The Future of Islamic State: Analyzing ISIS, the Iraqi and Syrian Civil Wars, and the US Air Campaign

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Colbert on the Rise of ISIS
Iraq's Security Outlook for 2013

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Abstract

A variety of indicators at the political and military level explain Iraq's deteriorating security situation in 2013. First, in terms of the violent physical conflict, the resurgence of al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI) and its bombing campaign has reached a level unprecedented since the 2006-2008 sectarian conflict, and was highlighted by the recent raids on the Abu Ghraib and Taji prisons. Second, armed clashes between the Iraqi security forces and Arab Sunni protestors have led to calls to re-activate Arab Sunni militias. Third, in the face of these threats, both the regular armed forces and the intelligence agencies remain divided, with various units either reporting directly to Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki or the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG). Fourth, the security forces suffer from the problem of divided loyalties, where members use the coercive arms of the state to pursue the interests of militias, such as the Shi'a Badr Corps, Muqtada's Al-Sadr's Mahdi Army, the Arab Sunni Reawakening militias, or the Peshmerga forces of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) or the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

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Refugee camps in Turkey's southern Antakya and Gaziantep provinces house tens of thousands of refugees and serve as headquarters for various rebel and opposition forces. The Free Syrian Army, a loose coalition of rebel groups, continues to operate in Syria's border areas with Turkey and Jordan. The regime has launched a series of attacks against rebel forces in the north, including in the Tadmor region, where a military base is located. The regime has also launched attacks against rebel forces in the north of the country, targeting the town of Azaz. The Free Syrian Army has been able to maintain a presence in the north, despite the regime's efforts to eliminate it. The situation is still fluid, with nongovernmental organizations reporting continuing attacks and clashes.
Expanding Conflict

Islamist militants have been moving easily between Iraq and Syria, fueling conflict in both countries.

**Map Overview**

- **Mosul**: Fell to ISIS on Tuesday in the group's most significant territorial conquest.
- **Tikrit**: Islamists overran the city Wednesday.
- **Deir el-Zour**: Islamists encircled the city on Wednesday.

**Legend**

- Purple circles: City occupied and held
- Red circles: City partially held
- Orange circles: Active in the city

*The Wall Street Journal*
ISIS Actual Sanctuary: June 10, 2014

ISIS achieves visible and established control.
THE ISLAMIC STATE'S CLAIMED CALIPHATE

Note: Actual territory under control of the Islamic State, the militant group formerly known as the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant, is less than what is claimed as the caliphate.
Fighters without borders

Key
- Kurdish region
- Sunni tribal area

Lebanese Shia militias fight for the regime in Syria

Lebanese Sunni fighters flow between Syria and Lebanon

Kurds move between Syria and Iraq

Sunni jihadis fight in Syria and Iraq

Shia militia head to fight in Syria

100 km
But General Dubik said it would take months for the military to acquire the capability to conduct a “sustained counteroffensive.”
US must not be Iraq 'air force for Shiite militias': Petraeus
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