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Overview of expert claims and EU policy responses to ISIS' rise to power in Iraq and Syria

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June 2021

Timeline: 1 November 2013 – 31 October 2014

This period covers developments after the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS)² had started making significant territorial gains in Syria and had established itself as a major actor in the Syrian civil war. By November 2013, ISIS had also gained strength in Iraq as a result of its “Breaking the Walls” and “Soldier’s Harvest” campaigns, in which it targeted the Iraqi security forces. In addition, ISIS was launching violent attacks against predominantly Shia targets on an almost daily basis. The chronological overview traces ISIS’ rise to power in Syria and Iraq and its reach into Europe. It ends at the height of the battle for Kobane, which was then on the verge of becoming a major failure for the U.S.-led international military intervention against ISIS and had taken on huge symbolic meaning. By October 2014, some EU member states had also conducted their first airstrikes as part of the global counter-ISIS coalition.

Eight key events have been identified after which the situation developed for the worse. The first four events (escalation of Sunni unrest in Anbar, ISIS’ surge into Fallujah and Ramadi, the first ISIS-inspired terrorist attack in Europe, and the beginning of ISIS’ advance on Mosul) provided indications that the likelihood of ISIS causing serious harm – based on its capability, intent and exploitation of structural vulnerabilities – was increasing. The last four events (ISIS’ seizure of two Iraqi border crossings with Syria and Jordan, its declaration of a caliphate, the Sinjar massacre, and ISIS’ capture of the Mosul Dam) showed that the risks had become much more pronounced.

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² We use the acronym ISIS throughout this overview, except for some direct quotes, despite the name change to “Islamic State” (IS) in June 2014.

Methodology:

This overview is based on a systematic analysis of open-source data published during this time. In a first step, it looks at evidential claims and knowledge claims by non-governmental experts. Evidential claims can help build situational awareness by answering questions about what, when, where, and who.³ Knowledge claims can guide forecasts of what could likely happen in the future and when, and how this could change a given situation.⁴

Four groups of experts have been selected as authoritative sources of evidence and knowledge:

- researchers at international NGOs (*International Crisis Group/ICG, Human Rights Watch/HRW, Amnesty International*),
- journalists reporting for well-resourced media organisations (*New York Times/NYT*),
- analysts at European think tanks (*European Council on Foreign Relations/ECFR, European Union Institute for Security Studies/EUISS*),
- business intelligence providers (*Economist Intelligence Unit*).

Emphasis has been placed on non-governmental experts who shaped European policy debates during the period under study by writing or being quoted about ISIS' activities and structural vulnerabilities. For reasons of manageability, only one media organisation has been selected: the NYT was better resourced and more authoritative than other quality newspapers, with a bureau in Baghdad and roughly 15 field reporters deployed across Iraq at the time. The keyword search for NGO outputs [through their websites] focused on 'Syria' and 'Iraq'. The keyword search for all other expert publications [through their websites] included "Iraq", "Syria", "ISIS", "Islamic State" and "Al-Qaeda".

This overview further looks at policy-relevant publications at the level of EU decision-making. This included a systematic search of:

- documents published by the *European Council, Foreign Affairs Council (FAC), European External Action Service (EEAS)*, and *European Commission (EC)* [on their respective websites; search terms "Iraq", "Syria", "ISIS", "Islamic State" and "Al-Qaeda"],
- references to *Herman Von Rompuy* as then President of the European Council, *Catherine Ashton* as then High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy & Vice President of the European Commission, *José Manuel Barroso* as then President of the European Commission, and the *European Union* [separate search in Google for each of the four names plus terms "Iraq" AND "Syria" AND "ISIS" AND "Islamic State" AND "Al-Qaeda"].

³ Omand, David. "Reflections on Intelligence Analysts and Policymakers." *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 33, no. 3 (2020), p. 475.

⁴ Meyer, Christoph O., De Franco, Chiara, and Florian Otto. *Warning about War: Conflict, Persuasion and Foreign Policy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020, p. 28.

Date	Notable events including turning points	Expert claims about ISIS' activities, enabling conditions for its rise to power and likely future developments	Impact of claims at EU level and broader policy responses
02/11/2013		<i>EIU</i> “Iraq politics: Going all Wrong” (<i>Document EIU</i>CP00020131103e9b200044) <i>EIU</i> reports that Iraqi PM has requested additional military assistance from the U.S. as his security forces are failing to contain the increasing conflict in Iraq. “What Mr Maliki needs more than weapons is the will to compromise with his political opponents, especially Sunnis but also Kurds. In the past year Sunnis have felt more and more excluded and harassed. In addition, the civil strife churning up Syria has spilt across the border into Iraq.”	
05/11/2013		Discussions from an expert roundtable held by the ECFR on “European challenges 2014: Middle Eastern Challenges” conclude that there is no possibility for an end to the military and political deadlock in Syria without a major external player changing its stance significantly. Further, although some argue the Geneva II peace talks are the last chance for a viable solution before Syria risks complete disintegration, it is highly improbable that these talks will make any impact. De-escalation of the conflict relies on cooperation between regional powers: Iranian, Saudi and Lebanese support of different factions complicates the possibility of constructive talks, while Turkey’s porous border is facilitating the continuous supply of arms to rebels. When dealing with Bashar al-Assad, Europeans must keep in mind that any dialogue with him will strengthen his position. It is recommended that Europe support regional partners such as Turkey to encourage dialogue between civil society groups and Syrian state actors, and continue humanitarian assistance.	
06/11/2013		Norimitsu Onishi (NYT) reports that there has been a substantial rise in Sunni jihadis purchasing military supplies from Turkish shops in Antakya, which they then take into Syria. This equipment ranges from	

		camouflage trousers, to prayer beads, to knives – “pretty much everything short of arms”. Storeowners report that they have started to receive bulk orders over the past few months. All of them claim not to know where these foreign jihadis are from – they do not ask – however all assume they are taking their equipment to Syria. Onishi writes that the mood significantly changed the day after Turkey shelled an ISIS target in Syria for the first time. The storeowners were no longer willing to sell equipment so freely to the jihadis and claimed to have been visited and questioned by the Turkish police.	
08/11/2013		Anne Barnard (NYT) writes that a new middle group is emerging in the Syrian civil war who have lost enthusiasm for either side. Fatigued by the war, they fear the demise of the Syrian state and currently feel as though there is nobody to represent them in the country.	
11/11/2013		Anne Barnard and Hwaida Saad (NYT) report that there seems to be no actor committed to ending the Syrian civil war and the consequent deep suffering it has created. <i>EIU “Iraq Politics: Shia Militias Are Back” (Document EIUCP00020131113e9bc00018)</i> EIU reports that there has been a revival of Shia militia groups because of renewed attacks by Al-Qaeda in Iraq over the past year and that there are signs that these groups may be forging formal relationships with the government. “There is a real risk that if the militia remobilisation continues apace, Baghdad and other mixed cities could see [sectarian] violence increase even further.”	
12/11/2013		Ben Hubbard (NYT) discusses the situation of Kuwaiti fundraisers and donors supporting rebel groups in Syria fighting Bashar al-Assad. Drawing on an interview with a Kuwaiti who has been financing the opposition, Hubbard explains that the money is transported by couriers through Turkey and into Syria. The fundraising for the rebels as well as the organisation and distribution of funds predominantly takes place on social media. This flow of funding has added a new layer of	

		uncertainty to the war, deepening divisions between the rebels and strengthening the more extreme elements within them. The Kuwaiti government insists that the flow of money into Syria is not as significant as it seems, however, even former members of Parliament have engaged in these fundraising activities. U.S. officials reportedly believe that Kuwait poses the biggest concern to the region in terms of financing linked to Jihadi groups in Syria. <i>EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUCP00020131114e9bc00009)</i> “The political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable. Militia and insurgent groups will continue to exploit political divisions and deficiencies in the security forces. Spillover from the Syrian civil war is adding to insecurity.”	
13/11/2013		In ECFR’s “Gulf Analysis” Hadeel Al Sayegh writes that Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki has used anti-terrorism laws to marginalise his Sunni opponents and community which has in turn prompted Sunnis to look to extremists as their defenders, which ISIS has taken advantage of. This context has been exacerbated by the conflict in neighbouring Syria which threatens to destabilise Iraq and has heightened Sunni opposition to Maliki who is viewed as cooperating with the Syrian regime. Al Sayegh argues that Iraq will continue its cycle of violence and sectarian polarisation as Maliki and his supporters’ predispositions will not allow for meaningful reconciliation and unity. <i>EIU “Iraq: Country Risk Summary” (Document EIUCP00020131115e9bd00017)</i> EIU assesses that “Iraq’s political scene will remain highly unstable ahead of a parliamentary election in April 2014. Disputes between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over the allocation of oil revenue will persist. Sectarian violence, now	

		exacerbated by the civil war in Syria, will add to the insecure political environment.”	
15/11/2013		HRW argues that the Iraqi government’s harassment of the Sunni population, e.g. through indiscriminate arrests, will further alienate them and spark more anger which could fuel rather than prevent future attacks by Sunni insurgents. HRW also reports that a suicide bomber targeted another group of Shia worshippers on 13 November, killing eight. HRW highlights that violence by Sunni insurgents against Shia worshippers on holy days is not a new phenomenon and that similar attacks happened on Ashura in 2012, killing 62, or in 2004, killing 180 Shia pilgrims. Yet, compared to previous years, insurgent attacks against predominantly Shia targets escalated drastically after Iraqi security forces attacked a protest camp in Hawija in April 2013. Liam Stack (NYT) reports that ISIS fighters mistakenly beheaded an Ahrar al-Sham combatant whom they had believed to be a Shia. Ahrar al-Sham were reportedly enraged by this incident and circulated wanted posters for the killers.	
18/11/2013		Anne Barnard, Karam Shoumali and C. J. Chivers (NYT) report that Abdulkader al-Saleh, a pragmatic Syrian rebel commander, has been killed in a government airstrike. Saleh led the Tawhid Brigades, made up of local militias, at one time the most organised and effective groups, which had started to become sidelined by ISIS. Saleh wanted “to bridge the gap between relatively secular army defector and Islamist fighters” and his silence on the atrocities committed by ISIS disappointed many of his supporters. However, he was popular among all factions of anti-government fighters and it is argued that his death will be a big blow to their morale. In a commentary for the ECFR Alexander Kouttab writes that the continued dampening of relations between Saudi Arabia and Washington poses a risk for the wider region at a time where regional	Council conclusions (FAC) on the regional impact of the Syria crisis: “The EU reaffirms its commitment as the largest donor in the context of the Syrian crisis to support governments, host communities and beneficiaries in countries with most refugees. It welcomes plans for a pledging conference in the beginning of 2014 (‘Kuwait II’). The EU will do its utmost to

		instability adds a layer of unpredictability to the consequences of any possible policy decisions Riyadh may take. Kouttab asserts that local actors are becoming increasingly significant in shaping regional dynamics while the influence of outside actors has declined. Turkey and Saudi Arabia have emerged as forceful powers in the region alongside Iran, further complicating the balance of power arrangements. A consequence of this will be an escalation in rivalry between Iran and Saudi Arabia which has the potential to drag the region into a protracted cycle of politicking and polarisation.	further increase its commitment and calls on international partners to increase humanitarian and economic support to those most affected in Syria and the neighbouring countries. (...) The EU is committed to work closely with the national authorities, the United Nations, aid organisations, development actors and international financial institutions one of the main priorities being the reinforcement of local capacities in order to cope with the essential needs of both refugees and affected local populations.” Remarks by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton following the FAC meeting: “There was a great deal of concern for the people inside [of Syria], the refugees and displaced people there and also for the refugees and displaced people outside. We recognize the implications for the neighbours who are having to
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			deal with a large numbers of refugees. And we are very worried that the winter is approaching and the potential for that to exacerbate the situation. (...) We believe that there needs to be real access for health and humanitarian workers to reach people all around the country. (...) we recognize there has to be a negotiated settlement. We do continue to urge everyone to make what we have called Geneva II a reality as soon as possible.”
19/11/2013		HRW documents unlawful killings of civilians during a joint offensive against regime forces by ISIS and five other groups in the Christian village of Sadad, northeast of Damascus, from 21 to 28 October 2013. The insurgents had entered the village claiming not to harm civilians but executed many and used others as a human shield.	
21/11/2013		Alan Cowell (NYT) relays reports from The Times and BBC Newsnight that numerous Britons have died while fighting with rebels in Syria. The British government has said that it is investigating these claims and security officials reports that 200 to 300 Britons are currently fighting with jihadist groups in Syria.	President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy argues that only a negotiated political solution will resolve the war in Syria, not a military one.
22/11/2013		Ben Hubbard and Karim Shoumali (NYT) write that a new umbrella alliance of seven prevailing rebel groups in Syria, named the Islamic Front, has formed. The alliance is a product of months of discussion between rebel leaders to establish an alternative to the Syrian National Coalition which is considered out of touch by many fighters. The	

		alliance could quell the competition between rebel groups for financing and arms, yet Hubbard and Shoumali explain that the reorganisation of rebel forces is not new, and it is unclear to what extent this new unification would affect dynamics on the ground. The new alliance is a blow to Western efforts to cultivate talks intended to end the war. The formation of the Islamic Front highlights the growing insignificance of the rebels' Supreme Military Council, created with encouragement by the West to empower more moderate forces over the extremists. It is reported that some members of the council have joined the alliance, although there are conflicting reports as to whether they have left the council or not. While the Islamic Front is an attempt at unification of rebel forces, there are fears that it may do further damage to the rebellion by deepening factionalised support for the fighters. <i>EIU "Iraq: Country Outlook" (Document EIU CP00020131124e9bm00025)</i> EIU reports that the attacks in Iraq have a clear sectarian tone, that the relationship between the government and its security forces, and the Sunni community are at a low point and these trends have been exacerbated by the Syrian civil war. "The Economist Intelligence Unit expects the political situation in Iraq to remain highly unstable with the risk of a further escalation in violence as militant groups continue to exploit political divisions."	
26/11/2013			Following the announcement of the date for the Geneva II talks, EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton affirms her strong support for a political solution to the war in Syria: "The EU has been a strong supporter of Joint Special Representative Brahimi's

			efforts. The EU has also been working to create conditions conducive to holding the conference among all important stakeholders. I strongly support the call of the UNSG that the eight weeks ahead of us should be used to build up confidence among the parties through the cessation of violence, humanitarian access, release of detainees and return of Syrian refugees and internally displaced people to their homes.”
29/11/2013		HRW reports that four journalists have been killed in Mosul since October 2013 and that ISIS has a strong presence there. According to interviews with Mosul residents, “the central government’s policies of conducting mass arrests and unlawful detentions in the area have ostracized the population”. A local journalist told HRW: “Mosul has two governments ... By day, it’s the local government, but at night, it’s al-Qaeda”. Another observed: “Mosul’s journalists are caught between two fires ... If they are not targeted by terrorists, they’re targeted by the government, which considers all Mosul residents terrorists”.	
Nov 2013		The ICG reports that Syrian rebels are divided over the brutality and growing power of ISIS. Seven Islamist rebel groups merged into the “Islamic Front” on 22 November to counter ISIS’ influence. Kurdish militias continued their campaign against ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra in northeastern Syria and managed to gain control over 19 towns and villages. On Iraq, the ICG reports that at least 169 people were killed in a series of bombings and executions between 20 and 29 November.	

		On 25 November, France offered weapons and counter-terrorism training to the Iraqi government.	
03/12/2013		Robert F. Worth and Eric Schmitt (NYT) write that an increase in sectarian violence across the Middle East has created an opportunity for jihadist groups in the region to establish a base in Syria, and pose a threat to Europe and Israel. Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri has signalled that he views Syria as a potential base. Worth and Schmitt explain that this increased Sunni jihadist insurgency may mean that the U.S. will have to intervene, especially in Syria, and as such readjust their strategy. Increased Islamic militancy in the region has been facilitated by sectarian violence and the collapse of the Muslim Brotherhood. The sectarian tensions, in particular, is what is driving the surge in radicalisation and militancy. Worth and Schmitt report that “there are signs of cross-pollination among some of the jihadist groups around the region”, explaining that Al-Qaeda affiliates from Yemen and the Arabian Peninsula have regular contact with groups in Lebanon and the Sinai Peninsula. The authors highlight that a point of growing concern is the large quantity of Muslims who have travelled from the West to fight in Syria, and the potential terrorist threat they pose if they return home.	
10/12/2013		Anne Barnard (NYT) documents the numerous journalists and activists who have been abducted by Islamist extremist fighters in Syria. Among them are Razan Zeitouneh, a secular Syrian human rights lawyer, and Spanish journalist, Javier Espinosa. Activists are facing a battle on two fronts: against the government and Islamic extremists. International aid agencies have been facing both security challenges and bureaucratic obstacles in their quest to deliver assistance. <i>EIU</i> “Iraq Politics: Quick View – Allies of prime minister break away ahead of elections” (Document EIUCP00020131212e9ca0001p) Two of Prime Minister al-Maliki’s allies have defected to compete in the upcoming parliamentary elections in Iraq. The PM has been	

		criticised for the increasing presences and influence of religion in politics. “The defections add force to criticisms of Mr Maliki from opponents who accuse him of sectarianism.”	
11/12/2013		Michael R. Gordon, Mark Landler and Anne Barnard (NYT) report that the U.S. has temporarily suspended non-lethal aid to Syrian rebels after the Islamic Front, a coalition of Islamist fighters who broke off from their moderate counterparts, seized warehouses of equipment supplied by the U.S. The incident is clouded with confusion as it is not clear how it unfolded. The Islamic Front claim they were guarding the warehouse from Al-Qaeda affiliated extremists while others dismiss this claim as a ruse. The increased infighting between the rebels has diverted their attention from their battle against the regime, and their factionalising now poses a question of whether the U.S. should engage with Islamist forces who are playing an increasingly significant role in the battle against the regime, in order to realise their goal of a political solution to the civil war. Andrew J Tabler, Syria expert at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, states that “it puts the [US] administration into a situation of having to choose between supporting moderate groups or effective ones”.	HR/VP Catherine Ashton and the EU adopt a Joint Communication in which they set out the steps that the EU is taking to enhance its comprehensive approach to external conflicts and crises. [The document does not make special mention of Syria or Iraq.]
13/12/2013		Duraïd Adnan (NYT) reports that twenty five prisoners held on terrorism charges have broken out of a prison in Baghdad, which makes it the fourth publicly announced prison break in Iraq since autumn 2012. It is suspected that the prisoners were aided by some prison guards who have been held by Iraqi security forces and are under investigation. Eleven of the escapees have been found. The incident underscores the declining security within Iraq and the rising sectarian tensions since the withdrawal of U.S. forces in 2011. One of the most remarkable prison breaks in Iraq took place in July, in which Al-Qaeda operatives coordinated attacks on two prisons and freed hundreds of inmates who later went to fight for ISIS. Adnan reports that violence continues in Baghdad: a car bomb in a Sunni majority city killed six people and another in the suburb of Nahrawan killed	

		four. Further, sixteen Iranian workers and three Iraqi were killed by gunmen in the north of Baghdad. The Iranian workers were in Iraq to work on a gas pipeline running between Iran and Iraq.	
16/12/2013		<i>EIU</i> “Iraq: key developments” (Document EIUCP00020131218e9cg00008) “The political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable. Militia and insurgent groups will continue to exploit political divisions and deficiencies in the security forces. Spillover from the Syrian civil war is adding to insecurity.”	Remarks by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton upon arrival at FAC meeting: “We have done everything we can to provide the sort of support that is going to be necessary for the people. That's primarily humanitarian support. (...) But the political process that needs to happen is something that for the last years we have consistently said has got to be a priority. (...) now that we've got a date, the most important thing is to get people there and to get an agreement to stop fighting and an agreement to get aid properly through to people, and an agreement to find ways to rebuild this country.” The EU announces a Regional Development and Protection Programme for refugees and host communities in Lebanon,

			Jordan and Iraq in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. It contributes EUR 12.3 million to finance a wide range of measures.
18/12/2013		<i>EIU</i> “Iran/Iraq politics: quick view – Iranian pipeline workers killed near Baqub” (Document EIUCP00020131219e9ci0002e) 15 Iranian workers were killed in an attack by insurgents on 15 December while building a gas pipeline to supply Iraq. Officials have blamed ISIS although no group has claimed responsibility yet. “The attack is unlikely to have a negative effect on bilateral relations, and in fact may contribute to even closer ties as both work to prevent attacks by militant groups.”	After discussing the humanitarian situation in Syria with UN leaders, President of the EC José Manuel Barroso states: ‘We have just signed the largest ever contracts for humanitarian aid between the Commission and our UN partners. I am proud that we can today commit 147 million euros to UNHCR, the World Food Programme and UNICEF. At the same time, we all know that a definitive solution for the conflict and for the dramatic humanitarian situation we are facing can only come from political negotiations. (...) So, my appeal to all the leaders in Europe is the following: if one year ago we knew how it would be today, what could have been the decisions then? I am sure that if we could have that focus, the decisions

			could have been much more ambitious. If we don't recognise the really exceptional nature of this crisis, one year from now it will be a much worse situation. (...) We have a moral responsibility to act because solidarity is at the core of our European values. But we also have an interest to act because this is a crisis in our own neighbourhood, and we know the consequences will be very dramatic if we are not able to articulate a much more comprehensive response. We also have a pragmatic stake in the fate of so many millions of refugees and displaced people right on our doorstep.' The EU's contribution include EUR 63 million to the UNHCR for providing humanitarian assistance to Syrians who have been displaced by the war. Barroso and UN leaders also call for a humanitarian ceasefire so that aid workers
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			can deliver assistance to local communities in Syria.
19/12/2013		Amnesty International documents serious human rights abuses in ISIS-run detention facilities in northern Syria, including in and around Raqqa, Aleppo and Idlib province. It also sheds light on the rules ISIS has established in the areas it controls, including flogging and summary executions. Based on ten interviews conducted with former detainees who had been held by ISIS between May and November 2013, Amnesty International argues that most abuses, such as abductions, arbitrary detention and torture, amount to war crimes. It reports that children have also been held in ISIS prisons. The former detainees have reportedly “asked that the world should wake up to the plight of those now suffering under ISIS in northern Syria”. Amnesty International argues that ISIS’ power has grown significantly since April 2013. It sheds light on how ISIS consolidated its influence in Raqqa and beyond since the spring of 2013. Duraïd Adnan (NYT) reports that suicide bombers have attacked Shia pilgrims undertaking a trek to the city of Karbala. The suicide bombers were able to carry out their attacks despite increased security measures taken by the government forces to protect Shia pilgrims. Sectarian divisions in Iraq continue to deepen and there are concrete concerns that the civil war in Syria will spill over into the country. Adnan writes that one Shia pilgrim declared that they would not be deterred by the attacks and that “Al-Qaeda wants to form its state, and we will not allow it. We are waiting for our Shiite leaders to give us orders to fight them”. Anne Barnard (NYT) reports that the leader of the Nusra Front, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, frames the war in sectarian terms with his objective being the establishment of an Islamic State in Syria. The Nusra Front has most recently been overtaken in terms of strength by	Statement by the spokesperson of EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton pledging EUR 12 million to the OPCW’s Special Trust Fund for the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons.

		ISIS, yet they are viewed as a less extreme alternative to ISIS by many Syrians in the opposition. Jolani has announced that the Nusra Front will do what it takes to prevent negotiations in the upcoming peace talks which he views as only reviving al-Assad's regime. Due to a change in perceptions that the Syrian civil war could be dominated by extremists, U.S. officials have stopped calling for the complete removal of Assad. Those who are critical of the US' Syria policy claim that the rise of such extremist groups is due to the failure of the U.S. to arm the Free Syrian Army sufficiently. <i>EIU "Iraq/Kuwait politics: quick view"</i> (Document EIUCP00020131220e9cj0001b) The president of Kuwait's National Security Bureau has expressed concern over the "rapidly growing instability" in Iraq which could have spill-over effects into Kuwait. "Sheikh Thamer's comments are a reminder of the continuing disruption that non-state actors can inflict on Iraq's bilateral relations with its Gulf neighbours." <i>EIU "Iraq: country outlook"</i> (Document EIUCP00020131221e9cj0000u) EIU expects that the political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable and is at risk of increasing violence as militant groups are exploiting political divisions within the country. Specifically, "in response to attacks on Shias by Sunni militants, some Shia militias are remobilising and, if the security forces prove unable to protect Shia neighbourhoods, there is a real danger of a Shia backlash."	
21/12/2013		Duraïd Adnan (NYT) reports that 18 Iraqi soldiers, including a high-ranking Iraqi commander, were killed by suicide bombers and roadside bombs during an operation targeting an ISIS training camp. The camp was hit by rockets while the soldiers stormed the camp. Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki has released a statement saying that more forces are to be deployed in Anbar province and that militants will be dealt with an	

		iron fist. Sectarian violence has persisted in Fallujah, three Shia pilgrims were killed in the south of Baghdad, a Sunni shop owner and his son were killed in a Shia majority neighbourhood in west Baghdad, and Sunni civilians were executed outside of their homes in southwest Kirkuk.	
22/12/2013		Emile Hokayem of the IISS writes for NYT that the rise of extremism in Syria and the increased number of Western jihadists travelling there is leading Western officials to consider engaging with President Assad, which Hokayem identifies as only exacerbating the problem. Cooperation with the regime would create an obstacle to fostering local partners against the extremists in Syria, along with justifying Sunni suspicions that the West had been collaborating with Assad all along. Consequently, more Syrians would turn to Jihadi groups. Engagement with Assad could allow Western intelligence officials to gain access to information on Western jihadis in the country along with potentially disrupting extremist activity, yet, Hokayem claims that viewing Syria primarily as a counterterrorism operation would be a “monumental error”. Assad would use this opening to manipulate Western support at the detriment of his domestic opposition. Hokayem recommends that “the best counterterrorism strategy remains the empowerment of mainstream Syrian rebels as part of the broader, more assertive policy that the White House has repeatedly rejected”. Failure by Western actors to sufficiently equip and train Syrian rebels has led to their failure to contain extremists, such as ISIS, which is growing in size, capability and ambition. Consequently, some rebel fighters have joined extremist groups out of lack of alternatives to fight the Assad regime.	
23/12/2013		HRW ’s Emma Daly reports about the abduction of Spanish journalists Javier Espinosa and Ricardo Garcia Vilanova by ISIS. Both have been held since September 2013, with ISIS refusing to negotiate their release. At least 30 journalists are reported missing in Syria, making it “the most dangerous country in the world for the media”. Daly highlights that it is “hard to keep track of numbers, since many outlets	The EC grants an additional EUR 30 million to boost aid for the victims of the Syrian war.

		and families choose to keep quiet about the missing in the hope of negotiating a return”. The FSA’s Supreme Military Council has said “that most people going after the journalists were outside their control”. Daly concludes that “the world cannot learn about the horrors in Syria ... when journalists can’t do their jobs”.	
25/12/2013		Michael R. Goodman and Eric Schmitt (NYT) report that a surge in al-Qaeda backed territorial gains, mostly by ISIS, in western Iraq and Syria has jolted the U.S. to rush aid at the request of Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki. ISIS has been making significant advancements owing to several factors. An Iraqi politician claims that in addition to playing on sectarian tensions fuelled by Maliki’s policies, ISIS is self-financing by extorting money from shopkeepers in Ramadi. Following the departure of U.S. forces from Iraq, the group has taken advantage of the vacuum to rebuild their forces in Iraq and move into Syria. Some experts suggest that the indiscriminate violence against both Shias and Sunnis who reject ISIS may result in a Sunni backlash. Washington maintains that the aid they are providing will be sufficient to combat ISIS, however experts claim that the lack of armed drones will significantly limit the Iraqi security forces’ ability to counter ISIS. President Obama has sought congressional approval to lease and eventually sell Apache helicopters to Iraq, however, delays due to bureaucratic procedures and resistance from some lawmakers has led to Maliki turning to Russia for assistance.	
26/12/2013		HRW ’s Erin Evers argues that new U.S. weapon deliveries won’t address Iraq’s challenges, such as the rise of ISIS. These measures are “missing the point” as there is “little evidence that Iraq’s failure to improve security in the country stems from a lack of weapons, but rather from its short-sighted approach to corruption and sectarian politics, and a counterterrorism strategy that targets Sunni Iraqis amounting to collective punishment”. She further highlights how corrupt the Iraqi security forces are, how this has facilitated prison breaks by ISIS and how aptly the latter exploits Shia-Sunni tensions.	

28/12/2013	Iraqi security forces arrest a Sunni member of parliament, Ahmad al-Alwani, after killing his brother and five of his guards during a raid on his home in Ramadi. Alwani had backed anti-government protests and was a prominent supporter of Sunni activists who had set up a camp near Ramadi. In response, 44 members of the Iraqi parliament submit their resignation over the next two days and call upon the army to release Alwani and withdraw from Anbar's cities. The arrest and the demolishing of protest camps across Anbar province by Iraqi security forces on 30 December trigger widespread		
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	unrest. [<i>Relevance: The Iraqi government's offensive on Sunni militants in Anbar was 'a disaster waiting to happen', given that Shia-Sunni tensions had long been stoked by Iraqi PM Maliki's polarising policies.</i>]		
30/12/2013		EIU "Iraq politics: quick view – prominent opposition PM arrested" (Document EIUCP00020131231e9cu0000c) Ahmed al-Alwani, an MP for the Muttahidoon faction of the Iraqiya bloc, and a prominent critic of al-Maliki was arrested on 28 December. His home was raided and resulted in several casualties. "The incident will reinforce Sunni perceptions of persecution by the government and security forces. It will also complicate efforts to win support from Anbar tribes to combat al-Qaida in Iraq, whose resurgence has made 2013 the bloodiest year since 2007."	
31/12/2013	ISIS uses the explosion of violence between Sunni tribes and security forces in Anbar's cities and the brief withdrawal of the Iraqi army to surge into Fallujah and Ramadi from the Western desert. It seizes control of	The Editorial Board of the NYT writes that arms alone will not resolve the increasing violence in Iraq. The Obama administration must ensure that PM Nouri al-Maliki honours the democratic processes of government and ceases sectarian-driven policies. The Editorial Board writes that "Mr. Maliki has been central to the disorder" within Iraq and that although American officials offer assurances that the PM has finally understood that cooperation with Sunnis and Iraqi Kurds will strengthen his position against the extremists, the authors are not convinced that the PM will keep to his word. "The United States has a strategic interest in Iraq's stability, which undoubtedly at risk, making increased counterterrorism cooperation and intelligence-sharing	

	several police stations in Fallujah and Ramadi the next day. [Note: ISIS it does not fully capture Fallujah in early January, as often claimed. ICG reports that these claims were “greatly exaggerated” by ISIS and Iraqi PM Maliki. More than 100 people are killed on 3 January in clashes between ISIS, government forces and local tribes. Relevance: ISIS’ Anbar campaign shows how it is exploiting Sunni-Shia tensions and a security vacuum in Anbar province.]	essential. But even the most lethal weapons will not have much positive effect if Mr. Maliki and other Iraqi leaders bicker rather than unite the country around shared goals through credible democratic processes”.	
Dec 2013		The ICG reports that increasingly powerful Jihadi groups have marginalised Western-backed rebel groups in Syria. On 5 December, ISIS abducted more than 50 Kurdish civilians from Jarabulus and Manbij near Aleppo. The month of December saw significant clashes between ISIS and the Ahrar al-Sham Islamist coalition. ISIS reportedly beheaded at least three Alawites in Adra, near Damascus, during a joint offensive with Jabhat al-Nusra and the Islamic Front. On Iraq, the ICG reports that daily violence continued with over 700 killed in December.	

		Attacks continued to target Iraqi security forces (e.g. on 21 December when 18 were killed in an ambush) and Shia neighbourhoods (e.g. a series of bombings in Baghdad on 30-31 December which killed 23). The Iraqi government closed its border with Syria on 25 December prior to the launch of an operation to counter ISIS in Anbar province. The ICG reports that 44 Iraqi members of parliament resigned over the demolishing of Sunni protest camps and arrest of al-Alwani. According to UN reports, 2013 became the deadliest year since 2008 with at least 7818 civilians killed.	
02/01/2014		Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango (NYT) report that ISIS is threatening to fully capture Fallujah and Ramadi. Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango write that the battle in the Anbar province along with fighting that has erupted in Beirut is proof of the effect of the Syrian civil war on an increase in sectarian violence and destabilisation in the region. The fighting in Anbar was triggered when PM Nouri al-Maliki ordered a prominent Sunni lawmaker to be arrested and then protest camps in Fallujah and Ramadi to be taken apart. Any Sunni tribesmen fighting alongside Baghdad are doing so reluctantly, based on the calculation that “the government is the lesser evil than Al-Qaeda”. U.S. officials are trying to push for cooperation between Maliki and his Sunni critics. As the fighting rages on in Anbar province, it seems clear that fears of a spillover from the Syrian civil war have come true and Anbar is fertile ground for ISIS’ activities as it borders Syria and tribal loyalties are blurred between the two countries.	
03/01/2014		HRW calls for an investigation of violence in Anbar province during the demolishing of Sunni protest camps and the arrest of al-Alwani on 30 December. HRW argues that “government statements before the clashes and the deployment of the army seemed intended more to provoke violence than prevent it”. HRW also highlights that this was not at all an unexpected development as Iraqi authorities “had repeatedly threatened to remove the protesters in Ramadi and other largely Sunni areas”. On 23 December, the commander of Iraq’s	

		Counterterrorism Service had reportedly referred to government operations against ISIS in Anbar on his Facebook page with “I swear to God I will kill those dogs and those who are with them. I will wipe them out.” The Iraqi state news agency had also reported two days before the incident that 30 armoured vehicles had been deployed outside of the protest camp in Ramadi which has existed for about a year. Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango (NYT) report that ISIS has captured Fallujah and planted their flag atop several government buildings. As ISIS’ insurgency is gaining strength and their fighting with Iraqi government forces, sectarian tensions remain high. ISIS’ advancements look to be a substantial “step toward realizing the long-held goal of transforming Iraq and Syria into one battlefield for the same cause: establishing a Sunni Islamist state”. They report that the Iraqi government is frustrated with the drawn-out bureaucratic process associate with receiving assistance from the U.S. and have turned to Russia for support. Christine Hauser (NYT) reports on the ongoing fighting between ISIS and Iraqi government forces in Fallujah and Ramadi, which have become centres of Sunni extremism since the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq in 2011. She describes videos that have been released which show ISIS fighters and Anbar tribal fighters positioning in the area. <i>EIU</i> “Iraq/Syria economy: Quick View – Iraqi oil Supply Line to Syria Uncovered” (Document EIUCP00020140104ea130000t) A Reuters investigation has uncovered that Syria is importing a significant percentage of its crude oil from Iraq. “Iraq has taken a far more agnostic approach to the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad than has the West and some of its Arab counterparts, reflecting the wariness	
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		of the Iraqi Shia-led government towards the Sunni-dominated Syrian opposition and the implications of the merger of al-Qaida's Iraqi and Syrian wings.”	
04/01/2014		Ben Hubbard, Robert F. Worth and Michael R. Gordan (NYT) write that amid the vacuum left following the withdrawal of the US, a post-American Middle East is emerging in which there is no credible force to contain the escalating sectarian tensions. These tensions are exacerbated by the sectarian-driven proxy activities of Iran and Saudi Arabia in the wider region, and in Syria in particular. The absence of U.S. forces coupled with the sectarian policies of Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki provided the prime opportunity for ISIS to rise as a defender of Sunnis in both Iraq and Syria.	
05/01/2014		Yasir Ghazi and Tim Arango (NYT) report that Iraqi government forces have managed to regain parts of Ramadi, whilst the insurgents (mostly affiliated with ISIS) retain majority control over Fallujah. Blurred and shifting alliances are complicating the situation in Anbar province as some Sunni tribesmen have started to switch allegiances from the Iraqi government to ISIS which highlights the disillusionment of Sunnis in Iraq. The NYT reports that the U.S. has expressed support of the Iraqi government, although their assistance will most likely not include American presence on the ground.	
06/01/2014		Anne Barnard and Rick Gladstone (NYT) write that Syrian insurgents have rejected their onetime ally, ISIS, as too extreme, and have moved to expel the group from Raqqa. There is an unconfirmed video of Ahrar al-Sham, releasing 50 prisoners from a makeshift ISIS prison. An Ahrar al-Sham fighter has invited ISIS fighters who “have been misled by their own commanders” to join Syrian groups opposing ISIS. The group’s continued mistreatment of their fellow insurgents in Syria has resulted in violent rebel infighting. The loss of Raqqa would be a significant blow to ISIS. EIU “Iraq Politics: Al-Qaida seizes control in Fallujah”	

		(Document EIUCP00020140107ea160000r) EIU reports that the escalation of sectarian tensions in Anbar created an opportunity for ISIS to intensify their efforts and that they have now consolidated their position in Fallujah. “Iraqi forces are likely to formally retake Fallujah, given their superior military hardware. However, the ensuing battle could further alienate Sunnis, unless Mr Maliki is able to work more closely with local tribal militias and make some political gestures to Sunnis. Anbar is likely to remain highly unstable for months and it might be impossible to hold the April elections in much of the province”.	
07/01/2014		Ben Hubbard and Anne Barnard (NYT) report that Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, leader of the Nusra Front, has called for a cease in the internal conflict between the armed opposition of Bashar al-Assad, namely rebel forces and ISIS, and proposed the establishment of an Islamic court to handle these issues. He emphasised that the infighting would strengthen Assad’s forces and provide them with an opportunity to regain territory. Yasie Ghazi and Tim Arango (NYT) write that while fighting continues in Fallujah and Ramadi, the mood among Iraqi civilians and tribesmen is significantly shifting toward support of the Sunni insurgents opposed to the government. PM Nouri al-Maliki’s heavy-handed retaliation for Sunni protests in Anbar, his strategy of labelling all Sunni activities as terrorism, as well as the presence of Iran-backed militias in Iraq have further exacerbated sectarian tensions. The conflict in the province has reached a complex point in which civilians are no longer able to distinguish who the gunmen on their streets are affiliated with. Robert F. Worth (NYT) draws on an interview with a Saudi national who went to Syria to fight with Jihadi groups but left after he became disillusioned with their cause which he believes is “fighting for their	

		flags” rather than pursuing pure jihad. The interviewee tells Worth that the Syrian rebels like Saudi fighters because they are most willing to carry out suicide attacks. He also explained that the fact that Assad was starting to use Sunni fighters on the front line was creating an issue for the rebels who do not want to fight them as their real fight is with Iran.	
08/01/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) reports that infighting between ISIS and other rebel groups has intensified following a number of incidents which had outraged the latter. Such incidents include the killing of a rebel leader and a rebel doctor, and the seizure of a former Syrian army base by ISIS which other rebels had been using since last year. Hubbard writes that the increased infighting has led to the rebels pushing ISIS out of several key areas, including Aleppo. This infighting is also curtailing U.S. efforts to hold a peace conference in Geneva on 22 January. Hubbard explains that analysts identify the distinguishing factor between the Nusra Front and ISIS as their approach rather than their ideology. The former is open to compromise with other groups in the Islamic landscape whilst the latter is not, hence the growing hostility towards ISIS. <i>EIU “Middle East and North Africa: Key Political Issues”</i> (Document EIUCP00020140109ea1800055) EIU forecasts that the conflict in Syria will persist in 2014 and that the opposition forces will mostly likely not be able to topple the Assad regime. It estimates that there is a possibility of an old war reigniting in Iraq. The relationship between the Sunni community and Shia government and security forces is at an all-time low, and the sectarian conflict which has been influenced by the Syrian civil war has contributed to ISIS’ rise.	
09/01/2014		Based on witness statements, HRW describes the situation in Fallujah and Ramadi in detail. It reports how Anbar’s residents are trapped in a three-front war and exposed to “unlawful methods of fighting by all sides”. 25 Fallujah residents have reportedly been killed by army	

		mortar shelling and 13.000 Anbari residents have fled to the Erbil area. Based on witness statements, HRW reports that ISIS entered Fallujah and Ramadi on 1 January. “In Fallujah, witnesses said, they went to each of the city’s five police stations, where they released prisoners and took weapons from police, who immediately surrendered. The fighters set the police stations and city government building on fire. The fighters then headed to Fallujah’s main checkpoint in the eastern part of the city, manned by the army and local police, and based themselves in an industrial area close to the checkpoint. When SWAT and army forces returned to Anbar, they surrounded Ramadi and Fallujah. They controlled entry and exit points and prevented fuel and food from being taken into the cities but allowed several hundred people to flee areas of heavy fighting.” On 6 January, Maliki ordered the army not to fire on residential neighbourhoods in Fallujah. He announced on 8 January that the army will launch no further military operations in Fallujah as long as tribal fighters continue to fight ISIS. According to witness statements, 500-600 ISIS fighters were present in five of Ramadi’s neighbourhoods on 5 January where they were fighting local groups and SWAT fighters while the army remained outside of the city. HRW reports that “infighting between tribal armed groups over whether to cooperate with government security forces” was hampering the fight against ISIS in Ramadi. Mark Landler (NYT) reports that the U.S. is set to resume non-lethal military aid to the Syrian opposition through the Syrian Military Council in the hope that it will encourage opposition groups to attend a peace conference on 22 January, known as Geneva II. Analysts suggest that this will not be enough to salvage the peace talks. U.S. aid had been suspended in December 2013 following the seizure of warehouses of equipment by the Islamic Front. Given the blurred lines between the groups operating in Syria, it will be difficult for the U.S. to ensure that its aid does not fall into the hands of extremists.	
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11/01/2014		Serge Schmemmann (NYT) writes that ISIS' gains in Fallujah and Ramadi pose a risk to Iraq's neighboring countries. Schmemmann argues that the situation in Fallujah "has now assumed the burden of a bloody question mark over the entire American war in Iraq". EIU "Syria/Iraq Politics: The Jihadists may have gone too far" (Document EIUCP00020140114ea1b0000z) EIU documents that ISIS is under attack from "rebels of all stripes" who are only united in their dislike of the group. There are reports that ISIS may have opened a third front in Lebanon. "Weakened central control in Syria and Iraq has opened space for ISIS brand of extremism, and the sectarian politics of both Mr Maliki and Bashar Assad's Syrian regime have prompted some hapless Sunnis to embrace the group. And yet few actually agree with its radical ideas."	
12/01/2014		Anne Barnard (NYT) discusses the reasons for the current infighting between ISIS and other Syrian rebels. "Nusra's leaders and supporters accuse ISIS of the grave error of focusing too soon on building a radical Islamic state, the ultimate goal for both groups, at the expense of the war against Mr. Assad." She argues that Syrian rebel infighting has reverberated beyond Syria and has many other facets, such as a turf war and meaning of the future of jihadism. She suggests that the Nusra front could be the main beneficiary of the situation. The NYT Editorial Board writes that three years on, the Syrian civil war has complexified and reinforced the proxy war and rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran. The U.S. and other powers do not have sufficient influence on this matter, and the upcoming peace conference will be a futile attempt at negotiations. The rise of ISIS continues to be alarming, despite its withdrawal from some of the areas it had seized in Syria. It is argued that while the resumption of non-lethal U.S. aid to Syria carries the risk that this equipment may fall into the hands of terrorists, it may be worth it given that "Syrian extremists are already	

		trying to recruit and train Americans and other Westerners to carry out attacks in the United States”.	
13/01/2014		Based on interviews with Syrian refugees in Kurdistan and Turkey, HRW reports how ISIS is violating women’s rights in areas under their control in northern and northeastern Syria. Anne Barnard (NYT) writes that ISIS has succeeded in retaking significant sections of territory in northern Syria, including Raqqa. It is reported that the group has set up checkpoints in the Al Baba neighbourhood in search of rebels and their collaborators which has prompted some to believe that ISIS is working with the regime. Infighting between rebel groups has distracted them from their fight against Bashar al-Assad and has provided an opportunity for Assad’s forces to advance toward eastern Aleppo. They have managed to regain a crucial Aleppo industrial neighbourhood and gains of the remaining area would result in the city becoming completely besieged. John Kerry and Sergey Lavrov have announced that Assad is considering opening humanitarian aid routes and committing to local cease-fires ahead of the Geneva II peace talks. Barnard is sceptical of how these cease-fires would work given that the rebels are currently fighting among themselves.	
15/01/2014		According to Alison Smale (NYT), European intelligence officials, social workers, teachers and police officers report that there has been a surge in recruitment efforts by Islamist radicals through seemingly harmless conversations and gradual indoctrination. The greatest concern is that these young individuals will be trained in using weapons and explosives in Syria and may carry out attacks once they return home.	Speaking at the Kuwait pledging conference for the Syria crisis, EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva states: “Today on behalf of the European Commission I pledge \$225 million (€165 million). You have already heard the generous pledges of five of our EU member states. In

			addition, another eighteen member states are joining our collective effort to bring relief to the Syrian people. Taken together, the EU pledge, the Commission and its member states, totals \$753 million. This brings our funding to \$3.5 billion since the beginning of the crisis. These funds will provide food and clean water, medicines and shelter to the Syrians and their host communities who most urgently need humanitarian assistance.” The EC releases a communication to other EU institutions on “Preventing Radicalisation to Terrorism and Violent Extremism: Strengthening the EU’s Response”. This discusses the situation of European foreign fighters in Syria, among others, and proposes various preventive measures.
16/01/2014		According to Nick Cumming-Bruce (NYT), UN human rights chief, Navi Pillay, has reported that Syrian rebel groups, and ISIS in particular, have carried out mass executions of civilians and fighters who were no longer engaged in combat, in Aleppo, Idlib and Raqqa.	

		Pillay says this amounts to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It is reported that ISIS fighters carried out mass executions upon both their retreat from Raqqa and their subsequent seizure of the city. Numerous bodies were also discovered in a children's hospital in Aleppo which had served as a base for ISIS. In a detailed commentary for ECFR, Rania Abouzeid writes that Syria is facing an “uprising within an uprising” as fighting between rebel groups and ISIS erupted on 3 January in northern Syria. The seemingly coordinated decision to confront ISIS by numerous groups at the same time over several locations, and how quickly ISIS was pushed back initially, has been surprising. Foreign fighters have been the main target of rebel groups and many are reportedly fleeing to Turkey as a result. Abouzeid explains that some believe that rebel clashes with ISIS were purposely planned to take place just before the Geneva II talks on 22 January to signal that there are armed rebels within Syria disassociated with extremists with whom the international community can engage with. The Islamic Front (IF) and Jabhat al-Nusra are most likely to reap the highest benefit from ISIS' short-term loss of territories (they have already regained some lost areas), as they are stronger and better organised than other groups. Al-Nusra has recruited foreign fighters fleeing ISIS and is now considered as a more moderate alternative. Meanwhile, Western officials are beginning to realise that they will require to engage with the IF if some sort of agreement is to be reached at the Geneva II talks, although IF sources report that they are reluctant to be seen collaborating with Western governments.	
17/01/2014		EIU “Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa economy: EIU's latest assumptions” (Document EIUCP00020140118ea1h0002z) EIU predicts that there may be an international intervention in the Syrian civil war which is likely to be prolonged. The increase in sectarian violence in Iraq has the potential to disrupt economic activities, especially if the oil sector is targeted.	

20/01/2014		Kareem Fahim and Yasir Ghazi (NYT) report that negotiations between jihadist militants and local leaders in Fallujah have failed, causing many to flee the city, fearing further escalations of violence. Iraqi PM, Nouri al-Maliki, under pressure from his government and Sunni leaders, has declared that he will not mobilise the army to storm Fallujah. He has instead given authority to Sunni leaders to lead negotiations and armed tribal Sunni militiamen to fight the militants. There is concern that Maliki's approach is proving ineffective as residents of Fallujah report that the militant gunmen are patrolling the streets and enforcing Islamic edicts. The situation bears the risk of a return of sectarian violence reminiscent of the U.S. occupation. EIU "Iraq Politics: Parties shy away from pre-election coalitions" (Document EIUCP00020140121ea1k0000n) Major political parties in Iraq are running independently, therefore creating a wider field for voters to choose from, creating the possibility for better cross-sectarian cooperation at a political level. However, this may mean that government formation may take longer and that Iraq may be inherently unstable.	At a first meeting of the Cooperation Council between the EU and Iraq, HR/VP Catherine Ashton states: "The EU is doing all it can to support Prime Minister Al Maliki and his Government in their efforts to confront terrorism and address security challenges, particularly in the west of Iraq. (...) I also mentioned the EU's concern at the execution of 40 persons yesterday, reiterating our firm position against capital punishment. Regional instability and the conflict in Syria are contributing to tensions inside Iraq, making it even more urgent to address the root causes of violence through an inclusive political process. April's general elections will be a crucial test for Iraq's democracy, and I hope that the country's political leaders will seize this opportunity to promote dialogue and compromise." The EU announces approximately EUR 75
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			million of development support to Iraq between 2014-2020 for the purpose of rule of law and institution building. Commissioner Andris Piebalgs states: “the EU is confident that the Iraqi authorities will work towards a successful transition to democracy and long term stability for the benefit of all of Iraq’s citizens”. The FAC releases its conclusions on Syria. It calls, among others, for confidence building measures such as agreements on local ceasefires, the lifting of sieges, or the release of arbitrarily detained prisoners.
21/01/2014		In its annual report, HRW discusses how sectarian tensions have deepened in Iraq, with ISIS carrying out “nearly daily attacks against civilians, making 2013 the bloodiest of the last five years”. It accuses the Iraqi government of responding to “largely peaceful demonstrations with violence and to worsening security with draconian counterterrorism measures”. EIU “Iraq: Key developments” (Document EIUCP00020140122ea1l0001o) “The political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable. Militia and insurgent groups will continue to exploit political divisions and	

		deficiencies in the security forces. Spillover from the Syrian civil war is adding to insecurity.”	
22/01/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – negotiations continue over forming KRG government” (Document EIUCP00020140123ea1m00026) A deadlock in negotiations in forming a cabinet for the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) has been causing widespread frustration but seems to be nearing a conclusion.	Remarks by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton at the Geneva II Conference on Syria: “We have to ensure that there is agreement on a political transition. (...) The population of Syria is stretched beyond these limits and even small progress would be welcome if not enough: eg. more humanitarian access to those trapped in conflict zones. (...) We have the ambition in the European Union to help in all possible ways. (...) I repeat it, it is so important to include women in the process”.
23/01/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) reports that in an audio recording, Ayman al-Zawahiri, leader of Al-Qaeda, has called for a halt to infighting between Islamist brigades in northern Syria and has recommended the establishment of Islamic courts to settle disputes. ISIS fighters and rebel brigades have been battling for 15 days which has reportedly resulted in almost 1400 deaths. Zawahiri said the rebels should refocus on the cause of defeating Bashar al-Assad.	
25/01/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) writes that ISIS went rogue from Al-Qaeda after defying orders from Ayman al-Zawahiri to withdraw from Syria to Iraq. This signals Al-Qaeda’s transformation from a corporation to a franchise model utilised by diverse militant groups which loosely use its ideology and brand name, making it harder for terrorism analysts to	

		define ‘Al-Qaeda’ and consequently how to combat the threat it poses. The civil war in Syria has compounded the complexities of how to characterise militant groups. ISIS, which has publicly snubbed the leader of Al-Qaeda, has thousands of foreign fighters. The Nusra Front remains loyal to Zawahiri while also preserving relations with the wider rebel movement. Currently, none of the militant groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda have turned their focus to attacking the West and some analysts argue that it is best to approach the different groups with a local focus. Others contend that such groups always return their focus to fighting a wider international battle which poses a threat to the West.	
28/01/2014		Ben Hubbard, Clifford Krauss and Eric Schmitt (NYT) report that the oil and gas resources of Syria have predominantly fallen under control of jihadist groups which are using the income to fund their battles. ISIS and the Nusra Front have benefited significantly from the proceeds of the oil and gas fields. ISIS is selling fuel to the Assad regime, bolstering claims by opposition leaders that the group is covertly coordinating with the government, while the Nusra Front is also exchanging fuel with the government for electricity and relief from airstrikes. It is reported that the militants have resorted to primitive methods to extract product from crude which is causing local environmental and health issues, and trade networks have been established to smuggle the oil into Iraq and Turkey. Oil production in Syria has steadily decreased over the years, accelerated by the civil war. The battle for control of these resources has become a major point of chaos within the oil rich regions of Syria. ISIS is thought to be sustaining “its operations through a combination of oil revenues, border tolls, extortion and granary sales”. U.S. officials are not convinced that ISIS and Assad are cooperating, yet it is believed that it is almost certain that Syrian intelligence has infiltrated both Qaeda affiliated groups.	

		EIU “Iraq: Country outlook” (Document EIUCP00020140129ea1s00009) EIU predicts that the political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable and there is a risk of further escalation in violence. Specifically, “the loss of central government authority over Fallujah, even if it proves only temporary, has created one of the most serious crises faced by the prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki. Reclaiming control of the city could exacerbate sectarian tensions further.”	
29/01/2014		Myriam Benraad (ECFR) asserts that the capture of Fallujah and parts of Ramdai by ISIS demonstrates both its tactical capabilities, and its territorial ambitions which call the Iraq/Syria border into question. ISIS’ successes in Iraq can be linked to rising Sunni resentment against PM Maliki’s repressive response to their protests, and some Sunni tribal sheikhs who feel betrayed by the Iraqi government and the U.S. Maliki is pursuing the recapture of territories lost to ISIS through force and has been counting on the support of some Sunni tribes who have joined him in the fight against ISIS. Benraad concludes that the threat of ISIS will not be sufficiently quashed through force alone and there is a high risk that the situation will be further polarised, as ISIS has shown that it utilises fragile socio-economic conditions to boost its recruitment.	
30/01/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: New provinces plan could harden sectarian divisions” (Document EIUCP00020140131ea1u0000x) EIU reports that Iraq’s cabinet announced on 21 January plans to carve out four new provinces. It is suggested that there may be political motivations behind this decision on al-Maliki’s part, as he may win support from those who support the plans for new provinces. “Although the proposal has been welcomed by some of Iraq’s disenfranchised minorities, it risks entrenching the already stark ethnic and sectarian divides that have fuelled violence in recent years.”	
31/01/2014		Joe Cochrane (NYT) writes that at least 50 Indonesians have gone to Syria since 2012 to join jihadist groups, warning that this figure is	

		likely to increase given the appeal of Syria to Indonesian extremists who view the war as a sign “linked to predictions in Islamic eschatology that the final battle at the end of time will take place in Sham”. The report states that humanitarian missions to Syria by Indonesian Islamic organisations have been providing money and medical aid to jihadists. The two most significant points of concern for Indonesia is that first, the foreign fighters may inspire others to radicalise and follow in their footsteps once they return home and tell their stories. Second, perceptions and actions by Indonesian jihadists may have consequences for sectarian tensions in Indonesia.	
Jan 2014		The ICG reports that more than 100.000 Iraqi civilians were displaced during the month due to the fighting in Anbar province. According to UNHCR reports, 65.000 fled fighting in Fallujah and Ramadi during the week of 18-24 January alone. ICG claims that after local groups reportedly regained control of Fallujah, the government no longer distinguished between residents and militias, announced Fallujah to be in the hands of ISIS and called for national and international support to fight ISIS. It claims elsewhere that Iraqi government forces “regained control of areas west of Baghdad” on 29 January. According to Iraqi government estimates, 1013 people were killed in January which amounts to the highest death toll since April 2008. The Iraqi government also reportedly executed 26 on terrorism charges on 21 January. On Syria, ICG reports that clashes between ISIS and other rebel groups intensified after 1 January, when the Islamic Front accused ISIS of killing a rebel commander and “being worse than the Assad regime”. While ISIS lost control of its bases in Idlib and west of Aleppo, it consolidated its presence east of Aleppo and in Raqqa province. On 27 January, ISIS rejected a reconciliation initiative by other Syrian rebel groups. According to the SOHR, ISIS and other rebel groups suffered a high number of casualties (estimated 1400) in rebel infighting between 1 and 23 January. ICG also reports that ISIS claimed responsibility for a deadly car bombing in Beirut on 2 January.	

03/02/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) reports that Al-Qaeda's central leadership has cut ties with ISIS. Al-Qaeda has cut with a group that has tarnished their brand, whilst ISIS emerges as a strong force. ISIS' expansion and economic independence allows it to endure without the backing of Al-Qaeda. The break between the two groups signals the decline of Al-Qaeda's clout in the region. Hubbard also writes that Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN special envoy for Syria is resigning in an apparent concession to the Syrian government in order to boost incentives for negotiations.	
04/02/2014		Duraid Adnan (NYT) reports that violence has continued in Baghdad and Anbar province. Two rockets targeted diplomatic and government offices in Baghdad, killing over a dozen people, Katyusha rockets killed a soldier in the international zone, and car and suicide bombings killed fifteen people. Two local Sunni tribesmen who were members of the Awakening Council were found executed. The clashes are predominantly between Iraqi security forces and ISIS. A curfew has been set in Ramadi, while gunfire continues. The head of the Iraqi security forces has announced that operations in Anbar will continue despite the upcoming elections in April as "it is a military battle and not a political one".	
05/02/2014		According to HRW, ISIS claimed responsibility for the execution of four Iraqi SWAT members near Ramadi. It also reports how SWAT forces reportedly ousted ISIS from one of Ramadi's neighbourhoods on 30 January but that fighting was continuing in other parts of Ramadi and that "accounts of fighting in and around Fallujah have been inconsistent". Duraid Adnan (NYT) reports that ISIS has made significant gains in Saladin province in Iraq, which neighbours Anbar, in a move that some believe is to distract governmental forces and divide their attention. PM Nouri al-Maliki is preparing for a counter-offensive in Saladin and has announced that "the battle is about to end in Anbar". ISIS has simultaneously continued its attacks in the capital. The international	

		zone which holds governmental and diplomatic offices has been attacked for two days in a row. Michael R. Gordon and Duraid Adnan (NYT) report that U.S. military officers have been advising Iraqi officials and military commanders in its strategy to combat ISIS in Anbar. Under pressure from U.S. officials, the Maliki government is to build ties with Sunni tribes, giving them the same benefits as Iraqi soldiers, to lead the offensive against ISIS in key Sunni cities such as Fallujah. This move is in recognition that a predominantly Shia army leading combat in a majority Sunni city could escalate sectarian violence. US State Department official on Iraq, Brett McGurk, says that there are currently around 2000 ISIS fighters in Iraq who are heavily armed and advancing with the goal to seize Baghdad as their base of operations. Iraqi forces currently face a military challenge as they operate with limited air power while they wait for U.S. military assistance to arrive, which will not be in time for their battle in Fallujah. David D. Kirkpatrick and Eric Schmitt (NYT) report that there has been a rise in terrorist attacks in Egypt which is a direct consequence of President Mohamed Morsi's ouster and the sectarian violence raging in the region. The sudden increase and effectiveness of the attacks signals that it may be down to a flow of Egyptian Jihadi fighters returning home from Syria to take up arms against the government. Several suicide bombings by returning foreign fighters have already occurred. It is believed that these jihadists are operating under Sinai-based militant groups such as Ansar Beit al-Maqdis which has proved to have the necessary resources and capabilities to carry out strategic and organised attacks. Al-Qaeda and ISIS have been posting propaganda videos in encouragement of Egyptian jihadism. Upon inspection of videos of attacks carried out in Egypt, analysts believe that the weapons being used are advanced versions which have been	
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		commonly used in Iraq and Syria, indicating that Ansar Beit al-Maqdis may be receiving firepower from the international jihadist movement.	
06/02/2014			The EP adopts a resolution on the situation in Syria. It refers to many evidential claims about the situation on the ground and reiterates, among others, the importance of confidence-building measures. The EP stresses “that the crisis in Syria requires a coherent common approach by the EU and its Member States in the field of humanitarian aid delivery and beyond”.
07/02/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – Electoral lists confirm political fragmentation” (Document EIUCP00020140209ea2700015) EIU asserts that the coalitions announced in Iraq matches their forecast of a more fragmented political landscape. This could result in new forces in Iraqi politics and some electoral surprises.	
10/02/2014		Duraïd Adnan and Tim Arango (NYT) report that ISIS has set up training camps in the mountainous Diyala province in Iraq and is utilising Mosul as a centre of financing through extortion and other schemes. Their suicide attacks are predominantly funded by this money.	FAC conclusions on Iraq: “The EU reaffirms its commitment to assist Iraq in its transition to democracy, recalling that the unity and territorial integrity of Iraq are essential elements in building a secure and prosperous state for all its citizens and in bringing stability to the whole region. (...) The EU renews

			its call on all of Iraq's political and religious leaders to engage in dialogue and to speak out against sectarianism and violence. It encourages the Government of Iraq to reinforce the rule of law and take decisive measures to promote inclusiveness and advance reconciliation (...). The EU (...) encourages the Government of Iraq to strengthen cooperation between its security forces and local Anbar tribes. (...) The EU expresses its support to the Iraqi authorities in the fight against terrorism and is ready to cooperate with Iraq on a comprehensive response to this global threat that is compliant with human rights and international humanitarian law."
11/02/2014		Duraïd Adnan (NYT) reports that ISIS has extended its reach in Iraq beyond Anbar province and carried out a deadly rampage in Mosul. ISIS fighters struck an army unit, beheading five soldiers, shooting nine and torturing and then hanging one. These types of attacks are becoming more common as government forces tighten their cordon around the Anbar province, the militants are escaping to Mosul as well as Saladin and Diyala provinces which are relatively safe areas for	

		them. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees says that up to 300,000 people have fled Anbar province as the conflict has escalated.	
12/02/2014		Tim Arango and Eric Schmitt (NYT) write that a series of prison breaks in Iraq have resulted in hundreds of former inmates joining and leading ISIS which is spurring a new wave of Sunni jihad across the region. The breakouts signal the increasing demand for experienced fighters by ISIS. One former inmate explains that he was given a choice by ISIS leaders to stay in Iraq and fight or leave with them for Syria. The prison breaks have fuelled conspiracy theories that Nouri al-Maliki and Bashar al-Assad's government are acting in concert to orchestrate the escapes to bolster their 'war on terrorism' policies. Moderate Syrian rebels believe that ISIS may be a pawn of the Assad regime. The Iraqi government has done little to allay fears that they had a hand in the prison breaks and MPs claim they were blocked from investigating the prisons for at least a week. The significant rise of ISIS has resulted in Western officials becoming even more reluctant to intervene in Syria as the conflict has transformed from one against the Syrian regime to a much more complex multi-pronged battle. EIU "Iraq: key developments" (Document EIUCP00020140214ea2c0000a) EIU predicts that continued Sunni frustrations over their marginalisation by the Iraqi government, and tensions between the Kurdistan regional government and central government will continue to undermine political stability. Further, EIU expects PM al-Maliki's State of Law coalition to perform strongly in the upcoming parliamentary elections, however, the formation of a new government may be delayed due to political divisions.	
14/02/2014		Anne Barnard (NYT) reports that a deadlock continues in the second round of Syrian peace talks in Geneva, while the Syrian regime pressed ahead with military campaigns to retake rebel-held areas and struck local cease-fires. It is said that tensions between the sponsors of the	

		peace talks, the U.S. and Russia, over the crisis in Ukraine exacerbated the efforts of establishing a transitional government in Syria. Russian officials criticised Western actors for only focusing on regime change, whilst the Syrian opposition delegation offered a 24-point proposal for a delegation government which Western officials refused to read. The opposition claimed that their violence in Syria is defensive in the face of brutal attacks from both the regime and ISIS. U.S. officials are reviewing policy options to respond to the escalating humanitarian crisis in Syria, which could include increasing military aid or even military force.	
17/02/2014			EU announces EUR 12 million in financial support to help destroy Syrian chemical stockpiles. Commissioner Andris Piebalgs states: “The European Commission is looking forward to a fruitful cooperation with the OPCW and the UN on this matter and hoping that the destruction of chemical weapons will be a step closer to bringing an end to the conflict in Syria.”
19/02/2014		Commentary by Maurice Fraser (ECFR): “So let ‘act tough’ be our guiding principle. But, just as important, we need to ‘think big’. We need something to match the scale of the challenge which the people of the Middle East are now facing if Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and, eventually, Syria, are to build something existentially better for themselves. We need something to match the American vision and ambition for Europe after World War II, with the Marshall Plan and the establishment of the OEEC (now OECD). Where are the European	

		statesmen and stateswomen ready to act tough and think big? If they are already there, let them step forward. Now.”	
21/02/2014		Duraid Adnan (NYT) reports that 21 people were killed and 65 injured in an attack on the Shia town of Musayyib, south of Baghdad, in Iraq. Iraqi security officials have said that “the shells had been fired from a Sunni area near Nasayyib where security forces were conducting a weeklong search for fighters” from ISIS.	
23/02/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) reports that the leader of Ahrar al-Sham was sent to Syria by Al-Qaeda to mediate rebel infighting and was killed in a suicide attack. Opposition activists claim the attack was undertaken by ISIS. Clint Watts of the Foreign Policy Research Institute believes that this move by ISIS was a clear warning to Al-Qaeda and its affiliates that “ISIS is in Syria for the long haul and there will be no remediation”. Ben Hubbard and Karim Shoumali (NYT) write that the Western-backed Syrian Supreme Military Council (SMC), a central body of top opposition commanders, is dysfunctional two years after its creation. Drawing on 20 recent interviews, the authors explain that the opposition movement in Syria is handicapped by infighting which distracts from the fight against the regime. The Council has served as a conduit for foreign military support although this aid has been insufficient and has led its brigades to seek support from wealthy Syrian and Persian Gulf patrons, lending legitimacy to regime claims that the SMC is a foreign-backed plot. Hubbard and Shoumali also report that there is infighting over the misuse of and misdistribution of arms between the opposition groups.	
24/02/2014		EIU “Iraq” country outlook” (Document EIUUCP00020140226ea2o0000c) “The loss of government authority over Fallujah, even if it proves temporary, has created one of the most serious crises faced by the	7th EU-Brazil Summit, Joint Statement: “We believe that the only solution to the conflict is a Syrian-led political transition that meets

		prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki. Reclaiming control of the city could exacerbate sectarian tensions further.”	the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, based on the full implementation of the 30 June 2012 Geneva Communiqué.”
Feb 2014		ICG reports that ISIS executed senior figures in Syrian rebel groups (Liwa al-Tawhid, Suqour as-Sham) affiliated with the Islamic Front in two separate suicide bombings on 1 February. The killing of the Ahrar al-Sham leader, reportedly by ISIS, came after Jabhat al-Nusra had given ISIS a deadline (1 March) to accept mediation or face expulsion from Syria. ICG refers to the SOHR’s estimate (27 February) that 3300 had been killed in rebel infighting since January. On Iraq, ICG reports that the army continued to besiege Anbar, continued the shelling of Fallujah and Ramadi, that ISIS brought down an army helicopter on 22 February and that government forces regained control of Sulayman Beg and surrounding areas on 22 February after more than a week of fighting. Car bombings across Iraq continued. In and around Baghdad, at least 114 were killed in three attacks on 5, 18 and 27 February.	
04/03/2014			After meeting with an Iraqi-Syrian delegation of civil society representatives, EU decision-makers conclude that supporting the “We are All Citizens” campaign is a promising strategy to address sectarianism in Iraq and Syria.
05/03/2014		Somini Sengupta and Nick Cumming-Bruce (NYT) report that a commission of inquiry into the human rights abuses in Syria which has been established by the UN has criticised Assad’s regime and allied militias of systematic murders and abuses, and the Security Council of failing to hold both sides accountable during the three-year long civil	

		war. The report details government tactics of sieges, withholding of water, food and medical care, and bombardments as violations of international law. The members of the inquiry have called on the Security Council to refer the warring actors in Syria to the ICC, however the U.S. and Russia are reluctant to do so. The commission is currently compiling a list of individuals suspected of being war criminals. They report the use of chemical weapons, mainly sarin, on multiple occasions. The findings are based on 563 interviews with Syrians who had fled the conflict as they were barred from entering Syria for their investigation. EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – violent stalemate continues in Fallujah” (Document EIUCP00020140306ea350001h) EIU reports that a violent stalemate is set to continue in Fallujah, whilst clashes with militants continue outside of Fallujah, in parts of Ramadi and smaller towns across the province. It is unclear who the balance of power lays within Fallujah. “There is little sign of an imminent resolution to the Fallujah crisis, and the stalemate could continue until after the elections, unless Mr Maliki decides to gamble on a risky assault in an attempt to project a strongman image to win votes.”	
10/03/2014		HRW reports about human rights abuses by Iraqi security forces, especially against prisoners and in retaliation for ISIS’ ‘Breaking the Walls’ campaign. HRW claims that “as many as 1000 prisoners escaped” during the Abu Ghraib and Taji prison breaks in July 2013. HRW further reports that severe fighting is ongoing in Anbar which has caused a humanitarian crisis and prevented the delivery of humanitarian aid to residents of Fallujah and Ramadi and to internally displaced persons.	
11/03/2014		Katrin Bennhold (NYT) writes that Shiraz Maher of the ICSR says that the Britons fighting with jihadists in Syria are not fighting with the intent to undertake a revolution or establish a democracy, they want an	

		Islamic caliphate. It is just as dangerous to compare foreign fighters to idealists as it is to assume that all of them will pose a terrorism threat when they return to Britain. Treating them this way may in fact increase the risk of radicalisation, Maher explains.	
12/03/2014			In response to the rapidly growing number of internally displaced persons fleeing Anbar province, the EU increases its humanitarian assistance to Iraq by EUR 3 million.
13/03/2014			EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva travels to northern Iraq to meet with Kurdish authorities, Syrian refugees and EU humanitarian partners. She states : “I take advantage of my visit here to call for an end to the violence in the region, unlimited access to those in need, respect for International Humanitarian Law, and most important of all, a sustainable political solution to the crisis. I also appeal to all the generous hosting countries to keep their borders open. It is vital that to avoid a further massive outflow to neighbouring countries,

			access to those in need inside Syria is improved.”
15/03/2014			Statement by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton on 3 rd Anniversary of the Syrian Uprising: “The only solution to the crisis is a political one: the establishment of a transitional governing body, and a genuine Syrian-led inclusive political process to establish a democratic and pluralistic Syria. (...) We call on all parties, especially the Syrian government, which bears the primary responsibility for the humanitarian tragedy, to swiftly fulfil all obligations imposed on them by UNSC resolution 2139, and call for a robust use of the review mechanism to enforce compliance.”
18/03/2014		Nick Cumming-Bruce (NYT) reports on the recent findings of an investigation on human rights abuses in Syria. The report documents the severe circumstances in which Syrians are dying of starvation because of blockades and seizures, and the death of inmates in a government-controlled prison due to systematic torture and lack of basic necessities such as food and sanitation. The panel has compiled a list of perpetrators, including names of military commanders and armed groups, which they have passed on to the UN High	

		Commissioner for Human Rights. The panel has also reported on the mass executions of civilians and rival opposition combatants undertaken by ISIS in Syria. EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUCP00020140319ea3i0000l) The political situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable and insurgents will continue to take advantage of political divisions and weaknesses of the security forces. “Sunni disgruntlement over their perceived marginalisation by the government, and tensions between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government, will continue to undermine political stability.”	
21/03/2014		Duraid Adnan (NYT) reports that 37 people were killed and 8 soldiers kidnapped in a series of attacks across Iraq. A suicide bomber blew up a police station in the Diyala province, followed by gunmen shooting from speeding SUVs. In Samarra, gunmen in SUVs seized an army unit, killed 5 soldiers and kidnapped 8. Consequently, a curfew was imposed on the city. In Anbar, a suicide bomber attacked a funeral for a leader of the local Sunni Awakening council, killing 13 people and wounding 37. In Tikrit, a roadside bomb killed a commander and two guards of the army’s Fifth Brigade. Car bombs in a market in Kirkuk killed 5 civilians and wounded 15. It is claimed that these attacks were carried out by ISIS.	
22/03/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: As bad as it gets” (Document EIUCP00020140323ea3m0000p) As the election draws closer, community divisions are getting even deeper. The rift between al-Maliki and the government of Iraq’s autonomous Kurdish region are as bad as ever. Al-Maliki has labelled all protestors in Anbar as ISIS members. “It is unclear whether Mr Maliki and his generals will contain, let alone defeat, the Sunni rebellion. What is certain is that Iraq’s fractious components are	

		increasingly minded to ignore the writ of the central government; some seek autonomy, if not secession.”	
24/03/2014		EIU “Iraq: Country Outlook” (Document EIUUCP00020140326ea3o0000q) EIU predicts that the situation in Iraq will remain highly unstable with risk of escalation of violence. The deteriorating security situation in Anbar is contributing to sectarian conflict.	
25/03/2014		Eric Schmitt (NYT) writes that dozens of Pakistani Al-Qaeda operatives have travelled to Syria in recent months in what U.S. intelligence and counterterrorism officials fear is in an effort to use Syria as a base to organise attacks against the U.S. and Europe. It is believed that Syria is an attractive base for these militants as it is a haven from drone attacks in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Intelligence assessments indicate that ISIS leadership has devised a long-term plan to recruit and train foreign fighters to conduct attacks against the West. However, not all of the US’ counterterrorism partners agree with the assessment that there is a coordinated plan to attack the West. It is unlikely that U.S. policy will change based on this new assessment although President Obama and his allies will have to consider the possibility that Syria may become the next Afghanistan. The U.S. secretary of Homeland Security has declared that “Syria has become a matter of homeland security”. The U.S. and its European allies are working closely to track foreign fighters returning home. It is believed that many of the Al-Qaeda operatives from Pakistan and Afghanistan are in the east and northwestern areas of Syria. These operatives have significant power over recruitment and training, although analysts believe that the Nusra front is not prioritising Western targets for now, however, it would turn its attention to the West should it feel its ideology was under direct threat.	
26/03/2014		Myriam Benraad (ECFR) writes that both despite and because of a recent standoff between the Iraqi government and Sunni protestors in Anbar, which ISIS exploited, Nouri al-Maliki seems set to win the	

		upcoming elections in April. The persistent sectarian violence and instability in Iraq has resulted in the increased estrangement of Sunnis and a population fatigued and disinterested in politics. Maliki has been successful in exploiting divisions between Sunnis, who lack a united leadership, to enlist them in the fight against ISIS alongside the army. His re-election would only heighten resentment toward his government as it is anticipated that Maliki would continue with repression and autocratic rule. The combination of a lack of Sunni unity, a fragmented Shia political landscape, persistent violence and a low turnout at elections would result in favourable conditions for Maliki's re-election. He presents himself as the only viable option in the context of a security vacuum. Benraad asserts that "any form of sustainable progress would first and foremost require an effective political rehabilitation of the Sunnis".	
27/03/2014			In a memo, the European Commission details the EU's Syria policy and comments on latest developments on the ground.
28/03/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Election commissioners resign" (Document EIUCP00020140329ea3s0003e) All members of Iraq's Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) resigned on 25th March in objection to efforts to block candidates from standing in the upcoming parliamentary election. "Unless a compromise is found soon that enables the IHEC to continue operating-as the electoral candidate lists need to be published to enable campaigning to begin-it will be difficult to hold the election as planned at the end of April."	
30/03/2014		Anne Barnard (NYT) reports that journalists Javier Espinosa and Ricardo Garcia Vilanova, have been reunited with their families after being held by radical Islamist militants in Syria for six months. The circumstances of their release are not clear. It is reported that over 20	

		Syrian journalists and activists, and a dozen foreign journalists are missing or held by insurgent groups in Syria, while approximately 40 Syrian journalists are being held by the government. Kidnapping has become so widespread that many news organisations have ceased reporting on the ground while aid agencies have struggled to do their work.	
Mar 2014		On Syria, the ICG reports that ISIS rejected al-Nusra's ultimatum to accept mediation and that it withdrew from Idlib and Latakia provinces, concentrating its fighters in eastern Aleppo and Raqqa. ISIS seized a town in Al-Hasakah province in northeastern Syria on 30 March where it reportedly killed 50 rebels. On Iraq, ICG reports about the ongoing fighting in Anbar, with ISIS still controlling Fallujah. It also reports about criticism that the Iraqi government is not seriously trying to solve the crisis – with MPs claiming that Maliki is not waging war on terrorism but against Anbar and its people. According to UN reports, 400.000 have been displaced in Anbar since the beginning of ISIS' campaign. ICG further reports that bombing attacks across Iraq continued: among other deadly incidents, at least 80 were killed on 25 March including 41 soldiers.	
01/04/2014		Masood Farivar writes for the NYT on the foreign fighters in Syria, drawing on his personal experience fighting alongside the Afghan Mujahedeen in the 1980s. He describes the foreign fighters he encountered as joining their fight for numerous reasons, but that their embrace of martyrdom was a point of disgust for Farivar and his Afghan comrades. Regarding the fears of Western states of terrorist attacks by foreign fighters when they return home, Farivar asserts that the caricatures created by Western experts of these militants overlooks the complexities of the conflict in Syria and the varied and intersecting motives. He advises that “before summarily prosecuting the fighters upon their return from Syria, as Britain is considering, or revoking the United States citizenship of fighters with dual citizenship (as some have called for), we should determine their guilt by more than	

		association. For most, a deradicalization program, such as those run by Saudi Arabia, could help reintegrate them into civilian life”. EIU “Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa economy: EIU’s latest assumptions” (Document EIUCP00020140402ea410001p) EIU predicts that as the international focus is elsewhere, namely the crisis sparked by the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, the war in Syria will be extended as Assad will use the opportunity to continue military operations against rebel groups. Consequently, “the war in Syria will act as a crucible for regional sectarian violence and has sparked a heightened round of violence in both Iraq and Lebanon”.	
03/04/2014			Remarks by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton at a European Parliament debate on foreign and defence policy: “The failure of international cohesion has prevented serious pressure being brought to bear on Assad to bring the conflict to an end. (...) The risk of regional instability – in particular impacts Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq - and the growth of terrorist and extremist groups such as Al-Qaida. This is an ever present problem.”
05/04/2014		The NYT reports that 17 Iraqi soldiers have been killed by ISIS in an explosion after seeking cover in a booby-trapped house following attacks by ISIS gunmen near Fallujah. The Interior Ministry reported that it had killed 20 ISIS gunmen hours earlier in Anbar Province.	

07/04/2014		Jihad Yazigi (ECFR) argues that the Syrian civil war is providing incentives to prolong it for those benefitting economically from it. He presents four stages of decline of Syria's economy marked by the outbreak of the conflict, the imposition of Western sanctions which outlined the increasing international isolation of the Syrian economy, the expansion of the conflict into Damascus and Aleppo, and the seizure of the northeast of Syria by the opposition in Spring 2013. Support from international partners, such as Russia and Iran, and domestic backers have allowed regime-controlled areas to remain resilient. The Syrian economy is fragmenting as different areas controlled by different forces has fostered growing decentralisation. This disconnect between areas has created new power centres led by local stakeholders. There is ongoing and increasing competition by all sides, as well as intra-rebel fighting for resources such as oil and grain. A solution the Europeans could pursue in the face of this fragmentation is to "empower the capacity of local councils across the country" and embrace the decentralised political system as a means of "working towards a new national consensus from the bottom up".	
08/04/2014			European Commission Overview identifies the return of radicalised European foreign fighters from Syria as a significant risk to the security of the EU and its members.
09/04/2014		EIU "Iraq Economy: Quick View – parliament remains divided over 2014 budget" (Document EIUCP00020140410ea4900018) EIU reports that the draft 2014 budget has been held up in parliament due to boycotts against the Iraqi Prime Minister, poor turnout by MPs and opposition from Sunni MPs who are unhappy with the government's actions in the Anbar province which they believe	Summary of a discussion between the EU delegation to Syria and international civil society organisations regarding the EC's (DEVCO) support for Syria: Gaps in the EU's response to the crisis in

		marginalised the Sunni community. This highlights the heightened political factionalism and sectarian tensions in Iraq.	Syria are highlighted which include the protection of minorities in the context of the polarisation of the conflict. The inflexible and time-consuming EU procedures are identified as not appropriate in a volatile conflict environment. Additionally, it is concluded that “there should also be strategic thinking on how to build up capacities of local authorities and support forms of local self-government.”
10/04/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) writes that Jordan has become the staging ground for Syrian rebels and their foreign backers on Syria’s southern front. The military aid provided to the rebels by the United States is covert, although the Military Operations Command in Amman is an open secret. Here, rebels receive ammunition and weapons, and the CIA coordinates its training of rebel fighters. The aid, however, has been limited and many rebels complain that they are not receiving enough to survive or combat Assad’s regime properly. Some believe that this may be part of an American conspiracy to prolong the war. The rebels feel that their foreign backers are more interested in conflict management rather than their victory. Their continued reliance on the Military Operations Command is out of desperation rather than due to clear value added to their fight. Despite recent reports, the southern front of Syria is relatively controlled due to the efforts of outside powers to contain the rise of extremism and preserve stability in Jordan.	
11/04/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Divided Iraq prepares for election”	

		(Document EIUCP00020140412ea4b0004c) EIU provides detailed outline of the fractious political scene in Iraq head of the parliamentary election on 30th April. “Across Iraq election campaigning in April will be characterised by a strong emphasis on sectarian affiliations, which is only likely to sharpen sectarian tension. Exacerbating the situation, Iraq is also suffering from spillover from the Syrian civil war, which is pitting a largely Sunni opposition against a Shia-supported government, but domestic factors cannot be glossed over.”	
12/04/2014		Ben Hubbard (NYT) writes that an estimated 800-1200 Jordanians have joined jihadist groups in Syria. One third of these fighters are from the city of Zarqa. Drawing on accounts of Jordanian fighters, Hubbard explains that most of the men join the jihad believing they are following a noble path of establishing an Islamic state. They often leave without telling their families, who are left devastated by their loss. The violent strategies of the Syrian government and the inaction of the international community is another motivating factor behind their decision to go to Syria. Analysts say that “Jordan’s stagnant politics and economy encourage marginalized, devout men to seek glory on foreign battlefields”. The increasingly sectarian nature of the Syrian civil war has fuelled the jihadist mobilisation in Zarqa. Every few weeks, families in the city hold a “martyrs wedding” for the fighters who die, as they view their martyrdom as a cause for celebration.	
13/04/2014		Duraid Adnan (NYT) reports that less than a week after the eleventh anniversary of the toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue and two weeks before parliamentary elections in Iraq, a series of explosions around the country resulted in 25 fatalities. On the same day, ISIS gained control of a main road linking the capital with the norther provinces and kidnapped 5 people, including an oil executive.	
14/04/2014		Nick Cumming-Bruce (NYT) reports that the UN human rights chief, Navi Pillay, condemned the systematic and routine torture tactics	FAC conclusions on Syria: The EU reiterates that only a

		employed by the Syrian regime. Her report documents the use of torture in government detention facilities and draws on 38 interviews conducted by investigators. There are several cases in which detainees have died under torture. The report also outlines that armed opposition groups have begun to use torture as of 2013 and have been targeting children identified as pro-regime. It is believed that those most at risk of detention by groups such as the Nusra Front and ISIS were activists and those trying to document the abuses.	political solution will end the conflict in Syria and is determined to engage with third countries to effectively deal with terrorism and the financing of foreign fighters. Any elections in Syria outside of the framework of the Geneva Communiqué will be a “parody of democracy”.
15/04/2014		Tim Arango and Duraïd Adnan (NYT) report that the Iraqi government has declared Abu Ghraib a ‘hot zone’ and has moved 2400 prisoners from its infamous prison to other prisons in central and northern Iraq due to fears that it could be overrun by ISIS. It is not clear whether the closing of the prison is permanent. Fighting has persisted in Anbar province while the Iraqi security forces who have held off on a full-out assault have made minimal gains. Fighting has moved closer toward Abu Ghraib.	The EP’s Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) engages with a <u>study</u> on preventing and countering youth radicalisation in the EU.
16/04/2014		Anne Barnard and Karam Shoumali (NYT) report that Jordanian warplanes fired at three vehicles trying to cross the border from Syria into Jordan after they ignored demands from security forces to stop. It is unknown who the vehicles belonged to. This was a rare incident as the Jordanians have sought to keep a low profile in the Syrian conflict despite it being an open secret that Amman accommodates an international operations room which provides military aid to rebels. Jordan has struggled with the influx of Syrian refugees and hundreds of Jordanians have crossed over to Syria to join radical Islamist groups. An activist in southern Syria told the NYT that the vehicles had belonged to a Syrian rebel group. He explained that the Jordanians have become increasingly sensitive about their border as ISIS tries to make territorial gains in southern Syria. The strikes could also be a	

		warning to the Nusra Front who have recently tried to attack the Nasib border crossing.	
17/04/2014			The EP calls , among others, “for the protection of all vulnerable communities [in Syria], inter alia by allowing humanitarian access and lifting all sieges of populated areas, including the Old City of Homs”. It “reiterates its call for the establishment of safe havens along the Turkish-Syrian border, and possibly within Syria, and for the creation of humanitarian corridors by the international community”.
22/04/2014		Mustafa Aykol writes in NYT that although Turkey miscalculated the crisis in Syria and may have unwittingly contributed to the chaos, its intent was not malicious. Aykol describes Erdogan’s foreign policy as “idealism tainted by excessive emotion, ideology and delusions of grandeur”. He says that Turkey now fully recognises the threat posed by radical jihadists within the opposition. EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – violence high ahead of election” (Document EIUCP00020140423ea4m0000x) EIU reports that violence in Iraq is at its highest level before an election since 2005. Most of the violence is concentrated in areas where ISIS is active. The group has threatened to target polling centres and voting card distribution points and has warned people not to vote. It is likely that there will be a low voter turn-out.	Statement by the spokesperson of the EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton on the announcement of presidential elections in Syria: elections organised by the regime outside of the framework of the Geneva Communique of 2012 ignores the basics principles of democracy and undermines efforts for a political solution to the Syrian crisis.

23/04/2013		Anthony Dworkin (ECFR) writes that “a role for the International Criminal Court in Syria seems fitting given what has happened there, but it will not change the dynamics of the conflict”. The increasing European effort to refer Syria to the ICC for war crimes and crimes against humanity is a stark reminder of how few options the EU has to facilitate change in Syria or end the conflict. Dworkin explains that some Europeans believe that the referral would further impede any political solution to the conflict as President Assad would be less willing to leave office and expose himself to possible prosecution. Further, if the ICC fails to gain jurisdiction it would diminish the Court’s relevance. It is also unlikely that Security Council members China and Russia will support the resolution. However, as there is currently no solution to a political transition in sight, there is nothing to lose from an assertive effort for accountability for the atrocities taking place in Syria.	
24/04/2014		Alan Cowell (NYT) reports that British police are to work with charitable organisations to prevent British Muslims travelling to Syria amidst growing concern that these individuals will commit terrorist attacks upon returning home. 40 people have been arrested in the first 3 months of 2014 on charges related to jihadist activities Syria in comparison to 25 for the whole of 2013. Approximately 400 Britons have joined Jihadi groups in Syria. Scotland Yard’s role in counter-efforts has been criticised by some Muslim leaders who say it may dissuade Muslims to participate in these efforts. Somini Sengupta (NYT) reports that the Syrian government and rebel groups are continuing to block humanitarian aid to besieged towns in violation of the legally binding resolution passed by the Security Council on 22 February. The report singles out the regime forces, and two extremist groups, ISIS and the Nusra Front, as the prominent forces violating international humanitarian law. The Security Council is set to review the report next week, although it is believed that Russia	

		is unlikely to support any punitive action, in allyship to the Syrian regime.	
25/04/2014		Tim Arango and Duraid Adnan (NYT) report that ISIS has claimed responsibility for the bombing of a political rally held by a Shia militant group, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, in Iraq. The incident highlights two concerning factors: “the merging of the civil war in Syria with Iraq’s own strengthened Sunni insurgency and the rising influence of Iran”. The group is campaigning for seats in parliament and was welcomed into Iraq’s political system by PM Nouri al-Maliki a few years ago. Asaib Ahl al-Haq is currently fighting in both Iraq and Syria, and is leading a recruitment effort for Syria, funded by Iran who also trains the fighters. The group has been previously involved in sectarian fighting in Iraq and its remobilisation has sparked fears of rising sectarian tensions within the country and has highlighted the weakness of Iraqi security forces. Asaib Ahl al-Haq presents itself as the protector of Iraq’s Shias.	
28/04/2014		ICG reports in detail about the situation in Fallujah since December 2013 and argues that “the potential for miscalculation, or calculated escalation, is enormous”. It argues that ISIS’ rise is a symptom, not the cause, of poor governance in Iraq which is driving instability. According to ICG, ISIS’ initial claim in early January 2014 that it had seized control of Fallujah “was greatly exaggerated: while it raised its black flag above some administration buildings in the city centre, locals blocked most of their forays and forced them to retreat to the outskirts”. ICG claims that by mismanaging the crisis, the Iraqi government gave Fallujah residents little choice but to form an alliance of convenience with ISIS. The army’s siege of Fallujah allowed ISIS to renew its support base in Iraq: “with a high profile from the fighting in Syria and superior weaponry, they once again have become a magnet for the country’s disaffected”. ICG also suggests that by initially exaggerating the threat to Fallujah, exacerbating tensions and allowing	

		the crisis to escalate, Maliki rescued his chances in the 30 April parliamentary elections. <i>Note that last previous ICG report on Iraq was on 14/08/2013, nothing was published in-between.</i> Tim Arango and Duraïd Adnan (NYT) report that the battle between ISIS and government forces rages on. ISIS controls much of Anbar and even held military parades in Fallujah in celebration. Experts fear that an ISIS-held territory stretching from Aleppo through Anbar province to Baghdad is likely. Sunni turnout in the election will most likely be limited as very few polling stations have been set up in Anbar and ISIS has threatened Sunnis not to vote, and Sunni candidates to step down. The NYT explains that the arming of Sunni tribes in the region by the U.S. may have exacerbated the situation, creating space for confrontations between tribes and weapons falling into the hands of ISIS. It is said that some of these tribes have sided with the extremists after witnessing their strength and in the face of a weakening of Iraqi security force. The NYT writes, “the greater fear, though, is that there is no way back this time, that the sectarian division of the nation will become entrenched as the government concentrates its forces on protecting its seat of power in Baghdad”.	
30/04/2014		In a detailed report, ICG analyses growing tensions between ISIS and Turkey. Regarding the situation along the Syrian-Turkish border, ICG claims that ISIS “gained control of two thirds of the (Syrian) border towns and gates” in early 2014. It reports that ISIS “has attacked Turkish NGO workers inside Syria and killed their Syrian employees”. Many of its kidnappings of foreign journalists have not been made public for security reasons, and Turkish intelligence negotiated the release of a Turkish journalist in early January. Further, ISIS “has gained ground to the east, including through attacks on the Syrian Turkmen town of Çobanbeyli”. The report also discusses how Turkish	

		authorities have become much more sensitive to the transnational threat ISIS poses after tensions between ISIS and Turkey heated up in March 2013. ISIS fighters and Turkish soldiers engaged in border clashes in October 2013 and January 2014, and Turkish security forces were wounded in a raid on a suspected ISIS safehouse in Istanbul in late March 2014. <i>Note that last previous ICG op-ed on Syria was on 19/11/2013, nothing was published in-between.</i> Eric Schmitt (NYT) writes that a new report released by the U.S. State Department has found that there has been an increase in autonomous Al-Qaeda affiliates which are focusing on local and regional objectives and taking less direction from AQ's central leadership, which has become decentralised. Tina S. Kaidanow, State Department counterterrorism coordinator, explains that this shift poses a new threat for U.S. interests, as they must not only understand the dynamics of the core AQ directives, but also of local contexts which may signal the direction of AQ affiliates.	
Apr 2014		ICG reports that rebel infighting continued in eastern Syria where ISIS launched an unsuccessful attack on the town of Abu Kamal near the Iraqi border on 14 April. On Iraq, ICG reports that ISIS tightened its grip on Fallujah and started providing basic services. In early April, ISIS pushed eastwards towards Baghdad and established a presence in Abu Ghraib city. ICG accuses the government of continuously using the Anbar crisis to marginalise Sunni opposition and gather domestic and international support. ISIS' suicide bombings continued, among others at a Shia political rally in Baghdad on 25 April, killing 33.	
03/05/2014		HRW reports that ISIS has claimed responsibility for deadly attacks on a Shia election campaign rally and on polling centres in Iraq. On election day, suicide bombs were also launched in Tikrit and Kirkuk. HRW argues that the Iraqi government is exacerbating a humanitarian	

		crisis in Anbar and indiscriminately targeting civilians. It reports that ISIS remains in and around Fallujah and on the outskirts of Ramadi. EIU “Iraq Politics: Alas, it may make little difference” (Document EIUCP00020140504ea530001z) EIU reports that parliamentary elections have gone ahead in Iraq and predicts that the al-Maliki’s coalition will win most of the votes but not enough to govern on its own. “A troubling new feature is the growth of Shia militias operating outside the official army command, but probably with the say-so of Mr Maliki, determined to take on the Sunni guerrillas, no matter if civilians in the way get killed. The tit-for-tat killings, which caused bloody mayhem in 2006-08, have returned with a vengeance.”	
05/05/2014			The EU Counter-Terrorism Coordinator suggests new initiatives at the European level to address the threat of foreign fighters more effectively, namely the creation of a Syria Strategic Communications Advisory Team and of an EU web portal to list, publicise and coordinate humanitarian volunteering opportunities regarding Syria within the EU. Following the parliamentary elections in Iraq, the EU expresses its confidence that the vote counting will be

			“leading to the swift formation of a truly representative government, able to address the many challenges facing Iraq”.
07/05/2014		HRW reports that the Iraqi army has not yet entered Fallujah but on 6 May, 3500 Iraqi soldiers and 750 pro-government militia began an offensive on surrounding towns. HRW reports that journalists are blocked from entering Anbar and that it is relying on Facebook messages by residents and hospital employees.	
15/05/2014		Anne Barnard (NYT) reports that a car bomb has killed at least 43 people and injured dozens more in an apparent attack by ISIS on the Tawhid Brigade, part of the Islamic Front, on the Syrian side of the Bab al-Salam crossing bordering with Turkey. Clashes between ISIS and other insurgents have persisted in Syria. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported that the heavy infighting caused mass displacement, with 6000 people driven from their homes in the province of Deir ez-Zor where the insurgents have been clashing over oil resources.	
21/05/2014		In an opinion piece for the NYT Jonathan Stevenson argues that the U.S. must go beyond diplomacy on Syria and step up its covert military assistance to opposition rebels to secure U.S. interests. Stevenson explains that the rise of ISIS and its split from Al-Qaeda has primed it to seek closer relations with other affiliates such as Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. Any cooperation between the two groups would pose a threat to U.S. security given the power of both organisations. So far, the Yemen-based group has been constrained by U.S. forces in the country, yet an alliance with ISIS would provide them a new base in Syria and as such a prime opportunity to target the US. Stevenson recommends that “Washington could consider creating a trusted elite force of heavily vetted and trained opposition fighters that could take on ISIS and the Nusra Front, help smaller or less	

		capable moderate groups against radical jihadis and possibly form the core of a stabilization force in Syria”. This, he argues, will signal U.S. determination to counter jihadist extremism to Iran and Russia, while possibly enhancing diplomatic efforts and securing U.S. security at home. Further, “American overt assistance raises the price of military engagement for Iran and Hezbollah, making them more likely to come to the bargaining table”.	
24/05/2014	A French-born jihadist who spent over a year fighting for ISIS in Syria opens fire at the Jewish museum in Brussels, killing four people. <i>[Relevance: This is the first ISIS-inspired terrorist attack carried out in Europe by a returning foreign fighter. The attack highlights that ISIS is stepping up its external operations and that foreign fighters who return from Syria to Europe pose a concrete, rather than abstract, threat.]</i>		The EU highlights that EUR 9 million have been contributed through its Development Cooperation Instrument to support Syria’s public health system to cope with the large influx of Iraqi refugees.
27/05/2014		Drawing on reports by Fallujah residents, HRW claims that “ISIS has planted improvised explosive devices along the main highway and other parts of city, and is operating prisons in Fallujah and elsewhere”.	

		Further, ISIS has reportedly taken over parts of Fallujah’s hospital. HRW also reports that ISIS claimed responsibility for nine car bombings in Shia areas of Baghdad which killed at least 34. EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUCP00020140529ea5r0000k) EIU states that it is unclear whether the next Iraqi government will be able to reduce violence in the country which depends on increased levels of cooperation between political elites.	
28/05/2014		Ben Hubbard and Shreya Sinha (NYT) report that President Obama has requested that Congress authorise up to \$5 billion to aid countries “on the front lines” in the fight against terrorism in light of the rise of new jihadist groups in the MENA. The NYT outlines the areas and countries the foremost of these groups operate: Afghanistan, Pakistan, Syria, North Africa, Nigeria, and Somalia. ISIS and the Nusra Front are identified as the two main extremist groups in Syria, which has become “the world’s largest magnet for international jihadists”. The growing influence of the various affiliates across these regions, who finance themselves through activities such as kidnapping-for-ransom, are posing a new kind of challenge for U.S. counterterrorism efforts. David D. Kirkpatrick and Eric Schmitt (NYT) discuss the growing threat to the U.S. from decentralised Al-Qaeda affiliates in the MENA. “More than 5,000 independent Islamist militias have sprung up over the last four years in Syria alone.” As these groups are chiefly focused on local objectives, the question of how to counter them is a complex one. Most of these groups do not have a concrete objective on global jihad and U.S. policy could unwittingly encourage such notions. For instance, Ahrar al-Sham has expressly conveyed its focus on ousting President Bashar al-Assad and establishing an Islamic government, rather than concentrating its efforts on global jihad. Washington’s backing of Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki has fuelled sectarian-based	EU Commissioner Kristina Georgieva says that a silent war rages on in Syria: “200.000 Syrians have died due to a lack of access to healthcare” (...) “which is in fact more than the estimated 162,000 people who have died as a direct result of warfare”. (...) “All parties to the conflict must allow unhindered access for principled humanitarian aid, including medical assistance, to reach the most vulnerable people in all areas of the country, including hard-to-reach and besieged areas, by all possible channels including cross line and cross-border.”

		conspiracies of U.S. support for Shias in the region. Yemen based Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has stood out among other affiliates for its express ambition to target US mainland. Daniel Levy (ECFR) writes that the Ukraine crisis has “been received in the Middle East with a collective ‘I told you so’”. The tensions in Ukraine will have the most ramifications in the region for Syria. The West may demonstrate its hard power in a stand against Russia through an expansion of its military activities within Syria, although Levy states that Western military operations have not been changed by events in the Donbas region or the Black Sea so far. Most likely, a protracted stand-off between Russia and the West may provide an opportunity for various players in the region to exploit this tactical advantage, however, most significantly, it adds an undesirable layer of uncertainty and instability to a region already on the brink of combusting. EIU “Iraq: Country Outlook” (Document EIUCP00020140529ea5s00037) “As things stand, the results make Mr Maliki favourite to secure a third term as prime minister, but a broad coalition of Shia, Sunni and Kurdish opponents could also reach a majority. As a result, the process of coalition-building may be protracted.”	
29/05/2014		Drawing on conversations with two Western foreign fighters in Syria, Kimiko de Freytas-Tamura (NYT) explains some of the motivations and outlooks of Westerners fighting in Syria. Both men expressed their disgust at the West’s failure to stop killings in Syria, and their desire for the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in Syria. One said he planned to die in Syria while the other suggested that Western governments were right to be concerned about the return of foreign fighters and to expect a response to their attacks in the Middle East. Both jihadists were contacted via social media and messaging	The Council decides to extend its economic sanctions on Syria until 1 June 2015.

		applications. It is thought that British and French fighters make up most Western fighters in Syria. Analysts say that some who do not travel to Syria for jihad but for purely humanitarian purposes end up being radicalised.	
May 2014		ICG reports that ISIS gained ground in eastern Syria (Deir ez-Zor province) throughout the month of May. It also reports that deadly bombings across Iraq continued which killed at least 172. According to ICG, the Iraqi army escalated the fight against ISIS and local militia in and around Fallujah by using indiscriminate force (barrel bombs). ISIS reportedly clashed not only with previously allied local militia in Fallujah, after being accused of kidnapping, beating and disarming local fighters, but also with other local groups in eastern Anbar over the sale of gas and other commodities.	
01/06/2014		Scott Sayare (NYT) reports that French authorities have arrested a returning fighter from Syria for the killings carried out at the Jewish Museum in Brussels. The suspect is 29-year-old Frenchman Mehdi Nemmouche who has an extensive criminal history and whom prison officials had flagged as a radicalised Islamist to authorities 3 weeks before he left for Syria. It is believed that Nemmouche is linked to ISIS although it is unknown whether the group helped him with the attack or if it was carried out through his own volition. Nemmouche was carrying an assault rifle and revolver, along with a GoPro with a piece of white fabric with the insignia of ISIS. It is said that the jihadist was radicalised during his time in prison and his arrest has raised questions about the effectiveness of authorities in tracking potential suspects travelling to and from Syria. It is thought that at least 3000 Europeans have fought or are fighting in Syria, more than 700 of them being French. EIU “Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa economy: EIU’s latest assumptions” (Document EIUCP00020140603ea6100045)	

		EIU reports that the war in Syria shows no signs of abating and that Assad's government is growing more confident about its chances of survival as highlighted by Assad's announcement that he will run for president in the June election which EIU believes he will win. "The war in Syria is leading to an increase in regional sectarian violence, including in Iraq and Lebanon".	
04/06/2014	ISIS begins its advance on Mosul as part of its northern Iraq offensive, and also launches parallel attacks on Samarra (125 km north of Baghdad) and Tikrit over the next days. <i>[Relevance: These developments highlight ISIS' military capability and the weakness of the Iraqi security forces.]</i>	Melissa Eddy (NYT) reports that two Lebanese brothers and a German man have been arrested in Germany on charges of being involved in a radical Islamic group fighting in Syria. One of the brothers is a returning foreign fighter who had joined ISIS– he was arrested on his way to return to Syria with military equipment, medicine and money. It is believed that around 300 Germans are fighting in Syria, and that the dozen who have returned pose a terrorist threat. Officials say the radicalised fighters have the skills to build bombs and orchestrate attacks, although there is no indication of any concrete plans.	EEAS statement on the presidential elections in Syria: "The election on 3 June cannot be considered as a genuinely democratic vote. (...) We call on the regime to re-engage in genuine political negotiations that will produce conditions allowing for a real expression of the will of the Syrian people."
05/06/2014		Amnesty International reports about a raid on a northern Syrian village on 29 May in which 15 civilians, including 7 children, were summarily executed. The executions, likely carried out by ISIS, happened after nearby clashes between ISIS and YPG forces had escalated. Amnesty International fears that "these civilians were killed as retribution for their perceived support of the YPG, either directly or indirectly through their Yazidi Kurdish landowners, or because they were mistaken for Yazidi Kurds". It further reports: "The fighting between ISIS and YPG is believed to have been sparked by a disagreement over the control of large amounts of grain stored in the village of Tell Halaf,	

		which is under YPG control. On the same day as the summary killings took place, crops belonging to Yazidi Kurds in al-Tleiliye and its vicinity were set on fire”. Kareem Fahim (NYT) writes that hundreds of ISIS militants stormed the Iraqi city of Samarra in an attempt to take control of the city. The Iraqi army and special forces launched a counteroffensive and managed to take back most neighbourhoods although ISIS retained partial control over at least two neighbourhoods. “The attack also raised the specter of deadly sectarian incitement, as the heavily armed militants took up positions within a mile of a hallowed Shia shrine in the city that has served as a focal point for strife in the past”. The loss of Samarra would have been a ruinous blow to the Iraqi government after failing to route the militants in Fallujah and Ramadi.	
07/06/2014		Kareem Fahim (NYT) reports that ISIS attacked a university in Ramadi on the third day of intensifying violence in Iraq. This was part of a series of lightning attacks in major cities across the country. Although government forces have been able to recover most of the territory seized by ISIS during these three days, “the scope of the attacks appears to have taken officials by surprise, while also signalling that the insurgency is gaining strength and expanding its reach”. In a sign of exasperated efforts of the Iraqi government in the standoff in Fallujah, the army has backtracked on its pledge not to harm civilians and has started to indiscriminately shell the city. The surge in violence has significantly raised the death toll in Iraq.	
09/06/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – ISIS asserts itself beyond Fallujah” (Document EIUCP00020140610ea6900001) EIU reports that ISIS has stepped up its operations and is attempting to extend its territorial control inside and outside of Anbar province. Taking advantage of the post-election power vacuum in Iraq, ISIS has launched several assaults over the past week in Samarra, Mosul and	

		Anbar. They have also killed the leader of a pro-government Sunni militia.	
11/06/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: ISIS takes Mosul” (Document EIUCP00020140612ea6b0001x) EIU reports that ISIS took control of Mosul on 10 June and is advancing towards Baghdad. They believe that ISIS’ offensive on Mosul was a result of both long-term planning and opportunism whilst the Iraqi government was preoccupied with post-election negotiations and exposing the state’s weaknesses. EIU states that this is a potential turning point in Iraq and that the response of Iraq’s divided forces will determine whether ISIS will be able to continue expanding its operations. “ISIS appears to have launched offensives in many of the intervening cities such as Baiji and Tikrit and may launch another attempt on Samarra.”	Joint statement following the third ministerial meeting of the EU and the League of Arab States (LAS) on the security situation in Iraq: both organisations call on the Iraqi government and regional government in Kurdistan to cooperate to restore security in Mosul and the broader Nineveh province. In a declaration, ministers call for a ceasefire in Syria and stress the urgent need for a political process to end the crisis. They urge the international community to better assist countries hosting Syrian refugees.
12/06/2014		As ISIS makes significant territorial gains, HRW reports that the group has been carrying out systematic abuses on civilians and fears that they will do the same in the newly-controlled territories. Further, HRW documents abuses by Iraqi government forces, including targeting civilian objects and torture, in their fight against ISIS and anti-government groups. Amnesty International reports that thousands of Syrian civilians are living under sieges imposed by security forces loyal to Assad and other non-state armed groups which amount to war crimes. “Amnesty International received reports from several sources in Yarmouk that the	Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva states that a new humanitarian crisis is underway in Iraq. “The roots of this latest crisis are complex and include the alienation of the beleaguered Sunni Arab population, a state of generalized violence, opportunistic armed opposition groups and a spill

		armed groups were at times blocking access to areas where distributions were carried out. The armed groups also threatened other residents with violence.”	over effect from the terrible war raging in Syria”.
13/06/2014		HRW comments that ISIS is operating as a ‘shadow state’ in Mosul and is collecting ‘jihad tax’ from businesses. The Iraqi security forces are both corrupt and incapable of confronting ISIS, and civilians do not trust them. Sunni tribal militias are currently fighting alongside ISIS as their hatred of PM Maliki is greater than their disdain for the jihadist group. Without meaningful governmental reform, the threat of ISIS will not be quelled. EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – ISIS advances towards Baghdad” (Document EIUCP00020140614ea6d0000r) EIU reports that ISIS and allied forces are advancing on Baghdad. Iraqi forces are reportedly abandoning their position in the face of ISIS. Further, ISIS has taken over Baiji which holds Iraq’s largest oil refinery. “Currently ISIS and Naqshbandi forces are advancing down towards Taiji, while other ISIS units are mobilising in southern and western Baghdad.”	
14/06/2014		HRW reports that ISIS executed 15 civilians in northern Syrian on 29 May 2014. “Residents and local Kurdish officials gave two possible motives for the attack. One was that ISIS took revenge on the villagers because it suspected them of supporting the YPG. The other was that ISIS thought the village was inhabited by Yazidis, a small predominately Kurdish sect that many Islamist groups in Syria and Iraq perceive to be infidels.”	
16/06/2014		A team of ECFR experts discusses the ten global consequences of the Ukraine Crisis. The authors assert that to reduce dependence on Russia for energy resources, Europeans will inevitably turn their attention to the Middle East. They highlight the new pipeline options via Turkey which may be a promising opportunity for oil from the Kurdish (and some other) regions of Iraq.	

		EIU “Iraq Politics: ISIS pushes on but resistance has increased” (Document EIUCP00020140617ea6g0001o) EIU reports that ISIS has continued to gain territory over the weekend, including the key city of Tel Afar on 15 June which is in a strategic position between Iraq and Syria. Tel Afar has a large Turkoman population who are likely to be in extreme danger as Shia Muslims. “The flashpoint between Kurds and ISIS could well be the Sinjar region, between Tel Afar and the Syrian border (the main city on the Syrian side is Al Hasakah, where ISIS is active). Sinjar is mainly inhabited by Yazidis, a Kurdish speaking non-Muslim minority, and Peshmerga forces are projecting into this area.” EIU reports that the Iraqi army has disintegrated and Shia militias are rapidly mobilising, some even returning from fighting in Syria, to confront ISIS in Iraq. The Iraqi government is yet to present a united front in the face of ISIS.	
17/06/2014		ECFR writes that Bashar al-Assad’s so-called victory in the Syrian presidential election in June emphasises his staunch hold on power. Although not through democratic means, Assad aimed to gain legitimacy through these elections which further enhances his domination in Syria. Coupled with the recent seizure of Mosul by ISIS, it is argued that Assad will use an anti-terrorist narrative to depict his opposition to terrorists and stoke fears of a jihadist takeover in Syria to boost domestic support. Assad’s re-election will hinder efforts for a credible transition government and consequently the civil war will not end any time soon. It is likely that violence in Syria and regional confrontation will intensify.	
19/06/2014		HRW highlights the abuses in PYD-run enclaves in Syria. It provides detailed background on the Kurdish role in the Syria civil war and the abuses and attacks that they have faced from ISIS.	Following the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people as a result of ISIS’ expansion in Iraq, the EU increases its humanitarian

			assistant to Iraq by EUR 5 million.
20/06/2014		ICG outlines that the surge of jihadi activity in Iraq is an outcome of deteriorating and poor governance coupled with increasing sectarianism in the country. These two factors must be addressed to avoid further advancements by ISIS, and the U.S. and Iran must focus on encouraging this rather than rushing into military intervention. PM Maliki's hardline policies targeting Sunnis has resulted in increased polarisation. The government has been weakened by its continued marginalisation of Sunnis, whose grievances have been suppressed. The ICG states that they have consistently warned that this trend would result in a worsening of the crisis, and the fall of Mosul and western Iraq into ISIS' hands has been a direct result of this trend. The ICG advises that there should not be a kneejerk response to this surge of jihadi activity as they believe that ISIS is not as close to seizing Baghdad as it is being reported. The group do not have a long-term plan past establishing an Islamic State and this is their major downfall. Yet, it is clear that ISIS' successes in Iraq and Syria have a direct impact on each other. Baghdad's policies have facilitated and empowered ISIS in Syria where they have gained oil and arms which in turn has allowed them to gain ground in Anbar. The ICG recommends that the U.S. and Iran desist from the constant reinforcement of PM Maliki and engage in meaningful restructuring of the currently malfunctioning government. Furthermore, PM Maliki must reconfigure the armed forces instead of relying on Shia militias which further exacerbate the sectarian tensions within the country. HRW comments that Iraq is on the brink of civil war as PM Maliki has enlisted the help of Shia militias, known for their human rights abuses, in the fight against ISIS. This will further deepen sectarian tensions within the country. To confront a threat like ISIS, "no counter-insurgency campaign will work without a fundamentally altered	

		political approach that bridges the sectarian divide. The government needs to convince moderate Sunnis that they have a place in the future Iraq.”	
21/06/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: A Winning Hand” (Document EIUCP00020140624ea6l0000k) EIU reports that senior Kurdish individuals in Erbil contacted their counterparts in Baghdad to warn them of ISIS’ advancements two days before the capture of Mosul, but to no effect. Since ISIS’ move toward the south there has been little to no communication between Erbil and Baghdad.	
22/06/2014	ISIS captures two key border crossings to Syria and Jordan in Iraq’s Anbar province. It also seized Qaim border crossing to Syria and four strategically located towns in Anbar over the previous two days. <i>[Relevance: the events suggested that Iraq had lost control of its border with Syria, might be losing control of its border with Jordan, and that ISIS was occupying most of Anbar.]</i>	HRW reports that ISIS is recruiting children in Syria through the offer of free schooling, which includes weapons training. Some children are joining as they are following their relatives or friends whilst others join out of not having any other schooling options due to living in a battle zone.	
23/06/2014		EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUCP00020140624ea6n0001b)	EEAS statement on the removal of chemical weapons

		EIU believes that it is unlikely that ISIS will be able to capture Baghdad and that the south of Iraq will remain relatively secure. However, ISIS' further advancements through Iraq pose a significant challenge to the future political and territorial integrity of Iraq. EIU "USA Politics: Quick View – Iraq requests US assistance against Sunni militia" (Document EIUCP00020140624ea6n0001s) The U.S. will deploy 300 military advisors to Iraq to aid the army in executing a counter-offensive against ISIS. "The U.S. would like to bolster the government in Baghdad (albeit one divested of Mr Maliki) and weaken ISIS without strengthening the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. But delivering on these ambitions will be extremely difficult."	from Syria: "Today's development marks the fulfillment of the main goal of this operation: the removal of the entire chemical weapons stockpile from Syria, so that the risk of having them used again is eliminated." Remarks by EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton following the FAC meeting: The situation in Iraq is not only a major security crisis, but also a serious humanitarian disaster. EU ministers remain committed to Iraq's sovereignty and unity and will continue to support the government's efforts against terrorism as this is essential for the security of the whole region. Press release on main results of FAC meeting. The Council supports its Member States in the prevention of kidnapping for ransom by terrorist groups, and efforts to secure the safe release of hostages
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			without payment. “It calls on the Iraqi government to make every effort to protect all civilians, ensure a response to the needs of the affected populations, provide essential services and facilitate the safe and unhindered passage for civilians fleeing the violence and safe access for humanitarian actors to all affected populations. The EU acknowledges the burden placed on the Kurdistan region and the Kurdistan Regional Government, which are hosting a large number of IDPs, and trusts that it will continue to respond to IDP needs. (...) It reiterates its support to the Iraqi authorities in the fight against terrorism and emphasises that the security response needs to be combined with a sustainable political solution by the Government of Iraq involving all Iraqi leaders and communities in a spirit of national unity, putting their differences aside to jointly combat this threat and to
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			restore security and the rule of law.” The EU strengthens its sanctions against the Syrian regime. 12 ministers of the Syrian government are now added to the list of those sanctioned.
24/06/2014		Julien Barnes-Dacey and Daniel Levy (ECFR) warn that ISIS’ continuous seizure of territory through Syria and Iraq “poses a grave threat to regional and international security” and “could thrust Iraq – and the wider region – into an unprecedented sectarian civil war”. They recommend a carefully measured response from the EU which does not solely focus on counterterrorism (CT). A purely CT approach would legitimise PM Maliki’s military approach and diminish the prospect of necessary political reforms, further exacerbating sectarian tensions at a time where a political deal is desperately needed. The international community should encourage the formation of a more inclusive system of governance which allocates meaningful authority to Sunnis to allow for the alleviation of entrenched polarisation and distrust. Finally, international actors should encourage regional players such as Iran and Gulf states to encourage domestic groups to work together. The authors explain that regional support of a deal in Syria is possible considering the current crisis in Iraq. HRW comments that residents of Iraq’s northern al-Hamdaniyah district are fearful that ISIS’ standoff with Peshmerga forces will not last and that they will be its next target. The district is a religiously diverse one and there are fears that minorities will be abducted or killed by ISIS fighters.	

		EIU “Iraq: Country Outlook” (Document EIUCP00020140625ea6o0003v) EIU reports that ISIS’ continued advances in Iraq pose a fundamental challenge to the territorial integrity of Iraq. Shia militias and volunteers have joined the Iraqi army in their counter-offensive against ISIS, and the U.S. and Iran are to provide additional support. EIU “Iraq Economy: The impact on the oil sector of ISIS’ advances” (Document EIUCP00020140625ea6o0005g) EIU reports that ISIS has control over a couple of small oil-producing fields north of Tikrit which they may use as for financing purposes. ISIS has a significant impact on the oil sector infrastructure. They are reportedly now in control of the oil refinery complex in Baiji city. But the refinery is likely to be damaged and ISIS will need to transport crude from other fields which may lead to fuel shortages and price rises across northern Iraq.	
25/06/2014		HRW argues that Iraq’s security forces are overstretched and crumbling, justifying the government’s co-operation with brutal Shia militias in the fight against ISIS. Sunni Baathist groups have joined ISIS in the battle in Iraq. These deep sectarian divides were ignited by PM Maliki’s discriminatory policies which alienated potential Sunni allies, and now ISIS fighters backed by Sunni militias “are gleefully finishing off the job that Maliki started: destroying the state”. EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – ISIS consolidates its position in Anbar” (Document EIUCP00020140626ea6p00024) The disintegration of the Iraqi army in parts of Anbar has enabled ISIS to consolidate its control in the province. “Tribal militias are particularly strong in Anbar province and will be key to the battle for control. The alliances are prone to shift, as happened in 2008 when most turned against ISIS’ predecessor organisation, al-Qaida in Iraq...	

		Many have shifted their position again (now backing ISIS) because of disillusionment with the government and ISIS' renewed momentum.”	
26/06/2014		HRW has identified 3 execution sites used by ISIS, 2 of which they have located. They believe that ISIS transports its prisoners by truck to the sites. EIU “Iraq Politics: Kurdish Calculations” (Document EIUCP00020140627ea6q0000t) EIU writes that the advance of ISIS through Iraq presents the KRG with an opening to strengthen its bargaining power over long-running disputes over territory, oil exports and budget transfers with the Iraqi central government. The Peshmerga have filled the vacuum left by the collapsing Iraqi army, consequently allowing them to secure long-disputed territories that Kurds have argued should be a part of Iraqi Kurdistan. EIU identifies Suleiman Beg and the Rabia border crossing with Syria as potential flashpoints for a Peshmerga-ISIS battle. Although, the Peshmerga currently offer the most credible military force in Iraq fighting against ISIS, EIU explains that unless the KRG addresses the concerns of the non-Kurdish populations it is protecting, there is a risk of insurgency. EIU “Iraq/Syria Politics: Quick View – Assad aircraft hit ISIS targets in Iraq” (Document EIUCP00020140627ea6q00009) EIU reports that Bashar al-Assad carried out airstrikes against ISIS targets within Iraq which Iraqi PM Nouri al-Maliki says he was not consulted on but welcomed this nonetheless. EIU reports that a picture published by ISIS of one of its commanders shaking hands with the Egyptian leader of Jabhat al-Nusra indicates a possible merger between the two rivals which will have significant implications for the balance of power in Syria and will facilitate ISIS in advancing through areas near the Jordanian border and Golan Heights.	

27/06/2014	ISIS announces the establishment of a caliphate, which would span from Aleppo in northern Syria to Diyala province in eastern Iraq. It proclaims its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, as caliph. It renames itself “Islamic State” and claims that all Jihadi groups worldwide should accept its supreme authority. ISIS calls on all able Muslims worldwide to emigrate to the caliphate. <i>[Relevance: The move, motivated by ISIS’ military victories, challenged the legitimacy of al-Qaeda. It enhanced ISIS’ appeal among radicalised Muslims globally, including huge numbers of converts to Islam.]</i>	Mark Leonard (ECFR) writes that the geopolitical struggle between Iran and Saudi Arabia sets the current dynamics of the region. Leonard says that “the United States is no longer the main definer of order but rather a resource that Iran and Saudi can use in their struggle against one another”. The rise of ISIS and the decline of US influence in Iraq may bring the two powers to act in concert against a common enemy. Such bilateral cooperation would be necessary to stop the violence. Drawing on conversations with analysts, Leonard explains that Tehran may be open to such cooperation, however, he believes that such a bargain between the two powers is some way off. “The potential rewards still outweigh the risks of the struggle, particularly for Saudi Arabia, which sees the conflicts as a means of reversing Iranian hegemony in Syria and Iraq”. Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) comments that there is a growing symbiosis between the conflicts in Iraq and Syria. While ISIS is viewed as the key unifying force behind the two conflicts, a regional cold war between Iran and Saudi Arabia is also exacerbating the issue. “Syria is ground zero for this struggle but Iraq is in many ways seen as more important”. Sectarian tensions have been utilised as a means of mobilisation to exert influence in the two conflict zones by Iran and Saudi Arabia. The threat of ISIS has been used by both Damascus and Baghdad to divert attention from domestic grievances and their military cooperation is likely to increase. However, although key actors view Syria and Iraq as one battlefield, domestic actors are motivated by country specific grievances and they are the shaping force of the events in each nation. Although both conflicts originate from grievances regarding political and sectarian representation which have manifested similar results of armed conflict and the rise of ISIS, they are directed by differing political economies. One further difference is that a majority population is in battle against a minority-led government in Syria, whilst in Iraq the conflict is marked by the	
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		discontent of a minority Sunni population against a majority Shia rule. Meaningful progress rests on local grievances being addressed through domestic deals. Barnes-Dacey asserts that it is likely that Assad and Maliki will use the threat of ISIS to garner greater support of their military operations by external backers, which “will only further fuel the fragmenting rather than unifying dynamics of the two conflicts”. EUISS underlines that the knock-on effects of terrorism in the Arab world are being felt across the Mediterranean. While recognising the “shared interest in ensuring that terrorism and violent radicalisation be eliminated from the region”, the EU has consistently stressed that the fight against terrorism must not come at the expense of civil liberties and human rights. HRW reports that ISIS is continuing its targeting of Shias and minorities in Iraq following its capture of Mosul. Residents of villages north of Mosul have explained that ISIS fighters announced over speakers that Shias must leave and then separated Shias from Sunnis. Shias were taken and the residents believe that they have most likely been killed.	
30/06/2014		HRW reports that ISIS abducted 153 children who are predominantly Kurdish and are forcing lessons in Sharia and jihadist ideology on them. HRW suggests that this may be a recruiting tactic.	
June 2014		ICG reports that ISIS has made significant territorial gains over the month of June in north western Iraq, including Mosul and Tikrit, and has declared the establishment of an Islamic caliphate in these areas. PM Maliki’s allies and hundreds of thousands of civilians have fled the region, whilst others have celebrated these gains as ‘liberation’ from central government control. Meanwhile, Kurdish forces have gained control of Kirkuk. Maliki has stated that he has been granted ‘unlimited powers’ by the cabinet to combat jihadi militants and retake seized territories (an operation to retake Tikrit was launched), while	

		there are reports that the government has lost control over key border crossings with Syria and Jordan. The U.S. has deployed drones and plans to send 300 military advisors, and Iran has sent 2000 troops to assist the Iraqi government. On Syria, ICG reports that President Assad's orchestrated re-election on 3 June demonstrates his steady consolidation of control of Damascus, Homs and in between, and that regime forces have regained control of Kasab, a town bordering Turkey. However, there are clear limitations as the return of pro-regime Shia foreign fighters to Iraq can deplete pro-regime forces. The ICG states that northern rebels have reported a modest increase in military support from foreign backers, yet observers are concerned about the stability of such inter-state cooperation. The death toll has continued to increase as the fighting between ISIS and other rebels persist in Deir ez-Zor, and ISIS has gained control over the city's key entrance most of its western countryside. The regime struck several ISIS targets, including their headquarters in Raqqa, killing 50 people. The ICG reports that anti-ISIS militants, including Jabhat al-Nusra, has set aside their ideological differences and formed a local alliance to cooperate in their battle against ISIS.	
01/07/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View – Parliament fails to appoint speaker" (Document EIUCP00020140702ea7100034) EIU reports that the Iraqi parliament failed to reach an agreement on a speaker after meeting for the first time on 1 July, despite the fact that Iraq faces a significant crisis in the face of the advancements of ISIS and the threat of Kurdish secession. EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View – KRG President threatens referendum" (Document EIUCP00020140702ea7100035) EIU reports that the president of the KRG, Masoud Barzani, has made a statement to the BBC in which he claims independence as the right of the Kurdish region and that the seizure of territories in Iraq by ISIS has	

		effectively already partitioned the country. EIU explains that the advancements of ISIS have allowed the KRG to take control of most of the disputed territories in Iraq and that in the event of a referendum, the results would almost certainly rule in favour of independence.	
02/07/2014		ICG's Peter Harling details that Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki has made limitless use out of his 'war on terror' policy to isolate Sunnis and weaken the state to an unfathomable extent. By labelling Sunni opposition as 'terrorists' and responding to their demonstrations with a hardline approach, Maliki has created a sectarian, corrupt and ineffective security apparatus. Harling states that the support of the U.S. and Iran has enabled Maliki doing so, despite clear signs of an impending threat as armed Sunni groups and Shia militia started to revive. Yet, the key issue of the crisis is "how power is exercised in Iraq, and the nature of its institutions" as this is what enables Maliki to proceed as he does. Harling explains that the more Maliki fails at ending the crisis and sectarianism increases, the more he consolidates his position. Harling argues that it was Maliki's own actions which have helped create the space for jihadist forces to surge. Andrew Hammond (ECFR) explains what the establishment of a caliphate means in practice. Hammond states that ISIS leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi's announcement as the state's 'caliph' signals that ISIS is using the Ottoman caliphate as a reference point. It is highly unlikely, as with previous caliphates, that any Muslims outside of its territories will pledge allegiance to the new Islamic State. Its establishment will have the most implication for Iraq in which it has established a base for its operations. Consequently, Gulf states have little to worry about, especially as ISIS commentary has not indicated any of these states are a potential target. Hammond asserts that ISIS is the product of a specific sectarian moment in the politics of the Middle East, with particular focus on Shiism and Western neo-imperialism. Therefore, although the caliphate underscores the fragility of the state	

		structures of Iraq and Syria, it does not indicate the fall of these countries to a “new era of Islamic empire”.	
05/07/2014		EIU “MENA Politics: Tethered by history” (Document EIUCP00020140706ea7500013) EIU writes on the interconnected fate of Arab countries and the failures of the Arab Spring. It explains that the civil wars within the region have empowered jihadist groups such as ISIS, which highlights the dire circumstances which Arab politics have reached. EIU discusses different arguments for why such a condition has come about in Arab politics. It highlights that “Islamists exploit class resentment to expand their base; governments stoke sectarian strife to justify their security apparatus”, which is most obvious in the cases of Syria and Iraq.	
08/07/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – Iraqi forces make slow progress in retaking Tikrit” (Document EIUCP00020140709ea7800058) EIU reports that the Iraqi security forces launched a counteroffensive against ISIS on 26 June to retake lost territory. However, although they hold much larger manpower than ISIS they performed poorly. Iraqi security forces focused their attention on Shia heartlands, Samarra and Baghdad, rather than Sunni-inhabited territories.	
09/07/2014		Myriam Benraad (ECFR) writes that ISIS is “the world’s wealthiest terrorist group” with funds of millions of dollars making its defeat dependent on sufficient socioeconomic reforms by the next Iraqi government. Benraad explains that the jihadists have cultivated a comprehensive war economy that is central to their strategy. They have been acquiring resources in Iraq and more recently in Syria since the U.S. occupation of Iraq in 2003. Alongside the exploitation of oil resources and raw material, the group has employed tactics such as looting banks, selling electric power, trafficking antiquities, and taxing local businesses in order to become self-sufficient. They are reported to have the highest paid members. For this reason, the capture of hydrocarbon-rich Mosul and northern Iraq was pivotal for ISIS’	

		subsistence. It is said that each oil and gas field that the Islamic State has control over provides it with millions of dollars. HRW reports that Iraqi PM Maliki's new media restrictions as part of his 'war on terror' policy go beyond the confines of international law and give precedence to pro-government journalism. These new media laws "will hinder efforts to resolve Iraq's dire political, economic and security crisis. Balanced reporting and open debate, rather than enforced cheerleading, are much more likely to help the country step back from the brink."	
10/07/2014		ICG's Joost Hiltermann writes that the advance of ISIS through Iraq has provided Iraqi Kurds an opportunity to take control of areas in northern Iraq, namely Kirkuk, which they have long claimed as their own. He explains that Kirkuk holds a fundamental economic value due to its vital location as it lies on top of one of Iraq's largest oil fields. Until recently, these oil revenues have been reaped predominantly by Baghdad. The completion of a new pipeline between Iraqi Kurdistan and Turkey has now provided the Kurds with an opportunity to ship Kurdish oil to Turkey without having to gain permission from Baghdad first. Hiltermann details that if the Kurds are able to establish buyers for their oil whilst the Iraqi government continues to malfunction under the strain of the sectarian war, it will be a significant step towards Kurdish independence – which would include Kirkuk. Yet, there are some obstacles, namely resistance from the U.S. and Turkey. Hiltermann draws attention to the fact that ISIS is "virtually at the city gates" of Kirkuk and although they are currently focused on the Shias, this could change in any given moment and cooperation through an inclusive national pact between the Kurds and Baghdad is as urgent as ever, otherwise the conflict may be endless.	
11/07/2014		HRW reports that Iraqi security forces have executed at least 255 Sunni prisoners since 9 June 2014 in what appears to be revenge killings for atrocities by ISIS. HRW advises that the U.S. and other	

		countries engaged in Iraq should halt military assistance to the Maliki government and that an international inquiry into violations of human rights and laws of war must take place. EIU “Iraq/Kuwait Politics: A growing threat: the Islamic State and Kuwait” (Document EIUCP00020140712ea7b00020) EIU reports that Kuwait has deployed troops to the Iraqi border, falling short of direct military intervention, as it faces both an internal and external threat from ISIS. EIU explains that a weak and unstable Iraq poses a risk of spillover into Kuwait. Furthermore, the civil war in Syria has resulted in Kuwait becoming a hub for fundraising for Syrian opposition forces which has created an increasing strain on sectarian sentiments within Kuwait.	
12/07/2014		EIU “Iraq/Syria Politics: Caliphornia dreamin’” (Document EIUCP00020140715ea7c00019) EIU explains that ISIS has employed “a mix of ruthlessness, astute publicity and clever tactics” to exceed expectations. Their advancements in Iraq and Syria have followed a pattern of recruitment of allied tribal groups and local militias whom they court with money and weapons and later assassinate once they have served their purpose. Those who refuse to pledge allegiance to ISIS face the same fate. EIU reports that Abu Bakr al Baghdadi, the self-declared leader of the Islamic caliphate, faces significant hurdles as surveys conducted in Syria and public announcements made by leading Sunni clerics show that there is little support of the caliphate or recognition of its legitimacy.	
14/07/2014		Amnesty reports about a significant increase in sectarian tension since ISIS took control of Mosul. ISIS’ choice of targets for its killing and abductions seems to lean toward ethnic and religious minorities (Shia, Yazidi, Christians) which is prompting a mass exodus of these groups. Iraqi government forces are also carrying out abuses and revenge attacks on Sunni detainees. “Local tribal chiefs are the only ones who	

		at times can have influence over ISIS, to obtain information or negotiate the release of those abducted.” EIU “Iraq Politics: The growing rift between the Kurds and Nouri al-Maliki” (Document EIUCP00020140715ea7e00028) EIU reports that tensions between the Kurds and Iraqi PM Nouri- al-Maliki are escalating as the PM has accused the Kurds of colluding with ISIS, resulting in Kurdish ministers boycotting the federal cabinet. The takeover of the oilfields in Kirkuk by KRG forces on 11 July have further deepened the rift between the Kurds and Baghdad. These increased tensions make the secession of Iraqi Kurdistan an even more likely possibility, which will in turn have severe consequences for Iraqi efforts to recapture territory lost to ISIS without the aid of the Peshmerga.	
15/07/2014			Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva welcomes UNSC Resolution 2165 on humanitarian access inside Syria as “a step forward”. “I sincerely believe that the Resolution will expand the delivery of life-saving assistance by the most direct routes to those in greatest need and in particular across four international border crossings. It will speed assistance to nearly three million people, among them children, women and the elderly, who have not

			received regular relief aid for many months. From now on UN agencies will be able to travel across borders without receiving the prior authorisation of the Government of Syria.”
18/07/2014		EIU “Iraq: Key developments” (Document EIUCP00020140719ea7i00027) EIU argues that the declaration of a caliphate by ISIS poses a major challenge to Iraq’s political and territorial integrity. EIU predicts high levels of violence and sectarian killings in the north and west of Iraq as it is doubtful that the government will be able to regain territory lost to ISIS. However, the south, including its oilfields, will remain more secure as it is unlikely that ISIS will be able to gain control of Baghdad. EIU also expects the KRG to push forward with its goal of independence as it continues to make territorial gains.	
19/07/2014		HRW documents the killing, kidnapping and threatening of religious and ethnic minorities (particularly Shia Shabak, Shia Turkmen, Yazidis and Assyrians) by ISIS since its capture of Mosul. “ISIS seems intent on wiping out all traces of minority groups from areas it now controls in Iraq”.	
20/07/2014		HRW argues that Iraq’s leaders have a long way to go, and little time left, to make the reforms needed to restore the rule of law. For Iraq to survive, its leaders need urgently to take back the reins of power from the militias. HRW reports about atrocities committed by ISIS and the faltering efforts of Iraqi security forces to gain control, and the overall continued destabilisation of Iraq.	
21/07/2014		ICG’s Noah Bonsey writes that ISIS has gained the resources and freed up the manpower required to retake ground in and around Aleppo following its recent success in Deir ez-Zor province. The simultaneous battle that the rebels are fighting against regime forces and ISIS has	

		weakened them. Bonsey writes that the Syrian rebels “lack the organization and resources to halt the regime's progress in severing rebel supply lines” which will ultimately benefit ISIS. He explains that ISIS has taken advantage of the backlash against the authoritarian and sectarian driven actions of the Iraqi government which has driven many to support the group, and they now aim to exploit similar grievances in Syria. Bonsey states that U.S. support of the rebels is a key variable and that the U.S. must now make take tough decisions in Syria in order to follow through on a coherent policy which will support the rebel forces and limit ISIS’ expansion.	
22/07/2014		HRW reports that Iraqi security forces have carried out indiscriminate air strikes while trying to retake areas controlled by ISIS. It argues that “governments that are helping Iraq in its military campaign should pull back their aid until Iraqi forces and any other groups supporting them end their indiscriminate attacks on civilians”.	EU reinforces sanctions against the Syrian regime. The EC has targeted three additional people and nine entities.
25/07/2014			EU statement on the election of a new Iraqi President: “The EU now calls on all Iraq's political leaders to work towards the speedy formation of a new government under a leadership seeking national participation and broad national reconciliation.”
26/07/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Nearly all gone” (Document EIUCP00020140729ea7q00008) EIU writes that ISIS is evicting or killing the last remaining Christians in Mosul. Christians residing in the city were first told that they were to convert to Islam, pay a special tax, or leave by 18 July, however, the decision was overturned and they were informed by loudspeaker that they must all leave Mosul by the next day or be killed. EIU reports that	

		ISIS members spray painted the letter ‘N’ for Nassarah, meaning Christian, on their homes and declared them the property of the Islamic State. The majority of Christians from Mosul have now fled to either the east of Iraq or the north of Kurdistan.	
28/07/2014		EIU “Israel Risk: Alert – Increased threats from the Islamic State (IS)?” (Document RSKW000020140730ea7s0000f) EIU reports a moderate probability and high impact of a risk for Israel from ISIS’ campaigns. This risk assessment is based on the increased activity of radical Islamists within Jordan following the successes of ISIS in Iraq. This is coupled with ISIS’ declaration that it will soon move on to Jordan. EIU writes that another risk for Israel is that if ISIS is able to make similar rapid territorial gains in Syria as in Iraq, this would result in the group reaching the borders of Israel-occupied Golan Heights.	EU counterterrorism coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, says that the terrorist threat from returning foreign fighters is of foremost concern for governments, as underlined by the attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels.
29/07/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – Christians driven from Mosul” (Document EIUCP00020140730ea7t00009) EIU reports that on 28 July France offered to grant asylum to those who have been forced out of Mosul. It is believed that the majority of displaced Iraqi Christians who had first moved to Syria have emigrated to Europe following the outbreak of the civil war.	The EU increases its humanitarian and development assistance to Syria by EUR 50 million and approves EUR 125 million to neighbouring countries to deal with the flow of refugees.
31/07/2014		HRW reports about a serious escalation in sectarian violence and documents the intensifying armed conflict between Iraqi security forces and Sunni insurgents, as well as government-backed kidnappings and killings of Sunni civilians since the fall of Mosul. It calls for a halt of military assistance of the Iraqi government.	
July 2014		On Iraq, ICG reports that PM Maliki has refused calls of stepping down following the parliamentary elections in April. Tensions between Maliki and the KRG have intensified in the wake of the Kurdish seizure of Kirkuk. KRG President Barzani has announced that he intends to hold a referendum on Kurdish independence within months,	

		whilst Maliki has accused the KRG of providing safe havens for terrorists, including ISIS. There has been no tangible progress by the army and political leadership in response to ISIS' gains in the northwest of Iraq. ISIS has reportedly executed, bombed and detained Sunni rivals in areas under its control. On Syria, ICG reports that ISIS has gained territory, oil and manpower in the eastern province of Deir ez-Zor. The group has also seized a gas field east of Homs, as well as regime bases in Raqqa and Hassakeh provinces, killing hundreds in the process. The ICG relays observers' concerns over the setbacks of the moderate opposition who are facing their most dangerous situation since the start of the uprising and are disorganised and poorly armed. There are fears that this could allow ISIS to recapture territory in Aleppo's northern countryside and push further west. Regime forces have made progress in encircling the rebels in Aleppo. ICG reports that Jabhat al-Nusra has sought to gain ground in the Idlib province at the expense of other rebels.	
01/08/2014		Amnesty International reports that ISIS' territorial expansion in northwestern Iraq has resulted in a resurgence of sectarian tensions and mass displacement of communities. EIU "Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa economy: EIU's latest assumptions" (Document EIUCP00020140802ea810001t) EIU predicts that Iraq will face territorial disintegration given ISIS' advancements unless the government receives outside assistance. Nouri al-Maliki's resistance to step down as Prime Minister may result in increased resentment towards him which may push moderate Sunnis towards supporting ISIS. EIU does not expect that the Iraqi army will be able to counter ISIS effectively to a point where the reassertion of the Iraqi government would be possible.	
02/08/2014		EIU "Turkey/MENA politics: Nasty neighbourhood" (Document EIUCP00020140803ea8200023)	

		EIU writes that ISIS' siege of the Turkish consulate in Mosul on 10 June, which now serves as its headquarters, reveals Turkey's weakening role in the region. "A mix of hubris, pro-Sunni sectarianism and bad judgment on the part of the Islam-inspired Justice and Development (AK) party, has drained the country of its soft power". Syrian Kurds have accused Turkey of allowing ISIS fighters to use its territory along the border as a base in its fight against them. EIU reports about increasing concerns that Turkey may become ISIS' next target.	
03/08/2014	ISIS storms the Iraqi town of Sinjar, executing many Yazidi men and abducting women and children. It lays siege to Mount Sinjar where tens of thousands of Yazidis remain trapped. <i>[Relevance: After ISIS had increasingly targeted ethnic minorities in northern Iraq since its capture of Mosul, the Sinjar massacre, which triggered international attention, marked the beginning of the genocide of Yazidis by ISIS.]</i>		

04/08/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: The Islamic State holds sway for now” (Document EIUCP00020140805ea840000o) EIU writes that the key to defeating ISIS may be in the hands of the wide-ranging Sunni groups who already oppose ISIS or may turn against them if the political conditions improve once a new government is formed in Baghdad. ISIS is the prevailing force in Iraq, forcing some groups to cooperate with it but their relations are fluid, meaning militias may cooperate with ISIS in one area and clash with them in another. There are various Jihadi groups in Syria and Iraq which envisage establishing an Islamic state, but their tactics and leadership differ from that of ISIS. While the Sunni tribal militias may be the most likely force to be able to defeat ISIS, having considerable manpower, they lack organisation and are divided. The key message from such groups is that they are cooperating with ISIS out of frustration with the Sunni persecution they have faced at the hands of the Iraqi government. Their call for autonomous Sunni regions could result in borders being drawn along sectarian lines. EIU calculates that there could be an uprising against ISIS if frustrations with its tactics continue to grow. However, the success of such an endeavour is considered unlikely unless Sunni groups form an alliance with the Iraqi government.	EEAS statement on the situation in northern Iraq: “We call on the Government of Iraq and the Government of the Kurdistan Region (KRG) to urgently restore their security cooperation in order to confront ISIL” and to ensure the delivery of humanitarian assistance to those in dire need.
06/08/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View – Islamic State routs Kurds from Sinjar” (Document EIUCP00020140807ea8600007) EIU reports that ISIS has captured the major northern Iraqi town of Sinjar, carrying out mass executions of the predominantly Yazidi population. Much of Sinjar’s population has fled to the mountains. Sinjar’s geographic location makes it difficult to protect the population and the Kurdish Peshmerga forces are overstretched in their counteroffensive against ISIS in Nineveh, Sinjar and the Mosul Dam. The Iraqi government’s refusal to transfer funds to the Kurdish Regional Government has resulted in its inability to pay the Peshmerga or arm them adequately.	

07/08/2014	U.S. President Barack Obama announces the authorisation of targeted airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq, to help break ISIS' siege of Mount Sinjar and prevent an ISIS' offensive on Erbil. ISIS seizes Mosul Dam, which provides electricity to Mosul and water to a large area around it. <i>[Relevance: the U.S. government had spent nearly USD30 million on repairing the Mosul Dam and had warned that, if it failed, "a 65-foot wave of water would be unleashed across areas of northern Iraq". It was considered highly likely that ISIS would use it as a strategic weapon, after having done so with the Fallujah Dam in May 2014. The U.S.</i>		
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	<i>decision to launch airstrikes against ISIS paved the way for the U.S.-led international coalition against ISIS].</i>		
08/08/2014		EIU “Iraq/USA Politics: Quick View – The U.S. announces air strikes” (Document EIUCP00020140809ea880000d) EIU reports that considering Kurdish forces retreating from territory around Mosul following unexpected advances by ISIS, the U.S. has approved air strikes in response. It had previously stated that it would not take such action unless there were signs of political unity in Iraq. However, this response was to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Sinjar and to protect U.S. interests in Erbil. Thousands of Yazidis remain trapped on Mount Sinjar. ISIS has control over the towns of Qaraqosh, Tal Kayd, Bartella and Karamlesh, in addition to advances south of Erbil. EIU “Iraq/Syria Politics: Fighting on multiple fronts” (Document EIUCP00020140810ea8800009) EIU writes that the enormous gains made by ISIS over the past two months has transformed the conflict in Syria. The group has employed a two-pronged tactic of terrorising its adversaries and co-opting local populations under its control and has boosted its military capabilities through capture of large supplies of weapons from the Iraqi and Syrian armies. ISIS’ success has enhanced its recruitment, including foreign fighters, as well as a large pool of finances put forward by fundraisers in the Gulf, namely Kuwait. The main battle fronts involving ISIS are: Raqqa, Deir ez-Zor, Hasakeh, Aleppo, Homs-Palmyra and Damascus. EIU reports that intra-rebel tensions are rising in Syria, and that despite the entrenched tensions between ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra, they are working in concert in some areas of western Syria. ISIS’ significant	

		advancements are a setback for the Syrian regime, which has been taken aback by the group’s effectiveness and ruthlessness. Previously, ISIS had advantaged the Assad regime by weakening rebel forces. “Ultimately IS could overreach itself and find itself facing too many enemies. However, for the time being it is still very much on the offensive”.	
09/08/2014		HRW reports that over 150,000 Yazidis are fleeing Sinjar and surrounding towns as they can no longer count on the protection of Peshmerga forces who say they have no orders to fight. “The ISIS strategy since capturing Iraq’s second largest city, Mosul, a month ago, is becoming increasingly apparent: to clear the area between Mosul and the Tigris river to the west of non-Muslim minorities”	
11/08/2014		Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) writes that Nouri al-Maliki’s refusal to step down as Prime Minister of Iraq risks the country falling into a second devastating crisis alongside ISIS’ expansion. U.S. military strikes will only be effective in defeating ISIS if meaningful political reform, by a government led by an alternative to Maliki, redistributes power to Sunnis and motivates them to switch sides and fight against ISIS. The deep sectarian polarisation in Iraq must be addressed if ISIS is to be defeated. EIU “Iraq: Country Outlook” (Document EIUUCP00020140812ea8b00012) EIU writes that ISIS has captured almost one third of Iraqi territory and that Iraqi security forces will focus on defending Baghdad and Samarra with the support of Iran and the U.S. In light of ISIS’ advances, there is mounting pressure on PM Maliki to step down for a new, more palatable candidate. Yet, it is unlikely that he will do so given that his coalition and allies hold around one third of parliamentary seats. EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUUCP00020140812ea8b0001n)	French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius writes to HR/VP Catherine Ashton urging the EU to “mobilise” to equip Iraqi Kurds in their battle against ISIS. Italy requests a meeting of European foreign minister to discuss arming Iraq’s Kurds in their fight against ISIS.

		EIU states that a violent de facto partition of Iraq into three sections is likely if the new government is unable to unite the Sunnis, Kurds and Shias against ISIS. EIU believes it is unlikely that ISIS will be successful in capturing Baghdad or southern Iraqi territories which is the main source of the country's oil exports. However, Kurdish forces are overstretched and have begun to make tactical retreats, although they are now to be supported by US airstrikes. EIU reports that the latest gains by ISIS puts minority groups at particular risk.	
12/08/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020140813ea8c0000h) EIU reports that Haider al-Abadi of the Dawa party has been nominated as Iraq's next prime minister. His nomination has received widespread international and domestic support, including from President Obama and the Kurdistan Alliance. EIU writes that al-Abadi was backed by a loose coalition of Shia parties, the National Alliance, after indications that Nouri al-Maliki could be considering a coup due to positioning security forces in key areas of Baghdad following protests by his supporters.	The EU increases its humanitarian aid to Iraq by an additional EUR 5 million. EEAS statement following an extraordinary meeting of the Political and Security Committee: there is unanimous agreement on the need for increased international coordinated humanitarian support in Iraq as well as a need to consider the request from Kurdish authorities for military support from EU member states, which will be deliberated in coordination with the Iraqi government.
13/08/2014		Francois Godement (ECFR) argues that European inaction on ISIS will result in catastrophic consequences for both the Middle East and Europe. Godement criticises the passivity of the EU and its member states and says that their shrinking military budgets do not serve as an adequate excuse. Failure to effectively counter ISIS will have several	

		implications for Europe. Iraq's oil resources are tentative at best, meaning an enormous price rise may be on the horizon. Europe also faces a large and continuous influx of refugees fleeing the Syrian civil war and persecution from ISIS, whom they will have to provide asylum to. Further, the threat of returning jihadists has already been exposed in the attack at the Jewish museum in Brussels. Godement writes that Europe's "inaction will bring shame and contempt for Europe, and make it an easy target for strongmen everywhere". Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) writes that "without a policy to defeat ISIS in Syria, any approach in Iraq is doomed to failure". The designation of a new PM in Iraq, Haider al-Abadi is a starting point for a strategy against ISIS. However, in order to succeed, he must be willing and capable to form an inclusive government which shares meaningful power with Sunnis and garners Kurdish support. This will be difficult given the entrenched polarised nature of Iraq. Yet, the only way to peel Sunni support of ISIS and gain much-needed military assistance from the U.S. is to offer profound Sunni participation in a new government and federalisation. This cannot be viewed solely from an Iraqi lens. Any setback of ISIS in Iraq will mean that they will regroup in Syria and continue destabilising Iraq. One promising option in Syria is to use regional and international consensus to create a negotiated path based on a common interest which would exclude Bashar al-Assad as the driver of extremism.	
14/08/2014		Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) writes that Europe's response to the unfolding crisis in Iraq has been slow despite warning signs "flashing brightly", such as the surge into Fallujah and Ramadi by ISIS last January. The slow edge towards unity on arming the Kurds may have an immediate impact in halting ISIS' advancements towards Erbil and protecting the Yazidis. However, this will not have any profound impact on the wider battle against ISIS who are focused on the Shia community and capturing Baghdad. A sole Western focus on Iraq	

		without regarding Syria is also doomed to fail. The defeat of ISIS will only be possible when a cross-sectarian coalition is formed in Baghdad which will in turn need Western military backing. EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140816ea8e00022) EIU reports that following significant gains made by ISIS in Iraq in the first week of August, the U.S. and France are providing military assistance to Kurdish Peshmerga forces. This move comes despite previous reluctance to work with the Kurds who have stated their interest in independence. However, they have been the predominant force to hold the line for two months after the fall of Mosul to ISIS, and they are now overextended and undersupplied. The U.S. has carried out airstrikes and sent 130 military advisors to Erbil to consult on the humanitarian situation in Sinjar. France has announced that it was making its first arms shipment on 13 August. EIU writes that this assistance will boost the morale and effectiveness of Peshmerga forces who are being joined by Kurdish forces from Syria, Turkey and Iran.	
15/08/2014			The FAC assesses the situation in Iraq as a result of the rise of ISIS, welcomes the decision by EU members to provide military material to the Kurdish regional authorities and invites the EEAS to ensure a stronger presence in Erbil. The FAC further calls for strong support of the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq.
18/08/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140819ea8i0000p)	

		EIU reports that on 17 August, Peshmerga forces recaptured the Mosul Dam and regained some Christian towns in the Nineveh Plains in Iraq from ISIS. The Mosul Dam is a key piece of infrastructure and at extreme risk of collapse, which would flood major cities in the Tigris. “The Kurds have also begun receiving arms from various European states and greater co-operation with the Iraqi army”. EIU “Iraq Politics: Maliki steps aside” (Document EIUCP00020140819ea8i0001b) EIU writes that Nouri al-Maliki has finally accepted the nomination of Haider al-Abadi as the new Iraqi prime minister, after being abandoned by his allies. EIU suggests that Maliki will seek a senior government position to gain political immunity whilst Abadi is forming the new government but that his presence in government would only hamper unity efforts. Abadi is viewed as a more pragmatic and moderate alternative to Maliki. Yet, it remains to be seen whether he is prepared to make the necessary concessions to persuade Sunni Iraqis to join the fight against ISIS, and to convince the Kurds to recommit to the Iraqi state.	
20/08/2014		Ellie Geranmayeh (ECFR) writes that Iranian backing of new Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi is not an indication of a U-turn on Baghdad. Abadi’s political background is similar to that of Nouri al-Maliki and so it will not change much in the Tehran-Baghdad relationship. The Iranians recognise that in order to avoid a complete disintegration in Iraq, an inclusive government must be formed to ensure that ISIS’ presence in the country does not become permanent, and it seems Abadi’s more moderate tone may be able to achieve this. HRW reports about U.S. journalist James Foley’s execution which ISIS claimed was in retaliation for U.S. airstrikes against ISIS in Iraq. Foley became the first U.S. citizen to be killed by ISIS.	Italian foreign minister Federica Mogherini says that “the Vatican can help provide aid in Iraq to Kurdish refugees fleeing militant ISIS, which is a threat to the European Union and the whole world”. She further argues that military assistance to Iraq to counter ISIS is “indispensable in the immediate term but hardly represents a long-term

			solution to this, like all crises”.
21/08/2014		Emma Bonino writes for ECFR that the EU must create a new structure, appoint a Commissioner for the Mediterranean, and adopt a new Mediterranean policy to meet the challenges posed by the countries of the Southern Mediterranean. Bonino asserts that the EU must abandon its system of spheres of influence and forego the use of one single policy for all its eastern and southern neighbours. Implications of the conflicts and tensions in countries such as Syria, Iraq, Egypt and Libya will be security, migration and oil supply, which the EU can only effectively counter if it strengthens its position in the region.	
22/08/2014		Speaking with Kurdish civilians besieged by ISIS in Kobane, Amnesty International estimates that 200,000 people are currently trapped there. ISIS has cut off electricity and water to Kobane. Residents are trying to flee but finding it hard to enter Turkey. Amnesty is “investigating reports of abuses at the Turkish border” against refugees from Kobane and elsewhere in Syria.	
25/08/2014		EIU “Middle East and North Africa Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140827ea8p00001) EIU reports that representatives of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, Qatar and the UAE have met in Jeddah under the ‘Friends of Syria’ initiative to discuss Syria and Iraq. The inclusion of Qatar is notable as it is facing disciplinary action from the Gulf Cooperation Council for its association with the Muslim Brotherhood and is a diplomatic rival of Saudi Arabia and Egypt for this very reason. The meeting garnered little outcome with regard to how to confront ISIS and prevent Iran from being considered a crucial regional actor by Western powers.	
26/08/2014		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140827ea8q00007) EIU reports that on 22 August a Shia militia massacred Sunni worshippers, killing over 70 people, at Friday prayers in a mosque in	

		the Iraqi Diyala province. The province holds one of the most mixed populations in Iraq and has recently been flooded with Shia militias in response to the danger of ISIS in the area. It is thought that the attack was in retaliation for a nearby bombing of militia, presumed to be by ISIS. As a result, two main Sunni parties have stopped participation in the ongoing talks on government formation. The attacks further heighten the feeling of persecution of Sunnis in Iraq. EIU “France Politics: The limits of French foreign policy” (Document EIUCP00020140828ea8q0000x) EIU writes that President Francois Hollande has been “uncharacteristically decisive” on action against the rapidly expanding ISIS, providing military assistance to the Peshmerga and supporting asylum applications from Iraqi Christians. However, EIU explains that “any meaningful progress in Iraq requires some sort of settlement in Syria” given the expansion of ISIS across Iraq’s borders. Hollande’s deep opposition to the Syrian regime makes him an unsuitable candidate in the case of any accommodation of Bashar al-Assad in efforts to confront ISIS.	
27/08/2014		EIU “Germany Politics: Contours of a more assertive foreign policy emerge” (Document EIUCP00020140828ea8r0002p) EIU writes that German foreign policy is becoming more assertive and gaining a more interventionist outlook. In recent weeks, the governing coalition has suggested arming Kurdish Peshmerga fighters combatting ISIS in Iraq.	
28/08/2014		HRW reports that the key tool of ‘naming and shaming’ human rights abuses does not work with ISIS and that they relish in their primitivism. Consequently, considering the genocide of Yazidis and executions of western journalists, only political action at the highest levels has the capacity to prevent mass killings.	
29/08/2014		Richard Gowan (ECFR) writes that the crisis in Iraq highlights the lack of strategic foresight of European governments and that they should	Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva’s statement on the

		have taken heed of past warnings. Only a few politicians and foreign policy analysts argued that the EU had long-term interest in Iraq, and the ECFR occasionally highlighted the need for Europe to assist Iraq in establishing a stable future. Gowan asserts “that the EU needed to invest in long-term conflict prevention strategies for Iraq” and draws on a piece he wrote in January 2008 in which he argues that pulling out of Iraq without a medium-term strategy to stabilise the country would have enormous strategic consequences for Europe on all fronts, and that Iraq would descend back into violence with destabilising effects for the region. Consequently, European policymakers must now formulate long-term strategies for restoring security in Iraq and learn from past mistakes. Amnesty International discusses the mass displacement of targeted religious and ethnic minorities since ISIS’ expansion in northern Iraq in June 2014, and how ISIS pursues a campaign of ethnic cleansing. EIU “Denmark Politics” (Document EIUCP00020140830ea8t0000i) EIU reports that Denmark is to make a military contribution to the international endeavour to combat ISIS following a joint request from the Iraqi and U.S. governments. Its military aid will go to the Peshmerga fighting ISIS in northern Iraq.	number of refugees fleeing the Syrian crisis reaching a record of 3 million: “With so many crises erupting simultaneously around us, with so much suffering, there is a risk that the victims of the Syrian crisis and their needs will slip from the public eye. On behalf of the European Commission, I pledge that we will continue to keep the focus and draw attention to the victims of the Syrian crisis”.
30/08/2014		EIU “World Politics: It ain’t half hot here, mum” (Document EIUCP00020140903ea8u00006) EIU writes that since its declaration of a caliphate, ISIS’ recruitment has surged, attracting a high number of foreign fighters from Europe, with Britons making up one of the largest groups of Western fighters. It is believed that ISIS’ attraction for western fighters is its global outlook, although the motives of these fighters “are as varied as their passports”. EIU argues that the most plausible explanations are the search for identity and boredom at home. ISIS fighters post their lives on social media and have labelled their base in Syria as	Conclusions of a special European Council meeting: “The European Council underlines the importance of coordinated action by countries from the region to counter these threats. It urges all Iraqi leaders to form a truly inclusive government as a first political response to the

		“FiveStarJihad”, yet they are not averse to carrying out violent attacks, battles, and suicide missions. Getting to Syria is generally easier for these fighters than returning home as Western authorities have some information on who has gone and will scrutinise and monitor them when they return. It is reported that some Western fighters have become jaded with the battle and are longing to return home. EIU suggests that Western countries face the threat of lone-wolf attacks. De-radicalisation programmes have had mixed results, while programmes to deter individuals from turning to extremism achieved better results. Peter Neumann of the ICSR asserts that a softer approach toward returning fighters may benefit Western nations as “chastened returning fighters may become the very people to persuade more young men to forgo the fight”. EIU “Syria/Iraq Politics: Handsome ransoms” (Document EIUCP00020140903ea8u00007) EIU reports that ISIS has begun to demand payment for the release of Western hostages this year as rebel groups in Syria turned against the group. It suggests that the international focus on this issue may push other groups who also undertake kidnappings to alter their tactics as demonstrated by Jabhat al-Nusra who released an American journalist. The kidnapping of Westerners by ISIS reached its height in 2013. The group has “netted multi-million-euro ransoms from several European governments”.	present crisis, and stands ready to support the Government of Iraq in the pursuit of the necessary reforms.” ISIS’ activities and the establishment of a caliphate are seen as a direct threat to the security of European countries. The European Council calls for quicker implementation of EU measures to prevent radicalisation and achieve efficient information-sharing to dissuade and disrupt foreign fighters. EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton echoes these remarks at an informal meeting of EU foreign ministers.
Aug 2014		On Iraq, ICG reports that ISIS has taken control of Sinjar, killing scores of Yazidis, and taking an unknown number hostage, whilst approximately 200,000 have fled and thousand are trapped in the Sinjar mountain range under siege by ISIS. In response, the U.S. has renewed its military action to prevent ‘genocide’ and protect US personnel and assets, with particular focus on containing the advance of ISIS toward Erbil. The U.S. also delivered arms to the Kurdish forces who were able to recapture the Mosul dam from ISIS and break	

		the siege in Sinjar. On 14 August, PM Maliki stepped down after Iran, US and Saudi Arabia, along with half of Maliki's State of Law coalition put their support behind Haider al-Abadi for PM (Dawa Party). On Syria, ICG reports that the northern armed opposition are faced with a weakening position as ISIS captured a series of towns in the north of Aleppo whilst the advancement of the regime continued in the city. Fighting between ISIS and the Syrian regime has intensified – the regime is continuing its airstrikes on territories held by ISIS near Aleppo whilst the group has reportedly seized an army base in Raqqah, consequently fatalities have significantly increased. Furthermore, ISIS has reportedly executed 700 members of the al-Sheitat tribe in the Deir ez-Zor province in retaliation to an anti-ISIS uprising. The ICG reports that a local Jabhat al-Nusra chief was assassinated on 2 August as frictions between al-Nusra and former rebel allies intensify.	
01/09/2014		HRW documents that both ISIS and Iraqi government-backed militias are conducting savage tactics and killings. HRW reports that there is credible evidence that ISIS used ground-fired cluster munitions in the Syrian town of Kobane in recent weeks but are uncertain how ISIS acquired those. EIU "Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa economy: EIU's latest assumptions" (Document EIUCP00020140902ea9100014) EIU predicts that ISIS will be able to consolidate its position in Iraq and Syria, maintaining a significant risk to regional stability in 2014-15. The group's successes against Peshmerga and Iraqi military forces will likely boost its ability to recruit marginalised youths. EIU assigns a high risk to Iraq breaking apart due to the challenges PM Haider al-Abadi faces in quelling sectarian tensions and forming a government in which Sunnis and Kurds are sufficiently appeased.	

		EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140903ea910001w) EIU reports that a joint operation of Iraqi, Kurdish and militia forces has been successful in lifting ISIS’ siege of the predominantly Shia Iraqi town, Amerli. There were fears that ISIS would commit a genocidal massacre in the town. The operation was assisted by US air strikes and British, French and Australian humanitarian aid. “This broad coalition allied against ISIS was one of the most significant elements of the operation, which was also one of the first instances of a recapture of territory from IS, aside from the recent Kurdish counteroffensive near Mosul.” There has been increasing international support to arm the Kurdish fighters, and the next target for recapture form ISIS will likely be the majority Sunni town of Suleiman Beg.	
02/09/2014		HRW has identified three new mass execution sites. It believes that these additional locations, vehicles and captured men that they have identified through new videos released by ISIS suggests that the death toll will continue to rise. Amnesty International reports that ISIS has carried out ethnic cleansing on a historic scale in northern Iraq. The 30-page report outlines the mass abductions and killings carried out by ISIS with focus on Kocho, Qiniyeh and Jdali villages in Sinjar region. Amnesty also reports that ISIS is coercing its captives to convert to Islam. The report provides a detailed timeline of events in Mosul and areas South of Kirkuk (June-Aug). “Amnesty International’s field investigations have concluded that the ISIS is systematically and deliberately carrying out a program of ethnic cleansing in the areas under its control. This is not only destroying lives, but also causing irreparable damage to the fabric of Iraq’s society, and fuelling inter-ethnic, sectarian and inter-religious tensions in the region and beyond.”	
05/09/2014		Florence Gaub (EUISS) discusses a potential causal link between climate-related challenges and ISIS’ particularly violent summer. She	

		suggests that rising temperatures and the lack of rainfall since 2006 in Syria resulted in poverty, making Syria more vulnerable to civil war. She argues that “although heat is not currently a cause of regional conflict, spill-over effects in a region plagued by porous borders cannot be ruled out in the future”. HRW writes that the murders of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff highlight the high risk of reporting on the conflicts in Syria and Iraq in particular, and the risks to humanitarian workers, who ISIS have also kidnapped and threatened to murder. EIU “UAE Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140906ea950002d) EIU reports that the UAE has announced that it is willing to act in accord with UN Security Council Resolution 2170 and participate in a Western-led coalition against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. What form this assistance will take is not clear. EIU argues that it could do more to block money flows to ISIS fighters, and possibly assist in general security and intelligence cooperation.	
06/09/2014		EIU “Iraq/Iran/Syria Politics: Unsavoury Allies” (Document EIUCP00020140909ea960001y) EIU writes about the growing power of Shia militias in Iraq and Syria and the challenge for Western forces allying with such forces without deepening sectarian divides. In Iraq, the U.S. will struggle to avoid working with Shia militias as is evidenced by their key role in the battle for Amerli. The aversion of these Shia militias to the idea of giving Sunnis more rights will make it a highly difficult task for PM Abadi to create a new, inclusive government. “As the war splits Iraq and Syria along sectarian lines, any American action against ISIS risks unwittingly supporting Iran and the Shias, thereby deepening the very sense of Sunni victimhood on which IS feeds”.	

08/09/2014		Amnesty International reports about the case of Abbas Medlej, a Lebanese soldier taken captive by ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra militants, who was beheaded after trying to escape. ISIS and al-Nusra have threatened that if Syrian refugees are mistreated in Lebanon they would kill more of their hostages. EIU “India Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140909ea9600021) EIU reports that Al-Qaeda has launched a South Asia branch in the Indian Subcontinent. Experts believe that the new wing, Qaidat al-Jihad, is an effort to fill the vacuum left by the death of its former leader, Osama bin Laden, and in response to the growing influence of ISIS in the Middle East, which has been attracting new recruits from Al-Qaeda.	
09/09/2014		An in-depth report by ICG details the state of the Syrian civil war and the significance of Aleppo to ensuring that the regime opposition is not defeated. ICG explains that the Syrian rebels are engaged in a two-front battle with the regime and ISIS who are currently making advancements in preparation to retake Aleppo, putting the rebels in a dangerous position and at risk of defeat unless urgent action is taken. This risk is heightened as ISIS and the regime currently share some short- and medium-term goals, including the defeat of the rebels. The loss of Aleppo would be an enormous blow and would result in the prolonging of the war in Syria and simultaneously strengthen ISIS who would absorb rebel remnants who are faced with no other credible alternative. ICG proposes two options to avoid the defeat of the rebels and the loss of Aleppo. They suggest an immediate ceasefire between the regime and anti-ISIS rebels in Aleppo, and prioritisation of the fight against ISIS. ICG believes that this would be an unlikely scenario as it is evidenced that Damascus has no intention of changing its strategy. Second, ICG recommends that the U.S. and its regional allies increase the flow of money, ammunition, and anti-take weaponry to the	

		rebels to help prevent their defeat and block any further advancements by ISIS. They indicate that this option carries the inevitable risk that the weapons could fall into the hands of ISIS fighters. ICG maintains that an expansion of airstrikes by Western governments would not produce any valuable outcome and the best approach in countering ISIS would be to strengthen Sunni alternatives (both locally and in the context of national governance). ICG also emphasises that sectarian governance further exacerbates the problem. “Syria is sliding toward unending war between an autocratic, sectarian regime and an even more autocratic, more sectarian jihadi group that, on present trends, will potentially destabilise the Middle East well beyond Syria and Iraq.” EIU “Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140910ea990001q) EIU reports that Haider al Abadi has been approved by Iraq’s parliament as new prime minister, along with a new cabinet. The defence and interior ministers have not yet been appointed due to disagreements. EIU highlights that all of Iraq’s governments have been inclusive: “the problem is not their composition but their failure to develop and implement productive policies, along with corruption and nepotism within the ministries”. Consequently, the government’s success in defeating ISIS will depend on its actions over the next few months.	
11/09/2014		EIU “US & Middle East risk: Alert – Mission Creep” (Document RSKW000020140912ea9b0000d) EIU writes that the new U.S. strategy on ISIS includes widening air strikes to Syria. This comes with complications as although it is vital to target ISIS strongholds, the U.S. military will need to avoid being accused of assisting the Syrian regime. This will provide an opportunity for ISIS to turn its focus to the south and west of Syria which border Jordan, Lebanon and Israel.	

13/09/2014		HRW reports on a government-back airstrike on a school in Tikrit. It calls for foreign governments providing military assistance to the Iraqi government to ensure that their aid is not being used in violation of war crimes.	
14/09/2014		ICG 's Jean-Marie Guéhenno and Noah Bonsey explain for Western attention and efforts against ISIS to be focused on Syria as this is where the group is making its most significant gains and is likely to continue to expand. They state that the sectarian politics and military tactics in Baghdad and Damascus, coupled with loose Turkish border controls have facilitated the rise of ISIS and need to be addressed. They highlight the importance of strengthening Syrian rebels which can be done either through a cease-fire between the regime and rebels, or a rapid increase in funding, ammunition, and anti-tank weapons from the U.S. and other coalition governments. However, such support also bears the risk of these resources falling into the hands of ISIS or Jabhat al-Nusra fighters. "If mainstream opposition is defeated in Aleppo, ISIS will expand westward. And by appearing to be the sole Sunni force capable of sustaining war against the regime, ISIS will win still more recruits."	
15/09/2014		EIU "Middle East and North Africa Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020140916ea9f00009) EIU reports that all six Gulf Cooperation Council states have agreed to support the U.S. efforts against ISIS by providing military basing and overflight rights.	
17/09/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020140918ea9h0001p) EIU reports that on 16 September, Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi's proposed candidates for the contentious positions of interior and defence ministers were rejected by parliament. EIU writes that the rejection of Jaber al-Jabbari, an Anbari Sunni, for defence minister is of serious note as the inclusion of a credible Sunni in the Ministry of Defence would be a significant step in regaining the trust of the Sunni	

		community in the Iraqi security forces and consequently spurring their opposition to ISIS.	
18/09/2014		EIU “Iraq: Key developments” (Document EIUUCP00020140919ea9i0001u) EIU reports that with US support, it seems that momentum is moving against ISIS, but recapturing territory will be slow. The ability of the new government to unite the Sunnis, Kurds and Shias against ISIS will determine the future of the Iraqi state. If they fail to unify, “then a prolonged and violent de facto partition is likely”.	The EP adopts a resolution on the situation in Iraq and Syria and ISIS’ offensives. It assesses developments in ISIS’ core conflict zone and calls for various counter measures.
19/09/2014		Amnesty International’s open letter to Iraqi PM Haider al-Abadi urges him and his government to protect and promote the human rights of civilians, and to abide by international law in its fight against ISIS. It lists recommendations on how to do so, among others discussing measure to enhance the accountability of the Iraqi security forces. EIU “Algeria Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUUCP00020140920ea9j00031) EIU reports that the Algerian wing of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) has created a new splinter group and sworn allegiance to ISIS. “Indeed, by pledging allegiance to Islamic State it probably wants to capitalise on its current high-profile role in international affairs, although the Algerian outfit will struggle to replicate the success seen in Syria and Iraq”.	
23/09/2014		Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) argues that U.S. air strikes in Syria will have limited results and may risk consolidating ISIS’ position as the only credible defender of the Sunni population. Barnes-Dacey explains that both opposition forces and Bashar Al-Assad are competing to be the West’s partner in its counter-ISIS efforts. Yet, neither party views the defeat of ISIS as their main priority, as they are primarily interested in “leveraging international support to secure victory in the broader domestic conflict”. This motivation is in part shared by Saudi Arabia and Qatar, two key regional actors involved in the air strikes. President	The EC increases its aid to Syria and neighbouring countries by EUR 215 million.

		Obama's arming of rebels and insistence on no co-ordination with Assad bolsters rebel efforts to become the West's only legitimate partner in tackling ISIS. Barnes-Dacey predicts that the West will inevitably be drawn into deeper intervention in Syria. EIU "MENA Politics: Syria air strikes presents risks and opportunities" (Document EIUCP00020140924ea9n00012) EIU writes that the air strikes carried out by the U.S. and its Arab allies which hit ISIS' stronghold in Raqqa especially hard, and targeted Jabhat al-Nusra, are diplomatically and politically significant. The involvement of Qatar in the operation is of note as it signifies a measure of reconciliation in the face of a shared threat posed by ISIS. On the other hand, EIU suggests that these strikes, which were undertaken without the permission of the Syrian regime, may hinder reconciliation efforts with Iran who are staunch defenders of Assad's regime. Another point of concern will be for Arab states who are contributing to the anti-ISIS coalition the fear of retaliatory attacks at home.	
24/09/2014		HRW argues that by arming non-state armed groups in Syria without proper vetting to ensure they do not carry out human rights abuses, Western governments are implicated in these violations. HRW highlights that the abuses of the Assad regime, ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra are systematic and increasing. Further, U.S. support of the government of Nouri al-Maliki in Iraq, without holding him accountable for his human rights abuses contributed to the rise of ISIS. EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020140925ea9o0003o) EIU reports that France has joined the U.S. in air strikes against ISIS and it is likely that the UK and Australia will join as well. The broadening of the coalition will boost its legitimacy and allow for the U.S. to continue its efforts.	In an EP subcommittee meeting on security and defence (SEDE), EU counter-terrorism coordinator Gilles de Kerchove warns that there is a risk of competition between ISIS and Al-Qaeda. "It is possible that al Qaeda may want to mount attacks to show that the organisation is still relevant, (that) they are still in the game."

		EIU “Algeria Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020140925ea9o00042) EIU reports that the new Algerian ISIS affiliate, Jund al-Khalifa, kidnapped a French tourist in Kabyle, Algeria. The group has demanded that France cease its participation in the air strikes in Iraq or it will kill its hostage. EIU explains that this is an attempt by the group to carry out a high-profile mission soon after its formation to amplify the impact of its alignment with ISIS. This recent abduction could indicate an additional surge in terrorist activity predominantly aimed at Westerners, although EIU believes the group does not have the capability to conduct anything more than hit-and-run operations in its strongholds in border regions and Kabyle.	
25/09/2014			Speech by President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy at the 69th General Assembly of the UN: Financial and weapon flows to ISIS must be cut off, and there must be collective action to stop foreign fighters joining the extremist groups. Further, the EU offers its full support to the new government of Iraq’s efforts to form an inclusive leadership. However, this crisis will not be resolved without a political solution in Syria.

			A senior EU official says that returning foreign fighters are the main threat member states are facing and some fear that “this could be totally out of control. It may already be too late”. Executives from large social media providers are to attend the interior ministers’ meeting in Luxembourg to aid the EU in stopping the highly effective use of the internet by ISIS propagandists.
26/09/2014		HRW claims that Shia militias led by former PM Maliki are laying siege to the strategically located town of Latifiya which is being overlooked by Washington and its allies. “Failure to address the broader effects of international assistance in Iraq’s fight promises to further polarize Iraq’s communities, multiply abuses, and may ultimately undermine the efforts against the Islamic State: it threatens to push Sunnis directly into the Islamic State’s waiting arms.”	
28/09/2014		HRW argues that any viable anti-ISIS strategy in Iraq needs to address and end abuses by the Iraqi government and its allies. “ISIS’s spectacular gains in Iraq and its horrifically brutal tactics there and in Syria have diverted attention from the critical need for the Iraqi government to stop using abusive tactics, especially if President Obama and his allies hope to undermine the militant group.”	
30/09/2014		José Ignacio Torreblanca (ECFR) writes that the West has become a passive observer of the decline of the world order. In the case of Middle Eastern conflicts, the dominant disorder is the fragmentation of states. Torreblanca argues that the state as a political and administrative entity has ceased to exist in the Levant and has been	

		replaced with deep entrenched sectarian and religious violence. Chaos will continue in the region in the absence of state builders. EIU “Iran/Iraq Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020141001ea9u00005) EIU reports that Iran has warned of a direct military response to ISIS if it threatens its borders with Iraq. Iran and the U.S. have suggested tacit intelligence-sharing cooperation in the campaign against ISIS should Iran intervene. The move signifies the seriousness with which Iran views the threat of ISIS. EIU “Iraq/Jordan Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020141001ea9u0000f) EIU reports that Jordan’s air force has joined the US-backed coalition against ISIS in Syria. Jordanian Islamist fighters in Syria make up the largest foreign contingents taking part in the civil war. EIU believes Jordanian involvement was in response to the increasingly porous nature of its borders to protect its territorial stability. EIU “Iraq: Country Outlook” (Document EIUCP00020141008ea9u00003) EIU writes that ISIS reached the peak of its expansion in mid-August when it pushed back Peshmerga forces from Sinjar and the Nineveh province. However, it seems that the US-led coalition airstrikes, along with military assistance, has bolstered Kurdish, Iraqi and Shia militia forces against ISIS, stifling their momentum. EIU predicts that the campaign against ISIS will continue to gain support from different countries, in the form of arms, advisers and transport aircraft, and that it is likely the UK will join in airstrikes soon. EIU believes the option of ground combat troops in Iraq is unlikely at present.	
Sept 2014		On Iraq, ICG reports that the beheadings of US journalists and UK aid workers have promoted strong Western reactions, and that France and	

		the UK launched first air strikes targeting ISIS in northern Iraq. An ISIS spokesman has called for the killing of citizens of coalition countries. Fighting has continued in Anbar province over the past month. On Syria, ICG reports that the U.S. began airstrikes in Syria against ISIS, Al-Qaeda central and Jabhat al-Nusra. Al-Nusra has threatened retaliation in response to scores of AQ-linked fighters being killed by U.S. strikes in northern Aleppo and Idlib. It is reported that most of the senior leadership of the Ahrar as-Sham group were killed in an unexplained blast in Idlib on 9 September. ICG states that ISIS continues to gain ground and observers are concerned that intervention risks the strengthening of the group.	
01/10/2014		EIU “Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa Economy: EIU’s latest assumptions” (Document EIUCP00020141003eaa10001r) EIU writes that US-led airstrikes that have extended to Syria will limit ISIS’ freedom of action. However, the group will benefit from sectarian and ethnic support in the country along with the lack of a credible opposition to the Syrian regime. Consequently, EIU states that ISIS “will continue to pose a risk to regional stability in the near term”.	
02/10/2014		ICG’s Peter Harling argues that Western airstrikes only increase the group’s ability to mobilise. He explains that ISIS is filling a void and is constantly recruiting more fighters. The group pursues territories it is confident it can seize, either due to the lack of presence of the Syrian regime or the incompetence of Iraqi security forces. Harling states that the rushed response of the West, under pressure of timelines imposed by the media, will aggravate the situation. Instead, “time, skilfulness, considerable means and real strategic reflexion are all going to be needed in order to fight this organisation”. Nick Witney (ECFR) writes that European involvement in the US-led coalition against ISIS has proven to be a costly and ineffective decision which has enlarged the threat to Europe and stopped any possibility of	

		intelligent policy responses. Witney asserts that the threat of ISIS has been “grossly over-hyped” and the group has already been weakened through battle with the Peshmerga, Iraqi Shia militants and US airstrikes. He asserts that the main threat is ideological which presents a direct risk to European countries whose own citizens may be recruited by ISIS and then return home to carry out attacks. “Western intervention is a great recruiting sergeant” and Europeans should recognise that “Islam is an integral part of their own societies”. By joining the U.S.-led intervention, they have made themselves targets of the narrative for revenge for Western oppression. Witney recommends that European governments limit their military involvement, leaving it to a better equipped U.S., and follow a diplomatic route, encouraging a Saudi-Iranian rapprochement. Ellie Geranmayeh writes for ECFR that Iran’s strategy against ISIS is to coordinate and arm Shia groups in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, as well as Kurdish forces, and gather vast intelligence on ISIS. It also recognises the need for a political track to resolve sectarian divisions in Iraq and Syria, but while it is supportive of the formation of an inclusive government in Iraq, it has not come up with a solution for Syria that has been deemed acceptable by rebel opposition groups. Iranian involvement in Iraq and Syria has been used as an ideological tool for recruitment by ISIS. Despite tensions between Iran and regional players, namely Saudi Arabia, and with the US, there is some sign of cooperation in the face of the common threat of ISIS. However, Iran has not been included by the West in the official anti-ISIS coalition which has further exacerbated tensions between them. Saleem Haddad writes for ECFR that Jordanians fear that ISIS sees them as their next target and that this fear is not unfounded. Of concern is the rise of Jihadi rhetoric among Salafi Jordanians although this movement is divided about its support for ISIS. Motivations for the	
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		support of ISIS do not only originate from religious beliefs. Jordanians worry that long-standing political and economic grievances toward the Jordanian regime, especially in Ma'an which protestors have already dubbed as the 'Fallujah of Jordan', could be exploited by ISIS. An opinion poll suggests that 89% of its respondents reject extremist ideologies. Therefore, Jordan must avoid forceful retaliation for grievances which could alienate and radicalise segments of its population. Jordan's battle against ISIS should occur both on a regional and domestic level. Regionally, it should encourage governmental reforms in Iraq to address the underlying issues behind radicalisation in the country. Domestically, it should address economic and political grievances while keeping its borders secure. It is unlikely that ISIS will be able to size its border crossings due to Jordan's state-of-the-art technology and stationing of a significant number of Jordanian and U.S. troops. Elizabeth Dickinson writes for ECFR that Kuwait faces one of the greatest risks from ISIS in the region. This is exemplified by increasing Kuwaiti Sunni sympathy toward ISIS and its large Sunni donor community funding the jihadists, transforming Kuwait into a hub for private donors of ISIS, Ahrar al-Sham and Jabhat al-Nusra. These donors originally shunned ISIS and its involvement in Syria, yet the groups advancements in Iraq were very well received. This divide in donor support for ISIS in Iraq but not Syria will risk splitting the donor community and accelerate their efforts to fund and offer ideological support to their preferred groups, spurring radicalisation and possibly destabilising Kuwait and fuelling sectarian tensions. Kuwait must balance domestic opinion and international pressures to ramp up its efforts against ISIS. "In the long term, the persistence of radical donor networks is a risk not only to Kuwait but to the broader region. These communities are deeply connected, and their ideologies are persistent.	
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		And with each political event that reaffirms their convictions, they become more difficult to break”. Julien Barnes-Dacey (ECFR) writes that only when the core dynamics behind the Syrian civil war are sufficiently addressed and resolved can there be any hope of defeating ISIS. He explains that ISIS’ current expansion in Syria is a pivotal moment in the conflict and U.S. action will have limited effects as Syrian rebel groups and the regime remain focused on their civil war goals rather than prioritising the battle against ISIS. U.S. strikes against extremist sections of the Syrian opposition and avoidance of striking regime targets has resulted in a surge of support of ISIS. The group currently controls approximately 35% of Syria. They are increasingly viewed as the only credible force able to tackle the Syrian regime, given their resources and capabilities. Writing for ECFR, Nawaf Obaid and Saud al-Sarhan argue that Saudi Arabia as leader of the Sunni Muslim world should lead the fight against ISIS in the region, especially as it is one of the main targets of the group given its wealth of resources and guardianship of the holy mosques of Mecca and Medina. Saudis believe that military airstrikes will not be enough to halt ISIS’ advances and that a response must be coupled with significant arming of moderate Syrian opposition groups as well as meaningful policy on the ground. Cale Salih writes for ECFR that ISIS’ significant advancements have put the Kurdish Regional Government in its most vulnerable position since 2003, increasing its reliance on external support and dampening its ambitions for independence. Furthermore, the rise of ISIS has increased intra-Kurdish rivalries, particularly between the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). This divide will continue to impact the Kurdish response to ISIS and the group’s rise will further curtail their competing visions of nationalism.	
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		Forces affiliated with the PKK have come out as the dominant force and protectorate of Kurds in Syria. In Iraq, the PKK and People's Defence Units' (YPG) have been successful in regaining territories which had been lost to ISIS which has won them widespread support among Iraqi Kurds. Daniel Levy (ECFR) writes that the most serious threat by ISIS for Israel is the possibility of an ISIS' advance into Jordan. Further, the threat of ISIS is viewed as a branding opportunity by Israel, which can market its counter-terrorism practices and resources to Western allies and refute European initiatives to recognise Palestine. Andrew Hammond (ECFR) writes that there are several reasons for Turkey's refusal to commit to combat missions against ISIS. Domestically, polls suggest that only 62.5% of AKP supporters view ISIS as a terrorist group and disapproval of the U.S. intervention in Syria is high. Focus is on the removal of the Assad regime in Syria which they believe Washington fails to address. Ankara is pushing for a protected buffer zone to protect its borders and allow for the return of Syrian refugees from Turkey. Further, given peace talks with the PKK, Ankara is hesitant to do anything to strengthen the Kurds' negotiating position or jeopardise their talks. "For a buffer zone to be truly effective against ISIS, a wide net would have to be cast against men and arms crossing the border. Then Turkey would have clearly come off the fence on which it has been sitting for so long". Aymenn Jawad Al-Tamimi explains for ECFR that ISIS' expansionism carries constraints and calculations on the part of ISIS and must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. If ISIS were to consolidate their position across Syria and Iraq, this would pose a direct threat of invasion to their neighbours. However, it is unlikely they will be able to do so. A more likely threat is that Western citizens will be targeted,	
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		and Western countries struck by terrorists, along with Arab states which have participated in the US-led airstrikes. Al-Tamimi explains that the real threat of ISIS in the region is posed in the Gaza-Sinai area where a distinguishable ISIS network exists and is expanding. He predicts that they could have the ability to overthrow the government in the space of 5-10 years which would put Egypt at risk. Another real threat is present in Saudi Arabia where it is reported that ISIS is actively attempting to establish terrorist cells. Saudi Arabia would present a lucrative source of opportunity for ISIS should it gain control of some of its areas. Sajad Jiyad writes for ECFR that given ISIS' significant advances and its establishment of a caliphate, the future of Iraq hangs on comprehensive governmental reform. PM Haider al-Abadi must grant disaffected Sunnis meaningful federalist control as well as ease tensions with the Kurdish Regional Government, keeping the country loosely united and avoiding full disintegration. <i>All ECFR outputs produced on this date look at the regional dimensions of the ISIS crisis.</i>	
09/10/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020141010eaa90000w) EIU reports that ISIS has adjusted its tactics in the face of the setbacks it has incurred due to coalition airstrikes and has managed to capture new territory in both Syria and Iraq. The group now controls approximately 80% of Anbar province. Its most significant advancement in two months was capturing the city of Hit on 2 October.	
10/10/2014		ICG's Hugh Pope highlights the urgent need for the completion of the Turkish-Kurdish peace process in order to successfully combat their shared enemy, ISIS. He claims that this "partnership is achievable and	The EU releases a detailed report on the implementation of its Counter-Terrorism Strategy, among others

		should not be put at risk by political grandstanding over the ruins of Kobane”. EIU “Algeria Politics” (Document EIUCP00020141011eaaa0000v) EIU reports that the Algerian jihadist group Jund al-Khalifa, which has pledged allegiance to ISIS, has killed its French hostage, Hervé Gourdel, in an execution mimicking ISIS’ murder of two US journalists and two British aid workers. EIU writes that there is little evidence to believe that there was any co-ordination between ISIS and Jund al-Khalifa, or that ISIS intended to wage a terrorist campaign in Algeria. However, the high-profile nature of the attack could inspire other groups to replicate it.	referring to the situation of European foreign fighters. EEAS statement on the situation in Kobane: “We strongly condemn ISIL and its offensive in Kobane and remain committed to play our role to the full in the fight against ISIL and in solidarity with all people suffering from ISIL actions. The EU, Turkey and all other regional and international partners need to work together more, to isolate and contain the threat of ISIL. The EU continues to fully support the diplomatic efforts of the UN's Special Envoy for Syria Staffan De Mistura towards a political solution to the Syrian crisis.”
11/10/2014		HRW reports that Yazidi women have been forced to marry ISIS fighters while young Yazidi boys have been taken away and were forced to convert to Islam.	
12/10/2014			The EU increases its humanitarian aid by EUR 3.9 million to support Syrian refugees in Turkey who escaped the fighting in Kobane.

14/10/2014		Amnesty International reports in-depth about the conduct of paramilitary Shia militias in Iraq and their abductions and killings of Sunni men. Amnesty explains that these actions amount to war crimes and are contributing to the increasing insecurity of Iraq. It recommends that PM Haider al-Abadi urgently ends militia rule in Iraq. EIU “Lebanon/Saudi Arabi Politics” (Document EIUCP00020141021eaae00057) EIU reports that Lebanon is to receive USD 1bn military aid from Saudi Arabia to combat ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. Iran is also ready to deliver military equipment to the Lebanese army. The Saudi commitment, which would be used to purchase French weapons, has been delayed as the Saudis battle between funding the fight against ISIS and its fears that military equipment could fall into the hands of Hezbollah. “The danger in all this is that regional geopolitics will ultimately thwart the speedy distribution of much-needed new military hardware, as Lebanon's army struggles to quell the jihadi assault on its eastern flank. The security situation around the border town of Arsal, where Islamist militants have taken a number of Lebanese soldiers hostage, underlines the gravity of the situation.” Considering ISIS is now controlling approximately one-third of Syrian territory and its seizure of a portion of Kobane, ICG’s Noah Bonsey explains that the group’s success is in part due to an increase in funds and manpower. The lack of capacity and organisation of the rebels who are fighting both ISIS and the Syrian regime is rendering them ineffective. The U.S. is partly to blame for this as they did not invest enough resources to improve the rebel forces’ capacities in time. Bonsey suggests that the effectiveness of strikes targeting ISIS are yet to be determined as the group is using this as an opportunity for propaganda and what is needed most are credible ground forces which can regain territorial control from ISIS. Strikes against Jabhat al-Nusra	
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		and ISIS have allowed the groups to brand the US-led coalition's efforts as a broader attack on Islam. Bonsey explains that a no-fly zone in the north could potentially benefit the rebels to better organise themselves. ICG's Didem Aykel Collinsworth explains that Turkey's decision to allow the U.S.-led coalition to use its territory to train moderate Syrian rebels and launch attacks is a move to restore confidence in its allies that it is committed to the fight against ISIS. She considers it unlikely that Turkey would engage in direct involvement in the Syrian war as its 900km porous border with Syria makes it extremely vulnerable to security threats from ISIS. Additionally, it would be unpopular domestically which is undesirable for the government as they are in an election cycle until the summer of 2015. Collinsworth highlights the urgency for the government and the PKK to move forward with the peace process and confidence building measures to ensure better cooperation in their fight against ISIS in Kobane and elsewhere. Turkey wants a buffer zone to accommodate refugees, but they cannot do it alone and the U.S. has been reluctant to pursue it.	
15/10/2014		EIU "Pakistan Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020141021eaaf00063) EIU reports that six senior commanders of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP, the Pakistani Taliban) have pledged allegiance to ISIS. It is most likely that TTP will first join ISIS' efforts in Syria and Iraq before returning home to fight. Given the pressure on ISIS in Syria and Iraq from US-led coalition airstrikes, EIU suggests that it is unlikely that they will be able to offer their new allies any material support.	
20/10/2014		EIU "Syria Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUCP00020141021eaak000iy) EIU reports that despite a local ceasefire in effect from May, political tensions remain high in Homs, Syria, as a dual car-bomb attack on a school in a regime-controlled area sparked loyalist protests against the	FAC condemns atrocities by ISIS and Iraq and Syria and expresses determination to join international efforts to counter ISIS. "Non-inclusive

		authorities. Regime forces have begun an offensive on Al Waer, in a signal that it is taking a tougher stance against rebel-held areas in the city. EIU “Iraq Politics” (Document EIUCP00020141021eaak000j7) EIU reports that the final line-up of the Iraqi cabinet has been completed, and all ministers have been sworn into office, positioning the Iraqi government to better tackle ISIS. Although there has been little formal progress on Kurdish demands, Iraqi Kurds participated in the government and were appointed to two new ministries, boosting their representation. Discussions over the outstanding issues with the Kurds is to be carried out over an initial three-month deadline, which need to be quick and satisfactory to strengthen efforts against ISIS.	policies in Iraq, and instability in Syria caused by the Assad regime's brutal war against its own people have allowed ISIL/Da'esh to flourish. As a consequence of its policies and actions, the Assad regime cannot be a partner in the fight against ISIL/Da'esh. The EU strengthens its sanctions against the Syrian regime by placing restrictions on an additional 14 people. Further details on the EU's Syria policy are summarised here.
21/10/2014		EIU “Iraq: Key Developments” (Document EIUCP00020141023eaal0000j) EIU writes that the extension of U.S.-led airstrikes against ISIS into Syria has important implications for Iraq, as ISIS strongholds in Syria have allowed for the funnelling of supplies for its operations in Iraq. EIU “Iraq/Syria/Turkey Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020141022eaal0000i) EIU reports that U.S. planes have airdropped weapons provided by Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga forces to Syrian Kurdish fighters defending Kobane against an ISIS assault. Simultaneously, ISIS has revitalised offensives on multiple fronts against Kurdish forces in Iraq, including Sinjar and Diyala, which may be an effort to distract the Peshmerga	

		from delivering support to Syrian Kurdish fighters. EIU writes that the military assistance to forces in Kobane has highlighted political splits within the Iraqi Kurdish community and its Peshmerga forces, but there are signs of a thaw.	
22/10/2014			The EU increases its humanitarian aid to Iraq by an additional EUR 3 million. In an EP plenary, the Italian Presidency on behalf of EU HR/VP Catherine Ashton discusses the situation in Kobane: ‘It is time to express our determination to contain and defeat ISIL in practice. Kobanê provides further evidence that military action by the coalition is necessary to contain ISIL. But at the same time, we need to recognize that military action alone is not sufficient to defeat ISIL. It will require sustained engagement and comprehensive and coordinated actions to tackle the regional threat posed by terrorism and violent extremism and address the underlying instability and violence which has given ISIL / Da'esh and other

			terrorist groups a foothold. This is what the EU collectively needs and is committed to doing. (...) On the military side, it is crucial that the recent decision by Turkish authorities to authorize the passage of Iraqi Peshmerga fighters to Kobanê translates into concrete action. (...) More generally, we want to treat the fight against ISIL as a key focus of our foreign policy dialogue with Turkey.”
23/10/2014			EU officials attend an expert meeting in which they discuss various responses to the threat of foreign terrorist fighters.
24/10/2014		HRW reports that the lawless behaviour of government-backed Shia militias has increased over the past year as they continue to kidnap and kill Sunni civilians in Iraq. It argues that “by turning a virtual blind eye to the abuses committed by Iraqi government forces and its proxy militias, key partners may be helping to push reluctant Sunnis into the Islamic State camp”. EIU “Syria/Saudi Arabia Politics: Quick View” (Document EIUCP00020141025eaa00040) EIU writes that the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has reported 533 deaths since the start of U.S.-led airstrikes in Syria. 32 were civilians while the majority of those killed were ISIS members,	

		underlining the precision of the attacks. The civilian deaths draw attention to the risks associated with foreign attacks which could result in backlash. Further, the targeting of oil refineries and grain silo to interrupt ISIS' revenue streams has led to a hike in fuel prices and shortages. All of this could result in the loss of support for foreign intervention. Syrian opposition forces are frustrated at the reluctance of air forces to strike regime targets, as well as the slow pace in which the U.S. has provided arms to them. The Syrian regime is under growing pressure as local populations in areas under regime control are growing angrier, and its losses of main agricultural areas mean that the regime will have to use up its foreign currency reserves to import wheat.	
27/10/2014		EIU "Iraq Politics: Quick View" (Document EIUUCP00020141028eaar00006) EIU reports that Iraqi security forces seem to have made some progress against ISIS in a major operation to reassert control between Baghdad and Karbala ahead of the Shia pilgrimage of Ashura. The Iraqi security forces claim that they have pushed ISIS out of the town of Jurf al-Sakhar and that Sunni tribal fighters have resisted a major ISIS attack against Amiriyat al-Fallujah.	
30/10/2014		HRW reports that ISIS executed approximately 600 Shia inmates after seizing Badoush prison when they captured Mosul on 10 June 2014.	
Oct 2014		On Iraq, ICG reports that ISIS advanced in Anbar and around its provincial capital, Ramadi. Provincial officials petitioned for urgent military assistance warning of the potential fall of the province. Criticism of PM Haider al-Abadi increased over the past month, with particular focus on his belated efforts to rebuild the army. Fatal attacks continued in Baghdad. On Syria, US-led airstrikes continued, although they failed to strike ISIS fighters heading to seize Kobane despite increasing air support to Kurdish forces. The U.S. called on Turkey to join the anti-ISIS coalition which they refused. ICG reports that US efforts lacked coherence and their military assistance to moderate rebels remained	

		limited. Clashes between the regime and ISIS persisted, racking up the death toll.	
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