

UNIVERZA V LJUBLJANI
FAKULTETA ZA DRUŽBENE VEDE

Koželj Rok

Odnosi med ZDA in Irakom, 2003 - 2014

Relationship between USA and Iraq, 2003 - 2014

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United States of America invaded a highly complex social and historical reality, led by dictator Saddam Hussein with a harsh hand and cruel methods, when it occupied Iraq in 2003. After the occupation of the country, USA and partner countries were not able to ensure a peaceful transition towards democracy, which would have been possible only with the inclusion of all ethnical and religious communities in an inclusive dialogue, which would in turn bring to the creation of a new, adapted Constitutional and Institutional State order. The two biggest problems have been the exclusion of a consistent Arab-Sunni minority from the decision-making process and the definition of status of the Kurdistan Autonomous Region in the North of the country. After the initial consistent mistakes of the US, among which we can count the invasion itself and the consequent dismissal of the Iraqi military and civil-administrative infrastructure, which caused un-governance and chaos, the appropriate decision (in the given situation) of the US administration was to implement the "Surge" operation: this term indicated a change of strategy of the US, resulting in alliances between US Army and Sunni tribes, an increased military contingent and the deployment of the Army on the ground where really needed (in towns and villages). This vast operation contributed to the start of a more inclusive political dialogue and to better perspectives for the future of the unified Iraqi State in the years 2009-2010. After the partial and later complete withdrawal of the US Army, however, sectarianism, political fragmentation, tribal identity and clashes for power re-emerged. This brought the former PM Al Maliki to use harsher methods and to increase discrimination against the Sunni minority, which in turn led to an increased terroristic violence of the Sunni radical groups, eventually organised in a structured political project consisting in the creation of a transnational Islamic Caliphate denominated "Daesh". Given the deteriorated situation in Iraq and Syria, the only realistic possibility of the USA for fostering a sustainable peace and stability in the region is to create a wide coalition against Daesh, which should include at least Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkey, besides Iraq, USA and its partners, under the umbrella of the United Nations. Such a coalition should first seek for local, on-the-ground Sunni partners, which are opposing Daesh, and then intervene with ground troops against the extremists.

Key words: Iraq, USA, Daesh, sectarianism, federalism, oil.

Odnosi med ZDA in Irakom, 2003 - 2014

Združene države Amerike so se z invazijo Iraka leta 2003 podale v zelo kompleksno družbeno in zgodovinsko resničnost, katero je diktator Saddam Husein vodil s trdo roko in krutimi metodami. Po okupaciji države, ZDA in partnerji niso bili sposobni zagotoviti mirne tranzicije v demokracijo, možne le z vključitvijo vseh etničnih in verskih skupnosti v enakopravni dialog, ki bi botroval kreaciji nove, adaptirane državne in ustavne ureditve. Največja problema sta bila, in ostajata še danes, emarginacija konsistentne arabsko-sunitske manjšine in definicija statusa kurdske avtonomne regije na severu države. Po začetnih velikih napah ZDA, med katere lahko štejemo invazijo samo in posledično razpustitev iraškega vojaškega in civilno-administrativnega kompleksa, ki je povzročila brezvladje in kaos, je bila še najboljša (v dani situaciji) odločitev ameriške administracije tista o operaciji "Surge": ta pojem je pomenil spremembo strategije ZDA v Iraku. Kot prvo, je s to obsežno operacijo okupacijska administracija poiskala in ustvarila zavezništva s sunitskimi plemeni proti sunitskim skrajnežem, nato je povečala vojaški kontingent in končno premaknila vojsko iz oddaljenih in zaščitnih vojašnic (kjer je bila brez pravega učinka) v mesta in vasi, kjer je bila zmožna jamčiti večjo varnost. Operacija je botrovala začetku bolj inkluzivnega političnega dialoga in boljšim perspektivam za prihodnost skupne iraške države v letih 2009 in 2010. Po delnem in nato popolnem umiku ameriških sil pa je ponovno prevladal sektarianizem, politična razdrobljenost, boj za oblast in nenazadnje plemenska pripadnost. To je pripeljalo takratnega premiera Al Maliki-ja do uporabe vse trše roke in stopnjevanja diskriminacije vse bolj nezadovoljne sunitske manjšine, kar je pripeljalo do vnovičnega povečanja terorističnega nasilja sunitskih skrajnežev, vse bolj organiziranih v strukturiran politični projekt ustanovitve transnacionalnega islamskega kalifata z imenom "Daesh". Glede na poslabšano situacijo v Siriji in Iraku, je edina realistična možnost ZDA za ustvarjanje trajnostne stabilnosti v regiji grajenje široke koalicije proti Daesh-u, ki naj bi obsegala vsaj Iran, Savdsko Arabijo in Turčijo, poleg Iraka ter ZDA in partnerjev, pod okriljem OZN. Taka koalicija naj bi poiskala lokalne, sunitske partnerje, ki so proti nadvladi Daesh-a, ter potem posegla z zemeljskimi vojaškimi silami proti ekstremistom.

Ključne besede: Irak, ZDA, Daesh, sektarianizem, federalizem, nafta.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The topic description

The aim of this broadly conceived task consists in the analysis of the US approach in dealing with the complexity of the Iraqi multi-faceted and complex society. Moreover, we will try to find out what conduct and line of action would be most effective in order to contribute to peace-building in today's exhausted Iraq. This kind of analysis assumes a special relevance at the present time, in the shadow of recent events, which saw ISIS (or ISIL or Daesh - the so called "Islamic State of Iraq", a former Al-Qaida affiliated jihadist terrorist organisation) taking control of many important cities in the Iraqi North-West, as well as of a consistent part of Syria.

Iraq is not one of the many artificial countries created »on the paper« by former colonial powers in order to promote their imperialistic politics, regardless of ethnical, religious and societal composition of the territory. Iraqis have their own, deep rooted unitary national identity, with the notable exception of the Kurds (Dodge 2012, Visser 2010). True is that Iraqis were for several centuries under the domination of the Ottoman Empire; it is also true that Iraqi nation is a real mosaïque of religions and ethnicities, encompassing not only the two macro-components (Arab Shia and Sunni), but also Turkmen, Assyrian, Bedouin, Black Iraqi, Faili Kurd, Shabak, Yezidi, Assyrian Syriac Christian and many other peculiar identities. Nevertheless, despite this ethno-cultural-religious variety, people all identify themselves as Iraqis. Iraqi nationalism was always an important component of Iraqi politics and a strong ideological engine, already under the Turkish domination, and later on during the British rule, up to the cruel tyranny of Saddam Hussein (Davies, 2005). In Iraq there were no strong radical religious components, let alone jihadists, since laic nationalism has always prevailed, able, as it was, to keep the country together.

In the light of the above, we could ask ourselves: what is the problem in Iraq? Why are Iraqis beyond the edge of the civil war? How come the Iraqi ground is so fertile for radical terror groups, such as ISIS – ISIL – Daesh, but also Sons of Naqshbandi, Badr Brigades, Iraqi Hezbollah and many others? How is it possible that ISIL conquered a consistent part of the North-West of the country? What are the responsibilities and the role of the US for the current situation? And, most of all, what can the United States do in order to stabilise the country? Many human lives were lost and huge material and financial means were spent in order to force the change of regime and to stabilise the country. However, Iraq today is far from being a stable country; it is not a truly inclusive and democratic one and it is not a trustworthy strategic ally of the United States, despite good

cooperation in trade and investment.

The present Master Thesis tries, at least partially, to answer to these issues. The most relevant of them is of course the present escalation of jihadist attacks, which have grown up in intensity, goals and extension, becoming real territorial conquest operations, with a remarkable degree of success: indeed, up to August 2014, Islamic State gained full control of important Iraqi Central-North-Western cities, such as Fallujah, Ramadi, Mosul and is approaching to the capital city of the Kurdistan autonomous region, Erbil, causing big distress, refugees and internally displaced people (1,8 million in November 2014), due to its cruel and intransigent policy-making in the conquered territories. In the analysis it is also kept in mind that the US Administration is in a difficult position, because many of the closest allies of the US in the Gulf region, namely the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, are not only non-hostile towards jihadists, but contribute to support them, or give shelter to rich personalities who help the extremists, often in an anti-Iran key, despite recent declarations by Saudi Arabian Government and by the Wahhabi royal family circle, showing a firm will not to give support to the Islamic State. A change in the Saudi strategic game of alliances could bring up new and more favourable perspectives for macro-regional stability.

The work is divided in three meta-parts:

1. Introductory and background overview of the recent history of US - Iraqi relations;

The overview covers the years from 2003, when USA invaded Iraq, to 2009, corresponding to the end of General Petraeus's "surge" against radical Sunni militants and terrorist Al-Qaida organisation;

2. A more detailed overview and analysis of the cooperation in the years 2009 - 2014;

This period corresponds to more and more concentration of power in the hands of the PM Al-Maliki who, by not respecting the Erbil Agreement and by ostracising and imprisoning his political opponents, gained more and more hostility from the Sunnis and the Kurds, in front of a more or less passive American behaviour; many cooperation programmes, which started to be implemented in these years, are analysed, together with their current status and future perspectives. In addition, the positions and opinions of the American NGOs, working on the territory in this time span, are scrutinised, in order to give a clearer picture of the cooperation.

3. Latest developments (2014): Al-Maliki's intransigence and Syrian civil war, among other, more

long-term factors, brought momentum for ISIS/ISIL, which conquered vast parts of Iraq, especially in the North-West of the country. The current state of play is first described, then analysed. Possible solutions are suggested, especially concerning the best line of action and strategy that the US can adopt in the present difficult situation.

1.2 Methodology

For the first, more general and broadly oriented part of our academic work, we used a literature driven approach. We mainly focused on literature covering the US-Iraq relations from 2009 onward. In addition, we analysed the basic juridical pillars and framework of the US-Iraq cooperation, i.e. the Strategic Partnership Agreement, the Status of Forces Agreement, the Memorandum of Understanding and the Trade and Investment Agreement. These four core documents are also added to the work for reference in form of annexes. This classical approach was widened and completed by an extensive Internet research on the topic of relations between the two countries. Especially useful was, in this regard, Reidar Visser's blog and the articles of some internationally known newspapers, such as "the Guardian" and "Daily Telegraph". The research was completed by using additional sources, such as specialised reviews/publications or monthly published newspapers.

The second part of the academic work is instead much more focused on the present situation, meaning the developments in the last year and a half or so. It is based on high quality and up-to-date US Congress researches and suggestions for policy making and on European Parliament External Relations' Policy Department information material.

Given the topics and what is happening in Iraq in this moment, chronology and constant updates were performed. The research framework goes therefore from the March 2003 US invasion of Iraq up to the situation in November 2014.

Summarising, the methodology stems from:

- 1.The existing literature, in order to provide for a historical background;
- 2.The analysis of the current legislative and normative framework in the US-Iraq cooperation;
- 3.The analysis of mass-media articles and contributions, especially for timely updates of the fluid situation on the ground;

In the shadow of latest events, the research question must be the following: *What are the reasons for the failure of post-2009 United States foreign policy in Iraq?* And, in order to be constructive and to offer some possible solutions, we also try to answer the following: *What would be the best possible line of action of the USA in order to bring peace and stability to Iraq, in the middle of the ravaging civil war?*

On the basis of recent history of the region and of established facts, we suggest the following two hypotheses:

H1: *Post-2009 US policy in Iraq appears to be the consequence of an Obama administration foreign policy that largely reflects a goal of not trying to repeat past mistakes. This low-profile stance, however, brought on the surface deeply rooted problems of power sharing between Sunni minority and Shia majority in Iraq.*

It can be stated that the consistent US efforts gave a very small gain, if any, compared to the pre-2003 situation. Consequently, the US Administration would not like to repeat the mistake again and limits itself to marginal help to a questionable Iraqi regime in its fight against jihadists. This hypothesis is mainly proven in the last chapter - *need for a change in the US strategy*, where the timeline of events in the sometimes inconsistent compared to the severity of events, US-Iraq relations is summarized.

H2: *Post-2009 US policy in Iraq is problematic because it reflects the issue of not being able to work with a credible internal player in the country, due to the highly corrupted and fragmented Iraqi political class, to incompetency and authoritarianism.*

Mr Al Maliki seems out of the game now, but the problem of the fragmented, clientelistic, corrupt, litigious and sectarian oriented Iraqi political class remains. While IS is conquering the country, in Baghdad politicians have been disputing over power-sharing and seem only able to build weak Governments. The hope remains, however, that the new PM Al-Abadi will have the possibility to reach a stronger consensus. Besides this hypothesis being the leitmotif of all the research work, it results best demonstrated in chapter 7, through the summary of the analysis of trends in Iraqi politics and relations with the US partner.

2 RECENT HISTORY

After the 2003 invasion by US armed forces, Saddam Hussein was defeated in a very short time (March to April 2003). Subsequently, a CPA (Coalition Provisional Authority) was set up. It had a huge power covering all tasks expected from a Government. It was chaired by Mr Paul Bremer, a proven career diplomat whom, however, did not have any experience in Middle East issues and lacked the knowledge of Arabic. USA dedicated big amounts of financial resources in order to reconstruct the civilian capacities of Iraq, especially the electricity grids and network, which was seen as a priority, since, as a matter of fact, Iraqis use to evaluate the efficiency of a Government according to the quantity of electricity and the availability of hours of electricity per day in a household, this Government is able to provide. The Coalition Provisional Authority made also two things, which, according to many, turned out to be completely wrong (Visser 2010; Hahn 2011; Dodge 2013):

It disbanded the Iraqi Army, leaving around 400,000 people without any kind of employment, and a huge quantity of weapons in an uncontrolled circulation;

It pursued a politics of de-Baathification in a too radical manner, leaving Iraq without many middle-class, educated people, which would be so important to implement decisions of any Government into daily practice;

Indeed, because of disbanding of the Iraqi Army, uncontrolled pillage and thefts of all State resources took place in the first months after the occupation, without any force being numerically able to prevent these thefts: not only computers, printers, chairs and tables were stolen from the former Governmental offices and ministries, but also wires and electricity cables were taken away in order to sell copper and other precious metals. As a matter of fact, due to the huge inflow of Iraqi copper, stolen in this way, even the international copper price has fallen (Baghat, 2003).

The Coalition Provisional Authority, quite soon, appointed a non-sovereign Iraqi Governing Council (IGC). The IGC was thus the provisional Government of Iraq from July 13, 2003 to June 1, 2004. The IGC was made up of Iraqi political and tribal leaders who were appointed by the CPA to provide the leadership of the country until the June 2004 transfer of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government (which was replaced in May 2005 by the Iraqi Transitional Government, which was afterwards replaced one year later by the first non-temporary government).

The Council's ethno-religious composition included thirteen Shias, five Sunnis, five Kurds, one Turkmen and an Assyrian (Dodge 2005). Three members were women.

In September 2003, the Iraqi Governing Council obtained recognition from the Arab League, which agreed to place its representative in Iraq's chair at its meetings. On June 1, 2004, the Council dissolved after choosing Mr Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawer as the President of the new Iraq interim Government. Full sovereignty was passed on to the interim Government, and the CPA dissolved, on June 28, 2004 (Kukis, 2011).

Though submitted to the authority of the CPA administrator Bremer, the IGC had several key powers. Its duties included appointing representatives to the United Nations, nominating interim ministers to Iraq's vacant Government positions, and drafting a temporary Constitution, called the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL). The TAL provided for the bills which were to govern the Iraqi Interim Government, and the schedule to hold elections to the National Assembly; drafting of a permanent Constitution to be voted by the Iraqi people on a referendum; and elections to a permanent Government.

Although having to answer to the CPA, different factions had controversial stands. Religious hard-liners won an overwhelming victory when "Directive 137" was passed on December 29, 2003. Passed by the council, it replaced Iraq's former secular family law code with Shari'a family law. There were wide protests against it among many Iraqi women fearful to lose their freedom to make their own decisions about marriage, divorce and many other issues where Iraq used to be a leader in the Arab world for women's rights. Other legislation passed by the legislative authorities included declaring the day of the fall of Baghdad to be a national holiday, establishing a tribunal to try former Baath government leaders, and banning television stations which are deemed to be supportive of the resistance, or of the former regime. A new flag was chosen by the council for post-Saddam Iraq, but it created much controversy, in part because of the similarity of color and design with the flag of Israel, and the flag was eventually not adopted (Visser 2010).

According to the Law of Administration for the State of Iraq for the Transitional Period, the temporary Constitution that the Council approved, the Council would stop functioning after June 30, 2004, at which point full sovereignty would return to Iraq, and the Government would be handed on to a new, sovereign temporary Government. Instead, the council chose to dissolve itself sooner, with a lot of unfinished work still to be accomplished.

In June 2004, after the experience of the Iraqi Governing Council, the CPA set up the Interim Iraqi Government (IIG), chaired by the Prime Minister Mr Ayad Allawi. The IIG was flawed by a big deficiency, which proved disastrous for the future of the country. It was made up by politicians from exile, by Iraqi Shia politicians and representatives and by the Kurds. But there were practically no Sunnis in it. The former dominators of Iraq turned into a subjugated minority without an equitable political representation (Visser 2007). The so called "exclusive elite agreement" among former exiled elite, Shia and Kurds, turned out to be one of the most powerful engines for the burst of the civil war starting from late 2004 on, and the main cause for the radicalization of the consistent Sunni minority. Due also to the good auspices and aid from the US, in 2005 the new Iraq Constitution was drafted by an independent body. This Constitution was, and still is at the time of writing, one of the most enlightened Constitutions in the Middle East. However, given the difficult situation of the country, the Constitution mostly remains dead letter.

As a condition for its approval, the draft Constitution was put to vote on a popular referendum. There was consistent consensus among the Shia majority and among the Kurdish component, but there was also a strong rejection by the Sunni minority, especially in Al-Anbar Governorate. Nevertheless, the Constitution obtained the necessary majority to pass. In addition to the Constitution approval, in 2005 there were also the first national free elections after 35 years of Baathist rule. The Sunni component largely boycotted these elections. Consequently, it was severely underrepresented in the Council of Representatives and in the Government, newly headed by Mr Nouri Al Maliki. Mr Al Maliki was chosen due to the fact that he and his Dawa party were amongst the few people not having an armed structure and a violently militant basis. He was perceived as being "harmless". Power was largely detained by Shia in South and Central Iraq, while the Kurdish Regional Government strongly held its three provinces, Erbil, Dohuk and Sulaymaniyah, with the two hegemonic parties of Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

At the same time, a flagrant civil war broke out. The situation was deteriorating, the sectarian divide got deeper and deeper, due to Shia militias attacking Sunni and Sunni para-military formations attacking Shia. The Kurds were the only component living in a relative calm, since they were able to strength their autonomous Peshmerga forces, which efficiently defended and secured the three Northern provinces forming the Kurdistan Autonomous Region. There was a real ethnic cleansing, and every day mass-murders of civilians by the use of IED (improvised explosive devices), or

simply random shooting on civilians of a certain area took place. The areas worst hit by the sectarian strife were Baghdad, Mosul, Ninewa and Fallujah. The US forces were not numerous enough to counter the fighting spreading everywhere. They were also pursuing an ineffective strategy of staying as far as possible from the population, in fortified camps, in order not to cause an (even bigger) reaction against their presence among the Iraqi population and to minimise US casualties. In this way, however, the armed groups and militias ravaged almost undisturbed. The exception was the city of Fallujah, which, at a certain moment in 2004, fell completely in the hands of Sunni insurgency groups. The US decided to start a wide offensive against the city, reconquering it with the use of heavy weapons, striking from air and from the ground. The offensive caused a mass migration, and the effects of some non-conventional weapons, such as depleted uranium and white phosphor, are felt still today among the population of the Fallujah urban area (Visser 2007; Visser 2011) .

The anti-American insurgency, sectarian strife and civil war, which saw the involvement, among others, of the increasingly well organised Moqtada Al Sadr's Mahdi Army on the Shia side and the Islamic State of Iraq (a branch of Al Qaida) on the Sunni side, became unsustainable. Iraq was on a path towards becoming a failed state. Therefore, at the beginning of 2007, the United States decided for a so called "surge". The number of troops in Iraq was consistently increased, the tactics and strategy completely changed. The US supreme commander of Iraq became General Petraeus, who decided to start counter-insurgency warfare, following a newly-established counter-insurgency doctrine. Petraeus sent the army out on the streets, in towns and cities, to cooperate with the newly born and still forming Iraqi security forces, in order to defeat insurgency and sectarian warfare. Petraeus adopted a pretty effective strategy, some elements of which are mentioned below:

Partitioning the worst hit cities, especially Baghdad, in many small areas, inaccessible and impermeable from outside, except through two well controlled and fortified check-points;

Special operation forces received orders to kill the upper and middle management of terrorist groups. This targeting was effective and actually efficient in reducing violence levels;

Alliance with those parts of Sunni society, who didn't see very well the strengthening of the extremist Al-Qaida, culturally far from the traditional Iraqi Sunni tribe environment; this kind of alliance generated the Sunni awakening movements, fighting against Sunni extremism and

consistently financed by the US Army (Salloum, 2013). The awakening movements were supposed to be incorporated, later on, in the Iraqi Security Forces. Instead of this, they were subsequently criminalised, segregated, when not imprisoned, tortured or killed by the Shia dominated Iraqi Security Forces (ISF);

The surge certainly sorted out some positive effects. Shia militias mainly decided to disarm and demobilise, also because of the fact that the Government was favourably inclined to integrate former fighters of the Mahdi Army and other Shia armed groups into the regular Iraqi Security Forces. We should not forget that the Government was strongly Shia oriented, with Al-Maliki having, yes, secular and nationalistic ambitions, but nevertheless favouring the majority Shia confession. On the other side, Sunni extremists were largely pushed back by a combination of Petraeus "surge", awakening movements and increasing ISF strength. From July 2008 up to January 2010 it really seemed that Iraq would have a chance for a genuine democratic reform, with the good auspices of the United States (Weller 2013; Katzman 2014a). However, the US lost that occasion. It should have promoted, developed and translated into practice two fundamental ideas:

Promoting the unity of Iraq: Iraq is not an artificial creature forged by British imperialism or Ottoman division of the territory. It is an entity of which the population historically feels part of one same nation, with only the notable exception of Kurdistan provinces;

Contrasting sectarian divide: traditionally, the sectarian divide was not present in Iraq: Shia and Sunni, Muslim and Christians lived in peace for centuries. The sectarian rhetoric became unfortunately important and stronger only in the aftermaths of the US invasion, with the exclusive elite pact and with the subsequent bloody civil war. In this framework, it would not have been appropriate to search for greater regional autonomies, if we exclude the Kurdistan region, nor to strengthen the exclusive elite pact and the muhasasa system of allocating powerful governmental positions according to the sectarian belonging, fostering a system of inefficiency and corruption.

Instead, the US approach turned out to be exactly the opposite: it promoted a system of power based on the exclusive elite pact and on allocating resources according to sectarian belonging. And, it wrongly saw the Iraqi society as irremediably split in factions, ethnicities, religious streams, and as being artificial. Therefore, it promoted autonomy solutions for regions and governorates, other than the Kurdish regions in the North, by obtaining a deepening of the divide, rather than the opposite.

The 2010 national parliamentary elections saw a consistent turnout and a plurality of competing lists, in a climate of phasing-out of the US troop presence and a relative decrease in violence. The most notable coalition was the Al-Iraqiya political formation. Mostly made up of Sunni smaller parties and movements, it had however the explicit goal to overcome sectarianism, to be open to everybody no matter what ethnic/religious affiliation and to include Iraqi patriotism and nationalism in its agenda. On the other side, the ISCI (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq) and the Dawa (more moderate Shia coalition, headed by the Prime Minister Al-Maliki) remained on more sectarian positions. Al-Maliki was above all afraid of losing power should the exclusive elite pact be broken by a success of Al-Iraqiya. This is why, some months before the elections, he started a huge de-Baathification operation mainly targeting Al-Iraqiya representatives, through a nominally independent body, which was chaired by a person close to Al-Maliki. More than 500 candidates were thus purged for having been in positions of power during the Baathist regime. This operation was seen by many as a blatant attempt by Al-Maliki to stop its main electoral competitor and to stop the change, promoted by Al-Iraqiya, in Iraqi politics. The United States were losing ground and power to negotiate and influence Al-Maliki in parallel with his gaining strength and with the decrease of US troops on the ground. A growing Iranian influence on Iraqi affairs has to be added to this scenario (Diplomatie 2014; TMnews 2014).

Despite everything, Al-Iraqiya won the relative majority of seats, gaining 91 seats in the CoR, as opposed to 89 seats by Al-Maliki.

At the same time, the United States continued to view the situation in Iraq as still dominated by sectarian actors, by choosing, as their favourite interlocutors, the most re-known representatives of sectarian groups. This was true to a certain extent, but it was also true that the Iraqi public opinion and large sectors of Iraqi society wanted to abandon the sectarian divide and did not want to be categorised according to a sectarian belonging. At some point in 2009 Vice President Biden stated that the US would try to promote a solution for peace by convoking the exponents of the biggest factions. But, in this way, the US administration encouraged exactly those groups, which were promoting the sectarian divide. Moreover, immediately after the 2010 elections, US clearly indicated that they would wish to see the involvement in the government of all the four main components, which meant, given the electoral results: Iraqiya, Maliki's State of Law Coalition, ISCI (Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq - a strongly Shia sectarian movement) and the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party - by definition a Kurdish nationalist party). Probably this indication was a

strategic mistake, bringing to the reinforcement and conservation of the current muhasasa system, which is based on dividing prestigious Government posts among the most powerful factions, based on a pre-arranged agreement. And indeed, this situation brought to the famous Erbil Agreement, which mainly conserved the division of resources according to muhasasa.

The Erbil Agreement gave Sunnis the Vice Presidency (Mr Al-Hashimi) and the post of the Speaker of the Council of Representatives (Mr Al-Nujaifi). Kurds have obtained the Presidency of the Republic (Mr Talabani), while Shia obtained the post of Prime Minister and many ministries. So, in theory, the Erbil Agreement worked, but in practice not really, because Mr Al-Maliki was concentrating power in his own hands more and more. The arrest of Vice President Al-Hashimi, and of the Finance Minister Rafie Al - Issawi, among other things, caused increased protests and street demonstrations (sometimes rioting) by the consistent Sunni minority. Al-Maliki reacted harshly against demonstrations: the Iraqi Security Forces often used weapons and killed many protesters, especially in Hawija, close to Kirkuk, in April 2013 (TMnews, 2014). In this climate, also the (especially Sunni) terrorism reinforced. Attacks on civil targets were greatly intensified in number. The responsible for these attacks is mainly Al-Qaida, with its branch Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, led by Abu Omar Al-Baghdadi. Moreover, this extremist movement was greatly reinforced due to the spillover from Syria. In addition to the already difficult situation, there are indications of a reactivation of Shia armed groups in response to Al-Qaeda violence, which is targeting mainly Sunnis (Visser 2012, blog).

In this extremely fragile framework, US lost a lot of leverage on Iraq. This loss is also due to the complete withdrawal of US troops from Iraq in December 2011, in line with a November 2008 bilateral U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Iraq refused to extend the presence of U.S. troops in Iraq, seeking to put behind it the period of U.S. political and military control. Some outside experts and some in Congress have asserted that U.S. influence over Iraq has ebbed since. Program components of what were to be enduring, close security relations—extensive U.S. training for Iraq's security forces through an Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I) and a State Department police development program—languished or ended. Still, Iraqi efforts to acquire sophisticated U.S. equipment such as F-16 combat aircraft, air defense equipment, and Apache attack helicopters give the Administration some leverage over Baghdad. And Iraqi officials have indicated to U.S. officials an interest in reviving dormant security cooperation efforts or establishing new ones to help the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) deal with the growing violence. The U.S. civilian presence in Iraq has

declined from about 17,000 to about 10,500 and is expected to fall to 5,500 by the end of 2013. Although recognizing that Iraq wants to rebuild its regional relations, the Administration and Congress seek to prevent Iraq from falling under the sway of Iran, with which the Maliki government has built close relations. Fearing that a change of regime in Syria would further embolden the Iraqi Sunni opposition, Maliki has not joined U.S. and other Arab state calls for Syrian President Bashar Al Assad to leave office and Iraq has not consistently sought to prevent Iranian over flights of arms deliveries to Syria. Still, the legacy of the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq war, Arab and Persian differences, Iraq's efforts to re-establish its place in the Arab world, and Maliki's need to work with senior Iraqi Sunnis limit Iranian influence over the Baghdad Government.

3 U.S. MILITARY WITHDRAWAL AND POST-2011 POLICY

The U.S. military contingent's withdrawal from Iraq by December 2011 was a consequence of the November 2008 U.S. - Iraq Security Agreement (SA), which was rendered operational by January 1, 2009. Following the Security Agreement's entry into force, President Obama, on February 27, 2009, outlined a U.S. military contingent size down programme providing for a withdraw of U.S. combat troops by the last days of August 2010, with a remaining force of 50,000 mainly for training the Iraq Security Forces, to remain until the end of 2011. An interim milestone in the Security Agreement was the June 30, 2009, withdrawal of US combat troops from Iraq's cities and towns. These withdrawal deadlines were adhered to.

3.1 Should U.S. Forces Have Remained Beyond 2011

During 2011, with the deadline for a total withdrawal coming closer, perceived danger of expanded Iranian influence, and severe deficiencies in Iraq's 800,000 member security forces made US officials to ask for a revision of the Security Agreement in order to keep a number of US troops in Iraq after 2011. Some US employees on the ground were afraid about a possible rebellion among major ethnic and sectarian communities. As a matter of fact, the rifts were still wide enough that Iraq could still become a "failed state" unless some foreign and neutral troops remained. U.S. officials pointed out that the current ISF weaknesses centred on the lack of ability to defend Iraq's airspace and national territory. Iraqi reactions, such as a statement by Iraqi Army Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Zebari that Iraq would be unable to execute external defence to its full extent until 2020-2024, reinforced those who thought that a US troops presence was still required. Renegotiating the Security Agreement to allow for a continuation of US troop presence required negotiations with the Iraqi Government and a ratification by the Iraqi Council of Representatives (COR). Several high ranking US personalities, visiting the country, and several statements convinced the Iraqis to consider extending the US military presence. Mr Al-Maliki told visiting Speaker of the House Boehner during an April 16, 2011, visit to Baghdad that Iraq would welcome U.S. training and weapons after that time. After Boehner's visit, Maliki, knowing that a vote of the COR would be required for an extension, said that a demand for US troops might be satisfied if there was a "consensus" among all different political blocs (which he later defined as at least 70% occurrence). This seemed to be an effort to isolate the Sadr faction, the loudest opponent to a continuation of US presence. On July 11, 2011, the Secretary of Defense Panetta exerted pressure on Iraqi leaders to make an affirmative decision (Katzman, 2014c; Humud 2014) . On August 3,

2011, major factions gave Maliki their support to negotiate a Security Agreement extension. In September 2011, a number of more or less 15,000 remaining US troops, based upon recommendations by the US military, was being discussed in many instances. A known newspaper reported on September 7, 2011, that the Administration considered suggesting to Iraq retaining more or less 3,000 - 4,000 forces, mostly in a training asset. Many experts criticized that number as too reduced to carry out the planned missions.

3.2 President Obama Announces Decision on Full Withdrawal

The difficulty in the negotiations—primarily a function of strident Sadrist opposition to a continued U.S. presence—became clearer on October 5, 2011, when Iraq issued a statement that Iraq would not extend the legal protections contained in the existing SA. That stipulation failed to meet the requirements of the Defense Department, which asserts that trying any American soldier under the Iraqi constitution could lead to serious crises at some stage. On October 21, 2011, President Obama announced that the United States and Iraq had agreed that, in accordance with the November 2008 Security Agreement (SA) with Iraq, all U.S. troops would leave Iraq at the end of 2011. With the formal end of the U.S. combat mission on August 31, 2010, U.S. forces dropped to 47,000, and force levels dropped steadily from August to December 2011. The last U.S. troop contingent crossed into Kuwait on December 18, 2011. The continuing Sunni unrest and violence has caused some to argue that U.S. gains were jeopardized and that the Administration should have pressed Iraqi leaders harder to allow a U.S. contingent to remain. Those who support the Administration view say that political crisis was likely no matter when the United States withdrew and that it is the responsibility of the Iraqis to resolve their differences. (Katzman 2014b)

3.3 Structure of the Post-Troop Relationship

After the withdrawal announcement, senior U.S. officials stated that the United States would be able to continue to help Iraq secure itself using programs commonly provided for other countries. Administration officials stressed that the U.S. political and residual security-related presence would be sufficient to exert influence and leverage to ensure that Iraq remained stable, allied to the United States, continuing to move toward full democracy, and economically growing and vibrant. At the time of the withdrawal, there were about 16,000 total U.S. personnel in Iraq, about half of which were contractors. Of the contractors, most were on missions to protect the U.S. staff. (Katzman 2014a)

3.4 Office of Security Cooperation and Major Weapon Sales

The Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I), acting under the authority of the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, is the mainly Iraq-based US institution interacting with the Iraqi Army—in primis by administering the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programs (US weapon deals with Iraq). OSC-I, funded with the Foreign Military Financing (FMF), is the most sizeable US security cooperation office of the planet. It is based in the US Embassy in Baghdad and several other locations around the country (Kirkuk Regional Airport Base, Besmaya, Tikrit, Umm Qasr, and Taji). OSC-I plans to transfer its facilities to the Iraqi government by December 2013. The overall OCS-I personnel counts over 3,500 staff, but the huge majority are security and support personnel, and most of them are contractors. About 175 staff are US military personnel and another 45 are Defense Department civilians. About 46 members are administrators of the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program and other security assistance programs such as the International Military Education and Training (IMET) one. Since 2005, Department of Defence has administered 231 US-funded FMS cases for a total of \$2.5 billion, and 201 Iraq-funded cases for a total of \$7.9 billion. There are several other purchase requests initiated by Iraq that, if they all proceed, would bring the estimated value of all Iraq FMS cases to more or less \$25 billion. The most sizeable FMS example is the sale of 36 US - made F-16 combat airplanes to Iraq, notified to Congress in two equal tranches, the latest of which was made at the end of 2011. The overall value of the sale of 36 F-16 is up to \$6.5 billion with all equipment, training, and arm systems included. Iraq has paid around half of that amount, to date. The first deliveries of the airplanes were scheduled for the end of 2014, although Iraqi high-ranking officials said that accelerating them would facilitate Iraqi efforts to inspect Iranian over flights to Syria. Several experts and Iraqi political class, particularly the Kurds, are calling for putting on stand-by the F-16 deliveries unless Al Maliki effectively starts to share power with Sunni and Kurdish leaders, diminishes ties to Iran, and starts to fully cooperate with US on the approach to Syria. Iraq's Kurdish leaders continue to argue that Maliki could use the F-16's against domestic peaceful opponents. Another consistent part of the arms sale program to Iraq concerns 140 Abrams tanks. Deliveries began in August 2010; the last of them were delivered in late August 2012. The tanks have a cost of about \$860 million (maintenance excluded), of which \$800 million was paid out of Iraq's national treasury funds. Iraq is apparently also seeking to buy more or less 30 Stryker armoured vehicles equipped with detectors to detect biological or chemical agents—a purchase that, if notified to Congress and subsequently approved, would be valued at about \$25 million. At the end of December 2012, the US Navy sent two support ships to war fleet to Iraq, which are supposed to assist Iraq's fast-attack and patrol boats that are securing its deep sea oil platforms and other

coastal and offshore locations. The United States also plans to sell to Iraq equipment that its security forces might use to lower the ability of rebel and terrorist groups to contraband merchandises across Iraq's borders and checkpoints (namely RAPISCAN system vehicles), at a price of about \$600 million. Some modernised air defense heavy guns are being provided for free as "excess defense articles (EDA)", but Iraq protested because the guns did not arrive until mid 2013. To help securing its own air space and military strength, Iraq has requested to buy from the United States the "Integrated Air Defense System" and Apache strike helicopters, with a total value of about \$10 billion. Iraq argues that it is not able, for instance, to stop Iranian over flights to Syria without this desired equipment. The sale of the Air Defense system was notified to Congress in August 2013, with a indicative value of \$2.4 billion, and included 681 3Stinger" shoulder-held units, 3 Hawk antiaircraft batteries, and other weapon systems. On that day, and in the preceding week, DSCA notified about 2.3 billion dollars of other sales to Iraq consisting of Stryker nuclear, chemical, and biological hazard reconnaissance vehicles, 12 Bell helicopters, the Mobile Troposcatter Radio System, and various maintenance support. Nevertheless, the United States has apparently not decided on the Apache helicopters up to now, partially because the Apache helicopter could be operated against peaceful demonstrators or Sunni or Kurdish opponents of the current Iraqi government. Perhaps to protect itself against a potential US denial of some sales, Iraq tries to diversify its weapon supplies. Al-Maliki visited Russia in October 2012, and signed deals for Russian weapons which had a value of about \$4.2 billion. The weapons are supposed to include 30 MI-28 helicopter gunships and air defense missiles, including the Pantsir surface-to-air missile system. Iraq might as well buy MIG fighter aircraft in the near future, according to some press statements. In mid-October 2012, Iraq announced to have the will to buy 28 Czech-made military aircraft, a deal with a value of about \$1 billion. (Katzman 2014c)

3.5 Police Development Program

A separate program is the Police Development Program, the most extensive program that passed from DOD to State Department direction, using International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INCLE) funds. Despite this, Iraq's wish to abandon US tutelage produced a probable Iraqi disinterest in the PDP. By the end of 2012, the program consisted of only 36 advisers, which represents about 10% of what was originally foreseen as an advisory force of 350, and it was being phased out completely during 2013. Two facilities built with the financial injection of over \$200 million in US money (Baghdad Police College Annex and a part of the US consulate in Basra) will

be turned over to the Iraqi government by the end of 2012. Several press reports write there is Administration consideration of ending the program in toto. (Katzman 2014b)

3.6 2013: A revival of US Security Programs in Iraq?

In addition to administering weapons sales to Iraq, the Office of Security Cooperation conducts training and military technical assistance programs for the Iraqi security forces. Because the United States and Iraq have not managed to agree on a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA - which would grant every kind of immunities to US military personnel), the 160 OSC-I personnel involved in these programs are mostly external contractors. They train Iraq's security forces on counterterrorism and naval and air defense. Some work as trainers not only tactically, but at the institutional level by counselling Iraqi security ministries and its command and control structure. If a SOFA will be agreed upon, some of these missions will perhaps be performed by US military personnel, presumably increasing the efficiency of the programs. The violence of some Sunni extremists and terrorists, that began in November 2012 and has since then accelerated, has apparently convinced the Iraqi government to emphasize more the security cooperation with the United States. On August 19, 2012, heading to a visit to Iraq, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Martin Dempsey said that he thinks Iraqi leaders will recognize that their capabilities may require yet more additional development and he thinks they are touching base with the US in order to see if US can help the country with that. Besides accelerated delivery of US weapons earmarked to be sold, Iraq reportedly has shown interest in expanded US training of the Iraqi Security Forces and organise joint exercises. After the visit of General Dempsey, respecting the Iraqi decision to re-engage to a high degree with the United States on security, it was reported that, at the request of Iraq itself, a unit of Army Special Operations forces deployed to the country in order to give advice on counterterrorism and help with intelligence gathering, mainly against Al Qaida in Iraq. These forces are perhaps operating under a limited SOFA agreement or related memorandum crafted for this goal. Some other reports speak about Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) paramilitary forces having entered the country from the end of 2012 on, and having largely taken over some of the DOD (Department of Defence) missions to assist local counter-terrorism units (Counter-Terrorism Service, CTS) against AQ-I in Western part of Iraq. An aspect of the reported CIA mission is also to operate against the AQ-I ally in Syria, the Al Nosra Front. As a reaction to an acceleration of the Iraqi military reengagement with the United States of America, in December 2012 Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Mr James Miller and acting Under Secretary of State for International Security Ms Rose Gottemoeller visited Iraq and a Memorandum of

Understanding (MOU) was signed with the then acting Defense Minister Sadoun Dulaymi. The five year MOU foresees:

Consistent and high level US-Iraq military exchanges;
professional cooperation in military education;
Cooperation in the field of counter-terrorism;
an enhanced development of defence intelligence capabilities;
several joint exercises on regular bases;

The MOU seemed to address many of the issues that have prevented OSC-I from performing its mission to its full potential. The MOU also reflected some of the more recent suggested ideas, such as regular joint military exercises. The idea of enhanced US - Iraq cooperation received even more consideration in the middle of 2013 when the United States wished to prevent the civil war in Syria from affecting neighbouring countries, including Iraq, but also Lebanon and Jordan. In late June 2013, General Dempsey stated United States is looking for ways and means to improve the military capabilities and strength of Iraq and Lebanon, two countries in the front-line and extensively affected by the Syria conflict. According to General Dempsey, a better and stronger help could include dispatching a number of training teams and accelerating sales of weapons and military equipment. During his August 2013 visit to Washington D.C, done primarily to attend meetings of the US-Iraq Political and Diplomatic Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), an organism based on the Strategic Framework Agreement, the former Foreign Minister Zebari indicated that Iraq has a strong wish to enhance security cooperation with the United States in order to expand Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) capabilities. His visit came several weeks after the July 2013 Abu Ghraib prison break that caused many experts to say that the lack of US - Iraq security cooperation had caused ISF efficiency to lessen. Some experts think that US departure and abandoning security programs has caused the Iraqi Security Forces to lose focus on counter-insurgency strategy, for example. (Humud, 2014; Katzman 2014c; Visser's blog 2012)

3.7 Regional Reinforcement Capability

Since the withdrawal of the troops from the country, the United States maintained a high leverage in the Persian Gulf region also in order to show a continuing US commitment in the security of Iraq as well as to deter Iran. Nevertheless, some experts and officials clearly stated that the reintroduction of US fighting troops into Iraq was not at that moment under consideration as an answer to the

degrading security situation in the country. The United States is maintaining a stronghold of about 50,000 military personnel in the whole region, including about 15,000 mainly US Army forces in Kuwait, a part of which are, since mid-2012, combat ready rather than purely support forces. There are also more or less 7,500 mostly Air Force personnel in Qatar; 5,000 Navy personnel in Bahrain; and about 3,000 mostly Air Force and Navy in the United Arab Emirates, with small numbers in Saudi Arabia and Oman. The rest of them are part of at least one aircraft carrier task force in or close to the Gulf at any given time, on demand. The forces are located in the Gulf countries under bilateral defense cooperation agreements with all six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states that give the United States access to their military facilities and, in most cases, to station forces and deploy even heavy armour. (Katzman 2014c)

3.8 Diplomatic and Economic Relationship

In his announcement of withdrawal from Iraq, the US President Obama said that, with the help of US assistance programs, the US would be continue to be able to develop every aspect of the bilateral relationships with Iraq and to help in strengthening its institutions. The bilateral civilian relationship was also the focus of a trip to Iraq by Vice President Biden in December 2011, just before the December 2011 al Maliki trip to the United States.

The milestone of the US-Iraq bilateral relationship is the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA). The SFA, ratified and entered into force at the same time as the SA, presents a solid framework for long term US-Iraqi relationship, and is aimed at giving assistance in orienting Iraq's politics and its economy toward the West and its nations, and to reduce Iraq's reliance on Iran or other regional partners. The SFA mainly provides for the following:

US-Iraq cooperation “based on mutual respect,” and that the United States will not use Iraqi facilities to launch any attacks against third countries, and will not try to install permanent bases.

US support for Iraqi democracy and support for Iraq in regional and international fora.

U.S.-Iraqi dialogue to augment Iraq's economic development, including through the use of a continuous Dialogue on Economic Cooperation and a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement.

Promotion of Iraq's development of its electricity, oil, and gas sector.

U.S.-Iraq dialogue on agriculture as well as promotion of Iraqi participation in

agricultural programs run by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and USAID

Cultural cooperation through several student exchange programs, such as the Youth Exchange and Study Program and the International Visitor Leadership Program. (Strategic Framework Agreement)

Programs, run by the State Department, are intended to promote and implement the goals of the SFA, according to State Department budget programming documents. These programs are realised mainly through the Economic Support Fund, and the State Department budget justification for foreign operations for FY2014 indicates that most U.S. assistance to Iraq for FY2014 will be dedicated to programs aimed at promoting democracy, adherence to the accepted international standards of human rights, rule of law, and conflict resolution. Programs funded by the State Department Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) will be focused on rule of law, moving away from previous use of INL funds for police training and financing of police forces. Funding will not be discontinued for counterterrorism operations (NADR funds), and for anti-corruption actions and initiatives. US officials stressed that the US is not the only one to finance the programs above, in light of the fact that Iraq was getting richer as a major oil exporter. For programs run by USAID in Iraq, Iraq matched the US funding contribution on a half/half basis.

3.9 The State Department as the main Agency

Almost all responsibility for conducting the bilateral relationship has fallen on the State Department, which assumed its leading role in Iraq since October 2011. With the completed transition, the State Department said in March 2012, that its “Office of the Iraq Transition Coordinator” had closed. In July 2011, as part of the transition to State leadership in Iraq, the United States formally opened its consulates in Basra, Irbil, and Kirkuk. An embassy detached office was considered for Mosul but cost and security issues kept the US facility there limited to a diplomatic office. Afterwards, the Kirkuk consulate closed at the end of July 2012 basically due to security concerns and also to save the elevated costs. As reflected in the FY2014 budget requests, the State Department was planning to refurbish the US consulate in Irbil with a new Consulate Compound. US plans for some consulates have been changed since then, and the size and cost of the US civilian presence in Iraq was being reduced. The partial cause of this was in the fact that some Iraqi leaders were not happy with continued US tutelage and have not been so keen in welcoming frequent US diplomatic exchanges with Iraq. US diplomats could very often not leave the Green Zone for official appointments due to high security concerns. US civil servants stated in

mid-2012 that the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, of which building costs were about \$750 million, had too much staff if compared to the real needs. From almost 17,000 personnel at the time of the ending of the U.S. withdrawal (at the end of 2011), the quantity of U.S. personnel in Iraq has been reduced to more or less 10,000 as of mid-2013, and was expected to fall to about 5,500 by the end of the year 2013. Of the total US staff in the country, about 1,000 were US diplomats or other civilian servants, officials and employees of the US government. The US Ambassador to Iraq was Mr Robert Stephen Beecroft, who was confirmed by the Senate in September 2012. The quantity of the U.S. presence is linked to the debate over whether the State Department, using mainly external security contractors, could fully secure its own personnel in Iraq. No US civilian personnel in Iraq have been killed or injured since the troop withdrawal until all 2014. Some believe that the reduction in personnel simply reflected a diminishing U.S. influence in Iraq. The March 2013 visit by Secretary Kerry was probably intended to reverse this apparent decline in the U.S. influence and profile in Iraq. His visit was the first by any Secretary of State since 2009. Other observers stated that US influence remains at a high level and substantial, but only in private diplomatic and political circles. Other observers and commentators suggested a more enhanced use of the meetings in the framework of the Strategic Framework Agreement provisions, in order to promote a non-violent resolution of the troubles in the internal Iraqi political system and to enhance U.S. influence. On the other hand, no meeting of the leadership-level Higher Coordinating Committee was held in the course of 2012, but some analysts said that an HCC meeting should have been held in 2013, potentially attended by President Obama and Prime Minister Maliki. The former Foreign Minister Zebari visited USA in September 2013; that visit was somehow linked with the Joint Coordinating Committees (JCC) meetings, established by the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA), as said before. Prime Minister Al-Maliki visited the United States for high-level talks in late 2013.

The State Department demand for operations (which included the financial costs for the Embassy and for other facilities and civilian personnel in Iraq) was about \$1.18 billion for FY2014—less than half the \$2.7 billion requested for FY2013, and down 66% from the \$3.6 billion provided in FY2012. FY2012 was considered a “transition year” to State Department leadership, requiring high start-up costs (Humud, 2014).

3.10 "No Sanctions" Impediments

As the US-Iraq relationship matured, some observers started to increasingly focus on US - Iraq trade relationship and US - led investments into the country. After the fall of Saddam Hussein, U.S.

economic and trade sanctions against Iraq were withdrawn. Iraq was removed from the “rogue states” list and the Iraq Sanctions Act, which foresaw a U.S. trade embargo imposed after Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990, was brought to an end. As written before in the section dedicated to the Gulf States, in December 2010 a series of U.N. Security Council resolutions removed most remaining “Chapter VII” UN sanctions against Iraq, with the exception of the payment of reparations to Kuwait. The lifting of U.N. sanctions allowed any country to also sell arms and weapon systems to Iraq. Nevertheless, Iraq must still comply with international proliferation treaties— this means that it is generally prevented from reconstructing Saddam-era weapons of mass destruction programs. In October 2012, Iraq demonstrated its will to comply with the mentioned restrictions by signing and ratifying an “Additional Protocol” of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Because of the sanctions lifted, there were no impediments to US business deals with Iraq in any field.

3.11 Conclusions

US forces left in December 2011, following a November 2008 bilateral U.S.-Iraq Security Agreement. Despite a comprehensive debate, Iraq did not want to extend the presence of US troops in the country, seeking to overcome the period of US political and military control and management. Many outside experts and some people in Congress have asserted that U.S. influence over Iraq has been diminishing ever since. Program components of what was supposed to be an enduring and close security relationship—extensive US military and technical help in training the Iraq’s security forces through an Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (OSC-I) and a State Department police development program—languished and could not be developed to their full potential during 2011-2013. Nevertheless, Iraq continued to show the will to buy sophisticated U.S. equipment such as F-16 combat airplane, air defense equipment, and attack helicopters, giving the Administration some leverage and influence over the Government of Iraq. During his visit to Washington, DC at the beginning of November 2013, the PM Al-Maliki pushed for accelerated U.S. weapon sales as part of an enhancement of the US - Iraq security cooperation in order to help Iraq dealing with the growing sectarian violence. The Administration and Congress tried to continue to cultivate and treat Iraq as an ally partially in order to prevent an increased Iranian influence on Iraq. As a matter of fact, Maliki government has built close relations with Iran. (Katzman 2014b).

4 STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT BASED COOPERATION BETWEEN USA AND IRAQ

Vice President Biden visited Iraq in November 2011 and held a meeting of the US - Iraq Higher Coordinating Committee. From then on, the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) has served as a genuine backbone of the US relationship with Iraq. The United States and the Government of Iraq highly value the potential of the SFA, as was often evidenced by public statements by both sides, the three Higher Coordinating Committee meetings and 24 Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) meetings held in the areas of cooperation foreseen in the SFA, by the Working Groups within each JCC that have been meeting on a regular basis, and by many developments across a variety of sectors, explained in more detail below.

4.1 Defense and Security

In June 2013, the U.S. Central Command organised the first U.S. - Iraq Joint Military Committee (JMC), which is one of the subordinate plans to the Defense and Security JCC. The JMC treated topics such as external border security, Iraqi military strategy, and involvement of Iraqi Security Forces in wide-regional training exercises. The following JCC was held in Washington in late 2013.

At the December 2012 JCC, the former Acting Defense Minister al-Dlimi ratified a Memorandum of Understanding on Security Cooperation with the US Department of Defense. This agreement represented a strong start of a military relationship between the United States and Iraq, and provided some mechanisms in order to augment defense cooperation in areas such as planning of a proper defense, cooperation in the field of counterterrorism, and combined exercises.

With a consistent US military aid, Iraq engaged much more consistently with its regional partners, also from a military point of view. Military exercises, strategic conferences and bilateral military engagements were organised and promoted. Iraq's participation in a Navy exercise in Bahrain in 2013 marked the first outer area deployment by an Iraqi naval unit in the post-Hussein era and the first-ever Iraqi naval port visit to Bahrain.

In tight cooperation with US officials, the Government of Iraq had bought around \$14 billion of equipment, services, and training through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program for its security forces. The Iraqi branch of the FMS program was one of the largest in the world.

Moreover, United States and Iraq agreed on a Framework for a Strategic Bilateral Cooperation Program for Addressing Chemical Weapons Risks in Baghdad in March 2013. The program

enshrined the collective efforts of the two nations in identifying and mitigating the threat of chemical weapons by developing a national response plan and building Iraq's defensive capabilities.

The threat posed by chemical weapons was thus recognized by the Framework, and took into account Iraq's capacity to respond to such kind of threats. In the related document, the United States and Iraqi Governments clearly assert their intention to assess the potential danger of chemical weapons, by developing chemical and biological emergency response plans, and implement exchange and training actions and technical assistance.

The United States obliged to continue its strong support for and cooperation with the Government of Iraq as enshrined in the Strategic Framework Agreement. Therefore, some experienced Iraqi officials visited the United States in order to hold meetings with the US Government counterparts to debate appropriate approaches for protecting Iraq from biological and chemical threats. In the course of 2013, more than 100 employees and representatives from various Iraqi ministries and agencies have participated in "chemical mitigation" training, with more expertise to arrive during the year 2014 (US Department of State 2014).

4.2 Cultural and Educational Cooperation

The two partner countries strongly committed to support the preservation and variety of Iraq's rich cultural heritage, the starting of a stronger Iraqi higher education system, and the continuation of sound cultural, professional and educational exchanges between Iraq and US.

Areas of Cooperation

Support in Higher Education: The USG (United States Government) and the GOI have been working jointly to construct a sound Iraqi higher education system. The exercise aims to create an English language institute hosted by the Iraqi Higher Committee on Educational Development, form an Iraq chapter of TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages) International, and foster faculty development.

Facilitating Exchanges: USG exchange programs foster mutual understanding and strengthen Iraqi capacity across sectors including education, English teaching, rule of law, entrepreneurship and economic growth, public health, scientific research, and human rights. A variety of exchanges are available, such as the Fulbright Program, the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP),

Study of the U.S. Institutes, the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship, the E-Teacher Scholarship Program, the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program, and Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) programs.

Preserving Cultural Heritage: Cultural heritage initiatives, including improved professional capacity in objects conservation, historic preservation, and archaeology, help safeguard the Iraqi cultural and artistic legacy. In 2009 the USG established the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) and recently committed additional funding to allow the IICAH to continue offering its world-class heritage preservation programs through 2013.

Recent Accomplishments

Education: The USG and GOI have established seven University Linkages. They have increased support for educational advising, which contributed to a 45 percent rise in the number of Iraqi students studying in the United States in the 2010-2011 academic year; they co-hosted the first-ever "EducationUSA" college fair in Erbil in October 2011. The USG provided two years of English classes to 1,500 disadvantaged youth, an increase of 50 percent over previous years.

Exchanges: From 2010 to 2014, approximately 400 Iraqis have participated in the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) program. IVLP alumni have used their experiences to promote positive change at home; as a direct result of a 2010 IVLP on "National Science Policy", the Government of Iraq (GOI) announced a \$50 million investment to create a National Science Foundation. In 2011, the Iraqi Fulbright program included 48 visiting Iraqi scholars and 30 Iraqi master's degree students.

Cultural Heritage: The USG initiated a major project to preserve the ancient city of Babylon, providing funding for a site management plan and preservation work at the ancient city's most famous landmarks. Funding for the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage (IICAH) in Erbil has expanded to include a grant from the USG for the objects conservation program and a larger grant from the Erbil Governorate for the historic preservation program. The U.S.-supported portion of the refurbishment of the Iraq Museum has been successfully completed.

Fourth meeting of the U.S. - Iraq Joint Coordination Committee on Educational and Cultural Cooperation (JCC), 06 March 2014 in Baghdad

The Joint Coordination Committee on Educational and Cultural Cooperation is based on the seven areas of cooperation jointly agreed upon in the U.S.-Iraq Strategic Framework Agreement, ratified in 2008.

The meeting, hosted by the Iraqi Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, was co-chaired by the Iraqi Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research Ali Al-Adeeb and Principal Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Kelly Keiderling. This occasion was an opportunity for the two partners to outline key areas for cooperation in educational area, cultural heritage, and several exchange programs.

The delegations marked the focus on enhancing ties between the peoples of the United States and Iraq. A joint statement which highlighted the overall success of educational exchange programs and cooperation on cultural preservation efforts was given to the press at the end of the meeting.

Both countries welcomed the huge progress in all educational and cultural cooperation topics and agreed to continue to increase linkages between the United States and Iraq through joint efforts in education, cultural heritage, and people-to-people exchanges. (US Department of State 2014).

Academic cooperation remains a fundamental element of building a strong linkage between the United States and Iraq, and both sides registered progress in this area. The “Open Doors” report on student mobility indicates that U.S. and Iraqi engagement in this area increased the number of Iraqis studying in the United States by 32.8 percent. 2013 was, sequentially, the fourth year in which the number of Iraqi students graduating in the United States increased by more than 30 percent. US and Iraqi universities, together with their faculties, continue to enhance and improve their working together through the so-called “Iraq University Linkages Program”, as well as US Embassy exchange programs for the development of university faculties, putting inside the “Fulbright Program”.

GoI scholarships, “Fulbright Program”, the “EducationUSA” consultancy network, and the new English Language Center at the Higher Committee for Education Development are to a big extent helping to increase the quantity of Iraqi citizens studying in the States. The US government contributed to construct the capabilities of the Iraqi Ministry of Education, including by enhancing the Ministry’s capability to lead student testing and analysis of data flows at primary and secondary

levels. Opportunities to learn English in Iraq are getting better, with around 1000 Iraqi youth throughout the Iraqi provinces studying English through the English Access Microscholarship Program. (US Department of State 2014).

U.S.-Iraqi collaboration in the protection and preservation of cultural heritage continues to strengthen through new and established initiatives. A site management plan for the future preservation and sustainability of the ancient site of Babylon nears completion through efforts by the World Monuments Fund and the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. U.S. support for education in cultural heritage preservation continues with additional educational programs conducted by the University of Delaware and other academic and NGO partners at the Iraqi Institute for the Conservation of Antiquities and Heritage in Erbil. In 2013, a new university linkage was also established between Mosul University and Boston University to help Iraq reestablish its tradition of excellence in higher education in the fields of archaeology and cultural heritage management. These initiatives are critical for building Iraq's capacity to preserve and manage its rich cultural heritage.

People-to-people ties between the United States and Iraq continue to grow stronger. The International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP), the Hubert H. Humphrey Fellowship Program, the Iraqi Young Leaders Exchange Program, sports exchanges, and other initiatives bring hundreds of Iraqi scholars, students, youth, and professionals to the United States each year. Both sides are looking to encourage more sports exchanges and to share expertise in sports medicine. Frequent cultural programs are promoting common values between both nations (US Department of State 2014).

4.3 Energy Cooperation

The United States and Iraq are committed to the development of Iraq's electricity, oil and gas sectors in an effort to build a strong economy that is capable of meeting the needs of the Iraqi people.

Areas of Cooperation

Critical Infrastructure Protection: The USG will provide training on accident response and critical infrastructure protection for Iraq's electricity sector. This program will allow Iraq to strengthen the

safety and reliability of its electricity sector by training Government of Iraq personnel on how to develop and implement threat assessment and accident response systems, as well as to implement improved operations and maintenance procedures for new and existing electricity generation, transmission, and distribution facilities.

Support Iraq's efforts to generate, transmit, and distribute sufficient electricity: The U.S. supports Iraq's goal to provide a substantial increase in electricity through significant ongoing and proposed projects and technical assistance. The US Government (USG) will help the GOI to procure spare parts for Iraqi power generation stations, intending to replace those parts that can bring the most generation back online as quickly and as inexpensively as possible.

Recent Accomplishments

Electricity Development: Iraqi officials unveiled the USG-funded "Electricity Master Plan" in February 2011, which will guide Iraq's development of its electricity sector over the next 30 years. Since 2003, the United States has invested nearly \$5 billion in rebuilding Iraq's electricity system, which has added 2,900 megawatts of electricity generation capacity and accounts for almost a quarter of the Iraq's electricity supply.

Capacity Building: The USG conducted workshops on oil tax regimes, contract negotiation, and international arbitration, which directly enhanced the Oil Ministry's ability to conduct transparent oil bid rounds in 2009 and 2010. In the electricity sector, the USG promoted a financially sound and sustainable foundation for provision of electricity services and the operations of the Ministry of Electricity.

Furthermore, Iraq's Ministry of Electricity has asked and obtained training and technical assistance from the US for around 100 of its most educated engineers and managers on matters concerning energy security and safety in the years 2012 and 2013, while the Ministry of Oil was helped by US training for 9 of its main geoscientists and engineers on resource evaluation.

The Iraqi and US government reaffirmed their commitment, by ratifying an ad hoc Memorandum of Understanding in January 2013, to cooperate together in all areas of oil production and export, as well as natural gas, electricity, and critical energy infrastructure protection (US Department of State 2014).

4.4 Law Enforcement and Judicial Cooperation

A strong justice system, built on effective policing, judicial independence, and rule of law, is vital to the security and development of Iraq. The United States and Iraq are collaborating to improve cooperation, capacity, and professionalism within Iraq's criminal justice system. These programs will help Iraq address corruption, terrorism, trafficking in persons, organized crime, drug abuse, and other threats to its people.

Areas of Cooperation

Support Judicial Security and Development: The USG is working with Iraq to protect and build its judiciary through a wide range of efforts, including training to improve judicial security, the delivery of courthouse security equipment, and the transfer of the Judicial Development Institute (JDI) – Iraq's premier facility for continuing legal education – to the control of the Higher Judicial Council in 2012. The JDI was established in 2010 with a grant from the USG and has graduated 1,700 judicial personnel.

Provide Law Enforcement Training: The USG provides advisory and technical assistance as well as training to support the efforts of the Ministry of Interior and police services to further develop leadership and technical skills critical to managing and sustaining internal security operations and supporting the rule of law. 120 members of the Iraqi Police will travel to the U.S. over the next three years as part of an exchange program for leadership development.

Continue to Improve the Iraqi Interior Ministry's Ability to Track Crime: The USG will help Iraq implement systems that will expand the Advanced Responder Network System, Iraq's equivalent of the 911 system in the U.S., to 70 percent of the population, and will provide operator and maintenance training for an electronic biometric database.

Secure Land Rights of Iraqi Citizens and Business Owners: The USG is working with the GOI to develop a secure database for the Iraqi Ministry of Justice to modernize its real estate registry and digitize the over 100 million documents it contains. This effort brings transparency and security to Iraq's land titling system, affording citizens and business owners the opportunity to buy and sell property in a system that reduces fraud.

Recent Accomplishments

Support to Iraq's Corrections Systems: Iraq's corrections system by 2003 was fully compromised by the brutal authoritarian practices of Saddam Hussein's regime. USG cooperation with the Iraqi Ministry of Justice Corrections Service since that time has helped Iraq develop and professionalize its Iraqi corrections system.

Anti-Corruption Institutions: The USG funded a five-year anti-corruption strategy launched by PM Maliki in March 2010. It has also supported Iraq's efforts to develop anti-corruption entities, including the Commission on Integrity (COI). The COI played an instrumental role in the 2011 repatriation of Saddam-era funds.

After considerable technical support and assistance from the U.S. Government, Iraq has now begun arresting, investigating, and prosecuting cases under its comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation.

In May 2013 the US Embassy in Baghdad, a US Federal Judge from the 2nd Circuit, and the FBI, trained 13 Iraqi investigative judges on techniques in asset recovery in financial crimes, and a presentation on such techniques will be made to the Acting head of the Higher Judicial Council Judge Hammari.

In 2012, Iraq established the High Commission for Human Rights to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights and ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

4.5 Political and Diplomatic Cooperation

The United States and Iraq support Iraq's democracy and are working to strengthen democratic institutions to better respond to the needs of the Iraqi people. The United States also supports Iraq's efforts to establish positive relations in the region and with key international organizations.

Areas of Cooperation

Support Progress on Iraq's UN Chapter VII Responsibilities: As Iraq moves to normalize its relations with nations and organizations around the world, the United States is supporting Iraq's efforts to fulfill its international obligations in order to lift punitive measures placed on Iraq by the United Nations Security Council after Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

Support to Vulnerable Populations, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): The USG works closely with the Government of Iraq to improve access to basic government services for vulnerable

populations. The USG works with local government and justice sector authorities to address community priorities, including legal services, to all of Iraq's people, regardless of ethnicity, religion, or sex, with a focus on the most vulnerable populations, including IDPs, widows, and orphans.

Recent Accomplishments

Election Support: The United States provided \$102 million over the last 7 years to support Iraqi elections, in particular to the 2010 Iraq Parliamentary elections in which over 12 million Iraqis participated. This support focused on a wide range of issues including political party development, transparency initiatives, civil society engagement, and media training.

Chapter VII Support: On December 15, 2010, UN Security Council, in a special session chaired by Vice President Biden, passed three resolutions to help return Iraq to the legal and international standing it held prior to the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. With support from the USG, the Security Council recognized Iraq's commitment to non-proliferation and lifted restrictions on Iraq related to weapons of mass destruction and civilian nuclear activities. The USG also worked to ensure Iraq's compliance with Security Council resolutions concerning the Development Fund for Iraq (DFI) and Oil-for-Food (OFF) program.

Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced Persons and Refugees: In 2011, the U.S. contributed a total of \$313.6 million in humanitarian assistance for Iraqi IDPs and conflict victims. These funds supported voluntary returns and reintegration efforts, and also provided basic humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable displaced Iraqis.

With U.S. support, Iraq and Kuwait worked together to end Iraq's Chapter VII obligations regarding the mandate of the High Level Coordinator for Missing Persons and Archives and establish a UN-led mechanism to continue and maintain their cooperation in this area. U.S. support also facilitated both parties' successful efforts to resolve the longstanding dispute over damage inflicted on Kuwait's national airline during the Gulf War. As a result, flights between Baghdad and Kuwait City resumed in 2013 after a 22-year cessation. In addition, both sides completed maintenance of the border pillars along their shared border in accordance with UN Security Council Resolution 833. Iraq has also constructively engaged its key neighbors like Jordan and the United Arab Emirates on issues of shared concern, including the growing conflict in Syria.

In April and June 2013, Iraq took another step toward building its democratic foundation through successfully holding provincial elections and in preparation for national elections in the spring of 2014.

The United States continued to strongly support Iraqi civil society and the many NGOs that continue to operate in Iraq under very challenging circumstances, through training and advocacy, bringing public attention to issues of inclusive citizenship, displacement, human rights and women's rights. The State Department also named the Hammurabi Human Rights Organization the winner of its 2012 Human Rights Defenders Award, for its "fearless advocacy for human rights, concrete achievements in protecting female detainees, and critical work on curriculum reform to promote religious freedom." (US State Department, 2014)

Through its UN partners, the United States has contributed over \$1 billion in overall humanitarian aid since the Syria crisis began, including fully funding a \$1 million food voucher program for the Domiz refugee camp in northern Iraq and supporting Syrian refugees living in camps and in host communities in Iraq.

The United States also continues to provide support to displaced Iraqis, both inside Iraq and elsewhere in the region. Thus far in Fiscal Year 2013, the U.S. has provided over \$87 million to address the needs of displaced Iraqis through the provision of shelter, health care, livelihoods assistance, and other basic humanitarian assistance.

4.6 Services, Technology, Environment, and Transportation Cooperation

The United States and Iraq are committed to strengthening Iraq's infrastructure and essential services delivery to improve the lives and health of the Iraqi people. It is vital to cooperate on transportation, health care, agriculture, and other key issues to promote growth and security in Iraq. (US Department of State 2014).

Areas of Cooperation

Improve Iraq's Transportation Infrastructure: The U.S. transferred control of Iraq's airspace to the Government of Iraq on October 1, 2011, and will continue to provide technical assistance on communications, navigation, and other functions to improve Iraq's transportation infrastructure. In this context, Iraqi Airways continued to revitalize its aircraft fleet, and in part due to U.S.

Government advocacy, agreed to a contract with Boeing for 41 planes worth \$5.4 billion for delivery from 2013 – 2017.

The Department of Transportation's attaché office in Baghdad worked with Iraq's Ministry of Transportation to bring Iraq's airports into compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization codes and regulations, clearing American commercial carriers to resume operations to airports in northern Iraq for the first time in decades.

Strengthen Iraq's Health Care System: The U.S. supports Iraq's efforts to strengthen its primary health care delivery services, improve the functioning of health clinics nationwide, and enhance its epidemiological training programs. The U.S. is collaborating with the Iraqi Government to improve public health communications campaigns, respond to disease outbreaks, and prevent the spread of infectious diseases.

Strengthen Iraq's Agricultural Outreach Capacity: The USG will work with the GOI to build on the Iraq Agricultural Extension Revitalization project to identify and address further areas needing improvement. The U.S. will develop exchange programs to connect Iraqi agribusiness entrepreneurs with their U.S. counterparts and expose them to U.S. farming and agribusiness technology, generating export opportunities for U.S. firms and jobs for Iraqis.

Capacity Building and Commercial Legal Reform: The U.S. will provide capacity development in the areas of legislative and regulatory drafting, administrative procedures, and commercial dispute resolution. Capacity development programs will target oil and gas contracting, judicial adjudication and arbitration of commercial disputes, state-owned enterprise reform, and intellectual property law.

Recent Accomplishments

Improved Rail Transportation: The successful completion of the Communication Based Train Control System and Digital Microwave Radio Communication Network, funded by the USG, will help Iraq move goods, people, and raw materials quickly about the country via a state-of-the-art train control system that allows dispatchers to track and control rail movements.

Supporting Iraqi Institutions: The USG provided technical assistance to help the Ministry of Health draft its 2010-2014 Strategic Plan, which was released in 2010.

Training Initiatives: In 2011, the USG conducted training in biological and chemical safety and security for university students, scientists, and Iraqi government officials. Senior Iraqi government officials participated in scientific exchanges in 2010 and 2011 and senior Iraqi telecommunications

officials participated in a 3-week training program in 2010. The first cohort of field epidemiology students completed their two-year degree program in 2012.

4.7 Trade and Finance Cooperation

The United States and Iraq support the development of a “prosperous, diversified Iraqi economy that is integrated into the global economic system”. To accomplish this goal, the USG and the GOI have partnered on a wide range of programs aimed to develop Iraq’s economy and promote the expansion of bilateral trade.

Areas of Cooperation

Promoting Iraqi-U.S. Business Ties: trade and investment are important cornerstones of the U.S.-Iraqi relationship, and the USG and the GOI are committed to bolstering these ties. The U.S. government brings dozens of Iraqi companies to several trade shows in the U.S. each year to help them connect and do business with U.S. partner companies. Twenty eight Iraqi and U.S. companies are also working together as the U.S.-Iraq Business Dialogue to advise the U.S. and Iraqi governments on private sector trade and investment issues in Iraq. Moreover, the U.S. and Iraqi governments are trying to find ways to finance Iraq’s many large infrastructure development needs.

Improving Access to Credit and Strengthening Iraqi Banks: The USG is supporting businesses in Iraq through access to credit and technical assistance programs, including more than \$20 million for loans directly to small businesses. The U.S. and Iraq are cooperating in order to establish a bank training institute and create a nationwide retail payment and funds transfer system, which will make it easier for companies to do business throughout Iraq. These technical assistance and capacity building programs are aimed to enable Iraq to develop comprehensive financial infrastructure and help ensure the long-term growth and health of the Iraqi economy.

Recent Accomplishments

Baghdad International Trade Fair: For the first time since 1988, the United States participated in the Baghdad International Trade Fair (2011), showcasing 85 American businesses, universities, and tourism organizations interested in a greater role in the Iraqi market at their flagship annual commercial event. The USA Pavilion featured companies with combined annual revenues of over \$1 trillion, making it the largest country presence.

The following year, in the fall of 2012, Prime Minister Maliki joined over 100,000 Iraqi visitors to the U.S. sponsored Pavilion. U.S. organizations' participation was up 80% over the 2011 fair.

The Trade and Investment Framework Agreement between the Governments of Iraq and the United States, which addresses trade issues and improves bilateral economic relations, entered into force in May 2013.

In part due to U.S. Government advocacy, major U.S. companies like Boeing, Cisco, ExxonMobil, Ford Motors, Halliburton, Honeywell, and Lockheed Martin all have offices or are represented in Iraq. U.S. exports to Iraq, excluding aircraft, rose 13 percent between the first quarter of 2012 and first quarter of 2013 (US Department of State 2014).

Business Dialogue: In June 2011, Secretary Clinton and Deputy Secretary Nides with Dr. Sami al-Araji and Ambassador Samir Sumaida'ie hosted representatives from thirty U.S. businesses to discuss opportunities for increased economic engagement between the United States and Iraq. The Iraq-U.S. Business and Investment Conference, held in Washington, D.C. in October, 2009, attracted some 800 U.S., Iraqi, and other interested business representatives. The USG has also supported a wide range of U.S. companies on trade missions to Iraq.

Commercial Dispute Resolution: The USG helped the Iraqi Ministry of Justice establish Iraq's first commercial court for foreign investors. The U.S. will be actively involved in training the judges in commercial dispute resolution (US Department of State 2014).

5 STRATEGIC GOALS OF THE UNITED STATES IN IRAQ

The broadest definition of the US strategy in Iraq would be to exploit some kind of rupture effect in order to create a dynamics favorable to US interest and goals in the region. However, given the complexity of Iraqi and regional geo-political configurations, it is questionable to what extent these rupture effects are controllable.

The history of American interventionism in Iraq shows a continuum in the research of the objectives, namely of influence and access, and a rupture in strategic practices. From supporting the Baathist coup d'état in 1963 against the government of Abdul Karim Qasim – which, in its turn, had overthrown the monarchy in 1958, had withdrawn Iraq from the Baghdad Pact and got closer to Soviet Union – to the two wars and embargo in order to overthrow Saddam Hussein regime (1990 and 2003), passing through the support to Iraq in its war against Iran (1980 – 1988), it can be clearly seen that the American engagement evolved from an indirect strategy to a total strategy, bringing the US towards a “proto-imperial” posture of an expensive invasion and occupation. Such an engagement goes beyond Iraq and involves a reinforcement of geostrategic influence of the US in the entire region. The approach tends to be preemptive and is targeted also to limit the influence of several contingent factors in the region, such as the return of Russia as a global player, regional insurgencies, terrorism and jihadism (Diplomatie 2014).

Iraq as a key area in the region

Iraq is in the centre of a geo-strategic sub-system that the United States denominated the “Big Middle-East”, going from Maghreb to Central Asia. This region contains:

The biggest world hydrocarbon reserve;

Strategic seaways for global trade;

It is at the same time neighbor of Russia, China and Europe;

It is an interconnection area between Europe and Asia, Asia and Africa.

Interconnection and access have become strategic engines of globalization, and several logistical and energetic trans regional mega-projects (pipelines, hubs, water and alternative energy sources) are emerging, transforming the region in a “continuum”. Iraq is in the center of the continuum

Gulf/Mediterranean area, through Turkey and the Levant, and of the continuums Caspian Sea – Central Asia – Iran – Iraq – Mediterranean Sea – Europe (or Red Sea – Africa). These continuums, historically characterized by trade routes and human migration, such as the Silk Route and post-Ottoman Empire migrations (reactivated by the Syrian conflict, with some minorities coming back to the Caucasus), by exchanges (socio-cultural or linked to informal economy or militancy) within tribal, ethnical, confessional networks – will be “territorialized” and extended via “megaproject”. We are here referring to:

A number of project for oil transit;

Renewable energy projects, such as “Desertec”, which will extend from the Middle East through Sahel towards Europe;

Trans-Asian route-rail-port project called “Gwandar”, connecting Asia to the Gulf;

A “dry channel” project, consisting in a railway connecting the new port of Al-Faw (Basra) to Germany through Turkey, which was given this name because it will be in concurrence with the Suez Channel;

Multiple air and maritime hubs, growing in the region;

The central position of the Arab-Persian Gulf in the American strategy is a constant – the Gulf was at times called “an American lake”. But it is also true that the US concentrated their military presence in Europe during the cold war. It is only during the eighties, after the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, that the United States reinforced their military presence in the area, by creating, in 1983, a dedicated command – the Central Command (CENTCOM) – and by multiplying defense agreements with the countries in the area (Diplomatie 2014). After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990, the Gulf monarchies, up to then not willing to build up a too tight partnership, which would have created dependence, with the US, decide to sign defense agreements and accept to host US military bases on their territory. The CENTCOM area became thus a perimeter area, covered logistically by military bases, military equipment installations, telecommunication systems and ISR (Information gathering, surveillance and recognition). After the 2001 terrorist attacks, the US tightened security links with the countries of the region, particularly with Gulf countries, which saw, in the “global war against terror”, an opportunity to legitimize their oppressive policies in the name of security.

6 LATEST DEVELOPMENTS BEFORE ISIS BREAK-OUT

6.1 Outcomes of PM Al-Maliki visit to Washington

A couple of years after the U.S. soldiers left Iraq, Baghdad and Washington seem to be more or less closely aligned in the fight against Al-Qaeda and similar extremist movements but mainly non aligned over Syria and Iran. That's the conclusion and follow-up to the second half of October 2013 White House visit by the Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki, whose home critics see his focus on Al-Qaeda tailor-made in order to deflect criticism of his more and more authoritarian exercise of power.

Maliki's visit, after months of sustained bloodshed and increased violence in Iraq, where almost daily bombing attacks, mostly directed at civilians, raised violence close to the levels at the top height of Iraq's civil war. Approximately 7000 Iraqi civilians have been killed in 2013 alone.

The rise in violent revolts and terrorist attacks two years after the US troop withdrawal is mostly related to a surge of Al-Qaeda on Iraq's western border, according to many analysts. Reidar Visser, a re-known Iraq analyst affiliated with the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, stated that this kind of rise has "mostly to do with the regional situation in Syria." (Visser in Katzman 2014c)

"It reflects Al-Qaeda activities in the border area," Visser said. "We wouldn't have seen this level of violence without Syria." (Visser in Katzman 2014c)

Al-Qaeda-affiliated groups that had surged to a prominent role in the Syrian rebellion operated on both sides of the Syria-Iraqi border, struggling against the authoritarian regimes of both Syria's President Bashar al-Assad and Al Maliki.

During the previously mentioned visit, President Obama made sure to the visiting Iraqi Prime Minister that the US want to be a reliable and long-lasting partner in helping in the raise of a stable and inclusive Iraq despite the rapid growth in sectarian violence that threatened security all around the land. Nevertheless, after a private meeting in the Oval Office, President Obama did not pronounce any public commitment for granting weaponry, military equipment or other assistance that the PM Al Maliki was seeking for. The Iraqi leader said US help was vital in order to contain the threat to his country's security posed by growth in Al-Qaeda. Obama stated he wished to convince Al-Maliki to promote the approval of an electoral law so that Iraqis could express their differences politically instead of using violence. The United States has been trying to put pressure on al-Maliki to stop his Shiite-led government's political and societal mistreatment of the consistent Sunni minority and hold him responsible for a substantial failure to govern in an inclusive way. President Obama also said he would wish to cooperate with the Iraqi Prime Minister in order to

fight back against terrorist groups that endanger not only Iraq but the entire region. This private meeting was held on the closing day of Maliki's first visit to Washington in around two years. The Iraqi Prime Minister has had the occasion to lobby Congress to grant authorization for the sale of U.S. - made Apache helicopters and other armaments he believed would be needed in order to stabilize Iraq. In their short remarks, neither Obama nor Maliki mentioned the suggested military sales or other assistance to Iraq, although Obama did note that it has been nearly two years since U.S. troops left the country. Maliki told journalists that he and Obama shared "a common vision" about the rise of terrorism in Iraq and on how to fight it. "We had similar positions and similar ideas," Maliki said. "We discussed the details of our cooperation, but the people who are in charge will discuss further details about this." After their meeting, the delegations issued a **joint statement saying they agreed on Iraq's need for additional equipment to contain the violence**. "Both sides emphasized — on an urgent basis — the need for additional equipment for Iraqi forces to conduct ongoing operations in remote areas where terrorist camps are located," the statement said. Moreover, the Iraqi delegation stressed its strong wish to purchase US equipment also as a way of reinforcing long-term institutional ties with the United States, and reaffirmed its will to ensure strict compliance with US laws and regulations on the use of such equipment. (Humud 2014; Katzman 2014c)

6.2 Conflicting priorities

Despite common worries about Al-Qaeda, the United States and Iraq appear to have different priorities and not the same agendas. Most Iraqi Sunnis, whose political parties and ideological stances have been repressed by Maliki's more and more authoritarian governing style, think the prime minister is using Al-Qaeda as an excuse, with his Washington partners, in order to divert attention from the unilateral consolidation of his Shia power base to the expense of Sunnis, increasingly excluded from the political life.

An International Crisis Group report, dated August 2013 on Iraq's explosive political situation stated that the issue of Sunni Arab participation in Iraq's political order is as acute and combustible as ever.

Maliki came to power in an electoral system favored and tailored by the US, but American policymakers have reacted, subsequently, with dismay at his apparent failure to create an inclusive political system in Iraq.

Douglas Ollivant, a senior national security fellow with the New America Foundation, said: “One thing that the US wishes of the Maliki government today is a better treatment of the Sunni population”. (International Crisis Group, August 2013)

The promotion of a bigger political inclusion was made forcefully by a bipartisan group of U.S. senators, among which Carl Levin, a Democrat from Michigan, and John McCain, a Republican from Arizona, in early 2014. Their argument was that Maliki is guilty, or at least the main responsible, for the biggest part of the political paralysis in Iraq that has led to the increase of violence and armed struggle. Subsequently, they urged the Obama administration to put under a question mark the delivery of military support to Iraq.

US civil servants have been worried about the Iraqi government’s close relations with the Persian neighbor. Maliki is Shia, exactly as most of Iran. And Maliki’s allegiance to Iran over its material and political support for Assad is a major cause for concern.

In any case, US - Iraqi relations are in the backstage for Washington policymakers in a series of other urgent issues in the Middle East, including Egypt, Syria and Iran.

6.3 Regional player

Beyond asking for military, technical and security assistance during his visit to the United States, Maliki also tried to reinforce his domestic leading position by presenting Iraq as an important strategic and stability factor in the Middle East.

Among other things, his government tried to do this by reinforcing Iraq’s credibility as a regional power broker. Analysts close to Maliki reported to Reuter's press agency that Iraq’s government sees itself as a bridge with the region’s Sunni Arab bloc, led by Saudi Arabia, and the regional Shia bloc, headed by Iran.

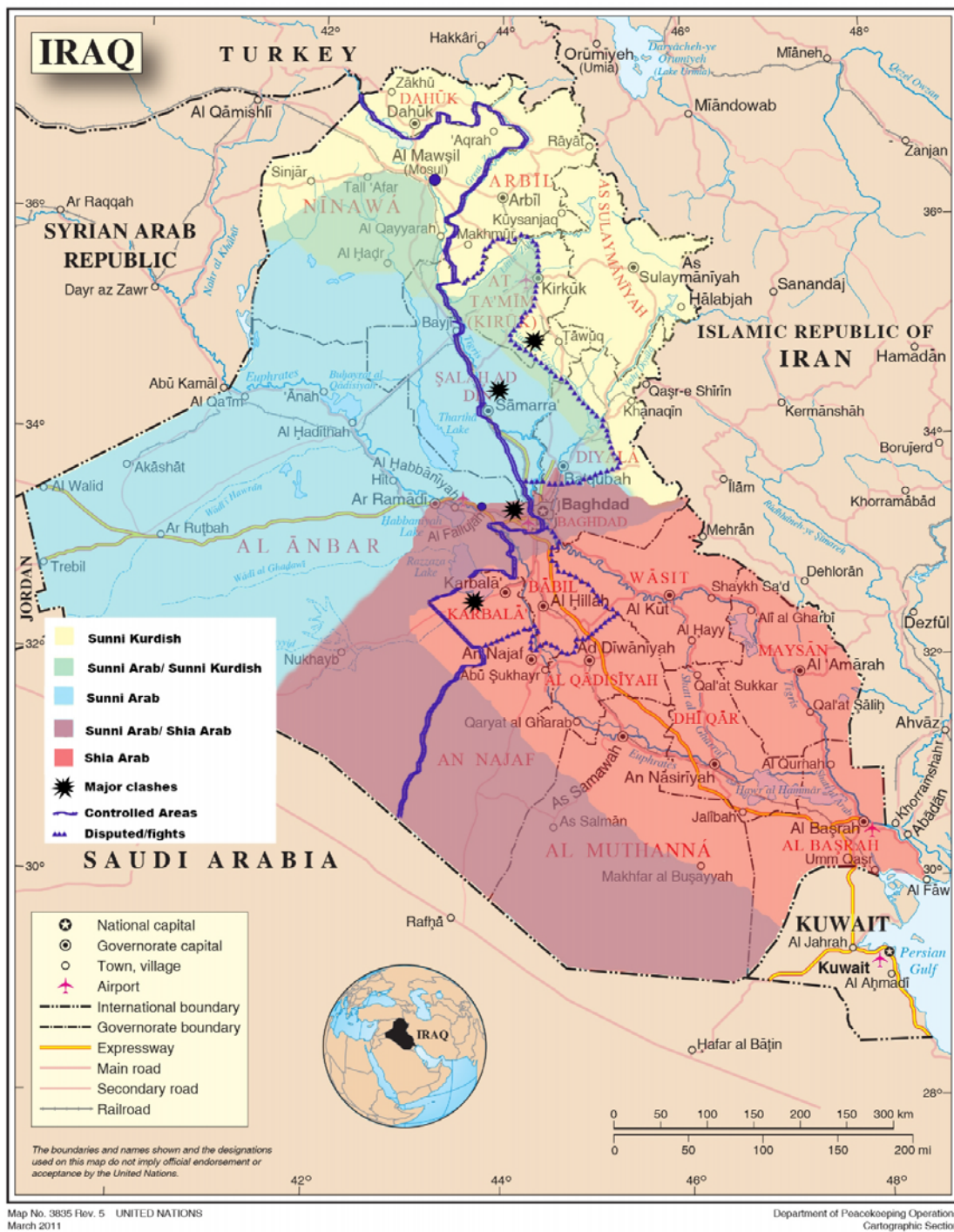
While the US continued the negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program, Iraq had suggested that it could have played a crucial mediating role.

However, the US administration did not see things in the same manner. As a matter of fact, Iraq’s regional diplomatic role was not at the center of the visit’s program, probably because of the perceived weakness of the Iraqi government by the US administration.

In any case, analysts say that Iraq's credibility and reputation in the region is of particular importance for PM Al-Maliki, given the closing-up of the then upcoming elections in April, when he tried to secure a third term for himself.

In order to accomplish this, Iraq continued to project its influence in the region across the engagement with nations it remained friendly with, although some of those countries were rivals themselves. Maliki esteemed important, for his image, to be seen as having the support of the Iranians and of the Americans.

Picture 5.1: ISIL massive break out and invasion, Kurdish conquest of Kirkuk



Source: United Nations, with additions by the Policy Department, DG EXPO, European Parliament, July 2014.

6.4 Insurrection begins as 2013 ends

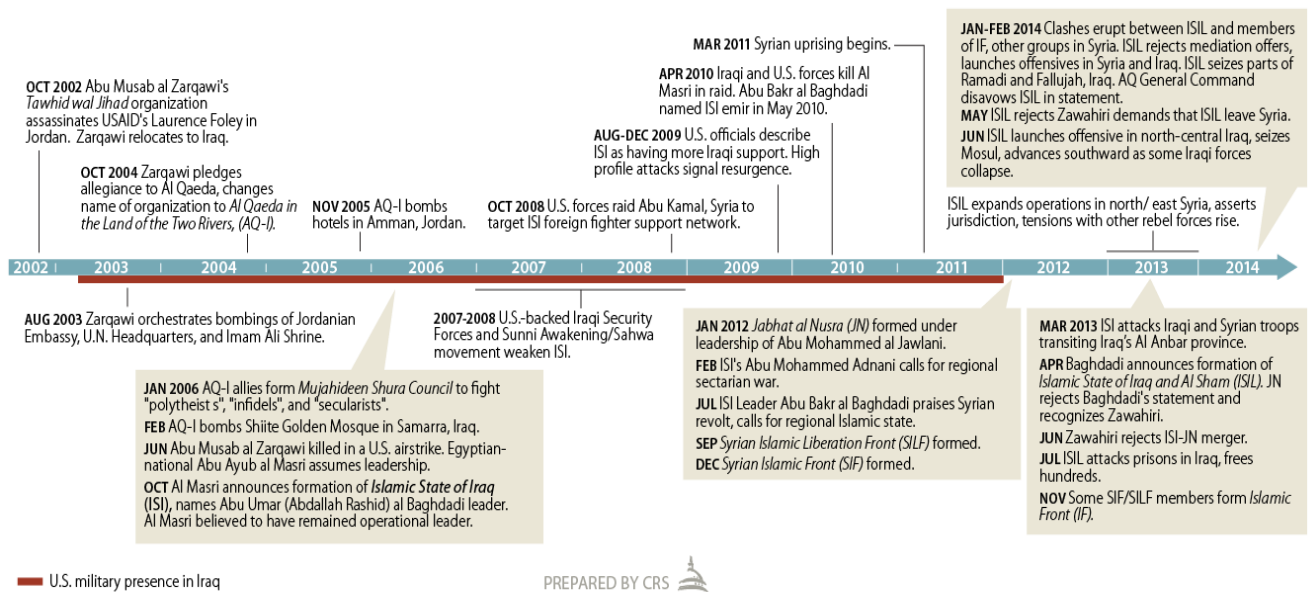
Revolts in Sunni inhabited areas were constantly escalating at the end of the year 2013. A bigger insurrection was started on December 26, 2013, when Al-Maliki wanted to arrest the Sunni Member of the Council of Representatives Ahmad al-Alwani following charges of incitement of anti-government activity. The attempt to arrest him, on the follow-up of an ISIL attack that killed 17 Iraq Security Forces officers, started a machine gun battle with security forces that killed Alwani's brother and several of his bodyguards. Subsequently, Al-Maliki ordered security forces to shut down a Sunni protest tent camp in Ramadi (the capital city of the Anbar Province). As a consequence to this move, Daesh (the so called "Islamic State") tried to conquer Ramadi and Fallujah, as well as a quantity of less sizeable Anbar towns and cities. Both Ramadi and Fallujah were big battlefields of US counterinsurgency struggle during the time of the Iraqi war. Daesh fighters were joined by a sizeable quantity of Sunni protesters, defectors from the Iraq Security Forces (ISF), and by a number of "Sons of Iraq" and other tribal fighters. Nevertheless, most "Sons of Iraq" militia members seem to have obeyed the positions of many tribal leaders to support the government in this occasion and to help in suppressing the ISIL-led insurrection. Also following the insistence of US officials, Al-Maliki did not order an ISF assault but provided instead weapons and funds to loyal and obedient Sunni tribal leaders and to the fighters of Sons of Iraq in order to help them to expel the ISIL terrorists by themselves. By January 2014, the Iraqi government had regained most of Ramadi, but Fallujah remained under insurgent domain. In early April 2014, Daesh-led insurgents also established a consistent presence in Abu Ghraib, which is only 10 miles from Baghdad. Iraq shut the prison down because of the security threat and moved all the prisoners to other cells and structures around Iraq. In the middle of April 2014, the government told Fallujah citizens to leave the city as soon as possible, in view of government planned air and artillery strikes on terrorist positions. These strikes indeed occurred, but have failed to dislodge the rebels from that city. Some Iraqi Security Forces officers have told journalists that the ISF efforts to recapture Fallujah and many other insurgent-controlled areas were disorganized and that this was the cause of their ineffectiveness. Terrorists continued to attack Shiite civilian population, as well as ISF and government targets in Baghdad , together with several other cities (UNPO 2013; Humud 2014; Katzman 2014c).

6.5 The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)

Daesh, or ISIS or ISIL (the so-called “Islamic State”), on June 29 2014 officially declared the establishment of an “Islamic caliphate” extending from Aleppo province in Syria to Diyala province in Iraq. The declaration nominated ISIL’s leader Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al Badri al Samarra’i (aka Abu Bakr al Baghdadi), as “imam and caliph” and stated that the group would henceforth be known as the Islamic State. ISIL (also referred to as ISIS) has become a transnational Sunni Islamist insurgent, rebel and terrorist group that has extended its control over several areas of north-western Iraq and north-eastern Syria since the beginning of 2013. The group’s ideological, political and organizational roots lie in the forces built and led by the late Abu Musab al Zarqawi in Iraq from 2002 through 2006—Tawhid wal Jihad (Monotheism and Jihad) and Al Qaeda in the Land of the Two Rivers (aka Al Qaeda in Iraq, or AQ-I). Following Zarqawi’s killing by the US forces in June 2006, AQ-I leaders reorganised the group in the form of a broader coalition known as the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI). ISI was severely weakened, but not at all eliminated, at the U.S. withdrawal from Iraq in late 2011. Under the continued leadership of Omar al-Baghdadi, the group rebuilt its operational capabilities. By January 2013, the group was already conducting many daily deadly attacks inside Iraq, especially in Baghdad. The precise nature and kind of ISI’s relationship with Al Qaeda leaders from 2006 on is not clear. In recent times, ISIL leaders have illustrated their view that “the ISIL has never been an offshoot of Al Qaeda,” and that, given that they view themselves as a state and a sovereign political entity, they have given leaders of the Al Qaeda organization deference but not pledges of obedience. In April 2013, Al Baghdadi expressed the wish and the intent to unite his fighting forces in Iraq and Syria with those of the Syrian Jabhat al Nusra (meaning “Support Front”), under a same name, i.e. ISIL. But the Nusra Front and Al Qaeda leaders rejected this suggested merger, underlining the increasing tensions among Sunni extremists in the complexity of a region, where these tensions have erupted into a conflict, since then. In July 2013, ISIL led attacks on prisons at Abu Ghraib and Taji in Iraq, and reportedly freeing several hundred imprisoned and detained members. Moreover, Daesh conducted a big and consistent number of attacks all across northern, central and western Iraq, whilst in Syria the same fighting group consolidated control on the city and province of Raqqa and extended its domain in north-western geographical areas at the time in the hands of other fighting forces. In the last part of 2013 the Iraqi government was trying to extend and seek an enhanced counter-terrorism and military assistance from its United States partner, clearly in primis in order to cope with the growing ISIL menace. Inside the territory of Syria, Daesh angered its rebel counterparts even more (by the growing of its own power), and an anti-Daesh campaign started at the beginning of 2014, making the terrorist

group withdraw from some areas it had previously under its domain and starting a continuous cycle of fighting, still going on. In the Syrian territory, Daesh remained pretty strong in Raqqa, Dayr az Zawr, and Hasakah. The group's tentatives to gain control over Fallujah and Ramadi in Iraq's province of Al Anbar and its offensive in the month of June 2014 in the northern part of Iraq showed and reinforced the image of the group's dangerousness and possibility to lead fighting operations, as well as managing alliances with local tribal groups in several areas covering huge land distances. The duration of Daesh alliances and partnerships is not clear: as a matter of fact, Daesh remains enemy with most of the secular and Islamist armed groups in Syria, while tribal, Islamist, and Baathist rebel factions in Iraq have been long opposing ISIL's previous manifestations and incarnations. Several statements and other media footage released by ISIS show an uncompromising and exclusionary worldview. Statements by its leader Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and by ISIS's spokesman Abu Mohammed al Adnani consist of sectarian and religious-oriented calls for pure and genuine violence and identify everybody, including Shiites, all non-Muslims, and the unsupportive Sunnis as enemies. The ISIL propaganda show Iraqi Shiites without compromise as "polytheists" and "rejectionists" and shows the current Iraqi government of PM al Maliki as a puppet in the hands of Iran. The same type of anger is directed against Syrian Alawites and the Syrian government, despite the fact that some analysts stated that Daesh fighters have had a benefit from advanced security and financial treaties and provisions with the Syrian government during the time of the US military presence in Iraq. Many senior U.S. civil servants said that Daesh was posing a very serious menace to the United States and that it has been maintaining a lot of training camps all around Iraq and Syria, however it was also said that it lacks, at present, the capacity to ignite wide-scale terrorist operations on US territory. During July 2012, Al Baghdadi said to the US leaders that "the war with you has just begun." In January 2014, he said, "Know, O defender of the Cross, that a proxy war will not help you in the Levant, just as it will not help you in Iraq. Soon, you will be in direct conflict—God permitting—against your will." (TMnews 2014b).

Picture 5.2: History of ISIL



Source: Humud (July 2014).

6.6 June 2014 ISIL Offensive and Iraqi Security Forces Collapse

When the national elections took place, on April 30, 2014, a lot of analysts said that the Sunni rebellions has been contained, even if not rolled back in a significant way. All these judgements were overthrown on June 10, when Daesh—in appearance with the assistance of a large quantity of its militants moving into Iraq from the war-ravaged Syria —conquered the important city of Mosul, due to mass surrenders and many desertions in the rows of the Iraqi Security Forces. ISIL/Daesh was probably supported by a certain number of Sunni residents of Mosul; subsequently, it moved on towards Tikrit and other cities progressing towards Baghdad, as well as going east into Diyala Province. During the offensive, Daesh and its allied fighters looted banks and other valuable assets, liberated prisoners, and seized a lot of US - given military equipment and weapons such as Humvees, heavily armoured tanks and steel-made personnel carriers. As a consequence, Daesh and its allied fighters had the necessary firepower to surround the capital, Baghdad, from the North, West, and also from Sunni-inhabited towns in the South (Mahmudiyah and Latifyah). Moreover, from the strongholds around Abu Ghraib, Daesh-led militants were thought to be within firing distance from Baghdad International Airport, which is located at the south-western outskirts of the city. Daesh and its allies also apparently sought to expand previous conquests in Anbar Province, by conquering the strategic Haditha Dam and the city of Haditha itself (The Middle East Policy Council..., 2014).

At the end of June 2014, several Shiite militias mobilized in large rows in order to help the ISF, and the remnants of the ISF regrouped in a sufficient number to divert the direct threat to Baghdad itself. This last-line defence was partially coordinated by US advisers (the topics will be discussed below), as well as by the sending of military equipment by Iran, which also sent the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard-Qods Force (IRGC-QF) units into the relevant parts of Iraq. By late June, the Iraqi Army even attempted to recapture Tikrit, with only limited success. It did however apparently prevent Daesh-driven militants from capturing the huge Baiji refinery, which outputs about one-third of Iraq's gasoline supplies. The Iraqi government often resorted to air strikes on ISIL positions, but by using a small fleet of propeller driven aircraft. Later on, it was delivered by a shipment from Russia of Sukhoi fighter airplanes. Nevertheless, experts do not know how to avoid the de-facto segmentation and fragmentation of Iraq as the ISF appeared unable to take back the lost areas and as the Kurdistan Regional Government indicated it would not give Kirkuk back to central government control. US and in general the international community started to rely even stronger their hopes for the stability in Iraq on the formation of an inclusive and participative Iraqi government.

With the advancing of Daesh-led fighters, several Shiite militias mobilized in order to help the government to stabilize the front line and to prevent Daesh from conquering Baghdad or even the Shiite heartland in the South of the country. Baghdad itself is inhabited by Shia for around 80% of its population, and many Shiites there and from other places volunteered for militia service, also by answering a call by one of the Iraq's leading Shiite clerics, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, to loyally assist the Iraqi Security Forces. Supported by these militia formations and by Iranian and US advisers - assisting separately - the Government forces somehow partially regrouped and were ready to deter any frontal strike on Baghdad itself. In July, US officials started to believe, more confidently, that the Daesh-led offensive would not manage to capture the Capital city. Nevertheless, Daesh fighters were able to dangerously come close to the Baghdad International Airport to the Southwest of the city and to many Sunni towns South of Baghdad (for instance Mahmudiyah and Latifiyah) in a sustained effort to encircle the Capital. In these moments, the press services wrote that the sectarian strife in Baghdad was growing and the violence escalating, as Shiites retaliated and tried to revenge against Sunnis for the ISIL-led offensive, while Sunnis responded. The United Nations reported that June 2014 had been the deadliest month in Iraq since 2008, with about 2400 Iraqis killed, of which more or less 66% were civilians and the remainder Iraqi Security Forces staff.

As the crisis revamped in all its potential, Prime Minister Maliki requested the Council of Representatives (COR, Iraq's elected parliament) to grant him "emergency powers" and planned counterattacks with Iraqi commanders. Iraq's tiny air force began to conduct the first air attacks on Daesh positions in Mosul and other cities already starting from June 12. Maliki's priority, as he stated in a television speech to the nation on July 2, was to counter the offensive militarily, albeit he did speak about an "amnesty" for those Sunni tribal figures who were on the side of the Daesh offensive but would return to the Government side. Maliki's focus could have been the start of an effort to increase his base among the Shiite community as the bulk of Iraqi leaders was trying to decide about the nature and composition of the next national government (see further below). The ISF collapse in the north enabled the peshmerga (Kurdish militia) of the Kurds' autonomous political entity in northern Iraq (Kurdistan Regional Government, KRG) to capture Kirkuk. The Kurds have long sought to control that oil-rich city, which they claim is historic Kurdish territory, and to affiliate the province with the KRG. Many experts assert that the Kurds are unlikely to willingly return control of Kirkuk to the central government. The capture has prompted renewed discussion among KRG leaders about seeking outright independence from Iraq, and KRG President Masoud Barzani said on June 30 that a referendum on independence might be held in coming months. Earlier, Secretary of State Kerry visited the KRG region on June 25 and urged President Barzani and other Kurdish leaders not to seek independence but instead to work within the Iraqi political process to form a new, inclusive central government in Baghdad. The potential for Kurdish secession to trigger political and military responses from Baghdad or neighboring countries, coupled with the likely loss of its receipts of a percentage of Iraq's nationwide oil.

6.7 Possible Outcomes

Some of the long term possibilities, not necessarily mutually exclusive, are:

An ISIL-led capturing or siege of Baghdad. Either of these developments could cause the government to fall and Daesh to expand the surface and the reach of the "Islamic state". In this moment, The total seizure of Baghdad is considered unlikely, as noted above, but a siege is still possible because of the significant Sunni population in towns just North and West of the city that ISIL and its allies are attempting to conquer. The fall or siege of Baghdad could detonate large-scale Iranian ground and air intervention, and could raise the likelihood of a massive US ground intervention as well.

De-facto federalism / partition of Iraq. Another scenario or outcome could be that Daesh does not manage to conquest Baghdad, but the PM Maliki government, the Iraqi Security Forces, and Shiite militias are unable to push the rebellion back. That situation could produce a new, coopted but informal, political structure in which each of the major ethno-religious components—Sunnis, Shiites, and Kurds—administer areas under their de facto political or military control.

Long-lasting civil war. The situation in Iraq could devolve into a long-term open civil war, in which forces loyal to the various factions — the Sunni insurrection, the Kurdistan Regional Government, and the Maliki (or any other) central government with its mainly Shiite militia supporters—alternately gain and lose territory in a never-ending fight for power.

A return to the pre-2013 situation. There exists the possibility that the different militias, with the help from outside, enable the Government to retake the areas captured by the Daesh-led offensive. That could have a beneficial effect on the current crisis but would not resolve the root causes of the Sunni unrest over the longer term.

6.8 April 30, 2014, Council Of Representatives Elections and Formation of a new Government

US civil servants considered the result of the April 2014 national elections as very important and crucial to stopping the Daesh-led rebellion. A new government was chosen by the directly elected Council of Representatives as a whole, in its entirety, and therefore to postpone the electoral consultations in the revolted areas only was not a realistic possibility. Although the insurrection made it difficult to vote through all the Al Anbar Province, each province was allocated a fixed number of seats in the COR, and therefore the violence did not reduce Sunni representation in the COR (the Iraqi Parliament). In provinces with mixed ethnical composition, such as Diyala, however, Sunni-driven violence might have reduced the number of COR seats won by the Sunni minority. An election law to regulate the electoral process was indeed approved on November 4, 2013. The new election law extended the number of seats of the newly-elected COR to 328, which means an increase of three (all from the Kurdistan autonomous region). In total 39 coalitions, comprising 275 political entities (parties), were registered. The elections also included voting for 89 total seats on the provincial councils in the three KRG provinces. The nationwide campaign period began on April 1.

The PM's State of Law bloc rested relatively intact since the 2010 election, while most of the rival blocs had deep fractures. The Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and the faction of Shiite cleric Moqtada Al Sadr each ran separately in the 2014 elections. These two slates entered the election opposing a third term as prime minister for Maliki. The Sunni political blocs divided substantially. A predominantly secular Sunni party, "Iraqiyya," gained more seats than did State of Law in 2010, but fragmented into components led by various Sunni and other leaders for the 2014 election. The major Kurdish factions also competed separately in most of the provinces where they filed divided. And a Kurdish party called Gorran got stronger and represented more challenge to the two main Kurdish parties (Kurdistan Democratic Party, KDP, and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, KDP) than previously. Turnout on the election day was about 62%, which corresponds to about the same level as in the 2010 COR elections. Violence was unexpectedly minimal on the election day.

In June 2014, the Independent Higher Election Commission (IHEC) announced the certified election results. State of Law – led by PM Al-Maliki - obtained a surprisingly high total of 92 seats—three more than it gained in 2010 and far more than those won by the ISCI party or the Sadrist slate. The biggest Sunni parties won, in combination, 53 seats—far less than the 91 seats they won when they competed together in the "Iraqiyya" bloc led by the former prime minister Iyad al-Allawi in the 2010 election. The various Kurdish parties won together about 62 seats. Maliki's individual candidate vote was apparently very strong, most notably in Baghdad province, which elects 69 Members to the COR—results that seemed to put Maliki in a dominant position to win a third term as prime minister (Iraqi news, 2014).

6.9 US comments on 30 April 2014 elections

On March 26, 2014, the US Embassy in Baghdad had issued the following statement:

"The United States fully supports Iraq's democracy and democratic institutions as defined and established in the Iraqi Constitution, specifically Article 102, which provides for the independence and neutrality of the Independent High Electoral Commission.

Ensuring that upcoming parliamentary elections are held on schedule is of the utmost importance and we commend the IHEC for its work in preparing for these elections under difficult circumstances. These preparations have ensured that there is no basis for any delay in the elections as scheduled for April 30. We urge the commissioners to continue this important work, to ensure

elections proceed as scheduled, and affirm that the United States will stand behind the full independence of IHEC over the weeks and months ahead." (Embassy, 2014)

Deliberations on the New Government

Maliki's apparently easy way towards a third term was suspended by the June 2014 Daesh-led offensive. US and also many Iraqi officials largely attributed the success of the offensive on Maliki's efforts to put aside Sunni leaders and ordinary citizens. The Shiite spiritual leader Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani seemed to undermine Maliki by asking for a quick agreement on an inclusive national government that "avoids mistakes of the past." (Sistani in UNPO, 2014) In a June visit to Iraq, US Secretary of State John Kerry apparently obtained Iraqi concurrence to complete the formation process for the government by August 1. The Council of Representatives began its meetings, as foreseen by constitutional provisions, at the beginning of July 2014, but stopped without announcing any senior positions, and adjourning for a subsequent meeting for July 8. The July 1 COR session was short because of the lack of consensus on the three most senior posts: COR Speaker (by tradition held by a Sunni Arab); the President (by tradition a Kurd); and the Prime Minister (by tradition a Shiite Arab). Most Iraqi experts which issued statements publicly indicated that there must be consensus on all the three posts before anyone is put in place. The post of Prime Minister is the most powerful and prestigious of the three. Press reports were telling that every Shiite faction, including many people close to Maliki and apparently in consultation with Iran, were trying to reach a degree of consensus on the replacement for Maliki. Maliki's strongest supporters insisted for him to continue as Prime Minister, but most Iraqi analysts who commented publicly were indicating that he would be replaced. Some of the mentioned potential successors included ISCI's Adel Abdul Mahdi, considered to be a moderate; Deputy Prime Minister Shahrastani; ISCI senior leader and former Interior Minister Bayan Jabr; former Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jafari; and Iraq National Congress man, Ahmad Chalabi, who had lobbied extensively for the United States to chase away Saddam militarily.

Concerning the post of President, Talabani is limited by Constitution to two consecutive terms. As noted above, several PUK leaders such as Barham Salih are potential successors. As for the Parliament's Speaker, journalist reports indicate that Salim al-Jabouri would have broad support to succeed Osama al-Nujaifi (TMnews 2014a).

6.10 US Answer to Iraq Political and Military Collapse

The violent escalation in Iraq since early 2014 made the Obama Administration take a more active role in the country. US actions increased since the start of the acute phase at the beginning of June 2014.

When the insurrection started in early January 2014, Secretary of State John Kerry stated the United States would provide the Iraqi government aid to cope with the crisis, but would not send back ground troops to the country. At a House Foreign Affairs Committee testimony of February 5, 2014, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk stated that the States have been trying to convince Maliki to adopt a “holistic” strategy of, on one side, combatting ISIL and, on the other, also accommodating his Sunni opponents.

Summarizing, between December 2013 and June 2014, the United States promoted/adopted the following actions/programs:

Has delivered and completed the selling of additional armaments/weaponry. In December 2013, the Department of Defence delivered 75 HELLFIRE missiles for use against ISIL positions. Another 100 HELLFIRES were delivered in March 2014. Nevertheless, these missiles could only be used by Iraq’s propeller-driven airplanes, because the Administration denied an Iraqi demand to buy armed drones for the same goal. In late January, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) informed Congress of a suggested trade to Iraq, in 2014, of an additional 500 HELLFIRES and associated technical training and equipment, at an estimated expense for Iraq of \$82 million. These missiles were sold but the supply became exhausted by late June 2014 and the United States apparently sent an additional 75 HELLFIRES. In addition, the US Administration obtained from Congress the permit to release the sale and lease of 30 “Apache” strike helicopters to Iraq. Some Members of Congress had earlier denied permission of these powerful helicopters because they were afraid that the Iraqi government could use them against peaceful demonstrators. The United States also released the sale of a quantity of unarmed surveillance drones. In May 2014, DSCA notified to Congress wished sales to Iraq of around 200 Humvee armored vehicles, of some 24 propeller-driven AT-6C Texan II military aircraft, and of related equipment, with a total estimated value of about \$1 billion (Katzman 2014a).

Sales of airborne Drones. The United States equipped Iraq with a quantity of unmanned air vehicles for surveillance purposes, for instance of Daesh camps in western Anbar Province. In this context, at the beginning of 2014, the United States provided 10 “Scaneagle” air vehicles.

More Training and military technical help. The Department of Defense enhanced bilateral and wide-regional training sessions for Iraqi counterterrorism (CTS) units in order to help building ISF counter-insurgency capabilities. US officials stated, at the beginning of May 2014, that a number of US Special Operations Forces would train and equip Iraqi Counter Terrorism forces in Jordan starting from early June 2014. Two sessions were already completed in Jordan before the June 2014 Daesh-led offensive (Humud 2014).

Efforts at Accommodation. During the year 2014, US civil servants had been in contact, on regular basis, with Maliki and his Sunni and Kurdish political opponents in order to make sure dialogue and accommodation occur at political level. US officials stated — at US presidential level and more directly since the June 2014 ISIL-led offensive took place — that the insurrection ending depends mainly on addressing Sunni problems, also in order to reduce Sunni support for Daesh. From the beginning of escalation of the Iraq crisis in June 2014, with the ISIL-led conquest of Mosul and of other Sunni heartland, the US response has gradually increased. US officials stated that the US strategy is meant to protect the territorial integrity of Iraq, to defend Baghdad with the Iraqi government, to prevent a going back to sectarian clashes between Sunnis and Shiites, and to prevent some geographical parts of Iraq from serving as a base for ISIS terrorist attacks on the United States or in general on the international community. The ISF debacle threatened, for sure, the legacy of the US invasion of Iraq in 2003. With Daesh terrorists connected on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border, many analysts stated that US policy had to address the ISIL menace in Syria and Iraq at the same time. President Obama said, in June 2014, that the Iraqi government would probably need US help to stop the offensive. He stated he had instructed his national security team to prepare a set of options, and subsequently announced a series of steps in mid-June 2014. US Administration civil servants affirmed that further help to Iraq might follow if there is clear evidence that Maliki and in general Iraqi political class will be willing and ready to address underlying political differences. US officials made it clear that US policy does not intend to be to align with one part or another in Iraq (Katzman 2014b).

Targeted Advice and Technical Training. In mid-June, President Obama affirmed that he had sent around 300 US Special Operations Forces to give advice, and, at least in an initial moment, to assess the status of the Iraqi Security Forces and collect information on Daesh strength and positioning. Half the advisers had already arrived— or had even been seconded from the existing Office of Security Cooperation—Iraq (see the explanation below) on the date of July 1. US Department of Defense Public Relations Office said the advisory mission is intended to be “of limited duration,” albeit additional advisers might be deployed to take action upon assessments of ISF weak points. The advisers are not subject to Iraqi law under a temporary and special “status of forces” agreement with the country. Several other additional personnel was deployed to protect American staff and Baghdad International Airport, as well as to evacuate U.S. civil servants if need should arise (US Department of State, June 2014).

Information and Intelligence sharing. Starting from late June, US personnel in Iraq has gathered information related to Daesh, also by using unmanned and manned recognition flights (at a rate of about 30 every day). The flights were also meant, partially, to ensure protection to the advisers and other U.S. personnel in Iraq. (Katzman, 2014b)

US-led Airstrikes. The US Administration was at that time considering a reported Iraqi demand to execute airstrikes on Daesh positions as well as on other geographical locations in the country. The US surveillance drone flights were partially intended to provide information that would permit precise targeting of Daesh and avoid the so-called “collateral damage”, i.e. Iraqi civilian casualties. The United States shifted another aircraft carrier towards the Persian Gulf, probably to improve the ability to hit targets in Iraq, should there a decision in this sense be taken. Concerning the military additional assistance, there are the following options at stake:

Accelerated and Extended Weapons Deliveries. One option would be to sell to Iraq additional military equipment and/or to speed up deliveries of weapons already bought by Iraq. In this context, the replacement of tanks and armoured vehicles to replace those lost could be considered, as well as the speedy delivery of the F-16s and Apaches discussed above. Nevertheless, the seizure of U.S.-delivered weapon systems by Daesh in the June 2014 land offensive raises the danger that new and more advanced U.S. weapons could be seized by this terrorist organisation. Moreover, the same worries, expressed previously, on the potential for the Iraqi government to use advanced air vehicles

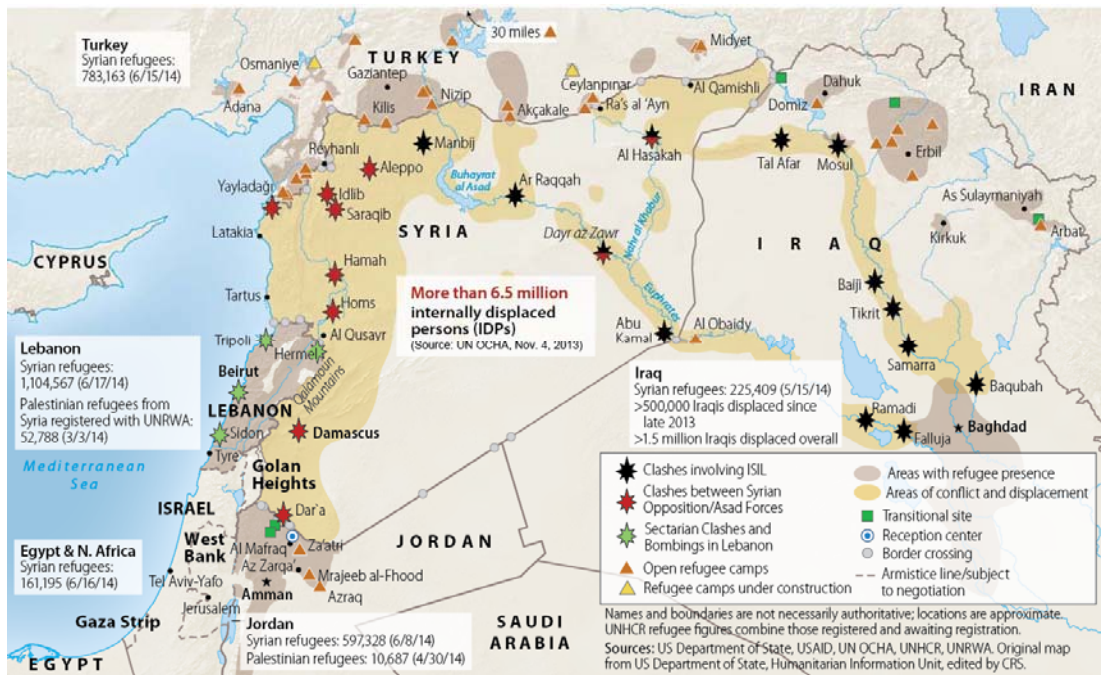
against peaceful protesters and civilian and political opponents rather than Daesh targets (US Department of State, June 2014).

Direct US armed deployment in combat. President Obama, up to the present, overthrown this kind of option by stating that the US will not be sending ground troops back to Iraq. (Obama in US Department of State, June 2014) The ruling out of the option was partially a consequence of the view, in the Administration, that U.S. ground troops would not have the possibility to correct the underlying internal political problems that caused the rebellion.

Promoting and achieving a switch of leadership in Iraq. Barak Obama's declarations on the crisis implied—although they did not directly state—a U.S. positive view on the potential replacement of Al Maliki by another Iraqi leader who would try to act more inclusively along ethno sectarian lines. Up to now, it is not clear if Administration officials are working to convince the spectrum of Iraqi factions to unite around an alternative person as a choice for Prime Minister. Moreover, it is not certain whether the United States, by negotiating with other regional actors such as Iran, could force Iraqi political parts to replace Al Maliki, following a relative success of his supporters in the April 30 elections.

Promoting a radical change in Iraqi policy-making processes. One aspect of the strategy announced by President Obama in the June 2014 statement on Iraq is to negotiate with other regional countries to force the government of Al Maliki to effectively divide power with Kurdish and Sunni leaders. Nevertheless, this component of the policy mix is said by many analysts to be part of a long term strategy, not immediately usable to revert the Daesh-led offensive (US Department of State, June 2014).

Picture 5.3: Daesh breakthrough in Iraq and Syria



Source: Katzman (2014c, Iraq Crisis and US Policy)

6.11 Syria-related Dimension

Starting in 2013, Daesh terrorists have been using Syria both as a logistical platform and ground for attacks in Iraq and also as a theatre of combat operations. Starting in 2014, Daesh conquered or re-conquered most geographical areas of the Syrian northern province of Raqqah and reasserted itself to the east in Dayr az Zawr, which is an oil and gas rich province bordering with the Anbar region of Iraq. Since late 2013, ISIL has gained control of many oilfields in Dayr az Zawr and apparently drawn revenue from oil and gas sales to the Bashar Al Assad Syrian government. With these conquests, the terrorist group has been able to keep operational autonomy from the leadership of Al Qaeda's and pay good salaries to its militants. Daesh obtained even more revenue in Syria by collecting taxes from local populations and asking for a percentage of the money involved in humanitarian and commercial operations and actions in areas under its occupation. Daesh also operated north of Dayr az Zawr in the province of Hasakah, by creating a connection to Iraq's province of Nineveh that it was reportedly in measure to exploit in its subsequent advance towards Mosul. ISIL impressive conquests in Iraq will certainly facilitate the passage of arms and militants from eastern Syria to Daesh and other extremist groups, both because of the propaganda originating from these gains and due to the supply lines they provide. Captured weapon equipment of US

origin, which had been provided to Iraqi security forces, already had appeared in pictures apparently taken around Syria and sent to social media. But, on the other hand, Daesh recent conquests could make it more vulnerable because of overextension.

Daesh territorial conquests could have motivated the Maliki and Assad governments to closely collaborate in their effort to counter Daesh. As a matter of fact, Daesh advances in Iraq could have weakened the Assad government's ability to keep contested areas under its control, because some of the Iraqi Shiite militants, who had previously struggled together with Assad forces, could have returned home to fight ISIL. In the middle of June 2014, Syrian governmental forces executed air strikes against ISIL-occupied geographical areas of Raqqah and Hasakah in collaboration with the Iraqi government, according to the information from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, based in London. Later-on, Syria struck Daesh positions and targets close to a border crossing between the two countries. Maliki warmly welcomed the attacks, which, according to him, happened on the Syrian side of the border. US and Iraqi military sources said, instead, that the Syrian attacks were done inside Iraq. In any case, enhanced cooperation between Syria and Iraq could change the course of both conflicts. In this sense, it could also undermine the current US strategy to encourage the Iraqi leadership to push Bashar al Assad to resign in favor of a Syrian transitional government. Enhanced Iraqi-Syrian cooperation could also decrease the US leverage on Baghdad to comply with U.S. long-standing requests not to allow Iranian overflights of weapons and other equipment to Damascus. It is not clear what impact Daesh conquests in Iraq could have outside of Eastern Syria. More or less half of ISIL militants in Syria are Syrian or Iraqi tribesmen, according to a Syrian Daesh defector (Reidar Visser's blog, June 2014).

Similar to the behaviour of other parts of the Syrian opposition, Syrian tribes have sometimes been reluctant to extend war against Syrian government forces beyond their own geographical areas. Daesh has at present concentrated its fighters in Syria's Northeast, and has mostly avoided regular fights in the country's bigger city areas in Syria's western part. Ongoing ISIL operations are carried on in Dayr az Zawr, while the group is fighting to conquer the way towards the city of Abu Kamal, a key area along the Syria-Iraq border. A report from the journalists was showing that the so called "moderate opposition" forces in Dayr az Zawr, helped by the Al Qaeda-affiliated Nusra Front, had been besieged on several parts of the city by the Syrian military forces and by Daesh. Nusra and Daesh do still clash in Syria. Any possible Iraqi or US effort to destroy ISIL supply lines through Abu Kamal or between Dayr az Zawr and Mosul could be beneficial, on the other hand, to the Syrian military and the Nusra Front forces, which are also active in the geographical area.

6.12 Iran Dimension

Iraqi Security Forces collapsed rapidly. This seemed to have been aligned with the interests of Iran and of the United States in stopping Daesh advance. As a matter of fact, many expert officials of both governments have shown their willingness to collaborate, mostly diplomatically and politically, in order to contain the menace represented by the Daesh-led offensive. The Secretary of State John Kerry affirmed in a press interview that the United States would have been “open to discussions [with Iran on Iraq] if there’s something constructive that can be contributed by Iran.” US officials mainly talked about the situation in Iraq at the margins of the June start of a previously-determined week of negotiations on Iran’s nuclear program, by trying to convince Iran to force Prime Minister Maliki to start sharing power, or even to be replaced tout court. However, no decision on closer cooperation with Iraq in this direction was taken as a result of that encounter. Some analysts remained reserved about the fact that the United States should or could collaborate with Iran on Iraqi-related issues, because Iran had been a strong supporter of the Shiite-led government in Iraq and did not necessarily share the U.S. strategy of putting in place a wide, inclusive and democratic Iraqi central government, respectful of human rights. Iran is apparently open in supporting another candidate, beyond Maliki, as Prime Minister, but was probably not insisting for him to be removed. A lot of newspaper articles were indicating that Iraqi factions were taking Iran’s views into account in the deliberations on the prime minister and other positions. In actions that appear to further U.S. objectives in Iraq, Iran has reportedly been delivering arms and ammunition to Iraq since early in the crisis. In early July, Iran began returning to Iraq some of more than 100 combat aircraft that were flown to Iran at the start of the 1991 war between Iraq and the United States-led coalition. Iran had integrated the aircraft into its air force as “reparations” for Iraq’s invasion of Iraq in 1980, but decided to return at least some of the jets to help the small Iraqi air force that has not yet received the F-16s it bought from the United States. Iran delivered as many as 12 Su-25s to Iraq in early July as part of this return process.

Some experts assess that Iran’s assistance could, in the long run, be counterproductive. Indeed, Iran had a key role in establishing the bulk of the autonomous Shiite militias that had fought against the United States during the period 2003-2011. By seeking above all to avoid the fall of Baghdad, Iran apparently sent the Islamic Revolutionary Guard - Qods Force (IRGC-QF) units into Iraq immediately following the fall of Mosul in order to give advice to the ISF in order to help re-organizing and reforming the autonomous Shiite militias to help in the struggle. The commander of the IRGC-QF, General Qasem Soleimani, paid a visit to Baghdad in this endeavour. There were well-grounded concerns that the revival of the militias could have increased sectarian strife with

Iraq's Sunnis, including with those who still live today in Baghdad and could rightfully fear arbitrary Shiite sectarian violence. It is at present unclear how the Iraq war might affect the balance of influence between Iran and the United States in the field of international diplomacy over Iran's nuclear program deal. Each regional country could probably try to protect its own interests by obtaining help from the other. Some think Iran might offer collaboration in Iraq—for instance in convincing Maliki to resign—in exchange for US and international community concessions on the final deal of Iran's program to enrich uranium for peaceful purposes. A US State Department spokeswoman stated in mid June that US diplomats are trying to maintain a wall between the ongoing negotiations on the nuclear programme and the ongoing crisis in Iraq (Reidar Visser's blog, 2014).

6.13 More Issues Caused by the Crisis

The de facto warfare in Iraq raised some more issues for the US and international community's policy making.

Humanitarian Impact and related Response

More or less 500,000 people were displaced by clashes in the surroundings of Mosul and in geographical areas going south towards Baghdad. The present displacement figures remain volatile and difficult to be ascertained, despite the regular provision of displacement matrixes by the IOM. Many of the displaced people are certainly trying to escape to the relatively securer Kurdistan autonomous region or forming refugee camps along its borders. Other people have scattered elsewhere in the country. This number completes the more or less half million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) which escaped clashes in the Anbar region earlier in 2014 and the around 1 million people who found a shelter in Syria between the years 2003 and 2011, many of whom are believed will remain displaced on the long term. An urgent and compelling humanitarian crisis has emerged and humanitarian operators are having difficult time to meet the needs of IDPs and other victims of the conflict.

The most urgent needs are food, shelter, drinkable water and non-food items. IDPs live with their families and also in hosting communities, tents, mosques, schools, uncompleted buildings, and other government buildings. Several reports state that access to sanitation and hospitals is limited, if any at all. Some transit facilities have been established close to Iraqi Kurdistan borders in order to

provide medical assistance and drinking water. Humanitarian organizations have mobilized teams of operators to evaluate and develop the situation to a more advance status where possible and to coordinate a planned response. Based on the data from the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI), the Kurdistan Regional Government policy on building and giving a legal status to the IDP camps has yet to be fully established. Refugee camps in Erbil and Dohuk have already been set up and the KRG is working to elaborate a way to satisfy the basic needs of the displaced people, and to identify an appropriate location for additional camps. Nevertheless, it seems that local authorities are reluctant to allow big numbers of IDPs into their land, considering also that the region already houses around 200,000 previous refugees from Syria. UNAMI is entitled to coordinate the response using the UN Humanitarian Country Team with partner organizations. Moreover, the United Nations elaborated a Strategic Response Plan (SRP) for Iraq in March 2014 of a value of \$104 million in order to sustain the Iraqi government in its endeavour to address the humanitarian requirements of the people stroke by the war in Anbar Province. The SRP is currently being re-planned to include provisions for the significantly increased number of IDPs and for a much wider geographical focus. Financial funding from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), a multilateral funding mechanism administered through the United Nations, is also being considered.

Answers to Threats to U.S. Personnel, Citizens and Facilities

In mid-June, the State Department affirmed that the US Embassy in Baghdad would continue to be open, but a number of personnel would be temporarily relocated to Consulate Generals in Basra and Erbil as well as to Department of State facilities in Amman, Jordan. These moving were apparently executed by non-military operators. In the affirmation it was stated that a “substantial majority of the U.S. Embassy presence in Iraq” would continue to remain in Baghdad and that, with an expected increase of personnel for security issues, the Embassy would have been “fully equipped” to deliver “its national security mission.” (US Department of State, June 2014).

Journalists wrote that more or less 200 Marine Corps guards and several external contractors were put in place at the US Embassy in Baghdad before the crisis to protect the Embassy (US House of Representatives hearing, 15 July, 2014). Since the crisis began, the White House has announced two deployments to increase that number. On June 16, the White House informed Congress that more or less 275 US military staff were being sent to Iraq in order to help with the temporary moving of

diplomatic staff, a deployment done previous consent of the Government of Iraq. On June 30, the White House announced the deployment of an additional 200 U.S. Armed Forces personnel to increase security to the U.S. Embassy and its support facilities, as well as to reinforce the Baghdad International Airport. According to the White House statement, the allocated forces would be accompanied by helicopters and unmanned drones. The force “is deploying for the purpose of protecting U.S. citizens and property, if necessary, and is equipped for combat,” according to the statement, and would “remain in Iraq until the security situation becomes such that it is no longer needed.” The Department of Defense had also previously confirmed that it “has airlift assets at the ready should State Department request them, as per normal interagency support arrangements.”

The State Department issued in mid-June an “Emergency Message for U.S. Citizens: Announcement of Relocation of U.S. Embassy Staff,” which advised “U.S. citizens to avoid travel to Iraq because of current safety and security concerns” and noticed to those concerned about their safety to “make plans to depart by commercial means.” The statement made it clear that the Embassy should not be contacted with requests in order to seek for assistance with travel arrangements, and that the Embassy “does not offer ‘protection’ services to people who feel under threat.” While the Embassy remained open, the affirmation continued, Embassy services for U.S. citizens throughout Iraq would be limited due to the security environment. (US Department of State, June 2014)

On June 12, the Department of State confirmed that a number of U.S. citizen contract employees to the Iraqi Government, who were paying services connected to the U.S. Foreign Military Sales Program in Iraq, were “temporarily relocated” by their companies due to security-related issues (US Department of State, June 2014).

In June 2014, President Obama was left then with a weak partner in Baghdad and a rather unreliable partner in Tehran to confront ISIS in Iraq. Obama fashioned in these circumstances a policy to confront ISIS that has rested on four pillars: supporting the training and equipping of the Iraqi army and the Kurdish Peshmerga, tacitly supporting Iran’s role in the state and its employment of Shi’a militias, and conducting air operations when called on.

This strategy initially looked successful with substantial advances by the Iraqi army, assisted by Shi’a militias, to push ISIS back from a number of their gains in western and north-western Iraq. U.S. assistance helped rout efforts by ISIS to make inroads into Kurdish territory. Mosul has

remained under ISIS' control, but neither Baghdad nor Tehran nor Washington has launched a substantial counter-offensive to retake the city. ISIS was importantly driven out of Tikrit in April.

However, their recent capture of Ramadi (May 2015) and their further consolidation of control in Al-Anbar province underscores that while the group may lose territory, it can also gain new territory by taking advantage of local tribal support and discontent, a steady stream of foreign fighters, shock and awe tactics, and the ineffectiveness of the largely weak and strained Iraqi army. U.S. officials have acknowledged that the Iraqi army itself is still months away from having the capacity to lead from Shi'a militias. The over-reliance then on these militias, who have repeatedly committed human rights abuses, deepens the impression on the ground that one's future is either with ISIS or with Iran.

This strategy alone is unlikely to defeat ISIS and relies too much on Iran, which essentially abetted Maliki's corrupt sectarian governance. Despite the President's support for governance reforms, the White House has neglected this critical element of his strategy, and as a result, has focused more on pushing back ISIS than on offering Iraq's Sunni community a political future that isn't dominated by Iran.

ISIS will probably face further military setbacks as Iraq's army becomes better trained and Shi'a militias make advances, but without offering the Sunni community any sustainable future, ISIS will find local support to continue to operate and subjugate parts of Iraq. Syria's civil war is advantageous to this group's ambitions for a state, because even if they were successfully routed from cities they can control, the non-existent border that separates these two states will allow ISIS to use territory in Syria to launch future operations.

While it's tempting to believe that arming tribes in Al-Anbar province could serve as a counter-balance to ISIS, such actions are short-sighted without pushing for a new political compact for Iraq's future. Washington should encourage an Iraqi constitutional dialogue with the aim of granting complete federal autonomy for Iraq's predominantly Sunni provinces. While the central government in Baghdad should retain its role as Iraq's federal government, the day-to-day affairs of Iraq's western and north-western provinces should be managed on the local level. In the next chapter we will examine how this idea could be included in the broad and comprehensive legislative plan for the setting up of an Iraqi National Guard.

Washington should also consider holding a conference with its Arab partners to expand the economic, political, and military assistance to the central government and the provincial leadership in fighting ISIS. Such an initiative would critically shift the fight against ISIS from being predominantly an Iranian-led campaign to one that has broad support from the Arab world. We will analyse this aspect further in the next chapter, by offering a concrete suggestion.

While these efforts alone will take time and concerted diplomatic effort by Washington and support from the GCC, the current strategy isn't working and needs adjustment. Empowering Iraq's Sunni community through political autonomy and encouraging greater support from the Arab League is a more prudent and sustainable strategy than relying exclusively on Iran and potentially American ground forces. Defeating ISIS can't be won purely on the battlefield .

7 NEED FOR A CHANGE IN THE US STRATEGY

Despite intensive airstrikes, carried forward by the international coalition against Daesh, and despite the take-over of Tikrit, thanks to Shia irregular paramilitary militias, the situation on the field is not improving in the first half of 2015. On the contrary: in May 2015, Daesh conquered the strategically important city of Ramadi, only around 150 km distant from Baghdad, and, on the Syrian front, the historically, archeologically and strategically very important city of Palmyra.

The latest Daesh prodrome does not come as a surprise in an extremely fragmented and destabilised regional context. In Syria the social tissue disaggregated; the conflict became a struggle of everyone against everyone. There are severe human rights violations from all the parts. Young people are unemployed and disoriented: they tend to sell their services to the best offer from any of the warfare gangs, because often they do not have any other choice to survive. In Iraq the Sunni population is worried about possible vengeance by armed Shia militias, or, to a lesser extent, by the seizing of territory, considered as belonging to Sunni Arabs, by the Kurds or by any of the ethno-religious minorities in the country (Yazidi, Assyrian-Christian, Turkmen, etc..). Therefore, to some extent a part of the Sunni population, including some powerful Sunni tribes of the Al Anbar province, indeed sees Daesh as the lesser of the evils, at least up until when they do not become governed by these fanatic terrorists.

Therefore, one could conclude that, in the present, there is a fight of everybody against everybody in Iraq and in Syria, that continues even in front of consistent gains of terrain by Daesh. Daesh is naturally profiting from this situation, and from the partial tacit instrumental alliances with those actors, which hope to obtain something (for example the weakening of its historical enemy...) thanks to its advance. Thus, Kurds in Iraq are hoping to obtain independence by Daesh weakening the Iraqi central government. Of course, Kurds in Iraq are in the frontline in the struggle against Daesh when it comes to the protection of big Kurdish cities like Erbil, but they also profited from the situation by seizing the oil-rich disputed territory of Kirkuk and by looking to the fertile plains of Nineveh, which do not historically belong to the Kurdistan Autonomous region. And there are indications that the Iraqi Kurds could profit from Daesh presence to deal with the proliferation of weak self-defence forces and self-governed territorial areas in the areas surrounding the Kurdish Autonomous Region and eventually seize some of these areas, in the present-day total absence of the Iraqi Central Government in those territories. As a matter of fact, there are rumours that the

Kurdish Regional Government, overwhelmingly dominated by the KDP (Kurdish Democratic Party) is trying to arrest the leaders of the Yazidi self-defence force and of the Assyrian Christian cantons.

Moreover, the Sunni population of the areas occupied by Daesh would like to be liberated only by other (mostly) Sunni troops, not by a hypothetical multi-national force led by the US, and even less so by pro-Iranian Shia militias, the only ones logistically and numerically capable (with the exception of the Kurdish Peshmerga forces) of fighting Daesh on the ground.

In the shadow of the above described situation, it appears clear that the US policy in Iraq (and Syria, for that matter) is especially problematic in this moment, since there are often no credible internal actors in the country, due to highly corrupted and fragmented Iraqi political class, and to a mix of incompetency and authoritarianism. This demonstrates the author's second hypothesis: weak Iraqi Governments will not contribute to an easy institutional re-building of the country.

Indeed, US are unwilling to re-engage in Iraq with troops on the ground, since the risk of another strategic debacle is more than concrete – indeed, massive investments in human lives and money did not harvest the desired results from 2003 to 2011, because they did not produce a stable democracy nor a trustworthy US political and trade ally in the region - and because the Western public opinion is more and more contrary to sending troops (risking many life losses) to far areas, where the situation results frankly incomprehensible. This, in addition to Sunni opposition to the presence of US troops, in addition to Iranian opposition to the presence of US Army in the region, and finally because the Government of Iraq did not ask for it, makes a massive US ground intervention, in the lead of the 60-country-wide international coalition, including the presence of regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, and under the aegis of a United Nations Resolution, unlikely to happen, despite this would probably be, in the present moment, by far the best solution, as argued in the conclusion of this master thesis. Such an intervention will not occur also because of the complexity of the situation in Syria, where it is not clear yet to what extent could the dictatorial and human rights disrespectful regime of Bashar Al Assad be a trustworthy and legitimate ally of any international coalition against Daesh. As a matter of fact, this regime has been weakened by a Turkey-sponsored heterogeneous more or less moderately Islamic coalition on one side; by the Al Qaeda linked Al Nusrah brigades, allied of the Palestinian Hamas; and by Daesh – but there is also an implicit alliance between Daesh and Bashar Al-Assad on some issues: for example, Al Assad is buying cheap oil from Daesh, and the two are united against other, minor factions, such as the Syrian Kurdish fighters. There is no movement or organisation in Syria today,

who could be able to start and promote a national reconciliation process, let alone the creation of a sound and comprehensive national democracy. This task seems beyond the reach of any international, macro-regional or global, coalition as well.

To mention also that an intervention of an international (US –led) coalition could legitimize the actions and the presence of ISIL in the eyes of many observers, which would tend to consider such an intervention as being of imperialistic character.

Again, Daesh is profiting from the situation on the ground and from these Middle East, and does not seem to be particularly disturbed by the coalition air-strikes. The air-strikes will be more a problem than a solution, because the bombs nowadays contain a lot of toxic, poisonous or even radioactive substances – although it seems that the depleted uranium has been phased out – which, if we analyse the studies realised in Fallujah after extensive US bombings from 2003 to 2008, will have a heavy impact on the present and future generations, by a severe toll of mutagenic and teratogen effects, such as widespread birth defects and increase risk of cancer and leukaemia.

From its part, as said, Daesh adapted by fragmenting into small, mobile and volatile fighting units and by smuggling the extracted oil in small lorries rather than in heavy and easily recognisable trucks. In these lorries, only some 500 litres of oil are transported at one time. The cost of a single missile is far higher than the cost of the lorry plus its cargo of oil. Therefore, it became extremely inconvenient to target individual lorries, even where these can be recognised as smuggling oil, by the allied reconnaissance and intelligence.

Moreover, as targeted as the air bombings can be –and they are not always so targeted – they will still hit, to some extent, the civilian population, probably more than Daesh itself. Oral evidence in the case of air-strikes to Serbia (by NATO in 1999) have shown that even if the population is against a regime, which is largely perceived as oppressing the country, this same population is fiercely against external air-strikes, even when these are intended to be against the regime.

On the contrary to what their goal is meant to be, the airstrikes will not only weaken or defeat ISIL, but they instead risk to reinforce it by alienating part of the population from the coalition, and force it towards Daesh.

Western analysts seem know this very well, but there is a general feeling that “something must be done”, and air-strikes seems by far the cheapest solution. On the other hand, one must not forget the incentive to the weapons’ industry that the production of bombs, and maintenance of war-aircraft s giving, without the correspondent loss of (Western) human lives.

True is that by using special forces, previous detailed and meticulous gathering of intelligence, and combining the air force with the two previous factors, in a very limited and targeted manner, good results may be obtained in “cutting the heads” of the Daesh organisation, i.e. by destroying its top management. But again, the destruction of the top management of this criminal organisation is by far not sufficient to resolve the underlying problem of high tribal, clanic, ethnical, religious and socio-economic fragmentation of the concerned areas. Therefore, it should be accompanied by a massive presence of somehow “accredited” and “recognised” ground troops whose purpose would be not only to “clean up” the area of Daesh, but to organise, in agreement with the local population, a process of Security Sector Reform, based on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reconstruction, bringing on-board an inclusive and corruption-free Government of Iraq as the prime actor in the process. In the case of Iraq, something similar was done with the 2007 so-called “surge”, ideated by General Petraeus. The process gave encouraging initial results, with the creation of local Sunni “awakening” movements, but was later on hampered and eventually vilified by the discrimination towards the movement by the Shia-led Al Maliki government.

This time, however, the situation is even more intricate than at the time of Petraeus surge. The situation in Syria is conditioning what is happening in Iraq to a great extent. Moreover, the potentially destabilising role of external players, such as Turkey, Saudi Arabia (and other Gulf countries) and Iran is even greater. Therefore, if the problem is regional, the solution must also be prevalently regional. And, since it does not seem realistic, for the above mentioned and for other reasons, that a macro-regional coalition, led by the US, is intentioned to pursue any large-scale massive operations against Daesh soon, the least US could do is to promote a Unitarian approach by putting around the same table these conflicting regional actors, to operate in Iraq with the same strategy and not to produce antagonistic influences on Iraqi actors somehow involved in the battle against Daesh. The USA could do this through the following guidelines:

1. Make advances in the nuclear negotiations with Iran. Iran has to be seen as a regional partner, which is “part of the picture”;

2. There is a new “UN humanitarian plan for Iraq” being presented in the month of June 2015. Appropriate smart moves of the Obama Administration could bring antagonising actors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran on board of this comprehensive plan, by suggesting them, through appropriate channels, to contribute, financially and organisationally, to the implementation of such a plan. This would at the same time increase their leverage on the region, but by making them cooperate and agree, under the auspices of the UN;
3. Supporting, by legal and technical expertise, but above all by its political leverage, the Iraqi Government and Parliament (Council of Representatives) in adopting the comprehensive National Guard reform, and implementing it as soon as possible. A good security sector reform in this sense could be a pillar for the much needed process of national reconciliation;
4. The Daesh so-called “foreign fighters” are increasing in number. Many of them come to Syria and Iraq through Turkey. Turkey is complaining that it does not have enough. The USA (and also the EU Member States) should therefore share their intelligence on foreign fighters with Turkey to a greater extent. Turkey should engage, from its part, to reinforce border controls and increase surveillance actions, including pre-emption, against foreign fighters, preventing them to enter Syria and Iraq, arresting them and re-sending them to their country of origin.

There is already a set of actions that the Obama Administration is promoting, but which cannot be enough, by their own. Nevertheless, some of these actions might be useful, if properly exploited:

1. Special operations: partially useful was the killing of a Daesh financial expert key-figure in May 2015;
2. Accelerated delivery of heavy weapons to the Iraqi Central Government: must go in parallel with the National Guard Reform, national reconciliation process and discussions about what kind of Constitutional order (federalization with large regional autonomies?) for the future of the country. Moreover, the time to motivate, train and equip soldiers with the new equipment might not be sufficient;
3. Delivery of heavy weapons to Peshmerga (Kurdish Regional) forces: Peshmerga are in the front-line in their struggle against Daesh, therefore arming them will have immediate benefits. But despite Peshmerga are Constitutionally recognised as an integral part of the Iraqi defence system, they will constitute a heavy factor for a potential disaggregation of the country when the imminent Daesh threat will be over.
4. Delivery of weapons to irregular armed forces: US Administration is considering this option, especially concerning the delivery of weapons to Yazidi and Assyrian self-defence forces – on the

same principle as the Iranians are arming the irregular Shia militias. The benefits and the caveats would be the same as in the arming of Peshmerga.

5. Sending military experts and training the Iraqi Security Forces: there are at present around 1500 US military experts on the ground in Iraq. This action is potentially useful, but the underlying problem is that the consequences of the strategically wrong US decision to disband the Iraqi Army in 2003 are still visible today: the best parts of the then unified Iraqi Army are now fighting against it, including some competent Sunni officials, who passed on the side of Daesh. Therefore, the US military experts are training a gathered Army of non-professional and often demotivated soldiers, led by mostly incompetent and/or corrupt officers. Not a fertile ground, therefore.

Before passing to the conclusions, it could be useful to develop further the potential of the upcoming “UN Humanitarian Response Plan” for Iraq as an occasion for a more incisive action of the US Administration, especially in promoting the overcoming of regional tensions between often antagonising actors. As a matter of fact, if antagonising actors, such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates and Qatar on one side and Iran on the other, will be brought around the same table limitedly to the implementation of the UN Plan, this would be already a first good step towards a national reconciliation process in Iraq, so heavily dependent on the powerful regional actors and their (dis)agreements. In order to convince Iran, the US leverage in the framework of the nuclear negotiations could be used: USA could offer a better “nuclear deal” to Iran, in exchange of cooperative behaviour of Iran in the implementation of the response plan. On the other hand, US could convince Saudi Arabia by offering a stronger cooperation in the security sector. For example, by offering Saudi partners to sell them the most advanced US missile defence system on the market, and the most advance reconnaissance and early warning capabilities. This move would diminish the Saudi fear of Iran, therefore diminishing the tensions in the entire region. Turkey could be brought “on board” by a stronger US stance against the Al-Assad regime in Syria. And here we come to another important piece of the “puzzle”: the future of Syria. Only by a national reconciliation process in Syria, will the one in Iraq really have the possibility to take place. The US could at present lead a process (directly or indirectly) of a national unity opposition in Syria, against Bashar Al-Assad, against Daesh and against the Al-Nusrah brigades. This opposition will become concretely realisable, however, only with the non-easy agreement between the only still remaining politically acceptable actors on the terrain, namely: the Free Syrian Army, supported by Turkey; the Hezbollah, which is actually supporting Al-Assad and is a close allies to Iran, but would be a key actor for a stabilisation; and the fighters belonging to the Kurdish and Christian resistance in the

country. If this “miracle” was accomplished, or at least promoted by the US, Turkey would gain more trust in its long standing trans-Atlantic alliance with Washington and would be more easily taken on-board, to work together with Iran for a stabilisation in Iraq and Syria.

Therefore, a pan-Arab (and pan-regional) Conference could be called on these bases and with these premises, maybe in the framework of the new UN Humanitarian Response Plan mentioned above. If this Conference succeeds, and a broadly based regional alliance is indeed formed in order to bring back stability to Syria and Iraq, perhaps in the framework of a UN peace-building operation, following a strong UN Resolution, the US should be ready to participate with a consistent military contingent.

8 CONCLUSIONS

Evidence shown, especially in the previous chapter, proves the first hypothesis suggested by the author, by highlighting the low-profile stance of the Obama administration, which, combined with the past mistakes of the Bush administration, brought on the surface deeply rooted problems of power sharing between the main ethno-religious components of the Iraqi society.

As a matter of fact, in the present situation, and in order to obviate to the above mentioned situation, besides training and logistical support to the Iraqi Security Forces, and the presence of Special Forces for information gathering, the US action should foresee the employment of a consistent number of US ground troops and should have the same operational parameters as the "surge" operation against Al-Qaida in Iraq in 2007-2008. In this way, the maximum of effect is ensured with the minimum of civilian casualties and concrete possibilities for alliances "on the ground" with the local population. Once the ISIS eradicated from Iraq, the US contingent should hand over the authority to local tribe leaders, to moderate and respected Sunnis and to the Iraqi new, inclusive central government, and advance into Syria, to destroy the nucleus of ISIS, with the help of the Syrian opposition. In that moment conditions could be met to force the Assad regime to organise free, democratic and inclusive elections, and to step down. At the same time, the Syrian opposition movements, after the victory over ISIS and Al-Nusrah brigades, would have to accept disarmament and disbanding.

However, in order to guarantee a long term sustainability, and the overall success of such a large-scale mission, some preliminary conditions must be met as quickly as possible:

Al-Maliki must step down and a new and inclusive Iraqi Government must be set up. There are good perspectives to achieve this, because Al-Maliki indeed recently announced it will not race for a third term, despite a good success of his State of Law party. Some of the other candidates have a good fame and are highly respected by many, and an agreement might be reached for one of them to form an inclusive Government.

Kurdish Regional Government must cooperate. This could come as a consequence of the equal sharing of oil-resources, according to the agreed formula of 17% to KRG and 83% to the Iraqi

central government. The new Iraqi government should immediately implement this agreement. The status of Kirkuk should be defined at a later stage.

Friendly moderate Sunni alliances within Iraq must be established, using all available channels, even before the "surge". This could be done only by promising Sunni provinces some degree of autonomy, non-discrimination, inclusiveness and welfare sharing. This is the first responsibility of the new Iraqi Government.

Major regional players, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, must agree with the US mission, and contribute to it. Their agreement will be granted if their strategic interests are met. In the case of Iran, it is realistic to expect that the elimination of ISIS by the US would counterbalance the stepping down of its ally, Bashar Al Assad, especially with a guarantee that the free Syrian Army would be disbanded in favour of an inclusive and democratic electoral process. Saudi Arabia and Turkey could be happy with the removal of Bashar Al Assad in knowing also that the new Iraqi Government will be a really inclusive one, and independent from Teheran's will.

As it can be seen, in the suggested scenario much depends on the quality of the new Iraqi Government, led by the Prime Minister Al-Abadi, beyond the good will (necessary but not sufficient) of the United States. We can only trust, at this stage, the Iraqi decision-makers to be able to build such an inclusive Government, and the Obama Administration to change its opinion on the use of ground troops, led by competent high-quality officers who served in the first surge.

9 POVZETEK MAGISTRSKEGA DELA V SLOVENSKEM JEZIKU

Zgodovina ameriškega interventizma v Iraku je že desetletja vezana na iskanje objektivov, kot so vpliv in dostop, kjer je dostop definiran kot dvojni dostop do strateško pomembnega geo-političnega križišča in do energentov. Od podpore državnega udara socialistične panarabske stranke Baath leta 1963 proti vladi Abdul Karim Qasim-a - ki je strmoglavil monarhijo leta 1958, umaknil Irak iz Bagdadskega sporazuma in se zbližal Sovjetski Zvezi - preko podpore Iraku v vojni proti Iranu, do dveh zalivskih vojn in embarga, faktorja, ki sta strmoglavila Sadama Hussein-a, se lahko jasno vidi, kako se je ameriška vpletenost razvila iz indirektno v totalno strategijo, dovršeno z drago proto-imperialistično invazijo in okupacijo. Taka strategija je orientirana tudi omejevanju vpliva drugih kontingentov faktorjev v regiji, kot vrnitev Rusije kot globalnega akterja, regionalnih uporov, terorizma in džihadizma.

V tem kontekstu so marca leta 2003 ZDA napadle in zasedle Irak. Vzpostavile so začasno koalicijsko vlado z ZDA na čelu. Razpustile so iraško vojsko in celotno civilno administracijo, izhajajočo iz eno-strankarskega Baath sistema in posledične ideologije. Približno eno leto kasneje so ZDA dovolile Iraku vzpostavitev prve samostojne iraške vlade. Obsežna sunitska manjšina, ki je vladala državi v prejšnjih desetletjih, je bila izključena iz politično-institucionalnega procesa nove iraške državne tvorbe.

Posledično so se Suniti odločili, da bodo bojkotirali prve splošne demokratične volitve, organizirane leta 2005. Na volitvah so zmagale zmerne šiitsko usmerjene stranke, in pa tiste kurdskega izvora, ki so pričele ustavo-tvorni proces. Nova iraška Ustava je bila sprejeta konec leta 2005. Zelo moderna, progresivna, vključujoča, ni bila nikoli docela uveljavljena v praksi in je v glavnem ostala "na papirju".

Od leta 2003 do 2007 se je nasilje v Iraku postopoma stopnjevalo. Napadom šiitskih milic na Sunito so sledili teroristični atentati na šiitsko civilno prebivalstvo s strani sunitskih skrajnežev (Al Qaida in zavezniki). Bolj mirne in stabilne so bile kurdske province na severu države, ki so samo čakale na pravo priložnost za še večjo avtonomijo, ki naj bi vodila v neodvisnost kurdske regije. Trenja med iraškimi varnostnimi silami in avtonomnimi kurdskega bojne enotami "Peshmerga" so tudi že bila prisotna.

Leta 2007 je situacija postala nevzdržna. ZDA so posledično pričele z operacijo "surge". Število ameriških vojakov v Iraku se je znatno povečalo, taktika in strategija pa sta se popolnoma spremenili. Operacija je bila učinkovita, ker je slonela na strateškem zavezništvu s sunitskimi plemeni v provincah Al-Anbar in Nineve, in ker je ameriška vojska pričela delovati kapilarno v mestih, vaseh, na terenu in ni bila več utrjena v vojaških bazah izven mest, kjer ni imela zelenega učinka.

Začasni umik sunitskih skrajnežev in razorožitev šiitskih milic sta pripeljali do delne umiritve in stabilizacije v državi v letih 2008 in 2009. Sledil je umik vojaških sil ZDA leta 2011 in pa stopnjevanje avtoritativnega in sektaškega pristopa Premier-a Al Maliki-ja.

Po umiku ameriških sil se je sodelovanje med ZDA in Irakom nadaljevalo in v nekaterih sektorjih še povečalo. ZDA so ustvarile Agencijo za sodelovanje na področju varnosti (OSC-I) in za večje prodaje orožja državi. V tem sklopu se je množila tehnična pomoč v vojaškem sektorju, vključno z usposabljanjem osebja in novo-rekrutiranih vojakov. Poleg tega, je bil implementiran projekt za specifične potrebe iraških policijskih sil in zaporniških policijskih enot, ki je bil še posebno osredotočen na spoštovanje človekovih pravic in svoboščin. ZDA so tudi pomagale v projektu regionalizacije države, ki naj bi vodila k večjim lokalnim avtonomijam in naj bi pripeljala do morebitne bodoče federalne ali konfederalne ureditve Iraka. Proces je še v teku. Z letom 2013 se je varnostna situacija v državi ponovno poslabšala. Irak je zato zaprosil ZDA za dodatno vojaško-tehnično pomoč, predvsem pa za hitrejšo primopredajo naročenega ameriškega orožja.

Strateško partnerstvo med ZDA in Irakom je bilo uradno priznано in ratificirano z obsežnim dokumentom, podpisanem leta 2011, ki vključuje sodelovanje na področjih, kot so kultura in izobraževanje, energetika, sodelovanje na področju pravne ureditve in pravnega reda ter spoštovanje zakonodaje; zunanjepolitično in diplomatsko sodelovanje; storitve, tehnologije, okoljevarstvo ter promet in zveze; in še sodelovanje na področju trgovine in financ. Ta Sporazum za strateško partnerstvo predvideva redne medvladne konference in srečanja na različnih nivojih, začnši z ministrskim, katerih naloga je koordinacija obeh strani pri izvajanju razvojnih programov. V tem sklopu se še najbolj pogosto sestajajo Skupni odbori za koordinacijo. V letih 2012 - 2014 je bilo kar precej sestankov Skupnih odborov za koordinacijo, na katerih so dogradili skupne strategije sodelovanja na več področjih. Še posebno pomembna je postala kooperacija v energetske sektorju, saj ima Irak zastarelo energetske infrastrukturo in pomanjkanje tehničnega

kadra. Pripravljen je bil torej skupni program o modernizaciji infrastrukture za dobavo električnega toka, saj v velikih mestih ni toka po več ur na dan, oziroma je tok samo ob določenih dnevnih urah. V Iraku se namreč politična popularnost stranke ali človeka meri v urah toka, ki jih je stranki uspelo zagotoviti civilnemu prebivalstvu v velikih mestih, še posebno v Bagdadu.

Decembra leta 2012 je bil ratificiran tudi Memorandum o Sodelovanje na varnostnem področju med obrambnima ministrstvom obeh držav. Predvideva mehanizme za povečano kooperacijo na področju planiranja obrambe, protiterorističnih operacij in skupnih vojaških vaj. Na žalost pa Memorandum ni tako obsežen, kot so mnogi bili upali, zato ker so ZDA zahtevale imuniteto lastnega vojaškega osebja v Iraku pred iraškimi sodišči. Tega Irak ni sprejel, zato je Memorandum ostal bolj pri gmotno-tehnični pomoči.

Kot že omenjeno, se je v letu 2013 varnostna situacija v državi zelo poslabšala, primarno zaradi vse trših ukrepov Al-Maliki-jeve vlade proti sunitski manjšini. Teroristični napadi ekstremističnih skupin, endemični v centru Iraka in v provinci Nineve že od leta 2003, so se še okrepili, nasilje v državi pa se je stopnjevalo. Množične demonstracije Sunitov v provinci Al'Anbar in v okolici Kirkuka so bile zatrjene s silo in v krvi. Po drugi strani pa so se tudi Suniti oborožili in se vse bolj organizirano začeli upirati Iraškim varnostnim silam, katere niso izbirale sredstev v boju proti upornikom. Nazadnje, proti koncu leta 2013, je že postajalo jasno da je ekstremistično-fundamentalistična skupina "Daesh" prevzela koordinacijo in poveljstvo mozaika sunitskih sil, ki so se uprle iraški vladi. ZDA pri vsem tem niso imele jasne in dodelane strategije. Njihov strateški partner je ostajal Al Maliki, vsem rezervam navkljub. 30. Aprila 2014 pa so bile v državi splošne volitve. Vsi, vključujoč z ZDA, so upali, da se bo situacija rešila s hipotetično novo, bolj inkluzivno, iraško vlado.

V juniju 2014 je ISIL začel izvajati obširno vojaško akcijo, preko katere mu je uspelo zavzeti kar četrtno države, vključujoč z pomembnimi mesti kot so Mosul, Tikrit in Falluja. Demotivirane Iraške Varnostne sile so bile v razsulu, kljub veliki številčni premoči. Daesh je zasegel tudi iraško orožje, vključujoč s težkimi tanki in artilerijo. Vojaki iraške vojske, kis o bili zajeti, so bili obglavljeni ali ustreljeni. Kamorkoli je Daesh prišel, je po hitrem postopku opravil z vsemi namišljenimi nasprotniki, vključujoč z vsemi etnično-verskimi manjšinami. Še posebno trpi ljudstvo pra-vera Yazidi. Ker teroristi ISIS-a smatrajo, da to ljudstvo obožuje hudiča, jih sistematično ubija ali zasušnjuje.

Nekatera sunitska plemena so se povezala z ISIS-om. ZDA niso pričakovale tako izrazitega in hitrega poraza iraških varnostnih sil. Na hitro so priredile novo strategijo, ki je predvidela tesno zaveznitvo z avtonomno kurdsko regijo na severu Iraka glede na to, da je le-ta še ostala sposobna organiziranega in discipliniranega boja proti Daesh'u, s svojimi bojnimi enotami "Peshmerga". Istočasno pa so ZDA še okrepile vojaško- tehnično sodelovanje z iraško vlado ter pričele z obsežnim bombardiranjem položajev ISIS-a. ZDA pa niso poslale zemeljskih vojaških sil, ker so rajši poizkušale graditi široko mednarodno koalicijo, ki trenutno obsega okoli 60 držav (September 2014). Od teh je približno ena petina bolj aktivnih, od logistične podpore do zračnih napadov na cilje ISIS-a, preko finančne pomoči. Na žalost pa do sedaj (marec 2005) še ni bilo možno zgraditi prave regionalne koalicije, zedinjene v skupnem koherentnem političnem načrtu o prihodnosti regije.

Bombardiranje položajev ISIS-a in okrepljeno vojaško-tehnično sodelovanje med ZDA in Irakom kljub vsemu nikakor ne bosta zadoščala za vzpostavitev trajnega miru v stabilni iraški državi. Če si želijo ZDA, da Irak postane zanesljiv, demokratičen in stabilen dolgoročni partner v regiji, potem mora ameriška administracija storiti vsaj sledeče:

- Preko diplomacije, prepričati Savdsko Arabijo, Iran in Turčijo do pogajanja o skupni strategiji proti ISIS-u in vzrokom, ki so povzročili izbruh in nenaden uspeh te ekstremistično-teroristične organizacije;
- Zgraditi široko koalicijo, še posebno regijskega značaja in pod okriljem OZN, ki bi bila pripravljena poslati vojaške sile na teren. Bombardiranje je velikokrat neučinkovito. K tej koaliciji pa bi morale ZDA prispevati tudi določeno število lastnih vojakov;
- Predlagati skupni denarni sklad za rekonstrukcijo in "nation-building" v Siriji in Iraku, v katerega naj bi prispevali ZDA, Evropska unija, in regionalni akterji, še posebno bogate zalivske države, kot so Savdska Arabija, Katar in Združeni Arabski Emirati, pa tudi Turčija in Iran. Skupno vodenje takega sklada ne bi samo pripomoglo k boljše planirani rekonstrukciji, temveč bi dalo občutek še posebno zalivskim državam in Iranu, da so priznani kot polnopravni člani mednarodne skupnosti, in da ni sumov ali rezerv proti njim s strani takozvanih zahodnih držav, z obtožbami da financirajo islamske skrajneže ali salafitska gibanja.
- Zgraditi strategijo za SSR (Security System Reform - Reforma varnostnega sektorja) skupaj z Evropsko unijo in regionalnimi partnerji, ki lahko pri tem pomagajo finančno in logistično.

Raziskovalna vprašanja in raziskovalne metode

Magistrska naloga je razdeljena na tri dele:

3.Uvod in ozadje moderne zgodovine odnosov med ZDA in Irakom;

Ta del pokriva obdobje od leta 2003, ko so ZDA zasedle Irak, do zaključka operacije "surge" Generala Petraeus-a proti radikalnim Sunitskim skrajnežem in teroristični mreži "Al-Qaida";

4.Bolj podrobna analiza sodelovanja v letih 2009-2014;

V tem obdobju je bivši iraški premier Al-Maliki vladal vse bolj avtoritarno. Z nespoštovanjem Erbilskega sporazuma in zapiranjem političnih nasprotnikov je sprožil vse večje nezadovoljstvo in sovraštvo Sunitov in Kurdov, pri bolj ali manj pasivnem obnašanju ZDA; analiziramo mnogo programov za kooperacijo, ki so se začeli v teh letih, skupaj z njihovim trenutnim statusom in perspektivami za prihodnost. Analiziramo tudi mnenja mnogih ameriških nevladnih organizacij, ki delajo na terenu, o teh programih, za podajo jasnejše slike zgoraj omenjene kooperacije.

3. Aktualni dogodki (2014):

Al-Maliki-jeva trda roka in civilna vojna v Siriji, med drugimi, bolj dolgoročnimi faktorji, sta pripomogla k uspehu ISIS-a, ki je zasedel velik kos Iraka, še posebno na severozahodu države. Trenutna situacija je opisana in analizirana. Predlagamo možne rešitve, še posebno glede najboljšega pristopa, ki ga ZDA lahko zavzamejo v dani težki situaciji.

Naloga opisuje tudi pravno podlago odnosov med ZDA in Irakom, ki temelji na sledečih dokumentih: SOFA (Sporazum o Stanju Sil), SFA (Sporazum za Strateško Partnerstvo), MOU (Memorandumski Sporazum), in Sporazum o trgovanju in investicijah. Izbrali smo tudi tri govore (pričevanja) treh ameriških glavnih strokovnjakov o Iraku. Pričevanja so bila izrečena na izrednih zaslišanjih Odbora za Zunanje Zadeve ameriškega Kongresa.

Analizirano časovno obdobje je izrazito sočasno, ker smo se hoteli osredotočiti na sodobne problematike in prispevati k operacijski vrednosti magistrskega dela.

Raziskovalna pomembnost tematike

Glede na konsistentno preteklo in sedanjo vpletenost ZDA v Iraku, je bilo povečanje učinkovitosti ameriškega vpliva in akcij v Iraku predmet mnogih študij, ki so se osredotočale še posebno na:

Izgradnjo miru in stabilnosti;

Gradnjo iraške države kot demokratične, pluralistične, inkluzivne družbe, ki globoko spoštuje človekove pravice;

Prepričati Irak v dolgotrajno zavezništvo z ZDA, s političnega in gospodarskega vidika;

Preko stabilnega zavezništva z Irakom, prispevati k miru in stabilnosti v celotni bližnje-vzhodni regiji;

Predlaganih je bilo veliko možnih rešitev, tudi diametralno nasprotujočih si. Lahko pa vseeno identificiramo dva poglobljena študijska pristopa, ki temeljita oba na solidnih družbeno-znanstvenih dokazih: prvi je "Unitarni" pristop, ki temelji na predpostavki da so sektaške bitke v Iraku posledica sistema "Muhasasa", ki so ga podpirale ZDA. Gre se za sistem, po katerem se vladne naloge in odgovornosti delijo po etnični, verski, sektorski pripadnosti. Ta pristop je pripeljal do še danes prevladujočega sistema, v katerem imajo arabski Šiiti, Arabski Suniti in Kurdi največji del pomembnih vladnih položajev. V tem pristopu se predlaga opustitev muhasase in stvaritev Vlade Narodne Enotnosti, temeljujoče na iskanju širokega konsenza. Drugi pristop pa je imenovan "endemični avtoritarizem" in v glavnem obdolžuje ZDA krivde, da so zapustile Irak v rokah Šiitske večine, ki je izvajala diskriminacijo do Sunitske manjšine in ni spoštovala zaključkov Erbilkega sporazuma, ki je predvideval, da bi morale biti oblast in bogastva iraškega ljudstva razdeljena med tri večinske in vladajoče etnične skupnosti. Še posebno je za ta pristop krivil bolj in bolj avtoritar in personalističen pristop bivšega premier-a Al-Maliki-ja.

Vsekakor pa so si vse znanstvene analize in študije edine v sledeči stvari: preko različne analize teže odgovornosti ZDA za nastalo situacijo, se vse analize strinjajo, da prevladuje v Iraku endemična korupcija, zelo razdrobljen in nestabilen strankarski sistem, personalističen sistem političnega odločanja in problematično situacijo glede na tako veliko etnično-verskih komponent iraške družbe, katerim manjka sposobnost doseganja dolgoročnih in stabilnih kompromisov.

Magistrsko delo poizkuša graditi na zaključkih in hipotezah različnih avtorjev in družbeno-

političnih strokovnjakov in znanstvenikov, ne samo z namenom podaje koherentne slike kompleksne resničnosti "na terenu", temveč tudi z namenom uporabe te koherentne slike za boljše strateško in operativno planiranje akcij ZDA v Iraku.

Raziskovalno vprašanje in hipoteze

V senci aktualnih dogodkov, mora biti naše raziskovalno vprašanje sledeče: kakšni so razlogi za neučinkovitost in poraz politike ZDA v Iraku po letu 2009? In, da bi bili konstruktivni in predlagali možne rešitve, poizkušamo odgovoriti tudi na sledeče vprašanje: kakšna bi bila najboljša možna strategija in planiranje programov in akcij ZDA v Iraku, sredi dandanašnje civilne vojne v državi?

Na podlagi moderne zgodovine regije in danih dejstev, predlagamo sledeči dve hipotezi:

H1: Politika ZDA v Iraku po letu 2009 je posledica zunanje politike predsedniške administracije, ki je primarno poizkušala ne ponoviti napak iz preteklosti. Ta strateška drža pa je omogočila aktualizacijo globoko zakoreninjenih problemov delitve moči med sunitsko manjšino in šiitsko večino v Iraku.

Lahko rečemo, da je velika gmotna in logistična investicija ZDA požela zelo malo uspeha, če sploh, v primerjavi s situacijo pred letom 2003. Ameriška administracija torej ne bi rada ponovila iste napake, zato se osredotoča predvsem na marginalno, tudi če simbolično pomembno, kooperacijo in vpletenost v Iraku.

H2: Politika ZDA v Iraku po letu 2009 je problematična, ker ne najde kredibilnih notranjih zaveznikov, ki bi bili sposobni voditi proces umiritve in narodne sprave, zaradi visoke podkupljivosti in fragmentacije iraškega vodilnega političnega razreda, kot tudi zaradi visoke neučinkovitosti in avtoritarizma.

Premier Al-Maliki ni bil ponovno izvoljen, ampak problem razdrobljenega, podkupljivega klientelističnega in sektaško orientiranega iraškega političnega razreda ostaja. Medtem ko Daesh zaseda večje dele države, se v Bagdadu politiki prepirajo o delitvi moči in so zmožni grajenja samo šibkih vlad. Vseeno pa obstaja upanje, da bo novi premier Al-Abadi dosegel močnejši in obsežnejši konsenz.

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