

# Syria & Iraq: July 2014

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## Foreword

I have posted an [annotated list](#) of my previous eight essays on Syria. That webpage also

includes links to historical documents on the Syrian civil war and a table of dates of removals of chemical weapons from Syria.

Because news media in the USA often ignore details of what is happening in Syria, at least once a day I checked the *Al-Jazeera* Syria blog and the Middle East section of the *Daily Star* newspaper in Lebanon. I also made daily searches of the websites of Reuters in England and the Associated Press to find news about Syria.

When I was a full-time student in universities during 1967-77, I learned not to write documents full of facts, without also explaining the significance of those facts and drawing conclusions from those facts. So, I include my opinions in this essay, to show the reader omissions, inconsistencies, propaganda, and other defects in the conventional wisdom or in journalists' reports. In science and engineering, we keep our opinions separate from facts, and in that spirit I label most of my opinions and my comments.

Copyright law allows an author to make brief quotations for purposes of scholarship, news reporting, or comment, but *not* to copy an entire article. (17 U.S.C. §107) That is why I do not quote most of an article by a news agency or newspaper. However, there is no copyright on works of the U.S. Government (17 U.S.C. §105), so an author is free to copy as much of a Government's work as the author wishes.

I am [aware](#) of "link rot" — the failure of links owing to a webmaster who either (1) moved old webpages to a new location, or (2) deleted old webpages. Such actions by webmasters frustrate users of the Internet, who depend on stable links. In writing this essay, I often cite multiple news sources, in the hope that at least one of those links will still function in the future. Link rot is a problem created by webmasters, and the solution to this problem lies with those webmasters.

I use Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) for events in Europe and Syria. Eastern Standard Time in Boston is -5 hours from GMT, Beginning 9 March, the USA was on Daylight Savings Time, Eastern Daylight Time in Boston is -4 hours from GMT. Beginning 30 March, England was on British Summer Time (BST), which is +1 hour from GMT. Iraq is *not* on Daylight Savings Time, so this summer Beirut and Baghdad have the same time, +3 hours from GMT.

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### **Terse Summary of Syria Fighters**

It is helpful to understanding the Syrian civil war to divide the opposition fighters into three groups of people:

1. The so-called "rebels" are moderates, many of whom are part of the Free Syrian Army.
2. The "jihadists" want to impose an Islamic government on Syria. The Islamic Front is the largest group of jihadists.
3. And two Al-Qaeda affiliated groups fighting in Syria: (a) the Nusra Front and (b) the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) — also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). On 3 Feb 2014, Al-Qaeda repudiated ISIL, but ISIL remains Al-Qaeda inspired.

On 29 June 2014, ISIL changed its name to "Islamic State", when it declared a caliphate. I continue to use the old name ISIL, for consistency with my previous essays. Moreover, using the term "Islamic State" appears to give legitimacy to their so-called "State", which is only a band of terrorists.

The USA and Western Europe would prefer that the rebels win, although military aid to the rebels has been withheld because of fears that donated weapons and munitions would eventually be acquired by either the jihadists or Al-Qaeda. The rebels are frequently described by two words: "fragmented" and "disorganized". Beginning in September 2013, the rebels are also frequently characterized as "disillusioned". Since October 2013, many smaller rebel groups have been leaving the Free Syrian Army and joining the jihadists.

While I use the words rebels, jihadists, and Al-Qaeda to indicate three different opposition groups, journalists routinely use the word "rebels" to refer to the entire opposition. Thus, there is different word usage between my text and quotations from journalists.

#### Government

The Arab nations, Western Europe, and the USA recognize the Syrian National Coalition, an exile group in Turkey, as the *only* legitimate government of Syria. However, there are hundreds of rebel or jihadist groups operating in Syria, and the Coalition represents only some of the rebel groups and none of the jihadists. As explained in detail in my [second](#) and [third](#) essays on Syria, the Coalition is unable to make decisions, and — in my opinion — has no credibility as a future government of Syria. However, the Coalition is the least objectionable alternative government for Syria. Since October 2013, several commentators have noted that Assad is preferable to having Al-Qaeda control Syria. The topic of a future government for Syria is discussed in my separate [essay](#).

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## History During July 2014: Destruction of Chemical Weapons

The M.V. Cape Ray arrived at Gioia Tauro on 1 July. The transfer of 600 metric tons of chemicals from the Danish cargo ship, Ark Futura, will take several days. [Pentagon](#). The Associated Press reported: "With the Cape Ray in port and the Ark Futura expected late Tuesday [1 July] or early Wednesday, police closed roads around Gioia Tauro's port to create a 1-kilometer (.6 mile) exclusion zone." [Associated Press](#) 17:54 GMT, 1 July.

The Ark Futura arrived at Gioia Tauro at sunrise on 2 July. By noon on 2 July, "about a third of the 78 containers had been transferred from the Ark Futura to the Cape Ray". [Associated Press](#), 11:12 GMT, 2 July.

At 15:23 GMT on 2 July, the Associated Press reported: "By late afternoon, about half of the 78 containers had been transferred" to the Cape Ray. [Associated Press](#).

At 00:51 GMT on 3 July, the Associated Press reported: "The MV Cape Ray steamed out of

the southern Italian port of Gioia Tauro after a 12-hour operation to transfer the chemicals from a Danish ship, the Ark Futura." [Associated Press](#).

Late on 2 July, OPCW posted a triumphant press release that *all* of the chemical weapons had been transferred from the Ark Futura to the Cape Ray.

The OPCW has verified that the entire consignment of 600 metric tonnes of Priority 1 chemicals from the Syrian arsenal has been successfully transloaded from the Danish cargo ship Ark Futura onto the U.S. Maritime Vessel Cape Ray. The transloading took place without incident at the port of Gioia Tauro in southern Italy with the presence of OPCW inspectors, who continuously monitored the process.

OPCW Director-General Ambassador Ahmet Üzümcü expressed his gratitude to Italy for offering the use of Gioia Tauro port. He also commended all the staff members involved in this operation.

The Cape Ray will now sail into international waters in the Mediterranean and begin neutralising the chemicals at sea with two Field Deployable Hydrolysis Systems (FDHS). U.S. officials estimate the neutralisation operations should be completed within 60 days.

The Ark Futura will continue on to the United Kingdom, where it will offload the rest of Syria's Priority 1 chemicals for destruction in a commercial facility at Ellesmere Port. It will then head to Finland with some Priority 2 chemicals to be destroyed at a commercial facility at Riihimäki.

A second cargo ship, the Norwegian vessel Taiko, has already delivered a consignment of Priority 2 chemicals to Finland for destruction at the Riihimäki facility. The ship is now heading to Port Arthur, Texas USA where the rest of the Priority 2 chemicals will be offloaded and destroyed at a commercial facility there.

[View: An infographic of the complex maritime operation \[PDF- 848 KB\]](#).

A team of OPCW inspectors will remain aboard the Cape Ray throughout the neutralisation operations to verify that the chemicals are destroyed in accordance with the stringent provisions of the Chemical Weapons Convention, including for safety and security as stipulated in Article IV, paragraph 10: "Each State Party, during transportation, sampling, storage and destruction of chemical weapons, shall assign the highest priority to ensuring the safety of people and to protecting the environment."

Before the Cape Ray left the United States for the Mediterranean to undertake this mission, OPCW experts determined that the FDHS units, storage arrangements, and measures to ensure the safety of the crew and prevent any possible spillage of chemicals off the ship, meet the high standards of the Convention for safety and security.

"Transloading of Syrian Chemicals onto the Cape Ray Completed Without Incident at Port of Gioia Tauro," [OPCW](#), 2 July 2014.

**My comments:** The Syrian government delivered its chemical weapons in six months —

months past [deadlines](#) — although the actual deliveries required only 19 days. In contrast, the transfer of chemicals from the Ark Futura to the Cape Ray — estimated to take 2 or 3 days — was safely completed in 12 hours.

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On 7 July, the M.V. Cape Ray began destroying 600 tons of chemicals from Syria. [Pentagon](#); [Associated Press](#), 18:02 GMT, both on 7 July 2014.

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On 7 July at 13:04 EDT, [Reuters](#) reported letters to the U.N. Security Council from the OPCW head and Ban about mysterious "two cylinders" containing Sarin. Ban said the two cylinders were "reportedly seized by the armed forces of the Syrian Arab Republic in August 2013 in an area reportedly under the control of armed opposition groups." On 7 July the Security Council discussed chemical weapons in Syria in a closed meeting.

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On 9 July, the [BBC](#) revealed that companies in England had legally sold chemicals to Syria in the mid-1980s, and Syria used those chemicals to make Sarin nerve gas. [Reuters](#) reports "three separate exports between 1983 and 1986 of 'several hundred tonnes' of dimethyl phosphite and trimethyl phosphite", according to a statement by U.K. Foreign Secretary William Hague. It is not clear whether the exporting firms understood that the chemicals would be used to make nerve gas. Hague posted his [statement](#) at the U.K. Foreign Office website.

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On Friday, 18 July, the [Pentagon](#) announced that 15% of the Syrian methylphosphonyl difluoride (DF), a precursor of Sarin, has been neutralized aboard the M.V. Cape Ray. There was a total of 581 metric tons of DF, of which 88 tons has been neutralized. After all of the DF is neutralized, they will neutralize 19 metric tons of mustard gas. [Associated Press](#).

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## 10 July 2014 Death Toll in Syria more than 171,000

At approximately monthly intervals the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reports its count of the total number of dead people in the Syria civil war. This death toll is a useful reminder of the failure of insurgents and diplomats to end this civil war.

On the morning of 10 July 2014, the Arabic-language SOHR released its monthly death toll. Agence France-Presse reported 171,509 dead from 18 March 2011, up to 8 July 2014. [Daily Star](#)(AFP), 13:04 GMT, 10 July 2014.

On 29 July, the most recent English-language news story at the SOHR website is dated 23 June. Apparently, communicating with English-language speakers is *not* a high priority for SOHR. In previous reports by SOHR on deaths in Syria (See quotations in my [sixth](#) and [seventh](#) essays on Syria.), SOHR spoke of their "loss of hope in an international community" that would stop the killing in Syria. But the continuing civil war is *not* the fault of English-

speaking politicians — the continuing civil war is the result of mainly Arab funding for insurgents, and the refusal of the insurgents to surrender.

**My comments:** During February and March 2014, the average death rate was 7178 dead/30 days.

On 31 March, the death toll was 150,344. On 18 May, the death toll was 162,402. That means that 12,058 people died in 48 days, which corresponds to 7536 dead/30 days. (See my [seventh essay](#) on Syria.)

On 8 July, the total was 171,509 which is 9107/51 days, which corresponds to 5357/30 days. The average death rate since 18 May is significantly less than earlier this year (i.e., 1 Feb to 18 May).

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## Alleged Use of Chemical Weapons in Kafr Zeita on 11 April 2014

### Introduction

The opposition says that Assad's government used chemical weapons at sunset on 11 April at the village of Kafr Zeita in Syria. Assad's government says that the Nusra Front used chemical weapons. Both the opposition and Assad's government agree that two people died and "more than 100" were affected by the chemical weapon. Both sides claim that chlorine gas is the chemical weapon.

On 29 April, OPCW announced it would "soon" send a fact-finding team to Syria to investigate this alleged use chlorine gas in Syria. The team arrived in Syria on 3 May. The OPCW fact-finding team maintained a low profile — with zero press releases and no interviews with journalists. On 27 May, the OPCW team was attacked by insurgents in Syria while attempting to investigate chemical weapons use in Kafr Zeita. The team departed from Syria on 30 May.

**My comments:** The first use of chemical weapons at Kafr Zeita was on 11 April. There was a bureaucratic delay of 18 days before OPCW decided to investigate. The crime scene has now been amply contaminated, and there have been abundant opportunities for fabrication or tampering with evidence. That is why competent detectives immediately secure a crime scene and then promptly begin collecting evidence. The delay by OPCW compromises their investigation.

For details of the early history of chemical weapons use at Kafr Zeita, see my [sixth essay](#) on Syria, which chronicles events during April 2014.

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On 9 July, while browsing at the OPCW website, I discovered a [document](#) called "Summary Report of the Work of the OPCW Fact-Finding Mission in Syria Covering the Period from 3

to 31 May 2014", which was released on 16 June, but ignored by journalists. That Summary Report, at ¶53 says "This [available] information lends credence to the view that toxic chemicals, most likely pulmonary irritating agents such as chlorine, have been used in a systematic manner in a number of attacks."

The attack on the fact-finding team by insurgents at Kafr Zeita on 27 May prevented the team from visiting a site of chemical weapons use: "The attack on the Team and the resulting denial of access to the FFM prevents it from presenting definitive conclusions." (¶53) After one of their vehicles were hit by an improvised explosive device and other vehicles were hit by automatic rifle fire, the team concludes: "While field visits are not envisaged for the immediate future, these remain an option."

This 11-page report mentions very few facts gathered during a month-long visit to Syria. There is no mention of samples gathered by the Syrian National Coalition and smuggled to Turkey in mid-April. (See [SNC](#), 15 April 2014.)

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At midnight on 17 July, residents of Kafr Zeita allege that Assad's military again dropped barrel bombs containing chlorine gas. [Al-Jazeera](#) (blog). Most news agencies ignored this incident.

During 12-29 April 2014, allegations of chlorine gas use by Assad's military were a frequent topic in the news. Diplomats demanded that the United Nations investigate these allegations. The invasion of Iraq by ISIL in June 2014 pushed the chlorine gas story out of the news. In July 2014, everyone seems to have forgotten the allegation of chlorine gas. Politicians and diplomats have a very short attention span.

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## **Why Peace Negotiations Futile: Disorganization of the Syrian National Coalition & Politics of the Peace Process**

My [first](#), [second](#), [third](#), [fourth](#), [fifth](#), [sixth](#), [seventh](#), and [eighth](#) essays on Syria explain why I believe peace negotiations are futile with the current conditions in Syria. The following information continues this history of frustrated negotiations.

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### **Diversions**

Beginning in mid-February 2014, there has been a crisis in the Ukraine, including the annexation of the Crimea by Russia. Why is the Ukraine crisis relevant to the civil war in Syria? Time that Obama/Kerry spend on the crisis in the Ukraine is time not spent on the crisis in Syria. The threats during the Ukraine crisis mean that further cooperation between Russia and the USA on the civil war in Syria is temporarily *unlikely*. By 30 May, the crisis in the Ukraine appeared to be winding down, as Russia had withdrawn most of their troops from the border. But on 28 June, the Ukraine government and pro-Russian separatists were

again fighting a civil war. On 17 July, someone in eastern Ukraine shot down a civilian airliner, as mentioned [below](#).

The Ukraine is not the only problem, there are at least six other major problems in the world that divert attention and resources from Syria:

- a continuing civil war in the Central African Republic
- more violence in South Sudan, as ceasefires are violated
- On 14 April, the Boko Haram Islamic terrorists in Nigeria, kidnapped more than 230 girls from a boarding school. Given the incompetence of the Nigerian government, foreign nations are involved in finding and rescuing the girls. Meanwhile, an Islamic bomb in Jos, Nigeria killed at least 130 people on 20 May. Approximately ninety people were kidnapped by Islamic terrorists on 21 June in Nigeria.
- On 18 May, a former Libyan general led an assault against the Libyan Parliament building, causing another crisis in Libya. Various parts of the government and military supported the general's anti-Islamist campaign. On 16 July, Islamic rebels attacked the airport at Tripoli, destroying airplanes and damaging the terminal building. On 31 July, Islamic extremist rebels seized control of Benghazi.
- On 10 June, ISIL — an Al-Qaeda inspired group that operates in both Iraq and Syria — captured Mosul, the second-largest city in Iraq. On 11 June, ISIL captured Tikrit. (See my [eighth essay](#) and [below](#).) The crisis in Iraq pushed Syria out of the news in Western newsmedia. Moreover, the capture of Mosul, Iraq by ISIL — as well as the declaration of ISIL's caliphate on 29 June 2014 — [changed](#) the Western view of the insurgency in Syria.
- On 12 June, palestinians kidnapped three boys in Israel and killed them. Their dead bodies were found in a field on 30 June. After terrorists in Gaza fired hundreds of rockets and mortar shells into Israel, the Israeli military began a military campaign in Gaza on 8 July. Despite the blatant provocations by the palestinians, the Arab newsmedia pushed Syria and Iraq out of the news in order to hysterically report the so-called "Israeli aggression" in Gaza. On 14 July, Egypt proposed a ceasefire in Gaza, which Israel accepted but Hamas in Gaza rejected. After more than 1300 rockets and mortar shells were fired from Gaza into Israel since 8 July, the Israeli Army invaded Gaza on the evening of 17 July.

At night on 15 July, after eight days of fighting in Gaza, there were reports of a total of 193 palestinians killed, an average of 24/day. [Daily Star](#). [Above](#) it was reported an average death rate in Syria since 18 May of 5357/30 days (178/day). Despite the fact that the recent death rate is 7 times greater in Syria than in Gaza, the Arabs were outraged by the Israelis, while the Arabs ignored the dead in Syria. Indeed, mainly Arab funding of insurgents in Syria is causing the high death toll in Syria. This example shows the illogical position of Arabs, as well as their anti-Semitism.

On 20 July, U.N. Secretary General arrived in Qatar on the first stop of a trip to arrange a



ceasefire in Gaza. Kerry arrived in Egypt on 21 July to help negotiate a ceasefire in Gaza. Both Ban and Kerry ignored the larger war in Syria, and Kerry ignored the current crisis in Iraq that could become a civil war. On 24 July, Ban spent *one day* in Iraq, and apparently accomplished nothing. On 25 July, Ban flew from Cairo to New York City. At night on 26 July, Kerry returned to the USA.

On 30 July, the death toll in the current war in Gaza was only 1390 palestinians and 59 Israelis during 24 days. [Daily Star](#)(AFP). That is an average of 60/day. The recent death rate in Syria is at least three times worse. But it is the conflict in Gaza, *not Syria*, that dominates the news.

Israel and Hamas agreed to a so-called "72-hour ceasefire" to begin 1 Aug, but only two hours after the ceasefire began, Hamas violated that ceasefire. [Daily Star](#).

**My comments:** With the deterioration of many Muslim nations (e.g., Libya, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan) and African nations (e.g., Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, etc.) and the Ukraine, the Secretary General of the United Nations will soon be spending *all* of his time condemning atrocities, war crimes, crimes against humanity, violations of international law, and other serious misconduct. The United Nations is ineffective in all of these civil wars and crises, except for a limited amount of humanitarian aid.

There are some similarities between the crisis in Gaza and the Syrian civil war. The Islamic terrorists in Gaza (principally Hamas) are militarily weaker than the Israeli military, but that does *not* stop these terrorists from continuing to fire rockets and mortar shells into Israel. The Israeli retaliation splatts the Islamic militants again and again. The palestinians in general, and Hamas in particular, have repeatedly refused peace treaties. My impression is that the palestinians would prefer to fight, be defeated, and suffer great casualties and immense damage to infrastructure — instead of negotiating a peace treaty with Israel. The belligerence of these Islamic terrorists has crippled the palestinian economy and prevented the development of a self-supporting nation.

Similarly in Syria, the Free Syrian Army refuses to recognize that it has been defeated and it has no hope of victory. The jihadists and Al-Qaeda have some small hope of victory in parts of Syria. All of these insurgents continue to fight, with huge numbers of casualties and immense damage to buildings and infrastructure owned by other people. These insurgents refuse to consider peace negotiations. The belligerence of these Islamic terrorists has crippled the Syrian economy. On 7 June 2014, Brahimi predicted that Syria would continue to deteriorate: "[Syria is] going to be a failed state, with warlords all over the place." (See my [eighth essay](#) on Syria.)

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## U.S. Military Aid to Rebels in Syria

On 2 July, Agence France-Presse reported that moderate rebels in northern and eastern Syria gave the Syrian National Coalition an ultimatum to supply more munitions and soldiers, or the rebels would quit on 9 July:

Rebels from northern and eastern Syria on Wednesday threatened to lay down their

arms in a week if the country's exiled opposition does not help them fight the jihadist Islamic State (IS).

"We, the leaders of the brigades and battalions... give the National Coalition, the (opposition) interim government, the (rebel) Supreme Military Council and all the leading bodies of the Syrian revolution a week to send reinforcements and complete aid," the statement said.

"Should our call not be heard, we will lay down our weapons and pull out our fighters," it added.

....

The factions that signed the statement are local rebel groups based in Raqa, Deir Ezzor and parts of Aleppo province where fighting against IS has been most intense, and which are now under IS control.

"Syria rebels will 'lay down arms' if no aid to fight IS," [Global Post](#)(AFP), 12:51 GMT, 2 July 2014.

AFP story also published by [Al-Bawaba](#) in Jordan and [Ahram](#) in Egypt; [Arab News](#).

**My comments:** This threat to desert shows a serious lack of morale amongst rebel fighters in Syria.

On 29 June 2014, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported that 5641 rebels had died in fighting against ISIL since 3 Jan 2014, with another 1200 unconfirmed dead rebels. [Associated Press](#); [Haaretz](#)(AP). ISIL may be killing more rebels than the Syrian army.

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On 29 May and 20 June 2014, Obama gave interviews to National Public Radio and CBS News in which Obama claimed the moderate rebels in Syria were "farmers and dentists". (See my [seventh](#) and [eighth essay](#) on Syria.) Obama was wrong, because the Free Syrian Army was mostly deserters from the professional Syrian army. On 4 July, former U.S. Ambassador to Syria, Robert Ford, criticized Obama's statement in an interview with Arabiya television. [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon.

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On 5 July, the commander of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) called on foreign nations to supply weapons to the FSA. The Associated Press reported:

The military chief of Syria's main Western-backed rebel group warned Saturday that the country risked a "humanitarian disaster" if allies do not send more aid to help his moderate forces halt the advance of Islamic militants.

....

"We call on urgent support for the FSA with weapons and ammunition, and to avoid a humanitarian disaster that threatens our people," said Brig. Gen. Abdul-Ilah al-Bashir, commander of the Free Syrian army. "Time is not on our side. Time is a slashing sword," he said.

Diaa Hadid, "Syria Rebel Chief Warns Of 'Disaster' Without Aid," [Associated Press](#), 13:54 GMT, 5 July 2014.

Meanwhile, the clock is ticking on the 9 July deadline for the rebel fighters in Syria to receive more munitions and personnel. Given the three-day weekend for the Fourth of July holiday in the USA, it is unlikely that the USA will respond to the demand before the 9 July deadline. The underequipped FSA should *not* have fought against *both* Assad and ISIL. The end result of having two enemies is that the FSA was more quickly exhausted. In my opinion, it is time for the FSA to recognize it has no hope of defeating either Assad or ISIL.

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The Syrian National Coalition held a three-day meeting on 6-8 July to listen to reports of what they accomplished in the last six months and to elect a new leader. A 9 July [press release](#) "calls on the international community to assume its responsibility in the fight against terrorism through supporting Syria's rebels". The press release quotes the spokesman for the Coalition as saying: "While Assad's allies have been supplying him with unlimited support, the aid provided by the Friends of the Syrian people to mainstream rebels has decreased to the minimum level. The flow of arms to the Syrian rebels has almost stopped lately." Reading between the lines, this seems to mean that the Coalition is *not* spending its resources on the FSA that desperately needs support, instead foreign donors are asked to support the FSA.

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On 10 July, ISIL used equipment supplied by the USA in an ISIL campaign against Kurds in northeastern Syria. ISIL seized the equipment in Iraq sometime around 11 June, after the equipment was abandoned by the cowardly Iraqi army. The equipment includes armored personnel carriers, Humvees, artillery, and mortar shells. This is *not* what Obama intended when he promised U.S. assistance to rebels in Syria. The Associated Press reports that "the balance of power [in Kurdish Syria] appears to have tipped in favor of the Sunni extremists [ISIL] because of the large amounts of weapons [ISIL] brought from Iraq into Syria." [Associated Press](#); [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon.

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I searched Google News for articles published during 9-13 July on the above-mentioned threat by rebels to quit unless they received more soldiers and munitions. Apparently, the rebels abandoned their threat, because I could find no mention of the resolution of this threat.

I did find a report by Press TV in Iran that claims "several militant factions affiliated with what the West calls moderate rebel groups" have defected to ISIL in Syria around 6 July. "In addition, several brigades affiliated with the Western-sponsored Free Syrian Army have pledged allegiance to ISIL in the east of the country." [Press TV](#), 12 July; [Al-Bawaba](#), 12 July. This report is unconfirmed by news organizations outside of Iran. This report could be misinformation distributed by Iran in the hopes of discouraging U.S. military supplies to moderate rebels and the Free Syrian Army.

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On 10 July, *The Washington Post* published a thoughtful opinion about Obama's recent desire to train moderate rebels in Syria.

"The Syrian people started this revolution through peaceful demonstrations," said Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) — one of many to make the case that the struggle has turned sectarian because Washington was passive while it grew more intense. "These radical Islamists are hijacking the revolution," Graham explained.

In fact, radical Islamists have been the core of the opposition to the Assad regime from the very beginning, decades ago. ....

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But now, Washington is going to "vet" this vast, dispersed opposition of 1,500 groups and find moderates. Good luck. The complexity of Washington's task can be seen in the American attitude toward the Islamic State. When the group battles the Maliki government in Iraq, it is a deadly foe and must be ruthlessly attacked. But when it crosses the (now-nonexistent) border between Iraq and Syria and battles the Assad regime, it is aligned with America's stated goal of regime change in Damascus. No other country has this strategic incoherence. The Sunni groups are battling what they see as apostate regimes in Baghdad and Damascus. Those Shiite and quasi-Shiite regimes are being supported by the region's Shiite powers — Iran and Hezbollah. America alone is searching for the good guys.

With this history in mind, it is difficult to believe that three years ago a modest American intervention of arms and training would have changed the trajectory of events in Syria. But can anyone now believe that a modest American intervention is going to find genuine democrats in the maelstrom, help them win against Assad and also the radicals, and stabilize Syria? Or is Washington's new activism more likely to throw fuel onto a raging fire?

Fareed Zakaria, "Obama caves to conventional wisdom on Syria," [Washington Post](#), 10 July 2014.

**My comments:** Whatever the origin of the Syrian civil war, it is clear that the current civil war is essentially sectarian, with Sunni insurgents (backed by Sunni governments in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE) fighting against the Syrian Shiite government (backed by Russia and the Shiite government in Iran). It is also clear that this civil war has persisted for too many years, killed too many people, created too many refugees, and destroyed too many buildings. The civil war needs to stop, and that means ending shipments of weapons to the insurgents. Therefore, Obama is *wrong* to want to increase military aid to so-called moderate rebels in Syria.

Since ISIL captured Mosul in Iraq on 10 June 2014, it has been clear that ISIL poses a grave danger to the Middle East. If the USA is to become involved in this sectarian war in Syria and Iraq, the USA should be helping to annihilate ISIL and other Islamic terrorists.

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On 12 July, [Reuters](#) reports that Jordan "is reluctant to host an expanded rebel instruction programme" for Syrian rebels, because Jordan fears retaliation by the Syrian government. Obama will now need to find another neighbor of Syria to host the proposed expanded U.S.-training program.

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### Flight MH17 shot down

On 17 July at 14:15 GMT someone in eastern Ukraine launched a surface-to-air missile that destroyed a Boeing 777 passenger airliner that was cruising at an altitude of 10 km. The flight was Malaysia Airlines MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. All 298 people aboard that passenger airplane died. (Initial reports said 295 died, because the airline forgot to count three infants.) Commentators quickly suggested that either the Ukraine military, the Russian military, or pro-Russian rebels had launched a Russian Buk missile, although everyone quickly denied launching the missile. [The Guardian](#) (blog); [The Telegraph](#) (blog); [The Telegraph](#) (analysis of rebel's ability to shoot down airplanes); [Reuters](#), 23:48 GMT; [Associated Press](#), 23:43 GMT; all on 17 July 2014.

This incident has no connection to Islamic terrorists. But I include this incident in this essay, because it shows what *could* happen if Islamic terrorists were to have access to surface-to-air missiles.

On 24 June 2014, Islamic terrorists in Pakistan fired assault rifles at an Airbus 310 passenger airplane that was landing at Peshawar airport, putting at least six bullet holes in the airplane and killing one passenger. [Al-Jazeera](#); [NY Times](#); [Reuters](#). Obviously, if these Islamic terrorists had one shoulder-launched missile, they could have destroyed the airplane and killed all 178 passengers. And if Islamic terrorists had access to Russian Buk missiles, the terrorists could attack commercial airplanes at cruising altitude.

Everyone should remember the Islamic bomb in PanAm flight 103 that exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland on 21 Dec 1988, killing all 259 people on the airplane and also killing 11 people on the ground.

Exploding an airplane in flight is a preferred kind of terrorism, because it gives the opportunity to kill several hundred people in one attack. Unlike a bomb in a subway or a bomb on a train, there will be no survivors from exploding an airplane in flight, because the fall will kill everyone, even if they survive the explosion and fire.

The conclusion is simple: under no circumstances should surface-to-air missiles be given to Muslims, regardless of whether "good" rebels or "friendly" governments. Islamic terrorists can steal those missiles and use them to attack civilian airliners in the USA and Europe. We have seen jihadists steal munitions from the Free Syrian Army on 6 Dec 2013, and ISIL steal munitions from the Iraqi army around 10 June 2014, as documented in my previous essays.

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In Coalition News on 18 July, the Syrian National Coalition tersely says:

Safi [spokesman for the Syrian Coalition] attributes the setbacks suffered by Syrian rebels to the reluctance of the friends of Syria group to provide the rebels with the advanced weapons that can tip the balance on the ground. This reluctance contrasts with the unlimited support the Assad regime receives from his Russian and Iranian allies, who have been conspiring on the Syrian people and their revolution for dignity and freedom. The resignations of some members of the FSA's Supreme Military

Council were prompted by the lack of military support, which in turn led to a lack of a unified leadership capable countering regime forces and the Iranian militias."

Furthermore, Safi agrees with the former U.S. ambassador to Syria[,] Robert Ford, who blames the rise of extremist groups in Syria on the Obama administration's hesitation to support the moderate opposition forces.

"Supporting Moderate Rebels is the Right Step towards Fighting Extremism," [SNC](#), 18 July 2014. (mismatched quotation mark in original)

There is no detail about "the resignations of some members of the ... Supreme Military Council", not even the date(s) were mentioned.

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### Coalition Sacks Interim Syrian government

In my [eighth essay](#) on Syria, I mentioned the president of the interim Syrian government, Ahmad Tohme, on 27 June disbanded the Supreme Military Council (SMC) of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and sacked the head of the FSA. Later the same day, the president of the Coalition (i.e., Jarba) reversed Tohme's two decisions.

On 22 July, the Coalition sacked the entire interim Syrian government, including Tohme. Reuters reports:

The Western-backed National Coalition of Syrian opposition members said on Tuesday [22 July] it had voted to force out its "interim government" and form a new one within a month. [¶] Attempts to form a viable government-in-exile for Syria's opposition have been hamstrung by rivalries between its backers and among its members as well as by its inability to establish itself inside Syria.

"Syrian opposition coalition dissolves interim government," [Reuters](#), 15:32 GMT, 22 July 2014.

Agence France-Presse reported:

The Qatar-backed head of the Syrian opposition's interim government was sacked Tuesday [22 July], under pressure from Saudi Arabia, once again exposing the sharp divisions between the opposition's main backers. [¶] Since the National Coalition was created in late 2012, rivalries between Riyadh [Saudi Arabia] and Doha [Qatar] have consistently undermined the group, which acts as the main opposition body.

....

Sixty-six Coalition members voted for Tohme's dismissal, while 35 voted for him to stay in his post. A replacement will be named in the coming weeks.

....

One of Tohme's most unpopular moves, said [veteran dissident and Coalition member, Samir] Nashar, was his decision to dissolve the rebel Supreme Military Council. The decision was later revoked by Jarba.

The Coalition is recognised by scores of states and organisations as a legitimate

representative of the Syrian people. [9] However, the exiled group has been accused by rebels and activists of being "disconnected" from reality on the ground, as well as of corruption and subservience to its backers in Riyadh and Doha. [9] Regime and jihadist advances in recent months have further weakened the Coalition, which has been unable to secure game-changing military support for rebels on the ground.

"Head of Syria opposition government sacked," [Global Post](#)(AFP), 15:46 GMT, 22 July 2014.

*The Daily Star* in Lebanon summarized the Reuters and AFP stories:

Syria's opposition-in-exile body the National Coalition (SNC) said Tuesday [22 July] it had voted to force out its interim government and form a new one within a month. [9] Attempts to form a viable government-in-exile for Syria's opposition have been hamstrung by rivalries between its backers and among its members, as well as by its inability to establish itself inside Syria. [9] The Coalition is designated as the main body representing the opposition by the United States and other major powers, but it has little influence over rebels fighting to overthrow President Bashar Assad.

The group said in a statement Tuesday it was dissolving its interim cabinet to "create new ground for work on the basis of moving the government into the interior as soon as possible, and employing Syrian revolutionary capabilities."

....

One of Tohme's most unpopular moves, said [opposition member Samir] Nashar, was his decision to dissolve the rebel Supreme Military Council. The decision was later revoked by Jarba.

"SNC dissolves interim government," [Daily Star](#), 21:14 GMT, 22 July 2014.

My comment is this kind of instability and bickering between politicians supported by Saudi Arabia and politicians supported by Qatar means that the Syrian National Coalition and its so-called "interim government" are unfit to lead Syria.

On 23 July, the English-language website of the Coalition has a news article about the [sacking](#) of the interim government. Another Coalition [article](#) bizarrely asserts "dissolving the interim cabinet does not mean lack of confidence or denying the efforts it has made so far, but it is chance to grant confidence to new technocratic expertise and to make the most of the renewable youthful expertise."

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On 27 July, Liz Sly, writing in *The Washington Post*, says U.S. military aid to rebels in Syria is too little, too late:

A U.S.-backed effort to arm the moderate Syrian opposition is finally ramping up along the Turkey-Syria border, but it may come too late to save the rebels from defeats on two fronts, by President Bashar al-Assad's government and by the extremists seeking to carve out an Islamic state.

Spurred by concerns that the al-Qaeda-inspired radicals will continue their relentless march across Iraq and Syria, the United States and its allies have begun accelerating

the supply of arms and ammunition to a small number of vetted rebel groups in northern Syria, according to diplomats and rebels who have been receiving the deliveries.

Yet even as the fresh support arrives, challenges are mounting for the embattled moderates, who have been pushed out of eastern Syria by extremists, are being encircled in Aleppo by the government and are seeing their ranks eroded by defeats, desertions and infighting.

The outlook for the revolt against Assad's rule is now bleaker than at any time in the past three years, rebel commanders say, diminishing the chances that the opposition will be able to present any meaningful challenge to the regime or even to serve as a counterweight to Islamist radicals, as U.S. policymakers are hoping.

....

The latest deliveries of arms and money are in part the result of improved coordination between the chief partners in the 11-member Friends of Syria alliance, according to U.S. officials and rebels. Saudi Arabia and Qatar, the opposition's biggest backers, have halted their unilateral funding of rebel groups, which was blamed for the unchecked rise of Islamist factions. The countries are now cooperating with the United States and its European allies to ensure that supplies reach only U.S.-approved moderates.

Liz Sly, "New U.S. help arrives for Syrian rebels as government, extremists gain," [Washington Post](#), 19:18 EDT, 27 July 2014.

At the U.S. State Department Daily Press Briefing on 28 July, this topic was the only mention of Syria during the 85-minute briefing:

QUESTION: I was struck by the criticism of the Administration's handling of Syria when we were — when we heard not from Republicans, but from Representative Eliot Engel of New York, the ranking Democrat on the House Foreign Affairs Committee, during Deputy Assistant Secretary McGurk's testimony last week. Congressman Engel said, I quote, "The right time to train and equip the moderate Syrian opposition was well over a year ago, but we waited so long and by now ISIS has gained so much territory and momentum, they are far more difficult to stop." He added, "I cannot help but wonder what would have happened if we had committed to empowering the moderate Syrian opposition last year." Your reaction?

MS. PSAKI: Well, there are a range of factors. Any member of Congress, Democratic or Republican, is certainly allowed to speak their view and should, and we encourage them to. We have expanded the scale and scope of our assistance since last year. Since — longer than just the last few weeks, certainly. We can't outline all of that publicly. That hasn't changed. There are a couple of events that we're all aware of that have happened over the course of that time that I think are important context, including Iranian engagement, including the influx of foreign fighters that have impacted the situation. We have, even in the last couple of weeks, provided additional — or made the determination to provide additional assistance, so I think the most productive role



that any member of Congress can play is to support those efforts and continue to push them through Congress.

QUESTION: Okay. Last one. I'm sure you saw The Washington Post article today that more or less echoed what Congressman Engel said. The article stated that by the time the Administration's request for \$500 million in counterterrorism funds is up and running, quote, "There may be few if any moderate rebels left to aid." And your reaction to that?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it goes to what I just stated in that that doesn't represent the totality of our assistance, far from it. There's a range of assistance that I can't outline and I'm not going to. But we've built the capacity over the course of time. We'll continue to do that. I think it's important to vet both the recipients of the assistance. That's something I think Congress and the American people want us to do, and it also is important to work with Congress. Those two steps require a process. That's what's been underway.

QUESTION: Is there still time to defeat the Assad regime?

MS. PSAKI: We certainly wouldn't be still working as hard as we are if we didn't think that was the case.

U.S. [State Dept.](#), 28 July 2014.

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## **Need to Enforce Sanctions on ISIL**

On 15 July, Reuters reported:

U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged countries to enforce an international arms embargo and economic sanctions on the Islamic State militant group in a bid to weaken the insurgency that has taken control of large swathes of territory in Iraq and Syria.

In a report to the U.N. Security Council on the world body's political mission in Iraq, obtained by Reuters on Tuesday [15 July], Ban described the rapidly deteriorating security situation fueled by the Sunni militants as "deeply worrisome."

....

"Member states must meet their obligation to implement and enforce the targeted financial sanctions, arms embargo and travel ban imposed on ISIS," Ban said.

"Terrorism must not be allowed to succeed in steering Iraq away from its path towards stability and democracy."

Al Qaeda in Iraq was blacklisted by the Security Council a decade ago and that designation was amended last year to include the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant as alias.

Michelle Nichols, "U.N. chief urges countries to enforce sanctions on Islamic State," [Reuters](#), 19:10 GMT, 15 July 2014.

The Associated Press also reported this story, although I can not find a copy at their website. See [Al-Jazeera](#)(blog), 19:40 GMT; [Yahoo News](#)(AP).

Because of continuing problems with document delivery at the United Nations website since 16 May, I was not able to obtain a copy of Ban's report from the U.N. in New York City.

United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267 (year 1999) and Resolution 1989 (year 2011) imposed financial sanctions and an arms embargo on ISIL. These U.N. Resolutions were ignored by Arab nations who continued to support ISIL and its predecessors. Just to be clear, Ban is *not* asking for *new* sanctions on ISIL. Ban is only asking that the existing sanctions on ISIL be enforced.

**My comments:** Notice that Ban did *not* call on nations to support Assad in his fight against ISIL. Ban is illogical, because ISIL must be defeated in *both* Syria *and* Iraq. Various Arab nations had been funding ISIL. But after ISIL seized oil fields in Syria and began selling oil, and after ISIL robbed banks in Iraq, ISIL may now be self-supporting.

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## Aleppo

Previously, Assad had surrounded Homs and starved the city into submission. On 7 May 2014 the insurgents in Homs negotiated an agreement that they would depart and allow Assad to control Homs. Apparently, Assad plans to do the same thing to Aleppo, the largest city in Syria.

My [seventh essay](#) on Syria describes how jihadists and Nusra Front had cut the electricity and water supply to the city of Aleppo. On 22 May 2014, Assad's forces seized the north-east approach to the city of Aleppo, as Assad prepares to surround Aleppo.

On 3-4 July, the Syrian Army captured the Industrial City of Sheikh Najjar in Aleppo Province. The Industrial City is on the eastern edge of the big city of Aleppo, and had been controlled by Nusra Front. [SANA](#).

On 7 July, the Associated Press reported:

Syrian troops advanced in and around the northern city of Aleppo on Monday [7 July], in what appears to be an attempt to lay siege to opposition-held parts of the country's largest city, activists said.

The troops faced rebels stretched thin by a two-front fight against government forces and Islamic militants encroaching on opposition-held areas. If rebels are driven out of Aleppo, it would be a near-fatal blow to an uprising that began in March 2011 as largely peaceful protests against President Bashar Assad's rule, but later turned into a full-fledged civil war.

....

"If Aleppo falls, the Syrian revolution falls," said an Aleppo-based activist who uses

the name Baraa Halabi, speaking to The Associated Press over Skype.

....

Activist Abdurrahman [of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights] said he did not think Aleppo would fall quickly. [9] "It is going to be a very difficult battle," said Abdurrahman, whose group has a network of activists around Syria. He said the government's aim was likely to capture Aleppo's northern district of Handarat to further close in on rebels.

Bassem Mroue & Daa Hadid, "Syrian Army Tries To Choke Off Rebels In Aleppo," [Associated Press](#), 16:58 GMT, 7 July 2014.

Also see [Al-Jazeera](#).

On 8 July, Agence France-Presse reported:

Elite government forces backed by Hezbollah converged Tuesday [8 July] on the north Syrian city of Aleppo as rebels bolstered their own fighters in readiness for a major showdown, a monitor said.

Rami Abdel Rahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said it was likely that pro-regime forces were preparing to lay siege to rebel-held parts of Aleppo, the country's pre-war commercial capital.

The rebels fighting to oust President Bashar al-Assad have controlled parts of the northern city since they wrested them from the government's hands in July 2012.

"Syria troops converge as rebels ready for Aleppo showdown," [Daily Star](#)(AFP), 18:51 GMT, 8 July 2014.

On 9 July, Reuters reports:

Syrian armed forces have taken strategic ground around Aleppo this week, residents and state media said on Wednesday [9 July], squeezing the main rebel supply line into the city after months of battlefield gains by Damascus. [9] The government advance, after close to two years of stalemate, was bolstered by fighters from the Lebanese Shi'ite Muslim group Hezbollah, ....

....

"There is a four-kilometer-(2.5-mile)-wide area in the north that is controlled by the opposition now," said a resident opposition activist from Aleppo. "If the regime can capture one last street, they will be able to besiege the city."

Oliver Holmes And Sylvia Westall, "Syrian government forces squeeze insurgents in Aleppo," [Reuters](#), 15:47 GMT, 9 July 2014.

**My comment:** The insurgents in Aleppo could avoid suffering — including suffering of innocent civilians trapped in Aleppo — if they would surrender now, instead of surrender later. But that is *not* how war functions. Instead the insurgents will fight, more people will die, more people will suffer, and more buildings will be destroyed.

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## Recognition that Assad is Winning the Civil War

Beginning on 10 March 2014, journalists have been reporting that Assad is winning the civil war in Syria. Some of these reports by journalists are cited in my previous essays.

On 16 July, when Assad was formally inaugurated for his third term, the Associated Press reported:

As [Assad] declared victory, the Western-backed push to topple him or reach a political deal seem increasingly elusive. And while new conflicts in the region have grabbed attention, Syria's 3-year-old civil war is grinding on without reprieve, with 170,000 dead and a third of the country displaced.

....

Rebels once focused on Assad's forces are now simultaneously fighting increasingly belligerent jihadis [i.e., ISIL] seeking to expand a cross-border fiefdom they carved out with neighboring Iraq.

The stunning takeover by militants of the Islamic State group of large areas of northern and eastern Syria and parts of neighboring Iraq has created a new adversary for the West — one that threatens their national security far more than Assad ever did.

....

Some rebels concede that their priority is now to fight off the grave menace posed by the expansionist ambitions of Islamic State jihadis.

Zeina Karam, "Assad Declares Victory, Push To Topple Him Tenuous," [Associated Press](#), 19:24 GMT, 16 July 2014.

On 16 July, [Reuters](#) reported: "Once written off in the West as certain to fall, [Assad] launches his seven-year term in his securest position since the early days of the three-year-old war."

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Assad's strategy was to concentrate on defeating insurgents (e.g., Free Syrian Army, Islamic Front, Nusra Front) in western Syria (which is heavily populated), and to temporarily ignore ISIL in northern and eastern Syria. Assad's strategy was working well, until mid-June 2014 when ISIL captured U.S.-supplied military equipment in Iraq and when ISIL robbed banks in Mosul, Iraq. Suddenly, ISIL was well entrenched in northern and eastern Syria *and* well supplied, stronger than ever. On 17 July, ISIL captured the Shaar gas field in Homs province. [Gulf News](#)(AFP). But on 26 July, Assad's military again took control of that gas field. [Global Post](#)(AFP); [Reuters](#); [Al-Jazeera](#). This victory by Assad on 26 July shows that Assad can defeat the formidable ISIL. However, the victory by Assad comes with losses of approximately 1000 soldiers and militia in two weeks. [Associated Press](#).

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## Ban appoints new peace negotiator

On 9 July, at noon in New York, the Associated Press reported:

Veteran Italian-Swedish diplomat Staffan de Mistura has been chosen by [U.N.] Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to replace Lakhdar Brahimi as the international point man on Syria, U.N. diplomats said Wednesday [9 July].

The diplomats, speaking on condition of anonymity ahead of an expected announcement from Ban later Wednesday, said de Mistura will solely be the United Nations envoy — not the joint U.N.-Arab League envoy as Brahimi was — and will have an Arab deputy.

....

Born in Stockholm, de Mistura had a 40-year career with the United Nations and recently served as deputy foreign minister in the Italian government headed by Mario Monti, who was also rumored to be a candidate to replace Brahimi.

De Mistura worked for various U.N. agencies and served as the top U.N. envoy in Afghanistan in 2010-11 and in Iraq from 2007-09, and as the secretary-general's personal representative for southern Lebanon from 2001-04.

Edith M. Lederer, "Diplomats: Staffan De Mistura Is New Syria Envoy," [Associated Press](#), 12:02 EDT, 9 July 2014.

The first U.N. peace negotiator for Syria, Koffi Annan, resigned in frustration, on August 2012. The second U.N. peace negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, also resigned in frustration, on 13 May 2014. There has been no negotiator for the past 57 days, but the recent situation was the same as in March/April 2014, when Brahimi was still serving as negotiator.

At 19:00 EDT on 9 July, there was nothing posted at the U.N. website about the new negotiator for Syria. The Associated Press, in a 21:04 EDT 9 July version of the above-cited story, says that de Mistura will be officially appointed on 10 July.

On 10 July, the U.N. issued a [press release](#) about the appointment of de Mistura. Although de Mistura speaks the colloquial Arabic language, Ban also appointed Ramzy Ezzeldin Ramzy of Egypt as the U.N. Deputy Special Envoy for Syria.

**My comments:** Why does the United Nations need a peace negotiator for Syria? There is absolutely *no* indication that any party in the Syrian civil war *wants* peace negotiations.

Instead, each of the parties belligerently want to continue fighting, in the hope that each will win. For the past months, Assad has been winning in heavily populated western Syria. As mentioned [above](#), Assad is poised to capture Aleppo, which would greatly strengthen Assad's position. ISIL has been capturing towns on both sides of the Syrian/Iraq border.

The major military forces amongst the insurgents are the Islamic Front (jihadists), Nusra Front (official Al-Qaeda), and ISIL (Al-Qaeda inspired) — and *none* of these three organizations expressed any interest in past peace negotiations, nor have they expressed interest in future peace negotiations. In 2013, these jihadists and Al-Qaeda groups declared

that anyone who negotiated with Assad would be a traitor to the revolution in Syria.

If the United Nations wants successful peace negotiations, the U.N. must accept Assad as ruler of Syria for the foreseeable future. As explained in my my separate [essay](#), the U.N. also needs to abandon the "transitional governing body" in Geneva1. It would be helpful if the U.N. could stop the flow of munitions to insurgents in Syria.

If de Mistura can endure consistent failures for a year or two, the situation on the ground might change in the year 2015 or 2016, giving de Mistura an opportunity to preside at peace negotiations. Such negotiations might involve the surrender of the Free Syrian Army and their reintegration into the Syrian army.

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### Symptom of U.N. Bureaucracy

The diplomats at the United Nations hold meetings and *talk*, but accomplish little. A small symptom of the U.N. bureaucracy is found on the U.N. News Center webpage about Syria, which says on 10 July 2014:

#### **Ushering Geneva process forward to a peaceful solution**

The long-awaited international conference on Syria aims to find a political solution to the ongoing conflict, and marks the first time the Syrian Government and the opposition will meet for direct talks since the conflict began in March 2011. Hosted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Joint UN-Arab League Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, the conference is taking place in Switzerland in two parts, opening in Montreux on 22 January 2014, and continuing at the UN office in Geneva, on 24 January. More than 30 nations have been invited to attend.

"News Focus: Syria" at [U.N. News Centre](#), visited 10 July 2014.

Do any of the U.N. bureaucrats realize that the "long-awaited ... conference" in Geneva *failed* on 15 Feb, 145 days ago on 10 July? Not only did the negotiations fail to accomplish anything, but also there is no prospect of resuming the negotiations in the foreseeable future. Moreover, the U.N. negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, resigned in frustration on 13 May, 58 days ago on 10 July.

The failed Geneva2 negotiations are an embarrassing consequence of the United Nation's stubborn insistence — probably inspired by the London11 group of nations — on imposing the Geneva1 plan on the participants from Syria. Adding to the failure, the Syrian National Coalition refused to recognize the reality that Assad was winning the civil war and Assad was firmly in control of the lawful Syrian government. Instead, the Coalition arrogantly demanded that Assad resign. Meanwhile, issues that really matter (e.g., ceasefires, prisoner exchanges, etc.) were *not* discussed. For details on why Geneva2 negotiations failed, see my separate [essay](#).

The Geneva2 negotiations are like the spot on a road where a truck has run over a skunk. It is five months past the time when U.N. bureaucrats should have removed the text about the Geneva2 negotiations from the above-quoted U.N. News Center webpage about Syria. (The text of speeches and press conferences at Geneva2 should be preserved at the U.N. website as a historical example of how *not* to have a peace conference.)

The above-quoted text was finally deleted from the U.N. News Focus webpage on the morning of 11 July 2014, when material about de Mistura was added.

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## U.N. Security Council Resolution 2139 Failed

On 22 Feb 2014, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2139, which required parties in Syria to allow humanitarian aid and to stop targeting civilians. Although this Resolution was effective immediately, *all* of the parties in Syria ignored it. The U.N. Secretary General issued Reports in March, April, May, and June 2014, each of which recognized that Resolution 2139 had failed.

My [eighth essay](#) on Syria mentions discussions beginning 28 April 2014 about the United Nations delivering aid through border crossings controlled by insurgents, a move strongly opposed by the Syrian government.

On the afternoon of 14 July, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 2165 that authorizes the U.N. to deliver humanitarian supplies through border crossings controlled by insurgents. [U.N. Security Council](#). Also see: [U.N. News](#); [Associated Press](#), 15:58 EDT; [Reuters](#), 15:19 EDT; all on 14 July.

The official copy of the [resolution](#) will be available at the U.N. website. As noted in my two previous essays, the U.N. document delivery system has been nonfunctional since 16 May 2014.

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On 23 July, Ban made his monthly report to the United Nations Security Council on the failure of their Resolution 2139. Because of continuing problems with document delivery at the United Nations website since 16 May, I was not able to obtain a copy of Ban's report from the U.N. website in New York City. On 5 Aug, I downloaded a copy from [ReliefWeb](#). I believe the following paragraphs of this report are particularly significant:

**6.** Government-controlled cities and towns continued to be subject to indiscriminate mortar attacks, shelling and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices by armed opposition groups and extremists, notably the cities of Homs, Damascus, Rural Damascus and Hama. One attack in a suburb of Hama city killed at least 34 people on 20 June; another killed at least 15 people in Al-Shouq in Rural Damascus; while six people were killed in the Wadi al-Dahab area of Homs. On 19 July, a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device exploded in Douma, in a densely populated area, killing at least 22 people and injuring more than 50. In Damascus, indiscriminate shelling by armed opposition groups and extremists intensified from 11 to 17 July, resulting in civilian casualties. For example, on 16 July, shelling resulted in the deaths of four people and injured 22 people in the Al-Shaalan neighbourhood.

**11.** There are a number of ongoing negotiations on ceasefire agreements between the Government and armed opposition groups, including in Yarmouk, Homs and Dar'a. In Yarmouk, an agreement on cessation of hostilities was reached between Syrian authorities and armed opposition groups on 21 June. However, reports indicate that the

agreement has not yet been fully implemented and that further negotiations are ongoing. In Homs, negotiations on a ceasefire are continuing in the Al-Wa'er neighbourhood. A ceasefire started in Al-Wa'er on 26 June but was breached on 29 June following reports of shelling. In Dar'a, negotiations on a ceasefire are under way in the Dar'a al-Balad area, including with Jabhat al-Nusra.

**25.** During the reporting period, armed opposition groups and designated terrorist groups have severely constrained access to the eastern governorates. Deir ez-Zor continues to suffer from severe access constraints as a result of the Islamic State's efforts to block humanitarian and commercial access into the Governorate from Ar-Raqqa, Al-Hasakeh and the southern desert region's areas in which the Islamic State control all major access routes. Some 711,000 civilians are estimated to be affected. Similarly, in Ar-Raqqa, the Islamic State and armed opposition groups are blocking humanitarian and commercial access to areas that are under the control of others. As a result, access to Al-Hasakeh is also constrained.

**28.** Approximately 241,000 people remain besieged — 196,000 in areas that are besieged by Government forces in Madamiyet Elsham, Eastern Ghouta, Darayya and Yarmouk, and 45,000 in areas besieged by opposition forces in Nubul and Zahra.

**51.** On 20 June, I set out six key areas for urgent action.

- First, bringing an end to the violence. I repeat my call for an arms embargo.
- Second, protecting the human rights, safety and dignity of the Syrian people.
- Third, starting a serious political process for a new Syrian Arab Republic.
- Fourth, addressing the issue of accountability for the serious crimes committed by all sides.
- Fifth, completing the destruction of the chemical weapons production facilities. This has now been achieved.
- Sixth, the need to address the regional dimensions of the conflict, including the extremist threat.

**52.** .... The world must come together to stop funding and other support for organizations designated as terrorist groups by the Security Council, including Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic State.

Ban Ki-moon, "Report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Security Council Resolution 2139 (2014)," S/2014/525, 23 July 2014. (Bulleted list in ¶51 added by Standler.)

The six-point plan in paragraph 51 of Ban's July Report was originally made in Ban's 20 June [speech](#) to the Asia Society in New York City. [U.N. News](#). Note that Obama openly defies Ban's first point, in that Obama's speech at West Point on 28 May 2014 — and by Obama's administration many times subsequently — promises an *increase* in military support for moderate rebels in Syria.

Paragraph 52 of Ban's July Report repeats the call that Ban made on 15 July, and discussed [above](#).

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On 24 July, ten days after Resolution 2165 passed, the first U.N. shipment of aid without the approval of Assad's government occurred: nine trucks traveled from Turkey to Syria. [Associated Press](#); [Al-Jazeera](#); [Daily Star](#)(AFP). On the evening of 25 July, I could find no announcement of this achievement at the United Nations website or at the UNOCHA website.

On 30 July, Kerry [announced](#) the USA would provide an additional US\$ 378 million in humanitarian aid to Syrians. Kerry used the opportunity to take a swipe at Assad: "The brutally indefensible and illegitimate Assad regime...." and "Syrians all over the country are being butchered at the hands of a ruthless tyrant." In addition to this ad hominem attack on Assad, Kerry ignored the atrocities of ISIL in Syria (e.g., car bombs, beheadings), ignored blockades of cities by insurgents, and ignored insurgents who deliberately fire mortar shells into civilian areas — each of which are prohibited under Resolution 2139.

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## Debate in Iraq

### Islamic condemnation of ISIL caliphate of al-Baghdadi

The first caliphate was established by the four successors of the Prophet Mohammad, which successors ruled the entire Muslim community during the years 632 to 661. The caliphate of the Ottoman Empire was established in the year 1299 and abolished by Turkish secular President Ataturk in 1924.

On 29 June 2014, al-Baghdadi proclaimed a caliphate in Syria and Iraq, and appointed himself as caliph, in line with the first four successors of the Prophet Mohammad. Traditionally, a caliph is appointed by community consensus, but al-Baghdadi arrogantly appointed himself. [Al-Jazeera](#) described al-Baghdadi's vision for his caliphate. As described below, many jihadists rejected al-Baghdadi's caliphate.

Some jihadists and Nusra Front in Syria promptly condemned the caliphate. Agence France-Presse reported:

Syrian rebels, including the main Islamist factions, said Monday [30 June] the creation of a caliphate by the Islamic State (IS) was "null and void". [¶] "We see that the announcement by the rejectionists of a caliphate is null and void, legally and logically," the groups said in a statement, using a pejorative term to refer to the extremist Islamic State. [¶] Among the signatories was the Islamic Front, Syria's biggest rebel coalition, and Majlis Shura Mujahideen al-Sharqiya, an alliance that includes the Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front.

"Syria rebels says IS caliphate 'null and void'," [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon, 20:53 GMT, 30 June 2014. Also at [Your Middle East](#) in Stockholm, Sweden.

*Al-Jazeera* reported the above story:

Several groups and committees in Syria including members of the Islamic Front — Jaish Al Mujahidin, Afnad Sham and the Mujahidin shura council — issued a statement regarding the Islamic State's declaration of a new caliphate. The statement said:

- the declaration is void mentally and legally.
- it seeks to divide Muslim countries.
- international and regional powers will take advantage of this declaration to directly intervene for their interests.
- Syrian regime will gain legitimacy due to this declaration

The statement added that the Islamic State was trying to hide its crimes and reality by establishing Islamic state. The fighting groups in Syria would not change their attitude towards the Islamic State and would keep fighting it.

[Al-Jazeera](#) (blog), 04:33 GMT, 1 July 2014.

On 2 July, an organization in Jordan rejected al-Baghdadi's caliphate:

The Jordanian branch of Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT) has dismissed the Islamic State's declaration of a Caliphate straddling the border between Iraq and Syria, saying the group had no real "authority" in implementing Islamic rule.

....

"Therefore the announcement of ISIS is empty speech without substance," [Media spokesperson of HT in Jordan, Mamdooh Qatishaat,] said.

Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamic movement that has been working for the re-establishment of the Islamic Caliphate in the Muslim world since 1953.

"Hizb ut-Tahrir rejects 'IS' declaration of Caliphate," [Al-Jazeera](#) (blog), 09:30 GMT, 2 July 2014.

On 2 July, Agence France-Presse reported that "Issam Barqawi, known as Abu Mohammad al-Maqdessi" — a "Jordanian jihadist ideologist" who was sentenced to prison in Jordan "for recruiting fighters for the Taliban" — publicly called for the Islamic State caliphate to "Reform yourselves, repent and stop killing Muslims and distorting religion." See "Top Jordan jihadist denounces ISIS caliphate," [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon, 12:17 GMT, 2 July 2014.

Reuters also reported on al-Maqdessi, which Reuters transliterates as al-Maqdisi:

Maqdisi has also said the Islamic State's extremist actions deviate from true Islam. [¶] "My eyes are not pleased with the shedding of Muslim blood by any party in the circle of Islam, even if they (the targets) are violators," he said. [¶] "... We are warning you against mutilating the religion of Allah and corrupting and sullyng it with the blood of the Muslims and the mujahideen (holy warriors)," he said.

Suleiman Al-Khalidi, "Jihadist thinker says Islamic caliphate will cause Islamist infighting," [Reuters](#), 19:05 GMT, 2 July 2014.

On the night of 3 July, Agence France-Presse reported:

The surprise declaration of a "caliphate" by jihadists accused of committing atrocities in Syria and Iraq has provoked an outcry even among Islamists who dream of a state under Shariah. [¶] The caliphate was abolished nearly 100 years ago, although many

Arabs and Muslims still associate it with a golden age. [9] But this week's announcement of a caliphate by the radical Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) group, which has been denounced by the central Al-Qaeda organization, appears to only appeal to fanatics.

....

ISIS chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's designation as "caliph," or leader of all Muslims, and successor to the Prophet Mohammad, has shocked most Muslims, even jihadists, who have rejected the idea outright.

Al-Azhar, a leading authority of Sunni Islam, "believes that all those who are today speaking of an Islamic state are terrorists," its senior representative Sheikh Abbas Shuman told AFP.

....

Islamist rebels in Syria, who are fighting both IS and President Bashar Assad's regime, have branded the caliphate announcement as "null and void."

....

And Lebanon's Jamaa al-Islamiya, the local branch of the widely influential Muslim Brotherhood, lashed out at the announcement and called it heresy. [9] The group also said ISIS' acts "are a deformation of Islam, that disgusts the people of the region."

Rana Moussaoui, "Caliphate declaration 'heresy,' Islamists say," [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon, 21:11 GMT, 3 July 2014.

Also at [Arab News](#); [Oman Tribune](#).

On 5 July, the *Middle East Monitor* reported:

The International Union of Muslim Scholars, led by influential Sunni cleric Dr Yusuf Al-Qaradawi, released a statement on Friday [4 July] concerning the recent declaration of a "caliphate" by the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIS). The union said that the caliphate declaration is "null and void" and "lacks any realistic or legitimate standards." It warned of serious consequences of the declaration on both Sunni Muslims in Iraq and the revolution in Syria.

The union defined the concept of a caliphate linguistically and religiously. The leader of the Muslim Ummah (nation) should be "a representative" of the nation, based on the people's choice of that leader, or their representatives. "The mere announcement is not enough to establish a caliphate," the statement added.

The scholars refuted ISIS arguments regarding its so-called "Islamic State", pointing out that, "All the affairs of the state and religious political practice should be based on Shura (consultation)." They cited evidence from the text of the Qur'an and Sunnah (example of Prophet Muhammad) to emphasise the concept of Shura, rather than coercion, in Islam. The union statement also referred to early Muslim caliphs, pointing

out that they were selected by Shura, not self-appointed.

It warned that ISIS's announcement "serves the enemies of the Syrian and Iraqi revolutions" which advocate legitimate demands for their peoples. Furthermore, the union accused ISIS of "hijacking the Iraqi revolution", in which Sunnis of all stripes are taking part, adding that delegitimising all Islamic movements in the world by the caliphate announcement is "unacceptable".

"Prominent scholars declare ISIS caliphate 'null and void'," [Middle East Monitor](#), 5 July 2014.

Agence France-Presse reported the same story:

Prominent Sunni Muslim scholar Yusuf al-Qaradawi has said that the declaration of an Islamic caliphate by Sunni rebels fighting the governments in Syria and Iraq violates sharia law.

Qatar-based Qaradawi, seen as a spiritual guide of the Muslim Brotherhood in his native Egypt, said in a statement on Saturday that the declaration "is void under sharia."

"We look forward to the coming, as soon as possible, of the caliphate," Qaradawi said, of the form of pan-Muslim government last seen under the Ottoman Empire.

"But the declaration issued by the Islamic State is void under sharia and has dangerous consequences for the Sunnis in Iraq and for the revolt in Syria," he added.

"Leading Sunni scholar says caliphate violates sharia," [Al-Jazeera](#)(blog), 08:12 GMT, 5 July 2014.

Also at [Arab News](#).

On 7 July, *Al-Jazeera* published an article collecting reports of various Islamic clerics and scholars who rejected al-Baghdadi's caliphate:

Muslim scholars and movements from across the Sunni Islamic spectrum have rejected the caliphate declared by the Islamic State group, with the fighters receiving scathing criticism from both mainstream religious leaders, and those associated with their former allies, al-Qaeda.

Assem Barqawi, also known as Abu Mohamed al-Maqdesi, who was released from a Jordanian prison in June after serving a sentence for recruiting volunteers to fight in Afghanistan, called fighters loyal to the Islamic State group's leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, "deviant".

....

"[The] Khilafah state (ISIL) declared is illegitimate," [Syrian exile and Sufi, Muhammad] al-Yacoubi said. Adding that supporting it is "haram", or forbidden.

The view was echoed by Qatar-based Egyptian religious leader, Yusuf al-Qaradawi, who said the declaration was "void" according to Islamic law. [9] "A group simply

announcing a caliphate, is not enough to establish a caliphate," Qaradawi said in an open letter published on the website for the International Union of Muslim Scholars, which he heads.

....

Speaking during Friday [4 July] prayers, Rachid Ghannouchi, the founder of the Ennahda Party, Tunisia's main Islamist party, added to the chorus of criticism, calling the declaration of a caliphate by followers of Baghdadi a "reckless" act, which gave a "deceptive message". [9] "Nations do not arise in this ridiculous way," he told his followers.

Shafik Mandhai, "Muslim leaders reject Baghdadi's caliphate," [Al-Jazeera](#), 7 July 2014.

On 15 July 2014, Agence France-Presse reported Muslim cleric Abu Qatada, who is currently being tried in criminal court in Jordan on terrorism charges, condemned the ISIL caliphate:

"The announcement of a caliphate by the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) is void and meaningless because it was not approved by jihadists in other parts of the world," Abu Qatada wrote in a 21-page document published on jihadist websites.

....

"This group does not have the authority to rule all Muslims and their declaration applies to no-one but themselves," said Abu Qatada.

"Its threats to kill opponents, sidelining of other groups and violent way of fighting opponents constitute a great sin, reflecting the reality of the group," wrote the Palestinian-born preacher.

"Jordan's Abu Qatada: Caliphate declaration 'void'," [Daily Star](#), 15 July 2014.

Copy at [Global Post](#)(AFP).

On 22 July, Reuters reported that "Mehmet Gormez, head of the Religious Affairs Directorate, the highest religious authority in Turkey," had criticized the new caliphate:

The declaration of a "caliphate" by Islamist militants in Iraq lacks legitimacy and their death threats to Christians are a danger to civilisation, Turkey's top cleric, the successor to the last caliph's most senior imam, said.

....

Gormez said death threats against non-Muslims made by the group, formerly known as Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), were hugely damaging. [9] "The statement made against Christians is truly awful. Islamic scholars need to focus on this (because) an inability to peacefully sustain other faiths and cultures heralds the collapse of a civilisation," he told Reuters in an interview.

....

An average of 1,000 Muslims are killed each day around the world, mostly due to

internecine strife, he said. "Almost 90 percent of them are killed by other Muslims, by their brothers. [¶] "Muslims need not look beyond themselves for the causes of these conflicts. They should be aware that ... global powers have a responsibility but those are forces they cannot control."

Ayla Jean Yackley, "Turkey's top cleric calls new Islamic 'caliphate' illegitimate," [Reuters](#), 12:01 GMT, 22 July 2014.

Copy at [Daily Star](#).

On 4 Oct 2011, the U.S. State Department put a ten million dollar [reward](#) for information on the location of al-Baghdadi, one of five known aliases of the leader of Al-Qaeda in Iraq, later known as ISIL, and now called the "Islamic State" caliphate. See also U.S. National Counterterrorism [Center](#); U.S. State Dept. [press release](#) on 4 Oct 2011. The U.S. Government does *not* assess legitimacy of religions, but does offer rewards for capture of murderers.

**My comments:** Al-Baghdadi is a terrorist thug who has hijacked a historical concept of a caliphate. Al-Baghdadi's so-called "caliphate" is operated by a barbaric gang with a long record of atrocities. In addition to being a mass murderer, al-Baghdadi is a religious bigot who discriminates against Shiite Muslims, Christians, and anyone else who disagrees with al-Baghdadi's perverted religion.

Although the current boundaries of nations in the Middle East are derived from the colonial Sykes-Picot Agreement in the year 1916, the current rulers of nations in the Middle East seem content with the current boundaries. During the civil war in Syria, and during the battle against ISIL in Iraq, is *not* a good time to redraw boundaries of nations in the Middle East, with the possible exception of giving a nation to Kurds in Syria and Iraq.

Beginning in the 1980s, most of the major wars in the world have involved nations with a majority Muslim population (e.g., Libya, Palestine, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, etc.). Moreover, Al-Qaeda, and its offspring ISIL, have repeatedly engaged in appalling barbaric acts — not only killing innocent people, but killing in a revoltingly egregious way. This pattern of violence, and the terrorism of Al-Qaeda, has given the entire Islamic religion a bad reputation. This bad reputation is strong amongst people in nations where Muslims are a tiny minority, where most of what people know about Muslims comes from news about Muslim terrorists.

Amongst Christian religions there are provisions for excommunication, ostracism (e.g., shunning), and other sanctions for especially deviant conduct. So Christians wonder why mainstream Islamic clerics do *not* sanction jihadists and especially Al-Qaeda. The mainstream Islamic clerics seem reluctant to comment on these wars, jihad, and Al-Qaeda. Note above that most of the condemnation of the caliphate came from clerics who advise jihadist organizations, Muslim Brotherhood, and other Islamic political groups — these are all competitors of the ISIL caliphate.

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## Ethnic Cleansing & Other Atrocities in Iraq

Back in June 2014, ISIL executed hundreds of Shiite soldiers in Mosul and Tikrit. (See my [eighth essay](#) on Syria.)

On 11 July, [Human Rights Watch](#) reports that Shiites have executed at least 255 Sunni prisoners.

On 14 July, [Amnesty International](#) released a report on violence by both ISIL and the Iraqi Government.

**My comments:** Unfortunately, this is what happens when religious bigots have ample weapons, and no one is controlling them to prevent such sectarian attacks. In June 2014 there was already more than enough religious bigotry in Iraq to fuel a civil war. Humanitarians are advised to stop reading news from Iraq, because it is going to become worse.

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### U.N. Report

On 18 July, the United Nations mission in Iraq and the U.N. human rights office in Geneva issued a joint monthly report that counted "at least 5,576 civilians" dead in violence in Iraq so far this year. During June 2014, "at least 1,531 civilians were killed in Iraq". The U.N. says all sides are committing war crimes in Iraq. [Associated Press](#), 10:52 GMT; [Reuters](#), 13:10 GMT; [Al-Jazeera](#)(Reuters).

The United Nations report says:

Since the escalation of the conflict at the beginning of June, UNAMI [United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq] has documented a range of violations of IHL [International Humanitarian Law] and violations and abuses of IHRL [International Human Rights Law] that, in some instances, may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In particular, UNAMI has documented systematic and egregious violations perpetrated by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and associated armed groups against civilians, including instances of

- direct, deliberate targeting of civilians in the conduct of armed operations;
- disregard of the principles of distinction or proportionality in the context of armed operations;
- killings and executions of civilians, captured Iraq Security Forces (ISF) personnel, and persons associated with the Government of Iraq;
- sexual violence and rape against women and girls;
- kidnappings;
- targeted assassinations/killings of political, community and religious figures;
- killings, abductions and other violations of members of ethnic, religious and other minorities;
- killing and physical violence against children;
- forced recruitment of children;
- wanton destruction of civilian property;
- robbery of civilian property;
- targeting and destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure (including hospitals and schools);

- attacks on protected installations (such as attacks on dams); and
- attacks on places of cultural significance and places of religious worship.

....

Prior to the recent deterioration of the security situation, a sustained upsurge in violent terrorist acts, had been taking a very heavy toll of civilian lives across the country. The impact of such rapid escalation contributed to a further increase in the death toll of civilians. It also generated further injuries, physical suffering, destruction of property and livelihoods and serious impairment of access to basic, life-sustaining services. The intensifying armed violence and continuous acts of terrorism have impacted severely on Iraqi children, women and civilian men both directly and indirectly, and driven over one million civilians from their homes. The fear of violence has severely impaired civilians' freedom of movement, for example, causing many to restrict their activities outside homes or neighbourhoods and affects their ability to access workplaces and basic services, including food, water, education and health care.

Report on the Protection of Civilians in the Non International Armed Conflict in Iraq: 5 June to 5 July 2014, [U.N. Iraq](#), 18 July 2014. (Bulleted list added by Standler to make run-on sentence easier to read.)

Copy at [U.N. OHCHR](#).

This unbiased United Nations report from observers in Baghdad mentions the evolution of ISIL:

ISIL grew out of a number of Islamist extremist insurgency and terrorist groups, most importantly 'al-Qa'eda in Iraq' ("AQ-I"); it was known formerly as the Islamic State of Iraq ("ISI"), and also as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria ("ISIS"). ISIL root organisation (AQ-I) was established on 15 October 2006, originally as an umbrella organization composed of and supported by a variety of insurgency groups operating in Iraq, including its predecessor, the Mujahideen Shura Council, al-Qa'eda, Jeish al-Fatiheen, Jund al-Sahaba, Katbiyan Ansar Al-Tawhid wal Sunnah, Jeish al-Taiifa al-Mansoura, and other Sunni based groups. Its field of operations were originally in the Iraqi governorates of Baghdad, al-Anbar, Diyala, Kirkuk, Salah id-Din, Ninawa, and parts of Babil and Wasit, etc. ISIL is led by Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who is believed to have been born in Samarra in Iraq. He emerged as the leader of AQ-I in 2010, succeeding the founder of Jamaat al-Tawhid wa al-Jihad Abu Musab al-Zarqawi. ISIL claims to have fighters from the UK, France, Germany and other European countries, as well as the US, the Caucasus, as well as a large number of Arab and Islamic countries. ISIL operated largely independently from other Islamist radical terrorist and insurgent groups, most importantly Jabhat al-Nusra (al- Nusra Front), which is the official al-Qa'eda affiliate. The organisation was believed to have received substantial financial support from wealthy individuals from the Gulf and Saudi Arabia, but its coffers have been considerably swelled by its seizure of oil fields in eastern Syria and Iraq and the reserves of the Iraqi Central Bank held in Mosul when the city fell to ISIL and its associated groups on 10 June 2014. ISIL is on the al-Qa'eda Sanction List of the Security Council in resolutions 1267 of 1999, and 1989 of 2011 which imposes financial sanctions, arms embargo and a travel ban on its members.

*Ibid.* at footnote 3.



**My comment:** I wonder if people in Iraq who had property destroyed/confiscated by ISIL, personal injuries caused by ISIL, or deprivation of personal freedom by ISIL could sue the Iraqi government for failing to protect them from ISIL. The failure of the Iraqi government is more than negligence, when the government had a willful indifference to the suffering of its citizens. (On 16 July 2014, a court in the Netherlands found the Dutch government was liable for the deaths of 300 Bosnian Muslims that Dutch peacekeepers had failed to protect in 1995. Courts in the USA sometimes hold a state or federal government liable for civil rights violations.)

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### **ISIL Expels Christians from Mosul ISIL Confiscates Property Belonging to Christians**

At night on 18 July, Reuters reported that ISIL in Mosul had issued a ruling on 17 July that would be effective at noon on 19 July:

Islamist insurgents have issued an ultimatum to northern Iraq's dwindling Christian population to either convert to Islam, pay a religious levy or face death, according to a statement distributed in the militant-controlled city of Mosul.

....

It said Christians who wanted to remain in the "caliphate" that the Islamic State declared this month in parts of Iraq and Syria must agree to abide by terms of a "dhimma" contract — a historic practice under which non-Muslims were protected in Muslim lands in return for a special levy known as "jizya".

"We offer them three choices: Islam; the dhimma contract — involving payment of jizya; if they refuse this they will have nothing but the sword," the announcement said. anonymous, "Convert, pay tax, or die, Islamic State warns Christians," [Reuters](#), 18:20 GMT, 18 July 2014.

Imran Khan, a journalist for [Al-Jazeera](#), reports that ISIL instructed Christians who wished to flee "should leave the city without taking any belongings with them". After Christians flee, ISIL takes possession of their homes and their property therein.

See also: [Daily Star](#); [NY Times](#); [Arab News](#)(AFP); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Al-Jazeera](#).

On 26 Feb 2014, ISIL issued a similar decree in Raqqa, Syria. (See my [fourth essay](#) on Syria.)

On Saturday, 19 July, the Associated Press reported that nearly all Christians had fled from Mosul:

[Christians in Mosul] clambered into cars — children, parents, grandparents — and headed for the largely autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq or other areas protected by the Kurdish security forces. Their departure marks the latest — and perhaps final — exodus of Christians from the city, emptying out communities that date back to the first centuries of Christianity, including Chaldean, Assyrian and Armenian churches.

Iraq was home to an estimated 1 million Christians before the 2003 U.S.-led invasion that ousted Saddam Hussein. Since then, militants have frequently targeted Christians across the country, bombing their churches and killing clergymen. Under such pressures, many Christians have left the country. Church officials now put the community at around 450,000.

....

In Mosul, the Islamic State group has gradually imposed its strict interpretation of Shariah law. The militants banned alcohol and painted over street advertisements showing women's faces, for example, but have held off on strict punishments. More recently, the group began seizing the houses of Christian and Shiite Muslim families who fled Mosul and gave some of them to Sunni families uprooted from other areas, residents said.

Still, the edict calling on Christians to convert, pay tax or face death took many in the community by surprise. [9] "I went to the Islamic State religious court to make sure that the statement is authentic, and the man there told me that I should leave my house, car, money and properties behind," said Maan Abou, a 45-year-old retired army officer. [9] On Friday [18 July], Abou left his home and washing machine repair shop in Mosul behind and headed for Kirkuk with his wife and four children, as well his own parents and his sister's family. [9] "My wife and daughters wore the Islamic headscarf in order to deceive the Islamic State people at the checkpoints and make sure that our money and mobiles were not confiscated," he said.

Sameer N. Yacoub & Ryan Lucas, "Under Threat, Iraq's Christians Flee City Of Mosul," [Associated Press](#), 19:22 GMT, 19 July 2014.

#### **Condemnation of ISIL**

On Friday, 18 July, the U.S. State Department condemned the persecution of Christians by ISIL:

The United States condemns in the strongest terms the systematic persecution of ethnic and religious minorities by the terrorist group Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). We are outraged by ISIL's recent announcement that Christians in Mosul must either convert, pay a tax, leave, or face execution in the coming days. We have also seen photos of reportedly Christian houses in Mosul marked with pejorative terms for Christians, as well as reports that Shia and Shabak houses have been similarly marked. ISIL also continues to target Sunni clerics and tribal sheikhs who disagree with its dark vision for Iraq.

These abominable actions only further demonstrate ISIL's mission to divide and destroy Iraq and contradict Islam's spirit of tolerance and peaceful co-existence. It should be clear that ISIL is not only a threat to the stability of Iraq, but a threat to the entire region. This growing threat exemplifies the need for Iraqis from all communities to work together to confront this common enemy and to take all possible steps to isolate these militant groups from the broader population.

We encourage government officials in Baghdad and Erbil to take every possible effort to assist Iraq's vulnerable populations and hold perpetrators accountable for their actions in a manner consistent with the rule of law. The United States stands with all the Iraqi people against the threat from ISIL.

Jen Psaki, "U.S. Condemns Religious Persecution by ISIL," [State Dept.](#), 18 July 2014.

On the morning of 21 July, journalists reported *only one* Christian leader outside of Iraq has publicly condemned the threats by ISIL against Christians. [Daily Star](#). Pope Francis called for prayer and patience in his Sunday, 20 July, appearance, and said "Violence is not conquered by violence. Violence is conquered by peace!" [Zenit](#); [Vatican Radio](#).

The United Nations Secretary General also condemned ISIL for the persecution of minorities in Mosul, "including an ultimatum to either convert, pay a tax, leave, or face imminent execution" and "the homes of Christian ... residents in Mosul have been marked." [U.N.](#), 20 July 2014.

On 21 July, the United Nations Security Council issued a seven-paragraph condemnation of "threats against religious and ethnic minorities in Mosul". The Security Council reminded ISIL that

systematic attacks directed against any civilian populations because of their ethnic background, religious beliefs or faith may constitute a crime against humanity, for which those responsible must be held accountable. All armed groups, including ISIL and associated armed groups, must abide by international humanitarian law and protect civilians living in areas they control.

[U.N.](#), 21 July 2014.

**My comments:** Sadly, the condemnation of ISIL by Ms. Psaki, the Pope, the U.N. Secretary General, and the U.N. Security Council are all like a dog barking at the moon. The leaders of ISIL can be reasonably sure that neither the USA, the Catholic Church, nor the U.N. will attack ISIL with troops or air strikes. It is a sad joke when Psaki says: "We encourage government officials in Baghdad ... to ... hold perpetrators accountable for their actions in a manner consistent with the rule of law." There is *no* "rule of law" in Iraq — it is a failed nation that is unable to enforce its laws and unable to defeat insurrections. In fact, ISIL has controlled Mosul since 10 June, and the government in Baghdad is now irrelevant to Mosul.

During the past three years, Islamic insurgents in Syria have called for jihad against Assad, and thousands of young men from Europe have responded. Similarly, the new caliphate (i.e., ISIL) in Syria/Iraq has called for Muslims to join them.

Assad in Syria has been aided by tens of thousands of Shiite militiamen from Lebanon and Iraq, as well as by some military from Iran.

I note the contrast with Christians. One might *expect* to hear Christian leaders calling for crusaders to attack ISIL, and kill these Muslim infidels who persecute Christians. But, Christians in Europe and the USA do *not* regard the mistreatment of Christians by ISIL as a cause for military intervention.

Merely condemning atrocities with words is *not enough*. A moral response would be to do something that will *stop* the atrocities. However, it is not clear what can be done. Airstrikes on Mosul would kill innocent civilians, which is an additional atrocity. Kidnapping the leaders of ISIL, trying them in courts in Baghdad, and then hanging them is like the children's story about mice putting a bell on a cat — kidnapping the leaders of ISIL is easy to say, but difficult to do.

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### ISIL Orders Female Genital Mutilation in Mosul

On 24 July, Reuters reported an announcement from the U.N. office in Iraq:

The United Nations, expressing deep concern, said on Thursday [24 July] that militant group Islamic State had ordered all girls and women in and around Iraq's northern city of Mosul to undergo female genital mutilation.

....

Such a "fatwa" issued by the Sunni Muslim fighters would potentially affect 4 million women and girls, U.N. resident and humanitarian coordinator in Iraq Jacqueline Badcock told reporters in Geneva by videolink from Arbil.

"We have current reports of imposition of a directive that all female girl children and women up to the age of 49 must be circumcised. This is something very new for Iraq, particularly in this area, and is of grave concern and does need to be addressed," Badcock said.

....

FGM, the partial or total removal of external female genitalia, is a tradition practised widely in many African and Muslim countries and often justified as a means of suppressing a woman's sexual desire to prevent "immoral" behaviour.

"Militants order female genital mutilation in Iraq — U.N.," [Reuters](#), 14:40 GMT, 24 July 2014.

Copy at [Daily Star](#).

However, there are some suspicions whether the ISIL fatwa was a hoax. The Reuters article quoted above also says:

But doubts emerged on social media about the basis for the report. One document posted on Twitter suggested it may be a year old and have been issued by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, the group's previous name.

Other Internet comments, including from Middle East analysts, questioned whether the order fit with the cultural traditions of the region.

[Reuters](#).

The BBC reports:

But media analysts say the decree seen on social media may be a fake. It has typos and language mistakes and is signed by "The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant", a name

the group no longer uses, instead referring to itself as the Islamic State.  
"Doubts grow over ISIS 'FGM edict' in Iraq;" [BBC](#), 17:04 GMT, 24 July 2014.  
The BBC shows information from UNICEF that shows FGM is common in African nations (e.g., Guinea, Mali, Egypt, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia), but is rare in the Middle East.

Agence France-Presse reports:

The United Nations said on Thursday [24 July] that jihadists in Iraq have ordered all women between the ages of 11 and 46 to undergo female genital mutilation, but experts quickly cast doubt on the claim.

The UN's second most senior official in Iraq, Jacqueline Badcock, told reporters in Geneva via videoconference: "It is a fatwa (or religious edict) from ISIS, we learnt about it this morning. We have no precise numbers."

....

But several experts have speculated that the fatwa may have been a hoax, and a number of journalists said on Twitter that their contacts in Iraq had not heard of it being issued.

Charles Lister, visiting fellow at the Brookings Doha Center and expert on Iraqi and Syrian extremist groups, said the UN claim appeared to be based on a "quite clearly faked statement" that began circulating online on Wednesday [23 July].

"UN says Iraq jihadists order female genital mutilation, experts doubtful," [GlobalPost](#)(AFP), 05:02 GMT, 25 July 2014.

On the evening of 25 July, the U.N. website in Iraq issued a "clarification" of Badcock's remarks:

"The United Nations Humanitarian Community is verifying the information about the reported 'decree' and its implementation," UNAMI Spokesperson Ms. Eliana Nabaa said. "At this point, the United Nations can neither confirm nor deny any reports circulating on the subject with regard to Iraq", she added, noting that "such 'decrees' have reportedly been circulated in Syrian areas of ISIL control".

"The United Nations remains gravely concerned about the particular vulnerabilities of women and girls in conflict areas, reportedly exposed to rape, forced marriages and other abuses which need to be particularly addressed", Ms. Nabaa stressed.

"UN Humanitarian Community Verifying Information About Reported ISIL 'Decree' on FGM," U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq, [Press Release](#), 19:24, 25 July 2014.

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## Daily News About Iraq 30 June 2014

On 29 June 2014, ISIL declared the establishment of a caliphate in Syria and Iraq. The following day, Ms. Psaki — Spokesperson for the U.S. State Department — appears to have given the first official response of the U.S. Government to the establishment of the caliphate.

At the Daily Press Briefing on 30 June, Ms. Psaki said:

QUESTION: Can I just stay with ISIL — which have renamed themselves today the Islamic State, just IS, I believe. Does this mark a change in their offensive? Does it make the ground conditions more difficult for the Iraqi people and the Syrian people? What is your reaction to the news that they're trying to establish this caliphate over Iraq and Syria?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we've seen these types of words or comparable claims from ISIL before. This declaration has no meaning to the people in Iraq and Syria. It only further exposes the true nature of this organization and its desire to control people by fear and edicts. It emphasizes even more so that this is a critical moment for the international community, for countries in the region, for all of the Iraqi people to unite against the threat that they face.

QUESTION: Does it show that in some ways, the group believes — is assuming more confidence that they believe that they are on a winning track here?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think it's, again, their strategy of using a repressive ideology and of conducting acts of ruthless terrorism against their people, against people across the region, has been consistent for some time now. So in our view, this claim, these words, this declaration is consistent with that and not a new — not providing new information. U.S. State Department Daily Press [Briefing](#), 30 June 2014.

**My comments:** Ms. Psaki is wrong to say that the declaration of the caliphate has "no meaning". That is like saying the U.S. Declaration of Independence has no meaning. It is hugely significant when a heavily armed group of terrorists declares the creation of an independent nation. I confess that I have learned something from reading propaganda at the Syrian government press agency (SANA) website and at Iranian news websites: one should include a pejorative word like "takfiri" when referring to jihadists or ISIL. <grin>

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### **Obama sends more U.S. military personnel to Iraq**

On 30 June, Obama announced that he was sending an additional 200 U.S. military personnel to Iraq, "to reinforce security at the U.S. Embassy, its support facilities, and the Baghdad International Airport." [White House](#).

**My comments:** Notice the mission creep has begun, in less than three weeks from the first deployment to protect the Embassy in Baghdad. The second group of military was to advise the Iraqi military and to assess their capability. Now, part of this third group is going to protect the Baghdad Airport.

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### **Sacred Mosque in Samarra**

There is a Shiite mosque, Askari Shrine, with a golden dome in Samarra that was built in the year 944 and is sacred to Shiites. A Sunni attack on that mosque in February 2006 caused a dramatic escalation of the Iraqi civil war. Given that recent experience, one would hope that

either the Iraqi government or a Shiite militia would protect that mosque.

But on the night of 30 June 2014, Sunnis fired mortar shells at the mosque. Two shells hit the dome, damaging it. Two other mortar shells landed in the courtyard of the mosque, killing six people. One can expect that Shiite Muslims will be sorely grieved by this attack on their sacred mosque. [NY Times](#). However, [Reuters](#) reports only one death and "at least 14 injured", and says eight mortar shells landed "near" the mosque. The [Associated Press](#) reports that anonymous "Iraqi officials" say three mortar shells landed near the gate of the mosque, injuring nine people. The discrepancies may be caused by Reuters and the AP relying on government sources, who minimized the damage to the holy shrine.

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## 1 July 2014

On 1 July, United Nations in Baghdad said 2417 people died in Iraq from terrorism during June 2014, plus another 244 killed in Anbar province. [UNAMI](#).

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### First Meeting of New Iraqi Parliament

During meetings with Kerry on 23 June senior Iraqi leaders agreed about the urgency of forming a new government, following the 30 April elections. But the first meeting of Parliament was postponed until the last possible day under the Iraqi constitution, 1 July. On 27 June, the top Shiite cleric called for the new leaders to be determined *before* the first meeting of Parliament.

On 1 July only 78% of the members (255 of 328 legislators) attended the beginning of Parliament. Parliament recessed for a half-hour, so that members could discuss candidates for leadership positions and so a physical fight could be avoided by angry Kurds and Shiites. When Parliament reconvened after the brief recess on 1 July, only 23% of the members (75 of 328) appeared, so Parliament adjourned. The next meeting of Parliament is scheduled for 8 July. (!)

References:

- [Twitter](#) (Al-Jazeera America journalist Jane Arraf: "5 minutes into #Iraq parliament session, shouting between #Kurdish MP and uniformed militia member of Maliki bloc").
- [Daily Star](#)(Reuters), 12:53 Baghdad, 1 July.
- [AllIraqNews](#) (half-hour adjournment) 13:00 Baghdad.
- Associated Press, "New Iraqi parliament ends session without progress," [Detroit News](#); [Globe & Mail](#), deleted from Associated Press website, 10:38 GMT, 1 July. ("The entire session, from the opening national anthem to [acting speaker] al-Hafidh's final words, lasted less than two hours.").

- [Al-Jazeera](#), 14:14 Baghdad (11:14 GMT).
- [NY Times](#), ("After the new Parliament took a short recess after less than an hour of debate, Sunni and Kurdish lawmakers did not return.").
- [AllIraqNews](#), 15:21 Baghdad ("73 members of Parliament violated the constitution by not attending the first parliament session to conduct the oath.").
- [Daily Star](#)(AFP), 17:00 Baghdad, 1 July.

At the U.S. State Department Daily Press [Briefing](#), on 1 July, Deputy Spokesperson, Marie Harf, tried valiantly to make it appear that the Iraqi Parliament was *trying* to form a new government. Ms. Harf said:

- "But let's be clear — [the formation of a new government] needs to happen as soon as possible."
- "And look, time is not on Iraq's side here. They need to do this as quickly as possible. They could do it before the 8th [of July 2014]. It would be better if they did it before the 8th. But certainly need to live up to their commitments here to continue meeting to get a government in place as soon as possible."
- "Well, I think there is a broad sense that Iraq's leaders understand the urgency here. Now, I think we will know very soon whether they really understand it and whether they're willing to back up that sentiment with actions. .... But we need to see a government formed as soon as possible, and ideally, that would happen before the 8th."
- "... we are very much making clear that this [formation of a new government] needs to happen very, very quickly."
- "... they need to move very quickly, and I think we will see in the coming days whether they are willing to do so."
- "And as I said, ideally they would do this before the 8th. So I think we're making clear that they don't need to wait a week, but this is a complicated process."

Ms. Harf praised the fact that Parliament actually met on 1 July, without recognizing that today's meeting had been postponed to the last possible date under the Iraqi constitution, without mentioning that 22% of the members were absent at the beginning, and without mentioning that they accomplished nothing during their mere two-hour meeting today.

At the end of 1 July, Reuters summarized what happened:

Despite the urgency, the Iraqi parliament's first session since its election in April collapsed when Sunnis and Kurds refused to return from a recess to the parliamentary chamber after Shi'ites failed to name a prime minister.

Parliament is not likely to meet again for at least a week, leaving Iraq in political limbo



and Maliki clinging to power as a caretaker, rejected by Sunnis and Kurds.

Under a governing system put in place after the removal of Saddam Hussein, the prime minister has always been a member of the Shi'ite majority, the speaker of parliament a Sunni and the largely ceremonial president a Kurd.

The Shi'ite bloc known as the National Alliance, in which Maliki's State of Law coalition is the biggest group, has met repeatedly in recent days to bargain over the premiership but has so far been unable either to endorse Maliki for a third term or to name an alternative.

Raheem Salman & Oliver Holmes, "Sunnis, Kurds shun Iraq parliament after no Maliki replacement named," [Reuters](#), 00:48 Baghdad, 2 July 2014.

**My comments:** I am astounded! Obviously, the members of Parliament have no concept of words like "urgent" or "crisis" or "impending doom", as they leisurely delay important decisions for another week, after a two month delay. When the Iraqi army saw ISIL in Mosul and Tikrit, the cowardly army fled. Similarly, the Iraqi legislators were exhausted after a mere two hours of discussions, and those legislators fled. The Iraqi people were *relying* on the army and the Parliament, but the people were deserted by both the army and Parliament. Words that come to mind when I think of the Iraqi government and its military: corrupt, cowardly, disloyal, dysfunctional, incompetent, undependable, useless, waste, .... The Iraqi legislators are so focused on petty sectarian and tribal bickering that they can *not* unite to fight ISIL, the enemy of nearly everyone in Iraq.

What is currently happening in the incompetent, dysfunctional Iraqi government and Parliament could also happen in Syria after Assad is removed from office. The removal of a strong, experienced leader (e.g., Saddam Hussein or Assad) and replacement with inexperienced tribal leaders from the opposite religious sect naturally creates an ineffective government whose main policy is revenge on those previously in power. The ineffective government will be unable to defeat jihadists and other terrorists. ISIL has exploited sectarian rivalries in Iraq e.g., ISIL formed alliances with Baathists who were formerly in power during the Hussein-era. (See [NY Times](#); [Arab News](#); [Al-Jazeera](#).) ISIL has also exploited the absence of an effective government in Iraq, a government and military who let ISIL take control of dozens of towns and cities. We should learn a lesson from what is happening now in Iraq: do *not* remove Assad in Syria.

One wishes that Obama set an 8 July 2014 deadline for the formation of a new government in Iraq that is both united in the fight against ISIL and acceptable to Obama. But that would be blatant interference in the internal affairs of Iraq, even though the Iraqis obviously need more motivation to end their petty, sectarian bickering. If Obama were to set such a deadline, I suspect the Iraqis would be united in rejecting that deadline and humiliating Obama.

Here is the big problem that I see coming. Obama repeatedly declared in June 2014 that the USA would wait to provide military aid until *after* Iraq forms a new, inclusive government. So what happens if *either* (1) the Iraqis fail to form their new government in a reasonable time (remember it took them nine months last time) *or* (2) the Iraqis form another *noninclusive* government? Plainly, Obama denies military aid to Iraq. That means Iraq seeks military aid from Russian and Iran. As a consequence, Iraq likely forms an alliance with

Syria, who also obtains military aid from Russia and Iran. Such an alliance makes sense, because ISIL is the common enemy of *both* Syria and Iraq. That means Iran, a rogue nation, increases its influence in Iraq and, simultaneously, the USA likely has no influence in Iraq. The loss of American influence in Iraq is bad enough, but the Syria-Iraq-Iran alliance strengthens Assad, which will *really* grieve Obama and Kerry.

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### Slow Delivery of F-16 jets to Iraq

The Iraqis have been whining about the slow delivery of F-16 fighter jets and Apache helicopters from the USA. These airplanes were intended to be based at Balad Air Base in Iraq. However, on 24 June, ISIL surrounded three sides of Balad Air Base, and ISIL may capture the Base. [Fox News](#), 24 June; [Iraqi News](#), 30 June.

**My comments:** Capturing an F-16 or a helicopter is no advantage to ISIL, because the equipment is too complex to be used (or maintained) by untrained personnel in ISIL. However, capturing airplanes and helicopters does deny the Iraqi military access to those expensive machines.

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On 1 July, the Iraqi ambassador to the USA spoke at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC and said that Iraq would prefer to receive more gifts of military aid from the USA. But if the USA could not deliver promptly, then Iraq would need to ask for military aid from Iran, Russia, and Syria.

The Iraqi ambassador, Lukman Faily, actually said: "Time is not on our side. Further delay only benefits the terrorists."

References:

- Martin Matishak, "Iraqi ambassador pleads for US military aid," [The Hill](#), 11:47 EDT, 1 July.
- Josh Lederman & Lara Jakes, "Envoy Says Iraq Can't Wait For US Military Aid" [Associated Press](#), 13:25 EDT, 1 July.

**My comments:** The corruption and malfeasance in the Iraqi government makes them unworthy of support. Their failure to form a government during May or June 2014 — and the abortive first meeting of Parliament on 1 July 2014 — shows their continuing unwillingness to unite against ISIL. And do not forget that the cowardly Iraqi army fled without a fight — despite the fact that the Iraqi army greatly outnumbered ISIL, outnumbered by at least fifteen-to-one, and perhaps forty-to-one — and the Iraqi army abandoned U.S.-supplied equipment and munitions to ISIL. And now the Iraqis have the chutzpah to ask for *more* gifts of military equipment and munitions, when they allowed ISIL to take the previous gifts of equipment and munitions from the USA. The Iraqi ambassador ought to give his speech about "further delay only benefits the terrorists" to the Iraqi Parliament, who — on the same day as the ambassador's speech — delayed forming a government for another week.

Notice that Iraq has absolutely no gratitude to the USA for ~~wrecking Iraq~~ rescuing them from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and giving the Iraqis the gift of democracy. In fact, Iraq was glad to see all U.S. combat military personnel leave in December 2011. Notice that Iraq does *not* say that if Russia and Iran provide weapons, then Iraq will be grateful to the Russians and Iranians. Nonetheless, Iraq seems to hope the USA will be jealous, and the USA will want to contribute more than the Russians and Iranians.

On the other hand, it is intolerable to allow ISIL to occupy much of Syria and Iraq. ISIL is more than a problem for Syria and Iraq — the problem directly affects *all* of their neighboring nations. Ultimately, the problem also affects Russia, Europe, and the USA.

It is becoming increasingly clear that Obama's failure to intervene in Iraq to stop the ISIL conquest during January-May 2014 was a stupid decision, during which Obama forfeited opportunities not only to defeat ISIL, but also to prevent ISIL from seizing U.S.-supplied equipment and munitions. Given that Obama chose to delay airstrikes and other U.S. military assistance until *after* the Iraqis formed an inclusive government, and given that the Iraqis seem willing to take a long time (many months?) to form a new government (which may not be inclusive), the U.S. Government has a dilemma.

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### Misinformation from Iraq Government

In my [eighth essay](#) on Syria, I mentioned the misinformation from Iraq on 24 June about who controls a large oil refinery in Baiji. The answer on 1 July is that ISIL controls the refinery, after the Iraqi army surrendered. But even on 1 July, the Iraqi government is still reporting false information to journalists. [Al-Jazeera](#).

After reading English-language Iraqi news websites from 16 June to 1 July, I have concluded that Iraqi news sources are unreliable.

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### 2 July 2014

The news from Iraq was calmer today, because the dysfunctional Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session today. In fact, they are ~~on vacation~~ in recess until 8 July.

### Iran flies SU-25s to Iraq

It seems that Iran has flown either three or seven working SU-25 aircraft to Baghdad on 1 July. I say "seems" because Iran painted over some of the Iranian markings, to conceal the fact that Iran is violating a United Nations embargo on shipments of weapons from Iran. [BBC](#); [Daily Star](#)(AFP).

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### Opinion Poll in USA

Quinnipiac University released the results of an opinion poll of 1446 voters in the USA that showed 33% believed Obama was the worst U.S. president since 1945, winning the poll with

a plurality. George W. Bush came in second-place, with 28% believing the younger Bush was the worst U.S. president since 1945.

Politico summarized: "Forty-five percent of voters said the U.S. would be better off with Mitt Romney serving in the White House, compared to 38 percent who said the country would be in worse shape. .... Forty percent of voters approve of the job Obama is doing, compared with 53 percent who disapprove. Fifty-four percent of voters say the Obama administration is not competent at running the government." [Quinnipiac University](#); [Politico](#), both on 2 July 2014.

**My comments:** As I mentioned in my [previous essay](#) on Syria (see my comments on 11-12 June to the debacle in Iraq), if McCain had won the 2008 U.S. presidential election, McCain would surely have given more military aid to the rebels who are fighting Assad. Romney in 2012 was also a stronger supporter of the rebels than Obama.

While I believe that Obama's foreign policy is amateurish, and I am especially critical of Obama's obsession with removing Assad, Obama's opponents would have been worse for Assad.

People in the USA and Western Europe have a simplistic view of supporting democracy in Syria, and removing Assad from power. To get a preview of what democracy in Syria would really be, look at the current dysfunctional government in Iraq, and look at the petty squabbling of the Syrian National Coalition in Istanbul. Instead of being idealistic about democracy in Syria, I think the focus should be on fighting Islamic terrorism, and supporting Assad's lawful government.

I suggest that career diplomats in the U.S. State Department be considered for Secretary of State. An alternative source of good candidates for Secretary of State would be professors in universities (e.g., Henry Kissinger from Harvard, Madeleine Albright from Georgetown University, and Condoleezza Rice from Stanford). Appointing a professional politician (e.g., John Kerry) has been a disaster, because successful politicians please voters with rhetoric and government aid, instead of doing the right thing.

Incidentally, I would have voted for Lyndon Johnson as worst U.S. President since 1945, simply for expanding the wasteful war in Vietnam. In my opinion, George W. Bush is the second-worst U.S. president, for creating the wasteful war in Iraq. Obama is incompetent, but Obama did *not* kill Americans on the scale of Johnson or the younger Bush. I think Obama won the worst president poll because people remember Obama's recent mistakes, but have forgotten about Johnson and Nixon. Also, people are currently grieved by the weak economy during the Obama presidency (e.g., low interest rates on savings accounts in banks, high unemployment).

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### **Obama tells Iraqi Government to "move expeditiously"**

On 2 July, Obama called the King of Saudi Arabia on the telephone. The [White House](#) summary of the call said: the King and Obama "reaffirmed the need for Iraq's leaders to move expeditiously to form a new government capable of uniting all of Iraq's diverse

communities." While Obama did not speak directly to member(s) of Iraq's dysfunctional Parliament, those members could read Obama's remarks in the newspapers. See, e.g., [Kuwait News Agency](#).

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### **Maliki offers amnesty to Sunni traitors**

On 2 July, Iraqi prime minister Al-Maliki announced an amnesty. Agence France-Presse reported:

Al-Maliki's surprise move, made in his weekly televised address, appeared to be a bid to split the broad alliance of jihadis, loyalists of executed dictator Saddam Hussein and anti-government tribes that has captured large chunks of five provinces, displacing hundreds of thousands of people.

"I announce the provision of amnesty for all tribes and all people who were involved in actions against the state" but who now "return to their senses," excluding those involved in killings, Al-Maliki said.

It was not immediately clear how many people the amnesty could affect, but analysts have said some form of political reconciliation will be necessary to convince Sunni Arabs angry with the Shiite-led government to turn against their co-religionists and jihadis.

"Al-Maliki offers amnesty to turn tide of offensive," [Arab News](#)(AFP), 3 July 2014.

With the dysfunctional Iraqi government, there is probably only a small probability that Sunnis traitors (except for leaders) would ever be arrested and held responsible for their crimes. [Reuters](#) reports the amnesty "excluded those who had 'killed and shed blood'." So the amnesty is of little practical value.

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## **3 July 2014**

### **Pentagon Briefing on Iraq**

On 3 July, the Secretary of Defense (Hagel) and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (Gen. Dempsey) held a press briefing at the Pentagon. Both Hagel and Dempsey were very clear that U.S. military personnel in Iraq were continuing to assess the situation in Iraq, so it is now premature to make decisions. Here are some quotations from the press briefing by Hagel and Dempsey:

HAGEL: President Obama has been very clear that American combat troops are not going to be fighting in Iraq again. The situation in Iraq, as you all know, is complex and it's fluid. But there's no exclusively military solution to the threats posed by ISIL. Our approach is deliberate and flexible. It is designed to bolster our diplomatic efforts and support the Iraqi people. We will remain prepared to protect our people and our interests in Iraq.

....

GEN. DEMPSEY: .... The insurgency, after some initial gains and collaboration with other Sunni groups in northern Iraq, made some pretty significant and rapid advances. They're stretched right now — stretched to control what they've gained and stretched across their logistics lines of communication.

The Iraqi security forces are stiffening around Baghdad. I don't have the assessment team's exact language, but some initial insights are that the ISF is stiffening, that they're capable of defending Baghdad, that they would be challenged to go on the offense, mostly logistically challenged. And that the call that the Ayatollah Sistani put out for volunteers is being answered and it complicates the situation, frankly, a bit.

....

GEN. DEMPSEY: The issue is for us — has been for us to determine the ability of the ISF after having suffered some initial setbacks to be able to stabilize the situation and eventually go back on the offensive to regain their sovereign territory and what will we be willing to contribute to that cause. And that's not a question that we're prepared to answer just yet.

In terms of — you know, you mentioned the airport and you mentioned our intentions. Remember, the phrase I used was that we are protecting that which would allow us to preserve options. And the airport, not the entire airport, but that part of it that we need for logistics, resupply and potentially for evacuation, we are protecting that part of the airport for that purpose.

It's — it really is about deliberately first preserving options and then developing options. And if you are asking me, will the Iraqis, at some point, be able to go back on the offensive to recapture the part of — of Iraq that they've lost, I think that's a really broad campaign-quality question.

Probably not by themselves. It doesn't mean we would have to provide kinetic support. I'm not suggesting that that's the direction this is headed. But in any military campaign, you would want to develop multiple actions to squeeze ISIL. You'd like to squeeze them from the south and west. You'd like to squeeze them from the north and you'd like to squeeze them from Baghdad. And that's a campaign that has to be developed.

But the first step in developing that campaign is to determine whether we have a reliable Iraqi partner that is committed to growing their country into something that all Iraqis will be willing to participate in. If the answer to that is no, then the future is pretty bleak.

QUESTION: Yes. Again, General Dempsey, what you just described sounds like an open-ended commitment or mission for the U.S. military. A stable Iraq, an inclusive government, the ability to force ISIL into some kind of retreat or submission sounds like a long-term effort. What is the end game? When will the president be able to say, "let's bring our boys home"?

GEN. DEMPSEY: Well, first of all, this is not 2003. It's not 2006. This is a very different approach than we've — than we've taken in the past. I mean, assessing, advising and enabling are very different words than attacking, defeating and disrupting.

We may get to that point if our national interests drive us there; if ISIL becomes such a threat to the homeland that — that the president of the United States, with our advice, decides that we have to take direct action. I'm just suggesting to you we're not there yet.

In terms of the open-endedness of it, Jim, you've heard me say before that the ideology that stretches from South Asia across the Arab world and into North and West Africa — the ideology, which is essentially an anti-Western, very conservative, religious, and in some cases radically violent ideology, we're stuck with that for the foreseeable future, a generation or two.

It doesn't mean that we have to throw that rock in our rucksack and take it on by ourselves. In fact, it should not be that. And what we owe the president of the United States over time, in consultation with the Congress and an explanation to the people of the United States, is how we can deal with this long-term threat without having to repeat what we did in 2003 and 2006.

....

GEN. DEMPSEY: .... I think the situation demands first and foremost that the Iraqi political system find a way to separate the Sunnis who have partnered now with ISIL, because they have zero confidence in the ability of Iraq's politicians to govern.

If you can separate those groups, then the problem becomes manageable and understandable and allows us to be in a position to enable Iraq, not with a huge industrial-strength effort, but rather with the special skills, leadership and niche capabilities that we possess uniquely.

"Department of Defense Press Briefing by Secretary Hagel and Gen. Dempsey in the Pentagon Briefing Room," [Pentagon](#), 3 July 2014.

It is bad news that the Iraqi army "would be challenged to go on the offense" against ISIL. General Dempsey said: Would the Iraqi army "be able to go back on the offensive to recapture the part of Iraq that they've lost[?] .... Probably not by themselves." It is a declaration of pitiful incompetence that the 400,000 soldiers in the Iraqi army are unable to defeat fewer than 10,000 terrorists in ISIL. Note that this press briefing was on a Thursday, just before the start of a three-day Fourth of July holiday weekend. The U.S. Government could hope that the startling press briefing would go unnoticed by most Americans. There was no press briefing at the U.S. State Department on 3 July 2014.

On 3 July, *The Washington Post* reported:

Iraqi security forces are probably incapable of retaking large swaths of territory seized by Sunni insurgents in recent weeks without outside help, the Pentagon's top leaders said Thursday as they sketched a bleak assessment of turmoil in the country.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and Army Gen. Martin E. Dempsey, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said at a news conference that U.S. commanders are still considering what potential military courses of action they will recommend to the White House and that it remains unclear whether U.S. troops will take a more active role in the conflict. But they said any further U.S. involvement would hinge on Iraq's ability to overcome deep-seated political and sectarian fissures and form a national-unity government.

Dempsey said the Iraqi army had "stiffened" its resistance to a fast-moving insurgency led by the Sunni fighters of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria, which has renamed itself Islamic State and declared a caliphate on captured territory. He said government forces were "capable of defending Baghdad" but added that they would be challenged to go on the offensive without external support.

....

On June 18, during testimony before Congress, Hagel and Dempsey downplayed the possibility of a U.S. bombing campaign in Iraq to weaken the terrorist organization. They questioned the strategic objectives of airstrikes and said Sunni insurgents had blended into the local population, raising the likelihood of civilian casualties.

Craig Whitlock, "Pentagon leaders: Iraq probably needs outside help to retake seized territory," [Washington Post](#), 14:14 EDT, 3 July 2014.

**My comments:** Let's look at how Obama helped create the current debacle in Iraq.

1. Obama's failure to give U.S. military support to the Iraqis during January-May 2014, when the Iraqi government was begging for help. Obama's failure meant that ISIL captured dozens of Iraqi towns and cities, including Mosul and Tikrit. Obama's failure means that ISIL captured U.S.-supplied weapons when the Iraqi army fled. Now ISIL is entrenched, very well-equipped, and wealthy from bank robberies in Mosul.
2. Obama's demand on 19 June 2014 that the new Iraqi government be "inclusive", *before* the USA will supply military aid to Iraq. Given the dysfunctional Iraqi government and their petty, sectarian/tribal bickering, forming a new government will likely take months, and the new government may not be "inclusive". Meanwhile, ISIL continues to be unopposed by the U.S. military.
3. Obama's declaration that the USA will *not* again send U.S. soldiers to fight in Iraq. I agree with this declaration, but it raises the obvious question of *who* will do the building-to-building fighting to dislodge ISIL from each of the towns and cities that ISIL has captured since January 2014. The Iraqi army is ~~equally~~ poorly motivated. The Shiite militias are poorly trained and — if used in combat in Sunni areas — will increase sectarian tensions. The U.S. Government surely does not want to see Iran, a rogue nation, send army brigades to fight in Iraq.
4. To a lesser extent, the current debacle with ISIL is a result of the London11 group of nations — including the USA — focusing on the removal of Assad, instead of focusing



on supporting Assad's battle against Islamic terrorism.

What is clear is that Obama had made a series of mistakes that exacerbated a difficult problem. I see two broad "solutions", each with obvious serious disadvantages:

- A. Form an alliance between Syria, Iraq, and Iran to let the Shiites annihilate the Sunni problem, including ISIL. Sell U.S. munitions to Syria and Iraq. But no U.S. military personnel in a combat role. Obama apologizes to Assad for all the bad things that Obama, Hillary Clinton, and Kerry said about Assad.

**Disadvantages:** Such an alliance embodies the "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" doctrine that will be distasteful to idealists. I would be surprised if Obama would apologize to Assad, although it would be the right thing to do. This alliance gives Assad and the Iraqi government the opportunity to commit genocide against the Sunnis.

- B. Obama could provide massive airstrikes on cities and towns controlled by ISIL. To prevent ISIL terrorists from fleeing to safety before the bombs fall, this plan needs to be kept secret until after it is executed.

**Disadvantages:** Iraqi death toll will soar into the hundreds of thousands, to kill a few thousands of ISIL terrorists. Such bombings of cities with large civilian populations is probably a war crime. There is an approximate precedent for this bombing in the bombing of Dresden, Hamburg, and Darmstadt during World War II. Note that seventy years later nearly everyone has forgotten about the huge civilian death toll in Germany.

Because of Obama's past mistakes, Obama now has no good options.

Note General Dempsey's remark that "we're stuck with [the threat of Islamic extremists] for the foreseeable future, a generation or two." I think he is correct, just as the 1950s through 1980s were dominated by the threat of Russian (then Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) military aggression. The USSR was rational and was deterred by the threat of mutual destruction. But Islamic jihadists are *not* rational when Western, Christian values are applied to them — jihadists are perfectly willing to commit suicide attacks and go to Paradise. Also Islamic jihadists are unwilling to negotiate with moderate Muslims, and even less willing to negotiate with Jews or Christians. I believe the Islamic extremists are a more difficult threat than the former USSR.

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**4 July 2014**

### **Maliki wants to remain prime minister**

On 4 July, the Associated Press reported:

Despite mounting pressure to step aside, Iraq's Nouri al-Maliki vowed Friday [4 July] not to abandon his bid for another term as prime minister and pledged to stay on until

the Sunni militants who have overrun much of the country are defeated. [9] The sharp words are certain to prolong the political impasse gripping Iraq, which is facing urgent demands for a new government that can hold the nation together in the face of an onslaught that threatens to cleave it in three along ethnic and sectarian lines.

....

"I will never give up the nomination for the post of prime minister," he said in a statement issued by his office.

He framed the debate over his future in democratic terms, reminding Iraqis that the voters handed his bloc the most seats in parliament, and declaring that he must "stand by them during this crisis that Iraq is passing through."

Al-Maliki said that to pull out now "while facing terrorist organizations that are against Islam and humanity would show weakness instead of carrying out my legitimate, national and moral responsibility."

"I have vowed to God that I will continue to fight by the side of our armed forces and volunteers until we defeat the enemies of Iraq and its people," he said.

Ryan Lucas & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq's Al-Maliki Signals His Intent To Stay In Job," [Associated Press](#), 19:59 GMT, 4 July 2014.

Reuters reported:

Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki refused on Friday [4 July] to give up his quest for a third term in power, defying a chorus of critics demanding his replacement as the country faces an existential threat from Islamist insurgents.

....

Maliki's statement will complicate the struggle to form a new government to unite the ethnically and religiously divided country, something parliament failed to achieve this week. It extends a political deadlock made all the more dangerous by the pressing threat to Iraq's territorial integrity.

....

In pointed comments in a Friday sermon read by an aide, the country's leading Shi'ite cleric [Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani] said parliament's inability to form a new government at its first session was a "regrettable failure".

Isra'a Al-Rubei'i & Maggie Fick, "Iraq's Maliki rejects pressure to give up premiership," [Reuters](#), 18:55 GMT, 4 July 2014.

Final version at 22:52 GMT: [Reuters](#).

*The New York Times* reported the same story:

Despite sharp criticism from almost every political party in Iraq and pressure from friendly foreign powers to step down, Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki announced

Friday [4 July] that he would run for a third term as prime minister. [9] He never suggested he would step down. But the chorus of criticism over his sectarian policies, which helped create the conditions that led to a large swath of the country falling to Islamic extremists, had left many believing that lacking supporters, he might relinquish power. [9] They appear to have underestimated his desire to hold on to it.

“I will not give up my candidacy for a third term,” Mr. Maliki announced in a statement read on Iraqiya, the state television channel.

....

Mr. Maliki’s language, which had an almost messianic tone, suggested he would prove difficult to dislodge and that the negotiations over forming a new government could drag on for weeks, if not months.

His statement defied not just other lawmakers but also Iraq’s senior Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who on Friday said the Parliament’s inability to form a government at its first meeting on Tuesday [1 July] was a “disappointing failure.” Alissa J. Rubin, "Iraq’s Maliki to Run Again, Rejecting Pressure to Step Down," [NY Times](#), 4 July 2014.

*The New York Times* quoted above mentions Maliki had "an almost messianic tone", so I looked for a copy of Maliki's actual announcement. *The Times* was correct. Here is the complete text of Maliki's press release:

In the name of God the Most Gracious the Most Merciful

Dear Honorable Sons of the Iraqi people

Let me talk with you today in all candor and clarity, the same approach that I have always adopted, and which I pledged before God Almighty and before you to adhere to since I was elected to hold the post of Prime Minister.

There is no doubt that you are aware of the difficult challenges facing Iraq which have increased the religious, national, and moral responsibility that we all have to bear, which requires me to be talking to you with such transparency that is commensurate to the seriousness of the plot against Iraq.

Sons of the dear Iraqi people,

The State of Law Coalition had a fierce election battle, facing various kinds of accusations and malicious propaganda the like of which was not suffered by any other electoral list. Internal and external known actors have been involved in this unjust campaign, and have served as a political message whose goals and objectives we knew from the beginning.

In spite of the considerable black propaganda that targeted me personally and targeted the rest of my brothers, the candidates of the State of Law Coalition, we have been

able, with God's help and the will of the loyal sons of the Iraqi people to achieve a landslide victory in parliamentary elections whose integrity and transparency had been acknowledged by the whole world, and the State of Law Coalition became the largest parliamentary coalition in the third session of the Council of Representatives.

Sons of the Honorable Iraqi people,

The loyalty to the voters requires me, to be loyal to them and I should stand to their side in this crisis that is suffered by Iraq , and I will never allow myself to let them down and give up the responsibility they trusted me with when they stood up with their purple fingers against the forces of evil and darkness, and I will stay as a soldier defending the interests of Iraq and its people in the face of terrorist organizations and its allies of ISIS, Baathists and Naqshbandis who want to implement suspicious foreign agendas that are no secret to anyone.

The withdrawal from the battlefield in the war against the terrorist organizations that are hostile to Islam and humanity, is a retreat from national, religious and moral responsibility, and I have pledged before God that I will fight and I will stay to the side of the sons of the armed forces and the army of volunteers until the final defeat of the enemies of Iraq and Iraqis.

I reiterate my thanks and appreciation and respect for all the sisters and brothers who elected me and trusted me and my brothers, members of the state of law coalition, and say with determination and strength that I'll stay loyal to them and to Iraq and its people, I will never give up the nomination for the post of prime minister, the state of law coalition is the biggest bloc, and it is the holder of the right to the position of Prime Minister and it is not the right of any other party to put conditions, because putting conditions means dictatorship, which is what we all strongly and firmly reject.

God save Iraq and its people

Peace be upon you and God's mercy and blessings.

Nouri Kamil Al-Maliki, "Official Statement", [Prime Minister's Office](#), 4 July 2014.

Maliki mentions "God" six times in the short statement about why Maliki wants to continue to be prime minister. Maliki mentions "loyal" four times. Maliki mentions "religious", "moral", and "pledged before God" twice each. It is true that "the State of Law Coalition became the largest parliamentary coalition in the third session of the Council of Representatives." But the State of Law Coalition only has 96 of 328 seats (29%), 69 seats (21%) from a one-vote majority.

On 3 July, an opinion in [Al-Arabiya](#) suggested that Iraq really needs a strong leader, like Saddam Hussein, to keep the various tribes and sectarian groups in Iraq under control. I agree. And for the same reason, that is why Assad is the best leader for Syria.

An Arabic-speaking U.S. citizen who worked in the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad from 2003 until Feb 2009 wrote an article for the [Washington Post](#) on the rise and fall of Maliki. The author recommends Abdul Mahdi as the successor to Maliki.

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## 5 July 2014

### Iranian military pilot killed in Iraq

Colonel Shoja'at Alamdari Mourjani of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards was "killed while 'defending' Shiite Muslim holy sites in the city of Samarra". His funeral in Iran was on 4 July. [Global Post](#)(AFP); [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon. [Al-Jazeera](#) reports that "the pilot probably died while fighting on the ground", because "there were no reports of a plane being shot down in Iraq". At 09:00 EDT on 5 July, I searched four English-language news websites in Iran for the query "Mourjani", but found nothing. Maybe the Iranians are *not* eager for Western nations to learn that Iranian military are fighting in Iraq.

See also [Reuters](#); [Arab News](#)(Reuters); [Washington Post](#).

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On Saturday night, 5 July, Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr in Baghdad explicitly urged al-Maliki's political party to select a different candidate for prime minister than al-Maliki. [Reuters](#); [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon; [Arab News](#).

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## 6 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Sunday, 6 July. Except for the farce in the Iraqi Parliament on 1 July, and the Pentagon briefing on 3 July, during the past week, Iraq has often been absent from the top ten news stories at the Google News website. During 10-30 June, Iraq was usually in the top ten news stories at Google News.

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## 7 July 2014

### Iraqi Parliament Postpones Again

The Iraqi Parliament was scheduled to have its second meeting tomorrow, 8 July. But, at 07:24 GMT on 7 July, Reuters reported that the Iraqi Parliament had postponed the next meeting of Parliament until 12 August. (!) [Al-Jazeera](#), 08:10 GMT and updated; [Arab News](#)(AFP); [Daily Star](#)(AFP) in Lebanon, 11:23 GMT and updated; [GlobalPost](#)(AFP), 14:02 GMT (Parliament "postponed due to persistent disunity").

The Associated Press reported:

Iraq's deadlocked parliament on Monday [7 July] postponed its next session until mid-August, prolonging the country's political impasse despite urgent calls for a new government that can confront Sunni extremists who have overrun a large part of the country.

The new legislature held its first session since April elections last week [1 July], but

failed to make any headway on selecting a new prime minister, president and speaker of parliament.

Lawmakers had been expected to meet Tuesday [8 July] for a second session, but they called off that meeting since no progress was made over the past week untangling the political situation.

The parliament said in a statement Monday that "after discussions with the heads of the blocs and concerned parties" that the next session will be held instead on Aug. 12. It expressed hope that "another chance will be available for more dialogue and discussions to arrange that meeting."

Sinan Salaheddin & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqi Parliament Delays Next Session Until August," [Associated Press](#), 13:14 GMT, 7 July.

Reuters reported:

Putting off the work of reaching consensus for five weeks [until 12 August] is a slap in the face to efforts by Iraq's Shi'ite clergy — along with the United States, the United Nations and Iran — to foster an inclusive government to hold the country together.

....

"Things are moving faster than the politicians can make decisions," a senior Shi'ite member of parliament told Reuters.

Isra'a Al-Rubei'i & Ahmed Rasheed (of Reuters), "Iraq parliament delayed, general killed near Baghdad," [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon, 16:29 GMT, 7 July 2014.

I looked at the homepage of *The Washington Post* at 15:10 EDT on 7 July, but there was *no mention* of the failure of the dysfunctional Iraqi Parliament. The *Post* did have an Associated Press [story](#) linked on its Middle East webpage. And the *Post* had its own article by Abigail Hauslohner, the *Post's* Cairo bureau chief since 2012, linked on its World webpage:

Iraq's parliament stalled Monday [7 July] for a second time, canceling its planned Tuesday session to give the country's deeply divided political factions time to reach an agreement on an urgently needed new government.

The delay further imperils Baghdad's ability to keep this oil-rich country intact a month after al-Qaeda-inspired militants seized much of Iraq's north and west, spurring the partial [collapse](#) of the nation's armed forces [on 12 June].

....

Politicians and analysts said the cancellation of the second session was a sign that the process could drag on for months, despite the looming threat of the nation's total collapse. [¶] "The delay exemplifies what ordinary Iraqis think of their government: weak, dysfunctional, self-serving and, above all, irrelevant," said Zaineb al-Assam, a senior analyst at IHS Country Risk.

While the politicians bicker, the chances of Baghdad reclaiming the land seized by the Islamic State and its diverse cohort of local allies — all disenfranchised by the Maliki government — is shrinking, analysts say.

....

The threat of sectarian war is also widening. Responding to a call to action by Iraq's top Shiite cleric last month, Shiite militia fighters have rallied to combat the Sunni militant threat, spurring increasingly [sectarian](#) rhetoric and attacks.

Abigail Hauslohner, "Iraq delays formation of a new government, as country veers further toward collapse," [Washington Post](#), 14:56 EDT, 7 July 2014. [The two links are in her article.]

**My comments:** As Hauslohner's article in *The Washington Post* makes clear, Iraq is rapidly headed to Hell — (1) unable to form a new government, (2) infested with radical Islam (ISIL) that is occupying significant parts of Iraq, *and* (3) with the possibility of a three-way civil war between the Shiite majority, Sunnis, and Kurds. Astoundingly, the Iraqi Parliament is frozen with indecision. In my opinion, this story should be front-page news in the USA, which ~~invested~~ wasted much resources in Iraq during 2003-2011.

With ISIL capturing much of western and northern Iraq by 11 June, the Iraqis have a gigantic crisis. The Iraqis voted on 20 April, but a meeting of the Iraqi Parliament has been postponed until 12 August, giving the Iraqis a second crisis about the formation of a new Iraqi government. The members of the Iraqi Parliament — who are not able to find their way out of a paper grocery bag — are *not* able to solve even *one* crisis, let alone two or three simultaneous crises.

When I think of Iraq, I recall the scenes in movies where a car drives off a cliff, and is shown disintegrating in slow motion — hubcaps coming off, the hood coming off, doors coming off, tires coming off, the car tumbling end-over-end down the steep slope, ... until finally what remains of the car reaches the bottom of the cliff, and then the car bursts into a huge fireball.

One wonders why the members of the Iraqi Parliament are not locked inside the Parliament building until they choose the *entire* new government. They have already wasted 20 days since the results of the 30 April election were certified on 17 June.

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At 11:20 EDT (15:20 GMT) on 7 July, the President's Press Secretary, Josh Earnest, held a press briefing at the White House. As is customary, the transcript did not become available until sometime the following day.

QUESTION: An Iraq question. The administration made it clear from the very beginning during this latest crisis that the priority is for the Iraqis to form an inclusive national government. We heard overnight that the Iraqi parliament is not even going to reconvene until August 12th, which is more than a month from now.

By all accounts, the process of government formation is paralyzed. Is the administration satisfied with the efforts so far of Iraqi leaders to overcome these

sectarian issues? And what else can the United States do to prod along that process?

MR. EARNEST: Well, Mark, I've been pretty candid I think over the last couple of weeks in articulating our disappointment that Iraq's political leaders have not been able to move more quickly to unify that country. That nation faces an existential threat from ISIL right now. And to confront that threat, the country will need to be united. This is a message that's been delivered by a range of senior administration officials, particularly the Vice President who has spent a lot of time on the phone with political leaders in that country.

We've made clear that that is a necessary step. We've also made clear that the President has made clear that additional military involvement will only be done in coordination with tangible commitments from Iraq's leaders to pursue a more inclusive governing agenda. The reason for that is that this existential threat that's posed by ISIL certainly has a security dimension to it, but it only highlights the degree to which Iraq is vulnerable to sectarian divisions. And it will require Iraq's political leaders from each of these major communities in Iraq — the Shia, the Sunni, and the Kurds — to put aside those sectarian divisions, to put aside their own political ambitions in some cases, and put the interest of the country first.

And we are urging Iraq's leaders to do that, and quite frankly to do that more than they have in the last few weeks.

QUESTION: But it seems as if they're going in the opposite direction. Vice President Biden calls, and rather than move up their date for convening parliament, they're moving it back. So are they brushing aside what your urgent advice is?

MR. EARNEST: I think that we've seen some constructive words from other leading members of Iraq society. We saw a representative of the Grand Ayatollah Sistani comment and urge Iraq's political leadership to do the same thing that this administration has been urging them to do.

We've seen other countries in the region urge Iraq's political leaders to come together and unify that country. So I think that there is widespread agreement in the region and around the world that the way in which this problem can be solved is pretty clear. It will require difficult steps. And I don't think anybody has tried to minimize — I certainly haven't tried to minimize the difficulty of making these kinds of decisions and reaching these kinds of agreements.

But to be blunt about it, reaching those agreements and making those difficult decisions are necessary for Iraq to survive.

[White House](#), 7 July 2014.

At 13:23 EDT (17:23 GMT) on 7 July, Jen Psaki held a press briefing at the U.S. State Department. As is customary, the transcript did not become available until sometime around 18:10 EDT the same day.

MS. PSAKI: .... But our focus remains on encouraging political steps forward and a



unified front against ISIL and the threat that all people of Iraq face.

QUESTION: You said that your kind of first priority is a government.

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Now, the parliament wrapped up and kind of delayed its next meeting until August 12th without any kind of judgment or new government or anything. And I mean, do you have — given, like, if you think back to the last time the Iraqi Government tried to form a government, that took months. [Standler: the last time, the Iraqi Parliament took *nine months*.]

MS. PSAKI: Mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Do you have that kind of time to kind of wait for a government to form and hope that that gels and will fight ISIS? I mean, it seems like they'll probably be pretty close to overrunning the country before the Iraqi — if that's like what needs to happen before any meaningful action is taken.

MS. PSAKI: Elise, there's no question that sooner is better than later and that we're in a dire — we're looking at a dire situation on the ground, which is why it's so important that things move forward urgently on the ground. We've seen the statements. Our view is that's not set in stone, that they still have the ability to move forward more quickly than what they outlined this morning.

....

QUESTION: Okay. Let me ask you this: Are you still sort of sticking to Maliki, or do you prefer to see someone else? Because the Iranians said today that while they support Maliki, they are not really — they could see working with someone else like Adil Abd al-Mahdi, who is the former vice president of the country.

MS. PSAKI: We've consistently said it's up to the Iraqi people and only the Iraqi people to determine their future leadership. Moving forward in the process is what our focus is on now.

QUESTION: Jen, do you have a specific reaction of whether it's discouragement or anger or whatever to the parliament just taking off and not doing anything?

MS. PSAKI: Well, I think specifically, as we've said in the past, we hope that Iraq's leaders will move forward with extreme urgency, and that's what we've been calling for.

[U.S. State Dept.](#), 7 July 2014.

In my opinion, Ms. Psaki was extraordinarily diplomatic and calm. Kerry is en route to China and *not* available to meet again with the Iraqi Parliament leaders. Surely, the U.S. Government is frustrated with the Iraqi inability to dump Maliki, appoint Abdul Mahdi as the new prime minister, and then get seriously engaged in defeating ISIL. Maybe the Iraqi

Parliament could create a special position for Maliki, (e.g., Supreme Exalted Termite in Charge of Debacles and Disasters <grin>) — a kind of consolation prize, so he would not be a mere member of Parliament.

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At 19:21 GMT on 7 July, the [Associated Press](#) reported that "But after an uproar over the long delay, [Parliament] speaker Mahdi al-Hafidh announced Monday night [7 July] that there was a preliminary agreement among lawmakers to meet Sunday, July 13."

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## 8 July 2014

At 11:38 GMT on 8 July, the Associated Press confirmed that the Iraqi Parliament would meet on Sunday, 13 July:

Acting parliament speaker Mahdi al-Hafidh said in a statement that after considering the "national interests," the next session will be on Sunday [13 July] instead of Aug. 12. [¶] He warned that any delay in forming a new government "will jeopardize Iraq's security and democracy and will increase the suffering of Iraqis." He also called on all political rivals to "shoulder their responsibilities and set aside their differences to fight terrorism to put Iraq back on democracy path." [¶] Al-Hafidh's statement made official what he had said late Monday [7 July] was a "preliminary agreement" among political leaders to skip the long break and move the next session up to Sunday.

....

Despite the decision to meet Sunday instead of next month, it still appears unlikely that political leaders will be able to bridge their differences in time to settle on names for the top leadership posts — particularly the prime minister, with incumbent Nouri al-Maliki resisting a campaign to replace him.

Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqi Parliament To Meet Early Next Week," [Associated Press](#), 11:38 GMT, 8 July.

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In really bad news, Iraq admitted to the United Nations that terrorists (ISIL?) had captured a Saddam Hussein-era chemical weapons storage facility north of Baghdad on 11 June and began looting it. The incompetent Iraqi government whined that it was now unable "to fulfill its obligations to destroy chemical weapons" at that site. [Reuters](#), 01:00 GMT, 9 July; [Daily Star](#)(Reuters), 18:56 GMT on 8 July.

The Associated Press says that a United Nations report in 2004 said one bunker at the site "contained 2,500 sarin-filled 122-mm chemical rockets produced and filled before 1991, and about 180 tons of sodium cyanide, 'a very toxic chemical and a precursor for the warfare agent tabun.'" Fortunately, the bunker was bombed in Feb 1991, during the first Gulf war, and some of the rockets were destroyed or damaged at that time. [Associated Press](#), 00:22 GMT, 9 July.

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The Saddam Hussein-era Sunnis in Iraq were really stupid to form an alliance with a snake

like ISIL. And on 8 July, there were reports that ISIL have arrested/kidnapped "between 25 and 60 senior ex-military officers and members of former dictator Saddam Hussein's banned Baath Party" in Mosul. [Reuters](#); [Daily Star](#)(Reuters); [Arab News](#)(Reuters).

**My comment:** A Machiavellian approach would be to let ISIL exterminate the Hussein-era leaders, *then* let the Iraqi government exterminate ISIL. Such a two-pronged solution seems likely, as the Iraqi government — through incompetence and bickering — delays the extermination of ISIL. Such a "solution" is barbaric and uncivilized, but seems inevitable in Iraq.

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## 9-11 July 2014

### Al-Maliki goes berserk

On 9 July, Al-Maliki accused the Kurds of harboring ISIL, in what appeared to be display of paranoia by Al-Maliki. Al-Maliki offered *no* evidence to support his inflammatory accusation. [Reuters](#), 12:12 GMT; [Associated Press](#), 20:09 GMT, both on 9 July. The Truth is that the Kurds have been fighting ISIL since early June.

On 10 July, the Kurds retaliated by boycotting Cabinet meetings. The deputy prime minister and the four ministers of foreign affairs, trade, health, and immigration are all Kurds. [Associated Press](#), 13:51 GMT; [Reuters](#), 09:58 GMT, both on 10 July. See also [Arab News](#)(AFP), 11 July. Notice that the Kurds did *not* resign from the Iraqi government. They continued to operate their ministries, while refusing to attend meetings with al-Maliki.

On 10 July, in retaliation for the boycott, the Iraqi government suspended cargo airplane flights between Baghdad and two Kurdish cities. [Reuters](#), 20:00 GMT, 10 July.

Also on 10 July, the President of the Kurdish region in Iraq said:

He [Nouri Maliki] has become hysterical and has lost his balance. He is doing everything he can to justify his failures and put the blame on others for these failures.

....

You [i.e., al-Maliki] must apologize to the Iraqi people and step down. You have destroyed the country and someone who has destroyed the country cannot save the country from crises.

"Kurdistan Region Presidency Responds to Nouri Maliki Accusations," [Presidency](#), 10 July 2014.

See also [Al-Arabiya](#).

On 11 July, the Kurds "suspended" their participation in Maliki's government, although they will continue to attend Parliament. [Reuters](#), 10:58 GMT.

Well, one good slap in the face deserves another, so on 11 July al-Maliki sacked his foreign minister, who is a Kurd. [Al-Jazeera](#); [NY Times](#); [Voice of Russia](#). That means al-Maliki is

currently prime minister, interior minister, foreign minister, *and* Minister of State for National Security, as Maliki consolidates his power.

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### **Grim Reality that Iraqi Parliament is a Failure**

On 11 July, CNN had a pithy comment:

Why are Iraqi politicians dragging their feet while ISIS militants fortify their foothold across the country? [9] Iraq's lawmakers are simply not going to "let a war get in the way of their political disputes," as [one expert](#) succinctly put it last week [1 July]. Hayder al-Khoei, "Why are Iraq's politicians dithering as their country burns?," [CNN](#), 10:29 GMT, 11 July 2014.

On 12 July, the United Nation's Envoy to Iraq, Nickolay Mladenov, said:

I call on all parliamentarians to attend the forthcoming session of the Council of Representatives on Sunday, 13 July. Failing to move forward on electing a new Speaker, a new President, and a new Government risks plunging the country into chaos. It will only serve the interests of those who seek to divide the people of Iraq and destroy their chances for peace and prosperity.

"SRSG [Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General] Mladenov warns Iraq may plunge into chaos if Parliament fails to revive political process," [U.N. in Iraq](#), 12 July 2014.

See also [Gulf News](#) (Iraq "could plunge into chaos."); [Al-Arabiya](#); [Reuters](#), 10:54 GMT; [Associated Press](#), 18:49 GMT, all on 12 July.

**My comments:** Mladenov is beginning to grasp the basic concepts, but his details are wrong. Mladenov bleats that failure of the Iraqi Parliament tomorrow, "risks plunging the country into chaos". But Iraq *was already in chaos* on 4 January 2014, when ISIL captured Fallujah, but the Iraqi government did nothing effective to defeat or expel ISIL from Fallujah. By the time that ISIL captured Mosul on 10 June, it was probably already too late to save Iraq.

Iraq has four interrelated problems:

1. Inability of the Iraqi army to expel ISIL. In January 2014, Iraq had neither the will nor the capability to expel ISIL from *one* city, Fallujah. Now Iraq faces the much more difficult problem of expelling ISIL from dozens of towns and cities, including the big city of Mosul. Iraq seems to have made an effort to expel ISIL from Tikrit, beginning on 28 June, but fighting continues on 15 July in Tikrit. (On 15 July, the Iraqi army and Shiite militias began a large assault on Tikrit. [Al-Jazeera](#); [Reuters](#). But on the evening of 15 July, the Iraqi army retreated from Tikrit. [Reuters](#).)
2. Saddam Hussein-era former leaders and former army officers who are willing to cooperate with ISIL, in revenge on Shiite government in Baghdad.
3. Dysfunctional national government, excessive sectarian/tribal bickering.
4. Parliament unable to appoint a new government. The results of the Iraqi election in

April were certified on 17 June, but during the next 25 days — during a national crisis — there was *only one* meeting of Parliament, and that one meeting adjourned after a mere two-hours.

Depending on your point-of-view, there may be a fifth problem: the fragmentation of Iraq. Kurdistan is expected to soon declare independence from Iraq, as a result of years of discrimination by Arabs in Iraq. (Kurdish independence *might* be prevented by an inclusive government in Baghdad, but the Kurds will likely vote for independence before the Iraqi Parliament forms an inclusive government.) My opinion is that the Iraqi government is so hopelessly dysfunctional that a fragmentation of Iraq would be an improvement, not a detriment. But if the Shiites and Kurds withdraw from the Iraqi government, then who will prevent Islamic extremists in the Sunni Muslim areas of former Iraq? Also a breakup of Iraq into three groups might begin a civil war.

Mladenov is right that *all* of the members of the Iraqi Parliament *should* appear in the legislative building on 13 July. But let's be honest here. Plainly, the Iraqi Parliament is failing to make even a minimal acceptable showing.

The Iraqi Parliament might someday appoint a government, and Iraqi leaders can make speeches, but neither of those will save Iraq. What is needed now is an Iraqi army that is willing and able to exterminate ISIL. This will be an extremely bloody battle that will result in huge casualties amongst both civilians and the Iraqi army. If anyone wanted to avoid these huge casualties, they should have bombed and strafed ISIL convoys *before* ISIL captured Iraqi cities, and *before* ISIL captured U.S.-supplied equipment, and *before* ISIL looted banks in Iraq. Because of procrastination, it will be much more difficult to defeat ISIL now.

#### **Procrastination**

When I was a professor in the 1980s, I noticed that a significant fraction of the students would wait until the night before a homework assignment was due, before they would *begin* to work on that assignment. Each week, these procrastinating students would again learn that they needed more than one night to do the homework, but the following week they procrastinated again. By failing to begin the homework days before it was due, the students deprived themselves of an opportunity to learn, and deprived themselves of opportunities to ask me for help. My colleagues in the liberal arts tell me that, no matter how many times students are reminded of a due date for a term paper, many students wait until a day or two before the due date, and then they plagiarize a paper — not only earning a failing grade in the class, but also risking expulsion for plagiarizing. It appears that procrastination is a way of life for mediocre people who are in a position where more is expected than those people can deliver.

It is the same with the Iraqi Parliament — every time a meeting is postponed for a week, or a month, the members take a vacation, instead of seriously working on the issues. Is the solution to their procrastination to treat the Iraqi Parliament like high-school pupils, with daily assignments that are due tomorrow? No. The reality is that some problems facing a Parliament take competent, energetic legislators (i.e., not like the Iraqi sloths) months to solve. A real Parliament is *not* faced with high-school algebra problems that can be solved on

one-page of paper.

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## 13 July 2014 Second Meeting of Iraqi Parliament

On the morning of 13 July, journalists reported that the Sunni Arabs had nominated Salim al-Jabouri to be parliamentary speaker. [Al-Jazeera](#), 06:04 GMT.

The Iraqi Parliament held their second meeting. The Associated Press reported:

Iraq's deadlocked parliament ended its second session after just 30 minutes Sunday [13 July] without making any progress toward forming a new government that can unite the country and confront the Sunni militant [ISIL] blitz that has seized control of a huge chunk of the country.

....

Hopes had been raised that lawmakers might at least vote on a speaker of parliament after Sunni blocs announced late Saturday that they had agreed on a candidate for the post, Salim al-Jubouri. But acting parliament speaker Mahdi al-Hafidh was forced to adjourn Sunday's brief meeting, he said, "due to the absence of any agreement on the names of the nominees for the three posts."

"There are still deep differences," he said. "We need more discussions to agree on the names."

He scheduled the next session for Tuesday [15 July].

The names aren't the only point of contention. There's also disagreement on whether to choose the speaker, president and prime minister individually, or to agree to all three as a sort of package deal — which has been the case in the past.

Sinan Salaheddin & Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraq Parliament Postpones Decision On New Leaders," [Associated Press](#), 11:05 GMT, 13 July 2014.

Reuters reported:

The disagreement over Maliki's future appeared to be blocking progress on the other political posts. [¶] Sunni politicians said the main Sunni bloc put forward Salim al-Jabouri, a moderate Islamist, as their candidate for parliamentary speaker, but accused Maliki of effectively torpedoing their proposal.

....

Iraq's political elite are under pressure from the United States, the United Nations and Iraq's own Shi'ite clerics to reach agreement so politicians can deal with the insurgency and prevent the country fragmenting on sectarian and ethnic lines.

....

[Meanwhile, police and witnesses] said militants in 50 to 60 vehicles stormed the town of Dhuluiya, about 70 km (45 miles) north of Baghdad at 3.30 am (8.30 p.m. EDT), taking the mayor's office and municipal council building and fighting to take control of the police station.

Ahmed Rasheed & Maggie Fick, "Iraq government talks delayed again as fighting rages," [Reuters](#), 11:13 GMT, 13 July 2014.

The "torpedoing" was done by linking (1) Shiite support for Jabouri's nomination to (2) Sunni acceptance of Maliki's bid for a third term as prime minister. [Reuters](#), 16:05 GMT.

I looked for reports of how many members of Parliament actually attended the session on 13 July. The Chinese news agency, [Xinhua](#), reported that 233 (71%) of 328 members attended the session. There were reports (e.g., [Al-Jazeera](#) blog at 04:22 GMT; [basnews](#); [Al-Jazeera](#)) that the Kurdish delegation was stranded at the airport in Erbil, because of a sand storm at the Baghdad airport.

[The New York Times](#) suggested that the failure on 13 July was caused by "last-minute deals between the largest Shiite bloc and the Sunnis were falling apart." Meanwhile, ISIL's conquest of Dhuluiya, "a Sunni town 46 miles northeast of Baghdad", provided a sense of urgency, which was ignored by the bickering Iraqi Parliament.

**My comments:** Well, I didn't expect much from the Iraqi Parliament, and they again delivered abundant disappointments. The delegates should have remained in Baghdad after the previous session on 1 July, so the delegates could work to form a national consensus during the Parliament recess. What happens in offices and meeting rooms in a legislature is often more important than the symbolic procedures on the floor of the legislature — but, of course, that is true only if competent people are *working* in those offices and meeting rooms. With a total meeting time of less than three hours in the 27 days following the certification of the election results, the Iraqi Parliament is *not* making a good-faith effort to form a new government.

Because the Iraqi Parliament is refusing to end their petty, sectarian/tribal bickering, and because the Iraqi government is failing in attempts to form a new government, Iraq is unworthy of help by foreign nations. Nevertheless, foreign nations will need to rescue the Iraqis from their miserable incompetence, simply because it is intolerable to allow ISIL to exist inside of Iraq and threaten neighboring nations.

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### **Iraqi Army too dangerous for Americans to assist**

*The New York Times* revealed a classified U.S. Government report on the inabilities of the Iraqi army.

A classified military assessment of Iraq's security forces concludes that many units are so deeply infiltrated by either Sunni extremist informants or Shiite personnel backed by Iran that any Americans assigned to advise Baghdad's forces could face risks to their safety, according to United States officials.

The report concludes that only about half of Iraq's operational units are capable enough for American commandos to advise them if the White House decides to help roll back the advances made by Sunni militants in northern and western Iraq over the past month.

Adding to the administration's dilemma is the assessment's conclusion that Iraqi forces loyal to Prime Minister Nuri Kamal al-Maliki are now heavily dependent on Shiite militias — many of which were trained in Iran — as well as on advisers from Iran's paramilitary Quds Force.

....

The draft of about 120 pages is now being reviewed by Gen. Lloyd J. Austin III, the head of the military's Central Command, which oversees operations in the Middle East. ... a final version is expected to be sent to Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel and other top Pentagon officials this week, officials said.

....

... Iraqi Army that was trained and equipped by the United States at a cost of more than \$25 billion, but which experienced a drop-off in training after the American withdrawal and has been greatly handicapped by Mr. Maliki's push to appoint commanders based more on political loyalty than military skill.

Eric Schmitt & Michael R. Gordon, "U.S. Sees Risks in Assisting a Compromised Iraqi Force," [NY Times](#), 13 July 2014.

**My comments:** The Pentagon is probably very unhappy that readers of *The New York Times* saw a summary of a classified report before the top Generals in the Pentagon could read that report. But it is useful to know that the Iraqi army is infiltrated by both Sunni insurgents and Iranian sympathizers. More than one hundred U.S. military personnel were killed in Afghanistan by Taliban-sympathizers who were genuine Afghani soldiers. Such attacks were so common that they were given the name "green on blue", after the color of the uniforms. Are we going to repeat this mistake of helping a disloyal army in Iraq?

So we are learning:

1. expect only petty sectarian/tribal bickering from the Iraqi Parliament,
2. expect nothing from the Iraqi army, and
3. expect atrocities from [ethnic cleansing](#) in Iraq.

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**14 July 2014**

On 14 July, Monday, there was no daily press briefing at the U.S. State Department. I had hoped to read Jen Psaki's reaction to the failure of the Iraqi Parliament on 13 July. On 14 July, the White House press [briefing](#) mentioned neither the Iraqi Parliament meeting on 13 July nor ISIL.

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## 15 July 2014

### Iraqi Parliament Elects Speaker

On 15 July, the Iraqi Parliament again failed to elect a prime minister. However, they did elect the speaker for Parliament who was nominated on 13 July. The Associated Press reported:

Iraqi lawmakers broke their deadlock Tuesday [15 July] and elected a new speaker of parliament, taking the first formal step toward forming a new government that is widely seen as crucial to confronting the militants who have overrun much of the country.

Still, it was not clear whether lawmakers had reached a larger deal on the most contentious decision — the choice for prime minister. The incumbent, Nouri al-Maliki, has ruled the country since 2006 but is under intense pressure to step aside, but he is insisting he be picked for a third term.

After voting behind closed doors, the legislature tallied the results on a white board wheeled into the hall that showed Sunni lawmaker Salim al-Jubouri winning with 194 votes in the 328-seat parliament. A second candidate, Shorooq al-Abayachi, received 19 votes. There were 60 abstentions.

According to the constitution, parliament now has 30 days to elect a president, who will then have 15 days to ask the leader of the largest bloc in the legislature to form a government. Then a prime minister will be picked.

Qassim Abdul-Zahra, "Iraqi Parliament Breaks Deadlock To Elect Speaker," [Associated Press](#), 11:41 GMT, 15 July 2014.

Same text in later [AP](#), edition at 18:38 GMT, 15 July.

*The Washington Post* reported:

Sunni lawmaker Salim al-Juburi captured 71 percent of the votes. The session, broadcast live on state television, was attended by 273 of the Iraqi parliament's 328 members, acting speaker Mehdi Hafedh said following the vote, which drew applause inside the assembly.

Abigail Hauslohner, "Iraqi parliament breaks political deadlock," [Washington Post](#), 13:27 GMT, 15 July 2014.

In the evening on 15 July, the Iraqi Parliament elected Haider al-Ibadi as first deputy speaker. [All Iraq News](#). Al-Ibadi is a member of al-Maliki's State of Law party.

At night on 15 July, the Iraqi Parliament elected Aram al-Sheikh Mohamed from Kurdistan as second deputy speaker. [All Iraq News](#).

While Parliament delayed the decision about prime minister of the new government, ISIL terrorists entered the Central Library in northeastern Baquba in Diyala and burned approximately 1650 books. [All Iraq News](#). We already knew that ISIL are barbarians, but the book burning again confirms their barbarian status.

In reading dozens of news reports about the Iraqi Parliament, I can *not* find any mention of the date for their next meeting.

At night on 15 July, Reuters explained what happened in the Iraqi Parliament:

But after quickly picking Salim al-Jabouri as speaker, lawmakers argued bitterly for hours over his Shi'ite deputy, suggesting they are still far from a deal on a new government or a decision on the fate of Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki.

....

Parliament chose Haidar al-Abadi, a member of Maliki's State of Law bloc, as the Shi'ite deputy speaker, but only after three rounds of voting and hours of contentious debate, during which he was unexpectedly challenged for the post by Ahmad Chalabi, a former ally of the United States.

Although Chalabi eventually withdrew, his decision to stand suggested ongoing discord within the Shi'ite alliance over how to allocate top posts, perhaps including the premiership itself.

However, the decision to award the deputy speaker's post to Maliki's ally Abadi could increase the likelihood that the prime minister steps aside: an aide to a senior Kurdish politician, speaking on condition of anonymity, noted that in the past the Shi'ite parties had chosen deputy speakers from outside the prime minister's bloc, to maintain unity among Shi'ite factions.

Isra' Al-Rubei'i & Ahmed Rasheed, "Iraq names moderate Sunni parliament speaker in move to break political deadlock," [Reuters](#), 18:20 GMT, 15 July 2014.

Final version at [Reuters](#), 06:11 GMT, 16 July 2014.

**My comments:** If the Iraqi Parliament continues to procrastinate according to the schedule in their constitution, a prime minister will be elected sometime after 29 Aug 2014, 45 days from 15 July. It is difficult to reconcile the Associated Press report that the voting was "behind closed doors" with the *Post's* report that the session was "broadcast live on state television". Attendance of 273 of the 328 members is 83%. What were the 55 missing members doing?

The Iraqi Parliament *should* have selected a speaker and two deputies a month ago. The Parliament is continuing to fail to select a prime minister.

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On 15 July, Kerry issued a statement that congratulated the Iraqi Parliament on choosing a speaker and two deputies. The entire statement says:

We congratulate the Iraqi people on the election of a new parliamentary Speaker and two Deputy Speakers. The election of a Speaker is the first step in the critical process of forming a new government that can take into account the rights, aspirations, and legitimate concerns of all Iraq's communities.

We urge Iraq's leaders to follow this achievement with rapid formation of a new government pursuant to Iraq's constitutional timelines. We further urge the

international community to support Iraq's democratic political process, which reflects the aspirations of the nearly 14 million Iraqis who voted for new representatives from all parts of the country. These representatives are now charged, through the Iraqi parliament, to form a new government with leaders who reflect a broad national consensus.

As I said in Baghdad [on 23 June], this is a moment when the stakes for Iraq's future could not be clearer as much depends on the ability of Iraq's leaders to come together and take a united stand against ISIL. Iraq faces an existential threat and Iraq's leaders need to confront that threat with the urgency that it demands. As they do, the United States will remain a steadfast partner in support of their fight for the democratic process and against ISIL.

John Kerry, "U.S. Congratulates Iraqis on the Election of a Parliamentary Speaker," [State Dept.](#), 15 July 2014.

On 15 July, there was a press briefing at the U.S. State Department for the first time in five days:

QUESTION: But as Maliki becomes more and more polarizing, a polarizing figure — and those were the words of someone like Barzani in Turkey, those are the words of even allies within the Shia coalition, even his own coalition — are you willing to support as an alternative someone that the Iranians might support, who is Ahmed Chalabi, someone who has been tarnished in the United States as someone who collaborated with the enemies of the United States?

MS. PSAKI: Well, we're not going to pick or support candidates. Obviously, as you noted, but it's worth me repeating from the U.S. Government, we — it's up to the Iraqi people to determine their leadership. We've expressed concern in the past about the lack of inclusivity in Prime Minister Maliki's leadership. That hasn't changed. And obviously, we want to see a future government and future leaders who govern in a more inclusive manner. But that's one of the next steps in the process, and we leave that to the Iraqis to determine.

Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 15 July 2014.

**My comments:** Kerry's remarks look like a school assignment to use all of the words "Iraq", "consensus", "inclusive", "democratic", "united", and "urgent" in one sentence. Aside from lawyers and politicians (and Kerry is *both* a lawyer *and* a politician), no native speaker of English writes pretentious sentences like Kerry's sentences. Obama's speech at West Point on 28 May 2014, and Obama's speech announcing his Iraq policy on 19 June 2014, also suffer from the same problem of too many slogans and not enough content.

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## 16 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Wednesday, 16 July. The war in Gaza, fighting in the Ukraine, and the negotiations with Iran over their nuclear weapons program, all pushed Iraq out of the news on 16 July. There is *only one* mention of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 16 July, and only nine mentions of the word "Syria" (Assad was inaugurated and Psaki criticized Assad.). Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not*

in session on 16 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

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## 17 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Thursday, 17 July. A civilian passenger airplane in the Ukraine was shot down, killing 298 people (see [above](#)), the Israeli Army began to invade Gaza, and there were negotiations with Iran over their nuclear weapons program. All of these events pushed Iraq out of the news on 17 July. There are *only four* mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 17 July, and only twelve mentions of the word "Syria" (mostly in context of Iran selling oil to Syria). Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 17 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

On 17 July, the Associated Press reported:

A powerful Iranian general has emerged as the chief tactician in Iraq's fight against Sunni militants, working on the front lines alongside 120 advisers from his country's Revolutionary Guard to direct Shiite militiamen and government forces in the smallest details of battle, militia commanders and government officials say.

The startlingly hands-on role of Iranian Gen. Ghasem Soleimani points to the extent of the Shiite-led Iraqi government's reliance on its ally Tehran. It also strikes a strong contrast with the more methodical, cautious approach of the United States, Iran's rival for influence in Iraq. Shiite fighters have come to idolize the Iranians who have moved into the heat of battle alongside them — with two Iranian advisers killed in fighting — while government officials grumble the United States has failed to come to their aid.

The Iranian role, however, risks further sharpening the sectarian rifts in the conflict. At a time when the U.S. and others are pressing Iraq's government to reach out to Sunnis to reduce support for the insurgency, the effective Iranian command of Iraq's defense is likely to further alienate Sunnis, who have long accused Shiite-led Iran of trying to dominate Iraq through its allies here.

....

A handful of advisers from Lebanon's Shiite Hezbollah guerrilla group are also offering front-line guidance to Iraqi militias fighting north of Baghdad. [9] "We sorely need these advisers," said Wahab al-Taei, a senior commander of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, one of several Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq. "They have the expertise we lack in urban guerrilla warfare."

....

Iraqi requests for U.S. airstrikes against the Sunni militants have so far gone unanswered, though President Barack Obama has not ruled them out. Pentagon officials have said there are questions whether strikes would be effective if the Iraqi military is not capable of recapturing lost ground and that strikes could further turn

Sunnis against the government.

Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki "feels he has been let down by the Americans and that's why he sought Iranian help," said Watheq al-Hashemi, an Iraqi analyst known to be close to the prime minister.

Qassim Abdul-Zahra & Hamza Hendawi, "Iranian Commanders On Front Line Of Iraq's Fight," [Associated Press](#), 18:19 GMT, 17 July 2014.

At night on 17 July, ISIL made a "brazen raid" on the Speicher Air Base near Tikrit and captured that Base. To save the Iraqi air force aircraft from destruction by ISIL, the aircraft were flown to other air bases. But at least one helicopter was destroyed. [Daily Star](#)(AFP). My comment is that while the Iraqi Parliament delays naming a new government, ISIL continues to capture more of Iraq.

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### 18 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Friday, 18 July. A civilian passenger airplane flying over the Ukraine was shot down yesterday that killed 298 people, the Israeli Army continued to invade Gaza, and the negotiations with Iran over their nuclear weapons program continued. All of these events pushed Iraq out of the news on 18 July. There are *zero* mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 18 July, and only five mentions of the word "Syria" (all condemning ISIL's "barbaric stoning of a woman ... in Tabqa, Syria"). Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 18 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

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### 19 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Saturday, 19 July. Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 19 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

[All Iraq News](#) reported that "five key figures" of the Iraqi National Alliance would meet on Saturday night "to decide whether to nominate the Premier, Nouri al-Maliki for the PM post or not." If the National Alliance does not nominate him, then no other political group will, and that will end his career as prime minister.

On 19 July the Associated Press reported Islamic terrorism in Baghdad, and the weak response of the Iraqi army to retake towns seized by ISIL:

On Saturday [19 July], a series of bombings, including three over a span of less than 10 minutes, killed at least 27 people, police officials said. The attacks, which hit the neighborhoods of Abu Dashir, Baiyaa, Jihad and Khazimiyah, are among the most significant in the capital since the militant campaign began.

....

The Iraqi military's only major effort to roll back the militant gains has targeted the city of Tikrit, some 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Baghdad. That campaign has sputtered, however, and the city remains in insurgent hands.

Sameer N. Yacoub & Ryan Lucas, "Under Threat, Iraq's Christians Flee City Of Mosul," [Associated Press](#), 19:22 GMT, 19 July 2014.

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## 20 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Sunday, 20 July. Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 20 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

[Reuters](#) reports that ISIL took credit for the car bombs in Shiite neighborhoods in Baghdad that killed at least 27 people on 19 July. Agence France-Presse reported the same facts. [Daily Star](#). Once again, ISIL not only kills innocent civilians because of their religion, but also ISIL boasts of the killing.

The [Associated Press](#) reports that the Iraqi Parliament is scheduled to meet on 23 July to elect a president.

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## 21 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Monday, 21 July. The Ukraine and Gaza pushed Iraq out of the news on 21 July. There are 15 mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 21 July (mostly condemnation of ISIL expelling Christians from Mosul, and scheduled voting on 23 July for a new president of Iraq), and three mentions of the word "Syria". Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 21 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

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## 22 July 2014

There was no significant news from Iraq on Tuesday, 22 July. Again, the Ukraine and Gaza pushed Iraq out of the news on 22 July. There are six mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 22 July, and *only one* mention of the word "Syria". Apparently the Iraqi Parliament was *not* in session on 22 July, because I saw no mention of a meeting of Parliament in the English-language Iraqi news websites or in other news media.

Parliament was scheduled to meet on 23 July to elect a president. But "more than 100 candidates" have appeared, so "a member of the Kurdistan Alliance bloc" requested the Parliament meeting be postponed until after 28 July. [Daily Star](#).

ISIL sent a car loaded with explosives to a police checkpoint in Baghdad, where the driver detonated the explosives, killing at least 31 people. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The same Baghdad neighborhood, Kazimiyah, was also attacked with car bombs on 19 July.

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## 23 July 2014

The meeting of the Iraqi Parliament that was scheduled for 11:00 Baghdad time was postponed until 13:00. [All Iraq News](#); [Iraq News](#).

The Kurdish political parties requested a one-day postponement, so they could decide on *one* nominee for president. So Parliament adjourned until 24 July. [All Iraq News](#); [Reuters](#).

Agence France-Presse reports that Kurdish politicians, meeting in a Baghdad hotel, selected Fuad Masum as their candidate for president. Since a Kurd is traditionally president of Iraq, that decision "almost guaranteed" his appointment. [Daily Star](#).

The Associated Press reports that al-Maliki had a "recent meeting" with Iranian General Ghasem Soleimani, and the Iranian unsuccessfully attempted to persuade al-Maliki to end his campaign for a third term as prime minister of Iraq. [Associated Press](#). As reported [above](#), Maliki wants a third term as prime minister.

There are 11 mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 23 July, and 27 mentions of the word "Syria".

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## 24 July 2014

At 11:35 GMT on 24 July the Associated Press tersely announced that the Iraqi Parliament had elected "moderate Kurdish politician Fouad Massoum as next president." The president is largely ceremonial, and so today's accomplishment is of only symbolic importance. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#). The new president received 211 votes out of 269 votes. It took less than two hours for Parliament to elect the new president. [All Iraq News](#). There are 328 total members of Parliament, so 269 votes indicates 82% attendance.

Parliament scheduled its next meeting for 5 August 2014. There was no mention of when the Parliament would select a prime minister. [All Iraq News](#). Strangely, there was no criticism of Parliament's decision to wait 12 days for their next meeting. The results of the 30 April election were certified on 17 June. *If* Parliament selects a prime minister on 5 Aug, that will be 97 days since the election and 49 days since the results were certified. While Parliament procrastinated and bickered, ISIL entrenched itself and the situation in Iraq deteriorated. Clearly, the Iraqi Parliament is making the problems in Iraq worse by failing to promptly form a new government.

### U.S. Government Reaction on 24 July 2014

The U.S. State Department was probably *not* impressed by the agonizing slowness of the formation of the Iraqi government, now 37 days after the election results were certified on 17 June 2014. But the U.S. State Department was politely diplomatic and congratulated the Iraqis:

The United States congratulates the Iraqi people on the election of their new president, Fuad Masum. By taking this crucial step, the Council of Representatives has demonstrated its commitment to uniting the country according to the constitution and advancing the legitimate rights and aspirations of all Iraq's communities.

Iraq's leaders now must take the next step in their democratic process by choosing a prime minister and forming a government. Only with an inclusive, cohesive government that represents all Iraqis can Iraq most effectively and successfully confront the urgent security and humanitarian challenges it faces in the fight against ISIL.

Marie Harf, "U.S. Congratulates Iraqis on the Election of the President," [State Dept.](#), 24 July 2014.

Brett McGurk, deputy assistant secretary of state for Iraq and Iran, testified before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on 23 July and before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on 24 July. *The Washington Post* reported on the House hearing:

Lawmakers on the House Foreign Affairs Committee expressed strong skepticism that current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki is willing or able to lead such a transformation, a view that the administration generally shares in private.

But Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Brett McGurk, who has been the administration's point man on the ground in Iraq over the past several months, was reluctant to agree publicly with multiple congressional calls for Maliki to go.

....

"I would also add that were we to take a position on such a thing, it would obviously not be either in our interests or it would dramatically affect the process." [McGurk] said.

Karen DeYoung, "New government in Iraq is an 'ongoing process,' Obama administration says," [Washington Post](#), 23 July 2014.

*The Washington Times* was one of a few newspapers to report on the Senate hearing:

The State Department on Thursday [24 July] all but showed Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki the door, saying he had been particularly hard to work with.

"We had extreme frustrations with the Iraqi government, particularly over the last year," Brett McGurk, deputy assistant secretary of state for Iraq and Iran, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

Then Mr. McGurk seemed to suggest Mr. al-Maliki's days as prime minister are numbered.

"They've created a new parliament, and through that parliament new leaders will emerge," he testified. "There are a handful of very capable leaders who may emerge as the next prime minister of Iraq. We're going to have to see this unfold very rapidly over the coming days."



Rowan Scarborough, "State Department: al-Maliki's days numbered as Iraq PM," [Washington Times](#), 24 July 2014.

On 24 July, the U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesperson mentioned the House testimony on 23 July:

QUESTION: But you would like to see Maliki or the Maliki era end?

MS. HARF: I don't think I said that, Said.

QUESTION: Okay.

MS. HARF: I said we don't support any one person. And we've also said — and you've heard Brett McGurk speak about this a little bit yesterday — that we have had concerns with some of the ways the Maliki government has governed and how they have not always governed inclusively. But we are not endorsing any party or any person, period, to be the next prime minister of Iraq.

Marie Harf, Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 24 July 2014.

On 25 July, the U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesperson said about the Senate testimony on 24 July:

QUESTION: Should we read from the testimony that Mr. McGurk did on Capitol Hill that you are losing patience with Mr. Maliki, you'd like to see someone else take his place?

MS. HARF: You ask this question a different way every day. We don't support —

QUESTION: Yes.

MS. HARF: — and I'll give you the same answer, so let's — for consistency, let's do that again today. We don't support any one candidate, any one person to be prime minister. We've said it needs to be someone who is interested in governing inclusively. We've also said we've had issues in the past with how Prime Minister Maliki has governed. But again, it's not up for us to decide. It's up for the Iraqis to decide.

QUESTION: Right. But your confidence in Maliki's abilities to rule inclusively, as you said, is —

MS. HARF: Well, we've had issues in the past.

Marie Harf, Daily Press Briefing, [State Dept.](#), 25 July 2014.

### **More News on 24 July 2014**

At 07:08 GMT on 24 July, the Associated Press tersely announced: "Attack on prisoner convoy north of Baghdad kills 52 prisoners, 8 soldiers." Reuters later reported that the bus was carrying prisoners from a military base to Baghdad when a roadside bomb exploded and gunmen sprayed bullets at the bus. [Associated Press](#); [Reuters](#), 14:40 GMT.

At 16:10 GMT, the Associated Press reported that ISIL had destroyed the ancient Prophet Younis Mosque and Shrine in Mosul. The Prophet Jonah (Younis in Arabic) was swallowed by a whale. Jonah was allegedly buried in the now destroyed mosque, but the whale is buried somewhere else. [The Guardian](#); [Arab News](#). The tomb of Jonah was destroyed by ISIL sometime before 4 July, when the ISIL vandals used sledgehammers. [Russia Today](#); [Iraqi News](#). My comment is that the ISIL barbarians remind me of the Taliban who blew up the giant statues of Buddha in Afghanistan in March 2001 — they are destroying their cultural heritage. The unique historical buildings might be rebuilt, but they will never be the same as the original.

Just to remind us who actually controls Iraq, ISIL detonated two car bombs in Baghdad on 24 July, killing at least 21 people. [Associated Press](#), 19:13 GMT.

There are 9 mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 24 July, and 3 mentions of the word "Syria".

### **Ban parrots U.S. position in Iraq**

Ban Ki-moon departed from his failure to establish a ceasefire in Gaza, and arrived in Baghdad on the morning of 24 July. Ban's appearance at the Iraqi Parliament postponed by one hour their meeting to elect a president. [All Iraq News](#). Ban then held a joint press conference with al-Maliki, in which Ban expressed his hope of settling the dispute between the Kurds and Arabs in Iraq. [All Iraq News](#). Ban arrived in Erbil, Iraq in the evening of 24 July for discussions with the Kurdish government. [All Iraq News](#). At night, Ban flew from Baghdad to Egypt, to continue futilely working on the problem in Gaza. [All Iraq News](#).

Ban made a [speech](#) in Baghdad that included: "Iraq is facing an existential threat but it can be overcome through the formation of a thoroughly inclusive government...". Copy of Ban's speech at [U.N.](#) and [UNAMI](#). Back on 23 June, [Kerry](#) said in Baghdad: "Iraq faces an existential threat, ...". More than three weeks before Ban's speech, the White House press secretary, Josh Earnest, said in a press [briefing](#) on 30 June: "In order to confront the existential threat that is posed by ISIL in Iraq,...." and "And that's why you've seen this administration work closely with Iraq's political leaders to encourage them to unite the country as they confront this existential threat." Mr. Earnest used the word "inclusive" *seven times* in reference to the Iraqi government. On 3 July, Mr. Earnest again said during his press [briefing](#): "The best way for Iraq to confront the threat that's posed by ISIL is to unify the country in the face of that existential threat." and he used "inclusive" *four times* in reference to the Iraqi government.

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### **25 July 2014**

During Friday prayers on 25 July, the top Shiite cleric in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, "made a thinly veiled appeal to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to step down, calling upon political leaders Friday not to 'cling' to their posts at the expense of political stability". [Associated Press](#). [Reuters](#) said the sermon "urged political leaders on Friday to refrain from clinging to their posts — an apparent reference to Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki, who has

defied demands that he step aside." The same Reuters article reminds us: "Despite pressure from the United States, the United Nations, Iran and Iraq's own Shi'ite clergy, politicians have been unable to quickly come up with an inclusive government to hold the fragmenting country together." [Al-Jazeera](#) reported: "Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's top cleric, has called on political leaders to refrain from clinging to their posts, in an apparent reference to Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki...."

ISIL detonated explosives at the base of tower supporting electric power transmission lines south of Baghdad, interrupting electricity. [Iraqi News](#). My comment is that electric power is required for a modern economy. Without electric power, civilization is hurled back to the late 1800s. But maybe living in the dark is not so bad for ISIL who have embraced a caliphate from the year 662.

There are 14 mentions of the word "Iraq" in the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 25 July (mostly in connection with sale of oil from Kurdistan), and *zero* mentions of the word "Syria".

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## 26 July 2014

On Saturday, 26 July, ISIL blew up the Shiite shrine of Nabi Shiyyt (Prophet Seth) shrine in Mosul. Agence France-Presse reported:

Seth is revered in Christianity, Islam and Judaism as the third son of Adam and Eve.

Sami al-Massoudi, the deputy head of the Shiite endowment agency overseeing holy sites, confirmed that militants blew up the Nabi Shiyyt shrine and added that they took some of the artefacts to an unknown location. [¶] "These people follow this impossible religious doctrine according to which they must destroy or kill anything or anybody deviating from their views," he said. [¶] "That simply has nothing to do with Islam."

....

Moqtada Sadr, a Shiite cleric whose followers have taken up arms to protect endangered holy sites, also condemned the demolition of the Nabi Yunus shrine. [¶] "He was a prophet for all religions," Sadr said in a statement, adding that the perpetrators of the desecration "don't deserve to live".

Sunni and Shiite religious officials have said ISIS militants had destroyed or damaged dozens of shrines and husseiniyas in and around Mosul since they overran part of the country six weeks ago. [¶] Husseiniyas are Shiite places of worship that are also used as community centres.

"Iraq jihadists dynamite Shiite shrine in Mosul," [Daily Star](#)(AFP), 12:22 GMT, 26 July 2014.

My comment is that I disagree with al-Massoudi when he says ISIL's destruction and killing "has nothing to do with Islam." ISIL is quite clear that they have an Islamic religious motivation, in fact ISIL has declared a caliphate. The existence of these shrines and Shiite mosques for many hundreds of years — the Prophet Seth shrine was originally built in the year 1057 — shows that they are compatible with traditional Islamic religion. The recent

destruction of these buildings shows that ISIL does *not* tolerate coexistence with other religious sects. That religious intolerance alone makes ISIL dangerous, but ISIL also practices summary executions and confiscates private property.

Also on 26 July, ISIL blew up a Christian church in Mosul, the Virgin Mary Church. [Iraqi News](#). This article contains links to eight earlier news reports of destruction of either Shiite mosques or Christian churches.

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## 27 July 2014

On Sunday, 27 July, the Associated Press reported:

Militants from the Islamic State group blew up a mosque and shrine dating back to the 14th century in Mosul on Sunday, local residents said, the latest casualty in a week that has seen a half dozen of the Iraqi city's most revered holy places destroyed.

Mosul residents said the Prophet Jirjis Mosque and Shrine was bombed and destroyed by the radical jihadist group. They spoke anonymously to The Associated Press for fear of reprisal.

The complex was built over the Quraysh cemetery in Mosul in the late 14th century, and included a small shrine dedicated to Nabi Jerjis, the Prophet George.

Sameer N. Yacoub "Islamic Militants Destroy Historic Mosque In Mosul," [Associated Press](#), 22:51 GMT, 27 July 2014.

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## 28 July 2014

On 28 July, *The Washington Post* published a particularly damning criticism of President Obama:

From Europe to the Middle East, we have seen how disaster follows U.S. retreat and disengagement from the world. But the one area where President Obama seemed to be leaning forward was drone strikes. He personally approved terrorist "kill lists" and has taken out many hundreds of terrorists with drones in Pakistan, Yemen and East Africa.

So why, when Iraqi officials began pleading with him one year ago to strike Islamic State terrorists with drones, did Obama repeatedly refuse — standing by while terrorists overran the country?

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce made the stunning revelation in a congressional hearing last week that Iraq had been urgently requesting drone support against the Islamic State since August 2013 and that those requests were repeatedly turned down.

Obama officials have publicly claimed that Iraq requested air support only in May of this year, after Islamic State had already taken Fallujah and was marching on Mosul. That is untrue. And it is Royce's version of events that is borne out by the public

record. On Aug. 17, 2013, in a little-noticed story entitled “Iraq Open to U.S. Drone Strikes on Terrorists,” [Bloomberg News](#) reported that Iraqi Foreign Minister Hoshyar Zebari was in Washington “seeking U.S. advisers, air surveillance or even drone strikes” and that “the top Iraqi diplomat’s comments are the first time he has publicly raised the possibility of working with the U.S. on anti-terrorist drone strikes.”

That was a year ago. Had Obama acted on those requests, the Islamic State offensive might very well have been stopped. The United States could have hit the terrorists while they were still in staging areas in the western Iraqi desert, away from civilians, where they were easy targets for U.S. drones. Instead Obama did nothing, while the Islamic State massed its forces, marched into Iraqi cities, and proclaimed a radical Islamic state.

....

Obama’s own attorney general, Eric Holder, recently [13 July] told [ABC News](#) that the rise of the Islamic State is “more frightening than anything I think I’ve seen as attorney general,” adding that “9/11 was something that kind of came out of the blue. This is a situation that we can see developing.”

Remember those words. Obama saw the threat from the Islamic State developing for a year. He had a chance to stop it. He failed to do so.

Marc A. Thiessen, "Obama failed to stop the Islamic State when he had the chance," [Washington Post](#), 28 July 2014. [Link to ABC News transcript added by Standler.]

Thiessen mentions that Obama did not take ISIL seriously: "In a January 2014 interview with the [New Yorker](#), Obama glibly dismissed the Islamic State as a bunch of junior varsity terrorists who posed little danger to Iraq or the United States." *Ibid.* Obama's characterization of ISIL as "jayvee" terrorists is nonsense — back on 3 Jan 2014 (24 days before the *New Yorker* article) insurgents in Syria began to fight against ISIL, because of ISIL's record of atrocities in Syria.

I suggest that during May 2013 to January 2014, ISIL was primarily a threat to Assad in Syria. Since June 2011, Obama has an obsession with removing Assad from power, and ISIL was helping defeat Assad, so Obama could easily tolerate ISIL. On 10 June 2014, Obama awakened from his slumber, when ISIL captured Mosul. [Above](#), on 3 July, I wrote about how Obama helped create the current debacle in Iraq.

In the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 28 July, there are two mentions of the word "Iraq" (both about the sale of Kurdish oil), and four mentions of the word "Syria". The world, and the U.S. Government, is focused on the little war in Gaza, and ignores the larger conflict in Syria, and the continuing debacle in Iraq. Meanwhile, bad news continues to gush from Iraq, as ISIL continues to commit atrocities, ISIL continues to attack civilians, the Iraqi army is unable to expel ISIL from any towns, and the Iraqi government is unable to select a prime minister.

The Associated Press reported:

Residents of Mosul have watched helplessly as extremists ruling the northern Iraqi city

blew up some of their most beloved landmarks and shrines to impose a stark vision of Islam. Next up for destruction, they feared: the Crooked Minaret, a more than 840-year-old tower that leans like Italy's Tower of Pisa.

But over the weekend, residents pushed back. When fighters from the Islamic State group loaded with heavy explosives converged on the site, Mosulis living nearby rushed to the courtyard below the minaret, sat on the ground and linked arms to form a human chain to protect it, two residents who witnessed the event told The Associated Press on Monday [28 July]. [¶] They told the fighters, If you blow up the minaret, you'll have to kill us too, the witnesses said. [¶] The militants backed down and left, said the witnesses, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation from the militants.

....

When militants from the Islamic State group first swept into in Mosul in June, they proclaimed themselves the mainly Sunni city's savior from the Shiite-led Iraqi government in Baghdad. Their first priority was to rebuild infrastructure and provide services like garbage collection that the government had neglected. .... [¶] Now, the honeymoon is over. In recent weeks, they have purged the city of nearly its entire Christian population, moved to restrict women and began the systematic destruction of city landmarks.

Vivian Salama, "In Iraq's Mosul, Radicals Unleash Their Vision," [Associated Press](#), 18:50 GMT, 28 July 2014.

On 31 July, Agence France-Presse reported a similar story about citizens of Mosul rebelling against ISIL, after ISIL destroyed historic mosques and churches. The first act of resistance was the killing of four ISIL jihadists by snipers on Sunday, 27 July. [Daily Star](#).

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## 29 July 2014

In the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 29 July, there are three mentions of the word "Iraq" (all about the sale of Kurdish oil), and six mentions of the word "Syria" (mostly on ISIL control of Syrian oil fields, a question that was deflected by the departure of the spokesperson for a trip to India).

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## 30 July 2014

On 30 July, sometime before 16:30 GMT, [Iraqi News](#) reported that Riad al-Saadi, a member of the Iraqi Parliament in the Liberal bloc, told Iraqi News that al-Maliki "withdrew his candidacy for the post [of prime minister] because of political pressure .... from other political blocs." The Iraqi National Alliance coalition of Shiite Islamists then nominated five candidates for prime minister: Ahmed Chalabi, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, Aadi Abdul-Mahdi, Khodair al Khozai, and Hussain al-Shahristani.

Who are these five candidates? I Googled each of their names and collected some

biographical information on each of them:

1. **Ahmed Chalabi**, deputy prime minister for one year (2005-2006), B.Sc. in mathematics from MIT, Ph.D. in mathematics from University of Chicago, but sentenced to 22 years in prison in Jordan for bank fraud, and blamed by the U.S. Government for providing false information about weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.
2. **al-Jaafari**, former prime minister (2005-2006), currently leader of the National Iraqi Alliance (the biggest bloc of political parties in Parliament).
3. **Abdul-Mahdi**, vice-president (2005 to 2011), economist, educated in France.
4. **Khodair al Khozai**, current vice-president since 2011, minister of education (2006-2010), Ph.D. in Islamic Ideology from Aligarh University, India.
5. **Hussain al-Shahristani**, current deputy prime minister since 2010, current foreign minister since 11 July 2014, refused to build nuclear weapons for Saddam Hussein, B.Sc. in Chemical Engineering from Imperial College in London, Ph.D. in Chemical Engineering from University of Toronto.

Despite the importance of this news, this story was reported by *neither* the Associated Press, Reuters, *nor* three other English-language news websites in Iraq. The lack of confirmation by other news agencies casts doubts on the veracity of the report by Iraqi News. However, the story is still linked on the homepage of Iraqi News at 07:30 GMT on 31 July.

In other news on 30 July 2014, the U.S. State Dept. approved the sale of 5000 Hellfire missiles to Iraq for US\$ 700 million. [Reuters](#), 12:47 GMT, 30 July. Strangely, there was no press release from the U.S. State Department and no news story by the Associated Press, but on 29 July there was a news release from the U.S. Defense Security Cooperation Agency ([DSCA](#)).

In the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 30 July, there are three mentions of the word "Iraq" (about the sale of Kurdish oil), and nine mentions of the word "Syria" (about humanitarian aid from the USA).

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### 31 July 2014

Two car bombs in Baghdad killed 9 people and injured 55 other people. [All Iraq News](#).

In the U.S. State Dept. Daily Press [Briefing](#) on 31 July, there are 19 mentions of the word "Iraq" (about the sale of Kurdish oil), and three mentions of the word "Syria".

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### 1 August 2014 July Death Toll in Iraq

On 1 August, United Nations in Baghdad said 1737 people died in Iraq from terrorism and violence during July 2014, *not* counting 198 deaths in Anbar province. [UNAMI](#). The July death toll in Iraq was significantly less than the 2417 killed during June (excluding Anbar), as reported [above](#).

It is interesting to compare the death toll in Iraq with the death toll in Gaza, where 1441 palestinians died during 8-31 July. [Daily Star](#) in Lebanon. Despite the higher death toll in Iraq, journalists gave much more coverage to the war in Gaza than to the war in Iraq.

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## Conclusions

I still agree with what I said in my Conclusion to my [eighth essay](#) on Syria that was written during June 2014.

The capture of Mosul, Iraq by ISIL on 10 June 2014 — as well as the declaration of ISIL's caliphate on 29 June 2014 — changed the Western view of the insurgency in Syria.

### *Before 10 June 2014*

Before 10 June 2014, the conventional wisdom in the London11 nations — including the USA — was that Assad was Evil, and the removal of Assad was the Nr. 1 goal in Syria. The Syrian National Coalition has a consistent and intransigent demand that Assad resign. The intransigence of the Syrian National Coalition has been encouraged by Obama and Kerry, with the frequent U.S. declarations that Assad has lost his legitimacy as leader of the Syrian government.

Obama's foreign policy on Syria is essentially an obsession with the removal of Assad. When Assad did not resign in 2011 or 2012 or 2013, Obama's foreign policy was increasingly divorced from reality.

One can summarize a series of events that exposed the futility of the plans of the London11 group of nations and the United Nations negotiations in Geneva:

1. The reality is that Assad is firmly in control of the Syrian government, Assad is winning the civil war in heavily populated western Syria, and the insurgents are unable to force Assad to resign.
2. Assad did *not* resign, and the Geneva peace negotiations ended in failure on 15 Feb 2014. The Coalition's intransigent demand that Assad resign, and Assad's insistence on remaining in power, are *impossible* for compromise.
3. Not only are there no plans to resume Syrian peace negotiations in the foreseeable future, but also the United Nations negotiator (Brahimi) resigned in frustration on 13 May 2014.
4. Assad was re-elected for another seven-year term on 3 June 2014.



5. It is now obvious that neither side in the Geneva negotiations genuinely wanted to negotiate. The U.S. Government essentially forced the Coalition to attend the Geneva negotiations, and Russia forced Assad's government to attend.

Not all of these facts or events were known on 15 Feb 2014, when the Geneva negotiations ended. But all of these facts are known at the end of June 2014, and were documented in my previous essays. A more detailed analysis of the failure of the Geneva negotiations is found in my separate [essay](#). I suggest that the London11 group of nations — and the Syrian National Coalition — were so obsessed with deposing Assad that they did not recognize that their demand that Assad resign would cause the Geneva2 negotiations to fail. Not only was much diplomatic effort and expense wasted on Geneva2, but also the frustration caused the skilled U.N. negotiator, Lakhdar Brahimi, to resign on 13 May 2014.

### ***After 10 June 2014***

After the capture of Mosul by ISIL on 10 June 2014, it was obvious that the big enemy in Iraq was ISIL. Because ISIL actively operated in *both* Syria and Iraq, the problems in the two nations were suddenly recognized to be intertwined. The U.S. Government's view was that terrorists in Syria had spilled into Iraq. The Truth is that ISIL was created in Iraq in 2004 under the name "Al-Qaeda in Iraq" and entered Syria in May 2013, when the terrorists took the name "Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant" (ISIL).

Iran is one of the two major suppliers to Assad's government in Syria, and Iran is also active in influencing the Shiite government in Iraq. Suppose the U.S. Government continues its policy of demanding the removal of Assad, and continues its policy of supporting the government of Iraq. Then the USA would be in the awkward position of opposing Iran in Syria, and agreeing with Iran in Iraq. This awkwardness could be avoided if the U.S. Government would both (1) abandon its declaration that Assad must resign, and (2) focus on the defeat of terrorism (e.g., ISIL) in both Syria and Iraq. Once the USA makes these two changes, there can be an alliance between Syria and Iraq, with both Iran, Russia, and the USA contributing to this alliance against terrorism. See the 28 June 2014 editorial in [The Guardian](#), which states that Assad's interests in defeating ISIL coincide with the West's interests. Also see Leslie H. Gelb, op-ed, [NY Times](#), 1 July 2014 ("The greatest threat to American interests in the region is ISIS, not Mr. Assad.").

An important point to recognize is that Al-Qaeda in Iraq (the predecessor of ISIL) was essentially defeated when the USA pulled its combat troops out of Iraq in Dec 2011. The weak and ineffective government of Maliki in Iraq allowed ISIL to capture much of western and northern Iraq from January 2014 through June 2014. There is an obvious lesson here. If the weak and ineffective Syrian National Coalition were to control Syria, ISIL would exploit that weakness. The result would be that ISIL would quickly seize control of Syria. In other words, we *need* a strong, decisive, experienced leader (e.g., Assad) in control of Syria, to limit the expansion of terrorists like ISIL, because ISIL is worse than Assad.

### **Final Conclusion**

However, even *if* the U.S. Government were to support Assad's fight against terrorism, and *if* the moderate rebels rejoin the Syrian army, it will be a tough job to defeat the jihadists and Al-Qaeda in Syria. As of 31 July 2014, the possibility of peace in Syria looks grim for the foreseeable future.

The situation is worse in Iraq, where on 7 July I characterized the members of the Iraqi Parliament as not able to find their way out of a paper grocery bag. The Syrians have an effective government and an effective military. In contrast, the Iraqi Parliament is unable to form a new government and the Iraqi army is unable to expel ISIL from towns and cities. Iraq — like Somalia and Libya — is a failed nation.

On 19 June, Obama told the Iraqi Parliament to convene "as soon as possible" and select government leaders with an "inclusive agenda". On the morning of 27 June, the head Shiite cleric in Iraq, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, called on the new Parliament to decide on the parliament speaker, president, and prime minister *before* the first session of Parliament on 1 July. A month later, on 1 Aug, Parliament had *not* decided who would be the new prime minister. *If* the Iraqi Parliament selects a prime minister at its next meeting on 5 Aug, that will be 97 days since the election and 49 days since the results of the election were certified. While Parliament procrastinated and bickered, ISIL entrenched itself and the situation in Iraq deteriorated. Clearly, the Iraqi Parliament is making the problems in Iraq worse by failing to promptly form a new government.

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this document is at <http://www.rbs0.com/syria11.pdf>  
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The annotated [list](#) of my essays on Syria and links to source documents.

[my homepage](#)