Between the Wolf and the Crocodile:
The Pragmatic Currents of the Islamic State

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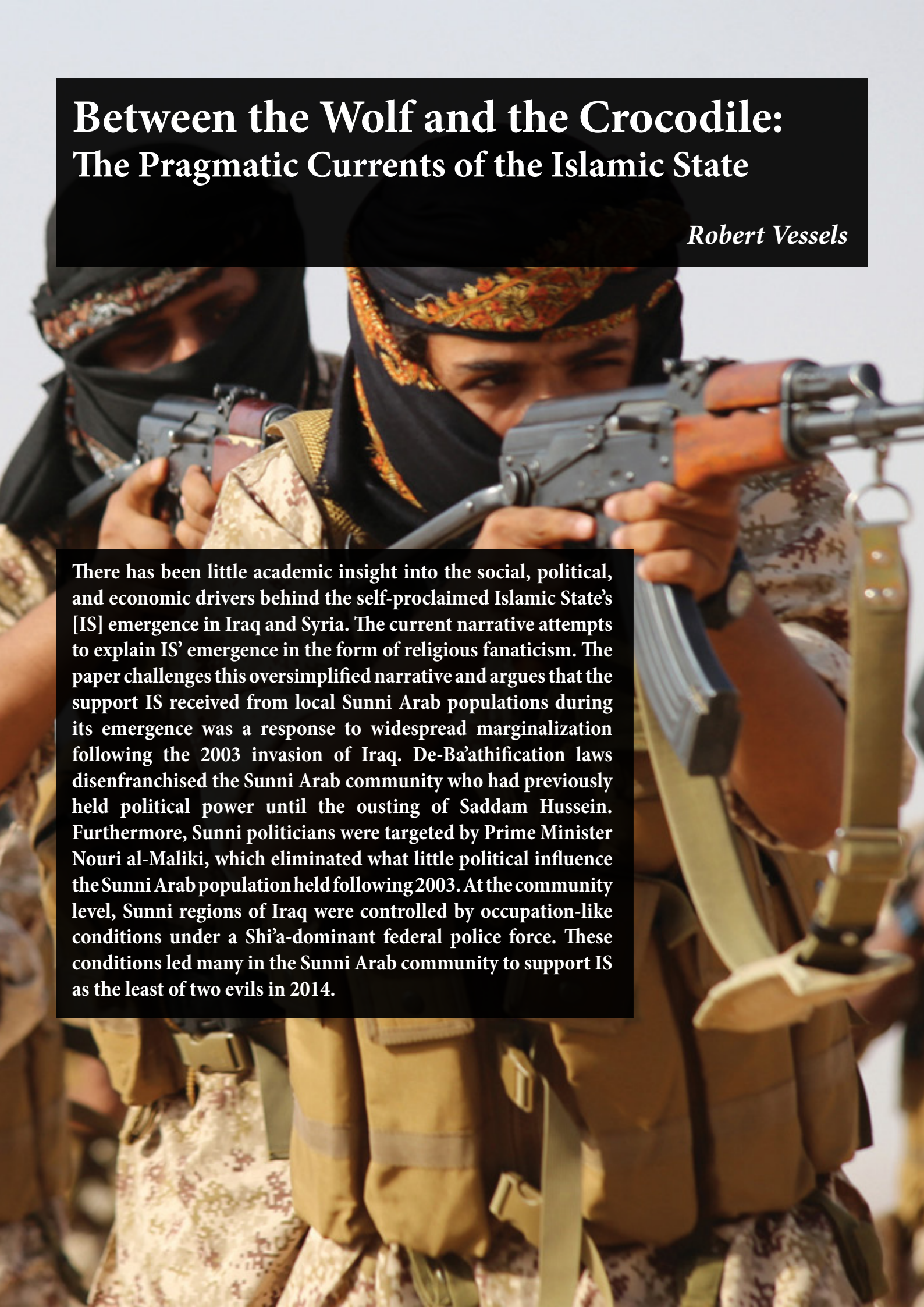

There has been little academic insight into the social, political, and economic drivers behind the self-proclaimed Islamic State's [IS] emergence in Iraq and Syria. The current narrative attempts to explain IS' emergence in the form of religious fanaticism. The paper challenges this oversimplified narrative and argues that the support IS received from local Sunni Arab populations during its emergence was a response to widespread marginalization following the 2003 invasion of Iraq. De-Ba'athification laws disenfranchised the Sunni Arab community who had previously held political power until the ousting of Saddam Hussein. Furthermore, Sunni politicians were targeted by Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, which eliminated what little political influence the Sunni Arab population held following 2003. At the community level, Sunni regions of Iraq were controlled by occupation-like conditions under a Shi'a-dominant federal police force. These conditions led many in the Sunni Arab community to support IS as the least of two evils in 2014.

Preface:

In March of 2003, the Baghdad night sky resembled a Fourth of July celebration gone horribly wrong. President George W. Bush had just ordered the first phase in the United States' invasion of Iraq: a continuous bombardment of key Iraqi positions meant to instill "shock and awe" among Iraq's military. Although the tactic was initially effective in that it resulted in minimal resistance from the formal Iraqi military, a soon-to-be infamous insurgency group quickly formed in the chaos of the invasion. Led by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaeda in Iraq [AQI] was the predecessor to the Islamic State [IS]. Initially, the organization was almost entirely comprised of foreign fighters from the Arab world. In addition to its anti-American insurgency, AQI was known for its large scale and indiscriminate attacks on civilians.[1] It targeted both Sunnis and Shi'a in an attempt to spark a sectarian civil war. Five years after the invasion, I found myself on the ground patrolling Baghdad's muhallahs* as an infantryman in the US Army. Sectarian violence had peaked the year prior, but was still readily apparent in massive car bombs during Friday calls to prayer and attacks on Shi'i pilgrims en route to Karbala.

This piece analyzes portions of events that I was actively engaged in during my 15-month deployment to Baghdad. After leaving the army, I became staunchly opposed to the US occupation of Iraq and struggled to find meaning behind my time there. During the process of writing this paper, I was acutely aware of my experiences in Iraq and although I instinctively wanted to study the US' responsibility for Iraq's instability, that topic has largely been exhausted.[2] Instead, this paper examines why, in the post-invasion rehabilitation period, large portions of Iraqis and Syrians welcomed and supported the emergence of IS, an organization that, according to Human Rights Watch, massacred at least one thousand Iraqis upon capturing Mosul and Tikrit in 2014[3] and has been widely demonized elsewhere.

The invasion of Iraq, the collapse of the Ba'athist government and the disbanding of the Iraqi military created a power vacuum that the US was unable to fill, the repercussions of which are felt today. The most visible result was the rapid emergence and spread of IS* that is currently fueling headlines around the world. Attesting to the organization's theatrical brutality, the beheadings of kidnapped Westerners Peter Kassig, Steven Sotloff, and James Foley were posted on YouTube for the world to see. The sheer terror of witnessing these hostages' last seconds has undoubtedly been etched in the minds of many. Aside from oversimplified partisan jabs at the Obama administration for pulling out of Iraq too soon and an occasional reference to AQI, there is scant information about the structural underpinnings of this group's origins.

In fact, the current narrative suggests that IS' emergence was motivated by religious zealotry and mental illness. Authors like Jay Sekulow, in his popular bestseller, Rise of ISIS, simplify IS as "immense evil" and "composed of religiously motivated psychopaths."[4] This narrative of "psychopathic terrorists" has extended to popular blogs like the Daily Kos as well as to the reports of Fox News television persona Megyn Kelly. They fail to account, however, for the social, political, and economic motivations behind IS' widespread support and pragmatic partnerships, which is the focus of this paper.

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1. Aaron Y. Zelin, "Al-Qaeda in Syria: A Closer Look at Isis (Part I)," The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 10, 2013, accessed September 6, 2014, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/al-qaeda-in-syria-a-closer-look-at-isis-part-i.

* In order to control enemy movements, entire neighborhoods (muhallahs) were sealed off by 12-foot high concrete walls similar to Israel's separation barrier.

2. Ted Galen Carpenter, "Middle East Vortex: An Unstable Iraq and Its Implications for the Region," Mediterranean Quarterly 20, no. 4 (2009).

3. "Iraq: ISIS Executed Hundreds of Prison Inmates," Human Rights Watch, October 30, 2014, accessed November 1, 2014, http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/30/iraq-isis-executed-hundreds-prison-inmates.

* AQI renamed itself Islamic State in Iraq [ISI] in 2006 following the death of Zarqawi. In a change of direction, ISI shifted its focus toward gaining and governing territory in Sunni-dominated Anbar Province in western Iraq. In April 2013, ISI changed its name to Islamic State in Iraq and al-Sham [ISIS]. The organization changed its name again in June 2014 to IS after its leader proclaimed himself caliph of a new worldwide caliphate. There has been much confusion over what to call the organization and all three of these acronyms seem to be used interchangeably. To simplify matters, this paper will use IS for the post-AQI era.

4. Jay Sekulow, Jordan Sekulow, Robert W. Ash and David French, Rise of ISIS: A Threat We Can't Ignore," (New York: Howard Books), Kindle Edition, 244, 382.

Introduction:

This study traces the emergence of IS to the aftermath of the 2003 invasion of Iraq and challenges the current understanding of IS supporters, which fails to differentiate those in a pragmatic partnership with the insurgency organization from its ideological subscribers. This understanding is rooted in years of over-simplification and misperceptions of the Muslim world by many Western academics and pundits, leading to the belief that Islam is its own civilization and the causality of all significant events in the region.

Islamic scholarship, often veiled behind a shroud of Orientalism, has a problematic history due to the fact that its scholars were regularly isolated from their peers in different fields. "As a result," says historian Roger Owen in his review of the Cambridge History of Islam, "criticism of the way in which Islamic studies are conducted has been reduced to a minimum and a great deal of work of low quality has been allowed to pass unchallenged."[5] According to Owen, few studies of the Muslim world make original contributions to their topic, while most are simply "competent surveys of existing sources."[6] Such material dates back to the nineteenth century and examines Islam as a singular civilization and its population a homogenous society that is inferior to the West.

A widespread shift in the Western perception of Muslims took place in the nineteenth century. European fascination for the Orient developed into a notion that the West was inherently different from and culturally superior to the Muslim world. Islam was perceived to be morally corrupt, stagnant, and "a once-great civilization now in decay."[7] Prominent European figures such as Ernest Renan, a distinguished scholar of religion, and Evelyn Baring, Britain's leading authority on Egypt at the time, supported this attitude toward Islam. Zachary Lockman elaborates:

> *Renan claimed to understand Islam's true nature: it must be everywhere and always be a hindrance to progress and an enemy to reason. […] he [Renon] was in his day a very influential scholar and intellectual and his opinions were widely shared across Europe and beyond, helping to foster a derogatory attitude toward Islam and a sense of Western superiority which in turn legitimized European colonialism.*[8]

In the same light, Baring viewed Muslims as "fundamentally irrational" and in an "abject state." Scholars as well as colonial authorities saw both Renan and Baring's perceptions of Islam as common sense.[9] Such reinforcement of a perspective isolating Islam neglects the diverse and complex social structures that surround major events in the Muslim world. Owen notes that, "Opportunities for a useful exchange of ideas are further reduced by a tendency to see Islamic society as sui generis and not, in important ways, like all other non-European societies in Asia and Africa."[10] As this paper will demonstrate, the Muslim world is not homogenous. Rather than focus on Islam and the religious mobilization behind IS' widespread support, I pinpoint pragmatism and political calculation to demonstrate that IS is not solely driven by fundamentalist Islamic interpretations.

Furthermore, Owen recognizes a problem with Islamic studies that is all too similar to present-day accounts of significant events in the region. Throughout much of the Cambridge History, "the reader is offered little more than another breathless account of battles, murders, and the rapid rise and fall of different dynasties, with little suggestion that history is more than a chronicle of random events."[11]Such stereotyping has increased with advancements in technology and global interconnectedness. Edward Said explains:

> *One aspect of the electronic, postmodern world is that there has been a reinforcement of the stereotypes by which the Orient is viewed. Television, the films, and all the media's resources have forced information into more and more standardized molds. So far as the Orient is concerned, standardization and cultural stereotyping have intensified the hold of the nineteenth-century academic and imaginative demonology of 'the mysterious Orient.'*[12]

5. Roger Owen, "Studying Islamic History," The Journal of Interdisciplinary History 4, no. 2 (August 1973): 287.
6. Ibid, 288.
7. Zachary Lockman, Contending Visions of the Middle East: The History and Politics of Orientalism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 75.
8. Ibid, 81.
9. Ibid, 93-4.
10. Owen, "Studying Islamic History," 295.
11. Ibid, 289.
12. Edward W. Said, Orientalism, Vintage Books ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), 26.

As a result, an emphasis remains on political history rather than the study of social and economic elements.[13] In the same fashion, a plethora of journalistic articles (and the few academic studies on IS that do exist) fail to address the socioeconomic currents behind IS' emergence and instead focus on religious militant group such as al-Qaeda. Taking into account these historical shortcomings in studies of the Muslim world, this paper introduces structural reasoning into the discussion of how and why IS emerged so successfully in Iraq and Syria in 2014.

..majority of IS' initial indigenous supporters do not subscribe to the group's ideology; rather, they are marginalized communities living under non-inclusive corrupt regimes and as a result supported IS as the lesser of two evils.

Additionally, this paper argues that IS successfully emerged in Iraq and Syria for three reasons. First, beginning in 2003, the meddling of external powers in Iraq and Syria set the stage for the current civil and regional conflicts. Second, internal power struggles led to political corruption and a sectarian rift between Iraq's newly disenfranchised Sunni Arab population and its Shi'i Arabs, who dominate political power in Baghdad. Third, IS' establishment in eastern Syria did not pose an immediate threat to the survival of the Assad regime, which was primarily concerned with key areas surrounding Aleppo and Damascus.

This paper further argues that a majority of IS' initial indigenous supporters do not subscribe to the group's ideology; rather, they are marginalized communities living under non-inclusive corrupt regimes and as a result supported IS as the lesser of two evils. The difference between IS' ideological followers and those disenfranchised populations will become abundantly clear in this study.

For this study, structural dimensions include political, social, and economic motivations for supporting the organization. While religion has played a significant role in forming IS' identity and notoriety, a focus only on IS' interpretation of Islam is problematic because it fails to recognize the complex social issues also at work. An example of this tunnel vision is Graeme Wood's cover story for The Atlantic's March 2015 print issue. In the article, Wood argues that "to deny the Islamic State's medieval religious nature" misleads us from the organization's true nature.[14] Not only is simplifying IS into a category of archaic religious zealots a modern example of Orientalism, it also hinders a deep understanding of the reasons behind the initial widespread support for IS. Additionally, IS' emergence is defined as the organization's evolution within Iraq and Syria from March 2003 to August 2014. This era spans the US invasion of Iraq and IS' 2014 summer offensive in which the militant organization captured vast swaths of territory spanning one-third of Iraq and Syria combined. It is during this timeframe that corruption and oppression from the central governments of Iraq and Syria toward their Sunni Arab populations came to a head and sowed the seeds for AQI's rebranding and resurgence.

Chapter One explores the key factors that lead to the disenfranchisement of Iraq's Sunni Arab community following the 2003 US invasion. Shortly after the fall of Baghdad, the Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA], an interim government led by Ambassador Paul Bremer, dissolved the mostly-Sunni authority in Iraq. With haste, the new de facto leader of Iraq enacted CPA Orders 1 and 2, which dissolved the military and began a process called de-Ba'athification, putting roughly 200,000 Sunni Arabs out of work and without reparations—including seasoned veterans of the Iraqi army.[15] A reward system was established for information leading to the arrest of individuals responsible for crimes committed by the Saddam regime—almost exclusively Sunni Arabs.[16] AQI sensed this as an opportunity to exploit the disenfranchisement of Iraq's Sunni Arab population by attacking Shi'i holy sites, thereby creating a sectarian war. Although AQI was successful in rousing sectarian violence throughout the country and indeed, a vicious civil war in 2006-2007, over time Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes partnered with the US military in combatting the mostly foreign-fighters that comprised AQI.

The de-Ba'athification of Iraqi society is key to the pragmatic relationships between IS and Sunni Arab groups who may share a sectarian identity but do not agree ideologically. I was able to interview several

13. Owen, "Studying Islamic History," 296.
14. Graeme Wood, "What ISIS Really Wants," The Atlantic, March 2015, 80.
15. Robert Collins, "Inside the Rise of Isis: Losing Iraq," in FRONTLINE (Public Broadcasting Service, 2014).
16. L. Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society," (2003).

former-members of Iraq's Ba'ath Party in Amman. This gave me a first-hand account from the demographic group that was most marginalized by post-Saddam policies in Iraq. This destabilization of the Iraqi status quo was exacerbated by the new Iraqi constitution, which further marginalized the Sunni Arab community when it was left out of the drafting process following a boycott of the 2005 parliamentary elections.

..in January 2005 [elections], only two of fifty-five members of the constitution's negotiating committee were Sunni Arab, which resulted in virtually no Sunni influence in the drafting process.

For many Sunnis, the 2005 constitution codified their exclusion from Iraq's politics and has been a lingering case of resentment. An emblem of democracy, the document was meant to be a major symbolic victory for the Bush administration; however, the constitution's drafting process was far from democratic. After a boycott of parliamentary elections in January 2005, only two of fifty-five members of the constitution's negotiating committee were Sunni Arab, which resulted in virtually no Sunni influence in the drafting process.[17] In turn, Kurdish and Shi'i leadership took the lead on negotiating the terms of the constitution and Iraq became a decentralized federal state.[18] The Sunni Arab community, nationalist in outlook and inclined to a centralized state, immediately opposed the constitution. It was widely believed that autonomy was a Kurdish code word for secession, and their pride in the country made that unacceptable.[19]

However, in "Iraq's Federalism Quandary," authors Sean Kane, Joost R. Hiltermann, and Raad Alkadiri contend that the Sunni Arab dominant provinces in western Iraq are beginning to lean toward regional autonomy.[20] To challenge this claim, I approached several prominent Sunni Iraqi leaders about their attitudes towards the constitution, specifically regarding autonomy. I discovered that, in an attempt to use the constitution in their favor, leaders of Iraq's largest Sunni Arab tribe recently began lobbying Washington for support in establishing a semi-autonomous Sunni region similar to Iraqi Kurdistan. Additionally, lobbyists are pushing for the White House to consult with the Dulaim tribe, instead of Baghdad, on issues regarding IS.[21]

In response to Iraqi security force abuses — that corroborate Dr. Misconi and Dr. Nujaifi's accounts — and marginalization from Baghdad, Sunni Arab leaders have begun to realize that the constitution's decentralization authority can be used as a means for control of natural resources and improved governance. With very little written on Sunni Arab lobbying efforts, further investigation will provide insight into thought processes behind the actions of Iraq's Sunni Arab leaders.

Chapter Two examines Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's policies, which eventually drove Iraq's Sunni Arabs into the arms of IS. In 2006, Sunni resentment towards the central government increased after Prime Minister Maliki, a Shi'i, took office. Pushing an increasingly sectarian agenda, especially during his second term, Maliki consolidated power as Washington withdrew, physically and intellectually, from the country.[22] Ambassador Christopher Hill is an authority on the State Department's hands-off approach to dealing with Baghdad. Hill is currently the dean of the Josef Korbel School of International Studies at the University of Denver. Hill has written extensively about his time as Ambassador to Iraq, specifically President Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's unwillingness to work with Prime Minister Maliki.

Through conversations with Dr. Humam Misconi, the senior advisor for the Economic Recovery and Poverty Alleviation Cluster of the United Nations Development Program in Iraq and a thirty-year veteran of the Iraqi government, I corroborated the incompetence of the US State Department policies and its personnel's unhappiness upon being assigned to Baghdad, as previously discussed by Ambassador Hill.[23]

17. Kenneth Katzman, "Iraq: Politics, Elections, and Benchmarks," (Congressional Research Service, 2009).
18. Jonathan Morrow, "Deconstituting Mesopotamia: Cutting a Deal on the Regionalization of Iraq," in Framing the State in Times of Transition, ed. Laurel E. Miller and Louis Aucoin (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2010): 574.
19. Ibid, 577.
20. Sean and Joost R. Hiltermann and Raad Alkadiri Kane, "Iraq's Federalism Quandary," The National Interest 118, no. Mar/Apr 2012 (2012).
21. Sean Nevins, "Meet the Man Lobbying America to Divide Iraq," Mint Press News, October 3, 2014, accessed December 3, 2014, http://www.mintpressnews.com/meet-the-man-lobbying-america-to-divide-iraq/197092/
22. Dr. Najih al-Maizan, interview by the author, trans. Mohammed Ayesh, Erbil, January 12, 2015.
23. Dr. Humam Misconi, interview by the author, Berkeley, November 6, 2014.

Furthermore, Misconi gave detailed accounts of the Iraq security force's abuse of power in Mosul, which were supported by a personal interview with the governor of Mosul, Dr. Atheel Nujaifi.[24] According to them, the overbearing presence of a Shi'a-dominant police force, which acted similarly to a mafia, led the greater public to welcome IS with open arms. Misconi's interview was invaluable in that it provided insight and accounts of family and colleagues living in the IS controlled city of Mosul. Additionally, fieldwork conducted in Jordan with former Iraqi government officials triangulate previous interviews in determining whether or not Washington could have prevented Maliki's sectarian agenda.

It is important to note that around the same time, AQI shifted from an organization dominated by foreigners to one comprised of Iraqis and led by an Iraqi — Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.[25] This shift in identity could explain why Iraq's Sunni Arab tribes formed pragmatic relationships with IS rather than combatting them as the Sons of Iraq did in 2007 during the Sahwa movement, commonly referred to as the Sunni Awakening. With only their Sunni religion in common, I argue that IS relied on these militia groups for tribal legitimacy and the militias joined the bandwagon in order to benefit from IS' ability to spearhead military operations against the Shi'a-run government in Baghdad.

Chapter Three examines IS' relationship with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Until recently, IS and the Syrian government have mutually benefitted from each other's presence. The Assad regime and IS have close ties that date back to the AQI insurgency, when Syria acted as an entry point into Iraq for foreign fighters.[26] Dr. Waleed al-Rawi, an expert on Iraqi militant groups and IS, as well as Congressional testimonies and logistical documents, known as the Sinjar Records, provide evidence of AQI's history with the Syrian central government. An understanding of this relationship between AQI and the Assad regime provides context for an apparent modus vivendi that formed following IS' establishment in Syria.

The year 2011 was important for the future of militant Islamist groups in Syria. When the uprising against the Assad regime began, it triggered the return of local Salafists who had been involved in external struggles. Syrian Salafists were not the only ones to take notice of the situation in Syria. "In 2011 when the crackdown on Sunni protestors in Syria became violent and protestors called for armed opposition, the ISI saw an opportunity not only to help future allies in Syria, but also to rally its base in Iraq."[27] The majority of sources accusing the Assad regime of supporting IS originate from opposition members with an obvious bias due to their position against the Syrian government. Nevertheless, The Carter Center's "Syria Countrywide Conflict Report #4" offers in-depth analysis of the relationships between all belligerents taking part in hostilities.[28]

Prior to IS' 2014 summer offensive, as the organization was engaged in hostilities against a coalition of opposition forces, the Assad regime only confronted IS in self-defense. During this time, the regime almost exclusively attacked opposition forces, leaving IS relatively free to grab large swaths of land in eastern Syria.[29] In light of these facts, the Carter Center's report suggests a modus vivendi between the Syrian government and IS. The relative calm that resulted from a lack of aerial bombardments allowed IS to successfully hold the territory it captured inside Syria and focus on state building and the organization of social services among its public. Although both belligerents benefitted from each other's existence, I challenge the idea of an active partnership between Assad's regime and IS. The two forces infrequently clashed because IS established itself near the Iraq border and the Syrian military could only afford to engage the most imminent threats to its survival, on the opposite side of the country from IS.

24. Dr. Atheel al-Nujaifi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 13, 2015.
25. Bobby Ghosh, "Isis: A Short History," The Atlantic, August 14, 2014, accessed August 15, 2014, http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2014/08/isis-a-short-history/376030/.
26. Waleed al-Rawi and Sterling Jensen, "Syria's Salafi Networks," PRISM 4 (2014): 44.
27. Ibid, 52.
28. "Syria Countrywide Conflict Report #4," (The Carter Center, 2014).
29. Ibid, 25.

I. The disenfranchisement of Iraq's Sunni Arabs:

The Islamic State [IS] captured swaths of land as large as the area of Britain in a seemingly effortless sweep across northwest Iraq and eastern Syria in the summer of 2014.[30] It is necessary to understand that IS comprises four broad constituencies, each with differing motivations and in contrast with the various portrayals of IS followers as 'religiously motivated psychopaths.' According to Dr. Yahya Alkubaisi, a leading scholar on IS' organizational structure, IS incorporates four circles: its ideological core, ex-officers of the Iraqi army, the Islamic Shield Brigade of foreign volunteers, and former Ba'athists. He elaborated that, "the fourth circle contains ex-Ba'athists, ex-soldiers. We think they are not terrorists. They are not ideologists."[31] In a testament to the marginalization of Iraq's Sunni Arab community, a large number from that population saw IS' victories as liberation from Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's oppressive government, which they had actively protested against since 2011.

Early IS support was not comprised solely of individuals eager to adhere to the group's interpretation of Islam. It included Ba'athists, nationalists and Islamists,[32] many of whom did not subscribe to IS' ideology. Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, a forty-year veteran of the Iraqi government and former member of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq [UNAMI], explains:

> *[To the] Iraqi government pre-August 2014, anyone against them is [a] terrorist. By August, they changed the name to IS. If you watch the daily statements, they are not talking about anything but IS; and IS to them, no matter who they are—kids, women—anyone in the field is [the] enemy and anyone is IS. […] These are locals. They are defending themselves against the government forces—against the militia. Against killing them [...] So, by nature, they have to rely on someone supporting them, and [there was no one but] IS. So, we have to make the distinction between those real IS ideologically and those who are fighting or surviving.*[33]

Thus, for many Sunni Arabs, IS was the best alternative to Baghdad's sectarian agenda.

De-Ba'athification is the key to fully understanding the disenfranchisement of Iraq's Sunni Arabs. According to Dr. Sadoun al-Zibaydi, Saddam Hussein's personal translator and appointed member of the constitutional drafting committee, de-Ba'athification was "based on the original misconception that Ba'ath-ism means Sunni-ism and Sunni-ism means Ba'ath-ism, and was meant to be de-Sunni-ism."[34] A product of the US, this process was problematic for Iraq's future because it removed Sunni Arabs from the public sector and forced a large number of professionals into unemployment.

Meant to be a beacon of Iraqi democracy and a symbol of US success, the drafting of Iraq's 2005 constitution was monopolized by Kurdish and Shi'i leaders and, as a result, accentuated sectarian identity and lead to the Sunni Arab community desperate for an alternative. Sunni Arab leaders were unrepresented in Iraq's political system because they were excluded from the constitutional drafting process, which was dominated by Shi'i and Kurdish representatives.[35] As a result, Sunni leaders staged large-scale protests across Iraq.

This chapter analyzes the history of crucial events that led to Maliki's oppressive regime and ultimately to IS' rise in Iraq. Understanding de-Ba'athification and the constitution's effect on Iraq's Sunni Arab population is necessary to comprehend why major protests spread across western Iraq in 2011. The Maliki government subsequently crushed the sit-ins and, as a result, many unlikely groups subsequently partnered with IS and took up arms against the central government.

Alkubaisi elaborates, "Many of the Naqshabandi Movement—they are Sufis, not Salafists—they joined

30. Ian Johnston, "The Rise of Isis: Terror Group Now Controls an Area the Size of Britain, Experts Claim," The Independent, September 3, 2014, accessed April 26, 2015, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/the-rise-of-isis-terror-group-now-controls-an-area-the-size-of-britain-expert-claims-9710198.html.
31. Dr. Yahya Alkubaisi, Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, Dr. Haider Saeed, and Dr. Sadoun al-Zibaydi, roundtable discussion with the author, Iraqi Center for Strategic Studies, Amman, January 15, 2015.
32. Andrew Slater, "Under an Isis flag the sons of Mosul are rallying," The Daily Beast, June 16, 2014, accessed October 1, 2014, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/06/16/under-an-isis-flag-the-sons-of-mosul-are-rallying.html.
33. Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, interview by the author, Amman, January 10, 2015.
34. Dr. Yahya Alkubaisi, Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, Dr. Haider Saeed, and Dr. Sadoun al-Zibaydi, roundtable discussion with the author, Iraqi Center for Strategic Studies, Amman, January 15, 2015.
35. Ibid.

Daesh.* So when you talk about these new volunteers, we cannot talk about one category. I think many of them are not real ideologists. They can be away from Daesh if there are any political procedures done by the Iraqi government." Groups like the Naqshabandi Army [JRTN], a Ba'athist militant group, and the Dulaim tribe, Iraq's largest Arab tribe,[36] have since cut ties with IS. JRTN remains a major force among Iraq's opposition groups and offers a nationalist alternative to marginalized Sunni Arabs. Sunni tribal leaders have also distanced themselves from IS. As of March 2015, they have not sought to overthrow the IS reign in their territory. Tribes such as Albu Rahman in Samarra have begun to push for regional autonomy without partition, similar to that of the Kurdistan Regional Government [KRG], authorized by the 2005 constitution.[37] Such nationalist sentiments go against the narrative that labels IS as led by psychopaths and support the argument that many of IS' initial supporters did not subscribe to its ideology.

De-Ba'athification and the Sunni Arab Disenfranchisement

Shortly after Baghdad fell to the American military in the spring of 2003, President Bush appointed Ambassador Paul Bremer as Presidential Envoy to Iraq. Long since retired, Bremer's foreign service had been in the Netherlands under the Reagan administration; his only experience in the Middle East was a two-week crash course on pertinent, regional issues.[38] In June, Bremer established the Coalition Provisional Authority [CPA], which then appointed an Iraqi transitional government of which he was the chief executive authority.[39] Bremer also created and implemented the Transitional Administrative Law [TAL], which was Iraq's interim constitution until 2005. With haste, and citing a concern for the safety of Iraqi society, the de jure pro-Consul of Iraq enacted two orders that dissolved Iraq's military and began the de-Ba'athification process, which put roughly 200,000 Sunni Arabs out of work and without reparations – including seasoned veterans of the Iraqi army.[40] Dr. Hussain Hindawi, who was the first appointed head of the Independent High Electoral Commission and later a UN staff-member, elaborates that, "The Sunni population felt neglected because they lost power—military power especially. Maybe 80 percent of the Sunni population [was] in the army."
CPA Order 1 sought to remove Ba'ath party structures and members from any positions of authority in Iraq. All members of the political party were "removed from their positions and banned from future employment in the public sector."[41] This impacted the future political system, which is still Shi'a-dominant, by drastically cutting the number of Sunni Arabs eligible for work in the government. The first CPA order also established a reward system for information leading to the arrest of individuals responsible for crimes committed by the Saddam regime—essentially Sunni Arabs. An unintended consequence was the settling of personal scores where some Sunnis were targeted under the new system, without due process.

CPA Order 2 dissolved all military and intelligence ministries and organizations. With the end of conscription, the order stated "any military or other rank, title, or status granted to a former employee or functionary of a Dissolved Entity by the former Regime is hereby cancelled." Furthermore, "Any person holding the rank under the former regime of Colonel or above, or its equivalent" was labeled a "Senior Party Member." This group was not offered a "termination payment" or severance pay upon dissolution, and if they retired from a Dissolved Entity before April 6, 2003, their pension was cut off.[42] As a result of this order, a large number of the Iraqi military and intelligence communities were left unemployed and retained their weapons. Many

* Daesh is short for Dawlat al-Islamiyah f'al-Iraq wa al-Sham, similar to the English title of ISIS/ISIL. The word is banned by IS, however, because it is also the Arabic word for "one who is trampled underfoot" and is commonly used in a derogatory manner across the region.

36. Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi, "Naqshbandi Army (Jrtn) Activist Front Groups," Aymenn Jawad, August 18, 2014, accessed October 8, 2014, http://www.aymennjawad.org/15202/naqshbandi-army-jrtn-activist-front-groups; Richard Spencer and Carol Malouf, "We will stand by Isis until Maliki steps down, says leader of Iraq's biggest tribe," The Telegraph, June 29, 2014, accessed February 17, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iraq/10934438/We-will-stand-by-Isis-until-Maliki-steps-down-says-leader-of-Iraqs-biggest-tribe.html.

37. Dr. Najih Al-Maizan, interview by the author, trans. Mohammed Ayesh, Erbil, January 12, 2015.

38. "Inside the Rise of Isis: Losing Iraq," Robert Collins, FRONTLINE, aired October 28, 2014, on PBS.

39. Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of Defense, "Designation as Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority," memorandum, May 13, 2003.

40. Collins, "Losing Iraq."

41. L. Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 1: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society," May 16, 2003.

42. L. Paul Bremer, "Coalition Provisional Authority Order Number 2: Dissolution of Entities," May 23, 2003.

high-ranking officials, who held authority and influence among the Sunni Arab population, felt cheated and were left without compensation.

AQI saw this as an opportunity to gain acceptance from Iraq's newly disenfranchised population and quickly initiated attacks on Shi'i holy sites, successfully precipitating a sectarian civil war in Iraq. In this phase however, AQI was unable to fully co-opt Sunni ex-military officers, who embody IS' second circle. That this constituency later joined IS is a consequence of developments in Iraq and Syria after the US withdrawal in Iraq in December 2011 and after the Syrian revolution began to morph into a dramatic civil war. This constituency would spearhead the decisive military victories by IS in the summer of 2014.

A New Constitution

On January 30, 2005, in accordance with the TAL, Iraq's transitional law, Iraq held its first national elections in the post-Saddam era. A majority of Iraqis voted for a 275 seat transitional National Assembly, which was tasked with choosing a president, prime minister, and a cabinet. Additionally, the transitional Assembly was to draft Iraq's new constitution by a deadline of August 15, 2005.

In protest of the US occupation, Sunni Arab leaders boycotted the elections and hence forfeited their influence over the drafting process. As a result, Sunni Arabs won only 17 transitional Assembly seats, and Iraq's Shi'i and Kurdish leadership held the most senior government positions.[43]

A drafting committee was formed on May 10, and Sunni Arabs represented only two of the fifty-five seats. Two months after deliberations had already begun, fifteen additional Sunni Arabs were placed on the committee to fortify their community's interests. The Sunni Arab representatives were unable to successfully push a viable Sunni Arab agenda because their abrupt invitation left them unprepared for the committee, which had already agreed upon a large portion of the constitution.[44] On the other hand, Kurdish negotiators had previously developed firm stances and redlines that bolstered their position, and the Shi'i team also possessed resources that favored its position.[45] According to Zibaydi, a member of the drafting committee:

> *So the new Sunni representatives came to the drafting of the constitution after the constitution had actually been written by some 85 percent of its participants. I was there amongst those [appointed] to be in that group. When we came, all the bases of the constitution that we have today and all the factors that are creating all these problems were already drafted. We weren't actually meant to do anything about those. We were only meant to be a decoration on the committee so they could say, 'well this constitution was drafted by a committee made up of all elements of Iraqi society.'*

From the start, Sunni Arab negotiators held little influence on the committee. Furthermore, rather than use the committee setting, Shi'i and Kurdish political leaders soon relocated negotiations of the most entrenched issues to their homes or party offices, often with the active facilitation of the US Ambassador Zalmay Khalizad, and regularly failed to invite Sunni Arab members.[46]

Eager to use the new constitution as an example of its success in an increasingly unpopular conflict, the US applied continuous pressure on the drafting of the "democratic" document, which further de-legitimized the process among the Sunni Arab population.

The US removed the drafting responsibility from the committee's constitutional experts and put it in the hands of Iraq's Kurdish and Shi'i elite after it realized that the committee would not successfully meet its deadline. When the constitutional negotiations resumed, they were held privately between Shi'i and Kurdish political leadership in what the media dubbed the "Leadership Council." The US ambassador attended most meetings, while Sunni Arab leadership was denied attendance.[47]

43. U.S. Library of Congress, CRS, Iraq: Politics, Elections, and Benchmarks, by Kenneth Katzmann, CRS Report RS21968 (Washington, DC: Office of Congressional Information and Publishing, January 2, 2009): 1.
44. Dr. Yahya Alkubaisi, Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, Dr. Haider Saeed, and Dr. Sadoun al-Zibaydi, roundtable discussion with the author, Iraqi Center for Strategic Studies, Amman, January 15, 2015.
45. Jonathan Morrow, "Deconstituting Mesopotamia: Cutting a Deal on the Regionalization of Iraq," in Framing the State in Times of Transition, ed. Laurel E. Miller and Louis Aucoin (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 2010): 577.
46. Joost R. Hiltermann, "Elections and Constitution Writing in Iraq, 2005," European Institute of the Mediterranean (2006): 39, accessed February 22, 2015, http://www.iemed.org/anuari/2006/aarticles/aHiltermann.pdf.
47. Morrow, "Deconstituting," 574.

Left out of the negotiations, many Sunnis saw the exercise as a US conspiracy designed to disenfranchise them. There were so few Arabs in attendance that a number of meetings were conducted in Farsi rather than Arabic.[48] Many of Iraq's Shi'i politicians at the time had lived in Iran, as either refugees or exiles during Saddam's reign and were seen as puppets of Tehran. The scenario added to a widespread belief that, according to Maizan, "the US occupied Iraq and gave it to Iran," which exacerbated a fear of Iranian influence on Iraqi politics and severely decreased the constitution's legitimacy among the Sunni Arab community.

The US' timeline undermined the efforts of the UN and its constitutional experts to help create a realistic Sunni Arab agenda for the committee. A UN federalist model was accepted by all parties but rejected by the US due to concerns about the wealth sharing provisions on natural resources, i.e. oil. The UN also spent time selling the value of a federalist system to the Sunnis—who, as nationalists, misunderstood federalism as synonymous to partition—but ran out of time.[49]

In a push to finalize the constitution, the US began to blatantly influence the drafting process. The US embassy even went so far as to release its own draft in English in order to push US views on key issues. An overt presence of US officials at National Assembly meetings further fueled Sunni Arab suspicions that the constitution was a product of outside forces.[50]

Sunni Arabs voted in great numbers against the constitution in the October referendum. In accordance with the TAL, the constitution would not be enacted if three governorates voted against it by a two-thirds margin. Iraq's three Sunni Arab-majority provinces voted against the referendum in large numbers; however, according to the UN's official count, only 62 percent voted against the referendum in Nineveh Province, and they failed to reach the margin by four percent. Following US meddling throughout the drafting process and a time table driven by Washington politics, those opposed to the results immediately questioned the legitimacy of the referendum and suspected that it was rigged to hasten a democratic victory for the US.[51] Hindawi, former chief of Iraq's election management body, explains the problems behind the constitutional drafting process further:

> *[Like] I said, three governorates voted against it. Even if you say 51 percent, that is the majority against it. But we know in Anbar it was 90 percent, [in] Saladin it was 83-85 percent. So they [the Sunnis] tried to make many contributions to the constitution, but they were never recognized. There was always a veto from the Kurds or from the Shi'a. The constitution is a source of the problems.*

A lack of faith in the referendum process delegitimized the central government among the Sunni Arab community. The appointment of Nouri al-Maliki as Prime Minister exacerbated feelings of resentment among the Sunni Arab community, especially in Nineveh Province, home to Mosul, the largest Sunni Arab majority city in Iraq, which, at least initially, seemed to accept IS upon its reemergence in 2014.

II. Maliki, Madness, and Mosul

Following the 2006 appointment of Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, the Iraqi people remained embroiled in a sectarian straitjacket from which they have been unable to escape. This chapter argues that, particularly in Maliki's second term, sectarian policies exacerbated tensions between the central government and the Sunni Arab community. Additionally, it analyzes the many layers of dissent, unrest, and violence that were present in Iraq leading up to the Islamic State's [IS] capture of Mosul on June 10, 2014.

Malevolent Maliki

Following the Sunni Arabs' 2005 constitutional debacle, matters worsened when Maliki, a Shi'i with close ties to Iran, took office the following year. Iraq is a country whose people have witnessed ten successful coup d'états and an unknown number of failed attempts since 1936.[52] According to Edward Luttwak, a historian and former special national security advisor to President Reagan, "A coup consists of the infiltration of a small but critical segment of the state apparatus, which is then used to displace the government from its control of the remainder."[53]

48. Ibid, 575.
49. Ibid, 579-80.
50. Ibid, 581.
51. Dr. Hussain Hindawi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 13, 2015.
52. U. Dann, "Review," Middle Eastern Studies 9, no. 2 (1973): 244.
53. Edward Luttwak, Coup D'etat: A Practical Handbook,

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei with Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki in Tehran on Oct. 18, 2010.

Fearful of losing power to an increasingly restless Sunni Arab population, Maliki targeted Sunni politicians and used military force to break up the widespread protests that ensued. Furthermore, Maliki dissolved the predominately-Sunni Sahwa system that was so successful in combatting al-Qaeda in Iraq [AQI], and empowered Shi'i militias that have been suspected of war crimes against Sunni communities. The resentment that resulted from these actions pushed Iraq's Sunni Arab community to the brink.

During Maliki's second term, the Obama administration began preparations for a hasty withdrawal from Iraq. In doing so, the State Department focused less and less on its diplomatic role and handed the chore of state building off to the US military. According to then-US Ambassador to Iraq Christopher Hill, "Iraq, so the thinking went, was someone else's problem— especially the military's […] In the end it was increasingly clear that Iraq remained the military's problem, not the State Department's."[54] Prime Minister Maliki took advantage of this minimal political oversight and slowly consolidated power in order to mitigate the risk of a coup d'état. The Sunni Arab community interpreted Maliki's actions as an attempt to marginalize them further.

In the course of Maliki's tenure, Iraqi security forces transformed from being a 55 percent Shi'a and 45 percent Sunni force to 95 percent Shi'a.[55] In 2009, Maliki disbanded The Awakening Councils, commonly known as the Sons of Iraq, in order to deny it legitimacy as a military force.[56] Comprised of 100,000 fighters, almost entirely from Sunni tribes, the Sons of Iraq fought alongside US forces during the Sahwa and all but eliminated AQI in western Iraq. The tribes did so under an agreement that they would receive pay, reconstruction contracts, and political representation in Baghdad in return.[57] However, according to Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, "Unfortunately [the] Maliki government never took the American[s'] advice. Instead of running the Awakening system, they destroyed it and they killed some of their leaders - they executed them."[58] Not only did Maliki disregard this agreement, he also branded many within the anti-Qaeda movement as terrorists and targeted its leadership.[59] These actions undoubtedly stoked Sunni Arab resentment towards the central government that led to a call for change in Baghdad and eventually a pragmatic partnership with IS, whom the Sahwa had recently fought in the form of AQI. Although the tribes were at odds with IS ideologically, they found a mutual enemy in Maliki and his government.

December Madness[60]

As sectarian tensions rapidly neared the boiling point, the situation in Iraq continued to deteriorate. In what Dr. Humam Misconi describes as "December madness," Maliki targeted what little political representation the Sunni Arab community had left after the ratification of the 2005 constitution. Following the US withdrawal from Iraq in December 2011, Maliki ordered the arrest of Sunni majority leader and Iraqi Vice President Tariq al-Hashemi on terrorism charges and sentenced him to death in absentia.[61] The following December, Iraqi Finance Minister Rafi al-Issawi, a Sunni, resigned after

paperback ed. (Harvard University Press, 1968), 27.
54. Christopher R. Hill, "How the Obama Administration Ignored Iraq," POLITICO Magazine, October 2, 2014, accessed October 7, 2014, http://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2014/10/how-the-obama-administration-disowned-iraq-111565.html#.VU1LydNViko.
55. Bill Powell, "Sunni Tribes Will Bet on the Strong Horse, and That's Isis," Newsweek, December 11, 2014, accessed December 15, 2014, http://www.newsweek.com/2014/12/19/sunni-tribes-will-bet-strong-horse-and-thats-isis-290633.html.
56. Martin Chulov, "Iraq Disbands Sunni Militia That Helped Defeat Insurgents," The Guardian, April 1, 2009, accessed January 10, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/apr/02/iraq-sunni-militia-disbanded.
57. Robert Collins, "Inside the Rise of Isis: Losing Iraq," in FRONTLINE (Public Broadcasting Service, 2014).
58. Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, interview by the author, Amman, January 10, 2015.
59. Hawar Berwani, "Sahwa Official Arrested in Diala," Iraqi News, November 9, 2009, accessed March 3, 2015, http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/sahwa-official-arrested-in-diala/.
60. Dr. Humam Misconi, interview by the author, Berkeley, November 6, 2014.
61. Rania El Gamal, "Tension Rise as Iraq Seeks Sunni Vp Arrest," Reuters, December 19, 2011, accessed February 20, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/12/19/us-iraq-politics-hashemi-idUSTRE7BI1E020111219.

security forces raided his office and his bodyguards were arrested on terrorism-linked charges. Misconi comments, "Maliki has some kind of December madness. He gets mad every December. Each December he creates a problem, you know. […] This is becoming a sequence; it's not a one or two time event. Each December there is a problem."[62]

Triggered by Issawi's resignation, anti-government demonstrations began in Fallujah, the heart of Anbar and Sunni resistance.[63] The protests were the culmination of nearly nine years of perceived discrimination of Sunni Arabs by the post-2003 governments. Saddam Hussein's personal translator and former Ba'athist, Dr. Sadoun Al-Zibaydi, elaborates:

> *So this sense of segregation on the Sunnis, year after year, and the injustices practiced through these years are being done through the constitution. So today we have the notion that if you don't apply the constitution you're an unlawful leader. This accumulation of a sense of injustice developing and simmering inside the Sunni community was actually such that when the former minister of finance Dr. Issawi was subjected to a very strange approach by Prime Minister Maliki when his offices were ransacked and he resigned. That moment was the trigger of a new development of peaceful protests, which continued for a whole year, demanding civil rights for the whole Sunni community, especially in the Anbar area.*

Initially peaceful, the sit-ins brought many different layers of Sunni opposition together under a common cause: reverse the status quo. In a YouTube video of a rally in Fallujah, several al-Qaeda flags were flown among the crowd.[64] Although protest organizers released statements distancing themselves from extreme sentiments, calls for a violent overthrow of the government were widespread. In a video released by the Naqshbandi Army, Saddam's former vice chairman and current Ba'ath Party leader, Izzat Ibrahim ad-Douri, purportedly proclaimed, "The people of Iraq and all its nationalist and Islamic forces support you until the realization of your just demands for the fall of the [Maliki-Iran] alliance."[65] Widespread resentment and a tense sectarian climate offered insurgency groups an opportunity to spread their influence among protestors. The appearance of both Islamist and nationalist sentiments together at demonstrations across Anbar was a precursor for the loose alliances between IS and Iraq's various Sunni militant groups in 2014.

Consequently, the central government also used the widespread protests to demonize its opponents. Although it was the result of engrained resentment toward a discriminatory system, Maliki interpreted the demonstrations as a spillover from the Syrian conflict. Calling the Sunni opposition "blood mongers who embrace sectarianism and terrorism,"[66] Maliki attempted to quell the now large-scale sit-ins with military force. Zibaydi elaborates:

> *The peaceful civil protests that were going on in the Anbar area were dealt with by Prime Minister Maliki by force and he refused to deal with that situation in a peaceful manner. [sic] So he came to disband those protests by force. He brought in forces and they began attacking those demonstrators— sit-ins, we weren't really demonstrating, we were sitting in to protest the mistreatment of the government in their communities. So he wanted to break up those sit-ins by bringing in the forces.*

In the town of Hawija alone, 50 protestors were killed and over 100 wounded by a military crackdown.[67] This was the tipping point for Iraq's Sunni Arab opposition. Tribal leaders that sought a peaceful solution with Maliki abandoned diplomacy after the 'Hawija massacre' as IS sounded a call to arms.

Maliki's policies thus led to a general feeling of discontent among Iraq's Sunni population, particularly

62. Dr. Humam Misconi, interview by the author, Berkeley, November 6, 2014.
63. Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Behind the Iraq Protests," The American Spectator, April 18, 2013, accessed November 7, 2014, http://spectator.org/articles/55742/behind-iraq-protests.
64. "Fallujah 04/05/2013," YouTube video, 4:39, posted by "Ahmed Ali," April 5, 2013, https://youtu.be/MZ1NJtoB4cI.
65. "Statement military spokesman for the Army men Naqshbandi 04/21/2013," YouTube video, 7:25, posted by "IraqNewsTv," April 21, 2013, https://youtu.be/H6FUG7XcVlM.
66. Omar al-Jaffal, "Maliki Furious over Jordan-Hosted Sunni Opposition Conference," trans. Kamal Fayad, Al-Monitor, July 27, 2014, accessed January 12, 2015, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/07/opposition-coonference-maliki-jordan.html.
67. Mushreq Abbas, "Iraq: Who Is to Blame for the Hawija Violence?," trans. Kamal Fayad, Al Monitor, April 25, 2013, accessed December 10, 2014, http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/

in Mosul. Once Maliki cracked down on sit-ins, IS saw this as their opportunity to take advantage of the situation and rally support from many within the Sunni Arab community.

Pro-Government Militias

Sanctioned by the central government, whether directly or indirectly, Shi'i militia attacks on and mass killings of Sunni civilians increased dramatically in 2014. When bodies of executed Sunni men were discovered, often en masse, they shared one similarity: a gunshot wound to the back of the head. On April 30, Maliki was reelected as prime minister of Iraq. Two weeks prior, at least 48 Sunni men were killed in the villages surrounding Baghdad known as the 'Baghdad Belt.' A doctor with the Iraqi Health Ministry reported to Human Rights Watch [HRW] that Asa'ib, a Shi'i militia, was attempting to cleanse the Belt of Sunni Arabs.[68] On June 11, one day after IS captured Mosul, witnesses told HRW that armed men dressed as civilians reportedly kidnapped around 120 people from a market near Hilla. "One said he witnessed them segregating Shi'is from Sunnis, and witnessed the kidnappers, who he called Asa'ib, torturing some of the detainees. We also tried talking to the division commander and police chief and some tribal leaders met those two to ask them to intervene and work on releasing them, but they refused to do anything."[69] Less than a month later, 53 bodies, all Sunni, were discovered in a ditch nearby.[70]

In Mosul, any movement around the city was restricted due to the central government's enforcement of numerous security checkpoints and restrictions. In contrast, Dora, a predominately Sunni neighborhood in Baghdad that saw particularly high levels of sectarian violence during the civil war, Asa'ib functioned relatively unimpeded. The fact that armed, masked men in unmarked vehicles operated in and out of areas controlled by similar checkpoints suggests government cooperation or sanction of militia activities. In an interview with HRW, a Dora resident and government employee explains, "Militias are taking people, but obviously they're doing it with the blessing of the security forces. There is only one exit and one entrance to this neighborhood and they are both manned by federal police checkpoints. How could trucks full of armed men with their faces covered come in and out without the police knowing?"[71] In addition to turning a blind eye to Shi'i militias, Iraqi security forces also bred resentment among the civilian population of Mosul with an overbearing presence that resembled life under the US occupation. IS acted on these events to take advantage of the sectarian nature of the tensions. In Mosul, a Sunni Arab majority city in Nineveh Province, a history of corruption and restrictions under the Maliki government led to general support of IS after it drove Iraqi security forces from the city.

Mosul

The city of Mosul played a crucial role in IS' emergence. Prior to June 2014, the 3rd Federal Police Division managed the city with a level of corruption that fostered resentment among the residents of Mosul. When faced with the option of continuing a life under occupation-like conditions or supporting the group that ran their oppressors out of town, many Sunni Arabs chose the latter. According to Alwindawi, there was a widespread notion among the Sunni Arab community that "this wolf is better than this crocodile."[72]

The Shi'a-dominant national police unit in charge of Mosul was lead by Lieutenant General Mahdi al-Gharawi. An accused war criminal, his reassignment was a controversial one. Prior to being named commander of Mosul, Iraq's largest city with a Sunni Arab majority, Gharawi was implicated in torture in Baghdad from 2005-2006.[73] The fact that Maliki appointed an accused war criminal in charge of Mosul undoubtedly reinforced arguments that the central government held little concern for the Sunni Arab community.

Accounts of abuse by the security forces in Mosul are longstanding. Dr. Humam Misconi received reports from family and colleagues residing in the city of mistreatment by the Iraqi security forces dating back to March 2009. He recalls:

68. "Iraq: Pro-Government Militias' Trail of Death," Human Rights Watch, July 31, 2014, accessed March 7, 2015, http://www.hrw.org/news/2014/07/31/iraq-pro-government-militias-trail-death.
69. Ibid.
70. Ibid.
71. Ibid.
72. Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, interview by the author, Amman, January 10, 2015.
73. "Iraq: Abusive Commander Linked to Mosul Killings," Human Rights Watch, June 11, 2013, accessed March 3, 2015, http://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/11/iraq-abusive-commander-linked-mosul-killings.


ISIS using children for propaganda and training

> *The last time I went to Mosul—unfortunately on a mission—everybody was complaining. Everybody I know from different sects and ethnic groups, they were all complaining from the mistreatment and humiliation and oppression by the Iraqi security forces […] and this goes [up] to the commander level. Gharawi, for example, was commander of the 3rd Federal Police Division. Everybody was complaining about him. You can't open up a business without paying him fees. You can't transport, for example, construction material. No truck can go through one way or the other, so people were fed up. So what happened when ISIS came there was some kind of public relief that happened [sic].*[74]

These abuses of power were an extension of Maliki's sectarian agenda under the guise of security and part of the response-by-force to Sunni protests. With every facet of life controlled by the national police, residents of Mosul became frustrated. Dr. Atheel Nujaifi, governor of Mosul, discusses his city under the authority of Gharawi:

> *For daily life there is a problem because the army and police are distributed everywhere in the city and they have checkpoints everywhere inside the city. […] This situation made the people of Mosul angry; they think they cannot do an ordinary life. The police interfered with every detail in life under the umbrella of security. […] And every check [point] there is corruption inside it. In the last month [June 2014], the police closed all of the businesses inside the city, and if people want to open their own place they have to pay the police. So for people inside Mosul, there is a life, but it's not much of a life and the people were angry about what they see there.*[75]

These feelings of resentment primed the city of Mosul's Sunni Arab population for IS' seizure of the city from Iraqi security forces in June 2014.

Life in Mosul quickly returned to normalcy under IS' authority following the retreat of the Iraqi security forces. This strengthened the support for IS among many of the city's Sunni Arab residents, and their relationship with IS entered into a brief honeymoon phase. Immediately following the capture of Mosul, during the last three weeks of June, IS refrained from enacting its rule of law and allowed life to carry on unimpeded. The most significant change enacted by IS was the dissolution of all checkpoints and other means of occupation. Dr. Hussain Hindawi recounts his friend's thoughts, "He was happy. […] When IS took Nineveh, the first thing they did was take down the t-walls and cancel all of the checkpoints. The people were very happy because there were no more checkpoints, no police."[76] IS' expansion and the consequential lack of travel restrictions also improved movement to and from the area. Alwindawi confirms that, "Before June, when IS took over Iraq, the travelling from Nineveh to Amman [took] 13 hours. When IS took over, it went down to seven hours. How? Because there is [sic] no more Iraqi military army checkpoints. We are free. Since you leave, you will reach. No one

74. Dr. Humam Misconi, interview by the author, Berkeley, November 6, 2014.

75. Dr. Atheel al-Nujaifi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 13, 2015.

76. Dr. Hussain Hindawi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 12, 2015.

will stop you. Also, you are not forced to pay bribes."[77]

Additionally, public services returned to Mosul almost immediately after IS gained control of the city on June 10, 2014. Scant resistance from security forces resulted in a relatively undamaged city and thus a quick restoration of services. A photograph posted to Twitter on June 12 shows cars lined up and a crowd gathered next to seven fuel trucks.[78] Fuel was an important resource because the central government still controlled the city's electricity supply and generators were needed to power homes. Street cleaning services also returned to the city, which further improved the situation. Another photograph posted on Twitter on June 12 shows garbage collectors cleaning the streets of Mosul.[79] IS demonstrated moderation during the early stages of its reemergence because it was initially dependent on local support from within the Sunni Arab community, many of whom were forced to choose between the lesser of two evils and did not subscribe to IS' ideology.

III. The Syrian Connection

The Syrian government and the Islamic State [IS] mutually benefitted from each other's presence following IS' 2013 emergence in Syria. Coupled with this accommodation, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's history with al-Qaeda in Iraq [AQI] suggests a partnership between the two; however, there is no evidence of an active modus vivendi between the Syrian government and IS. The Syrian regime has been on the US Department of State's list of "state sponsors of terror" since 1979, making it the longest-standing member in history.[80] President Assad, the head of the Syrian regime since 2000, had maintained a relationship with IS dating back to 2003. These ties originated with the Syrian government's aid to AQI and its insurgency during the American occupation of Iraq. From the earliest days of the US invasion of Iraq, Syria was a rallying point for foreign fighters, mostly from the Arab world and Chechnya, and a safe haven for fighters in need of respite from the conflict.[81] These earlier ties suggest that a modus vivendi formed between the Syrian government and IS after it moved into Syria in 2013;[82] however, the frequency and locations of Syrian military clashes shows that it lacked the means to effectively confront IS unless in self-defense.

Although a large number of IS' early advocates in Iraq were marginalized locals who chose the only alternative to an oppressive government, the same experience does not hold true in Syria. In Iraq, IS capitalized on the Sunni Arab protests and the sectarian atmosphere attributed to the actions of AQI and Maliki. On the other hand, in Syria, IS appeared two years after similar protests escalated into a sectarian civil war that already included effective resistance forces. Furthermore, IS began primarily as a local resistance movement in Iraq, contrary to it being established by foreign fighters in Syria. Unlike its experience in Iraq, IS was immediately at odds with local Syrian opposition groups—both secular and Islamist— following its emergence.

In contrast to Iraq, where IS swept through and firmly secured territory with little resistance, well-established opposition forces stiffly resisted IS operations in Syria because of its refusal to share power with other groups. In several instances, these opposition groups banded together and formed a unified resistance front against IS advances, further differentiating the acceptance of IS among Sunni Arab communities in Iraq and Syria. In one of its first major offenses in Syria, IS attempted to attain complete control of Dayr az-Zawr governorate because of its critical oil and gas resources, which generated an estimated $50 million per month on the black market. Controlled by JAN and Harakat Ahrar al-Sham, two prominent opposition groups, it took fierce fighting and several attempts before IS took control of the Conoco-Philips and al-Jafra oil fields in March 2014. The victory was not outright, however, as IS lost and regained territory across the governorate several

77. Dr. Mouayad Alwindawi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 10, 2015.
78. Aymenn Al-Tamimi, Twitter post, June 12, 2014, 5:23 p.m., http://twitter.com/ajaltamimi.
79. Aymenn Al-Tamimi, Twitter post, June 12, 2014, 3:02 a.m., http://twitter.com/ajaltamimi.
80. "State Sponsors of Terrorism," U.S. Department of State, accessed February 10, 2015, http://go.usa.gov/32VHW.
81. Waleed al-Rawi and Sterling Jensen, "Syria's Salafi Networks," PRISM 4 (2014): 46.
82. In 2011, Baghdadi sent several men into Syria to establish a new opposition group. The men established Jabhat al-Nusra [JAN], which quickly became a formidable force that was well respected by locals. In April 2013, Baghdadi announced that ISI had expanded into Syria as ISIS and acquired JAN. Zawahiri condemned the move and ordered IS' return to Iraq. Baghdadi refused to adhere to the Sykes Picot border (In a Twitter post on June 9, 2014, an IS account (@albaraka_news) posted a picture of IS militants symbolically bulldozing through the border of Iraq and Syria.) and split from Qaeda, remaining in Syria. This refutes claims that IS advanced from Syria into Iraq in the summer of 2014.

times over the following four months.[83] Additionally, as IS pushed west towards Aleppo, it was confronted by an alliance of at least six prominent opposition groups, including JAN and the Free Syrian Army [FSA].[84]

IS' emergence in Syria is further differentiated from Iraq due to its lack of tribal support. In eastern Syria, a number of tribes remained uninvolved with IS because it was led by Iraqis and therefore seen as a foreign force. In contrast to Syrian opposition forces, which were primarily defending their neighborhoods, IS encroached on Syria in order to benefit from the instability and attain territory. On July 30, 2014, members of the al-Shaetat tribe revolted against IS in Dayr az-Zawr and were brutally quelled by IS forces. Consequently, IS realized the threat of tribal resistance and responded with the massacre of roughly 800 men from the al-Shaetat tribe.[85] As a result, IS quickly became the enemy of a large number of Syrian opposition groups, which were also enemies of the Syrian government.

2003-2007: Syria's Support of AQI

Bashar al-Assad has both actively and passively supported terrorist organizations since 2003. Following the US invasion of Iraq, Syria became a strategic center for AQI insurgency operations in order to advance Syrian interests in Iraq. Although it is difficult to clearly differentiate between individual ventures and government assistance, the capacity of crossborder activity and logistical assistance to the anti-American insurrection indicates Syrian government complicity.

In October 2007, US troops confiscated a set of documents from a town on the border between Iraq and Syria. Known as the Sinjar records, these papers identified a Syrian network that enabled and financed AQI's insurgency operations.[86] According to these records, at least 700 foreign fighters used the Syrian border to enter Iraq from August 2006 to 2007. Furthermore, the US Department of Treasury identified the Abu Agadiyah network as the organizer of equipment and personnel flows across the Syrian border to AQI. Overseen by Badran Turki Hisham al-Mazidih, also known as Abu Ghadiyah, the system "obtained false passports for foreign terrorists, provided passports, weapons, guides, safe houses, and allowances to foreign terrorists in Syria and those preparing to cross the border into Iraq."[87]

It is hard to explain how such a large and extensive network could exist under the nose of an authoritarian regime such as Assad's, yet according to Dr. Hussain Hindawi, "When Assad was strong and established they [the Syrian government] opened up the entire border for the terrorists. Not only that, they also offered training, financing, everything."[88] With close ties to Iran, which vied for influence over Iraq following the ouster of Sunni power, the Syrian government had every reason to support the anti-American insurgency before a Shi'i government was established in Baghdad.

US troops confiscated numerous Syrian passports that were issued to foreign fighters and had entry stamps citing "volunteer for jihad."

In several instances, the Syrian government aided insurgent networks. For example, US troops confiscated numerous Syrian passports that were issued to foreign fighters and had entry stamps citing "volunteer for jihad."[89] According to US Ambassador to Syria Theodore Khattouf, a foreign jihadist recruiting station was established in Damascus directly across the street from the US embassy.[90] The establishment of safe houses and support given fighters in transit to and from Iraq undoubtedly had a positive effect on the local economy.

83. "Syria Countrywide Conflict Report #4," (The Carter Center, 2014): 6.
84. Ibid, 8.
85. Ibid, 7.
86. Joseph and Brian Fishman Felter, "Al-Qa'ida's Foreign Fighters in Iraq: A First Look at the Sinjar Records," (West Point: Combating Terrorism Center, 2007).
87. "Treasury Designates Members of Abu Ghadiyah's Network Facilitates Flow of Terrorists, Weapons, and Money from Syria to Al Qaida in Iraq," U.S. Department of the Treasury, February 28 2008.
88. Dr. Hussain Hindawi, interview by the author, Erbil, January 13, 2015.
89. Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, "Prepared Statement for the Senate Armed Services Committee: Helping Win the War on Terror," ed. Department of Defense (Washington D.C.2003).
90. David Schenker, testimony in Francis Gates, et al. v. Syrian Arab Republic, et al., U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Civil Action No. 06-1500 (RMC), Sept. 2008.

Communications between al-Qaeda leadership shows that the AQI branch received substantial financial support from outside al-Qaeda's global financial network in order to fund its insurgency. In July 2005, Ayman al-Zawahiri, al-Qaeda's then operational commander, wrote a letter to AQI leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi that asked for approximately US$100,000 in assistance.[91] Al-Qaeda is an organization whose funding is dependent on an international network of donors, so IS' present-day ability to self-fund sets it apart from its predecessor. The fact that al-Qaeda's central command needed financial assistance from one of its affiliates, long before AQI became IS and acquired the means to generate income, suggests that AQI was the beneficiary of large monetary donations, likely from its closest ally, the Syrian government. This history between Bashar al-Assad and AQI is a key to understanding why Assad supported Islamist opposition groups during the Syrian civil war.

The Arab Spring and an Attempt to De-Legitimize the Opposition

President Bashar al-Assad rekindled ties with and supported the radicalization of Salafi groups in Syria following the start of the Syrian Civil War in order to undermine the opposition forces and ultimately benefit from their fractured coalition and infighting. The conflicts that allowed IS' emergence in Iraq and Syria were similar in the fact that they were born of marginalization and political unrest; however, the circumstances surrounding IS' establishment in Syria are unique. While Maliki's political decisions inadvertently bolstered IS in Iraq, Assad accommodated Salafi groups within Syria in an attempt to undermine the opposition and support his narrative on the uprising as a foreign-backed terrorist plot against Syria.[92]

The emergence of IS in Syria and its subsequent rivalry with JAN provided relief to the Syrian government because it sparked infighting among the opposition forces and weakened the united front against the central government. According to various reports, Assad financed both IS and JAN through the support of smuggling networks that allowed the two organizations to sell resources from captured oil and gas fields in eastern Syria.[93]

"Prior to this IS offensive, the Syrian government had directed over 90% of all air raids against opposition positions... [Syrian government] left the IS relatively unchecked at its core, and have allowed IS forces to advance against opposition positions in the north of Aleppo."

Although Assad and IS mutually benefitted from each other's military operations, there was no specific modus vivendi between the two. Any perceived collaborations were strategic military decisions on the part of the regime to engage the most immediate threats. For a period of time between its divorce from al-Qaeda and its 2014 summer offensive, IS almost exclusively engaged in hostilities against a coalition of anti-government forces. During this time, the Assad regime primarily confronted IS in self-defense and focused operations against other resistance groups. As a result, IS was left relatively free to seize territory and establish a proto-state in eastern Syria. A report by The Carter Center explains, "Prior to this IS offensive, the Syrian government had directed over 90% of all air raids against opposition positions. As the IS advances, government forces have hit back when their forces were threatened, but have left the IS relatively unchecked at its core, and have allowed IS forces to advance against opposition positions in the north of Aleppo."[94] Although the Syrian military allowed IS to gain a foothold in eastern Syria, this does not prove the existence of a partnership between the two actors.

The limited engagements between the Syrian government and IS are often used as evidence of a modus vivendi. They can also be explained by the

91. Ayman al-Zawahiri to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, July 9, 2005, Combatting Terrorism Center at West Point.
92. Bashar al-Assad, Opera House in Damascus speech, January 6, 2013, quoted in Maya Shwayder, "Bashar Al-Assad's Speech On Syrian Crisis (FULL-TEXT), International Business Times, January 7, 2013, accessed March 1, 2015, http://www.ibtimes.com/bashar-al-assadsspeech-syrian-crisis-full-text-998536.
93. See United Nations Security Council, Monitoring Team's report on the threat posed by ISIL and AFN (2014), 20; Ruth Sherlock and Richard Spencer, "Syria's Assad accused of boosting al-Qaeda with secret oil deals," The Telegraph, January 20, 2014, accessed September 12, 2014, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/syria/10585391/Syrias-Assad-accusedof-boosting-al-Qaeda-with-secret-oil-deals.html.
94. "Report #4," 25.

location of IS' command center. Located in eastern Syria, IS' core was far from Damascus, Aleppo, and other locations critical to Assad's survival. With government forces spread across a wide region, it is likely that IS benefitted from receiving few air strikes because the government forces consolidated their resources in areas that posed the most imminent threat, such as Aleppo. Aleppo and Minnakh Airbase to the north were of significant importance to the Assad regime because they secured resupply to troops in remote areas and also cut off routes into Raqqa, IS' de facto capital.[95] The Syrian army lacked the ground troops needed to retake IS territory, which was over 100 miles from the frontlines. Why focus limited assets on areas that were not immediately threatening to regime survival?

ISIS militants

In April 2014, several opposition forces launched operations on four different fronts in an attempt to capture Aleppo. That same month witnessed a dramatic increase in the number of barrel bomb attacks by Assad's forces, and opposition forces in Aleppo were targeted more than 100 times per month throughout the summer.[96] The Syrian military's resources were allotted for strategic objectives and defense. When opposition forces mobilized in areas deemed crucial to regime survival such as Aleppo, engagements with the Syrian military rose. This explains why the regime seldom engaged IS until it increased its attacks on IS positions after IS began its push west.

Conclusion:

The Islamic State [IS] did not appear in Iraq or Syria overnight. Rather, IS is the product of a destabilized region and its attendant politics that can be traced back to the 2003 US invasion of Iraq. A series of subsequent hasty decisions and policies by the US, the Sunni Arab leadership, and Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki caused the disenfranchisement of Iraq's Sunni Arab community and led to a breakdown in its relations with the central government. Meanwhile, in Syria, a brutal civil war set the conditions for IS to establish a base from which to invade Iraq with the help of local Iraqi tribes and insurgency groups, including the Ba'athist-led Naqshabandi Army.

This study contributes to the collective understanding of the pragmatic currents behind the emergence of IS and to the field of radical non-state actors that is often unaddressed by other approaches. Academic studies of IS are limited; instead of focusing on why local actors supported IS' emergence in Iraq, studies are dictated by policy agendas rather than scholarly inquiry. For example, Ahmed S. Hashim's "From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate"[97] connects IS' roots to al-Qaeda. Although this research is important, it fails to address the multi-dimensional currents of IS' local success. Not a single study to date examines the social, political, and economic drivers behind IS' meteoric rise. This is disconcerting and denotes a real problem in how the West confronts the region. Rather than recognize the Sunni Arab community's resentment towards a marginalizing central government, the focus tends to remain on IS' religious rhetoric and its ties to al-Qaeda. As Edward Said has noted, Western society tends to squarely lay the blame on "Islam" for problems in the Muslim world. Events of the recent past are undoubtedly weaved into this framework. Orientalism permeates scholarship and mainstream media alike and could not be more evident in reports and analysis of deadly attacks on Western targets – civilian and military – in the name of Islam.[98] While the ideological and theological underpinnings of IS are relevant, understanding the complex and pragmatic reasons why

95. Liam Durfee, Conor McCormick and Stella Peisch, "The Battle for Aleppo," Institute for the Study of War, June 13, 2013, accessed November 12, 2014, http://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/battle-aleppo.
96. "Report #4," 29.
97. Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Islamic State: From al-Qaeda Affiliate to Caliphate," Middle East Policy XXI, no. 4 (2014): 69-83, accessed April 20, 2015, http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/mepo.12096.
98. Edward W. Said, Covering Islam, Revised ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xii.

so many have joined or supported IS in Iraq and Syria allows for a more relevant discussion of the movement.

This paper challenges current understandings of the nature of IS supporters by attempting to differentiate pragmatists from those motivated by religious ideology. Religion undoubtedly plays a central role in IS' recruitment and support. I would argue that IS' religious influence increased following the establishment of the de facto Islamic State on June 29, 2014, which shifted focus from revolution and anti-government insurgency to state building, albeit under Islamic law.

This study firmly locates the emergence of IS in Iraq and Syria between March 2003 and August 2014. The atmosphere during this period was explicitly revolutionary, as the Sunni Arab community in both Iraq and Syria struggled to alleviate their marginalization by the central governments in Baghdad and Damascus. Nevertheless, I am acutely aware that religious and structural motivations cannot be completely separated. While a recruit may have lost his livelihood under the de-Ba'athification laws, it is possible that the idea of fighting under an Islamist flag ultimately led to his decision to join IS. Likewise, it is impossible to say that so-called lone wolf attackers in Europe who claim to follow IS are motivated solely by religious zealotry; in fact, it is possible that structural factors are the driving force behind their actions.

Looking Forward:

Moving forward, one important question must be addressed: What would be required to split IS pragmatists from ideologists, and solve the structural problems that undergird their activism? Or, what will it take for Iraq's Sunni Arab community to oust IS from their territory?

It is unlikely that IS will completely lose local support without Baghdad's acceptance of a semi-autonomous Sunni Arab region—or regions—as permitted by the 2005 constitution.[99] Dr. Najih al-Maizan, a leader of the Abu Rahman tribe, confirms, "We are seeking—demanding that the international community interfere and demand the Iraqi government to execute [sic] the constitution. The first article of it [sic] says that Iraq is a federal state. Also, Article 117, 118, 119, 120—all of these articles declare that every province has the right to set up autonomy for themselves."[100] In fact, Sunni Arab leadership began lobbying Congress for support of a new Sunni region as well as the US military's direct involvement with tribal leaders, rather than Baghdad, regarding anti-IS operations and security.

Tribal leaders remain reluctant to fight for the removal of IS from their territories. Tribal leaders like Maizan fear that, if they confront IS, Iranian-led Shi'i militias would immediately replace IS and punish the remaining population. He explains, "The people of Sunni areas are afraid of the [Shi'i] militias. If we fight and defeat Daesh, Shi'a [sic] militias will come to our area and occupy it and torture people, take their homes, and punish the Sunni people in their areas."[101] Furthermore, tribal leaders have not forgotten Malik's betrayal of the Awakening veterans and will not set themselves up for such duplicity a second time. A region with its own security forces would mitigate the fear among Sunni Arabs trapped within IS territory of being labeled terrorists after the defeat of IS. Also, it could ensure that, in the possibility of a second Sahwa movement, tribal leaders would not be criminalized once they are no longer crucial to the central government. The sense of security among the Sunni Arab community that would likely accompany the establishment of their own semi-autonomous region might be the only way to secure and stabilize Iraq's future.

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99. Iraq Constitution, sec. 5, art. 116-121.
100. Dr. Najih al-Maizan, interview by the author, trans. Mohammed Ayesh, Erbil, January 12, 2015.
101. Ibid.