

After the Liberation of Mosul

by Samir Yousif^[1] (December 2016)



The “Islamic State” is nothing but a *paper tiger*. That is the summary of the one month war between the Iraqi Army and ISIL in the north of Iraq. The strength of the terrorists was demonstrated, with no mercy, against women and children and other civilians. The population in areas taken by ISIL, two years ago, were simply taken by surprise. The barbarous methods employed by ISIL against the Yazidi community, the Christians, Shabak, Shia Turkmen^[2], Kurds and even Arab Sunnis shocked the whole world. Out-of-date practices of Muslims were re-introduced such as enslaving of women (Sabaya= Slaves) and men, punishments based upon Islamic Sharia (cutting of hands and necks), burning POW alive, and stoning of women. Homosexuals were simply thrown from high buildings^[3] – following the relevant Quranic verses^[4]. In addition, ISIL managed to be *innovative* in the sense that it introduced new concepts such as Jihad Al-Nukah (women offering sex to the fighters after paper work with the presence of an ISIL clerk for one hour each)^[5].

The Iraqi military units easily penetrated the areas controlled by ISIL and that represented a surprise to western observers as they expected a fierce battle. Such issues are outside the scope of this paper and will not be discussed further. The very purpose of this paper is to discuss the political implications

of ISIL's defeat on the balance of power inside Iraq – for sure the external implications may even be of greater value as such defeat can't be isolated from other regional conflicts[\[6\]](#).

The Aftermath of 2003

Since 2003, large segments of the Sunni sect in Iraq felt alienated, and became part of external agendas and adopted hard line and extreme political views[\[7\]](#). Other Sunnis were moderate and positive in dealing with the new realities. The hard-line Sunnis did everything to move history back but failed[\[8\]](#). Today a clear division can be seen between the two groups of Sunnis.

The hard-line Sunnis faced with a historic defeat of ISIL called for an All-Sunni Summit in Jordan on Friday 25 Nov 2016. The very purpose of this Summit was to unite the various Sunnis factions and to have a common perspective for the next step. Regional involvement was very evident as players like Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar have different and sometimes conflicting agendas. The Summit was a complete failure[\[9\]](#) as Khamis Khanger[\[10\]](#) wanted to preside over the Summit. The moderate Sunnis rejected all that was proposed by the extremists from one hand, and from the other, the extremists themselves failed to agree between themselves.

The Sunni Province Scenario

The extremist's solution was for the establishment of a Western Province, similar to the Kurdish one in the North of Iraq. The next issue on the agenda was: who is going to run this newly-established province? The various factions failed to agree. This failure to agree is not unique to the Sunnis as the Kurds for decades have never reached an agreement on how to run their province. The Kurdish experience indicated the difficulties in running a semi-autonomous entity with the absence of mature central authority and well-developed regional state organs. The Kurdish Leader Masood Barazani who presided over the Kurdish Province for nearly three decades became an absolute dictator. His family controls all the main titles and the head of the regional Kurdish government is his nephew. With the absence of transparency, millions of dollars disappeared from the province's budget. No trace was ever found. To strengthen his hegemony, Barazani put a hold on all the democratic institutions in the province turning it to an absolute dictatorship. As his term of office expired, he rejected to

leave the office and continued as the Head of the Province for an indefinite period.

The relationship between the province and the Central Government of Baghdad was very negative and the Kurdish province behaved as a hostile state. There were many examples of the forces of the province firing at the Iraqi Federal forces. In addition, the province prevented the enforcement of Iraqi law within its boundaries.

Today, the Kurdish Province is dismantling itself. Sulaymania[\[11\]](#) and Dahouk are planning to move back to the Central Government and break up with the province. The situation in Iraq is very complicated and no clear way ahead can be expected.

Establishing a Western Province for the Sunnis, although it looks as if it provides the only exit from the present deadlock, represents no permanent solution. On the contrary, many analysts indicate that the security situation and overall stability will be compromised as the Western province will prepare for a civil war to regain the control of Baghdad[\[12\]](#). In addition, the other components of the Iraqi society oppose such steps as they consider establishing new provinces to represent another step towards dividing Iraq into three countries.

The establishment of a Western Province for the Sunnis will lead to establishing another province for the Shia. Influential Shia will move ahead in establishing a province that includes central and south of Iraq. Such provinces will exhibit similar problems as did the Kurdish Province. Few strong and influential war lords will monopolies and run the Province. All signs of democracy will vanish.

An Alternative Scenario

The moderate Sunnis who are positively participating in the present political process in Iraq have a completely different solution, as do the Shia and Kurd moderates. Hard-liners on all sides make co-existence between the different components of the Iraqi society an impossibility that suggest separate provinces as the only way forward.

The other available option is for the moderates from all components of the Iraqi Society to form a national unity government: a government that is homogenous

within itself. The moderates are national Iraqis and they don't follow any foreign agenda – whether an Iranian agenda or a Saudi agenda.

This alternative scenario is not a theoretical hypothesis but to the contrary a real option available before Iraq. What makes this option closer to reality than the Western Province scenario is the support that it is receiving from Najaf (the main religious center). GA Sistani, well-known to his moderation, considers establishing a Western province as a last resort, and a heavy price to be paid.

A national unity government composed of moderates from all sides implies moving ahead in strengthening the establishment of a modern non-religious State. As the state moves away from the influence of Political Islam, sectarian and racial conflicts will gradually wither away.

As was stated above, the core of our argument, blames not only a specific sect (the Sunnis) for the instability in Iraq during the last decade, but rather the central government that is composed of hard-liners.

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[2] It should be noted that the bulk of the leadership of ISIL were Sunni Turkmen indicating a very close connection with Erdogan.

[3] <http://pamelageller.com/2016/08/islamic-murders-gays.html/>

[4] There are many references documenting the atrocities and violation of human

rights of the Islamic State, see for example: enslaving women and selling them, real pictures: [here](#).

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