

**If you are safe,
I am safe**



A strategy for Iraq

Preface

THIS report is the work of two year's research, reflection and writing on Iraq — building on more than twenty years' experience of addressing conflict in places as diverse as Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Darfur and Afghanistan.

The proposition *If you are safe, I am safe* was first set out in January 2014, as the crisis in Iraq worsened; its first draft was completed in June 2014 as Mosul fell. Despite all that has happened in Iraq since then, the basic proposition and strategy of this proposal remains the same. This edition sets that out more clearly and applies it to the current situation, affirming its continued relevance — and indeed necessity.

My aim is that, with the proposition *If you are safe, I am safe* now gaining support, this edition of the report will benefit policy makers and analysts inside and outside Iraq to better understand both the proposition and the strategy presented here; I hope that it will help them to come to an informed opinion of it — one that will be reflected in their advice and analysis as well as their practice. My purpose with this report is also to help build a coalition of support for the *If you are safe, I am safe* proposal amongst Western governments and even more importantly in the Iraqi government and in Iraq's civil society too: one that will last long after the immediate crisis triggered by Daesh has passed.

OVERVIEW

When Iraqis unite it is the end for Daesh

POLITICS IS THE KEY TO VICTORY

‘WAR’, said the noted Prussian military theorist Carl von Clausewitz, ‘is politics by other means’. If that is so, then for counter-insurgency, ‘politics is war by other means’. The temptation is to see conflict in primarily military terms; this is almost always a mistake. Get the politics wrong and you will have a harder, costlier fight that will drag on longer — and the prospects of victory for the government will be far reduced.

The classic counter-insurgency case-study remains the Malayan Emergency 1948-1960 from which many lessons were learnt, most recently by the United States in the development of its latest counterinsurgency doctrine. The chief lesson from Malaya, and one the US has understated, is the absolute necessity of changing the political landscape from one where defeat was likely to one where victory was likely.

So in Northern Ireland. There, after three years of conflict, a state that could not constrain the violence that it faced was reconfigured by bold political reform into one that could do so. In Iraq, the politics may be more fragmented than in Malaya or Northern Ireland, but they are just as central to achieving a real victory over insurgency.

IDENTIFYING THE POLITICAL PROBLEM IN IRAQ

The heart of the crisis in Iraq is social and political division — in particular division between the Sunni and Shi'a communities and their politicians, and division between the Sunni community and the state. This is not an entirely new problem in Iraq but a train-of-events have raised the problem to a new level of intensity.

The uprising of 1991 and the Ba'athist regime's response to it caused a step change in Shi'a self-identity and alienation from the state; the collapse of that regime in 2003, the de-Ba'athisation policies, the 2005 constitution and establishment of a Shi'a-led government in Iraq have transformed both inter-communal relations and communal relations with the state: it is now the Sunni communities who are alienated and who contest government legitimacy and resent the new political settlement and its beneficiaries.

This crisis of inter-communal relations and state identity has been expressed in a civil confrontation marked by the torture and execution of thousands of civilians, the targeted-killing of tens of thousands of others, and the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands more. Terror and counter-terror have exacerbated communal divisions and acerbated communal relations further still.

The rise of powerful non-state and sub-state actors has further divided state power and the politics of the last decade have further increased Sunni alienation. This crisis has contributed to failures in numerous other areas of Iraqi public life — in public services and law and order, economic and social life, as well as providing opportunities for corruption and manipulation of the public to thrive.

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM AND DAESH

This is the environment that has been the seedbed of insurgency and the environment that Daesh, following in the footsteps of its previous incarnation as al-Qaeda in Iraq, has exploited. It is the reason Daesh was so easily able to quickly occupy much of northern Iraq in June 2014 and to hold it since then. In exploiting this multi-faceted crisis of identities and relations, it has sharpened the sectarian element of the conflict simply because it is both entirely sectarian and so extreme in its sectarianism. The dependence on militias and Iran makes alienation of Sunni from the state still greater.

The rallying of Shi'a in the face of the Daesh onslaught compares starkly with the passivity of most Sunni — a hard core of insurgents apart. This suggests that we are witnessing a further phase of deterioration in communal relations and alienation from the state to those begun in 1991 and 2003.

POLITICAL PROBLEM, POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY

However, Iraqi Sunni, whilst not flocking to support the government, have not, with the exception noted above, flocked to Daesh either; though strained — even to breaking point — the ideal of Iraqi unity still survives. This suggests that it is not too late to address the core political problems that have divided Iraq.

The benefits of doing so would be considerable; a united Iraq would be far more able to field an army and associated police forces capable of undertaking the military and policing operations that are required to retake northern Iraq and would win considerably more support from locals in both the seize and hold phases of the ongoing campaign. Only an Iraq that

unambiguously represents and reflects all its peoples will be able to deliver the legitimate government that Sunni communities need if stability is to return to Iraq and the seedbeds of the insurgency are to be removed.

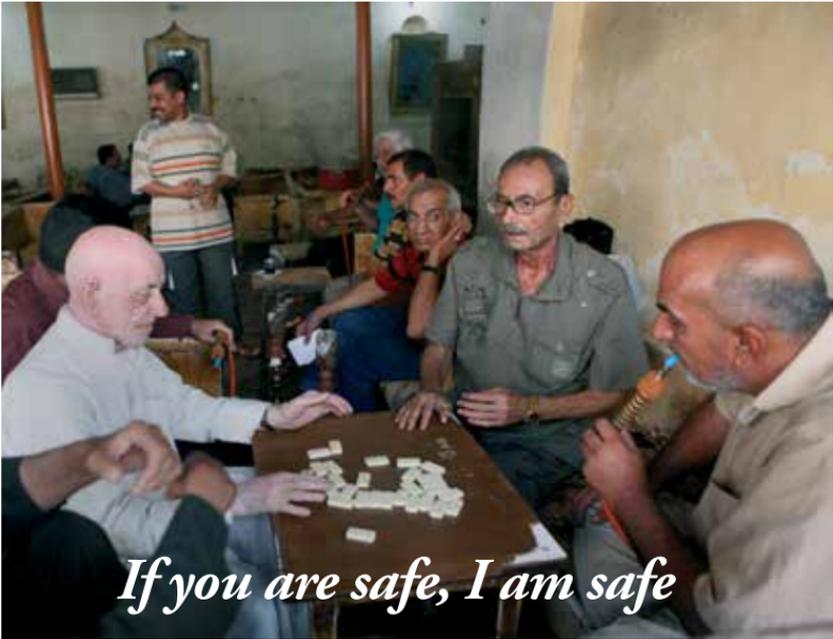
This is not the only analysis to identify a political solution as necessary to the resolution of Iraq's crisis. The problem has been to identify how that would work in a climate in which trust between politicians has broken down. If a political solution is required to resolve the problem but the problem itself prevents a political solution we are faced with an impasse — a self-perpetuating crisis.

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe proposes a way out of this impasse by focusing on changing the political atmosphere itself — as well as public mood and the political environment. This, not a grand final political settlement, is now what is required — and it is also realisable.

THE POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT THAT DEFEATS DAESH

What is needed in Iraq is a strategy that focuses on changing the public mood and the political environment from one where reconciliation between communities and between Sunni and the state is not possible, to one where it is. To do so it is necessary to identify and address the primary drivers of division between the communities and to address issues of Sunni alienation from the state.

Such a strategy would need to bring together communications, policies, actions and legislation that can deliver this shift in mood and environment and state-communal relations. This report provides a key to restoring inter-communal relations and trust as well as re-crafting an Iraqi state identity that can win and hold the loyalty of the



overwhelming majority of Iraqis of all communities.

By dealing with the underlying causes of insurgency, the environment that Daesh exploited in the first place is changed into one that is conducive to its defeat. By creating the language and conditions for Iraqi unity the resources are made available to realise that defeat. *If you are safe, I am safe* is the key; it is a message that informs, shapes and provides the aim of the strategy proposed in this report.

The foremost problem is the presence of Daesh and the conditions that have given it the opportunity it has exploited. Both these must be addressed fully. However, there are other security threats in Iraq over disputed territories and between other ethnic groups than those outlined here. Improving the political climate is a necessity if these too are to be resolved and conflict avoided.

If you are safe, I am safe



If You Are Safe, I Am Safe

An Introduction

ADDRESSING THE CORE PROBLEM AND ITS CAUSES

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe is a strategy that aims to change Iraq's political mood and environment from one marked by division of sect and faction to one marked by co-operation and unity. It does this by directly addressing the heart of the problem: the deep inter-communal divisions in Iraq together with the root driver of these divisions: the perceived threat between groups; this includes the question of the identity of the state, which is both a primary driver of threat and division as well as a cause of Sunni alienation from the state. It addresses this core problem by proposing an alternative view: that the security of one's own group is to be found in the security of the other group, who when no longer perceiving threat will not respond with threat.

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe provides an easy to communicate concept of safety — one that has the potential to reach, inform and influence all Iraqis and their communities. The message *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* is the basis of a campaign aimed at changing perspectives of the 'other community' from being a source of threat to being a source of security; in so doing, it should strengthen inter-communal identity in relation to identity based on sect or group; usually this will be national identity, but could equally be more local — Baghdadi, for instance. Importantly, this builds on already existing identities. This communication campaign can also contribute

If you are safe, I am safe

significantly to a vision for and reality of Iraq as a state and nation that can attract Sunni support, whilst minimizing loss of Shi'a support. This helps to re-shape Iraqi self-identity and the Iraqi state from inciting conflict to inspiring and enabling reconciliation and national unity.

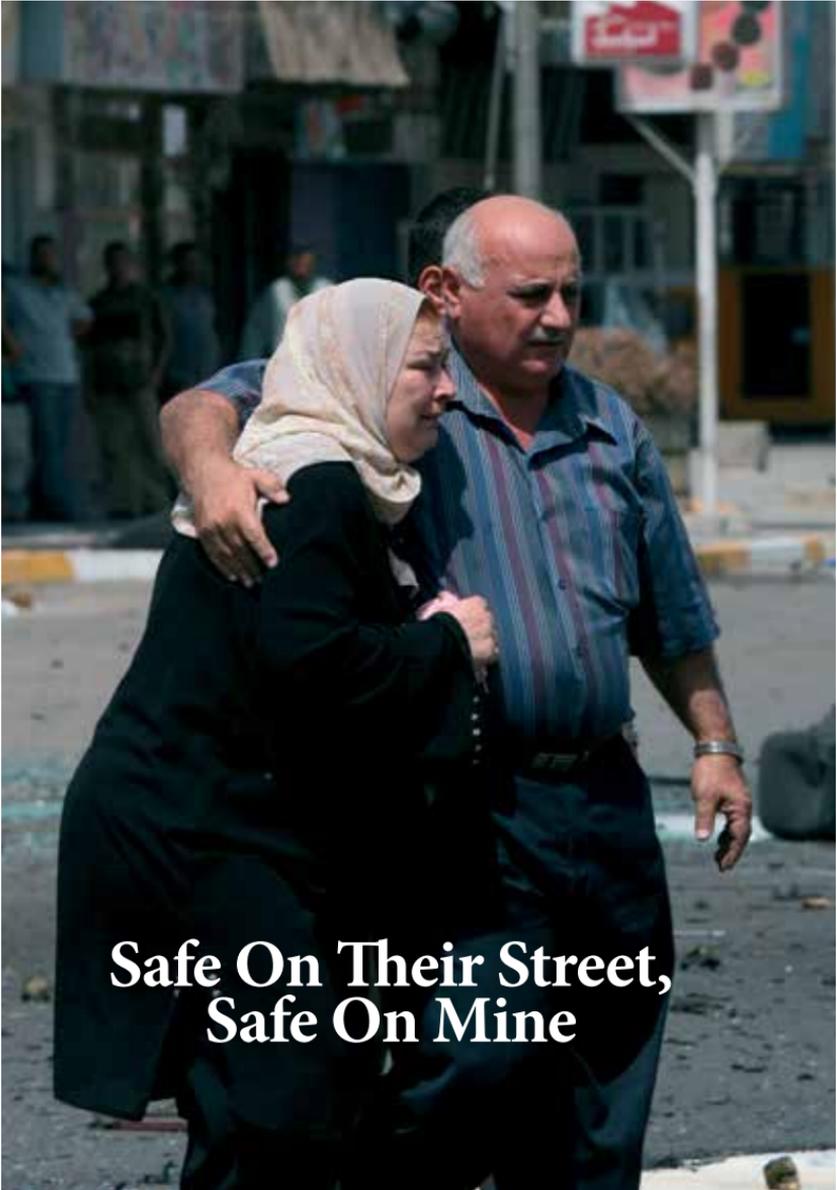
Implementing a strategy based on this approach offers the best prospects for bringing an end to violent conflict in Iraq — both in the short and long-term — and building the basis of a stable Iraq that is able to serve, prosper and protect all its citizens and which can help bring security to the region.

HOW THIS PROPOSAL WORKS

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe is a message-led approach in which the message shapes all communication, actions, policies, and legislation; the message provides purpose, direction and a framework that guides the design, development, communication and implementation of policies and programmes, thus maximising coherence and minimising contradiction.

This ensures that all components of the strategy reinforce the key message and add to one another's effects — because 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts'. Consequently they will make a far bigger impact on the general public, on those who must deliver programmes and policies, and on the real-world that the strategy seeks to change — including the core issues: communal relations and cross-communal support for the state itself.

If you are safe, I am safe



**Safe On Their Street,
Safe On Mine**

THE EVIDENCE BASE

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe is an evidence-based response to the central role that perception of threat has on inter-communal relations. Perceived threat negatively distorts the thinking, emotions and behaviours different social groups have towards one another.

At the same time, it reinforces their own group identity, positively affecting thinking, emotions and behaviour towards their own group; taken together, this can quite quickly create a gulf between groups — one that is often characterised by resentment, fear, anger and even hatred. Meanwhile, the identity that these different groups share is weakened.

Threat is not only manifested as a consequence of a lack of physical security but also by changes in the identity of the state and people's relationship to it and by cultural change. This perception of threat — whether physical, political, religious, cultural, social or economic (and which include and combine into threats to identity) — has been the core driver of conflict in Iraq for over a decade. There is, therefore, no solution to Iraq's conflicts without addressing this phenomenon directly.

The principles of *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* are those that underpin all stable and peaceful societies. They are, for instance, the basis of the world's most successful security organisation — NATO. This organisation, founded in 1949, is based on the principle that an attack against one member must be considered as an attack against all members. This principle is backed up by political consensus, military doctrine, planning, troop deployments and by training at the national level. This has worked for NATO members for over 65 years; why would these principles not also work for Iraq?

If you are safe, I am safe



If you are safe, I am safe



If They Are Safe, You Are Safe



If You Are Safe, I Am Safe

Implementation

COMMUNICATIONS: WORDS AND ACTIONS

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe is a strategy based on persuading Iraqis that there is no security for one group if another group perceives itself to be threatened, whether that threat is physical or a threat to their identity. All must feel safe if all are to be safe.

Clarity in communication and action is essential to achieving this. That clarity is ensured by keeping one message at the forefront of the communications campaign and that same message as the guide for all actions: *If you are safe, I am safe*.

Every Iraqi needs to be reached with this message many times over, through a plethora of media, and to experience it through government policy and programmes. This is essential because every Iraqi is part of the solution.

WINNING THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

Behind the battle on the streets there is a battle of ideas that in part at least, attempts to right wrongs and perceived wrongs, make sense of history and determine the future of Iraq — or much of Iraq. *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* is a counter-vision to the extreme views currently on offer from Daesh and an alternative to ideas that fuel, intended or not, sectarian conflict

— whether cultural, political or violent. *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* argues that real security for all Iraqis cannot be delivered by sectarian visions, nor can it be delivered by despair and cynicism, but it can be delivered by purposefully promoted inter-communal security.

This proposal addresses the root of the problem, sectarianism, as well as its main driver — threat and the perception of threat. Whereas sectarian-centred approaches to security create new cycles of threat and violence and thereby becomes self-defeating, inter-communal security does not do this. Challenging sectarian ideas that have been promoted to Iraq's communities is one key aspect of the communications campaign. Too often, the centre-ground does not engage in this battle of ideas — and that is a huge mistake. The absence of engagement in this battle of ideas is a surrendering of the space to others — to those less effective, those less helpful and those that are hostile.

The key to winning this battle of ideas — specifically focused on identity of communities and the nation and state — is to have something to say that is more persuasive than the alternatives. Sectarianism is failing Iraq and the evidence is that it cannot but fail Iraq. In Arab Iraq there is still an attachment by the majority of people from every community to Iraqi unity, however sectarianised some of that commitment has become and however weak it now is.

Iraqi unity is an emotional and intellectual asset with very deep roots; if cultivated appropriately, it could provide a counter identity to sectarianism. It is the only practical alternative that exists and one which the *If you are safe, I am safe* message is designed to reclaim, renew and re-assert.

The value of communications is often understated. Insurgents employ communication at the heart of their

strategies because they know how vital projection of influence is. After all, even a bomb's effect is not chiefly to kill and maim, it is to convey fear to thousands or tens of thousands more than those directly affected as well as to give the impression that the government cannot protect its citizens. In addition, terrorists spend a huge amount of effort on both traditional communications and sophisticated use of social media. If they see communications as central, so should the government.

To beat the insurgent in this media battle it is essential to have a message that correctly addresses the two key issues — inter-communal relations and the identity of the Iraqi state. *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* does that — the message of insurgents does not. The next step is to get that message across to each community in Iraq.

IDENTIFYING THE AUDIENCES FOR THE MESSAGE

The audiences that must be reached are not only the insurgent-contested communities that the government must win over — who are the usual target of communications in a counter-insurgency campaign — but Shi'a, Kurd and the smaller minorities too.

Nevertheless, though the message is the same for all Iraqis, each community and its sub-groups will need different emphases of the same message and different means of communication will be prioritised. Government and parliament, governors and local government, media and civil society leaders would all need to be engaged with directly.

The police are absolutely essential to the delivery of this message — they are, after all, the face of government. They would need specific training, resourcing and more besides.

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The same would be true for other security forces and the army. In these areas, *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* can build on the considerable investment that the coalition placed in Iraq from 2003-2011.

Focusing on the governorates with the highest civilian casualties, especially Baghdad, should be a priority when it comes to reaching the general public. Groups initially better able to respond to a non-sectarian message and who have influence — the middle class and the middle aged — would be prioritised.

Another group to focus on initially would be businessmen; Iraqi enterprises are closing at an alarming rate as a consequence of lack of competitiveness: conflict has increased costs for Iraqi manufactures compared to imports from peaceful countries.

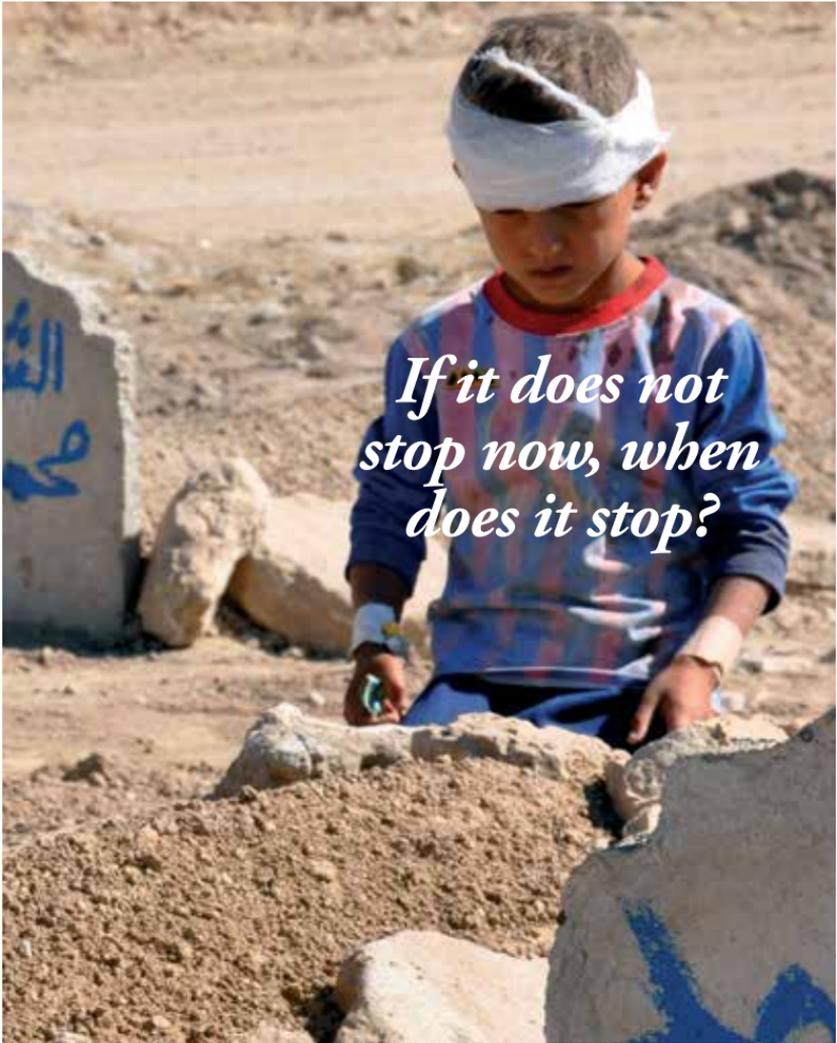
THE MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

If you are safe, I am safe is both simple to communicate but deep enough to require and repay unpacking in more complex media formats. It can be communicated through TV and radio discussion programmes, documentaries and public service adverts; through film and short film, music and art; through books, booklets, pamphlets, newspaper stories, articles and adverts.

If you are safe, I am safe can appear on car stickers, T-shirts and billboards. Implementation of *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* zones for policing, for the workplace and in public spaces, as well as policy announcements and speeches associated with this strategy — along with symbolic acts aimed at communication through action — would all gain news coverage and impact opinion.

Public support can be capitalised upon. Advocates can

If you are safe, I am safe



be recruited, trained and resourced and classes can be run; it can be promoted and discussed in neighbourhoods and work settings, debates held at universities and in schools — as well as in parliament and on TV. The message should inspire social media discussion enriched with pre-prepared web-based resources.

The police should be reformed to be ‘advocates’ for *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* and a chief exemplar of the change it can bring to service quality, Iraqi unity and the nature of the state.

Key to winning the battle of ideas in Iraq is not just having a superior media strategy, though that certainly helps, but having a superior message: *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* is the only idea that offers an end to violence, a restoration of communal relations, and provides a narrative for a new expression of a democratic Iraq that includes and serves all Iraqis.

COMMUNICATION THROUGH SYMBOLIC DEEDS

To properly communicate this, words are not enough. Symbolic acts are a powerful and necessary form of communication as they demonstrate that the message is being implemented and government commitment is real. Such acts would form an essential part of the communications programme, providing not just content but concrete evidence that the message is credible.

An example of a symbolic act might be the demolition of Abu Ghraib and its transformation into a national memorial to all Iraqis who have been wrongfully killed, tortured or imprisoned over the last decades: after all, people from every community have suffered.

This example would not only help address the problem of the misperception that it is only one’s own community that

has suffered and not the 'other' community but it would also reach out to many Iraqis alienated from government or damaged by their experience of the security and penal system. This can be supported by prisoner releases and recompense for those who have been mistreated.

This also helps establish the government's stance on moral and ethical issues, a key battleground in this current conflict where issues of justice and righteousness are prominent, albeit in somewhat confessional terms. Whilst caution is advisable for any commentator here, the identification of the issue with the message is worthwhile.

Street names, bank notes and coin designs, public art, public holidays, the names of military units, the look and feel of security services and of government offices and the nature and place of public works — all of these can be used to communicate a message about Iraq and its identity and mutual belonging.

SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

Whilst the message would be for all Iraqis, whether under Baghdad's rule or currently under Daesh, the specific implementation of programmes; would necessarily be focussed on those communities under government control that feel most threatened — which would include newly liberated areas. Programmes and personnel would need to be prepared for areas still to be liberated to ensure the best prospects for holding on to them and winning legitimacy for the government.

POLICE ZONES

Such programmes could include *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* police zones and police checkpoints to ensure that vulnerable communities experience highly-effective policing that respects and serves them and so earns their support. That would mean police recruitment and leadership changes, enhanced training and rigorously enforced codes of conduct for police, and a shift to community policing.

These police reforms would need to be backed by the introduction of intelligence-led counter-terrorism policing to ensure that the security benefits of improved community relations are maximised. This would secure improvements both in legitimacy and security.

Training and advisory resources are available internationally, not least from Northern Ireland, to support this shift in policing. Resource constraints would require it starting in the more sensitive neighbourhoods and public places. Associated reforms for judiciary and penal services would complement this and could be a way of driving these aspects of security sector reform.

The Sunni suburbs of Baghdad might be priority areas for this as they represent a core constituency whose alienation from the state and government needs to be addressed.

Successful implementation there would demonstrate how *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* can change the experience of living in government-controlled Iraq; like symbolic acts, this can be specifically communicated to others, including those under Daesh rule, as a key component of the communications campaign.

SHAPING THE WORKPLACE AND PUBLIC SPACE

Other programmes could include *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* neighbourhoods, workplaces, hospitals, schools, major transport routes, and public spaces. In these places specific inputs would aim to improve the experience of government rule and the social and cultural experience of everyday living in Iraq for both individuals and communities. This would have an enormously beneficial impact on mood and attitudes of those alienated from government and each other.

A VIRTUOUS CIRCLE OF CONFIDENCE AND TRUST

The aim is to put the drivers of threat into reverse gear, thus improving inter-communal relations as threat perception recedes. As threat perception falls, so attitudes and behaviour will change for the better. Both main communities should start to see one another in a more positive light and to act better towards each other, with each improvement leading to another improvement in the other community's view and response. This is the surest way of increasing confidence and restoring the basis of trust between political leaders, but also between divided communities.

If you are safe, I am safe



IF YOU ARE SAFE, I AM SAFE



If You Are Safe, I Am Safe

Defeating Daesh

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe could play a significant role in the defeat of Daesh in Iraq by enabling the government to ‘out-govern the insurgents’ in previously difficult to rule areas, with all the benefits that brings for counter-insurgents.

There can be no credible plan to re-take Mosul without a plan to win the hearts and minds of its people. Winning the hearts and minds of Sunni under Daesh occupation would change the human terrain from one conducive to Daesh rule and security to one hostile to it. It would increase the willingness of locals to co-operate with government forces, thus enhancing flows of intelligence to the coalition and winning local allies — vastly improving the government’s ability to take, hold and police territory currently occupied by Daesh. This is the security-environment shift that a political strategy can deliver.

It would not just facilitate the liberation of occupied Iraq but also disadvantage any continued Daesh (or associated) insurgency and act as a major deterrent to any return by Daesh.

It would be highly advisable to ensure that an effective and acceptable police force is ready to secure and police areas re-taken from Daesh, as this is essential if these areas are to be held, legitimacy earned, and government by consent won and a new insurgency avoided or defeated. The police zones mentioned earlier could provide a good model for these.

AN ENVIRONMENT FOR REBUILDING THE ARMY

Promoting an ‘Iraq for all Iraqis’ could yield great benefits for the reconstruction of the Iraqi army. Its failure at Mosul was as much one of morale and spirit as poor leadership and hollowed-out units. Mosul had become a foreign city to the soldiers; the army and security forces felt unwelcome and were widely seen as hostile by the city’s inhabitants. No surprise then that it was both uneasy about holding on and less than fully prepared to fight for the defence of the city.

States and armies are built together, not just because armies require the administrative resources of the state but because the state confers upon them a legitimacy and gives them a role that makes them distinct from any other armed force. This is necessary for their proper shaping and successful functioning.

If Iraq’s army is to become an effective fighting force again, it needs a revived sense of Iraqi national and state identity. The *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* proposal would help create the context in which the Iraqi army can become a strong and healthy institution and address its morale and recruitment problems. A stronger cross-communal make-up and ethos would also enhance the army’s ability to retake Daesh-occupied Iraq by demonstrating that the army that had once been seen as hostile was now a true force of liberation for all Iraqis.

A restored Iraqi army remains the best option for the retaking of the areas occupied by Daesh and the one most likely to contribute to a defeat that is not just military, but political and moral, and which can be communicated to the region to the utter detriment of Daesh’s interests. This is what makes this strategy an international priority, not just an Iraqi one.

THE ARMY, THE STATE AND COMMUNAL RELATIONS

The sectarian militias that have provided the bulwark against Daesh since the summer of 2014 present a problem for Iraqi national identity, human rights, communal relations, Sunni and other Iraqis' relations with the state, democracy and Iraq's stability. They cannot be removed, but they can be — must be — balanced by the building of a national army.

An Iraqi army manned by Shi'a, Sunni and other Iraqis would reinforce the message of a united Iraq that is 'for all and defended by all'. Just as an army benefits from a united nation and state, so a state and national identity can benefit from an army as a shared symbol of national pride. Its successes would demonstrate what can be achieved by Iraqis working together.

Opening up positions in the police and army to Sunni would provide not only the resource for many of the proposed police zones, and an important recruitment source of experienced officers and soldiers for the army, but a clear demonstration that Sunni had a future in Iraq. Whilst creating the conditions in which Sunni are seen rallying to the defence of Iraq would help bridge the communal divide too and encourage Shi'a support for the *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* approach — that is, for a shared Iraq based on mutual security and shared interests.

A DEFEATED DAESH IN IRAQ

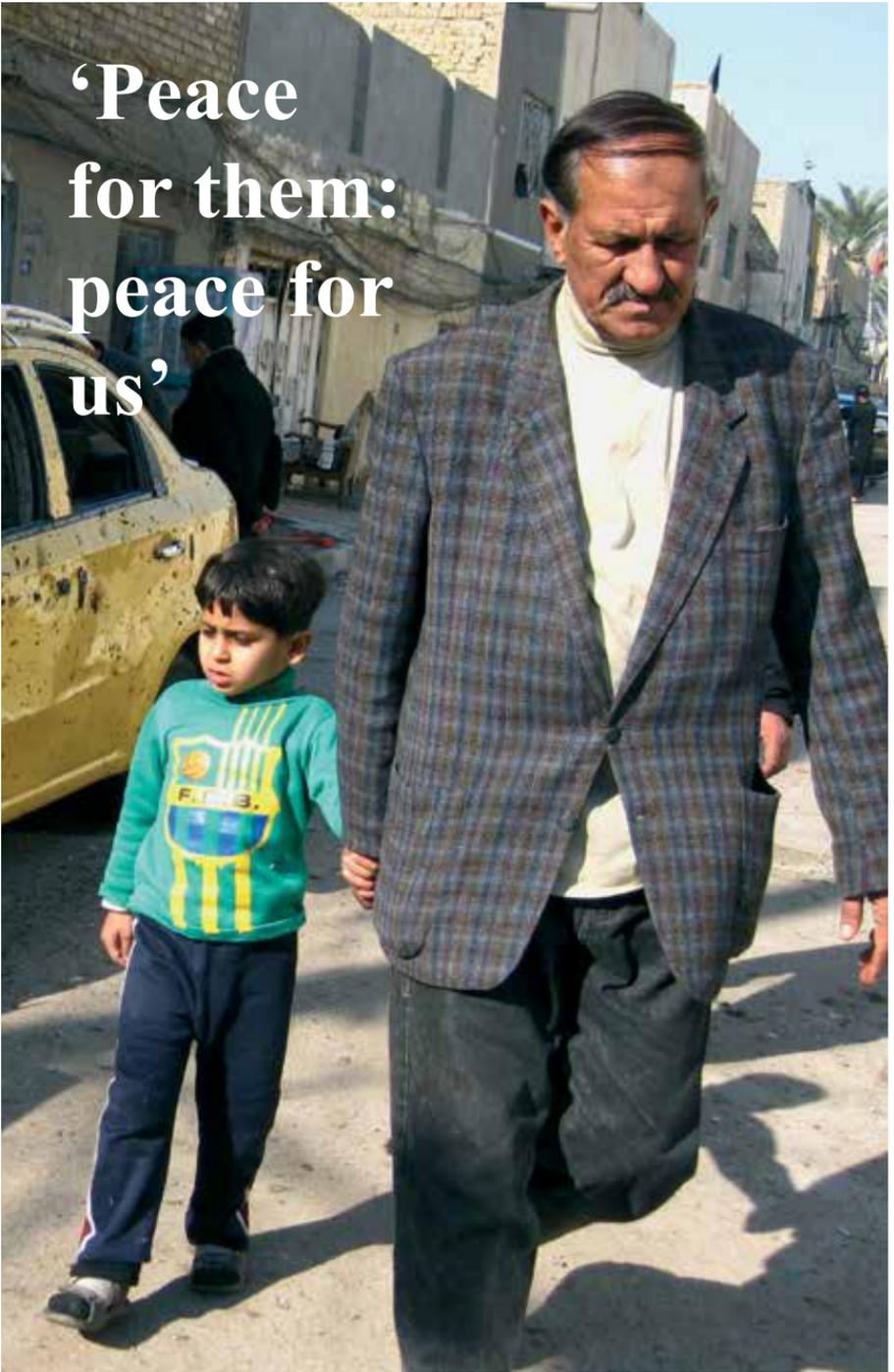
The defeat of Daesh in the political struggle for Iraq and on the battlefield — including evicting it from Iraq and preventing it from returning as an insurgent force in Iraq — are all aims of the strategy proposed here. Such a victory (politically, militarily and in the battle of ideas — and minds and hearts) would hugely damage, perhaps end, Daesh's claim to 'caliphate' status and its hope of a return. It would decisively end its narrative of advance and victory, strip it of a large amount — perhaps one-half — of its assets and income sources. There would be a treasure trove of captured leaders and foot soldiers with high intelligence and propaganda value; it would expose to the world even more clearly the catalogue of terror it has carried out.

Demonstrating that Iraqis can live alongside one another in peace and work together for each other's security and prosperity would do even more damage to Daesh's philosophy and bring an end to the environment it has exploited in Iraq.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE REGION

The expulsion of Daesh from Iraq — both its ideology and its military force — would change the dynamics within Syria as Daesh would be weakened at all levels; the example of a neighbour nation brought back from the brink would be demonstrated too. Stability might be projected across the border as well as military action taken from Iraqi territory. A successful conclusion of the conflict in Iraq along the lines proposed here might lower the temperature of the broader Shi'a-Sunni confrontation considerably. Such a prospect would add to the security of all.

‘Peace
for them:
peace for
us’



CONCLUSION

BEHIND the security crisis in Iraq lies a political and social crisis. It is only by fixing this that the security crisis can be fully dealt with. To fix this requires going behind the political and social crisis to the psychological drivers that have shaped emotions, thinking and the behaviour of whole communities. It is only by addressing the drivers of the political and social crises themselves that a successful resolution of the current crisis, going back to before 2003, can be achieved.

If You Are Safe, I Am Safe seeks to turn the thrust of the drivers of division and conflict into bulwarks of unity and peace by harnessing the powerful desire for security (whether physical, emotional, cultural, political, economic, social, etc) through an information campaign backed by measures that address the key issues of identity that attach to individuals, communities and the state. That is what *If You Are Safe, I Am Safe* seeks to do and what makes it distinctive.

Whilst there are considerable barriers to a formal political solution to Iraq's current problems, by focusing efforts on changing the political and social mood and environment, barriers to intermediate reforms can be overcome as mood shifts. Because the strategy is highly flexible and can start at any level, any number of entry points can be utilised to introduce the strategy to Iraq.

This strategy can also benefit from existing Iraqi social and political strengths — for instance, the continued attachment to the idea of a united Iraq. As a message-based strategy, it can offer the Iraqi government a means to bring together and hold together all the actors and actions required to achieve a shift in Iraq's political environment, something that is incredibly hard to achieve. The analytical approach is not only solid, but is backed by case studies, theory and an evidence base.

Case Study 1

The Primacy Of Politics

THE REAL LESSON OF MALAYA

Judged as the best example of a successful counterinsurgency campaign, lessons from Malaya have been at the heart of the recent rethink of US counterinsurgency doctrine. However, the chief lesson from that campaign has been obscured.

IN June 1948 the British declared a state of Emergency in Malaya in order to pre-empt a Communist-led insurgency that aimed to challenge British rule politically and militarily. Government security measures were harsh and poorly co-ordinated during 1948-49, a period characterised as ‘terror and counter-terror’.

However, the crisis was thoroughly assessed by the government during this time and a more integrated political and security campaign emerged, the cornerstone of which was an official commitment to independence for Malaya, announced in April 1949. This seized the main national political cause from the Communists and left them supported by only a minority of the population against the British Empire backed by the local elites and the majority of the local population — Malay, Chinese and Indian.

The British had cut the Communists out as leaders of a struggle for independence; when they applied to the main Malay party for support after 1951 they were spurned: after all, the British were offering independence, which was in their power to give, whilst the Communists were unable to seize it.

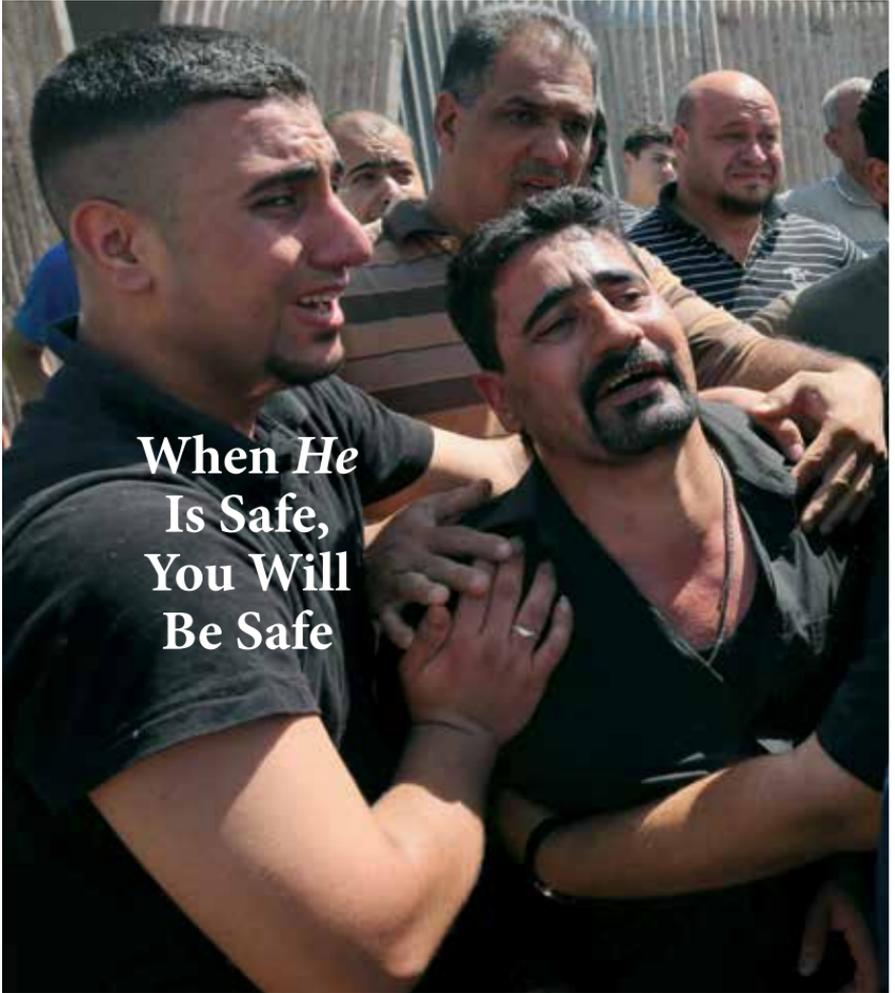
This reshaped the conflict into one that could be won. The British identified the Chinese, particularly the rural poor, as the population whose loyalty still had to be won, but a population small enough to be effectively isolated physically from the insurgents. Once isolated by resettlement, they could then be won over by tough measures that persuaded ‘minds’ and by softer policies that could win ‘hearts’.

There was a lot of lesson-learning and a great deal of research (largely on the back of registering the populace for ID cards), including listening to the contested population and former insurgents. This informed (and reformed) policies and programmes by identifying insurgent weaknesses and how they relied on the population, as well as highlighting the political, social and economic issues that gained them support.

Ineffective and counterproductive policies were replaced — often by policies that were almost their opposite. For instance, the emphasis shifted from punishing collaboration with terrorists to rewarding non-collaboration; rewards were granted to insurgent defectors; the economic and social issues that the Communists exploited were addressed, including through land allocations and legal rights to land, access to medical supplies and education through resettlement, and the extension of citizenship to the largely immigrant Chinese. These policies lost the Communists much of the political justification for the insurgency whilst at the same time depriving them of physical access to their remaining potential support base.

The British identified communication as central to winning loyalty to them and to breaking the loyalty felt to the Communists. They took a clear position on communications — ruling out black propaganda and trusting to the long-term benefit of winning the trust of the population through the

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Is Safe,
You Will
Be Safe**

integrity of their information campaign. They promoted debate, allowed and encouraged the contested population to hear the Communist view and contrast it with the government's.

The essential message was that the government is your friend and can be relied upon to deliver what it has promised, in contradistinction to the insurgents. This was proclaimed in deed and word. That message had to emanate from every part of the counterinsurgency effort — from the Director of Operations (*military*), the High Commissioner (*civil*), down to platoon and village level. This one message was central to the success of the entire campaign.

Politics and communications shaped the conflict into one that was manageable in scale and provided the human resources necessary to win it — a plentiful supply of motivated, locally-recruited personnel for the security forces backed morally and by intelligence from the majority of the population and increasingly that of the remaining contested communities.

Determined and effective security measures and extensive communications campaigns — of word as well as deed — cut off the insurgents from their remaining support base and the fresh recruits and the supplies of food they provided, while many of the issues that generated insurgent support were addressed through 'hearts and minds' programmes; meanwhile, improved handling of intelligence, security tactics and incentives for insurgents to hand themselves in eroded the insurgents' operational strength.

It was just a matter of time before insurgent activity collapsed in this political and security environment. The government won; the insurgents — who had thought themselves invincible — lost.

Case Study 2

Creating A New State

The message from Belfast that could win peace for Baghdad

THE British and Irish endured an almost 30-year sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland as terrorists fought to impose their will by military force. They failed. The British had not only built the world's leading counter-terrorism force but transformed the Northern Irish state from being a cause of conflict into a servant of both communities.

IN 1922 Ireland was divided between an independent Irish Free State (later becoming the Republic of Ireland) with an overwhelmingly Catholic and Irish population and the much smaller Northern Ireland where a majority of Protestants, identifying themselves as 'British', were determined to remain united with Britain. Northern Ireland (or Ulster, as it is also known) was created for this Unionist majority, and it was they who ruled it and whose interests it primarily served. However, by the 1960s this state was in crisis, with rising political protest challenging its legitimacy and from 1969 armed conflict threatening its stability and existence.

The British government's answer was to dissolve the Northern Ireland government in 1972 and impose direct rule while it explored options to end the crisis. Its answer was to start inter-communal negotiations to achieve a political agreement within Northern Ireland. This quickly produced an apparent settlement, the Sunningdale Agreement, between the UK, the Republic of Ireland and the two main sectarian parties representing the two communities in conflict about the future — the Unionists (wanting

to remain with Britain) and the Nationalists (wanting Northern Ireland to be dissolved into the Republic of Ireland).

Only a year after the signing of this agreement it failed as Unionist support for it fell away: Unionists coming to see it as the first step in an unstoppable progression to an united Ireland — the very thing those committed to union with Great Britain could not and would not tolerate. Despite this perception, it was not true: Unionists could have vetoed any further steps towards unity of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland, but that veto was not sufficiently clear. A determined political campaign waged against the agreement exploited this ambiguity with the slogan ‘a united Ireland is only a Sunningdale away’. Unionist support faltered and then turned against the agreement, bringing it down.

Twenty-five years later, an almost identical political agreement was negotiated between a wider range of parties and the same two governments. Both agreements had as their basis a continued Northern Ireland state, consent, power sharing, human rights, North-South co-operation, and co-operation between London and Dublin and an institutional role for Dublin in Northern Ireland; police reform, North-South security co-operation, and an end to violence. The 1998 Agreement, unlike 1973, recognised both British and Irish identities.

Lessons were learned from 1973: the 1998 Belfast Agreement made explicit the Unionist veto, and the Republic of Ireland’s constitutional claim to Northern Ireland was repealed. The Belfast Agreement was explained clearly to the populations and referenda held and a popular mandate for the agreement gained in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It took another eight years for outstanding issues to be finally addressed in a later agreement (St Andrews, 2006) — demonstrating the time and commitment it takes to secure settlements.

A workable governing system is securely in place and civil conflict — absent now for more than 16 years — is highly unlikely ever to return.

Two key lessons Iraq can learn from Northern Ireland

SO what lessons does Northern Ireland have for Iraq? The first might be this: that the basis of a just, workable and sustainable settlement does not change much over time. Terrorist or security service activity doesn't change the terms of the final settlement very much, if at all — three-quarters of all those who died in the Northern Ireland conflict died after the Sunningdale Agreement failed in 1973.

If the political blueprint for a settlement in Northern Ireland and its consequent outworking into public expenditure, public services, law, security policy, national culture and identity remained largely unchanged between 1973 and 1998, then what does change?

The answer to that is the political environment and mood of key political actors and the public. Hopes that security clampdowns on the one hand, or terrorist activity would bring the other side to the negotiating table proved false and were finally recognised as such. Politics alone would have to provide the solution. It was well placed to do so. The period of direct rule from London had reshaped the political environment in Northern Ireland, creating a state that was no longer the creature of just one community.

Over time it created a legal system that upheld and sought to fairly arbitrate between the rights of both communities, it provided health, housing and education services and employment opportunities to both communities without preferment. And it sought and achieved to some degree the development of a political space that allowed for both the Irish and Unionist (British-orientated) identities to be expressed — with the Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 providing an Irish dimension to the governance of the province. This set the scene for a return to

political negotiations aimed at agreeing a settlement based on a continuation of the Northern Irish state but with sufficient Irish dimensions to appease the hardline Nationalists (known as Republicans).

The remarkable thing is the similarity between the 1973 and 1998 agreements. They differ in degree, but in substance they are the same. This suggests that actual solutions to political conflict will not change over time because the basic reality of the conflict does not change, and therefore nor does the solution. What does change is the preparedness of politicians and the public to recognise this and to make the concessions required for a settlement. This is not just about rational thinking, it is also about emotions, and therein lies the greatest barrier.

Changing the political environment and mood of the participants is therefore the main task of government, with associated responsibility being held by political parties, popular and religious leaders and the general population itself. The political environment and mood can change, and government and parties can actively contribute to that.

This is the second lesson to be learned from Northern Ireland. As is argued in this report, the political environment *can* be changed through law, action and communication and is best done so with a determined strategy. Such an approach also has the benefit of displacing armed groups as the key defenders of community rights and identity. A successful agreement comes about by focusing on the political environment and the public mood, not by manipulating the blueprint of the agreement or bribing parties.

That effectively is the difference between doing a deal now and having to wait a generation or more for the same political settlement to be agreed. The price for that delay will be high — in death and injury, trauma, deeper community wounds and tensions, criminal empowerment, poverty and lack of services as well as state and national development.

If you are safe, I am safe

Behind the masks lie the answers



The Insights of Social
Psychology into Conflict

INTERNAL conflict is seen primarily in security and political terms while the underlying psychological phenomenon are ignored. Conflict is usually understood as a product of rational judgments made by an elite facilitated by the availability of weapons and the absence of constraining force.

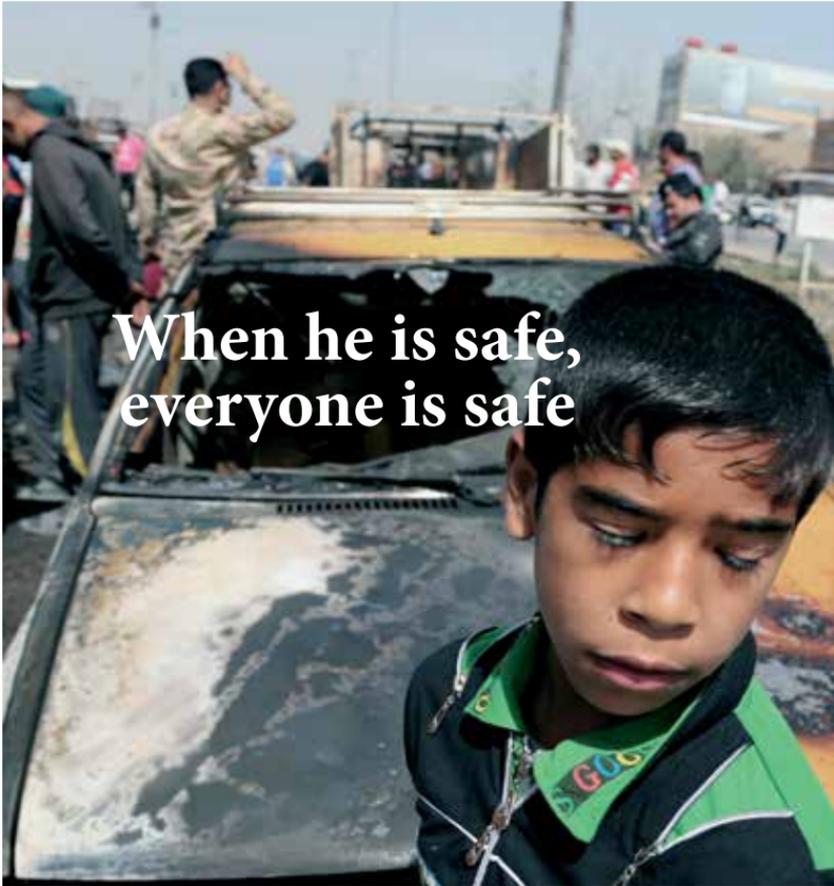
What is missing from this picture are the psychological phenomena associated with conflict. With the aid of recent research in social psychology we now have the opportunity of better understanding the psychology behind conflict at both group and individual levels and using this to shape political and security strategies and tactics.

Social psychology provides insights into how group identity affects individuals' and groups' perception of others and how perceived threat from others intensifies group identity and hostility to other groups; threat also triggers and amplifies a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses that make conflict more likely and reconciliation harder.

An informed understanding of these dynamics is increasingly viewed as essential if conflict — whether manifested in boycotts, protests, or warfare — is to be addressed effectively.

Social psychologists have also shown that decision-making is itself deeply affected by the existence of perceived threat, as it impacts negatively on cognitive processes and boosts group-think; the rational basis of decision-making has also been exaggerated at the expense of the contribution that emotions play in decisions. As threat produces a surge in negative emotions, so decision-making is affected negatively.

By understanding the underlying phenomena that shape group identity and determine group behaviour we can be in a better position to design and implement the policies and



**When he is safe,
everyone is safe**

programmes that can counter perceptions of threat. This will reduce group polarisation, cognitive biases, and negative emotions like fear, anger and resentment. This will have a significant impact on conflict levels and the prospects of positive political settlements that actually enhance group relations and break the cycle of conflict.

These insights from social psychology are evidence-based and are set out in reliable theories of intergroup relations. *In outline the most comprehensive — **the Intergroup Threat Theory** — follows here...*

How threat affects group relations

Intergroup Threat Theory

AT the heart of social psychology's insights into group conflict is its understanding of inter-group relations and the effect of threat upon them. The last few decades have seen much research in this area. It is captured most completely by the Intergroup Threat Theory as articulated by Walter G. Stephan and others. This theory focuses on group identity and threat, and cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses to threat for both groups and individuals. *What follows is a broad summary of the theory, drawing largely on Walter Stephan's work¹.*

GROUP AND IDENTITY

Self-identity is a basic human need, as necessary for sustaining human beings as food or water. Human beings find much of their identity in belonging together with others in groups based on religion and denomination, ethnicity and nationality, region and language, tribe, clan and family. For some cultures, group identity is particularly important for self-identity.

The evidence suggests that the categorisation of groups in itself creates biases in perception. As people identify with a group (their 'ingroup'), they tend to favour this group and discriminate and feel hostility towards other groups (called 'outgroups'); in times of conflict the tendency towards this is much greater.

The Intergroup Threat Theory identifies two types of threat, each of which can affect the way both groups and individuals relate to and respond to one another, with far reaching consequences. The first type of threat, named 'realistic threat', concerns threats to tangible things — economic resources, territory, political positions and power; for individuals this would include their safety, health, security, liberty, wealth or income. The second, named 'symbolic threat', concerns intangible things — beliefs, values, morality and worldview (or the loss of honour, rank, or self-esteem for an individual). Both realistic and symbolic threats can challenge the 'status' of a group, sometimes simultaneously. Perceived threats impact almost wholly negatively on intergroup relations, even when the outcome may appear positive, such as a negotiated settlement.

FACTORS AFFECTING THREAT PERCEPTION

There are a number of factors that influence threat perception. These factors can be categorised under four headings: 1) relations between groups; 2) cultural values of groups; and 3) the context of interactions; together with a fourth categorisation, 'individual difference variables', which applies to individuals and so is not outlined here.

1. Relations between groups have a significant impact on the perception of threat by a group. If the groups have a history or experience of conflict with each other and if the 'outgroup' is larger or more powerful, then the perception of threat will be greater.

A 'low-power' group will be more likely to perceive threat to itself because it is more at the mercy of the stronger group but a 'high-power' group will react more to a threat because

it has more to lose and has greater resources to respond to that threat.

2. Cultural factors impact on symbolic threat perception. A group culture marked by collectivism rather than individualism will be more prone to perceive threat from an outgroup that is culturally different. So too will a group whose culture is marked by resistance to uncertainty and the preservation of social order. Cultures that demand conformity to cultural norms and rules will also be more prone to perceive threat.

3. And lastly, context impacts on the perception of threat experienced by ingroups. Is it co-operative or competitive? Is the group power balance equal or unequal? Who sets the rules of the interaction and are there norms for the interaction?

All of these factors will impact on the degree of threat perception experienced by an ingroup.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF PERCEIVED THREAT

The evidence suggests that perceived threat has a very strong impact on the cognitive responses, emotional responses and behavioural responses of ingroups.

Cognitive responses include stereotyping, ethnocentrism, intolerance, hatred, and dehumanisation of the outgroup. Cognitive bias in intergroup relations is likely to be triggered or amplified by threat; for instance, threat is likely to increase incidence of the 'ultimate attribution error': positive attributes are explained by circumstances and negative attributes by group characteristics. Communicative and memory biases are likely to be amplified by threat. Stereotypes will be harder to disprove. Perceptions of the outgroup are likely to be homogenised, with all its members appearing to be a threat.

Threat also makes people more likely to condone policies

like torture, imprisonment without trial and repression — policies that they would otherwise oppose. At the same time, attitudes towards the ingroup move in the opposite direction, thus creating a sharpening of distinctions between the ingroup and the outgroup, with pride, loyalty and feelings of superiority in the ingroup set against stereotyping, discrimination and prejudice towards the outgroup.

Overall, perceived threat makes violence towards the outgroup easier to justify.

Emotional responses to realistic threat include anger and resentment. Responses to symbolic threat include contempt, disgust and collective guilt. Threat undermines emotional empathy for outgroup members and enhances it for ingroup members; those threatened are also more likely to feel *schadenfreude* at others' sufferings. (For individuals, the emotional responses are quite different — fear, anxiety, and vulnerability.)

These emotional responses are hugely significant, not least because emotions play a major and under-reported role in decision-making. These emotional responses to threat are entirely negative and, combined with the cognitive impacts mentioned above, they provide further distortion to the decision-making of the group experiencing threat.

Behavioural responses can include aggression or withdrawal, negotiation or retaliation. Much depends on the type of threat that is perceived. Symbolic threat will rarely result in negotiation as self-identity cannot be traded away, though realistic threat may well do so as tangible resources can be subject to negotiation.

However, even responses that are not hostile, like negotiation (which may avoid conflict), still leave relations between the groups negatively affected — potentially a worse outcome

in the future. A threatened group will usually be less prone to minority influence and be far more likely to demonstrate group-think, potentially making conflict resolution much harder.

Threat is dynamic, not static; the ingroup's response to the threat it perceives from the outgroup affects the outgroup's own threat perception and its response to the ingroup, which in turn affects the ingroup's threat perception and response — potentially creating a cycle of ever higher threat perception and increasingly hostile relations between groups.

1. The above summary of the Intergroup Threat Theory is largely based on the following sources:

Walter G. Stephan, Oscar Ybarra and Kimberly Rios Morrison, 'Intergroup Threat Theory', published in *The Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, ed. Todd D. Nelson, (New York, NY, US: Psychology Press, 2009);

Walter G. Stephan and Marisa D. Mealy, 'Intergroup Threat Theory', published in *The Encyclopedia of Peace Psychology*, ed Daniel J. Christie, (Wiley Online, December 2011; and

Walter G. Stephan and Cookie W. Stephan, *Intergroup Relations*' (Brown and Benchmark, 1996).

Acknowledgements

THIS report has been circulated widely to Iraqi and regional experts in academia and foreign ministries across Europe and North America, the Gulf and the Far East.

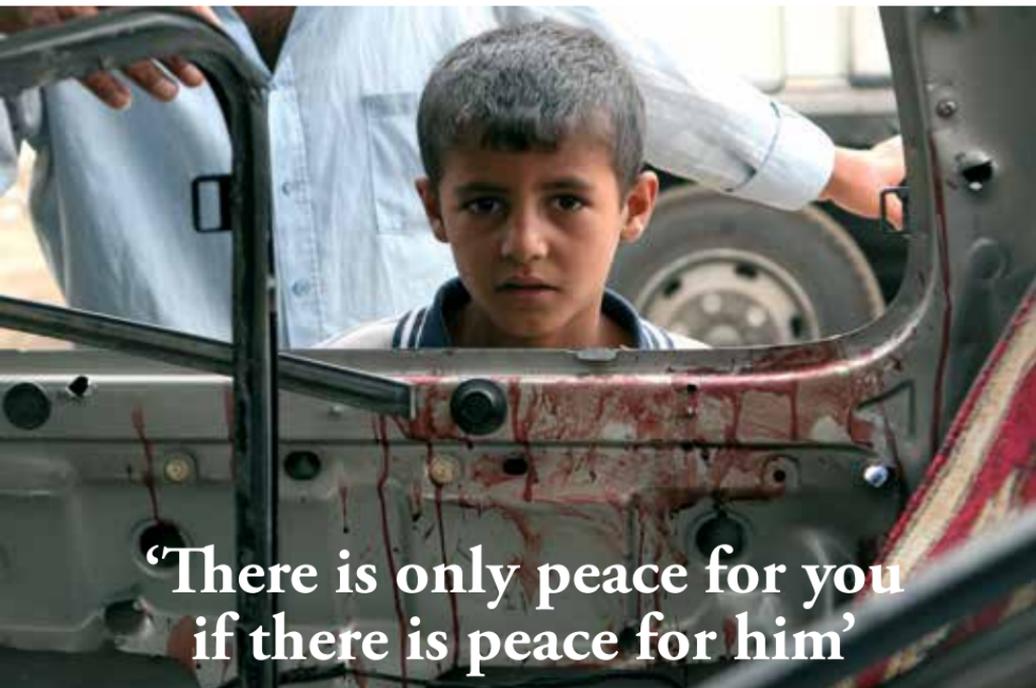
I am pleased at how positive the feedback has been and how helpful the suggestions that have been made — most of which are incorporated into this edition.

This first published edition is therefore the product not only of my own reflection and research but also that of many others, too many to be named here. Suffice to say, thank you to all who have read it and found time to speak with me about it.

However, there are some I must mention. Over the last two years, Ambassador Zaid Noori and his team in the UK have provided invaluable advice as well as much needed help with contacts, translation and logistics. Thanks are also due to Sultan Barakat, Chairman of the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit at the University of York; he has been a regular sounding board for the ideas set out in this report and his regional knowledge and insights have been gratefully received.

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**‘There is only peace for you
if there is peace for him’**

This report has been written by Roderick Crawford, a political consultant and analyst. For twenty years he also edited the respected British political journal *Parliamentary Brief* which he launched in 1992 to support a political settlement in Northern Ireland and to inform government policy-making and political debate. Before writing this report he spent some four years researching, writing on and promoting security sector reform in conflict states.

‘AN AMAZING CONTRIBUTION’

Roderick Crawford made an amazing and strong contribution to Northern Ireland’s peace process. The special report he published prior to the referenda in 1998 framed the debate and won the argument for a ‘Yes’ vote.’

— Lord Bew of Donegore

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