



EMUN

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2014.

Stability continues to elude the Middle East. Over the past year, the Islamic State had made considerable ground in Iraq and Syria, posing a severe threat to the sovereignty of these nations. The region continues to grow as a global extremist hub, attracting extremists from a wide range of backgrounds. World security is once again under threat and our hearts go out to those who living under the tyrannous rule of these militants.

The Iraqi War Cabinet assembles together some of the most shrewd politicians and advisors from countries that are directly threatened by the advance of the Islamic State. This is a committee where most of you will have a common agenda but not a common plan of achieving it. Here you will find yourself among individuals who are just as passionate about finding a long term solution to the Middle East's troubles. A solution to such a complex problem, with so many racial and religious differences to consider, will not be easy, but I do expect that all of you will be creative and think critically about the policies you will implement. Expect twists and turns, betrayals and the weirdest of Allies, this is the Iraqi War Cabinet.

"You don't despair about something like the Middle East, you just do the best you can."

~ P.J. O'Rourke

Wrong.

Your Chairperson,
Saad Khan

Note to All Delegates: COMMITTEE BEGINS ON THE 10TH OF JUNE, 2014

Iraqi War Cabinet

The ISI to the ISIL to the IS¹

The group originated as Jama'at al-Tawhid wal-Jihad in 1999, which became Tanzim Qaidat al-Jihad fi Bilad al-Rafidayn—commonly known as Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI)—in 2004. Following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, AQI took part in the Iraqi insurgency. In 2006, it joined other Sunni insurgent groups to form the Mujahideen Shura Council, which consolidated further into the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI) shortly afterwards. ISI gained a significant presence in Al Anbar, Nineveh, Kirkuk and other areas, but around 2008, its violent methods, including suicide attacks on civilian targets and the widespread killing of prisoners, led to a backlash from Sunni Iraqis and other insurgent groups.

In April 2013, the group changed its name to the **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant**. It grew significantly under the leadership of Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, and after entering the Syrian Civil War, it established a large presence in the Syrian governorates of Ar-Raqqah, Idlib, Deir ez-Zor and Aleppo. ISIL had close links to al-Qaeda until February 2014 when, after an eight-month power struggle, al-Qaeda cut all ties with the group, citing its failure to consult and "notorious intransigence"

Shia - Sunni Tensions²

Perhaps the single most important factor in ISIS' recent resurgence is the conflict

between Iraqi Shias and Iraqi Sunnis. ISIS fighters themselves are Sunnis, and the tension between the two groups is a powerful recruiting tool for ISIS. The difference between the two largest Muslim groups originated with a controversy over who got to take power after the Prophet Muhammed's death.

A majority of Iraqis are Shias, but Sunnis ran the show when Saddam Hussein, himself Sunni, ruled Iraq. Saddam spread a false belief, still surprisingly persistent today, that Sunnis were the real majority in Iraq. Thus, Sunnis felt, and still feel, entitled to larger shares of political power than might perhaps be warranted by their size. The civil war after the American invasion had a brutally sectarian cast to it, and the pseudo-democracy that emerged afterwards empowered the Shia majority (with some heavy-handed help from Washington). Today, the two groups don't trust each other, and so far have competed in a zero-sum game for control over Iraqi political institutions. For instance, Shia used control over the police force to arbitrarily detain Sunni protestors demanding more representation in government last year. So long as Shias control the government, and Sunnis don't feel like they're fairly represented, ISIS has an audience for its radical Sunni message.

Financing the IS

The Islamic State is widely believed to be primarily financed by rich, sympathetic donors in the Middle East. However, evidence suggests that this is false. The IS makes millions of dollars every day selling oil from seized territory. It holds no less than sixty percent of Syria's oil production

¹ Sly, L. Washington Post. 02 March 2014. Web. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/al-qaeda-disavows-any-ties-with-radical-islamist-isis-group-in-syria-iraq/2014/02/03/2c9afc3a-8cef-11e3-98ab-fe5228217bd1_story.html>

² Beuchamp, Zack. Vox Media. Web. <<http://www.vox.com/cards/things-about-isis-you-need-to-know/iraqi-army-sectarian-lines>>

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resources. It transports its oil through a long-standing black market on the Turkish border, in which corrupt border guards and an inefficient system allow for IS to sell their oil at an unregulated price as low as twenty dollars a barrel, undercutting the world market.

Key Developments and Strategic Locations

Figure 1

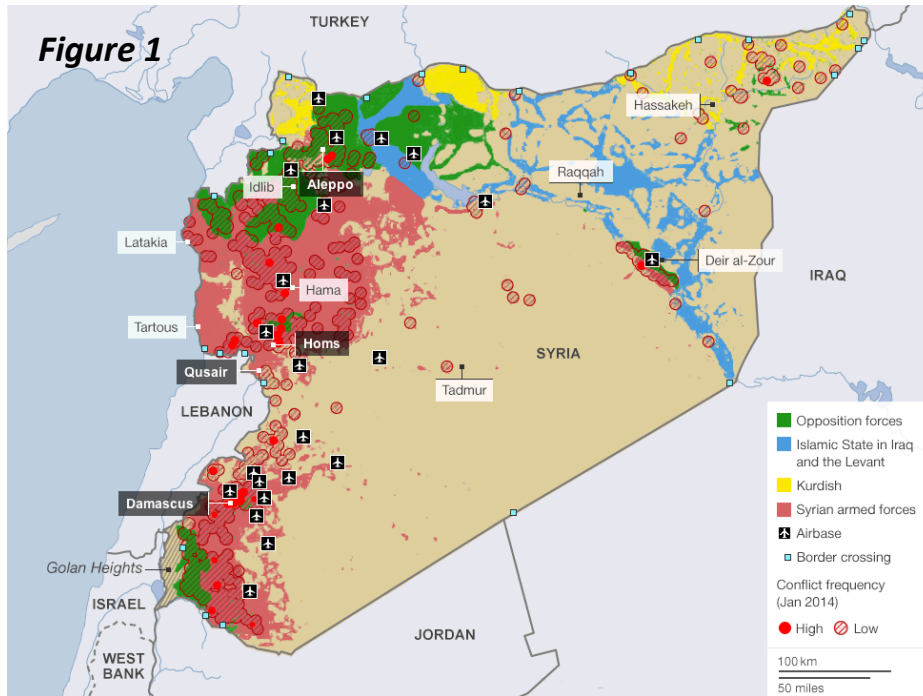


Figure 2

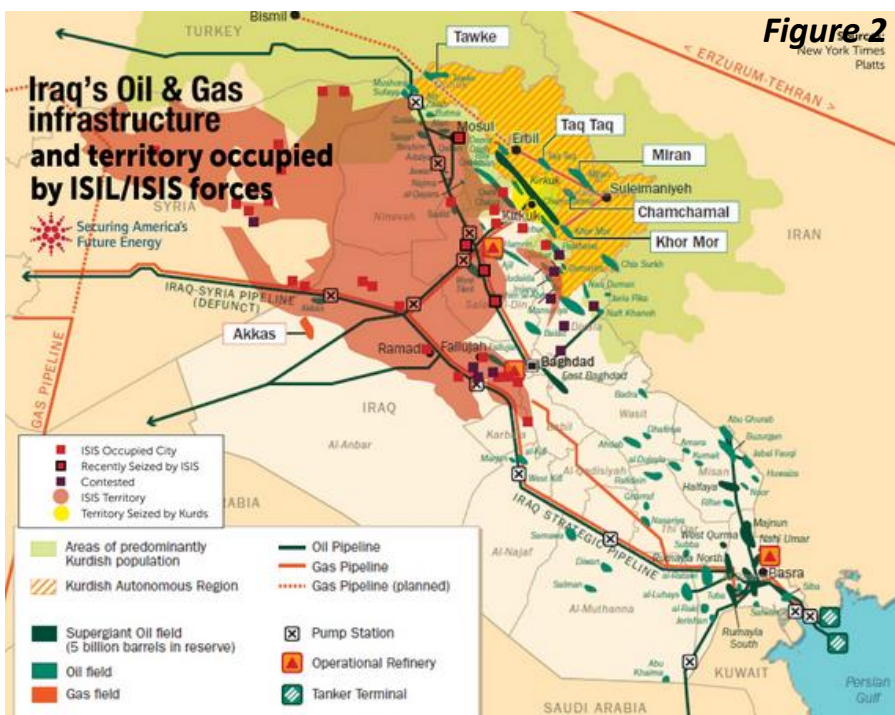


Figure 1: March 2014 - Regions Held by Kurdish, Syrian and ISIS forces in Syria (Source: Vox)

Figure 2: Iraqi Oil Infrastructure and Territory occupied by IS Forces (Source: New York Times)

A Brief Timeline:

2006 - Under al-Zarqawi, al Qaeda in Iraq tries to ignite a sectarian war against the majority Shia community.

June 7, 2006 - Al-Zarqawi is killed in a U.S. strike. Abu Ayyub al-Masri, also known as Abu Hamza al-Muhajer, takes his place as leader of AQI.

October 2006 - AQI leader Abu Ayyub al-Masri announces the creation of Islamic State in Iraq (ISI), and establishes Abu Omar al-Baghdadi as its leader.

April 2010 - Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi becomes leader of ISI after Abu Omar al-Baghdadi and Abu Ayyub al-Masri are killed in a joint U.S.-Iraqi operation.

April 8, 2013 - ISI declares its absorption of an al Qaeda-backed militant group in Syria, Jabhat al-Nusra, also known as the al-Nusra Front. Al-Baghdadi says that his group will now be known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIS).

April 2013 - Al-Nusra Front leader Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani rejects ISIS's attempt to merge with the group.

22 January, 2014: Over 50 ISIL militants were killed by Iraqi Air Force strikes in Anbar province.

February 3, 2014 - Al Qaeda renounces ties to ISIS after months of infighting between al-Nusra Front and ISIS.

8 March, 2014: Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki accused Saudi Arabia and Qatar of openly funding ISIL

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27 April, 2014: Iraqi helicopters reportedly destroyed an ISIL convoy inside Syria. This may be the first time that Iraqi forces have struck outside their country since the Gulf War

May 2014 - ISIS kidnaps more than 140 Kurdish schoolboys in Syria, forcing them to take lessons in radical Islamic theology.

June 9, 2014 - Monday night into Tuesday, militants seize Mosul's airport, its TV stations and the governor's office. ISIS frees up to 1,000 prisoners.

IS Structure and Weaponry

The self – declared caliphate is governed by Abu Bakr al – Baghdadi and his council of deputies. The Shura and Sharia Councils, in theory, aid the caliph. The Shura is responsible of ensuring that the Caliph carries out his duties and has the power to dismiss him, if he fails to do so. The Sharia, is responsible for implementing Sharia Law. Reporting to the Sharia, among others, is the Provincial Council, responsible of the administration of the IS's 18 provinces and the Security Council, responsible for eliminating any threats to the Caliph.

Despite having a relatively unskilled military force, the weaponry IS has acquired is put to excellent use. Tanks and anti – tank weaponry, used mainly for assaults on remote military bases and defending captured territory have made the IS a formidable force. The weaponry held by the IS is concentrated at it's borders, with the inflow of foreign fighters, especially from Afghanistan, bringing in expertise of how to operate these weapons. Defections from the Iraqi army, though few, have been steadily increasing citing differences in 'religious ideas'.

Major Players

The Iraqi Armed Forces

The Iraqi army has 250,000 troops, plus armed police. **The Iraqi War Cabinet starts on the 3rd of June, 2014, a day after the capture of Mosul by IS militants. To put it simply, 30,000 Iraqi troops ran from nearly 800 militants.** The Iraqi army is mixed Sunni-Shia, and "it appears that the Iraqi Army is cleaving along sectarian lines," Yale University insurgency expert Jason Lyall said. "The willingness of Sunni soldiers to fight to retake Mosul appears limited." This makes some sense out of the Mosul rout: some Sunni Muslims don't really want to fight other Sunnis in the name of a government that oppresses them. This suggests a natural limit to ISIS' expansion. Mosul is a mostly Sunni city, but military resistance should be much stiffer in Shia areas.

Iraqi Kurdistan

Iraqi Kurdistan in Iraq is governed semi-autonomously. The Kurdish security forces are partly integrated with the government, but there's somewhere between 80,000 and 240,000 Kurdish Peshmerga (militias) who don't answer to Baghdad. They're well equipped and trained. As of June 2014, the IS has had no successful excursions into Kurdish held territory. The advance of the IS have been a bit of a boon for the Kurds, with the major oil fields captured due to the diversion of police forces to Baghdad and regions threatened by the IS.

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Figure 3: Kurdish Control in Iraq (Source: Vox)

Quds Forces (Iran)

The Iranian government is Shia, and it has close ties with the Iraqi government. Much like in Syria, Iran doesn't want Sunni Islamist rebels to topple a friendly Shia government. So in both countries, Iran has gone to war. Iran has sent about 500 Revolutionary Guards to help Iraq fight ISIS. They're Quds Force, the Guards' elite special operations group. The Quds Force is one of the most effective military forces in the Middle East, a far cry from the undisciplined and disorganized Iraqi forces that fled from a much smaller ISIS force in Mosul. One former CIA officer called Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani "*the single most powerful operative in the Middle East today.*" But of course, Iraqis haven't forgotten the Iraq – Iran war and many don't want foreign intervention.

Special Groups in Iraq

Ever since the American intervention in Iraq, certain 'Special Groups' have existed in Iraq. Mainly paramilitary entities, some of these groups also have separate political committees. The Badr group for example is tied with the ruling party in Iraq and has a leader representing it as the Deputy Governorate of Baghdad. Some are said to be linked to the Mahdi army, headed by Muqtada al – Sadr. As Shia majority organizations, the IS is their common enemy however, many share complicated relationships with the Iraq state, with leaders openly declared as 'terrorists' but allowed to roam free by the Iraqi military, as a result of their anti – IS views.

Some Points to Consider

- Do the Iraqi armed forces require foreign intervention to reclaim lost Iraqi territory? If so, from whom and how?
- How is a primarily Iraqi committee to deal with IS strongholds in Syria?
- Is Baghdad secure from an IS attack?
- How are the Iraqis to secure military, financial and strategic assets from an IS attack?

Some Reading Material:

<http://www.vox.com/cards/isis-myths-iraq/crazy-irrational>

<http://www.vox.com/2014/9/25/6843611/14-maps-that-explain-isis>