

SMA Reach-back Report

R4 Question #1: How Strong is Iraqi Nationalism in Countering Iranian Influence?

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Executive Summary

History of Iraqi Nationalism

As with all newly formed Arab states following the conclusion of WWI, Iraq struggled to establish an inclusive national identity (Abouaoun, Dagher). Rooted in the Hashim monarchy's attempts to preserve antiquated patrilineal lines, the rise of Saddam Hussein's "national republic" in 1979 forcefully instituted a form of non-inclusive Arab nationalism. The success of the Iran-Iraq War (1980-1988) seemingly led to a resurgent rise of a fresh Iraqi nationalism although, in time, this proved to be limited to Iraq's Sunni population¹ (White). The US invasion of Iraq in 2003 once again exposed simmering sectarian tensions, in turn eroding Iraqi nationalism even more (Abouaoun). The establishment of a new Shia ruling elite (post-2003) sowed the seeds of Sunni Arab discontent in addition to opening the floodgates of increased Iranian influence (White). Non-state actors took advantage of the societal decay and positioned themselves as defenders of Iraq's various sectarian communities (Abouaoun). Non-state actors, emboldened by globalization and the information revolution, were used as proxies by regional powers competing for influence in the region.

Can Iraqi Nationalism Counter Iranian Influence?

There is some consensus among contributors that Iraqi nationalism could be an effective tool to mitigate Iranian influence in Iraq. Today, as cautious optimism emerges from the downfall of ISIS, one recent poll found that 60% of Iraqis see themselves as Iraqis first (Kaltenthaler, Dagher). A significant majority of

¹ Dagher disputes the claim that nationalism is in decline. He notes that his cumulative experience conducting polls in Iraq showed a high level of national identity in Iraq among both Shias and Sunnis.

these nationalists (65%), oppose Iranian military intervention in Iraq against ISIS, and 63% support Coalition airstrikes against ISIS.²

Some experts expressed limited optimism that Iraq is approaching an inflection point where the development of Iraqi nationalism can be achieved through competent governance; however, it is not clear how realistic this goal is, given the current climate. To understand this, let us review some of the drivers and buffers of Iraqi nationalism.

Buffers of Nationalism	Drivers of Sectarianism
Liberation of territory from ISIS ³	Sectarianism and conflict serve political elite ⁴
Success of ISOF and Federal Police ⁵	Lack of nationalism within Iraqi Army ⁶
Shared public grievances: corruption, lack of essential services, inequality, lack of rule of law, etc. ⁷	Weak government institutions ⁸
Sense of shared responsibility to help IDPs ⁹	Nationalism rising among Sunni Arabs, but not Kurds ¹⁰
Fatigue & desire to mend societal fabric ¹¹	
Protect Iraqi sovereignty & territorial integrity ¹²	
Emerging nationalism among youth ¹³	
Iran not popular among all Shia groups ¹⁴	

What Can Be Done to Foster Iraqi Nationalism?

If an increase of Iraqi nationalism is correlated with a reduction of Iran's influence in Iraq, several experts note that steps could be taken to allow nationalist platforms to emerge.

First, experts stress the importance of reinforcing Iraqi state institutions, with a particular emphasis on the Iraqi military. As one of Iraq's most effective institutions, the Iraqi military must lead the way on integration, professionalism, and freedom from corruption (Wahab).

² But 75% of nationalists view the US as an unreliable partner (Kaltenthaler, Dagher). Rising nationalism, which may help mitigate Iran's influence in Iraq, may also serve to limit US influence in Iraq. In fact, White notes that a form of nationalism may be forming that is both anti-Iran and anti-American.

³ Seloom, Wahab

⁴ Saeed, Seloom, Wahab

⁵ Wahab

⁶ Atran, Seloom

⁷ Gulmohamad, Saeed, Wahab

⁸ Seloom

⁹ Seloom

¹⁰ Gulmohamad

¹¹ Seloom

¹² Seloom

¹³ Saeed

¹⁴ piX

Second, Iraqis need a new model of inclusive government (Abouaoun). He noted that, “a ‘spontaneous’ rebirth or boost of Iraqi national identity is a farfetched aspiration.” It can only be achieved through a process that generates a new governance model—only then can national identity mobilize Iraq’s Shias to minimize Iran’s influence in Iraq.

Third, strong and inclusive institutions must be supported by domestic and international efforts to build a stable, interconnected, and diversified economy (Wahab). This should begin with investment in the physical infrastructure that connects Iraqis across the country with one another as well as with economic opportunities (i.e., roads, railroads, pipelines, etc.).

Experts generally agree that rising Iraqi nationalism *could* play a critical role in countering Iran’s influence. However, nationalism is quite nascent in Iraq (Saeed) and not all experts agree that it currently exists in any significant way at all—let alone with enough strength to minimize Iran’s influence in Iraqi politics (Seloom).

Subject Matter Expert Contributions

Elie Abouaoun, USIP

As in all post-WWII, newly founded Arab States, Iraqis struggled to establish an all-inclusive and accepted trans-communitarian national identity. First, the monarchy has been suspected of preserving antiquated patrilineal rules in defiance of modernity and popular legitimacy. Second, the so called “national republic” has embraced a non-inclusive Arab nationalism that was enforced with brutality, leaving a strong push back against the national identity within large parts of the Iraqi societies.

Saddam Hussein managed to sell the idea though that he achieved stability in Iraq. However, the suppression of identity conflicts came at the expense of human rights, peaceful alternation of power, economic and social development.

Post 2003 politics in Iraq attest to the breakdown of the social contract amid widening communitarian rifts over the very nature of the state. Iraq’s survival and legitimacy, is increasingly emerging as contingent upon the accommodation of diverse communities, with affiliations and allegiance often transcending territoriality.

The emergence of deeply-rooted militarized non-state actors, complicates the picture since these new actors were formed around ethnic or sectarian lines, and are now seen as the lines of defense for these communities. This is even more true in the case of the Iranian-affiliated, Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), who have positioned themselves as defenders of the Shias against Sunnis and Kurds alike. The comprehensive question to ask is whether the concept of the “Nation State” (based on a national identity) is valid for Iraq today?

Since 2003, Iraq slipped toward a deeper socio-political and cultural identity crisis leaving many communities in duress. Once (forcefully) united under the banner of nationalism and protected by the “republic,” these communities have found themselves vulnerable to the contestation of multipolar and multi-regional power struggle storming their habitats.

Developments since the fall of the regime, accentuated by the effects of globalization, have dramatically transformed essential protectionism functions from the hands of the state, into the hands of the community. It has liberated politics from the strict confinements of geography while helping expand communitarian mobilization and outreach across borders. This momentum was captured by non-state actors, including Iranian proxies, to exert a stronger grasp over the Shias in Iraq. Communitarian, sectarian and ethnic groups have thus expanded their outreach and mobilizations across borders, in order to gain power and leverage against perceived contending groups. The future of Iraq is placed in a limbo and therefore, the reformulation of state’s structure that can gain the consent and approval of the multi-communitarian constituency appear to be a tedious task.

Between 2003 and 2017, political violence among ethnic and sectarian constituents in Iraq has claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands and led to the displacement of millions. It is unthinkable now to seek an end to the conflict in Iraq without forecasting a political roadmap that provides a new “model” of inclusive governance for Iraq. Hence, a “spontaneous” rebirth or boost of the Iraqi national identity is a farfetched aspiration.

While not impossible, it must go through a process to generate a new governance model. Only then, one can expect such a “national identity” to mobilize the Shias against the (although fictional from my perspective) “protectionist” policy of Iran towards the Iraqi Shias.

Scott Atran, ARTIS

Iraqi nationalism is no match for Iranian nationalism. In our experiments, not even the Iraqi army had much of a nationalist fervor. Gen Jabouri (who commands the Mosul front) told us that every tribal faction and their brother, has their first loyalty to their faction/tribe and that everyone demands some representation, which makes having competent command difficult.

Zana Gulmohamad, University of Sheffield

There are pro-Iraqi nationalist key figures and major political factions that have some influence on policy-making and have been pushing to adopt more Iraqi nationalism and reduce Iranian leverages in Iraq. These include but are not limited to the PM Haider al-Abadi; the highest religious Islamic Shia Marja "reference" Ali al-Sistani who adopted the quietest approach and does not hold and has never held a bureaucratic post. The controversial populist Shia religious and political firebrand Muqtada al-Sadr who has political and armed factions (Saraya al-Salam) could also be considered in this category but his views are extremely unstable (fluctuating) and – based on his record and continuous interference in governance – he could be viewed as destabilising figure in Iraqi politics. However, they [aforementioned figures] are facing increasingly pro-Iranian Iraqi Shia actors who would claim that they themselves are the real protectors of Iraq.

Parallel to Iraq's nationalist figures there are powerful pro-Iranian figures and Shia factions such as former PM Nouri al-Maliki and a considerable number of advocates and supporters in the Islamic Dawa Party. Shia political factions and militias include the Badr Organization (led by Hadi al-Amiri), Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (led by Qais al-Khaza'li), Kata'ib Hezbollah, Harakat al-Nujaba and many others are pro-Iranian militias that have political affiliations and agendas for Iraq. Those groups are supported, equipped and backed by the Iranian regime, which follows the Iranian supreme leader's Wilayat al-Faqih doctrine. The Iranian regime has increased support for segments of Shia armed factions, which have been loyal to Tehran in Iraq during the war on the Islamic State. Despite the fact that the Popular Mobilization Forces include powerful pro-Iranian Shia factions, it also includes armed factions loyal to the PM and Ali Al-Sistani as well as a minority of Arab Sunnis including microminorities; it [PMF] is not monolithic but the powerful pro-Iranian groups are the most prominent.¹⁵ The pro-Iranian Shia militias also are pushing the country towards more conservative Shia Islamic orientations for state and society and distancing the country from secularism to the extent that they are interfering in peoples' daily lives. Therefore, their tendencies are more like the Iranian style regime. They interfere in administrating some of the towns as well as universities. Importantly, they are preparing ground for their political and religious inspirations and are strategically allied with Iran, as the majority of the Arab World and Turkey do not welcome them.

The author believes Iraqi nationalism and identity still exists but among the Arabs, not the Kurds. Moreover, there are different interpretations by each Iraqi Arab Shia or Sunni or even secular and hyper-nationalist about how to view Iraqi identity and the state. Nevertheless, Iraqi nationalism that could counter Iranian influence will be strengthened if pro-Iranian Shia factions have been weakened and their opposing factions from the Shia and Arab Sunnis have been supported. The factor of Iraqi nationalism alone without real tangible support from inside and outside and a strategy to counter Iranian interferences would be difficult to resist Iranian interferences. The support includes providing services for the public, fighting corruption and promoting equality, rule of law, and stripping the Shia militias of their arms.

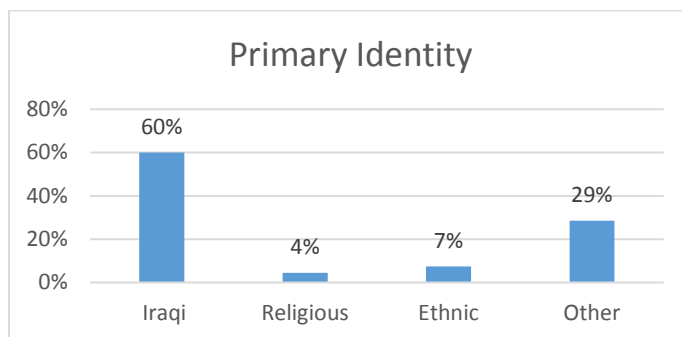
¹⁵ See the categorizations within the PMF: Gulmohamad (2016) Iraq's Shia Militias: Helping or Hindering the Fight Against Islamic State? Jamestown Foundation, Terrorism Monitor, Volume 14, issue 9, access online: <https://jamestown.org/program/iraqs-shia-militias-helping-or-hindering-the-fight-against-islamic-state/#.VzDd8rwkfdk>

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

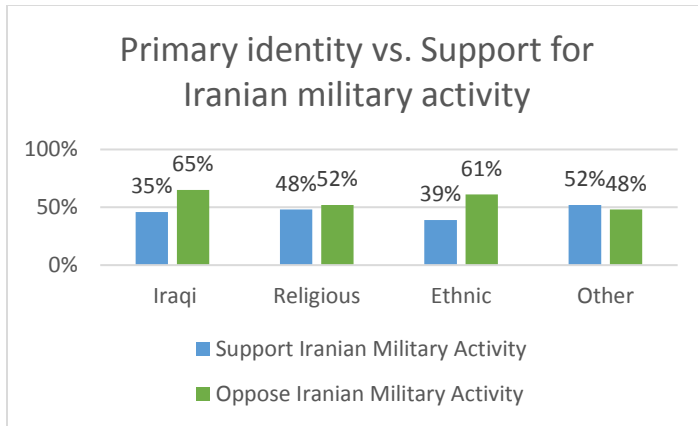
- Most Iraqis, 60%, see themselves as Iraqis first (nationalists), 4% as their religious identity first, 7% as their ethnic identity first, and 29% as some other identity first.
- Sixty-five percent of Iraqi nationalists oppose Iranian military intervention in Iraq against ISIL, while 35% of the same group supports Iranian intervention against ISIL.
- Fifty-seven percent of Iraqi nationalists view Iran as an unreliable partner and 43% of Iraqi nationalists view Iran as a reliable partner.
- By contrast, 63% of Iraqi nationalists support coalition airstrikes against ISIL and 37% oppose them. This support is likely due to the perception of the efficacy of the airstrikes.
- But Iraqi nationalism also works against trust in the U.S. Seventy-four percent of Iraqi nationalists view the U.S. as an unreliable partner against 26% who see the United States as a reliable partner for Iraq.

In response to the question of how strong a factor Iraqi nationalism is in countering Iranian influence, we conclude that is a very strong factor. Data from national opinion polls in Iraq support this contention. The data cited here comes from a national scientific poll with 3,500 respondents carried out in the summer of 2016 by IIACSS.

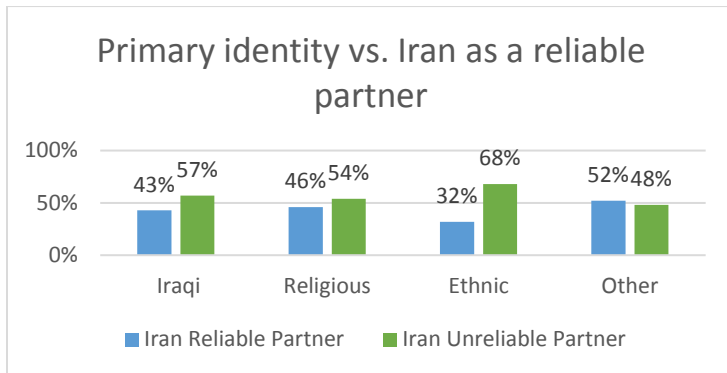
The chart below shows the distribution of Iraqi responses to a question asking them what their primary identity is. As can be seen in the chart, the clear majority of Iraqis view themselves as Iraqis first, and some other identity, such as sectarian, ethnic, or tribal, etc., is secondary.



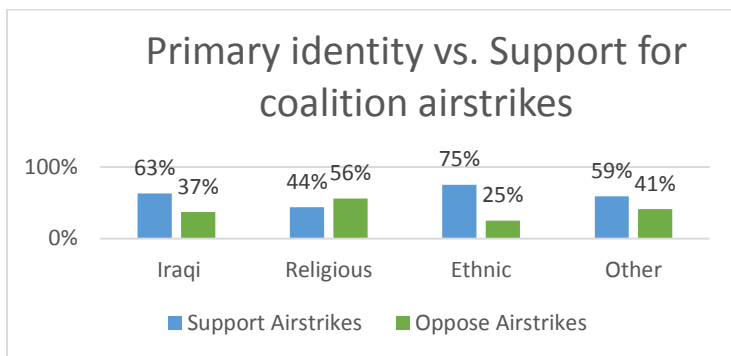
The next chart shows how Iraqis who hold various different primary identities view Iranian military intervention in Iraq against ISIL. As is seen in the chart, Iraqis who have a national, religious, or ethnic identity as their primary identity are opposed to Iranian military activity in Iraq. But the rate of opposition is highest among those who have a national identity. Thus, Iraqi nationalism is a strong factor in opposing Iranian military action against ISIL. Given the fact that the majority of the respondents are Shi'a, it is not just Sunni Arabs and Kurdish Iraqi nationalists who oppose Iranian military activities but Shi'a Iraqi nationalists as well.



The following chart changes the focus to whether Iraqi nationalists view Iran as a reliable partner to Iraq or not. Fifty-seven percent of Iraqi nationalists view Iran as an unreliable partner to Iraq. Only Iraqis who have a primarily ethnic identity, which is mainly Kurds, have a more unfavorable view of Iran as an unreliable partner to Iraq.

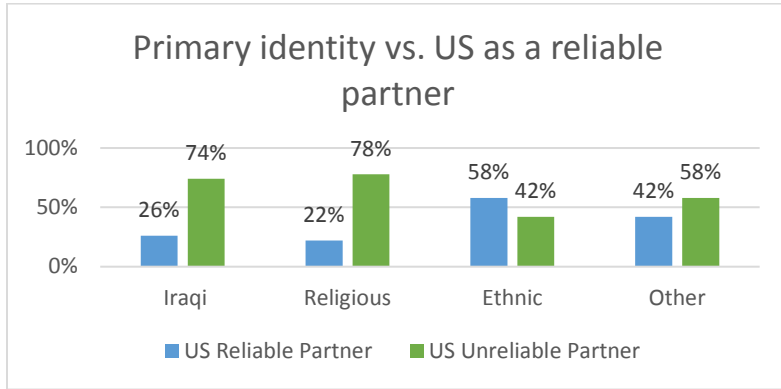


How does Iraqi nationalism influence views toward the United States? It is important to contrast this with Iraqi nationalism’s effect on views toward Iran. The following chart shows that Iraqi nationalists are more prone to support coalition airstrikes against ISIL than oppose them.



But when the distribution of responses to the question about whether the United States is a reliable partner to Iraq are examined, Iraqi nationalism makes Iraqis more prone to view the U.S. as an unreliable partner. This is shown in the chart below. Seventy-four percent of Iraqi nationalists view the United States as an unreliable partner. This number is only surpassed by primarily religious Iraqis,

among whom 78% view the United States as an unreliable partner. Thus, for the United States, Iraqi nationalism is a more potent force for unfavorability in Iraqi public opinion than it is for Iran. As ISIL is defeated militarily and as nationalism grows in Iraq, and we have seen this trend developing, it will lead more and more Iraqis to want to exclude foreign political and military intervention no matter the country of origin.



PiX Team, Tesla Government Services

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https://www.pixtoday.net/iraq/index.php/Article:Iran_and_Iraq#Iran_and_the_Iraqi_Shi.27a

Yerevan Saeed, Arab Gulf States Institute

Iraqi nationalism could be one the weapons to counter Iranian influence in Iraq. In the last two years, a sense of Iraqi nationalism has emerged particularly among the young and new generation, as evidenced by anti-Iranian slogans during protests in various Iraqi cities. In addition, the frustration and disappointment of the Iraqi people, regardless of their ethno-sectarian backgrounds, is another unifier of Iraqis. This trend has emerged from the north to the south of Iraq. However, such sense of Iraqi nationalism is very nascent and yet ethno-sectarian sentiments dominate Iraqi politics and societies. It's through these ethnic cracks that Tehran has been able to penetrate into Iraq and play the role of kingmaker on the Iraqi political and military stage.

Ironically, in the last two years, Iraqi Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has carried the mantle of reform and Iraqi nationalism. He has allegedly allowed his followers to chant anti Iranian slogans. Sadr who has largely sought to escape Iranian influence, prepares to win big in the Iraqi provincial and national elections in Sept. 2017 and April 2018. While Iraqi nationalism appears to emerge due to disappointment, corruption and frustration at the Iraqi political elite, it still cannot be a factor to counter Iranian influence in Iraq. Kurds are seeking to march towards independence and Iraqi Sunnis seek a region similar to Iraqi Kurdistan, where they can govern themselves. And Shias are subject of discussion surrounding Iraqi nationalism since they are in power and control.

Muhanad Seloom, Iraq Center for Strategic Studies

Iraqi nationalism has been a strong factor in countering Iranian influence in Iraq despite the challenges. While Iraq's war against terrorism has deepened ethno-sectarian divisions, Iraqi nationalism has evolved by mirroring the victories against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the shared responsibility to help thousands of the internally displaced people (IDPs). There are several examples supporting this argument. The IDPs in Karbala and Babil provinces, who fled ISIL-controlled areas, are mostly Shiite Turkmens or Shiite Kurds. However, there are approximately 650 Sunni Arab families from Anbar who chose to seek refuge in Shia-majority cities such as Najjaf, Karbala, and Babil. These Sunni Arab families, who fled Ramadi and Falluja after 2014, remain in Babil, Najjaf, and Karbala today.¹⁶ Moreover, in April 2017, [Shia] activists hosted a group of refugees in Shia-majority city of Amara to “embody the unity of Iraq and repair the damage of ISIL [to societal fabric]”.¹⁷

It is evident from the rhetoric¹⁸ that the Iraqi community is aware of the sectarian divisions; but equally aware of the need to mend the damage done to the ethno-sectarian societal fabric. The situation in Iraq continues to be fraught with ethno-sectarian tensions, both on the political and societal levels due to different reasons. Sectarian militias, currently operating under the umbrella of the al-Hashd al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilisation Units), are accused by the Arab Sunni community of committing war crimes and serious Human Rights abuses. Thousands of Sunni men have been kidnapped by the Shia militias since June 2014. Arab Sunni Members of Parliament renewed the call on Shia militias to release over 2900 kidnapped Sunni men.¹⁹ In addition to this strife, internal divisions are encouraged by regional states such as Iran, Turkey, and certain GCC states seeking to create spheres of influence in Iraq. Iran has the most significant and tangible influence in Iraq, represented by the IRGC-backed Shia militias in Iraq. Turkey has penetrated northern Iraq through its unique relationship with the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and certain Sunni Arab and Turkmen groups. The combination of security instability, external influence, and a weak government in Baghdad have had negative effects on nationalism in Iraq.

Despite the challenges, Sunni and Shia Arabs have demonstrated their commitment to defend Iraqi sovereignty and territorial integrity. For example, the majority of Sunni and Shia Arabs have opposed Ankara's military presence in northern Iraq. The Iraqi Parliament, led by Dr. Saleem al-Jebouri who is also a Sunni prominent figure, criticized Turkey's military presence inside Iraq as a violation of state sovereignty. These indicators reveal that nationalism is an important factor in shaping the Iraqi political discourse.

While the examples of nationalism cited in this commentary are unlikely to unite Iraqi ethno-sectarian groups anytime soon, Iraqi nationalism could potentially play a crucial role in mitigating the negative Iranian influence over Iraqi politics. After analyzing data from local Iraqi media outlets and Iraqi social media trends, it is evident that there is an increased sense of nationalism both during and after the liberation of cities from the grip of ISIL. To conclude, nationalism in Iraq can potentially play an important role in not only minimising the Iranian influence inside Iraq but also in creating an ethno-sectarian sense of unity in Iraq.

¹⁶ Al-Sumaria (2016): Refugees from Anbar reach Babil province: <http://www.alsumaria.tv/news/بابلوصول/170934>

¹⁷ Judge Mushreq Naji (2017): <https://twitter.com/mushreq2/status/857607487444451328>

¹⁸ The author has conducted interviews with a sample of cross-sectarian Iraqis.

¹⁹ RUDAW (2017): <http://www.rudaw.net/mobile/arabic/middleeast/iraq/22042017>

[Bilal Wahab, Washington Institute for Near East Policy](#)

The state of Iraqi nationalism is in flux, with recent opportunities to flourish. The Iraqi military's victories and sacrifices—notably Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) and Federal Police—against ISIS have boosted a sense of nationalism. Many militias seek to ride this tide to boost their legitimacy and political standing as elections approach. Another unifying factor is public grievances against ineffective governance, as manifest by insecurity, corruption and lack of public services and economic opportunities. While an opportunity for nationalist platforms to emerge and lead such nationalist trends, vested partisan and sectarian interests on one hand, and weak state institutions on the other, limit the possibility of seeing new national fronts leading Iraq toward more independence, especially from Iran.

In the current Iraqi political system, every political actor has an interest in the state's survival, but also in keeping it weak and fragile. This allows the parties in power to syphon off funds from the government to their respective parties, and build patronage networks through cronyism and mass employment. In effect, Iraqi politics operates in the middle ground between inclusiveness and competition. On the one hand, there is almost too much inclusion; due to the principle of governance by consensus (tawafuq), every political party in parliament controls a ministry or high-level government position. Yet there is fierce competition for such spoils. Maintaining a weak state system allows the parties to secure funding and influence. This model leaves a state that is not rooted in rule of law, good governance, or service delivery; if the state could deliver these services to its people, the power of political parties would weaken as a result. Evidently, such a political system is only possible thanks to oil, a low cost and high yield commodity.

How can post-ISIS Iraq move beyond this system of sectarianism and patronage wielding toward Iraqi nationalism? The answer lies in re-conceptualizing state institutions and international support policies toward building a more inclusive and interconnected economy.

In addition to sectarianism, bad governance contrasted to good governance, only weakens nationalism and promotes insecurity, corruption and a lack of economic opportunities. Sectarianism has served the political elite and guaranteed their tenure of power. The demand for the Iraqi national government to deliver competent governance could be rising. But who can credibly supply it?

The demand for nationalism and nationalist agendas is on the rise. On the one hand, as recent public opinion research from Iraq shows, the Iraqi army fighting ISIS on behalf of all Iraqis has emerged as a symbol of cross-sectarian pride. The liberation of swathes of territory in Mosul and Anbar from ISIS brings a tempered sense of national unity. The professionalization of the Iraqi military and reducing corruption within its ranks are necessary measures for such optimism to take root.

Moreover, Iran and its mode of sectarian governance have failed to deliver. Despite record oil sales and revenues, the Iraqi economy and infrastructure suffer. Even the Shia majority feel let down by their government and its failure to deliver good governance. Grievances generated by such utter failure reflect in demonstrations in the Shia heartland, including Najaf and Basra.

Iran's patronage of the Shia politics has also failed to translate into more security and prosperity for Iraqis in general and the Shia communities in particular. Some have come to realize that Iran does not mean Iraq well. Anti-Iran voices remain faint but getting louder in the house of Shia. Iran's power stems

partly from playing the role of power broker among the myriad of Shia factions. When at times Iran has become too intrusive, as in local Basra politics, taking sides eventually backfires.

Moreover, despite being politically coopted by Iran, Iraq is Iran's economic and energy competitor. Iranian dumping of cheap and subsidized agriculture products into Iraqi market has hurt Iraqi farmers. To increase its quota at OPEC, Iran increased its oil reserves in recent years. Should international oil industry re-enter Iran's energy sector, the two countries will compete for investment capital.

It remains an open question whether Iraqi politics can meet such public *demands*. With elections scheduled for spring of 2018, Iraq's political parties and candidates would strive to appeal to the public's desire for a more unified and better governed Iraq. Iraqi nationalism would be defined in terms of a strong stand against corruption, improving the economy, and tackling poor public services and unemployment. Ironically, such grievances unite Iraqis, be they Sunni, Shia or Kurd.

The way forward lies in professionalizing the Iraqi military and bringing them under state control. The accountability of a civilian government is of paramount importance in post-ISIS Iraq, as multiple militias have brought under the folds of Iraqi military. In addition to militia infiltration, there is the question of corruption, which undermines the institution's legitimacy as a national one. Such reforms are necessary, whether or not mandatory military service is adopted.

As for the economy, one cannot talk of a country without a national economy. Hence, investing in growth-inducing infrastructure and policies is key to address public grievances and promote a sense of nationhood. In other words, the nation needs to deliver. Toward that end, economic integration is necessary, where Iraqis cities and economic hubs are connected and interdependencies are created through highways, railroads, pipelines, and ports. Finally, Iraqis need to see their oil as theirs and account for its translation into growth rather than wasteful spending.

Wayne White, Middle East Policy Council

Before the 2003 Iraq Invasion, it was thought that generalized Iraqi Nationalism, seemingly enhanced greatly by the 9-year Iraq-Iran War, would substantially curb Iranian influence beyond a limited number of Shia militants. As it turned out, however, that level of nationalism was mainly limited to Iraq's largely disenfranchised Sunni Arab minority.

With the advent of a largely Shia/Kurdish Iraqi ruling elite after the 2003 US Invasion, both with past ties to Iran, Iran's role in Iraq spiked. The anti-Americanism of groups like Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army edged aside more standard Iraqi nationalism, fashioning nationalism in a new form—a form in which equally anti-American Iranians & fellow Shia could become allies in a struggle against “occupation.” Nonetheless, although the two dominant Kurdish political parties maintained ties with Iran, they increasingly allied themselves with the US as their problems with majority Shia governments in Baghdad mounted.

Under Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's continued dominance, the ceasefire and cooperation worked out by the US back in 2007-2008 that took 90% of Sunni Arab insurgents out of the battle against Baghdad & seriously weakened Sunni Arab al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) operations was sabotaged by arrests/murders of cooperating Sunni Arab “Awakening” leaders, renegeing on government promises to incorporate Sunni Arab combatants into the security forces, and heavy-handed purges of Sunni Arabs from all manner of government positions—including the Deputy Prime Minister. Maliki's close ties to Iran indicate Iran was witting—more likely advising--in this Shia on Sunni persecution.

The result of Maliki's folly we live with today: a large portion of Iraq's battered & betrayed Sunni Arab community defended itself (and retaliated) by turning to a revitalized AQI that in turn, morphed into ISIL & then ISIS that then seized control of Sunni Arab Iraq, even areas south of Baghdad. ISIS is now but a shadow of its former self, but the association of Sunni Arabs with its beastiality & the destructive re-conquest & sustained bombardment of ISIS-held Sunni Arab areas will result in an even grimmer fate for Iraq's Sunni Arabs and even more Iranian influence over Iraqi politics since Iran aided in the re-conquest.

Current Iraqi Prime Minister al-Abadi, at US request, muted the flagrant anti-Sunni Arab character of regime rhetoric, but, surrounded by many of the hardline Shi'a politicians supporting Maliki did not accept US entreaties to reach a lasting accommodation with Sunni Arabs that would have made many turn on ISIS and reduce the costs of re-conquest. Sunni Arabs will be treated even less well, seeing reduced influence in Baghdad, will probably become involved in even further violence, guaranteeing Iran's considerable influence (and even involvement on the ground) in Iraq to help counter a challenge it is ironically responsible for.

BIOGRAPHIES

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.

Scott Atran

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



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

Institute, Hebrew Univ., Jerusalem; Leverhulme Distinguished Visiting Prof. of Anthropology, Univ. of London-Goldsmiths.; Presidential Scholar, John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

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

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

Munqith Dagher

Dr. Munqith Dagher conducted Iraq's first-ever public opinion poll and since that time has been responsible for undertaking 1,500,000+ 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 and various market research projects. He has lectured widely and published several articles and books in different countries in the world.



Since ISIL took over Mosul in June of 2014, Munqith has dedicated most of his time to exploring the reasons behind the sudden uprising of this terrorist organization and how to defeat it. In the course of this project, he has run three rounds of quantitative and qualitative research in Iraq. Munqith has since published some of these results in the Washington Post and has given several talks and presentations in some of the most well known think tanks in the world, such as the Centre of 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, a Masters degree in Human Resources and War Sciences respectively. He was professor of public administration and strategic management in the Baghdad, Basrah and National

Defence Universities. Munqith has also completed a course in Principles of Marketing Research from the University of Georgia, US.

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.

Karl Kaltenthaler



Karl Kaltenthaler is Professor of Political Science at the University of Akron and Case Western Reserve University. His research and teaching focuses on security policy, political violence, political psychology, public opinion and political behavior, violent Islamist extremism, terrorism, and counterterrorism. He has worked on multiple research studies in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Syria, Tajikistan, and the United States. He is currently researching the radicalization and recruitment process into Islamist violent extremism in different environments as well as ways to counter this process (Countering Violent Extremism). His work has resulted in academic publications and presentations as well as analytic reports and briefings for the

U.S. government. He has consulted for the FBI, the U.S. State Department, the U.S. Intelligence Community and the U.S. military. His research has been published in three books, multiple book chapters, as well as articles in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Political Science Quarterly*, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, as well as other several other journals.

Zana Gulmohamad



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

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

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

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Yerevan Saeed

Yerevan Saeed is a research associate at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. He is an analyst who researches and writes on security, political, and energy issues in the Middle East, focusing on Iraq, Turkey, Iran, the Gulf, and the Levant. He has served as White House correspondent for the Kurdish Rudaw TV and his work has been published in the Washington Institute's Fikra Forum, the Diplomatic Courier, The New York Times, the London based Majalla magazine, Rudaw, Global Politician, and several Kurdish newspapers. In addition, he has been interviewed by Voice of America, NPR, CNN, Voice of Russia, and Kurdish television programs and newspapers. From 2009-13, Saeed worked with STARTFOR as Middle East specialist. He then joined NOVETTA as media analyst for Iraq from 2014 and 2015; additionally, he worked for several media outlets, including The New York Times, NPR, The Wall Street Journal, The Boston Globe, BBC, and The Guardian, as a journalist and translator in Iraq from 2003-07.



Saeed holds a bachelor's degree in government from the University of Texas at Austin and a master's degree from Tufts University's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, with a focus on Middle East studies and international negotiation and conflict resolution. He is a PhD student at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University. He speaks Kurdish, Arabic, and has a command of Farsi.

Muhanad Seloom



Muhanad Seloom is the director of the Iraqi Centre for Strategic Studies (ICSS). He is a linguist [Arabic, English, and Kurdish] with BA in Translation & Linguistics and a criminologist with MA in Comparative Criminology and Criminal Justice. His expertise includes ethno-sectarian conflicts in the Middle East, terrorism, politics of designation, and mechanisms of securitisation. His PhD research examined the relationship between designating groups

“terrorist” and the wider supportive community’s choice to adopt violence. His most recent publications address the prospects of conflict transformation and political settlement in Iraq.

Bilal Wahab

Bilal Wahab is a 2016-2017 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.



Wayne White



Wayne White is a Policy Expert with Washington's Middle East Policy Council. He was formerly the Deputy Director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research's Office of Analysis for the Near East and South Asia (INR/NESA) and senior regional analyst. He also served as Principal Iraq analyst and head of INR/NESA's Iraq team.

White was Chief of INR's Maghreb, Arabian Peninsula, Iran and Iraq division and State Department representative to NATO Middle East working groups. He served as the State Department's intelligence briefer on Iran and Iraq for the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC) and Jordanian cabinet-level officials, and on Iraq, Iran, and Syria for senior Israeli defense and military officials. He was a Political Officer at the US Interests Section in Baghdad, US Sinai Field Mission peacekeeper, and in various capacities as an Embassy Officer in Niger during the Sahel Drought Emergency.