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# Contemporary conflict analysis of Iraq

Rapid literature review  
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## About this report

This rapid review is based on eleven days of desk-based research and provides a short synthesis of the literature on conflict and peace in Iraq. It was prepared for the European Commission's Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace, © European Union 2014. The views expressed in this report are those of the author, and do not represent the opinions or views of the European Union, the GSDRC, or the partner agencies of the GSDRC.

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# 1. Overview

The 2003 invasion of Iraq left a legacy of violence and a political system which was increasingly used by political leaders for sectarian advantage. After a period of relative stability, **violence has increased** in Iraq during 2014, to levels last seen during the sectarian conflict in 2006/7. Since the beginning of 2014, an extreme jihadist group ISIL/Da'esh, who are also active in Syria, has gained control of territory in the mainly Sunni and contested areas of Iraq including Kirkuk, Diyala, Anbar, Salah al Din and Ninewa.

As of October 2014, the fighting has caused the internal displacement of 1.8 million people and there are 5.2 million who need urgent humanitarian assistance. The conflict has taken on an increasingly **sectarian nature** and **minorities**<sup>1</sup> have been disproportionately affected.

**Actors** involved include: i) ISIL/Da'esh<sup>2</sup> and various Sunni armed groups ranging from secular nationalist to Salafist jihadist, who work together and occasionally in opposition to each other; ii) Sunni tribes, some of whom support ISIL/Da'esh and some of whom opposed them; iii) the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF); iv) various Shia militia groups who have a close relationship with ISF; and v) the Kurdish *peshmerga* (the Kurdish Regional Government's (KRG) armed forces).

The roots of this violence include:

- **Sunni alienation** as a result of the '**sectarianisation**' of the **political system**. This has left many Sunni's **lacking trust** in state institutions and a **weakening sense of Iraqi identity**.
- **Feelings of insecurity** as a result of the increasing Shia make-up of Iraqi Security Forces and sectarian, unregulated and unaccountable militias. **Sectarian attacks** have helped to perpetuate the conflict.
- **Underlying structural tensions** including lack of services, education and employment and discrimination against minorities.

The **trigger** for the current conflict was the violent crackdown on peaceful Sunni protests which was taken advantage of by armed anti-government Sunni groups and ISIL/Da'esh, who use legitimate discontent with the government as a justification for their actions.

The conflict is closely interconnected with the conflict in **Syria**. There is the potential for deepening sectarian conflict. **Airstrikes** and attempts at an **inclusive political solution** are changing the conflict dynamics. **ISF and ISIL/Da'esh's capacity** can affect the course of the conflict. **Resistance to ISIL/Da'esh** is emerging in areas they control, such as Mosul.

**Potential conflict risks** include: i) the Kirkuk territorial dispute; ii) overburdened internally displaced persons/refugee hosts; iii) rising ethnic tensions; iv) southern Iraqi unhappiness with the government; v) calls for the breakup of Iraq; vi) intra-Sunni violence; and vii) control over water.

**Short-term scenarios** for the future include: a stalemate with sustained levels of violence along ethno-sectarian lines; an ISIL/Da'esh offensive on Baghdad; and the establishment of a coalition government which leads to an

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<sup>1</sup> See Appendix 1 for details of Iraq's ethnic minorities

<sup>2</sup> Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)/ Islamic State(IS)/Da'esh

erosion of Sunni support for ISIL/Da'esh. **Medium to long-term scenarios** include: the Kurds declare independence or Iraq breaks into three.

The literature<sup>3</sup> does not engage much with **peacebuilding platforms** or actors. Some **common ground** can be found in: i) the general rejection of violent groups; ii) Sunni support for secular democracy; and iii) a sense of common identity. Some important **peacebuilding actors** could include: religious leaders, women and youth, and civil society organisations.

**Regional actors** have been very involved the conflict in Iraq, including Syria, Iran, Turkey, and the Gulf States, and have played both a positive and negative role.

**Conflict responses** include: the stepping down of Maliki and an attempt to form a more inclusive government; and targeted air strikes by countries such as the United States and France.

**Recommendations** for action emerging from the literature include: i) use ideas to combat ISIL/Da'esh; ii) do not give in to a sectarian narrative; iii) address the underlying issues; iv) address the conflict in Syria v) make ISF and other institutions inclusive; vi) recognise minority rights; vii) clarify the status of disputed territories; viii) deal with militias and human rights abuses; ix) develop an inclusive regional security structure; x) cut off support to ISIL/Da'esh; and xi) provide conflict-sensitive military support.

## 2. Key actors

The situation in Iraq is dynamic, and it is difficult to get accurate reports identifying the actors of violence and their relationships (Home Office, 2014, p. 37). The key actors include:

### *Political actors*

Iraqi Sunni leaders like Usama al-Nujaifi, Atheel al-Nujaifi, and Salih al-Mutlaq have lost most of the popular support they had by the end of 2013 as a result of being seen to work too closely with Maliki (Adnan, 2014, p. 24). In creating a more inclusive government, attempts to incorporate Sunni political leaders who do not have the support of their communities are unlikely to make a difference to resolving the conflict (Adnan, 2014, p. 25).

**Table 1: Major Political Factions in Post-Saddam Iraq**

Faction	Leadership/Description
Da'wa Party/State of Law Coalition	The largest faction of the Da'wa Party has been led since 2006 by Nuri al-Maliki, who displaced former Da'wa leader (and former Prime Minister) Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Da'wa is the core of the "State of Law" political coalition. Iraq's current Prime Minister, Haydar al-Abadi, is a Da'wa member.
Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI)	Current leader is Ammar al-Hakim, who succeeded his father Abd al-Aziz al-Hakim upon his death in 2009. The Hakims descend from the revered late Grand Ayatollah Muhsin Al Hakim, who hosted Iran's Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini when he was in exile in Iraq during 1964-1978.

<sup>3</sup> As this is a current and rapidly evolving conflict, much of literature emerging from this rapid review comes mainly from Western think tanks, organisations working in Iraq and opinion pieces.

Sadrists	Moqtada Al Sadr is leader, despite his “withdrawal from politics” in 2014. Formed a Shiite militia called the Mahdi Army during the US military presence, which it disbanded in 2009. Sadr is son of revered Ayatollah Mohammad Sadiq Al Sadr, who was killed by Saddam’s security forces in 1999, and a relative of Mohammad Baqr Al Sadr, a Shiite theoretician and contemporary and colleague of Ayatollah Khomeini. The Sadrists boycotted the January 2005 elections but have competed in all elections since. In 2014, competed under the “Al Ahrar” (Liberal) banner.
Kurdish Factions: Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), and Gorran	Masoud Barzani heads the KDP and is the elected President of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The PUK is led by Jalal Talabani, who was President of Iraq until the 2014 government section process. Iraq’s current president, Fouad Masoum, is a senior PUK leader as well. Gorran (“Change”) is an offshoot of the PUK.
Iraqi National Alliance/ ”Iraqiyya”	Led by Iyad al-Allawi, a longtime anti-Saddam activist who was transitional Prime Minister during the period June 2004-February 2005. Allawi is a Shiite Muslim but most of his bloc’s supporters are Sunnis, of which many are ex-Baath Party members. Iraqiyya bloc fractured after the 2010 national election into blocs loyal to Allawi and to various Sunni leaders including ex-COR speaker Osama al-Nujaifi and deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq. Allawi and Nujaifi are both vice presidents in the government formed in September 2014, and Mutlaq has retained his deputy prime ministerial post.
Iraqi Islamic Party	Sunni faction loyal to ousted Vice President Tariq al-Hashimi. Hashimi was part of the Iraqiyya alliance in the 2010 election. He fled a Maliki-ordered arrest warrant in late 2011 and has remained mostly in Turkey since.

Source: adapted from Katzman, 2014, p. 2

### ***Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)***

The ISF had been nicknamed ‘Maliki’s militia’ as a result of the changes he made and it’s increasingly Shia composition (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 10). Maliki’s policies resulted in Sunnis being purged from the security forces to be replaced by loyal Shia and the use of sectarian militant groups such as the Iranian backed Shia militia Asaib Ahel al-Haq (Krieg, 2014, p. 2). In addition, much of the rank and file of the security sector are underpaid, underequipped, understaffed, and under-trained and have little sense of duty to the public or faith in their capabilities, which makes it harder to challenge ISIL/Da’esh (Krieg, 2014, pp. 2-3).

### ***Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)/ Islamic State(IS)/Da’esh***

ISIL/Da’esh<sup>4</sup> is the main insurgent group in Iraq. It is an off-shoot of al-Qaeda in Iraq, although it acts independently and increasingly in competition with al-Qaeda (Puttick, 2014, p. 3). Its leader is Abu Omar al-Baghdadi. It is transnational and controls territory in north-western Iraq and north-eastern Syria, threatening the security of both countries (Katzman et al, 2014, p. 1). It has declared an Islamic caliphate in the territory it controls in Iraq and Syria (Katzman, 2014, p. 8).

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<sup>4</sup> ISIL/Da’esh is known by a variety of different names listed above. ISIL/Da’esh is used by the European Council: [http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article\\_15603\\_en.htm](http://eu-un.europa.eu/articles/en/article_15603_en.htm)






ISIL/Da'esh made rapid advances in Iraq in June 2014 as it captured swathes of territory and major population centres including Mosul, Tikrit, and Tal Afar and Al Qaim near the Syrian border (Puttick, 2014, p. 3). The capture of Mosul was a surprise to many observers as it had a garrison of 30,000 ISF (Puttick, 2014, p. 3). Its transnational nature is illustrated by the suggestion that ISIL/Da'esh fighters from Syria helped capture Mosul and surrounding territory (Katzman, 2014, p. 18).

ISIL/Da'esh is the most violence component of the Sunni rebellion and has threatened the Iraqi capital, Bagdad (Katzman, 2014, p. 8, 19). They have made sectarian calls for violence and identify Shias, non-Muslims, and unsupportive Sunnis as enemies (Katzman et al, 2014, p. 1; Amnesty International, 2014b; Home Office, 2014, p. 40). They have carried out ethnic cleansing in northern Iraq and systematically targeted non-Arab and non-Sunni Muslim communities, killing or abducting hundreds, possibly thousands, and forcing more than 830,000 to flee (Amnesty International, 2014b, p. 4).

ISIL/Da'esh is said to have significant financial resources as a result of funding from individuals in Arab Gulf states and income from oil fields it now controls and from smuggling and extortion (Home Office, p. 34). It has a very prominent media campaign and has attracted recruits from across the world, including many Western states, although the majority of its recruits in Iraq seem to be Arab Iraqis (Katzman et al, 2014, p.1; ACAPS, 2014b, p. 10).

### ***Iraqi Sunni Insurgency Groups:***

**Table 2: Iraq's 'revolutionary' and jihadist Sunni armed groups include<sup>5</sup>:**

Organization Name	Logo	Leader	Orientation	Claimed Areas of Operation
The General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries, JRTN, and the Iraqi Baath Party		Izzat al-Duri (and possibly others)	Nationalist and secular	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamrin system</li> <li>• Anbar</li> <li>• Baghdad Belts</li> </ul>
1920 Brigades		Harith al- Dhari is a major figure	Islamist, jihadist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamrin system</li> <li>• Baghdad Belts</li> </ul>
The Islamic Army in Iraq		Ahmed al-Dabash (and possibly others)	Islamist, Nationalist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamrin system</li> <li>• Anbar</li> </ul>
Jaysh al-Mujahidin		Haqi Ismael al-Shortani (and possibly others)	Salafist, Jihadist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamrin system</li> <li>• Anbar</li> <li>• Baghdad Belts</li> </ul>
Ansar al-Islam		Warya Holori, also known as Abu Abdullah al-Shafei (Although recent artifacts mentioned the pseudonym Sheikh Abu Hashim al-Ibrahim)	Salafist, Jihadist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hamrin system</li> <li>• Baghdad belts</li> </ul>
Fallujah Military Council	None	Unknown	Combined	Fallujah

Source: Adnan, 2014, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> For more detailed information on the individual groups please see Appendix 2



Many of the Sunni insurgency groups ranging from the secular General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries (GMCIR) to the Salafist jihadist Ansar al-Islam have been active historically and re-emerged as Sunni discontent escalated after the Hawija protest incident in April 2013 and the Anbar clashes of late 2013 (Adnan, 2014, p. 24; Katzman, 2014). Some of the Sunni opposition groups have supported ISIL/Da'esh to expel the ISF from parts of Iraq, particularly the General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries (GMC IR) (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). Their relationship with ISIL/Da'esh is complicated as they do not share ISIL/Da'esh's long term goals but, despite violent clashes between them, their presence behind ISIL/Da'esh lines will create difficulties for ISF rather than provide an advantage (Adnan, 2014, p. 4, 24).

The GMC IR, which is Ba'athist aligned, and Ansar al-Islam are among the most capable of the Sunni opposition groups and present long-term threats to the Iraqi state (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). Even smaller groups are capable of disrupting ISF operations and making them more vulnerable. These groups are likely to prioritise the fight against the Iraqi state over the fight against ISIL/Da'esh and meet any ground incursion in Sunni areas under ISIL/Da'esh's control by ISF with armed opposition (Adnan, 2014, p. 4).

A report looking at the Sunni insurgency suggests that operations to combat ISIL/Da'esh are likely to provide opportunities for these anti-government groups to strengthen and expand their areas of operation (Adnan, 2014, p. 24). This is likely to be helped by the popular support they have as a result of the policies of the Maliki government (Adnan, 2014, p. 24). One expert recommends paying attention to whether this popular support decreases as a result of the new government which is being formed with a wider representation of the Iraqi Sunni community, as a weakening of support will help combat the anti-government opposition (Adnan, 2014, p. 24).

### ***Sunni tribes***

Despite many of Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes opposing ISIL/Da'esh extreme interpretation of Islam, Puttick (2014, p. 3) argues they are not willing to fight against ISIL/Da'esh on behalf of a government many feel does not represent them. ISIL/Da'esh's successes in the Sunni Arab heartland cities and towns indicates collaboration exists between ISIL/Da'esh and some local tribes, as well as Sunni militia forces (Puttick, 2014, p. 3).

### ***Non-oppositional Sunni communities***

The armed groups do not represent all Iraqi Sunni communities (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). Other Sunni groups are actively cooperating with the government to defend against an existential ISIL/Da'esh threat. These are mostly tribal communities, including the Jughaifi tribe in Haditha, west of Ramadi; the Albu Issa, Fhailat, Ihrimat, Halabasa, and Albu Alwan tribes in Amiriyat al-Fallujah, southeast of Fallujah; the Jubur in Dhuluiya, southeast of Samarra; the Izza tribe in Mansouriya, northeast of Baquba; and Shamar tribe in Rabia, west of Mosul (Adnan, 2014, p. 25).

A number of other communities are likely to fight ISIL/Da'esh if they can be assured that the government or another armed group would provide them with the necessary military and political backing (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). They include components of the Jubur tribe in Alam, east of Tikrit; the Ubaid tribe in and around Hawija, south-western Kirkuk; and elements of the Jubur tribe in Zowiya, northern Salah ad-Din (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). Their support may be influenced by the opportunity to participate in re-formed National Guard units, which allow Iraqi Sunnis to draw a government salary to defend and control their areas in a semi-independent fashion from central federal forces (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). In addition, incentives to displaced persons to return to their homes once they have been returned to Iraqi government control may be helpful (Adnan, 2014, p. 25).

ISIL/Da'esh recently killed at least 220 members of the Sunni Albu Nimr tribe in retaliation to the tribe's opposition to ISIL/Da'esh's takeover of their territory (Reuters, 2014).

## ***Shia militias***

An Amnesty International (2014a) report highlights that Shia militias, with varying degrees of cooperation from government forces, have been abducting and killing Sunnis in Baghdad, Samarra, Kirkuk and elsewhere around the country. These attacks have been carried out with impunity (Amnesty international, 2014a, p. 5; see also Katzman, 2014, p. 26). The largest Shia militias have tens of thousands of fighters and operate outside of any legal framework (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 17).

A number of the Shia militia groups are backed by Iran (Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 14). They have long been operating with the backing and blessing of successive Iraqi central governments and after the flight of the Iraqi army from much of the country, their power and legitimacy has dramatically increased with calls for volunteers to take up arms against ISIL/Da'esh (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 17). Cooperation with the army/security forces means lines between them are increasingly blurred and the militias appear to have more authority and effective power on the ground than the struggling government forces (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 17, 18).

Iraq's main Shia militias include (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 17; see also Katzman, 2014, pp. 10-11):

The **Badr Brigades** (or Badr Corps or Badr Organisation), the military wing of the Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council (SIIC), was created in the 1980s with the backing of Iran to fight Saddam Hussein. It is currently headed by Hadi al-Ameri, a former transport minister in the Government of Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki [until September 2014] who also heads the Badr Organization political party.

The **Mahdi Army** of cleric Moqtada al-Sadr had become the most powerful militia following the 2003 US occupation of Iraq, but was officially dissolved in 2008. It was revived in June with the creation of its offshoot **Saraya al-Salam** (Peace Brigade).

The **Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq** (League of the Righteous) was established around 2005 as a splinter group of the Mahdi Army under the leadership of Qais al-Khaz'ali and is linked to General Qassem Suleimani, the head of al-Quds Force of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). It is believed to be currently the most powerful of the Shia militias. In the past two years some of its members have been fighting in Syria alongside Syrian government forces battling Sunni armed opposition groups.

The **Kata'ib Hizbullah** (Hizbullah Brigades), unrelated to the Lebanese Hizbullah and reportedly an offshoot of the Mahdi Army's "Special Groups".

## ***The Kurds and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)***

Iraqi Kurds interest in outright independence has been increasing in recent years as the issues dividing the KRG and Baghdad have expanded (Katzman, 2014, p. 17). A key dividing issue has been the distribution of oil revenues (Katzman, 2014, p. 17). Their seizure of Kirkuk has given the Kurds even more control over economic resources and may make independence more likely (Katzman, 2014, p. 17).

However, the ISIL/Da'esh threat to Kurdish-controlled territory put independence discussions on hold (Katzman, 2014, p. 17). In addition, some commentators suggest that the Kurds would accept a better-revenue-sharing formula and improved relationship with the central government rather than independence (PILPG, 2014, p. 9).

They have own force of *peshmerga* (Kurdish militiamen), which number about 150,000 active duty fighters but have struggled to access heavy duty weaponry (Katzman, 2014, p. 12; ACAPS, 2014b, p. 10). Recently the US and others have begun to supply arms to them in order to support their right against ISIL/Da'esh and to support their protection on minority groups (Katzman, 2014, p. 23).

### 3. Key structural tensions, vulnerabilities, and proximate drivers

As mentioned above, levels of violence have dramatically increased in Iraq during 2014. Much of the country is under the control of the various different pro- or anti-government actors, while other areas are hotly contested. The roots and drivers of this violence include:

#### *'Sectarianisation' of the State*

Many commentators agree that the roots of the current crisis was the increasing 'sectarianisation' of the political system and attempts to monopolise power by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, followed by his heavy-handed response to an emergent Sunni protest movement in 2013 which alienated Sunnis<sup>7</sup> (Lynch, 2014, p. 3; Adnan, 2014, p. 10). Most of the current anti-government groups have been active during the Sunni insurgency following the fall of former President Saddam Hussein (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). As Sunni political participation increased during 2009 and 2010 the prominence of these groups declined (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). In 2011, when the US forces withdrew, the situation was relatively stable (Katzman, 2014, p. ii). However, after the US withdrew in 2011, Maliki's political marginalisation of Sunni leaders and sectarian command of the Iraqi Security Forces led to an anti-government protest movement in Sunni areas such as Anbar and Salah ad-Din in 2013 (Adnan, 2014, p. 4; Katzman, 2014, p. 16).

The protestors also demanded the release of prisoners, particularly women; a repeal of Article 4 anti-terrorism laws under which many Sunnis are incarcerated; reform or end to the de-Baathification laws that have been used against Sunnis; and improved government services (Katzman, 2014, p. 16). Some commentators suggest that the 'protest movement was emboldened by the Sunni-led rebellion in neighbouring Syria' (Katzman, 2014, p. 16).

#### *Security concerns*

The main grievances of most Iraqi Sunnis include the integration of Shia militias into the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and attacks by the ISF in Sunni civilian areas (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). The increasing Shia representation in ISF alienated Sunnis and Kurds, who already felt marginalised by the regime's socio-economic policies (Krieg, 2014, p. 2). Due to these changes which Maliki made to the security sector, many Iraqis did not feel protected by the state's security sector and turned instead to religious militias, neighbourhood watches, and tribal insurgent groups for security (Krieg, 2014, p. 1).

Lack of political will to hold accountable militias and Iraqi central government forces responsible for abductions and deliberate killings has been a long-standing concern throughout the country (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 13). Amnesty International (2014a, p. 24) suggest that the continued existence of sectarian, unregulated and unaccountable militias is both a cause and a result of the country's growing insecurity and instability. They make it much harder to establish effective and accountable security and armed forces who are able and willing to protect all sectors of the population and enforce the law equally (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 24).

The partial collapse of the ISF, aided ISIL/DA'ESH and its allies to take control of several cities in Anbar Province in early 2014 and capture to Mosul and several other mostly Sunni cities in June 2014, while KRG was able to seize control of the long-coveted city of Kirkuk (Katzman, 2014, p. ii).

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<sup>7</sup> See below for more information about the protests

One commentator suggests that ISIL/Da'esh's success is the 'testimony to a failed policy of the interrelated political and security sector reform in Iraq' (Krieg, 2014, p. 1).

### ***Sectarian attacks***

Sectarian attacks have increased to a level not seen since 2006/7, with government-backed Shia militias and Sunni armed opposition groups both targeting civilians from each other's communities in a vicious cycle which perpetuates the conflict (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 4).

A number of religious leaders and clerics, such as Harith Al Thari, a prominent Sunni Arab cleric from Anbar and chairman of the Association of Muslim Scholars, have fuelled the conflict by affiliating with anti-government insurgents and justifying violence through Islamic and anti-Shia Wahhabi principles (Ali, 2014, p. 1-2).

### ***Other underlying structural tensions***

Other underlying tensions which strained relations with the government include: lack of services and infrastructure; lack of education (especially in rural areas); unemployment of youth and women; poverty due to corruption and unjust wealth distribution; discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities; random detention; and limited freedom of expression (Ali, 2014, p. 3).

### ***Public opinions***

Polls reveal that in areas where ISIL/Da'esh has seized control, conditions were favourable to them a result of rampant insecurity, deteriorating economic conditions, and alienation from the Shia majority government (Charney, 2014; Dagher, 2014, p. 4). There were clear differences of opinion in Sunni or Shia dominated areas relating to confidence in the national government and the April 2014 elections (Charney, 2014). Polling by IIASS, an Iraqi market research firm, between June and September 2014 reveals that Sunnis feel that 'things in Iraq are going in the wrong direction', ranging from 82.7 per cent in January 2014 to 91 per cent in July 2014 (Dagher, 2014, p. 9). Sunnis' sense of Iraqi identity as their primary identity has dropped sharply from 80 per cent in 2008 to 40 per cent today (Dagher, 2014, p. 18). Sunnis also feel more insecure than Shias and Kurds (Dagher, 2014, p. 11).

Polls in July 2014 show that trust in institutions such as the government, courts and the legal system is low amongst all groups with only 3.8 per cent of Sunnis trusting in the government, 36 per cent of Shias and 28 per cent of Kurds (Dagher, 2014, p. 14)<sup>8</sup>.

### ***Sunni attitudes***

Some commentators suggest that a factor which contributed to the present crisis and which makes it difficult to resolve, is that many Sunnis reject the entire post-2003 political order and this is part of the reason they support the insurgency (Haddad, 2014, p. 17). A difficult factor in including them politically comes from the widespread Sunni rejection, even amongst Sunni politicians, of the idea that they are a numerical minority, which means their expectations regarding sectarian balance are unlikely to be able to be met (Haddad, 2014, p. 18).

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<sup>8</sup> Other causes for concern and hope for Sunnis, Shia and Kurds polled by IIASS in July 2014 can be found in Appendix 3

### ***Trigger for the current conflict***

During early 2013 Sunnis began to protest against the government and its policies which were alienating them from the state (see above for details). The protest movement was initially peaceful but after ISF killed civilians while attempting to clear a protest camp in Hawija in April 2013, an organised, overt militant opposition to the Iraqi government emerged (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). Violent Sunni elements reawakened and used the sentiments behind Iraq's longstanding protest movements to justify their actions and to move against ISF and reignite the sectarian war which prevailed during 2006-2008 to destabilise Maliki and his Shia led rule (Adnan, 2014, p. 10; Katzman, 2014, p. 16). The armed Sunni rebellion created conditions in Fallujah and Mosul that ISIL/Da'esh exploited to capture the cities in January and June 2014, respectively (Adnan, 2014, p. 4; Katzman, 2014, p. 16; Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1; ACAPS, 2014b, p. 2). Violence increased as Shia militias who had fallen dormant as security improved in Iraq post 2008 began to reactivate to retaliate for the Sunni-led attacks, while ISF security measures to deal with the increasing violence mainly targeted Sunnis (Katzman, 2014, p. 17).

Defeating ISIL/Da'esh would not remove all violent opposition to the government, which includes groups ranging from Salafist-jihadist to Sunni nationalist, especially if the core concerns of Iraqi Sunnis behind the opposition are not addressed by the government (Adnan, 2014, p. 4; Cordesman, 2014b, p. 2).

### ***Drivers of ISIL/Da'esh recruitment***

ISIL/Da'esh recruitment is on the rise, especially from rural, male youth from villages outside Mosul (Dagher, 2014, p. 33). Employment, literacy and income rates are much lower in these areas (Dagher, 2014, p. 33). ISIL/Da'esh is driving its recruitment by linking the Iraqi military and political forces with the Shia militia who have perpetrated abuses against the local population for several years; and exploiting strong concerns over Iran's involvement in the area (Dagher, 2014, p. 34). US involvement is being presented as a 'new crusade of Christians against Muslims' (Dagher, 2014, p. 34). ISIL/Da'esh have also been presenting themselves as defenders of Sunni values, although their actions are contrary to Sunni practices and traditions of the area (Dagher, 2014, p. 35).

There are some suggestions that ISIL/Da'esh is using the airstrikes to increase their support by placing its flag on civilian areas to ensure maximum collateral damage and push public sentiment against those behind the strikes (Dagher, 2014, p. 37).

### ***Iraq's ethnic and religious minorities<sup>9</sup>***

The deteriorating security situation in Iraq over 2013- 2014 has had particularly disastrous consequences for Iraq's different minorities such as the Yazidis, Christians and Turkmen (see Appendix 1) (Puttick, 2014, p. 8). ISIL/Da'esh and its allies have targeted minorities, as well as Shia Muslims (Puttick, 2014, p. 2). Minority groups have been victims of ethnic cleansing, assassinations, kidnappings, torture, bombings targeting their religious rituals, armed robberies and attacks on their businesses (Amnesty International, 2014b; Puttick, 2014, p. 8). Minorities generally do not have their own militias or tribal protection structures which means they are especially vulnerable if attacked (Puttick, 2014, p. 8). Many of the 1.2 million people displaced in by mid-July 2014 were minorities, and many communities have been reduced in size by emigration and killing to the point that they are now in danger of extinction in Iraq (Puttick, 2014, p. 2). Lack of federal government response to attacks upon them has meant many minorities have lost trust in the government (Puttick, 2014, p. 12).

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<sup>9</sup> Please see Appendix 1 for more information about the different minority groups

Minorities have also faced discrimination in areas they have been displaced to, with those in the KRG facing serious social and economic obstacles upon arriving, including inadequacy of housing, healthcare and education (Puttick, 2014, p. 16). There are reports that Kurdish authorities have been applying differential rules for access at the checkpoints based on ethnicity and religion, with Kurds and Christians generally being allowed to pass freely while Turkmen and Sunni and Shia Arabs have been barred from entering or sent to holding sites (Puttick, 2014, p. 16).

## 4. Conflict dynamics

### *Interconnectedness with the conflict in Syria<sup>10</sup>*

The conflict in Iraq goes beyond its borders and is closely linked with what is occurring in Syria (Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1). ISIL/Da'esh operates in both countries and Iraqi Shia militia have fought on behalf of the Syrian government, while Iraqi Kurds have supported Syrian Kurds and vice versa (Katzman, 2014). As long as the conflict continues in Syria it has the potential to remain a breeding ground for radicalism or a safe haven for radical armed groups such as ISIL/Da'esh (PAX, 2014a, p. 3; Cordesman, 2014b, p. 23).

### *Underlying sectarian frustrations and the potential for deepening sectarian conflict*

The underlying factors that made Syrian and Iraqi societies vulnerable to ISIL/Da'esh differ (PAX, 2014a, p. 2). A large part of the territory which is controlled by ISIL/Da'esh in Iraq is disputed by the Iraqi government and the Kurdish Autonomous Region and has experienced different conflicts as a result of various state policies aiming to alter the local demographics in an ethnically and religiously mixed area (PAX, 2014a, p. 2). Local sectarian conflicts have become part of the dynamic of violence by ISIL/Da'esh (PAX, 2014a, p. 2). ISIL/Da'esh has fed upon various local Sunni frustrations, while at the same time the Sunni population used ISIL/Da'esh as an opportunity to settle historical and political grievances (PAX, 2014a, p.2). There are concerns about revenge actions against communities currently supporting ISIL/Da'esh which could exacerbate already existing local conflicts and fault lines (PAX, 2014a, p. 2). Other commentators are concerned that sectarian violence will continue until Sunnis are convinced that Baghdad has their best interests at heart (Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 16). There are also concerns that the redeployment from Syria of Iraqi Shia volunteer fighters will increase levels of sectarian violence (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 6).

### *Airstrikes and a political solution: inclusive functioning government*

The US-led airstrikes initiated in August 2014 have blunted ISIL/Da'esh's advances but have not weakened them overall (Katzman, 2014, p. 24). This is partly due to the support for ISIL/Da'esh and other armed Sunni groups from the local populations as a result of political, economic and social grievances (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). Shia political domination has led to Iraq's Sunni Arabs siding with radical Sunni Islamist insurgents as a way of reducing that dominance (Katzman, 2014, p. ii). Some attempts are being made to win the support of the Sunni population in the areas under ISIL/Da'esh control so that they chose to side with the Iraqi government to fight ISIL/Da'esh on behalf of the state (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). This has been difficult (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). The lack of national-level Sunni leadership feeds the support for local insurgent groups (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). As demonstrated by the April election results, many Sunni political leaders lost their credibility with the population during the protest movement as they attempted to reach political accommodations with the Maliki government (Adnan, 2014, p. 4). However, a military

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<sup>10</sup> For more information please see the section on Syria in regional dynamics

campaign to destroy ISIL/Da'esh which does not address the Sunni disconnect from the state is likely to accelerate a sectarian civil war (Adnan, 2014, p. 4).

Unlike in Syria, Iraq's new government formed after Maliki was strongly encouraged to step-down, provides an opportunity to re-establish trust between the government and its Sunni population (PAX, 2014a, p. 2). Analysts believe that there can be no form of military victory unless the new Iraqi government can bring Iraq's Shia, Sunnis, and Kurds back together as some form of functioning state (Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1).

### ***ISF's capacity***

ISF's lack of capacity and weakness mean that it has struggled to take back the territory which has been lost (Allawi in Chatam House, 2014, p. 4; Kardaş, 2014, p. 3; Fraiman et al, 2014). Relying on strong Shia militias, who often have Iranian backing, to help with the fight against ISIL/Da'esh has alienated local Sunnis in those areas, especially when they have carried out abuses with absolute impunity (Amnesty International, 2014a; Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1; Krieg, 2014, p. 3). Weak Sunni representation in ISF and the involvement of the Shia militias have resulted in ISF being perceived as a sectarian actor and as a result fighting in Sunni areas may be met by resistance motivated and fuelled by sectarian sentiments (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). Some support for ISF does exist in Sunni areas as was shown in focus groups in Anbar, with some women who feel that ISF can protect the civilian population from clan militias and terrorists (Ali, 2014, p. 2).

### ***ISIL/Da'esh's capacity***

Some experts suggest that ISIL/Da'esh and its allies ability to advance the conflict further is affected by their lack of capacity to take full military control of Baghdad or the Shia heartland (Brenner, 2014, p. 1; Worsdell, 2014, p. 3). In addition, experience with similar groups elsewhere suggests that ISIL/Da'esh will face problems such as a collapse of local support and conflict with local allies as it tries to consolidate power (Lynch, 2014, p. 3; Staniland; 2014, p. 21).

### ***Resistance to ISIL/Da'esh***

Resistance to ISIL/Da'esh is mounting in the Sunni population (Adnan, 2014, p. 25). The new government's establishment of a new "National Guard" force has enabled some tribes to start fighting back, although there are complaints by some tribal leaders that support is not being delivered (Reuters, 2014). ISIL/Da'esh has attacked and killed those resisting it, including 220 Sunnis from the Albu Nimr tribe (Reuters, 2014).

### **Mosul**

A recent report suggests that despite initially welcoming ISIL/Da'esh's ousting of the ISF from Mosul, the conditions under ISIL/Da'esh's control have led to some residents welcoming anyone, even the Iraqi army, to come and liberate them (Moslawi, Hawramy and Harding, 2014). A number of prominent imams in Mosul have also refused to swear allegiance to ISIL/Da'esh leader al-Baghdadi. Due to the imams following, ISIL/Da'esh have not executed them but have placed a number under house arrest. Despite the house arrest of the most prominent preacher, hundreds of worshippers continue to turn up at his mosque. They know only that he refused to pledge allegiance to ISIL/Da'esh and this act of defiance undermines ISIL/Da'esh's credibility in the eyes of the Sunni residents of Mosul (Moslawi, Hawramy and Harding, 2014).

## Potential conflict risks

### Kirkuk territorial dispute

A potential for future conflict relates to disputes over areas under Kurdish control, especially their takeover of Kirkuk (Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1). Oil-rich Kirkuk has long been contested between the city's main ethnic groups, Kurds, Turkmen and Arabs, and sectarian tensions and attacks are high (Amnesty international, 2014a, p. 13; Katzman, 2014, p. 13). It is currently in the control of KRG, after the Iraqi army fled the ISIL/Da'esh advance. KRG have indicated that they do not intend to give up control of the city (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 13; Katzman, 2014, p. 13; Worsdell, 2014, p. 4).

### Influx of displaced people overburdening hosts

Hundreds of thousands of the displaced are being hosted by KRG and its officials have said they are overwhelmed and unable to cope (Amnesty International, 2014b, p. 5; ACAPS, 2014a, p. 6). There is some suggestion that the Kurds feel abandoned by the central Iraqi government in their support for IDPs/refugees and their fight against ISIL/Da'esh (Rahman in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 9-10). Social tension between host communities and IDPs is on the rise throughout Iraq and is likely to increase if the long-term impact is not addressed (OCHA, 2014, p. 48).

### Ethnic tensions

ISIL/Da'esh's ethnic cleansing is 'causing irreparable damage to the fabric of Iraq's society, and fuelling inter-ethnic, sectarian and inter-religious tensions in the region and beyond' (Amnesty International, 2014b, p. 5). A recent report suggests that ethnic/religious minority refugees/IDPs are very reluctant to return to their homes because they feel they were betrayed and attacked by their neighbours (Saadullah, 2014). There have been demonstrations against Arab Iraqis in KRG and some Iraqi Kurdish politicians are even suggesting that Arabs and Kurds will not be able to coexist in areas where the local Arab population is perceived to have sided with ISIL/Da'esh (Saadullah, 2014; PAX, 2014b, p. 2).

### Southern Iraqi unhappiness with the government

Many people across Shia dominated southern Iraq are extremely unhappy with the government in Iraq for similar reasons to many Sunni Arabs and Kurds (Khedery in Chatham House, 2014b, p. 3). The government in Baghdad has failed to deliver on the basic social contract which is to provide security, basic services, and a means for citizens to earn a living (Khedery in Chatham House, 2014b, p. 3-4).

### Calls for the breakup of Iraq

Some Iraqi Sunni's would like the same level of autonomy as the Kurds (Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 16). However, this could fragment the Iraqi state even more, leaving it weakened (Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 16). Basra may also want to declare itself a region like Kurdistan (Chatham House, 2014b).

### Intra-Sunni violence

Intra-Sunni violence has also been documented in the contested areas of Iraq, including, general violence and targeted killings between various, fragmented, Sunni groups (Home Office, 2014, p. 10; Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 14).

### Control over water

ISIL/Da'esh has used control over water in its fight against the Iraqi government and stopped water reaching Shia-dominated southern Iraq and the capital, Baghdad, as well as flooding farmland around the town of Abu Ghraib (Smith, 2014, p. 4; ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4). However, one commentator suggests that, following the example of ISIL/Da'esh's cooperation with Assad's regime over the distribution of electricity, agreements for sharing water may 'provide a basis for conflict management that mitigates the worst violence and spares civilians further harm' (Ahram, 2014, p. 30).



## 5. Scenarios over the short, medium and long-term

Few scenarios for the future of Iraq have been provided in the literature. A number include:

### *Short-term scenarios*

ACAPS<sup>11</sup> has looked at some short term scenarios. The one they think is most likely is that there is a **stalemate with sustained levels of violence along ethno-sectarian lines** (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 1, 2). This may lead to a rechanneling of resources to its fight in Syria (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 2). They suggest an **ISIL/Da'esh offensive on Baghdad** is possible if they become stronger or if dwindling support among Sunni's in the areas it controls prompt them to make a move that will deepen sectarian tensions in its favour (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 1, 3). This would cause mass displacement and serious disruptions to essential services (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4). They suggest that although it is less likely, there could be the **establishment of a coalition government which leads to an erosion of Sunni support for ISIL/Da'esh** (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 1, 4). This erosion of support is likely to be accompanied by increased violence against anti-ISIL/Da'esh Sunnis and greater humanitarian and human rights concerns (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4). A minority of Sunnis allied with ISIL/Da'esh will remain with them, while others are swayed by the new political circumstances to turn against ISIL/Da'esh in favour of the government (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4). A more inclusive government could also delay the Kurds desire for independence (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4). Foreign military intervention is more likely to be accepted in this scenario (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 4).

Other scenarios look at the likelihood of **foreign military intervention** by the US or Iran in the event of major threats to Baghdad or the targeting of important Shia shrines (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 5). They run the risk of escalating the situation to a sectarian based regional proxy war like in Syria and worsening the humanitarian situation (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 5). A **declaration of independent statehood by the Kurds** is less likely in the next six months unless the relationship with the central government reaches breaking point (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 6). While it would be unlikely that this would lead to armed conflict between independent Kurdistan and Iraq, it would greatly increase tensions and raises the question of what will happen to the Arab Iraqis who have sought shelter in KRG (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 6). A possible **outbreak of cholera** is a risk, and its impact would be severe as a result of the conflict hindering the response (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 6-7). A last wildcard scenario suggests **ISIL/Da'esh may target Jordan** if it gains strength but is unable to make gains in Iraq or Syria (ACAPS, 2014a, p. 7).

### *Medium to long-term scenarios*

**The Kurds declare independence:** In July 2014 KRG President Massoud Barzani asked the KRG parliament to plan a referendum on independence, although this has been put on hold to deal with the threat posed by ISIL/Da'esh (Zanotti and Katzman, 2014, p. 2). Some commentators suggest that a more independent Iraqi Kurdish entity could be a stabilising factor in the region (Zanotti and Katzman, 2014, p. 2). However, it could also exacerbate instability in or around Iraq, possibly by provoking military responses from Iraq's central government, Sunni and Shia militias, and neighbouring countries (Zanotti and Katzman, 2014, p. 2).

**Iraq breaks into three:** Many of the experts gathered by Chatham House in September 2014 to discuss the future of Iraq predict it will break up into three sovereign states within the current Iraqi border (Chatham House, 2014a).

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<sup>11</sup> The Assessment Capacities Project (ACAPS) is an initiative of a consortium of three NGOs (HelpAge International, Merlin and Norwegian Refugee Council) and collaborates with a large network of partners including NGOs, UN and academics. It is funded by nine donors.

However this raises many questions as there are no clean and neat religious or ethnic lines and there are many mixed families or people who live somewhere they do not 'belong' (Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014b, p. 2; PILPG, 2014, p. 8). At another roundtable hosted by the Public International Law & Policy Group (PILPG) in July, it was pointed out that there are more options than maintaining a single state or breaking into three autonomous regions (PILPG, 2014, p. 8).

## 6. Peacebuilding platforms

There is a gap in the literature when it comes to examining peacebuilding platforms in Iraq.

### *Common ground*

Polling by IIASS in Iraq between June and September 2014 suggest the general public rejects violent extremist groups. 77.4 per cent of people polled in Sunni areas controlled by ISIL/Da'esh in September think that ISIL/Da'esh has a negative influence on life in Iraq. 83.2 percent of Sunni and 97.6 per cent of Shia in Iraq generally think Al Qaeda have a negative influence on internal events in Iraq (Dagher, 2014, p. 7).

The polls show that there are some fundamental ideological differences between Iraqi Sunnis and ISIL/Da'esh (Dagher, 2014, p. 19). The majority of Iraqi Sunni's are supportive of secular politics and democracy. New polls also show that trust in the government has risen dramatically amongst Sunni's since the new government was established. In September 2014 47 per cent of Sunni's now trust the government (compared with 3.8 per cent in July) (Dagher, 2014, p. 24). 63 per cent of Sunni's support the new international alliance to fight ISIL/Da'esh (Dagher, 2014, p. 26). However they do not support sending international troops back to Iraq (Dagher, 2014, p. 28). 43.6 per cent feel that support should only be provided to Iraqi security forces, while 39.5 per cent feel that the support should go to tribal fighters in these areas (Dagher, 2014, p. 28). They also strongly feel that the various Shia militias have had a negative impact on Iraq (Dagher, 2014, p. 29-31).

Polling suggests that Iraqis do see themselves as sharing a common identity and nationality (Charney, 2014). 89 per cent of Iraqi's are proud of their Iraqi nationality, including 98 per cent in mostly-Shia Basra, 94 per cent in Diyala and 85 per cent in Nineveh, heavily-Sunni provinces, as well as 57 per cent in Erbil, the heart of Iraqi Kurdistan (Charney, 2014). However, there is also some suggestion that the different groups may have a different idea of what it means to be Iraqi, which may not be inclusive (Kadhim and Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 5, 7).

### *Peacebuilding actors*

There is some mention of the role **religious leaders** could play. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, an influential Shia religious leader, played a critical role in helping break the deadlock that allowed Haydar al-Abadi to become the new prime minister instead of Maliki (al-Khoei, 2014, p. 40). He has called for arms to be carried exclusively by official security forces and for restraint to be exercised (al-Khoei, 2014, p. 40). He is supportive of peaceful coexistence in Iraq and some commentators suggest that he can be a 'powerful moderating force' (al-Khoei, 2014, p. 40). Meanwhile, a joint Sunni and Shia fatwa was issued in June urging Iraqi citizens to back the security forces and condemn ISIL/Da'esh (Home Office, 2014, p. 39).

Focus group discussions in Anbar suggest that there needs to be **local participation** in the peace process to ensure a feeling of ownership, and highlight the importance of including **youth and women** (Ali, 2014, pp. 2-3).

A report from Anbar suggests that while **civil society organisations** have not been that active and have been targeted with violence, they have engaged in some peace initiatives (Ali, 2014, p. 3). A list of civil society organisations who have worked on peacebuilding is provided in Appendix 4, although the source provided no information on current activities.

## 7. Regional actors and dynamics

Due to the entrenched interests regional neighbours have in Iraq, these states are likely to play an important role in crafting or undermining any long-term solution to the conflict there (PILPG, 2014, p. 3). Some commentators accuse the regional powers of using Iraq to conduct their own proxy wars (Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 8). However, ISIL/Da'esh advances have threatened Iraq's territorial integrity and caused many of the Sunni Arab states to express support for the Abbadi government and for US efforts to construct a coalition to defeat ISIL/Da'esh (Katzman, 2014, p. 29).

### *Iran*

ISIL/Da'esh's offensive has led to Iran increasing its aid to the Iraqi government, which potentially increases Tehran's influence in Iraq (Katzman, 2014, p. ii; Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 16). Contrary to expectations earlier in the year (Haddad, 2014, p. 16), Iran backed the appointment of Abbadi as prime minister-delegate, despite their long support of Maliki (Kayzman et al, 2014, p. 5). ISF's defence of Baghdad was helped by the mobilisation of Shia militias, US advisers, and by Iran's sending of military equipment and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) units into Iraq (Katzman, 2014, p. 19). The IRGC-QF have helped reorganise the revived and expanded Shia militias (Katzman, 2014, p. 30; Worsdell, 2014, p. 5). The US has expressed less concern over this Iranian involvement as it helps with the US's objective of countering ISIL/Da'esh (Katzman, 2014, p. 30). Some commentators suggest that Iran is using Iraq as an avenue to reduce the effects of international sanctions, as well as to increase its foreign policy profile (Katzman, 2014, p. 30; Worsdell, 2014, p. 5).

Experts note that any long term alliance between Iran and Iraq will suffer from lingering distrust of Iran from the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war and religious competition between Iraq and Iran's Shia clerics (Katzman, 2014, p. 31).

Iran is likely to get more heavily involved if ISIL/Da'esh threatens Shia holy places (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 10). However, getting deeply involved in Iraq poses some risks for Iran (Worsdell, 2014, p. 5). It could end up costing it political and economic capital; distract it from its other regional priorities, such as its support for the Assad regime in Syria; raise regional sectarian tensions; and open itself up to attacks from ISIL/Da'esh (Worsdell, 2014, p. 5).

### *Syria*

Iraq sees Assad as an ally against ISIL/Da'esh, which has caused some friction with the US (Katzman, 2014, p. 31). Despite their attacks on Assad's government, some sources allege that ISIL/Da'esh had benefited 'evolving financial and security arrangements with Damascus that started during the 2003-2011 US military presence in Iraq' (Katzman et al, 2014, p. 1). The Iraqi government feels that the armed rebellion in Syria has emboldened Iraqi Sunnis to escalate armed activities against them and has provided a base for ISIL/Da'esh operations (Katzman, 2014, p. 31). The extremely porous border between the two countries and the surge of trained fighter and weapons in the region has had a destabilising impact (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 2). The US have said it will increase support for moderate Syrian rebels who are fighting both Assad and ISIL/Da'esh as part of its broader anti-ISIL/Da'esh strategy (Katzman, 2014, p. 31).

Iraqi members of ISIL/Da'esh have assisted in their operations in Syria and vice versa (Katzman, 2014, p. 32). Iraqi Shia militiamen have also gone to Syria to fight on behalf of the Assad regime, although many have returned to Iraq to fight ISIL/Da'esh (Katzman, 2014, p. 32; ACAPS, 2014b, p. 6, 10). The interlinked battle space means that what happens in one country can have a consequence in the other as the different forces move between the different countries, strengthening and weakening their different positions (ACAPS, 2014, p. 10). Syrian Kurds have helped the KRG fight ISIL/Da'esh in Kurdish controlled areas of northern Iraq in August 2014 (Katzman, 2014, p. 32). The KRG has provided some assistance to Syrian Kurdish rebels and with the agreement of Turkey, a number of Iraqi *peshmerga* have travelled to Syria to help defend the Syrian town of Kobani against ISIL/Da'esh's attack (Letsch, 2014; see also Katzman, 2014, p. 32).

## **Turkey**

Turkey's Iraq policy is based on supporting its territorial integrity and assisting in statebuilding (Kardaş, 2014, p. 2). Turkey has been very concerned about Iraqi Kurdish insistence on autonomy and possible independence and the impact this may have on Kurds living in Turkey (Katzman, 2014, p. 32). The anti-Turkey Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has had camps inside Iraq, against which Turkey has carried out attacks (Katzman, 2014, p. 32). However it is also the biggest outside investor in northern Iraq and did not openly oppose the KRG's seizure of Kirkuk even though it improves KRG's economic and political independence from Baghdad (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). Its investments in KRG would be threatened by any ISIL/Da'esh advance into its territory (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11). Its deepening relationship with KRG has resulted in a worsening relationship with the Iraqi government, although attempts have been made to limit the damage to their relationship (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). It has maintained a dialogue with Sunni politicians and actors such as ex-Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi and the Nujayfis (Kardaş, 2014, p. 2). It has provided financial support to KRG to help it deal with the IDP/refugees it is hosting (Rahman in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 10).

Turkey might potentially be helpful in reaching out to the Sunni leadership and the Kurds in order to convince them to work with the central government despite their previous bad experiences (Kardaş, 2014, p. 3). It has hosted a meeting of Sunni tribal and religious leaders from Iraq who used the meeting to distance themselves from ISIL/Da'esh but also to call for recognition of their serious concerns (Kardaş, 2014, p. 3).

## **Gulf States**

Iraq has had mixed success in reducing tensions in the last few years with several of the Sunni-led Persian Gulf states, some of whom have not accepted that Iraq is now dominated by Shia factions (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). Relations worsened during 2012-2014 as the Maliki government marginalized Iraq's Sunni leaders (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). Sunni militia fighters have been able to travel freely in both directions from Anbar province to bordering Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Syria (Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 14). However, the Gulf States have pledged support for US-led efforts in Iraq to defeat ISIL/Da'esh, possibly including participating in airstrike operations (Katzman, 2014, p. 33).

Saudi Arabian nationals are thought to be among ISIL/Da'esh's financial patrons, at least up until recently (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11). However, ISIL/Da'esh's advances have caused unease for some (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11). To illustrate their support for the Abadi government and US efforts in Iraq, on September 15, 2014, Saudi Arabia announced that it would open an embassy in Baghdad, something it has long promised to do (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). It has also donated USD 500 million to the United Nations to address the crisis caused by ISIL/Da'esh (Katzman, 2014, p. 33). However, any growing influence of Iran in Iraq is likely to aggravate Saudi Arabia and could inflame regional sectarian tensions (Worsdell, 2014, p. 4).

All of Jordan's border with Iraq is along the Anbar province where ISIL/Da'esh controls a lot of territory (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11). While it opposes ISIL/Da'esh and is a potential target, jihadists have used Jordan as a launchpad for attacks against the Syrian government (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11). The country has also hosted a conference of anti-government Iraqi Sunni leaders who have cooperated with ISIL/Da'esh, although it is unclear if it was supported by the Jordanian government<sup>13</sup> (ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11; Adnan, 2014, p. 20).

## 8. Conflict responses

### National and international response: Maliki's step-down

Despite the April 2014 election result putting Maliki in a strong position to win a third term as prime minister, the June 2014 offensive by ISIL/Da'esh prevented this (Katzman, 2014, p. 20). Maliki had clearly become an impediment to peace and the US and many Iraqi officials largely blamed the offensive's success on Maliki's efforts to marginalize Sunni leaders and citizens (Katzman, 2014, p. 20). As a result, and apparently under pressure from the United States, Iran, Iraq's Sunnis and Kurds, and others, several senior figures in the State of Law bloc abandoned Maliki and designated Haydar al-Abadi as leader of the State of Law bloc and therefore Prime-Minister-designate (Katzman, 2014, p. 21). Although Maliki initially suggested he would not leave office peacefully, the support for Abadi from the US officials and Iranian officials, resulted in Maliki agreeing to step down and support Abadi (Katzman, 2014, p. 21).

The cabinet Abadi has named appears to be inclusive of Sunni Arabs and Kurds (Katzman, 2014, p. 21; Cordesman, 2014a, p. 2). He has ordered ISF to cease shelling Sunni-inhabited areas that are under the control of ISIL/Da'esh forces (Katzman, 2014, p. 22). Abadi also announced the establishment of a new "National Guard" force in which locally recruited fighters will protect their home provinces from ISIL/Da'esh, like during the 'Awakening' in 2006-2007 (Katzman, 2014, p. 22). However, Sunnis are concerned that this new program will also apply to Shia militias who want to secure Shia areas (Katzman, 2014, p. 22). Speaking at an event in Chatham House, Kadhim (in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 6) suggests that the political system Abadi has inherited will mean that Abadi's government will also fail. In addition, there are some concerns because he is still part of the Dawa faction (Cordesman, 2014b, p. 7).

### International military action

As the conflict in Iraq worsened and ISIL/Da'esh made gains which threatened minority groups such as the Yazidis, international actors, including the US, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, began air strikes in Iraq in August 2014, to assist the Iraqi government and KRG's fight against ISIL/Da'esh (Katzman, 2014, p. ii). In September 2014, air strikes against ISIL/Da'esh began in Syria as well (Chulov, Ackerman and Lewis, 2014). Public support for international military actions is higher in Iraq than in Syria but experts caution that military action should lead to the protection of civilians, or the actions could be counterproductive (PAX, 2014a, p. 1; see also Cordesman, 2014b, p. 19).

#### *United States*

The United States responded to ISIL/Da'esh's military gains in Iraq and Syria with a military response in Iraq and the formulation of a broader strategy to try to defeat the group in both Iraq and Syria (Katzman, 2014, p. ii; see also

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<sup>13</sup> For more information about the conference please see Appendix 2

Katzman et al, 2014). They are working together with allies from Europe and the Gulf states. The threat to the KRG as ISIL/Da'esh advanced to within about 30 miles from the capital Irbil and the humanitarian crisis in Northern Iraq were significant prompts for US military action (Katzman, 2014, p. 19). In addition they wanted to defend the threat to Baghdad and the Iraqi central government; prevent a return to sectarian violence; prevent Iraq being a base for terrorist attacks; and protect American personnel and facilities (Katzman, 2014, p. 24). They have sent military advisors; carried out airstrikes in support of ISF and the Kurds; carried out counterterrorism training; shared intelligence; encouraged the formation of a new and more inclusive central government; and expanded and accelerated delivery of HELLFIRE missiles, surveillance systems, F-16 combat aircraft and attack helicopters to ISF (Katzman, 2014, p. ii, 23, 24). They have consistently ruled out the reintroduction of US ground troops, although there are around 1,700 US military personnel in Iraq as of mid-September 2014 (Katzman, 2014, p. 23). This appears to be the result of the belief that the introduction of US troops would not address the political problems underlying the current violence (Katzman, 2014, p. 25; Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1). They have discussed restoring stability to Iraq with Iran but have repeatedly ruled out any direct cooperation with Tehran in Iraq, which is difficult as a result of historical animosity (Katzman, 2014, p. ii; ACAPS, 2014b, p. 11).

## **France**

France has also carried out air strikes in Iraq (Roggio and Weiss, 2014) and has reached out to other countries to find a solution to the crisis with an 'International Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq'<sup>14</sup> in September 2014 (France Diplomatie, 2014). The conference attendees, who included Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Arab League, European Union, and the United Nations, all expressed their commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq and pledged to help it combat ISIL/Da'esh (France Diplomatie, 2014).

## **Recommendations**

### **Use ideas to combat ISIL/Da'esh:**

ISIL/Da'esh cannot be defeated with weapons alone as such tactics play into their hands when military strikes go wrong (Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 8). Instead one expert recommends you combat them by combatting their ideas (Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 8; see also Cordesman, 2014b, p. 15). This could be done by: i) getting Sunni clerics to denounce ISIL/Da'esh; ii) having joint Sunni and Shi'ite messages of unity within Iraq; and iii) getting Iraqi, Syrian rebel, Arab, and Turkish media to constantly publicise ISIL/Da'esh extremism, abuses, atrocities (Cordesman, 2014b, p. 16). People's fears need to be addressed and a better alternative to ISIL/Da'esh presented (Dagher, 2014, p. 37). Dagher (2014, p. 35) also recommends communicating the differences between Sunni values and ISIL/Da'esh actions more widely.

Information can be communicated in a variety of ways. 90 per cent of Sunnis in ISIL/Da'esh controlled areas say their main source of information is television and most house have one (Dagher, 2014, p. 38). Around 42 per cent of people living in these areas have access to the internet (Dagher, 2014, p. 38).

### **Do not give in to a sectarian narrative:**

Despite the increasingly sectarian nature of the conflict in Iraq, Sunnis and Shias are not inevitably opponents (Younis, 2014). Displaced Sunni's have been living peacefully in the Shia dominated south, for example (al-Khoei, 2014, p. 40). The Iraqi government needs to resist the sectarian ISIL/Da'esh narrative and recognise that ISIL/Da'esh

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<sup>14</sup> For more information about the conference please see Appendix 8

is distinct from Iraq's Sunni community (Younis, 2014). Taking an 'anti-Sunni approach' to dealing with ISIL/Da'esh will increase sectarian divisions and further destabilise Iraq (Worsdell, 2014, p. 3).

#### **Address the underlying issues:**

One expert suggests that it is important to not address the situation in Iraq as though the problem started with the emergence of ISIL/Da'esh when its roots are much deeper (Altikriti in Chatham House, 2014a, p. 7). Even if ISIL/Da'esh were to be pushed back, unless the underlying issues which allowed them to emerge, 'an ineffective and corrupt Iraqi political leadership, widespread Sunni resentment, and regional turbulence and spill-over from neighbouring Syria' were addressed, there would be space for them or a similar group to return (Worsdell, 2014, p. 4).

Strong political, financial and security incentives need to be created to bring Sunnis back to supporting the government and ISF (Cordesman, 2014b, p. 17). Serious attempts need to be made to win the hearts and minds of people in ISIL/Da'esh held areas (Dagher, 2014, p. 37; PAX, 2014a, p. 1). This requires the formation of a genuine government of national unity which has meaningful Sunni representation and a detailed, actionable development plan for Sunni areas (ICG, 2014, p. 9). Meeting the needs of citizens within affected communities through the provision of electricity for example could win their support (Shaver and Tenorio, 2014, p. 21). Attempts need to be made to increase human security for all, including Sunnis living in areas under ISIL control, in order to re-establish trust among the population (PAX, 2014a, p. 1).

The new Iraqi government also needs to appeal to all groups in Iraq, not just Sunnis and Shias and provide security and a fair share of power and oil revenues, as well as job creation, economic development, and reviving the nation's education and medical systems when security is restored (Cordesman, 2014a, p. 1).

#### **Address the conflict in Syria**

Any attempt to address ISIL/Da'esh must include Syria as the conflicts are closely interlinked (PAX, 2014a, p. 3; Cordesman, 2014b, p. 23). Efforts should be made to create legitimate and responsive governments in both Iraq and Syria (PAX, 2014a, p. 1).

#### **Make ISF and other institutions inclusive:**

The International Crisis Group (ICG) (2014, p. 9) recommends that control of ISF is placed with a credible defence minister and that the legislation granting provinces decision making powers over the own security is implemented. A Minority Rights Group International report recommends that all units of the Iraqi armed forces are organised on a strictly non-sectarian basis and that measures are taken to ensure that the Iraqi government is inclusive of all sectors of Iraqi society (Puttick, 2014, p. 25; ICG, 2014, p. 9). They also recommend passing a comprehensive non-discrimination law to curb sectarian hiring practices and improve inclusiveness in public appointments and ensuring the human rights of minorities are recognised and upheld (Puttick, 2014, p. 25).

#### **Recognise minority rights**

The KRG should recognise the Yezidi and Shabak as distinct identities and end discrimination against minorities who do not identify as Kurdish (Puttick, 2014, p. 26). In addition, displaced persons fleeing violence should be allowed to enter the KRG without discrimination on the basis of ethnicity or religion (Puttick, 2014, p. 26).

#### **Clarify the status of disputed territories**

The status of Kirkuk and other disputed territories should be settled by holding of referenda (Puttick, 2014, p. 25).

#### **Deal with militias and human rights abuses**

Amnesty international (2014a, p. 24) recommends that the new government of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi takes 'swift and decisive measures to reverse the phenomenon of militia rule, and establish the rule of law and respect for human rights without discrimination' (see also Cordesman, 2014b, p. 17; ICG, 2014, p. 9). There should

be a disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process and independent vetting to prevent integration into the army, police and security forces of militia members or other individuals who are reasonably suspected of having committed or participated in human rights abuses (Amnesty International, 2014a, p. 24). The legacy of state-perpetrated crimes against its people should be dealt with and a large reconciliation and peace building effort should be made to mitigate existing pressures, enable a safe return of IDPs, and prevent the potential of escalation (PAX, 2014a, p. 2).

#### **Develop an inclusive regional security structure**

PAX (2014a, p. 3) suggests that a regional security structure should be developed which is inclusive of both Arab and non-Arab states. This is complicated by the serious rivalries and uncertainties between the states in the region (Cordesman, 2014b, p. 13).

#### **Cut off support to ISIL/Da'esh**

Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Kuwait, should stop financing and arming the Syrian rebels and to do everything they can to block private donations to ISIL/Da'esh and other extremist groups (IPB, 2014, p.2; PILPG, 2014, p. 3). It is important that the coalition against ISIL/Da'esh and neighbouring states cut off their supply lines (PAX, 2014a, p. 3). This includes not accepting oil or antiquities smuggled from ISIL/Da'esh controlled territory, preventing human trafficking, and cutting off financial or other support to ISIL/Da'esh from within their countries (PAX, 2014a, p. 3).

#### **Provide conflict-sensitive military support**

Any delivery of arms should be responsible and well thought out (PAX, 2014a, pp. 2-3). For example, arming the KRG could impact on the delicate power balance in Iraq (PAX, 2014a, p. 2).



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## Key websites

- ISW Iraq updates – <http://www.understandingwar.org/iraq-blog>
- Iraq body count database – <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>
- International Crisis Group – Iraq – <http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/middle-east-north-africa/iraq-iran-gulf/iraq.aspx>
- United Nations in Iraq – <http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?lang=en>
- Human Rights Watch – Iraq – <http://www.hrw.org/middle-eastn-africa/iraq>
- Relief Web – Iraq – <http://reliefweb.int/country/irq>
- Amnesty International – Iraq – <http://www.amnesty.org/en/region/iraq>
- Insight on Conflict – Iraq Peacebuilding Organisations – <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/iraq/peacebuilding-organisations/>
- European Union External Action – EU-Iraq relations – [http://eeas.europa.eu/iraq/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/iraq/index_en.htm)

## Appendix 1: Iraq's minorities

**Turkmen** are the largest ethnic group in Iraq after Arabs and Kurds and number up to three million. Around 60 per cent are Sunni Muslim, most others are Shia, with a substantial Christian minority. Turkmen are mainly located in Tel Afar, Kirkuk, Erbil, Salahuddin, Diyala, Baghdad and Kut. They have been subject to threats, kidnappings, assassinations, and large-scale bombings (Puttick, 2014, p. 5).

**Christians** in Iraq are mostly of Chaldo-Assyrian or Armenian ethnicity and adhere to several different denominations. They have been targeted for their religious difference as well as their perceived ties with the West. Hundreds of thousands have fled the country since 2003 and at present, only an estimated 350,000 – 850,000 remain in the country (down from up to 1.4 million). ISIL/DA'ESH's advance in Ninewa had caused a new wave of displacement (Puttick, 2014, p. 5; see also Katzman, 2014, p. 28). Prior to ISIL/Da'esh's advance, Iraqi Assyrian Christian groups advocated an approach – the 'Nineveh Plains Province Solution' which would allow the area to be a self-administering region (Katzman, 2014, p. 28-29).

**Yezidis** are followers of an ancient monotheistic religion. They face harassment and discrimination from society at large as well as threats and attacks from extremist groups as a result of being labelled devil worshipers. There are currently an estimated 500,000 Yezidis living in Iraq. Before the current crisis, the majority were located in Ninewa governorate, concentrated in the towns of Sinjar, Ba'shiqah, Sheikhan and Bahzan, while others live in Dohuk and its surroundings. Yezidis have faced pressure to conform to a Kurdish identity. (Puttick, 2014, p. 5). ISIL/Da'esh's advances have caused mass displacement and many Yezidis have been killed, kidnapped, faced sexual violence, sold into slavery, or forced to convert to Islam or 'marry' ISIL/Da'esh fighters (Puttick, 2014, p. 11; HRW, 2014; Amnesty International, 2014b).

**Kaka'i**, also known as Ahl-e-Haqq, are followers of a syncretic religion numbering around 200, 000. The majority used to live in villages surrounding Kirkuk, although many have been displaced to the KRG over the years. They have been the targets of threats, kidnappings, assassinations, and boycotts of their businesses because of their religious practices, and they have also faced discrimination on account of their Kurdish ethnicity (Puttick, 2014, p. 5).

**Shabak** number approximately 250,000 and are scattered across the disputed regions of Ninewa governorate in villages located to the north and east of Mosul. Most consider themselves a distinct ethnic groups and they have suffered from efforts to forcibly alter the demographic balance in their areas in favour of either Arabs or Kurds (Puttick, 2014, p. 5).

**Faili Kurds** are Kurds who generally follow the Shia sect of Islam, in contrast to the Sunni-majority Kurdish population. They were persecuted under Saddam Hussain, stripped of their Iraqi nationality and many lived for decades as stateless persons in Iran. Although many have returned to Iraq, they face challenges in restoring their nationality, despite the government's efforts to ease the process (Puttick, 2014, p. 5).

**Sabeen-Mandaeans** are adherents of a pre-Christian monotheistic religion based on the teachings of John the Baptist. Since 2003, most Sabeen-Mandaeans have either fled the country or been killed, with fewer than 5,000 remaining in Iraq, mostly in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Maysan. The dwindling size of the community means that its existence in Iraq is under serious threat (Puttick, 2014, p. 6).

**Baha'i** are followers of a monotheistic faith founded in 19th-century Iran. They face difficulties having their religion recognised. Currently, their population in Iraq is thought to number less than 1,000. (Puttick, 2014, p. 6).

**Black Iraqis** are largely the descendants of East African migrants who came to Iraq after the birth of Islam. Community leaders estimate their numbers may be as high as 1.5 to 2 million. They are located mostly in southern

Iraq, with the largest community residing in Basra. Black Iraqis face systematic discrimination and marginalization in all aspects of economic, political and social life (Puttick, 2014, p. 6).

**Roma**, sometimes referred to as Kawliyah in Iraq, number between 50,000 and 200,000 and live primarily in isolated villages in southern Iraq as well as in the outskirts of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul. They face widespread discrimination and ostracism and most are unable to find steady employment. (Puttick, 2014, p. 6).

For a map showing the distribution of ethno-religious groups in Iraq, see Puttic , 2014, p. 4  
<http://www.minorityrights.org/download.php?id=14>

## Appendix 2: Sunni armed groups

### *'Revolutionary' Sunni groups*

The **General Military Council of Iraqi Revolutionaries (GMC IR)** is the strongest among the anti-government groups in Iraq (Adnan, 2014, p. 12). The prominent neo-Ba'athist group **Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al- Naqshabandia (JRTN)** is closely affiliated with the council (Adnan, 2014, p. 13). Despite some positive statements by the GMC IR about ISIL/Da'esh, the two do not share an ideological orientation (Adnan, 2014, p. 15). ISIL/Da'esh's actions against non-Sunni religious and ethnic communities are contrary to GMC IR's nationalist rhetoric which emphasises Iraqi unity (Adnan, 2014, p. 15). However, ISIL/Da'esh's strength has made GMC IR's response to these actions cautious and put it in a difficult position (Adnan, 2014, p. 15). While no open confrontation has occurred, there have been some violent clashes between the groups and ISIL/Da'esh has taken violent action against any attempts by other anti-government groups to take control (Adnan, 2014, p. 16). However, when faced with attempts by the government, including through Iraqi Shia militia groups, to retake areas, these groups have worked together despite their disagreements (Adnan, 2014, p. 16). Their continued clashes would suggest, however, that the GMC IR is not likely to continue their cooperation over the long term (Adnan, 2014, p. 16).

Due to their attempts to marginalise other militant groups in Fallujah, there is a rift between ISIL/Da'esh and the **Fallujah Military Council** (Adnan, 2014, p. 17). ISIL/Da'esh has tried to consolidate their support in the city by reaching out to tribes and other notable figures and it seems they have less control over the city than in Mosul or Tikrit (Adnan, 2014, p. 17; Home Office, 2014, p. 37; Tucker-Jones, 2014, p. 16). However, they are not militarily strong enough to beat ISIL/Da'esh even if they wanted to (Adnan, 2014, p. 17).

The **Council of Revolutionaries of the Tribes of Anbar (CRTA)** is not really active, beyond the statement of its leader, Ali Hatem Suleiman, who is head of the large Dulaim tribe (Adnan, 2014, p. 18). Despite fighting against al Qaeda in Iraq during the 'Awakening' and having nationalist rather than religious aims, they have fought alongside ISIL/Da'esh, and some commentators suggest that ISIL/Da'esh is the dominant partner (Parker and al-Khalidi, 2014, p. 6). Suleiman's influence is contested as he is no longer on the ground in the tribal areas (Parker and al-Khalidi, 2014, p. 6).

**The 1920 Brigades** were active against the Coalition forces but their activities decreased following the US led surge in 2006/7 and are likely to be a fraction of their former strength now (Adnan, 2014, p. 18). There may be some cooperation with GMC IR and they are closely affiliated with the Association of Muslim Scholars in Iraq (AMSI). Their vision for the future of Iraq is very different from ISIL/Da'esh's and they have criticised their actions (Adnan, 2014, p. 19). While rhetorically prolific, they are not a major force on the ground (Adnan, 2014, p. 19).

**The Islamic Army in Iraq**, led by Ahmed al-Dabash, has resurfaced and are likely to have carried out attacks against ISF, although there does not seem to be a national campaign (Adnan, 2014, p. 19). A joint statement with Ali Hatem Suleiman which was reconciliatory in tone, resulted in a backlash from other armed anti-government groups, including the GMC IR (Adnan, 2014, p. 19, 20). They have clashed with ISIL/Da'esh. While they have expressed a desire to participate in a political solution for Iraq, it is predicated upon the abolishment of the current system of government (Adnan, 2014, p. 19).

The **Sons of Iraq** are former Sunni insurgents who cooperated with the coalition forces against Al-Qaeda in Iraq and who were being integrated into the ISF (Katzman, 2014, p. 10). However many grew disillusioned with the process and the Maliki government and a number have joined ISIL/Da'esh as preferable to a Shia dominated government (Katzman, 2014, p. 10).

In mid-July 2014, an **anti-government conference** was held in Jordan. The conference was attended by approximately 300 anti-government Iraqi figures, including major figures from the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, representatives associated with 1920 Brigades, former members of the Iraqi Army, Iraqi Sunni religious figures, and tribal figures (Adnan, 2014, p. 20). The demands of the conference would require the abolishment of the current Iraqi state (Adnan, 2014, p. 20). Also in attendance was the prominent Iraqi Sunni religious figure Abdul-Malik al-Saadi. Saadi played an important role in mobilizing Iraqi Sunnis against the government at the beginning of the 2013 protest movement and provided a perceived sense of legitimacy separate from ISIL/Da'esh (Adnan, 2014, p. 20). His presence indicates the popular support for anti-government movements (Adnan, 2014, p. 20). The conference was not attended by Ali Hatem Suleiman or the Grand Mufti of Iraq Rafi al-Rafaie, a supporter of the 'revolution', who criticised the conference for not discussing the problem of constitution or the political system (Adnan, 2014, p. 20).

All the anti-government Iraqi Sunni representation at the conference pushed to describe the current events as a 'revolution' and strongly minimise the role of ISIL/Da'esh (Adnan, 2014, p. 21). This makes it challenging for Iraqi Sunni politicians who are participating in the political process to gain credibility as authentic representatives of Iraqi Sunnis and to re-establish the legitimacy of the Iraqi central government as a government that is representative of all Iraqis (Adnan, 2014, p. 21).

### ***Jihadist Sunni groups***

**Jaysh al-Mujahidin (JM)** are a jihadist group active in launching attacks against ISF, generally working locally in parts of Anbar and Kirkuk provinces (Adnan, 2014, p. 21). They are not seeking to conquer territory like ISIL/Da'esh but do not believe in working through any sort of political process (Adnan, 2014, p. 21). Despite being anti-Shia, they have not claimed or expressed desire to carry out attacks on Shia civilian populations (Adnan, 2014, p. 21). While they claim to work with other anti-government groups, they were quick to deny any participation in the Jordan conference with the groups with political agendas (Adnan, 2014, p. 21). They are opposed to ISIL/Da'esh and al-Qaeda as represented by Ayman al-Zawahiri and are likely to come into conflict with them, although they do not rival ISIL/Da'esh as a military force (Adnan, 2014, p. 22).

**Ansar al-Islam (AI)** is a long established Salafist Jihadist group formed in 2001 which has worked with al-Qaeda in Iraq as recently as November 2012 (Adnan, 2014, p. 22). Its attacks have been geographically concentrated in Mosul, although it has claimed responsibility for attacks against ISF around Hawija, in southwestern Kirkuk province; in Garma and Sichar, near Fallujah; in Udham in northern Diyala; in Latifiyah, south of Baghdad; and in Balad, Ishaki, and Yankaja in Salah ad-Din province (Adnan, 2014, p. 23). It has clashed with ISIL/Da'esh despite their ideological affinity (Adnan, 2014, p. 22). Ansar al-Islam is more cautious than ISIL/Da'esh about causing civilian casualties, especially to Sunni civilians (Adnan, 2014, p. 23).



## Appendix 3: Public opinion polls

Perception/opinion	Sunni		Shia		Kurd	
Feel forced to live outside Iraq	33 per cent		20 per cent		14 per cent	
Authoritarianism in Iraq is a real challenge	23 per cent		6 per cent		10 per cent	
Most people are not trust worthy	76 per cent		65 per cent		Not given	
A democratic system may have problems, yet it is better than other systems	82.4 per cent		73.7 per cent		72.7 per cent	
Most important characteristics that are essential to democracy is the opportunity to change the government through elections	50.6 per cent		36 per cent		40 per cent	
	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Do not agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Do not agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Do not agree</i>
I am satisfied with the way that the central government performs its duties in national government	4.8 per cent	90.8 per cent	28.3 per cent	65 per cent	27.9 per cent	64.8 per cent
The Government should implement only the laws derived from Sharia (Islamic Laws)	38 per cent	51 per cent	36 per cent	57 per cent	11 per cent	79 per cent
Iraq would be a better place if religion & politics were separated	81 per cent	13 per cent	34 per cent	60 per cent	75 per cent	22 per cent
	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Do not trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Do not trust</i>	<i>Trust</i>	<i>Do not trust</i>
Trust in institutions: government (Council of Ministers)	3.8 per cent	94 per cent	36 per cent	63 per cent	28 per cent	66 per cent
Trust in institutions: Courts and legal system	12 per cent	85 per cent	53 per cent	43 per cent	34 per cent	60 per cent
Trust in institutions: the Armed Forces (the Iraqi Army)	22 per cent	82.6 per cent	85 per cent	7.8 per cent	30 per cent	57 per cent

Source: adapted from Dagher, 2014, p. 10, 13-16, 20-23

## Appendix 4: List of peacebuilding organisations in Iraq

**Al Mesalla** develops capacities of individuals and organisations in Iraq in the field of human rights and non-violence.

**Al Rafidain** Peace Organization was founded in 2007 and works in fields of peacebuilding and gender issues in Iraq

**The Baghdad Women Association (BWA)** works on the capacity building and empowerment of women, as well as support for women who are victims of violence

**Center for Peace and Conflict Resolution** at the University of Duhok: The only degree program in Iraq that is dedicated to teaching students about the emerging theory and practice of peacebuilding.

**Civil Development Organization (CDO)** conducts peace education and encourages dialogue among community, tribal and religious leaders and politicians in Iraq.

**INSAN Iraqi Society** is dedicated to ensuring peaceful co-existence among communities living side by side in Iraq, by enhancing the living conditions of communities, promoting good governance and building the capacity of the civil society in conflict resolution.

**Iraqi Al-Firdaws Society** brings together diverse groups and communities in Basra, Iraq to speak for peace in one voice

**Kurdistan Villages Reconstruction Association Organisation (KVRA)** is focused on fostering the rise of the Iraqi civil society, along with the formation of truly democratic values and structures.

**Muslim Peacemaker Teams (MPT)** use non-violent methods to support communities struggling with violence in Iraq.

**National Institute for Human Rights (NIHR)** enhances skills in human rights education, conflict management and peacebuilding in Iraq.

**Reach** is one the oldest Iraqi peacebuilding organisations and teaches communities how to deal with violence and conflict resolution.

**The SILM network** is a network of 18 Iraqi organizations working in the field of conflict resolution and peacebuilding in Iraq.

**Women Leadership Institute (WLI)** is one of the leading voices for the women's movement in Iraq, and promotes the participation of women in the peacebuilding process.

Source: <http://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/iraq/peacebuilding-organisations/>

## Appendix 5: International Conference on Peace and Security in Iraq Statement<sup>15</sup>

Paris, September 15, 2014

1. At the invitation of the President of the French Republic and the President of the Republic of Iraq, an international conference on peace and security in Iraq was held today in Paris.
2. The conference participants (Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Norway, Oman, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States of America, Arab League, European Union, United Nations) expressed their commitment to the unity, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iraq. They welcomed the formation of a new government under the authority of the Prime Minister, Mr Haïdar al-Abadi, and offered him their full support to strengthen the rule of law, implement a policy of inclusiveness, and ensure that all components are fairly represented within the federal institutions and all citizens are treated equally. All of these measures are necessary in order to successfully combat Daech (ISIL) and terrorist groups, which represent a threat to all Iraqis.
3. The conference participants asserted that Daech (ISIL) is a threat not only to Iraq but also to the entire international community and that confronting such a threat wherever it is will require a long term effort from the international community. They condemned the crimes and acts of mass violence that Daech (ISIL) commits against civilians, including the most vulnerable minorities, which may amount to crimes against humanity. They agreed to cooperate and do everything to ensure that the culprits are brought to justice. They confirmed support for the inquiry led by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to that end.
4. All participants underscored the urgent need to remove Daech (ISIL) from the regions in which it has established itself in Iraq. To that end, they committed to supporting the new Iraqi Government in its fight against Daech (ISIL), by any means necessary, including appropriate military assistance, in line with the needs expressed by the Iraqi authorities, in accordance with international law and without jeopardizing civilian security.
5. The conference participants also reaffirmed their commitment to the relevant resolutions of the United Nations Security Council on the fight against terrorism and its sources of recruitment and financing, in particular Resolution 2170. They will make sure that this resolution is correctly implemented and will take the necessary measures to ensure it has all the intended effects. They firmly believe that resolute action is necessary to eradicate Daech (ISIL), particularly measures to prevent radicalization, coordination between all security services and stricter border control. They welcomed the prospect of working on an action plan to combat terrorist financing.
6. Reiterating their support for the Iraqi Government, the international partners recalled the need to support the Iraqi people's desire for human rights to be observed in a federal framework that respects the constitution, regional rights and national unity.
7. They recognized the role played by the United Nations in Iraq, particularly in coordinating and facilitating international assistance to the Iraqi Government. The conference participants also recognized that the Arab League

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/iraq-304/events-2526/article/international-conference-on-peace>

and the European Union are essential long-term strategic partners for Iraq. They also welcomed the results of the Jeddah conference of September 11, 2014.

8. The conference participants agreed to continue and increase, depending on changes in the situation on the ground, the provision of emergency humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi Government and local authorities, in order to help them accommodate and assist refugees and displaced persons, who should be able to return to their homes safely.

9. The international partners declared that they were willing to assist Iraq in its reconstruction work, with the aim of achieving fair regional development, in particular by providing expertise, know-how and appropriate financial support through, for example, a specific global fund to help reconstruction of areas devastated by Daech (ISIL).

10. The international partners agreed to remain fully mobilized in their support for the Iraqi authorities and in the fight against Daech (ISIL). They will ensure that the commitments made today are implemented and followed up on, notably in the framework of the United Nations, and other bodies established for this purpose, and during the high-level meetings that will be held alongside the United Nations General Assembly.