

**General John R. Allen**  
**Brookings-Doha U.S. Islamic World Forum**  
**3 June 2015**

- **Thank you Bruce (Bruce Jones) for your generous introduction and thank you to Salman Sheikh, Will McCants, Tamara Wittes and your entire team for hosting such a significant and comprehensive dialogue. Ambassador Al-Rumaihi, Ambassador Smith, excellencies, it's a pleasure to be with you and to see so many familiar faces today. I've arrived here today from Baghdad with a stop in Paris ... not your typical route to Doha, but one in keeping with the theme of this conference: "Changing Assumptions."**
  
- **Of course, The Brookings-Doha Center is one of several magnificent institutions here in Qatar ... institutions that from their very beginning have challenged the way we think about exchange and partnership between the United States and the Islamic World. It is centers of excellence like this one, in addition to this city's world-renowned cultural institutions, which make Doha an increasingly important meeting place between East and West.**

- **In few other places across the world can you see a Rothko in the morning, attend a lecture on the history of Gulf Security in the afternoon; and listen to a Stravinsky symphony that evening. In fact, it is these kinds of opportunities that Igor Stravinsky himself, the great Russian-American composer, credited with his creativity. He said that it was through exposure to his own false assumptions -- not to fonts of wisdom or established knowledge -- that he developed as an artist. And indeed, these are communities -- both Doha and Brookings -- that have invested in the difficult work of rethinking assumptions and imagining our world in new ways.**
- **When it comes to this region, the relationship between the United States and the world, and even the nature of the global order, this is a time when assumptions are rapidly changing. As President Obama said last September at the UN General Assembly, this is a moment where the world is “at a crossroads,” a period where the old order is passing and a new order is coming into being.**

- **Tragically, and often horrifically, the rise of ISIL has upended many of our assumptions ... and in deeper ways than regional security or politics. As someone who spent four decades as a U.S. Marine, I have come closer than many to inhumanity. I have never before seen the kind of depravity and brutality in this region that ISIL represents, and in fact, celebrates.**
- **While few of us could have imagined the rise of such a divisive force, there is potentially another set of lessons we can learn from the global response to ISIL, which I will henceforth refer to by its Arabic acronym, Daesh.**
- **Several years ago, few would have assumed that so many nations, from so many different traditions, with different political systems, faiths, and interests, could come together, as a Coalition, over multiple lines of effort, to confront a shared threat.**
- **For the past nine months, in my role as the President's Special Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh, I have been privileged to help lead this collection of strong and diverse partners we have sought to build and bind together.**
- **From the onset of this campaign, we have understood that countering Daesh would**

**require an enduring effort. And indeed, success will require us to persist, adapt, and constantly reassess our activities in light of both victories and setbacks ... setbacks such as experienced in Ramadi last month.**

- **Having arrived in Doha from a Ministerial of the Coalition's Small Group in Paris, where ministers from the Campaign's leading partners discussed the way forward, I am confident that Ramadi has actually redoubled our resolve. And in Baghdad this past weekend, where I met with senior government and security officials, I saw how the same was true for our Iraqi partners.**
- **Having been part of four previous Coalitions over the course of my career ... having commanded a Coalition of 50 nations in Afghanistan, I've seen how important it is to understand the ups and downs of a campaign within the context of long-term strategic objectives.**
- **Yes, it is vitally important that we learn from the experience of Ramadi ... and that we learn the right lessons. But it is also imperative that we see the direction of our campaign from a more expansive horizon than last month or the next.**

- **Today, we are nearly a full year from the series of horrific events in Iraq which compelled the United States to act, and ultimately, to convene a broad global coalition. It was at this time last June that Daesh fighters began pouring down the Tigris River Valley. It was a moment where Iraq was under siege and largely isolated in the world. Multiple Iraqi cities fell, entire Iraqi divisions collapsed, and the northern approaches to Baghdad were exposed.**
- **On 10 June, Mosul, a city of more than 1.5 million people, collapsed. A few weeks later, it was from that city's Nur al-Din Mosque that Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi would proclaim the so-called Caliphate.**
- **To the west, Daesh broke through the border town of al Qaim, and poured east along the Euphrates River towards Baghdad. Daesh's spokesman, Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, vowed: "The battle would soon rage in Baghdad and [in the holy city of] Karbala."**

- **Shortly thereafter, Daesh launched a multi-pronged attack further into northern Iraq, massacring minority populations, enslaving hundreds of women and girls, surrounding tens of thousands of Yazidis at Sinjar mountain, and opening a clear route to Erbil, the region's capital.**
- **All of this prompted U.S. action.**
- **First: We surged intelligence assets over Iraq from one ISR sortie per month to 60 per day. The aim was to gain a more granular picture of the ISIL network, which would be essential to any future operations.**
- **Second: We established joint operations centers in Baghdad and in Erbil, restoring critical relationships between Iraq's central government and Kurdish commanders.**
- **Third: We deployed Special Forces teams to assess Iraqi Security formations, with a focus on Baghdad's defenses, ensuring that those defenses could hold, and that our personnel would be protected.**
- **Fourth: We focused on helping the Iraqis maintain their political process following**

**national elections to stand up a new government.**

### **Coalition Assembly / Organization**

- **These actions were absolutely essential in the immediate term, but were by no means sufficient to counter the scope and scale of the threat. At root, Daesh is not an Iraq or Syria problem; Daesh is a regional problem with global implications.**
- **It was out of a keen awareness of the global implications of this emergency ... and the unthinkable human implications if it were allowed to go unabated ... that President Obama and Secretary Kerry resolved to build a Global Coalition last September. And it was then that the White House asked me to assist in organizing, consolidating, and coordinating this Coalition as the President's Special Envoy.**
- **In my service over the past nine months I have now traveled to 24 capitals, many of them repeatedly, and during that time we have assembled a global Coalition of more than 60 nations.**
- **Unlike other Coalition campaigns I have been a part of, we have had to build this Coalition from whole cloth. When I served as Commander of**

**our NATO forces in Afghanistan for instance, our authorities and organizing mechanisms came from the UN and later from NATO. During this campaign, we have had to develop an organizational framework to sustain a long-term campaign while simultaneously taking action to confront the current emergency.**

- **Last December in Brussels, the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL's objectives and commitments were first outlined in a Joint Statement agreed to by 60 partners who declared their unanimous commitment to counter Daesh along five mutually reinforcing lines of effort.**
- **As I often say, while it is the Coalition's kinetic actions that receive the most attention, it is the aggregate effect of the Coalition's activities across multiple lines of effort that will ... in the end ... determine the Coalition's success.**
- **That is why in every visit I make to a Coalition Capital and in every conversation I have with a prime minister, king, or president, I describe our campaign as organized over five lines of effort:**
  - **A military component to deny safe haven and provide security assistance**
  - **Disrupting flow of foreign fighters,**
  - **Disrupting access to financial resources,**

- **Providing humanitarian relief and stabilization support**
- **Counter-messaging – or defeating Daesh as an idea.**
  
- **Over each of these five central lines of effort Coalition activities are directed by specific working groups co-led by two or three Coalition partners.**
  - **For the Counter-ISIL Finance Working Group the co-leads are Italy, Saudi Arabia and the United States;**
  - **for Foreign Terrorist Fighters, the Netherlands and Turkey;**
  - **for Counter-ISIL Messaging, the U.A.E., the UK and the United States;**
  - **for Military Support, the United States and Iraq;**
  - **and for Stabilization Support, Germany and the U.A.E.**
  
- **The kind of diverse and robust global leadership and activity we have enjoyed within this Coalition is, in my experience, unprecedented... in both scope and level of activity in so short time. And as we work to operationalize and intensify our activities, we have an opportunity to challenge assumptions about what a collection of committed nations can make possible.**

- **Briefly, let me provide an overview of the Coalition's progress over of our central lines of effort and some of the ways the Coalition is evolving to confront an adaptable enemy.**

### **Military / Security Line of Effort**

- **Our first line of effort is focused on providing security support for our partners on the ground. While these efforts are the purview of CENTCOM and its partners, it is the task of the Coalition and me, serving as the President's Special Envoy, to ensure that Coalition activities over each of the lines of effort are synchronized and mutually reinforcing.**
- **As I have indicated, Ramadi is a loss we must understand. But we should also not forget that Daesh has been defeated from Babil to Diyala to Ninewa, in Kirkuk Province, at Mosul Dam and Mount Sinjar, at the Rabiya crossing, and in its assault on the KRG.**
- **In Kobane, where Daesh hoped to yet again achieve a media spectacle for the entire world to see, they were soundly defeated.**
- **In Tikrit, when PM Abadi asked for help at a decisive moment, the Coalition delivered, helping ground forces break through.**

- **Today, Daesh has lost over twenty-five percent of the populated territory it used to hold in Iraq.**
- **The Coalition has played a vital role in helping local forces make these gains.**
  - **15 partners are helping to build the ISF's capacity.**
  - **Six partners are contributing to the Coalition's advise and assist mission.**
- **Building the capacity of Iraqi security forces will take time and it is only recently that our four building partner capacity sites became fully operational. With each passing week, we will see greater effect from the forces these camps produce and send to the battlefield.**
- **Daesh's operations in Ramadi also highlighted the vital importance of Al Anbar Province, not simply as part of a shaping operation to take Mosul, but as a strategic priority.**
- **It's one third of Iraqi territory. It is of great strategic importance to both Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Heading East, it's the gateway to Baghdad, Karbala and Najaf. And heading West, it's the means Daesh uses to exploit the Syrian border.**

- **Unlike his predecessor, Prime Minister Abadi believes in functioning federalism, in the decentralization of authorities to the provinces. So through the central government in Iraq, a strong effort is underway to arm tribes, provide resources, and empower Sunnis in Anbar to address a Sunni threat in their midst.**
- **We also want to support the decisions of the legitimate local leadership in Anbar, the Anbar Provincial Council, who are working directly with the Prime Minister and central government. In particular, we want to respect the unanimous decision of the Anbar Provincial Council to request the participation of the Popular Mobilization Forces in security operations.**
- **These Anbari leaders do not view these forces from a strictly sectarian prism and understand that the PMF forces can play a vital role in holding the line against Daesh. Indeed, many PMF fighters are not Shia-hardliners but Iraqis who volunteered last summer, answering Grand Ayatolah Ali Sistani's fatwa to defend Iraq.**
- **But, there also remain some extremist militia elements influenced by Iran and others where Iran plays a significant leadership role. As we have said many times, it is critical that all forces fall under the command and control of the**

**Government of Iraq in order for counter-ISIL operations to be successful. Prime Minister Abadi reaffirmed this at the Paris Ministerial meeting less than 24 hours ago.**

### **Stabilization efforts**

- **As more territory is taken back from Daesh, we must also ensure we're poised to empower the Iraqi government to act in relief of liberated populations.**
- **We are working closely with the Iraqis, with the support of our Coalition partners, and in particular the Arab states, to help Iraq develop stabilization and recovery plans. The UAE and Germany are leading those efforts, and Italy is playing an important role in developing police.**
- **On Stabilization, the UN Development Program, in coordination with the Iraqis, has created a funding mechanism that channels contributions from international partners to Iraq to complete rapid projects in liberated areas. The fund is focused on restoring basic service and governance. At the Ministerial this week in Paris, several partners joined the United States in committing substantial sums to these efforts.**

## **Counter-Finance**

- **Squeezing Daesh access to financial resources is one of the most effective mechanisms we have to disrupt operations and management of the so-called Caliphate.**
- **We are sharing information to block their access to the global financial system and uncovering their points of access in the region and abroad for financial support.**
  - **In the recent raid on Abu Sayyef, we collected substantial information on Daesh financial operations.**
  - **And we're gaining a much clearer understanding of Daesh's organization and business enterprise.**
- **Still Daesh's financial resources are diverse. Beyond its oil enterprise, which we have degraded, their portfolio includes:**
  - **Massive criminal extortion of populations under its control.**
  - **Looting, kidnaping for ransom, human trafficking, a slave trade, and potential profit from sale of plundered antiquities.**
  - **Da'esh also operates in territory where there is an extensive criminal infrastructure to support illicit financial activity, much of it dating back to historical smuggling routes and to the**

**efforts exerted by the Saddam regime to subvert sanctions in the 1990s.**

## **Counter-Messaging**

- **The Coalition's counter-messaging line of effort is also contesting Daesh's narrative across platforms and languages.**
- **It is important that key, credible Muslim voices and scholars have spoken out and rejected Daesh's ideology.**
- **In the Arab world, it's important that the voice discrediting Daesh is an Arab voice and that it has an Arab face.**
  - **The UAE has established a joint center to help coordinate counter-Daesh messaging in the region and we are discussing other regional messaging centers.**

## **Foreign Fighters/ With focus on Rehabilitation-Reintegration**

- **The final line of effort I will mention today, and the area where I will devote the most attention, involves countering foreign fighters. This is an issue of prominent concern at every Coalition gathering, including yesterday in Paris, and in**

**nearly all of the conversations I have in capitals across the world. And rightly so.**

- **While Turkey's 900km border with Syria is the main point of entry to the battle space, the burden of meeting the foreign fighter threat clearly cannot rest with the Turks alone.**
- **In fact, the Turkish border is the last line of defense in this equation. Comprehensive approaches to reduce FTF flow must function as a strategic "defense in depth"... starting at the point of radicalization... the point where someone chooses to fundamentally alter their life on the path of radicalization.**
- **Last year's UNSC Resolution 2178 calls upon all nations to strengthen their borders, share information, and adjust their laws to criminalize traveling for terrorism.**
- **Within the Coalition we have begun to make important progress, working to share information and harmonize our practices. More than 30 coalition partners have now made legal and justice reforms intended to make it more difficult to travel to the battlespace.**

- **But we also face a new reality: potential foreign fighters need no longer leave their home countries – or even their homes – to be radicalized and be recruited. And the potential for radicalized individuals to conduct attacks in their home countries is becoming an increasing concern as so called “Lone Wolf” attackers.**
- **That is why we need nations working together at each link along the chain: at every border between a potential foreign fighter and the battle space, in their home communities, and at the point of recruitment and radicalization, which is often a personal computer or cell phone.**
- **The journey to become a foreign fighter is a journey across transitions. Transitioning to radicalization. Transitioning across borders. Transitioning into the battlespace. Between each transition is a flow segment, and our mission must be to understand and impede, or disrupt, or stop the FTF inside each segment.**

- **While the majority of FTFs travel to Iraq and Syria by air there is no one route they take – and FTFs increasingly use circuitous routes or “broken travel” to avoid detection.**
- **There is also no one “type” of foreign fighter, no single method of recruitment, no one source of financial support for travel.**
- **Within the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, we are establishing mechanisms and partnerships to address the diverse and multi-faceted nature of the threat.**
- **In fact, the Coalition’s Foreign Fighter Working Group is organizing Coalition action around nine fronts, ranging from border control, to information sharing, to mapping travel and post counter-offensive FTF flows.**
- **One critical issue we need to address is how we manage to reach, rehabilitate, and reintegrate the thousands of young people who become known to us, and who will need our help returning to their societies as productive members. From the point of radicalization and recruitment to the process of rehabilitation, we as a Coalition and a community of nations must**

**work together to confront this generational challenge.**

- **There is no denying that many societies find the idea of rehabilitating foreign fighters objectionable. And indeed, those who have broken the laws of our lands must be held accountable. But long-term detention cannot be the sole means of dealing with returning foreign fighters.**
- **I believe we must strive to be a Coalition of compassionate states. Especially when certain Coalition partners have experienced success, the promise of rehabilitation and reintegration is one we ought to embrace.**
- **Earlier this year I met with key Muslim leaders and social scientists in Singapore who have successfully de-radicalized young men, and in so doing supported their successful return to society.**
- **The numbers are not as high for Singapore as they are for some others, but their success is notable: out of 57 releases, they have only had one recidivist.**
- **Belgium, Austria, and Germany, have also developed successful reintegration programs and lessons to provide in a western context. For**

**its part, Saudi Arabia has developed a set of effective practices for their specific cultural and national context at their Mohammed bin Nayef Center.**

- To confront this challenge, there will be no one-size-fits all solution. Any successful approach will have to respond to uniquely local social conditions and realities. At the same time, some of the forces which compel young men, and increasingly young women, to become foreign fighters, are thoroughly global and modern in their nature.**
- It is a horrible irony that such an anti-modern force as Daesh has such a deft understanding of certain insecurities that come with being a young person in a modern, multi-cultural world. Daesh is practiced in exploiting a sense of rootlessness and separation that many young people feel in their communities.**
- Whether in minority communities in the West, in certain Arab societies, or in Southeast Asia, a feeling of disenfranchisement and otherness is present and powerful for many. There is a separation between these young people and what is defined as mainstream or the majority culture. There is separation between the opportunities young people see on their smart phones and those they believe are available to**

**them in their own lives. There is separation between these young people and the true depth and richness of the Islamic faith.**

- We must save our children. We must guard against the manipulation of these separations and anxieties, while at the same time working to address their root causes.**
- Truly, this is no small task. It is a matter of working together as a Coalition and a community of nations to ensure that the promise of modernity is available and achievable to all.**
- In my discussions with Islamic scholars and Imams over the years, I have been told that it is by embracing modernity and connecting with the world, not through their rejection, that a Muslim can fully appreciate the richness of their faith.**
- Whether during my service in Anbar, in Afghanistan, and within units under my command, I have seen this kind of Muslim faith practiced and lived. It is an experience that challenged me to be a better Christian. And I am grateful for my exposure to the rich and true nature of the faith of Islam.**

- **Developing this sense of shared understanding and mutual respect strengthens our ability to act in shared purpose, which is absolutely essential in the fight in which we are now engaged.**
- **When Daesh seeks to divide and conquer, we must draw strength from the diversity of our Coalition.**
- **When Daesh succeeds only when men and women feel little connection to their governments and to their societies, it is necessary for all of us to work together to offer better models.**
- **When Daesh defines itself by what it seeks to destroy, we must define our ultimate efforts by what we seek to build together.**

## **Daesh Affiliates**

- **And when we see groups and individuals seeking to affiliate and align with Daesh in several parts of the world, we see clearly how these challenges are not unique to one region.**
- **Indeed, the growth in the number of Daesh affiliated groups is a challenge that the Counter-ISIL Coalition is beginning to confront. When**

**the Coalition coalesced last fall, partners came together to counter Daesh in Syria and Iraq, not forces who were affiliated with them globally. Since Daesh declared the Caliphate nearly a year ago, we have seen organizations in several countries seeking to become an affiliate or “distant province” of the so-called Caliphate.**

- **But not every group who raises the black flag represents the same threat. Many of these groups are made up of simple criminals or contained insurgencies. At the same time, there are certain affiliates who could present a clear danger to Coalition capitals and our homelands. As a Coalition we need a sound strategic framework for judging both the sophistication of these groups and the scale of their connection to core Daesh.**
- **In trying to determine the threat of a potential Daesh affiliate, I find it useful to ask a series of questions.**
  - **First, what command and control does core Daesh have over this group?**
  - **Second, has Daesh leadership decided to link itself publicly with this group, and coordinate their propaganda and messaging?**

- **Third, can core Daesh and this potential affiliate exchange resources, including funding and fighters?**
- **Fourth, and most importantly: can this group threaten a Coalition homeland?**
- **If the answer to most of these questions is “yes,” the Coalition has ways to mitigate the threat. On three lines of Coalition effort: Counter financing, counter foreign fighters, and counter messaging, we can build on our current capabilities to counter Daesh affiliates.**
- **We must also not forget that Daesh’s legitimacy is tied to a so-called caliphate, a proto-state with a specific geography. That means our overarching objective must remain countering core Daesh within Iraq and Syria. Squeezing and defeating Daesh there strikes a blow at the distant provinces, too.**

## **Conclusion**

- **As a Coalition, we cannot eliminate every rivalry, whether between different nations, different faiths, or those who hold political and historical grievances against one another. In coordinating to counter Daesh, in prizing a spirit of mutual interest and mutual respect**

**over differences, we can change assumptions about how nations work together.**

- **Over nine short months we have come together with dozens of partners to confront the current emergency, while at the same time creating structures and organizing mechanisms to hold together strong partners over an enduring campaign.**
- **Having commanded a theater of war in a major coalition effort in Afghanistan, I'm beginning to see strategic momentum building. But sustaining that momentum takes daily attention across the Coalition and within the LOEs and working groups. It means learning from setbacks, not letting them define your long-term campaign.**
- **And this will be a long campaign. Aspects of it, like defeating Daesh's ideology, will likely take a generation or more. But we can and must rise to this challenge. In an age where we are more interconnected than at any time in human history, Daesh is a global threat.**

- **If we do not defeat this threat with strength and unity, our collective future will hold more groups like Daesh, who use the tools of modernity – the ease of world travel, our global financial markets, the Internet – to wreak havoc on the progress that humanity has achieved at such cost over the centuries.**
- **The leaders and experts assembled today arguably know better than anyone the importance of unity of effort, the sustained pursuit of peace, and the need to adapt and thrive even in challenging circumstances. As we continue the fight to degrade and defeat Daesh, we all in the Coalition hope we can count on your efforts and your energy.**
- **Thank you.**

**###**