The Politics of Security in Ninewa:

Preventing an ISIS Resurgence in Northern Iraq

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Acknowledgements

Cover Photo: Soldiers from the Iraqi Counterterrorism Service (CTS) raise the Iraqi flag in Bartella, Ninewa in October 2016 (AP Photo/Khalid Mohammed) via News 1130.

Acronym Reference Guide

A/A/A: Accompany, Advise, and Assist
AAAB: al-Assad Airbase
AAH: *Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq* (League of the People of Righteousness)
AQI: al-Qaeda in Iraq
ATA: Anti-Terrorism Assistance
BPC: Build Partner Capacity
CIO: Contributions to International Organizations
CPA: Coalition Provisional Authority
CTS: Counterterrorism Service
CTEF: Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund
D-ISIS: Defeat-ISIS (Coalition)
DDR: Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration
EOF: Escalation of Force
ERD: Emergency Response Division
ERW: Explosive Remnants of War
ESF: Economic Support Fund
ESDF: Economic Support Development Fund
ERU: Emergency Response Unit
FAO: Foreign Area Officer
FEDPOL: Federal Police
FFS: Funding Facility for Stabilization
FFES: Funding Facility for Expanded Stabilization
FFIS: Funding Facility for Immediate Stabilization
FMF: Foreign Military Financing
FMS: Foreign Military Sales
GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council
GoI: Government of Iraq
HPE: Ezidkhan Defense Force
IA: Iraqi Army
IDA: International Disaster Assistance
IED: improvised explosive device
IHL: international humanitarian law
INCLE: International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement
IMET: International Military Education and Training
IP: Iraqi Police (formally named the Iraqi Police Service)
IRGC: Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
ISF: Iraqi Security Forces
ISI: Islamic State of Iraq

ISIS: Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISOF: Iraqi Special Operations Forces
JOC: Joint Operations Command
KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party
KH: *Kata'ib Hezbollah* (Battalions of the Party of God)
KRG: Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI: Kurdish Region of Iraq
MoD: Ministry of Defense
MoI: Ministry of Interior
MRA: Migration and Refugee Assistance
NADR: Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs
NOC: Ninewa Operations Command
NPGF: Ninewa Plains Guard Force
NPF: Ninewa Plains Forces*
NPU: Ninewa Plains Protection Units
NSS: National Security Service
OIR: Operation Inherent Resolve
OFDA (USAID): Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance
OSC-I: Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq
PKK: Kurdistan Workers' Party
PMC: Popular Mobilization Committee
PMF: Popular Mobilization Forces (*al-Hashd al-Sha'abi*)
PRM (DOS): Department of State, Populations, Refugees, and Migration
PUK: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
QRF: Quick Reaction Force
Q-West: Qayyara West Airfield
SDF: Syrian Democratic Forces
SoI: Sons of Iraq
T&E: Train and Equip
TMF: Tribal Mobilization Forces (*al-Hashd al-Asha'ari*)
TSK: Turkish Armed Forces
UNAMI: UN Assistance Mission Iraq
UNDP: United Nations Development Program
USG: U.S. Government
UXO: Unexploded Ordinance
WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction
YBS: Sinjar Protection Units
YPG: People's Protection Units

* There are two groups named the "Ninewa Plains Forces." One is a Shia-Shabak PMF group, the other is a KRG-supported Christian group

Area of Interest: Ninewa Province
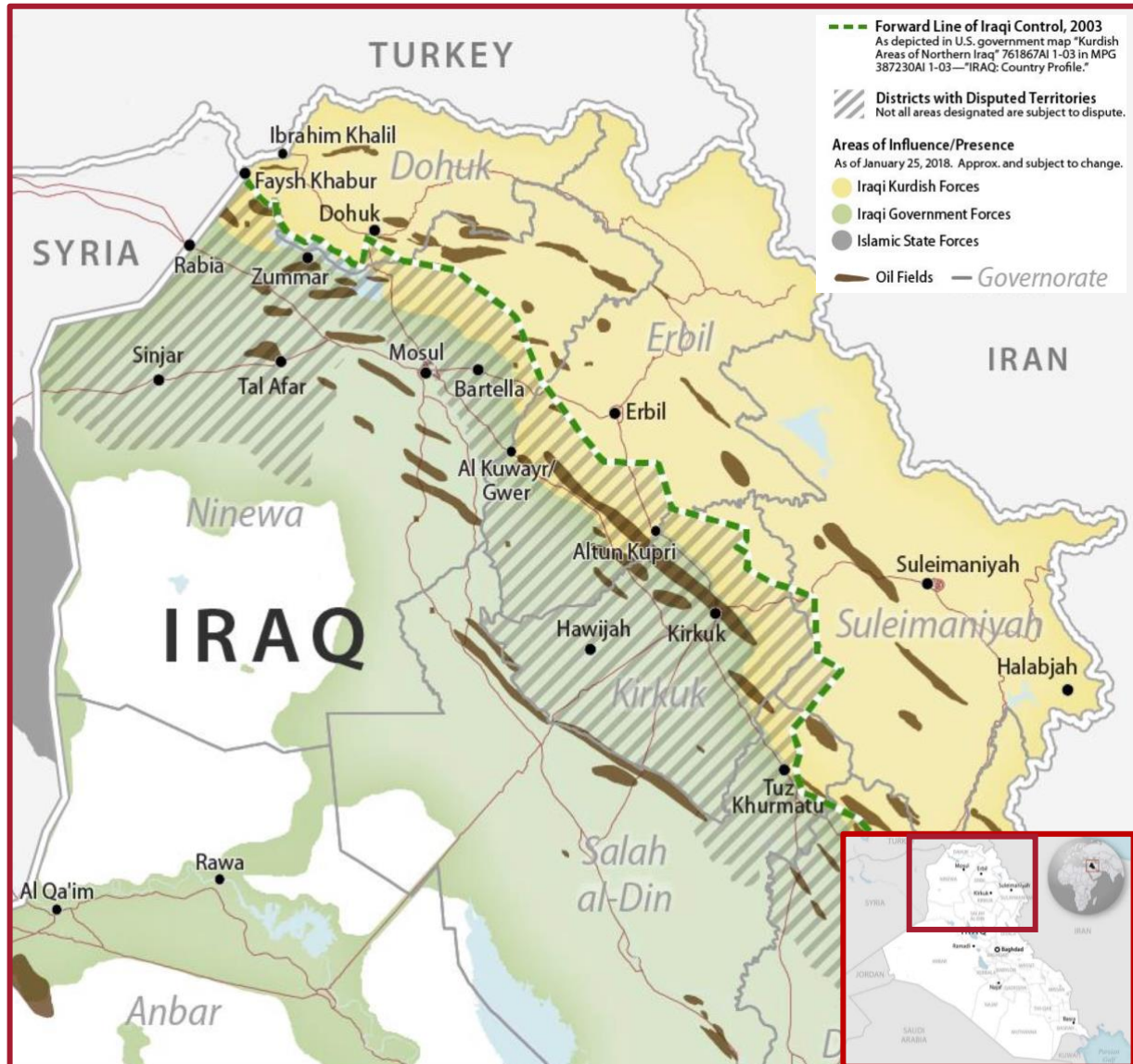
**Maps Source:** Blanchard, Christopher M. "Iraq: In Brief," Congressional Research Service. March 5, 2018. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R45096.pdf, p. 3 and 6.

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Executive Summary

On July 7, 2017, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi announced that Iraqi Security Forces had liberated Mosul from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Although fighting would continue as security forces worked to clear insurgent remnants from the city, his declaration marked a critical turning point. Today, a range of U.S., Iraqi, and international leaders consider ISIS a defeated organization. But many of the conditions that fueled ISIS' rise to power still exist. ISIS could return yet again. In fact, ongoing violence indicates that it never left. To help prevent a reinvigorated ISIS insurgency, we examined Ninewa Province to 1) understand how politics can undercut the effectiveness of Iraqi Security Forces and 2) develop recommendations for how the U.S. government can improve its current approach.

If ISIS were to regain prominence, Ninewa would undoubtedly play a central role. For years it was considered the most important province within ISIS' so-called caliphate, just as, in an earlier time, it was considered the center of gravity for al-Qaeda in Iraq. Its capital, Mosul, is Iraq's second largest city. Its location within Iraq's disputed territories has placed it at the heart of struggles between Erbil and Baghdad, while its diverse array of minority communities distinguishes its human terrain as one of Iraq's most complex. As the longtime center of Sunni Arab nationalism in Iraq, it also served as a fertile recruiting ground for military, intelligence, and political officials under Saddam Hussein— many of whom would later join jihadist insurgencies. Much as it has for centuries, Ninewa serves as the connective tissue between Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and Iran. Its strategic location has meant that those who controlled Ninewa could influence the entire region—an insight which still holds true.

Despite significant progress since 2014, much work remains before the U.S. or its Iraqi partners can declare victory in Ninewa. The province's liberation has ushered in an era of security force proliferation where militias of various alignments, the Peshmerga, the Iranians, the Turks, and the Iraqi Security Forces maneuver for influence. As microcosms of Iraqi society, these armed groups represent a wide range of political interests. The security impacts of those divergent political preferences—"the politics of security"—are responsible for many of the most damaging setbacks to the Global Coalition's attempts to achieve a lasting defeat of ISIS.
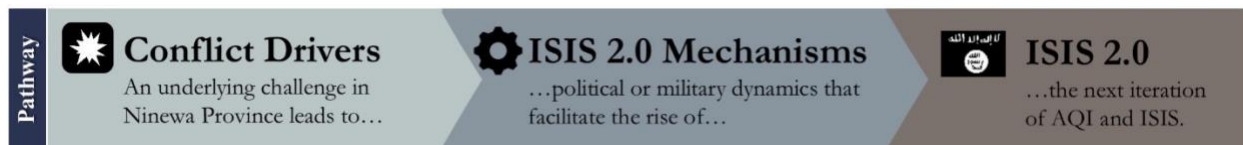
To understand how politically brittle security forces can lead to the return of ISIS, we examined Ninewa through the lens of five "ISIS 2.0 Pathways." These processes describe the means through which political conflict generates specific "mechanisms" that can impair the capability or capacity of security forces. If left unaddressed, these mechanisms can then lead to the next iteration of ISIS. Our analysis identified five key pathways:

➢ **The Battle for Local Control:** the extent to which local populations can exercise control over security forces, represented by battles over federalism, the demographic composition of the security sector, and civil-military relationships

- ➢ **Erbil vs Baghdad:** ongoing tensions over disputed territories, budget decisions, and political influence in Ninewa's government
- ➢ **Command and Control:** political-bureaucratic battles over the allocation of tasks, authorities, and reporting requirements among the various security services
- ➢ **The Militia Question:** the uncertain future of Popular and Tribal Mobilization Forces
- ➢ **Outsider Influence:** the degree and nature of foreign involvement within Ninewa

By examining these pathways, we identified 15 politically-generated mechanisms which could significantly impair the efforts of Ninewa's security forces. For each of these 15 mechanisms we assessed the extent to which U.S. policies mitigate their impacts, then aggregated those results to understand how capably the current U.S. strategy interdicts the ISIS 2.0 Pathways.

Political-Military Deficiencies in the Ninewa Counter-ISIS Strategy		
Mechanism	**Indicator**	**Assessment Explanation**
Pathway One: Local Control		
Baghdad Neglect	🔴	Local leaders skeptical of U.S. advocacy in Baghdad; un-resourced law enforcement strategy; key local security demands remain unfulfilled
Ethnic Security Dilemma	🟡	Confusion on US policy toward local militias among minority group leaders; increasing permanence of ethnic militia-based security framework
IDP Resentment	🟡	Very poor police recruitment levels mean little progress on addressing internally displaced persons' concerns regarding which security forces control routes of return and hometown—will not return until corrected
Illegitimate Elections	🟡	UN monitoring is insufficient deterrent for security force interference; undermanned police unable to replace politically-affiliated forces
Pathway Three: Command and Control		
Unaccountable Units	🟡	Despite military-centric advise and assist efforts to establish control, cannot account for the sheer number of armed groups in Ninewa.
Pathway Four: Militia Question		
Rural Safe Havens	🔴	No security forces to replace disintegrating TMF, which allows ISIS to regenerate in rural areas that have historically served as safe havens
TMF Demobilization	🟡	UNDP executing livelihood programs, but not targeted at rural areas or former TMF fighters; no clear DDR program for TMF; disaffected former fighters could provide pool of potential recruits for ISIS 2.0
🔴 Seriously Inadequate	🟡 Inadequate	🟢 Adequate

Among the five pathways, *The Battle for Local Control* was the most problematic. U.S. policies are *inadequate* for three of its associated mechanisms, and *seriously inadequate* for another. On the other

hand, *Erbil vs Baghdad* and *Outsider Influence* are being adequately addressed. *Command and Control* and *The Militia Question* both had mixed results. In all, we found seven of the 15 ISIS 2.0 mechanisms remain *inadequately* addressed by the current U.S. approach, two of which we assess to be *seriously inadequate*. This snapshot allows policymakers to understand which political conflicts are most damaging to the effectiveness of Ninewa's security forces.

The most serious strategic deficiencies were related to mechanisms we termed *Baghdad Neglect* and *Rural Safe Havens*. Baghdad's real and perceived inattentiveness to local security concerns are continuing to fuel trepidation among provincial leadership, while the ad hoc dismantlement of Sunni tribal hold forces is rapidly creating security vacuums in rural Ninewa. Both of these instances are closely tied to the enduring lack of capacity within Ninewa's police forces.

Mechanism Status by ISIS 2.0 Pathway			
Pathway	Seriously Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate
Local Control	1	3	1
Erbil vs Baghdad	0	0	3
Command and Control	0	1	1
Militia Question	1	1	1
Outsider Influence	0	0	2
TOTAL	2	5	8

To address these issues and improve the U.S. government's attempts to prevent an ISIS 2.0, we recommend the following course corrections:

1) **Fund hiring initiatives for local police.** The poor state of local police recruitment in Ninewa renders numerous U.S. policy efforts ineffective. After touting a local and multiethnic police force as the linchpin of its post-ISIS stabilization strategy, the status quo U.S. approach has made minimal progress towards creating a capable provincial police force. Prior to their collapse in the face of ISIS' 2014 onslaught, the Ninewa Province Police employed more than 30,000 officers. Today, the same force numbers between 13,000 - 15,000, in large part because the Iraqi government has not provided the funding to hire new recruits. The current strategy expects the police force to assume more responsibilities with fewer resources. Something needs to change. While the U.S. may need to contribute funding towards this end, it can also solicit more resources from the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the Government of Iraq itself. To generate Saudi and Emirati buy-in, the United States will need to offer assurances that donations will not end up in the hands of Iranian proxies. To encourage the Government of Iraq to prioritize local police salaries, the U.S. may need to leverage its Foreign Military Financing and Foreign Military Sales programs, both of which provide high-end equipment that is highly prized by the Iraqi government but is less critical to counterterrorism.

2) **Revisit the "police primacy" strategy.** The idea that local police are critical to fighting terror organizations has strong academic backing and is highly popular among Ninewa's stakeholders. It has also served as the central tenet of the Coalition's post-liberation counter-ISIS strategy. But if the realities of Iraq truly prevent the creation of a local police force capable of assuming the lead role for provincial security, then the U.S. government must revisit its planning assumptions. It cannot rely on the local police force to prevent an ISIS resurgence while simultaneously failing to develop a plan that actualizes that concept. Alternative approaches could be effective. In post-liberation Ninewa, the Iraqi Army has generally filled the security void created by a struggling police force. However, if the IA continues to perform a significant portion of provincial law enforcement tasks, then Coalition train and equip efforts should be adjusted to more effectively

support the IA's policing responsibilities. In addition to train and equip modifications, the U.S. government may also need to exert diplomatic pressure on the Ministry of Defense to encourage it to focus on domestic rather than external threats. The refrain that the Iraqi Army should concentrate on nation-state conflict because "that's what armies do" is counterproductive. In particular, Army units could modify their operating procedures and training requirements to include more law enforcement best practices. The IA could also concretize the alignment of its units with a specific area of operation rather than allowing for reassignments throughout Iraq, thus breeding familiarity and enduring partnerships between Army leaders and local stakeholders.

3) **Adopt more assertive positions on critical debates about the future of Iraq—specifically its security forces.** Historically, the U.S. government's most successful security assistance missions have required deep involvement in the sensitive political-military affairs of its partner. In particular, as Mara Karlin has argued, the U.S. has often needed to dictate host nation decisions regarding personnel appointments, the mission scope of security forces, and the security apparatus' organizational structure. These topics closely parallel many of the security sector deficiencies identified in this report. Yet to a certain extent, the current U.S. approach to domestic Iraqi politics may have overlearned the lessons of the recent past. Whereas the U.S. had once attempted to control outcomes on a variety of local issues—often with poor results—it now seeks to largely avoid the fray of internal Iraqi disputes. In many cases this approach is valuable and prudent. However, the lack of a clear U.S. position can also sow confusion and foreclose opportunities to push Ninewa's institutions in a positive direction.

4) **Brace for increasing ISIS activity in rural areas where Sunni tribal "hold" forces are disintegrating.** As the GoI discards Tribal Mobilization Forces via ad hoc, bureaucratic means rather than through a deliberately planned transition to formal security forces, ISIS will likely exploit security vacuums in Ninewa's rural safe havens. From these locales, ISIS can continue to escalate its intimidation campaign against security forces and key tribal opponents—exactly the kind of "quality attacks" which precipitated its rise in 2014. The absence of a workable demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) plan for TMF members could further inflame this dynamic by providing ISIS 2.0 with a pool of unemployed former fighters from which to recruit. To combat this eventuality, the U.S. must help the Iraqi government develop a more thorough plan for the future of the TMF, to include DDR, the transition of former fighters into the formal hold forces, and the handover of security responsibilities to the IA or police. The U.S. government should also ensure that it channels portions of its bilateral economic assistance to rural areas of concern and allocates appropriate intelligence collection and analytic capacity to identify the emergence of safe havens in areas controlled by tribal forces.

In the post-election environment, the need for an engaged U.S. will become even more critical. An Abadi-Sadr government should be encouraged to embrace its nationalistic, technocratic inclinations, while strong U.S. advocacy for professional, non-sectarian security practices may serve as an important reassurance to Sunni Arab communities likely to react poorly if the Iranian-affiliated Fatah and the Nouri al-Maliki-led State of Law coalitions are able to form a government.

In either case, we believe our conclusions will remain valid. While we do not purport to have solved all of Iraq's political disputes, these four recommendations offer a framework for the U.S. to more adequately address the politically-driven impediments to the viability of Ninewa's security sector. As ISIS continues to regenerate its capacity in Ninewa, it is critical that the U.S. Department of

Defense, Department of State, and their interagency partners move to swiftly to disrupt the pathways that could lead to an ISIS 2.0. We believe these ideas constitute a good start.

Part I:
Why Ninewa?

Introduction: The Resilience of ISIS

ISIS Defeated?

After a string of counterterrorism successes associated with the 2007 Surge, mainstream opinion increasingly held that al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI) had been crippled.[1] The organization, which began calling itself the Islamic State of Iraq in 2006, had endured significant setbacks. Its senior leaders had been killed.[2] Its mid-level cadre had been eviscerated by the relentless pace of targeted special operations raids. Its political position had become increasingly tenuous after the flight of Sunni tribes to the *Sahwa* ("Awakening") Movement. Its territorial control had evaporated. Its capacity for high profile attacks had dramatically fallen from its peak in 2006. Al-Qaeda in Iraq had been defeated.

But signs were present that the organization could rebound as U.S. forces accelerated their withdrawal in 2010 and 2011. Even as a cadre of Iraq veterans from the U.S. military, intelligence community, and State Department warned that al-Qaeda would likely make a comeback, few effective measures were taken to prevent their warnings from coming to fruition. As the organization dispatched its emissaries to Syria, the rebranded Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) began to steadily defeat its opposition in 2012 and 2013. But the belief that AQI had been vanquished became so ingrained among U.S. policy makers that President Barack Obama was still referring to them as the "JV team" *after* they had retaken Fallujah.[3] Within months of its victories in Anbar, ISIS would sweep across northern Iraq's Ninewa Province, capture Mosul, and declare the establishment of their so-called caliphate. Current narratives surrounding the "Defeat-ISIS" campaign risk generating a similarly dangerous "post war" mindset.
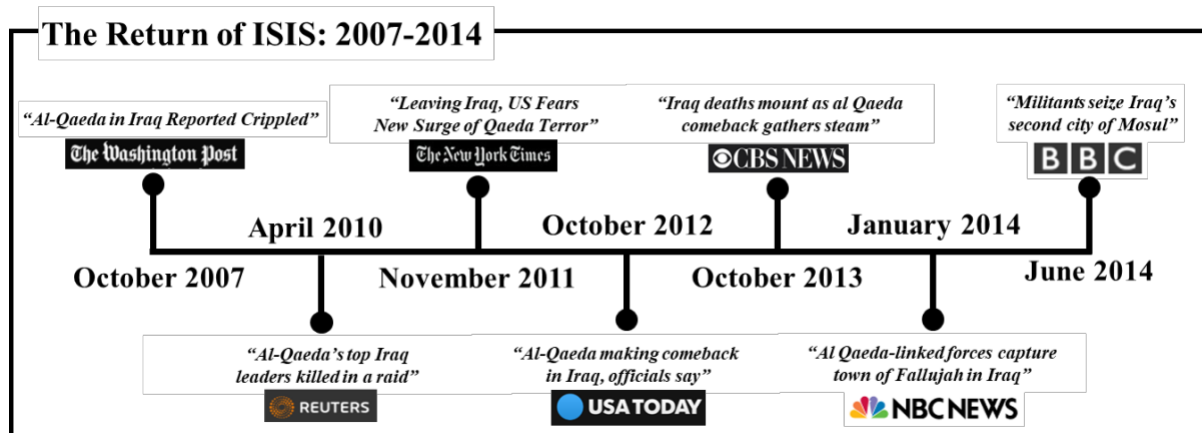
The Return of ISIS: 2007-2014

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[1] Thomas E. Ricks and Karen DeYoung, "Al-Qaeda in Iraq Reported Crippled," *Washington Post,* October 15, 2007. http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/10/14/AR2007101401245.html.
[2] Arango, Tim. "Top Qaeda Leaders in Iraq Reported Killed in Raid," *New York Times,* April 19, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/04/20/world/middleeast/20baghdad.html.
[3] Remnick, David. "Going the Distance," *The New Yorker,* January 27, 2014. https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-david-remnick.

Despite widespread claims that ISIS has met its demise—frequently made by political leadership from both Iraq and the U.S.—many of the conditions that fueled ISIS' rise to power continue to exist. Iraqi security forces still struggle to perform a variety of tactical tasks. Sunni Arabs and minority groups still fear abuse at the hands of Shia-dominated security forces. Provincial and local leaders still demand more control over their territory. The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad continue to feud. Remote territory in the Jazeera Desert, the "Sy-raq" border region, and the Hamrin Mountains continues to provide jihadists with safe havens in northern Iraq. Iran continues to meddle inside Iraq's borders, further inflaming Sunni suspicion of state institutions. To address these issues and prevent a repeat of recent history, Iraq and its partners must build institutions capable of waging a long-term battle against ISIS. In the words of Congressman Seth Moulton (D-MA): "We must hear how this time will be different."[4]

Unfortunately, the fact that these conditions remain has begun to fuel an intensifying insurgency in Iraq's formerly ISIS-controlled territories. After undergoing an initial post-liberation "honeymoon" phase, Salah al-Din and Diyala Provinces have experienced a steady rise in ISIS-generated violence.[5] By June 2017, ISIS was mounting more explosive attacks in Diyala than at any point since their 2007-2008 heyday, including during the 2013 period that preceded their dramatic rise.[6] In the beginning of 2018, ISIS has also intensified its campaign in Kirkuk. A February 2018 ISIS ambush near Hawija reportedly killed 27 members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a staggering number of casualties for one attack.[7] Assassinations targeting Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and local leaders have also become common.[8]

> ## From October to December 2017, the Iraqi Security Forces suffered more casualties in Ninewa than in any other province

Many leaders from Ninewa Province believe that ISIS-driven violence will continue to intensify—unless things change.[9] Talk of sleeper cells *("khilaya naima")* and clashes with ISIS remnants serve as reminders that the organization continues to maintain the type of clandestine presence that enabled it to survive in the years preceding its 2014 onslaught. Ninewa—much like its neighbors to the south—has suffered from post-liberation insurgent violence. From October to December of 2017, the Iraqi Security Forces suffered more casualties in Ninewa than in any other province, followed by Salah al-Din, Baghdad, and Kirkuk.[10]

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[4] Congressman Seth Moulton, "Securing the Peace After the Fall of ISIL," Oversight and Investigation Subcommittee, House Armed Services Committee, U.S. Congress, October 3, 2017. https://armedservices.house.gov/legislation/hearings/securing-peace-after-fall-isil.

[5] Morris, Loveday. "Away from Iraq's Front Lines, the Islamic State Is Creeping Back in." *Washington Post*, February 22, 2017, sec. Middle East. https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/middle_east/away-from-iraqs-front-lines-the-islamic-state-is-creeping-back-in/2017/02/22/8abd8b70-d161-11e6-9651-54a0154cf5b3_story.html.

[6] Knights, Michael, "Predicting the Shape of Iraq's Next Sunni Insurgency," *CTC Sentinel*, August 2017, p. 19.

[7] Mahmoud, Mustafa, "Islamic Sate kills 27 Iraqi militiamen near Kirkuk," *Reuters*, February 19, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-attack/islamic-state-kills-27-iraqi-militiamen-near-kirkuk-idUSKCN1G30YH.

[8] Hawramy, Fazel "Kirkuk not as liberated from IS as claimed," *al-Monitor*, February 26, 2018. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/kirkuk-iraq-kurdistan-islamic-state.html.

[9] Author interviews with leaders from Ninewa Province, Baghdad and Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

[10] Report to Congress, "Overseas Contingency Operations: Operation Inherent Resolve/Operation Pacific Eagle-Philippines (October 1-December 31, 2017)", Lead Inspector General, February 16, 2018. p. 25.

The province has also begun to witness a rise in "quality attacks"—those which accurately target ISF and anti-ISIS political leaders. In February and March 2018, ISIS accelerated its attempts to assassinate and kidnap tribal sheikhs from the Jabour tribe, one of the most prominent sources of local resistance to ISIS.[11] An attack conducted on March 12, during which ISIS militants stormed the home of a tribal sheikh near Qayyara, killing him and six other guests, serves as a good example of such incidents.[12] These attacks are indicative of an insurgency increasingly capable of conducting refined targeting and pattern of life analysis.[13] Specifically targeted attacks, rather than those that simply killed civilians, were the type of violence most responsible for demoralizing the ISF and intimidating ISIS opposition during previous insurgent periods.[14]

Since Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared victory over ISIS in Mosul on July 9, 2017,[15] violence has trended downwards in Ninewa. The average attacks per day have decreased from 9.4 in June 2017 to 1.5 attacks per day (on average) in February 2018.[16] Yet despite the fact that the number of attacks has decreased since the ISF liberated Mosul, there is still consistent and considerable violence in the province: there were 577 attacks in Ninewa between July 2017 and March 2018:[17]

Type of Security Incident	Number of Occurrences (July 8, 2017 – March 21, 2018)
Shooting	260
Improvised Explosive Device (IED)	120
Suicide Bomb Detonation	24
Suicide Bombers Arrested or Killed	283
Car Bomb Detonation	8
Car Bombs Dismantled or Destroyed	41
Grenades, Mortars, and Rockets Launched	15
TOTAL	**577**

Data Source: Wing, Joel, "Security in Iraq" post series, *Musings on Iraq* (blog), March 23, 2018. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/.

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http://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/Article/1443298/lead-inspector-general-for-operation-freedoms-sentinel-quarterly-report-to-the/.

[11] "ISIS targets tribal leaders of the Jabour…and activates cells in southern Ninewa," *al-Alam,* March 13, 2018. [in Arabic, translated by author]. https://al-aalem.com/news/48638.

[12] "Armed men kill tribal sheikh and his son and six others in south Ninewa," *Alghad Press,* March 18, 2018. [in Arabic, translated by author]. https://www.alghadpress.com/news/Iraq-News/147363/AlghadPress.

[13] "Pattern of life" (POL) analysis refers to the process of surveilling a target for the purposes of understanding their daily routines. A "targeting process" then draws on that analysis to determine the most opportune time to strike.

[14] Knights, "Predicting the Shape of Iraq's Next Sunni Insurgencies," p. 18.

[15] Tim Arango and Michael R. Gordon, "Iraqi Prime Minister Arrives in Mosul to Declare Victory Over ISIS," *The New York Times*, July 9, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/09/world/middleeast/mosul-isis-liberated.html.

[16] Wing, Joel, "Security in Iraq" post series, *Musings on Iraq* (blog), March 23, 2018. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/.

[17] Ibid.

While these numbers are reduced from their peak during the campaign to liberate Ninewa from ISIS, the level of violence remains substantial. The average number of daily attacks ranks Ninewa as one of the top three most violent provinces in Iraq. Both civilian and security service casualties also distinguish Ninewa as one of the most dangerous and unstable provinces:
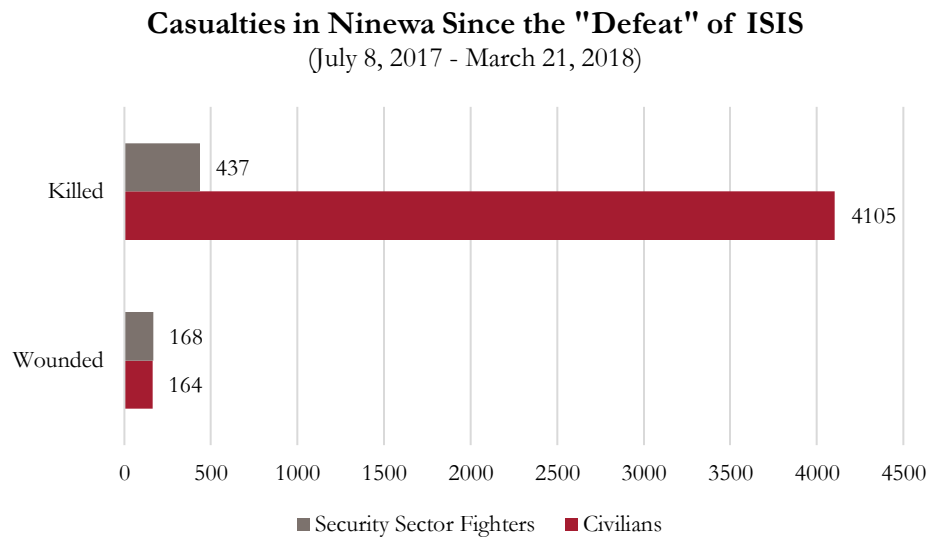
Casualties in Ninewa Since the "Defeat" of ISIS
(July 8, 2017 - March 21, 2018)

Data Source: Wing, Joel, "Security in Iraq" post series, *Musings on Iraq* (blog), March 23, 2018. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/.

Countering the Resiliency of ISIS: A Framework for Blunting the Impact of Political Conflict on Counter-ISIS Security Forces

In light of ISIS' ongoing resiliency, this report aims to help prevent a metastasized insurgency by focusing on the political-military dimensions of Ninewa's security sector. A range of factors will eventually determine whether ISIS can replicate its previous success: cities need reconstruction, people need jobs, community-based reconciliation must take place, education systems must assist children raised under three years of ISIS curriculum. But this report narrows its focus by attempting to understand how **political conflicts** within Ninewa **impair the ability of security forces** to continue their fight against ISIS.

After describing Iraq's ongoing ISIS-connected violence and offering context for our area of interest in *Part I: Why Ninewa?*, we then provide a description of the province's key stakeholders in *Part II: Ninewa's Security Sector*. Having detailed Ninewa's security landscape, we then describe how Ninewa's political conflicts impact its security sector. We accomplish this task in *Part III: ISIS 2.0 Pathways* by examining how the following unresolved political questions provide opportunities for a potential ISIS 2.0:

➢ What degree of control should local and provincial governments exercise over security forces operating within their jurisdiction?

➢ How can the Government of Iraq (GoI) ensure that the ethnic, sectarian, and geographic composition of its security forces engenders trust among Ninewa's population?
➢ What steps are required to mitigate the security impacts of the ongoing dispute between Erbil and Baghdad?
➢ How can the structure of security services—defined by the chain of command, reporting requirements, and the allocation of security tasks—increase the buy-in of Ninewa's various communities?
➢ What role will the Popular and Tribal Mobilization Forces play within Ninewa's security enterprise?
➢ How can the U.S. government ensure that foreign actors—to include the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, Turkey, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and Iran—are playing positive or negligible roles in the province?

These questions are geared towards the inherently political dimensions of security in Ninewa—and each are associated with specific mechanisms that can lead to the rise of ISIS 2.0 through the deterioration of security forces. Rather than starting our analysis from a military centric "beans and bullets" standpoint, we will instead begin with the politics and work our way backwards.

To address these ongoing disputes, Iraqis must craft a vision for the future of their security forces in Ninewa—and the U.S. must play a role if it hopes to avoid returning yet again. Towards that end, we evaluate the effectiveness of the status quo U.S. strategy in *Part IV: Assessing the Current Approach.* In *Part V: The Path Forward,* we then provide our recommendations for how the U.S. government can more effectively address the fallout of political conflict within Ninewa's security sector.

Provincial Overview

Ninewa Demography and Geography

Located in northwestern Iraq, Ninewa has long served as an important regional crossroads. Its borders with Syria, Turkey, and the Kurdish Region of Iraq (KRI) have historically placed it at the center of economic and political struggles, with Mosul—its capital—as the ultimate prize. The province is divided into nine districts: Mosul, Tel Kayf, Sheikhan, Akre, Tel Afar, Sinjar, Ba'aj, al-Hatra, and Hamdaniya. Each is named after its district capital, with the exception of Hamdaniya, whose capital is Qaraqosh.[18] Iraq's Highway One connects Baghdad to Samarra, Tikrit, Baiji, and Qayarra before reaching Mosul. It then turns west, ending at the Syrian border town of Rabia. Prior to reaching Rabia, Highway 47 intersects with Highway One in western Ninewa, connecting Tel Afar, Sinjar, and the Syrian desert to Mosul. Highway Two runs from KRI's capital, Erbil, through the Ninewa Plains to Mosul, north past Tel Kayf, and then on to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) stronghold of Dohuk.

Geographically, Ninewa is Iraq's third largest province.[19] The Tigris River runs from the Turkish border at Fayshkabour through the eastern portion of the province, bisecting Mosul along the way.

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[18] Qaraqosh is also often referred to as Baghdeda, which is the older Syriac name for the city.
[19] "Ninewa Governorate Profile," *Inter-Agency Information and Analysis Unit,* December 2010, p. 1.

The southwestern portion of the province is dominated by the Jazeera Desert, a vast expanse which continues to provide ISIS with remote safe havens. Mount Sinjar, the site of U.S. efforts to safeguard desperate Yazidis in 2014, is located in western Ninewa, just north of Highway 47.
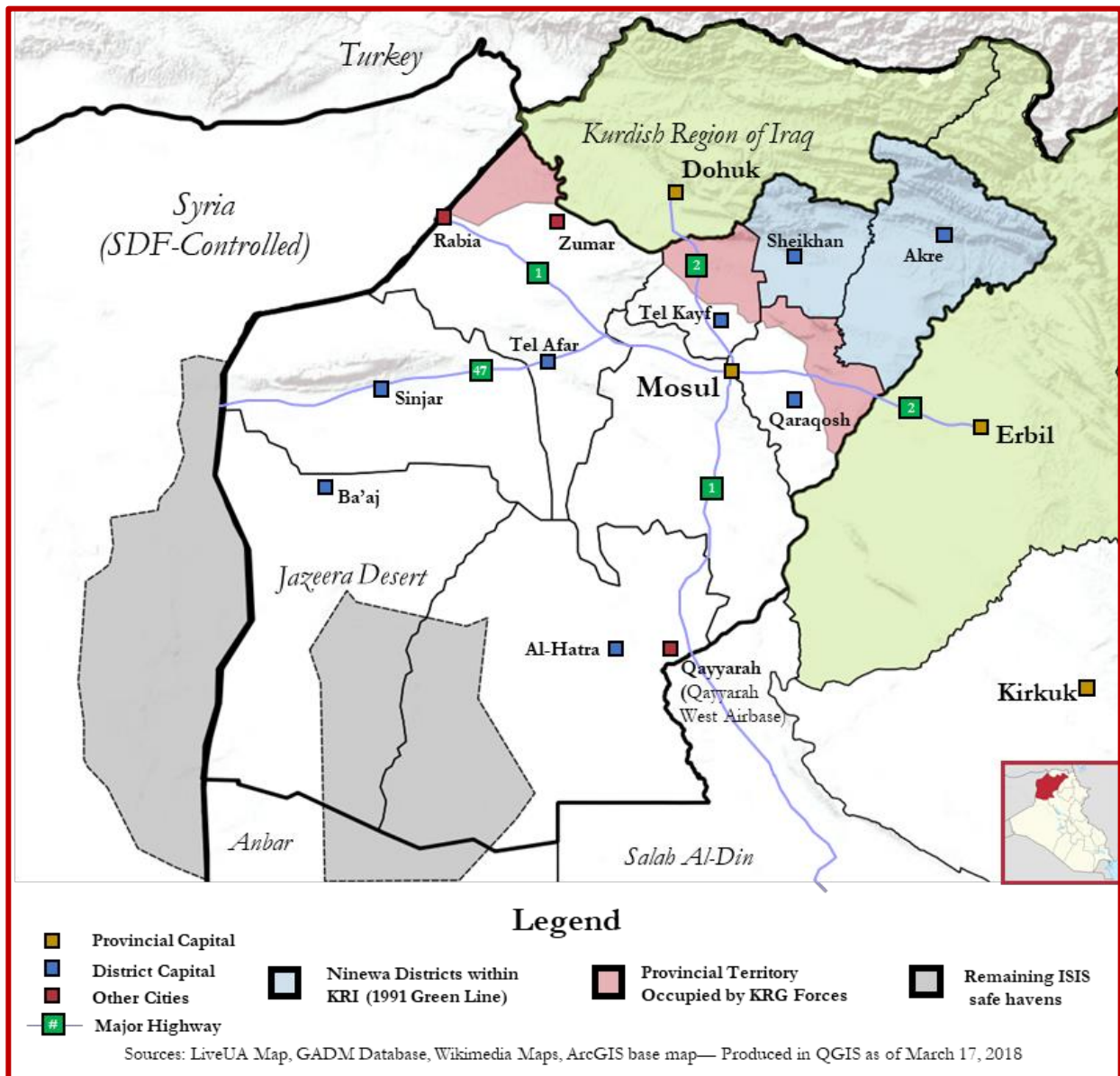
Among Iraq's provinces, Ninewa is the most ethnically diverse. While Sunni Arabs constitute the majority, a variety of other groups hold sway. Kurds are the dominant group in Akre and Sheikhan Districts, which have been administered by the KRG since the establishment of the "Green Line" demarcating the US-enforced 1991 ceasefire between Saddam and the Kurds.[20] The Ninewa Plains, east and northeast of Mosul, hold the majority of the province's Christian and Shabak Population—an area which also contains major oil fields. Turkmen, both Sunni and Shia, are prominent in Tel Afar. Yazidis are the majority in Sinjar, as well as in their holy city of Lalish in Sheikhan District.[21]

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[20] Khedir, Hewa Haji, "After ISIS," *PAX,* Netherlands, June 2015, p. 33.
[21] Ibid, p.28.

The province's ethnic diversity resulted in much of its land receiving formal classification as "disputed territory" under Article 140 of the 2005 Iraqi constitution. Control over the area bordering the KRI in the northern and eastern portions of the province remains contested.[22] The Ninewa Plains and northwestern Tel Afar district serve as front lines in the battle for these communities' future.

The Role of Ninewa in Iraq's Insurgent Movements

Despite the recruitment of local Sunni officers into Iraq's security services, Mosul has always retained a certain level of independence from the rest of Iraq. Prior to the rise of the Ba'athists, Sunni Arab Moslawi nationalists organized the 1959 "Shawaf Revolt," a rebellion launched in opposition to the rule of secular communist president Abdul Kareem Qasim. In response, the Qasim regime brutally repressed the revolt, leaving hundreds of lynched Moslawis hanging in the streets for days.[23] Residents still use those events as a frame of reference for expected or actual

Ninewa's Historical Importance to Iraqi Security Forces

The city of Mosul became a major source of recruitment for the Iraqi Army when it was first established by the British mandate in 1921. Sunni Arab officers formed the core of the army, making up 70 percent of all officers by the early 1960s, 45 percent of whom were from Mosul.[24] When the Ba'ath Party seized control of Iraq in 1968, many of its leaders were Sunni Arab military officers. The Ba'ath Party's political and military ties to Sunni Arabs in Ninewa empowered provincial leaders, many of whom assumed critical roles in the new government.[25]

When Saddam Hussein came to power in 1979, he continued to strengthen ties with the Sunni Arab community in Mosul, recruiting them into his elite military, intelligence, and security services. Saddam's strict control over leadership appointments ensured political loyalty in the Iraqi military, purging anyone considered to be a potential threat to him or the Ba'ath Party. As a result, Mosul became both a Ba'ath Party stronghold and an important military center.[26] An estimated 330,000 residents from Ninewa Province, or about 10 percent of its population, were employed in Saddam's forces.[27] To this day, Sunni leaders commonly make reference to Mosul as "The City of Officers" to emphasize the city's historical centrality to Iraq's military, as well as the idea that Mosul's own sons should control security forces operating in Ninewa.[28]

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[22] Ibid, p.33.

[23] al-Aqeedi, Rasha, "The Once and Future Mosul," *The American Interest,* September 26, 2016. https://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/09/26/the-once-and-future-mosul/.

[24] Sharp, Jeremy, "Iraq's New Security Forces: The Challenge of Sectarian and Ethnic Influences," *Congressional Research Service*, March 25, 2005, p.2.

[25] Hamilton, Eric, "The Fight for Mosul," *The Institute for the Study of War,* 2008, p. 4.

[26] Knights, Michael, "Lessons from Mosul," Policy Watch #950, *The Washington Institute for Near East Studies*, January 27, 2005.

[27] Cambanis, Thanassis, "U.S., Iraq Troops Fight to Take Control in Mosul," *The Boston Globe,* November 17, 2004.

[28] In example, author interviews with Major General (Retired) Abd al-Razzaq Majbal al-Waka'a, Emir of the Jabour Tribe in Iraq (Sheikh of Sheikhs) and former Governor Atheel Nujaifi, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

atrocities committed by non-local security forces. In the Ba'athist era, an insulated educational system and lack of contact with southern Iraq left Moslawis largely unfamiliar with their Shia countrymen. The Moslawis' unique sense of identity was further accentuated by linguistic and cultural peculiarities that distinguish the city from the rest of Iraq. As a result, many Moslawis were especially fearful of the unknown following the U.S. invasion in 2003.[29]
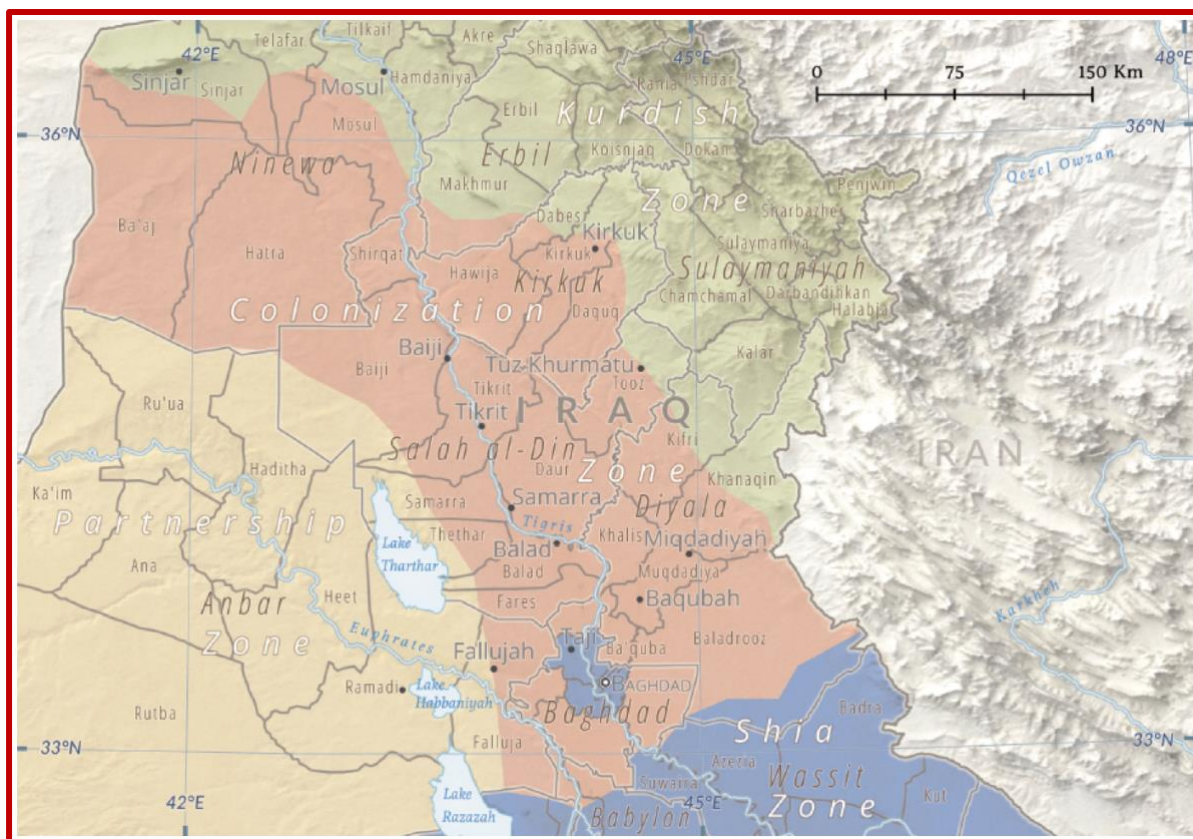
The "Colonization Zone" represents the heartland of the Sunni insurgency. Fears of "Kurdification" have expanded this zone to include Zummar and the Ninewa Plains.
Map Source: Michael Knights, "Predicting the Shape of Iraq's Next Sunni Insurgency," CTC Sentinel, August 2017.

After a brief period of stability following the fall of Saddam, security quickly eroded as the Sunni community's political and military stature precipitously declined. The Coalition Provisional Authority's (CPA's) 2003 de-Ba'athification policy disproportionately impacted Mosul due to the historic prominence of the Ba'ath Party in the city. Thousands of Ba'athists in Mosul were considered to be "senior party members" under the CPA's "Order Number One."[30] This affected community members who were not among the core party members, such as 120 tenured professors who were fired from Mosul University. Sunni disenfranchisement was exacerbated by the disbanding of the Iraqi army and other Iraqi security forces, which led to further Moslawi unemployment and

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[29] Ibid.

[30] "Senior party members" were defined as those holding the ranks of "Regional Command Member," "Branch Member," "Section Member," and "Group Member." These positions were also referred to as "level-four Ba'athists" and above. See "CPA Order Number 1: De-Ba'athification of Iraqi Society," *Coalition Provisional Authority,* May 16, 2013. https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9a%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%201%20-%205-16-03.pdf.

grievances.[31] More than 100,000 Sunni military personnel were removed from Iraqi security forces due to their ties to the Ba'ath Party, many of whom were then left unemployed. The more than 1,100 former flag officers, 2,000 former colonels or lieutenant-colonels, 4,000 field and company grade[32] officers, and 103,000 other former soldiers in Ninewa who were discarded from the army made the province a natural recruiting ground for Sunni insurgents.[33]

Post de-Ba'athification, the composition of Iraq's security forces shifted. The now-predominantly Shia security forces in Ninewa stoked sectarian conflict by regularly mistreating members of the Sunni community. As one Shia Moslawi noted in an interview with *The Financial Times:* "Even though I'm Shi'a, what they say is true: the army in Mosul was sectarian. They humiliated [non-Shi'a] people at checkpoints and arrested them without reason. They demanded bribes. I think we have to acknowledge this played a role in the fall of Mosul: it pushed people toward ISIS."[34] There had long been sectarian tensions in Ninewa given its substantial diversity, but actions by the military in the province significantly exacerbated these tensions. As Major General Petraeus would later explain: "It was, frankly, situations like that that did make some areas of Iraq—of the Sunni Arab areas—fertile ground for what initially billed itself as the resistance, then was stoked by former regime elements seeking to reverse what had taken place. And, of course, [that] provided fertile grounds for al-Qaeda – Iraq to flourish in as well."[35] Existing ethnic tensions, heightened by mistreatment by security forces, created an environment where extremists could find people sympathetic to their cause.

In addition to its disaffected population, Ninewa's location also attracted non-local insurgents following the U.S. invasion. Regional tribes span across the Syrian border and the Euphrates valley. These connections provided crucial links between financial backers in Syria and Sunni insurgents within Iraq.[36] Additionally, Mosul sits at a critical juncture for many major road networks (see map on p. 6), thus providing insurgents and counterinsurgents key lines of communication. Its proximity to foreign fighter flows from Syria—as well as its easy accessibility to Anbar, Diyala, Salah al-Din, and Kirkuk— has long made it a center for AQI activity. Given that ISIS exploited its gains in Syria to launch its assault into Ninewa in 2014, and the fact that ISIS' largest remaining safe haven in Syria borders Ninewa, its physical location continues to pose a challenge for the GoI.

In 2006, this confluence of factors made Ninewa an ideal and welcoming location for insurgents attempting to flee an increasingly successful counterinsurgency campaign in central Iraq. As the *sahwa* movement began to take hold in Anbar province, AQI members fled to safe havens surrounding Mosul. Clashes between AQI, security forces, and Shi'a militias escalated into an intimidation campaign of constant bombings, kidnappings, and assassinations. Ninewa experienced a record amount violence in December 2006, when it endured an average of 15-18 attacks per day.[37] Indeed, Mosul was the primary base from which AQI rebuilt itself in the mid-2000s,[38] and would

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[31] O'Driscoll, Dylan, "The Future of Mosul Before, During, and After the Liberation," *Middle East Research Institute,* September 2016, p. 16.
[32] Junior and mid-level officers, typically lieutenants, captains, and majors.
[33] Knights, "Lessons from Mosul."
[34] Solomon, Erika, "Iraq fears for its future once Isis falls," *Financial Times*, May 8, 2017. https://www.ft.com/content/6eedad00-1f66-11e7-a454-ab04428977f9.
[35] Hamilton, "The Fight for Mosul," p. 7.
[36] Knights, "Lessons from Mosul."
[37] Hamilton, "The Fight for Mosul," p. 10.
[38] Schorzman, Douglas, "Why Mosul is Critical in the Battle Against ISIS," *The New York Times*, October 17, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/18/world/middleeast/mosul-iraq-isis.html.

likely serve a similar role were ISIS to reestablish itself as a powerful insurgent movement capable of taking and holding significant territory.

U.S. Objectives in Ninewa

The 2017 National Security Strategy lists three primary ends for U.S. policy in the Middle East:[39]

1) Deny safe havens or breeding ground for jihadist terrorists
2) Prevent regional domination by any power hostile to the U.S.—namely Iran
3) Facilitate the region's stable contribution to the global energy market

Ninewa's security sector has significant impacts on all three of these objectives.

As discussed earlier, the province has long served as an important hub of jihadist activity. Having liberated around 98 percent of the territory once held by ISIS, the Coalition has shifted its focus to ensuring the "enduring defeat" of ISIS. Beyond the obvious need to prevent ISIS from challenging state security forces and killing civilians, stability is also essential for the restoration of basic services and the reconstruction of cities destroyed during the liberation campaign.[40] While current U.S. policy has explicitly rejected nation-building, administration officials recognize that security cooperation is essential for allowing the international community to engage in Iraq's rebuilding process.[41] U.S. military officials involved in Ninewa's reconstruction efforts from 2008-2009 describe coordination between security services and local contractors as one of the primary obstacles they faced while administering construction projects.[42] Industry representatives still list security as one of their major considerations when deciding whether to place bids on large-scale projects.[43] Without security, construction sites are attacked, workers are intimidated, and foreign donations evaporate. As a result, vulnerable populations could remain susceptible to ISIS messaging. The U.S. needs Ninewa security forces that can—with minimal assistance—continue to keep the lid on an ISIS insurgency for the foreseeable future.

While neither Iran nor oil are the focus of this report, counterterrorism policies have the potential to either hamper or advance U.S. interests in both domains. In a bid to exert its influence over Ninewa's major cities and transit routes, Iran has increasingly deployed members of its Quds Force to advise and assist its allies. These activities are part of Iran's broader regional efforts to expand its influence via partners and proxies.[44] To counterbalance Iran, the U.S. seeks its own regional allies to hold the line.[45] In Ninewa, the battle to develop U.S. partners will most likely play out within the security sector.

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[39] *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, The White House, December 2017, p. 48.
[40] Brigadier General James F. Glynn, "Department of Defense Press Briefing By Brig. Gen. Glynn Via Teleconference From Baghdad, Iraq" (The Pentagon, January 16, 2018), https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript-View/Article/1416545/department-of-defense-press-briefing-by-brig-gen-glynn-via-teleconference-from/.
[41] CJTF-OIR PAO, "Coalition Announces Shift in Focus. as Iraq Campaign Progresses," *U.S. Central Command*, February 5, 2018, http://www.inherentresolve.mil/News/Article/1432636/coalition-announces-shift-in-focus-as-iraq-campaign-progresses/.
[42] Author interview with U.S. military leader who served in the Mosul Reconstruction Center, December 2017.
[43] Author interview with businessman in the construction industry, Iraq, January 2018.
[44] *National Security Strategy of the United States of America,* p. 49.
[45] "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge," *U.S. Department of Defense*, p. 4 and 9.

Lastly, Ninewa plays a critical role in Iraq's energy industry. Major oil pipelines connecting Kirkuk and Baiji to Turkey run through Ninewa. Insurgents have regularly targeted these pipelines in previous years, even staging deadly follow-on attacks against repair crews.[46] Tensions between the KRG and GoI have made these routes more important than ever, as routes running through the Kurdish region carry major political ramifications for both governments.[47] Security forces will need to safeguard oil facilities and workers if Iraq hopes to effectively use one of its most lucrative export routes. In the long-term, Ninewa also holds the potential to serve as a source of production: one of Iraq's largest undeveloped oil fields lies in the Ninewa Plains. While Exxon signed a deal with the KRG in 2011 to begin its exploitation, the unstable security situation has prevented any serious development initiatives.[48]

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[46] Wing, Joel, "Iraq's Northern Kirkuk Oil Pipeline Down and Out for Foreseeable Future," *Musings on Iraq* (blog), April 21, 2014. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/2014/04/iraqs-northern-kirkuk-oil-pipeline-down.html.

[47] Rami, "The oil minister orders the rehabilitation of oil pipelines to Ceyhan via Saladin and Nineveh," October 10, 2017. http://en.economiciraq.com/2017/10/10/the-oil-minister-orders-the-rehabilitation-of-oil-pipelines-to-ceyhan-via-saladin-and-nineveh/.

[48] "Exxon Moving into Seriously Disputed Territory: The Case of Bashiqa," *Iraq Business News*, November 17, 2014. http://www.iraq-businessnews.com/2011/11/17/exxon-moving-into-seriously-disputed-territory/2/.

Part II:
Ninewa's Security Sector

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)

Kurdish Security Forces

KRG-Supported Militias

Non-Aligned Militias

Foreign Security Services

Civilian Governance

Ninewa's Security Sector

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

Ninewa Operations Command (NOC)
Nominally coordinates efforts of all ISF and PMF

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)
Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF-2)

National Security Service (NSS)
Intelligence Service (*mukhabarat*)

Iraqi Army (IA)
15th, 16th, and 20th Divisions, support from 9th Armored Division

Federal Police (FEDPOL)
Relocated to Kirkuk, previously 3rd and 5th Divisions

Energy Police
Secure oil, electric, and transportation lines

Ninewa Province Police
Iraqi Police (IP)—local police force; includes provincial SWAT team

Emergency Response Division (ERD)
Ministry of Interior Special Operations—not currently playing major post liberation role

Border Guards
Primarily operate on Syrian Border

Kurdish Security Forces

KDP Peshmerga
Main fighting force of the KRG (Barazani/Kurdistan Democratic Party)

KDP Zeravani
Military police force (like FEDPOL), train several KDP-supported militias

KDP Asayish
Intelligence and internal security service

Hashd al-Sha'abi

Hashd al-Sha'abi - Council Administered
Popular Mobilization Council (PMC) led in-practice by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis

<u>Local PMF Units</u> - Composed primarily of groups originally from Ninewa

Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU)
Christian unit in Ninewa Plains (Assyrian Democratic Movement)

Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)
Shia-Shabak unit in Ninewa Plains/Mosul (Shabak Democratic Assembly)

Babylon Brigade
Christian-Shia unit in Ninewa Plains

al-Hashd al-Turkmani (Brigades 16 and 52)
Shia Turkmen primarily in vicinity of Tel Afar

Lalish Regiment
Yazidi unit vicinity Sinjar

Ninewa Guards
Predominantly Sunni unit (former Governor Atheel Nujaifi)

<u>Non-Local *Marjaiya* Groups</u> - Non-proxy Shia groups loyal to Sistani

Ali al-Akbar Brigade
Affiliated with Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala. Active in Western Ninewa

<u>Non-Local Proxy Groups</u> - Composed primarily of proxy groups "from the south," heavily Iranian influenced

Badr Organization
Major Shia militia and political party

Asai'b Ahl al-Haq (AAH)
Splinter organization from Jaish al-Mahdi

Kata'ib Hezbollah
Iranian proxy headed by Muhandis with links to Lebanese Hezbollah

National Security Service-Administered
National Security Council led by NSA Falih al-Fayad

Tribal Mobilization Forces (*Hashd al-Asha'ari*)
Smaller (~100-300) man units composed of Sunni tribesman, particularly from the Jabour and Shamar tribes

Kurdish-Supported Militias

Jazeera Brigade
Sunni tribal forces, primarily from Rabia and Zamar

Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)
Christian militia (Bet Nahrain Democratic Party)

Ezidikhan Defense Force (HPE)
Yazidi unit formerly prominent in Sinjar (Haider Shesho)

Rojava Peshmerga
KDP-supported militia operating in Syria and western Ninewa

Ninewa Plains Guard Force (NPGF)
Largest pro-KRG Christian militia; based in Qaraqosh

Dwekh Nawsha
Christian Militia (Assyrian Patriotic Party)

Other Militias

Sinjar Protection Units (YBS)
Yazidi PKK affiliate in Sinjar

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)
Primarily operating in vicinity of Sinjar alongside YBS

"Fake Hashd"
Forces falsely claiming or accused of being PMF; a common occurrence

Foreign Forces

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)
Acting in "advise and assist" capacity, mainly to *hashd al-sha'abi*

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)
Operating out of Bashiqa Camp northeast of Mosul

Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/CJTF-OIR
U.S. and other coalition members involved in advise and assist

Overview:

Security services and civilian officials both influence counter-ISIS efforts within Ninewa. *Part II: Ninewa's Security Sector* will examine these power centers, beginning with the armed groups acting as security forces within the province.

The liberation of Ninewa from ISIS has ushered in an era of security force proliferation in northern Iraq. At present, at least ten formal security services and an innumerable collection of militias exercise control throughout the province. Forces operating in Ninewa generally fall within six categories:

1) Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)
2) Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF, also known as *al-hashd al-sha'abi*)
3) Kurdish Security Forces
4) KRG-aligned militias
5) Non-aligned militias
6) Foreign forces

Each of these categories includes units with widely varying capabilities, loyalties, and popular perception. This section will outline the groups which currently have the greatest impact on Ninewa's security.

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

All formal ISF in Ninewa, with the exception of the Counterterrorism Service, fall under the authority of the **Ninewa Operations Command (NOC),** led by Major General Najim al-Jabouri.[49] The NOC, now located in east Mosul after having coordinated the Ninewa offensive from the Qayyara West Air Field, attempts to synchronize ISF efforts and manage rivalries between the different services. As the official reporting link to Baghdad's Joint Operations Command, it also serves as the primary conduit through which Baghdad can exercise control over operations within Ninewa.

Among the formal security services, none has a more impressive reputation than the **Counterterrorism Service (CTS, *jihaz mukafahat al-irhab).*** CTS, which is composed of

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

Ninewa Operations Command (NOC)
Nominally coordinates efforts of all ISF and PMF

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)
Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF-2)

National Security Service (NSS)
Intelligence Service (*mukhabarat*)

Iraqi Army (IA)
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Emergency Response Division (ERD)
Ministry of Interior Special Operations—not currently playing major post liberation role

Border Guards
Primarily operate on Syrian Border

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[49] "Security meeting of the Ninewa Operations Command to explore the strengthening of security and stability and the pursuit of ISIS cells," *al-Mawsleya TV,* December 15, 2017 [in Arabic, translation by author]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7qOn_UHaBc.

three Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF) brigades with division-level headquarters, has a hard-earned reputation as Iraq's most well-trained and effective fighting force. CTS enjoys a long-standing and extremely close relationship with U.S. Special Operations Forces, which has proven integral to CTS's development and its integration with U.S. enabler capabilities. While initially designed to conduct targeted raids and special operations missions, CTS was forced to serve as Iraq's primary conventional light infantry force after the rise of ISIS. Rather than launching late-night kill and capture missions, ISOF was tasked with retaking entire cities. During the campaigns to liberate Fallujah, Ramadi, Baiji, and Mosul, CTS served as the lead element—and consequently bore the brunt of the casualties. U.S. government requests for counter-ISIS train and equip funds have estimated their casualty rate at 40 percent during the Mosul campaign alone.[50] Combat loss of vehicles and equipment were likewise substantial.[51]

In addition to their reputation as a capable and disciplined force, their ability to recruit across sectarian lines has contributed to their widespread acceptance within Iraq—so much so that some consider CTS to be a model for other Iraqi security forces. CTS members are not allowed to associate with political parties and undergo a strict vetting process prior to their acceptance. According to organizational policy, members who engage in sectarian expressions of any kind are expelled from the unit.[52]

ISOF-2 is the main unit still operating within Ninewa, although it also maintains responsibility for Kirkuk. It is based primarily in the vicinity of Mosul.[53] As a highly mobile force with dedicated helicopter assets, ISOF maintains the ability to respond to incidents throughout the province. They are increasingly reverting to their previous role—a direct action special operations unit meant to kill and capture high value targets and disrupt terrorist networks. Rather than manning security positions or checkpoints, ISOF is attempting to revert to operations based on a deliberate targeting process. Their mobility also allows them to serve as a quick reaction force (QRF)—if an event overwhelms a local unit, CTS can respond in less than three hours anywhere in the province. They will often arrive much quicker.[54]

CTS also maintains a unique command structure that operates parallel to the NOC. CTS does not report to the Ministry of Defense—its chief reports directly to the Prime Minister and is considered a cabinet-level official. At the national level, the Counterterrorist Command (CTC) serves as the operational hub, while a CTS headquarters develops the organization's strategy and manages resourcing requirements.[55] Regional coordination centers, including one for Ninewa, report to the CTC. ISOF-2 answers to the regional coordination center rather than the NOC, although it does make efforts to synchronize its activities with other services. The regional coordination center houses both an intelligence fusion cell and an operational headquarters. CTS uses the regional

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[50] Binnie, Jeremy, "US budget document outlines Iraqi special forces losses in Mosul," *IHS Jane's,* June 2, 2017. http://www.janes.com/article/71081/us-budget-document-outlines-iraqi-special-forces-losses-in-mosul.

[51] "Justification for FY 2018 Overseas Contingency Operations: Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF)," *Office of the Secretary of Defense,* May 2017. Slide 5. http://comptroller.defense.gov/Portals/45/Documents/defbudget/fy2018/fy2018_CTEF_J-Book_Final_Embargoed.pdf.

[52] Witty, David, "The Iraqi Counterterrorism Service: From the War on ISIS to the Future," *Iraq in Context,* January 23, 2018. https://www.iraqincontext.com/single-post/2018/01/23/The-Iraqi-Counter-Terrorism-Service-From-the-War-on-ISIS-to-the-Future.

[53] Author interview with CTS official, February 2018.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Witty, "The Iraqi Counterterrorism Service."

coordination center to exchange intelligence with other local security services, although CTS will only provide its intelligence to other services on a "need to know basis."[56]

The **Iraqi Army** (IA, commonly referred to simply as *jaesh*) also maintains a large presence in Ninewa. The 15th and 16th Infantry Divisions, which are the reconstituted elements of the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th IA Divisions that collapsed in 2014, have served as the primary units in the province since the liberation of Mosul.[57] The 20th Infantry Division is also currently assigned to the NOC.[58] The 9th Armored Division, Iraq's only division that employs a significant number of U.S.-made M1A1 tanks, also maintains elements in the province to provide support as needed.[59] Although the IA has often had a contentious relationship with the primarily-Sunni population in Ninewa, their reputation seems to have been rehabilitated by the campaign to liberate the province from ISIS. Prior to ISIS, the IA was known for checkpoint abuses and overbearing responses to insurgent attacks. Sunni political leaders, and particularly former governor Atheel Nujaifi, helped fan widespread resentment towards the IA during the Arab Spring.[60] Abuses were compounded by the fact that the IA in Ninewa was heavily composed of Kurdish units, ostensibly recruited due to the unwillingness of Sunnis to serve in the security forces during the early occupation years.

> **Sunni Arab confidence in the Iraqi Army had plummeted to 28 percent in 2014. By August 2017, it had skyrocketed to 94 percent.**

Yet their popularity has rebounded significantly since hitting a nadir in 2014. In phone interviews conducted with Mosul residents in June 2014, residents blamed "wrong practices of the army and federal police" as the primary reason for the fall of their city.[61] Sunni Arab confidence in the Iraqi Army had plummeted to 28 percent in the months preceding ISIS' offensive in Ninewa. By August 2017, that number had skyrocketed to 94 percent.[62] The newfound IA popularity also stems from the Sunni population's preference for institutional security forces in comparison to PMF units.

Despite the IA's vastly improved image, many local leaders are waging an active campaign to reduce the role of the IA in Ninewa's cities.[63] These demands stem from a long-standing Iraqi belief that the Army should primarily defend the nation from external threats rather than conduct counterinsurgency or activities that veer into policing. Indeed, the Ministry of Defense itself wants to see IA units removed from cities and consolidated on large bases in order to allow them to retrain, reorganize, and reequip after a grueling fight against ISIS.[64] Yet, despite the ability of some liberated cities, like Ramadi, to rapidly transition security to local police forces, Mosul still relies

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[56] Author interview with CTS official, February 2018.

[57] Jessa Rose Dury-Agri, Omer Kassim, and Patrick Martin. "Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces: Orders of Battle." *Institute for the Study of War*, December 2017, p. 21-22. http://www.understandingwar.org/report/iraqi-security-forces-and-popular-mobilization-forces-orders-battle-0.

[58] Author interview with MG Najim al-Jabouri, NOC commander, March 2018.

[59] Ibid., p. 21-22.

[60] "The government in Baghdad must fall," (interview with Atheel Nujaifi), DW News, Deutsche Welle, March 4, 2013. http://www.dw.com/en/the-government-in-baghdad-must-fall/a-16713949.

[61] Dagher, Munqith, "Dai'sh in Iraq: The Full Story," presentation at the Center for Security and International Studies (CSIS), October 30, 2017, slide 14.

[62] Ibid., slide 26.

[63] Author interviews with Ninewa political leaders, January 2018.

[64] Author interview with security official, February 2018.

heavily on the IA for its security.[65] Soldiers man checkpoints throughout the city and play a central role in decision making. The NOC, run by an army officer, is an army-centric organization. Still, a widespread desire exists among local officials to get the "big guns" out of the cities and shift responsibilities to the local police.

The **Iraqi Police Service** (IPS, more commonly known as "**Iraqi Police**" or "IPs") are the local police force operating within the province. In contrast to the Federal Police, a more militarized force that employs armored vehicles and heavy weapons, IPs will often patrol in soft-shell sedans and carry little more than a pistol. Despite their lack of firepower, the **Ninewa Province Police (*shurta muhafiza Ninewa*)**, led by Brigadier General Hamad Nams al-Jabouri, are considered by many U.S. and Iraqi officials to be the key to security in the province. As the element responsible for day-to-day security duties, they theoretically have the most direct involvement with the population. They are the primary first responders, the most likely to receive local intelligence reporting, and generally serve as the first line of defense against terrorism and criminality. But this also exposes them to the greatest risk of being targeted by insurgent attacks. In contrast to the other formal security services, the majority of the Ninewa Province Police force is locally recruited, and therefore much more connected to the population. But this, again, also means that its members are known within the community, and thus both they and their families can be more easily targeted for kidnapping or assassination. The headquarters for the Ninewa Province Police is located in Mosul.

The primary intelligence service operating within the province is the **National Security Service (NSS, *jihaz al-amn al-watni*).** While they ostensibly focus on intelligence collection, they are often present at checkpoints throughout the province in order to identify individuals of interest. They also conduct their own raids, arrests, and interrogations. Their role is akin to the traditional *mukhabarat*. This role has led them to clash with other security forces who feel that their activities have not been properly coordinated with "battle space owners"—the units responsible for administering security within a given territory.[66] At times these clashes have turned deadly, at one point even causing authorities from Baghdad to intervene to negotiate hostage exchanges between the NSS and ISOF.[67] They maintain a network of outposts throughout Mosul.[68]

The final component of the formal ISF in Ninewa is the **Iraqi Border Guards (*haras hadud al-Iraq*)**. They operate primarily on the Syrian border in western Ninewa, especially in the strategically-important border town of Rabia, located on Highway One. ISIS' final desert redoubts in Syria are located in regions bordering Ninewa, thus meaning that the Border Guard is responsible for preventing ISIS fighters facing pressure from the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces from retreating into Ninewa, although the PMF also assist in securing remote border regions.

The **Federal Police (FEDPOL, *shurta itihadiya*)** and the **Emergency Response Division (ERD, *furqa ar-red as-suriya*)**, the MoI's quick reaction force, both played large roles in the liberation of Ninewa but are no longer key players in the province. In an effort to reduce the number of security services reporting to the NOC, FEDPOL units operating in Ninewa were transferred to Kirkuk in early 2018.[69] (See *Appendix B* for more discussion on FEDPOL and ERD.)

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[65] Ibid.
[66] David Kenner and Campbell MacDiarmid, "Goodbye, Islamic State. Hello, Anarchy." *Foreign Policy*. March 24, 2018. http://foreignpolicy.com/2017/03/24/goodbye-islamic-state-hello-anarchy/.
[67] Ibid.
[68] Author interviews with security officials in Iraq, January-February 2018.
[69] Author interview with NOC Commander Major General Najim Jabouri via WhatsApp, March 2018.

Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)

After Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the most influential Shia religious leader in Iraq, issued a fatwa calling for the mobilization of Iraqi citizens against ISIS in June 2014,[70] an umbrella organization called the **Popular Mobilization Forces (*al-hashd al-sha'abi*)** was formed to manage the various groups offering to join the fight. This fatwa—as well as formal legislation passed by the Council of Representatives in November 2016—form the two formal pillars of legitimacy for the PMF.[71] Among the wider Iraqi population, *hashd* units have become one of the two most respected security forces—the other being CTS. However, *hashd*'s appeal is far from universal: the majority of their support comes from predominantly Shia areas from which the majority of *hashd* forces originate. As opposed to CTS, they represent an alternate view of what the Iraqi Security Forces should look like: organically formed units more comfortable expressing and relying upon their ethnic or religious beliefs as the motivating cause for their activities. But this reliance on inherently divisive belief systems also tends to make Shia PMF units controversial in Ninewa, particularly among the Sunni Arab, Turkmen, and Kurdish populations.

While *hashd* units in Ninewa formally fall under the command of the NOC, they also answer to their own regional committee. In theory, these PMF regional headquarters are meant to coordinate the activities of *hashd* units within their area of responsibility and serve as the connective link to the national **Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC)**.[72] However these regional commands appear to exert little influence over actual operations. Regional committee leaders are often drawn from small PMF units or minority groups in order to limit their influence.[73] In Ninewa, a Christian former Nujaifi supporter heads the council.[74] As a

Hashd al-Sha'abi

Hashd al-Sha'abi - Council Administered
Popular Mobilization Council (PMC) led in-practice by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis

Local PMF Units - Composed primarily of groups originally from Ninewa

Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU)
Christian unit in Ninewa Plains (Assyrian Democratic Movement)

Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)
Shia-Shabak unit in Ninewa Plains/Mosul (Shabak Democratic Assembly)

Babylon Brigade
Christian-Shia unit in Ninewa Plains

al-Hashd al-Turkmani (Brigades 16 and 52)
Shia Turkmen primarily in vicinity of Tel Afar

Lalish Regiment
Yazidi unit vicinity Sinjar

Ninewa Guards
Predominantly Sunni unit (former Governor Atheel Nujaifi)

Non-Local *Marjaiya* Groups - Non-proxy Shia groups loyal to Ayatollah Sistani

Ali al-Akbar Brigade
Affiliated with Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala. Active in Western Ninewa

Non-Local PMF Groups - Composed primarily of Shia groups "from the south," heavily Iranian influenced

Badr Organization
Major Shia militia and political party

Asai'b Ahl al-Haq (AAH)
Splinter organization from Jaish al-Mahdi

Kata'ib Hezbollah
Iranian proxy headed by Muhandis with links to Lebanese Hezbollah

National Security Service-Administered
National Security Council led by NSA Falih al-Fayad

Tribal Mobilization Forces (*Hashd al-Asha'ari*)
Smaller (~100-300) man units composed of Sunni tribesman, particularly from the Jabour and Shamar tribes

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[70] "Iraq conflict: Shia cleric Sistani issues call to arms," *BBC News,* June 13, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-27834462.

[71] Reuters Staff, "Iraqi parliament passes contested law on Shi'ite paramilitaries," *Reuters,* November 26, 2016. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-military/iraqi-parliament-passes-contested-law-on-shiite-paramilitaries-idUSKBN13L0IE.

[72] Duri-Agry et al, "Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces," p. 36.

[73] Ibid., p. 37.

[74] Brigadier General Louis Yousif, "The Tribal Mobilization Forces of Ninewa are providing 15,000 fighters to fight on the ground," *al-Mowsaliya TV,* June 29, 2016 [in Arabic, author translation]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wNX197jdSOg.

result, real lines of influence tend to flow from the PMC to the large, Iranian-affiliated Shia PMF groups, and then through those groups to the smaller PMF units. As a byproduct of inadequate coordination, individual units have attempted to expand their cooperation with adjacent *hashd* elements through direct liaison.[75] *Hashd* units commonly work alongside formal ISF and are responsible for a large number of checkpoints throughout Ninewa.

Hashd in Ninewa fall into two categories: units directly administered by the PMC, led in-practice by U.S.-designated terrorist and deputy PMC chairman Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis[76], and those administered by the NSS. Units answering to the PMC constitute the vast majority of the PMF.

"NSS-administered" units are synonymous with the **Tribal Mobilization Forces (TMF, *al-hashd al-asha'ari)*,** which are locally recruited, primarily Sunni militias often from the Shamar and Jabour tribes. The U.S. is heavily involved in supporting the TMF program, primarily through train and equip efforts.[77] While funding for TMF salaries flows from Baghdad, Iraqi budgetary pressures have increasingly placed the future of these resources in jeopardy.[78] The separation between NSS-administered and other *hashd* units stems from Sunni tribal concerns over their marginalization by the overwhelmingly Shia PMC, as well as U.S. refusal to directly cooperate with Iranian-directed *hashd* units that in several cases were responsible for the deaths of American soldiers in earlier years. In many ways, the program resembles earlier U.S. attempts to enable tribal opposition to AQI through the Sons of Iraq (SoI) program. Individual TMF units are—as a matter of policy—typically limited to 100-300 fighters.[79] Baghdad remains hesitant to create large, Sunni tribal forces which could potentially challenge the state for control. Combined with the aforementioned budgetary pressures, this sentiment has increasingly resulted in Baghdad's reluctance to place new fighters on TMF salaries despite attrition suffered by *al-hashd al-asha'ari* during combat operations against ISIS.[80]

PMC-administered *hashd* units can generally be sub-divided into local and non-local groups. Local units are typically pre-existing militias that have since been incorporated into the PMF framework. While most *hashd* units within Iraq tend to be Shia Arab, Ninewa's demographic complexity has meant that a wide variety of ethnic and religious groups are represented among the local *hashd*. PMC leadership often touts these units as a symbol of their organization's diversity and tolerance, although power within the organization clearly resides with the larger Shia groups.[81]

Among the local *hashd* groups, those with Shia credentials enjoy the closest relationships to PMF leadership, and thus have seen their influence grow significantly in the post-liberation phase. The Shia Shabak **Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)**[82] have become highly influential in East Mosul and the Ninewa Plains. The **Babylon Brigade**, a mixed Christian-Shia Arab unit led by Rian Kaldani, has also become influential in the Ninewa Plains and enjoys a close operational relationship with the

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[75] Author interview with Hunian Qado (Leader of the Shabak PMF Unit "Ninewa Plains Forces"), Baghdad, Iraq, January, 16, 2018.

[76] National Security Advisor Falih al-Fayad is technically the chairman of the PMC, however Muhandis is widely considered to be the leader of *al-Hashd al-Sha'abi.*

[77] Author interview with officials in Iraq, January 2018.

[78] Ibid.

[79] Author interview security officials in Iraq, January 2018.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Author interviews with PMF leaders Yousif Liklabi (legal advisor and spokesman) and Hussein al-Rumahi (Secretary General, al-Wafa Party), Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[82] There is a Pro-KRG Christian militia that is also called the Ninewa Plains Forces (*Qawat Sahl Ninewa*), but the two are separate organizations and actually represent fiercely opposed political interests.

NPF. **Shia Turkmen** units, primarily within the **16th and 52nd PMF Brigades**, have become particularly relevant in the Tel Afar area.[83]

Units that are not naturally aligned with national Shia leaders tend to have weaker relationships with PMF power-brokers, and thus do not receive the same level of support or political backing enjoyed by the aforementioned groups. Former Governor Atheel Nujaifi's largely Sunni **Ninewa Guards (*Haras Ninewa*)** exemplify this trend. While his forces have formally entered the PMF framework, the decision to grant them entry was highly controversial and is still opposed by many Shia PMF leaders. In fact, despite formally joining the PMF, Nujaifi still faces an active arrest warrant issued by Baghdad as a result of his unit's cooperation with Turkish forces based in Bashiqa. In January 2018—well *after* Nujaifi's group had entered the PMF—a Baghdad court went even further by sentencing Nujaifi to three years in prison.[84] So while both the PMF and Baghdad may have formally reconciled with *Haras Ninewa*, the extent to which the détente is real remains to be seen. Other non-Shia PMF units like the Christian **Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU)** and the Yazidi **Lalish Regiment** do not have such contentious relationships with PMF leadership, but they still do not receive the close political, material, and advisory support that the Shia groups enjoy.

While there are numerous local *hashd* units in Ninewa, non-local units are the backbone of the PMF. Groups from southern and central Iraq constitute the bulk of *hashd* fighters, and leaders from those organizations exercise the real decision-making authority within the PMC. **Marjaiya units**, those loyal to the leadership of Ayatollah Sistani, are generally considered to be more moderate and less prone to sectarian abuses. At the other end of the spectrum, Iranian proxy groups like **Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH),** and the **Badr Organization** are viewed as highly sectarian. Groups like **Saraya al-Salaam**, Muqtada al-Sadr's Shia Iraqi nationalist group, fall somewhere in between.

Although non-local *hashd* units are present in Ninewa and have significant influence over many of the local *hashd* groups, their limited presence precludes them from directly administering territory. Iranian proxy groups are the primary link between the PMC and local Shia *hashd* groups, with Badr playing a particularly prominent role. While they exert influence by supporting local groups, the non-local units' attempts to directly recruit from among Ninewa's Sunni population have proven largely ineffective, as offices opened in Mosul to raise their own locally-sourced *hashd* have met with little enthusiasm from Moslawis.[85] But despite their lack of overt presence, the Badr Organization, *Kata'ib Hezbollah*, and AAH are still largely perceived as major players in Ninewa, especially by communities with natural suspicion of the PMF.[86]

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[83] Andras Derzsi-Horvath, Erica Gaston, and Bahra Saleh, "Who's Who: Quick Facts about Local and Sub-State Forces," *Global Public Policy Institute,* August 16, 2017. http://www.gppi.net/publications/quick-facts-about-local-and-sub-state-forces/.

[84] Dolamari, Mewan, "Iraqi court sentences former Mosul governor to three years imprisonment," *Kurdistan 24,* January 26, 2018. http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/f3160029-8e18-45d5-8b3e-10c376c2a928.

[85] Author interview with security official in Iraq, January 2018.

[86] Author interviews with various leaders based in Ninewa Province, Iraq, January 2018.

Among the non-local groups, the *marjaiya* **Ali al-Akbar Brigade** plays the largest direct role in Ninewa. The unit, which is loyal to the Shia Imam Hussein Shrine in Karbala[87], has a significant presence in Western Ninewa, to include in Tel Afar and the Jazeera Desert.[88]

The relationship between Shia PMF and the KRG is particularly fraught. In the wake of the KRG's September 2017 independence referendum, the PMF were heavily involved in Baghdad's efforts to retake the disputed territories which Peshmerga had gained control over since 2014. As such, KRG officials tend to levy particularly bitter criticism against the PMF.[89]

Kurdish Security Forces

Kurdish Security Forces

KDP Peshmerga
Main fighting force of the KRG (Barazani/Kurdistan Democratic Party)

KDP Zeravani
Military police force (like FEDPOL), train several KDP-supported militias

KDP Asayish
Intelligence and internal security service
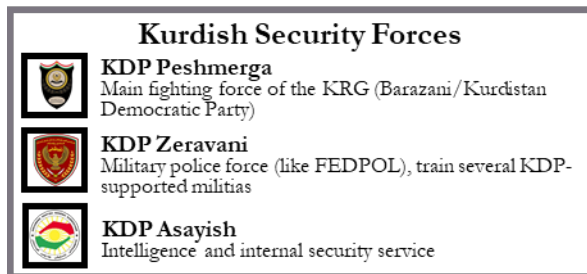
As a result of post-referendum clashes with the PMF and ISF, the KRG has ceded control over much of Ninewa's disputed territories to Baghdad-aligned forces. Accordingly, the KRG no longer exercises direct control over the wide swaths of land that they had acquired during the campaign to liberate Ninewa from ISIS. The front lines dividing Kurdish forces from the PMF and ISF remain tense, particularly in Makhmour, a district approximately 25 miles east of the main American base in Ninewa (Qayyara West, also called "Q-West").

Despite the dramatic reduction in territory under Kurdish control, the KRG still maintains supremacy over the northern half of Tel Kaif District and the eastern half of Hamdaniya District, both located in the Ninewa Plains. KRG forces also maintain control over territory on the Syrian border in northwestern Tel Afar District.[90]

The **Peshmerga** has long-been divided into units loyal to the Barzani clan's Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) and those responsive to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The Barzani clan's preeminence in neighboring Dohuk Province has meant that KDP-aligned forces predominate among KRG elements in Ninewa. Among KDP forces, three security services play key roles:

1) The KDP Peshmerga, which serves as the KDP's army and the largest fighting force among the three Kurdish security services
2) The ***Zeravani***, a military police force similar in capability to Iraqi FEDPOL
3) The ***Asayish***, an internal intelligence and security agency

The systematic destruction of Arab villages by Kurdish forces as part of broader "Kurdification" efforts in the Ninewa Plains have left many residents deeply resentful of the Kurdish presence.[91]

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[87] Aymenn Jawad al-Tamimi, "Hashd Brigade Numbers Index," *Aymenn Jamawad al-Tamimi's Blog,* October 31, 2017. http://www.aymennjawad.org/2017/10/hashd-brigade-numbers-index.

[88] Author interview with MG Najim Jabouri, commander of the NOC, March 2018.

[89] Multiple author interviews with officials from the KRG, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

[90] The KRG also maintains control over substantial sections of the disputed districts of Akre and Sheikhan, although these districts were originally considered to be part of the Iraqi Dohuk Province.

[91] Human Rights Watch, "Marked With an 'X': Iraqi Kurdish Forces' Destruction of Villages, Homes in Conflict with ISIS," November 2016. https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/11/13/marked-x/iraqi-kurdish-forces-destruction-villages-

Furthermore, to improve the defensibility of their positions and demarcate areas they intend to permanently control, Kurdish forces have built berms and ditches in Ninewa stretching hundreds of miles.[92]

KRG-Aligned Militias

Despite these incidents, some ethnic minority leaders feel their communities are better protected under Kurdish authorities, and thus have chosen to align with the KRG.[93] Given their long-term ambition to assert control over Ninewa's disputed territories, the KRG seeks to expand its influence by supporting a variety of non-Kurdish militias. The *Zeravani* have been instrumental in training many of these Ninewa militia units. KRG-aligned militias include several Christian groups in the Ninewa Plains: the **Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF),** the **Ninewa Plains Guard Forces (NPGF),** and **Dwekh Nawsha**. The NPF and NPGF are officially considered part of the KRG

	Kurdish-Supported Militias
	Jazeera Brigade Sunni tribal forces, primarily from Rabia and Zumar
	Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF) Christian militia (Bet Nahrain Democratic Party)
	Ezidikhan Defense Force (HPE) Yazidi unit formerly prominent in Sinjar (Haider Shesho)
	Rojava Peshmerga KDP-supported militia operating in Syria and western Ninewa
	Ninewa Plains Guard Force (NPGF) Largest pro-KRG Christian militia; based in Qaraqosh
	Dwekh Nawsha Christian Militia (Assyrian Patriotic Party)

security forces by the Ministry of Peshmerga.[94] In the central and western portions of the Ninewa, the KRG has partnered with Sunni tribesman and created the **Jazeera Brigade**, ostensibly the first Sunni Arab unit which the KRG considers to be a member of its security forces. The Jazeera Brigade's creation received widespread media attention, as many Arabs found the spectacle of Sunni tribesman adorned with Kurdish flags and *Zeravani* patches troubling.[95] To many in the province, the incident represented the KRG's creeping influence in Ninewa and its continued attempts to decide the fate of the province's disputed territories by altering ground-level realities.

Prior to losing control over Sinjar in the post referendum fallout, the KRG had also partnered with the **Ezidkhan Defense Forces (HPE)**, a Yazidi organization. In a bid to ensure the group's allegiance after it began cooperating with the PMF, then-Kurdish President Masoud Barzani arrested the HPE's leader, Haider Shesho, and only released him after receiving a public loyalty pledge.[96] The HPE has since been displaced by PMF's Lalish Regiment, also a Yazidi group. Despite the fierce

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homes-conflict-isis. AND Human Rights Watch, "On Vulnerable Ground: Violence Against Minority Communities in Nineveh Province's Disputed Territories," November 2009. https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/11/10/vulnerable-ground/violence-against-minority-communities-nineveh-provinces-disputed.

[92] Chulov, Martin, "650-mile trench stakes out claim for bigger Kurdish territory in Iraq," *The Guardian*, January 20, 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/jan/20/kurdish-trench-in-iraq-stakes-out-claim-for-bigger-territory.

[93] Author interview with KRG-aligned Christian political and militia leader Romeo Hakari, Secretary General of the Bet Nahrain Democratic Party and leader of the Christian Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF), Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

[94] Gaston, Erica, "Iraq After ISIL: Qaraqosh, Hamdaniya District," *Global Public Policy Institute,* August 5, 2017. http://www.gppi.net/publications/iraq-after-isil-qaraqosh-hamdaniya-district/?L=0%2525252527%2525252522#c2095.

[95] "The Peshmerga Graduates First Round of Arab Volunteers from Ninewa," *al-Jazeera*, February 8, 2017, http://www.aljazeera.net/news/arabic/2017/2/8/نينوى-من-عرب-لمتطوعين-دورة-أول-تخرّج-لبشمركة. [in Arabic, author translation].

[96] "Deputy Commander of Sinjar Protection Forces: Shesho was Arrested on Political Grounds and Will be Released," *al-Sumaria*, April 8, 2015. https://www.alsumaria.tv/news/130297 [in Arabic, author translation].

animosity between the PMF and the Kurdish forces, the HPE and Lalish Regiment—two minority groups aligned with the KRG and PMF respectively—seem to have an amicable relationship with each other. As with many minority groups in Ninewa, the HPE does not appear to have any particular pro-Kurdish (or pro-Baghdad) affinity, but rather simply seeks a patron to supply it with guns and money.

Lastly, the KDP supports a Syrian militia known as the **Rojava Peshmerga**. Support for the group is designed to extend the Barzanis' influence into northeastern Syria at the expense of the YPG. The group is active along the Iraqi-Syrian border and has conducted lethal incursions into Sinjar. The group has at times worked with the KDP and Turkish forces to help target PKK-affiliated groups in western Ninewa.

Non-Aligned Militias

Non-Aligned Militias

Sinjar Protection Units (YBS)
Yazidi PKK affiliate in Sinjar

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)
Primarily operating in vicinity of Sinjar alongside YBS

"Fake Hashd"
Forces falsely claiming or accused of being PMF; a common occurrence
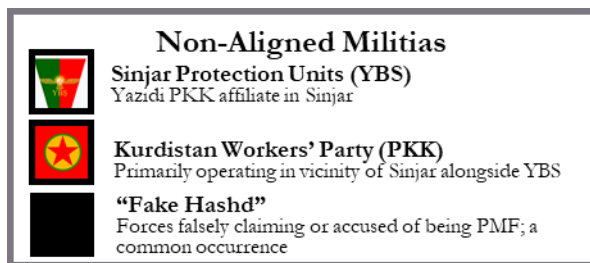
The proliferation of *hashd* units throughout Ninewa has led to a new phenomenon: the rise of **"fake *hashd*"** groups. Given the enormous number and diversity of units associated with the PMF, communities often lack the ability to determine whether armed groups are acting under legitimate authorities. Many militias and criminal organizations within Ninewa take advantage of this ambiguity and claim status as a *hashd* unit to justify their activities. Similarly, civilians unsure of an armed group's exact identity will often identify them as *hashd,* thus potentially lodging complaints against *hashd* units which may not have actually been committed by groups within the PMF framework. Lastly, official *hashd* units have often disassociated themselves from the PMF when committing crimes or sectarian violence, similarly taking advantage of the ambiguous environment. This phenomenon often makes the task of identifying crimes committed by official PMF units exceedingly difficult, further complicating an already complex security sector landscape in Ninewa.[97]

In addition to the "fake *hashd*" militias, there are two other armed groups—primarily in Sinjar—who are not affiliated with any of the security sector actors described to this point: the **Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)** and the PKK-affiliated **Sinjar Protection Units (YBS)**. Their presence has grown stronger as the U.S.-supported YPG have consolidated control over northeastern Syria. In March 2018, they were even reported to have taken over several governmental buildings, prompting the Ninewa Provincial Council to issue an ultimatum for the withdrawal of the PKK from Sinjar[98]. The PKK presence in Sinjar has become so prominent that Turkish officials have openly discussed a joint Iraqi-Turkish military operation in Sinjar following Iraqi national elections in May 2018.[99] The PKK periodically face strikes from Turkish aircraft and have also clashed with KDP forces.

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[97] Interview with security officials, Iraq, January 2018.
[98] "Ninewa gives fighters from the PKK 10 days to exit from Sinjar," *National News Agency*, March 11, 2018. http://wataniq.com/news?ID=26468 [in Arabic, author translation].
[99] Dogan, Zulfikar, "Turkey poised to open a military front in Iraq," *al-Monitor*. March 12, 2018. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/03/turkey-iraq-ankara-considers-opening-new-front-in-kurdistan.html.

Foreign Security Services

There are three primary foreign actors involved in Ninewa's security sector: Iran, Turkey, and the **Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS,** comprised of the U.S. and its allies.

Major General Qassem Suleimani's **Quds Force**—a division of **the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)**

Foreign Forces

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)
Acting in "advise and assist" capacity, mainly to *hashd al-sha'abi*

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)
Operating out of Bashiqa Camp northeast of Mosul

Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/CJTF-OIR
U.S. and other coalition members involved in advise and assist

responsible for extraterritorial military and clandestine operations—maintains a significant presence in Ninewa. The IRGC-Quds Force typically embeds with Shia PMF units. The IRGC primarily acts in an "advise and assist" capacity, often directing the activities of their proxies and buying influence through the provision of weapons, money, and political clout in Baghdad. Farsi-speaking individuals are reportedly a common presence at Shia PMF checkpoints around Mosul.[100] As a result, many leaders tend to accuse the PMF of advancing an "Iranian agenda" (*"ajenda Irania").*[101]

Although their influence is not considered as pervasive or problematic as Iran's by most key stakeholders, Turkey also maintains a significant interest in Ninewa. The PKK's activities in northern Iraq serve as the main rationale for the continued presence of the **Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)**. The Turks have also suggested that their forces could potentially be used to protect Ninewa's Turkmen population against abuses and to secure key trade routes into Turkey. While the GoI has at times accused the Turks of maintaining an "illegal" presence in Iraq, the KDP has maintained an amicable relationship with Turkey—primarily based on common economic interests—and has provided the TSK with permission to operate from within KDP-controlled territory. As such, the TSK maintains a constellation of bases throughout the KRG, with a particular focus on targeting PKK strongholds in the KRG's Qandil Mountains. The TSK also maintains a contingent at the Bashiqa Camp northeast of Mosul, where it has trained and equipped Atheel Nujaifi's Ninewa Guards. While the city of Bashiqa has come under ISF control in the wake of the referendum, the camp itself remains within KRG-controlled territory.[102]

Despite the KDP-Turkish security relationship, unified opposition to the independence referendum has resulted in increasingly close ties between Baghdad and Ankara. The TSK's continued presence at Bashiqa had long been a source of tension between the two capitols, but newfound common interests seem to have produced an understanding that TSK forces can remain at the camp.[103]

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, which includes the American **Combined Joint Task Force-Operation Inherent Resolve (CJTF-OIR),** continues to maintain a presence in Ninewa. The Coalition is partnered primarily with formal ISF. It seeks to build the capacity of the ISF and strengthen their ability to exercise command and control over their various elements. The U.S.

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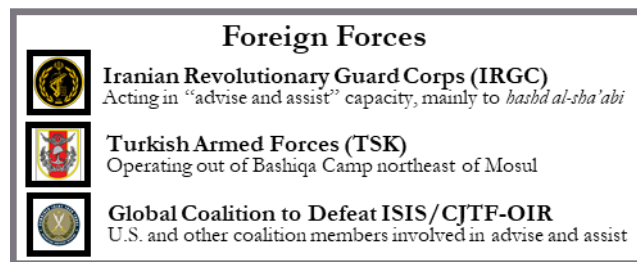
[100] Author discussion with witnesses, Iraq, January 2018.
[101] Multiple author interviews with officials from Ninewa, Iraq, January 2018.
[102] Current territorial control map, LiveUAMap, March 14, 2018. http://iraq.liveuamap.com/en.
[103] Reuters Staff, "Iraq says deal reached over Bashiqa, Turkey says issue will be solved," *Reuters*, January 7, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-turkey-abadi/iraq-says-deal-reached-over-bashiqa-turkey-says-issue-will-be-solved-idUSKBN14R0D4.

maintains particularly close relationships with the Ninewa Operations Command and CTS. Q-West, in southeastern Ninewa, continues to serve as a major coalition logistical hub. Lastly, the Coalition also maintains a series of "building partner capacity" sites outside of Ninewa, although police and military forces from the province regularly rotate through these sites in order to gain much-needed tactical and technical skill sets.

The U.S. military also plays a critical role on Ninewa's Syrian border. The U.S.-**supported Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF)** control northeastern Syria and administer key border crossings, to include the checkpoint on Highway One. Over 2,000 U.S. military personnel operate alongside the SDF as part of the continuing "Defeat-ISIS" campaign, thereby making the U.S. a key interlocutor between the SDF and regional actors.[104]

Civilian Governance

At the provincial level, the governor's office and the **Ninewa Provincial Council** serve as the main pillars of authority. Elections for provincial councils in Iraq are supposed to be held every four years, although the last provincial election prior to May 2018 occurred in 2013.[105] The function of provincial councils is laid out in Article Two of the "Law of Governorates Not Incorporated into a Region":

> The [provincial] council is the highest legislative and oversight authority within the administrative boundaries of the province that have the right to issue provincial legislations that enable them to administer their affairs in accordance with the principle of administrative decentralization that does not violate the Constitution and federal law.[106]

The governor's office implements the decisions of the provincial council, with the governor being the highest executive official within each province. The governor directs and manages citizens' affairs, including legal issues, energy issues, media relations, and other administrative services. The governor also has direct authority over local security agencies and investigative services. He may request additional manpower from the Minister of Interior if he believes that the security agencies in the province are "unable to fulfill their duties in maintaining peace and order on account of insufficient numbers."[107]

Despite an active arrest warrant for Nowfal Hamadi Sultan Akub, the governor of Ninewa, he has remained in office. He was appointed by Baghdad on October 5, 2015 after Ninewa fell to ISIS, replacing former Governor Atheel Nujaifi.[108] Nowfal has faced bitter accusations of corruption,

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[104] Lamothe, Dan, "There are four times as many US troops in Syria as previously acknowledged by the Pentagon," *Washington Post*, December 6, 2017. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/12/06/there-are-four-times-as-many-u-s-troops-in-syria-as-previously-acknowledged-by-the-pentagon/?utm_term=.cdf45553bf3f.

[105] Ali, Ahmed, "Iraq's Provincial Elections and their National Implications," *Institute for the Study of War,* April 19, 2003, p. 2.

[106] Article 2 of The Law of Governorates Not Incorporated in a Region, Law 21 of 2008, as Amended by Law 15 of 2010.

[107] Article 31 of The Law of Governorates Not Incorporated in a Region, Law 21 of 2008, as Amended by Law 15 of 2010.

[108] "Nofal Hammadi of al-Nahetha bloc elected as Governor of Nineveh succeeding al-Nujaifi," *Shafaaq News*, October 5, 2015. http://www.shafaaq.com/en/En_NewsReader/cd3b0e97-1523-4bca-8bc2-9d7a8d7700c5.

leading the provincial council to vote for his removal. As a result, Prime Minister Abadi suspended him from his position for 60 days beginning in December 2017, ultimately resulting in the issuance of an unexecuted arrest warrant.[109]

Prior to the May 2018 election, the 39-member Ninewa Provincial Council was headed by a Kurdish member of the KDP, Bashar al-Kiki, who played a particularly important role given the governor's embattled status. As the head of the province's security committee, Sunni Arab Muhammad al-Bayati also has played a key role by serving as the council's primary interface with security forces. The provincial council appoints the governor and his deputies and theoretically has the power to dismiss them by an absolute majority vote. In addition, the provincial council has the authority to legislate provincial laws, establish budgetary and financial priorities, and approve security plans drafted by the province's security authorities.[110]

Below the provincial government, district and sub-district units each maintain their own governing councils.[111] The nine district councils in Ninewa Province remain under the oversight of the governor and are tasked with improving the efficiency of service delivery. The district councils manage the operations of local administrations, review local ministry proposals, and deal with budgetary requirements according to the national budgetary process, including the collection of local taxes and fees.[112]

The mayor is the executive official of the district council and is elected by the majority vote of the district council. Mayors may be removed by the district council by means of a process that parallels the provincial-level mechanism. Mayors are responsible for implementing the decisions of their respective councils and serve as the primary liaison between their council and the governor.[113]

Despite the legal powers given to the councils, provincial officials still remain under the authority of the national Council of Representatives. Over the past several years, provincial councils have complained about their limited freedom to exercise power, citing instances when the federal government has appointed local officials without their approval and has delayed funding for local projects. The dependence of provincial authorities on federal budget allocations ensures that the central government maintains a great deal of power. However, provincial councils have also been accused for ineffectiveness and corruption, as evidenced by the arrest warrants for both the former and current governors of Ninewa Province.[114]

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[109] Goran, Baxtiyar, "A Kurd is appointed acting governor of Nineveh," *Kurdistan 24,* December 28, 2017, http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/f0251fe7-0f7b-4999-a461-93758f13d661.
[110] Ali, "Iraq's Provincial Elections and their National Implications," p. 1.
[111] "Republic of Iraq District Government Field Manual," *USAID,* October 2007, Version 2, p. 15.
[112] Ibid, p.16.
[113] Ibid, p.16-17.
[114] Ali, "Iraq's Provincial Elections and their National Implications," p. 2.

Part III:
ISIS 2.0 Pathways

The Battle for Local Control

Federal, Provincial, and Local Power Struggles
Ethnic, Religious, and Geographic Composition
Provincial Civil-Military Relations
ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Local Control

Caught in the Middle: Erbil vs Baghdad

Fight for the Disputed Territories
Advancing Political Objectives Through Security Policies
ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Erbil vs Baghdad

Command and Control

Shifting Roles and Authorities in the Post-Liberation Phase
Inter-Service Rivalries
Divergent and Unenforced Reporting Requirements
ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Command and Control

The Militia Question

PMF: A Temporary Solution or Permanent Institution?
The Disappearance of a Sunni Hold Force
ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: The Militia Question

Outsider Influence: The Role of Foreign Actors

Iran and Ninewa
Turkey and Ninewa
ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Outsider Influence

Overview:

To understand how politically brittle security forces can lead to the return of ISIS, we examine Ninewa through the lens of five "ISIS 2.0 Pathways." These processes describe the means through which political conflict generates specific "mechanisms" that can impair the capability or capacity of security forces. If left unaddressed, these mechanisms can then lead to the next iteration of ISIS. Our analysis differentiates between the underlying political debates associated with each pathway— which we term conflict drivers—and ISIS 2.0 mechanisms, which describe the particular processes through which ISIS 2.0 can gain an advantage relative to Iraqi Security Forces.
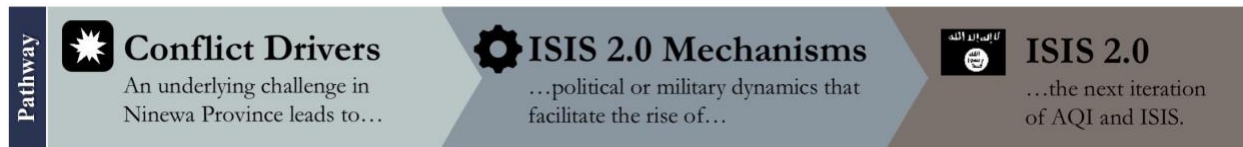
While Ninewa's citizens face a variety of questions regarding the future of their security forces, we assess that five main political challenges—which we use to characterize our five ISIS 2.0 pathways— will continue to stress counterterrorism efforts:

1) **The Battle for Local Control:** the extent to which local populations can exercise control over security forces, represented by battles over federalism, the demographic composition of the security sector, and civil-military relationships
2) **Erbil vs Baghdad:** ongoing tensions over the Article 140 disputed territories, budget decisions, and political influence in Ninewa's government
3) **Command and Control:** the political battles fought over the allocation of tasks, authorities, and reporting requirements among the various security services
4) **The Militia Question:** uncertainty about the future of the PMF and TMF
5) **Outsider Influence:** the degree and nature of foreign involvement in the province

Part III: ISIS 2.0 Pathways will demonstrate how each of these pathways impacts Ninewa's security sector and, more importantly, the mechanisms by which those impacts provide increased opportunities for a renewed ISIS insurgency.

The Battle for Local Control

This pathway centers around three core disputes:
1) Which level of government—federal, provincial, or local—should retain decision making authority over key budgetary, resourcing, and leadership decisions?
2) What policies are required to ensure that the ethnic, religious, and geographic composition of security forces generate sufficient buy-in from local stakeholders?
3) What degree of formal authority should civilian officials in provincial and local governments maintain over security forces operating within their districts?

As currently constituted, authority is highly concentrated with the federal government in Baghdad. Provincial officials have little to no influence over most of the security forces operating within their territory. Decisions regarding recruitment policies, troop deployments, and senior leader appointments are most often made in Baghdad.

While centralized authority may remain necessary for the foreseeable future, unresolved tensions about control over and composition of the security sector will increase the risk that ISIS will regain prominence through five mechanisms: the creation of local grievances within Sunni Arab and Turkmen communities, the institutionalization of unresponsive governance, the incentivization of sectarian militia mobilization, growing resentment among internally displaced persons unable to return due to security concerns, and the delegitimization of electoral outcomes.

Pathway One: The Battle for Local Control

✴ Conflict Drivers

- Bureaucratic competition between local, provincial, and federal governments
- Impact of security forces' ethnic, religious, and geographic composition on community acceptance
- Authority of civilian officials over their military counterparts

⚙ ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms

- **ISIS Alliances**: alliances with ISIS to re-exert Sunni Arab and Turkmen dominance
- **Baghdad Neglect:** perceived (or real) neglect of local security concerns by Baghdad
- **Ethnic Security Dilemmas:** incentives for threatened communities to act outside institutional framework
- **IDP Resentment:** IDPs afraid to return due to non-representative forces
- **Illegitimate Elections:** perceived influence over legitimacy of electoral process

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Federal, Provincial, and Local Power Struggles

Centralized control over security forces is hardly a new dynamic in Ninewa—but in an era of Sunni dominance, it generally engendered less conflict. Several factors continue to advantage the federal government in this dispute. Most state institutions remain top-down organizations, despite Prime Minister Abadi's supposed desire to grant additional autonomy to the provinces. Military organizations like the NOC report to Baghdad's Joint Operations Command, not the governor's office. Money, resources, and weapons are allocated by Baghdad, not Mosul. The Army, CTS, FEDPOL, ERD, NSS, and the Border Guard are federal organizations. Even the Ninewa Province

Police—in theory a local force—can at times appear more responsive to the MoI than local political officials.

The firing of Ninewa Police Chief Wathiq Hamdani provides a clear example of the tension arising from centralized control over Ninewa's security structures. In January 2018, the MoI announced the dismissal of Brigadier General Hamdani without providing any public justification for the change. Adding insult to injury, the MoI replaced Hamdani, a Ninewa native, with a new police chief from Salah al-Din Province. Following the MoI's announcement, the provincial council held a press briefing to oppose the change. The council's president, Bashar al-Kiki, directly challenged the right of federal institutions to choose local police commanders: "Changing officials is the power of the provincial council and the administration of Ninewa…The current commander Wathiq Hamdani has been supervising the administration of the police file in the province for more than a year, and he has been voted on unanimously by the provincial council. He is our only candidate and the Ministry of Interior must agree to his appointment."[115] But the council's public demonstration produced little effect; the MoI ignored their demands and proceeded with Hamdani's dismissal.

But from the perspective of some federal authorities, the incident represents their efforts to ensure the appointment of competent officials. Some Iraqi security officials privately described Hamdani as ineffectual, pointing to the Ninewa police force's slow post-liberation reconstitution in comparison to more successful cities like Ramadi. In contrast to Hamdani, his replacement was a "professional" whose lack of personal ties within the province would allow him to operate in an objective manner.[116]

Those arguments are part of a larger phenomenon: authorities in Baghdad point to poor governance and corruption at the provincial level as reasons for their reluctance to devolve control over security decisions. While senior officials in Baghdad may agree in-principle to additional provincial authority, they often cite the provincial governments' ineffective public administration as a rationale for continued centralized control.[117] Both federal and provincial officials acknowledge that corruption also runs rampant in the central government, but Baghdad is naturally loath to lose control over budgeting and management decisions, especially when those concessions may fail to produce improvement.

At the local level, many minority groups feel that Ninewa's political structure does not provide them with the opportunity to properly resource and control security forces within their villages. In their view, the provincial government provides generous support to the Sunni or Kurdish communities within the province, whereas their treatment of minority groups ranges from neglect to abuse. Accordingly, these leaders advocate devolution of power not only to the provincial council, but possibly to city or district levels. To accomplish this goal, many have proposed splitting Ninewa into multiple new provinces reporting to either Baghdad or Erbil.[118] Sunni tribal leaders from more rural towns are prone to similar sentiments—"no one is paying attention to my needs"—and thus will frequently accept support from whichever group is offering.

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[115] "Ninewa Provincial Council Rejects Appointment of Police Commander from Outside the Province," *al-Sharq al-Awsat.* January 30, 2018. https://aawsat.com/home/article/1159186/مجلس-محافظة-نينوى-يرفض-تعيين-قائد-الشرطة-من-خارج-المحافظة [translated from Arabic by author]. Full press conference: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30w7M2b_kwA&t=2s. [in Arabic, translated by author].

[116] Author interview with Iraqi security officials, 2018.

[117] Author interview with Raed Juhi, Inspector General of the Ministry of Defense, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[118] Author interview with minority group representatives from Ninewa, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

Ninewa's Leadership and Recruitment Disputes

In 2007, as part of U.S.-advocated reform efforts during the Surge, Sunni officials were appointed to key positions in Ninewa. Lieutenant General Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq, a respected Moslawi officer, was appointed as the head of the newly formed NOC, while Brigadier General Khaled Hussein al-Hamdani, another local Moslawi officer, was placed in command of Ninewa's police forces.[119]

Once the NOC was established, it immediately opened recruitment centers in Mosul to increase Sunni Arab representation in the predominantly Kurdish 2nd IA Division. The NOC eventually recruited 900 former and 1,300 new officers, many of whom were from the poorer Sunni Arab neighborhoods in west Mosul. To accelerate those efforts, the majority-Kurdish 8th brigade was transferred outside of Ninewa. Likewise, in January 2009, the government began to diversify and localize the Federal Police and the six Emergency Response Brigade (ERB) battalions stationed in Mosul. Whereas the first Federal Police brigade deployed to Mosul was largely Shiite, the second FEDPOL unit was 75 percent Sunni Arabs, mainly recruited from west Mosul. As a result, Ninewa's security forces had become significantly more representative by 2009—a factor which contributed to a steep decline in violence.[120]

But Prime Minister Maliki's growing sectarianism during his second term largely erased those gains. As U.S. military forces withdrew from Ninewa in September 2011, Maliki began to remove local officers and replace them with Dawa Party loyalists. In April 2011, controversial Shiite general Mahdi al-Gharawi, who was accused of torturing Sunnis in Baghdad, was appointed as the commander of the 3rd FEDPOL Division, the unit which oversaw west Mosul. His leadership of the 3rd FEDPOL Division created significant friction between local police and their ISF counterparts, a dynamic intensified by his April 2014 appointment as the commander of the NOC.[121]

As a result of sectarian ISF command appointments, increased corruption and rampant absenteeism quickly returned. Ninewa's security situation began to steadily decline. As the Arab Spring intensified, the unrest fueled Baghdad's demands for action against Nujaifi and Moslawi protestors. Rather than focusing on counterterrorism efforts, security forces began arresting antigovernment imams and local municipal officials.[122] Senior Sunni commanders were dismissed or disregarded, particularly those who had previously tried to curtail the influence of Shia militias. Kurdish officers in Mosul's security forces were also purged and replaced by Maliki loyalists.[123] By the time ISIS seized Mosul in 2014, Maliki's sectarian policies had effectively destroyed the cohesion and confidence that security forces had developed in the preceding years.

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[119] Knights, "Lessons from Mosul," p. 8.

[120] Ibid., p. 8.

[121] Ibid., p. 8-9.

[122] Ibid., p. 9.

[123] Derek Harvey and Michael Pregent, "Who's to blame for Iraq crisis," *CNN*, June 12, 2014. https://www.cnn.com/2014/06/12/opinion/pregent-harvey-northern-iraq-collapse/index.html

Ethnic, Religious, and Geographic Composition

Closely related to the federal-provincial dispute, disagreements also remain over who should serve within and lead security forces. The dispute over General Hamdani highlights the political sensitivities surrounding the identity of key leaders. More generally, residents remain deeply distrustful of security forces composed of recruits from different ethnicities, sects, or geographic regions. This sentiment is particularly strong among minority communities, who feel they were abandoned by both Iraqi and KRG security services as ISIS swept across the province in 2014.

> ## "Why should I trust someone from Basra or Zakho to defend the Ninewa Plains?"
>
> Dr. Srood Maqdasy
> Christian MP, KRG Parliament
> *Erbil, Iraq, January 2018*

While the Iraqi Army has regained a measure of trust during the counter ISIS campaign, its popularity in Ninewa may in part be due to the lack of strong alternatives. When FEDPOL and ERD were operating in the province, they were often viewed as outside institutions, recruited and controlled by Badr or other Shia groups. Shia PMF "from the south" engender even more antipathy. Kurdish security forces face resentment for "Kurdification" of non-Kurdish villages through the demolition of Sunni Arab homes. Only the Ninewa Police could reasonably be considered a truly local force. However, in addition to being the weakest element among the major security services in Ninewa, their responsiveness to local institutions can be subverted by the MoI.

The inability to trust formal security forces primarily composed of outsiders has led to a proliferation of the ethnically-constructed militias described in *Part II: Ninewa's Security Sector*. While most of these militias have been incorporated into the PMF or the KRG's Ministry of Peshmerga, they continue to feel marginalized and under resourced. Many Sunnis and minorities believe that their incorporation into those institutions was little more than a publicity stunt by the PMF and KRG, both of which seek to bolster their image as multi-ethnic institutions. Indeed, promises to deliver equipment, training, and salaries have often not materialized.

Provincial Civil-Military Relations

Lastly, the relationship between security forces and provincial civilian officials remains highly imbalanced. Military or police forces may consult with civilian officials, but it is clearly the security forces who ultimately decide how to conduct their operations. This dynamic can lead to buck passing—or active opposition—by civilian officials who do not feel empowered to adjust security practices within their constituency.

Competing narratives surrounding the fall of Mosul illustrate the importance of this conflict. As part of the search for culpability, Iraq's Council of Representatives compiled a report to "name and shame" leaders responsible for the disaster. The committee singled out former Governor Atheel Nujaifi, listing him second among the report's 30 names.[124] In the eyes of the committee, only Maliki

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[124]For the full document see: "By Documents: Council of Mosul Raises its Report to the Council of Representatives for Consideration as Legal Statute," *Alsumaria News,* August 16, 2015. [in Arabic, translated by author]. https://www.alsumaria.tv/news/143522/.

bore more responsibility.[125] Interviews with Shia leaders involved in the Ninewa security sector confirmed that some still hold the belief that Nujaifi was "totally responsible" for the disaster in 2014, not least due to his inflammation of anti-security force sentiment during the Arab Spring.[126] But, in many respects, the governor's lack of formal authority over security forces complicates this explanation. In response to the accusations, Nujaifi has pointed to the weak position of civilian leaders in comparison to security forces: "According to the law, I have no authority over the army. Even though I was the head of the [Ninewa] security committee, I could not give orders to the army or the Ninewa Operations Command."[127] While such explanations are certainly self-serving, they are also not easily dismissed.

From a less formal perspective, the nature of civil-military relations in the province depends heavily on the leaders within both civilian and military institutions, and particularly on the governor. Ninewa has admittedly been served poorly in this regard. Governor Nowfal Akub Hamadi Sultan, who assumed the office after the firing of Nujaifi, was widely viewed as corrupt, incompetent, and possibly illegitimate—he was appointed to his office by Baghdad rather than popularly elected. As a result of his deep unpopularity and lack of respect among both the population and regional military leadership, he has had almost no sway with officials in the NOC or even the PMF's regional council.[128] In contrast, Anbar's governor is substantially more popular and respected. He has been able use this popularity and his leadership ability to exert a greater degree of control over forces operating within his province. Whether the May 2018 elections produce a governor more capable of recalibrating provincial civil-military relations remains to be seen.

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Local Control

ISIS Alliances

The inability of the GoI to field Ninewa security forces that are representative of the local population has historically resulted in overbearing security operations, a grievance that served as an impetus for alliance creation between AQI/ISIS and more mainstream Sunni leaders. Without an understanding of the local context in which they are operating, security forces composed of members from Shia or Kurdish regions have often been heavy handed in their attempts to secure the province. The fact that firepower has historically been concentrated with the least representative services—the Army and Federal Police—has tended to reinforce this dynamic. Without good intelligence and a solid understanding of their operating environment, these forces became infamous for interrogating, arresting, or killing civilians with no connection to insurgent activities. Importantly, these activities, even if they stem from good faith efforts rather than sectarian intentions, will tend to be perceived as discriminatory by locals if committed by forces that are not ethnically or geographically representative of the communities in which they are operating.

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[125] Melvin, Don, "Report blames former Iraq PM, other senior officials for fall of Mosul," *CNN*, August 18, 2015. https://www.cnn.com/2015/08/17/middleeast/iraq-mosul-report/index.html?no-st=1522043382.

[126] For example, interview with Mosul report committee member, Iraqi MP, and Shabak militia leader Hunain Qado, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[127] Iraq Report: Fall of Mosul. *al-Monitor*. August 2015. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/08/iraq-report-mosul-fall-maliki-abadi.html.

[128] Author interviews with security officials, Iraq, January 2018.

These resentments provide powerful incentives for political leaders to denigrate the legitimacy of security forces. As the Arab Spring unfolded, many Sunni leaders in Ninewa—including Atheel Nujaifi, commander of the Sunni Ninewa Guards—focused much of their criticism on the security forces serving within Ninewa.[129] In addition to further poisoning the relationship between civilian and military officials in the province, this dynamic also reinforced perceptions that any slight by security forces was committed on the basis of ethnic or sectarian discrimination.

These grievances can then produce a spiral of attacks and overbearing reprisals. As security forces suffer casualties from ambushes and bombings, their desire to respond can lead to counterproductive actions, especially when paired with a lack of precise intelligence. If civilians are killed—whether intentionally or unintentionally—the incentives for local power brokers to form unholy alliances with a potential ISIS 2.0 grow stronger.

IDP Resentment

Furthermore, non-representative security forces perpetuate grievances among the province's population of internally displaced persons (IDPs). As IDPs are considering whether to return home or remain in their current location, they will typically rely on a relative to travel back to their district, assess the situation, and report back to the larger family. One of the key criteria most families use to make their decision is the composition of security forces controlling both their community and the routes to get there.[130] Many IDPs thus far have decided to remain outside of Ninewa due to the strong presence of security forces that are perceived as sectarian—particularly the PMF. This dynamic perpetuates the hardships experienced by IDPs, a group that could easily become susceptible to messaging from an ISIS 2.0 as they increasingly blame other communities or government authorities for their dire situation.

Ethnic Security Dilemmas

Even in the absence of recent grievances, many communities will simply never trust security forces that lack connections to their district. Were security forces to conduct themselves with the utmost integrity—a questionable proposition given recent history—communities still need assurances that security services will continue to respect and defend their citizens in the face of changing political allegiances. As long as security forces fail to reflect the ethnic composition of their community, this guarantee will always remain in doubt.

In contrast to forces like the Federal Police, ethnically composed militias provide a sense of security through their connection to the local community. The familial and cultural ties of militia members to the population make the community *feel* more secure, even if the actual conduct of the security forces may not meet the standards of a more professionalized force. Unfortunately, as much as these forces make one community feel secure, they make adjacent communities of different compositions feel insecure. Given the complex human terrain of Ninewa, Iraq's most diverse province, the presence of one sectarian militia dramatically increases the likelihood that neighboring communities will view their intentions with trepidation, particularly if such a force were to accrue weapons, political influence, or foreign patrons. An ethnic security dilemma quickly emerges: even groups with

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[129] Ali, "Iraq's Provincial Elections and their National Implications."
[130] Author interview with IDP and refugee official, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

> **"Security is a feeling…Ethnic militias provide a feeling of security…We need to get people to trust the security forces."**
>
> Raed Juhi
> Inspector General, Ministry of Defense
> *Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018*

purely defensive intentions can become perceived as a threat, thus prompting other communities to form their own militias.[131] Even the smallest militias can attract attention and potentially incentivize more powerful forces to view them as competitors. Nujaifi, while advocating against minority militias, described how these dynamics can unfold: ""I think it's very dangerous for these minority groups to have their own forces. ...These minorities can be destroyed for that. If Christians establish a Christian force to protect the Christian area, how much do you think they will be? A couple hundred. A couple hundred want to fight the majority…"[132] So while many Iraqis may prefer ethnic militias to protect their communities, the resulting cycle of security competition typically produces the proliferation of armed groups, increased violence, and the collapse of security force accountability.

This insecurity incentivizes sectarian mobilization, a dynamic that has proven crucial to the resiliency of ISIS. As ISIS swept through Ninewa in 2014, many Sunnis who had peacefully coexisted in multiethnic communities turned against their neighbors from different faiths. ISIS has leaned heavily on its ability to assert itself as the most effective organization for the advancement of the Sunni Arab and Turkmen cause. Even if a majority of the Sunni community remains opposed to an ISIS 2.0, the presence of other ethnic militias will continue to bolster its claims that the Sunni community needs an organic vehicle for its self-protection.

Baghdad Neglect

Unsurprisingly, dealing with localized security issues will never be a priority for officials in Baghdad. They tend to focus on two types of issues: 1) those that appear the most critical on a national scale, or 2) those that impact their core constituencies. Ninewa's status as a predominantly Sunni province whose minority Shia population is primarily composed of Turkmen and Shabak communities means that few representatives in Baghdad consider the province to be a central component of their political base. Accordingly, Ninewa will likely only receive true national-level attention in crisis scenarios—situations that could have been addressed before developing into crises will largely be ignored until they become so dire that they warrant the central government's attention.

The lack of responsive governance can significantly impede the security sector's ability to deal with threats before they become unmanageable. The national government took minimal actions while ISIS strengthened its clandestine networks and escalated its attacks throughout 2011-2014. Only after Mosul fell did the government launch a robust response. While the central government has always shown an interest in installing loyal individuals who will respond to its demands, it has typically shown little interest in actually governing. As a result, provincial officials—in many cases correctly—believe that as long as the central government continues to hold an overwhelming degree of power, it will continue to neglect provincial concerns unless a true disaster occurs. While

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[131] Posen, Barry, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," *Survival 35:1,* Spring 1993, pp. 27-47. http://web.mit.edu/SSP/people/posen/security-dilemma.pdf.
[132] Author interview with former Ninewa Governor Atheel Nujaifi, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.

provincial and district councils may not hold all the solutions, they are certainly more accountable to local constituencies than officials operating from Baghdad.

Illegitimate Elections

The final mechanism through which non-representative or centrally controlled security forces can facilitate an ISIS 2.0 is through the perceived delegitimization of elections. Despite the Council of Representatives' decision to reaffirm that national and provincial elections will take place in May 2018, the election timeline remained controversial.[133] The dispute primarily stems from the alleged malign influence of security forces over voters. Politicians—even those with competing political interests—called for postponing the elections.[134] Those opposed to the presence of *hashd* units alleged that Shia militias would coerce the population into voting for candidates who will advance the "Iranian agenda," or possibly even intimidate populations enough to prevent them from voting at all. Similar concerns surrounded proposals to allow IDPs to vote from within refugee camps. Of the 2.6 million Iraqis who remain displaced from their homes, most are Sunnis from Ninewa.[135] An overwhelming number of the camps serving Ninewa IDPs are located within the KRI, prompting politicians without Kurdish ties to allege that the KDP would use their control over these camps to produce electoral outcomes favorable to their positions.[136] The further delegitimization of Ninewa's institutions and leaders in the eyes of the Sunni community could provide additional opportunities for insurgent activity—a phenomenon that has already played out after Sunnis boycotted elections in 2005.[137]

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[133] Chmaytelli, Maher, "Iraq sets May 12 date for elections to be contested by PM Abadi, Iran allies," *Reuters,* January 22, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-election/iraq-sets-may-12-date-for-elections-to-be-contested-by-pm-abadi-iran-allies-idUSKBN1FB10G.

[134] Author interviews with multiple Ninewa politicians, Iraq, January 2018.

[135] Cattler, David, "A Survey of the Near East: Implications for US National Security," *The Washington Institute,* March 13, 2018. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/a-survey-of-the-near-east-implications-for-u.s.-national-security.

[136] Author interview with Hunain Qado, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[137] Hamilton, "The Fight for Mosul," p. 9.

Caught in the Middle: Erbil vs Baghdad

Ninewa plays a key role in the conflict between the central government and the Kurds. Its northern and eastern borders are not only considered disputed territories under Article 140 of the Iraqi constitution, they also contain some of the country's most lucrative oil resources. As a result, the central government and the KRG have battled for influence within the province, often by means of their political control over the security sector. ISIS' seizure of Ninewa in 2014 led to further intensification of this long-simmering conflict.

Pathway Two: Erbil vs Baghdad

Conflict Drivers

- Control over Ninewa's disputed territories
- Use of Ninewa politicians and security forces to advance KRG budget and autonomy objectives
- Revenue from oil fields in Ninewa Plains
- Status of September 2017 KRG independence referendum

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms

- **CT Diversions:** security forces responsible for CT reassigned to address Erbil-Baghdad conflicts
- **Coordination Collapse:** collapse of joint intelligence and operational coordination
- **Fractured Community Defenses:** splitting of non-Kurdish communities into pro-Baghdad and pro-Erbil camps prevents united security initiatives

Fight for the Disputed Territories

The core political objective fueling Baghdad and the KRG's competition for control over Ninewa's security sector has been the establishment of de facto ownership over the disputed territories. Both sides recognize that by maintaining forces on land whose ultimate fate will supposedly be determined through an Article 140 referendum process, they are better able to build political connections, influence local powerbrokers, and employ coercive measures in ways which improve their chances for permanent ownership of the territory. The obvious fact that both sides are playing this game has led minority politicians to campaign on the slogan "No to demographic change!" *("la lil-tagheer al-demographi").*

ISIS' 2014 rise to power initially appeared disastrous for the KRG's military position in Ninewa. Much like the Iraqi Army, the Peshmerga quickly abandoned positions in ethnically non-Kurdish territory. The extent of the Peshmerga collapse was so severe that, until both U.S. and Iranian forces intervened on their behalf, many—including President Barack Obama— feared that the ISIS onslaught would reach all the way to Erbil.[138] Concerns about the safety of Americans in the Kurdish capital ultimately proved to be the deciding factor in the U.S. decision to launch a military campaign against ISIS.[139]

But as the U.S. began to pound ISIS positions through airstrikes coordinated with Peshmerga units, Kurdish fortunes rapidly improved. With Iranian ground support and U.S. firepower paving the way, the KDP was able to retake its pre-ISIS territory within Ninewa—then it kept going. At the

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[138] President Barack Obama, "Statement by the President," *White House Office of the Press Secretary,* August 7, 2014. https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/08/07/statement-president.
[139] Ibid.

conclusion of the counter-ISIS campaign, the KDP had dramatically expanded its control over the Ninewa Plains and the northwestern portion of the province. Their dominant positions in these territories also convinced a variety of non-Kurdish units to pledge loyalty to the KRG in exchange for guns and money.

Following the KRG's independence referendum, Kurdish gains were erased as rapidly as they had materialized. In October 2017, PMF and ISF units rolled back all of the advances made by the KDP, to include territory near Bashiqa, the Mosul Dam, Sinjar, Tel Afar, and other cities within the Ninewa Plains.[140] Additionally, KDP influence with many of its former non-Kurdish clients appears to be waning as its own budgetary problems compound its lack of on-the-ground presence.

The post-referendum fallout has also dealt a major blow to the KRG's energy sector—and by extension, its ability to pay for independent state institutions. While oil fields in Kirkuk were the biggest loss, clashes in the Ninewa Plains has likewise prevented production. Additionally, battles between Iraqi and Kurdish security forces near Rabia and Zummar restored GoI control over key export routes into Syria and Turkey. By securing these routes, the ISF and PMF were able to ensure that the central government could control revenues from the Kirkuk oil fields. The stakes for control over these routes remain high. By ceding its influence, the KRG remains dependent on central government resource allocations, to include funding for civil servant salaries. Given the widespread realization within the KRG that oil revenues and foreign investments represent their mostly likely path towards achieving de facto autonomy, they may continue to seek avenues to increase their control over oil and natural gas revenues—including through influence over Ninewa's security enterprise.

Advancing Political Objectives Through Security Policies

The KRG's ouster from much of the disputed territories has led to an increasingly popular view among analysts that Erbil is no longer a major player in Ninewa's security sector. But despite those claims, the KDP will continue to exert its influence within the province. While its Peshmerga may have been forced to retreat, the KDP's political leaders remain entrenched within Ninewa's civilian institutions. Unlike the Sunni community or the incredibly fractured minority groups, the KDP remains a unified force. The already small Christian community, for example, has between 12-14 political parties vying for support.[141] Meanwhile, Kurds in Ninewa essentially have one option. While this unity has led to corruption and poor governance in the KRG, it has also allowed the KDP to compete successfully in provincial elections. As of March 2018, the current head of the provincial council, the interim governor, the mayor of Sinjar, and many other key players are Kurdish members of the KDP who maintain offices within the KRI. While the KDP is dominant, the PUK has also worked to maintain relationships with the Shammar, Tayy, Jabour, and Hadid tribes.[142] The KRG will continue to look to friendly politicians in Ninewa to support its negotiations with the central government, particularly on issues related to regional autonomy and budget allocations.[143]

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[140] "Iraq takes disputed areas as Kurds 'withdraw to 2014 lines,'" *BBC News,* October 18, 2017. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-41663350.
[141] Author interview with Dr Srood Maqdasy, Christian MP in the KRG Parliament, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.
[142] Mansour, Renad, "Mosul After the Islamic State: The Kurdistan Region's Strategy," *Carnegie Middle East Center,* May 20, 2016. http://carnegie-mec.org/2016/05/19/mosul-after-islamic-state-kurdistan-region-s-strategy-pub-63615.
[143] Ibid.

The Role of Kurdish Security Forces in Post-Invasion Ninewa

The 2003 U.S. invasion marked the beginning of an unprecedented era of Kurdish domination in Ninewa. As the U.S. occupation had de facto excluded Sunnis from participation in the security sector, they continuously relied on other demographics to fortify military and police forces. Following a reduction of U.S. forces in Mosul in 2004, AQI quickly filled the void by defeating local security forces and establishing control over western Mosul and areas of the left bank.[144] Coalition Forces recaptured the city after two weeks, but only with the support of Shiite police commandos and several thousand Kurdish Peshmerga.[145] As a result, Prime Minister Ayad Allawi incorporated entire Peshmerga units into the Iraqi Army, particularly within the 2nd IA Division.

The changing ethnic balance of Ninewa's security sector was reinforced by the first national and provincial elections held in January 2005. Sunni Arabs boycotted the provincial elections, allowing Kurdish bloc members to capture 31 of the 41 seats on the Ninewa Provincial Council. This newfound political power allowed the Kurdish and Shiite blocs to appoint local officials and award local contracts. Though Kurds represented 27 percent of Ninewa's population at the time, Kurds accounted for 63 percent of the provincial government. Moreover, both the Iraqi military chief of staff and the commander of the 2nd Iraqi Army division were Kurdish. As a result, the KDP could wield enormous influence in Ninewa, including over Mosul's security. This created resentment among the Sunni Arabs against the "outsider" Shiites and Kurds.[146]

Kurdish fortunes began to shift in 2007. In addition to combatting AQI, the Surge also enabled the central government to end the Kurdish domination of Ninewa's formal security forces. Lieutenant General Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq, the newly appointed Sunni head of the NOC, swiftly cut Kurdish ties to the Mosul-based 2nd IA Division. As the Surge gained momentum, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki forged a temporary alliance with Mosul's Sunni Arabs to roll back Kurdish Peshmerga in the disputed territories. The increasing strength of Moslawi Sunni Arabs against the Kurds was reinforced by the January 2009 Ninewa provincial elections, when Sunni Arabs won 48.4 percent of the vote and an outright majority on the provincial council by claiming 19 of the council's 37 seats. Atheel Nujaifi became governor, restoring Sunni dominance in the province.[147]

But the reduction in Kurdish influence would prove to be short-lived. Though Mosul remained relatively peaceful until 2011, provincial security began to deteriorate as tensions between local and federal officials worsened. In 2011, Governor Nujaifi deepened his relations with the Kurds, pivoting away from Baghdad. According to Michael Knights, "this schism was at the root of the Mosul security crisis: the local government increasingly placed itself in the Kurdish camp, undermining Sunni solidarity and aligning the provincial government against the very federal structures that were responsible for securing Mosul."[148] Maliki tried to undermine Nujaifi by reaching out to anti-Kurdish Sunnis and minorities, while Nujaifi gathered his support among anti-Maliki Sunnis. The resulting political hostility damaged relations between security forces and Moslawis, exacerbated by Nujaifi's political campaign attacking the ISF.[149]

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144 Hamilton, "The Fight for Mosul," p. 9.
145 Ibid., p. 9.
146 Knights, Michael, "How to Secure Mosul," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy,* No.38, October 2016, p. 7.
147 Ibid., p. 7-8.
148 Ibid., p. 8.
149 Ibid., p. 10.

These pro-KRG politicians play a particularly critical role in the "local control" debate. As part of its bid to limit Baghdad's influence in border regions, the KRG strongly favors decentralized control over Ninewa's security sector.[150] The less connected the provincial security apparatus is to Baghdad, the more opportunities exist for the KRG to exert its influence and ensure pro-KRG military policies. The formation of units like the Sunni Jazeera Brigade were part of this strategy, with the ultimate goal of creating a pro-KRG "buffer force" to prevent direct clashes with Shia PMF.[151] As the ability to influence Sunni tribesmen has dramatically declined following the post-referendum loss of territory near Zumar, Rabia, and Makhmour, the importance of pushing for weaker central control over security forces has only increased.

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Erbil vs Baghdad

For many U.S. and Iraqi officials, the cooperation between Kurdish and GoI security forces during the campaign to retake Ninewa represented an unprecedented and hopeful sign of the future.[152] The subsequent collapse of that initiative provides useful examples of how disputes between the KRG and GoI create additional space for an ISIS 2.0.

Coordination Collapse

First, these disputes significantly hamper the ability of security forces to effectively undertake joint operations. Poor relations preclude a number of actions that would enhance the effectiveness of already strained military and police forces. Now-

> **The Baghdad-Erbil conflict can cause units that would normally be fighting ISIS to instead fight each other.**

opposing security forces lack the ability to coordinate simultaneous operations against ISIS networks that may span KRG-GoI zones of control, thus allowing insurgents to continuously escape counterinsurgency campaigns and live in the "grey zone" between often-hazy frontline positions. They lack the ability to share intelligence information generated as a result of their operations. They lack the ability to conduct a "forward passage of lines" whereby units can pass through the front lines of another security service to employ the most desirable routes. And they lack the ability to leverage unique capabilities that only one side may possess. These factors lead to provincial security forces whose total capacity is less than the sum of its parts. While some leaders from both the KRG and the GoI continue to acknowledge the importance of continued counterterrorism cooperation, such efforts have largely collapsed since September 2017.[153]

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[150] Mansour, "Mosul After the Islamic State: The Kurdistan Region's Strategy."
[151] Ibid.
[152] Carter, Ash, "A Lasting Defeat: The Campaign to Destroy ISIS," The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, Harvard University, October 2017. https://www.belfercenter.org/LastingDefeat.
[153] In example, see meeting between Lahur Talabany (head of PUK counterterrorism services) and General Talib Kanani (CTS commander): Talabany, Lahur (@LahurTalabany). "Had important discussion w #Iraqi President Fuad Masum & Talib Kanani, Head of Iraqi Counter Terrorism on importance of strong cooperation in fight against ISIL especially in disputed territories. #Kurdish efforts in combating terrorism & securing stability have been significant." March 15, 2018, 10:38 AM. Tweet. https://twitter.com/LahurTalabany/status/974339108914024450.

CT Diversions

Even worse, the Baghdad-Erbil conflict can cause units that would normally be fighting ISIS to instead fight each other. Following the referendum, ISOF and PMF units were quickly moved from Ninewa to Kirkuk to retake disputed territories from the Peshmerga. Today, security forces that could normally focus on counterinsurgency are instead manning borders and checkpoints where KRG and GoI zones of control collide. ISOF-2, the unit responsible for Ninewa, also directs operations in Kirkuk. As such, CTS forces in Ninewa will typically be the ones most likely to respond to contingencies in Kirkuk—whether terrorism or Kurdish related. While the recent security situation has allowed them to maintain this operational tempo, increased demands could easily exceed the unit's capacity.[154]

Fractured Community Defenses

Lastly, the local militias ostensibly meant to protect their communities against extremists often become pawns in the larger Baghdad-Erbil struggle. Even groups from the same ethnic communities, when supported by different power centers, work at cross purposes rather than collectively. The constant feuding between these security forces ensures that their defense against an ISIS insurgency will remain insufficient. Even worse than simply failing to coordinate their efforts, the KRG and GoI are actively harming their shared cause.

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[154] Author interview with Iraqi security official, Iraq, 2018.

Command and Control

While intense rivalries among security services and disputes regarding tasks, authorities, and the chain of command may fundamentally seem like issues of military strategy, all of these decisions send important signals to political stakeholders. Who is doing something, where they are doing it, what they are allowed to do, under what restrictions, and under whose command are all critical questions for leaders weighing whether or not to support a proposed strategy. As security forces continue their transition from high intensity operations designed to clear ISIS from cities into more steady-state stability operations, these disputes have become increasingly apparent.

Pathway Three: Command and Control	
✷ **Conflict Drivers**	⚙ **ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms**
• Evolving roles for security services in post-liberation phase • Inter-service rivalries • Competing chains of command • Political preferences for task allocation	• **The Competence Question:** decline of public confidence in security forces due to 1) misallocation of capabilities, and 2) task duplication or oversight • **Unaccountable Units:** lack of accountability for abuses due to unclear reporting and oversight authorities

Shifting Roles and Authorities in the Post-Liberation Phase

The dire security situation that erupted in 2014 required many of Iraq's security services to assume roles for which they were not originally intended. The most dramatic example was the Counterterrorism Service (CTS). Rather than performing the precision raids for which they were intended, the CTS' effectiveness prompted senior leaders to task them with retaking entire cities. The Iraqi Army—supposedly an institution meant to protect the nation from outside threats—has primarily served as a tool to fight domestic insurgency. The *hashd al-sha'abi*, originally intended to serve as an organic hold force for their local areas, has instead deployed to regions far beyond their natural bases of support. In Ninewa, the need to conduct shaping operations between Mosul and Tel Afar prompted the GoI to involve PMF units which, for political reasons, it would have preferred to sideline.[155]

With Ninewa now liberated, many leaders within both the political and military spheres have strong preferences for how security services should be employed. Most proposals aim to return security services to the roles for which they were originally envisioned, even if, in practice, almost all units have needed to contribute to the daily counterterrorism fight. Rather than maintaining an obvious presence on city streets, the Iraqi Army would remain in garrisons, entering urban areas only in the event of major security incidents. The Ninewa Police would assume responsibility for routine issues. The CTS and NSS would refocus on targeted raids guided by precise intelligence. Proposals on the *hashd* role vary wildly, ranging from complete dissolution to the dramatic expansion of their formal

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[155] According to U.S. Army doctrine, "shaping operations create and preserve conditions for the success of the decisive operation." In this case, Mosul was the decisive operation, while "shaping operations" conducted by the PMF to the west of the city ensured that ISIS could neither reinforce nor withdraw from Mosul. See ADP 3-0, *Unified Land Operations,* Department of the Army, October 2011.

responsibilities. While many of these concepts have solid theoretical underpinning, implementation challenges remain significant. The resulting difficulties could provide opportunities for insurgents.

Inter-Service Rivalries

Some disputes regarding unit responsibilities go beyond questions of technical capability or ethnic composition: many services simply do not like each other. Stories of Iraqi Security Forces turning their weapons against fellow ISF units from different services during the Battle of Mosul were not uncommon.[156] Nor are such instances a new phenomenon, as U.S. soldiers worked constantly to prevent such instances during earlier times in Iraq.

The PMF and the CTS exemplify these disputes as they represent fundamentally different visions of how Iraq's security forces should be constituted. On one side is a series of ethnically and sectarian-based militias reliant on religious legitimacy and often supported by Iran; on the other, a nonsectarian, professionalized organization with close links to the U.S. While many of the frontline fighters from both groups enjoy amicable relationships with their counterparts, the organizations themselves are often in tension. They compete for public prestige, responsibility, political clout, and money. Only a few years ago, CTS was hunting many of the Iranian-affiliated "special group" leaders who have now risen to power in the PMF.[157] For these reasons, the success of one service may be viewed as threatening by its rivals. Not unlike any other bureaucracy, the security services are engaged in turf wars (in addition to real ones), and their activities can often be interpreted through a bureaucratic-politics model. In contrast to a perspective which expects security forces to simply divide responsibilities to maximize the collective good, policy makers can expect the divergent interests and standard operating procedures of each service to produce widely varying organizational preferences.[158]

Inter-service disputes can rapidly evolve into political issues. In March 2018, a member of the Ninewa Police force was found dead in Ba'aj. Allegations rapidly circulated that he had been kidnapped and killed by PMF members. In response, Ninewa MP and former provincial council member Jameela Abeedi held a press conference to demand that Prime Minister Abadi launch an investigation to "name the security component" responsible for the "assassination operation." She then proceeded to outline the larger problems represented by the murder: "The terrorist gangs of kidnapping and assassination and banditry are a dangerous precedent and could spill discord among the components of the district…the associated armed groups are not disciplined or calculating according to the power of security authorities. Additionally, there are a number of military divisions securing the main route within the province and carrying out security patrols in a confusing fashion, especially along the route connecting Tel Afar, Sinjar, and Ba'aj."[159] The incident demonstrates that conflicts between security components—as well as uncoordinated security initiatives—will quickly draw the attention of political figures. Moreover, when the incidents involve conflict between local

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[156] Author discussions with witnesses, Iraq, January 2018.

[157] Author interview with security official, Iraq, 2018.

[158] Allison, Graham T., "Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis," *The American Political Science Review,* Volume 63, Issue 3 (Sep., 1969), pp.689-718.

[159] Abeedi, Jameela, "Representative from Ninewa: Assassination of a man in Ba'aj is a dangerous precedent and I demand Abadi to investigate this incident," *Rudaw,* March 17, 2018. [in Arabic, translation by author]. http://www.rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/1603201811.

and non-local forces, as it did in Ba'aj, the dispute can rapidly come to represent broader concerns regarding the composition of security forces.

Divergent and Unenforced Reporting Requirements

Military operations require that all elements ultimately answer to a single commander who can synchronize the organization's efforts, a principle called "unity of command."[160] Efforts to achieve this end state in Ninewa have been decidedly mixed. While the NOC performs this function in theory, its actual influence on daily operations remains questionable. The NOC's roots lie in the Army. Most of its officers are drawn from the Ground Forces Command, an Army-based institution in the Ministry of Defense. However, most of the other security services are not MoD organizations, especially were the IA to eventually remain outside of the cities. The local police report to the MoI, and thus have incentives for responding to demands flowing through their own reporting chains. The CTS, which reports directly to the Prime Minister rather than through the Minister of Defense, also maintains its own parallel chain of command. Lastly, the PMF, although technically answering to both the NOC and a regional PMF council, in reality is far more responsive to their own political leaders and the will of powerful, Iranian-directed Shia militia groups. During interviews with the authors, officials in the NOC pointed to their "coordination" with the PMF but acknowledged that they did not actively direct PMF operations.[161] Witnesses have also relayed anecdotes of attempting to report misconduct by PMF units, only to be told by NOC authorities that they do not control the PMF. Even if they were to follow orders of the NOC, PMF leaders reported a sense that security forces in the province lacked an overall commander.[162] To compensate, these groups take matters into their own hands by expanding their efforts to laterally coordinate with other IA and PMF units.[163] While "cross-talk," the military term for coordination with parallel units, is normally considered a useful practice, it becomes less so when used as a substitute for higher command authority.

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Command and Control

The Competence Question

The desire to significantly alter the roles which security forces assumed during Ninewa's liberation may encompass greater risk than proponents typically admit. As Iraq has witnessed on multiple occasions, local police forces struggle to deal with real insurgent threats. They remain the least well-equipped and easiest to intimidate during off-duty hours. Although the idea of keeping heavily armed, non-local units outside of the cities has clear appeal, trusting the Ninewa Police with too many security responsibilities could backfire. Were the police to face sustained losses or even collapse, the IA response could prove highly problematic. As currently envisioned, IA units will remain garrisoned outside a city, limiting their situational awareness, and will only enter in crisis scenarios. Such operations are unlikely to engender the trust of the local population. U.S. forces learned the same lesson in the early years of the Iraq War, prompting military leaders like General

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[160] "Joint Publication 3-0: Joint Operations," U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, January 17, 2017, p. A-2.
[161] Author interview with NOC officials in Mosul, early 2018.
[162] Author interview with Hunain Qado, Iraqi MP and leader of Ninewa's Shabak PMF unit, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.
[163] Ibid.

Petraeus to issue orders demanding that soldiers would no longer "commute to war" and would instead live among the Iraqi people in order to secure them.[164] The end result may be a misallocation of security capabilities, where the units most capable of defeating insurgents are removed from the fight.

Furthermore, ground-level realities have precluded the actual implementation of the planned transition to "police primary" operations. The IA still performs the bulk of the security responsibilities in much of the province and maintains a significant presence within the cities, despite the expressed desire to minimize their role.[165] To this point, local police forces have not proven that they can fully assume the Army's responsibilities.[166] The fact that the Army may need to continue filling in the security gap is particularly problematic given that, as of March 2018, the three divisions operating in the province were manned at around 50 percent strength.[167] Thus, the proposed roles for the various security forces in Ninewa are not only fraught with risk, but also ill-synchronized with stated policy objectives.

Unclear and often-unenforced oversight authorities carry two primary risks. The first—which is also reinforced by inter-service rivalries—is the insufficient coordination of security service efforts. The inability of a commander to generate a common understanding of the battlefield within his own headquarters and those of his subordinates hinders the entire force's ability to respond to security threats that span multiple sectors of responsibility. Subordinates failing to accurately report their situation leave the commander uninformed, and a commander failing to synchronize the efforts of his units means that critical tasks will either remain unaddressed or duplicated. As a result, ISIS can continue to exploit the desynchronized operations of Ninewa's security forces. This increased insurgent activity then leads to doubt among political fence-sitters regarding the competency of Baghdad's security apparatus.

Unaccountable Units

The second consequence of the NOC's failure to achieve unity of command is the inability to hold commanders responsible for abuses committed by their units. When groups operate outside formal reporting authorities, the fog of war begins to preclude conclusive determinations about the institutional culpability for acts of sectarian reprisal and corruption. The inability to understand what security services are actually doing also makes it harder to credibly confirm or deny "fake *hashd*" allegations. Reports from civilians accusing abusive militias of an association with the PMF are common, while conversely, *hashd* units frequently exploit confusion surrounding their status to deny formal affiliation with the PMF. Without clear, enforced reporting mechanisms, ISIS will exploit the resulting grievances to drive a wedge between security services and the population.

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[164] Petraeus, David, "How We Won in Iraq," *Foreign Policy,* October 29, 2013. http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/10/29/how-we-won-in-iraq/.
[165] Author interview with security official in Iraq, 2018.
[166] Author interview with NOC Commander Major General Najim Jabouri via WhatsApp, March 2018.
[167] Ibid.

The Militia Question

While the future of the PMF is a contentious topic nationwide, their status in Ninewa remains particularly complicated. Both the Kurds and the Sunni community harbor intense dislike for the Shia PMF groups which have gained prominence in the province. Meanwhile, the TMF program seems increasingly in jeopardy, despite the fact that no clear path exists for replacing its fighters or providing them with alternatives to their current occupation.

Pathway Four: The Militia Question

Conflict Drivers

- Resource disparity between Shia and non-Shia units
- Baghdad trepidation about creation of Sunni fighting forces
- Deeply negative perception of Shia PMF, particularly non-local groups

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms

- **Rural Safe Haven:** increasing shortage of hold forces in Sunni tribal areas
- **TMF DDR:** unclear path for disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of "off-ramped" TMF, creating pool of unemployed, disaffected Sunni fighters
- **Sectarian Spiral:** grievances against PMF create spiral of attacks and reprisals

PMF: A Temporary Solution or Permanent Institution?

In contrast to the formal security forces, leaders in Ninewa view the very existence of the PMF as a disputed topic. Many accuse them of being an "illegal" and "unconstitutional" force. Some leaders currently operating *within* the PMF framework have even demanded the dissolution of *hashd* units given the new realities of the post-liberation era.[168] These PMF leaders are likely motivated by the second-tier status of their non-Shia forces within the Shia-dominated PMF. As the leaders of many minority leaders have stated publicly, they will work with whichever entity provides them with the support required to control their community's territory.
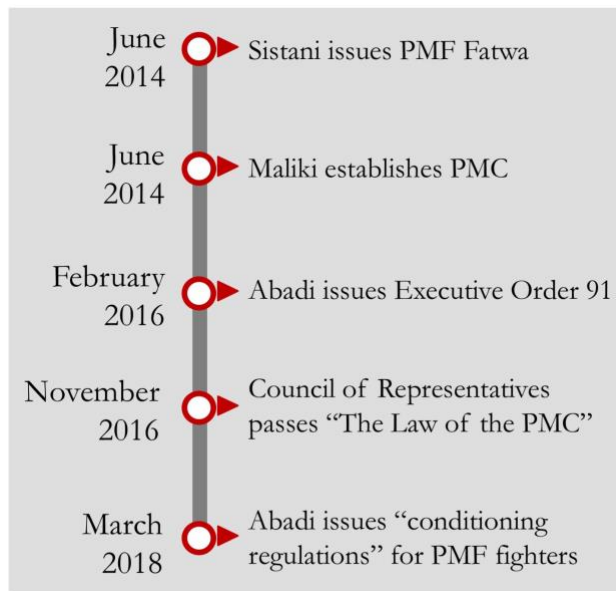
Meanwhile, Shia-affiliated *hashd* leaders dismiss calls for disbanding the PMF. Its leaders make a range of claims for their continued existence, ranging from the ludicrous (the PMF are uniquely qualified for urban warfare, while the Army supposedly is not)[169] to the more plausible (locally constituted PMF units are more ethnically representative of minority communities than the formal security services). Furthermore, after suffering significant casualties during the campaign against ISIS, PMF units believe they have earned their place among Iraq's formal security institutions and do not intend to relinquish their newfound power. To compound their growing institutional legitimacy, many PMF leaders appear intent on consolidating their units' military gains into electoral victories—despite express legal prohibitions against PMF political activities. Towards that end, Hadi al-Ameri's PMF-based *Fatah al-Moubin* ("Manifest Victory") Coalition secured the second-most seats

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[168] Author interview with Atheel Nujaifi, Erbil, Iraq, January 2018.
[169] Author interview with PMF leader Hussein al-Rumahi, Secretary General of the al-Wafa Party, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

in the May 2018 elections, trailing only Moqtada al-Sadr's *Sairoon* Alliance, itself led by the commander of one of the PMF's largest militia groups.[170]

The PMF appears to have gained the upper hand in this debate. Despite the objections of Sunni and Kurdish leaders, the PMF have become an increasingly institutionalized part of the Iraqi state—even if many of its groups continue to pursue their own interests. Three major decisions have made the near-term dissolution of the PMF unlikely. First, to build on the legitimacy of Sistani's Fatwa, Prime Minister Maliki issued a decree announcing the establishment of the Popular Mobilization Committee (PMC, *Hay'at al-Hashd al-Sha'abi)* in June 2014.[171] Despite the fact that it seemed to contradict Article 9 of the Iraqi Constitution, which states that "the formation of military militia outside the framework of the armed forces is prohibited," the PMC quickly established itself as an influential political and military entity.[172] In February 2016, Abadi issued Executive Order 91, which declared that "the PMF will be an independent military formation and a part of the Iraqi armed forces, and attached to the general commander of the armed forces."[173] This move attempted to address allegations that the PMF were operating outside of Iraq's constitutional structure, while simultaneously consolidating the state's control over their actions. Executive Order 91 was superseded when the Iraqi Council of Representatives passed "The Law of the Council of *al-Hashd al-Sha'abi*" on November 26, 2016, an act which solidified the legal status of earlier PMF decrees.[174] While the law formalized the PMF's status as a part of Iraq's armed forces, it still exempted it from military laws regulating the minimum age and education requirements of its members.[175] On March 8, 2018, Abadi issued the latest decree regarding the status of the PMF.[176] The new regulation guarantees that PMF fighters will receive the

Timeline (left column):

- **June 2014** — Sistani issues PMF Fatwa
- **June 2014** — Maliki establishes PMC
- **February 2016** — Abadi issues Executive Order 91
- **November 2016** — Council of Representatives passes "The Law of the PMC"
- **March 2018** — Abadi issues "conditioning regulations" for PMF fighters

[170] Amir Toumaj and Romany Shaker, "Iranian-backed Iraqi militias form coalition ahead of parliamentary elections," *Foundation for the Defense of Democracy Long War Journal,* January 25, 2018. https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2018/01/iranian-backed-iraqi-militias-form-coalition-ahead-of-parliamentary-elections.php.

[171] Renand Mansour and Faleh A. Jabar, "The Popular Mobilization Forces and Iraq's Future," *Carnegie Middle East Center,* April 28, 2017. http://carnegie-mec.org/2017/04/28/popular-mobilization-forces-and-iraq-s-future-pub-68810.

[172] Ibid.

[173] Ibid.

[174] "The Law of the Council of *al-Hashd al-Sha'abi*," Iraqi Council of Representatives, November 26, 2016 [in Arabic, translation by author]. http://ar.parliament.iq/2016/11/26/.

[175] "Iraq: Legislating the Status of the Popular Mobilization Forces," *Library of Congress,* December 7, 2016. http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/iraq-legislating-the-status-of-the-popular-mobilization-forces/.

[176] "Prime Minister and Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces Dr. Haider al-Abadi issues conditioning regulations on the circumstances of the fighters of the PMF," *Media Office of the Prime Minister*, March 8, 2018. [in Arabic, translated by author]. http://www.pmo.iq/press2018/8-3-201803.htm.

same pay and retirement benefits of the formal security forces.[177] However, the law also requires the PMF to abide by the full range of military regulations, including the previously waived education and age requirements. The same stipulation would also require commanders to be graduates of military training courses, alternatively framed as either "providing access" to the training or "reigning in" commanders.

The Disappearance of a Sunni Hold Force

While Shia PMF units will most likely stay, TMF units appear increasingly imperiled. At its peak, the NSS-administered TMF program included approximately 12,000 "A-list," salaried fighters who had been "tri-vetted" by the U.S., the GoI, and the KRG. This number roughly equated to the approximately 17,000 police officers who Maliki had refused to pay during his second term, and thus factored heavily in the estimated number of local fighters needed in a new provincial hold force.[178] But as TMF forces suffered attrition during combat, commander requests to place "B-list" reserve fighters on their salaried rolls have been increasingly denied by Baghdad. As a result, units that are technically authorized to retain up to 600 fighters have often dwindled to little more than a hundred.[179] The central government remains highly skeptical of any Sunni forces operating outside the direct control of the security forces—a concern which also killed the Sons of Iraq program under Maliki. In contrast to the Shia *hashd* groups, which largely existed prior to the advent of the PMF, the *hashd al-asha'ari* lack a sophisticated political and military infrastructure to advocate for their continued support. As a whole, the TMF program has been a much more ad hoc system than the PMF. These factors, combined with prevailing political sentiments, have created a sense that the TMF's future is much shakier than their PMF counterparts. When combined with the February 2018 announcement of another potentially politically-motivated arrest warrant for Nujaifi—whose Ninewa Guard serves as the only significant Sunni PMF force in Ninewa—ethnically Sunni security forces appear to be disappearing, while the Shia PMF grows stronger.

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: The Militia Question

Rural Safe Haven

Many fighters from the *hashd al-asha'ari* reside in the same rural, tribal areas where ISIS was able to endure even in its most embattled days. With this in mind, the collapse of the TMF may produce a two-fold effect. First, the local hold forces responsible for securing long-running insurgent safe havens may be disintegrating at the very moment when they are most needed. The Iraqi Army, Federal Police, CTS, and even Ninewa Police are unlikely to hold the line against insurgents in the rural tribal areas. Instead, local tribesmen will most likely be the ones either confronting or supporting ISIS 2.0. Dramatically curtailing support to these areas, without substituting a new hold force that locals will accept, would allow ISIS to regenerate its forces in the countryside, much as it has in the past.

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[177] Reuters Staff, "Iraq's Shi'ite militias formally inducted into security forces," *Reuters,* March 8, 2018. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-militias/iraqs-shiite-militias-formally-inducted-into-security-forces-idUSKCN1GK354.

[178] Author interview with security officials, Iraq, January 2018.

[179] Ibid.

TMF DDR

Secondly, the fact that the TMF is responsible for holding many of the areas where ISIS has recruited successfully in the past means that its former fighters may eventually find new homes within an insurgent organization. As the dissolution of the Iraqi Army demonstrated, disillusioned fighters with no jobs can create long-term problems. If the TMF program continues to be marginalized without a clear path for the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former TMF fighters, it may end up providing ISIS with a source of new recruits.

Sectarian Spiral

In contrast to the TMF, the primary negative effect of continued large-scale PMF involvement would be to strengthen perceptions that Iran and non-local Shia groups are dominating the province. Furthermore, if an insurgency were to begin targeting local Shia PMF groups—like the Shia Turkmen or Shabak units—their patron Shia organizations from the south may escalate their involvement. An increased presence of Badr, AAH, or KH would almost certainly inflame tensions among the Sunni community and help fuel significant backlash.

Outsider Influence: The Role of Foreign Actors

The turmoil and instability caused by ISIS has opened the doors for foreign actors to expand their influence in Ninewa Province. As a result, increasing "outsider influence" in Ninewa generates intense debates surrounding Iraqi sovereignty and has the potential to disrupt stabilization efforts.

The foreign actors primarily responsible for these developments are Iran and Turkey. Not only have the two states cultivated local proxies, including both militia groups and political authorities, they have also dispatched their own security forces within Ninewa to directly further their agendas. Their activities continue to fuel controversy, resentment, and uncertainty.

While this section does not discuss Saudi Arabia at length, the Kingdom also casts a shadow over the province. Allegations that ISIS is a proxy of Gulf states like Saudi Arabia and Qatar still pervade discussions in Iraq, particularly among the Shia.[180] The reality is more nuanced. Despite the billions of dollars it has invested into spreading Wahhabism, Saudi Arabia has been a critical partner for U.S. counterterrorism efforts.[181] It was also a major donor during the February 2018 Iraq Reconstruction Conference in Kuwait.[182] Yet, the perception that Saudi Arabia views Iraq as a mere battlefield to counter Iranian influence still runs strong among Iraqis. Even as Saudi Arabia has begun to develop ties with Shia Iraqi nationalists like Moqtada al-Sadr, many Iraqis remain convinced that the Saudis operate on a purely sectarian basis.[183]

Pathway Five: Outsider Influence	
✳ **Conflict Drivers**	⚙ **ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms**
• Sovereignty debates regarding foreign forces on Iraqi soil • Imposition of foreign agendas • Election meddling	• **Iran's Army:** Iranian presence within PMF fuels distrust between those forces and non-Shia civilians • **Turkey's War:** TSK intervention in Sinjar or elsewhere could generate further instability

Iran and Ninewa

The overthrow of Saddam Hussein in 2003 provided Iran with a historic opportunity to transform its relationship with Iraq. Since then, Iran has built ties with Iraqi politicians, parties, and armed groups to expand its influence. Iran has developed its militia and political proxies to such an extent that it can often pressure the GoI into decisions that are not fully aligned with Iraqi self-interest. To capture Iraq's levers of power, Iran funds and organizes political coalitions. Their efforts in the 2010

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[180] "Islamic State: Where does jihadist group get its support? *BBC News,* September 1, 2014. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29004253.

[181] "Fighting, While Funding, Extremists," *New York Times,* June 19, 2017. https://www.nytimes.com/2017/06/19/opinion/saudi-arabia-qatar-isis-terrorism.html.

[182] "Donors pledge $30bn for Iraq's post-ISIL reconstruction," *Al Jazeera,* February 14, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/billions-pledged-iraq-post-isil-reconstruction-180214114614406.html.

[183] "Iraq's Muqtada al-Sadr makes rare Saudi visit," *al-Jazeera,* July 31, 2017. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/07/iraq-muqtada-al-sadr-rare-saudi-visit-170731073908238.html.

parliamentary elections contributed to Ayad Allawi's failure to form a government, paving the way for the continued rule of Iran's preferred candidate, Nouri al-Maliki.[184]

Their activities continued apace in the run-up to the May 2018 elections. In March 2018, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis accused Iran of channeling money into Iraq to influence electoral outcomes.[185] These activities may have influenced the series of splits from Prime Minister Abadi's electoral list, particularly after the collapse of a one-day alliance between Abadi and the PMF-based coalition of Hadi al-Ameri, a preferred Iranian proxy. The electoral participation of Iranian-backed militia leaders has provoked concern among both Sunni and Shiite nationalist leaders.[186]

As discussed in *Part II: Ninewa's Security Sector*, various Iranian-backed PMF elements operate within Ninewa, including *Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq* (AAH), and the Badr Organization. While they do not maintain an overwhelming number of representatives in the province, they are widely considered to exert significant influence over some of the local-Shia *hashd* units. Since the disintegration of the Iraqi Army in Ninewa in 2014, the foreign operations branch of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), the Quds Force, has dispatched thousands of operatives into Iraq. The Quds Force, led by General Qassem Soleimani, has provided finances, heavy weaponry, logistical support, and advice to PMF units that advance its interests.[187] These Iranian-sponsored elements are largely viewed with suspicion by non-Shia communities. The Quds Force remains active in Ninewa, located in dozens of military and political premises established under the guise of the PMF.[188]

Turkey and Ninewa

As part of its increasingly interventionist regional activities, Turkey has significantly escalated its attacks on Iraq-based PKK elements during 2018. Following the collapse of Ninewa's security forces in 2014, the PKK established a presence in Sinjar, ostensibly to fight ISIS and rescue the local Yazidi population. Since then, the PKK has remained in Sinjar to establish, train, and equip local PKK-affiliated militias, including the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBS).[189]

In response, Turkey has bolstered its longstanding presence in the KRI by deploying additional troops to northern Iraq and occupying Camp Bashiqa in northeastern Ninewa. Though Turkey initially justified its deployment as a necessary protective measure against ISIS, its enduring objective has been to disrupt the PKK. Turkish Armed Forces (TSK) located at Bashiqa have trained Kurdish Peshmerga and Sunni units, including Nujaifi's Ninewa Guards. The Turkish presence has sparked

[184] Nader, Alireza, "Iran's Role in Iraq," *RAND Corporation,* 2015, p. 6.

[185] "Mattis Accuses Iran of Using Money to Sway Iraq's Elections," *Associated Press,* March 15, 2018, https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/15/world/middleeast/iran-iraq-mattis.html.

[186] Mahidyar, Ahmad, "Iran's militia allies gearing up for Iraq's parliamentary elections," *The Middle East Institute,* February 20, 2018, http://www.mei.edu/content/io/iran-s-militia-allies-gearing-iraq-s-parliamentary-elections.

[187] Schmitt, Eric, "Iran Sent Arms to Iraq to Fight ISIS, U.S. Says," *NY Times,* March 16, 2015. https://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/17/world/middleeast/iran-sent-arms-to-iraq-to-fight-isis-us-says.html.

[188] Majidyar, Ahmad, "Quds Force and Iraqi Allies Allegedly Setting up New Offices in Mosul," *The Middle East Institute,* May 1, 2017, http://www.mei.edu/content/io/quds-force-and-iraqi-allies-allegedly-setting-new-offices-mosul.

[189] Knights, Michael, "Turkey's Waiting Game in Sinjar," *Turkey Scope* Vol.1, No.8: 2017, http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Knights20170622-Turkeyscope.pdf.

backlash from Baghdad, which described the TSK's activities at Bashiqa as a violation of Iraqi sovereignty.[190]

Throughout late 2017 and early 2018, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan threatened a military attack against the PKK in Sinjar if it did not withdraw immediately. Partially in response to escalating tensions, on March 11, 2018 the Ninewa Provincial Council demanded that the PKK withdraw from Sinjar within ten days.[191] Though statements by senior Iraqi and Turkish officials had indicated that a joint Turkish-Iraqi operation would likely occur after the May 2018 elections, President Erdogan announced on March 25, 2018 that he had ordered the TSK to begin targeting PKK fighters in Sinjar.[192] Adding to the confusion, shortly after Erdogan announced that the TSK had begun operations in Sinjar, both Iraqi and Turkish military officials denied any such developments.[193] While the PKK has announced its withdrawal from Sinjar, security officials in Ninewa have indicated that the claims were most likely a bid to maintain their presence while avoiding additional military pressure.[194] The chaotic security situation in Sinjar has prompted Governor Nowfal Hamadi to call on federal authorities to provide a "large security force" to secure the area.[195]

In addition to direct military intervention, Turkey has stirred controversy through ties with local officials. Former governor Nujaifi still faces an outstanding arrest warrant issued in 2016 for allegedly collaborating with and allowing Turkish troops into Iraq in 2015. As of March 2018, Nujaifi had fled to Turkey—it is unclear as to whether the Iraqi government will call on the Turkish government for his extradition.[196]

ISIS 2.0 Mechanisms: Outsider Influence

Iran's Army

The first mechanism through which outsider influence can facilitate an ISIS 2.0 is by fueling continued resentment of the PMF, which have become an integral part of Ninewa's security apparatus. Similar to the mechanisms previously described under the *Local Control* pathway, Iranian-influenced PMF is viewed as controversial and unreliable by the Kurdish, Sunni, and non-Shia minority communities. Farsi-speaking IRGC officers at PMF checkpoints and headquarters can be alarming, creating resentment and grievances among locals who fear Iran's Shia agenda. This is a particularly problematic issue given the inescapability of the PMF's short-to-midterm involvement in

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[190] Tim Arango and Michael R. Gordon, "Turkey's Push to Join Battle for Mosul Inflames Tension with Iraq," *The New York Times,* October 23, 2016. https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/24/world/middleeast/turkeys-push-to-join-battle-for-mosul-inflames-tension-with-iraq.html.

[191] "Ninewa gives PKK fighters 10 days to exit from Sinjar," *Watan News Agency.*

[192] "Turkey begins operation in Iraq's Sinjar, Erdogan says," *The Telegraph,* March 25, 2018. https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2018/03/25/turkey-begins-operation-iraqs-sinjar-erdogan-says/.

[193] Menekse Tokyay, "Mystery of Erdogan's military operation in Sinjar," *Arab News,* March 25, 2018. http://www.arabnews.com/node/1273506/middle-east.

[194] "Yawar: It is on Baghdad to take a strong position against the Turkish military entrance in Iraq," *Iraq News Network* March 25, 2018. [In Arabic, translation by author]. http://aliraqnews.com/ياور-على-بغداد-أن-تتخذ-موقفاً-قوياً-ضد-ا/.

[195] "Governor of Ninewa demands quick actions to protect Sinjar after the withdrawal of the PKK," *Alghad Press,* March 24, 2018. [in Arabic, translation by author]. https://www.alghadpress.com/news/Iraq-News/149479/AlghadPress.

[196] Kassim, Omer, "Iraq's Judiciary Rules against Sunni Politician Ahead of Iraqi Elections," *Institute for the Study of War,* February 9, 2018. http://iswresearch.blogspot.com/2018/02/iraqs-judiciary-rules-against-sunni.html.

Ninewa's security. As discussed during the *Militia Question* pathway, Iran's continued involvement also impedes the GoI's attempts to exert authority over PMF groups.

Turkey's War

A potential Turkish military intervention in Sinjar has the potential to destabilize Ninewa Province. Not only could Turkish military operations lead to an increasing number of IDPs, civilian casualties, and infrastructure destruction, the situation could also lend itself to miscalculation or accidental conflicts among the myriad armed groups operating around Sinjar. If the conflict escalates, it could easily divert security forces from the counter-ISIS mission. Governor Hamadi's calls for increased security resources are emblematic of those concerns. As a symptom of reduced counterterrorism capacity and general instability, ISIS could expand its activities and exploit overstretched security forces.

Part IV:
Assessing the Current Approach

The Defeat-ISIS Strategy in Ninewa

Diplomatic Engagements
Civilian Foreign Assistance Programs
Military Programs

Assessing the ISIS 2.0 Pathways

Overview
Pathway One: The Battle for Local Control
Pathway Two: Erbil vs Baghdad
Pathway Three: Command and Control
Pathway Four: The Militia Question
Pathway Five: Outsider Influence

Identifying the Strategy's Failures

Overview

Having described the pathways through which politically brittle security forces can lead to the resurgence of ISIS, this section describes how the U.S. government is attempting to respond. To accomplish this, we outline the three core elements of the U.S. Defeat-ISIS strategy in Iraq:

1) **Diplomatic Engagement**—the policy preferences, talking points, and negotiation techniques employed by the U.S. government during its discussions with key stakeholders
2) **Civilian Foreign Assistance**—grants, loans, and civilian cooperation programs managed by DOS and USAID
3) **Military Assistance**—programs administered through DoD, generally consisting of train, equip, advise, and assist efforts

The Pathway Defeat Framework

These elements generally represent the ways and means that the U.S. government is employing to prevent the reemergence of ISIS. To identify gaps in the current Defeat-ISIS strategy, we demonstrate how the sum total of U.S. diplomatic engagements, civilian foreign assistance, and military programs are disrupting the ISIS 2.0 pathways—and where they are not. While it is theoretically possible to disrupt a pathway by attacking the underlying conflict drivers, we have chosen to focus our analysis on mitigating ISIS 2.0 mechanisms. The reasons are twofold. First, we believe a mechanism-based approach is more feasible given the steep challenge of solving some of Iraq's most intractable political problems. We do not purport to have grand solutions for disputes between Erbil and Baghdad or the central government and its provinces. Second, although this approach may not permanently solve a problem, it still has the ability to mitigate the politically-driven issues that could empower ISIS. Thus, our framework aims to address politically driven problems within the security sector, but in a way that focuses on ISIS 2.0's more proximate causes. After using this framework to analyze the status quo U.S. approach, we will identify the mechanisms which current policy is inadequately addressing.

The Defeat-ISIS Strategy in Ninewa

Status quo U.S. policy represents an attempt to improve rather than revise current institutions. In general, it maintains a largely hands-off approach to most domestic issues, focuses on standard "build partner capacity" efforts, and attempts to convert recent gains into a more durable peace by avoiding large-scale, potentially destabilizing reform initiatives. The main lines of effort for the current security sector reform strategy are strengthening the local police, improving ISF command and control, and professionalizing security forces.[197] Current efforts also aim to address the corruption, poor discipline, politically-based promotion system, and weak non-commissioned officer corps that have hampered ISF military effectiveness.[198]

This approach values the relative stability that has developed in Ninewa Province over the previous year. It holds that—contrary to other viewpoints that seem more alarmist—the situation in Ninewa looks relatively positive within the context of post-conflict environments. It takes a minimalist, incremental view of how the U.S. should engage key stakeholders. Current efforts refrain from asserting strong preferences for how to resolve the province's core political disputes and instead focus on the provision of technical assistance to trusted elements of the ISF. Rather than attempting to increase stakeholder buy-in through efforts to reform the security sector's makeup, this approach primarily aims to improve the current system's operations. The strategy attempts to accomplish these goals through three kinds of initiatives: **diplomatic engagements**, **civilian foreign assistance**, and **military assistance**. We will now describe these initiatives before assessing their contributions towards defeating the five ISIS 2.0 pathways (see *Appendix D* for a summary of these initiatives).

Diplomatic Engagements

Diplomatic engagements with stakeholders in Ninewa's security sector have been informed by five broad U.S. policy preferences, which we refer to using the following terms:

1) A "Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal Iraq"
2) Local, Multiethnic "Police Primacy"
3) Iran: "Go Home"
4) "Not in the Business of Nation Building"
5) ISF and the U.S.: An Enduring Partnership

"Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal Iraq"

This phrase applies writ-large to the U.S. vision for Iraq, but it is most commonly referenced in the context of disputes over federalism and the KRG-GoI relationship.[199] The U.S. has supported the post-referendum reassertion of federal authority by Baghdad, but also maintains its longstanding

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[197] Author interview with diplomatic officials, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[198] Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations, "Operation Inherent Resolve: Report to the United States Congress," 2017, p. 25.

[199] Nauert, Heather, "Department Press Briefing," *US State Department*, June 8, 2017. https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/dpb/2017/06/271653.htm#_ftn1.

position that the devolution of authorities to regional and provincial levels will ultimately benefit counterterrorism efforts. In Ninewa, the decreased military presence of KRG forces has resulted in a U.S. approach increasingly focused on GoI preferences rather than a truly tri-vetted approach. Despite these positions—at times interpreted as "abandonment" by some within the KRG—the U.S. still seeks to promote CT cooperation between the GoI and KRG. To mitigate tensions in the disputed territories, the U.S. has supported the concept of joint KRG-GoI patrols but is not willing to allocate U.S. troops to the initiative as it did in earlier years.[200]

Despite U.S. support for decentralized federalization, the U.S. is hesitant to advocate strongly for major devolutionary reform. Doing so could jeopardize its relationship with the central government, unleash turmoil were such reforms poorly implemented, and imperil other U.S. priorities. As such, the U.S. has adopted a "let the Iraqis decide" attitude on major reform decisions. If Iraq decides to undertake such reforms, the U.S. will support their implementation. If they do not adopt such reforms, the U.S. will not insist that they change course.

Local, Multiethnic "Police Primacy"

The U.S. government considers local police forces to be the most important security service for ensuring that ISIS will not remerge in the long-term. After the conclusion of major combat operations, policing rather than military operations must move to the fore of security efforts—a concept known as "police primacy." While local police will continue to need support from other elements of the ISF, their routine interactions with the population will enable them to perform the daily rule of law tasks needed to prevent an ISIS resurgence. Unlike most other security forces, the provincial police are also recruited from the areas in which they will serve, thus making them the security service most likely to be "local and multiethnic." To support this policy, the U.S. has focused on building law enforcement capacity through both civilian and military assistance programs.

Iran: "Go Home" [201]

Countering Iranian regional influence remains a major administration priority. As a result, the U.S. has demanded that the Iraqi government reign in Iranian-proxy groups in the PMF like Badr, AAH, and KH. Recouping diverted U.S. equipment, such as the nine M1A1 Abrams tanks widely reported to have come under the control of Iranian proxies, has proven to be a particularly significant issue.[202] In December 2017, the U.S. government also engaged in direct communications with Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Iranian Quds Force, warning him that Iran and its proxy groups would be held responsible for any Iranian-connected attacks on U.S. troops in Iraq.[203]

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[200] Michael Knights and Yousif Kalian, "Confidence- and Security-Building Measures in the Nineveh Plains," *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*, June 14, 2017. http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/confidence-and-security-building-measures-in-the-nineveh-plains.

[201] Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, "Remarks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir," *US State Department,* October 22, 2017. https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/10/274995.htm.

[202] David Axe, "In Iraq, Hezbollah's Got U.S. Tanks, and Washington Wants Them Back," *The Daily Beast,* February 20, 2018. https://www.thedailybeast.com/in-iraq-hezbollahs-got-us-tanks-and-washington-wants-them-back.

[203] Reuters staff, "CIA chief Pompeo says he warned Iran's Soleimani over Iraq aggression," *Reuters,* December 2, 2017. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-pompeo/cia-chief-pompeo-says-he-warned-irans-soleimani-over-iraq-aggression-idUSKBN1DX02P.

"Not in the Business of Nation Building"

U.S. desires to reduce commitments in Iraq, as well as abiding doubts over the effectiveness of large-scale reconstruction efforts, have led the administration to eschew a reconstruction role in post-ISIS Iraq.[204] Instead, the U.S. has made significant contributions to stabilization efforts, particularly through the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) and the State Department's Economic Support Development Fund (ESDF). American efforts to assist with reconstruction have focused on encouragement of U.S. private investment and diplomatic support for international fundraising initiatives.

ISF and the U.S.: An Enduring Partnership

Despite the fact that the U.S. wants to reduce its commitments in Iraq, the U.S. government still aims to 1) preserve the Global Coalition's ability to operate "build partner capacity" training sites, 2) remain embedded within ISF headquarters, and 3) preserve access to facilities needed to support counter-ISIS efforts in Syria. As such, U.S. diplomatic efforts have attempted to push back against Iraqi demands for a complete U.S. withdrawal, arguments which are especially prominent among Iranian-influenced politicians and PMF leaders. The U.S. has emphasized that it remains in Iraq as "invited guests," committed to ensuring the long-term success of the ISF.[205]

Civilian Foreign Assistance Programs

The State Department and USAID conduct a range of activities aimed at assisting Iraqi efforts to stabilize liberated areas, improve governance, enhance military capacity, and improve law enforcement capabilities. These initiatives fall into three categories: security assistance, bilateral economic assistance, and donations to the United Nations Assistance Mission-Iraq (UNAMI).

Security Assistance

Four funded programs constitute the bulk of U.S. security assistance in Iraq:

1) **International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE)**, which aims to develop the Iraqi criminal justice system[206]
2) **Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR)**, which enables efforts to remove the "explosive remnants of war" (ERW) in liberated territory, address WMD concerns, enhance border security, and develop CT capabilities within law enforcement units[207]

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[204] For example, see "Learning from Iraq," *Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR),* March 2013.
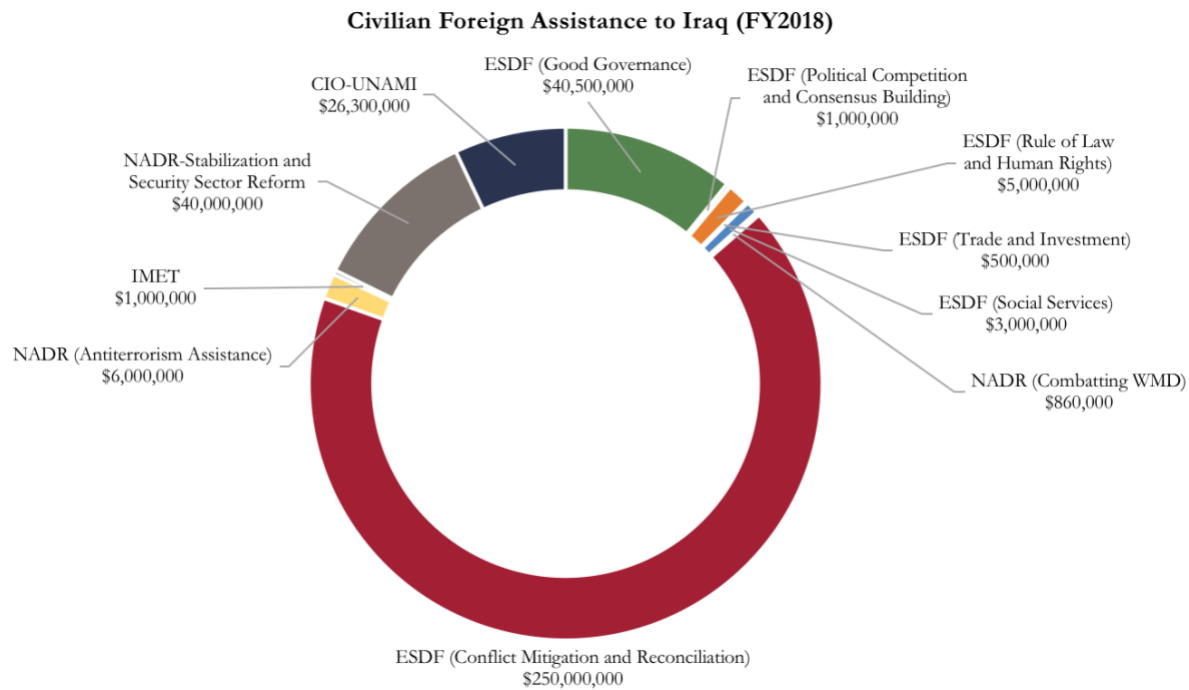
[205] CJTF-OIR PAO, "Coalition Announces Shift in Focus as Iraq Campaign Progresses."

[206] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," *Department of State,* p. 108.

[207] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 112. In Iraq, this includes four programs: the Global Threat Reduction (GTR) program, focused on counterproliferation, the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program, Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA), focused on improving law enforcement CT capabilities, and Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD), focused on the disposal of explosive remnants of war (ERW). See p. 113-114.

3) **International Military Education and Training (IMET)**, which funds professional development programs for Iraqi military personnel both in the U.S. and in Iraq[208]

4) **Foreign Military Financing** (**FMF),** which provides grants or loans that facilitate GoI purchases of military equipment[209]

The State Department also approves **Foreign Military Sales (FMS),** which it does in combination with military personnel located in the U.S. Embassy's Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I).

Civilian Foreign Assistance to Iraq (FY2018)

ESDF (Good Governance)
$40,500,000

CIO-UNAMI
$26,300,000

ESDF (Political Competition
and Consensus Building)
$1,000,000

ESDF (Rule of Law
and Human Rights)
$5,000,000

NADR-Stabilization and
Security Sector Reform
$40,000,000

ESDF (Trade and Investment)
$500,000

IMET
$1,000,000

ESDF (Social Services)
$3,000,000

NADR (Antiterrorism Assistance)
$6,000,000

NADR (Combatting WMD)
$860,000

ESDF (Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation)
$250,000,000

Note: Does not include MRA, which is tracked at the bureau rather than country level. Source: U.S. State Department [210]

Bilateral Economic Assistance

Two programs constitute the bulk of U.S. bilateral economic assistance to Iraq: the **Economic Support Development Fund (ESDF)** and the **Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)** program. ESDF supports "stabilization and recovery in areas liberated from ISIS; reinforces Iraq's own economic and fiscal reforms; strengthens governance and government responsiveness; and promotes reconciliation, accountability, and human rights."[211] These efforts are primarily channeled through the UNDP Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which executes: 1) light infrastructure rehabilitation, 2) livelihoods support, 3) local official capacity building, and 4) community

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[208] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 119.

[209] Ibid.*, p. 121.

[210] "Iraq Foreign Assistance," *Department of State,* March 24, 2018. https://www.foreignassistance.gov/explore/country/Iraq.

[211] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 94. In comparison to previous years, this program know also includes activities previously conducted in Iraq under the Economic Support Fund (ESF) and Democracy Fund (DF).

reconciliation. In Ninewa, the Trump administration has requested an additional focus on minority groups, particularly Christians.[212]

MRA initiatives aim to provide life-saving assistance to internally displaced persons within Iraq, typically within the camp context. These programs are usually enacted through local implementing partners and managed by State/Populations, Refugees, and Migration (PRM).[213] In 2017, the U.S. also funded similar activities under OFDA's International Disaster Assistance (IDA) account.[214] The State Department requested $1.195 billion in MRA funding for the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau in FY 2019 and designated Iraq as one of NEA's priority efforts.[215]

Contributions to International Organizations (CIO)

The U.S. has also supported the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) by providing it with annual contributions ranging from $26-31 million.[216] UNAMI produces political reporting, encourages national reconciliation, monitors and assists electoral processes, facilitates regional dialogue, and advances legal reform efforts.[217] UNAMI's office in Erbil is heavily involved in efforts to stabilize Ninewa.

Military Programs

Military programs fall within three categories: 1) train and equip, 2) advise and assist, and 3) security cooperation.

Train and Equip

Train and equip efforts are focused on "building the partner capacity" of Iraqi Security Forces. The Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) provides the resources required to execute those operations.[218] To bolster Ninewa Police capabilities, Coalition forces have run training programs at Camp Taji, Besmaya Range Complex, al-Assad Airbase (AAAB), and facilities in Baghdad.[219] Most Ninewa recruits attend training at one of the Baghdad locations, while al-Assad focuses on training police from Anbar. These programs often consist of little more than a basic five-week training course for recruits with no prior military or police experience.[220] These same individuals are then asked to perform standard law enforcement activities, while ostensibly remaining prepared to deal with potential insurgent threats.

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[212] Blanchard, "Iraq: in Brief," p. 10-11 and 13.
[213] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 99.
[214] Ibid., p. 86
[215] Ibid., p. 309 and 311.
[216] Ibid., p. 94
[217] "UN Assistance Mission for Iraq," *United Nations.* http://www.uniraq.com/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&layout=item&id=943&Itemid=637&lang=en.
[218] "Justification for FY 2019 Overseas Contingency Operations: Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF)," *Office of the Secretary of Defense,* February 2018. Slide 4.
[219] CJTF-OIR, "Building Partner Capacity," *US Department of Defense,* December 15, 2015. https://media.defense.gov/2016/Feb/27/2001459845/-1/-1/0/151215-O-ZZ999-001.JPG.
[220] Associated Press, "US-led coalition trains Mosul police, plans for IS-free Iraq," *Fox News,* February 3, 2017. http://www.foxnews.com/world/2017/02/03/us-led-coalition-trains-mosul-police-plans-for-is-free-iraq.html.

The Coalition has also employed a $50 million "police in a box program" to bolster the capability and synchronization of local police. The initiative utilizes shipping containers filled with office equipment, communications gear, light weapons, and vehicles to provide the reconstituted local police with the ability to quickly reestablish services in areas where their headquarters were destroyed. Shortly after its liberation, Mosul received several of these units. The Coalition has employed a similar program to assist the Iraqi Border Guard.[221]

Advise and Assist

These activities are generally conducted by special operations forces or conventional U.S. military personnel embedded within ISF headquarters. In contrast to train and equip efforts, they are primarily focused on enabling current operations. Soldiers embedded with ISF counterparts assist in planning, intelligence collection and analysis, force protection and the coordination of artillery or airstrikes.[222]

Security Cooperation

OSC-I runs the U.S. military's security cooperation with Iraq. While this effort also involves advising ISF, it tends to focus on broader, long-term collaboration, typically by engaging senior level officials at the ministerial level. It serves as the DoD component of U.S. Embassy Baghdad, and thus facilitates DOS initiatives which involve heavy military components, such as foreign military sales (FMS).[223] Personnel in OSC-I are akin to "military diplomats," both in their duty description and professional training. A significant portion of OSC-I's staff are "foreign area officers" (FAOs), regional experts with years of language training who spend most of their careers working in embassies.

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[221] Witten, Travis J., "US will use 'police in a box' to secure Iraq," *Business Insider*, July 6, 2017. http://www.businessinsider.com/us-will-use-police-box-to-secure-iraq-2017-7.
[222] Marshall, Crystal, "US-led coalition forces make decisive gains against ISIS in 2017," *US CENTCOM,* December 28, 2017. http://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/NEWS-ARTICLES/News-Article-View/Article/1405453/us-led-coalition-forc/.
[223] "Department of Defense Budget Fiscal Year (FY) 2019," *Office of the Secretary of Defense,* February 2018. p. 4-5.

Assessing the ISIS 2.0 Pathways

Overview

Having detailed the ways and means through which U.S. policy aims to disrupt the ISIS 2.0 pathway, we now examine whether these efforts are adequately addressing the mechanisms that could allow ISIS to regenerate its capacity. We conduct this analysis by assessing policy impacts on each of our five ISIS 2.0 pathways: *(1) The Battle for Local Control, (2) Erbil vs. Baghdad, (3) Command and Control, (4) The Militia Question,* and *(5) Outsider Influence.*

To judge the cumulative effects of U.S. policies, we assign a warning indicator to each mechanism. This indicator serves as a heuristic for how worried policymakers should be about a given mechanism. We arrived at these conclusions by evaluating the problem's current severity in combination with the effectiveness of U.S. policies that address it. The combination of these dynamics means that U.S. policies could be producing a: 1) seriously inadequate impact, 2) inadequate impact, or 3) adequate impact. *Seriously inadequate impacts* fail to address the ISIS 2.0 mechanism or may even lead to an amplification of its negative effects. *Inadequate impacts* are those which, while producing some positive results, fail to sufficiently address the problem. *Adequate impacts* address the problem sufficiently and are generally sustainable.

Pathway One: The Battle for Local Control

The U.S. has long expressed its support for further devolution, but it does not seem inclined to make strong demands of the GoI. While the U.S. wants to ensure that the Sunni and minority communities hold a stake in Iraq—and specifically that they have sufficient representation within the security forces—current public statements do not indicate that the U.S. government has waged a concerted campaign to advocate for significant structural reforms to achieve those ends. Instead, U.S. policy seems primarily designed to incrementally improve governance by focusing on anticorruption efforts and encouraging national-level reconciliation. While Abadi has provided Ninewa provincial leaders with the authority to coordinate stabilization efforts and the return of IDPs, these authorities have little impact on provincial officials' relationship with the security sector.[224] Rather than attempting to push Baghdad to formally delegate additional security authorities to the governor and provincial council, the U.S. has conceived the issue as one best addressed through improved local governance. Civilian officials in Anbar—who operate under the same federal system as Ninewa—enjoy a much stronger relationship with their military and police counterparts.[225] As a result of the governor's comparatively less corrupt and more capable administration, the civil-military relations within the province are largely productive. This dynamic contrasts sharply with the situation in Ninewa, where embattled Governor Nowfal Hamadi has been viewed as an inept, corrupt, and potentially illegitimate ruler. Unsurprisingly, he holds little influence with security forces. U.S. policy postulates that better leaders who can perform their duties in a competent manner can make the current system work.

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[224] Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations, "Operation Inherent Resolve," p. 39.
[225] Interview with security and diplomatic officials, Iraq, January 2018.

Pathway One: Local Control

Mechanism	U.S. Positions and Programs	Indicator	Assessment Explanation
ISIS Alliances	- **ESDF:** Encourage reconciliation and anti-corruption initiatives; deliver projects of high value to Sunni politicians - **T&E:** Local forces to assuage Sunni politicians and provide constituents jobs	🟢	Leaders not threatened enough to ally with radicals, but lingering concerns over ascendant Shia and enduring Kurdish political power
Baghdad Neglect	- **USDF**: Facilitate dialogue between Ninewa and Baghdad leaders - **LMPP:** Push local police as solution—but Baghdad not funding recruitment	🔴	Leaders skeptical of U.S. advocacy; U.S. pushing un-resourced solutions
Ethnic Security Dilemma	- **USDF:** Non-committal on future of minority militia groups - **LMPP:** Ideally use local police to replace militias—but not offering pathway	🟡	Confusion among minority leaders and increasing permanence of situation
IDP Resentment	- **MRA**: Provide critical supplies to IDPs, especially in KRG (OFDA/PRM) - **NADR:** Demining initiatives - **T&E:** Efforts to build local/multiethnic police capacity	🟡	Very poor police recruitment levels mean little progress on addressing security force-related IDP concerns
Illegitimate Elections	- **CIO:** Support for UNAMI-led election monitoring - **"Go Home":** Public criticism of Iranian election meddling - **T&E:** Efforts to build apolitical, institutional security forces - **AA:** Assist NOC with election security planning	🟡	Insufficient deterrent for security force interference; undermanned police unable to replace PMF

AA: Advise and Assist **CIO:** Contribution to International Organizations **ESDF:** Economic Support Development Fund	**LMPP:** *Local, Multiethnic Police Primacy* **MRA:** Migration and Refugee Assistance	**NADR:** Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related **T&E:** Train and Equip **USDF:** *Unified, Stable, Democratic and Federal*	🔴 Seriously Inadequate 🟡 Inadequate 🟢 Adequate

In regards to the ethnic composition of security forces, the U.S. likewise does not appear inclined to dictate any particular outcomes to Baghdad or Ninewa. In response to ideas like a provincial-level national guard force, the U.S. position seems to be: "We would support it if they did it, but that is their decision." This attitude—"that is an Iraqi decision"—permeates most aspects of this approach. As a result, the current demographic composition of security forces will likely remain approximately the same, with a potentially declining role for the Sunni population. Local provincial representation will largely reside within the local police and the PMF. As the TMF continues to wither and police forces remain undermanned, the balance of this local representation could increasingly tip in favor of Shia-affiliated units, leaving Sunnis few forces with which they directly identify.

Positions and Programs: "Local Control" Impacts

Within the *Local Control* pathway, U.S. initiatives address all ISIS 2.0 mechanisms, albeit in an insufficient manner.

First, diplomatic and military officials attempt to mitigate the **Baghdad Neglect** mechanism by reassuring Ninewa's leadership that U.S. officials are conveying local security interests during their conversations with Baghdad. Most Iraqis still consider the expression of U.S. policy preferences to be highly influential. When asked how the U.S. government could help prevent the return of ISIS, many leaders responded that the U.S. needs to "talk to Baghdad" to make sure that local security issues were being addressed.[226] But, while U.S. officials engage in this dialogue regularly, many local leaders still express dissatisfaction with the process. Naturally, many will remain dissatisfied unless all of their demands are fulfilled. However, this phenomenon is at least in part a result of the "let the Iraqis decide" aspect of *"Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal"* (USDF) policy. In many cases, these stakeholders feel as if the U.S. has remained on the sideline during disputes between provincial leaders and Baghdad because—in reality—it generally has. Regardless of the fairness of these stakeholders' criticism, their suspicion that U.S. officials are not representing their viewpoints in Baghdad mean that diplomatic efforts have not been fully effective in assuaging their concerns. This problem is exacerbated by the U.S. adherence to its *Local, Multiethnic "Police Primacy"* (LMPP) policy stance. The U.S. is pushing a security arrangement which—while popular among most stakeholders—is not being resourced. Baghdad remains unable—and to a degree, unwilling—to provide salaries for local police and TMF fighters, a key demand among politicians from a variety of constituencies. The inability to pay police and TMF hold forces serves as an example of the security neglect which many local leaders still fear. To a degree, the U.S. emphasis on local police force development, while simultaneously failing to convince Baghdad to finance such efforts, undercuts the power of its message. This failure also reduces other tools the U.S. could bring to bear: if Ninewa cannot recruit policemen, the U.S. cannot train or equip them. While it would be unrealistic for the U.S. to facilitate all local security demands, the real inability of Baghdad to deliver on such a crucial issue is highly problematic. The longer it continues, the more intense the divide between local and federal authorities will become, and the less the U.S. will be seen as an honest or effective broker. We therefore assess current U.S. efforts to mitigate the *Baghdad Neglect* mechanism as *seriously inadequate.*

USDF diplomatic engagement also serves as the cornerstone of the USG's impact on the **Ethnic Security Dilemma** mechanism. The U.S. has largely been unclear on its view of minority militia groups involved in local self-defense. While the U.S. clearly prefers that formal ISF take the security lead as part of its *Local, Multiethnic, "Police Primacy"* stance, it has also refrained from calling for the disbandment of groups like the Christian Ninewa Plains Protection Unit (NPU). In fact, in many cases, it has even supported these groups through train and equip efforts. This stance has had two effects. First, a great amount of confusion exists among Ninewa's leaders regarding the future of these groups. While they would be willing to have their forces join more formal institutions, no clear paths exist to accomplish that goal. This leads to a de facto reality: as local militias provide local security, establish routines, and become accustomed to the status quo dynamic, it may become harder to unwind the ethnically-based security system that is developing within the province. This means that the current situation is becoming stickier, thus making it more likely that ethnic security

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[226] Author interview with multiple leaders from Ninewa, Iraq, January 2018.

dilemmas may develop in the future. For these reasons, we assess that the decision to remain non-committal on the future of ethnic militias is currently having an *inadequate* impact on the *Ethnic Security Dilemma* mechanism.

U.S. officials have attempted to tackle the potential development of **ISIS Alliances** with Sunni politicians through the Economic Support Development Fund (ESDF), much of which has been channeled through the UNDP's Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS). Both of these initiatives involve significant outlays—especially in Mosul—designed to encourage community reconciliation, combat corruption, promote good governance, and restore key infrastructure. As of October 2017, U.S. funding had enabled over 350 FFS projects in Mosul, as well as more projects totaling $22 million in Sinjar and $34 million in the Ninewa Plains.[227] As such, these efforts may reduce the incentives for Sunni politicians who may otherwise wish to use ISIS as leverage against the central government. However, the U.S. should be wary of disproportionately targeting Congressionally-popular minority groups with its stabilization funding: such programs have little ability to address the *ISIS Alliances* mechanism, although they certainly have humanitarian and reconciliation benefits. If stabilization projects are to be justified on the grounds that they will keep Sunni communities "in the fold," then Sunni areas must receive the bulk of the funding. Furthermore, these initiatives do not address the KDP's continued dominance among elected leadership positions, nor the perception that Shia forces influenced by non-local actors continue to play a large role in-post liberation Ninewa, nor the continued lack of local representation within Ninewa's security sector. While those concerns remain, the significant scope of ESDF projects being delivered in Ninewa mean that, for now, Sunnis politicians should not feel like they need to resort to a more extreme tactic like insurgent alliances. We therefore assess that U.S. policies are currently *adequate* for the *ISIS Alliances* mechanism.

In response to **IDP Resentment**, the U.S. government has primarily focused on supporting the urgent needs of IDPs through Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) funding, generally overseen by State/Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). In the IDPs' hometowns, ESDF and FFS initiatives attempt to improve the conditions which IDPs would return to—for example, ensuring that schools have reopened. Likewise, NADR-funded demining programs facilitate the removal of unexploded ordinance and ISIS-laid improvised explosive devices (IEDs). However, none of these initiatives address the core concerns for refugees who have stayed away not for economic or development reasons, but rather because they fear the composition of forces stationed in their hometowns or along their return routes. The program that should be addressing this concern is the U.S. military's train and equip efforts, particularly those focused on the local police. However, as discussed earlier, these efforts have produced minimal results, a problem further accentuated by Baghdad's refusal to fulfill TMF requests to move replacement fighters from an unpaid reserve status to the TMF's salaried rolls. As a result, Ninewa—which has the highest number of IDPs among any of Iraq's provinces—is making minimal progress towards creating institutionalized, local, multiethnic forces.[228] These are the very forces needed to assuage IDP concerns. For these reasons, we assess that efforts to build local police forces are having an insignificant impact on the subset of IDPs whose primary concern is the security sector. Given the criticality of that specific issue, we assess that U.S. efforts are producing an *inadequate* impact overall.

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[227] Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Iraq Joseph Pennington, "Statement for the Record," *House Armed Services Committee,* October 3, 2017.
[228] "Integrated Location Assessment," *UN International Organization for Migration.* March 2017. p. 49.

Finally, U.S. efforts have attempted to address the **Illegitimate Elections** mechanism through contributions to UNAMI, public diplomacy, train/equip, and advise/assist. UNAMI officials are involved in assessing and reporting on the legitimacy of Iraq's elections, although concerns remain over whether the scale of their presence has been sufficient to both discourage and detect election tampering. The U.S. has complemented these efforts with increased public statements pointing to the dangers of Iranian election meddling in Iraq. However, neither of these efforts address the fact that the mere presence of security forces aligned with a particular political interest will lead many to believe that the results are illegitimate—again, an issue that local police forces are unable to address as currently constituted. As the absence of local police forces prevent some IDPs from returning, this problem also becomes entangled with the *Erbil vs Baghdad* issue. Security forces in the KRI have often been accused of intimidating IDPs into supporting their political interests, most recently during the referendum on independence.[229] While Coalition efforts to train and equip the IA have been more successful, the IA is still highly reliant on PMF units to provide security in many locations. The initiative which has the best chance of addressing the disposition of security forces are U.S. military advise and assist efforts, specifically attempts to help the NOC with their election security planning. However, there are few ways to plan around the shortage of apolitical forces. The increased capacity and reputation of the IA has helped address these concerns, but since no concrete initiatives have been undertaken to address this dynamic, we assess the current strategy as *inadequate*, and potentially a contributing factor to low voter turnout in Ninewa during the May 2018 elections.

Pathway Two: Erbil vs Baghdad

Frustration over the KRG referendum on independence runs strong within the U.S. government, although DoD still maintains a strong affinity for its Kurdish counterparts. After months of pleading with Masoud Barzani to pull back from the disastrous independence vote, many policy makers have been disinclined to imperil broader counterterrorism objectives to "bail out" Kurdish leaders widely recognized as thoroughly corrupt. After having achieved historic levels of ISF-Peshmerga cooperation during the campaign to liberate Mosul, any residual goodwill between the two sides has evaporated. Despite those setbacks, the U.S. has worked to facilitate an amicable solution to ongoing Erbil-Baghdad disputes and helped negotiate a significant easing of tensions in March 2018.[230]

Positions and Programs: "Erbil vs Baghdad" Impacts

The U.S. has attempted to address the diversion of counterterrorism forces to conflicts in the disputed territories (**CT Diversions**) by encouraging joint KRG-GoI patrols, building the capacity of counterterrorism forces, and helping the ISF cope with increased operational demands. Joint patrols between ISF and Peshmerga, a measure facilitated by U.S. troops prior to their withdrawal in 2011, remain a popular measure in Erbil but has failed to gain any traction in Baghdad. The U.S. theoretically supports the idea as well, but it has put little diplomatic or military capital into forcing the issue. The unwillingness of the U.S. to aggressively push for such a measure stems not only from the "let the Iraqis decide" aspect of the *"Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal"* policy, but is also a by-product of the *"ISF and the U.S.: An Enduring Partnership"* preference. The U.S. must ensure that its

[229] "Iraq – Complex Emergency: Fact Sheet #8, FY 2017," *USAID,* September 30, 2017. p. 2.

[230] Coker, Margaret, "After Months of Acrimony, Baghdad Strikes Deal With Kurds," *New York Times,* March 22, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/22/world/middleeast/iraq-kurds-agreement.html?hp&action=click&pgtype=Homepage&clickSource=story-heading&module=first-column-region&region=top-news&WT.nav=top-news.

commitments are politically sustainable, both at home and in Iraq. Domestically, this desire augurs for troop reductions in Iraq, which decreases the willingness to accept additional troop-requiring burdens.[231] In Iraq, visible troop deployments provide those opposed to an enduring American presence additional talking points, and thus are politically sensitive. As a result, joint patrols seem unlikely, and the ISF, PMF and Peshmerga will likely remain in a tense standoff throughout much of Ninewa's disputed territories.

Pathway Two: Erbil vs Baghdad

Mechanism	U.S. Positions and Programs	Indicator	Assessment Explanation
CT Diversions	- **USDF:** Encourage joint KRG-GoI patrols, but no U.S. troops - **T&E:** Build partner capacity of CT forces, facilitates multiple missions - **AA:** Help NOC plan for force movements and allocate taskings	🟢	Key units maintain enough capability to deal with current threat level—but barely. **T&E** working to fix.
Coordination Collapse	- **SC:** Facilitate high-level dialogue between security officials - **AA:** U.S. forces serve as intelligence sharing operational coordination stopgap	🟢	Although not ideal, U.S. can facilitate intel exchange, at times op coordination
Fractured Community Defenses	- **USDF**: "Hands off" approach creating militia realignment from KRG to GoI - **T&E:** Reduced resources to KRG leaves less for use on non-Kurdish militias	🟢	Natural unipolar alignment helps lessen intra-community divides

AA: Advise and Assist **ESDF:** Economic Support Development Fund	**SC:** Security Cooperation **T&E:** Train and Equip	**USDF:** *Unified, Stable, Democratic and Federal*	🔴 Seriously Inadequate 🟡 Inadequate 🟢 Adequate

If tensions escalate, the GoI will likely task additional elements from ISOF-2 to step in between the PMF and Peshmerga. As Iraq's most trusted and nonsectarian security force, it is better equipped to deal with escalation of force (EOF) scenarios that can challenge even highly capable units. This recurring requirement—which often diverts ISOF-2 from Ninewa to disputed territories in Makhmour and Kirkuk—could serve as a long-term distraction for a unit which should instead be focused on pursuing high payoff counterterrorism targets within Ninewa. To mitigate the impacts of increased operational demands on CTS, U.S. train and equip efforts have made significant investments in growing the force's capacity. The FY 2018 Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF) justification envisioned doubling the size of CTS to 20,000 personnel over the course of three years.[232] Additionally, the FY 2019 CTEF will support the creation of an additional special operations infantry brigade, albeit under the command of the Ministry of Defense.[233] This new unit will assume many of the more manpower-intensive tasks which have consumed CTS since 2014,

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[231] This change in mission may also require additional operational authorities. While soldiers operating in secure headquarters may only be conducting "advise and assist" (A/A) activities, those actually accompanying partner forces into potential combat scenarios will be conducing "accompany, advise and assist" operations (A/A/A).

[232] "Justification for FY 2018 Overseas Contingency Operations," slide 5.

[233] In Arabic, this unit is known as the "special forces" brigade ("*quwat khasa*"). However, US officials refer to it as a "Ranger Brigade" to draw a comparison to the American 75th Ranger Regiment, the US Army's special operations infantry unit. See "Justification for FY 2019 Overseas Contingency Operations," slide 6.

thus allowing them to continue to refocus on their core national-level missions and mitigating the impacts of the *CTS Diversion* mechanism. These train and equip initiatives are enhanced by U.S. advisory efforts. When forces are re-tasked to the disputed territories, advisors help the NOC continue conducing CT operations by assisting in operational planning and keeping U.S. officials appraised of the situation should additional U.S. military assets be required to deal with contingencies. Overall, these efforts are clearly on the right track. The fact that additional counterterrorism or border demands would exceed the current capacity of ISOF mean there is still potential for this mechanism to cause significant problems, but as current initiatives begin to take affect and tensions potentially ease on the Green Line, the programs will likely produce their desired impacts, even in the absence of joint patrols. We therefore assess that U.S. efforts to address the *CT Diversions* mechanism are an *adequate* solution to the problem.

The U.S. military has mitigated the collapse of GoI-KRG operational and intelligence coordination (**Coordination Collapse**) through security cooperation and advise/assist efforts. The Office of Security Cooperation-Iraq (OSC-I) facilitates high-level military-to-military dialogue between security officials within the KRG and GoI, helping to provide a less-political, more professionally-focused avenue for discussions. Advise and assist efforts also help to mitigate the lack of direct GoI-KRG coordination. Since Americans—both diplomatic and military—are involved with both sides, they have the ability to pass along information through American rather than Iraqi channels. While information would be more effective if communicated directly, intelligence and operational deconfliction routed through a KRG-U.S.-ISF channel can also work. While not ideal, it can ensure that truly critical breakdowns are avoided. For these reasons, we assess that current U.S. efforts *adequately* address the ongoing *Coordination Collapse* between ISF and the Peshmerga.

Among the local defense forces that have developed intra-community rivalries as a result of the KRG-GoI dispute (**Fractured Community Defenses**), two U.S. policies have produced the most important impacts: the *"Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal"* approach and a reduction in Peshmerga train/equip programs. After its eviction from much of Ninewa's disputed territory, Erbil has been increasingly viewed as a secondary military player in the province. Whereas the U.S. once encouraged militias to ally with either Baghdad or Erbil, the future now clearly lies with Baghdad. With the exception of forces operating in the Ninewa Plains and northwest Tel Afar District, KRG-affiliated forces no longer hold significant sway in the province. Given American preferences to support Baghdad's reassertion of federal authority and "let Iraqis decide" on most political issues, the U.S. has simply conformed to the new reality. Whereas the "tri-vetted" approach had once shaped American engagement with tribal security forces, the U.S. now places less emphasis on the KRG's opinions. Furthermore, given the KRG's decreased relevance to CT efforts, the U.S. has begun to reduce train and equip programs supporting the Kurds.[234] In addition to the direct impacts on Peshmerga forces, this reduction also means less resources for the KRG to devote to militia forces operating in Ninewa. The combined effects of these policies have been to encourage a general militia realignment with Baghdad. While many communities remain divided along KRG-GoI lines, especially those which span across ISF/Peshmerga zones of control, the general effect has been to reduce the competitive military influence of the KRG within non-Kurdish territory. As such, we assess that these policy stances have proven to be an *adequate* response to the *Fractured Community Defenses* mechanism.

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[234] Detsch, Jack, "Pentagon stops budgeting for Peshmerga salaries," *al-Monitor*, February 20, 2018. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/02/pentagon-stop-budgeting-peshmerga-salaries-iraq.html

Pathway Three: Command and Control

The political and inter-service battles to determine security force tasks, authorities, and reporting requirements produce mechanisms that are military-centric. As a result, DoD efforts have constituted the bulk of the initiatives which address the *Unaccountable Units* and *Competence Question* mechanisms.

Pathway Three: Command and Control			
Mechanism	**U.S. Positions and Programs**	**Indicator**	**Assessment Explanation**
Unaccountable Units	- **AA:** Help NOC manage reporting and "battle tracking" requirements; encourage collocation of ISF with PMF to facilitate incident response - **T&E:** Training programs on international humanitarian law (IHL) - **"Go Home"**: Demands that ISF regain control over equipment	🟡	Military-centric efforts help, but cannot account for the sheer number of armed groups in Ninewa. An almost impossible task.
The Competence Question	- **LMPP**: Policy preference unaligned with reality or corrective measures - **T&E:** Directly bolster ISF capabilities - **AA:** Enhance ISF effectiveness and allow for employment of high-end U.S. assets - **SC:** Facilitate foreign military sales and engage with senior leaders in Baghdad - **"Enduring Partnership":** Preserve access for U.S. military - **IMET:** Professional development for ISF leaders - **FMF:** Allows for substantial GoI purchases of U.S.-made military equipment	🟢	Massive efforts to ensure the competence of ISF. However, effects of current strategy are distributed across country, whereas local police recruiting impacts are acute and undercuts a key "post ISIS" planning assumption.
AA: Advise and Assist **ESDF:** Economic Support Development Fund **FMF:** Foreign Military Financing	**IMET:** International Military Education and Training **LMPP:** *Local, Multiethnic Police Primacy*	**SC:** Security Cooperation **T&E:** Train and Equip **USDF:** *Unified, Stable, Democratic and Federal*	🔴 Seriously Inadequate 🟡 Inadequate 🟢 Adequate

To enhance the GoI's ability to identify and address incidents of abuse by its security forces, U.S. advisors have encouraged their counterparts to collocate formal ISF units alongside the PMF. Efforts to combat sectarianism or extortion often stall without clear incident reporting. By placing ISF at the same positions as *hashd* units, Americans hope that the more reliable IA commanders can confirm or deny whether abuses have occurred. Unlike the PMF, the NOC has been able to identify cases where it has arrested and punished soldiers responsible for civilian abuses.[235] U.S. advisors also assist the NOC with "battle tracking": the process of monitoring reports, unit positions, and the status of operations. Professionalizing these functions helps ISF commanders "visualize the battlefield" and ensures that incident reports are appropriately handled. To help improve so-called

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[235] Ahmad, Rezan, "Ninewa Operations Command: Killing of a Mosul Mosque's Imam by Torture," *Bas News,* March 20, 2018. [in Arabic, translated by author]. http://www.basnews.com/index.php/ar/news/iraq/423932.

"command post operations," the FY 2019 CTEF budget justification requested $600,000 specifically to upgrade the NOC's facilities.[236] Train and equip programs promote adherence to international humanitarian law (IHL), although these engagements are limited to vetted ISF elements. Units with which the U.S. does not cooperate—namely Iranian-influenced PMF groups—do not receive such training.[237]

In its diplomatic engagements, the U.S. has attempted to reign in problematic Shia-influenced units within the context of its *"Go Home"* policy stance on Iranian-affiliated militias. As mentioned previously, the U.S. has demanded that the GoI regain control over major weapons systems that have come under the control over Iranian proxy groups, to include at least nine M1A1 tanks reportedly under PMF control. Thus, while not directly related to civilian abuses, U.S. demands for stronger ISF accountability mechanisms have been emphatic. Despite these initiatives, the sheer number of armed groups in Ninewa with weak or non-existent connections to ISF headquarters means that achieving acceptable levels of accountability for low-level actors is an almost impossible task. Despite the fact that DoD's initiatives are appropriate for the task, they cannot overcome the fundamentally chaotic nature of Ninewa's security sector. As such, we rate current efforts to mitigate **Unaccountable Units** as *inadequate*.

Poor command and control can also lead to 1) the misallocation of military capabilities, and 2) task duplication or oversight. The U.S. military leads efforts to combat the **Competence Questions** Ninewa's citizens may raise after suffering from ill-managed ISF operations. Advise/assist and train/equip efforts are direct attempts to improve ISF competency. OSC-I facilitates Iraqi purchases of military equipment made by U.S.-vendors.

These efforts are supported by State Department security assistance programs. International Military Education and Training (IMET) facilitates the professional development of Iraqi security personnel, while foreign military financing (FMF) provides loans and grants that allow the GoI to acquire critical military hardware. The State Department also lobbies Baghdad to ensure that DoD has the political "top cover" needed to remain in Iraq and sustain its enduring partnership with the ISF.

From a policy perspective, the theoretical linchpin of the Coalition's security sector reform strategy in Ninewa is the idea that the local police can serve as the primary guarantors of the province's security *(Local, Multiethnic, "Policy Primacy")*. This is a big gamble. While IPs are certainly the most demographically representative of Ninewa's security forces, they are also the weakest of the services. Iraq's recent history—particularly in Ninewa—provides a strong cautionary tale against relying on the local police force to fight terrorist organizations rather than allowing them to focus on more manageable tasks like common crime, traffic violations, and public order. Given current conditions, sidelining the Army in order to allow the Ninewa Police would create a significant security vacuum. The unworkability of current U.S. policy has meant that—for now—the idea has largely been ignored by those at the implementation level. The Army remains firmly in control. This creates the danger that local actors may begin to doubt the relevancy of U.S. preferences and find their own solutions.

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[236] "Justification for FY 2019 Overseas Contingency Operations," Slide 12.
[237] Their spokesmen claim that PMF units have incorporated IHL into their training, although such claims are dubious. Author interview with PMF Spokesman Yousuf Laklibi, Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

Taken in concert, these commitments improve the ISF's ability to synchronize its efforts and ensure that it has the capability and capacity needed to account for some operational inefficiencies. Given the significant amount of resources being poured into improving ISF competency, we assess that U.S. efforts are currently *adequate*. However, the incongruence between the supposed U.S. emphasis on local police and Ninewa's ground-level security reality risks making U.S. policy irrelevant. At a minimum, the current path does not adhere to the U.S. government's "theory of victory" for post-ISIS Ninewa.

Pathway Four: The Militia Question

To defeat mechanisms connected to the uncertain future of Ninewa's PMF and TMF *(The Militia Question)*, the U.S. government has primarily relied on the economic support development fund (ESDF), train and equip programs, and military advisory efforts. It implements these programs and advocates preferences within the context of three policy frameworks: *"Not in the Business of Nation Building," "Go Home,"* and *"Unified, Democratic, Stable, and Federal."*

Pathway Four: Militia Question			
Mechanism	**U.S. Positions and Programs**	**Indicator**	**Assessment Explanation**
Rural Safe Havens	- **T&E:** Build IA and local police to replace TMF—but efforts progressing slowly - **AA:** Assist responses to developing rural insurgency	🔴	TMF attrition not being backfilled by other security forces
TMF DDR	- **ESDF:** Provides livelihood support - **NBNB:** Limits scope of development projects	🟡	UNDP executing livelihood programs, but not targeted at rural areas or former TMF fighters
Sectarian Spiral	- **"Go Home":** Pressure Baghdad to reduce influence of "non-local" PMF - **ESDF:** Reconciliation initiatives - **CIO:** UNAMI-led reconciliation training	🟢	While policies are light, currently ok given no spikes in PMF-specific attacks or non-local PMF involvement
AA: Advise and Assist **CIO:** Contribution to International Organizations	**ESDF:** Economic Support Development Fund **NBNB:** "Not in the business of nation building"	**T&E:** Train and Equip	🔴 Seriously Inadequate 🟡 Inadequate 🟢 Adequate

As the manning levels of TMF units securing rural Ninewa continue to decline, the disappearance of a Sunni hold-force in these areas can provide ISIS with **Rural Safe Havens**. While the U.S. has strongly advocated for the TMF program and was a major catalyst behind its implementation, neither it nor Baghdad have shown a willingness to pay for the salaries required to sustain or replenish existing units. While plans have been circulated that envision transitioning one-third of the TMF into the formal ISF, another third into a provincial national guard, and the demobilization of the remaining third, little progress has been made to fund or operationalize those ideas.[238] Furthermore, while U.S. officials generally would like to see a representative force emerge, desires to "let the Iraqis decide" their own affairs *(USDF Policy)* have prevented the U.S. from providing

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[238] Author interview with security officials, Iraq, January 2018.

serious incentives to maintain the TMF program beyond the near term or adapt it into a more formalized institution. Beyond long-range uncertainties surrounding the TMF—and, by extension, Ninewa's Sunni hold force—their short-term disintegration could create serious security vacuums. Since these are the forces that have largely been tasked with securing rural areas where ISIS has historically regenerated its capacity, the neglect of the TMF risks allowing an ISIS insurgency to regain momentum by exploiting increasingly weak tribal hold forces.

U.S. efforts to train and equip the formal ISF could theoretically generate the additional forces required to replace TMF. But the current pace of train and equip efforts do not indicate that such an outcome is likely. As stated earlier, IA units in Ninewa were operating at 50 percent strength as of March 2018. Just managing their current responsibilities is challenge enough—especially in the continued absence of a meaningful police recruitment campaign. Advise and assist efforts help maximize available resources and facilitate the ISF's attempts to respond to growing rural insurgencies. But even the best planning processes cannot fully overcome wholly insufficient resources. Nor is it likely that insurgents will allow the U.S. to leverage its artillery and airpower by gathering *en masse*. While U.S. intelligence capabilities can aid ISF efforts to identify and disrupt insurgent networks, the most reliable intelligence in these areas would typically be gathered by local actors who are intimately familiar with the operational environment. In other words, units like the TMF. As TMF hold forces disappear, insurgents can increasingly use rural safe havens to mount assassination and intimidation campaigns against tribal leaders who have opposed their movements. As discussed in *Part I: Why Ninewa?,* these kinds of "quality attacks" have become increasingly more common in early 2018. These concerning indicators and worrying trendlines mean that U.S. efforts to deny ISIS access to *Rural Safe Havens* are currently *seriously inadequate.*

The inability to sustain TMF units also creates a "supply-side" problem: as fighters are cut from the TMF, those who are not disarmed, demobilized, and reintegrated into civil society may become the population which supplies ISIS with its next pool of fighters *(**TMF DDR**).* U.S. desires to limit its reconstruction role preclude massive development projects that might (or might not) address the problem, but the ESDF does provide funding for livelihood support. These programs can help unemployed fighters, but they are not specifically targeting former TMF members, or rural areas more generally. Doing so would be a tough ask given the immense problems facing Mosul, not to mention Tel Afar, Sinjar, and the Ninewa Plains. The NOC's recruitment strategy implicitly recognizes this challenge: TMF fighters who have still not received compensation for their role in the fight to liberate Mosul have been designated as priority hires in the event that funding for police salaries becomes available.[239] But in the absence of a more concerted strategy to address this issue, U.S. attempts to mitigate the impacts of *TMF DDR* concerns remain *inadequate.*

Lastly, U.S. initiatives also impact the potential ***Sectarian Spiral*** that could develop if Sunni resentment towards Shia PMF translates into escalating violence. The ESDF provides funding for reconciliation initiatives aimed at preventing intercommunal violence, as does UNAMI.[240] Both of these programs can mitigate sectarian disputes, but, given the difficulty of measuring the impact of such efforts, are unlikely to produce clear results.
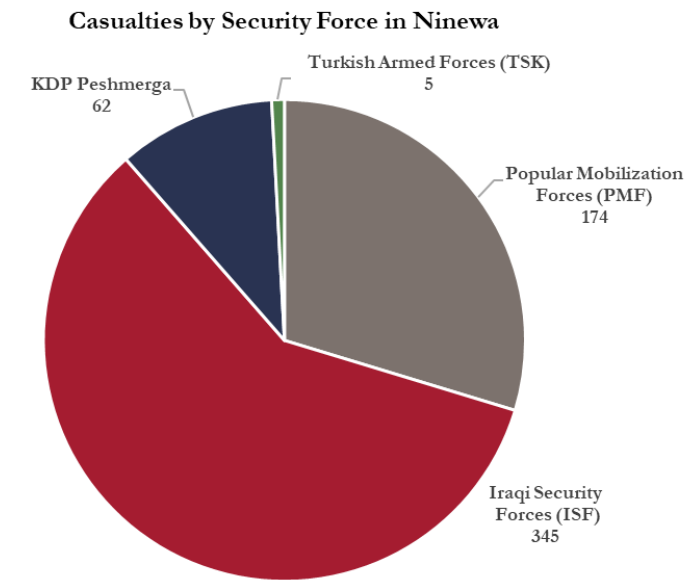
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[239] Author video conference via WhatsApp with NOC Commander Major General Najim Jabouri, March 2018.
[240] "Training Course for Civil Society Network in Ninawa on Community Reconciliation and Social Cohesion: Accountability and Reconciliation", *United Nations Iraq,* November 5, 2016.
http://www.uniraq.org/index.php?option=com_k2&view=item&id=6296:training-course-for-civil-society-network-in-ninawa-on-community-reconciliation-and-social-cohesion-accountability-and-reconciliation&Itemid=606&lang=en

In a more direct bid to limit the role of controversial PMF units in Ninewa, the U.S. government has consistently lobbied Baghdad to keep groups like Badr, AAH, and KH out of Sunni areas *("Go Home"* policy). These demands likely played a role in PM Abadi's decision to exclude non-local PMF groups from the campaign to liberate Mosul, an order which was largely respected by the PMF. As a result, the PMF groups of greatest concern do not directly administer major swaths of territory in Ninewa like they do in Kirkuk or Salah al-Din.

Casualties by Security Force in Ninewa

KDP Peshmerga
62

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)
5

Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF)
174

Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)
345

Data source: Wing, Joel, "Security in Iraq" post series, Musings on Iraq (blog), March 23, 2018. http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/.

Demands by former Secretary of State Tillerson that Iranian-directed Shia militias "go home" have not been linked with concrete steps to sever their influence over local forces in Ninewa. U.S. officials are aware of proxy group and IRGC elements operating alongside local Shia PMF but feel as if they have few options to prevent these advise and assist efforts. Minority group PMF units, like the Shia Shabak Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF), will often align with more influential PMF units to obtain resources and political support—in the NPF's case, the Badr Organization.

Despite these lingering concerns, U.S. efforts to mitigate the possibility of a PMF-based *Sectarian Spiral* in Ninewa are currently *adequate.* The most egregious PMF units do not govern territory, and the PMF units currently operating in Ninewa have not suffered a disproportionate amount of casualties in comparison to the province's other security services.[241] While this mechanism merits continued monitoring, current efforts are appropriate for the threat level.

Pathway Five: Outsider Influence

In the face of growing *Outsider Influence* in Ninewa, the U.S. government has endeavored to bolster its partnership with ISF, pressure Baghdad to confront Iranian activities, and mitigate the fallout from additional instability.

Iran's widespread presence within the PMF has led many of Ninewa's citizens to view the Shia *hashd* as **Iran's Army**. The U.S. government has found few levers to directly oust the Iranians from Ninewa. Instead, it has attempted to ensure that formal ISF have the capabilities and capacity needed to remain the primary actor within the security sector. Security gaps that ISF cannot handle have tended to fall to *hashd* units. As such, U.S. train and equip efforts serve as an important bulwark against the expansion of Iranian influence into Sunni or non-Shia minority territories. Train and

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[241] Author analysis based on Ninewa casualty data compiled by Joel Wing, available at http://musingsoniraq.blogspot.com/.

equip efforts may also serve as the best means for enticing vetted recruits to leave PMF groups in favor of joining the ISF. While Abadi's March 2018 decision to raise PMF salaries to match those of the ISF made this task more difficult, recruits—and the public writ large—can still be impressed by forces equipped with high quality American materiel.[242] These DoD efforts are facilitated by State Department engagements designed to counter Iranian-affiliated politicians' attempts to affect the complete withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. As stated earlier, DOS also encourages leaders within the GoI to combat Iranian influence.

Pathway Five: Outsider Influence

Mechanism	U.S. Positions and Programs	Indicator	Assessment Explanation
Iran's Army	- **T&E:** Reduce ISF reliance on Iranian-affiliated PMF, entice recruits into ISF - **"Enduring Partnership":** Political cover for U.S. to continue serving as an alternate pole for Iraqi political and security actors to align with - **"Go Home":** Pressure on Baghdad, but few concrete policy steps to force out - **NBNB**: Iranian-aligned forces could fill U.S. void in reconstruction efforts	🟢	While policies are not particularly effective at thwarting Iranian influence, presence does not seem to be producing major *counterterrorism* problems.
Turkey's War	- **ESDF:** Sinjar has been major focus—resume operations as soon as possible - **MRA:** Address additional IDP flows - **NADR:** Unexploded ordinance disposal following operations - **CIO:** UNAMI-facilitated regional dialogue	🟢	The scale of conflict will likely determine USG tools can address the issue. As of now, probably manageable.
CIO: Contribution to International Organizations **ESDF:** Economic Support Development Fund	**NBNB:** "Not in the business of nation building" **NADR:** Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related	**T&E:** Train and Equip	🔴 Seriously Inadequate 🟡 Inadequate 🟢 Adequate

The U.S. government's "*Not in the Nation Building Business"* policy also plays a factor. Iranian militias are eager to profit from reconstruction projects. To gain access to ill-gotten but lucrative financing, the IRGC and its allies enmesh themselves in local business deals, often exploiting communities with little choice but to comply with their demands. While taking on a larger reconstruction role would involve a host of potential pitfalls for the U.S., one byproduct of the *Nation Building* policy may be additional latitude for the IRGC and its proxies to exploit the economic vacuum and widen the scale of their military-economic activities.

Taken in concert, these initiatives have only proven marginally effective in countering Iranian influence. But despite that reality, the **counterterrorism** impacts of the Iranian presence have been manageable. Efforts by the U.S. and its Iraqi partners to keep the most problematic Iranian-affiliated elements out of the province have been largely successful. While the general expansion of Iranian

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[242] Author interview with Iraqi security official in Ninewa, early 2018.

influence into Ninewa may not be desirable from a broad policy perspective, U.S. initiatives have proven *adequate* in blunting Iranian impacts on the counter-ISIS fight.

In contrast to its attempts to actively constrain Iranian activities, the U.S. has refrained from voicing an assertive stance on Turkish activities within Ninewa. Rather than demand the cessation of TSK operations at Camp Bashiqa or northern Iraq writ large, U.S. programs attempt to mitigate the potential instability generated by Turkish activities. ESDF has financed a significant number of programs in Sinjar, many of which could be halted in the event of intensified TSK-PKK clashes. If such a conflict were to occur, the resumption of these programs would likely prove critical to stabilizing Sinjar. NADR-funded demining activities may also prove useful for disposing unexploded ordinance (UXO) left as the result of a conflict. In the interim, MRA programs would help manage IDP flows, while DOS and UNAMI would facilitate regional dialogue designed to reduce the potential for miscalculation or miscommunication between Turkey, Iraq, and the Global Coalition. Advise and assist activities would also help in this regard, albeit at a more tactical level. Even with U.S. planning, intelligence, and communications support, the confusing array of armed groups operating in Sinjar make it likely that non-PKK units could be unintentionally targeted or otherwise become involved in a PKK-TSK conflict.

Whether these measures prove effective may ultimately depend on the scale of TSK operations in Sinjar. If the TSK were to launch an intervention in Sinjar that resembles its previous actions within the KRI, then the impacts on Ninewa's security would be noticeable, but not severe. In this event, the mechanisms in place are likely *adequate* to deal with the consequence of **Turkey's War**. However, if the intervention widens to include a significant and sustained TSK ground presence, the resulting instability could overwhelm the current system's capacity.

Identifying the Strategy's Failures

Mechanism Status by ISIS 2.0 Pathway			
Pathway	Seriously Inadequate	Inadequate	Adequate
Local Control	1	3	1
Erbil vs Baghdad	0	0	3
Command and Control	0	1	1
Militia Question	1	1	1
Outsider Influence	0	0	2
TOTAL	2	5	8

Part IV: The Current Approach has described the status of America's attempts to disrupt the ISIS 2.0 pathways. Among the five pathways, *The Battle for Local Control* was the most problematic. U.S. policies are *inadequate* for three of its associated mechanisms, and *seriously inadequate* for another. On the other hand, *Erbil vs Baghdad* and *Outsider Influence* are being adequately addressed. *Command and Control* and *The Militia Question* both had mixed results. In all, we found seven of the 15 ISIS 2.0 mechanisms remain *inadequately* addressed by the current U.S. approach, two of which we assess to be *seriously inadequate*. This snapshot allows policymakers to understand which political conflicts are most damaging to the effectiveness of Ninewa's security forces.

The most significant factors in cases where U.S. policies are failing to defeat ISIS 2.0 pathways are:

➢ Poor local police recruitment (*Ethnic Security Dilemma*, *IDP Resentment*, *Illegitimate Elections*, *Rural Safe Havens*, *TMF DDR*)
➢ Incongruence between a strongly held "police primacy" position and the resources allocated to that effort (*Illegitimate Elections, Rural Safe Havens, Baghdad Neglect*)
➢ The ad hoc dismantling of tribal Sunni hold forces (*Ethnic Security Dilemma*, *Unaccountable Units*, *Rural Safe Havens*, *TMF DDR*)
➢ U.S. reluctance to take clear policy positions on domestic Iraqi political issues—often couched in the language of "let the Iraqis decide" (*Baghdad Neglect, Ethnic Security Dilemma*, and *TMF DDR*).

Many of these same factors also negatively affect mechanisms which we believe the U.S. is adequately addressing, but those impacts were overcome in the aggregate by other policy initiatives.

The impact of complementary efforts being undertaken by Coalition partners did not change our assessment. Although the Coalition is heavily engaged in training programs for local police, capability is only part of the problem for the Ninewa Provincial Police. The more acute problem is manpower, more specifically the province's inability to correct that shortage almost one year after the liberation of Mosul. Most other Coalition efforts were smaller than comparable U.S. efforts and similar in their qualitative objectives.

Strategic Deficiencies in the Ninewa D-ISIS Campaign

Mechanism	U.S. Positions and Programs	Indicator	Assessment Explanation
Pathway One: Local Control			
Baghdad Neglect	- **USDF**: Facilitate dialogue between Ninewa and Baghdad leaders - **LMPP**: Push local police as solution—but Baghdad not funding recruitment	🔴	Leaders skeptical of U.S. advocacy; U.S. pushing un-resourced solutions
Ethnic Security Dilemma	- **USDF:** Non-committal on future of minority militia groups - **LMPP:** Ideally use local police to replace militias—but not offering pathway	🟡	Confusion among minority leaders and increasing permanence of situation
IDP Resentment	- **MRA**: Provide critical supplies to IDPs, especially in KRG (OFDA/PRM) - **NADR**: Demining initiatives - **T&E:** Efforts to build local/multiethnic police capacity	🟡	Very poor police recruitment levels mean little progress on addressing security force-related IDP concerns
Illegitimate Elections	- **CIO:** Support for UNAMI-led election monitoring - **"Go Home":** Public criticism of Iranian election meddling - **T&E:** Efforts to build apolitical, institutional security forces - **AA:** Assist NOC with election security planning	🟡	Insufficient deterrent for security force interference; undermanned police unable to replace PMF
Pathway Three: Command and Control			
Unaccountable Units	- **AA:** Help NOC manage reporting and "battle tracking" requirements; encourage collocation of ISF with PMF to facilitate incident response - **T&E:** Training programs on international humanitarian law (IHL) - **"Go Home"**: Demands that ISF regain control over equipment	🟡	Military-centric efforts help, but cannot account for the sheer number of armed groups in Ninewa. An almost impossible task.
Pathway Four: Militia Question			
Rural Safe Havens	- **T&E:** Build IA and local police to replace TMF—but efforts progressing slowly - **AA:** Assist responses to developing rural insurgency	🔴	TMF attrition not being backfilled by other security forces
TMF DDR	- **ESDF:** Provides livelihood support - **NBNB:** Limits scope of development projects	🟡	UNDP executing livelihood programs, but not targeted at rural areas or former TMF fighters

AA: Advise and Assist
CIO: Contribution to International Organizations
ESDF: Economic Support Development Fund
LMPP: *Local, Multiethnic Police Primacy*

MRA: Migration and Refugee Assistance
NBNB: "Not in the business of nation building"
NADR: Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related

T&E: Train and Equip
USDF: *Unified, Stable, Democratic and Federal*

🔴 Seriously Inadequate

🟡 Inadequate

🟢 Adequate

D-ISIS Campaign Status by Pathway and Mechanism

Mechanism	U.S. Positions and Programs	Indicator	Assessment Explanation
Pathway One: Local Control			
ISIS Alliances	- **ESDF:** Encourage reconciliation and anti-corruption initiatives; deliver projects of high value to Sunni politicians - **T&E:** Local forces to assuage Sunni politicians and provide constituents jobs	🟢	Leaders not threatened enough to ally with radicals, but lingering concerns over ascendant Shia and enduring Kurdish political power
Baghdad Neglect	- **USDF:** Facilitate dialogue between Ninewa and Baghdad leaders - **LMPP:** Push local police as solution—but Baghdad not funding recruitment	🔴	Leaders skeptical of U.S. advocacy; U.S. pushing un-resourced solutions
Ethnic Security Dilemma	- **USDF:** Non-committal on future of minority militia groups - **LMPP:** Ideally use local police to replace militias—but not offering pathway	🟡	Confusion among minority leaders and increasing permanence of situation
IDP Resentment	- **MRA:** Provide critical supplies to IDPs, especially in KRG (OFDA/PRM) - **NADR:** Demining initiatives - **T&E:** Efforts to build local/multiethnic police capacity	🟡	Very poor police recruitment levels mean little progress on addressing security force-related IDP concerns
Illegitimate Elections	- **CIO:** Support for UNAMI-led election monitoring - **"Go Home":** Public criticism of Iranian election meddling - **T&E:** Efforts to build apolitical, institutional security forces - **AA:** Assist NOC with election security planning	🟡	Insufficient deterrent for security force interference; undermanned police unable to replace PMF
Pathway Two: Erbil vs Baghdad			
CT Diversions	- **USDF:** Encourage joint KRG-GoI patrols, but no U.S. troops - **T&E:** Build partner capacity of CT forces, facilitates multiple missions - **AA:** Help NOC plan for force movements and allocate taskings	🟢	Key units maintain enough capability to deal with current threat level—but barely. **T&E** working to fix.
Coordination Collapse	- **SC:** Facilitate high-level dialogue between security officials - **AA:** U.S. forces serve as intelligence sharing operational coordination stopgap	🟢	Although not ideal, U.S. can facilitate intel exchange, at times op coordination
Fractured Community Defenses	- **USDF:** "Hands off" approach creating militia realignment from KRG to GoI - **T&E:** Reduced resources to KRG leaves less for use on non-Kurdish militias	🟢	Natural unipolar alignment helps lessen intra-community divides
Pathway Three: Command and Control			
Unaccountable Units	- **AA:** Help NOC manage reporting and "battle tracking" requirements; encourage collocation of ISF with PMF to facilitate incident response - **T&E:** Training programs on international humanitarian law (IHL) - **"Go Home":** Demands that ISF regain control over equipment	🟡	Military-centric efforts help, but cannot account for the sheer number of armed groups in Ninewa. An almost impossible task.

Pathway Three: Command and Control *[CONTINUED]*

Competence Question	- **LMPP**: Policy preference unaligned with reality or corrective measures - **T&E:** Directly bolster ISF capabilities - **AA:** Enhance ISF effectiveness and allow for employment of high-end U.S. assets - **SC:** Facilitate foreign military sales and engage with senior leaders in Baghdad - **"Enduring Partnership":** Preserve access for U.S. military - **IMET: P**rofessional development for ISF leaders - **FMF: A**llows for substantial GoI purchases of U.S.-made military equipment	🟢	Massive efforts to ensure the competence of ISF. However, effects of current strategy are distributed across country, whereas local police recruiting impacts are acute and undercuts a key "post ISIS" planning assumption.

Pathway Four: Militia Question

Rural Safe Havens	- **T&E:** Build IA and local police to replace TMF—but efforts progressing slowly - **AA:** Assist responses to developing rural insurgency	🔴	TMF attrition not being backfilled by other security forces
TMF DDR	- **ESDF:** Provides livelihood support - **NBNB:** Limits scope of development projects	🟡	UNDP executing livelihood programs, but not targeted at rural areas or former TMF fighters
Sectarian Spiral	- **"Go Home":** Pressure Baghdad to reduce influence of "non-local" PMF - **ESDF:** Reconciliation initiatives - **CIO:** UNAMI-led reconciliation training	🟢	While policies are light, currently ok given no spikes in PMF-specific attacks or non-local PMF involvement

Pathway Five: Outsider Influence

Iran's Army	- **T&E:** Reduce ISF reliance on Iranian-affiliated PMF, entice recruits into ISF - **"Enduring Partnership":** Political cover for U.S. to continue serving as an alternate pole for Iraqi political and security actors to align with - **"Go Home":** Pressure on Baghdad, but few concrete policy steps to force out - **NBNB**: Iranian-aligned forces could fill U.S. void in reconstruction efforts	🟢	While policies are not particularly effective at thwarting Iranian influence, presence does not seem to be producing major *counterterrorism* problems.
Turkey's War	- **ESDF:** Sinjar has been major focus—resume operations as soon as possible - **MRA:** Address additional IDP flows - **NADR:** Unexploded ordinance disposal following operations - **CIO:** UNAMI-facilitated regional dialogue	🟢	The scale of conflict will likely determine USG tools can address the issue. As of now, probably manageable.

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SC: Security Cooperation
T&E: Train and Equip
USDF: *Unified, Stable, Democratic and Federal*

🔴 Seriously Inadequate

🟡 Inadequate

🟢 Adequate

Part V:
The Path Forward

Recommendation Overview

Funding the Ninewa Provincial Police

Revisiting the "Police Primacy" Strategy

Asserting U.S. Policy Preferences

Addressing Ninewa's Rural Safe Havens

Post-Election Iraq and the Path Forward

Reccomendation Overview

To solidify the Coalition's gains against ISIS, the U.S. government should implement four course corrections to its strategy in Ninewa:

1) **Fund hiring initiatives for local police.** The poor state of local police recruitment in Ninewa renders numerous U.S. policy efforts ineffective. After touting a local and multiethnic police force as the linchpin of its post-ISIS stabilization strategy, the status quo U.S. approach has made minimal progress towards creating a capable provincial police force. Prior to their collapse in the face of ISIS' 2014 onslaught, the Ninewa Province Police employed more than 30,000 officers. Today, the same force numbers between 13,000 - 15,000, in large part because the Iraqi government has not provided the funding to hire new recruits.[243] The current strategy expects the police force to assume more responsibilities with fewer resources. Something needs to change. While the U.S. may need to contribute some funding towards this end, it can also solicit resources from the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), and the GoI itself.

2) **Revisit the "police primacy" strategy.** The idea that local police are critical to fighting terror organizations has strong academic backing[244] and is highly popular among Ninewa's stakeholders. It has also served as the central tenet of the Coalition's post-liberation counter-ISIS strategy. But if the realities of Iraq truly prevent the creation of a local police force capable of assuming the lead role for provincial security, then the U.S. government must revisit its planning assumptions. It cannot rely on the local police force to prevent an ISIS resurgence while simultaneously failing to develop a plan that actualizes that concept. Alternative approaches could be effective. In post-liberation Ninewa, the Iraqi Army has generally filled the security void created by a struggling police force. However, if the IA continues to perform a significant portion of provincial law enforcement tasks, then Coalition train and equip efforts should be adjusted to more effectively support the IA's policing responsibilities. In addition to train and equip modifications, the U.S. government may also need to exert diplomatic pressure on the Ministry of Defense to encourage it to focus on domestic rather than external threats. The refrain that the Iraqi Army should concentrate on nation-state conflict because "that's what armies do" is counterproductive. In particular, Army units could modify their operating procedures and training requirements to include more law enforcement best practices. The IA could also concretize the alignment of its units with a specific area of operation rather than allowing for reassignments throughout Iraq, thus breeding familiarity and enduring partnerships between Army leaders and local stakeholders.

3) **Adopt more assertive positions on critical debates about the future of Iraq— specifically its security forces.** Historically, the U.S. government's most successful security assistance missions have required deep involvement in the sensitive political affairs of its partner. In particular, the U.S. has often needed to dictate host nation decisions regarding personnel appointments, the mission scope of security forces, and the security apparatus'

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[243] Author interview via WhatsApp with NOC Commanding General MG Najim Jabouri, March 2018.
[244] For example, see Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, *How Terrorist Groups End*, *RAND*, 2008. https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG741-1.html.

organizational structure.[245] These topics closely parallel many of the security sector deficiencies identified in this report. Yet to a certain extent, the current U.S. approach to domestic Iraqi politics may have overlearned the lessons of the recent past. Whereas the U.S. had once attempted to control outcomes on a variety of local issues—often with poor results—it now seeks to largely avoid the fray of internal Iraqi disputes. In many cases, this approach is valuable and prudent. However, the lack of a clear U.S. position can also sow confusion and foreclose opportunities to push Ninewa's institutions in a positive direction. Few Iraqi stakeholders believe that the U.S. is truly non-preferential about the major debates roiling their country. In the absence of clarity, they will simply operate based on their own potentially flawed assumptions about the nature and intensity of American preferences. Unclear U.S. positions on the January 2018 replacement of Ninewa's police chief, the proliferation of ethnically-based minority militias, and the future of the TMF program reflect cases where the U.S. has failed to send a clear and meaningful message to Iraqi counterparts. Many of the reforms needed to make the IA a more capable internal defense force likewise require the U.S. to exert influence over delicate GoI political-military decisions.

4) **Brace for increasing ISIS activity in rural areas where Sunni tribal "hold" forces are disintegrating.** As the GoI discards Tribal Mobilization Forces via ad hoc, bureaucratic means rather than through a deliberately planned transition to formal security forces, ISIS will likely exploit security vacuums in Ninewa's rural safe havens. From these locales, ISIS can continue to escalate its intimidation campaign against security forces and key tribal opponents—exactly the kind of "quality attacks" which precipitated its rise in 2014. The absence of a workable demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration (DDR) plan for TMF members could further inflame this dynamic by providing ISIS 2.0 with a pool of unemployed former fighters from which to recruit. To combat this eventuality, the U.S. must help the Iraqi government develop a more thorough plan for the future of the TMF, to include DDR, the transition of former fighters into the formal hold forces, and the handover of security responsibilities to the IA or police. The U.S. government should also ensure that it channels portions of its bilateral economic assistance to rural areas of concern and should allocate appropriate intelligence collection and analysis capacity to identify the emergence of safe havens in areas controlled by tribal forces.

In the post-election environment, the need for an engaged U.S. will become even more critical. An Abadi-Sadr government should be encouraged to embrace its nationalistic, technocratic inclinations, while strong U.S. advocacy for professional, non-sectarian security practices may serve as an important reassurance to Sunni Arab communities likely to react poorly if the Iranian-affiliated Fatah and the Nouri al-Maliki-led State of Law coalitions are able to form a government.

Through these actions, the U.S. government can address the policy deficiencies identified in *Part IV: Assessing the Current Approach.* The following sections will further develop our recommendations and present possible courses of action for their implementation.

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[245] Mara Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States: Challenges for the United States.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. 2018. p 19.

Funding the Ninewa Provincial Police

Security officials within the GoI and the NOC believe that Ninewa requires approximately 10,000 - 17,000 more policemen.[246] Based on typical Iraqi Police salaries[247] and the number of additional officers needed to properly man the Ninewa Provincial Police (NPP), the annual cost of this initiative would range from roughly $150 million to $260 million.[248] Given the substantial cost, no single actor will likely be willing or able to foot the bill.

For the U.S. to energize an effort to close the funding gap, it would likely need to contribute to the cause. As such, DoD should request funding for Ninewa Police salaries within its FY 2020 Counter ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF). DoD should also explore interim funding mechanisms that it could implement more quickly.

A U.S. contribution towards this effort can serve as the first step for a campaign to solicit donations from others with a stake in Iraq's future. The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS is a good starting point. European countries with gendarme-style police forces like Italy and Spain have served as the Coalition's lead trainers for Iraqi police forces. The Coalition's extensive involvement in law enforcement train and equip efforts should mean that they understand the importance of recruiting local police. State Department Special Envoy Brett McGurk and the Office of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS (SECI) should utilize upcoming small group and ministerial meetings to deliver specific requests to Coalition partners.

Next, the State Department should request assistance from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).[249] Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Qatar were all top donors at the February 2018 Iraq Reconstruction Conference.[250] The UAE has likewise played an increasingly assertive regional role. The Emiratis and Saudis also share a keen interest in preventing the expansion of Iranian influence, which is one byproduct of PMF units' assumption of duties that would otherwise be performed by the local police. With these goals in mind, the U.S. should pitch a strong Ninewa police force as a responsible way for the GCC to counter Iranian regional influence. In contrast to more radical approaches like indecisive military interventions or half-hearted attempts to develop local proxies, this problem presents the GCC with an opportunity to support an institution that guarantees Sunni representation within Iraq's security services, will be instrumental to reconstruction efforts, and prevents Iranian-aligned groups from establishing *de facto* control over one of Iraq's most critical regions.

Two roadblocks could hamper donations from the Gulf countries: 1) GCC concerns that donations could be diverted from their intended purpose by pro-Iranian GoI elements, and 2) the potential

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[246] This estimate is based off of GoI assurances to the NOC that it will eventually provide funding for 10-12,000 additional policemen, as well as the gap between current manning (13-15,000) and its peak in the pre-ISIS period (30,000). Numbers based on author interview with NOC Command General MG Najim Jabouri, March 2018.

[247] A typical Iraqi Policeman makes 1,300,000 Iraqi Dinars per month (1,092 USD). Figures based on interviews with multiple officials in Iraq, Erbil and Baghdad, Iraq, January 2018.

[248] Based on salaries for 10-17,000 policemen, plus an additional 15 percent.

[249] For a useful discussion of the developing Iraq-GCC relationships, see Douglas Ollivant and Bartle Bull, "Iraq After ISIS: What To Do Now," *New America Foundation,* April 24, 2018. https://www.newamerica.org/international-security/reports/iraq-after-isis-what-do-now/key-issues-for-us-iraqi-relations-after-isis/.

[250] "Donors pledge $30bn for Iraq's post-ISIL reconstruction," *Al Jazeera,* February 14, 2018. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/02/billions-pledged-iraq-post-isil-reconstruction-180214114614406.html.

domestic backlash that could arise from "Wahhabi-funded" security forces. Our discussions in Riyadh confirmed that—despite the desire to improve ties with Iraq—the Saudis remain worried that funding provided to the Iraqi government will end up in Iranian pockets.[251] To mitigate GCC concerns over the end-user recipient of their donations, the U.S. should offer to provide monitoring and oversight of salary disbursements. While the limited U.S. military footprint in Iraq precludes expansive oversight, soldiers conducting advise and assist missions in ISF headquarters elements could provide a reasonable amount of accountability. U.S. military advisors embedded in the NOC have the ability to directly interface with the NPP, and thus could ensure that the funds are distributed to the department. While the U.S. would likely lose most of its oversight ability after the funds are given to the NPP, this arrangement could at least assuage GCC fears that their contributions could be diverted by pro-Iranian politicians in Baghdad. Allowing the U.S. to run the program may also mitigate some of the potential domestic political fallout by placing distance between the Saudis and those who would actually receive the funds.

While Turkey has also established itself as a major player in the post-ISIS reconstruction process, the broader geopolitical situation between the U.S. and Turkey could complicate US-led efforts to secure additional Turkish commitments. If the GoI wants donations from Turkey, despite the tensions created by their presence in Bashiqa and the KRI's Qandil Mountains, then the Iraqis may be better equipped to engage with the Turks directly rather than using the U.S. as an intermediary.

Lastly, to ensure that Iraqis share in the short-term financial burden and commit to a more tenable long-term arrangement, the U.S. should hold the GoI itself to account. Prime Minister Abadi has given the NOC assurances that he will eventually provide them with salaries for 10-12,000 additional policemen.[252] How he or his successor will do so is less clear. Abadi has already promised the PMF that he will raise their salaries to the same level as the formal ISF, which means that PMF members will soon receive 1,300,000 IQD (1,092 USD) per month rather than the 600,000 IQD (504 USD) they had previously received. Given that the PMF maintains approximately 122,000 fighters, this is a substantial financial commitment. Yet current budget trends do not indicate that Iraq is prepared to increase its defense spending—quite the opposite. Iraq's 2018 budget envisions a 15 percent reduction in spending for the Ministry of Defense, achieved in part by a 4,000-employee reduction. Likewise, Ministry of Interior spending will fall by 6.5 percent, as the ministry sheds approximately 8,000 personnel. The PMF budget is also projected to decline by 12 percent.[253] These figures make it hard to understand how Abadi or his successor will cover short-term police salary commitments. Despite those challenges, U.S. officials should work with the GoI to determine a reasonable plan forward. In addition to providing some funding to assist the GoI, the U.S. should condition elements of its security assistance on the GoI's ability to meet agreed upon goals for Ninewa police recruitment. Foreign Military Sales (FMS) approvals and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) loans, both of which facilitate Iraqi purchases of major weapon systems, could provide the U.S. with useful leverage. While restriction of these purchases may push the GoI to seek alternative suppliers in Russia or Iran, modern tanks and anti-aircraft systems are less directly relevant to the Defeat-ISIS campaign than other elements of the U.S. train and equip program. Major weapon systems, therefore, can be used as leverage—and withdrawn if the GOI does not comply with U.S. demands—without unduly jeopardizing the effectiveness of U.S. counterterrorism efforts in Iraq.

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[251] Author discussions in Riyadh, KSA in April 2018.
[252] Author interview via WhatsApp with NOC Commander MG Najim Jabouri, March 2018.
[253] Ali al-Mawlawi, "Iraq's 2018 Federal Budget: Key features and trends," *al Bayan Center,* March 17, 2018. http://www.bayancenter.org/en/2018/03/1461/.

Revisiting the "Police Primacy Strategy"

The misalignment between stated U.S. policy and the Iraqi security services' current glide path is undercutting the credibility of the Coalition's plan to deal ISIS a lasting defeat. If the US fails to obtain international commitments to fund police recruitment, the Coalition must revisit its "police primacy" policy. If it does not rethink this approach, the U.S. will continue to operate under a false planning assumption that the police will eventually take the lead for provincial security.

Military commanders at the tactical level are loath to create security vacuums on behalf of theoretically sound but practically unworkable policies. As such, leaders will continue to allocate available forces against urgent problems—regardless of what uniforms those personnel wear. This dynamic helps explain why the Iraqi Army still plays a dominant role in Ninewa's security. If the units that will be responsible for policing Ninewa happen to come from the Army, then the U.S. must adjust its policies accordingly. Towards that end, the U.S. should take three steps:

1) **Alter train and equip engagements with the Iraqi Army** to more adequately prepare a military organization to conduct law enforcement operations
2) **Push the Ministry of Defense to incorporate more law enforcement best practices** into its training, acquisitions, and standard operating procedures
3) Work to more concretely **formalize the long-term relationship of individual Army units with the communities** in which they operate

Many of the concerns regarding the use of Army units in a law enforcement capacity stem from the belief that the IA brings a "military mindset" to policing, and thus may resort to force more quickly than law enforcement units or fail to grasp how to conduct good police work. To help address this challenge, Army units acting as both soldiers and policemen could benefit substantially from additional law enforcement training. The U.S. could facilitate this training through its CTEF engagements with the IA by ensuring that law enforcement requirements are appropriately weighted within its programs. Required adjustments may include composition of personnel conducting the training programs—for example, greater incorporation of the military police—to ensure that trainers have appropriate expertise to discuss law enforcement issues, the development of training programs specifically designed to address mistakes commonly made by IA acting in a policing capacity, and the reexamination of equipping efforts to ensure that the IA possess the tools necessary to conduct policing. US partners in the Global Coalition could also make important contributions: as mentioned earlier, many Coalition partners have gendarme-style police forces, and thus should expand their police-focused training efforts to also include programs for IA units filling law enforcement roles.

Beyond adjustments to its own programs, the U.S. government also needs to pressure the GoI to deemphasize the idea that the Army should only serve as a force to counter external rather than internal threats. Rather than preparing to fight a foreign adversary, the IA needs an overriding focus on internal defense.[254] The concept that the Army should largely refrain from such activities is widespread and popular, but given the realities of Iraq's security situation, the impulse to prepare for

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[254] US programs that address this mission set are referred to by the umbrella term "foreign internal defense" (FID), which refers to "activities that support a host nation internal defense and development strategy." See *Joint Publication 3-22: Foreign Internal Defense,* US Department of Defense, July 12, 2010.
http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_22.pdf.

a highly unlikely scenario rather than address pressing security challenges is counterproductive. US officials should neither promote nor accept the idea that the IA should focus on nation-state conflict simply because "that's what armies do."[255] For IA units stationed in Ninewa, two specific requirements stand out: 1) the incorporation of law enforcement considerations into institutional decision making, and 2) the development of a more habitual relationships between the IA and stakeholders in their area of operations (AO).

The IA—a military organization, primarily developed in collaboration with the US Army—needs to reexamine its institutional capabilities, doctrine, professional development pipeline, and training programs to ensure that it can undertake the policing tasks that it will inevitably be asked to perform.[256] Changes may include sending leaders to law enforcement courses rather than purely military schools, increasing law enforcement curriculum during basic training for new recruits, changing tactical standard operating procedures and ROEs to reflect more restrictive law enforcement practices, and more heavily investing in equipment and infrastructure that can facilitate policing rather than high-end conflict (biometric trackers rather than air defense systems).

As part of a doctrinal review process, the U.S. should push the IA to take measures to more closely align individual units with the specific communities in which they serve. Since the Army is considered a national force, many senior commanders are reluctant to concertize restrictions on where a unit can be employed and recruit. The reality that a unit can be moved from one location to another relatively quickly and that many of the soldiers in a given unit tend to be recruited from locations throughout Iraq tends to serve as an impediment to the creation of strong civil-military relationships between the IA and local stakeholders. Neither side can feel fully invested in the relationship when they know that it could end at any moment. Were the GoI to more firmly declare that its units will operate within a designated community and select local leaders willing to remain within the unit for an extended period of time, both military and civilian leaders could more effectively establish long-term shared objectives. Such a declaration could also assist in recruitment, as desires to remain stationed close to home are often important to prospective soldiers and policemen. While the MoD may still need to employ units outside their AO to deal with short-term contingencies or large operations, it should clearly state its intention to avoid doing so in all but the most extreme circumstances. As a whole, "fencing" IA units within a concretely defined area of operation would help address concerns that the IA, unlike the police, are not a "local" security force. It would also reflect many of the most desirable aspects of the provincial "national guard" structure advocated for by many within the Sunni Arab community.

Proposals aimed at increasing the IA's ties with local communities will likely face stiff pushback—Iraqis tend to fiercely defend the role of the Army as a national institution. However, as our next recommendation covers, preventing the return of ISIS will likely require the U.S. government to be more diplomatically assertive with its Iraqi partners than it has been in recent years.

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[255] For a well-presented example of the conventional wisdom regarding the future roles of the Iraqi police, intelligence services, and army, see Douglas Ollivant, "Iraq After ISIS: What to Do Now," *New America,* 6:43-9:12. https://youtu.be/c5uVwEQhouY?t=6m43s.

[256] The US military uses an acronym called "DOTMLPF" (pronounced "dot-mil-P-F") to capture this concept. The acronym stands for doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, and facilities. It is generally used to help planners ensure that allocated resources are aligned with required capabilities. See *Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Instruction 3170.01I,* US Department of Defense, January 25, 2015. http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Library/Instructions/3170_01a.pdf?ver=2016-02-05-175022-720.

Asserting U.S. Policy Preferences

The U.S. should clarify its positions on Iraqi political issues when they lend themselves to reasonably clear American preferences. Too often, the U.S. has convinced itself that it should maintain essentially noncommittal stances on topics where it could have exerted significant influence. As Mara Karlin puts it in *Building Militaries in Fragile States,* US security assistance programs are "doing it wrong. The United States traditionally approaches the problem of building militaries in fragile states by emphasizing the training and equipment and by distancing itself from key political issues. This method wastes time, effort, and resources. Moreover, it represents a critical policy failure. Put simply, it is fundamentally flawed."[257]

While the U.S. cannot order the GoI to adopt a policy position, its words still carry considerable weight. As such, the U.S. should avoid making Iraqis try to guess our positions. There *can* be benefits to ambiguous policy statements. They can help the U.S. maintain policy flexibility and may avoid damaging our relationship with Iraqis who could view more interventionist activities as neocolonial interference in their sovereign affairs. For this reason, it is reasonable that U.S. diplomats may not lay their cards on the table during every meeting. However, as we demonstrated during our examination of the *Baghdad Neglect, Ethnic Security Dilemma,* and *TMF DDR* mechanisms, adopting a "let the Iraqis decide" approach is not always optimal. To highlight this point, one of the most commonly cited complaints about the U.S. during our interviews with leaders in Erbil and Baghdad was the ambiguity of U.S. policy positions. Interview participants pointed to noncommittal American stances as a reason for their hesitation to trust U.S. officials. Many were uncertain about U.S. alignment on various policy issues. In this respect, abstaining from concerted diplomatic efforts to advance an American viewpoint constitute an important policy choice. Therefore, when opportunities to push for meaningful reform exist, the U.S. should use its diplomatic influence to help those initiatives succeed.

The areas where we identified potential for greater U.S. involvement align with the "sensitive political issues" that Karlin argues are key to foreign internal defense missions, namely personnel decisions, the mission scope of security forces, and the security apparatus' organizational structure.[258] Attempts to strengthen the Army's policing and internal defense capabilities would require the U.S. to push the GoI on all three of those dimensions. These metrics are also critical to assuaging the concerns of local stakeholders. Yet, from their perspective, the U.S. is not attempting to influence those factors in a meaningful way. While the U.S. has certainly had a say on those topics to a certain extent, there is room for more clarity. Just within the 1st and 2nd quarters of Fiscal Year 18, unclear U.S. positions on the replacement of Ninewa's police chief, the degradation of the TMF, and the proliferation of minority militias have sown confusion regarding political decisions that are critical to creating effective security forces. To rectify this shortfall, the U.S. must make its stances known—assertively, both in private and, where appropriate, in public. As Doug Ollivant and Bartle Bull have stated, the appointment of a political rather than career ambassador in Baghdad could be a good way to gain traction in these discussions.[259] An ambassador with perceived influence inside the White House's inner circle would convey high-level U.S. interest in Iraq's security affairs, while also providing the GoI with a valued conduit to influential Washington policy makers.

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[257] Karlin, *Building Militaries in Fragile States,* p. 193.
[258] Ibid., p. 19.
[259] Ollivant and Bull, "Iraq After ISIS," p. 14.

Addressing Ninewa's Rural Safe Havens

The likely intensification of a rural ISIS insurgency in Ninewa underscores the importance of maintaining counterterrorism-specific train and equip initiatives. In addition to building the capacity of police or army units that could eventually relieve TMF units, the U.S. should also consider working with the GoI to slow the rate of TMF attrition and expand train and equip partnerships with TMF in particularly vulnerable areas. While those activities would require the acquiescence of Baghdad, such authorizations could feasibly be obtained given northern Iraq's increasingly active insurgency.

Beyond train and equip efforts, the U.S. should work with the GoI to develop a more systematic structure for addressing whether unit requests to replace their fighters are accepted or denied. The current system lacks an overarching logic whereby unit requests are evaluated by balancing an individual unit's strength against the specific threats that they are confronting. Instead, the rate at which a unit's manpower declines appears to be based more on the unit's natural rate of turnover rather than a Baghdad or provincially-driven security plan. Military advisors and diplomats should prioritize their efforts to help Baghdad find a more effective solution.

Furthermore, the U.S. must help Baghdad develop a more concrete DDR plan for the TMF fighters who will inevitably be "cut loose" in the future. Priority hiring of those individuals into formal security forces is a good idea that has already gained traction among leaders within the NOC—the U.S. should make supporting and expanding this concept a core objective of its security assistance in Ninewa. In many cases, former TMF fighters may lack the educational qualifications required for entry into the IA or Ninewa Police. Rather than simply denying them entry, the U.S. and GoI should work to ensure that educational programs specifically target those individuals as part of an accession pipeline into the formal ISF.

Such efforts would likely fall within the framework of the U.S. government's stabilization programming. Writ large, stabilization efforts should be examined to ensure that they are adequately addressing concerns in potential rural safe havens. Many of the stabilization programs could make critical contributions to TMF DDR, such as the Economic Support Development Fund's 'livelihoods assistance' programs.

The U.S. should also allocate additional intelligence assets against areas secured by the TMF in order to monitor the emergence of safe havens. The lack of formal security forces in these areas make reliable reporting difficult to obtain and can lead to gaps in the U.S government's understanding of the security situation. The U.S. should keep this in mind as threats originating from Mosul and Tel Afar—or alternatively, threats against U.S. forces—will tend to dominate collection taskings and analytical attention. Maintaining close contact with TMF leaders will prove critical to assessments regarding the readiness of their units and insurgent activity within their area of operations. Without a clear understanding of developments in rural areas, the U.S. and Iraqi governments may fail to re-task security forces, enable GoI development programs, or initiate political engagements until it's too late.

Post-Election Iraq and the Path Forward

As Iraqis attempt to form a new government, the U.S. D-ISIS campaign will face both opportunities and challenges. Many of the decisions made during PM Abadi's tenure reflected his desire to avoid handing an electoral victory to former Prime Minister Maliki or Iranian-aligned elements of the PMF, a fear which seems well-founded given the Fatah Coalition's second-place finish. However, a broad-based, cross-sectarian government consisting of Moqtada al-Sadr's *Sairoon* Alliance, Abadi's *Nasr* Coalition, and a collection of smaller Sunni Arab and Kurdish movements could provide the government with more latitude to implement nationalist and technocratic policies. As an example of the movement's cross-sectarian appeal, the *Nasr* Coalition won the most seats in Ninewa, despite Abadi's membership in an avowedly Shia Islamist party.[260] The most prominent Ninewa politician to run as part of Abadi's coalition was Khalid al-Obeidi, a former defense minister and Sunni Arab from Mosul. [261] He is well-known and widely respected in the province: during our interviews, he was consistently mentioned as a potential candidate for Ninewa's governorship. And despite the fact that Sadr's *Jaesh al-Mahdi* militia was at one time known for running sectarian death squads, he has since rechanneled his populist-nationalist rhetoric into a generally credible call for national unity.[262] The broad appeal of an Abadi-Sadr alliance could provide them with the strength necessary to stand against Iran's sectarian interference.

Despite the fact that Sadr has American blood on his hands, the U.S. should support the formation of such a government. An Abadi-Sadr government is Iraq's best hope for staving off the type of sectarianism that allowed ISIS to rise after America's 2011 withdrawal, and both leaders have developed increasingly productive relationships with their counterparts in the GCC.[263] While Sadr and Abadi have pledged to reduce foreign interference, both recognize the fact that the U.S. seeks to help Iraq stand on its own, while Iran seeks to dominate it. Amazingly, even Hadi al-Ameri, an Iranian-proxy heading the Fatah Coalition, has admitted that the U.S. will need to continue playing a role in Iraq.[264] Most Iraqi officials concede—in private—that not only would the liberation of ISIS-controlled territory have never been possible without the U.S., there is a serious need for continued U.S. assistance. As a result, it is likely that even a Sadr-led government will still strongly consider U.S. policy preferences. The U.S. should therefore reengage in a sustained, concerted way to advance policies critical to preventing the resurgence of ISIS.

Alternatively, Maliki and Ameri could outmaneuver the nationalists, marking a significant success for Iran and a correspondingly heavy blow to the U.S. Were this plot to unfold, the need for well-articulated U.S. policies will only increase. Iraqi stakeholders stung by such an outcome will be tempted to revert to many of the damaging practices that enabled the rise of ISIS, including the *ISIS*

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[260] Ziad al-Ali, "Why Iraq's surprising election doesn't signal major changes," *Washington Post,* May 16, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/05/16/iraqs-surprising-election-results-do-not-signal-deep-political-change/.

[261] Ali Mamouri, "Sunnis, Kurds court Sadr as new Iraqi government takes shape," *al-Monitor,* May 23, 2018. https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2018/05/iraq-election-sadr-abadi-sunni-kurds.html.

[262] Gareth Browne, "Muqtada al-Sadr: The unlikely answer to Iraq's sectarian problem," *Middle East Eye,* February 1, 2017. http://www.middleeasteye.net/columns/iraqs-answer-sunni-shia-divide-muqtada-al-sadr-1442520467.

[263] Mina al-Oraibi, "The Way Forward in Iraq," *New York Times,* May 17, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/17/opinion/iraq-elections-sadr-haider-abadi.html.

[264] Margaret Coker, "U.S. Takes a Risk: Old Iraqi Enemies Are Now Allies," *New York Times,* May 11, 2018. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/11/world/middleeast/iraq-iran-election-enemies.html.

Alliances mechanism identified in *Part III: ISIS 2.0 Pathways*. A similarly hopeful time, when Ayad Allawi's secular coalition won the plurality of votes in Iraq's 2010 election, was eventually squandered. The same thing could happen again. Ameri and Maliki, who many U.S. and Iraqi officials often half-jokingly refer to as "the father of ISIS," could easily bring out the worst impulses of threatened Sunni leaders in Ninewa. One of the most important bulwarks against those leaders' toleration of an ISIS 2.0 would be a U.S. government demonstrably committed to the promotion and support of professional, non-sectarian GoI security policies. Not only will the U.S. need to produce some results in this regard, it would also need to be *perceived* as advocating for the core security interests of Ninewa's threated communities. If those communities do not *feel* like the U.S. has their back, they may well take matters into their own hands.

In either scenario, we believe our recommendations will remain relevant. This project sought to describe how political conflict could impair Ninewa's security forces during their ongoing fight against ISIS. It then sought to identify areas where U.S policies were inadequately mitigating those challenges and provide ideas for how to address them. As the U.S. government continues to reevaluate its goals in Iraq, it is critical for leaders to pay close attention to how their policies impact the five *ISIS 2.0 Pathways*—including the mechanisms which do not pose imminent threats today but may rapidly become more problematic. While we acknowledge that this report does not offer grand solutions to underlying challenges like ethnic divisions or political tensions between Baghdad and Erbil, we do believe that the four recommendations we advocate are feasible and directly applicable to preventing ISIS from exploiting Ninewa's volatile political scene. As ISIS continues to regenerate its capacity in Ninewa, it is critical that the Department of Defense, Department of State, and their interagency partners move swiftly to disrupt the pathways that lead to an ISIS 2.0. We believe these ideas constitute a good start.

Appendices

Appendix A: Ninewa's Security Sector

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

Ninewa Operations Command (NOC)
Nominally coordinates efforts of all ISF and PMF

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)
Iraqi Special Operations Forces (ISOF-2)

National Security Service (NSS)
Intelligence Service (*mukhabarat*)

Iraqi Army (IA)
15th, 16th, and 20th Divisions, support from 9th Armored Division

Federal Police (FEDPOL)
Relocated to Kirkuk, previously 3rd and 5th Divisions

Energy Police
Secure oil, electric, and transportation lines

Ninewa Province Police
Iraqi Police (IP)—local police force; includes provincial SWAT team

Emergency Response Division (ERD)
Ministry of Interior Special Operations—not currently playing major post liberation role

Border Guards
Primarily operate on Syrian Border

Kurdish Security Forces

KDP Peshmerga
Main fighting force of the KRG (Barazani/Kurdistan Democratic Party)

KDP Zeravani
Military police force (like FEDPOL), train several KDP-supported militias

KDP Asayish
Intelligence and internal security service

Hashd al-Sha'abi

Hashd al-Sha'abi - **Council Administered**
Popular Mobilization Council (PMC) led in-practice by Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis

<u>Local PMF Units</u> - Composed primarily of groups originally from Ninewa

Ninewa Plains Protection Units (NPU)
Christian unit in Ninewa Plains (Assyrian Democratic Movement)

Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)
Shia-Shabak unit in Ninewa Plains/Mosul (Shabak Democratic Assembly)

Babylon Brigade
Christian-Shia unit in Ninewa Plains

al-Hashd al-Turkmani (**Brigades 16 and 52**)
Shia Turkmen primarily in vicinity of Tel Afar

Lalish Regiment
Yazidi unit vicinity Sinjar

Ninewa Guards
Predominantly Sunni unit (former Governor Atheel Nujaifi)

<u>Non-Local *Marjaiya* Groups</u> - Non-proxy Shia groups loyal to Sistani

Ali al-Akbar Brigade
Affiliated with Imam Hussein shrine in Karbala. Active in Western Ninewa

<u>Non-Local Proxy Groups</u> - Composed primarily of proxy groups "from the south," heavily Iranian influenced

Badr Organization
Major Shia militia and political party

Asai'b Ahl al-Haq (AAH)
Splinter organization from Jaish al-Mahdi

Kata'ib Hezbollah
Iranian proxy headed by Muhandis with links to Lebanese Hezbollah

National Security Service-Administered
National Security Council led by NSA Falih al-Fayad

Tribal Mobilization Forces (*Hashd al-Asha'ari*)
Smaller (~100-300) man units composed of Sunni tribesman, particularly from the Jabour and Shamar tribes

Kurdish-Supported Militias

Jazeera Brigade
Sunni tribal forces, primarily from Rabia and Zamar

Ninewa Plains Forces (NPF)
Christian militia (Bet Nahrain Democratic Party)

Ezidikhan Defense Force (HPE)
Yazidi unit formerly prominent in Sinjar (Haider Shesho)

Rojava Peshmerga
KDP-supported militia operating in Syria and western Ninewa

Ninewa Plains Guard Force (NPGF)
Largest pro-KRG Christian militia; based in Qaraqosh

Dwekh Nawsha
Christian Militia (Assyrian Patriotic Party)

Other Militias

Sinjar Protection Units (YBS)
Yazidi PKK affiliate in Sinjar

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK)
Primarily operating in vicinity of Sinjar alongside YBS

"Fake Hashd"
Forces falsely claiming or accused of being PMF; a common occurrence

Foreign Forces

Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)
Acting in "advise and assist" capacity, mainly to *hashd al-sha'abi*

Turkish Armed Forces (TSK)
Operating out of Bashiqa Camp northeast of Mosul

Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS/CJTF-OIR
U.S. and other coalition members involved in advise and assist

Appendix B: FEDPOL and ERD Background

Federal Police (FEDPOL)

The Federal Police (FEDPOL, *shurta itihadiya*) assumed a large role in the liberation of Ninewa—particularly in West Mosul—after CTS suffered high attrition rates during the initial operational phases. The 3rd and 5th Federal Police Divisions were the primary units operating in Ninewa.[265] They were involved in manning checkpoints throughout the province, especially in Mosul and Tel Afar, and worked with the PMF to secure the Jazeera Desert, territory where ISIS still maintains a limited safe haven.

After attempting to rely on a softer, community-based policing approach in the post-invasion era, Iraqi authorities realized that they needed a more heavily armed, militarily-capable force to address an active insurgency. As attacks against security forces intensified in 2004, local police forces completely collapsed in Fallujah, Najaf, Karbala, and Kut.[266] To fill the capability gap between local police and the army, U.S. and Iraqi authorities began training military-style units within the Ministry of Interior.[267] To reign-in these forces' rampant involvement in anti-Sunni torture and extrajudicial killings, the U.S. military named 2006 "The Year of the Police in Iraq" and created the Iraqi National Police (INP) to more formally institutionalize Iraq's military police force.[268] As the organization's professionalism and influence grew, it was renamed the Federal Police in 2009.[269] Modeled on gendarmerie forces and trained primarily for military operations, FEDPOL is intended to promote law and order by targeting insurgent groups within Ninewa.

Due in part to the fact that they are housed within the Ministry of Interior (MoI) rather than the Ministry of Defense (MoD), FEDPOL are often viewed as more sectarian and corrupt than their army counterparts. Their history of human rights abuses reinforces this perception. Numerous reform efforts—both those from within the Iraqi government and those orchestrated by the U.S. and its allies—have thus far failed to reform the MoI into an institution that all Iraqis fully trust.[270] Many FEDPOL units are considered subsidiaries of the Badr Organization, a political movement which exerts an overwhelming influence throughout the MoI and maintains close ties to Iran.[271] But despite these lingering concerns, their popularity has also risen in the wake of ISIS' defeat.[272]

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[265] Duri-Agry et al, "Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces," p. 25-26.

[266] Perito, Robert M., "The Iraqi Federal Police: US Police Building Under Fire," *US Institute for Peace (USIP),* October 2011, p. 4. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR291_The_Iraq_Federal_Police.pdf.

[267] Ibid., p. 4.

[268] Ibid., p. 6.

[269] Ibid., p. 12.

[270] Robert Perito and Madeline Kristoff, "Iraq's Interior Ministry: The Key to Police Reform," *US Institute for Peace,* July 2009, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/iraq_interior_ministry_perito_kristoff.pdf.

[271] Duri-Agry et al, "Iraqi Security Forces and Popular Mobilization Forces," p. 24.

[272] Dagher, "Dai'sh in Iraq: The Full Story," slide 14.

Emergency Response Division (ERD)

The Emergency Response Division (ERD, *furqa ar-red as-suriya)* is an MoI unit which also played a key role in the liberation of Mosul. Intended to serve as quick reaction force, it is generally considered the MoI's commando unit. Like other MoI units, it is often viewed as highly sectarian, corrupt, and Badr-influenced. ERD received increased attention during the campaign to liberate Mosul for its role in reprisal killings and human rights abuses.[273] The U.S. has not provided military equipment or training to the ERD since 2015 based on those concerns, although diversion of such equipment is routine in Iraq.[274]

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[273] James Gordon Meek, Haider Newmani, Brian Ross, and Rhonda Schwarts. "US ignores evidence of atrocities by blacklisted Iraqi military unit," *ABC News.* May 31, 2017. http://abcnews.go.com/International/us-ignores-evidence-atrocities-blacklisted-iraqi-military-unit/story?id=47745913.
[274] Ibid.

Appendix C: Security Sector Social Media

Formal Iraqi Security Forces (ISF)

Ninewa Operations Command (NOC)
قيادة عمليات نينوى
www.facebook.com/اعلام-قيادة-عمليات-نينوى-463967220419319/

Counter Terrorism Service (CTS)
جهاز مكافحة الإرهاب العراقي
https://ar-ar.facebook.com/iraqicts/
https://www.facebook.com/ISOFGOLD/

National Security Service (NSS)
جهاز الامن الوطني العراقي
www.facebook.com/جهاز-الامن-الوطني-العراقي-236121343252727/

Iraqi Army (IA)
15th Division:
فرقة المشاة الخامسة عشر
www.facebook.com/اعلام-فرقة-المشاة-الخامسه-عشر-331217787245328/

16th Division:
فرقة المشاة السادسة عشر
www.facebook.com/إعلام-قيادة-فرقة-المشاة-السادسة-عشر-16-الأبطال-842995932529372/

20th Division:
فرقة المشاة العشرون
www.facebook.com/اعلام-قيادة-فرقة-المشاة-العشرون-362196017564529/

Federal Police (FEDPOL)
قيادة الشرطة الاتحادية
https://www.facebook.com/media1967/

Energy Police
المديرية العامة لشرطة الطاقة
https://www.facebook.com/EnergyPoliceDirectorate/

Ninewa Province Police
قيادة شرطة محافظة نينوى
https://www.facebook.com/policenineveh/

Emergency Response Division (ERD)
فرقة الرد السريع
https://www.facebook.com/erdforcesbatting/

Border Guards
قوات حرس الحدود
https://ar-ar.facebook.com/Borders.Police.Forces.Command/

Hashd al-Sha'abi

Ninewa Plain Protection Units (NPU)
وحدات حماية سهل نينوى
https://twitter.com/ninevehpu?lang=en
https://www.facebook.com/NinevehPU/

Ninewa Plains Forces (Shabak NPF)
قوات سهل نينوى
www.facebook.com/قوات-سهل-نينوى-1120789734658812/

Babylon Brigade (literally "Babylon Battalions")
كتائب بابليون

www.facebook.com/1453692391558797-قوات-سهل-نينوى-كتائب-بابليون/

Lalish Regiment
فوج لالش

https://ar-ar.facebook.com/1892110641115168-شبكة-فوج-لالش-للإعلام/

Ninewa Guards
حرس نينوى
https://ar-ar.facebook.com/NinevehGuards/

Badr Organization
منظمة بدر
https://www.facebook.com/Badrwarnews/
https://www.facebook.com/g.badr.iq/

Kurdish-Supported Militias

Ezidikhan Defense Force (HPE)
قوات حماية ايزيدخان
ar-ar.facebook.com/510588972408661-صوت-قوة-حماية-ايزيدخان/

Ninewa Plains Guard Force (NPGF)
لواء حراسات سهل نينوى
www.facebook.com/npgf-832158626936207-لواء-حراسات-سهل-نينوى/

Dwekh Nawsha
دويخ نوشا
https://www.facebook.com/Dwekh.Nawsha/

Jazeera Brigade
لواء الجزيرة

https://www.facebook.com/324005661357471-لواء-الجزيره/

Appendix D: U.S. Government Policy and Programs

Diplomatic Engagements

Approach	Description	Pathways Impacted
"Unified, Stable, Democratic, and Federal Iraq"[275]	- Support reassertion of federal authority by Baghdad, but also maintain longstanding U.S. advocacy for devolution of authorities to regional and provincial level - Ninewa strategy increasingly more focused on GoI preferences rather than a truly "tri-vetted" approach - Continue to promote CT cooperation between GoI and KRG - Support joint KRG-GoI patrols in disputed territories, but not willing to allocate U.S. troops - Hesitant to advocate strongly for major reforms because it may jeopardize relationship with central government, cause too much turmoil, and imperil other priority efforts - "Let the Iraqis decide" on major reform decisions	- Erbil vs Baghdad - Local Control
Iran: "Go Home"[276]	- Approach towards major Iranian-proxy groups in the PMF like Badr, AAH, and KH - Major focus on recouping diverted U.S. equipment (M1A1 Abrams tanks) - Proxy groups and Iran will be "held responsible" for attacks on U.S. troops[277] - Publicly expressed concerns over Iranian election interference[278]	- Militia Question - Outsider Influence - Command and Control - Local Control
"Not in the Business of Nation-Building"[279]	- Support stabilization efforts rather than reconstruction initiatives - Reconstruction assistance primarily conducted by encouraging private investment from U.S. companies and supporting international/coalition initiatives.	- Militia Question - Outsider Influence
ISF and US: An Enduring Partnership	- Preserve U.S. and Global Coalition's ability to operate "build partner capacity" training sites and embed with ISF headquarters, albeit at reduced troop levels—avoid controversial/high-profile troop deployments - Push back against demands for complete U.S. withdrawal - Ensure continued access to facilities needed to support counter-ISIS efforts in Syria.	- Command and Control - Outsider Influence - Erbil vs Baghdad
Local, Multiethnic "Police Primacy"	- Local police considered the most important security force to prevent an ISIS 2.0 - Build police capacity and let them assume primary responsibility for security operations.	- Local Control - Command and Control

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[275] Nauert, Heather, "Department Press Briefing."
[276] Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, "Remarks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir."
[277] Reuters staff, "CIA chief Pompeo says he warned Iran's Soleimani over Iraq aggression."
[278] Secretary of Defense James Mattis, "Media Availability with Secretary Mattis En Route to the USA.".
[279] Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, "Remarks at the Ministerial Plenary for the Global Coalition Working to Defeat ISIS," *US Department of State,* March 22, 2017. https://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2017/03/269039.htm.

Foreign Assistance

Program	Description	Funding (in millions)[260]			
		'16	'17	'18	'19
Foreign Military Financing (FMF)	"The provision of FMF assistance [grants and loans] to partner militaries establishes and facilitates strong military-to-military cooperation, promotes U.S. trade and economic interests, and enables friends and allies to be interoperable with U.S., regional, and international military forces."[261]	250	250	0	0
Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining, and Related Programs (NADR)	"Critical, security-related programs that reduce threats posed by international terrorist activities; landmines, explosive remnants of war (ERW) and stockpiles of excess conventional weapons and munitions; nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons of mass destruction (WMD); and other destabilizing weapons and missiles, including Man-Portable Air Defense Systems (MANPADS) and their associated technologies."[262]	38.3	56.9	46.9	46.9
Economic Support Development Fund (ESDF)	"Support the Administration's strategy to sustain gains made against ISIS and ultimately lead to its defeat. Funds will support stabilization and recovery in areas liberated from ISIS; reinforce Iraq's own economic and fiscal reforms; strengthen governance and government responsiveness; and promote reconciliation, accountability, and human rights. Funds will also continue to support Iraqi minorities most affected by ISIS"[263] Stabilization initiatives are funneled through the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS) program, focused on 1) light infrastructure rehabilitation, 2) livelihoods support, 3) local official capacity building, 4) community reconciliation. In Ninewa, administration focus has been on minority groups, particularly Christians.[264]	116.5	553.5	300	150
International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (INCLE)	"Supports U.S. partners in developing their criminal justice systems and capabilities in order to protect the national security and economic interests of the United States from the impact of crime and instability overseas."[265]	0	0.2	0	2.0
Contribution to International Organizations (CIO)	U.S. contributions to United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq (UNAMI)[266]	31.2	31.2	26.3	~20-30
International Disaster Assistance (IDA)	USAID Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) humanitarian assistance in response to natural disasters and complex emergencies[267]	0	11	0	0
Foreign Military Sales (FMS)	Approval of American private industry military sales to Iraq	-	-	-	-
Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA)	"In partnership with the world's leading international and nongovernmental humanitarian organizations, programs funded through the Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) account save lives and ease suffering, uphold human dignity, and play a critical role in helping to mitigate and resolve conflict displacement"[268]	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A[269]
International Military Education and Training (IMET)	"Promotes regional stability and defense capabilities through professional military education and training, including technical courses and specialized instruction conducted at U.S. military schoolhouses or through mobile education and training teams abroad."[270]	1	0.7	1	1

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[260] FY 2018 and 2019 represent executive branch requests, while '16-'17 have been appropriated. Figures drawn from FY 2019 DOS Budget Justification and Christopher M. Blanchard, "Iraq: In Brief," *Congressional Research Service,* March 5, 2018. https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R45096.pdf.
[261] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 121.
[262] Ibid*.,* p. 112. In Iraq, this includes four programs: the Global Threat Reduction (GTR) program, focused on counter-proliferation, the Export Control and Related Border Security (EXBS) program, Antiterrorism Assistance (ATA), focused on improving law enforcement CT capabilities, and Conventional Weapons Destruction (CWD), focused on the disposal of explosive remnants of war (ERW). See p. 113-114.
[263] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 94. In comparison to previous years, this program know also includes activities previously conducted in Iraq under the Economic Support Fund (ESF) and Democracy Fund (DF).
[264] Blanchard, "Iraq: in Brief," p. 10-11 and 13.
[265] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 108.
[266] Ibid*.,* p. 94
[267] Ibid., p. 86
[268] Ibid.*,,* p. 99.
[269] DOS tracks MRA at the bureau rather than state level. In 2018, the Near Eastern Affairs Bureau received $1.195, and stated that Iraq was one of its priority efforts. See "DOS Budget Justification FY 2019," *Department of State,* p. 309 and 311.
[270] "FY 2019 Congressional Budget Justification – Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs," p. 119.

Mil – Mil Engagements

Program	Description	Funding (in million $)			
		'16	'17	'18	'19
Train and Equip—Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF)	"Provides the necessary resources to continue training and equipping all element of the vetted ISF to support the consolidation of gains and develop into an inclusive and sustainable force capable of securing Iraq. As the tempo of offensive operations slows, this budget request realigns resources from the need to support partner forces with urgent materiel assistance for major combat operations to enhancing the capability of security forces, consolidating gains, and dealing ISIS a lasting defeat while developing partner capacity to prevent its reemergence."[271]	715	1,365.9	1,269	850[272]
OIR—Advise and Assist	"Planning, intelligence collection and analysis, force protection and precision fires to achieve the military defeat of ISIS"[273]	5,000	11,900	13,000	15,300[274]
Security Cooperation (SC)	Funds OSC-I: "This program is DoD's cornerstone for achieving the long-term U.S. goal of building partnership capacity in the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). The OSC-I conducts the full range of traditional security cooperation activities such as joint exercise planning, combined arms training, conflict resolution, multilateral peace operations, senior level visits, and other forms of bilateral engagement. Additionally, the OSC-I conducts security cooperation activities in support of the ISF to include: CT training, institutional training; ministerial and service level advisors; logistic and operations capacity building; intelligence integration; and interagency collaboration. The OSC-I is the critical Defense component of the U.S. Mission in Iraq and a foundational element of the long-term strategic partnership with Iraq. This is a unique and separate mission from ISIS-focused train and equip operations."[275]	100	85	42	45[276]

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[271] "Justification for FY 2019 Overseas Contingency Operations: Counter-ISIS Train and Equip Fund (CTEF)," Slide 4.
[272] Blanchard, "Iraq: in Brief," p. 14. Note: the figures for 2016 and 2017 include the "Iraq Train and Equip Fund" (ITEF), which has since been subsumed by the CTEF.
[273] Marshall, Crystal, "US-led coalition forces make decisive gains against ISIS in 2017."
[274] "FY 19 US Defense Budget Overview," *Office of the Secretary of Defense,* February 2018. p. 4-1. This figure also includes operations in Syria.
[275] Ibid., p. 5.
[276] Ibid., p. 4-5. Previous years drawn from DOD Budget Requests FY16-FY18.

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