

**HUMANITARIAN  
AND DEVELOPMENT  
PROGRAMME**

# **IRAQ 2018 SCENARIOS**

## **Planning After Mosul**

July 2017

**HUMANITARIAN FORESIGHT THINK TANK**

## KEY OBSERVATIONS

1. The war against the Islamic State has led to the extreme fragmentation of armed actors controlling territory, hindering post-IS stability, governance and adherence to IHL.
2. Intra and inter-factional conflict between PMF, Sunni and Kurdish factions will escalate as IS territory decreases under the incitement of external actors, leading to insecurity and increased protection issues of civilians through the reconstruction period.
3. Islamic State tactics will evolve into asymmetric attacks, which will improve the possibility of humanitarian access despite security challenges.
4. As reconstruction begins in Mosul and operations are transferred to local NGOs and government actors, pressure will build for INGOs to be based in Iraq. Organisations accessing Mosul and its environs from KRI will experience growing challenges crossing these borders and working remotely.
5. Demographic engineering through forced returns and the prevention of returns will continue to trigger displacement and protection concerns in formerly IS-held and disputed border areas.

## INTRODUCTION<sup>1</sup>

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After the liberation of Mosul, stakeholders must invest in what comes next. The coalition that united against the Islamic State is deeply divided by enmities and opposing agendas, the ramifications of which—particularly on the humanitarian response, treatment of civilians and post-IS reconstruction—will provide a bellwether as to whether Iraq’s future will be defined by stability, or a lack thereof. The main issues defining the post-Mosul landscape will not be the provision of emergency aid—though crucial for lifesaving—, but rather, the interest and capability of state actors to fairly treat Sunni IDPs, prevent the fracturing and localisation of armed groups and forced demographic displacement and establish a truly representative system of governance providing Kurdish, Sunni, Shia and minority communities with political sovereignty. Currently, there is neither basic willingness nor capacity to carry out these policies. A lack of trust in the state, the proliferation of weapons and internal and external forces vying for dominance, and grievances both historical and inchoate will ultimately lead factions across the Iraqi landscape—from the level of individual, to family, to community, and ultimately to ethnic and sectarian group—to take things into their own hands. Rebuilding a collective identity is crucial to rebuilding Mosul or Ninewa. Currently, the ‘collective’ exists only as a point of policy sublimated by splintering actors into infinite, opposing iterations.

This report facilitates strategic decision-making by examining the current military, economic, political and humanitarian context in Mosul and key parts of Iraq, alongside a power-mapping

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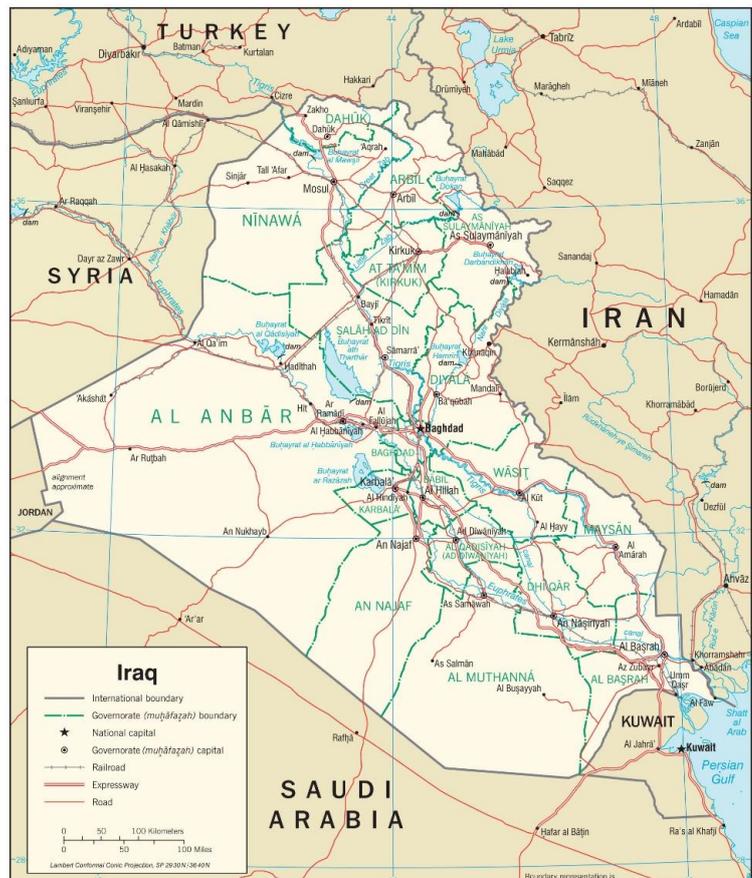
<sup>1</sup> Please find list of abbreviations in the Appendix.

of relevant actors. Based on the current system, three scenarios are put forth to support strategic planning, providing indicators to monitor their evolution.

## THE BATTLE ON MOSUL: CONSEQUENCES AND CAPABILITIES

On 10 July, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced the fall of the Islamic State in Mosul, though coalition forces continued to battle fighters in pockets of western Mosul's Old City in the following days. The recapturing of the city — home to the al-Nouri mosque site where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared the IS caliphate in June 2014— is a symbolic coup for the Iraqi government. Yet, the challenge of rehabilitation lays ahead.

821,178 Iraqis are currently displaced from Mosul operations, of the total 3.3 million IDPs registered since January 2014, and while it is difficult to accurately assess casualties, the UK-based Airwars estimated that 3,800 deaths were caused by US-led coalition airstrikes on the city<sup>2</sup>. While eastern Mosul has begun to come back to life since its liberation in late January 2017 and is experiencing a high rate of returns, western Mosul witnessed far heavier damage on crucial civilian infrastructure and shelter, requiring greater financial investment and time. Stabilising Iraq's second-largest city requires structural interventions

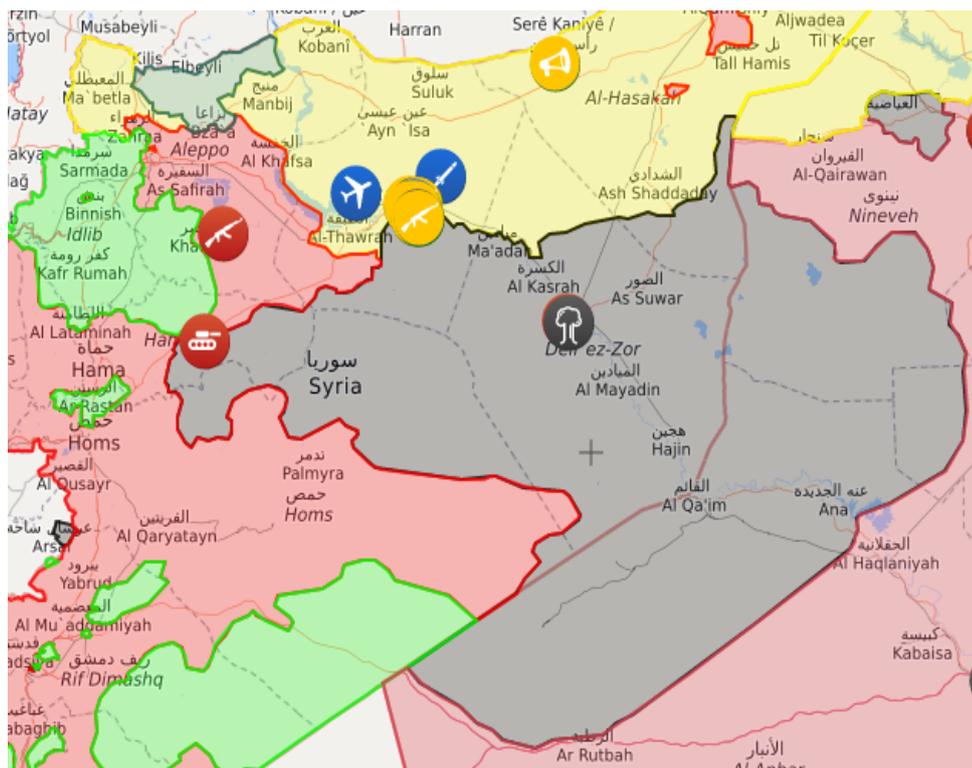


University of Texas Library: [Iraq Map](#).

including infrastructure rehabilitation, shelter construction and demining. Yet, it also requires the more complex building of trust—through social cohesion and peace-building, recovery and stabilisation programs and business development. Several factors hinder this. Reports of unlawful killing of men and boys fleeing Mosul<sup>3</sup>, torture and extrajudicial killings carried out by government forces of IS suspects, civilian casualties caused by coalition airstrikes and the replacement of respected Counter Terror Services (CTS) with localised, inexperienced sectarian forces will all challenge long-term security.

<sup>2</sup> HRW (6 June 2017): "Iraq: Civilian Casualties Mount in West Mosul."

<sup>3</sup> HRW (30 June 2017): "Iraq New abuse, execution reports of men fleeing Mosul."



## Background

The Mosul offensive began in October 2016 and ended in early July 2017. Since operations commenced more than 897,000 people were displaced<sup>4</sup>. Following the liberation of eastern Mosul in late January, Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and other coalition members engaged in an offensive on western Mosul. Progress was

stalled by the dense urban warrens of western Mosul which prevented the use of armoured vehicles, poor coordination between forces<sup>5</sup>, and efforts to avoid civilian casualties. Displacement was hindered by the terrorist organisation's use of civilians as human shields<sup>6</sup>. The US also 'decentralised' its rules of engagement<sup>7</sup>, allowing Iraqi forces to call in airstrikes more rapidly, which arguably led to greater civilian casualties and increased the risk of injury for civilians and setting an important precedent for subsequent operations.

The Mosul offensive is only one objective in a broader strategy targeting Islamic State territory in Iraq and Syria. With Mosul secured, attention in Iraq will turn towards pockets in Ninewa, Kirkuk and Anbar governorates in Hawija, Tal Afar, Qaim, Ana and Rawa. In Syria, the battle on Raqqa and Deir Ezzor along the Euphrates River will also affect Iraq-based operations, as the coalition focuses on controlling the Iraq-Syria border to impede the flow of radical fighters. Maintaining the momentum of coalition forces for the coming stages will be impacted by the high casualty rates experienced by key factions within the anti-IS coalition and the disaggregation of elements within the coalition and their contesting territorial objectives.

Meanwhile, suicide attacks in east Mosul and other liberated areas have emphasised the longer-term risks of securing territories. While the coalition can claim rapid territorial gains, the Islamic State's strongest attribute has been its ability to gain support through the spread of ideology, a victimhood narrative and insurgency tactics. Physical territory, while an emblematic coup, can be

<sup>4</sup> OCHA: "Iraq: Mosul Humanitarian Response, Situation Report No. 38 (12 to 28 June 2017)"

<sup>5</sup> Made evident by the Iraqi army-called airstrike in March that led to the deaths of nearly 100 civilians in a residential building.

<sup>6</sup> Civilians have been prevented from fleeing by IS booby-trapping and welding of doors shut. Supply lines were cut months ago and families are running out of food and water. *Arab Times* (6 May 2017): "Iraqis surround Mosul Old City."

<sup>7</sup> *Military Times* (24 Feb 2017): "US Changes Rules of Engagement for Mosul Fight in Iraq."

jettisoned to allow fighters to disperse and maintain a strategic ability to carry out asymmetric counter-insurgency<sup>8</sup>. With Mosul retaken, local grievances surrounding justice and retribution, issues of corruption, sectarian governance and water and electricity shortages will come to the fore and divide Sunnis. The destruction of infrastructure and displacement of skilled professionals will require concerted and targeted policy to manage, but insecurity will remain a persistent obstacle to rehabilitation.

## COALITION STAKEHOLDERS<sup>9</sup>

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The coalition in Mosul and its environs consists of US-trained elite Counter-Terror Services (CTS), Iraqi Army, Emergency Response Division (ERD), local Sunni Nineveh Guard<sup>10</sup> and Ministry of Interior-backed Federal Police inside Mosul; the 9<sup>th</sup> Iraqi Army Armoured Division<sup>11</sup> and Kurdish Peshmerga to the north and east; Iran-backed, predominantly Shia Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) to the west and south and Sunni tribes to the south. These factions are supported by advisory<sup>12</sup>, artillery and air support provided by western members of the coalition led by the United States. Though a number of external actors influence the context, Iran plays the greatest role in the Iraq theatre, extending its reach from the former Iran Republican Guard Corps Interior Minister, who oversees the Federal Police and Rapid Response Division<sup>1314</sup>; as well as Shia militias discussed further below.

### Counter-Terror Services

The deployment of CTS forces in the city was designed to avoid sectarian retributive violence, but the use of the skilled forces on the frontline has led to a high casualty rate, leading to the use of other less-experienced and disciplined forces in the battlefield and rushed military recruitment. This presents significant risks for the ensuing operations.

### Popular Mobilisation Forces

The PMF and particularly larger militias including Kataib Hezbollah, Badr Organisation, Asaib Ahl al-Haqq Badr, Liwa Ali al-Akbar and others<sup>15</sup> represent the intersection of military and political power, with forces operating as the private militias for charismatic leaders like Badr Organisation's Hadi al-Ameri, former Minister of Transport, Muqtada al-Sadr and Nouri al-Maliki, among others. Leaders boast a certain level of political immunity, even given space to

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<sup>8</sup> Ahmed, Hevidar and Rebwar Qasim. *Rudaw* (24 December 2016): "Iraq's Golden Division may liberate Mosul, but at what cost?"

<sup>9</sup> For more information on stakeholders, please consult actor mapping.

<sup>10</sup> Which has also included the National Mobilisation Forces, or Hashd al-Ashairi, or Tribal Forces.

<sup>11</sup> ISW (29 March 2017): "The campaign for Mosul: March 17-29, 2017."

<sup>12</sup> As well as possible ground troop support.

<sup>13</sup> Kittleson, Shelly. *Al-Monitor* (26 March 2017). "Iraqi federal police forces take on key role in west Mosul."

<sup>14</sup> The newly-appointed Ministry of Interior Qasim Mohammad Jalal al-Araji was a member of the Islamic Revolution Guard Corp's elite Quds Force appointed 30 January 2017 and pledged allegiance to the Badr Organisation militia.

<sup>15</sup> ISW (29 March 2017): "The campaign for Mosul: March 17-29, 2017."

produce aggressive propaganda against the US, their anti-IS coalition partner<sup>16</sup><sup>17</sup>. This also explains the PMF's integration into the government and ability to continue operating despite numerous allegations of sectarian-motivate violence, displacement and property destruction in other parts of the country.

A number of PMF militias operate in Iraq and Syria, crossing the border to fight alongside Syrian government allies. Therefore, the border areas north and south of IS territory are highly strategic for the PMF to sustain contiguous territory between Iran and Syria and sustain a trade route, explaining PMF encirclement of Tel Afar as part of the need to clear trade routes of rebellious elements. This is putting the militias at odds with other actors including the Peshmerga, where armed clashes in disputed areas of Diyala, Kirkuk and Sinjar<sup>18</sup> have led to casualties, and US-backed Syria proxies the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces and rebel groups north of the Jordanian border near the Baghdad-Damascus highway. This will complicate efforts to retake Qaim, Rawa and Ana located in this area. Certain elements of other Iraqi forces under the Iraqi Security Forces umbrella are also perceived as being sectarian and of working alongside and taking orders from the more powerful PMF militias, like the Federal Police and ERD. The PMF is operating alongside these forces, securing their presence around Mosul by controlling checkpoints<sup>19</sup>, mediating humanitarian access<sup>20</sup>, operating detention and screen sites<sup>21</sup> and incorporating local Mosul militias that are transforming into political parties as proxies<sup>22</sup><sup>23</sup>.

### **Nineveh Guard**

The Nineveh Guard, made of local forces, is led by former Ninewa Governor and Turkish ally Atheel al-Nujaifi. He and his forces will push for greater authority over northern Ninewa and will contest current governor Nofal Hammadi<sup>24</sup>.

### **Emergency Response Division (ERD) and Federal Police**

The Emergency Response Division and the Federal Police fall under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Interior and operate within Mosul. The Federal Police serve as a paramilitary force bridging policing and military functions and often work alongside PMF divisions, whereas the Emergency Response Division is an elite In May 2017, the ERD was accused by a local journalist

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<sup>16</sup> Federal Police forces are less experienced in guerrilla warfare than Counter Terrorism Services, but the latter do not like fighting alongside the PMF. Habib, Mustafa. *Niqash* (29 March 2017): "Laying the Blame: In Iraq, Analysts weigh in on accidental airstrike that killed hundreds in Mosul." Witty, David. *ISW* (June 2016): "The Iraqi Counter Terrorism Service."

<sup>17</sup> Ali al-Husseini, commander of al-Hashd al-Turki, also compared Turkey to the Islamic State and condemned their presence in the war. Asaib Ahl al-Haq similarly accused the US of assisting terrorists in Tal Afar. Majidiyar, Ahmed. Middle East Institute (16 March 2017): "Iran-supported militia groups intensify anti-U.S. propaganda in Iraq."

<sup>18</sup> Particularly in Tuz Khurmato.

<sup>19</sup> Rise Foundation (6 December 2016): "Tall Tayyibah and Najma, 6 December."

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> PMF, Peshmerga and NSS forces.

<sup>22</sup> Discussions at INSO forum meeting, May 11 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Badr Organisation for example, discussed in INSO meeting 11 May 2017.

<sup>24</sup> Full name is Nofal Hammadi al-Sultan.

embedded with forces of torturing, raping and killing civilians. Though an investigation has been called, it is unlikely that key allies including the US would pull away significantly at this time<sup>25</sup>.

## HEAVY TRENDS: INTRA-FACTIONAL DIVISIONS WORSEN CONFLICT, IGNORE STRUCTURAL DRIVERS OF INSTABILITY

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In the run-up to provincial elections and a possible Kurdish referendum in September 2017, Iraq's central government is facing a potentially violently-contested vote among Shia parties, alongside a push from Kurds and some Sunni groups for the implementation of decentralisation to empower provincial councils that could devolve into conflict<sup>26</sup>. Modalities surrounding IDP voting are also unknown, particularly in mixed areas where military actors have the power to prevent some communities from accessing polling stations. Political parties have been subsumed by affiliated armed groups holding territory who will instrumentalise disempowered governance structures for legitimacy, exacerbating the risk for violent confrontations. This dynamic is already playing out in southern Shia governorates of Thi Qar, Basra, Baghdad and Muthanna and Najaf, where supporters affiliated with various candidates have clashed during campaigning; and for fighters who have liberated IS-held territories, their call for a role in the post-IS governance of areas and certain benefits in their areas of origin.

Nevertheless, in the fight between Iranian-backed Shia politicians, Iran will ostensibly maintain its influence; and for the Kurds, Turkey will maintain its foothold, despite avenues for Iranian intervention through the KDP's opponents. What has been observed so far is that Islamist parties, like Ammar al-Hakim's National Iraqi Alliance, are increasing rhetoric against 'atheist' groups—signalling that parties attempting to form on a secular platform, like Muqtada al-Sadr's, will be targeted as a key threat by some proxy parties. This could continue to fuel conflict between the Iran-backed PMF and PKK-backed forces and KDP-backed forces on the Syrian-Iraqi border, in disputed territories like Tuz Khumato and Kirkuk. Between Erbil and Baghdad, de facto borders will harden as Baghdad draws international attentions into federal Iraq and away from the KRI. Barzani will attempt to redirect attention through the Kurdish referendum, but at least so far, allies are not biting. Even the US has signalled that continuing aid flows are contingent on the KRG maintaining its relationship with Baghdad.

Iraq's political governance has faced not only the traditional divisions of Sunni, Kurdish and Shia parties, but is also contending with worsening contests within these ethno-sectarian blocs. Since the ouster of Saddam Hussein in 2003, the instability and conflict characterising this period has created a vacuum for militarised groups to seize influence. This phenomenon intensified with the seizure of territory by the Islamic State in 2014. Baghdad's efforts to combat this growing legitimacy was to attempt to co-opt some of the militias within its structure via the December 2016 law declaring the PMF as a government force. Similarly, the Iraqi government continues to

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<sup>25</sup> *New York Times* (26 May 2017): "Journalist's footage shows Iraq forces torturing civilians, ABC report says."

<sup>26</sup> These councils have been given a greater remit over security, finance and political decisions. Habib, Mustafa. *Niqash* (5 January 2017): "Maliki Vs. Sadr: Iraq's Provincial Councils a New - And Dangerous - Political Battleground."

pay the salaries of KRI Peshmerga and PKK-affiliated Yezidi Sinjar forces. These relationships of co-dependency are tense as the PMF and Kurdish groups push for sovereignty.

Following President Hussein's ouster, the Sunni Ba'athist regime and its military was dismantled and a new Shia patronage network was established based on retribution and division. Regular outbreaks of sectarian violence characterised the period leading up to the birth of the Islamic State, and fuelled support of its precursor, al-Qaeda. Anti-jihadist operations throughout the last decade have drawn massive amounts of funding to armed groups and have sanctioned their growing presence and control in Iraq. This power has translated directly into Baghdad and Erbil politics. It has also created an extraordinary amount of competition between militias and their international backers.

Sunni representation will remain the key challenge, as it has for the last decade. Politicians recognised by the international coalition have less legitimacy than ever, as the Islamic State's presence disrupted typical patronage networks and tribal hierarchies and provoked the quick escape of many Sunni leaders outside of Iraq. Once the Islamic State is pushed out of its territories, a period of intense conflict in Sunni areas will follow as retaliatory violence and jostling to reassert power structures disrupted during the IS period occur.

While elections-related violence should be expected at polling stations and in contested districts, the greatest threat to the political system as it stands is an Iraq-wide, youth-led movement protesting structural corruption and unemployment, or their own political marginalisation once more after participating in battles against IS. Currently, only Shi'ite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr has attempted to utilise this demographic through the deployment of his Sarayat al-Salam militia alongside sympathetic protestors. However, the militarised nature of the youth demographic—often seeking employment in armed groups as one of the few opportunities for income, prestige and family benefits—could dangerously overlap with wider dissatisfaction or be utilised by militias, causing broader goals to be suppressed by political conflict. The choice of some Kurds seeking a steady salary to join Shia militias in dispute areas like Diyala, is an example of the abrogation of community to earn a living wage—something that could cause the Kurdish Regional Government to brutally crack down on Kurdish youth and trigger an anti-government pushback, or cause Kurdish-PMF conflict in disputed areas to the east and west.

### **Intra-Shiite Competition amid a Weakening Central Government**

Iranian political and military influence has expanded dramatically since the 2014 formation of Shia militias to command a vast mercenary force moving between Iraq and Syria, today exerting varying degrees of control over many of the politicians and parties across sectarian divides. Tehran allies hold office in the Ministries of Defence, Interior and Intelligence, as well as the new independent Counter-terrorism bureau<sup>27,28</sup>. Iran has also waited to see how Shia political blocs will develop before the election, and has withheld a clear vote of support between the two key

<sup>27</sup> Kittleston, Shelly. *Al-Monitor* (26 March 2017). "Iraqi federal police forces take on key role in west Mosul."

<sup>28</sup> Toumaj, Amir. *Long War Journal: Threat Matrix* (23 November 2016): "Analysis: Iraqi Popular Mobilization Forces in Iran's game plan."

contenders: Iran-proxy Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition<sup>29</sup>; and cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's protest movement<sup>30</sup>.

Maliki has been so threatened by Sadr's reform platform, he attempted to co-opt it as a cover to cull members through a secretive cross-platform voting bloc<sup>31</sup>, the "Reform Front", that carried out McCarthyite questioning of politicians on corruption allegations. This justified the removal of Ministers of Finance and Defence for more pro-Iran candidates<sup>32</sup>. Maliki has also announced a 'secular' platform Kurdish and Sunni parties, including the PUK and Sunni Speaker of House Samir al-Jubbouri. On Sadr's side, he has co-opted cleric Ammar al-Hakim of the Islamic Supreme Council, who represents an agenda of political Islam but also seeks a wider coalition of tribes and moderate politicians towards his 'historic settlement'. This division between Maliki and Sadr/Hakim was first formed in 2013 provincial council elections in southern Iraq, but Maliki's support waned due to the damaging impact of his sectarian political agenda. Abadi is so far avoiding much of the political muck-racking surrounding the election, and may triumph because voters and powerbrokers want to avoid the insecurity resulting from a more powerful victor.

In the run-up to the provincial elections, three possible outcomes could destabilise a predictable result: intra-militia violence organised by political leaders; the establishment of unpredictable; new political parties out of other PMF militias at the expense of establishment politicians; or a protest movement fragmenting from militia groups established out of economic and social disenfranchisement with the possibility of escalating into violence. Any sort of violence between groups would detract from the fight against the IS, who will still maintain a significant capacity to carry out asymmetric attacks in the Shia political and religious heartlands. Economic factors also play into this power struggle. Though crude oil prices have been forecasted to increase slightly over the next year due to steady demand and OPEC production controls<sup>33</sup>—a benefit for the oil-exporting state—Iraqis hailing from the poor oil-producing Basra region protest that little of this revenue returns to the province, and as the battle against IS wanes, pressure to decrease military funding will intensify alongside efforts to incorporate militias more firmly into government structures, which could trigger conflict between actors who wish to maintain their influence.

### **Erbil Oligarchy clings to power**

Though perhaps the most secure part of Iraq, latent political and economic conflict in the KRI is coming to the fore as the threat of the Islamic State subsides. The authoritarian nature of the

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<sup>29</sup> Which includes Haidar al-Abadi. Maliki is allied with Iran and the Iranian Republican Guard Corps, a supranational Shia force carrying out Iranian objectives. Militias allied to the IRGC include Jund al-Imam, Harakat al-Nujaba, Badr Organisation, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shuhada, Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ah al-Haq; During violent protests in Basra, Maliki threatened to re-establish a militia offensive that targeted Sadr's forces in 2008. [Counter Extremism Project](#) (2015): "Badr Organisation." Watling, Jack. *The Atlantic* (22 December 2016): "The Shia Militias of Iraq."

<sup>30</sup> Associated with Sarayat al-Salam militia. Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani's stance to disband militias, of which he announced that the affiliated Abbas Brigades would not participate in the elections. The more Iraqi-nationalist Imam Ali Brigade and Ali al-Akhbar Brigade could choose to stand with the Abbas Brigade or seek an alliance with larger Iranian-backed militias.

<sup>31</sup> Estimated to be up to 1/3 of the cabinet. Habib, Mustafa. *Niqash* (28 September 2016): "Don't call it a comeback: Iraq's controversial ex-MP plays divide and conquer in Baghdad."

<sup>32</sup> Affiliates of Iranian Republican Guard Corps.

<sup>33</sup> [World Bank](#) (Jan 2017): "Commodity Markets Outlook."

government, a clampdown on opposition<sup>3435</sup>, an economic crisis, endemic corruption, deep-set political divisions, deteriorating services, and the poor treatment of the Yezidi minority feature prominently. The economic crisis and threat of instability have allowed the government to implement severe austerity measures, delaying civil service salaries without large-scale protests. Yet, upcoming provincial and legislative elections could act as a catalyst for strife, likely focusing tensions on Sinjar and Kirkuk. The government is hoping to distract attentions with a referendum.

Since August 2015, President Masoud Barzani has been ruling without a mandate, and parliament has not met since November 2016. While this has been contested by opposition parties, the PUK and Gorran, the more looming problem concerns decreasing international support and financial revenue as the Iraqi government shoulders responsibility for the post-Mosul period and reconstruction. Without the immediate threat of IS and in the shadow of an election, the KRG's undemocratic government will be put under the spotlight. To deflect this attention and force a compromise over the state of Kirkuk<sup>36</sup>, the usually adversarial KDP and PUK are planning for a fall referendum on independence, albeit without a firm plan for what would follow. The Gorran party - which receives a significant amount of support from Iran alongside the also Sulaymaniye-based PUK party - has opposed this project as an excuse for avoiding democratic elections. Even with the popular vote to secede, the KRG would still be economically dependent on the central government as well as neighbouring Iran and Turkey—all of whom oppose an independent region. The likely hope, therefore, is to press a political compromise that liberates the KRI from its debt and rolls out decentralisation<sup>37</sup>, forestalling a local election and the unpopular prospect of independence<sup>38</sup>.

Public discontent is increasing, particularly outside of KDP areas<sup>39</sup>. A crackdown on freedoms of expression has followed<sup>40</sup>. The KDP is a close economic partner of Turkey through the Ceyhan oil pipeline, which has put the party in the middle of Sinjar region conflict between the terrorist group the PKK<sup>41</sup>, Turkey, and PMF groups. But a deal between the KRG, Baghdad and Iran to establish a pipeline between Kurdistan and Iran would shift the balance of power in the region, and through the inclusion of Kirkuk production would bring KRI closer to Baghdad over revenue

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<sup>34</sup>Two oppositional figures—cleric and member of the Kurdistan Islamic Union Hoshiyar Ismailand journalist Shukri Zainadin were killed in suspicious circumstances in November 2016. Qader, Histyar. *Niqash* (3 January 2017): "Year in review: Iraqi Kurdistan's 'Year of Crisis'."

<sup>35</sup>A journalist, Wedat Hussein Ali, was kidnapped in August in Dohuk. *Middle East Observer* (5 Jan 2017): "Iraqi Kurdistan chaos and political void may lead to civil war."

<sup>36</sup>PUK Peshmerga control Kirkuk's oil fields. The PUK has clashed with the KDP over the imbalanced allocation of oil-revenue in the KRI as part the August 2016 Baghdad deal.

<sup>37</sup>Law 21 was amended by the Iraqi Parliament in 2013. To delocalise power to provinces, allowing local officials to make decisions. The Iraqi Constitution outlines provincial council authority in Article 122. Cravens, Lamar (June 2011): "Analysing Decentralisation in Iraq."

<sup>38</sup>This sheds some light on the internal issues between Gorran, and the PUK and KDP, who created a referendum committee to discuss the referendum, rather than as the Gorran party wanted with a parliamentary mandate.

<sup>39</sup>Suleymaniye, for example. Human Rights Watch (16 March 2017): "Kurdistan Region of Iraq: 32 arrested at peaceful protest." Coles, Isabel. *Reuters* (10 October 2015): "Three killed in violent unrest in Iraq's Kurdistan region."

<sup>40</sup>The abduction and imprisonment of a well-known Kurdish journalist is just one example. Human Rights Watch (25 August 2016): "Iraqi Kurdistan: Kurdish journalist abducted, killed: threatened by security forces over his reporting."

<sup>41</sup>Yezidis consider that the attack by the Islamic State on the Sinjar mountains was worsened by the tactical withdrawal of Barzani Iraqi Peshmerga, and their rescue by the YPG, a force affiliated with the PKK, was their only rescue.

sharing<sup>42</sup>. The disputed territory of Kirkuk has become a lightning rod for Kurdish aspirations because of its oil-producing strategic value to the cash-strapped region and as a point of leverage over Baghdad. The PUK, seeking to hold its grasp on Kirkuk, has sought closer relations with Iran and Shi'ite politicians alongside Gorran and counter the power of Turkey and the KDP. The 2016 financial crisis impacted PUK regions harder, with decreased salaries to civil servants and the shuttering of institutions, leading to strikes<sup>43</sup>. As parties fight over oil revenue from Kirkuk, the risk of oil infrastructure targeted by non-state armed groups increases dramatically, which could then push PMF forces, or even Turkey through the local Turkmen demographic, to act unilaterally and intervene under the auspices of a security incident. Its proximity to IS positions in Hawija increase this likelihood.

Intra-Kurdish conflict is also manifesting itself in the Yezidi Sinjar region, which has become a proxy war between the three largest Kurdish parties: the KDP, PKK and PUK, Turkey and Iran. The KDP requires Yezidi support to manifest its own territorial ambitions across northern Iraq and represents Turkish interests in crushing PKK-supported groups like the Sinjar Resistance Units, Sinjar Women's Protection Units and Arab Nawader al-Shammar. Iran wants to control the border area between Iraq and Syria to realise its goal of a pathway between Syria and Iran, and is willing to support the PKK if it remains in the region. Conflict escalated quickly from KDP restrictions on food and other goods entering Iraq from Syria, to Turkish airstrikes on PKK-affiliated Yezidi groups.

### **Sunni Politics: No Country for Old Men**

Despite the exertions of the US and the backing of Sunni states like Turkey, Jordan, UAE and Qatar<sup>44</sup>, Sunni Iraqi figures are failing to create a unified bloc to contest Shiite parties in the upcoming elections and may be divided among stronger Shia coalitions. The fracture is between the Nujaifi family and Samir al-Jubbouri, whereby the former is allied with Turkish and Sunni interests and the latter is seeking support from Baghdad.

Speaker of Parliament Samir al-Jubbouri and some other Sunni politicians are allying themselves with strong local Shia leaders through a cross-sect 'secular' unified Iraq party<sup>45</sup> due to distrust of Turkey and other actors. Ankara meanwhile is bringing together leader of the Mutahidoun bloc Osama Nujaifi, former deputy Prime Minister Saleh al Mutlaq, Turkey proxy former governor of Ninewa Atheel al-Nujaifi and others<sup>46</sup> to create a platform around a federal Iraq with independence for Sunni regions outlined in the Ninevah Five-Year Strategy. Militarily both sides have a lot to lose. In late November, when the government passed a law legitimising Shiite

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<sup>42</sup> *Al Monitor* (June 2016): "Iran Kurdistan Regional Government Pipeline Deal."

<sup>43</sup> Latif, Alaa. *Niqash* (24 November 2016): "Dancing Demonstrators: Meanwhile in Iraqi Kurdistan, Protests Against Leaders Grow." This is arguably also due to a weaker state security to clamp down on protests.

<sup>44</sup> The 8 March Ankara meeting, for example. Sattar, Omar. *Al-Monitor* (22 March 2017): "Iraq's Sunnis eye post-IS future under regional cover."

<sup>45</sup> *Al-Monitor* (22 March 2017): "Iraq's Sunnis eye post-IS future under regional cover." And Al-Ghazi, Muhannad. *Al-Monitor* (21 February 2017): "Iraqi special forces stand to gain stature with victory over IS."

<sup>46</sup> Leader of the Iraqi Islamic party Ayad al-Samarrai, planning minister Salman al-Jumaili, leader of Arab Project Khamis al-Khanjar, head of Forces Alliance parliamentary bloc Ahmad al-Massari, head of Solution bloc Mohammad al-Karbouli, Association of Muslim Scholars Sec Gen Muthanna al-Dhari, lawmakers, tribal leaders and clerics.

Muslim volunteer militias, some Sunni MPs voted alongside Shia parties, hoping to secure a role for affiliated tribal militias within the PMF and reconstruction period<sup>47</sup>. The Iraqi National Forces Alliance—a Sunni majority party—objected.

Both sides face an impossible challenge vis-à-vis the communities they represent. Those empowered to represent Sunni Iraqis through their strong external links are discredited to their home bases, having escaped IS for the safety of Jordan, Turkey or the US. These leaders offer few benefits to their countrymen in exchange for their own influence. And if history teaches anything, this influence could have an expiration date. Tribes empowered by the US during the 2006-7 Sahwa campaigns were neglected by their backers, and the Islamic State systematically executed these leaders and empowered a younger generation of tribesmen to diminish the influence of their elders<sup>48</sup>. In Anbar province, the impact of this post-IS power struggle is felt as households from IS-held territories face forcible displacement in other Sunni sub-districts, prompted by informal local councils fearing IS intrusion and destabilising retributive violence. The Tribal Council is advocating for a return to tribal justice, sanctioning retributive violence, collective punishment, destruction of property and eviction notices to families accused of being associated to extremist groups<sup>49,50</sup>.

### **Destabilising Youth Dividend**

An unpredictable element to the current Iraqi context is an ironically stable system driver. The large proportion of youth, high rates of unemployment plaguing the age group and a lack of mobility endemic to the tribal-based patronage system favouring seniority is a powerful force for young people joining the PMF. Arguably similar reasons supported recruitment to the Islamic State among Sunni youth: a sense of purpose, regular salary, insurance for the families of deceased fighters and transcending traditional tribal and party structures. Shia and Sunni elites have been trying to rebuild their patronage networks externally to take control of funding flooding into Iraq to fight the IS through IDP responses and creating armed groups providing security and overseeing reconstruction. As mentioned above, these individuals—particularly in the Sunni community—have little legitimacy in their own communities apart from as a conduit for financial resources. They are remnants, and alternately, victims of a social hierarchy, flattened and broken by the Islamic State's presence. Re-integration into this corrupt, loyalty-based system - headed by an illegitimate Sunni leadership alongside tribal elders and Sunni politicians using external rehabilitation funding as an incentive - will lead to conflict, power struggles and resentment in Sunni communities as soon as the flow of aid stops; and it is unlikely that the state will adequately be able to address their long-term grievances, particularly if reconstruction is led by Shia or Kurdish forces.

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<sup>47</sup> Saleh, Ibrahim. *Niqash* (8 December 2016): "Iraq's new militias law could make Sunni tribes more powerful."

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. Refers to the example of lower-ranking members of the Abu Alwan tribe co-opted into high positions in the Islamic State, disturbing traditional tribal hierarchies.

<sup>49</sup> *Iraq Protection Cluster* (30 March 2017): "Anbar Returnee Profile – February 2017."

<sup>50</sup> *International Crisis Group* (8 August 2016): "Fight or Flight: The Desperate Plight of Iraq's "Generation 2000"."

## REGIONS OF IRAQ

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### Ninewa

As the battle against IS winds down, stakeholders are preparing for post-war governance and to contest the fall elections. This will require an agreement between local politicians, their militias, the PMF, KRG and regional backers. The presence of a number of military actors in the province attempting to consolidate their gains will likely complicate electoral processes as actors vie for influence through local proxies for the lucrative post-war reconstruction period. The Sunni majority population is divided by two visions: of a federal, independent Ninewa—led by Atheel Nujaifi, the Hashd al-Watani he leads and the regional Sunni bloc led by Turkey<sup>51</sup>; and of a Ninewa headed by a Sunni party closely allied with Baghdad's Shia political elite, led by current governor Nofal Hammadi.

The power vacuum has contributed to a rise in criminality, manifested by a rise in extra-judicial killings and the likely rise in local militias to provide security. In the midst of general instability, violence targeting political stakeholders will likely increase—in April 2017 the Ninewa Governor survived an assassination attempt. This trend could create a space for insurgent groups like IS to flourish. At the local level, returns are being instrumentalized by parties of the anti-IS coalition. Sunni villages between the Iraq and Syria border, around Qayyarah, Shirqat, and Salahaddin will likely remain unpopulated due to PMF presence, while political pressure from Baghdad, the Kurds and in other territories, Shia forces, is driving returns to Mosul. Shiite militia forces will maintain a fluid presence between Iraq and Syria, requiring their presence in the province. The Kurds are another part of the Ninewa puzzle. Before 2014, Kurds already governed disputed parts of the northern border areas; they will consolidate their hold particularly along the four axes agreed in the military accord with Baghdad<sup>52</sup>: along Khazer, Bashiqa, Nawran and the Mosul Dam. If the KDP attempts to exchange parts of Ninewa with the PMF for greater access in Diyala, this will increase intra-Kurdish conflict with the Sulaymaniyya-based PUK party.

### Diyala

Diyala, home to the headquarters of Badr Organisation, will likely see a political alliance between the province's Shia and Kurdish communities. In 2013 elections, a Sunni boycott of the election allowed the Shia National Alliance<sup>53</sup> to take the most seats despite representing less than one-third of the population<sup>54</sup>, followed by the Sunni party Iraqi Diyala. Before the IS conflict, Sunnis represented half of the province's population<sup>55</sup>. Shia and Kurdish forces have forcibly displaced Sunni communities in disputed areas, and up-to-date demographic data is unavailable. Though the governorate ran successfully through the central government quota-based system, growing PMF influence has led to the ousting of the former governor on

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<sup>51</sup> Includes his brother Osama al-Nujaifi (the Iraqi VP) and his Muttahidoun bloc, businessman Khamis al-Khanjar, former minister of finance Rafi al-Issawi and Barzani's KDP. Close to Gulf States also.

<sup>52</sup> Qader, Histryar. *Niqash* (19 October 2016): "Any excuse: Will Kurdish soldiers withdraw from parts of Mosul their leaders covet?"

<sup>53</sup> Also known as the Watani List.

<sup>54</sup> Al-Khatib, Aida. *Niqash* (28 January 2016): "Post-Islamic State Problems: Diyala Province Undergoing Violent Ethnic and Sectarian Cleansing."

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

the grounds of corruption and the institution of a senior member of the Badr organisation Muthana al-Tamimi, who enjoys strong cross-aisle support. Leadership will remain within the constellation of Hadi al-Ameri's Badr Organisation.

An increase in IS suicide bombings in Diyala highlight the terrorist group's enduring presence and ability to carry out attacks, particularly from the capital of Baqubah and its surrounding rural areas as well as the Hamreen mountains and the al-Zor basin—a crucial base of Sunni extremism in the early 2000s that allows insurgent groups to carry out attacks in Salahaddin, Tuz Khormatu and Kirkuk from Highway 2. Kidnappings and political violence carried out by various armed actors also persist in the governorate and will escalate nearer to elections. Sunni evictions have taken place in the Kurdish-claimed disputed areas of Jalawla, Saadiya, Qara Tapa and Mandali, further igniting sectarian grievances. IS takes advantage of this context by targeting Shia communities, knowing Shia forces will then direct retribution on Sunni areas<sup>56</sup>.

## **Kirkuk**

Kirkuk will be the catalyst for conflict between the Kurds and the central government in the coming months, as calls intensify in the KRI and disputed border areas to vote over governance in these regions through the invocation of Article 140 in the Iraqi constitution. The oil-rich city of Kirkuk has been under the control of PUK-allied Peshmerga since 2014 provincial elections and has been the site of intra-Kurdish and Kurdish-Shiite conflict. The Turkmen minority with Turkish support is contesting this independence movement. While informal peace accords have ameliorated this conflict, tensions between the KRG and Baghdad governments are ramping up, with symbolic rulings against the raising of Kurdish flags over the region, and counter-parliamentary sessions bringing parties together to discuss a referendum on independence. Yet, a vote on Kirkuk will not be included in the upcoming provincial elections due to its volatile nature and ongoing attempts of local stakeholders to alter the demographic composition in their favour<sup>57</sup>. Kirkuk's oil wealth makes the territory highly strategic and lucrative. The presence of the Islamic State in Hawija and necessity to continue the offensive in Kirkuk could lead to conflict between members of the anti-IS coalition.

## **Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI)**

The KRI is attempting to maintain civil peace by increasing calls for a referendum on independence with few results, distracting from the economic and political context. Disciplined and coordinated Peshmerga and Asayish security forces have managed to successfully preserve Iraqi Kurdistan's border regions from IS-penetration inside the KRI; largely due to restrictions on the entrance of displaced persons into Kurdish territory as well as the control of foreigners and Arabs from federal Iraq into and within Kurdistan. The greatest risk of conflict is between Kurdish factions, aggravated by regional powers Iran and Russia. Russia has allied itself with the KRG through the renegotiation of loans to pre-finance crude oil exports. Turkey

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<sup>56</sup> Knights, Michael and Alex Mello. Combating Terrorism Center (25 October 2016): "Losing Mosul, regenerating in Diyala: How the Islamic State could exploit Iraq's sectarian tinderbox."

<sup>57</sup> As the battle continues between Kirkuk and Hawija, it is likely that PMF and Kurdish forces will seize on the anti-IS battle to displace Arab and Turkoman Sunni neighbourhoods in the ethnically-mixed city and its enclaves. These areas include: to the northwest: Chakhmakha, Chikarran, Abu Sabash and Salihi, Arrap'ha, Khadra, 1st of June and Rashid. These areas are situated on the edges of Kirkuk and will be easiest to access without significant conflict inside the city. Southwest of Kirkuk to Hawija is also a mixed Sunni-Kurd area; Sunnis could displace pre-emptively or at the onset of conflict further south to Hawija, or northwest to the areas between Hawija, Baiji and Mosul along the Tigris.

has also allied with the KDP due to its oil and military interests. The Sulaymaniyya-based PUK and Gorran parties, meanwhile, are supported by Iran. The potential for a conflict particularly in the flashpoint Sinjar region, between KDP-held Dohuk and PKK-Syrian Kurdish Rojava in the Sinjar region, and in the oil-rich Kirkuk region, between PUK forces who hold the area, the KDP and regional backers increases if the issue of revenue-sharing re-emerges again.

In the early months of 2017, clashes between PKK-affiliated groups - including those supporting the Yezidis - and KDP-supported militias particularly following KDP-implemented restrictions at Syria-Iraq crossing points that provide the Yezidi community with crucial food supplies, intensified. This localised conflict could escalate as a proxy conflict between the Turkey and Iran-supported groups. The risk of civil unrest, protests and strikes is high across the Kurdish region. Another interesting factor likely to surface in the coming year is growing recruitment of Kurds into PMF forces, caused by economic need in the midst of the recession, highlighting the Shiite militias' spreading influence across Iraq. The Erbil-based government in March 2017 passed a law against recruitment of Kurdish civilians into this force, signalling their fear.

### **Salahaddin**

Salahaddin citizens are torn between cousins former governor Ahmed al-Jubbouri and current governor Raed Ibrahim al-Jubbouri. Raed al-Jubbouri enjoys an alliance with PMFs including Hezbollah in Iraq, and reflects the political influence of Baghdad<sup>58</sup>. With pressure from Baghdad and from Sunni states for rehabilitation funds, it will be hotly contested in 2017 elections and could experience an increase in armed violence. The Islamic State has also been carrying out attacks in the norther part of the governorate, in Shirqat, extending to cover a significant portion of Kirkuk governorate. Risks expand as ISIS fighters flee the Mosul offensive for safe havens in other parts of the country. Salahaddin will continue to be a debilitating launch point for attacks into Kirkuk and further south in Salahaddin, particularly due to the mixed demographic nature of both governorates. This precedent could justify a growing presence of Shia militias in the province, who will continue to clash with Peshmerga forces in the area of Tuz Khomatu, and engender grievances among the Sunni inhabitants further south - particularly in liberated cities like Baiji and Tikrit which will likely face very slow reconstruction. Salahaddin also hosts a large number of IDPs—the majority of IDPs residing in the poorest shelter conditions in comparison to other governorates are in Salahaddin governorate (29%)<sup>59</sup> or 143,022 people.

### **Anbar**

Considered the heartland of Iraqi Sunnis and a bastion of support for radical movements contesting the post-Saddam Shia government, Anbar has suffered from systematic neglect by Baghdad, which contributed to the Islamic State's seizure of cities on the Euphrates in 2014-15. In 2016, population centres were retaken by the anti-IS coalition, but unlike the careful urban warfare of Mosul, retaking Fallujah, Tikrit, Ramadi and Hit depended heavily on airstrikes and severely damaged crucial civilian infrastructure. Reconstruction has been woefully short of the mark. Despite numerous gains along the Euphrates front, Iraqi forces and Sunni militias have failed to clear

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<sup>58</sup> *Al Monitor* (April 2013): "Iraq provincial elections Maliki Majority."

<sup>59</sup> *IOM Iraq* (February 2017): "Displacement tracking matrix: DTM round 64."

the Anbar towns of Annah, Rawa and Qaim<sup>60</sup> of IS, due to the difficulty for troops to hold the large and sparsely-populated desert region. The border area, which hosts roads connecting Baghdad to Damascus and Amman, has also drawn conflict between PMF forces and US-backed Syrian opposition forces near the Jordanian border and predominantly Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces further north participating in the Raqqa offensive. Iran wishes to connect its proxy forces across the border, while the US is hoping to stabilise Anbar through Sunni allies by rebuilding the Baghdad-Damascus road and strengthening regional trade<sup>61</sup>, supporting rebels to create a buffer for Jordan and the SDF fight against IS in Raqqa. This could lead to permanent displacement of some communities along this strategic route<sup>62</sup>.

Intensified conflict only adds to the security vacuum in Anbar, as the predominantly Shia government focuses on Mosul and local Sunni leaders and their militias fight over rehabilitation funding and political representation. The vast desert region is difficult terrain to rout out IS, and the terrorist group will likely continue to use small villages in Anbar as a launch pad to regroup and conduct attacks elsewhere. Historic distrust of security forces from the time of Maliki has led many civilians to prefer local tribal militias to fill security gaps, which decreases their level of training and accountability and incentivises the proliferation of non-state armed groups alongside illegal trade that could counter security objectives, if not also lead to new radical groups. Poverty compounded by IS and post-IS rehabilitation has led to poor purchasing power, unemployment, criminality, smuggling, insecurity and score-settling, which will continued to contribute to multiplying waves of displacement<sup>63</sup>. For now, returnees to Anbar outnumber IDPs at a rate of 2:1 currently<sup>64</sup>. Protection issues remain of the greatest concern<sup>65</sup>. Anbar is home to three groups including the Iraqi Islamic Party established for more than a decade; an alliance connected with former Iraq PM Ayad Allawi and local tribes who fought against IS who previously were not politically represented including al-Bu Nimr, al-Abed and al-Bu Fahd.<sup>66</sup>

## Southern Iraq

The southern Iraq governorates of al-Najaf, Karbala, Babil, Baghdad, al-Qadisiyah, Wasit, Misay, Thi Qar and al-Basra will likely experience the most fiercely contested elections, compounded by the strong militias

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<sup>60</sup> Connects to Deir Ezzor and Raqqa, and is just north of IS-held Rutba connecting Damascus and Baghdad. Al-Qaim has been singled as a possible hiding-place for high-level IS officials, and the death of the Wilayat Baghdad emir and his bomb expert in late May was possible evidence of this; <http://www.iraqinews.com/iraq-war/iraqi-command-says-killed-masterminds-behind-baghdad-basra-bombings-anbar/>

<sup>61</sup> IHS JANES (13 January 2017): "Islamic State likely to lose residual control of Iraq's Anbar province in three-month outlook, but retain terrorism capability."

<sup>62</sup> Nejdi (to the south) and Jaziran (along the central access of the Syrian-Iraqi border) Arabs controlling Iraq's Jordan and Syria border will face a high threat of displacement as Iran-backed PMF groups expand their control over the border, and particularly, key roads while clearing IS. The Anbar Sunni-Arab region is viewed with great suspicion across Iraq, and even among Sunni areas—therefore, displacement will likely be contained in the Anbar-Ninewa areas where the tribal clans Dulaim and Shammar dominate, though there is a presence of Dulaim southwest and west of Baghdad, which could lead some families to travel further south-east. It is likely that displacement will be characterised by several movements, led by the degree to which Shia and Kurdish forces wish to maintain some level of control over the governorate and its trade routes, how this control impacts livelihoods through smuggling, and the degree to which families consider pre-emptive displacement to avoid sectarian violence. This could in fact lead to displacement outside of Iraq and the definitive demographic change of the area, similar to what was witnessed north of Tikrit, in Jurf al-Sakhr and Ramadi.

<sup>63</sup> Late May Iraqi forces announced operation to search for IS pockets in Anbar. *AlArabiya* (22 May 2017): "Iraqi forces begin manhunt inside ISIS pockets of Anbar." but are focusing on pockets near Baghdad.

<sup>64</sup> WFP (March 2017): "Iraq Market Monitor Report."

<sup>65</sup> Iraq Protection Cluster (24 April 2017): "Anbar Returnee Profile- March 2017."

<sup>66</sup> Habib, Mustafa. *Niqash* (21 July 2016): "Who's the boss? Iraq's next elections will change power balance, could put militias in charge."

backing political figures. Steps made by former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki to run in the next elections are inciting tensions between militias backed by the politician and those supporting other candidates, increasing the possibility of armed clashes in the southern Shia-majority area. As the Islamic State loses territory in Iraq and Syria it will increasingly direct its capabilities towards high-propaganda soft targets on Shia communities and religious sites. It is important to remember that Shia militias from southern Iraq are populating militias operating across the country. The election could cause violence and insecurity between militias in any areas with PMF presence.

## HUMANITARIAN PREPAREDNESS

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Following the liberation of western Mosul, Iraqi forces and humanitarian actors are dealing with the challenges of emergency health care, organizing mustering points and transit sites, conducting security checks among the IDP communities liberated from IS territory, camp oversight and the distribution of aid. The key priority of actors is to facilitate the greatest number of returns possible, to encourage the city's rehabilitation and deal with the demographic and securitised nature of the response. There are several obstacles to this return: water scarcity, a lack of basic health services, food insecurity primarily caused by depressed livelihoods, and few economic opportunities. In east Mosul - which serves as a useful blueprint for the recovery of the part of the city west of the Tigris -, the reconstruction of water networks was undertaken quickly, and markets returned with civilians. Yet, the city still faces the risk of asymmetric terrorist attacks, teachers and health workers are slow to return, and government efforts to take over the humanitarian response and service provision have appeared underfunded, poorly coordinated and patronage-based in a way that bodes poorly for social cohesion and trust-building between residents and authorities in the coming months.

In west Mosul, as areas were cleared in the early months of the offense, IDPs reported pressure from authorities in camps to return to neighbourhoods yet to be cleared of unexploded ordnances and booby-trapping, in addition to the risk of indirect fire. The degree of destruction combined with pressures to return could lead to more serious humanitarian needs requiring greater logistical coordination to meet in the still-insecure city's rubble. Camps are overcrowded with poor access to WASH services, inadequate trauma care and diminishing aid in the face of a growing number of IDPs. After years of IS rule, cash savings have been depleted, impacting purchasing power<sup>67</sup>. Citizens cite the need for employment, and prefer to stay in rented accommodating. Economic hardship will likely trigger movement between camps and host communities to receive the best services.

The longer-term challenge concerns ongoing demographic engineering carried out by armed actors against Sunni Arabs residing in disputed border areas abutting Kurdish territory and near the Syrian-Iraqi border, where Kurdish and Shia-backed groups want to dig in and establish territorial realities. Carrying out these policies leads to a number of protection issues for men, women and children surrounding forced

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

evictions, family separation, extra-judicial killings and violence, poor treatment by non-state and state armed groups of communities and diversion of aid.

The proliferation of armed actors with indeterminate political connections also hinders humanitarian work, blurring parallel systems of governance and military authority. This imperfect decentralisation will impact access and negotiation with actors particularly in disputed areas, but also between the humanitarian-heavy KRI and Federal Iraq, which will try to draw organisations across the border. For humanitarian actors, assessing who, among coalition-backed commanders, local mukhtars and governors actually holds power will be immensely challenging—yet military actors controlling checkpoints and access will represent local and regional kingmakers. Though Abadi signed an executive order to demilitarise camps, the administering of screening centres, transit points and camps by ethnic or sectarian armed groups<sup>68</sup> increases the possibility of poor treatment of IDPs—particularly men and boys. Protection advocacy is integral to any intervention in this complex context, to ensure adequate and fair treatment for civilians. The stratified and instrumentalised provision of emergency aid and reconstruction funding to carry out various demographic objectives and priorities, and shift funds away from remaining humanitarian needs, could deteriorate stability and provoke further displacement, particularly if access is controlled by non-state armed groups. In camps, the capture of identification cards required for travel hinders movement, and could be employed by armed groups to restrict the return of some persons to alter the pre-conflict demographics of a region<sup>69</sup>.

In Sunni areas suffering from poor political representation, at the brink of a wave of retributive violence and re-ordering between tribal groups, militias used to financially incentivised access, will proliferate to 'secure' regions from IS insurgencies, impeding aid organisation operations. Areas considered to have been sympathetic to IS could also witness a form of aid or reconstruction attrition and greater surveillance. Psychosocial support will be key to bolstering community trust, but its effect is limited by a lack of public understanding and national capacities.

## DISPLACEMENT TRENDS: MOSUL<sup>70</sup>

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A total of 821,178<sup>71</sup> people have been displaced during the Mosul offensive. One-fifth of IDPs have returned to their areas or origin—the majority to eastern Mosul<sup>72,73</sup>, facilitated by improving security, the rehabilitation of services, and the push factors of poor camp conditions and pressure from camp authorities. Of those remaining IDPs, more than half are staying in host communities with family, friends

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<sup>68</sup> In this case, refers to both the Peshmerga and PMF.

<sup>69</sup> In Diyala and Kirkuk, and Ninewa. Human Rights Watch (13 November 2016): "Iraqi Kurdistan: Arab homes destroyed after ISIS Battles." Amnesty (20 January 2016): "Northern Iraq: Satellite images back up evidence of deliberate mass destruction in Peshmerga-controlled Arab villages." [Amnesty](#) (7 November 2016): "Iraq: Kurdish authorities bulldoze homes and banish hundreds of Arabs from Kirkuk."

<sup>70</sup> Based on OCHA reports and Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM).

<sup>71</sup> [IOM Iraq](#): "Emergency Tracking Matrix: Mosul operations data snapshot: 2 July 2017."

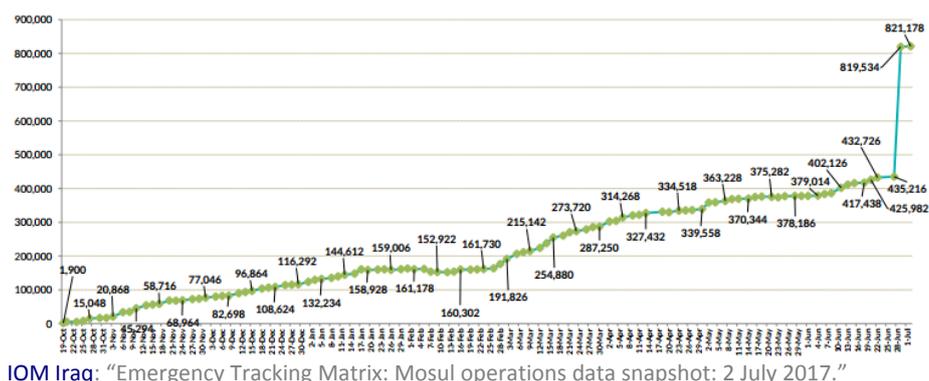
<sup>72</sup> [UNHCR](#): Iraq Situation: UNHCR Flash Update 30 June 2017."

<sup>73</sup> [OCHA](#): "Iraq: Mosul Humanitarian Response Situation report no. 38 (12 to 28 June 2017)."

and government sponsored arrangements (389,898); and a remaining 358,302 are living in 19 camps and emergency sites.

Key needs highlighted for residents in the east were employment, food and legal assistance; whereas for

returnees in the west, food and water were prioritised<sup>74</sup>. A longer-term challenge will be to facilitate the return of skilled workers including health workers and teachers, whose services work as a pull factor for other returnees<sup>75</sup>. For its part, the Iraqi education and health ministries have tried to combat this phenomenon albeit perhaps not in the best way<sup>76</sup>.



Displacement from Mosul has been highly contained within Ninewa governorate. 77% of IDPs are in Mosul district around the city itself, or in camp areas to the south, like Hammam al-Alil and al-Qayarrah<sup>77</sup>; and in Hamdaniya district with camps to the west, like Hasansham camps and Khazer. Returns to west Mosul have also begun, particularly in the earlier liberated areas in the south. Of the 721,513 IDPs of west Mosul since February 2017, there is an estimated 62,513 returns as of 28 June 2017<sup>78</sup>. These numbers add to the more than three million internally displaced Iraqis and 220,000 Iraqi refugees resulting from the 2014 Islamic State assault<sup>79</sup>. Ninewa has also experienced a high rate of returns, particularly to Tel Afar (16,110 families) and Mosul (17,029 families) sub-districts<sup>80</sup>, prompted by host community pressures to return, conditions in camps, and movement restrictions.

Before 2014, Mosul was a predominantly Sunni city (80%) with large minority communities of Kurds, Christians, Turkomans, Shabaks (Shia) and Yazidis. The population before the current coalition offensive consisted of city residents, Syrian refugees, as well as IDPs from Ninewa, Salahaddin and Anbar fleeing the Shia-led sectarian violence that rose in the aftermath of Saddam Hussein's ouster. In 2014 many Mosul residents fled to the Kurdish region, with smaller numbers travelling further south to Baghdad and Salahaddin.

<sup>74</sup> IOM Iraq: "Emergency Tracking Matrix: Mosul operations data snapshot: 2 July 2017."

<sup>75</sup> A security source quoted in Al-Monitor stated that between 1,000 and 1,500 permits were being issued on a daily basis in January 2017 to citizens of the eastern Mosul areas. Oda, Suha. *Al-Monitor* (27 March 2017): "Why aren't Mosul residents returning to liberated areas?"

<sup>76</sup> The Ministry of Health tried to demand doctors return to Mosul, and the education ministry awarded a four year leave for teachers

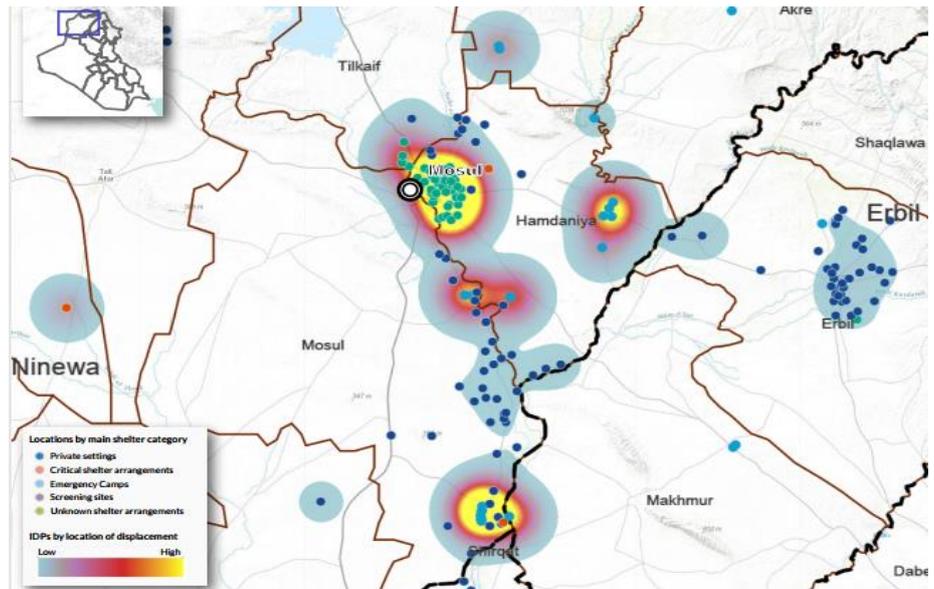
<sup>77</sup> IDPs from Ba'aj and Telafar are also displacing to these areas. People from Ba'aj were moving to Tel Jarabiya

<sup>78</sup> OCHA: "Iraq: Mosul Humanitarian Response Situation Report no. 38 (12 to 28 June 2017)."

<sup>79</sup> UNHCR: "Iraq Emergency"

<sup>80</sup> Iraq Protection Cluster (30 March 2017): "Ninewa returnee profile – May 2017." Though numbers between IOM's DTM and the Baghdad government differ.

Genocidal violence and sexual enslavement conducted by the Islamic State against minority communities, and particularly the Yazidis, led to high rates of displacement among minorities<sup>81</sup> and left behind a predominantly Sunni demographic. It is also likely that areas populated by Christian, Yazidi and other minority groups, like al-Hamdaniya, Bartilla, Tal Kaif and Bashika<sup>82</sup> around



[IOM Iraq](#): “Emergency Tracking factsheet ~35 – Mosul operations from 17 October to 29

Mosul—will be repopulated slowly or not at all<sup>83</sup>. The Yazidis have stated clearly that they will not return to Sinjar until self-governance is assured. Other minorities, including Christians, have also stated their reluctance to return to their home areas, and prefer to seek refuge abroad, particularly in Europe<sup>84</sup>.

Most of the incoming IDPs and rural migrants to Mosul city between 2003 and 2014 (prior to June 10) settled in some of the city’s poorest and least serviced neighbourhoods in the south-western part of Mosul<sup>85</sup>, and those from Tal Afar settled on the right bank<sup>86</sup>. UN Habitat states that areas radicalised in the early 2000s included al-Tal district, al-Jubour tribe; Mahlabiya and Hamam al-Ali tribes south of Mosul, al-Jubour from al-Qayarah and al-Shorah. Sunnis coming from this area will face obstacles to resettlement.

The complex nature of displacement and the multiple movements that households take during a conflict highlight the significant gaps not only in Mosul and its environs, but also in other governorates— particularly those hosting Arab Sunni IDPs like Anbar, Baghdad, Salahaddin since as early as the mid-2000s. The uneven distribution of aid will destabilise the long-term recovery of IS-held areas by triggering new waves of displacement as beneficiaries try to better meet their needs, and will further give credence to allegations of ethnically and sectarian-motivated distribution.

<sup>81</sup> [UN Habitat](#) (October 2016): “City Profile of Mosul, Iraq: Multi-sector assessment of a city under siege.”

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> The following neighbourhoods had property confiscated during the Islamic State presence, and as minority neighbourhoods could not be resettled in similar figures: Christian neighbourhoods of al-Arab, Shurta, Nour, Muhandiseen, Majmouah, Thaqafiyah, Faisaliah, Zohour, Dawas, Jawsaq and Dandan, in addition to old city neighbourhoods of al-Thaqafa, al-Bakir, al-Maidan, al-Saa’a and Shia Turkoman and Shabak neighbourhoods of Atshanah, Karamah, Quds, Nour, Bab Shams, Nour and Adan  
[UN Habitat](#) (October 2016): “City Profile of Mosul, Iraq: Multi-sector assessment of a city under siege.”

<sup>84</sup> [REACH](#) (February 2017): “Mosul Offensive - Crisis Overview II 29 December – 13 February 2017.”

<sup>85</sup> In Al-Mamoun, Al-Rafidain, Tal Al-Rumman, Al-Risala, Wadi Al-Ein, Al-Yarmouk neighbourhoods.

<sup>86</sup> In Al-Harmat, Al-Nahrawan, Al-Eslah Al-Zeraee and 17 Tamouz neighbourhoods.

In recent assessments, 97% of Anbar IDPs outside of camps said they would move in the next three months, compared to 97% of Diyala IDPs, and 68% in Salah al-Din<sup>87</sup>. In camp settings the figures are far lower: 6% in Anbar, 15% in Baghdad, 21% in Salahaddin, 1% in Diyala and 29% in Ninewa. The reasons also vary dramatically. For Baghdad, the majority of IDPs are seeking better security; in Salahaddin numerous reasons inform displacement, but better employment opportunities feature most prominently; in Diyala, IDPs recognise a high cost of living and the desire to be closer to family. In Anbar there is also a wide range of issues, but security features prominently, followed by access to services, employment and shelter conditions<sup>88</sup>.

### **In Longer-Term Displacement, Ethno-sectarian Dynamics Play a Greater Role**

Displacement can be broadly characterised by short, mid and long-term judgements based on the trajectory of a crisis. Violence perceived to be short-term often leads to more localised, temporary displacement and the spending of household savings. Longer-term drivers of insecurity prompt more permanent decisions. In Iraq, these decisions often prioritize settlement in areas corresponding to ethno-sectarian identity, and for the most vulnerable, if household savings are depleted and few opportunities for education and social mobility exist in host communities, returning to camp settings.

It is difficult to make assumptions on the correlation between displacement paths and ethno-sectarian identity as data is not dis-aggregated. However, earlier research conducted during prior waves of displacement—the June 2014 initial IS attack on Ninewa, and the second wave of August expansion—could shed light on some interesting trends. The expansion of the Islamic State in 2014 across northern Iraq prompted different displacement strategies in the following groups: Shabak, Turkmen Shia and Christian minorities from Ninewa, Yezidis from Sinjar and the migration patterns of ethnically-mixed communities hailing from Diyala. Each community fled to host communities based on proximity to their areas of origin, ease of access and perceived safety of communities, and convergence with similar ethno-sectarian identity—frequently but not necessarily correlated with extended family or clans. Though most displaced persons first attempted to stay closer to home, research shows that as conflict becomes more permanent or protracted, Iraqis prioritize settlement in areas corresponding to their ethno-sectarian identities to ensure security and stability in the divided country.

30,000 Shia Shabak and Turkmen households hailing from Ninewa fled the first wave of Islamic State violence in neighbouring, not necessarily Shia minority communities. As the violence persisted, they sought Shia-majority governorates in South and Central Iraq<sup>89</sup>. The lack of links with host communities meant that these households were left in dire conditions, receiving little aid and housed in collective shelters. Christian minorities from Ninewa were able to travel to other Christian communities in the Kurdish region, in Erbil and Dohuk. However, the small size

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<sup>87</sup> REACH (March 2017): “Displacement Intentions of IDPs in informal sites: Centre/ South Iraq.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Like Wassit, Thi Qar, Qadissyya, Muthanna, Wissan and Najaf

of these communities prevented high absorption; and a large proportion of Iraqi Christians chose to follow the migration route to Europe and claim asylum, arguing that the sectarian nature of the battle against IS could exacerbate conflict post-IS, and that western governments may welcome Christian communities more easily<sup>90</sup>. A small percentage of Yazidis from Sinjar travelled to KRI, and then travelled to Dohuk to integrate with Kurdish and Yazidi communities. Before 2014, Diyala already hosted large numbers of Sunni IDPs fleeing IS from in Anbar, Baghdad and Salahaddin as well as regularised Iraqi government attacks on Sunni armed opposition groups in the Sunni districts of Ba’quba and Muqdadiya; which was a persistent trigger of further movement, but also witnessed the highest rate of returns apart from Ninewa<sup>91</sup>. The 2014 offensive led to mostly internal displacement as IDPs could seek asylum in the safer Kurdish-held north of the governorate, to Kifri, Kalar and Khanaqin<sup>92</sup>. Regular insecurity in Diyala and the flaring up of sectarian violence leads to complex and organic movements within the governorate<sup>93</sup>.

## ONE YEAR SCENARIOS

The following three 2018 scenarios were built using a structured analytical toolkit fed into by the Iraq country team and key stakeholders in the Iraq context. Drivers identified during the research phase of this report have been used to construct specific hypotheses woven together into possible scenarios. None should be considered as definitive, but rather as a potential sketch of possible futures to strengthen strategic interventions for humanitarian actors. Several key assumptions underpin these scenarios: that Iraq will remain unstable in the coming year; that coalition forces will begin to focus on individual objectives; and that low oil prices will continue to weaken the country’s—and the KRG’s economic situation.

### A Fractured Iraqi theatre impedes battle against IS

*Following the battle for west Mosul, Iraqis flee west and east Mosul camps for urban areas, putting pressure on recovering infrastructure and increasing social tensions. Fear of greater civilian casualties, the use by IS of human shields and a ramping up of attacks in Hawija leads to an impasse of several months on the Mosul front. Meanwhile conflict between Shia PMF and US-backed forces on the border between Iraq and Syria increase, prompting a shift in the US strategy for limited ground forces and greater support of Sunni tribal forces in Iraq and Syria,*

Indicators	
• Border conflict impeding success against IS and occurring with regularity.	
• Recruitment of Kurds into PMF in	

<sup>90</sup> Though difficult to assess at this stage in the conflict, the Iraqi Christian Relief Council estimated that 80% of Iraq’s pre-war population (2003) of 1.5 million Christians have fled Iraq. Hussein, Rikar. *VQA* (28 February 2017): “Mass Christian Immigration From Iraq Makes Future of Church Uncertain.”

<sup>91</sup> According to the IOM DTM from 14 September 2014, 88% of IDPs in Diyala were from elsewhere in the governorate and the remaining 12% were from Anbar. *REACH* (15 September 2014): “Diyala Governorate, Iraq: Internal Displacement Factsheet”

<sup>92</sup> Whereby ethnically diverse communities live in the same villages and towns, as compared to Ninewa where small minorities have neighbouring separated villages. *NCCI* (January 2016): “Diyala Governorate Profile.”

<sup>93</sup> *IOM* (August 2015): “Diyala Governorate Profile May – August 2015).”

as well as Kurdish SDF. An asymmetric attack on Tuz Khurmato leads PMF forces to encircle the area justifying its presence due to the Shiite population in the embattled city and surrounds Kirkuk as well. Ethno-sectarian tensions are further inflamed here and in Diyala by the active recruitment of Kurds into PMF militias. Though most forces are redistributed from the western Mosul front, some PMF elements remain in the area, creating tensions with residents. The IRGC-backed militias move on Tel Afar with the cover of the Federal Police, a passive ally of the militia forces. Kurdish factions hold a referendum prompted by constitutional Article 140 on the status of disputed areas. This triggers a larger debate around the already-started process of federalisation, and rolls out independence and responsibility to provincial councils. Tensions do not decrease in Kirkuk and conflict breaks out once more here and in Tuz Khurmato, with Kurdish troops positioned in PMF units. Implementing the article intensifies campaigning before the April 2018 elections, as these protests will be fiercely contested, particularly in the south. The possibility of a federalised and unified Iraq temporarily releases tensions between various ethnic and sectarian groups and gives Sunni Iraqis a greater space to organise to secure a fairer and more regularised distribution of power and federal revenue and best decide how to reconstruct cities of Ramadi, Fallujah and Hit, while increasing the level of interference by Turkey and Gulf States. The decision to share power between large leaders of the Kurdish, Sunni and Shia community does little to remedy the endemic structural conflict that instigated and fuelled the most recent conflict.

- Humanitarian Implications

Low household purchasing power remains an issue in liberated areas, hampered by long-term economic instability, a lack of government and humanitarian resources and slow recovery. Protection concerns for communities in DIB zones and Kirkuk, along the Iraq-Syria border and for returnees to IS-held areas more generally, including Sunni areas (Peshmerga-held Wana, Sheikhan, Zummar). Negative coping mechanisms like child labour, child marriage, food restriction. Medical needs for recently liberated populations are not adequately met. Movement and access restrictions for IDPs and increasingly for humanitarian actors as control lines solidify between Baghdad and KRG. Insecurity in retaken areas and IS attacks. Difficulties in coordinating, monitoring with government-affiliated groups and ensuring fair treatment of IDPs due to fragmented nature of screening, transit, detention and camp settings. Some Sunnis prevented from returns in disputed border areas. Other waves of displacement due to instability in the south.

Diyala, Suley and Kirkuk, positioning troops against Kurds.

- Baghdad and KRI restricting movement between territories, Baghdad offers jobs for KRG-based professionals.
- Kurdish allies threaten to reduce funds in run up to referendum
- Increasing rhetoric surrounding Kirkuk
- Coercive tactics for Mosul IDPs to return.
- Attack on Tuz Khurmato or Kirkuk Shia site justifies PMF presence.
- Kurdish referendum in Fall 2017 leads to federalised, independent state.
- IS attacks in Anbar, Salahaddin, or along the Euphrates
- Renewed pressure to assert demographic reality in Kirkuk,
- Intra-Kurdish conflict setting KDP-Turkey against PUK-Iran.
- Sunni areas receive limited funds to implement reconstruction.

- Security Implications

Clashes, civil unrest and popular protest alongside general instability caused by inter-sectarian conflict, particularly in areas with mixed populations, Kirkuk governorate and its environs. IS and other radical groups conducting VBIED and IED attacks in Shia and Kurdish areas continuing a low-level insurgency. Insecurity in Sunni areas as power struggle begins between various non-state armed groups.

### Iran Rising draws in Turkey

*Heavy casualty rates among Counter Terror Services cause PMF and Peshmerga to play a central role in post-Mosul operations. The presence of the PMF and the Kurds discreetly increases through local proxy militias, with both parties' informal establishment of checkpoints formalising into de facto presence in Ninewa, particularly. Several brutal attacks on soldiers combined with an increasingly aggressive position among commanders cause some forces to disaggregate, lose discipline and carry out retributive attacks against civilians. Large IS attacks on other fronts, particularly around Hawija, cause some elements to move from Mosul's environs. This phenomenon allows the Islamic State to return to some liberated areas and regroup in Sunni areas of Anbar, Salahaddin and parts of Kirkuk (Hawija), carrying out debilitating attacks in liberated areas and in Shia strongholds in central and southern Iraq.*

*Alongside a series of political appointments of former members of the Iranian Republican Guard Corps in winter 16/17, Iran continues to expand its political influence by encouraging affiliates to ramp up a popular protest movement against current PM Haider al-Abadi to destabilise Baghdad's government. Widespread popular pressure and instability in the Shi'ite south causes Abadi to step down, leaving a political vacuum for established and positioned Iranian allies to step in. With the PMF already legitimated as government forces, the militias are given a greater remit in strategic areas for Iran—particularly as a mobile force between Iraq and Syria, and as an engine of demographic change, exploiting the presence of Arab and Turkmen minority communities (near Hawija and Kirkuk, Taza Khurmatu, Tawuq, Tuz Khurmatu, Sulaiman Beg) to establish a permanent presence close to Kurdish territories and carry out punitive retribution in Telafar. Turkey finds these moves aggressive and considers attacking Telafar to protect the local Turkmen population, or Sinjar when the PKK presence expands within the Yezidi community. Elections dynamics spill over into militia groups around the country, deteriorating discipline and causing violent clashes. Slow reconstruction in Sunni areas and the inability to return to some disputed border areas fuels Sunni grievances against*

### Indicators

- PMF and Peshmerga take a greater role in Mosul offensive through local affiliated militias.
- PMF's growing role causes Turkey to call for an intervention to protect Turkmen.
- High-stakes Turkey-Iran proxy war occurs in Iraq-Syria border area and Sinjar.
- PMF plays central role in Telafar.
- Rising rhetoric between Turkey and Iran, increased support for Sunni tribal forces.
- Increased presence of PMF in all Shia Turkmen population centers in northwest Iraq.
- Protests around Baghdad green zone and southern Shia governorates.

*the central government. Sunni regions are deprived of resources and hope, and leaders based in Kurdistan have lost all credibility to steer a political campaign. Internecine fighting particularly between other Sunni jihadist groups like Jaysh al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiya, Prophet Yunus Brigade, Mosul Brigades, Ahrar al-Mosul, Ansar al-Sunna seek revenge on former IS members and re-build their networks, while conflict occurs within the tribal architecture to redress hierarchy issues, which destabilises the community leading to greater displacement and a worse standard of living, and establishes another round of Sunni radical insurgency.*

- Humanitarian Implications

Response is increasingly guided by Baghdad based PMF leaders firstly through informal controls that then become formalised. In some areas, Peshmerga controls divided between PUK and KDP regions also. Very little communication between de facto control lines as civilian structures are disempowered. Protection concerns are at the forefront; in addition to shelter and camp conditions for Sunni IDPs in Ninewa, Anbar, Salahaddin, Pressure for Sunni IDPs to leave KRI or move into camp-like, controlled settings.

- Security Implications

Disputed areas remain a risk for actors providing aid as well as civilians, who will likely be caught up in the crossfire of any clashes between non-state armed groups. Proliferation of new armed groups and a lack of discipline and accountability among existing groups could decrease stability and lead to civil unrest, in addition to indirect and direct fire, home seizures and abductions as well as arbitrary detention.

### A Shared Iraqi Vision

*After west Mosul is taken, terror attacks across the country escalate dramatically, particularly impacting sectarian-mixed areas like Baghdad, Tuz Khurmato, Kirkuk and parts of Ninewa. Displacement due to anti-IS operations around Raqqa and Deir Ezzor leads to a build-up at the Iraqi border, while some IS fighters travel towards Syria. The PMF and Kurdish forces try to organise camp communities to create a buffer border line that serves their interests. The Badiya desert area is difficult to control in full. The sectarian nature of these attacks causes some PMF fighters to partake in retributive attacks on Sunni neighbourhoods, contributing to*

- Abadi is outmuscled by a more powerful leader- Maliki or Sadr.
- Shia militia leaders established in political system.
- Deteriorating quality of humanitarian response and rights-based approach in Sunni governorates and towards Sunni IDPs causing further displacement.
- Sunni regions suffer politically.

### Indicators

- IS attacks around Iraq and in the Shia heartland of Basra, Najaf and Karbala.

*additional waves of displacement and discrediting the neutrality of the now-government forces. These events cause numerous PMF fighters, who hail from these areas, to return to their areas of origin to defend their neighbourhoods. Nevertheless, the trans-border nature of the PMF forces unifies the IS response across borders. To hold territory, PMF presence in Syria and the border region increases dramatically, leading to more attacks in other parts of the country, around Mosul, Hawija, Diyala and Salahaddin. The US begins to aerially bombard Iran proxies with greater regularity particularly near the Jordanian border. Alongside this, the US also takes a greater role in the rehabilitation process and supports the Abadi government to reintegrate PMF forces into state security, limiting the amount of weapons in the hands of non-state groups and strengthening the national army. Iranian influence is limited politically if not on the ground, as Shiite cleric Ali Sistani makes statements supporting the integration of PMF into government units and their disbanding; alongside cleric Muqtada al-Sadr. Sunni political factions have space to forge a political agenda, with the concerted efforts of the US government and its Sunni Arab ally states including Jordan, Saudi and Turkey. In the meanwhile, Sunni community leaders sense that resources are insufficient to properly combat the Islamic State and are unsure as to whether to fully support the government in its endeavours to combat IS, or work among themselves. Bearing a significant proportion of reconstruction costs, Iran stands down. Kurdish desires for a referendum on independence are sublimated by government-led efforts to devolve greater powers to provincial councils and the Kurdish Regional Government. This causes Kurdish criticism to turn inwards towards the KRI's corrupt leadership; discontent increases with the economic crisis. Alongside this policy, Christians, Yazidis and Turkmen calls for minority-led councils in Ninewa (including Ninewa Plains, Sinjar and Tel Afar) are granted, albeit, Ninewa Plains sub-districts are governed by the Kurdish Regional Government. The Islamic State re-establishes itself in some Anbar, Ninewa areas and maintains a capacity while remaining underground for the moment.*

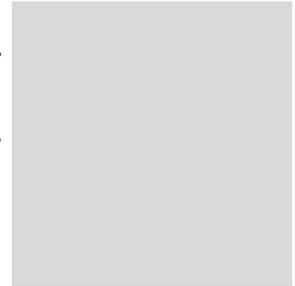
- Humanitarian Implications

While returns to Mosul occur quickly, populations remain fluid and violence from IS attacks and retributive violence causes families to flee locally. The accepted dominance of PMF forces in the country shifts the humanitarian environment for actors and worsens organizations' ability to fairly advocate for protection concerns and the respect of international humanitarian law. Displacement remains complex and poor distribution of resources and services leads to compounding waves as IDPs seek better conditions. Dynamics are highly impacted by demographic engineering.

- Security Implications

- Complex displacement trends in Mosul.
- Violence against Sunni communities after IS attacks in mixed areas.
- US ramps up involvement to coordinate a Sunni vision with the support Saudi, Turkey and Jordan.
- Baghdad delocalises power to provide greater authority to provinces, Kirkuk has special status.
- Ninewa districts are empowered to better represent minority rights.
- Sunni coalition and Sadr and Hakim Shia parties run on secular platform.
- Kurdish PUK and KDP forces integrate.
- Some Shia militias are disarmed and spread between security agencies.

Violence in the south within Shia groups, Sunni militias and Kurdish groups to consolidate authority. Greater stability in disputed border areas and wake of Mosul offensive as forces involved in anti-IS coalition feel incentive to cooperate politically. Even with integration of PMF into government bodies, possibility of internal structures maintaining the decision-making power of non-government persons undermines the effectiveness of the body.



## CONCLUSION

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As the battle for Mosul comes to a close, deep sectarian fault lines exacerbated by regional proxies, are threatening the stability of a future Iraq. At this moment, the possible gains for Iran, the strongest actor in the Iraqi theatre, are too great to gamble on a cross-platform coalition building a new Iraq. The greatest challenge to Tehran is a mobilizing youth movement turning against continued violence and a poor economic future and worsening quality of life for the large demographic. Yet, the militias that are formed largely of Iraqi youth will continue to remain one of the few sources of income, mobility and prestige in the fractured state. For humanitarian actors, focusing aid and a protection-based strategy into the neglected Sunni areas that birthed radical jihadism and into the shrinking minority areas are crucial to supporting stability and the fair rehabilitation of a future Iraq.

## APPENDIX: LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS / NAMES

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- Ahmed al-Jubbouri and Raed Ibrahim al-Jubbouri- two cousins fighting for position of governor of Salahaddin. Ahmed is the former governor of the governorate, while Raed is the current one, who is closer to PMFs.
- Ammar al-Hakim – Islamic Supreme Council leader and part of broad coalition with Muqtada al-Sadr.
- Article 122- An article of the Iraq constitution providing provincial councils with greater power
- Article 140 – An article in the Iraq 2003 constitution calling for the normalisation of Kurdish territories by the carrying out of a census to establish the demographic nature of a constituency, and then a referendum on whether these regions should be part of Kurdistan. Concerns the issue of Kirkuk the most.
- Asayish – Kurdish intelligence agency.
- Ba'ath Party- Sunni party of Saddam Hussein dismantled by US ouster of president in 2003.
- Badr Organisation- the largest Diyala-based organisation led by Hadi al-Ameri. Muthanna al-Tamimi, another member of the Badr. Has strong ties with Iranian Republican Guard Corps.
- Counter Terror Services (CTS) – Elite forces also known as Golden Division
- Gorran- Change party based in eastern Iraqi Kurdistan. Strong links with Iran and against a referendum.
- Haidar al-Abadi - PM, member of the Dawa party.
- Hashd al-Watany (National Mobilisation Forces) – led by former Ninewa governor Atheel Nujafi with support of his Turkish ally, based in Ninewa in Baquba.
- Iraqi National Forces Alliance- Sunni political party.
- Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)- Umbrella term for forces including Popular Mobilisation Forces, National Mobilisation Forces, the Iraqi army, elite units including Counter Terror Services, Emergency Response Division, Federal Police.
- Jalal Talabani – Ailing leader of PUK party and president of Iraq from 2005-2014.
- KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) – leading Iraqi Kurdistan party with strong links to Turkey.
- Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) – northern Iraqi governorates of Dohuk, Erbil, Suleymaniye and territories seized post-IS, including northern Ninewa, Kirkuk and parts of Diyala.
- Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) – the Kurdish government led by Kurdish Democratic Party leader Masoud Barzani.
- Law 21- Allows local governments to choose their own judiciary and heads of security, giving provinces greater control over resources—a tense issue considering oil revenue sharing in the resource rich, poor southern province of Basra.
- Masoud Barzani – President of Iraqi Kurdistan since 2005.
- Mutahidoun bloc- Sunni Ba'athist bloc led by Osama Nujafi and Atheel Nujafi of the al-Hadba list.
- Ninevah Five-Year Strategy- a document drawn up by a coalition of Sunni political blocs supporting a federalised, independent Nineveh.
- Nofal Hammadi – Current governor of Ninewa, considered corrupt and recently abandoned by his political party.

- Nouri al-Maliki – Member of the Dawa party and former PM accused of sectarianism post-Saddam; contesting upcoming provincial elections. Represents State of Law Coalition.
- Peshmerga- Kurdish armed forces, not integrated between PUK and KDP regions.
- PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê)– Kurdistan Workers Party, based primarily in southern Turkey and northern Syria in Rojava. Supports Iraqi groups like the Sinjar Resistance Units, Sinjar Women’s Protection Units and Arab Nawader al-Shammar.
- Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF)- predominantly Shia militias since December 2016 under the umbrella of Iraq Security Forces
- PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan) – main opposition party in Iraqi Kurdistan with links to Iran. Based in Suleymaniye and Kirkuk.
- Sahwa (Awakening) – the name of an American campaign aimed at arming Sunni Anbar tribes to fight against Al-Qaeda in Iraq. Members forming this coalition were systematically targeted by IS before their expansion.
- Samir al-Jubbouri – Speaker of the House with strong links to Shia political parties.
- Saray al-Salam: militia allied with Muqtada al-Sadr
- Shabak- a minority Iraqi ethnic group living primarily in disputed border areas. Mostly Shia.

## IRAQ 2018 SCENARIOS: Planning After Mosul

July 2017

**HUMANITARIAN FORESIGHT THINK TANK**

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