

Winning the Peace in Iraq

Major General Walter E. Piatt
Commanding General, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry)



A shop owner poses in front of his stand in Old Mosul, May 14, 2018.

Iraq won the fight; now can it win the peace? The barriers to peace are immense; however, the ability to overcome these obstacles is within the grasp of the Iraqi people. They have the capacity and the ability to build upon the good will of a country that unified to defeat ISIS. While the caliphate no longer exists and ISIS no longer has the ability to hold territory or conduct conventional attacks, the enduring defeat of ISIS is dependent on the defeat of the ideology.

Peace is possible in Iraq. The Iraqis have won a great victory over ISIS, but winning the peace and defeating the ideology of ISIS will be a much harder task for the Government of Iraq (GOI). The time has come where ISIS is no longer the main threat to stability in Iraq. The threats to peace today are more complicated and will require time and patience to overcome. Countering these threats requires the strength and unity of the Iraqi population. The Iraqis themselves will be responsible for the future of their great nation.

Key Challenges and Opportunities
Hope, Rebuilding Trust, and Governance

Hope: Compassion is more powerful than bullets.

Hope and compassion are powerful weapons in the desire to win the peace in Iraq.

The people of Iraq can ensure the lasting defeat of ISIS by categorically rejecting its violent ideology. To do so, they must have trust in their government and state institutions, who in turn must show compassion toward the people of Iraq. The methods used to win the fight cannot be the same as those used to win the peace. It will simply create more enemies, not less. To win the fight Iraq, had to destroy; to win the peace, Iraq must build. Hope and compassion are the foundations on which to build lasting peace in Iraq.



IDPs in Hajj Ali, Iraq, September 27, 2017.

Elections Do Not Create Democracies: Iraq must do more than form a government; it must govern.

The people of Iraq need the government to govern. They require the return of basic services (provision of water, electricity and medical care), return of the rule of law and functioning justice system, reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, good governance, the rooting out of corruption, ethnic reconciliation and stability. If the GOI does not demonstrate progress in these areas, they risk further disenfranchisement and ultimately the loss of the support of the people. This was clearly



Muqtada al-Sadr during 2018 election campaign

demonstrated by the recent outbreak of civil unrest across the country in July. While the formation of the new government takes time, those who oppose a peaceful solution may fill the power vacuum that has been created. Both the West and regional powers watch eagerly to learn who will rise to the top positions and how this will affect their interests. There is no doubt that regional and world powers will gain and lose influence, yet in the end, the Iraqi people will be the biggest losers if they remain unsupported in their efforts to self-govern.

Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG): The division in Iraq can only be rebuilt by trust.

Iraq responded as one nation when the enemy threatened. Now that cities are liberated and ISIS is on the run and in hiding, historic issues that have divided the nation for decades have reemerged. The Iraqi and Kurdish Security Forces (KSF) occupy defensive positions facing one another along the coordination line. The space between them is ungoverned and not secure, providing an opportunity for ISIS to hide and grow. The distrust between the KRG and the GOI is at the highest point in decades and is allowing the very threat they defeated together to survive. The number one threat to Iraq, surpassing ISIS, is quickly becoming the hatred between Iraqis and Kurds. If 'One Iraq' is possible, the first step is to build trust and unity within the Kurdistan region.



Kurds supporting the Kurdish Referendum in September 2017.

Following the failed referendum of 2017 and disagreements over policy concerning Kirkuk and the disputed territories, a mutual distrust exists between the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). Though these political parties form a strong alliance in Baghdad, they are divided within Kurdistan. For the 'One Iraq' policy to have a chance, there must first be a 'one Kurdistan,' and that does not seem likely in the near future without help from the international community and the Coalition.

The GOI and KRG have demonstrated that they can work together to defeat a common enemy. Both sides have openly agreed that security cooperation and combined military operations are the foundation that will allow trust to be reestablished. Trust between the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and KSF will demonstrate that cooperation is possible at the political level.

Kirkuk: Iraq's powder keg waiting to explode.

Kirkuk is the decisive point for Iraq; it will either unify or divide the country. Disputes over the ownership of Kirkuk remain an enduring issue in Iraqi politics stretching back to the rule of Saddam Hussain. Issues concerning ownership of Kirkuk are further complicated by disagreements over oil revenue. Currently, the provincial government underrepresents and marginalizes ethnic minorities.



Kirkuk locals protesting land disputes.

Local leaders must demonstrate that the local government serves the will of the people, governs for all, and addresses local issues in a holistic manner that is representative of its population. Effective security measures and the removal of malign actors will further legitimize the GOI while stabilizing the province for future economic development. If the GOI is unable to solve the myriad of issues confronting it in Kirkuk, there may come time when international intervention is required. This may be in the form of advisors, observers, or possibly even peacekeepers under a United Nations banner.

Mosul Reconstruction: Mosul is where Iraq won the fight; it could also be where it loses the peace.

It has been over a year since Mosul's liberation. Yet this ancient city remains in ruins. Water, electricity and medical care and supplies remain in critical short supply and the population is suffering. While feeling euphoric about the defeat of ISIS, the people of Mosul are frustrated at the lack of progress in rebuilding the city. This frustration may lead to mistrust of the GOI, which in turn could alienate the population. Conversely, if the population sees progress made in Mosul they will have their hopes for a brighter future renewed. Reconstructing Mosul brings hope to



Destruction of West Mosul.

the Iraqi people and lays the foundation for winning the peace in Iraq. The Iraqi government needs to address allegations of ineptitude and corruption in Mosul so it can begin to regain its citizens' trust. This is also critical for gaining vital financial support from the international community to rebuild Mosul. The GOI and international community should prioritize, focus, and facilitate reconstruction operations in a unified fashion that demonstrate small, but measurable change quickly. Failure to do so risks losing the city again. Until Iraq rebuilds Mosul, Iraq cannot move on to the other challenges it faces in western and northern Iraq.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs): The people of Iraq are survivors not victims.

The people of Iraq need time to heal from the scars of war before they can return home; however, the solution to reducing the vast number of displaced people in Iraq is more complex than simply providing bricks and mortar. The solution requires protection of the population. The physical scarring of the landscape can be repaired; the mental and cultural wounds will take much longer to heal. The Iraqi people have been traumatized by war; in many cases their loved ones have been kidnapped, raped, or have simply disappeared. They have suffered horrific physical and mental abuses. Some have been shunned by their communities because they experienced such crimes, even if they survived them. Over time, the camps meant to protect the survivors of war will begin to treat them like victims, thus slowing the healing process necessary for posttraumatic growth. Protection of this population will prove a key weapon in defeating a noxious and evil ideology.

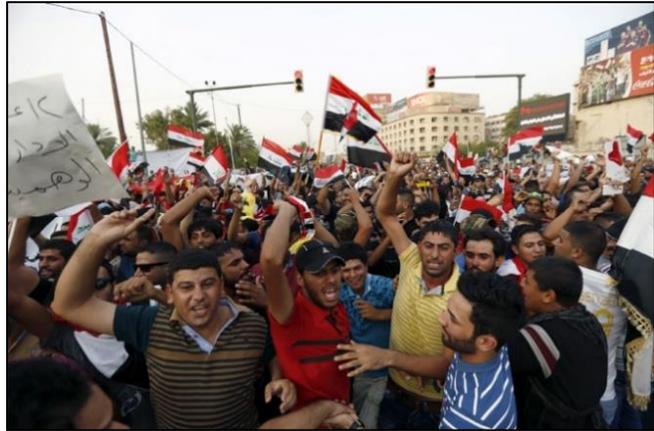


Iraqi IDP camp.

In order to return to their homes the Iraqi people must feel safe and should feel empowered to develop a sense of community protected by local and federal security forces. Locally empowered security forces are key to establishing the security to protect the survivors of war allowing them to rebuild their communities. This, in conjunction with the efforts of the international community, will start setting the conditions for the return of people to their homes and communities. Healing from the psychological scars of war will take longer than repairing infrastructure, but the physical repairs will facilitate the healing process building more than just buildings. In the end, this approach will build strong communities that will be able to resist the evil ideology of ISIS.

Sunni Disenfranchisement: Sunnis feel they are on the outside of their government.

Many moderate Iraqi Sunni Arabs see themselves as Iraqis and they fought, and died to remove ISIS from their country. However, since the defeat of ISIS many Sunnis feel that they have been marginalized as if they exist outside of their government and the protection and benefits it offers. Sunni tribesmen were integral to the defeat of ISIS in Al Anbar, Salah ad Din, and along the border with Syria. The GOI needs to demonstrate that it is serious about reconciliation; it needs to reintegrate Sunni's into the Iraqi political system, administrative apparatus, and provide economic opportunities. Failing to do so risks Sunni Arabs remaining vulnerable to extremist ideologies and influence, setting the conditions for the reemergence of ISIS or a similar terrorist group.



Sunni Arabs protesting.

the

Economy

Resources, Transparency, and Investment

Enticing Investors: Reform is key to Iraq's economic and regional power.

Iraq has the potential to be a regional economic power with its natural resources, abundant workforce and historical record as a food exporter, if it can create an environment enticing to international stakeholders. Iraq requires investment to modernize and diversify its economy, which has been decimated throughout years of conflict. Infrastructure upgrades could be the foundation for economic growth in Iraq, reinforcing stability by creating jobs and increasing profits. To ensure this happens, Iraq should prioritize fostering a business environment, which is transparent to all vested parties, and quickly address allegations



Oil infrastructure in Iraq.

of corruption. Further reforms aimed at enticing investors are required. These reforms could include streamlining the process for Iraqi business visas, tax reform, and the promotion of privatization. These measures will be critical to be able to build and maintain the confidence of those who invest in Iraq's future.

Oil: Foundation for a unified Iraq and future economic opportunities.

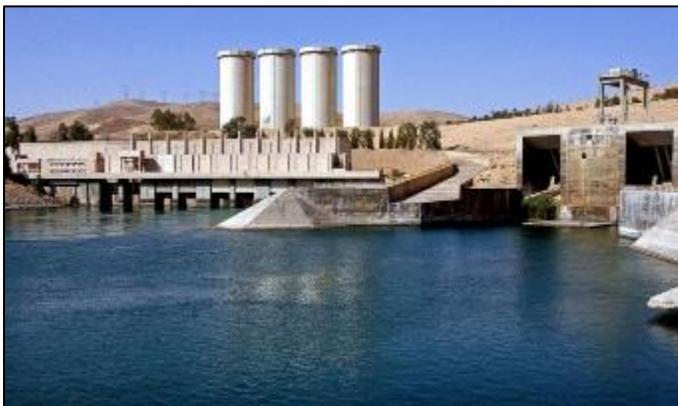
Oil is Iraq's most attractive opportunity for investment and its revenue has the potential to benefit every province across the country. To capitalize on its vast oil reserves, Iraq needs the ability to upgrade its infrastructure, maximizing output by exploiting new technology that expands profit opportunities from additional petroleum byproducts. Oil revenue sharing arrangements could help Iraq establish fair and equitable wealth distribution across the country.



Oil extraction in Iraq.

Water: Iraq needs water to grow peace.

Water is a vital resource in winning the peace in Iraq. It affects every Iraqi, and if managed correctly, it will strengthen the country's agricultural sector. Water used to irrigate crops and produce power is vital for Iraq's population and industries. Water shortages, lack of water access, and outdated water management systems have created a crisis that could quickly reach catastrophic levels within the nation. Much of Iraq's water infrastructure is old and in disrepair. The distribution systems are not efficient. Given the opportunity to modernize, Iraq could increase its capacity to provide essential services to its population and regain regional notoriety as an agricultural exporter, further expanding job opportunities. Water, more than any other resource is required for peace to grow. As one protester stated on 17 July:



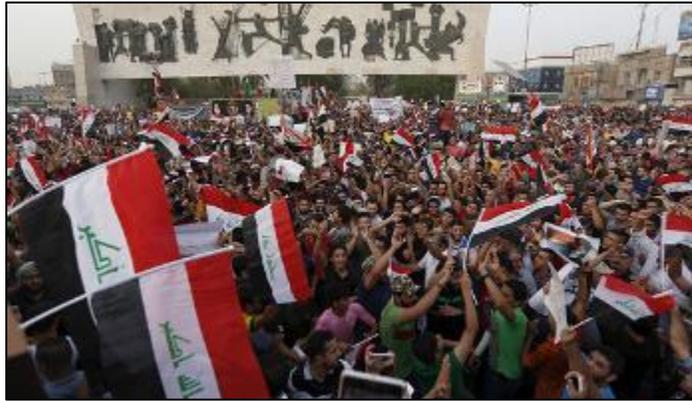
Mosul Dam

essential services to its population and regain regional notoriety as an agricultural exporter, further expanding job opportunities. Water, more than any other resource is required for peace to grow. As one protester stated on 17 July:

'Water. I am demanding water. It's a shame that I am demanding water in 2018 and I have oil fields that feed the world. I'm not asking for a metro or big planes, just water.'

Unemployment: If everyone works, no one fights.

The more Iraq invests in employment for its people, the more the people will invest in Iraq. Lack of economic opportunities alienate the population from the government and may make it vulnerable to ISIS's evil ideology in some areas. The GOI's best opportunity to countering and protecting against adoption of extremist ideologies is through economic reform, fighting corruption, and eventually reducing



Iraqi protesters.

unemployment. A working Iraqi population will prove more resilient against extremist ideologies. The people of Iraq are ready to work; the GOI must find them jobs.

Economic Opportunities

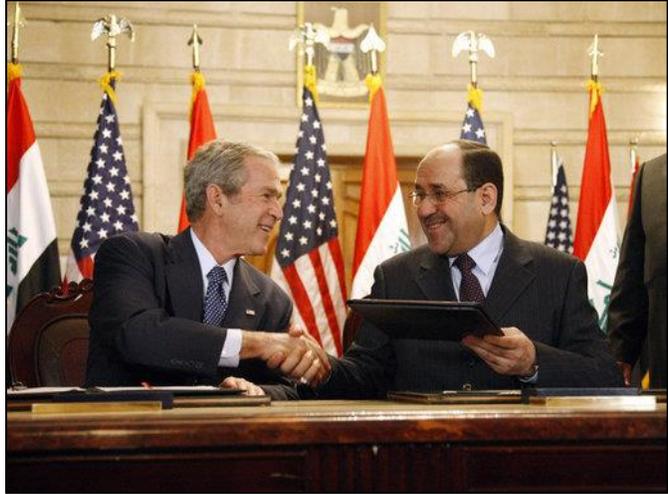
Solar Energy: In a land where the sun is always shining, solar energy should be more prevalent. Iraqis are hesitant to invest in new technologies though, since they will not see an immediate return on investment. Foreign investment in this industry may be the only way to get it off the ground and prove that it is a viable source of energy for the Iraqi people.

Recycling: Recycling plants have a low threshold for investment and often turn profits quickly. The clearance of rubbish from roadsides and neighborhoods increases pride and ownership within communities, making them more secure and stable. Other industries (e.g. textile industry) are also associated with recycling and can help reduce unemployment and diversify the economy.

External Actors, Influencers, and Proxies

United States: A reliable partner.

The relationship between the United States and Iraq remains critical as the Coalition moves towards Phase IV operations. The United States has championed the 'One Iraq' policy since the signing of the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) in 2008, and has demonstrated resolve and a commitment to establishing and maintaining a stable and secure Iraq. It has led a coalition that has built a military campaign plan that is designed to build the capacity of the ISF and within the higher level of government. This plan aims to set the conditions for Iraq to secure its sovereignty and win the peace that it so richly deserves.



President Bush and PM Maliki sign the SFA in 2008

The Coalition rapidly came together to support and enable the ISF to defeat ISIS; that fight is now over. To win the peace the international community and Coalition must devote its combined resources to enable the GOI to rebuild and stabilize the country. As the Coalition starts to transition towards Phase IV, it will remain subordinate to the nation of Iraq. The Coalition governments must offer the GOI the best political advice and harness the efforts of international sponsors and NGOs to start to address the significant challenge that the GOI has. This approach should aim to promote local security arrangements, provide protection, support local government, and support stabilization efforts and critically help the GOI ensure the people of Iraq get guaranteed access to water and electricity. The people of Iraq need basic services now.

Turkey: Iraq needs strong relationships with its neighbors.

Energy and water security are significant issues that could bring Iraq and Turkey closer together or tear them apart. Turkish economic investment has been critical in northern Iraq stabilization efforts. Turkey's growing control over the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers could generate power and water reserves for both nations, but Iraq must secure water rights from Turkey. This presents a significant challenge to the GOI; however, it provides an opportunity to strengthen economic and political ties between these two nations. A further complication in the Iraq-Turkey relationship is the willingness of other nations to establish diplomatic ties with the KRG. Turkey's status as a member of NATO, coupled with its views on the Kurdish region, require close consideration in the development of foreign policy and military strategy.



Turkish soldiers in Iraq.

Iran: Strong relationships with Iran are required for peace in Iraq.

Iran may be Iraq's most important regional partner. Their shared economic and security interests make the two natural partners in the region. Iraq must find ways to continue to collaborate with Iran, while addressing concerns over this partnership from Iraqi minorities. Iran has proven to be an effective counter-terrorism partner for Iraq in the fight against ISIS, but now must work towards a relationship that recognizes and upholds Iraqi sovereignty. This will be politically challenging but, cooperation between Iran and Iraq will benefit both countries in a number of areas including trade, tourism, security, infrastructure, and resource distribution.



Hassan Rouhani

Hashd al-Shaabi: The “saviors of Iraq” were crucial for winning the fight, but are disruptive in winning the peace.

Hashd al-Shaabi are considered heroes in the fight against ISIS, but current debate over whether to demobilize or integrate groups further into the ISF is contentious. Hashd al-Shaabi have yet to find their role in winning the peace and the longer they remain without a meaningful mission, their role moving forward becomes more tenuous. This is a problem for the Iraqis to solve. In addition, it is clear that the agendas of some militia groups are beginning to diverge from that of the state. If this continues, the resulting instability will risk the gains made against ISIS.



Hashd al-Shaabi fighters.

Syria: Winning the peace in Iraq aids stability in Syria.

The conflict in Syria will take years to resolve, making overall stability in the region dependent on winning the peace in Iraq. Threats to Iraq, resulting from the ongoing conflict in Syria, have the potential to spill across the large boarder these countries share. Turkey, Russia, Iran, Israel, Syrian Pro-Regime Forces, and Syrian Defense Forces (SDF) will continue to operate in Syria long after CF have completed operations against ISIS remnants. Currently, all the actors are still establishing coordination measures, which should remain a priority to reduce the fog of war and unnecessary spread of the conflict. A secure border between Iraq and Syria is essential in establishing coordination measures and providing a level of security cooperation.



Turkish flag raised over the Afrin City Hall

Iraqi Army: The Heroes of Iraq.

The Iraqi Army (IA) is the most trusted institution in Iraq today. It won the fight against ISIS and quickly secured Iraq's borders. Concurrently, the IA resumed training and began to modernize its forces, which further strengthened the professionalism of the organization. The IA must be trained, structured, and resourced to ensure it is prepared to face future threats to Iraq. To protect and stabilize the country, Iraq requires a dedicated, professional, and respected army. The IA is such an army. IA leaders witnessed ISIS almost rip apart their country. They are determined to not let Iraqi security be threatened and will continue to shoulder much of the burden in winning the peace in Iraq. The IA has an important role to play in the integration of all elements of the ISF into a cohesive and mutually supporting force. The ISF must build trust amongst its services and commands to establish a layered and inter-connected security apparatus.



Iraqi soldiers assigned to 74th Brigade.

Iraqi Police: The future heroes of the Iraqi people.

The Iraqi Police (IP) will be fundamental to rebuilding the hope and trust of the Iraqi people. The IP, in particular the local police, are crucial to providing the local communities with the protection and safety they need to live without fear. The Police need to demonstrate that the rule of law is functioning, transparent and is respectful to human rights. The police lack the numbers, equipment and training to enforce the rule of law. The IP must grow and recover from the impact of the fight against ISIS. This is an essential task for the GOI that must be supported by the Coalition.

Border Guard Force: Builders of a stable Iraq.

The nascent Border Guard Force, if properly trained and resourced, will help protect Iraq's international borders, legitimize trade, and allow commerce to take place. The Border Guard Force will play a major role in the long-term stability of Iraq.

Winning the peace is harder than winning the fight.

ISIS threatened to overtake Iraq, coming very close to the boundaries of Baghdad. This threat unified the country bringing together various religious, cultural, and ethnic groups to defeat a common enemy. Now that ISIS is defeated, the historical grievances and issues that once divided the nation have returned to threaten the security and future of this great nation. Together Iraq won the fight—to win the peace it will require a unified response, by and for the people. If not, then King Faisal's words will remain true into the foreseeable future.

"In Iraq, there is still—and I say this with a heart full of sorrow—no Iraqi people but unimaginable masses of human beings, devoid of any patriotic idea, imbued with religious traditions and absurdities, connected by no common tie, giving ear to evil, prone to anarchy, and perpetually ready to rise against any government whatever."

King Faisal 1933

Peace in Iraq is possible. The destiny of this great nation is dependent on Iraq's ability to overcome the devastation of the war and defeat the lingering ideology of ISIS. For Iraq to win the peace, it must overcome these significant challenges, which will be reliant on the hope and will of the Iraqi people. The recent protests across Iraq indicate that the people of Iraq are demanding and expect change now. They want to see their country return to peace; the peace that they so rightly deserve after decades of conflict. The new Iraqi government must deliver. Hope must prevail.

Background to paper

The 10th Mountain Division deployed its Headquarters to Iraq in February 2018 to assume the role of Combined Joint Forces Land Component Command. The Division deployed during a period of transition to a new Headquarters construct within the Combined Joint Task Force (CJTF), and found itself rapidly adjusting to a change of mission once on the ground. The Division staff was instrumental in shaping the new CJTF Headquarters and played key roles in understanding the operational environment and operationalizing the Reliable Partnership plan. The focus of the Division on working with the ISF has been fundamental in its efforts to set the theatre for Phase IV operations.

This paper has included contributions from a range of sources such as the Commanding General's initiative team, which produced a series of papers named *Hays Horizons*. These think pieces tackled many of the issues and challenges discussed in this paper. Thoughts and ideas shared by others outside of the CJTF, including the Precision Information Targeting Team (PITT) and Dr. Basimah Rowe, influenced and shaped many aspects of the paper. The names of those that contributed directly to *Winning the Peace in Iraq* are listed below.

'Climb to Glory!'
Walt Piatt
July 2018

Contributors:

BRIG John Fenwick (AUS)
LTCOL Andrew Garner (GBR)
Major Michael Benner (USA)
Major David Cowan (AUS)
Major John Luckie (USA)
Major Joy Thomas (USA)