

A THREAT OF ISIS TO THE STATE-BUILDING
EFFORTS IN THE MIDDLE EAST THROUGH
THE PRISM OF CHANGING U.S. STRATEGIC
OBJECTIVES IN THE REGION

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Introduction

The aim of the article is to analyze the changing U.S. Middle-Eastern state-building goals (from George Bush Jr. to Barack Obama) and point out its effect on the strategic shifts in Iraq and Syria. The main factor standing behind U.S. policies in the 21st century were the September 11th, 2001 attacks, which led to an increased American military and political engagement in the Muslim world. The decisive area of the campaign to seize the support of pro-Western Arab and Muslim factions in the Middle East was Iraq, where the U.S. plans to build a model democracy in place of a tyrannous Saddam Hussein regime where countered by a wave of anti-Western uprisings. The concepts of Islamic revolution (with an example of Iran in Muslim communities) connected with modern jihadist movements driven by the Palestinian cause and Al-Qaeda's visions of the new caliphate increased internal conflicts in Iraq between the Sunni (dominant in the Baath era), the Shia (constituting the majority of the population) and Kurds (aspiring to independence). The Syrian conflict (since 2011 until the present day) opened a path for Al-Qaeda-affiliated (but later independent) Islamic State terrorists successful offensive (backed by former

Baathist military officers) in Northern Iraq and in Syria, degrading the outcome of U.S.-supported state-building processes in the region to the positions of desperate defence.

1. *The breakthrough in the Middle East
– towards a re-built Iraqi statehood or Islamic terrorism?*

United States' National Security Strategy (NSS) of the year 2002 was centered on a world-wide struggle of anti-terrorist alliance, including key campaigns against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and terrorist network all over the globe, as well as elimination of safe harbours for terrorism¹. On 19/20 March 2003, Operation Iraqi Freedom was launched, opening a path to a regime change in Baghdad, planned in detail since January 2003 in the light of the September 11, 2001 attacks and increased threat of terrorism in the Muslim and Arab Middle East². The U.S. invasion of 2003, which led to the seven-year-long broad military presence of American forces in the Land of Two Rivers, began Iraqi state-building processes hampered by Al-Qaeda and (later) the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Barack Obama stressed that Saddam Hussein Iraq did not meet the conditions required for identification of states or entities posing an imminent threat to America (like Al-Qaeda), and therefore the U.S. invasion of 2003 was not justified (“[it] was such a strategic blunder”)³.

In 2004, Abu Musab al-Zarkawi sworn allegiance to Osama bin Laden, forming Al-Qaeda in the Land of Two Rivers⁴. On 30 June 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) transferred its powers to Iraqi Interim Government, keeping in force the provisions of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL) of 8 March 2004⁵. The January 2005 elections to the Iraqi National Assembly led to a constitutional referendum of October 2005 and parliamentary elections of December 2005, which formed

the foundations of constitutional democracy in Iraq⁶. On 7 June 2006, Zarkawi died after the U.S. air-bombing, but his successor Abu Ayub al-Masri managed through a coalition of Islamist groups to form the core of the Islamic State in Iraq, headed by Abu Umar al-Baghdadi, appointed by Masri⁷. In the U.S. National Security Strategy (NSS) of the year 2006, the combat against Al-Qaeda was presented as a defence of liberty against its enemies, in the campaign involving Afghan and Iraqi allies⁸. The NSS 2010 emphasized that the U.S. were focused on destroying Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan⁹. The U.S. troops in Iraq were to be completely withdrawn. Since May 2010, taking advantage of this opportunity, the new ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi has been rebuilding his organization (shrinking after the U.S.-led campaigns), gaining momentum in Syria after the outbreak of the severe domestic conflict, and breaking its ties with Al-Qaeda to launch a successful offensive in 2014, capturing (a.o.) the cities of Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah to control in 2015 over 15-35 thousand square miles¹⁰. The NSS 2015 stressed that the response of the U.S. to the terrorist state-building was a formation of a coalition of 60 countries to defeat ISIL¹¹.

2. The impact of Operation Iraqi Freedom on state-building efforts in Iraq

As Rebecca Patterson noted, the U.S. Department of State began to work on the Iraqi case in October 2001, in a program of political support for the exiles leading through the Future of Iraq Project to a post-Saddam Hussein governance for Baghdad¹². As Barton Gellman observed, staffers of Vice President Richard Cheney were preparing documentation on Iraqi oil fields and infrastructure as early as in March 2001, for an unknown reason, leaving no traits how to explain such works¹³.

On 20 January 2003, retired general Jay Garner was asked by Donald Rumsfeld to head the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in post-intervention Iraq, to take charge of Iraqi state-building process until he is replaced by L. Paul Bremer, the presidential envoy¹⁴. The first decree of Paul Bremer as the head of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), proclaimed on 16 April 2003 by the Commander-in-Chief of U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Gen. Tommy Franks, was dated the 5th of May 2003, a day before an official announcement of the presidential appointment¹⁵.

M. Gordon and B. Trainor stressed that Gen. McKiernan (the chief planner of Eclipse II, the U.S. military operation in Iraq in 2003) expected the invading military force to be on Iraqi soil for the next six months after the operation, while, due to early plans, the complete dissolution of the Iraq's army was not taken under consideration¹⁶. According to David Phillips, the administration of George W. Bush, instead of preparing for the post-intervention planned state-building in Iraq, placed its trust in Ahmed Chalabi, who was thought to provide for the post-war reconstruction processes and a liberal democratic order in Baghdad¹⁷.

The beginnings of state-building efforts in Iraq after the U.S. invasion could be connected with the Nasiryah meeting (mid-April 2003) of Iraqi domestic and externally-based opposition activist with the participation of Jay Garner (Director of ORHA), Zalmay Khalilzad and Ryan Crocker on the American side, leading to, as Anthony Cordesman pointed out, a 13-point declaration depicting the transformation of Iraq into a federal state governed by the leaders legitimized through the choice of Iraqis¹⁸.

As Dan Caldwell explained, after the dissolution of 1.5 million strong Baath party by Bremer's decree, Ahmed Chalabi took control of the implementation of debaathification process favoured by the U.S. Department of Defence top staff in a broadened scope, while the De-

partment of State proposed a limited “«de-Saddamification»”¹⁹.

Steven Hurst emphasized that Iraqi Governing Council was created with Bremer’s approval due to the efforts of a UN representative Sergio Viera de Mello in July 2003 to increase public support for the state-building processes²⁰. According to S. Hurst, the CPA failed its mission by underestimating the growing insurgency raising in the “«Sunni triangle»” between Baghdad, Ramadi and Tikrit, stimulated by the processes of debaathification, whereas disproportionately strong emphasis was placed by the president George W. Bush on foreign fighters as a reason for the growing Al-Qaeda threat in Iraq²¹.

As Ali Allawi noted, the mistake of CPA of ignoring signals of insurgency among the Sunnis and their religious radicalization made it easier for Salafi jihadists (including Zarkawi) to infiltrate their communities and increase bombing attacks against the occupying forces and the new Iraqi government, while the circumstances of capturing overthrown Saddam Hussein on 13 December 2003, humiliating for the Ba’athists though, could not stop the wave of uprising²².

Due to the 15 November 2003 agreement, the introduction of Transitional Administrative Law brought closer the works on the new Iraqi constitution, which could end the occupation through the planned (and implemented) transfer of authority from the CPA and the Governing Council to the interim Iraqi government in June/July 2004²³. According to Adeed Dawisha, the elections of 30 January 2005 were a “huge and indisputable success” due to high participation of Shia and Kurdish Iraqis, providing for a 58% turnout at the national level²⁴. From a critical perspective, as S. Hurst wrote, the January 2005 elections in Iraq strengthened sectarian division, with a majoritarian Shia United Iraqi Alliance, cooperating with Kurds, and marginalized Sunnis, boycotting electoral processes at that time²⁵.

The constitutional referendum in October 2005, as Larry Diamond observed, proved that religious-ethnic rows between Iraqis directly affected political choices, leading to a mass rejection of the new constitution by the Sunnis (even on the 90%-level) and its almost unanimous support by the Shia and Kurdish population, whereas the December 2005 elections were seen by the Sunnis as an opportunity to reengage politically against the prevailing Shia after the unsuccessful strategy of electoral boycott in January²⁶.

Ali Allawi explained that the electoral success of the United Iraqi Alliance owes much to the engagement of the Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, who was personally involved in forming the coalition of Shia to build a single electoral list²⁷. At the same time, Sistani's influence was seen as a critical factor of the Interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi's electoral failure in January 2005 and the introduction of the head of religious Da'awa party, Ibrahim Jaafari, as the new Prime Minister of transitional period²⁸. Adeer Dawisha stressed that in the U.S.-occupied Iraq the lack of basic public service provisions was particularly visible in Baghdad, where large parts of population could not reach medical assistance, which led to increased significance of the radical Shia cleric Muqtada as-Sadr, whose foundation offered medical aid²⁹.

The Sadrists, as Toby Dodge emphasized, gave a very significant support to Maliki at the time of December 2005 elections, which led to the formation of the government with strong religious Shia agenda, prone to confront with rival Sunni orientations³⁰. The Maliki government's most significant task was to hamper the fierce civil war with the U.S. military engagement, increased in 2007 in the framework of "surge" campaigns³¹. They were conducted, as Toby Dodge noted, in two stages: the first, initiated on 14 February 2007 (focused on delivering human security at the community level, with a special plan

for Baghdad), and the second, implemented since June 2007, providing for a large scale military operation on the outskirts of the Iraqi capital conducted in order to stop the movement of insurgents escaping from Baghdad districts from regrouping³².

Within the “surge” policy of the U.S. in Iraq (announced by president Bush Jr. in January 2007) additional 30 thousand soldiers were brought to strengthen the contingent, reaching at its height about 170 thousand troops³³. The final stages of the U.S. Iraqi intervention were based on the Bush-Maliki decision of November 2007 to conclude a status of forces (SOFA) arrangement within a year, and negotiations were carried since early 2008 leading to the gradual limitation of American military engagement within the provisions of the Strategic Framework Agreement and security agreement, signed on 17 November 2008 to specify the remaining areas of constrained U.S. military operations in Iraq by late 2011³⁴.

Adeed Dawisha labelled the post-U.S. occupation of Iraq a Napoleonic enterprise of Prime Minister Maliki, accused of dictatorial actions by his deputy Saleh Mutlaq, attacked in response by the army loyal to the chief of government, who was issuing hundreds of arrest orders against his political opponents and pressing for the trial of Vice-President Hashemi as well³⁵. Jessica Stern and J. M. Berger predicted that the partial regionalization of state authority in Iraq at the time of Maliki and Abadi governments could lead to a change of borders in the Middle East, while ethnic and religious strives allowed ISIS to take control of a large portion of the newly built Iraqi democratic republic³⁶.

TABLE I. *Iraqi Security Forces*

ISF components	November 2007		May 2008	
	expected level	after the training	expected level	after the training
Ministry of the Interior – Police – Border Guard	343,711 305,711 38,000	241,960 210,529 31,431	359,876 321,671 38,205	251,880 221,507 30,373
Ministry of Defence – including the Army	208,111 186,352	161,380 141,991	177,224 156,848	222,935 199,277
Counter-Terrorism Bureau	3,967	3,485	4,733	3,709
All Iraqi Security Forces	555,789	439,678	541,833	478,524

Sources: C. Dale, CRS, op. cit., p. 68. U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, 13 June 2008, p. 35, http://archive.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Master_16_June_08_%20FINAL_SIGNED%20.pdf

TABLE 2. *Iraqi budget – security expenditures*

billions of \$	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
base budget, total	34.0	41.1	49.9	58.6	72.4
Ministry of Interior – se- curity budget	1.9	3.2	5.7	5.5	6.1
Ministry of Defence – se- curity budget	3.4	4.1	5.3	4.1	4.9
security budget total	5.3	7.3	11.0	9.6	11.0

Sources: U.S. Treasury data in the U.S. Department of Defense, *Measuring Stability and Security in Iraq*, August 2010, p. 13 http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_9204_Sec_Def_signed_20_Aug_2010.pdf

All U.S. expenses in Iraq between 2003 and 2015 accounted for 819.6 billion dollars, including 753.5 billion spending of the Department of Defense (DoD), 50.2 billion spent by the Department of State (DoS) and USAID, as well as 15.9 billion of Veteran Affairs (VA) Medical funding³⁷.

The Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF) received from the U.S. 1.6 billion dollars to strengthen Iraqi Security forces (as for the year 2015)³⁸ and, additionally, the U.S. granted the ISF 771 million dollars (2013-2015) in the framework of the Foreign Military Financing (FMF), enabling to acquire the U.S. arms and education.

U.S. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) to Iraq accounted for 18.6 billion approved by the DoS between 2005 and August 2015, including, among others, 3,300 Hellfire missiles, 156 M1A1 tanks, and 36 F-16 aircraft³⁹. The Iraq Train and Equip Fund (ITEF) budget for FY 2016 accounted for 715 million dollars and was limited to 630 million dollars for FY 2017⁴⁰.

After the withdrawal of U.S. forces due to the end of the New Dawn Operation in December 2011, Iraqi Security Forces numbered 800 thousand men, including 350 thousand in Iraqi army, and used heavy equipment from the United States, but – surprisingly – the ISIS offensive of 2014 in Northern Iraq crushed the ISF and left a 50-thousand strong army of declining morale⁴¹.

3. Victims of terrorism and armed violence in Iraq

According to Iraq Body Count, between March 2003 and October 2016, the overall civilian losses in Iraqi internal conflicts rose to 183,962⁴². From 2003 until 2006, the probable number of victims of violence (according to the estimates of the Iraq Family Health Survey Study Group) reached circa 151 thousand dead⁴³. The data presented by Iraq Body Count showed that in 2007 ca 26 thousand of Iraqis died because of domestic conflicts and 28.6 thousand more were killed from 2008 until 2012⁴⁴. Overall,

TABLE 3. U.S. expenses in Iraq in billions of dollars

blns	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15*	Total
DoD	48	57.1	77.1	91.9	127.1	140.3	89.6	59.9	42.7	13.5	4.9	1.1	0.5	733.7
DoS/ AID	3	19.5	2	3.7	3.2	2.7	2.2	3.3	2.1	4.7	0.7	1.4	1.5	50
VA Med	0	0	0	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.3	1.6	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.3	3	16.1
Total	51	76.7	79.1	96	130.8	143.9	93.1	64.8	46.5	20.3	7.7	4.8	5	819.7

* budget request. Source: A. Belasco, op. cit., p. 19.

civilian losses from 2008 until 2012 in Iraq, according to the UN, included 18,800 dead and 59,700 wounded⁴⁵. Iraq Body Count records confirm 9,851 dead civilians in Iraq in 2013, adding 20,169 more in 2014 and 17,502 in 2015, whereas in 2016 the estimates of civilian deaths as a result of violence (until 11 October) reached 11,913⁴⁶. According to the Global Terrorism Database, terrorist attacks in Iraq in the years 2013 and 2014 resulted in 12,488 mortal victims and 21,249 wounded⁴⁷. The United Nations in Iraq (UNIRAQ) data show that in Iraq in the years 2013–2014, 20,160 civilians died after the attacks and 41,107 were wounded (ca 7,800 killed and 18,000 wounded in 2013, 12,000 killed and 23,000 wounded in 2014)⁴⁸. In the UN records concerning Iraq, in 2015, there were 7,500 dead and 15,000 wounded⁴⁹.

Table 4. *Victims of violence in Iraq*

Iraq	2003-2006	2007	2008 -2012	2013-2014	2015	2003-2015
dead	69,903** – 151,000 [^]	26,000**	18,800* -28,600**	12,488*** – 20,166*/ 30,020**	7,500* -17,502**	183,962**; - 215,788/ 233,266
wounded	?	?	59,700*	41,107*	15,000*	115,807 (from 2008 until 2015)

[^] A. Alkhuzai et al. (Iraq Family Health Survey), op. cit., p. 492.

* UN, <http://www.uniraq.org>

** Iraq Body Count, 1 March 2003 – October 2016, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/>

*** Global Terrorism Database, from <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd>

TABLE 5. *Terrorist attacks in Iraq and Afghanistan*

year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Total
attacks in Iraq	3,438	6,608	6,210	3,255	2,458	2,687	2,265	1,271	2,495	30,687
victims of terrorism in Iraq**	20,629	38,817	44,014	19,077	16,869	15,108	12,192	90,77*	21,334*	197,117
attacks in Afghanistan	494	964	1,122	1,219	2,124	3,346	2,872	1,023	1,144	14,308
victims of terrorism in Afghanistan**	1,557	3,534	4,647	5,488	7,588	9,035	9,171	6,347*	6,828*	54,195

* Killed and wounded ** Killed, wounded, kidnapped

Sources: National Counterterrorism Center: Annex of Statistical Information, 2009-2011, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2012-2013, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2012/210017.htm>, <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/crt/2013/224831.htm>

Douglas Little stressed that Barack Obama responded to the ISIS capture of Mosul and its territorial gains in north Iraq and Syria in June 2014 by sending back to Baghdad U.S. military advisers and forming a strategy of containing the Islamic State through airstrikes without re-engagement of ground troops⁵⁰. RAND experts noted that the leading U.S. observers (including the CIA) faced enormous problems with estimating the manpower of ISIS after the withdrawal of American troops from Iraq and the rise of Islamic State's omnipresence in the regional conflict, while the number of members of the former Al-Qaeda's affiliate organization varied from mere 9 thousand to even 200 thousand in the years 2014 and 2015 (estimates of the U.S. intelligence of September 2014 sustained that ISIS had about 20-31 thousand fighters)⁵¹.

4. *The Syrian war and the Middle-Eastern crisis*

As RAND experts emphasized, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war until late 2013, armed militants linked to Al-Qaeda created for themselves safe havens in the neighbouring Iraqi provinces, where the Sunnis seemed to favour the rebel's side, while the ruling Shia were afraid of the Sunni return to the dominant position (due to the possible overthrow of the Assad regime), which led to the spillover of an ongoing conflict in Syria into Iraq⁵². Paul Danahar emphasized the significance of the Syrian civil war to the return of Al-Qaeda threat to Iraq, diminished in the last stages of the U.S. occupation and regaining its offensive capabilities as early as in 2013 to once again seize control of the Anbar province in 2014⁵³. Importantly, and surprisingly, as Adeed Dawisha emphasized, the Arab League quickly responded to the bloody pacifications of opposition groups in Syria by the Assad regime by suspending Syria as a member-state of the organization and calling its government to stop the armed repressions in Autumn 2011, moving a step further in January 2012, when the League requested Bashar Assad to step down (after the same call of Jordan's king Abdullah)⁵⁴.

Jeremy Bowen stressed that after the outbreak of the Syrian civil war (at the time of Arab Spring of 2011) the jihadists quickly took advantage of the clashes between the Assad regime and the armed opposition to strengthen their ranks, reaching in 2012 a position of the most effective fighting group in combat against the Damascus government⁵⁵. As Patrick Cockburn noted, the head of Saudi intelligence (since 2012) prince Bandar Sultan's support for Syria jihadist fighters against Assad was withdrawn in February and March 2014, while at the same time the Saudis, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates raised pressure on Qatar to stop its funding of the Muslim Brotherhood and Syrian jihadists⁵⁶.

An important turning point in the formation of the Islamic State occurred in February 2014, when Al-Qaeda officially withdrawn its patronage over ISIS/ISIL due to its engagement in the Syrian war and attempts to exert control over the Nusra Front, which decided to stand against Al-Baghdadi organization (as its former possible affiliate group) to remain independent, while the Islamic State forces managed to keep control over large portions of central and northeast Syria⁵⁷.

The Nusra Front, the Al-Qaeda branch in Syria, turned against ISIS in February 2014 after the Zawahiri's organization's decision to cut off ties with the Islamic State (made also because of the latter's attempt to exercise control over Nusra)⁵⁸. Nusra and its leader Mohammed al-Juliani chose to loosen its ties with Al-Qaeda as well (after blocking the merger with ISIS in 2013) to move away from the U.S. and Russian air-bombing priority targets in Syria⁵⁹.

The UN-mandated study on the use of chemical weapons in the Syrian civil war of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) stated in its August 2016 report that the illegal arsenals of toxic gases (sarin, sulphur mustard, VX, chlorine and others) were used by the government forces and by ISIL in the years 2014–2015⁶⁰. All officially declared chemical weapons of Syria were thought to be destroyed by 4 January 2016, due to an inter-governmental agreement between Damascus, Washington and Moscow⁶¹. Unfortunately, August 2016 reports signified a possible use of chemical weapons near Aleppo⁶².

Another destabilizing factor in the Middle-Eastern policy was the turmoil in Turkey, shocked by the failed 15-16 July 2016 military coup (linked by Turkish government with Fethullah Gulen, U.S. resident, allegedly plotting to overthrow Erdogan's government), which endangered the role of Ankara as the NATO's regional pillar, while

the Turkish armed intervention in Syria could not bring those peace efforts closer to success⁶³. Turkey's operation called the Euphrates Shield of August 2016 was, as Ryan Gingeras noted, driven by the post-Ottoman imperial political aspirations of Ankara to reclaim regional leadership, apart from security concerns connected with the ISIS threat near the southern Turkish border⁶⁴.

Within the framework of the U.S. air operation Inherent Resolve against ISIS (which cost 9.3 billion dollars between 8 August 2014, when kinetic operations began and 31 August 2016) the anti-terrorist coalition in Iraq and Syria (Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Jordan, The Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, the UAE, the UK), aircraft managed to damage or destroy 31.9 thousand targets in almost 12 thousand U.S. attacks (ca 6.8 thousand in Iraq and 5.2 thousand in Syria as of 4 October 2016) and 3.5 thousand operations of the coalition (3.2 thousand in Iraq and 272 in Syria)⁶⁵. The U.S. support for the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) allowed this opposition group (cooperating with Kurdish units) to take strategically important town of Manbij near the Turkish border from the hands of the Islamic State in August 2016⁶⁶.

5. Roots of ISIS threat in Iraq and Syria and the perspectives of U.S. engagement – comments and analysis

Michael Weiss and Hassan Hassan stressed that the strength of Islamic radicalism in Iraq owes much to the Faith Campaign of the Saddam Hussein regime, leading to an alliance of the elite of Ba'ath party members with religious circles and infiltration of the latter by Iraqi security apparatus at the time after the first war in the Persian Gulf⁶⁷. Notably, as M. Weiss and H. Hassan pointed out, Saddam Hussein chose Ibrahim Izzat al-Douri, his deputy in security structures of Iraq, to take control of

the planned reconversion of Ba'ath elite towards Islamic radical groups⁶⁸. Amatzia Baram sustained that the backgrounds for the present Islamic State in Iraq were formed at the time of Iraqi state-supported Islamization campaign of 1993–2003 (“«Faith Campaign»”)⁶⁹. In 2006, the former Saddam Hussein’s deputy Ibrahim Izzat ad-Douri, as M. Weiss and H. Hassan explained, created the (Sufi) Army of the Men of the Naqshbandi Order, which later joined ISIS in the successful attack against Mosul in 2014⁷⁰. The cooperation of former Saddam Hussein’s officers and jihadists⁷¹ seemed to be still important after Douri’s death in 2015⁷².

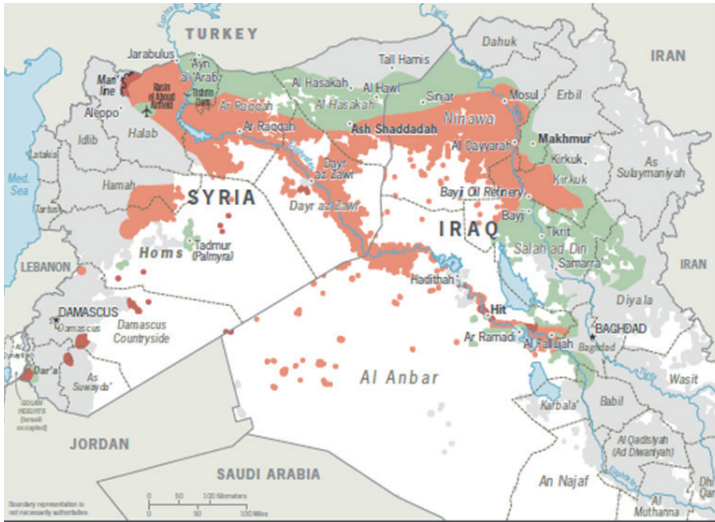
Katerina Dalacoura argued that (contrary to the neo-conservative view of George Bush Jr administration) democratization should not be seen as an antidote to terrorism in the Middle East, because democratic order could even encourage terrorists by leaving open tracks to free associations allowing terrorist groups to hide their ranks within legal political structures and gain space for activity in a framework of diversified forms of political participation⁷³. As Noah Feldman observed, the revolutionary transformation in Iraq, depicted by Ahmed Chalabi and Paul Wolfowitz, could not become feasible due to the replacement of the former Saddam Hussein Ba’thist regime by violent anarchy and instability⁷⁴. Hamid Dabashi estimated that without a deep political reform in Iran the fruits of Arab Spring would remain limited because of the significance of Shia militant groups, invigorated in their conflict with Sunni Arabs by the conditions created by the U.S. invasion in Iraq and its aftermath⁷⁵. Ł. Wordliczek emphasized that it took president Obama more than three years of tenure to decide to remove the detainees from Guantanamo prison, kept there in the war on terror campaign of president George Bush Jr.⁷⁶ As Marwan Muasher observed, the economic crisis in the U.S. and the costs of war in Iraq and Afghanistan stood

behind the Obama administration's decision to limit its role in the Middle East peace process, including the Israeli-Arab negotiations, which appeared too long and exhausting for the president and his staffers⁷⁷.

Conclusion

The main dilemma behind the violent Middle-Eastern crisis refers to the process of creation and strengthening of pro-Western governments in the region. While reliability in Arab communities matters for their governments more than Western aid, the progress of stabilization and reconciliation efforts may become too difficult without foreign assistance. The years after Operation Iraqi Freedom brought one of the largest civil conflicts of the post-Cold War era, leading to a question whether such countries as Iraq and Syria can build their foundations on local roots, taking deep religious and ethnic domestic divisions into account. The prospects of Middle-Eastern stabilization were shattered by the Turkish military coup in the summer of 2016, which (besides its fiasco) showed instability of the closest Western ally in the Muslim world and an important NATO member. Hence, it seems even more clear that a reliable U.S.-Arab leadership could play a critical role in destroying ISIS and restoring peace.

Map. I. *ISIS outreach*



Areas controlled by ISIL (ISIS) between August 2014 and April 2016

Source: U.S. Department of Defense, http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/features/2014/0814_iraq/docs/20160512_ISIL%20Areas%20of%20Influence_Aug%202014%20through%20Apr%202016%20Map.pdf

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THE MEANING
OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT IN
THE REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

Marcin Szydzisz

The idea of Regional Security Complexes was created by Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. The theory has simple assumptions. According to the Authors, the security issues can be grouped into geographically separated regional complexes. They assume that security problems are rarely of vital importance when the distance is large; similar dangers are mostly encountered in the same regions. Interdependence between actors in the same region is much stronger than between actors from different regions or between regions as a whole¹.

This theory also emphasises the role of global and regional powers in the post-Cold War world. The Authors divide such powers into three categories: *superpowers*, *powers* and *regional powers*. They assume that the global system may be influenced exclusively by the *superpowers*. Today, the US is the only country that plays this role. According to the Authors, only a few selected regions may be influenced by the *powers*. The theory assumes that after the Cold War there were four actors that could be called *powers*: China, Japan and Russia and the EU. The last category are the *regional powers*. In each region there are *regional powers*, which exert influence over a single region².

Buzan and Waever characterize the Middle East after the end of the Cold War. In this region, the impact of the