

# MOSUL AFTER DAESH INTERNAL AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

OTHMAN ALI







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## ABSTRACT

The Mosul Operation will have far-reaching consequences for Iraq and the Middle East. This paper addresses the possible scenarios which might unfold in the post-DAESH era in Iraq and the Middle East. Though the U.S. has a clear role in planning and implementing the operation, we maintain that the Mosul Operation is being launched in a manner that will serve Iran and its Iraqi Shiite allies' interests. This paper will demonstrate that the Iraqi government has deliberately avoided agreeing to a formula which will empower the Sunni Arabs in Mosul in the post-DAESH era and it intends to restore the regime which was in place before the DAESH takeover in 2014. It is very likely that there will be a new and serious confrontation between the central government and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) over the control of the disputed territories in the northern and eastern parts of the province. Furthermore, unless a U.S.-led coalition force is present in Mosul, the Shiite-dominated administration in Baghdad will try to marginalize the local Sunnis. This will make the latter more receptive to radical views such as those of DAESH or similar organizations which will emerge. Finally, Turkey cannot afford to stand by while serious events take place just across its borders. In coordination with the U.S. and the KRG, Turkey needs to take steps to avoid further destabilizations in the post-DAESH era in Mosul.

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## INTRODUCTION

It appears that the unfolding events in the Mosul operations have critical implications not only for the future of Mosul but also for the future of Iraq. In this paper we maintain that Iran will use its influence with Iraqi groups, especially with the followers of former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, to restore Mosul's pre-DAESH administrative regime. This will give Iran safe land access to Syria so as to complete its Shiite Crescent design for the Middle East. However, this plan will eventually clash with the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) desire to maintain its control in the newly gained territories in Mosul's predominantly Kurdish districts. This Iranian-inspired policy in Mosul is also contrary to the Sunni Arabs' plan for self-rule in the province, especially with the plan of the Mutahidoun bloc of Osama al-Nujaifi. We further argue that unless the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH has a military presence in post-DAESH Mosul, the conflicting agendas of the various armed militias will inevitably lead to armed conflicts which will have serious national and regional spillovers. This study ends with recommendations for the administration of Mosul in the post-DAESH period.

As the final chapter of DAESH military control in Iraq's second largest city comes to its inevitable end political observers and decision-makers in the West and the Middle East have expressed concerns about the post-DAESH era. There is widespread conviction that the next chapter in Iraq's history will be filled with uncertainties, and that the country might be heading for a future which is bleak and unpromising. The conflicting agendas of the participant parties are partly responsible for some of the uncertainties in the post-DAESH period. There are several scenarios which may unfold after the expulsion of DAESH from Mosul: (1) the restoration of the pre-2014 administration, (2) the transformation of the Mosul governorate into a region by itself, (3) the division of the administration of Mosul along sectarian and ethnic lines, and the clearance to the disputed Kurdish regions within the province, which have been recently controlled by the peshmerga, to join formally the KRG.

## THE COMPLEX NATURE OF THE MOSUL OPERATION

The operation in Mosul unlike other regions in Iraq has a complex nature. This is due to the high stakes of many national, regional and international actors here. Although the U.S.-led international coalition seems to be the main actor which has been planning and executing the operation in Mosul, the U.S. is trying to present the Iraqi government and Prime Minister Haider al-Abad as being in charge of the operation.

Due to the complex nature of the Mosul operation and the conflicting goals of the various groups participating in the battle, the launching of the operation was delayed on several occasions. The main obstacle was the differences over the future of the post-DAESH administration in Mosul. While KRG leader Mosud Barzani emphasized the significance

of the signing of a political agreement in this regard prior to the commence of the operation, al-Abadi and other Shiite leaders have preferred to leave the discussion of this matter to the period after the defeat of DAESH.<sup>1</sup> The issue of the participation of the Hashd al-Shabi (Popular Mobilization Units-PMU)<sup>2</sup> was another complicating factor. While the U.S, and non-Shiite groups wanted to exclude the PMU from the Mosul operation, Iran and Iraqi Shiite groups within the government insisted on their participation. Another controversial issue which required close consideration was the conditions under which the peshmerga units will participate in the battle.

According to sources close to the London-based al-Rawabit think tank, on September 24, 2016 as part of the preparation for the Mosul operation, President Obama, who was then attending a UN General Assembly meeting in New York, met a high level Iraqi delegation led by Prime Minister al-Abadi. Obama agreed to give his full support to the operation provided that the Iraqi government will exclude Shiite militias

from participating in the battle, and that the Iraqi Sunni Arabs in Mosul will not face similar marginalization to the one they experienced during the al-Maliki administration.

Once the Iranian policy-makers were informed about this meeting and Obama's conditions, they began to play their cards against al-Abadi. Al-Maliki formed the Islah (Reform) bloc to exert pressure on al-Abadi, Kurds, and Sunni Arabs. In addition, Iranian-backed militias made numerous threats against the U.S. involvement in the Mosul operation. Qais Khazali, the leader of Asaeb Ahlul Haq, and Muqtada Sadr, the head of Sarayah Selam militias, stated that U.S. troops in Iraq are their legitimate targets.<sup>3</sup> Militia commanders, including Hadi al-Ameri, who is the leader of the powerful Badr group, issued many statements openly defying the views shared by al-Abadi and the U.S. on the anticipated participation of the Hashd al-Shabi in the Mosul operation.<sup>4</sup>

During the months of August, September, and October 2016, US was engaged in an intensive shuttle diplomacy between various groups trying to work out the details of the attack on Mosul and reach a compromise about the mentioned differences. There was heavy traffic of coalition officials visiting Baghdad and Erbil. These included U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon, and Canadian Minister of National Defense Harjit Singh Sajjan.<sup>5</sup> Hakim al-Zamily, the head of the Security and Law Committee of the Iraqi Parliament, stated that al-Abadi and the other Shiite leaders are worried that the peshmerga would not withdraw from territories that they might capture during the battle. After

1. "If You Want to Know What Will Happen to Mosul After Isis Is Pushed Out, Look Back to the Fall of Saddam Hussein", *Independent*, October 17, 2016.

2. The PMUs maintain between 60,000 and 90,000 men under arms on a rotating basis. Indeed, the concept of al-Hashd al-Shabi was launched not by the state but by a so-called al-wajib al-kifai fatwa issued in June 2014 by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's most influential Shiite leader. The Popular Mobilization Committee was headed by Jamal Jaafar Mohammad, better known by his nom de guerre Abu Mahdi al-Mohandis, a former Badr commander. Mohandis is the right-hand man of Qasem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force, which is becoming increasingly influential in shaping Iraq's future. Most of the groups followed the call to arms by Iraq's leading Shiite sheikh Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani. But Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the supreme leader of Iran, had also an important role in the decision to recruit the PMU. (See Renad Mansour, "From Militia to State Force: The Transformation of Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi", Carnegie Endowment, November 16, 2015, <http://carnegie-mec.org/diwan/61986>, (Access date: December 23, 2016); "Hashd al-Shaabi/Hashd Shaabi-Popular Mobilisation Units/People's Mobilization Forces", Global Security, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/hashd-al-shaabi.htm>, (Access date: December 23, 2016); A New Controversial Actor in.., Ortadoğu Stratejik, <https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=159421377454757>, (Access date, December 23, 2016; Bilgay Duman, *A New Controversial Actor in Post-ISIS Iraq: Al-Hashd Al-Shaabi*, (ORSAM Report, Ankara: 2015).

3. العراق: مقتدى الصدر يهدد بضرب الجنود الاجانب العاملين في القيادة العامري يؤكد مجددا : قطعاً سنشارك في تحرير موصل Al Uoum Al-Sabaa, July 18, 2016; Shafaqnews, August 2, 2016.

4. عين العراق "مكتب العبادي يؤكد مشاركة الحشد الشعبي في معركة الموصل". July 9, 2016

5. Dan Lamothe, "The 'Biggest Strategic Concern' about Mosul? Putting It Back Together after ISIS Loses", *Washington Post*, July 20, 2016.

a long and demanding period of negotiation and tough bargaining some compromises were reached: Masud Barzani signed a “memorandum of understanding” with the Pentagon on July 12, 2016. This MOU ensures the peshmerga’s withdrawal from any territories which will be controlled during the battle.<sup>6</sup>

The non-participation of the PMU which has been demanded by the Mosul Administrative Council was also settled. Consequently, the city of Mosul in the post-DAESH era will be liberated by the federal police (Shurta-al-ittihadya) and the anti-terrorism force (Qawat Mukafahat al-Irhab).<sup>7</sup> Both of these forces are Shiite security personnel and many of their members are ex-Shiite militias who have received training drills in Iran.<sup>8</sup> The militia of Hashd al Watani (National Mobilization Force) of Aseel al-Nujaifi (ex-governor of Mosul) which was renamed “Hers Naynawa” (Neyniva Guards) - has been allocated the task of holding the ground in Mosul after its liberation.<sup>9</sup> Behind the scene, the American officials, including Joseph Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, played a role in working out compromises between Barzani and the central government. These will include the peshmerga’s participation in the battle to support the Iraqi army’s offensive but the allocation of a leading position. On July 30, 2016, having met U.S. military officials,

Barzani stated: “Liberating Mosul is impossible without the peshmerga. He also added that peshmerga will take part in the operation, but they will not enter the city of Mosul. On August 13, 2016, Barzani met some leading figures from the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH who have been engaged in intensive shuttle diplomacy. He hosted a meeting with both Brett McGurk, U.S. envoy for the global anti-DAESH coalition, and Falih al-Fayadh, Iraqi National Security Advisor. According to Jabbar Yawer, the chief of staff of Peshmerga, it was agreed that Kurds would participate in the battle with 50,000 peshmerga.<sup>10</sup>

Due to the complex nature of the Mosul operation and the conflicting goals of the various groups participating in the battle, the launching of the operation was delayed on several occasions.

In reality Kurds allocated only 10,000 peshmerga to the battle. However, both Kurds and Shiite leaders have different readings of the arrangements which have been worked out so far, and their relationship is plagued by a significant amount of distrust. As late as August 25, there were acrimonious exchanges between al-Abadi and Kurdish leaders. The former insists that the peshmerga have to withdraw from all “the disputed territories” they have captured from DAESH. Karim Nouri, a top commander of the Badr forces, told *Rudaw*, “Kurds should not even dream of being able to take away any part of Mosul. Touching Mosul’s territories is as

6. “الزاملي يوضح سبب رفض العبادي لتقدم البيشمه ركة في الموصل”، NRT TV, August 21, 2016; “US-KRG Military Deal ‘Unconstitutional’ Claim Baghdad Mps”, *Rudaw*, July 18, 2016.

7. Ali Kurdistan, “Why Sunnis Don’t Want Shiite Militia in the Mosul Offensive”, *Rudaw*, July 1, 2016.

8. Chiyuki Aoi. *Legitimacy and the Use of Armed Force: Stability Missions in the Post-Cold Era*, (Routledge, New York: 2011), pp. 127-28.

9. Hashd al-Watani is to be the only force entering the city after the defeat of DAESH. This council has passed a resolution not to allow pro-Iranian Hashd al-Shaabi militias to enter the city. There is concern that Hashd may commit sectarian cleansing similar to what happened in other predominantly Sunni populated regions taken back from DAESH. The Mosul-based al-Mutahedon parliamentary bloc has lately been calling for the creation of a federal/ autonomous Mosul Region with a decentralized administration to provide self-rule for its various ethnic and religious components. For more detail, see Kurdistan, “Why Sunnis Don’t Want Shiite Militia in the Mosul Offensive”.

10. Mohammed A. Salih, “Baghdad-Erbil Bickering Overshadows Mosul Battle”, *Al-Monitor*, July 28, 2016, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/07/iraq-government-marginalize-kurds-mosul-battle.html>, (Access date: December 23, 2016).

dangerous as playing with fire.”<sup>11</sup> This irritated the KRG officials. Shaikh Jafar, a political bureau member of the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) and top military commander, stated: “We are not going to withdraw from any territories which have been liberated by peshmerga’s blood. al-Abadi forces can only come to our liberated territories over our dead bodies.”<sup>12</sup> This and other similar divergences could keep alive the potential for future clashes between Shiite forces and Kurds during the war and beyond.

Regardless of how people feel or what the people of Mosul desire the Shiite groups have already used their simple majority in Parliament to ensure the restoration of the pre-DAESH administration in Mosul.

## THE POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR POST-DAESH MOSUL

### The Reimposition of the Pre-DAESH Administration

One of the possible scenarios which al-Abadi and the central government will try to impose is to recreate a system similar to the one that existed in Mosul before the DAESH takeover: Mosul will remain as a governorate with a Shiite-dominated state apparatus. The main features of this scenario is the re-establishing of Shiite dominated administration which ruled Mosul and alienated people from the government, and that made the DAESH takeover of Mosul easy. The Shiite-controlled state apparatus was involved in a heavy-handed policy of daily abuses of the majority Sunni population in the

province. These included, among other things, the arbitrary arrest of citizens under numerous pretexts, especially with the charge of being members of the former Baathist administration of Saddam Hussein. It is noteworthy, that 36% of Saddam’s army and security apparatus in Iraq was from Mosul. During this era there was widespread corruption and money embezzlement from government offices and large-scale extortion of money with various pretexts from the notables and merchants of Mosul.<sup>13</sup> It became public knowledge that the Shiite-dominated units of the army, security, and federal police in Mosul were raising sectarian flags and using abusive language towards Sunni symbols.

This scenario would unsurprisingly cause significant disagreements between elements loyal to the central government and the people of Mosul with Arab, Turkmen and Kurdish backgrounds, as well as the KRG. Both Osama al-Nujaifi, the leader of the al-Mutahedon Sunni bloc, and the Mosul provincial council have already made it clear that they would not accept such a scenario. U.S. General David Petraeus, coalition commanding officer in Mosul, insists that any role to “Shia militias” in running the affairs of the city should be denied. He recommends an inclusive decentralized administration for the province to provide Mosul’s various religious and ethnic groups with some degree of self-rule.<sup>14</sup> In general, some Turcoman groups with Shiite origin who have been recruited to the PMU would support the central government in restoring the pre-2014 Shiite-dominated administration in the province. But this desire on the part of a small section of the Mosul population, which is confined to Telafar, runs counter to the feeling of the great majority of the province. The PMU

11. Othman Ali, “Mosul Operation and Obama’s Nightmare”, ORSAM, October 24, 2016.

[www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4927?c=turkmen%7Cturkish](http://www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4927?c=turkmen%7Cturkish), (Access date: December 23, 2016).

12. قيادي كوردي : البيشمركة لن تنسحب من اراضي حررتها بالدم . Kurdistan 24 , August 22, 2016.

13. Dylan O’Driscoll, “The Future of Mosul Before, During, and after the Liberation”, Middle East Research Institute, September 2016.

14. “US Ex-Spy Chief Urges US Influence in Running Mosul in Post-DAESH Era”, *WN*, July 22, 2016.

and the al-Maliki group in the State of Law bloc have already recruited some members of the religious minorities such as Christians, Yezidis, and Shabaks. These groups are not powerful enough to dictate the future of the province unless they receive support from the Iraqi army and the PMU. Nevertheless, it is my opinion that the al-Abadi government will be forced by pro-Iranian circles in Baghdad to try to restore the direct rule of the central government with some Sunni tokens added to satisfy the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH.

The only obstacles to re-establishing the former Maliki regime in Mosul were the Kurdish peshmerga and Turkey's military presence in Bashiqa, and the latter's influence via the Sunni Hashd al-Watani. As for the peshmerga, the Baghdad government has managed to confine their role to the northern and eastern outskirts of Mosul and both sides agreed on the plan that the peshmerga will not enter the city. Hashd al-Watani will have an insignificant presence in the city, due to their small size and their lack of advanced heavy weaponry. Consequently, the city of Mosul in the post-DAESH era will be controlled and manned by the federal police and the anti-terrorism force. Both of these forces are comprised of mainly Shiite security personnel and many of their members are ex-Shiite militias who it is claimed have received training drills in Iran.

al-Abadi could only be deterred from re-imposing the former al-Maliki regime in Mosul by considerable U.S. military and security servicemen on the ground.

### The Creation of a Mosul Region

This option which calls for changing the current status from "governorate" to "region" faces feasibility problems, and legal and political challenges. On September 9, 2016, Aseel Nujaifi, the ex-governor of Mosul and the leader of the Hashd al-Watani which is 4,000-strong force from Mosul, called for the formation

of a Mosul region with eight provinces and large decentralized power to satisfy the needs of different religious and ethnic minorities. In addition, there are several powerful tribal sheikhs with close ties to the U.S. and the KRG who also gave their support to the transformation of Mosul from governorate to region.<sup>15</sup>

The pro-Iranian Islah bloc has already used its majority in Parliament to pass a resolution on September 26 which foresees that the pre-2014 regime of government in Mosul will be reintroduced after the expulsion of DAESH. The resolution states that the pre-2014 borders and regime in Mosul will remain intact. Thus the Sunni Arabs of Mosul have been prevented in advance from turning their province from a "governorate" into a "region" which would have given Sunni Arabs more leverage. According to the Iraq Constitution regions have more power administratively, judicially and in security affairs than governorates.<sup>16</sup> Consequently al-Abadi has failed to deliver his second promise, made in New York to Obama.

15. يبيعون "جلد" الموصل قبل استعادتها - أمين قنورية - النهار  
www.annahar.com/.../476979-...-1-يبيعون-جلد-الموصل-قبل-1-...

16. The primary purpose of a constitution is to unite a country. It is clear, however, that the current Iraq Constitution has become an instrument of division rather than unification. This is despite the fact that the first article states that 'The Republic of Iraq is a single federal, independent and fully sovereign state in which the system of government is republican, representative, parliamentary, and democratic, and this constitution is a guarantor of the unity of Iraq.' In practice, however, Article 119 cancels out the first article when it stipulates: 'One or more governorates shall have the right to organize into a region based on a request to be voted on in a referendum submitted in one of the following two methods: First: A request by one-third of the council members of each governorate intending to form a region. Second: A request by one-tenth of the voters in each of the governorates intending to form a region.' The Iraqi parliament, the highest legislative authority in the land, has stipulated that , a governorate seeking to form a region has to submit a request to the parliament where it is to be decided on by a vote. This is the requirement that has enabled the prime minister to block such applications, as he has refused to refer the requests to form such regions to the parliament.

It can be argued, however, that as a result of the contradiction between the two articles of the constitution quoted above, and the express authorization and facilitation of the establishment of regional federations in Article 119, demands for the creation of such federations will continue, and the path of such demands will take two main directions.

It is anticipated that the central government will emerge from the ongoing battle against DAESH victorious with a lot of military and political power on the ground in Mosul. If the past is any guide, this regime has a centrist tendency which runs counter to the Iraq Constitution's spirit. The constitution is based on decentralization and federalism. Having ensured their power at the center, Shiite groups consider any attempt by the Sunnis to form regions as separatist and as foreign-instigated plans to divide Iraq. During the al-Maliki reign (2006-2014) the central government in 2011 turned down, in a very unconstitutional way, the formal requests by the Sunni Arabs provinces of Diyala and Salahaddin to form regions. The peaceful rallies and the political groups which espoused federalism in these provinces were brutally suppressed.<sup>17</sup> al-Maliki informed former President Jalal al-Talabani that "Muslavies are hateful people and they are mostly followers of nationalist Baathist and al-Qaeda sympathizers", and that he would not allow them to have a region to make an advanced base for regional governments who have designs against Iraq.<sup>18</sup> Recently, the pro-Iranian political groups in Baghdad have declared the Nujaifi brothers of Mosul, who advocate the issue of region status for Mosul, as traitors of Iraq and agents of Turkey. The Baghdad media close to the Shiite National Alliance considers the issue of Mosul becoming a region as a Turkish plot to give legitimacy to the old Mosul vilayet.<sup>19</sup> Being aware of this intransigent stand of the central government, Osama al-Nujaifi has proposed recently that there is a need to put Mosul under the control of an international force composed of the countries who are members of the U.S.-

led coalition "to supervise the affairs of Mosul during the transitional period."<sup>20</sup>

Another obstacle to the formation of a region is the lack of trust and common purpose. The ethnic and religious components of the people of the province have no common political understanding about the future of their province. For the most part, the Kurds and other religious minorities want either to join the KRG or to form a separate province of their own. Sunni Arabs, on the other hand, want to keep Mosul intact, because this will guarantee their past dominant position.

### The Division of Mosul

The dissolution of Mosul province in line with ethnic and religious lines into several smaller provinces has been favored by the KRG. The Kurds claim 15 out of Mosul's 23 districts which they regard as a part of the disputed territories must be under KRG rule according to Article 140 of the Iraq Constitution of 2005. The religious communities such as Christians, Yezidis, Kakais and Shabaks who live in the Mosul plain have been campaigning for years to be under KRG rule. The leaders of these communities have been attracted by the relatively more tolerant attitude of the Kurds compared to their previous experiences with Sunni Arabs.<sup>21</sup> The religious minorities want to live in their areas under a special regime which guarantees their rights, and demand the presence of an international peacekeeping force to protect them as they are afraid that will face atrocities similar to those which were inflicted on them by DAESH.<sup>22</sup>

Imad Youhana, from Kitlat al Rafiden (Rafiden Christian bloc) expressed the desire

17. "التجيفي-يطالب-بقوات-دولية-في-الموصل-لمنع-عمليات-انتقام"، Kitabat, November 1, 2016, <https://www.kitabat.com/ar/page/01/11/2016/87893>, (Access date: December 23, 2016).

18. مستقبل الموصل بعد «داعش» | الشرق الأوسط، [aawsat.com/home/article/.../مستقبل-الموصل-بعد-«داعش»](http://aawsat.com/home/article/.../مستقبل-الموصل-بعد-«داعش»)

19. "التجيفي-يطالب-بقوات-دولية-في-الموصل-لمنع-عمليات-انتقام"، Kitabat.

20. "الاقليم السني: سيادة العراق وورقة التوت"، Huqooq, [huqooq-iraq.com](http://huqooq-iraq.com), (Access date: December 23, 2016).

21. أثيل التجيفي يكشف مرحلة ما بعد داعش في الموصل July 30, 2016.

22. يبيعون "جلد" الموصل قبلاستعادتها، <http://www.annahar.com/article/4769797>, (Access date: December 23, 2016).

for a Western international protection force to protect them from future DAESH-type atrocities.<sup>23</sup> This scenario will face a stiff resistance from the central government which views the detachment of the Mosul plain as a further step towards Kurdish independence. In fact, the Shiite groups have also managed to raise units for Hashd among the Shiite Turkmen, Shabak and Yezidis. These militias might challenge the peshmerga for power and influence after the defeat of DAESH.

Overall, it would be valid to argue that the arrangements which have so far been agreed upon by the central government and the KRG will not be able to prevent the inevitable clashes in Mosul in the future. Abdul Rahman al-Louisi, a Mosul lawmaker from the al-Maliki Islah bloc, stated that the KRG is taking part in the war to end the DAESH threat against it and to grab more territories. He views the division of Mosul according to ethnic and religious lines as a further step towards dividing Iraq and creating more conflicts within Iraqi society.<sup>24</sup> The scholars of Rawabet think tank center find that it is not feasible to divide Mosul along ethnic and religious lines because there is no predominant sect or ethnicity in any of the sub-districts of Mosul. For instance, the town of Sinjar, which the KRG wants to turn into a Yezidi province, has neither Kurdish majority nor Yezidi majority. The surrounding sub-districts are mostly Arabs and even the Yezid Kurds have divided loyalties: some have joined the peshmerga of the KRG and others have been recruited to the Yezidi unit of the PMU.<sup>25</sup>

The Iraqi government has no plan other than reimposing Maliki's former administration in Mosul. This picture of

divergent and clashing interests results in a significant amount of uncertainty for the post-DAESH Mosul. Unless the U.S.-led coalition puts more pressure, which appears doubtful, the Iraqi government will go ahead and impose its own scenario in Mosul. Only an effective coalition presence in Mosul after the defeat of DAESH and the desire of the concerned parties for compromise will prevent another wave of bloody encounters in Mosul in the post-DAESH era. By putting forward a plan to divide Mosul, the KRG hopes to pre-empt the central government, and to impose its will in the Mosul area which shares extensive borders with the KRG. Another issue of concern is that any civil war in Mosul might create chaotic circumstances which would lead to the reemergence of extremist groups in Mosul that would threaten the KRG. Finally, the KRG wants to prevent the possibility of the Baghdad government imposing officials in Mosul who will hold anti-Kurdish sentiments.<sup>26</sup>

## Divergent and clashing interests of national, regional and international actors result in a significant amount of uncertainty for the post-DAESH Mosul.

### Mosul as Part of a Sunni Region in Iraq

The idea of a Sunni region within Iraq has been unpopular among all the segments of the Iraqi population, and Sunnis in particular. Most Iraqi political groups have viewed this scenario as a Western plot to divide Iraq. For this reason, Iraqi groups were almost unanimous in their

23. الحياة - مستقبل الموصل بعد «داعش» يقرها الأميركيون، August 26, 2016, [www.alhayat.com/.../داعش-يقره-ال-...](http://www.alhayat.com/.../داعش-يقره-ال-.../) (Access date: December 23, 2016).

24. يبيعون "جلد" الموصل قبل استعادتها.

25. تحديد ما بعد هزيمة "داعش" في الموصل - مركز الروابط للدراسات، Rawabet Center, August 20, 2016, [rawabetcenter.com/archives/31123](http://rawabetcenter.com/archives/31123), (Access date: December 23, 2016).

26. الموصل ما بعد الدولة الإسلامية: استراتيجية إقليم كردستان - مركز كارنيغي، May 19, 2016, [Carnegie-Mec.org/2016/05/19/ar-pub-63630](http://Carnegie-Mec.org/2016/05/19/ar-pub-63630), (Access date: December 23, 2016).

condemnation of Joe Biden's<sup>27</sup> January 2006 plan for the division of Iraq into three regions based on ethnic and sectarian grounds.<sup>28</sup> When Biden made his proposal neither the Sunni Arab leaders had a unanimous voice to call for the creation of a Sunni Arab region, nor was the central government willing to facilitate such a regime, which would have empowered Sunni Arabs.

A decade later and for many reasons, the issue of dividing Iraq into regions has gained a lot of credence, especially among Sunnis. Nouri al-Maliki, former Iraqi prime minister (2006-2014), pursued a policy based on sectarianism and totalitarianism. This policy put effectively all democratic institutions built by the U.S.-led coalition in Iraq on halt. He had established a one-person rule, marginalized Sunni Arabs, and alienated the Kurds. The Sunni based al-Sahawat<sup>29</sup> forces were dismantled and disarmed after al-Qaeda's defeat. The disarming of al-

Sahawat has left Sunni populations vulnerable in a country where militias are growing increasingly powerful.<sup>30</sup>

The Sunni Arabs joined the al-Abadi government on the understanding that their demands would be addressed and the policies of al-Maliki would be repelled.<sup>31</sup> In spite of being in power for more than two years al-Abadi has failed so far to meet any of the aforementioned demands and the Sunni leaders are gradually losing credibility with their own constituencies.

As time passes Sunni concerns are growing and they have become complex and difficult to address. The National Guard Law, for example, which the Sunni National Coalition, has proposed with U.S. support, has not been ratified yet in the Iraqi Parliament. This project aims to give the provinces some say in the security affairs of their regions, and it has been blocked for several months by pro-Iranians Shiite leaders who want to keep the monopoly of power.<sup>32</sup> Ali Khedery sums up the state of frustration of the Sunnis with the Baghdad government: "The Iraqi government is hopelessly sectarian, corrupt, and generally unfit to govern what could be one of the world's most prosperous nations."<sup>33</sup>

Now most of the members of the Sunni National Coalition have offered their support for the creation of a Sunni region. The Islamic Party of Iyad al-Tikriti has endorsed this as a party program of action. The Mutahidoun bloc of Osama al-Nujaifi also supports it. During his

27. Joe Biden, current vice president of the U.S. and then senior democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, proposed in January 2006 that Iraq be divided into three separate regions -Kurdish, Shiite and Sunni - with a central government in Baghdad. In an op-ed for *The New York Times*, Sen. Joseph Biden, D-Del., wrote that the idea "is to maintain a united Iraq by decentralizing it, giving each ethno-religious group ... room to run its own affairs, while leaving the central government in charge of common interests." Biden and co-writer Leslie H. Gelb acknowledged the opposition by many Iraqis to their suggestion and said the Sunnis "have to be given money to make their oil-poor region viable. The Constitution must also be amended to guarantee Sunni some privileges as "sweetener." The rationale which was given in their joint op-ed was a historical one. This was based on the Bosnia experience where after some hesitation the U.S. drew a plan to divided it on ethnic and religious lines and implemented this plan forcibly. Since then there has been peace. For more details, see Joseph R. Biden Jr. and Leslie H. Gelb, "Unity Through Autonomy in Iraq", *New York Times*, May 1, 2006; "Biden: Split Iraq into 3 different regions", *USA Today*, January 5, 2006.

28. "The Rise of Nouri al-Maliki", World Policy Blog, <http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2015/04/13/rise-nouri-al-maliki>, (Access date: December 23, 2016); Dexter Filkins, "What We Left Behind", *The New Yorker*, April 28, 2014; Myriam Benraad, "Al-Maliki Looks at a Third Term in Iraq", Al Jazeera, April 29, 2014. ;...

نوري المالكي.. موسم الخسارة والاحتفاء بإيران - الجزيرة  
www.aljazeera.net/.../نوري-المالكي-موسم-الخسار...

29. During the summer of 2006, the U.S. forces under Lt. Col. Tony Deane encouraged Sattar Abu Reisha, a local chieftain of Remadi to raise a tribal force against al Qaeda; the latter managed to recruit other tribal chieftains. This grew into what later became known as the Anbar Salvation Council. (See, Todd Pitman, "Sunni Sheiks Join Fight Vs. Insurgency", *The Washington Post*, March 25, 2007.

30. Dina al-Shibeeb, "Iraqi Sunnis Ready to Fight ISIS but Lack Support, Says Tribal Leader", Al Arabiya, October 27, 2015).

31. The Sunni National Coalition joined the al-Abadi government on the understanding that it will ensure: (1) the release of thousands of Sunni prisoners held on terror charges (under Law No. 4 on terror) which have been declared dubious by human rights groups; (2) the repeal of de-Bathification laws, which are barring supporters of the Saddam Hussein regime from politics and administrative positions; (3) greater representation in key state institutions such as the military. See, Matt Bradley, "Fragile Iraqi Government Faces Sunni Demands for Reforms", *The Washington Post*, September 9, 2014.

32. Bradley, "Fragile Iraqi Government Faces Sunni Demands for Reforms".

33. Ali Khedery, "Iran's Shiite Militias Are Running Amok in Iraq" *Foreign Policy*, February 19, 2015.

visit to Washington, al-Nujaifi in coordination with Rafi al-Iysaawi, a leader from al-Anbar province, agreed to open the “Sunni Office” in the U.S.<sup>34</sup> In addition, regional countries such as Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Jordan and Turkey, who are resentful of the Iranian government’s undue influence with Iraqi authorities, have given their support to the creation of a region for Sunnis in Iraq, and have hosted conferences which espoused this cause.<sup>35</sup> Abbas al-Bayati, the head of Foreign Affairs committee of Iraq’s Parliament, thinks that eventually the U.S. will help to establish a Sunni region because it will serve its interest and that of its regional allies. U.S. officials have met Iraqi Sunni officials and tribal chieftains on several occasions and discussed the matter.<sup>36</sup>

Nevertheless, the idea of the formation of a Sunni region in Iraq has still many formidable obstacles. The Sunni political groups do not agree among themselves whether to have one Sunni region for the six predominantly Sunni inhabited provinces or to turn their provinces into several regions. Iran and al-Maliki groups have managed to recruit many Sunni politicians and tribal shaikhs who oppose the creation of a Sunni region. Besides, the war with DAESH has created an issue of feasibility for the Sunni provinces to join a unified Sunni region. Except for Mosul, most Sunni regions have come under the direct military control of the pro-Iranian Shiite militia which objects to any form of decentralization or to the creation of a region for Sunni Arabs. But the most serious obstacle to the Sunni region in Iraq is Iran. The creation of such a region according to Iran will create a barrier to their access to both the Saudi Arabian and Syrian frontiers. Iran’s Iraqi corridor to Syria starts from the Diyala province and continues

through Telafar and Sinjar. Except for Telafar, all these regions will be a part of the would-be Sunni region.<sup>37</sup> Iran has already secured the part of the corridor in Diyala by using Hadi al-Ameri’s Badr Brigade in the sectarian cleansing in the area.<sup>38</sup> Despite numerous promises to the U.S. not to include Shiite militias in the ongoing Mosul operation, they are currently being employed in the west of Mosul to secure first Telafar and subsequently Sinjar for the Iranian government. Iran’s presence in western parts of Mosul, through its Iraqi Shiite militia, will also give it a leverage over the Party Yekitiya Demokrat (PYD)-dominated cantons in northern Syria and the KRG in Sinjar.<sup>39</sup>

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## REGIONAL DETERMINANTS

The U.S. is the most powerful external determinant in shaping the post-DAESH era in Mosul. Other regional actors such as Saudi Arabia, Jordan and other Gulf states such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates are also leaving their imprints on post-DAESH Mosul. However, Iran and Turkey, to a lesser degree, are the two principal actors which have and will have considerable influence on the future of Mosul.

34. خلافات في المشروع الاقليمي السني في العراق

35. خطة سعودية تركية إماراتية قطرية لتشكيل اقليم سني في العراق بزعماء أمريكية. 42 يناير، 2016

36. الاقليم السني رغبات ساسة تقودهم مواقف إقليمية ودولية. 00:81:00 51-40-6102 (صوت العراق) - مازن صاحب <http://www.sotaliraq.com/newsitem.php?id=327170#ixzz4OlpfGBhd>

37. “تصدي عراقي- إيراني ضد التدخل تركي محتمل في تحرير موصل”

al-Qudus [www.alquds.co.uk/?p=608910](http://www.alquds.co.uk/?p=608910), October 26, 2016.

38. “Iraq: Possible War Crimes by Shia Militia”, Human Rights Watch, January 31, 2016.

39. “صواريخ التاو تنتظر الحشد في تلعفر”

al-Sharqa awsat (Issue no.13852), October 31, 2016.

### The Iranian Factor

Iran's stand on Mosul is based on its policy objectives in Iraq as a whole. It views its control of Iraq through Shiites militias as a step towards broader Iranian hegemonic policies in the Middle East. "Today we see signs of the Islamic Revolution being exported throughout the region, from Bahrain to Iraq and from Syria to Yemen and North Africa," Soleimani said to semi-official Fars news agency on February 2015. Furthermore, the PMU serves as a convenient tool in the process of the Hezbollahization of Iraq. Indeed, with the central government weaker than ever in Iraq, a lot of oil wealth up for grabs, and the absence of a large U.S. military to constrain them, the Shiite militias have more incentive than ever to stay in business and serve Iran's design in the Middle East. This hegemonic stand is clearly seen in the recent discourse by Iranian top officials. Iranian commanders are now publicly flaunting. "Iraq is the new, much larger, much wealthier Lebanon, and its battle-hardened militias are the new, much larger, much wealthier Hezbollah."<sup>40</sup> Only full and direct control over all parts of Iraq, including Mosul will guarantee the implementation of the Iranian design for the Middle East. al-Maliki has recently called the PMU to extend their war to "Syria, Yemen and other regions where they are needed."<sup>41</sup> This call is a further indication that Iraqi Shiite militia will be used for Iran's regional hegemonic policies.

The only two forces, which are opposing Iran's attempt to plant its influence in Mosul, are Masud Barzani's peshmerga forces and Turkey's military presence in Mosul. In spite of its growing influence among the Iraqi Shiites and some Kurds, Iran does not command the

same influence in predominantly Sunni-Arab provinces such as Mosul. For this reason, Iran views the Mosul operation as an opportunity to expand its influence into the remaining parts of Iraq. The liberation of Mosul by the Iraqi forces, supported by Iran, would serve this interest of Tehran. Hence, it wants to strongly contribute to the rebuilding of the authority of Baghdad in Mosul. Iran wants to go down as the principal supporter of Iraq, and as one of the saviors of Mosul.

There is another reason that has caused Iran's recent reactions to Turkey: the latter's growing strategic cooperation with the government of Saudi Arabia. Iran was resentful of the joint statement following the 5th GCC-Turkish Joint Ministerial Meeting for Strategic Dialogue held in Riyadh, on October 13. The statement called upon Iran, "not to interfere in the internal affairs of the countries in the region," and "to respond positively to the efforts of the United Arab Emirates to resolve the issue of the three islands Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa." It also expressed "...concern about the plans to involve sectarian militia forces, which perpetrated revenge attacks, mass killings, torture and clear human rights abuses against local population of the liberated areas, in the imminent Mosul operation." In response to the growing Turkish-Saudi cooperation, Iranian officials and analysts blamed Turkey of "dancing to the Saudis' tune in Iraq, as in the cases of Syria and Yemen."<sup>42</sup>

The offence on Turkey was extended to its allies in Iraq. The pro-Maliki Islah members in Parliament openly called for severing all ties with Ankara, and giving the PKK the right to open offices throughout Iraq.<sup>43</sup> In addition, on October 23, al-Maliki stated that Barzani and his peshmerga have turned northern Iraq into a

40. Michael Knights, Phillip Smyth, and Ahmed Ali, "Iranian Influence in Iraq: Between Balancing and Hezbollahization?", Washington Institute, <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/experts/view/knights-michael>, (Access date: December 23, 2014).

41. ... اخبار اليمن المالكي يسوّغ لقوات «الحشد الشعبي» الشيعي بالتدخل في Gulf Eyes, October 26, 2016, [www.gulfeyes.net/Al-Ymn/803385.html](http://www.gulfeyes.net/Al-Ymn/803385.html), (Access date: December 23, 2016).

42. Bayram Sinkaya, "The Mosul Operation and Iran", ORSAM, October 27, 2016, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4945?s=orsam|english>, (Access date: December 23, 2016).

43. "Iraqi Lawmaker Calls On Government To Allow PKK To Open Offices In Iraq," *E Kurd*, October 14, 2016.

forward operating base for the U.S. and Israel.” He added that Barzani’s power in the region needs to be trimmed, because he enjoys the control of a strategic location with billions worth of oil and gas reserves.<sup>44</sup>

### The Turkish Factor

Due to geographic proximity, the good ties between the Sunni leaders of Mosul and Turkey, and historical, cultural and economic factors, the events of the Mosul operation are bound to have a strong impact on Turkey. In this light, it is also in Turkey’s national interest to assist Mosul leaders in coming up with a comprehensive long-term and acceptable formula to all concerned actors which will safeguard the rights of all sections of the people in the province, including Turkmens. Only an effective coalition presence in Mosul after the defeat of DAESH, and the desire of the concerned parties for compromise will prevent another wave of bloody encounters in Mosul in the post-DAESH era.

Turkey is concerned that the participation of al-Hashd al-Shaabi in the Mosul operation will lead to new fractions even when DAESH will be cleared from Mosul. The ethnic and sectarian fractions in Mosul may deepen the disintegration in Iraq. Bilgay Duman summarizes the Turkish concern in Mosul in the following terms: “Ankara does not seem to take a step back from its current position in the operation in Bashiqa and Mosul. Mosul means a lot to Turkey. In addition to its historical dimension, the power vacuum which may arise after the Mosul operation and those who will take control in Mosul are very significant for Turkey. Especially the presence of the PKK in the region poses a serious threat to Turkey.” It is known that the PKK has formed a de facto administration in Sinjar, in the west of Mosul. The PKK is trying to form an area of influence and use this region as a transition base

which will connect Qandil and the PYD in Syria by using the local people in Sinjar (especially the Yezidi).<sup>45</sup> There is also a good deal of history here as well; Turkey’s President Erdogan has said that places like Iraq “are... part of our soul.” In a speech in Bursa on October 22, Erdoğan referred back to the immediate post-World War I period, commenting that “We did not voluntarily accept the borders of our country”.<sup>46</sup> He noted that one of modern Turkey’s greatest mistakes was “the weakening of our cultural connections...With total ignorance...people asked what business does Turkey have in Iraq, Syria and Bosnia? [But] these geographies are each part of our soul.”<sup>47</sup>

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I believe that Turkey has no territorial ambition in Mosul, and its real concern is the PKK’s reported attempt to form a corridor from Qandil to the shores of the Mediterranean. Turkey is also worried about the reports of the PKK’s probable participation in the ongoing operations against DAESH in Mosul and Telafar. The corridor that the PKK wants to form overlaps with the line that Iran wants to draw from its frontiers across Diyala, Sharqat, and to the western parts of Mosul with Syria and Lebanon.<sup>48</sup>

44. “Al-Maliki you hajim Barzani we Youdafi an Sunnah Kerkuk,” *NRT*, October 23, 2016.

45. Bilgay Duman “Iraq, Turkey, Mosul and the Unseen”, ORSAM, <http://www.orsam.org.tr/index.php/Content/Analiz/4852?s=orsam|english>, (Access date: December 23, 2016).

46. Jonathan Marcus “Will Turkish ambitions complicate fight for Mosul?”, *BBC*, October 24, 2016.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

Erdoğan said that “the people in Mosul should save Mosul and the people in Tel Afar should save Telafar.” This shows that Turkey is equally worried about Hashd forces’ probable involvement in ethnic and sectarian cleansing in Mosul and Telafar. The Iraqi government reacted strongly to Erdoğan’s statement and even registered a complaint against Turkey in the UN Security Council requesting that a decision should be taken against Turkey.<sup>49</sup>

Therefore, the Turkish military presence, though small, has according to the Iranian and the Baghdad governments, a potential to grow and embolden Sunni Arabs to ask for a real say in the administration of Mosul. al-Abadi’s government had begun a forceful propaganda war against Turkey, which it accused of “invading” Iraq and threatened a “regional war” between the two sides.<sup>50</sup> Hashd al-Shaabi militias which are allied with Iran have called Turkish troops “occupiers” and threatened to attack them, although Turkish forces were invited into the territory by the central government and Iraqi Kurds.<sup>51</sup> I would argue that the Turkish military presence in northern Iraq will also deter the Baghdad government from waging a war against Masud Barzani’s forces in cooperation with the PKK and Iran. Barzani’s forces are widely regarded as the only formidable Iraqi group left to oppose Iran’s design to have full hegemony over Iraq.

## POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Turkey and the world community should be ready for the inevitable violent confrontation in Mosul in the immediate post-DAESH due to the clashing ideologies of the participants in the operation.

49. Bilgay, “Iraq, Turkey, Mosul and the Unseen”.

50. “U.S., Kurds Affirm Turkey’s Role in Mosul Fight as Iraq Rejects Turkish Presence,” *Breitbart*, October 24, 2016.

51. “Iraqi Lawmaker Calls on Government to Allow PKK to Open Offices in Iraq”.

2. The U.S. went to Iraq in 2003 to topple Saddam’s government with no plan for post-war Iraq. This has resulted in a devastating political chaos in Iraq, and the emergence of ethnic and sectarian clashes. The U.S. is making the same mistake in Mosul by rushing the military operations without any plan for a post-DAESH administration. Unless it rectifies this situation, Iran and its Iraqi Shiite allies will fill the void as they did after the fall of Saddam’s regime.
3. Osama Nujaifi’s call for an international peacekeeping force in Mosul in the post-DAESH period, to supervise the affairs of the province on a provisional basis, is extremely valid, and should receive serious consideration from all concerned parties, especially Turkey.
4. Turkey and Iran, assisted by the U.S.-led coalition against DAESH, should hold an international conference to draw blueprints for the reconciliation process in Mosul. This process should be a part of a wider reconciliation process in Iraq. Ammar al-Hakim, of the Shiite National Alliance, has recently called for such a conference to address national reconciliation which should receive serious considerations by all parties.
5. Turkey should use its influence with the KRG to negotiate with the central government with regard to the future status of the disputed territories in Mosul. This could be done either through the reactivation of Article 140 of the Iraq Constitution, or by addressing the issue with a new formula which has the same spirit.
6. The transformation of Mosul into a region with an inclusive administration will serve all parties’ interests, and could serve as a model for peaceful conflict resolution in other parts of Iraq.



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**T**his report aims to analyze Turkey's fight against DAESH, with an emphasis on the processes of continuities and ruptures on the side of DAESH, and the responses given to it that were witnessed. The report firstly explains the evolution of the DAESH threat up until the airport attack. In the second part, it analyzes the fundamental features of the airport attack, underscoring the new tactics DAESH implemented. The third part assesses the security measures Turkey has taken and their effectiveness before and after the airport attack. Finally, the fourth and the last part points out how the wedding attack ended Turkey's patience, how the implications of foreign policy change affect the struggle with DAESH, and the objectives and the possible outcomes of the Euphrates Shield Operation.



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