



THE FIFTH ANNUAL

SULAIMANI FORUM

**BEYOND DAESH:
ENDING THE CYCLE OF CONFLICTS,
TOWARD DURABLE SOLUTIONS**

8-9 ^{MARCH} 2017





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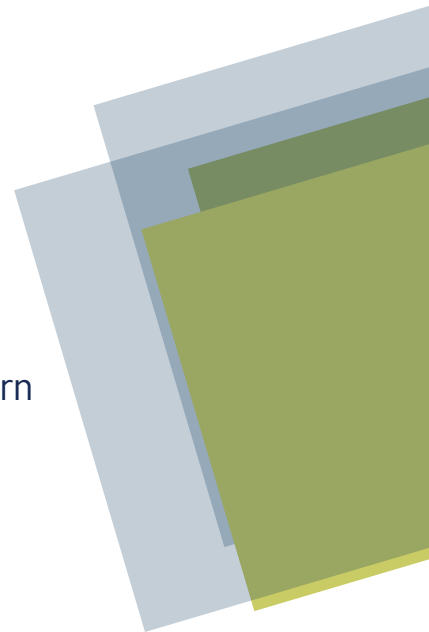
**BEYOND DAESH:
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AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF IRAQ, SULAIMANI
March 8 - 9, 2017

Proceedings

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AUIS Office of Communications





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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Sulaimani Forum was organized by IRIS Director Christine van den Toorn, Coordinator Sarah Mathieu-Comtois and Program Officer Bahra Lokman. The Forum would not have been possible without the efforts of the Communications, IT, Security, Facilities Management, Finance and Purchasing, and Student Services departments, as well as the AUIS student and staff volunteers. AUIS would also like to thank its President, Bruce Walker Ferguson, for his support, as well as all AUIS faculty. The support of Henri Barkey and Mina Al Oraibi, both members of the AUIS Board of Trustees, was essential in the planning, oversight, and implementation of the event. IRIS and AUIS greatly appreciate the support of our sponsors, listed on the first page of these proceedings. IRIS and AUIS sincerely appreciate the support of the security services of the Sulaimani Governorate, the Kurdistan Regional Government, the Sulaimani Asayesh, and the Sulaimani International Airport. AUIS would especially like to thank the office of the Prime Minister of the federal government of Iraq and the Kurdistan Regional Government, whose efforts greatly facilitated the organization of the Forum. Special thanks to Ranj Abdullah for his photography of the Forum.

Secularism of the state is not a Western idea; it is merely one that results from the adaptation of models of governance to evolving social realities.

Francis Fukuyama



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Institute of Regional and International Studies

The Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS) is an independent policy center based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Through multidisciplinary research, strategic partnerships, a fellowship program, and open dialogue events among experts and influential public leaders, IRIS examines the most complex issues facing the Kurdistan Region, Iraq, and the Middle East.

IRIS is housed at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), Iraq's first independent, not-for-profit, American-style institution of higher learning. IRIS's location offers academics, analysts, journalists and institutions access to areas of interest and a safe space in an otherwise unstable region, making it an attractive, unique partner and meeting place.

The Institute's main focus areas include but are not limited to: economic reform and good governance; U.S. policy in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region; IDP and refugee issues; minorities; and post-ISIS Iraq.



SULAIMANI FORUM

Now in its fifth year, the Sulaimani Forum is a high-level policy conference that explores issues facing the Middle East region, with a particular focus on Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. Over the course of two days, scholars, experts, and policymakers from around the world convene to discuss current trends, pressing challenges, and points of conflict in the Middle East. The Sulaimani Forum presents an annual opportunity to bring together the main stakeholders in regional affairs to hold intellectual, political and strategic debates of great relevance in today's world.

Held at the heart of the Middle East, the Sulaimani Forum is a unique space for innovative policy dialogue. Each year, it tackles both Iraq-specific security issues and pressing global questions, from a regional standpoint. It explores relations between the Middle East and "the west" as well as regional geopolitics. Participants, in this context, gather annually to identify avenues for change by challenging and rethinking established perspectives. The Sulaimani Forum's mission is to offer blueprints for concrete, long-term, positive change in the Middle East.



Executive Summary

With Iraqi, Kurdish and international security forces on the verge of defeating DAESH in western Mosul, the fifth annual Sulaimani Forum addressed the fundamental issues that breed extremism and conflict in Iraq and across the Middle East, and discussed durable solutions to move beyond radicalism. The Forum also considered the short-term security and humanitarian-sector challenges facing Iraq, including the plight of internally displaced persons (IDPs) that have fled fighting in Iraq over the past two-and-a-half years.

Discussing and debating the pressing short- and long-term challenges was a prestigious and diverse group of government leaders, international experts and respected commentators. The 2017 Sulaimani Forum was delighted to welcome H.E. Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who delivered the keynote address and graciously participated in an illuminating one-on-one interview with Mushreq Abbas (NRT Arabic). Other leaders,

including current and former ministers and senior officials from the federal government of Iraq, the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), the United States, the European Union (EU), the Republic of Turkey, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, the Republic of Egypt, and the Republic of Lebanon, as well as from the diplomatic community in Iraq, were present. Guests and participants also included representatives from the world of academia and research, led by Francis Fukuyama of Stanford University. Other organizations in attendance numbered the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), the Wilson Center, New America, the United States Institute for Peace (USIP), the European Council on Foreign Relations, the Strategic Studies Center (Moscow, Russia), the Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC), the National Endowment for Democracy



(NED), and the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). Correspondents from CNN, BBC, *Politico*, *Economist*, *New Yorker*, NPR, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *New York Times*, *Al Monitor*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *The Philadelphia Enquirer*, as well as all major Iraqi and Kurdish outlets also attended.

Over the course of two days of panels and conversations, participants readily acknowledged the core challenges facing the region. For decades, the Middle East has been plagued by repeated cycles of violence, while disputes over territory, resources and power have undermined regional stability and stymied economic growth and social development.

Speakers recognized that the horrors of DAESH merely embody the latest manifestation of this malaise, hampering states and societies of the region from meeting their full potential.

But with DAESH now losing ground, there was consensus that an opportunity exists for a new beginning. However, if Middle Eastern governments are to chart a different course, participants agreed that regional leaders will first need to address the fundamental issues that have encouraged extremism and driven violent conflict: poor governance, social inequity, widespread youth unemployment, political marginalization, and sub-par economic growth. Without leadership from within to solve

these problems, regional states will be unable to complete the move to the virtuous cycle that their populations deserve.

The 2017 Sulaimani Forum drew a number of key conclusions:

Post-DAESH Priorities

The territorial defeat of DAESH is in sight, which as H.E. Prime Minister Abadi pointed out, is due in part to the effective cooperation of Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and their Kurdish counterparts. But the bigger challenge, namely ensuring that it is not simply replaced by another more radical alternative, remains. Long-term stability demands that leaders address Iraq's and the Middle East region's fundamental problems of poor governance, corruption, unemployment, and stagnating economic growth.

Good governance is the key to ending the cycle of violence in the Middle East. Francis Fukuyama pointed to the need for both the building of functional institutions through which services can be delivered and the implementation of rule of law. Those two elements of modern political order, he argued, are more consequential – and more difficult to achieve – than elections and democracy. In addition, he emphasized the need to separate religion from politics.

Negotiating New Settlements

The war against DAESH represents an opportunity for actors in the region to find avenues for durable cooperation. It is also a

rare chance for the Iraqi state to rebuild itself as a more decentralized, yet more united, entity. To achieve this goal, increasing demands for autonomy, both in governance and defense terms, by Iraq's different communities should be acknowledged, and addressed through negotiation rather than force.

In this context, renewed dialogue between the federal government of Iraq and the KRG is both necessary and possible. H.E. Prime Minister Abadi highlighted the possibility of and need for renewed political dialogue between Erbil and Baghdad, a statement which many Kurdish leaders echoed. The Prime Minister's speech reflected on the unity that brought many battlefield victories, and looked forward to Iraq after DAESH.

The Humanitarian Challenge

The humanitarian crisis facing Iraq and the Kurdistan Region represents an emergency humanitarian crisis in the short term and, if not properly managed at the political, economic and social levels, a destabilizing factor in the long term. A lot of emphasis was placed on the need to "win the peace" once combat operations in Mosul were complete, as well as on the idea that aid should be framed as an investment in the future of Iraqis, and not merely as emergency relief. Efforts must be sustained to work towards reconstruction and reconciliation once areas have been stabilized. Success will require planning and coordination, which – as a number of

participants pointed out – are difficult to achieve due to the myriad actors involved. Similarly, the proper treatment of displaced populations, who might not be able to return quickly to their homes, will have an impact on inter-community relations and on prospects for long-term stability.

One example of the scale of the challenges ahead **is the dire plight of the Yezidi community** and other minorities in Iraq. Addressing this humanitarian disaster will require new governing and security mechanisms for protection, stability and harmony. There are still thousands of Yezidi women and children in DAESH captivity. Other displaced members of the Yezidi community still live in camps in the Kurdistan region or have been scattered across Europe, as of yet unable to return to their homes due to security concerns, new struggles for power, and lack of reconstruction. An eventual settlement that ensures long-term stability is likely to involve political autonomy for these minority communities, and greater representation in local and national security and administration structures.

The Role of International Powers

The Sulaimani Forum expressed a sense of uncertainty about the future role of the United States in Middle East under the Trump administration. However, analysts cautioned against anticipating a major shift in US foreign policy, claiming that drastic divergences in approach between the

Obama and Trump Administrations have been overstated.

Nevertheless, the solution to the Middle East's problems lies within. The role of international powers is important; but the key to long-term stability rests with regional states, which must come together to form a new political, economic, and security framework. This conclusion also applies to individual states, such as Iraq.

Employment and Higher Education

Creating new employment opportunities for the region's youthful population is a major challenge ahead. Preparing a qualified workforce should be the primary objective of higher education. Institutions need to collaborate with the private sector to develop curriculums that respond to the needs of the market.



Jill Derby

Chair, Board of Trustees, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani
Opening Remarks

Jill Derby, Chair of the Board of Trustees at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS) welcomed distinguished guests to the fifth annual Sulaimani Forum and began her speech by commending AUIS's commitment to providing a space for the open sharing of information and exchange of ideas by a diverse group of people. She discussed the significance of March 8 as International Women's Day, describing it as an international celebration of cultural and social achievements, as well as a call to action for women to unleash their potential both in Iraq and throughout the world. Finally, she noted that AUIS has become a place for women to develop their leadership skills and contribute to the country and surrounding region.



“

***AUIS is committed to providing a space
for diverse ideas and perspectives.***

”

Barham Salih

Founder and member of AUIS Board of Trustees

Opening Remarks

Barham Salih, founder of AUIS, followed up on Dr. Derby's speech by highlighting the importance of the University, especially in the midst of recent developments in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. He expressed his hope that AUIS continues evolving in its role as a center of knowledge, especially following the defeat of DAESH.

While numerous actors, including the Iraq Security Forces (ISF), the Peshmerga, and the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), are making progress in the fight against DAESH, the real question remains how to maintain peace after the terrorist group is defeated. Salih welcomed guests to the region, where he hoped attendees would be able to both discuss concerns, and celebrate victories and triumphs in Mosul. He asked the audience to think about ways of ending the cycle of violence and of sustainably countering extremism in the region. "It's time to explore options to keep the peace and ensure this does not happen again," he asserted.



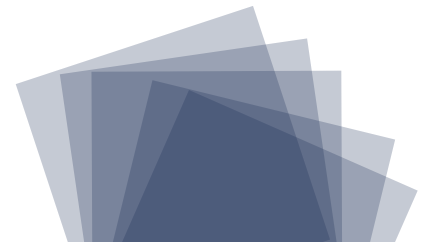
“

The Middle East does not have to be condemned to this cycle of violence forever [...] through this Forum, we want to help with the search for durable solutions for the future of this land.

”

Salih also shared an anecdote his mother used to tell him, in light of International Women's Day. Women, according to his mother, are not just the mothers of their own children, but also of the community. They are not only half of society; they are also the mothers of the other half. They safeguard the rights of the community, help prevent violence, and promote peace and security. Women's empowerment through economic development is key to combatting extremism and creating a peaceful society. In light of the fight against DAESH, it is especially important to keep focused on the human cost of war.

Salih concluded his speech by remarking on the 10th anniversary of AUIS and thanking the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the federal government of Iraq for recently awarding full accreditation to AUIS. Public-private partnerships and collaboration in education, such as between the Ministry and AUIS, are key to the transformation of communities in Iraq.



H.E. Haider al-Abadi
Prime Minister, Republic of Iraq
Inaugural Address

“

*I call for the
unification of the
Iraqi security
forces into one
Iraqi national
force.*

”



Interviewer: Mushreq Abbas, NRT Arabic

His Excellency Haider al-Abadi, the Prime Minister of Iraq, opened this fifth annual Sulaimani Forum’s inaugural address with tidings from liberated Mosul, from where he had just arrived. He wanted to recount the success of liberation with all Iraqis because “they all have a share in this victory.” He commended the heroes who fight DAESH—a group that aims to deny people a decent life

and falsely claim to protect Sunnis. “When DAESH came here,” he asserted, “they pretended they were defending the Sunnis. In reality, they are killing Sunnis more than any other community in Iraq.” In addition to the mass murder of civilians, they have destroyed billions of dollars of infrastructure.

In discussing the defense of Iraq, he highlighted the importance of women. “I would like to take advantage of International Women’s



“

We have to address divisions in society in order to be truly victorious. We are winning the war in the battlefield; we must now win the peace through unity.

”

Day to praise women for assisting in the defense of Iraq. There are more women than men in Iraq. They are the basis of the family in the household. They should be provided with rights in education, jobs, society, and political and societal institutions.” The Prime Minister noted that he would like to see women as leaders of political parties.

In discussing the role of AUIS in the current context, he commended the diversity among the students and the University’s crucial task of not only securing the future, but also being effective in the present. He stressed that the University must not provide a

purely theoretical education that graduates students who are disconnected from the realities of Iraq, and praised the University for achieving this goal. Referencing his observations in Mosul, he pushed for the development and promotion of voluntary work without the expectation of anything in return. In the establishment of security frameworks in Mosul and throughout the country, there must be awareness that individual benefits cannot be gained at the expense of the society. In Mosul, the Prime Minister saw a competition for progress. He described the battle against DAESH as a decisive and ontological struggle that should

encourage multiple economic and social classes to work toward the enhancement of society. The struggle is not merely one for power; it is the question of “to be or not to be” against an enemy who would like to take away freedom of thought. In Anbar, the group is conspiring to pit one tribe against another. In Mosul, it is provoking Arabs against Kurds, Sunnis against Shiites, Yezidis against Christians. Throughout Iraq, there is a need for national reconciliation: winning a war means nothing if victory does not bring peace. In addition to the liberation of land, Iraq needs unity to achieve peace and ensure the absence of repressive government institutions. Although sectarian differences have been barriers in the past, Iraq’s diversity should be a vector of progress in the future.

Moving to a discussion of the state of the economy, the Prime Minister noted that the drop in oil prices also exacerbated disparities within society, thereby marginalizing certain groups. In an attempt to mitigate this, the Iraqi government has launched a reform program to root out corruption. Through this and other efforts, there has been political, economic, and military progress.

Mistrust has also been replaced by willingness, on the part of both the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Peshmerga, to fight side by side. The people of different cities and provinces in Iraq should govern themselves, and the federal government

should assist in this governance. The Prime Minister called on political parties to be united and abstain from acting on behalf of personal and political interests—an activity that encourages dictatorship similar to that under Ba’ath party oppression.

The fight against DAESH is an opportunity for cooperation at the regional and international levels. Counterterrorism is not simply an Iraqi assignment, but a also global one. Members of the international community have at times claimed that terror stems from Iraq, but Iraqis are in fact victims of terror. Iraq will fight back against terrorism, while respecting the sovereignty of other countries and showing a willingness to cooperate regionally and internationally, Prime Minister Abadi stated. He then concluded his speech by expressing his hope that AUIS will be a place for students and faculty to work within Iraqi society, and by emphasizing the importance of political unity.

This inaugural address was followed by a conversation between the Prime Minister and Mushreq Abbas of NRT Arabic. The discussion focused on current military strategies, internal displacement of populations fleeing conflict zones, and government reform efforts. In addressing aerial strike tactics to minimize non-combatant casualties, the Prime Minister noted the use of F-16s for their precision and ability to limit collateral damage to the civilian population. He also asserted that recent reports claiming that DAESH

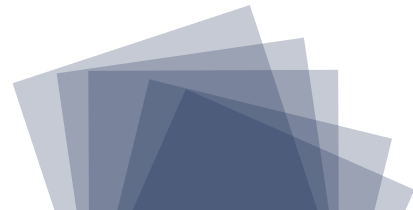
had used chemical weapons were false. He noted that based on the information accumulated from the battles in and liberation of Ramadi, Fallujah, Tikrit, and Bayji, DAESH did not have a chemical weapons capability, and largely used IEDs to target civilians. In this sense, he claimed, the military does not expect any surprises in the liberation of western Mosul. Furthermore, contrary to reports claiming that the military is trying to cause battles in the western part of the city, special care is being taken to ensure precision strikes and prevent civilian casualties and infrastructure damage, especially because of the narrow streets in the old part of the city.

With regards to internally displaced persons (IDPs), the Prime Minister addressed concerns that the government is ill-equipped to handle displaced populations in the wake of liberation. He asserted that about 3,000 people had already returned to their homes in the aftermath of the liberation of eastern Mosul. While the government has set up new camps, it is advising that it is safest for residents to stay in their homes. The situation, however, is complicated because DAESH is trying to push civilians into liberated areas to place pressure on security forces. Furthermore, access to the western half of the city is limited for humanitarian organizations providing emergency relief.

Further addressing plans for the post-DAESH environment, the Prime Minister noted that there would be national elections as well

as elections in local councils. Because the government is formed through the Parliament rather than direct elections, he emphasized that although political opposition is welcome, the erection of obstacles to the formation of a government is not productive. A number of factors—including the liberations of Fallujah and Mosul, the economic crisis, and the dismissals of the Ministers of Finance and Interior—have increased pressure on the federal government. Unity, cooperation, and administrative reform are especially important now to overcome sectarian divides and rid DAESH from the country.

Addressing government reform, the Prime Minister mentioned the need to focus on the allocation of positions on the basis of qualifications rather than proportion. The government needs to represent people at both the provincial and federal levels. If these challenges are not overcome, it will be impossible to deliver services to the Iraqi people. In addition to internal reform efforts, the Iraqi government has requested the help of international organizations to root out corruption. As a result, the people in the government who wish to maintain a weak government through corrupt practices will be held accountable. The Prime Minister finally emphasized that in addition to maintaining strong security forces, it was also important to maintain the neutrality of the judiciary.



International Women's Day Talk

Farida Abbas

Author and survivor of Kocho, Sinjar

Farida Abbas, author of *The Girl Who Beat ISIS* and survivor of the DAESH massacre of the Yezidi community in Kocho, Sinjar in 2014, began her speech with a commemoration of International Women's Day and expressed the hope that what happened to her community would never happen again. Abbas described the massacre DAESH carried out in the Yezidi village of Kocho, in the district of Sinjar, where she used to live. In 2014, members of the group arrived in the village, separated the men from the women, stole jewelry and belongings, and forced Yezidis to convert to Islam. Many of the men, including Abbas's father and two brothers, were brutally killed, and the women were taken to cities in Iraq and Syria, including Mosul, Tal Afar, and Raqqa. Abbas was moved to Raqqa, where she and other women were forcibly married, insulted, raped, and commanded to abandon their religious beliefs.



“
***My story is the
one of hundreds of
thousands of Yezidi
girls and women.***
”

“

Today, as we are celebrating International Women's Day, we must recognize that women are paying the highest price for conflicts throughout the Middle East.

”

During her time in Raqqa at an abandoned house with other women and girls, Abbas suffered physical abuse. Her refusal to accompany DAESH fighters in war resulted in repeated rape and physical beating. Once, when a DAESH fighter tried to rape her, she cut her wrists, but was subsequently treated by a doctor so she could be raped again. She tried to escape twice, but was captured and moved to another area where three DAESH members gave her to an emir, who allowed five other members to rape her. She was unable to walk for two months, and tried to commit suicide four times.

Later, Abbas was moved to Deir Azzour, where a DAESH member showed her pictures of her family, whom she denied knowing. He told her that the emir would behead her when he came because of her refusal to convert to Islam. Finally, she was

able to escape to an internally displaced person (IDP) camp in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), and has since moved to Germany.

At the conclusion of her speech, Abbas asserted that women usually suffer the most in conflict. Thousands of Yezidi women still live in IDP camps. During a visit less than a week before her speech, she found that nothing had changed and that the situation was getting worse. Armed groups that were supposed to be united are fighting each other. She advised that there must be a solution to the conflict, protection for minorities, and government assistance in Sinjar. There is still a lack of accountability for those responsible for the massacre in Sinjar. Abbas hoped that, in the future, there would be more dialogue and less fighting.

The Human Cost of War

Moderated by Lyse Doucet
Chief International Correspondent, BBC

Christos Stylianides

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and
Emergency Crisis Management, European Union

Lise Grande

Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident
Representative for Iraq, UNDP

Darbaz Muhammed

Minister of Migration and Displacement,
Government of Iraq

Choman Hardi

Assistant Professor and Chair of the English
Department, American University of Iraq,
Sulaimani

David Miliband

President and CEO, International Rescue
Committee

The human cost of war has rarely been so visible than it is in the Middle East today. After decades of dictatorship, sanctions, and war, Iraqis are now grappling with the legacy of DAESH, displacement, and internal strife. Across the border, Syria is witnessing an enormous humanitarian crisis that shows no sign of abating soon. This panel explored the key drivers fueling these crises, their potential long-term impacts, and how stability can be restored. Panelists also presented policy recommendations for political and humanitarian agencies.

Lyse Doucet

Chief International Correspondent, BBC



Lyse Doucet is the BBC's Chief International Correspondent and an occasional Contributing Editor. Prior to this, she has been based in Kabul, Islamabad, Amman, and Jerusalem, and traveled across the Middle East with the BBC. She co-directed two documentaries: *Children of Syria* (2014) and *Children of the Gaza War* (2015). Doucet has been a Council Member of the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) and is currently a Council Member of the International Council for Human Rights (ICHR), based in Geneva.

Doucet opened by stating that to achieve enduring peace, the protection of civilians during and after warfare must be a priority. In this sense, the human cost of war is not merely about aid and humanitarian issues, but also about politics and the security of war. Introducing the fifth annual Sulaimani Forum's International Women's Day speaker, Farida Abbas, she then recounted the horrors of the attacks on Yezidis by DAESH in 2014. Following Abbas's moving speech, Doucet asserted: "We can pay no greater tribute than to follow what [Abbas] has urged all of us to do – [engage in] real work and real dialogue."

Numbers show that the needs of girls and women are three to four times larger than those of men, but aid budgets fail to reflect that reality.

Christos Stylianides

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and
Emergency Crisis Management,
European Union



***Peaceful
coexistence of
Iraq's different
ethno-religious
groups is the best
answer to DAESH.***

Christos Stylianides, European Union (EU) Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Emergency Crisis Management, announced the EU's preparedness to work with partners to manage humanitarian needs arising from the conflict with DAESH. He praised the planning and coordination efforts of the government in Baghdad to prevent a humanitarian crisis. Although the military operations in eastern Mosul had resulted in significant humanitarian needs, Stylianides highlighted the Iraqi military's commitment to civilian protection. He stressed that as the western Mosul offensive progresses, everything possible should be done to prevent non-combatant casualties. The protection of civilians is crucial to future prospects for reconciliation, prosperity, and stability in Iraq. He thanked the Commissioner of Education for his commitment to youth education as part of a humanitarian effort, and emphasized that such support must continue.

Iraq, he asserted, is at a critical juncture, especially given the efforts to retake Mosul. He acknowledged the immense importance of military success, but also asserted that one of the most important processes was the planning for the post-Mosul and post-DAESH environment. Though DAESH may be defeated militarily, the narratives of intolerance and division need to be defeated as well. Peaceful coexistence is the best answer to these challenges.

In addition, multiple countries across the EU have facilitated the creation of hospitals and treatment of the wounded from Mosul. Central to the EU's efforts to prevent radicalization, forced marriage, and other atrocities is



education. Explaining that short-term humanitarian efforts were not enough, he stated that he had heightened the priority of education by increasing its budget by 600 percent. The

EU would continue to build on its previous successes to combat water and housing shortages and promote education and safer communities for the future.

Lise Grande

Humanitarian Coordinator and Resident Representative for Iraq, UNDP



While millions of Iraqis remain displaced, 1 million have been able to return home to liberated areas over the past year.

Lise Grande the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Humanitarian Coordinator and the Resident Representative for Iraq, began her talk with a discussion of the complexity and magnitude of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. In the short term, millions of families lost everything. In the long term, she asserted, the international community would have to face the fact that hundreds of thousands of Iraqis would be scarred for months, years, and perhaps generations. In the first two years of the conflict, more than two million Iraqis fled their homes. In 2016, nearly 800,000 people fled, but 1 million who had been displaced returned to their homes in liberated areas, at an unprecedented pace. Currently, there are 3.5 million Iraqis living in more than 3,800 communities across the country, including more than one million in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

Grande noted the immense difficulty of responding to the staggering pace of displacement, listing the multitude of priorities, from ensuring families' safety, access to food, water, sanitation, and health services, to supporting children's education and helping families receive support in a way that allowed them to retain their dignity. First acknowledging the immense efforts of the Iraqi federal government, Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), religious organizations, community groups, and families across the country, she explained that the UN and its partners had been asked to step in due to limited national resources and the magnitude of the task.

Grande admitted to difficulties in coordinating projects, relaying an informal UN rule of thumb that from the time a coordination mechanism is established, it takes about three to four years for the mechanism to operate effectively. In the case of Iraq, the UN had not had the luxury of such a prolonged timeframe. She also described problems with funding, the ability to get partners to the front lines of the conflict, and access to areas held by DAESH.

Turning her attention to Mosul, Grande stated that there were 750,000 to 800,000 civilians living inside western Mosul; of that number, about 400,000 resided in the densely populated old city, which placed them at greater risk of falling victim to gunfire, booby traps, or violence by DAESH if they tried to escape. Despite the difficulty of the situation, she commended the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) for adhering to international humanitarian law. She relayed the process by which the ISF placed civilian protection at the center of its mission: if civilians wanted to leave or the ISF was unable to protect them, the security forces helped them across the front lines. Subsequently, families were disarmed, screened, and brought to camps operated by the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, with support from the UN and non-governmental organizations. This system, she claimed, is what gave 550,000 citizens the confidence to stay in their homes in eastern Mosul instead of fleeing.

Additionally, she discussed the role of humanitarian partners in eastern Mosul, explaining that 1 million people in newly liberated areas in Nineveh and eastern Mosul had received assistance. Every day, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) trucks 2 million liters of safe drinking water to half of the neighborhoods in eastern Mosul and thousands of people receive health consultations. Over 100 schools have been opened. In areas that had not yet been liberated, such as western Mosul, Hawija, and Tal Afar, Grande promised that the UN and humanitarian partners would be there to provide the needed support.

Grande concluded her speech by warning that when the war ends, there could be as many 3.5-4 million Iraqis who are still displaced. While many will want to go back to their homes, others may wish to stay where they had resettled, and both groups have the right to choose their path. She promised that the UN and the international community would provide long-term support to these groups, as well as to those who may be prevented from returning in the aftermath of the war.



Darbaz Muhammed

Minister of Migration and Displacement,
Government of Iraq



Darbaz Muhammed, the Minister of Migration and Displacement for the federal government of Iraq, began by discussing the challenges of displacement in the Iraqi context. Displacement usually refers to something that happens over a short period of time. However, in the Iraqi case, people have been displaced for years, which has made the role of the Ministry of Migration and Displacement particularly difficult.

At the height of the crisis, there were more than 4 million internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Iraq. Today, around 1 million have returned to their homes. In Mosul, there is a need to accommodate 500,000 IDPs, and Iraq has created a plan with the UN to help accommodate those displaced by the conflict. Even considering these statistics, there has not been one IDP family who has not been contacted by a team working for the Ministry of Migration and Displacement.

***Despite challenges,
not a single
displaced family
has not received
humanitarian
assistance.***

Moving on to the topic of reconciliation between and within IDP communities, a major issue that he claimed needed to be addressed was the challenge of perpetrators and victims coming from the same communities. In one instance, an IDP was asked to forgive DAESH and he responded: "How can I when they killed my mother and would not give me her body for more than six days?" Muhammed asserted that fighting DAESH was not just an issue to be addressed by the military; it was also an ideological issue that needed to be addressed at the community level.

In discussing the provision of services to IDPs, the minister noted that one of the main goals of the Ministry is ensuring that people do not die of hunger, cold, or heat. The ministry rescues and transports people to safe areas, provides emergency services, and welcomes them to camps. The minister noted that in the days leading up to the conference, his ministry had been able to provide a convoy of humanitarian assistance to western Mosul. He emphasized that his ministry's funds were only

for emergency aid, asserting that it was the responsibility of all countries to provide water, education, and security services. He called on other sectors in the Iraqi government to provide assistance in health and education, as well as fuel and heating oil for IDPs.



Choman Hardi

Assistant Professor and Chair of the English Department, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani



War is gendered. It affects men and women differently, and this must be considered in devising humanitarian responses.

Choman Hardi, Assistant Professor and Chair of the English Department at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), began her discussion by highlighting three key topics related to gender and conflict: the gendered nature of war, the consequences of forced migration, and gender roles in the context of social and economic inequality. In addressing her first point, she highlighted the fact that war affects men and women differently. While the majority of individuals killed during times of war are men, women are often victims rape in times of genocide and ethnic cleansing. Assessing gender dynamics in times of conflict, she noted that historically, men have been expected to play the role of aggressor and protector in the face of an enemy. When men cannot fulfill this role, they feel feminized. The rape of women in war has also been used, Hardi argues, as a means of destroying communities' identity and honor.

Addressing her second topic, Hardi noted that the uprootedness caused by the elimination of jobs and livelihoods contributes to feelings of uselessness among internally displaced persons (IDPs). Despite coordination between international agencies and ministries in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, cities such as Sulaimani are not equipped to deal with the massive influx of people. In the case of the *Anfal* genocide, IDP camps eventually evolved into towns, and many of the people in those towns have still not integrated into the community. In the current Iraqi context, more efforts need to be made to integrate IDPs into the community in order to restore their livelihoods.



Last, Hardi reiterated her comments on masculinity and gender in the context of social and economic inequality. When men are displaced, she noted, they lose their ability to provide for their families and feel feminized. Their role has been framed by societies as protectors of women, family, and country, but in post-conflict situations, men sometimes feel the need to gain control over women's bodies, which in turn affects wives and sisters. In scenarios in which men have been killed and women have become the heads of households,

the expectation that women maintain traditional feminine roles despite being widowed makes them targets for violence or abuse. Conflict in Iraq has upset traditional social structures and gender roles—a phenomenon that could be used as an opportunity for change and movement towards gender equality; for now, however, marginalization of women remains the main consequence.

David Miliband

President and CEO, International Rescue Committee



***Political crises
are no excuses
for neglecting
humanitarian
needs.***

David Miliband, the President of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), addressed issues related to displacement and aid from a global perspective. Record numbers of displaced people, sectarian issues, and abuses of humanitarian law are global phenomena. If institutions are not put in place to facilitate the safe return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), sustainable return is not possible. Despite the fact that two to three times more women than men have been affected by displacement, aid is not distributed proportionally. Furthermore, education—an essential component of aid—comprises less than two percent of the humanitarian budget. In attempts to attract aid, the clearer countries are about the outcome, the more likely they are to receive support from non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments.

Discussing the work of the IRC in Iraq, Miliband noted that 60 percent of the organization's operations are carried out outside the Kurdistan Region. Displacement from Anbar is ongoing, Hawija is still under DAESH control, and the degree of trauma experienced by IDPs in cities throughout the country is enormous. Information about the location of individuals is communicated through families—whose members are also the main sources of information about conditions around the country, and in turn, help the IRC identify aid beneficiaries most in need. Because of the magnitude of the conflict with DAESH, challenges remain regarding the living conditions in and capacity of IDP camps.



Echoing the concerns of other panelists, he reminded participants about the work that will remain to be done in the aftermath of the war. There is a need for the rebuilding of institutions after the conflict. Otherwise, humanitarian crises

can lead to serious political crises, which will in turn breed the kind of instability that can give rise to more violence. Humanitarian aid should be framed as an investment in the future of Iraqis, and not merely as emergency relief.

The Mosul Operation, an Update and Prospects

Moderated by Michael Knights

Lafer Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

Jabar Yawar

Spokesman, Ministry of Peshmerga,
Kurdistan Regional Government

Karim Nouri

Spokesman, Popular Mobilization
Forces (Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi)

Hayder Shesho

Commander, Yezidkhan Protection
Forces

Hisham Al Hashimi

Analyst

The battle for Mosul promises to be a turning point, not just in countering Daesh's malignant influence in Iraq, but also for Iraq's long-term stability. Iraqi security forces, including the Peshmerga, and popular mobilization units are all engaged in taking the fight to Daesh. But at the same time, those different factions are also posturing for what lies beyond the liberation of Mosul. This panel evaluated the ongoing battle for Mosul, and how it is shaping the country's security architecture.

Michael Knights

Lafer Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy



What is the next threat after Mosul, and how should security forces be structured to best meet that threat?

Michael Knights is a Lafer fellow at The Washington Institute, specializing in the military and security affairs of Iraq, Iran, Yemen, and the Gulf Arab states. Knights has published widely on security issues for major media outlets such as Jane's IHS, and regularly briefs American policymakers and military officers on regional security affairs. Knights worked as the head of analysis and assessments for a range of security and oil companies, directing information collection teams in Iraq, Libya, and Yemen.

Knights opened this panel of the Mosul Operation by highlighting the fact that, after Mosul has been cleared from DAESH, other towns would still need to be retaken, such as Hawija and Tal Afar. Nobody in the West, he continued, could understand the suffering of the Iraqi and Kurdish security forces, which have been fighting this war and have experienced feelings of insecurity for over 13 years. Introducing the panelists, Knights also mentioned that while the Iraqi Security Forces' (ISF) Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations, General Abdul Amir Yarrallah, could not join the panel due to ongoing fighting in Mosul, General Salahaddin Mustafa, ISF Deputy Chief of Staff for Training, was present in the audience.

Jabar Yawar

Spokesman, Ministry of Peshmerga,
Kurdistan Regional Government



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***Our collaboration
with the Iraqi army
takes the forms of
planning, intelligence
sharing, and joint
operations.***

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Jabar Yawar, Spokesman for the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Ministry of Peshmerga, addressed questions related to Peshmerga reform and coordination with Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), especially as it applied to the battle in Mosul. He emphasized that the liberation of Mosul cannot be celebrated as the final defeat of DAESH, noting a number of cities and regions that remain under the threat of DAESH, such as the areas between Salahaddin and Kirkuk, or between Ramadi and Al-Qaim. Although the city of Sinjar has been retaken from DAESH, other districts in the area still are still left under its control. Furthermore, even if DAESH is expelled from Iraqi towns, the group has been trying to re-emerge in towns that have already been liberated using tactics such as quick bomb detonations. Strongholds in deserts and mountains are often difficult to penetrate.

Yawar expressed hopes that, following the liberation of Mosul, the ISF and the Peshmerga can collaborate to improve non-conventional terrorism fighting tactics. Furthermore, there needs to be a plan on how to fight DAESH ideologically, with the help of mass media, as well as research centers and universities. With regards to military cooperation between Erbil and Baghdad, even before operations in Mosul, there were meetings between the Ministry of Peshmerga and national forces in order to identify key objectives for the liberation. Such coordination led to the creation of the Erbil Center for Joint Coordination, which played a key role in facilitating cooperation between the Peshmerga, the ISF, and coalition forces. In addition, the Combined Joint Operations



Center facilitated airstrikes, intelligence efforts to gather information on DAESH locations in Mosul, and the passage of information on these positions to international coalition forces. The KRG played was instrumental in facilitating logistics operations to create a safe corridor for ammunition. Some military commanders, such

as Sheikh Jafar, and military operations, such as the Khazar frontline offensive of October 17, 2016, were crucial in allowing the quick and efficient retaking of areas on the road to Mosul.

Karim Nouri

Spokesman, Popular Mobilization Forces
(Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi)



Retaking Mosul is not enough, we must regain the trust of communities. DAESH came as a consequence, not a cause, of political disunity.

Karim Nouri, Spokesman for the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), began his discussion by defending the transparency of the PMF, which, he asserted, are known for their openness. The people of Mosul, he stated, saw a monster in DAESH and wondered how to go about protecting Baghdad from its advancement. Beginning its operations in Diyala, the PMF then continued on to Salahaddin and Anbar. Implicitly acknowledging widespread criticisms of the PMF, he emphasized that its role did not undermine the authority of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Discussing the magnitude of the threat against both the PMF and the international community, he noted that the fight against DAESH was a fight against an ideologically mobilized force. The group's threat lies in its use of a diversified range of weapons, including drones, bombs, and gunmen, and the recruitment of fighters from across the world, from the Caucasus to Paris, London, Istanbul, and Riyadh.

Nouri explained that, in Sinjar, the PMF was moving on the western front, preventing DAESH from maneuvering and penetrating their lines. In Tal Afar, the PMF encouraged locals to join them in the liberation of their area. Despite the PMF's willingness to work with local communities and adherence to local and international standards, there is still widespread misunderstanding of the activities of the PMF. He highlighted the existence of accountability mechanisms and punishment for those who violate standards. The battle in Mosul, he claimed, has been waged in a very "clean" manner. The PMF has sent assurance letters



to the people of Mosul in order to gain their trust. Nouri claimed that originally, the people of Mosul wanted the ISF to leave, but now, they are asking for them to return, along with the PMF.

The PMF is keen to combat vicious media propaganda claiming that the group is coming to slaughter people. It aims to establish peace, confidence, and trust. Political differences and corruption led to the rise of DAESH, and instead of finding solutions, people leveled accusations against each other. Today, politicians are still using the bloodshed in Mosul for political

capital. Returning to his defense of the PMF, he reminded the audience that the PMF had been formally integrated into the security system in Iraq and obeyed the rule of law. When DAESH came, the PMF disclosed information about its leadership and operations, but other armed groups continued to work secretly. He concluded his speech with a reminder that the PMF walks in the public light, and that while it has a religious point of reference, it is committed to following the Iraqi government's directives.

Hayder Shesho

Commander, Yezidkhan Protection Forces



We hope that the Yezidis can be granted the right to autonomous governance, with the support of the Iraqi government, the KRG, and the international coalition.

Hayder Shesho, Commander of the Yezidkhan Protection Forces (HPE), relayed details of the Yezidi community's situation since 2003. He asserted that the rights of minorities in Sinjar, and specifically those of the Yezidis, had been violated as a result of the Iraqi Constitution's Article 140. Acknowledging the statements of the Prime Minister referring to Sinjar as a disputed area, Shesho warned that the rights of Yezidis and other minorities would be violated again. Many Yezidi areas, such as those between Khanasor and Sinjar, were occupied by DAESH and often the site of violent battles. As a result of the dispute between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the federal government of Iraq, no parties came to the aid of the Yezidis when the genocide happened. He supported the statements made by Yawar and Nouri, expressing respect and gratitude for their forces' martyrs, while reminding the audience that other minority forces also needed support. Although advances towards the liberation of Mosul have been impressive, 40 percent of the city of Sinjar remains under DAESH control, and there has been very little support for the complete retaking on the city.

Before the offensive for the liberation of Mosul began, Yezidis asked the governments in Erbil and Baghdad to allow Yezidi forces to partake in the military operation. Their demand was justified on the basis that thousands of Yezidis were believed to be held within Mosul; however, they were not allowed to participate. There was indeed coordination between military forces in some areas, but this coordination should

have been used to liberate Yazidi lands from DAESH. He explained that it seemed unfair that in certain areas such as Hawija, there were operations to liberate four or five people, but that the same level of support was not given to Yazidi areas such as Sinjar, where 3,000 women and girls were still living under DAESH occupation. Shesho noted that international forces can and should be used to prevent genocide against minorities.

The commander continued by predicting the future status of Yazidis and minority communities in Iraq. “As Yazidis,” he explained, “we do not see a future for ourselves in Iraq, the land where our ancestors lived for thousands of years.” Shesho asserted that the rights of minorities continue to be neglected. There is a need for decisions that protect religious minorities and resolve political disputes. On March 3, 2017, there was internal fighting in Sinjar. At the time of this panel, on March 8, 2017, 80 percent of the former residents of Sinjar still lived outside the city, and only 20 percent had returned. Even many of those who had returned have had to leave again. Shesho reiterated his call for support from the KRG, the federal government of Iraq, and the international community. He concluded by expressing his hope that decisions regarding the future of the Yazidis would be made by Yazidis, with the support of the federal government of Iraq, the KRG, and the international coalition forces.



Hisham Al Hashimi

Analyst



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DAESH bet on disunity between Baghdad and Erbil, and thus failed to prepare an appropriate defense strategy for eastern Mosul.

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Hisham Al Hashimi, an established analyst of Iraqi politics, explained the war against DAESH in four stages: (1) collapse and defeat; (2) resistance; (3) rehabilitation; and (4) liberation. The first stage—collapse and defeat—began on January 5, 2014 when Anbar fell to DAESH, and reached a peak in June 2014 when the group seized effective control of Mosul. Stage two was defined by resistance, and the absorption of attacks by terrorist groups, with the introduction of Shia forces into the conflict. The third stage involved the rehabilitation of army units in preparation for the entry of the international coalition into the conflict in September 2014. Finally, the fourth stage was the initiative of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) to begin liberating cities throughout Iraq. This stage began in Tikrit, was temporarily reversed by DAESH retaking Ramadi in May 2015, and has since continued with the recapture of cities and prevention of DAESH land seizures throughout the country.

As the fight against DAESH has progressed, the ISF have been able to respond to the conflict by understanding the complexities characterizing areas under full DAESH control, areas partly under DAESH control, and liberated areas. DAESH aimed to make Baghdad or Damascus its capital—a goal it hoped to achieve through the occupation of Samarra, the former capital of the Abbasid Caliphate. The group failed in Samarra and attempted to draw Iraqi forces into Fallujah. Since the battles between the ISF and DAESH have begun, however, the ISF have only been defeated in Ramadi, and the federal police have only been defeated twice.



Both forces have played important roles in the liberation of cities throughout Iraq. In some areas, domestic and local forces have also been able to defeat the extremists; in others, such as Tikrit, international coalition forces stepped in to support local forces.

Hashimi underscored the continued importance of understanding DAESH fighting tactics. Such an understanding has helped Iraqi forces adapt to threats and request specific weapons or gear

(such as night vision goggles) to effectively combat the extremist group. Furthermore, without cooperation between Baghdad and Erbil, success in combatting DAESH could not have been possible. He cited the recapture of Hamam al-Alil as a key example of an effective joint operation that led to the defeat of DAESH in Mosul.

Regional Competition and a Framework for Stability

Moderated by Robin Wright

Joint Fellow, United States Institute of Peace and
Woodrow Wilson Center; Contributing Writer, New Yorker

Hoshyar Zebari

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance,
Government of Iraq

Mowaffak Al Rubaie

Former National Security Advisor and member of
the Council of Representatives, Government of
Iraq

Basat Oztürk

Deputy Undersecretary of Defense, Government
of Turkey

Elena Suponina

Advisor, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies

Hassan Ahmadian

Professor, University of Tehran

Tarek Mitri

Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy
and International Affairs, American University of
Beirut

The Middle East is in the midst of a political, economic and security upheaval, whose current manifestation is a form of extremism that threatens the foundations of states in the region. Yet, those regional powers have not sought to establish a framework to manage and contain crises; instead, states like Iraq, Syria and Yemen have become battlegrounds for competing interests and ambitions. This panel explored these regional dynamics and considered what is required to establish a long-term political and security framework that will promote peace and stability. Panelists also assessed the role of external actors, particularly the United States and Russia, in the design and implementation of a workable and durable regional system.

Robin Wright

Joint Fellow, United States Institute of Peace and Woodrow Wilson Center;
Contributing Writer, New Yorker



Robin Wright is an American foreign affairs analyst, journalist and author. She has reported from more than 140 countries on six continents for the most notable outlets. She won the National Magazine Award for her work with the *New Yorker*. Her book, *Rock the Casbah: Rage and Rebellion across the Islamic World*, won the 2012 Overseas Press Club award for best book on international affairs. She also won the United Nations Correspondents Association Gold Medal for coverage of foreign affairs, the Overseas Press Club Award, and the National Press Club Award.

Wright opened discussions on this third panel by stating that, having covered every war in the Middle East since 1973, she had never seen the region in such a dysfunctional state and under greater threat. She also highlighted the unprecedented variety of challenges facing the Middle East, from extremism to public services failures. “Can the Middle East even be sustained as a region in the way it was conceived of 100 years ago?,” Wright asked. In this context, she urged the experts on the panel to reflect on frameworks that can be used for regional stability in the long run.

Can the Middle East even be sustained as a region in the way it was conceived of 100 years ago?

Hoshyar Zebari

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance, Government of Iraq



Iraq has to balance loyalty to both Iran and the United States.

Hoshyar Zebari, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance for the federal government of Iraq, opened his discussion by responding to Wright's question regarding a framework for stability in Iraq and Syria. He noted that unfortunately, the region surrounding Iraq was broken. Zebari acknowledged that some people would mark the beginning of this break with the fall of Saddam Hussein and the American intervention in Iraq in 2003, but he believed that it began earlier, during Saddam's invasion of Kuwait in 1991. He elaborated on the historical and current place of Iraq in the region, claiming that the country had a very important balancing role to play. Highlighting the many missed opportunities for Iraq to assume a positive leadership role in the region, he pointed to widespread political apathy and inefficiency as a cause for failure.

According to Zebari, there are no security structures or arrangements for the region—a situation exacerbated by the deep hostility between Iran and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Many years ago, Iraq pushed for dialogue between Arab states and Iran, but that idea did not take off. Today, there is conflict all across the region, from Syria and Yemen to Libya. Iraq has the opportunity to play a positive role, but it faces competing influences from the United States and Iran. In other words, although Iraq is a strategic partner of the United States and the international coalition more broadly, it is also part of another bloc that includes Iran, Russia, and Syria.



Zebari noted that despite efforts toward unity and stability, he believed that if the Shiite parties gathered a political majority in the next election, ethno-religious faultlines within Iraq would be further exacerbated. Given lessons learned from past experiences of dictatorship

in Iraq, from Abdul Karim Qasim to Saddam Hussein, he assessed that “[Iraq] cannot be ruled by one sect or one party. It has to be done through partnership and inclusiveness. Otherwise, more divisions will emerge.”

Mowaffak Al Rubaie

Former National Security Advisor
and member of the Council of
Representatives, Government of Iraq



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***Iraq lies at faultlines
between the Arab
and non-Arab
world, which makes
for a particularly
complex geopolitical
environment.***

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Mowaffak Al Rubaie, former National Security Advisor for the federal government of Iraq, described the country as a buffer zone between the Arab and non-Arab worlds. Iraq, he said, is like a valley surrounded by four volcanoes—Iran and its nuclear aspirations, Israel and its atomic arsenal, Turkey with the region's largest economy, and Saudi Arabia as a religious and economic weight; The country is unstable because surrounding states are trying to settle scores in this valley. Speaking broadly about the future of Iraq, he noted that the only way forward was to work toward a strong and united Iraq that could block and deter security threats, promote financial development and security enhancement, and develop industry and culture. He further advised that there was a need for the consolidation of state authority. Rubaie specifically referenced the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and militias fighting against DAESH, claiming that anyone who held arms was considered a militia.

Rubaie continued by addressing the recent political and economic issues between Baghdad and Erbil. In addition to the existence of disputed areas across the country, disputes over oil and gas resources, security checkpoints, and the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) budget had fueled tension between the two governments. From a Western perspective, Iraq is divided between Kurds, Sunnis, and Shiites; however, Rubaie warned the audience, the situation is much more complicated. Nonetheless, despite those complexities, Rubaie concluded, the only way forward is to garner a sense of geopolitical unity in Iraq.

Basat Oztürk

Deputy Undersecretary of Defense,
Government of Turkey



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***It is in our best
interest to see a
strong, united
Iraq.***

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Asked to discuss Turkey's future role in the region, Basat Oztürk, Deputy Undersecretary of Defense of Turkey, began with the request that the region of the Middle East, along with Turkey, not be considered in isolation from the rest of the world. He countered what he deemed traditionally Orientalist views, claiming that it was not just countries in the East that were facing crises of governance or failing states. Rather, such feelings of insecurity were international phenomena faced not only by countries such as Iraq, Syria, and Yemen in the Middle East, but also countries such as Libya and Somalia in North Africa and Afghanistan in South Asia, as well as countries in the West. This instability has led to tectonic political shifts, as evidenced in the recent election in the United States and referenda in the United Kingdom. The European Union (EU), he asserted, is currently undergoing an identity crisis, visible through waves of populism promoting racist, xenophobic, and Islamophobic ideas.

Oztürk acknowledged the shift from traditional towards hybrid warfare, whereby countries use a variety of proxies and subcontractors to capitalize on insecurity. He also stated that it was in Turkey's best interest to be surrounded by a stable, safe, and secure region, which included not only its border countries but also Europe. He recognized the need for reform in the Middle East, Europe, and the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to promote democratization. The way to achieve unity is, he claimed, through the promotion of strong political systems, economies, democracy, and



scientific endeavors, as well as robust regional cooperation. Specifically addressing the role of the UNSC in Syria, Oztürk noted that no coherent strategy to address the crisis had been adopted—a situation for which Turkey is paying a huge price.

In some ways, Turkey is a part of the “Western club” because of its membership in NATO and candidacy for EU membership. However, there are forces trying to prevent Turkey’s progress in challenging Western dominance and, arguably, injustice. This opposition manifested itself most notably in the recent attempt to overturn

the democratically elected government by whom Oztürk called the “Fethullah terrorist organization.” Oztürk stated that Turkey was able to resist the coup because it had become a mature democracy. Although he admitted that Turkey had a long way to go, he noted that the international community needed to work together to achieve more progress toward this democratic ideal. Returning to the issue of Syria during the question and answer session, he defended Turkey’s respect for national sovereignty, explaining that the country had no intention of imposing anything on Syria, Iraq, or other neighboring countries.

Elena Suponina

Advisor, Russian Institute of Strategic Studies



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Russia is ready to cooperate with the United States to retake Raqqa. It is also open to working with Iraq.

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Elena Suponina, an advisor at the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies, discussed aspirations and perceptions of Russia in the region. In regard to Syria, she asserted that there needed to be both military and non-military actions to resolve the conflict. Seemingly countering negative perceptions of Russia in Syria, Suponina noted that the views of Syrian opposition groups of Russian forces in the country were actually quite positive. She described the Russian role in Syria as not merely military, but also social and humanitarian.

Suponina petitioned the international community to support Russia, Iran, and Turkey, and reminded that Sergei Lavrov, the Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs, had signaled interest in cooperating with the United States in Syria. She hoped that with the change in administration, there would be more opportunities to collaborate. A few days before the conference, Russian president Vladimir Putin had voiced his concerns about the over 9,000 Russian-speakers who had been recruited to join DAESH. Worldwide fears over DAESH recruitment, she asserted, should be an impetus for collaboration.

During the question and answer session, she highlighted Russia's respect for national sovereignty. The Astana process, she claimed, is not meant to substitute the Geneva process. Russia does not aim to participate in any secret agreement to divide the region, and never aspired to act as a colonizing power or participate in agreements similar to Sykes-Picot.

Hassan Ahmadian

Professor, University of Tehran



Dialogue and trust building cannot be imposed on our region by international powers. We have to work them out ourselves.

Hassan Ahmadian, Professor at the University of Tehran, addressed three concepts he deemed key to the issue of regional insecurity: threat perception, exclusion, and demonization. According to Ahmadian, there are countries in the region that perceive Iran as a threat and hope that it stuck to its own borders. He countered this argument with the claim that Iran was unable to secure itself and its borders unless it acted as a regional power and responded to regional threats. He addressed the second concept—exclusion—with the advice that a country cannot succeed internally and regionally if certain groups or minorities (such as the Kurds) were excluded from the political process at the domestic level. Likewise, at a regional level, no countries should be excluded that have a stake in regional political and military issues because this is a recipe for disequilibrium. Finally, regarding the third concept—demonization—Ahmadian called on all powers to refrain from demonizing each other. Such behavior, he explained, had caused

stable states to become fragilize, and fragile states to fail. Demonization, he warned, would only lead to more chaos in the region.

Addressing western and global perceptions of Iran's regional aspirations, he asserted that Iran's leaders had never talked about Shia hegemony, only Islamic unity. Shia crescent rhetoric belongs to Iran's rivals who wish to upset the country's internal and regional security. Echoing the sentiment of other



participants, he stated that Iranians, Russians, and Turks could not impose decisions on Syria. Because of Iran's history of being excluded from the international community, he explained, Iran had always taken a multilateral approach to

resolving conflict. Exemplifying that sentiment, he reminded attendees that in Vienna, Iran pushed for the participation of Iraq and Egypt.

Tarek Mitri

Director, Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut



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Fragile national cohesion is a generalized challenge in the Middle East.

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Responding to a question about how Lebanon was coming to terms with its identity and with the tensions that still existed in the country, Tarek Mitri, Director of the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs, American University of Beirut (AUB), began by saying that the fragility of national cohesion in Lebanon turned the country into a battleground for regional conflict. He warned against the prioritization of national identities over structures that promote unity. In Lebanon and other countries throughout the world, such emphasis on identity had the ability to sabotage the search for a cohesive state.

Addressing the origins of divided identities in the Middle East more broadly, he referenced the 100th anniversary of the Sykes-Picot Agreement, which divided the region along arbitrary borders. Mitri asserted that the regional order had since collapsed, but borders that had been drawn by colonial powers were still in existence, and there was no evidence of an emerging regional order. Regional powers such as Egypt, Iraq, and Syria were constrained by such lack of order, and in Syria in particular, Russia's foreign intervention had not strengthened its position in the region, but rather highlighted American weakness. What used to be a conflict between moderate Arabs and the resistance camp had given way to a Sunni-Shia proxy war. DAESH only shaped the *jihadi* threat, but it existed before the group's rise. Although no state formally supports DAESH, each state views the group with varying levels of threat and priority.



Mitri concluded his speech with the warning that state failure offered opportunities for radicalism. Radicalism would in turn promote identity politics, paving the way for the

exclusion of certain groups. No matter how deep the problems of insurgency or identity, there should always be a thirst for the state, he concluded.

Iraq's Political Scene: Mapping the Settlement or Settlement of the Map?

Moderated by Lukman Faily
Former Iraqi Ambassador to the United States

Salim Al Jabouri

Speaker of Parliament, Government of Iraq

Adil Abdelmahdi

Former Vice-president, Government of Iraq

His Beatitude Louis Raffael Sako

Chaldean Patriarch

Fuad Hussein

Chief of Staff, Office of the Presidency
Kurdistan Regional Government

Aram Shaykh Muhammed

Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Government of Iraq

Mina Al Oraibi

Fellow, Institute for State Effectiveness

Questions relating to the structure of the state, power sharing and identity continue to plague Iraqi politics 14 years after the fall of Saddam Hussein's dictatorship. While politics have become more representative, Iraqi leaders have yet to reconcile different visions of the state, including those of minorities. Moreover, underlying disputes have become more acute as Iraqi communities and factions look beyond the liberation of Mosul. This panel evaluated current political dynamics in Iraq, requirements for national reconciliation, and prospects for a new Iraq to emerge.

Lukman Faily

Former Iraqi Ambassador to the United States



Lukman Faily served as the Iraqi Ambassador to the United States from 2013 until 2016. His previous diplomatic service was as Iraq's Ambassador to Japan, from 2010 until 2013. Prior to his foreign service career, Faily lived in the United Kingdom for 20 years, working at senior levels in the information technology industry. He was an active leader in the large Iraqi exile community and served as a trustee for several Iraqi non-governmental organizations. He played an active role in opposing Saddam's dictatorship and advocated for democracy and the rule of law in Iraq.

Faily highlighted the importance of discussing the future of Iraq, once DAESH is defeated, as crucial in sustaining peace and stability in the long term. Following Salim Al Jabouri's speech, referring to the title of the panel, he stated: "We are here to talk about the future of Iraq and the issue of a lasting settlement that will promote stability in Iraq."

Can regional dynamics ever benefit political settlement and stability in Iraq?

Salim Al Jabouri

Speaker of Parliament, Government of Iraq



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The solution is to build a country where everyone refers to the constitution to achieve political goals.

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Addressing domestic and regional issues that will need to be solved in the aftermath of the conflict against DAESH, Salim Al Jabouri, the federal government of Iraq's Speaker of Parliament, emphasized the need for the effective participation of locals in the political process. Iraq's problems are not Iraq's alone; rather, in order to be solved, they require a security exchange with other countries. A number of issues need to be addressed; while fighting corruption is important, there is also a need to pave the way for reconciliation in terms of political and economic issues, as well as the provision of services. The war against DAESH would hopefully end soon, but a new era of political struggle will replace it. Therefore, it is important to understand the role of armed groups in future political processes in Iraq. Questions about the licensing of political parties, especially those who took up arms against DAESH, need to be answered. Speaking broadly, he noted that while it is important that these parties have an agenda, it must be ensured that they do not impose their ideologies on the Iraqi population. A civil state is the only type of state capable of helping Iraq achieve unity. Such a goal can be reached through the promotion of state institutions and adherence to the Iraqi Constitution, which serves as the highest form of legislation.

Responding to a question about political unity in the parliament, he noted that the Council of Representatives had been able to overcome all ethnic and religious differences, but that this kind of inclusiveness had not spread to all branches of the government.

Adil Abdelmahdi

Former Vice President, Government of Iraq



“

***If we can fight
DAESH together,
then why can't we
solve our other
issues together?***

”

Discussing the historical roots of Iraq's crises, Adil Abdelmahdi, former Vice President of Iraq, acknowledged that the challenges Iraq now faces are not limited to a specific time or space, but rather have been compounded over many years. During the Ottoman period, rulers approached leadership with a systematic balance of freedom and oppression spread across geographical areas. However, after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the maps that were drawn dividing the region disrupted the balance that the Ottomans had created. Iraq and the region subsequently went through cycles of relative stability and instability. The relative stability that existed before 2003 in Iraq was upset by the fall of Saddam Hussein and exacerbated by events after 2007. With the creation of a new constitution in Iraq, greater efforts were made to expand and protect the rights of a wider range of ethnic and religious groups, including through the creation of provisional councils and legislative bodies. He implied that Iraq still had a long way to go to achieve greater inclusivity, listing minority protection as a priority.

Abdelmahdi acknowledged that Iraq faced threats to both internal and regional cohesion. Internally, achieving greater levels of inclusivity and cooperation is difficult because of the vast number of religious and ethnic minorities; externally, DAESH aims to deepen cleavages not only between different Islamic doctrines, but also between Iraq and other Arab countries. He recommended a balance between regional cooperation with Turkey and Iran and domestic cooperation between the Peshmerga and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Regional and domestic efforts need to be undertaken to mitigate security and economic issues stemming from low oil prices and the war against DAESH.

Louis Raffael Sako

Chaldean Patriarch



It is important to establish a civil democratic government in Iraq and separate politics from religion to protect the diversity of the Iraqi society.

The Chaldean Patriarch, His Beatitude Louis Raffael Sako, discussed ways to enrich the diversity of the Iraqi community. He expressed the need for a solution that includes all Iraqis. Frustration among Iraqis (especially the disenfranchisement of minorities, such as Christians) is, he argued, the main cause of the rise of DAESH in the country. If Iraq is to become a state in which people are not discriminated against on the basis of minority or majority status, then there needs to be a clear separation between religion and politics. Religion, he claimed, is based on principles, while politics are based on interest. Iraq needs a civil, modern, and democratic state that ends majority versus minority narrative. With respect to the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), there must also be a civic, democratic, and pluralistic system.

Sako concluded by reiterating that the church's role is in the church, citing the example of Europe as a success story in developing its sovereignty and stability through the separation of religion and governance. He urged Iraqis to consider the role of their Constitution in a post-DAESH political environment. The religious-political narrative, he advised, should not be provocative, but rather respectful of everyone. Furthermore, the education curriculum—whether religious or national—needed to be amended to shed a positive light on these issues. He concluded by calling on the political elite to prioritize public over personal interests and encourage greater participation of qualified individuals, including women, in the political system.

Fuad Hussein

Chief of Staff, Office of the Presidency,
Kurdistan Regional Government



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To foster a shift from a community-based state to a state for citizens, we need a liberal philosophy and respect for human rights.

”

Fuad Hussein, the Chief of Staff in the Office of the Presidency of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), began his discussion by posing a number of questions related to the issue of statehood of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Can the concept of “settlement”—as per the present panel’s title—lead to a new future for Iraq? Is there an agreement on the essence or nature of a future state, and if so, who is party to this agreement? Would the state be one of citizens, for citizens, or one governed along communal, ethno-religious lines? Iraq, he asserted, is currently the latter, and politics mirror those inter-community dynamics. The most dangerous outcome to the present conflict has in fact been the militarization of those ethno-religious communities, leading to further fragmentation. Greater efforts to protect Iraq’s diversity and to promote human and women’s rights, will be key in mending state-citizen relations and fostering reconciliation.

Disclaiming that he did not aim to draw a rigid analogy between the formation of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) and a historical event, he referenced the divisions that formed in Iraq after the 1958 coup. Originally inspired by the communist ideology, coup leader Abdul Karim Qasim later faced resistance from two opposed groups, weakening opposition: the communist party and the Iraqi Army. Likewise, after the 1963 coup, a similar balancing act was undertaken with the creation of the Republican Guard as the ideological counterweight to the Iraqi Army—a formation that set the two groups on a collision course.



Hussein acknowledged Prime Minister Abadi's discussion of the importance of a strong central government and military, while also highlighting his belief that there is strength in the limbs. In the aftermath of the conflict with DAESH, the PMF's objectives might clash with other ideologies in Iraq, but it will be essential to consider different and opposing ideologies to foster unity. He differentiated between identity issues and political issues, noting that there was no problem with identity—such as those

of Iraqis or Kurds—but rather with the politics surrounding the inclusion of those identities. Hussein expressed his concern that in the attempt to abolish a state of components, there was a risk that the presence of a decision-making majority would create tension with minorities, which would spur further discontent between Baghdad and Kurdistan.

Aram Shaykh Muhammed

Deputy Speaker of Parliament,
Government of Iraq



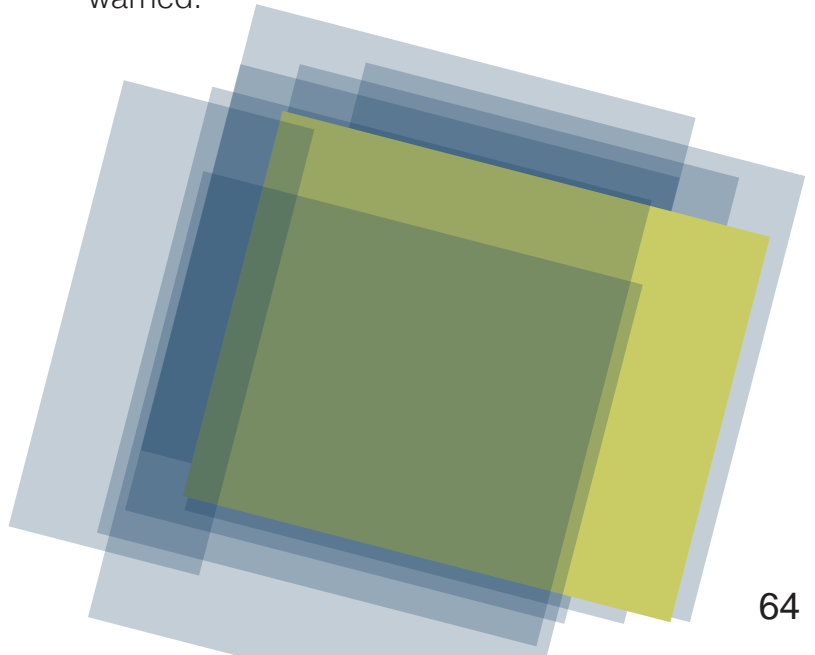
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***The most dangerous
way to deal with
political conflicts is
to delay them.***

”

Aram Shaykh Muhammed, Deputy Speaker of Parliament of the federal government of Iraq, started his discussion by highlighting the importance of addressing the issues that allowed the emergence of DAESH in Iraq. Such a focus is necessary to shape a long-term settlement for stability.

It is essential, he argued, to adopt new attitudes and dialogue in order to de-escalate political tensions between Erbil and Baghdad. Issues to be solved include the split of oil revenues, disputed territories, the place of the Peshmerga within the security apparatus, as well as the political participation of the Kurds in Baghdad. In addition, he emphasized an urgent need for honest and serious dialogue on the population that is displaced in the Kurdistan Region, and the payment of civil servants in the Kurdistan Region, both of which pose serious challenges to stability. “The most dangerous way to deal with political conflicts is to delay them,” he warned.



Mina Al Oraibi

Fellow, Institute for State Effectiveness



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Unfortunately, it has been hard for Iraq to find a good neighbor in the region.

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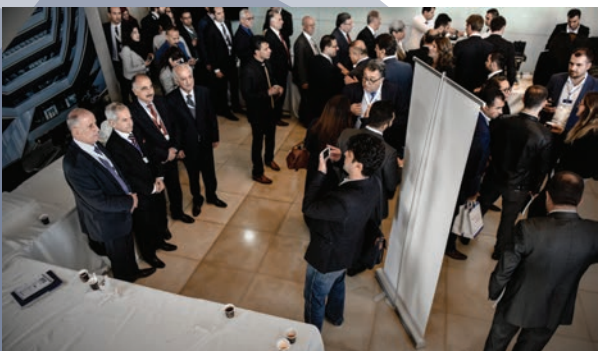
Mina Al Oraibi, a fellow at the Institute for State Effectiveness, highlighted the difficulty for Iraq to identify its national interests and pursue them in the way most modern states do.

She pointed to the failure of the international community in promoting state building in Iraq in previous years. Favoring certain groups over others has had counter-productive effects on the development of good governance practices. Regionally, neighboring states have also failed to support stability in Iraq and Syria, contributing positively only when assistance coincided with their own strategic interests.

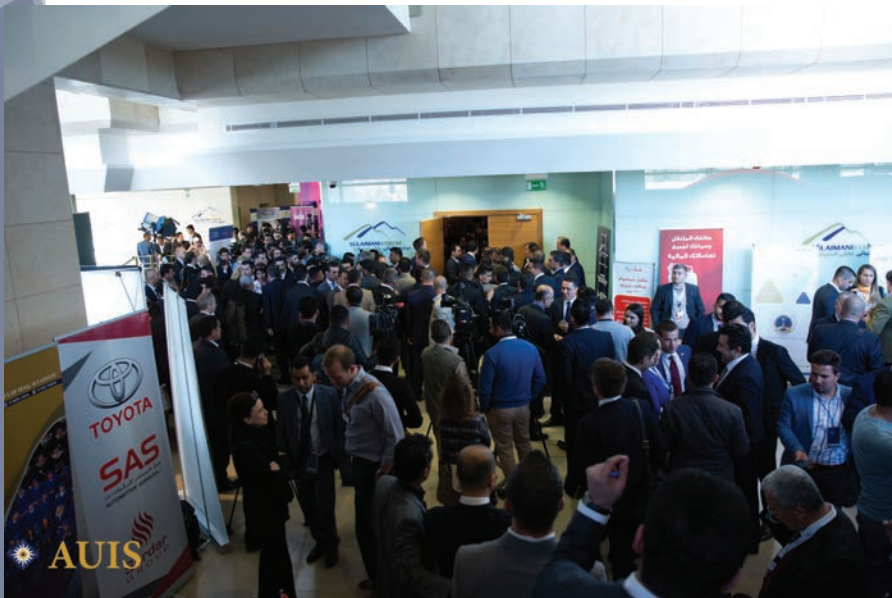
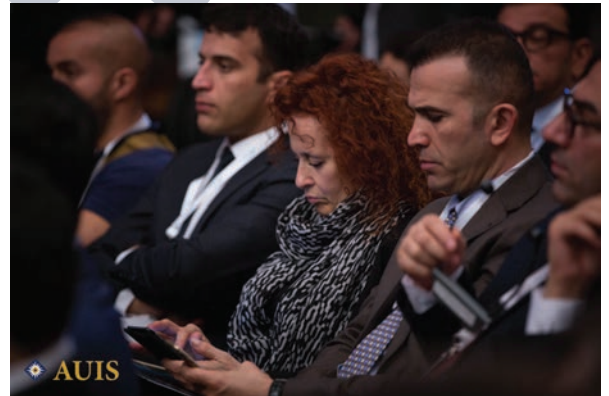
For Iraq to recover after DAESH, Oraibi stated that, there is a need for, on the one hand, international support for reconstruction and, on the other, serious Iraqi national reflection on the issues that allowed the rise of DAESH and plagued the country for years. Iraqis must assess and discuss mistakes of the past to move forward.

She concluded by stating that while stability, from a security perspective, is important, domestic reform will also be necessary to ensure durable peace.



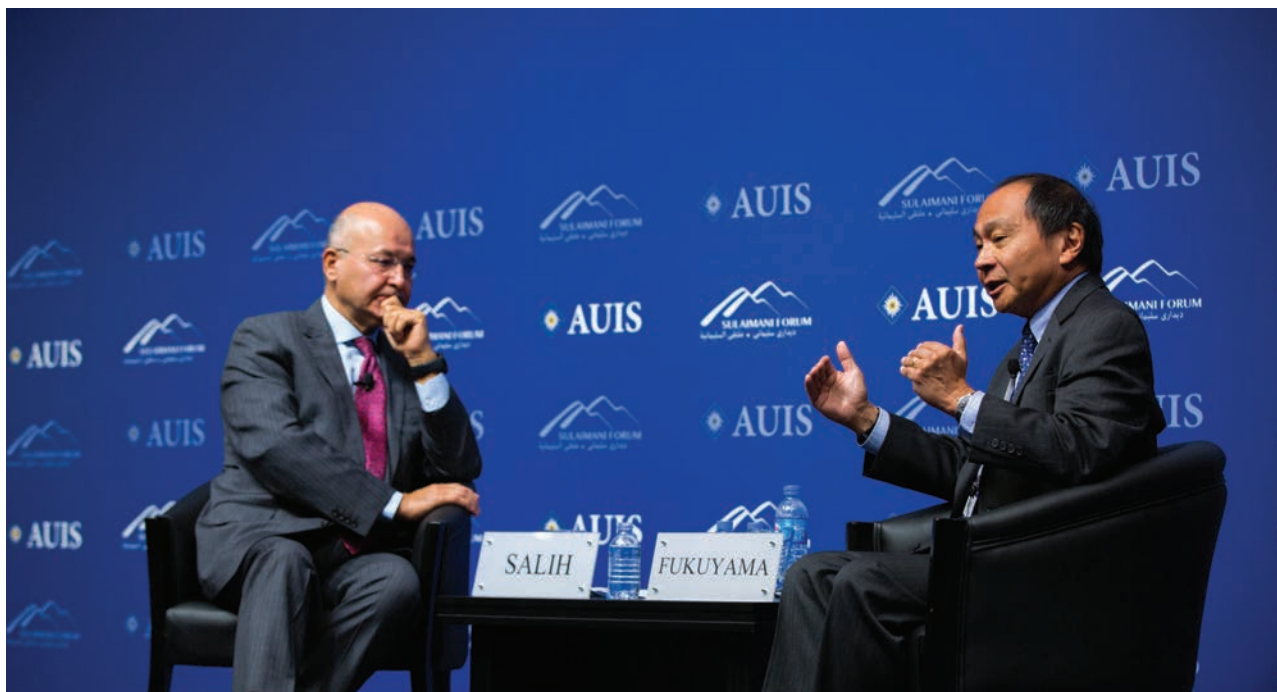








Prospects for Governance Reform



A Conversation with

Barham Salih, Founder and member of the Board of Trustees, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani

Francis Fukuyama, Olivier Nomellini Senior Fellow and Mosbacher Director, Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, Stanford University



“

Ultimately, the only solution to the problems in this region is a form of liberalism that removes religion from politics while protecting the right to a religious identity.

”

Barham Salih opened the conversation by introducing Francis Fukuyama as an intellectual icon. Salih then presented Fukuyama's *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992) thesis as follows: the triumph of liberal democracy over other models of governance signifies the end of evolution for human societies. “Has liberal democracy truly triumphed or does there exist a higher form of political order?” Salih asked. Fukuyama replied that he still believed the liberal democracy, with a market-oriented economy, to be unrivalled as the last step of development for human societies. One possible alternative, he nuanced, might become the Chinese authoritarian capitalism model. At this point in time, however, we cannot assess how sustainable that model is.

Salih then followed with a question on the impact of American engagement for democratization and governance in Iraq and Afghanistan. Fukuyama answered by highlighting the importance of state building in securing long-term military gains. Terrorism, he argued, cannot be countered without a coherent, legitimate Iraqi state. In this sense, America's inability to foster such a state over the past decade has been, in his opinion, its greatest foreign policy weakness.

Moving the discussion from security to governance, Salih asked Fukuyama to assess prospects for political developments in the region. The former answered by describing modern political order with three key elements: (1) monopoly of force, not in military terms, but

Governance is both more difficult to achieve and more consequential for citizens than democracy. Holding elections is easy; honoring their spirit and outcome through accountability and representativeness is much harder.



also as the ability to deliver services and fairly deploy resources to citizens; (2) the rule of law; and (3) democratic accountability. Democracy is the easiest part for states to achieve: it is easy to hold elections, but much more difficult to build state institutions and implement the rule of law necessary to limit those institutions.

In a world where the liberal democratic model has reached unprecedented levels of expansion, corruption, Fukuyama contended, has replaced democracy as the world's major political divide. The 1990's saw a sharp increase in the number of democratic countries –moving from 35 then to around 115 today. In this sense, while the 20th century world order was split between democratic and non-democratic states, he explained, the 21st century is largely sectioned between

personal and impersonal states. The quality of democracy has become the main issue. He used the example of Russia, where there are elections, but governance remains based on personal interests—rampant cronyism that has reached the core of the regime. Political leaders do not serve the broad public interest, but extract resources for themselves and their families or networks.

In the same vein, Fukuyama added “democracy can be the enemy of good governance when it leads to the election of politicians running patronage networks.” A government that governs well is one that, for example, provides uninterrupted electricity to its citizens; this is not characteristic of democratic states exclusively. China and Singapore, for example, brought electricity to their countries long before

holding elections. Good governance without democracy, as those two examples however show, has led to a lack of accountability and legitimacy in the long term.

Bringing up Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*, Salih asked Fukuyama to discuss the current state of the "clash of civilizations" in the context of the global response to the threat posed by DAESH and of relations between the West and the Muslim world. Fukuyama responded with a warning that the fear rhetoric used by increasingly prominent populist leaders can have an impact on inter-community perceptions and incite intolerance in Muslim communities both abroad and in the Middle East.

Advising on how to mend relations between the West and the Muslim world, Fukuyama called for a return to the subtler approaches of the Bush and Obama administrations. Some Muslims, but not all, adhere to extremist views and movements and must be met with military force. To effectively counter terrorism, however, acknowledging that terrorists represent a very small part of the population is important. Also key in winning any war on terror is gaining the sympathy of the majority of moderate citizens. Current American policies do exactly the opposite: they stereotype people in a way that will be detrimental to American interests in the Middle East.

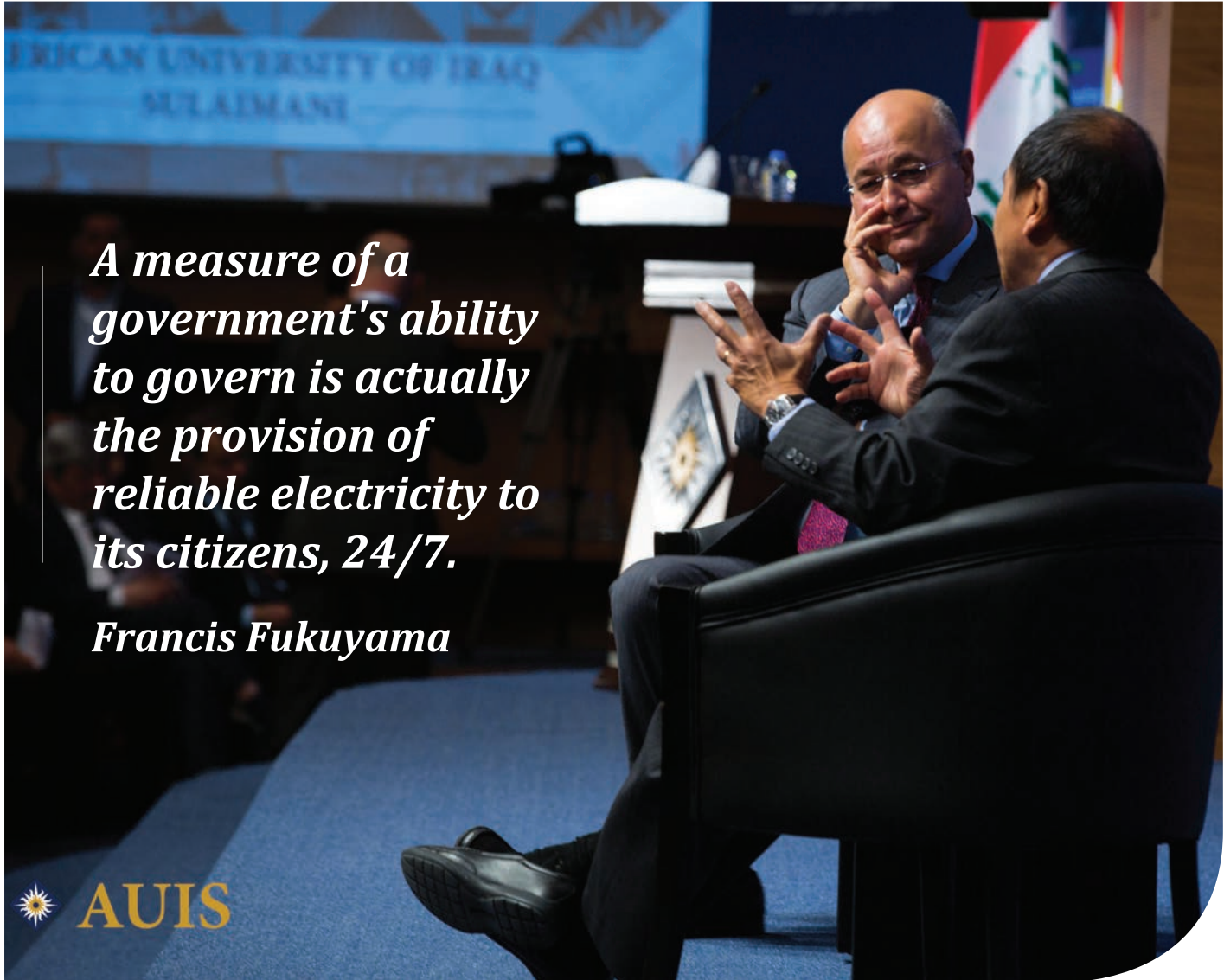
On topics of religion and governance, Fukuyama highlighted the importance of sectarian conflict within Islam, and claimed

that the only way of ending violence would be the adoption of liberalism as a political system that would remove religion from politics in a way that also protects people's religious identity. Political secularism is not a Western idea, but rather a concept that came about as a realization, following a series of wars, that if sectarianism and religion endured as the basis of governance in pluralistic societies, stability would be impossible.



Similarly, touching upon the question of identity politics, Fukuyama argued that the Middle East was currently at a juncture similar to that where Europe found itself in the late 19th century. Industrialization had then caused an identity crisis among the population, which in turn led

to the rise of extreme forms of nationalism. Today the Middle East is experiencing a similar shift, in which the spread of modern technology and migration have changed cultural points of reference, creating a similar identity gap, and one that could be filled by Islamism.

A photograph of Francis Fukuyama speaking at a podium. He is wearing a dark suit and glasses, gesturing with his hands while speaking. The background shows a banner for the 'AFRICAN UNIVERSITY OF IRAQ' and a flag. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

***A measure of a
government's ability
to govern is actually
the provision of
reliable electricity to
its citizens, 24/7.***

Francis Fukuyama

Finally, answering a question about the state of democracy in the United States, Fukuyama reluctantly expressed worry about his own country, stating that he had not experienced a moment in his life in which fundamental democratic institutions were under sustained attack, as they have been over in the past year.

Opening a question and answers session with the audience, Lukman Faily, former Iraqi Ambassador to the United States, asked about the trajectory of populism in Iraq, wondering if it was likely to converge with global trends. Also on the topic of populism, Qubad Talabani, the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) Deputy Prime Minister, remarked on the strength of populist rationale in the Kurdistan Region and asked about ways of balancing reforms in this context. Fukuyama replied by arguing that populism exists in all societies, in cyclical ways. Crises, he concluded, have often been necessary to root out causes of populism. In the meantime, efforts must be made to address populist discontent with immigration, income inequality, deindustrialization, and loss of income for the working class.

Basat Oztürk, Turkish Deputy Undersecretary of Defense, asked about the importance of preserving strong states in the Middle East.

Fukuyama responded that finding a balance in state strength is key to democratic governance. In the context of a coup attempt for example, while the capacity to fight terrorism and destabilizing elements seems legitimate, he questioned the necessity for the widespread arrest of journalists and academics.

Amre Moussa, former Secretary-General of the Arab League, asked Fukuyama to globally contextualize Islam. Fukuyama reiterated his original critique of Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* posture, arguing that most people do not think of themselves in civilizational terms—in the case of Islam, the Muslim *umma* identity—but rather associate with community or political identities, such as “Kurd,” “Arab,” “Iraqi,” or “Syrian.” Fukuyama acknowledged the influence of civilizational cultural idiosyncrasies on models of governance, but claimed that differences within civilizational units have more impact on how political societies are organized.

Salih closed the discussion asserting: “there is no end of history, history will go on.” The challenges facing the Middle East, he finally added, represent opportunities for change, for people to shape the future of history.

Crisis of Governance & Imperative of Reform

Moderated by **Thamir Ghadban**
Former Minister of Oil, Government of Iraq

Naufel Al Hassan

Deputy Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's Office,
Government of Iraq

Amanj Rahim

Chief of Staff, Council of Ministers, Kurdistan
Regional Government

Sherko Jawdat

Member of Parliament, Kurdistan Regional
Government

Carl Gershman

President, National Endowment for Democracy

Tamara Cofman Wittes

Senior Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy,
Brookings Institution

The optimism that accompanied the liberation of Iraq and later the Arab Spring has quickly given way to political torpor, as the promises of institutional reform, improved governance, and economic growth have failed to materialize. Regional states continue to face long-standing domestic challenges while struggling with the huge security challenges posed by DAESH and other extremist groups. This panel spoke to the challenges faced by states in the Middle East in moving to a virtuous political and economic cycle, and suggested strategies to cement lasting reform.

Thamir Ghadhban

Former Minister of Oil, Government of Iraq



Thamir Ghadhban is an Iraqi civil servant and politician. He has been specializing in the oil industry since the early 1970s. After the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, he became Chief Executive Officer of the Ministry of Oil, and then served as Minister of Oil in the interim government of Prime Minister Ayad Allawi.

He opened the panel with a brief discussion of the aftermath of the fall of Saddam Hussein's regime and the Arab Spring. In both instances, he asserted, the youth expressed hopes and dreams for a better life, greater job opportunities, democracy, and good governance. Today, however, the struggle against terrorism in most states of the Middle East overshadows hopes for better governance models. In this context, he prompted the panelists to both ponder the challenges to governance reform in the region and offer insights on success prospects.

***A heavy
bureaucracy is the
main challenge to
good governance in
Iraq today.***

Naufel Al Hassan

Deputy Chief of Staff, Prime Minister's
Office, Government of Iraq



***It is not merely
about building
institutions,
but also about
building trust.***

Naufel Al Hassan, Deputy Chief of Staff to the Prime Minister of Iraq, began with an assessment of Iraq's legal system, pejoratively noting that most laws in place were adopted under Saddam Hussein, in the 1970s and 1980s. He argued that those legislative documents were not appropriate tools to overcome the challenges of a post-2003 free market system. Today, the economy requires a different legal framework—a realization that has prompted reforms in the government and parliament. Of the 54 laws that the government recently proposed, 12 have already been approved, three have been rejected, and the rest are still pending consideration. He implied that such actions were just the beginning; hundreds of laws needed to be changed.

Specifically addressing foreign investment, he relayed an initiative launched by the Prime Minister's office, with the support of international financial institutions such as the World Bank, to make it easier for foreign capital to be invested in Iraq. Lamenting the position that Iraq usually held at the bottom of World Bank's "Ease of Doing Business" reports, he noted that this initiative focuses on eliminating unnecessary red tape and optimizing processes. According to a study led by the Prime Minister's office, he argued, 80 percent of challenges to investment stem from excessive bureaucracy, and not from corruption. Discussing the "large government" issue, Hassan argued that it would be addressed through a long-term strategy aimed at moving people from the public sector toward the private sector.



Nonetheless acknowledging the problem of corruption, Hassan stated that Iraq can neither succeed in governance without trust between the public and the government nor in reform unless Iraqis accept the price of reform. The process of reform is not one undertaken by the government alone, but rather a mutual

commitment between the public, elites, NGOs, and the government itself. One way to achieve this is for politicians to cease the constant cycle of campaigning. He concluded by expressing agreement with Fukuyama, noting that unless there were some sort of shock to the system, there was unlikely to be any change.

Amanj Rahim

Chief of Staff, Council of Ministers,
Kurdistan Regional Government



“

We will be continuing the reform process as soon as the Parliament starts working again.

”

Amanj Rahim, Chief of Staff to the Council of Ministers of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), responded to Ghadhban's question regarding the process of reform through legislative amendments. Rahim asserted that there were many similarities between Baghdad and Erbil in this respect, and that there were four main priorities for reform: (1) amendments to laws; (2) registration procedures; (3) tackling corruption; and (4) austerity measures.

Elaborating on his first point, he noted that before 2014, the KRG operated ineffectively. Today, there are around 1,400,000 people receiving salaries from the government, which is astonishing given a population of 5 million. Compounding this economic burden, there are currently over 2 million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Syria and Iraq living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). According to World Bank figures, the cost of harboring those refugees and IDPs for the KRG has been approximately \$1.5 billion per year. This difficult economic situation has forced the KRG to seriously assess its policies and address crucial issues, such as those of transparency and accountability. The KRG has hired top accounting firms, such as Deloitte and Ernst & Young, to monitor its oil and gas revenues and expenditures. It is also the KRG's Council of Oil and Gas's intention to share the results of those studies with the population of the KRI. In Iraq and the KRI, accounting legislations had not been changed since the 1940s. As a result, it was difficult for international oil and gas companies to use those outdated accounting tools. The World



Bank, Rahim highlighted, is playing a key role in supporting the KRG's efforts and advising policymakers on how to adapt this legislative system to modern standards. Work remains to be done, however, to eliminate opportunities for abuses of power by bureaucrats.

Regarding registration, Rahim noted that the biometric registration should address many of the corruption issues related to social security and pensions. On tackling corruption, the final draft of a national strategy—prepared with the help of the Westminster Foundation in the United Kingdom—has been received by

the Council of Ministers. Furthermore, prior to 2014, there had been no public procurement regulations—an issue that was now being resolved. Rahim noted that mechanisms exist, but the major problem lies with implementation.

Rahim concluded by drawing attention to how reform in the public payroll system, as well as austerity measures, can yield results: between 2013 and 2016, public expenditure amounted to an average of IQD 18 billion annually. Today, it amounts to a mere IQD 5 billion.

Sherko Jawdat

Member of Parliament, Kurdistan
Regional Government



***Education, civil
society, and
media have
indispensable
roles to play in
society.***

Sherko Jawdat, a Member of Parliament in the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), discussed the benefits of good governance in relation to democracy and civil society. He expressed his belief that while there is a need for the establishment of good governance practices within the government, it does not take away the need for “democracy” – that government should be representative of its citizens’ will – and awareness of civil society. He claimed that strategic governance mistakes had been made in both Iraq and the Kurdistan Region in the past. The lack of trust and self-confidence and a misunderstanding of what good governance means has led the KRG down this path.

Concepts of transparency, accountability, rule of law, and participation in decision making represent international standards for good governance. Jawdat discussed the importance of strategic monitoring through the use of indicators to assess the quality of governance. One negative indicator, in his view, is the continued predominance of special, personal interests over the public interest. Such an indicator provides impetus for legislative reforms that would limit opportunities for corruption. Another indicator on which the KRG scores poorly is private sector productivity and growth. This is a direct consequence of over-reliance on formerly abundant oil and gas revenues. Other indicators include sub-optimal use of resources and lack of transparency, visible through the limited access to information enjoyed by KRG citizens.

Jawdat noted that the 50-year old anti-corruption and auditing laws had become obsolete. He also criticized the fact that many KRG officials lack the skills to manage large public funds. Furthermore, the current war against DAESH impedes a political environment conducive to good governance. Those in leadership positions should work toward stability instead of abusing power. Furthermore, education and media are necessary to keep civil society aware.

Touching upon the question of Erbil-Baghdad relations, Jawdat petitioned for the adoption of a “national plan.” The parliament, government, and other state institutions should cooperate to achieve stability, agree on the bases of rule of law, and establish monitoring and assessment mechanisms. Achieving this will require wisdom, courage and willingness, as well as an understanding that reforms may be difficult to enact in the short run. Transitional justice, to ensure inter-community reconciliation and lasting stability, will also be necessary.



Carl Gershman

President, National Endowment for Democracy



“

If Iraq can make it, if it can hold itself together, it will be extremely important for the region.

”

Carl Gershman, President of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), opened his discussion by responding to Ghadhban's question of whether or not he saw progress with regards to governance in the Middle East. He noted that it was a difficult moment for democracy not only in Iraq and the region, but throughout the world. Democracy, he explained, is threatened in the face of (1) resurgent authoritarianism, or the increasing prominence of Russia, China, and other authoritarian powers; (2) the retreat of Western power and influence abroad; (3) the growth of terrorism and its use by illiberal forces to justify crackdowns; and finally, (4) a crisis of modern democracy in its heartland, the United States.

“I have reasons to be somewhat hopeful,” he however said. “First, this is a country that has really moved forward after a terrible past.” Relaying an anecdote about his visit to the *Amna Suraka* Museum in Sulaimani, he expressed his amazement that a country could get rid of a regime as brutal as that of Saddam Hussein's. This represents a step forward in the right direction.

Since 2003, Iraq has nonetheless suffered from problems related to governance, corruption, and incomplete control over instruments of force, which has led to violent conflicts such as the one against DAESH today. Nevertheless, Iraq has not fallen apart. “Democracy,” he claimed, “is a [...] long-term process that requires [...] small steps and the work of civil society.” For example, a democracy cannot tackle corruption unless it has a court system that understands how to prosecute



corruption. Fukuyama, who sits on NED's Board, often discusses capacity building—an essential element of civil society. Gershman stated that civil society had the dual purpose of increasing pressure on the government and working with the government to find a balance between supply of capacity and demand for services.

In the context of the current military offensive to regain Mosul, Gershman continued to highlight the importance of planning and support for post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation. Presenting NED's work in the country, most particularly in Nineveh, Anbar, and Salahaddin, he underscored the importance of involving the younger generation in those processes. Examples of NED's activities in Iraq include the

formation of functioning local legislatures, the stimulation of the private sector to foster economic recovery, and the support of labor unions to work toward the defense of workers' rights.

Gershman concluded on a positive note, stating that if Iraq could work out ethno-sectarian divisions, it could become a model for other countries in the region. He referenced Al Rubaie's remarks on the need to combat ideologies of hate, and affirmed that the clash within civilizations is more prominent than the one between civilizations. There is a need for strong Muslim educators to offer an alternative narrative for success in the modern world.

Tamara Cofman Wittes

Senior Fellow, Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution



Western governments should avoid mistakes of the past, such as a military-only strategies and support for authoritarian, 'stable' states.

Tamara Cofman Wittes, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution's Center for Middle East Policy, prefaced her discussion by praising the fact that this fifth annual Sulaimani Forum focused on durable solutions to “underlying challenges of which extremism and civil war are the symptoms.” Governance deficits in the Middle East, she claimed, are an old story. The region has a legacy of failed attempts to reform governments, which have fostered a deficit of social trust.

Over several decades, prior to 2011, the United States, Europe, and most G8 countries have attempted to promote reform in the region. The way those reforms have been enacted, however, worsened the social trust problem: rather than investing efforts toward the creation of a more inclusive social contract, efforts were made to renegotiate the social contract among elites. Governments sold public assets to those who had access and wealth, shrank public sector employment without unleashing the potential of a wider private sector, restraining it once again to those who had wealth and access, and brought business elites into politics instead of opening the political process to the youth and women. This story of failed reform is key today, because it explains cynicism among the population, who remains skeptical of the government's ability to solve problems. She warned that the drivers that built up before 2011 still exist today. Despite opportunities for change, educated young people with aspirations for themselves and their countries are still falling victim to exclusionary economics.



Wittes listed four recommendations for the improvement of governance practices in the Middle East. First, she noted that the future of the region would be determined by its quality of governance, “not just by the fact of government.” Inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability should be the main objectives of governance reforms. Second, she advised that the trust deficit in the Middle East means that governance models must be decentralized. Strong, centralized governments will not earn the trust of cynical citizens. Given the effects of civil war and “warlordism,” we cannot expect one man, or one family, to sustainably rule a country. Third, she highlighted the need for human capital. Elections are not enough. It is the people who populate the process and institutions that matter; building the skills within communities for dialogue and conflict resolution is key to success. Events such as the

Sulaimani Forum, she noted, provide exactly the type of platform necessary for this dialogue to take place. In this sense, despite all of the challenges it is facing, Iraq, as opposed to many other states in the region, has the doors open for dialogue and reform.

Wittes concluded by addressing a message to “outsiders.” The United States and European governments are focused on fighting DAESH, but they must keep in mind that stability of many states is superficial and could contain the seeds of future violence. Western governments should avoid mistakes of the past, such as a military-only strategies and support for authoritarian, “stable” states. Rather, Western governments need to be prepared to invest in durable solutions in the Middle East.

Qubad Talabani

Deputy Prime Minister, Kurdistan
Regional Government



***Public sector
culture within the
KRG is sometimes
hostile to private
sector growth and
development.***

Qubad Talabani, the Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), opened by stating: “Last year [at the fourth annual Sulaimani Forum], I talked about an economic crisis in the Kurdistan Region fuelled by the drop in oil prices. Last year, the Kurdistan Region was close to collapse [...]. This year, I am very happy to say that we have started to implement the necessary reforms to address the situation.” Talabani proceeded with a detailed explanation of specific reforms that the KRG had implemented. The first is the balancing of revenues and expenses. He noted that some of the KRG’s expenses had been reduced; at the same time, the government had tried to increase non-oil revenues. In 2014, the budgetary gap neared \$7 billion; by the end of 2016, it had decreased to \$1 billion. Talabani expressed confidence that by next year, the KRG will be registering a budgetary surplus, to be used for investment.

In the same vein, the KRG is aiming to increase taxation by installing six customs points in the region —two in airports in Sulaimani and Erbil, and four on land borders. The previous system was outdated, but thanks to the support from international financial institutions, the KRG is now using an updated electronic system. Such reforms are essential to the improvement of government transparency and efficiency. More efforts would be undertaken to ensure that the KRG meets international standards and increases tax revenue. Furthermore, a new accounting system has been adopted for the Ministry of Finance. Finally, the KRG is also in the process of linking ministries together and paying salaries electronically.



Talabani noted that the KRG is working with the World Bank to improve electricity infrastructure. The problem lies not with electricity production, but with distribution. In an effort to solve the problem, the government has started to evaluate how electricity distribution could be privatized to achieve more efficiency.

Regarding electronic salary distribution, Talabani stated that last year during the Sulaimani Forum, he mentioned the use of a biometric system to collect information on civil servants. Now, he stated, 90 percent of the KRG's employees have registered through the biometric system. This will further the KRG's efforts to increase transparency and reduce unnecessary public payroll expenditures.

Talabani concluded his speech by stating that poor governance had created a lack of trust among Kurds. Circling back to Rahim's discussion of the KRG's plan to publicize auditing reports on oil and gas revenues, he stressed the need for the developing economy of the Kurdistan Region to diversify itself and move beyond fossil fuel resources exploitation. Once the economic and security crises are addressed, the KRG plans on promoting growth and job creation in the industry, tourism, and agriculture sectors. "Next year," he concluded, "I will tell you about those achievements."

Building the Future: Job Creation and Sustainable Economic Growth

Moderated by Abdulwahab Alkebsi

Deputy Director of Programs, Center for International Private Enterprise

Bayad Jamal

CEO, Bayad Corporation; AUIS Alumnus

Abdulrazzaq Al Essa

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; Acting Minister of Finance, Government of Iraq

Christine van den Toorn

Director, Institute of Regional and International Studies, AUIS

Mahdi Alaq

Council of Ministers, Government of Iraq

Qubad Talabani

Deputy Prime Minister, Kurdistan Regional Government

Douglas A Silliman

United States Ambassador to Iraq

The stability of Iraq, the Kurdistan Region, as well as the wider Middle East depends on the promotion and sustaining of economic growth and job creation. Iraq and other states are in desperate need of increased investment, both domestic and foreign, and of a revitalization of the private sector in order to ease the fiscal burden on already overstretched government budgets and to reduce reliance on hydrocarbon revenues. But this flow of funds has been held back by institutional weakness, lack of transparency and uncertain investment environments. This panel explored the key reforms that need to be put in place and way through which those reforms can be effectively implemented and secured.

Abdulwahab Alkebsi

Deputy Director of Programs, Center for International Private Enterprise



We cannot win the peace without winning the youth.

Abdulwahab Alkebsi is the Deputy Director for Programs at the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), a non-profit affiliate of the United States Chamber of Commerce and one of the four core institutes of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED). Prior to joining CIPE, Alkebsi served as the Director of the Middle East and North Africa division at the NED.

He opened the panel by framing the fight against DAESH as an opportunity to rebuild the Iraqi state. Echoing H.E. Prime Minister Haider Al Abadi's statement that war could not be won without winning the peace, Alkebsi added that engaging the youth, through education and job opportunities, would be key to winning the peace. Iraq is one of the youngest countries of the world: 60 percent of Iraqis are under the age of 24 and over 50 percent of the people living in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) are under the age of 20. This is both an opportunity and a challenge. According to the World Bank, 35 percent of the youths are currently unemployed. Among those 35 percent, a large share is highly educated. In this sense, there is a need to create more links between education institutions and the job market.

Bayad Jamal

Bayad Corporation; AUIS Alumnus



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The lack of solid economic indicators is causing us to shoot in the dark when it comes to private sector reform.

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Alkebsi asked Bayad Jamal, Chief Executive Officer of Bayad General Trading Co. (Samsung) and an alumnus of the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), about the state of the workforce in Iraq, given the statistics above. Why are so many educated young people unemployed? What should be done to generate more jobs for those youths? Addressing how to resolve the demand and supply issue, Jamal listed the problems facing the private sector and youth employment prospects.

Private sector growth in Iraq, he argued, faces many obstacles related to monetary and fiscal policies. Private sector companies claim that universities are not producing graduates with the relevant skill set to respond to the needs of the job market. The private sector also struggles to grow due to the bureaucracy, and lack of coordination between Baghdad and Erbil on issues like the taxation system. This hurts the profit margins of companies and the purchasing power of consumers.

Jamal affirmed other Sulaimani Forum participants' point that the lack of proper economic indicators for both the government and the private sector makes it difficult to successfully implement reform.

Abdulrazzaq Al Essa

Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; Acting Minister of Finance,
Government of Iraq



We need to separate universities from political movements. Universities should be platforms for science and culture to flourish.

Abdulrazzaq Al Essa, Iraq's Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, discussed measures being undertaken by his ministry to prepare youths for the job market. "In thinking about rehabilitating youth, we must think about the rehabilitation of the community." This is especially relevant in a context where Iraqi educational institutions have been negatively impacted by nepotistic recruitment practices under Baathist rule. Those continue to have a negative impact on the younger generation's access to quality education.

In describing the dire state of Iraqi education, Al Essa cited the Davos Education Index, which places Iraq at the level of countries that do not have proper educational institutions. After 2003, while steps had been taken toward strategic planning in education, they were not fully implemented. Today, the ministry has developed a strategy that will focus on five main pillars: students; curriculum; administration; scientific research; and graduates.

With regards to curriculum reform, Al Essa stated his ministry had begun a process to change the course system. The government has also started to assess ways of reconciling private sector needs with skills taught in schools. Highlighting the agricultural industry, he stated that his ministry had begun discussions with deans from agriculture schools to ensure that students were learning the skills necessary to support the sector. Al Essa emphasized the need to make universities independent of political parties, and that progress has been made in fighting nepotism in academic appointment processes.

Finally, he underscored the efforts of the Prime Minister's office in launching a loan program for youths wishing to acquire relevant skills and start their own businesses.

Christine van den Toorn

Director, Institute of Regional and International Studies, AUIS



AUIS has had employment rates of 70 to 90 percent over the past several years. Our curriculum and Career Services Center prepare students for the private sector.

Christine van den Toorn, the Director of the Institute of Regional and International Studies (IRIS) at the American University of Iraq, Sulaimani (AUIS), presented AUIS as a case study for how to successfully prepare students for employment, especially in the private sector. In 2014, she noted that AUIS had a 90 percent employment rate among graduates, and today despite the economic crisis around 70 percent of alumni were employed and ten percent were in graduate school. As the government shrinks and public sector employment opportunities diminish with reform, an emphasis on teaching students the skills necessary for private sector careers is increasingly important.

van den Toorn described three ways AUIS prepares its students to be productive members of the workforce after graduation. First, van den Toorn explained that the AUIS curriculum is based on a progressive pedagogy that teaches both critical thinking and professional skills. The business and information technology curricula, as well as the core curriculum, have prepared students for jobs at prestigious firms such as Ernst & Young, Deloitte, General Electric and in the investment and banking sectors. AUIS alumni are prepared to enter sectors that contribute to reform in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI).

A second factor of success is AUIS's Career Services Center. van den Toorn recalled that the first internship program set up by AUIS in its early years was at an oil company; now around a dozen students have worked for that company and, last year, over 60 percent of AUIS students



had internships during the summer. Some were employed by the companies at which they had interned after graduation. The Career Services Center provided intensive preparation for the workforce, including cover letter review and interview training workshops. She noted that, through State Department and IREX programs, other universities throughout Iraq are starting to offer similar career services.

The final factor, access to opportunities, is provided by both AUIS and its Career Services Center. These institutions connect students to private companies, namely through the use of staff and faculty professional networks with journalists, private sector actors, and universities. These partnerships

between institutions and universities are both crucial for post-graduation employment and possible to achieve, as AUIS's experience has shown.

Responding to a question regarding how such reform might be possible in the wider region, van den Toorn explained that AUIS was a private university for the public good, and expressed hope that other universities throughout the Kurdistan Region and Iraq could replicate the programs AUIS had implemented through partnerships with the United States government, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations.

Mahdi Alaq

General Secretary, Council of Ministers,
Government of Iraq



Iraq's industrial sector's share of the national GDP has regressed massively, from 18% in the 1960s to less than 2% today. We must diversify our economy.

Mahdi Alaq, the General Secretary of the Council of Ministers of the federal government of Iraq, discussed efforts currently being undertaken by the government to facilitate business registration and licensing. Statistics, Alaq claimed, should be compiled independently and subject to international monitoring.

Commenting on unemployment rates, Alaq said that the initial unemployment rate was 18 percent—a number that had since dropped to 12 percent. Similarly, the poverty rate, through work with World Bank, was brought down from 34 to 16 percent. The unemployment rate in 2015 was 50 percent, as a result of the economic crisis and security situation.

One of the major challenges to promoting employment in the private sector is the prestige that public sector workers hold. He stated that with the high number of young people in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), there is now a good opportunity for the development of human resources. Alaq listed a number of initiatives to promote the private sector. One in particular was the Parliament's proposal to merge the special pension and retirement laws—an action that would grant members of the private sector the same privileges as public sector employees. Furthermore, there have been efforts to encourage investors to invest in the private sector, work with the International Labor Organization (ILO), encourage the manufacturing of local products, and ensure consumer protection and industrial sector promotion. Unfortunately, the industrial sector



only contributes to 2 percent of the economy. As a result, a committee headed by the Ministry of Industry is planning on launching a study in the coming months about the promotion of the industrial sector. Alaq stated that while it should not overshadow the problem of corruption, progress has been made on the economic growth front. He concluded with stating that income from custom duties in 2016 is five to six times as important as that of 2015.

During the question and answer period, Alaq noted that when a reform package had been introduced in 2015, the government spent months organizing workshops for the private sector. The legislative environment, he asserted, must support the private sector. He argued for the prioritization of private sector empowerment. In this sense, a number of national strategies—such as those related to anti-corruption, energy issues, and poverty alleviation—are being implemented with the help of international organizations.

Qubad Talabani

Deputy Prime Minister, Kurdistan Regional Government



“

The problem between the people and the government of the Kurdistan Region is the absence of trust. The most important suspicion lies with the oil and gas sector.

”

Qubad Talabani, Deputy Prime Minister of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), noted that the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) was still producing students with degrees that offered skills for jobs that do not exist, and that the government can facilitate the acquisition of skills relevant to job market needs.

Talabani introduced a new KRG program called *Services*, which maps every service the government provides and seeks to address the bureaucratic quagmire. Expressing his exasperation with bureaucratic processes, he noted that it currently takes 32 working days to register a company in Kurdistan and 17 steps to renew a driver's license. Each step, he asserted, represents an opportunity for corruption and inefficiency.

Further commenting on private sector stagnation, Talabani noted that another barrier is the fact that, culturally, the KRG is restrictive to the private sector. He acknowledged that there are some mid-level bureaucrats who do not wish to see businesses succeed, and set up barriers or interpret procedures or laws to prevent private sector growth. Seemingly responding to Alaq's comments about customs revenues, Talabani also stated that tariffs could generate short-term revenue, but would deter growth over the long term.

Responding to a question about how the KRG was working to reduce nepotism, Talabani expressed the need to strengthen human resource capabilities; instead of finding a job for a particular individual, an individual

must fit the requirements of the job. He stated that he had advocated for the merger of the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, to ensure a convergence of priorities throughout the entire education system. Many of the projects that the KRG is undertaking are part of a broad reform initiative drafted by the World Bank, in partnership with the government, building on experiences in other countries. Cooperation with international financial organizations have granted the KRG the technical expertise to apply best practices.

Discussing the role that youth could play to combat a culture of nepotism, Talabani expressed his pride that many of the people using the biometric program and working at banks and registration offices were part of this younger generation. Many of the young people who have participated in the internship program facilitated by the government have now graduated and are employed in the private sector, using the practical skills that they learned throughout their education.



Douglas A. Silliman

United States Ambassador to Iraq



“

You need to get rid of red tape, develop a functioning banking system, work on e-commerce, and eradicate corruption.

”

Douglas A. Silliman, the United States Ambassador to Iraq, began his speech by thanking the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the Peshmerga, and encouraging governments in Baghdad and Erbil to continue to support the displaced, reopen schools, and help people rebuild their lives. Silliman relayed his great affection and respect for Iraq. By most measures, such as natural resource wealth, access to water, arable land, and an educated and resourceful population, Iraq was a strong country. It has however been challenged in recent years by the fall in oil prices, the draining of the Treasury as a result of the fight against DAESH, and an expanding youth population.

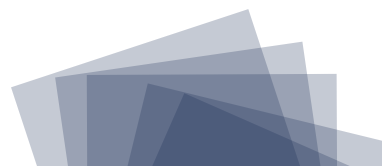
In the United States, he said, various levels of governments provide about 15 percent of employment. In Iraq, the government provides employment for 43 percent of the population. It is also responsible for 60 percent of full-time employment in the country, according to a United Nations report. Silliman recommended a paradigm shift for the Iraqi economy. The government, he asserted, cannot provide jobs for all its citizens, but must provide the economic and structural grounds for job creation. Iraq is 165th out of 190 countries in the “Ease of Doing Business” index. Recounting the details of a meeting with a senior Iraqi official, he noted that the official claimed that in order for a company to purchase a large plot of land to build a factory two years ago, 150 signatures were required. The official personally had to sign ten times. Today, some progress has been made—only 75 signatures are required. It still takes two to three years to get the approval for a reform.



Silliman offered a few recommendations to facilitate the achievement of reform by the KRG: (1) placing limits on the government; (2) combatting corruption; (3) eliminating unnecessary red tape; (4) developing a functioning banking system that worked electronically and provided financing for companies and individuals; and (5) supporting e-commerce. Overregulation slows the creation of businesses and jobs, curbs investment, and encourages corruption. Foreign businesses wishing to work in Iraq do not know the cost of doing business until they arrive in the country; such an environment, according to

Silliman, is the biggest drag on investment and entrepreneurship in Iraq.

Addressing the pathways to combat nepotism, Silliman said that such an issue needed to be solved over a generation, not over months or years. Some trends—such as the payment of salaries through banks or electronic systems—already show signs of success. The elimination of middlemen from a bureaucracy is always a good start, he concluded.



An Update on the Battle for Mosul

A Conversation with Gen. Talib Shaghati
Head of the Counter Terrorism Service, Iraqi Security Forces

Jane Arraf

Middle East Correspondent, NPR

Akeel Abbas

Professor, American University of Iraq, Sulaimani



Jane Arraf

Middle East Correspondent, NPR



Jane Arraf is NPR's Middle East Correspondent. She previously worked with *Al Jazeera English*, *Christian Science Monitor* and as CNN's Baghdad Bureau Chief and Senior Correspondent. During the war in Iraq, she covered the battles for Fallujah, Samarra and Tel Afar and was the only television correspondent embedded with American forces fighting the Mehdi Army in Najaf in 2004. Arraf headed CNN's first permanent Baghdad bureau in 1998 and for several years was the only Western correspondent permanently based in the Iraqi capital.

During this conversation with four-star General Talib Shaghathi, Head of Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) and AUIS Professor Akeel Abbas, Arraf inquired about the key issues surrounding the battle for Mosul and the fight against DAESH in general, from security effectiveness to human rights accountability. She also highlighted the extent of the human sacrifices made by the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), mentioning the several thousands Iraqi soldiers who have been killed or wounded in combat against DAESH.

How do conflicts within the PMF impact the fight against DAESH and the battle for western Mosul in general?

General Talib Shaghathi

Head of the Counter Terrorism Service,
Iraqi Security Forces



***The Counter
Terrorism
Service has given
a new color to
Iraqi unity.***

General Talib Shaghathi, Head of the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF), having just arrived from Mosul, emphasized the rapidity with which advances were made on the frontlines. While the ISF is still facing a number of challenges in the liberation of Mosul, including the protection of both civilians and infrastructure, he continued, cooperation from the population had importantly helped, namely in gathering information about the locations of terrorists.

“This war,” he stated, “is highly symbolic for the Iraqi army. DAESH usurped the population, and it considers Mosul at the center of its Caliphate. Ousting DAESH from Mosul will mean getting rid of DAESH.” In this sense, Gen. Shaghathi stressed the need for efficient fighting tactics and strategy to purge terrorists not only from Iraq, but also the world. If two or three terrorists can paralyze major cities such as London and Paris, he asked the audience to ponder what thousands could do in a city like Mosul.

Gen. Shaghathi also noted the important shift that had taken place regarding public perception of the Iraqi forces. Today, he stated, military forces were sending a message of peace and acknowledging that civilians are essential capital in maintaining peace through cooperation. Such cooperation is evident in western Mosul, where 80 neighborhoods had been liberated at the time of the Forum. However, the military is still facing significant challenges in defeating DAESH in the city. In particular, the fact that 80 percent of the population in Mosul lives in the city while only

20 percent live on the outskirts has made it especially difficult for security forces to carry out operations. Furthermore, DAESH has used civilians as human shields in order to perform its operations.

Gen. Shaghati praised the CTS, whom he claimed had given a new color to Iraqi unity. Its members have come from across Iraq, from Basra to Samarra, and Nasiriyah and, despite their differences, are liberating areas that are not their community's homeland. He asserted that the force works on the bases of nationalism, professionalism, and patriotism with no regard to political affiliation. Anyone propagating sectarianism would be dismissed from the CTS. He expressed pride in the fact that a number of ethnic and religious groups—including Kurds, Arabs, Shias, Sunnis, Yezidis, and Turkmen—constitute the demographic mosaic of the CTS, which serves as a symbol of patriotism and nationalism. On the question of recruitment criteria, he stated that members of the CTS were chosen on the basis of their qualifications only.

Gen. Shaghati spoke broadly about the fighting tactics and commented on the military death toll. He asserted that there was no room for compromise with DAESH; either a DAESH fighter killed a soldier, or a soldier killed a DAESH fighter. As DAESH fighters realize that they are likely to be defeated, they usually become more brutal: they use drones to bomb ISF locations, as well as car bombs and snipers to cause greater casualties. For this reason, he continued, efforts have been made in training to foster a strong sense of patriotism among ISF

soldiers, who the now believe in the honor of martyrdom for the sake of their homeland.

Responding to a question about his views on a partnership with the United States, he broadly noted that Iraq had its own long-term objectives, which are different from those of the United States. He also briefly commented on the issue of civilian casualties from coalition airstrikes and reiterated the importance of precision strikes to prevent those. High non-combatant death toll breeds resentment that is counterproductive to post-DAESH stability. He concluded by expressing the hope that cooperation would continue and that it would lead to the elimination of DAESH as quickly as possible.

Addressing the issue of holding Mosul after liberation, Gen. Shaghati stated that it was everyone's responsibility. The people of Mosul, along with the local police, would mobilize. On the western bank already, the federal police and members of the armed forces are coordinating with the CTS. Briefly touching upon the question of the role of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), Gen. Shaghati noted that the groups have their own strategic targets in Tal Afar—to cut off the road before the terrorists fled to Syria. The PMF, he explained, are under the direct orders of the Prime Minister. Gen. Shaghati also denied allegations of use of heavy shelling by the CTS in densely populated areas around Mosul, claiming that special tactics had been used in those areas. Many of the images that had been released to the press were misleading.



Gen. Shaghatai also addressed mechanisms used for dealing with human rights violations and prosecutions. He first praised the level of cooperation between the ISF and civilians in eastern Mosul. He assured that no human rights violations were tolerated, conveying the example of two ISF lieutenants who had been dismissed for arresting a potential terrorist without reasonable proof. He further stated that CTS fighters had completed one week of

training in discipline, and leaflets about human rights were published and disseminated so that soldiers were aware of human rights laws. In basic training, every soldier also received explanations on the Geneva Convention and how to act in accordance with its principles.

Akeel Abbas

Professor, American University of Iraq,
Sulaimani



The government's decision to allow the PMF to participate in the Mosul offensive was a good one.

Akeel Abbas's first intervention in the conversation was an evaluation of the Popular Mobilization Forces' (PMF) involvement in the conflict. He claimed that although the PMF had assisted in some achievements and restored a sense of confidence in the early days of the conflict, they had also deepened the level of insecurity. The PMF's participation in liberation offensives prior to that of Mosul had been problematic, due to what Abbas described as a combination of incompetence and sectarian tension. The government came up with a thoughtful plan for the deployment of the PMF around the cities while the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) penetrated the cities and engaged in fighting. In the Mosul operation, the scenario was different, because civilians did not leave, as they had in Ramadi and Fallujah. In the earlier days of the Mosul Operation, the same tactic of having PMF patrol the outskirts of the city was used, and proved relatively successful. More recently, however, reports claim that the PMF is actively engaged in fighting inside Mosul. There has been no negative reaction from the population, partially as a result of the fact that some of the PMF are affiliated with the clerical establishment in Najaf. This outcome, Abbas asserted, raised the question of whether that type of operation could be carried out in western Mosul, and whether those PMF units were willing to take heavier losses than those of the ISF.

Abbas also questioned the performance of the ISF in Mosul. While the success of the ISF, and especially the Counter Terrorism Service (CTS), is praiseworthy, there have been reports,



accompanied by horrifying images, that heavy arms were used in densely populated areas. Those forces, he asserted, have not been properly trained for heavy fighting. He also questioned the mechanisms for monitoring and

prosecuting human rights abuses; it remains unclear how uniformly such mechanisms had been implemented across the ISF, as well as within the PMF.



U.S. Policy in the Middle East

Moderated by Sir John Jenkins

Senior Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies

Susan Glasser

Senior International Affairs Correspondent, *Politico*

Peter Bergen

National Security Analyst, CNN; Vice President and Director of International Security, Future of War, and Fellows Programs, New America; Professor, Arizona State University

Nabil Fahmy

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, American University of Cairo

Jon Alterman

Senior Vice President, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy; Director, Middle East Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Kenneth Pollack

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution

Since the election of President Donald Trump in November 2016, officials, journalists and analysts have been trying to decipher what his Presidency will mean for American foreign policy. With the fight against DAESH and the return of thousands of American troops to Iraq, American policy in Iraq remains of paramount importance. Now that the positions of Secretaries of State and Defense, in addition to National Security Advisor, have been filled, some notions of what that policy will shape up to be are beginning to emerge. From the travel ban and to 'taking Iraq's oil', to pushing back against Iranian influence in Iraq, the panel presented a prognosis of what a Trump Presidency means for the region.

Sir John Jenkins

Senior Director, International Institute for Strategic Studies



Sir John Jenkins is the Executive Director of the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) – Middle East. He took this position in January 2015 after a 35-year career in the British Diplomatic Service, where he served in Jerusalem, Syria, Iraq, Libya, and Saudi Arabia. He also took an active part in Sir John Chilcott's Iraq Inquiry and was asked by the Prime Minister in March 2014 to lead a Policy Review into the Muslim Brotherhood and Political Islamism.

He opened this last panel on American foreign policy in the Middle East by introducing the different panelists and asking: is there such a thing as an emerging Trump doctrine in foreign policy? Is there any continuity with policy orientations of the Obama administration? What are the prospects for a unified and coherent foreign policy to emerge from the newly formed National Security Council? Jenkins also asked the panelists to assess the perception of states, or groups of states, in the region of this new American administration. In other words, what would MENA states like to see, and what can they realistically expect, from the Trump Administration?

Russian and Iranian interests have increasingly converged in the region.

Susan Glasser

Senior International Affairs
Correspondent, Politico



Trump's foreign policy is best understood as a form of 'hostile takeover' of Washington, not only from the perspective of the Democratic foreign policy establishment, but from the Republican standpoint.

Susan Glasser, Senior International Affairs Correspondent at the American outlet *Politico*, opened with the claim that Trump's foreign policy is best understood as a form of "hostile takeover" of Washington, not only from the perspective of the Democratic foreign policy establishment, but from the Republican standpoint. Trump's stated views, she emphasized, are equally at odds with the consensus among the Republican foreign policy lead about what the United States' role in the world should be.

Glasser argued that it is too early to speak of a Trump doctrine, given how unformed, in policy terms, it remains. A strong trend in discourse, she however pointed, is the President's commitment to the "America First" rationale. Such a worldview, given Trump's opportunistic character, will not necessarily be incompatible with policies such as increasing the number of American forces on the ground in Syria. Indeed, Glasser argues that predicting United States policy in the Middle East, at this point in time, involves as much psychology as it does foreign policy analysis. Trump's obsession with "winning," she asserted, has caused much of the confusion that surrounds his unclear position on the region.

She then touched upon the question of the President's social media presence and its relevance with regards to foreign policy. "Unlike others in Washington, I am of the view that [one] should pay attention to his tweets, and not to merely dismiss them as political



fever,” Glasser affirmed. Trump’s intention, she explained, is to be very involved in the decision-making process on issues that are important to him. In other words, while he has appointed a very experienced, qualified foreign policy team, it remains unclear to what extent their views

will weight in the policymaking balance. This, Glasser ended, calls for caution in considering the President’s statements.

Peter Bergen

National Security Analyst, CNN; Vice President and Director International Security, Future of War, and Fellows Programs, New America; Professor, Arizona State University



The travel ban is a crazy idea because it is a solution to a problem that does not exist.

Peter Bergen, CNN's National Security Analyst, started by arguing that, in his opinion, there is currently a lot more continuity with George W. Bush's second term policies and Obama's policies than what had been expected. This being said, he highlighted two important caveats: (1) every American administration is made up of ideologues and pragmatists, and this one is no exception; and (2) the individual currently assuming the role of President is mercurial and hard to predict. Bergen used the recent travel ban as a perfect example of this: the pragmatists, Trump's experienced advisory team—including General McMaster, General Mattis and Secretary Tillerson—all lobbied for the exclusion of Iraq from the policy. Yet the travel ban is still in place for other countries. This shows, Bergen claimed, how the power struggle between ideologues and pragmatists is playing out.

Bergen then presented an overview of his policy predictions for the region, overall arguing that continuity would prevail, diverging only in certain cases where Obama-era policies had been counter-productive. In Yemen, Obama administration policies—intense drone strikes—are continuing, and intensifying. In Syria, the Trump Administration will present a new Syria, anti-DAESH policy, which will be announced as a dramatic departure from the previous administration's approach. In fact, however, Bergen argued, it will be very similar—special forces on the ground and drone strikes. In Saudi Arabia, there will be continuity with previous policies of relatively close alliance, despite the strong anti-Saudi rhetoric that was



voiced by Trump on the campaign trail. In Afghanistan, there is likely to be a departure from President Obama's strategy, which consisted of repeatedly announcing the departure of American forces without actually pulling out. A stronger, more stable American presence in Afghanistan is likely, Bergen argued, to be productive in fighting the Taliban and promoting economic growth in the country. With regards to Iran, General Mattis has already expressed support for the nuclear treaty. Finally, in Egypt, the Trump administration will likely refrain from designating the Muslim

Brotherhood as a terrorist organization because, Bergen asserted, "it is such a bad idea."

In sum, the main differences between Obama's foreign policy and Trump's foreign policy lie, at this time, in discourse and rhetoric more than in action. The fact that Trump used, in his address to Congress, the expression "radical Islamic terrorism" was deemed a great success by ideologues. But how much of a difference will it actually make?

Nabil Fahmy

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt and Dean of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, American University of Cairo



Arab countries are over-dependent on foreign support; they need to assume more responsibility for the challenges that they face if they are ever going to become viable states.

Going back to one of Jenkins's first questions, Nabil Fahmy, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt, voiced the following nuance: in foreign policy particularly, one must differentiate between a Trump doctrine and a Trump Administration doctrine. The grounds on which to assess his personal foreign policy views in fact remain very thin. In general, however, he has clearly expressed his will to be a "disruptive force," to depart from former policies. He has also advocated for a stronger stance on terrorism and extremism, and vis-à-vis Iran.

The Arab world is still assessing what his approach to the region will be, as well as how it should react. *A priori*, one aspect to be optimistic about is his will to invest resources in fighting extremism. However, it should not be forgotten that he has also put a lot of emphasis on shared responsibility with states in the region. The form that this burden sharing will take remains undefined, and will probably impact the United States' relation with some of the states in the region.

Fahmy then presented a quick roundup of his American foreign policy predictions for the region. On Iran, Trump is taking a very realist approach, claiming that Russia must be engaged. In Libya, it is unlikely that the Trump Administration will play an active role. Regarding the Middle East peace process, he has expressed several contradictory views. Those repeated shifts have had, Fahmy argued, consequences on Israeli behavior, likely hindering prospects for a viable two-state solution to emerge. On the Syrian issue, Fahmy



encouraged the President to engage both Russia and the Arab states to achieve what he called a necessary but “difficult compromise.”

Fahmy also highlighted important differences, both in language and interests, between branches of the United States government, such as the Department of Defense, and President Trump. Nonetheless, no one has the luxury of ignoring the president of the United States. It is thus important to carefully ponder his

statements and watch the development of his administration’s foreign policy doctrine.

He concluded by highlighting an element of Trump’s foreign policy notions that has, in his view, the potential to yield positive outcomes: Arab countries are over-dependent on foreign support. Without resorting to isolation, they need to assume more responsibility for the challenges that they face if they are ever going to become viable states.



Jon Alterman

Senior Vice President, Zbigniew Brzezinski Chair in Global Security and Geostrategy; Director, Middle East Program, Center for Strategic and International Studies



Saudi Arabia is a big problem for the Trump Administration. It needs to ally with the Saudis to restrain Iran, but also pressure them to counter Salafi extremism.

Jon Alterman, Senior Vice President at CSIS, started by recalling that improving the United States' relationship with Iraq was a central goal of the Obama administration's strategy in the Middle East. The Trump Administration, on the other hand, appears very skeptical of the possibility of "attracting Iran to anything positive." The backbone of their strategy, up to now, has been that American resolve could lead Iran to retreat.

But what form will this resolve take, Alterman asked? He argued that given the inter-connectedness and complexity of issues in the Middle East, it might be difficult for the United States to adopt a harder line on Iran without jeopardizing some of its other policy objectives. For example, he explained, on the one hand, Saudi Arabia is essential to restraining Iranian influence in the Middle East. On the other, if the Trump Administration is truly committed to countering terrorism radicalization by fighting Salafi ideology and theology, it will have to take a firm stance vis-à-vis Saudi Arabia.

Overall, the Trump administration has not yet had to make real choices as to where to invest resources, what goals to prioritize. Some issues will eventually have to be deemphasized due to the constrained-resources environment the United States is operating in. In a sense, Alterman carefully pointed, the situation is similar to the one whereby the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has to balance different interests through tradeoffs –the central government in Baghdad, the United States, Russia, Iran, Turkey, for example. Priorities have to be defined in order to adopt a set of policies that will reflect a coherent American foreign policy strategy.

Kenneth Pollack

Senior Fellow, Foreign Policy, Center for Middle East Policy, Brookings Institution



If Kurdistan is willing to help itself, I think this administration certainly will be willing to consider and embrace the idea of Kurdish Independence, but it cannot come at the expense of Iraq's stability.

Kenneth Pollack, a senior fellow at Brookings' Center for Middle East Policy, reiterated the panel's general sentiment of uncertainty, with a specific emphasis on how Iraq will fit in the new American administration's foreign policy strategy. Before making any predictions, he reminded the audience that Trump's national security team is not only very competent; it is also largely comprised of individuals who have extensive experience and expertise on Iraq specifically. They are acutely aware of the importance of Iraq and the Kurdistan Region, as well as of the fact that military victories are ephemeral if there is no successful political, economic, social strategy to pin them in place.

On the campaign trail, President Trump repeatedly stated his intention to defeat DAESH promptly, but did not make any tangible policy commitments. Since his election, he has also been talking about importantly augmenting the military budget, while massively cutting funding of the Department of State. Interestingly, the most vocal opponents of those proposed cuts has been the American defense establishment, who puts forth the argument that military gains must be supported by strong foreign policy strategies. Members of the national security community, Pollack recalled from conversations he has recently had in Washington, are currently focused on assessing what Trump is willing to commit to Iraq and the Middle East. They know well that military resources alone cannot yield positive outcomes.



As of now, Trump has stated three main objectives for the region: (1) to quickly defeat DAESH; (2) to push back hard on Iran; and (3) to avoid becoming entangled in the Middle East. In this context, tactics must be reconciled with strategy. For example, pushing back on Iran by fighting it in Iraq would have very destructive consequences for the country, possibly feeding extremism.

Answering a question about Kurdish independence, Pollack responded that he was a staunch advocate of it because it is both in

the Kurdish and American interest. He claimed that, in his opinion, this administration would consider the issue of independence in relation to progress made with the current reform program. The United States wants Kurdistan to evolve into a real example of political unity and prove that Kurdish independence does not have to come at the expense of stability in Iraq.



#SuliForum

The Social Media Highlights - 2017

The action surrounding the 2017 Sulaimani Forum was not confined to the event venue. A lively discussion of the conference took place on Twitter, as policymakers, panelists, commentators, officials, and students took to the social media sending more than 3,000 tweets that highlighted key moments and quotes at the Forum, causing the event to trend in Iraq. The hashtag #SuliForum generated

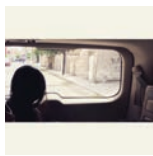
65,141,252 potential impressions, reaching 6,561,732 people.

The Facebook coverage of the event, including for the first time live and 360 videos, also generated high engagement, reaching 751,960 people on the second day of the Forum, with 1,286,000 impressions generated overall during the event.



Eric Gustafson @epicEKG

For #Iraq watchers, there's only one place to be: the **#SuliForum** at @AUIS_NEWS. Loving all the 'live' tweets from @PostWarWatch & friends!



Raz Salayi @razsalayi

It's that time of year again where **#Sulaimaniya** runs in the background, in your headphones, no matter what you're doing. **#SuliForum** #Iraq



Mina Al-Oraibi @AlOraibi

Only in **#SuliForum** could you have Head of Iraq Counter-terrorism in fatigues straight from battlefield speaking, while Fukuyama listens in.



Barham Salih @BarhamSalih

Honored that PM @HaiderAlAbadi addressed 5th **#SuliForum**, offering update of military developments, vision for Iraq politics and economy.



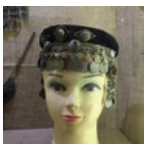
Lyse Doucet @bbclysedoucet

"I hope the political process is on the right path" #Iraq @HaiderAlAbadi #SuliForum
"our people do not want sectarian differences"



David Miliband @DMiliband

Extraordinary, moving speech by Farida Abbas about persecution of Yazidi women by Daesh #SuliForum



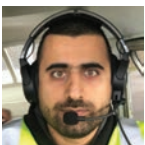
ClarisseEU @Clarissimata

An Iraqi General welcomed in Kurdistan talking abt protection of civilians & human rights - and people say no progress in Iraq...#SuliForum



Maitham Alfaisal @MaithamAlfaisal Mar 9

ISIS will be defeated soon, how can we defeat their faith? Education is the solution #SuliForum



Hayder al-Khoei @Hayder_alKhoei Mar 9

So much talk of reform in Iraq yet so little reform, esp. on combating corruption. Real reform will bring down the entire system. #SuliForum

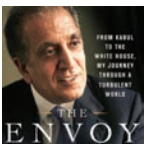


Susan Glasser @sbg1 Terrorism and civil war are the symptoms; look at the underlying problem too. Wise words from @tcwittes #suliforum



AUIS Voice @TheAUISVoice Mar 9

Fukuyama: Taking religion out of politics does not take away from the region's religious identity #SuliForum



Zalmay Khalilzad @realZalmayMK Mar 8

Spent the day at #Suliforum at AUIS. It a source of great happiness and pride to see how far AUIS has come.



Tamara Cofman Wittes @tcwittes Mar 9

Trump is opportunity for Arab states to change approach, define their own vision for region, instead of relying on US-@mnabilfahmy #SuliForum



Paul Salem @paul_salem Mar 9

As last panel gets underway, Congratulations to @BarhamSalih and #AUIS for #SuliForum; consistently the best such gathering in Middle East.



Qusay Muhyaldeen @QusayMuhyaldeen

Proud to be @AUIS_NEWS Alumnus, host to Iraq's largest and most successful discussion forum #SuliForum #suliforum2017 #AUIS_NEWS #AUIS

#SULIFORUM

65,141,252

POTENTIAL IMPRESSIONS

REACHING 6,561,732 PEOPLE.



Support AUIS

The American University of Iraq, Sulaimani is a non-profit institution for public benefit and seeks to be a resource for the entire community. It is with the contributions of its generous donors, ranging from companies and organizations to individuals and families that the University is able to offer a liberal arts, American-style education that has an impact on the future of the region.

AUIS accepts support for its institute IRIS to continue its activities to advance research and scholarship in the region and promote dialogue through events such as the Annual Sulaimani Forum. There are many ways to support higher education at AUIS, namely sponsoring new scholarships, establishing faculty chairs, expanding the library's collection and resources, and supporting the continued development of the campus, amongst many other opportunities.

To contribute, please visit the AUIS Foundation website at auifoundation.org. The Foundation, a US-based 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization with a distinguished Board, is the steward of funds raised on behalf of the University. You can also contact gifts@auis.edu.krd if you have any questions about ways you or your organization can support AUIS.



ABOUT AUIS

ABOUT AUIS

The American University of Iraq, Sulaimani was established in 2007 to be a catalyst for innovation in higher education in Iraq. The University is a not-for-profit institution that strives to be a resource to the entire community and an institute for public benefit. Since its inception, the University has been dedicated to offering its students a comprehensive liberal arts education that develops strengths in critical thinking, the ability to communicate well, a strong work ethic, good citizenship and personal integrity. Within one decade, the University has grown from ten to 1,600 students, and expanded and improved its academic programs to educate the future leaders of Kurdistan, Iraq, the Middle East region, and the world.

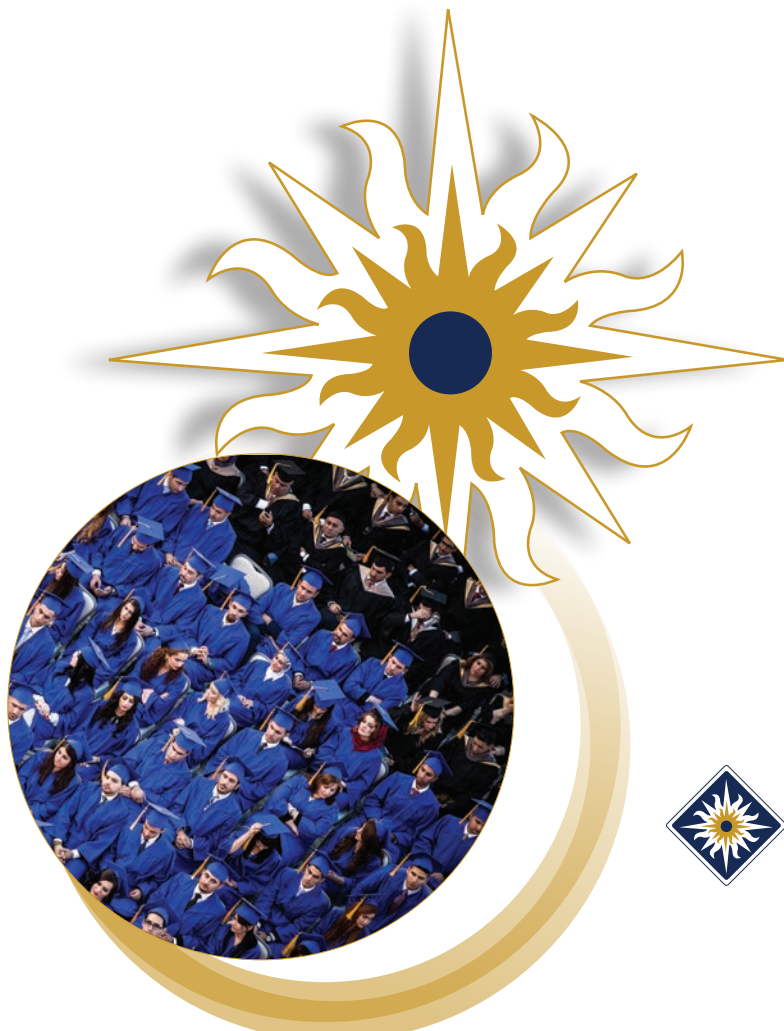
As a not-for-profit institute, the University relies on contributions to carry out its mission. That is to provide its students with an education that prepares them for a pluralistic and global society, to make available the opportunities and skills needed for success and to be a resource to the entire community with a lasting impact on education and the educational culture of the region.

The Founder Dr. Barham Salih, with the support of the Kurdistan Regional Government, the US Embassy in Baghdad, and the aid of private sector companies and a group of prominent individuals created an institution not only innovative in its teaching methodology but also unique in its role as an establishment of learning transcending sectarian divides and affiliations.

The University's campus is located on a hill overlooking the city and includes an academic building with lecture halls, classrooms and offices; an administrative building with a cafeteria and large conference facilities; two basketball courts and a soccer field; a 400-bed residence hall; and an additional building with high-quality lab facilities and equipment. The grounds at AUIS will be able to accommodate the continuous growth of its student body and the demand for wide-ranging educational opportunities.

The University's academic programs include majors in Engineering, Business Administration, English Literature and Journalism, Information Technology and International Studies. With English being the language of instruction, AUIS students are required to have excellent language skills to succeed in the undergraduate program. They develop English language skills in the Academic Preparatory Program, where learning how to read and write in English is juxtaposed with student success skills. Students enrolled in the undergraduate program receive a well-rounded education grounded in the liberal arts with core multi-disciplinary courses that foster creativity, analytical, and critical thinking and greater knowledge of the world.

The University is the destination of choice for top students from all over the country, even attracting Kurds and Arabs studying in the US, UK and Europe. In addition to several merit scholarships, the University awards high-performing students with lower tuition rates that are directly linked to their high school scores. In February 2017, the University was awarded full accreditation from Iraq's Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific



AUIS



***Do not only
thrive in the
world around
you. Dare to
change it!***

***Thomas L Friedman**
AUIS Commencement Ceremony (2015)*

Research. The Academic Preparatory Program was granted a five-year accreditation by the Commission on English Language Program Accreditation (CEA), from April 2015 to April 2020.

At AUIS, staff and faculty members are proactive in creating partnerships and associations that will benefit the educational experience of AUIS students. The University currently has partnerships with many universities in the United States and Europe and these have resulted in the creation of different programs and opportunities for AUIS students. Additionally, AUIS students have participated in a wide-range of international competitions and conferences.

There is a strong emphasis on extracurricular activities at AUIS as well and the University encourages and actively promotes student engagement in volunteering initiatives, community outreach programs, internships, clubs, athletics and the creative arts. The University supports men's and women's sports teams in basketball and soccer as well as student clubs and associations, focusing on activities such as reading, drama, social action, chess, IT, music, Model United Nations, and the environment, among others. AUIS is also home to the first and only independent student newspaper, the Voice.

The University promotes research and open dialogue in the region through its Institute for Regional and International Studies. Every year, IRIS supports researchers interested in the



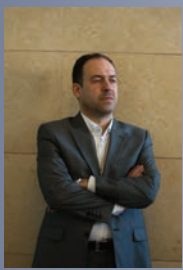
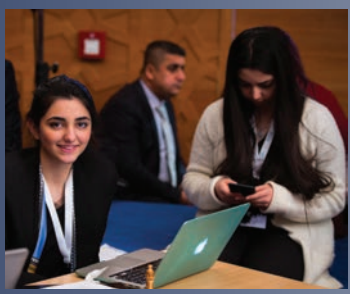
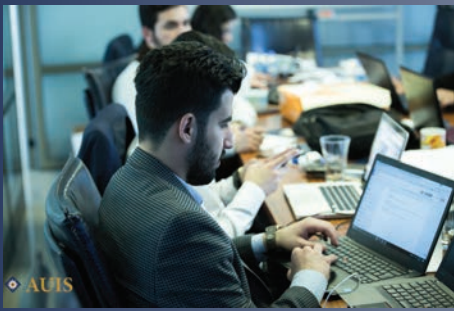
region by providing them with fellowships that include involving AUIS students in the study of the complex geopolitics of the Middle East. The Sulaimani Forum is the institute's flagship event and takes place every year on AUIS campus.

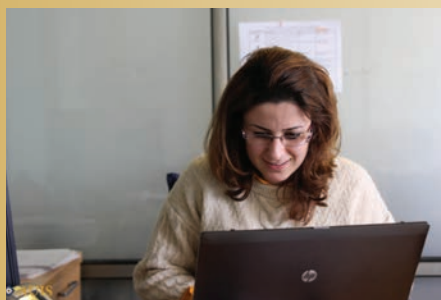
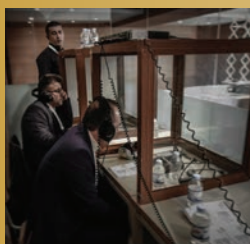
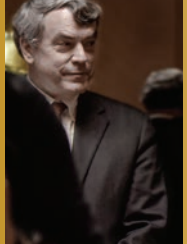
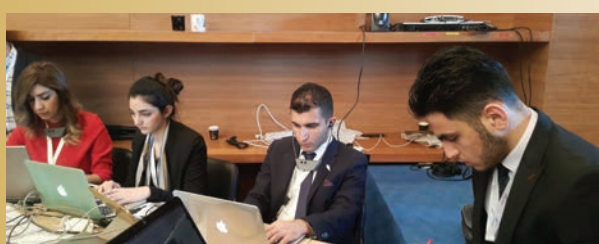
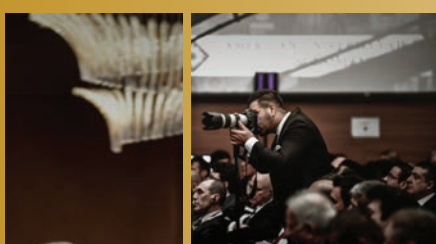
Graduates of AUIS therefore have been exposed to many experiences that prepare them for a bright future and are a distinct point of pride for the University whose mission it is to facilitate the transition from the university and the world of education to the workforce and the world at large. Commencement ceremonies at AUIS are memorable events that celebrate the diligence and dedication involved in completing an undergraduate program. Thomas Friedman,

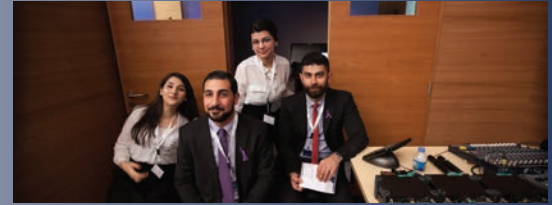
author and New York Times columnist, gave the commencement speech at the University's third ceremony and was deeply impressed by the cadre of graduates who he challenged to change the world around them.

The objective of the University is to produce graduates of responsible character with the necessary knowledge and skills for professional and national leadership. Students are prepared for successful careers that ultimately have an impact on the entire region. Investment in AUIS is thus an investment in the educational culture and future of the country.

Behind the Scenes









Professor Bruce Walker Ferguson , AUIS President, welcomed guests to the fifth annual Sulaimani Forum's gala dinner.



A highlight of the Forum was an evening of traditional Kurdish music with renowned Daf player, Hajar Zahawy, and the Loor Band from Sulaimani.



AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF IRAQ, SULAIMANI