

Nusra was a dominant military in much of this area before ISIS took over. There were many other smaller militias in the area as well. Undoubtedly they conformed to local village and tribal structures and factions.

It is hard to make many generalizations other than to suggest that the extreme fragmentation that prevailed in this area before ISIS forced conformity on the tribes and villages is likely to return. This is an area of clans and tribes. It has always resisted central government. Syria always ruled with a combination of force, placating tribal leaders, and patronage.

ISIS has done the same.

I suspect that the regime will eventually be taken back by the Syria government once ISIS is sufficiently weakened by the coalition and once Assad can retake the West of the country.

Comments on Da'esh Transition in Syria

Vern Liebl

Center for Advanced Operational Culture, USMC

There is no such thing as an "ungoverned space." There is always some kind of political institution in every space inhabited by people. May not be what we recognize or want to recognize, but it is always there. Just look at Somalia.

Comments on Da'esh Transition in Syria

Dr. Sabrina Pagano

NSI, Inc.

Future Manifestations of the Insurgency

Several scenarios for Da'esh's future are possible, though the most likely for its transition are its continued conduct of an insurgency, disappearance, or devolution into a loose collection of former fighters and other free agents staging attacks with or without organizational support (Gelvin, 2016). This question (R3.QL7) takes as its premise the assumption that Da'esh will transition to insurgency, and as such, the response will be centered around that possibility.

Da'esh has steadily lost and will likely continue to lose territory (Almukhtar, Wallace, & Watkins, 2016; Friedman, 2016; Stratfor Enterprises, 2016), and has faced significant decreases in weapons supplies (Abi-Habib & Raydan, 2016) and revenue sources.[93] These losses have been sustained while Da'esh simultaneously faces the ongoing administrative and financial burdens of running a state, for which it may not be well-prepared (Micallef, 2016). The land it does control is resource poor and is lacking in industrial power, and its attempts to expand beyond Sunni areas have been met with strong resistance (Walt, 2015). Together, these facts suggest that Da'esh's time may be limited,[94] and would require its reinvention to remain viable in some form (though see Arango, 2015; Walt, 2015 for examples of a competing view). By losing territory in Syria and Iraq, Da'esh will no longer be able to claim the status of a caliphate (Wood, 2015). Eradicating the concept of Da'esh may take longer than defeating the physical manifestation of the group, however (Astorino-Courtois et al., 2016; Friedman, 2016). In other words, "the Islamic State 'brand' has been established" (Micallef, 2016).

Nonetheless, without claim to territory, Da'esh necessarily loses some of its legitimacy or prestige, given its basis in the acquisition and maintenance of territory (Micallef, 2016; Wood, 2015). Total loss of territory requires Da'esh to shift its narrative to provide an explanation, which may not be compelling to its existing or potential new adherents. In time, Da'esh's brutality (Cronin, 2015) or the nature of its ideology—which promotes abuses that in other cases such as Yemen and Somalia have led to rejection of jihadist groups—may lead to a similar rejection of Da'esh in Syria (Zelin, 2013). As Zelin indicates, online adherents seem to betray this possibility given their stated concerns about a possible sahwa in Syria. Such an Awakening is made even more likely if Da'esh pushes its theocratic social agenda further—though Da'esh is prepared for this possibility.

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[93] For example, as of summer 2016, Da'esh's oil and gas revenue has decreased 26 percent since the prior year, though totaled approximately $23 million a month according to IHS (Almukhtar, Wallace, & Watkins, 2016).

[94] See also Astorino-Courtois et al. (2016). Countering the ISIL fight. SMA/CENTCOM Reach-back Effort. Retrieved from: http://nsiteam.com/sma-reachback-cell-v7-state-non-state-partners-countering-isil/: "Based on the balance of actor interests, resolve and capability, the defeat of Islamic State organization seems highly likely (defeat of the ideology is another matter)."

Even in the absence of a state, however, Da'esh can reorient toward increasing attacks abroad as well as exploiting the uncertainty and political dysfunction currently characterizing Syria (Friedman, 2016). According to William McCants of the Brookings Institution, Da'esh likely will continue its agitation in Syria, waiting for its opportunity to re-emerge (McCants, as interviewed in Friedman, 2016). Ongoing Sunni Arab marginalization may provide the fuel that is required for this eventual re-emergence (Friedman, 2016; Jenkins, 2015; Stratfor Enterprises, 2016), or render attempts to defeat Da'esh ineffective (Arango, 2015)—particularly if the Syrian government itself remains an undesirable alternative.

In the meantime, Da'esh's goal will shift from the acquisition and maintenance of territory to using insurgent methods to weaken its enemies. In its weakened state, Da'esh is likely to increase its emphasis on both terrorist and insurgent tactics, ensuring that it maintains some level of threat (Almukhtar et al., 2016; Stratfor Enterprises, 2016). Coughlin suggests that this shift is clearly evident in the recent attacks in Istanbul and Baghdad, which appear related to the pressures that Da'esh confronts in the face of the

> *In just the past year, even while under near continuous bombardment by the American-led coalition, the Islamic State has claimed responsibility for more than three dozen attacks, stretching across 16 countries on four continents.*
>
> *– Worth, 2016*

weakening of the caliphate both in Iraq and Syria (Coughlin, 2017). Mironova noted a change in tactics signaled by the recent terror attacks in Paris and Brussels, and Micallef similarly suggests that Da'esh's recent pattern of attacks in Europe and North America are suggestive of a new strategy (Micallef, 2016; Mironova, 2016). As Micallef details, Da'esh has moved away from direct attacks on Syrian military forces toward increasing use of scorched earth defensive strategy combined with the use of aggressive insurgency tactics (Micallef, 2016).[95]

Micallef goes on to indicate that Da'esh has also revisited its early (2003-2007) strategy of indiscriminate urban violence, including its application in Europe. This strategy invokes the use of so-called lone wolves, along with small (5-10 person) militant groups armed with IEDs and automatic weapons. Following this strategy, Da'esh is also increasingly likely to use two-tiered attacks, in which soft civilian targets, and then first responders, are killed.

Though Da'esh uses terrorist tactics, Cronin previously argued that Da'esh is not a terrorist organization given its significant number of fighters, control of territory, endogenous funding, control of lines of communication, and extent and sophistication of military capabilities and operations (Cronin, 2015). However, given Da'esh's more recent and significant loss of fighters, loss of territory and its accompanying capability for funding, and a strong but nonetheless outmatched military capability, it seems that a reclassification may be imminent.

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[95] Micallef also indicates another form of adaption Da'esh has and would likely take if it were to lose a majority or all of its territory (Micallef, 2016). He emphasizes Da'esh's expanding footprint in Europe, which has grown considerably since 2014. This includes both an increase in jihadist cells and its involvement in European criminal activities. These activities furthermore may serve to offset the financial losses associated with loss of territory.

Terrorist attacks ultimately will have a much lower resource burden for Da'esh than would ongoing control of territory, which will enable it to remain dangerous long after the loss of its territory (Stratfor Enterprises, 2016). These attacks may invoke the use of "mobile, dispersed, and flexible units" that operate on behalf of Da'esh (Stratfor Enterprises, 2016). For the time being at least, Da'esh continues in its ability to inspire others to engage in violent acts of terrorism (The Economist Data Team, 2016), though this influence may dissipate over time (for example, see Gelvin, 2016).

> *The bad news is that shorn of those holdings the Islamic State may be an even more formidable opponent, one against which the offensive arsenal of modern nations will be far less applicable while their ability to kill the innocent will be no less diminished.*
> *– Micallef, 2016*

(Lack of) Historical and Potential Future Da'esh Alliances

Historically, Da'esh has operated apart from other groups, denouncing potentially like-minded groups based on their lack of adherence to Da'esh's rigid set of rules. Da'esh's interests have included consolidation and expansion of the caliphate, along with cleansing of the faith (including both Shia and Sunni "infidels"), and maintenance of its fighting force (Astorino-Courtois & NSI Team, 2016). Its inflexible emphasis on the establishment of the caliphate and its declaration of others who do not ally with it as apostates has served to reinforce its isolation and even turn potential allies into enemies (Gelvin, 2016). In Syria, Da'esh has been fighting both Assad's army as well as other rebel groups opposed to Assad's rule (Rosen, 2015). Da'esh's potential partnerships in Syria thus are limited, though it does draw support in Syria from three groups that have pledged their allegiance to it (IntelCenter, 2016). These include Jaish al-Sahabah in the Levant, Martyrs of al-Yarmouk Brigade, and a faction of Katibat al-Imam Bukhari.

We can, however, examine the broad question of potential Da'esh alliances by focusing on overlapping ideology or motivations. Given Da'esh's flagging control in Syria, its motivation to align itself with groups with whom it shares a common set of interests may be increased. The establishment, maintenance, and expansion of territorial holding by Da'esh was a major factor distinguishing it from Al Qaeda and similar groups (Gelvin, 2016). As Gelvin notes, if this distinguishing factor were eliminated, Da'esh would effectively become indistinguishable from Jabhat al-Nusra (now Jabhat Fateh al Sham), whose goal is focused on defeating the Syrian government and establishing an Islamic regime. Glenn notes that Al Qaeda has a similar objective to Da'esh in propagating a hardline Islamist ideology, but differs from Da'esh in strategy (Glenn, 2015).

> *They base themselves on texts and concepts developed over centuries by communities of established Muslim scholars. Indeed, this is a crucial component of the Salafi claim to authenticity. It is therefore not a big conceptual leap to go from quietism to jihadism.*

Similarly, Da'esh shares with 'quietest' Salafists (i.e., those that do not engage in direct political action) similar "theological DNA." McCants and Olidort indicate that Salafis and jihadists also share a focus on addressing the humanitarian problem in Syria, which is viewed as resulting from the Shiite faith of the Assad regime. However, these groups have traditionally differed widely in the methods and nature of their involvement in issues of interest to them. The civil war in Syria, along with other events in the Middle East, has more recently encouraged a shift among these 'quietest' Salafis to political engagement, and even taking up of arms (McCants & Olidort, 2015).

Given Da'esh's transition to insurgency, it is possible that it might converge with Jabhat Fateh al Sham or the quietest Salafists, or may more generally find it necessary to change its tactics regarding its alliances. Given its long history of pointed separation and rivalry with al Qaeda and other jihadist groups, and the traditional clashing of its tactics with those of the quietest Salafists, this possibility seems unlikely.

In the meantime, other opposition groups have banded together, even despite seeming contradictions in ideology (e.g., jihadist and non-Islamists), as a function of necessity, given that no solitary group has the power to defeat regime forces (Zelin, 2013). Groups such as Al Qaeda, for example, have developed approaches to interacting with their competitors, including Al-Nusra's embedding within the Syrian insurgency (Friedman, 2016).

Control Over Strategic Territory and Ungoverned Space[96]

> *You want the terrorist fighting for his own survival rather than (having) the*
>
> *space to plot against us. … Isolating them plus applying pressure equals the less chance they have for striking out beyond the border.*

As of summer 2016, Da'esh had lost 56 pieces of territory including five major cities (all in Iraq) since the beginning of its advances across Iraq and Syria in 2014 (Almukhtar et al., 2016). While many of its major losses have been sustained in Iraq, these forfeitures more generally degrade Da'esh's power, in turn influencing its actions in Syria.

Da'esh's core areas of control include northern Aleppo province around al Bab, Raqqa, and Deir el-Zour (Stratfor Enterprises, 2016), and yet these areas have been under threat. Northern Aleppo comprises a densely populated area, and given its border with Turkey, is a strategic passageway for supplies, weapons, and foreign fighters. As of December 2016, al Bab, the last urban stronghold for Da'esh in the northern Aleppo area, was being advanced upon as part of the Euphrates Shield operation led by Turkmen and Arab rebels and backed by Turkey and the US (Karadeniz, 2016). Also in this area, Dabiq— Daesh's alleged site of an apocalyptic battle with the West (or "Roman" enemies)—held symbolic

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[96] For the purposes of this response, "ungoverned space" is considered as any area to which the writ of the state is not formally extended or is ineffective.

importance for Da'esh, but fell to Turkish-backed Syrian rebels (supported by US Special Forces) in October 2016 (Luck, 2016).

Raqqa, Da'esh's effective capital, has inherent symbolic value, as well as practical value in a number of ways. These include its strategic location on the Euphrates River, role in controlling critical highways, large population, economic centrality, and utility as a major hub for people and supplies (Stratfor Enterprises, 2016). As of late December 2016, the Syrian Democratic Forces (including the Kurdish component, the YPG) have continued moving toward Raqqa, capturing villages and land along the way as part of isolation campaign Euphrates Anger [sic] (Said, 2016). However, a plan for a full offensive does not exist, and thus will present a near-term challenge for the incoming Trump administration (Sly, 2016).

At present, a vast majority of Deir el-Zour province is still under the control of Da'esh, though there have been ongoing U.S. airstrikes over the past year and targeted attacks conducted by U.S. special forces (CBS News, 2017). The Syrian government is also involved in the fight to remove Da'esh from this area (Almukhtar et al., 2016). As Almukhtar et al. note, if Da'esh loses Deir al-Zour, it stands to lose a key connection between its Raqqa stronghold and Mosul, further decreasing its ability to defend territory. Da'esh suffered a significant loss in the multiple offensives that took back the land along the Syrian-Turkish border, given the area's strategic importance (similar to Northern Aleppo) as a passageway for foreign recruits[97] and supplies (Abi-Habib & Raydan, 2016).

Despite its territorial setbacks, Da'esh retook Palmyra in December 2016 (Abi-Habib & Raydan, 2016), creating an impediment for the Syrian government's troops and their Russian supporters. This Da'esh offensive may have been undertaken to combat against more general perceptions that it was losing the battle for territory (Abi-Habib & Raydan, 2016).

Generally speaking, the ungoverned spaces that will provide the greatest opportunity to Da'esh will be those in which Da'esh is the only or the best potential provider of security, political grievances, economic growth, and effective governance (Blanchard & Humud, 2016).

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[97] Of approximately 20,000 foreign fighters from the Middle East and West (by one estimate) that joined Da'esh at the height of its power, a large majority entered through the Turkish border (Abi-Habib & Raydan, 2016).

Comments on Da'esh Transition in Syria

Mubin Shaikh

First, DAESH will continue to attempt being present and also expansive, in Syria. However, as it does indeed continue to suffer significant setbacks, as well as the campaigns and Mosul and Raqqah, it will lose a lot of its forward motion in this regard.

Secondly, while some analysts suggest that there could be mergers between DAESH and other groups, for those analysts like myself who pay attention to the ideology that motivates and sustains these groups, it is very unlikely for such mergers to form considering how great the ideological divide is. DAESH will not be able to publicly explain why they would work with a group previously declared as deviant and the merging group would not be able to save face, if they came forward saying they had repented from their deviance.

Third, the greater ability for mergers to exist will, from the Salafist and Islamist groups. It is these groups will maintain organizational structure and military effectiveness because of the larger network from which they can draw on resources and potential allies especially those that are trained armed and supported by state backers. These groups, will continue to compete and fight with DAESH and the Assad regime, simultaneously. They will also begin to turn their invective on Russia and specters of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the necessity to fight them, is already proliferating. This may cause tension between groups supported by Turkish assets, however may find significant support among its private Gulf backers.

Finally, the competition for ungoverned spaces will continue to be between DAESH and Al Qaeda, the latter which will be seeking to expand its network among Islamist groups, and in this sense, may well share in the governance of previously ungoverned spaces by groups of aspiring to be players in the Syrian national context.

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Author Biographies

Vernie Liebl

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

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

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

Dr. Joshua Landis

Joshua Landis is Director of the Center for Middle East Studies and Professor at the College of International Studies at the University of Oklahoma.

He writes "SyriaComment.com," a daily newsletter on Syrian politics that attracts over 100,000 readers a month.

Dr. Landis is a frequent analyst on TV, radio, and in print, He has appeared recently on the PBS News Hour, the Charlie Rose Show, and Front Line. He is a regular on NPR and the BBC. He frequently publishes in leading Foreign Policy journals.

He has served as the Syrian Studies Association, won the best teacher prize at his university, and received three Fulbright grants, an SSRC and other prestigious awards to support his research.

He has lived for 4 years in Syria and 14 in the Middle East. He is married and has two boys.

He was educated at Swarthmore (BA), Harvard (MA), and Princeton (PhD).

Dr. Sabrina Pagano
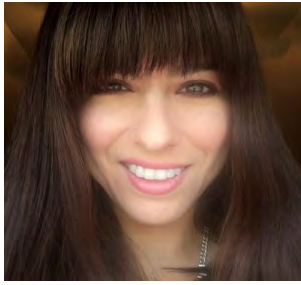
Dr. Sabrina Pagano is an experienced project leader and principal investigator, with almost 15 years of experience leading teams and projects both in academia and industry. She earned her Ph.D. in Social Psychology (minor in Statistics) from the University of California, Los Angeles, and a dual BA with highest honors in Psychology and Political Science from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She has led and been an active contributor to work in both the government and commercial domains. Though supporting a wide variety of projects and proposals, her work at NSI has focused in three main areas, including serving as the Principal Investigator and Project Manager for a multi-year contract investigating progress in conflict environments, providing project oversight as the project manager for two AAA titles at a top gaming company, and as one of two developers of a corporate offering focused on enhancing dignity in interactions with customers and employees. Prior to NSI, she served as the Director (Acting) of a growing behavioral sciences program, as well as a Faculty Fellow Researcher and Lecturer at UCLA. Dr. Pagano's work has spanned a wide variety of topics, with particular depth in intergroup relations, injustice, basic and moral emotions (e.g., empathy, moral outrage), and prosocial/antisocial behavior. She maintains an active knowledge base in the broad field of social psychology, and knowledge that spans multiple fields given over a decade of experience and leadership specifically on multidisciplinary projects.

Mubin Shaikh

Born and raised in Canada, **Mubin Shaikh** grew up with two conflicting and competing cultures. At the age of 19, he went to India and Pakistan where he had a chance encounter with the Taliban prior to their takeover of Afghanistan in 1995. Mubin became fully radicalized as a supporter of the global Jihadist culture, recruiting others and establishing his network in the extremist milieu. He was affected by the 9/11 attacks which forced to him reconsider his views. He then spent 2 years in Syria, continuing his study of Arabic and Islamic Studies. Rejecting terrorism from Islam, he would go through a period of full deradicalization.

Returning to Canada in 2004, he became an undercover operator with the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and worked several CLASSIFIED infiltration operations on the internet and on the ground. In late 2005, one of those intelligence files moved to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Integrated National Security Enforcement Team (INSET) for investigation. The "Toronto 18" terrorism case resulted in the conviction of 11 aspiring violent extremists after Mubin testified over 4 years and 5 legal hearings in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice.

He now has a Master of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism (MPICT) and is a PhD candidate in Psychological Sciences studying radicalization, deradicalization and violent extremism at the University of Liverpool, Tactical Decision Making Research Group. Mr. Shaikh is considered a SME (Subject Matter Expert) in radicalization, violent extremism and Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) to: United Nations Center for Counter Terrorism, Interpol, Europol, Hedayah Center, U.S. Department of State - Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communications, National Counterterrorism Center, U.S. DOD Strategic Multilayer Assessment Team, U.S. Central Command - Special Operations Command (as an expert on ISIS), International Special Training Center, NATO (Defence Against Terrorism) and many others. He has appeared on multiple U.S., British and Canadian media outlets as a commentator and is extensively involved with the ISIS Social Media and Foreign Fighter file. He is also co-author of the acclaimed book, *Undercover Jihadi*.
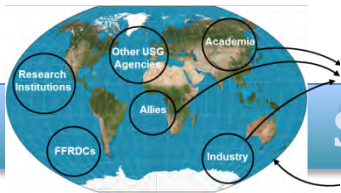
ViTTa Special Topic: Mosul Coalition Fragmentation: Causes and Effects[98]

Authors: Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois, NSI and Jimmy Krakar, TRADOC G-27

Executive Summary

This paper assesses the potential causes and effects of fragmentation on the Counter-ISIL coalition. This coalition consists of three distinct but interrelated subsets: 1) the CJTF-OIR coalition; 2) the regional coalition, *de facto* allies of convenience, who may provide any combination of money, forces or proxies; and, 3) the tactical coalition, the plethora of disparate groups fighting on the ground. The study team assessed how a change in either the CJTF-OIR coalition or regional coalition could influence the tactical coalition post Mosul and the subsequent effect of these potential fragmentations on the GoI's ability to control Iraq. The study team established six potential post-Mosul future scenarios. One future consisted of the tactical coalition remaining intact and the other five consisted of different permutations of the tactical coalition fragmenting. The study team then modeled these six futures with the Athena Simulation and quantified their effects on both Mosul and Iraq *writ large*.[99]

During simulation these six fragmentation scenarios collapsed into two distinct outcomes: one in which GoI controlled Mosul and one in which local Sunni leadership controlled Mosul. The variable that determined the outcome was the involvement of the Sunnis in the post-Mosul coalition—if the local Sunni leadership remained aligned with the GoI, the GoI remained in control of Mosul. If the local Sunni leadership withdrew from the coalition the GoI lost control of Mosul and the local Sunni leadership assumed control of Mosul—regardless of whether any other groups left the coalition. Irrespective of the local Sunni leadership's involvement in the coalition the GoI was able to maintain control of everything but Mosul and the KRG controlled areas of Iraq.

This included historically Sunni areas of Al Anbar including Fallujah and Ramadi (see Figure 1, below).
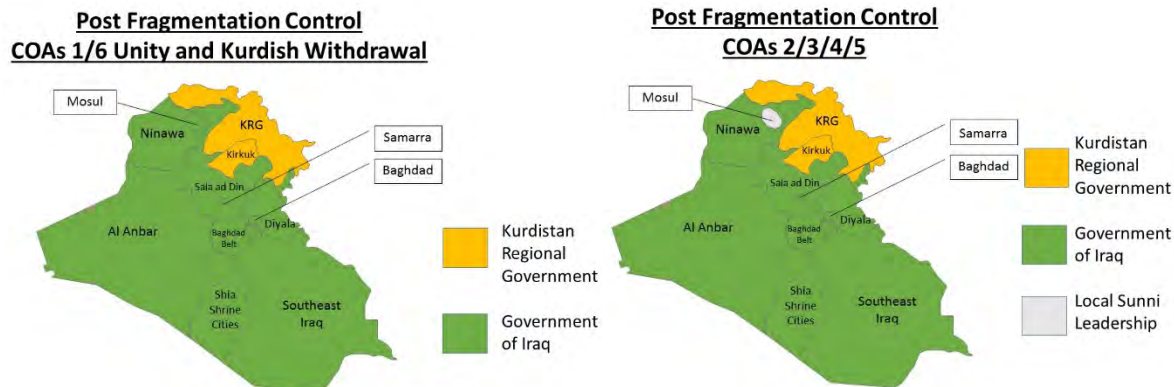

Figure 1: If the Sunnis remain part of the GoI coalition, GoI remain in control of Mosul. If the Sunnis withdraw from the coalition they can gain control of Mosul.

While several permutations of the regional coalition fragmenting may take place, the centrality of the Sunnis to any outcome puts the actions of the GoI to forefront. PM Abadi's desire to preserve the unity of Iraq may position the GoI at odds with calls for increased local autonomy from some factions of Kurdish and Sunni 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.

Methodology- The methodology of this paper was a combination of open source elicitations and simulation. The elicitations primarily consisted of interviews with Subject Matter Experts that took place during the SMA CENTCOM support operation. This provided the qualitative information of how fragmentation of either the CJTF-OIR coalition or the regional coalition could influence fragmentation of the tactical coalition. The study team used the Athena simulation to model the tactical coalition and quantify the effects of potential fragmentation on GoI control

The study team organized the elements of the tactical coalition as follows: GoI maintained control of Iraqi Police, Iraqi Army, PMF #1 (pro-GoI Shi'a); Kurdish Regional Government maintained control of the Peshmerga; local Sunni leadership controlled PMF #3 (Sunni PMF) and Mosul Tribal Police; PMF #2 (pro-Iranian Shi'a) operated under their own leadership. The degree of fragmentation varied by future with the primary variable being which groups remained united with the GoI. (See Figure 2)

The study team assessed six separate futures. All of these futures had a common beginning in which a clear force secured Mosul and began transitioning to a hold force at week 5 (See Figure 3). At week 10 the simulation branched into one of the six futures. These futures were: 1) the tactical coalition remains intact 2) Sunni forces withdraw from the coalition 3) Sunni forces and the KRG withdraw from the coalition 4) similar to 3 but pro-Iran PMF forces (PMF #2) do not support GoI and operate independently 5) all forces in Mosul are operating independently and 6) the Kurds withdraw from the coalition. While not all encompassing these futures provide a useful framework to judge outcomes. Figures 4 provides detail on the futures while Figure 5 is a synchronization matrix of activities common to each future.

Coalitions

In the context of current C-ISIL operations the term coalition encompasses several different sets of participants which often overlap. In the interests of simplification the study team decomposed the coalition into three separate coalitions: the CJTF-OIR coalition—the countries that are generally allied and have a similar end state for the region; the regional coalition which is a coalition of convenience and includes Turkey, Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; and the tactical coalition which involves forces aligned with the GoI for clearance of Mosul but whose long-term objectives may differ from GoI.

CJTF-OIR Coalition: SME elicitation showed that the majority of the CJTF-OIR coalition will remain during the battle for Mosul. History shows that if the US has political will it can maintain a force structure much larger than what the CJTF-OIR coalition currently requires. Currently, the core members of CJTF-OIR appear committed to preserving the coalition until Mosul is liberated. Prime Minister May continues the UK's commitment to CJTF-OIR while France, the Netherlands and Germany also appear to be committed to remaining in the coalition during the fight – what is less clear is their commitment to the considerable reconstruction and rehabilitation of Mosul and surrounding areas that is critical for securing ISIL's defeat there. While it is difficult to assess the combat contributions and stamina of many of the other members of CJTF-OIR it is safe to assume that their contributions while valuable could be made up by other means.[100] While not directly part of the CJTF-OIR coalition, the aid provided by the United Nations and international donors will be critical for the reconstruction and reintegration of Mosul. If the siege is prolonged the deficit of humanitarian funds could produce individually and politically devastating results.

Regional Coalition: The regional coalition are the regional governments who have formed a *de facto* coalition against ISIL. This includes KSA, KRG, Iran and Turkey. While united in their opposition to ISIL their long-term goals are often in competition and non-exclusive. They employ a combination of forces, proxies and funding to achieve their goals.

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 another 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 Yemen[101]. This type of sanction, especially if there were not similar treatment of Iran, would further erode US-KSA relations and perhaps convince KSA to resume connections with Sunni extremist groups in Iraq and Syria as bastions against Iranian influence. A KSA decision to open up funding for Sunni tribes/ extremist forces in the region would: 1) further aggravate KSA-US relations; 2) rapidly provoke conflict among regional proxies, and 3) widen cleavages among Sunni groups in Iraq. Each of these eventualities puts the US in a tight spot with very few levers of influence over KSA.

KRG (PDK and PUK): 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 recently

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[100] An example of US commitment outlasting its coalition was the transition of MNF-I to USF-I.

[101] 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

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

Of course, 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. While there it appears that there are few external factors that would prompt the Peshmerga in general to withdraw from the coalition fight, reduction in funding and arms however is one. 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.

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 <u>post-ISIL</u> 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 which also could be used as territory to house IDPs from Mosul. While it is unlikely that Turkey would publicly 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 Kurdish groups is the worst outcome for Turkey.

Iran: There is significant evidence that the battlefield success of much of Iraq's Shi'a militias—modeled in this series of simulations as PMF #2—is dependent on Iranian resources and expertise (Barnard, 2015; Bazoobandi, 2014; Campbell, 2014; Nader, 2015).[102] Of course this relationship helps Iran increase its regional influence (Khedery, 2015).[103] 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

[102] 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
[103] 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/

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.

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.[104] As a result, ISIL success in Mosul or ability to strike Shi'a elsewhere presents a direct threat to the Shi'a population, and should it look like a possibility, is likely to encourage Shi'a militia fighters both within the coalition as well as those not currently included to "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.

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).[105] 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.

Tactical Coalition- At the tactical level there are Sunni Forces consisting of PMF #3 and the Sunni Tribal Police Force; the Shi'a PMFs consisting of PMF#1 (Pro-GoI Shi'a) and PMF#2 (Pro-Iranian Shi'a); and the Peshmurga. While similarly named they often have conflicting agendas. The force structure in this simulation attempted to strike a balance between the ever changing nuance of detail and the monolithic blocks.

Sunni forces: Two conditions could easily push Sunni forces to break with the coalition: 1) local leaders see no evidence that situation in Mosul following ISIL defeat 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 Forces (PMFs) take an active role in the fighting in or too near Mosul. There is general awareness of the need to keep these forces separated from the Sunni population in Mosul. Media reports claim that coalition leaders will allow Shi'a militias to participate only in rural areas outside the city[106] presumably with the mission of rounding up escaping (Sunni) ISIL fighters and families. Unfortunately, despite aid agencies' intentions[107], 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

[104] 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.

[105] 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

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

[107] 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.

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. The effects of either of the above actions could be magnified by US actions. 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.

Peshmerga: Three primary conditions could cause Peshmerga forces to leave the tactical coalition: 1) conflict with GoI over disputed areas escalates, 2) Conflict with Sunni forces in an area such as Nineveh, 3) A split in the Kurdish leadership between the PUK and PDK.

Iraqi Oriented Shi'a PMF (PMF#1): It should not be discounted that some of the nationalist Shi'a 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 Shi'a militia groups, it is not at all clear that 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 out on their own to avenge Sunni violence against Shi'a or in them 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 Shi'a Iran master plan." in the region.

Iranian Oriented Shi'a PMF (PMF#2): The primary condition that would cause the Iranian Oriented PMF to leave the tactical coalition is that Iran or the IGRC dictate that they leave the tactical coalition.

Conclusion:

Given the tenuousness of the ties that hold the Regional and Tactical coalitions together—and the variety of competing interests and agendas of coalition members, there are any number of occurrences that could cause partial or severe fracture during or after the battle for Mosul. 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.

While many factors could lead to potential fragmentation of the Regional and Tactical coalitions the common denominator in many of these scenarios is the actions of the GoI and the respective responses from other regional actors. Regardless of the cause of fragmentation the only point where the GoI could not maintain control is in the area of Mosul itself. Either the GoI maintains control or the Sunni majority will develop a leadership structure to take control of the area. Regardless the GoI will maintain control in the remainder of Iraq minus the rump under KRG control.

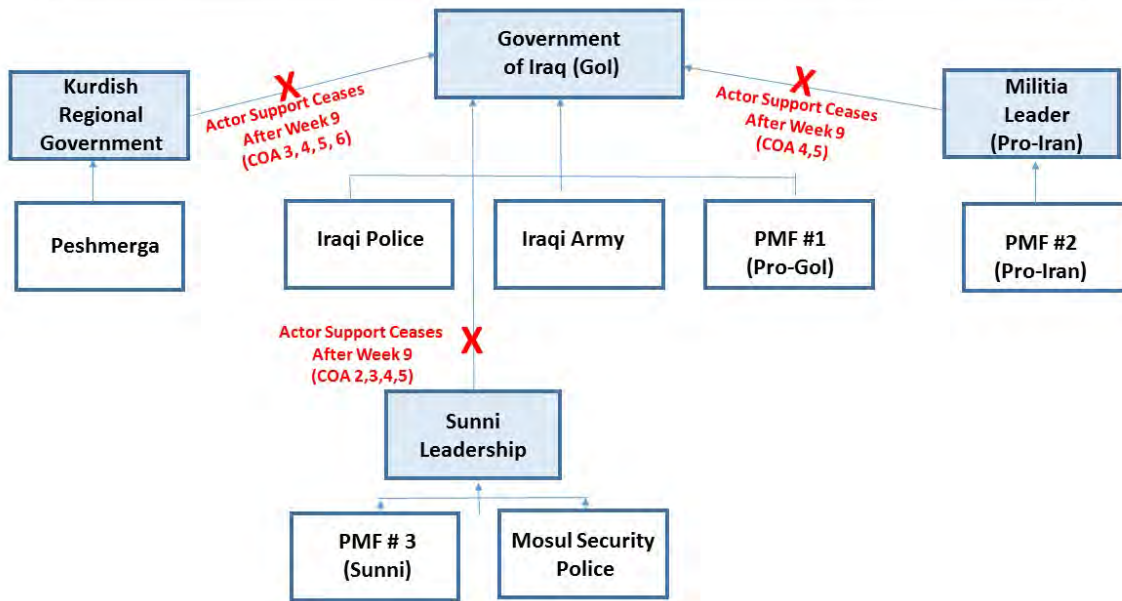## Actor Relationships to Force Groups in Mosul

Figure 2: Actor relationships to force groups in Mosul

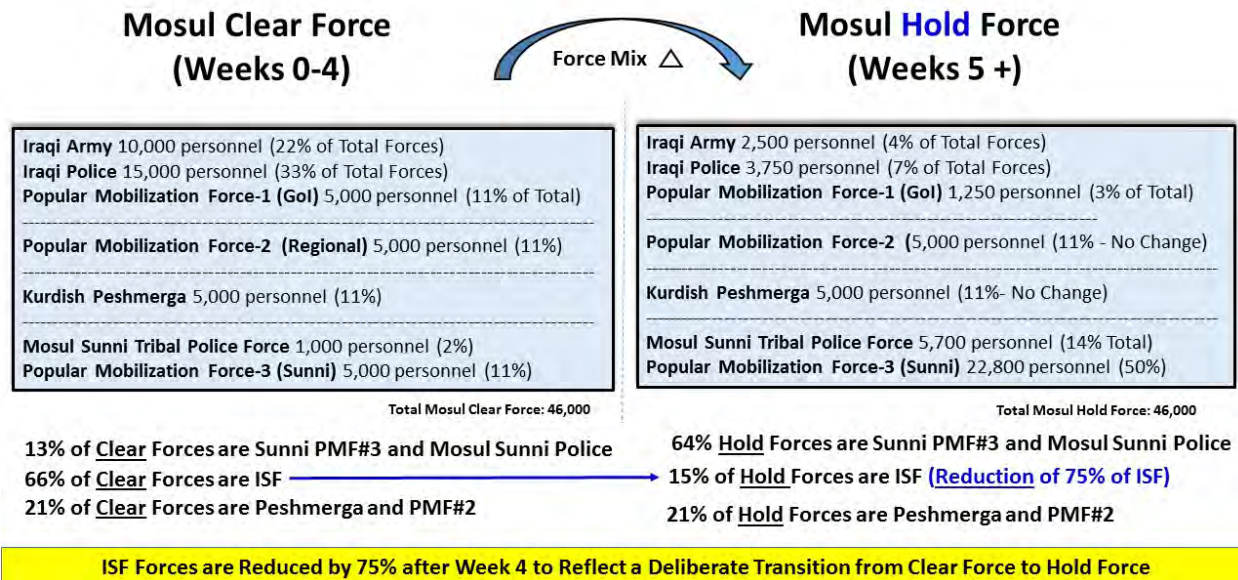## Transition from Clear Force to Hold Force in Mosul

Figure 3: Clear Force and Hold Force composition

Courses of Action / Strategies and Tactics	Actor Support	Force Activities
COA 1 (Unified Iraqi Security Forces)	Actors all unified in their support of GOI	Cooperative Patrolling, Checkpoints and limited CMO (infrastructure, law enforcement, education, healthcare)
COA 2 Sunni Break Away	Shia and Kurdish Actors all unified in their support of GoI; local Sunni leaders support themselves	Shia and Kurds together but Sunni forces not cooperating
COA 3 Three Way Melee	Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders support themselves. Regional support fragments accordingly.	Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni forces not cooperating with each other on patrols / checkpoints. Clashes between forces.
COA 4 Four Way Melee	Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders support themselves. International and regional fragments.	Same as COA 3 but now PMF 2 is also on its own in Mosul; Criminal activity more common now. Clashes between forces.
COA 5 Total Chaos	Shia, Kurdish, and Sunni leaders support themselves. Sub-groups fragment.	All forces acting on their own patrolling, checkpoints, etc. Significant criminal activity and graft. Clashes between forces.
COA 6 Kurdish Break Away	Kurdish leaders support themselves vice the GoI coalition.	Shia and Sunni forces united, but Kurdish forces not cooperating.

Figure 4: The six futures the study team assessed

Synchronization Matrix

COA 4a Force Mix Change in Week 5 Case	Week * 1 4 7	10 13	16 19 22	25 28	31 34 37	40 43	46 49 52
1 Support to GOI and Coalition mission for 9 weeks	Supporting GOI	All actors now vying for control					
2 75% ISF forces replaced by Sunni forces at Week 5 (PMF3 and MSP)	30K ISF	7.5K ISF (75% of Original ISF replaced 1 x 1 by Sunni Hold force (PMF#3 and Mosul Police) in Week 5)					
3 75% of IDPs are able to return within first year (cumulative)	(Shia wk 8 /Sunni wk 16) for 25%		(Shia wk 22 / Sunni wk 32) for 50%		(Shia wk 49 / Sunni wk 36) for 75%		
4 Training Levels for Mosul Hold Force Stays at Partial Training	Partial Training of Iraqi Police						
5 Demeanor Training Levels for Hold Force Improves in Increments	Average Demeanor of IP						
6 > 85% Destruction of Infrastructure rebuilt only 40% w/in one year	20%		30%		40%		
7 CMO activities occur where possible, otherwise patrols, checkpoints	Civilian Military Operations is Limited by Security						
8 Random IEDs (50 Civilians Killed in Each, No Blame Determined)	IED Wk 14 ★		★ IED Wk 19	IED Wk 33 ★		★ IED Wk 44	
9 Government services and offices partially operational	High unemployment due to large number of government employees						
10 Nominal / expected levels of ambient black market and graft	Default Graft, Black Market and Low-level Criminal Activity						
11 Progress restoring water and power within 120 days	Only Power Restored		Both Power and Water Restored				
12 Heated articulation of grievances, ethno-religious tensions	Sunni Civilians – Average Demeanor until end of Week 35				Sunni Civilians to Aggressive		
13 Considerable sectarian narratives of mistrust and moral outrage	Offsetting sectarian messaging						
14 International and Regional NGO support delayed / impeded	Few major International and Regional NGO infrastructure programs due to security						
15 Mosul fighting rarely occurring (few casualties, except IED events)	Sporadic fighting engagements between forces with few casualties (+ CIVCAS Weeks 7, 14, 19 and 44)						
16 Essential Non Infrastructure Services at 50% required levels	100%		50%				
17 US / coalition funding	Continuous but diminished funding for GOI due to neighborhood atmosphere but continued support to Kurds						

* Note: All % figures shown are cumulative which occur during the period of weeks shown

Figure 5: Synchronization Matrix

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Previously he worked as a Counterinsurgency Advisor for the COMISAF Advisory Assistance Team (CAAT) in Afghanistan. He has over 25 years of active and reserve military experience in Infantry, Civil Affairs and Human Terrain operations; with deployments to Somalia, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Currently he is an Army Reservist assigned to USSOCOM J-8.

Jimmy received his BS in Military History from the United States Military Academy, an MS in Intelligence from American Military University and graduated the Defense Language Institute as a basic Arabic Linguist. His most recent publication was "The Civil Engagement Spectrum: A tool for the Human Domain" published in the Sep/Oct 15 issue of *Military Review*.

Dr. Allison Astorino-Courtois

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

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