

The Hashd al-Shaabi and Iraq Subnationalism and the State



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Abbreviations

AAB	Ali al-Akhbar Brigade
AAH	Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq
AD	Abbas Division
AQI	Al-Qaeda in Iraq
BB	Babylon Brigade
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
FWS	Faylaq Waad al-Sadiq
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GoI	Government of Iraq
HHN	Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba
HS	Hashd al-Shaabi (see PMF)
HW	Hashd al-Watani
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps
IS	Islamic State
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State of Iraq and Levant
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KH	Kata'ib Hezbollah Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq
KIG	Kata'ib al-Imam al-Ghaib
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
KRI	Kurdistan Region of Iraq
KSK	Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shahuda
MERI	Middle East Research Institute
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoI	Ministry of Interior
NG	Nineveh Guards
NPC	Nineveh Provincial Council
PMF	Popular Mobilisation Forces
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
SALW	Small Arms and Light Weapons
SCRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SSR	Security Sector Reform
SK	Saraya al-Khorasani
SRU	Sinjar Resistance Units
SS	Saraya al-Salam
TRS	Transition and Reintegration Strategy
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United States

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Executive Summary

This report views the Hashd al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilisation Forces, PMF) as having played an intrinsic role in the provision of security in Iraq since the dramatic rise of the Islamic State (IS). However, through the lens of nationalism it analyses the negative role the PMF may play once IS is defeated. The report therefore presents suggestions to deal with the perceived threat of the PMF in the short to medium term.

The various groups within the PMF essentially represent a number of subnationalisms, which to a different extent act as competition to the state. The leaders of the various militias use their own particular brand of nationalism in their attempts to gain and maintain power and in doing so they dilute any prospect of national unity or loyalty to the state. Through providing security they act as competition to the Iraqi army which directly impacts on the perception of the state and is used by members of the PMF for political gain. The multiple competing subnationalisms in Iraq do little for the fostering of Iraqi unity or the functioning of Iraq as a state, and are likely to result in the continuation of violent conflict. Therefore, dealing with the challenges surrounding the PMF will be one of the most pressing issues in Iraq following the defeat of IS.

The ultimate solution to this problem would be the incorporation of these forces through demobilisation and integration into the conventional ISF. Having one inclusive army, police force and border patrol operating under unified command structures and accountable to civil bodies of oversight is not only an important symbol in aiding national reconciliation and promoting cooperation between different communities, it is also a primary prerequisite for the effectiveness of the security sector as a whole. However, the current situation on the ground, in terms of security, reconciliation, and political will, precludes an aggressive, straight-forward pursuit of this objective. This necessitates an initial phase in which significant progress in these areas is made before incorporation of most PMF units can realistically take place.

The government of Prime Minister Abadi needs to use its time following IS' defeat to build a solid political platform based on shared citizenship, unity and reform. This platform has to include serious reforms in the areas of security and national reconciliation. At the same time, an assistance programme will have to be set up for individual militia members wishing to either integrate into the ISF or make the transition from fighter to civilian immediately following IS' defeat. This joint process will allow for the gradual dissolution of the PMF as the functioning of the Iraqi state improves, cooperation and unity is advanced, and the army grows in strength. During this time the government can stop colluding with the PMF and begin incorporating, containing, and eventually suppressing the various groups within the PMF based on the level of loyalty to the state that the group holds. Only then can a comprehensive demobilisation and reintegration programme based on formal agreements with all militias be launched as an ultimate solution to Iraq's problem with militias and subnationalisms. It is crucial that this programme is adapted to fit the local context and that the government of Iraq can exert primary control over it. Accordingly, some conventional standards of DDR programming may have to be deviated from in order for this programme to be successful.

1- Introduction

When the Islamic State (IS)¹ declared its caliphate in the summer of 2014, after capturing major Iraqi cities such as Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah, and threatened to march through to Baghdad, the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) seemed unable to halt its advance (Tran & Weaver, 2014). In response to this existential threat, Iraq's most senior religious cleric, Grand Ayatollah al-Sistani, issued an edict for all able-bodied men to enlist in the ISF and help protect the homeland, its people, and the holy shrines. Although Sistani's fatwa carefully employed the language of nationalism as opposed to religious jihad, and called for men to join the national security forces, the outcome has been quite different (Cole, 2014).

A plethora of sub-state armed groups rapidly emerged and conglomerated under the banner of the Hashd al-Shaabi (HS), or Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF). Some groups were newly established, others reactivated or remobilised in response to Sistani's call after a period of inactivity. Others still were already active on the request of the then Prime Minister, Nouri al-Maliki, and used Sistani's call for legitimisation. Meanwhile the ISF suffered from an image and credibility problem following its collapse in the North, as well as a general lack of capacity to absorb such a large number of new volunteers on short notice (Mansour, 2015).

The PMF has proven to be an invaluable force in the fight against IS and played a pivotal role in preventing IS' further territorial gains. Estimated between 100,000–152,000 fighters strong (Al Jazeera, 2016; Westcott, 2016), the PMF in conjunction with the ISF, Kurdish Peshmerga and the International Coalition's air support have done much to stop IS' advance and bring it to the brink of defeat. Since its establishment, however, questions concerning the future of the PMF and how this relates to Iraq's unity and functioning as a state have remained unanswered. Despite a law being passed to recognise the PMF as a legal government entity, it still embodies many different ideologies, which often counter that of the Iraqi state.

This report aims to understand what effect the PMF will have on issues such as Iraqi unity, the government's legitimacy, territorial integrity and the post-conflict security of Iraq. Throughout this report, the term 'Iraqi unity' refers to preventing Iraq from failing as a state and fragmenting into numerous small ethno-religious territories. It means the development of an inclusive system of governance based on citizenship and respect for human rights of all components. It also requires different communities to opt for cooperation rather than competition with one another. Even if a strong national identity never emerges, and Kurdish independence does occur, the importance of this still applies to the rest of the country if further 'Balkanisation' of Iraq is to be prevented.

The common, and inaccurate, rhetoric of the PMF as being an Iranian proxy does nothing to further the understanding of the future role it may play and the different actions that need to be taken with regard to the multiple forces, who represent the wide spectrum of various ethnosectarian agendas that exist in Iraq. Therefore, although the threat of sub-state and non-state military groups will be examined as a whole, the very different ideologies within the PMF will also be explored from the perspective of competition

1 Although referred to as the Islamic State in this report, this term only came into being after a caliphate was declared on 29 June 2014 and Islamic State were formerly known, and are often still referred to, as the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS), Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), and Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). They are also often referred to as Daesh (the majority of the interviewees used this term), which is based on the Arabic acronym of their name and has negative connotations.

with the Iraqi state.

The report aims to understand the potential danger to Iraq that some forces within the PMF may pose through framing this phenomenon within the theories of nationalism and using it to understand the various subnationalisms that exist. Solutions are then presented using theories of conflict resolution and by analysing Iraq's past experiences in dealing with its sub-state militias. The overall aim is to understand if, and when, the PMF would stop advancing Iraqi interests and start hindering them, and what the Iraqi government's response should be. The intention is not to discredit the PMF, as the value of the role it played has already been highlighted, but rather the purpose is to understand whether the PMF has begun to counter the aspirations it was created to achieve – the functionality and continued viability of Iraq as a state underpinning this analysis as its core objective.

Methodology

Methodologically, this research employs a mixed methods qualitative approach. Firstly, a theoretical framework based on state nationalism is developed through which to examine the PMF (discussed in greater detail in the next section). Secondly, the qualitative analysis includes speeches and interviews of members of the various forces within the PMF, as well as the literature produced by the separate forces and the wider PMF umbrella. The analysis of discourse is used to understand the ideologies of the various forces within the PMF, as:

ideologies are largely expressed and acquired by discourse, that is, by spoken or written communicative interaction. When group members explain, motivate or legitimate their (group-based) actions, they typically do so in terms of ideological discourse (Van Dijk, 2006, p. 121).

Context is an extremely important element in the analysis of language, as language users make decisions on what is socially appropriate based on the setting and audience (Van Dijk, 2006). For this reason, the analysis places an emphasis on the period when the PMF first emerged (2014-2015), as once groups within the PMF began receiving negative press coverage they became more careful about the language they used.² To understand changes in their ideologies, the use of symbols (flags, pictures, insignia, etc.) and actions (battles taken part in, who they receive arms and finances from, who they meet with, etc.) will also be analysed in order to understand if ideologies have remained stable.

Finally, semi-structured interviews are used in order to gain a further understanding of the forces' ideologies, perceptions of Iraq and visions for the future. Semi-structured interviews were chosen for the project as they allow one 'to get at the contextual nuance of response and to probe beneath the surface of a response to the reasoning and premises that underlie it' (Aberbach & Rockman, 2002, p. 674).³ The research for this project was conducted between December 2016 and February 2017 in Baghdad, Erbil, and Kirkuk.

² Numerous journalists relayed to the authors that it had become more difficult to get interviews with PMF leaders and when they were successful, the interviewees avoided answering 'tricky' questions.

³ For more details on the method used for these interviews see: O'Driscoll, D. (2016, September). The Future of Mosul: Before, During, and After the Liberation. *MERI Policy Reports*, pp. 14-15. Retrieved from <http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/Liberating-Mosul-Pre-and-Post-Factors-for-Consideration.pdf>

2- Nationalism, the State, and Sub-State Actors

2.1. Introduction

Many commentators have highlighted the danger the PMF poses to the territorial integrity of Iraq as it leads to loyalty lying somewhere other than the state (Alamuddin, 2016; Alavi, 2016; Dai, 2016; Duman, 2015). However, in order to fully understand this phenomenon, the danger it poses (if any), and how to counteract it, the analysis needs to extend beyond this and towards a more comprehensive understanding of the challenge that the PMF may pose to the state. Thus, a theoretical lens by which to view and analyse it needs to be developed. This section aims to develop such a lens through using the existing theories on nationalism, specifically state nationalism, and contextualising them within contemporary Iraq and the presence of sub-state militias.

2.2. PMF and Theories of Nationalism

For John Breuilly (1993, p. 1) 'nationalism is best understood as an especially appropriate form of political behaviour in the context of the modern state and the modern state system'. Thus, for him, nationalism relates to the 'objectives of obtaining and using state power' (Breuilly, 1993, p. 1). Breuilly therefore falls within the constructionist strand of the nationalism school of modernism – nationalism is invented by the elites to mobilise the masses (A. D. Smith, 2010). This report shares Breuilly's viewing of nationalism. However, as its focus is on the action of attempts to gain power by the elite, it is important to understand how nationalism formulates on the ground. Therefore, it is necessary to examine more encompassing definitions of the term, as above Breuilly demonstrates the driver of nationalism but not what mobilises its followers (which is important for this study).

Smith (2010, p. 9) defines nationalism as an 'ideological movement for attaining and maintaining autonomy, unity, and identity for a population which some of its members deem to constitute an actual or potential "nation"'. Whereas Barrington (1997, p. 714) defines nationalism as 'the pursuit – through argument or other activity – of a set of rights for the self-defined members of the nation, including, at a minimum, territorial autonomy or sovereignty'. Therefore, for the purposes of this study nationalism is defined as *a political tool to gain and maintain power* within a state or territorial unit – be it existing or yet to be created – using notions or ideologies of gaining rights for those defined as being members of the "nation".

However, in order to understand this definition of nationalism, and in particular how elites utilise nationalism, it is necessary to define what a nation is. Although disagreeing with how Smith views nationalism, his definition of a nation is useful inasmuch as these are exactly the sentiments that elites draw upon in order to manipulate their supporters in an attempt to gain power. For Smith (2010, p. 13) a nation is 'a named human community residing in a perceived homeland, and having common myths and a shared history, a distinct public culture, and common laws and customs for all members'. Therefore, in nationalism, as defined previously, elites rally around these elements in order to attract support to gain or maintain power within the current state, the formation of a new state, or within some level of territorial autonomy. In this context, subnationalism will be defined as a nationalism that operates against the nationalism of the state and it is under this bracket that many of the forces within the PMF fall.

As Breuilly's understanding of nationalism will be used in this study to better analyse the threat that non-state and sub-state armed actors may pose to the functioning and territorial integrity of the Iraqi state, it is important to present further details of his work and to situate it within the empirical case of Iraq. Breuilly mainly discusses nationalism with regards to political opposition to the state, as he sees the nationalist ideology as being 'central to its activity when in opposition' but diminishing when in power (Breuilly, 1993, p. 9). He argues that governmental nationalism is only 'a distinct subject when the links to an earlier nationalist opposition phase are especially evident or when the government conflicts with a national opposition claiming to speak for another nation' (Breuilly, 1993, p. 9). However, Iraq is an exceptional case study as both of these elements are the norm.

Iraq was not created through any sort of nationalism against the Ottoman Empire, but rather stems from the geostrategic imperialistic competition between the French and British, which ignored the ethnosectarian divisions of the territory. These circumstances greatly impaired the fostering of a national identity and for the most part some form of military dictatorship was necessary in order to maintain the state (Hinnebusch, 2010). Although most of the Arab states can predate their existence to that of colonial meddling, Iraq cannot, which makes it a difficult task for elites to foster any type of unitary national identity (Harik, 1985). In short, Iraq is not, and never has been a nation-state, although failed nation-building has been a recurring element.⁴

When the historical formation of Iraq is paired with the more recent history of the fall of Saddam Hussein, which essentially led to the transformation of the state (new constitution included), a unique set of dynamics becomes apparent. Apart from the federal Kurdish region, with its aims for independence, the rest of Iraq is competing to try to control the governance of Iraq under very different nationalistic ideologies, which is only further encouraged by the current electoral system (O'Driscoll, 2014).⁵

Many Sunnis have a strong sense of Iraqi nationalism, stemming from previous dominance of the state system. On the contrary, Shiites are now the dominant force and ethnosectarian nationalism is often used to enforce this (O'Driscoll, 2015). However, neither community is united and different versions of nationalism are used by the elites within both communities in order to gain and maintain support, which often involves strong backing of external states, such as Iran and Turkey. Therefore, in Iraq a system has developed whereby nationalism is used by those in power, those trying to gain power, and those attempting to secede. Moreover, the nationalisms that exist in Iraq are not always for the same Iraq, or Iraq is lower on the scale of loyalties, if there at all. In short, in Iraq there are nationalist movements both opposing and "controlling" the state with those opposing looking to either break away from the state or reform it in a different national direction (Breuilly, 1993; O'Driscoll, 2014).

Iraqi nationalism exists on many levels, but not in the sense of governing a united 'nation' but rather in manoeuvring a particular nation into a position of power/dominance over the others. However, this does not mean that certain elements of nationalistic ideologies cannot be used to encourage unity, as this has historically been the case in failed nation-

4 Nation-state is defined as: A politically organised territory that recognises no higher law, and whose population politically identifies with that entity and are culturally and historically similar people who share a common language, history and culture.

5 The current electoral system allows for coalitions to be formed after elections and is often divisive, as it encourages negative campaign rhetoric and does not lead to fair elections.

building in Iraq. The difference is that they must be used to promote unity in a multi-ethnic/sectarian state, rather than for any means of dominance. If nationalism in Iraq is understood as involving multiple actors trying to gain and maintain power within the state, having militias directly linked to them can aid this process, legitimise the actors, and create distinctive divides amongst the population. Moreover, due to the history of Iraq where dominance over other groups has been enforced by the military, having rival ethnosectarian nationalisms backed by militias becomes a real concern, as these subnationalisms can use their militias to oppose the state or act against rival subnationalisms. This gives rise to internal security threats, instability and weakens the government. It is therefore necessary to understand the role the military plays within nationalism.

The military can play an important part in the rise of nationalism, particularly if one is to understand nationalism as a political phenomenon where the state plays a central role (Jensen, 2000). Having militias that fight in place of and/or for the state, as currently is in place in Iraq, is reminiscent of the times before the current state system. Therefore, it essentially endangers the territorial integrity of the state, as it encourages subnationalisms rather than any sense of Iraqi unity (Posen, 1993). For a military to function properly, be successful, and have loyal soldiers willing to risk their lives, a form of military nationalism is important. If the military unit/militia is loyal to a political party, certain sect, or ethnicity – as is the case across Iraq, from the Shiite militias, to the Sunni militias, to the Peshmerga⁶ – then the military nationalism is not going to be directed at the state or at least the state is not going to be the main objective of their nationalism/loyalty (Jensen, 2000). Barry R. Posen (1993) closely links nationalist ideology with the mass army, therefore if the mass army is at threat, so is the unity of the state, or if there are rival military groups resulting in the core allegiance being elsewhere, it is also at threat. This is important in a deeply divided country like Iraq where unity needs to be encouraged through democratic and accountable state institutions, including the army.

Seen in this light, the war against IS is an opportunity to increase Iraqi unity, as conflict can mobilise popular support, however the proliferation of militias in the case of Iraq has watered down this process. The media, analysts and intellectuals also play an important role in national ideology – or in the case of Iraq, unity – through reporting on the war. Thus, in a war like the one against IS this is diluted through the multiple actors diverting attention away from the achievements of the Iraqi army. Hence, in a sense, during the Mosul operation where the PMF is participating to a comparatively lesser extent, the praise for and pride in the ISF has increased, which in turn has a positive effect on Iraqi unity from both Sunnis and Shiites, as well as on the view of Haider al-Abadi's role as a leader. However, due to most international reporters being based in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) and the Kurds making it easier to gain permission to embed with the Peshmerga, the Peshmerga received more attention in the early battles, despite playing a smaller operational role than the ISF in the Mosul operation.⁷ This in turn diluted the external perception of the military's success, which is negative as pride in one's country helps promote unity.

Additionally, past military glories are important in nationalist ideologies and here the PMF is seen as playing an important role in stopping the advance of IS when the Iraqi

⁶ The military of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). An analysis of this force falls outside the scope of the current report and would require a separate study of its own. There exist however important parallels between party-linked sub-state militias in Iraq and the Peshmerga in the KRI.

⁷ This was relayed to the authors during numerous conversations with journalists travelling to the

army capitulated. Not only does this detract from the Iraqi army's importance, but it also legitimises the various groups within the PMF to their supporters. Essentially, this encourages loyalty away from the state, thus helping the elites within these groups to sell their own particular brand of nationalism, acting against any form of Iraqi unity.

The type of nationalism that has developed in Iraq is one of dominating the other communities. The various militias operating within Iraq encourage this form of nationalism and, in the future, could also be used as a tool to enforce it. Returning to the earlier definition of nationalism by Breuille, nationalism is all about gaining power; in Iraq militias and the symbolism that surrounds them are often part of the wider political tool to gain power. They act as a force against any type of effort to promote Iraqi unity, which is essential to the inclusive and democratic governing of Iraq. This is not to say that rival ethnonationalisms cannot exist in Iraq, as after all it is a multi-“nation” state with federalism enshrined in the constitution. However, the aim of these nationalisms must be for some form of political autonomy or territorial self-governance, rather than taking control of Iraq over (and to dominate) other communities. It may not be possible to form one national identity in Iraq, however creating Iraqi unity through rule of law, equality, security and democracy should be an achievable goal. Having armed militias tied to individual sects or political parties with clear and divisive nationalist ideologies endangers this process, as it fractures loyalties, encourages dominance over other groups, and makes Iraq susceptible to exogenous interference against the territorial integrity of the state.

2.3. The Role of Militias: Theory and Context

Militias pose a danger '[i]f they fill a functional hole left by the state' as this 'further challenges the legitimacy of the state'. This can therefore lead to conflict, as 'militias do not support state institutions' because 'loyalties lie within the militia organization' (Williams, 2008, p. 10). In addition,

although the militias in Iraq have linkages elsewhere in the region, especially with Iran, they are essentially sub-national organizations that came into existence to protect certain groups. Yet they use violence not only for defensive or protective purposes but also in offensive ways against rivals and sectarian enemies (Williams, 2008, p. 11).

Looking at the rise of militias in the context of Iraq after 2003, it is clear that these developments correlate closely with the dangers highlighted by Williams. The rise of militias in Iraq should be seen as a double-edged sword. Since 2003 they have both compromised and contributed to security, often simultaneously. As the new government of Iraq was being constructed, practically from the ground up, it lacked both the capacity and legitimacy to provide security and enforce the rule of law in all parts, and for all citizens, of the country. Meanwhile, the Coalition Forces initially lacked the numbers and were too preoccupied with other objectives to effectively police Iraqi society (Ucko, 2008).⁸ The security and government services vacuum which subsequently emerged was promptly filled by Shiite militias, most notably the Mahdi Army and Badr Corps (Hubbard, 2007). These militias mainly engaged in security activities such as the guarding of mosques and other holy places, tasks that, according to Spencer Ackerman (2005), the US leadership preferred to delegate given the shortage of Coalition forces.

frontlines during the early part of the battle when the Peshmerga were still on the frontlines.

⁸ At the time, the US forces were primarily engaged in combatting the Sunni insurgency, the hunt for Saddam Hussein, and his supposed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs).

Initially, Iraq's political parties and their militias such as Badr avoided direct confrontation with foreign troops, positioning themselves instead as an 'insurance policy' to provide security against attacks from other groups pending a political solution for the country (Mowle, 2006). In September 2003, the Badr Corps even changed its name to the Badr Organisation in an ostentatious move to signal a transition into a civil organisation aiming to assist in the restoration of security and reconstruction of Iraq (Terrill, 2004). Kenneth Pollack (2008) noted that Sadr's Mahdi Army in the South set up a social-services network to provide the desperately needed security, services and employment that the government and coalition forces could not provide in those places and at that time. Many Iraqi Shiites saw the Mahdi Army as one of the most effective providers of security and were opposed to disarming the militias for as long as the government was not able to step in (Tavernise, 2006).

It is here that the sword tends to cut both ways. If a government's legitimacy rests on perceptions of effectiveness, efficiency, and fairness of political institutions to carry out their respective authoritative tasks (Schmitter, 1995), then the presence of militias should be seen as both a response to, and cause of, the problem. In the process of providing security and other public goods for their respective constituencies they undermine the ability of the state to consolidate democracy and exercise control over its territory. Thus, an inverse relationship exists between the legitimacy of the state and that of the militias which, in the case of Iraq, has locked society in a vicious cycle where militias gain legitimacy and power as they undermine that of the government. The presence of multiple Shiite militias also led to violent competition for political influence, in particular in areas contested between Badr and the Mahdi Army. Both Mahdi and Badr have been suspected of operating 'death squads' and perpetrating sectarian violence, even while infiltrating government institutions, thus further undermining the government's legitimacy (Hubbard, 2007). In short, the presence of militias has been persistent in Iraq, and there exists a mutually enforcing mechanism between their legitimacy and challenge to the state. It is now left to examine the theories regarding state methods to deal with militias.

Paul Staniland argues a state has four main strategies to deal with militias: 'suppression, incorporation, containment, and collusion' (Staniland, 2015, p. 772). The method used depends on the ideology of the militia in comparison to that of the state, and whether they are viewed as allies, enemies, or business partners. The strategy or policy-mix adopted by a government towards the militia depends on its operational utility as perceived by the government and the extent to which its ideology aligns with the political foundation of the state. In a secular state, for example, militias with a religious ideological base are unlikely to be colluded with as they represent a threat to the political foundation on which the government operates. On the other hand, governments are likely to collude with militias it deems useful, tolerating their existence as independent actors, in particular when their ideology does not pose a political threat to the state. Similarly, governments will generally seek to incorporate groups who have served their purpose and adhere to a non-threatening ideology, while attempting to suppress or contain groups who serve no purpose and are centred around a rivalling or hostile ideology (Staniland, 2015).

Due to the threat of IS, and the effectiveness of the PMF, it is no surprise that the Government of Iraq (GoI) has cooperated with the group. Up until now collusion has been the main approach utilised by the GoI to deal with the PMF – with collusion being defined as ‘a strategy of active, sustained cooperation between a state and an organized armed actor’ (Staniland, 2015, p. 774). However, collusion is not a long-term strategy, as it can ‘hollow out state power and provide a base for militias to become unmanageably powerful’ (Staniland, 2015, p. 775).

The kind of relationship that will emerge between the PMF and Baghdad after IS’ defeat will depend on whether the government perceives some or all of the groups as either ideologically hostile or friendly to the political foundation of the Iraqi state – or whether Abadi feels he has the popularity and support to directly challenge the PMF. Furthermore, as the PMF is comprised of many groups with distinct leadership, ideologies and objectives, one can expect that incorporation will be a less problematic strategy to follow with some groups than with others. Forces espousing especially hostile subnationalisms and ideologies may only be able to be incorporated once they abandon strong ideological opposition to the government.

On 26 October 2016 the Iraqi parliament passed legislation legitimising the PMF as an independent organisation within the Iraqi Army, which was later signed into law by the Iraqi President (Rudaw, 2016c). Although the law puts the PMF under the authority of the Prime Minister and forbids the forces from having political links, realistically these political links and the loyalty to their commanders and independent ideologies are already clearly cemented. The law does not alter the existing command-structure of each respective militia. In its current form it actually weakens the government and legitimises the PMF by giving it the credibility and benefits of the army, whilst not absorbing it within the army. Therefore, the independent loyalties and ideologies of the forces within the PMF will still exist and often act against the government’s policies. Through incorporation at this level, these groups:

are often used as tools of politicians, who transition their local followers from a private army into being on the government payroll. In this way, the private becomes public, though often still yoked to private purposes (Staniland, 2015, p. 776).

Therefore, the current progression that the PMF is making into being institutionalised only results in them gaining more benefits, but does not necessarily transfer their loyalties.

Finally, as argued by Ariel Ahram (2011, p. 546), militias are unable to ‘stand up to a conventional, centralized external attacker’ and are for states facing mainly internal threats. Thus, once the Islamic State is defeated the PMF will not help in rebuilding the Iraqi army to face external threats. In short, this law will do nothing to subvert the subnationalism of the various groups within the PMF and the danger they pose to the territorial integrity of Iraq remains.

2.4. Conclusion

Through theories of nationalism and the role that the military plays within nationalism this section has mapped out the danger of sub-state militias. Whether they follow the ideologies of the state, or act as a distinct subnationalism, militias endanger the state, particularly if the state is inclusive and based on citizenship. The history of Iraq heightens this danger, as it has created a number of subnationalisms that oppose each other. For a Iraqi unity to be promoted, the Iraqi army needs to be rebuilt at the expense of the militias. The theories on militias and military nationalism argue that even if a militia follows the same ideologies as the state, it is still a danger, as it undermines the government's legitimacy and directs loyalty away from the state. However, it remains important to understand the multiple ideologies that the various forces within the PMF follow, as this allows for better comprehension of the issue. Therefore, the next section will map out the ideologies of the various forces within the PMF.

3- The Future Threat of the PMF

3.1. Introduction

As the PMF came to prominence due to the Iraqi army's capitulation against IS, and with the purpose of defeating it, it is important to examine the multiple aims of the various groups that exist within it, both for the present and once IS is defeated. The Iraqi army has recovered from the dire situation it found itself in during 2014, and its role in the battle in Mosul is a testament to this (Knights, 2016a, 2016b). Therefore, when IS is defeated the PMF will have fulfilled its purpose and its continued existence threatens to erode Iraqi national unity. The disparity between ideologies and objectives within the PMF further highlights the danger of viewing it as one entity. Throughout this report, it has been reiterated that the PMF cannot be viewed as having a common ideology. As an umbrella organisation, the opposing direction of the ribs of the umbrella can represent the different ideologies of the PMF. It is therefore necessary to examine what the various groups' aims are for post-IS Iraq. At the same time, it is also important to analyse the various forces' views with regard to Iraqi unity, as well as their position on factors such as external influence, other forces, and their ultimate command. Consequently, this section will aim to map out these views in relation to a select number of forces.

3.2. PMF Command

The senior PMF leadership is predominantly made up of people with close links to Iran and does not represent the wide range of ideologies that exist within it. As such, it often carries out actions and uses language that could be considered sectarian and overtly linked to Iran. Worryingly for Iraq, the PMF leadership sees its force as being independent of the army and does not welcome incorporation, as highlighted by a PMF spokesperson, Ahmed Alasabi, below:

The law clearly states that the Hashd al-Shaabi enjoys an independent state which means full independence from the other forces. I don't think in the long run there is a possibility of merging the HS and the Iraqi army because the conditions in which the Hashd al-Shaabi was created are different from the ones in which the army was established. In addition, the components of the Iraqi army are different from the one of the Hashd al-Shaabi. The way the function is also different and thus merging the two will harm both because of these differences (Alasabi, 2017).

The reason the PMF wants to remain independent and separate is to do with gaining and maintaining power through nationalism, as analysed earlier. When pushed further on the differences between the Iraqi Army and the PMF, Alasabi mainly pointed to discipline and training. It is of deep concern for the future of Iraq that the PMF leadership envisions their force as being incompatible with the discipline and training that is customary for military forces the world over, particularly considering some of the accusations that have been made against particular forces by organisations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2014; Human Rights Watch, 2016).

To ensure a shared Iraqi identity based on citizenship and prevent subnationalism emerging it is essential to respect other communities, however the PMF command routinely undermines this through their actions and rhetoric. For instance, the PMF Command renamed Tal Afar Airport after the martyr Jassim Shibir, a commander in the IRGC-backed Jund al Imam Brigades who was killed by a sniper outside the airport (Roggio & Toumaj, 2016). Although the PMF, and Shibir, should be praised for their efforts in liberating areas around Tal Afar, symbolism is an important part of nationalism and the symbolism of this sends the wrong message. Tal Afar is a majority Sunni area, with

a minority of Shiites, and therefore naming the airport after a Shiite martyr with links to Iran can be viewed as an act of domination rather than liberation (Manis & Kaválek, 2016). Actions like these do not bode well for post-IS Iraq and naming the airport after a Sunni martyr that fought IS would have had far more symbolic importance for bringing communities closer to each other. This is just one of many actions which have undermined unity. However, it remains important to use a useful approach to understand the various positions by analysing the individual groups.

3.3. Groups within PMF

In the absence of official statements regarding the groups and number of fighters comprising the PMF, attempting to analyse and classify all of the groups within the PMF is a non-starter considering the dearth of public data, and financial and political incentives to over- and under-state troop levels. For the purpose of this discussion, we limit our analysis to ten militias representing the main subnationalisms within Iraq. Although these forces are not the only groups fomenting these subnationalisms, they should be seen as representing the different 'umbrella ribs' departing from a common Iraqi identity. Finally, based on Staniland's theory of government strategy adaptation towards militias, an evaluation is made of the loyalty of each of these militias towards the *current* democratically-elected leadership of the Iraqi state – the highest authority currently impersonated by PM Abadi. A summary of this analysis is presented in table 1 on page 26.

3.3.1. Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (AAH)

Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) epitomises the PMF forces with a strong subnationalism that acts against Iraq's territorial integrity and social cohesion. AAH was formed as a result of a split within Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army and has strong Iranian backing, from financial support to military training. As far back as its inception in 2006 – in the Israel-Lebanon War – AAH has been engaged in military action outside of Iraq's borders with other Iran-backed militias and has also fought alongside the Assad regime in Syria. AAH was also heavily involved in attacks against the US forces in Iraq between 2006 and 2011, acting against the central government. One of AAH's main aims, even with its political wing al-Sadiqoon, is to increase Iranian influence in Iraq, which has seen them distribute 20,000 posters of Ayatollah Khamenei in Iraq. AAH also acted as a military force for Maliki to help implement his process of centralising and consolidating power between 2011 and 2014 (Stanford University, 2016).

AAH gained some level of legitimacy, first through Maliki's support and now through fighting IS. However, as a force they represent a subnationalism that goes against Iraqi unity and places a higher importance on Iranian leaders than it does Iraqi leaders. Moreover, AAH is believed to have been involved in multiple criminal activities from assassinations to kidnappings and their leader often stokes ethnic and sectarian tensions (George, 2016; Human Rights Watch, 2015b). For example, prior to the commencement of the Mosul campaign AAH's leader, Qais Al-Khazali stated:

The liberation of Mosul will be the revenge against the killers of Hussein, because these are their grandsons. Allah willing, the liberation of Mosul will be vengeance and retribution against the killers of Hussein (Hearst, 2016).

Hussein bin Ali is the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad and was killed at the Battle of Karbala in the year 680 by forces loyal to Yazid bin Muawiyah, Islam's

sixth Caliph.⁹ Khazali is placing collective guilt on all Sunnis for the death of Hussein who as a direct descendent of the Prophet Muhammad and is important for Shiites (Harney, 2016). The insinuation that all Sunnis in Mosul are guilty stokes sectarianism and demonstrates AAH's subnationalism.

Khazali has also used threatening language towards the Kurds: 'After ISIS, Kurds are the greatest problem, especially Mr. Masoud Barzani. And solving the problems or peace with them is impossible' (Rudaw, 2016a). The language used here is a direct threat of an armed clash with the Kurds, but by singling out Barzani, he is directly threatening the part of the Kurdistan region that has strong links with Turkey, rather than the part with links with Iran. Again, Khazali is demonstrating his Shiite vision for Iraq – one following Khamenei – and is making violent threats that he does not, or at least should not, have the authority to make.

For the reasons stated above and enhanced by the theoretical understanding of the role of nationalism in Iraq in section 2.2., AAH is seen as a threat to any future vision of Iraqi unity. As a force, they undermine the central government, stoke ethnic and sectarian tensions, and carry out actions that counter the aims of the PMF – protecting the territorial integrity of Iraq. Even if they come under the command of the ISF, they have demonstrated that as a force they do not follow the same vision for Iraq as Abadi, and the wider population, and it would be extremely difficult to make them accountable to the democratically-elected civil leadership in Baghdad.

3.3.2. Badr Organisation

The Badr Organisation has strong and historic ties to Iran dating back to the 1980s when it was the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and operated as the Badr Brigade. In 2007, SCIRI changed its name to the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) and began distancing itself from Iran. The Badr Organisation split from ISCI in 2012 and maintained its strong links with Iran. As a result, its leader, Hadi al-Ameri, became both the political and military leader of the organisation and they have grown in prominence in Iraq ever since (Stanford University, 2016).

The Badr Organisation have participated in elections and currently have 22 seats in the Iraqi parliament. Al-Ameri also served as Transportation Minister under Maliki between 2011 and 2014. Furthermore, the Badr Organisation also controls the Ministry of Interior, a hugely significant ministry in Iraqi politics, first through Mohammed Ghabban until he resigned in July 2016 and since January 2017 through Qasim Mohammad Jalal al-Araji (Al Arabiya, 2017; Counter Extremism Project, 2016). Ameri has extremely close ties to Iran and has been funded and supported by them since the 1980s. He frequently visits Iran and maintains a close personal connection to Tehran's leadership (George, 2014). This is significant considering his growing political and military influence in Iraq. Ameri is said to exert control over some sections of the Iraqi army and police and also has close ties to Iran's Quds Force Commander, Qasem Soleimani, who himself has played a leading role in Iraq's fight against the Islamic State (Stanford University, 2016).

The Badr Organisation is one of Iraq's biggest and most successful militias in Iraq and

⁹ Although Muawiyah was the sixth Caliph, he is not viewed as a legitimate Caliph among the majority of Muslims.

when this is paired with its growing political influence and military powers beyond its own militia, it becomes clear that it is going to be a major player in the Iraqi political scene. Having good relations with Iran is advisable for all political players in Iraq, as they are a neighbouring country and a powerful one at that. However, when these relations exceed mere diplomacy and allow Iran to directly influence policy and military actions this becomes a concern. The Badr Organisation's form of subnationalism involves an ideology where Iran's Supreme Leader is seen as *the* leader, as evident in the following statement from Ameri: 'The majority of us believe that... Khamenei has all the qualifications as an Islamic leader. He is the leader not only for Iranians but the Islamic nation. I believe so and I take pride in it' (Parker, Dehghanpisheh, & Coles, 2015). The choice of the term 'Islamic nation' insinuates that there is an entity/powerbroker above that of the Iraqi state and the leader is the Supreme Leader of Iran. This also makes it sectarian, as he refers to an Islamic nation with a Shiite leader, rhetoric similar to that used by IS. Moreover, Ameri makes statements beyond his role of leader of the Badr Organisation by directly threatening foreign leaders, an action that should be reserved for the Prime Minister of Iraq: 'We advise the Turkish President that if he does not retreat Turkish troops alive, we will send them back to him dead' (Goran, 2016).

The growing influence of the Badr Organisation will make it difficult to disband its military wing or integrate them into the Iraqi Army. Nonetheless, due to its strong operational and ideological links to Iran this remains important. The Badr Organisation's political role should prevent them from being able to have a militia, as this gives it the ability to enforce its political will. For instance, in the Mosul Operation Ameri changed the plan to allow IS militants and the population to flee west by placing pressure on the government to allow the Badr Organisation to enter Tal Afar, thus closing the escape route (Watling, 2016). Additionally, statements such as the following from the head of the Kirkuki branch of the Badr Organisation, Mohammed Mahdi al-Bayati, demonstrate the difficulty that will be faced in any attempt to incorporate them into the army:

The Iraqi Army is an organised body that abides by rules and procedures that the Hashd al-Shaabi cannot follow. The Hashd al-Shaabi was not founded to remain in the training areas. The Hashd al-Shaabi was founded to fight and be martyred. Look at the number of the Hashd al-Shaabi martyrs. The number is higher than martyrs of the Iraqi army in the same period. Also, Hashd al-Shaabi is a semi-ideological force unlike the Iraqi army. Hashd al-Shaabi was founded to protect the political system and repel IS. However, the Hashd al-Shaabi and the Iraqi army could have the same operation room. They could share their weaponry but they should also remain separate (al-Bayati, 2016).

The fact that al-Bayati sees the PMF as having a separate ideology to that of the ISF is significant, and only acts to reiterate the threat they pose to the state. Moreover, like Alasabi from the PMF command, al-Bayati does not think it is possible for the PMF to follow any system of strict rules, which is once again of deep concern.

3.3.3. Saraya al-Salam (SS) a.k.a. Mahdi Army

Saraya al-Salam (SS) is the armed wing of the Sadrism Movement and is led by Muqtada al-Sadr. It was formerly known, and is still commonly referred to, as the Mahdi Army and was formed in 2003 in response to the US invasion of Iraq. The Sadrism Movement is a conservative Islamic movement that stands against foreign interference in Iraq, including that of Iran. Muqtada al-Sadr has grown his support based on that of his father, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Şadiq al-Şadr, who founded the Sadrism Movement and was assassinated in 1999. The Sadrism Movement is seen as anti-Western and has carried out numerous attacks against the US forces during their occupation of Iraq (Stanford University, 2016). More recently, Sadr has stated that the US forces are a target for his

militia due to their involvement in the campaign against IS in Iraq (Kalin, 2016).

The Mahdi army had issues with other Shiite militias, particularly the Badr Organisation with whom they often violently clashed (Bruno, 2008). The Mahdi Army has also been accused of targeting Sunnis and operating death squads and as a force has always followed its own agenda to promote Sadr's particular vision for Iraq. However, this vision has not remained consistent and has evolved over time. This evolution has involved shifting towards the provision of social services, to actively pursuing politics, to leaving politics, and finally to the current guise of fighting the Islamic State (under the new name of Saraya al-Salam) and championing an anti-corruption agenda with technocratic governance at the core. Although Sadr himself has left politics, he supports and is considered the religious leader of parties with a total of 34 seats in the Iraqi parliament (Stanford University, 2016).

Saraya al-Salam follows a Shiite Iraqi brand of nationalism heavily influenced by conservative Islam; importantly due to its focus on Iraqi nationalism it is against external influence. At the same time, the Mahdi Army has previously clashed with other parties and has demonstrated sectarianism. Moreover, Sadr has routinely used his influence to hold the government to ransom. However, Sadr has demonstrated a willingness for his force to be incorporated within the Iraqi army and his current anti-corruption policies could be supported by a wide range of Iraqis, creating some form of Iraqi unity. It remains to be seen, however, whether he will actually commit to incorporate his force.

3.3.4. Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH)

Kata'ib Hezbollah (KH) was formed in 2007 with an agenda against the US forces in Iraq and its actions have resulted in it being placed on the US terrorist list. It maintains close links to the IRGC and the Lebanese Hezbollah and has received training from both and finances and weaponry from the former (Levitt & Smyth, 2015). KH's links to Iran are particularly strong, with it following the *velayat-e faqih*, or the Guardianship of the Jurists, recognising the Supreme Leader of Iran as *the* Shiite Leader. Particularly problematic for Iraqi unity – or any Iraqi state- building project for that matter – is that members of KH swear an oath of loyalty to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei. Like Badr, IRGC Quds Commander Qasem Soleimani has played a central role in the organisation (Stanford University, 2016).

KH sent its members to fight for, and alongside, Assad's forces in Syria early on in the conflict. It is said that in 2013 KH, alongside AAH, helped form Harakat al-Nujaba (HN) as a front organisation in Syria that they could send their members to (Levitt & Smyth, 2015). The following quote from the spokesperson for HN, Bashar al-Saidi, demonstrates the danger that organisations such as KH place on the territorial integrity of Iraq:

It makes no difference whether we're in Iraq or Syria, we consider it the same front line because we are fighting the same enemy. We are all the followers of Khamenei and will go and fight to defend the holy sites and Shiites everywhere (Morris & Salim, 2015).

Not only does this statement ignore the borders of Iraq, it is also sectarian in nature and places Iranian leaders above Iraqi – demonstrating a particular brand of subnationalism that not only acts against Iraqi unity, but against the Iraqi state itself. The leader of HN, Akram al-Kaabi, has stated publicly in a televised interview that his force would not think twice about overthrowing Iraq's democratically elected leadership if Grand Ayatollah Khamenei would give the order (Roggio & Weiss, 2015a). There have also been reports that KH forces went to Syria upon the request of Soleimani, demonstrating

that KH is carrying out the requests of foreign commanders, rather than Iraqi ones (Gordon & Myers, 2013; Morris & Salim, 2015). This becomes more pertinent when considering that the Iraqi leadership has not given permission for these groups to fight in Syria and has also expressly forbidden these actions, as demonstrated by the following statements. Prime Minister Abadi stated: 'I call upon the fighters of Hashd al-Shaabi to abide by Iraqi rules and to not participate in the tensions of neighbouring countries' (NRT, 2016). In addition, the Foreign Minister, Ibrahim Jafaari, stated that 'the government has not given permission to anybody, and Iraq does not intervene with the affairs of other countries' (Adel, 2016).

Alongside the Badr Organisation, the Ali Akbar Brigades, AAH, Saraya Khorasan, and Jund al-Imam, KH has been accused of atrocities by Human Rights Watch ranging from the destruction of property to unlawful detention and killings. What is particularly worrying about these accusations is the sectarian nature of the acts and the collective punishment carried out against Sunnis. Moreover, rather than there being a few rogue elements, orders for this were said to have come directly from the leaders (Human Rights Watch, 2015a, 2016a).

Giving the ideologies of KH and the actions it has taken, which are in direct conflict with Iraq's unity and its territorial integrity, the important position it holds within the PMF and wider Iraqi security operations is of concern. Its leader Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandes is the deputy commander of the PMF and is personally in charge of many field operations the PMF conducts. KH's ideologies, links to foreign powers and blatant disregard for the borders of Iraq form a very dangerous subnationalism that should not be allowed to grow stronger.

3.3.5. Saraya al-Khorasani (SK)

Saraya al-Khorasani (SK) was formed in 2013 as a force to defeat IS. It first began operating in Syria before joining the fight against IS in Iraq in 2014. It has received funding, training and arms from Iran and is said to have been formed by the Quds force indirectly. Credence is given to this by the fact that its logo copies that of the IRGC and that its name is a reference to its allegiance to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei (Qaidaari, 2015). Additionally, there were a mere two months between SK's formation and it being actively engaged in battle, which points to significant external assistance (Qaidaari, 2015).

SK has also been involved in numerous tensions with both Sunnis and Kurds. In Salam village, a mixed Sunni/Shiite area near Tuz Khurmato, there were reports of SK burning down Sunni houses as an act of revenge for IS' actions (Hawramy & Harding, 2014). Additionally, SK is a part of the PMF that is in competition with the Peshmerga for control of the areas in and around Tuz Khurmato and areas of Diyala, which has resulted in a number of deaths on both sides (Bozarlan, 2016; Mahmoud & Fraidon, 2014; Wing, 2015). Moreover, when fighting broke out between SK and the Peshmerga in Salam village, SK took six Peshmerga hostage (Hawramy & Harding, 2014). In and around Yengija, near Tuz Khurmato, there are more reports of SK destroying Sunni homes, as well as torturing and 'disappearing' residents and once again there is competition between them and the Peshmerga for control of the area (Hassan, 2014). These types of clashes are a worrying development for Iraqi unity as they place two subnationalisms against each other, however, rather than being against an illegitimate actor – as is the case against IS – this places two legitimate actors in Iraqi law on opposite sides of the fight.

Everyday, or banal, nationalism plays an important role in reinforcing the particular brand of nationalistic identity that it represents and symbolism is significant in this (See: Billig, 1995). Therefore, the symbolism used by those groups in the PMF with strong links to Iran, such as SK, reinforces their subnationalism daily and promotes it on a broader scale. For instance, following the death of IRCG Quds General Hamid Taqavi, who was killed by an IS sniper, SK put up many billboards of him across Baghdad (Parker et al., 2015). SK also named a training camp in the Sunni-majority province of Anbar after Taqavi. Not only does this demonstrate SK's strong links to another country, it is a provocative act to name a piece of territory in the Sunni part of Iraq after an Iranian Shiite general. This highlights SK's brand of subnationalism, which is Shiite, linked to Iran and sectarian in nature, and is a threat to the development of Iraqi unity (Roggio & Weiss, 2015b). The symbolism that idolising an Iranian general in both the Iraqi capital and a Sunni territory represents is a manifestation of SK's subnationalism and its attempts to promote this to a wider audience. When this is paired with the earlier-mentioned logo mimicking of the IRCG, the banal nature of SK's subnationalism and its close ties to Iran are clearly apparent.

SK also has clear political aims with the lines between the military and the political blurred, despite the fact that the PMF law does not allow political links. These aims are demonstrated below by the SK Commander, Sayid Hamid Aljazairy:

The Hashd al-Shaabi will become part of the political dynamics in Iraq. We will try to change the way politics work in Iraq. All of the Hashd al-Shaabi groups who fought in the battles and gave sacrifices would have the right to be part of the political process in Iraq... True the law does not allow that, but the Saraya al-Khorasani will join the political process as Altalee'a political party but not as Saraya al-Khorasani. We are not only military force but also political (Aljazairy, 2017).

This statement highlights how the forces within the PMF value the new law, as it legitimises and funds them, however they have no intention of following those aspects that go against their aims to gain and maintain power.

3.3.6. Nineveh Guard a.k.a. Hashd al-Watani

The Nineveh Guard (NG), previously known as Hashd al-Watani (HW), is a predominantly Sunni militia created by the former governor of Mosul, Atheel al-Nujaifi, in 2014 after IS took control of the city of Mosul. It is on the complete opposite side of the spectrum to the Shiite militias linked to Iran, in that it was formed with the help of the KDP and Turkey. NG receives direct funding and training from Turkey, as well as funding from other Sunni Gulf states. Nujaifi, and thus the NG, enjoys very close ties to Turkey and he has often insisted that it plays a role in the liberation of Mosul, as well as in the future of Nineveh Province (Al-Nujaifi, 2016). In October 2016 NG joined the PMF in order to gain legitimacy; this legitimacy works both ways, as the PMF also gains more Sunni members (Mansour, 2017). Additionally, the PMF was forced by the Council of Ministers to incorporate 12,000 fighters from Mosul into the PMF, thus making Nujaifi's force a logical addition (Alasabi, 2017).

The language regularly used by Nujaifi is very sectarian in nature and suggests that without Turkey's support Sunnis would be taken advantage of. The links between Nujaifi and Turkey are an issue, not only as they can be considered a particular Sunni subnationalism with links to a Sunni neighbour, but also considering the poor relations Nujaifi has with the Iraqi government. Moreover, the Iraqi central government has repeatedly asked Turkey to remove its troops from Iraq as they are there without the government's permission (Al Jazeera, 2015; Chmaytelli & Gumrukcu, 2016; Zaman,

2016a, 2016b). Therefore, NG's brand of subnationalism goes against the state by inviting a foreign force into Iraqi territory against the will of the Iraqi government.

Another significant issue with NG is the perceived loyalty of its members to Nujaifi himself, rather than Iraq or even the Nineveh Provincial Council – an issue that also exists in other PMF forces that have well-known leaders with strong personalities. There have also been accusations that he started the force to stay politically relevant and to ensure that his political ideas are implemented.¹⁰ As already highlighted, having forces tied to a particular person or political party is an issue for Iraqi unity, as they should be tied to the state, however, this is even more prominent when the person in question has strong ties to another state. Essentially, Nujaifi's subnationalism, which is Mosul/Nineveh based, Sunni in nature, and tied to other Sunni states, is now backed by an armed force.

Nujaifi's vision for his force as a controlling rather than liberating one to offer security in post-IS Mosul is also an issue for the legitimacy of the state and thus Iraqi unity – as security should be offered firmly within the state structure (Al-Nujaifi, 2016). It is important to note that Sunnis do have to play a role in the post-IS security of Mosul, however, this is better served as part of the Iraqi Army, police, etc., and not by a force linked to a politician, thus bringing NG within the traditional Iraqi security forces is extremely important.

3.3.7. Abbas Division (AD)

The Abbas Division (AD) is one of the forces that was formed following Sistani's Fatwa and was initially created to protect the Shiite shrines. Following Sistani's beliefs, AD has no political links to established entities and are a pro- government force following the army command system. They receive weapons, equipment and training from the Iraqi Army and do not appear to have links to external actors (Knights, 2016c). For instance, according to one of the commanders, Sheikh Maitham al-Zaidi, when Iran tried to give them weapons they told them to refer to the Iraqi army who would in turn distribute the weapons (Watling, 2016).

Most importantly, AD has demonstrated a clear willingness to disband and be incorporated within the ISF once the fight against IS is over, or once Sistani calls for them to do so, as demonstrated by the following quote from the spokesperson:

My personal view is that the Hashd al-Shaabi should be incorporated into the Iraqi Army. All of the units, brigades and companies should join the Iraqi army and assume the responsibility of protecting Iraq. Iraq is one and united. It has its own official forces. There are a large number of Hashd al-Shaabi members who would go back to their civic duties within the Iraqi institutions (Alsabti, 2016).

Therefore, AD cannot be considered a subnationalism, and although Shiite in nature they have many Sunni members, support Iraqi unity, and operate within the authority and leadership structures of the state. That said, militias can ideologically evolve and AD's incorporation into the Iraqi Army proper is still of importance for Iraqi unity.

3.3.8. Ali al-Akbar Brigade (AAB)

Like AD, the Ali al-Akbar Brigade (AAB) was created due to Sistani's Fatwa and to protect the shrines. It has also evolved into an offensive force that operates alongside the Iraqi Army. AAB follows the same ideologies of AD and also has no political links. The links

10. Both of these issues were brought to the authors' attention in numerous interviews with Nineveh Provincial Council members between June and August 2016.

Selected PMF Subnationalisms

Group	Leader	Establishment	Subnationalism	Ideological fit to government
Abbas Division	Sheikh Maytham Rahi	2014	<i>Sistani</i>	High
Ali al-Akbar Brigade	Sheikh Abdul Mahdi al-Karbalai	2014	<i>Sistani</i>	High
Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq	Qais Al-Khazali	2006	<i>Khomeinism, transnational</i>	Low
Babylon Brigade	Rayan al-Kildani	2014	<i>Christian protectionist</i>	Medium
Badr Organisation	Hadi al-Ameri	1982	<i>Khomeinism, transnational</i>	Low-Medium
Harakat al-Nujaba	Akram al-Kaabi	2013	<i>Khomeinism, transnational</i>	Low
Nineveh Guard	Atheel al-Nujaifi	2014	<i>Sunni, territorial (Nineveh), links to Turkey</i>	Low
Kata'ib Hezbollah	Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis	2007	<i>Khomeinism, transnational</i>	Low
Liwa Salahaddin	Yazan al-Jabouri	2014	<i>Sunni, territorial (Salahaddin)</i>	Medium
Saraya al-Khorasani	Seyed Ali al-Yaseri	2013	<i>Khomeinism, transnational</i>	Low
Saraya al-Salam	Muqtada al-Sadr	2003 (as Mahdi Army)	<i>Sadrism, Iraqi Shiite nationalist</i>	Medium-High
Sinjar Resistance Units	Mazlum Shengal	2007	<i>Yazidi, PKK</i>	Medium

Table 1.

between it and the Iraqi Army are strong, as demonstrated by Adil Talib, who oversees logistical operations for AAB: 'the Brigade fights for Iraq. It is a national struggle. ... We laugh at the name militia. There is no difference between us and the army' (Watling, 2016). Many Sunnis have joined AAB, with estimates that between 16-20% of the force's members are Sunni (Mansour, 2017; Steele, 2015). The most promising aspect of groups like AAB and (to a slightly lesser extent) AD, is their significant Sunni membership; not only is this important for Iraqi unity, but also – considering their willingness to join the ISF – for the future security of Iraq.

3.3.9. Babylon Brigade (BB)

The Babylon Brigade (BB) is a Christian PMF that was formed as a response to the atrocities carried out by IS against the Christians of Iraq. The Christian community in Iraq is diminishing at a frightening rate and the lack of security plays a key role in their emigration from Iraq (Piggott, 2015). Having Christians in the armed forces is therefore incredibly important, however, security would be greater if this was within the ISF and involved interaction with the wider security apparatus and neighbouring communities. Moreover, BB appears to be driven by strong notions of revenge (A. Smith, 2015), which will not contribute to Iraqi unity. Although the Christian community in Iraq has suffered a great deal, revenge will only continue the cycle of violence (Bennett-Jones, 2016; A. Smith, 2015). For minority communities it is even more important that they are integrated within the ISF, as they are too small in numbers to provide security for themselves and must be part of a larger system (O'Driscoll & van Zoonen, 2016).

3.3.10. Sinjar Resistance Units (SRU)

The Sinjar Resistance Units (SRU) are a Yazidi force who were created to counter the actions of IS against the Yazidis. Like the Christians the Yazidis have suffered numerous acts of heinous violence at the hands of IS and the SRU is seen as one of the many holding forces in Sinjar. SRU has received financing from within the PMF umbrella and there are claims and counter claims as to whether they still receive this funding (Rudaw, 2016b; Zaman, 2016c). An issue with the SRU is its strong links to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the People's Protection Units (YPG), Kurdish forces from Turkey and Syria respectively. These links danger the territorial integrity of Iraq, especially as Abadi has asked both the PKK and YPG to leave Iraq (Middle East Eye, 2017). It is important for Iraqi unity that the security of the Yazidis, and other minorities, is offered through the state, however, Yazidis must be a part of this. Therefore, incorporating the SRU into the Iraqi Army would not only offer further security, but would also encourage Iraqi unity.

A further issue with the Yazidi forces operating outside of the ISF is that there is considerable competition for their allegiance, ranging from the external actors already mentioned, to the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), to Baghdad itself (Kaválek, 2016).

The push and pull on Yazidis through identity politics only heightens a range of subnationalisms and creates conflict and divides within the Yazidi community – this process counters any project for Iraqi unity. Iraq needs an inclusive policy towards minorities, not policies that push them to the fringes, which having separate militias does.

3.4. Conclusion

As is evident in this section, there are a range of ideological groupings that exist within the PMF and there cannot be considered to be one overriding ideology. Some groups such as Abbas Division and Ali al-Akbar Brigade were established in response (and answer) to the Shiite clerical leadership and the Iraqi state. Muqtada al-Sadr's Saraya al-Salam, combines its sectarian nature with nationalistic principles marked by an outspoken and fierce resistance to external influence in Iraq – most notably from the US and Iran (Stanford University, 2016).

There are also other powerful groups whose leadership openly declare loyalty to Grand Ayatollah Khomeini, and who claim to pursue an agenda of imposing Khomeini-style Rule of the Jurisprudent (*velayat-e faqih*) in Iraq.¹¹ Key leaders from groups such as Kata'ib Hezbollah, Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, and the Badr Organisation have in the past claimed to “represent” Ayatollah Khomeini in Iraq and to promote a Shiite controlled state (Stanford University, 2016).

Other smaller groups such as Harakat Hezbollah al-Nujaba, Saraya al-Khorasani, Kata'ib Sayyid al-Shahuda (KSK), Kata'ib al-Imam al-Ghaib (KIG) and Faylaq Waad al-Sadiq (FWS) have outspoken leaders fiercely loyal to Tehran's military and religious leadership, openly display imagery of Grand Ayatollahs Khomeini and Khomeini, and hail the IRGC special Quds unit commander Qassim Soleimani (Al-Tamimi, 2015; Qaidaari, 2015; Rawabet Research and Strategic Studies Center, 2016; Stanford University, 2016).

There are also a number of Sunni forces who aim to reinforce the Sunnis position in Iraq and counter IS' negative impact, such as the Hashd al-Ashaari, Liwa Salahaddin, and the Nineveh Guards (Hashd al-Watani). The Hashd al-Ashaari is made up of Iraqi Sunni tribal forces and receives funds from the Iraqi government under the PMF (The New Arab, 2016). Liwa Salahaddin is made up mainly of Sunnis from Salahaddin and enjoys very close relationships with the PMF leadership, which is not the norm for the Sunni forces (Samaha, 2016). There are also a number of smaller forces representing the minorities, including the Christians, Shabaks, Turkmen, and Yazidis, with the aim of protecting them from the threats of groups like IS and advancing minority issues in Iraq, including demands for autonomy.

It is unfortunate that an organisation that literally represents every fabric of Iraqi society and has multiple subnationalisms and ideologies is referred to by one name, rather than by the individual organisations depending on the context. It is even more unfortunate that the overriding ideology that is seen to represent the PMF is that of being an Iranian proxy. Subsequently, this is often portrayed as the ideology of the PMF as a whole. When atrocities are spoken of or when links to Iran are highlighted, the name 'Hashd al-Shaabi' is often mentioned rather than the individual groups. Finally, although this section has demonstrated the core ideologies of the various forces, this does not necessarily mean that all of the members within the individual forces follow it; within any given group multiple levels of identification to the set of ideologies exist (Van Dijk, 2006).

Notwithstanding, the threat that the subnationalisms within the PMF place on Iraqi unity and the territorial integrity of Iraq has clearly been demonstrated. Once IS is

11. *Velayat-e faqih* was advanced by Ayatollah Khomeini in the 1970s and is installed in the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The constitution of Iran calls for a *faqih*, or *Vali-ye faqih* (Guardian Jurist), to serve as the Supreme Leader of the government.

defeated this will only be magnified, as forces – and the politicians behind them – will be free to follow their own agendas. Not only will this lead to sectarian fighting but also fighting within groups. It is important to note that the issue is not with some rogue groups within the PMF, it is a wider ideological issue with having forces that delegitimise the state and its security forces. The new law does nothing to change the fact that forces within the PMF have subnationalisms that go against Iraqi unity and threaten the territorial integrity of the country. As long as the basic structure exists, no matter how the command or oversight changes, loyalty to actors other than, and above, the state will exist. The next section will aim to address the threat that these subnationalisms place on the Iraqi state by examining ways to counter them.

4- The Way Forward

4.1. Introduction

The important role the PMF plays in defeating has already been highlighted, however it is worth reiterating this point; Michael Knights captures the sentiment very well:

the PMF has to be recognised as a legitimate part of Iraq's military history and a proud chapter for many Iraqis. When the Iraqi military failed in June 2014 it was the Shia paramilitaries that stepped up and created the confidence to prevent the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) from taking Samarra and western Baghdad (Knights, 2016d).

Nevertheless, once this threat is gone, the entities within the PMF will remain and continue to compete politically by utilising their particular brand of subnationalism to attempt to manoeuvre themselves into power. As has been argued, this will weaken the state, increase sectarianism and endanger the already fragile unity that exists in Iraq.

Staniland's theory (section 2.3) suggests purpose and ideology are the main determinants for the adoption of government strategies in dealing with militias. These strategies can range from collusion, incorporation, containment and suppression. Incorporation aims to demobilise a militia by formally integrating it into "normal" politics and occurs when a state decides to shift away from a collusion strategy in favour of integrating militias into the state apparatus (Staniland, 2010: p. 6). In the case of pro-state militias, this usually takes the form of formal demobilisation or transition. However, considering the ideological pluralism within the PMF this process will be more complicated with some groups than with others. Notwithstanding, the ultimate solution is the demobilisation of the PMF and its partial integration into the conventional ISF, therefore the current tactic of collusion/containment needs to slowly move towards suppression and incorporation. Having one inclusive army, police force and border patrol operating under unified command structures and accountable civil bodies of oversight is not only an important symbol for fostering national unity, it is also a primary prerequisite for the effectiveness of the security sector as a whole.¹² However, although this might be the ultimate solution, one should consider whether the current situation on the ground allows for an aggressive, straightforward pursuit of this objective. Furthermore, Iraq has been characterised by its sub-state militias for some time, hence any approach to deal with the entities within the PMF should also take into account lessons learned from past failures to incorporate them.

4.2. Zero Traction: Previous DDR Failures in Iraq

As early as 2004, the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) realised the growing power of the militias was threatening the viability of the Iraqi state (Bremer, 2006). David Gompert, who replaced Walter Slocombe as the CPA's director for national security in 2004, was tasked with formulating a concrete strategy for dealing with the militias (Mowle, 2006). These efforts evolved into the ambitious Transition and Reintegration Strategy (TRS) and, by June 2004, the CPA had formal and detailed agreements for the complete demobilisation of nine paramilitary groups, comprising a total of around 102,000 combatants (Rathmell *et al.*, 2006).¹³ The monumental failures of this programme have been carefully documented and analysed, and provide an important opportunity to draw lessons for the immediate future.

¹² The principle of Unity of Command or Unity of Efforts is one of the foundations of efficient military organisation which has withstood the test of time since Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* through to the modern-day U.S. Army Field Manual.

¹³ The nine paramilitary groups forming part of the agreement were the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), Badr Corps, the Iraqi Communist Party, Iraqi Hezbollah, Iraqi

In many ways, the draft version of the TRS reflected a realistic and pragmatic approach. It recognised that, at the time, the presence of ‘militias reflected group distrust of the central government’ – an issue not likely to be resolved until the writing of the constitution and the election of a permanent parliament (Mowle, 2006: p.47). It also noted that Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) efforts have only worked when they were part of a long-term framework ‘*taking at least five years to be effective*’ (CPA as quoted in Mowle, 2006, p.47). The TRS would advance along three tracks. First, combatants were to be integrated into Iraq’s conventional security forces. This would be done on an individual basis to ensure members’ loyalties would actually transfer from militias to the state. Second, some militia members would be retired with veterans’ benefits. Third, the remaining ex-combatants would be reintegrated into civil society through education, vocational training and job placement (Government Accountability Office, 2004, pp.63-69). All combatants would be eligible to enter one of the three tracks.

The plan, however, soon came apart when it moved from the drawing board to actual agreements and implementation. As a result of increasing desperation on the side of the CPA and Iraqi government to deal with the growing power of the militias swiftly, the programme’s timeline was narrowed to only one year (2004 -2005) instead of the original five (2004-2009). Ayad Allawi, Interim Prime Minister of Iraq at the time, announced the final plan (CPA order 91) and declared that the bulk of militia members (some 90,000) would be processed as early as January 2005. Furthermore, the CPA did not allocate significant resources and funding to the project as it claimed the programme would be carried mostly by existing programmes and budgets (Rathmell *et al.*, 2006). The final plan, which stipulated that over 100,000 militia members were to be demobilised and integrated within a year, at the cost of a mere \$ 14.3 million, arguably reflected the continued lack of interest and prioritisation of one of Iraq’s major obstacles towards the consolidation of democracy. According to David Ucko (2008, p.348) ‘Order 91 set unrealistic targets whose eventual transgressions served to compromise the integrity of the entire process.’ Similarly, Mowle (2006, p.53) concludes that ‘If DDR had been placed on a more realistic schedule, militia leaders might have conditionally accepted it.’

However, the plan was perhaps most significantly torpedoed by the fact that neither the Iraqi government nor the US military were in a position to realistically provide reintegrating militias with security guarantees. Amidst a growing Sunni-insurgency and swelling violence, coupled with a continued power-struggle among Shiite leaders and their militias, ‘the leaders of these forces saw no reason to disarm or to stand down’ (Ucko, 2008, p.348). Progress along all three tracks came to a halt, or in many ways never started. There was mutual distrust between the government and the militias. While the militias refused to give lists of their composition and armaments, the interim defence minister, Hazim al-Shalaan, opposed the integration of ‘Islamists’ into the armed forces, eliminating most from signing up. Militia members also demanded to be integrated at ranks higher than those offered to them. The growing violence and poor state of Iraq’s economy rendered the vocational and educational programmes useless. Finally, government officials were sceptical regarding militia members who claimed to qualify for the retirement package and very few militia members could prove they met the eligibility criteria (Mowle, 2006).

Although the term was carefully avoided at the time, and despite its flawed implementation, the reintegration and transition plan has been the only project in Iraq

Islamic Party, Iraqi National Accord, Iraqi National Congress, and al-Da’awa (Jaffari faction). Muqtada al-Sadr’s Mahdi Army had been excluded from the agreement, reportedly on account that it was formed *after* the 2003 invasion. However, a separate truce with Sadr involving disarmament to some degree would be brokered in 2005.

resembling something of a formal, top-down DDR programme in Iraq. Ucko (2008) explains that, in the aftermath of failed efforts to demobilise and integrate the Shiite militias, their leaders politically integrated into the Iraqi governmental institutions unchecked, and without relinquishing their armed wings. This not only fuelled the Sunni insurgency but also corrupted Iraq's political affairs to the extent that ministries and parties were often at odds and competing with each other, preventing the formulation of coherent national policies and inhibiting national reconciliation.

Years later, this situation led the new political elite to block efforts to formally integrate fighters of the Sahwa Movement¹⁴ into the security forces, as well as any DDR programme to assist them in transitioning to civilian life. The Sahwa was formed through alliances between Sunni tribal leaders and US forces and was a highly effective counter-insurgency force, largely responsible for defeating Al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). Although this force was instrumental in the campaign against AQI, it was viewed with suspicion and resentment by the political elite in Baghdad, who feared their success on the battlefield would translate into political influence at their expense (Benraad, 2011). The then Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki was particularly averse to the role of the Sahwa forces and despite earlier promises and some tentative efforts to integrate them within the Iraqi security forces, he instead began disbanding the force without any form of compensation, social support or offer of ulterior employment to former fighters who risked their lives to eject AQI from their areas (O'Driscoll, 2015). Not only did this give rise to security threats by eliminating one of the most effective counter-insurgency forces, it also eroded any trust garnered between the central government and the Sunni population – which largely perceived these actions as a gross betrayal. The unwillingness to integrate Sahwa fighters or assist them in transitioning to civilian life gave AQI the opportunity to lure disenchanting Sahwa members back into the insurgency and radicalise their animosity towards the government (Benraad, 2011; Steele, 2008).

It is crucial these same mistakes are not repeated in dealing with the PMF after the defeat of IS. The failure of the 2004 TRS to seriously take into account and adapt to the local context meant it never truly got off the ground. Programmatically, it set an unrealistic timeline, was understaffed and underfunded. There was no credible third-party willing to enforce compliance and penalise transgressions when they occurred. The reluctance of the central government to incorporate Sahwa fighters and assist in their demobilisation and transition to civilian life created thousands of disgruntled armed ex-combatants as potential spoilers to the short-lived lull in violence.

Unfortunately, the current circumstances on the ground do not appear any more amenable to a formal DDR programme than they were in the past. If anything, they have deteriorated as rival subnationalisms have become increasingly entrenched. The lack of a political agreement, scope for reconciliation, and a neutral arbiter able to provide security guarantees does not bode well for DDR in the near future. Furthermore, the economic situation in Iraq has deteriorated since 2007 limiting the economic space for reintegration opportunities. According to a 2008 report by the US Government Accountability Office (GAO), the United Nations considers a secure environment, the inclusion of all belligerent parties, an overarching political agreement, sustainable funding, and the presence of reintegration opportunities as *minimum* requirements for successful DDR in Iraq (GAO, 2008, p.39-40). It is unlikely these conditions will be sufficiently met immediately following IS' defeat. Therefore, efforts in the short term should not insist on the immediate disarmament and demobilisation of the PMF. Rather, they should be focused on preparing the ground for the eventual comprehensive integration and DDR of the sub-state militias in Iraq.

14 In full: *Harakat al-Sahwah al-Sunnīyah*. Units formed during the US troop surge in Iraq were also referred to as the Sons of Iraq.

4.3. Setting the Stage: Integration and DDR of the PMF

Most commonly, integration and DDR of sub-state armed forces is achieved through negotiations and formal agreements. It is a political process in which success hinges first and foremost on the political will of all actors involved to honour the agreement. The main obstacle for reaching a settlement – or non-compliance later on – is often related to the security-dilemma that arises from forces having to disarm and demobilise in the absence of security guarantees (Walter, 2002). It is important to note that while setting the stage for launching this programme following IS' defeat, preliminary measures can and must be taken to foster national unity and strengthen the appeal of national institutions, most notably the army and police force. This will weaken the appeal of security forces tied to political parties, and other forces whose primary goal is to utilise their brand of subnationalism to gain power, rather than to serve the collective national interest. Before a nationwide programme for DDR and integration based on formal agreements with all (or most) militias can realistically be initiated, significant progress must first be made in the areas of security, national reconciliation and unity.

4.3.1 Security

Without a secure environment in Iraq, it will be virtually impossible to convince sub-state armed forces to lay down their weapons (Özerdem, 2010). It is beyond doubt that the formation of the PMF has been instrumental in first stopping IS' advance, and later rolling it back. It is also likely IS will go underground in the event of it losing its territorial grip on areas it currently controls. Therefore, lessons need to be drawn from previous experiences of DDR of militias, with Sahwa as an example of a successful counter-insurgency strategy in the past. Most importantly, it shows the importance of building trust between communities and protection forces through localised security solutions.¹⁵ Had the members of the Sahwa militia been properly integrated into the conventional security forces at the time, it is unlikely the security situation would have deteriorated to the extent it did after the US pulled out of Iraq.

The recent history of Iraq in dealing with escalating ethnosectarian tensions suggests that, for the foreseeable future at least, the national army and police forces should be sufficiently diverse and inclusive in order to enable the provision of security and rule of law by localised units drawn from local communities. As trust between communities and security forces is built, and security improves, the government could then move to give the ISF a more national character by gradually re-deploying and/or blending localised units. Currently, however, individual PMF units are assuming (and competing over) this role of local security provider in many places. Although still heavily Shiite-dominated, the PMF now includes large numbers of Sunni fighters as well as Christian, Shabak, Turkmen, and Yazidi units. The PMF is beginning to more and more to resemble a cross-section of Iraqi society. However, the problem with this situation is that rather than operating for Iraqi unity, some of the individual forces' aim to promote their own subnationalism in order to gain and maintain power. Rivalry between the different militias is already compromising security and hampering military efforts surrounding Mosul (Habib, 2017). Shiite militia leaders complained about the nature and conduct of local Sunni militias under the command of the former Nineveh governor Atheel al-Nujaifi. The Ministry of Defence subsequently threatened to pull Nujaifi's militia from the city limits and issued an order for arrest if he sought to enter the city again (Habib, 2017). Without local militias, the onus of maintaining stability in liberated areas falls on the shoulders of the Iraqi army and police who currently lack the strength and numbers

¹⁵ Interviews with the authors revealed that both Sunni and Shiite Turkmen from Tal Afar perceived the diversification and inclusion of Sunnis in the local security forces as the main factor behind the improvement of security in that region.

to both control and liberate areas from IS. It is this type of rivalry and infighting within the PMF that not only obstructs military success but also gives rise to security threats in the form of armed confrontation between militias.

The central government should therefore take measures that incentivise the recruitment of diverse, local units into the conventional security forces – potentially through affirmative action in recruitment and admission policies. This will provide local populations with the opportunity to become active stakeholders in the security of their areas. It is critical that this effort is accompanied by appropriate vetting procedures to prevent infiltration by extremist elements seeking to delegitimise the process.

Rebuilding the Iraqi army into a force that represents the entire population within one entity can be the building block of a wider project for Iraqi unity. Essentially, to borrow a sales analogy, the Iraqi population has become a large market with two corporations competing for clients, one of the corporation's (Iraqi Government) subsidiaries (Iraqi Army) is selling one brand (Iraqi unity) to unite the population, whilst the other (PMF) is selling multiple brands to create competition amongst the population.

To take the sales analogy one step further, in order to sell Iraqi unity and get the population to become loyal to its brand, the Iraqi government has to carry out a significant marketing campaign. If the population supports the Iraqi army over the PMF, it will become more difficult for political actors to push the PMF to prominence, especially with elections around the corner. The more successful the marketing campaign is, the easier it will be to demobilise the PMF and reintegrate the forces either into the army or the wider population. The Iraqi army has to be marketed as, and become, a united force that represents the entire population and offers security to everyone. Victory over IS, and the important role that the ISF has played in Mosul, could act as the launch pad for this marketing campaign. A sense of Iraqi pride would have to be created that would act as a deterrent to political actors seeking exogenous assistance to undermine the government and Iraqi unity. However, the army cannot be the only product sold under the brand of Iraqi unity and Abadi would have to install a wider programme of reform, including anti-corruption, rule of law, and multifaceted development initiatives.

4.3.2 DDR and Integration Assistance for Individual Combatants

Prior to agreements reached with the various militias surrounding their definitive demobilisation and integration, a programme needs to be in place so that individual former combatants can access social and economic assistance that gives them a realistic chance of reintegrating into civilian life (Gleichmann *et al.*, 2006). In the direct aftermath of IS' defeat, Iraq is likely to be confronted with thousands of battle-fatigued militia members who no longer wish to carry a weapon, yet face a struggling national economy and, with a limited skillset, see little opportunity for contributing to society otherwise. Moreover, as Lilli Banholzer (2014, p.6) points out 'the experience of combat and living in extreme deprivation and constant fear and stress does not leave former combatants unharmed'.

Therefore, even in the absence of formal agreements and without confronting any particular militias as a whole, a programme designed to provide psychological and socio-economic assistance to individual fighters wishing to make the war-to-peace transition needs to be formed. Eligibility should be conditioned on their disarmament and demobilisation. The programme can be devised between the central government of Iraq and a financial or programmatic partner such as the United Nations and/or World Bank.¹⁶

16 Both the World Bank and the United Nations, most notably the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), have extensive international experience and expertise in supporting and

The reintegration package could include psycho-social support mechanisms, healthcare and education benefits, vocational training and job placement. It could set a maximum amount to be spent per combatant while assistance provided would be based on individual needs assessed through counselling sessions conducted during demobilisation (Özerdem, 2010). This will help prevent demobilised combatants turning into potential 'spoilers' of any provisional peace established after IS' defeat. Such an approach would also allow for a better absorption of demobilised PMF elements by Iraq's struggling labour market as it allows for better regulation of the number of job-seekers entering the market.

In conjunction, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and the Ministry of Interior (MoI) should implement procedures to facilitate, or incentivise, the integration of individual militia members into the ISF. PMF combatants who, after IS' defeat, wish to become part of the conventional security forces should have the opportunity to do so – in particular if they can be part of the earlier-mentioned localised security solutions. The government could pursue this process through a range of incentives and policy measures. This could include affirmative rank harmonisation policies in which – as and where appropriate – militia members could join the conventional security forces at appealing ranks equal to or slightly above their previous positions. Furthermore, members could be offered a better career development and retirement plan, additional training, or simply higher salaries.

It must be stressed that integration should be done on an individual level to ensure loyalties are indeed transferred from the militias to the state. Additionally, strict vetting procedures must be in place to prevent infiltration of the security forces by extremist elements and/or perpetrators of war crimes. Their integration risks delegitimising the whole process and the security forces at large (McFate, 2010).

Finally, it is possible that more hard-line Iranian-backed Shiite militia members will not take advantage of this opportunity. Excessive integration by moderate and non-Shiite militia members during this phase could render the PMF a distinctly Shiite paramilitary force – a sort of Iraqi Revolutionary Guard modelled after its Iranian counterpart – which some members see as desirable (Roggio, 2016). There might, however, be a positive side to this. As the army and police force grow in strength at the expense of the PMF, and their ethnosectarian make-up diversifies, the PMF will gradually lose strength and appeal over the ISF, making negotiations concerning the eventual demobilisation and final integration of remnant forces more feasible.

4.3.3 Reconciliation and the promotion of national unity

Although it is beyond the scope of this report to lay out a comprehensive national reconciliation strategy, the government must launch a broad and comprehensive campaign aimed at healing society from the wounds inflicted during the war against IS. Naturally, there is space here for retributive mechanisms such as criminal justice proceedings but the programme should be broadened to better encompass other 'building blocks' for post-conflict justice like Truth, Reparation and Reconciliation (Weitekamp *et al.*, 2006). An excessive focus on punishment for perpetrators of IS crimes may render the reconciliation programme as nothing more than a vessel for executing "victor's justice", unable to effectively address many victims' needs or reconcile damaged inter-community relations. Bringing victims and offenders together on a voluntary basis through truth commissions can be an effective way to complement judicial mechanisms to better address other post-conflict justice needs such as truth, reparation and reconciliation (Christie, 2001). Local, informal tribal solutions may

also contribute to striking a balance between justice and reconciliation by offering an acceptable mechanism through which to process large numbers of alleged perpetrators. The Gacaca Tribunals in Rwanda are an example of this,¹⁷ while East Timor can be studied as an example of complementing retributive judicial with restorative non-judicial mechanisms in a post-conflict environment. A primary example of a non-judicial restorative mechanism is a truth commission.

The combination of criminal trials and truth commission hearings has the ability to enhance national unity by establishing a shared national historical narrative. It can also contribute to improving inter-community relations by highlighting the suffering of all communities and offering a platform for direct participation of both victim and perpetrator. Truth commissions can help to generate additional insight and create understanding as to how segments of society came to commit the mass atrocities as they occurred in Iraq. Such understanding can go a long way in preventing episodes of mass violence in the future. It can serve as the basis for further legislative measures within the framework of national reconciliation. Here one can think of anti-corruption measures and laws aimed at decentralisation and the devolution of power from the central government in Baghdad to the provincial councils (O'Driscoll & van Zoonen, 2016).

All of these elements are important for national reconciliation and should be part of a long-term multi-phased framework. An excessively narrow focus on retribution through criminal trials can add to divisions in the country by creating winners and losers, thus giving rise to new, and perpetuating existing, inter-community grievances. National reconciliation needs to be a time in which the government seeks to bring all groups back into the fold and nurture a sense of unity by focusing on building a shared future together. It is therefore primarily a time for inclusion and the creation of stakeholders, not retribution through exclusion and punishment.

Additionally, as part of the platform for reconciliation, issues such as the equitable distribution of wealth from Iraq's natural resources and the disputed territories need to be addressed. Failure to reach agreement, or at least further negotiations, will not only give some of the PMF units a reason to operate in flash zones, but could also exacerbate conflict between the Kurds, PMF units, and the Iraqi population. These types of localised conflicts empower the subnationalisms of the PMF units and can be used as a legitimisation for their continued existence.

It must be noted that the GoI and KRG do not have to accomplish or reach final agreements in all of these areas, but rather significant progress still needs to be made before any programme aiming at the formal DDR and integration of sub-state militias can realistically take hold. Notwithstanding the urgency of matters previously discussed, the following section sets out what an eventual formal programme of DDR and Security Sector Reform (SSR) in Iraq might look like and examines some of the pitfalls associated with this important element of state-building.

4.4. What DDR and Integration of the PMF May Look Like in the Future

Ultimately, any process designed to deal with the challenges of Iraq's militias and corresponding subnationalisms has to combine Security Sector Reform (SSR) with the DDR of large numbers of surplus security personnel. While DDR assists individual ex-combatant's transition to civilian life, thus helping to 'right-size' the operational side of the security sector, SSR deals with the structure and relations between the various components of the sector at large. The main purpose of both is to consolidate the state's monopoly of force (McFate, 2010). SSR does this by establishing efficient and effective

¹⁷ For a critical reflection however, see: Waldorf (2006).

security structures accountable to civilian control (Ball, 2002; Özerdem, 2010; Brzoska, 2003), while DDR contributes to state-building by breaking down informal command structures and mitigating against the emergence of spoilers in the peace process (Banholzer, 2014). The OECD-DAC *Handbook for Security Sector Reform* acknowledges that DDR and SSR should generally be pursued in conjunction and considered as part of one comprehensive security and justice development programme (DaC-OECD, 2007).

The dynamic between DDR and SSR means both interact in a way that either complements or compromises each other's chance of success. When DDR fails to successfully reintegrate ex-combatants back into civilian life, they may take up arms again, form criminal gangs or otherwise pose security threats that could compromise the SSR process. Alternatively, failures in the process of SSR can lead to erosion of trust between local communities and the security apparatus, in turn enabling the formation and rise of subnational armed groups or militias. On the other hand, successful DDR can free up valuable government resources needed for SSR activities, while the creation of an effective and transparent security sector can ease the security dilemma confronting former combatants as they face the decision to voluntarily partake in a DDR programme.

4.4.1 Local Ownership

Both DDR and SSR are inherently political processes which tend to rise and fall together (Brzoska & Law, 2006). Decisions made during these processes will directly impact existing power relations. Any process to demobilise or otherwise sever the ties between the militias and Iraq's political parties cannot be characterised otherwise. Hence, it can only be advanced through negotiation and political agreement. The previous section suggests how the actors within the Iraqi government concerned with building and maintaining national unity might use the immediate future for creating an environment in which such negotiations can be initiated.

It is widely acknowledged that local ownership (and agency) over any DDR/SSR programme is an important prerequisite for success (United Nations, 2017; Panarelli, 2010). The central government must therefore take the lead in the design and implementation of the programme. At the same time, diplomatic efforts must also be directed at the various exogenous backers of the militias to seek their support for the programme – or at least prevent active opposition to it.

Due to the ideological pluralism within the PMF, it will be significantly more complicated to incorporate some units than others. The shrine protection units such as Abbas Division and Ali al-Akbar Brigade were formed through Sistani's Fatwa calling for the protection of the shrines from the threat of IS. They are controlled by Sistani who supports the Iraqi state and the current Abadi-led government. Therefore, as their ideology is closely linked, these groups will turn into what Staniland terms a 'superfluous supporter' more easily incorporated. Other groups fomenting a stronger Shiite or Khomeinist subnationalism have a more ambiguous ideological fit and are likely to have to be contained in the short term whilst the Iraqi army and Iraqi unity are being rebuilt and individual members are incorporated, thus laying the ground for eventual suppression or incorporation, however the latter would require them to at least partially mitigate their brand of subnationalism – as was the case with Badr when they gradually loosened their commitment to *velayat-e faqih*. Table 1 on page 26 gives a clearer picture of the possibility of incorporating groups based on their ideological fit to government. However, it must be stressed that the overall tactic should be containment, whilst unity is rebuilt, leading to eventual incorporation and suppression subject to fit and willingness, with loyal groups likely to be incorporated earlier.

The recent 'Hashd Law' legalising the PMF forces will pose an obstacle for government strategy towards militias unwilling to mitigate their subnationalism. Institutionally,

the forces comprising the PMF are now part of the state structure, constraining the government's ability to suppress potential rogue militias in the future. Although the Hashd Law will eventually need to be repealed in order to make serious progress in the process of DDR and SSR, the announcement should be made at the opportune moment, after formal agreements are reached and when integration and demobilisation can be initiated in earnest.

4.4.2 Sequencing: DDR or DRD?

Disarmament is likely to be one of the most problematic aspects of any future process. In Afghanistan, the process of DDR/SSR became bogged down in a political quagmire due to the precondition of disarmament it set on demobilisation and reintegration (Özerdem, 2010). Given the similarities in the conflict situation and gun-culture of Afghanistan and Iraq, it is best to avoid this by letting go of the conventional DDR standards of necessitating disarmament prior to demobilisation, reintegration and/or integration. Depending on what the future security situation allows, it may be appropriate for Iraq to follow the Tajikistan model for DDR (1997–2001). Widely perceived as a success story, reintegration of former fighters was prioritised and started even in the absence of adequate disarmament levels (Torjesen & MacFarlane, 2007). It is believed that this has greatly benefitted the success of the programme as it allowed for the cultivation of trust between the government and former rebels and increased their willingness to participate in the programme (Matveeva, 2012). Part of the approach could be to initially limit disarmament to militias' heavy weapon arsenal (artillery, armour, rocket-launchers etc.) but allow Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) for the time being.

Notwithstanding, the wide availability of SALW in Iraq does constitute a significant security risk. When IS infiltrated Kirkuk on 21 October 2016, it staged attacks on multiple targets within the city limits (Georgy, 2016). As police and counter-terrorism units rushed to respond, the streets were flooded by civil-vigilantes armed with AK-47s and other weaponry eager to stop the attack. Several videos later emerged showing ad-hoc militias dragging the corpses of dead IS fighters through the streets behind their cars while emptying their clips blissfully in the air. Again, it is the government that should hold the monopoly of force and respond to such attacks, not untrained civilians holding a weapon. This is but one example to illustrate that if a large-scale disarmament phase does take place, whether before or after (re)integration of combatants, its scope should include the civilian population.

The recruitment of many youths within the PMF was targeted mainly at poor urban areas such as Sadr City in Baghdad, Basra, Diwaniya and Amara (International Crisis Group, 2016). The militias themselves are capable of, and should, in accordance with the local security solutions outlined in the previous section, facilitate the reinsertion of members to their areas of origin. Demobilisation then is unlikely to take the form of protracted cantonment. It could instead be realised by setting up community (and neighbourhood) registration centres which offer education and job counselling sessions. They would also assess eligibility and members' needs in terms of psycho-social support. This would ensure that the individualised reintegration package that would emerge from this process would be perceptive to differences between members returning to rural or urban areas as they may have different reintegration needs (Özerdem, 2010).

4.4.3 Integration and Reintegration

Provided that significant progress has been made in the areas discussed in the previous section (security, national reconciliation and unity) and the individual integration and reintegration of former militia members has produced a number of success stories,

it is likely that a significant number of combatants will wish to integrate into the conventional security forces. This is particularly so if we consider the limited skillset and motivations of individual combatants who make up the bulk of the PMF. According to the International Crisis Group (2016: p. 16), 'the large majority of Hashd volunteers have not finished primary or middle-school studies and previously worked in precarious conditions as day labourers making a maximum of 25,000 ID per week (barely \$20).' For many of these youth, joining units within the PMF was the only way to earn a better salary and receive benefits for their families were they to be martyred. Moreover, as the Iraqi army collapsed and failed to protect holy shrines and communities across the country, many perceived it as proof of the dysfunction and corruption among the political elite. Accordingly, forces comprising the PMF offered them a once in a lifetime opportunity for heroism and wielding any sort of power of significance. Rather than completely rejecting it, this phase should aim to harness this energy and redirect it in a way that complements rather than compromises Iraqi unity and stability. Therefore, it serves to repeat that integration into the conventional security forces (e.g. police, army, counter-terrorism units and border patrol) should occur on an individual rather than unit basis, to ensure informal command structures are dissolved and loyalties transferred.

However, offering a no holds barred voluntary choice between integration or demobilisation can be problematic for various reasons. Firstly, the number of PMF fighters opting for integration may exceed security sector needs and result in an unsustainable and disproportionate security sector. Secondly, as the various components of the PMF are predominantly Shiite, excessive integration on their part could result in a return to the pre-2014 situation where Shiites disproportionately dominated the sectarian make-up of the army and police forces. A third factor to take into account is the capacity of the new security sector to effectively absorb large numbers of former PMF fighters in a narrow timeframe.

Considering this, it is important that options for reintegration are offered corresponding to the needs of the security sector (identified in phase I) and centred around principles of inclusion and diversity. A quota system could ensure diversity and inclusion and help build trust between the new security forces and local communities. At this stage, it is critical that appropriate vetting procedures are maintained throughout the integration process. Preventing infiltration by extremist elements as well as the integration of perpetrators of war crimes and human rights abuses is important to protect the image and legitimacy of the new security forces and the DDR/SSR process as it is being implemented.

Those who at this stage do not wish to integrate into the new armed forces should receive assistance for their reintegration into civilian life, or in some cases, have the option of retirement with full benefits. Reintegration is a long-term process, and Iraq's domestic economy may struggle to absorb the large numbers of ex-combatants into its labour market. As DDR experience in several African countries has shown, seeking the 'reintegration of combatants back into poverty' is not constructive.¹⁸ Accordingly, Kees Kingma (1997) argues that DDR should often be implemented as part of a multi-dimensional effort which includes long-term development goals and targets wider communities rather than individuals. In the case of Iraq, the involvement of the UNDP is recommended to ensure integration of DDR efforts with wider development programmes. It is important that the educational and vocational training packages offered at this stage correspond with the economic needs and realities on the ground so that the community as a whole benefits from the process (Özerdem, 2010). Another

18 During DDR efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, transitioned ex-combatants that had trained as carpenters through vocational training programmes declared that they deliberately re-joined armed groups as their businesses suffered from a perpetual lack of customers (Banholzer, 2014).

means of mitigating the challenge of labour market absorption is to allow and assist members of militias in finishing their high school and/or secondary education prior to formal demobilisation. The US employed this strategy for the gradual demobilisation of soldiers after World War II (Banholzer, 2014).

4.5. Conclusion

The rise of militias in Iraq should be seen as a double-edged sword. Since 2003 they have both compromised and contributed to security – often simultaneously. In seeking to complement the state by providing security and other essential government services they actually undermine it, leading Iraq into a vicious cycle where the militias gain popularity as the legitimacy of the government falters. This is the primary mechanism responsible for the persistence and proliferation of sub-state militias in Iraq.

Ultimately, any process designed to deal with this challenge has to combine security sector reform with the demobilisation and reintegration of large numbers of surplus security personnel. However, both SSR and DDR are inherently political processes which can only be seriously advanced through negotiations. The current reality on the ground does not bode well for DDR, and a rushed, overly aggressive pursuit of this objective is likely to bear a close resemblance to past failures in dealing with Iraq's militias.

Therefore, the Iraqi government and parliament must use the time following IS' defeat wisely and first make significant progress in the areas of national security, reconciliation, and creating a sense of national unity, as well as maintaining or improving on Baghdad-Erbil relations. Previous experience in Iraq has shown that serious improvement in security can only be achieved through inclusive solutions giving local communities a stake in their own security. Efforts for national reconciliation have to go beyond mere retribution and include restorative mechanisms which grant a more active role to both perpetrator and victim and are better equipped to produce a shared historical narrative concerning what has happened and why. It also has to involve innovative anti-corruption measures and efforts to decentralise and devolve power from the central government to the provincial council level.

Complementing these efforts, an assistance programme will have to be set up for individual militia members wishing to make the transition from fighter to civilian. If this programme proves capable of producing success stories for ex-combatants, and progress in the other areas is also ensured, an environment in which DDR has a realistic chance of success will be created. Only then can a comprehensive DDR/SSR programme based on formal agreements with all militias be launched as an ultimate solution to Iraq's problem with militias and subnationalisms. This programme will have to be adapted to fit the local context and potentially deviate from conventional DDR standards in its sequencing and overall design.

5- Final Conclusion

The important role that the PMF has played in Iraqi history cannot be denied, in Iraq's time of need it provided security and kept IS at bay whilst the ISF regrouped and restructured. When Iraq's territorial integrity was under threat, the PMF delivered and this must be respected. However, whilst the PMF once protected the territorial integrity of Iraq, it now threatens to undermine it. Having forces that represent a distinct subnationalism – whether that be a transnationalism linked to Iran, or a Sunni nationalism opposed to the government – dilutes the population's loyalty to the state. The longer the PMF continues after the fall of IS the stronger these individual subnationalisms will become, which will in turn weaken Iraqi unity. Although the new PMF law aims to dismantle the political ties of PMF forces and install one leadership, these links and loyalties already exist and will continue despite the law as it leaves existing command-structures and units wholly intact. Effectively breaking down these multiple command-structures within the PMF cannot be achieved without demobilising and (re)-integrating militia members individually into civilian life or the conventional security forces. It must be made clear that the individual forces within the PMF are used by their leaders and backers as a tool to gain power. This is further evidenced by the fact that the forces that have Iraq and its unity as core principles are willing to disband and those with leaders bent on gaining political power are not.

The ISF is an extension of the state and people's perception of it and the loyalty it receives transfers directly to the state. It is vital that the entire population is represented in the ISF and that they are the sole provider of security. When sub-state actors are seen as key to security, they undermine the state's legitimacy and inhibit the consolidation of democracy. If the PMF is still operating at the same level come the next national elections the results could be catastrophic, as in elections the rhetoric will be stronger and will pull the society in multiple directions, damaging unity.

Abadi needs to use his time following IS' defeat carefully and build a solid political platform based on Iraqi unity and reform. This platform has to include serious reforms in the areas of security and national reconciliation. Previous experience in Iraq has shown that significant improvement in security is best achieved through localised security solutions giving local communities a stake in their own security. Efforts for national reconciliation have to go beyond mere retribution and include restorative mechanisms which grant a more active role to both perpetrator and victim and are better equipped to produce a shared historical narrative concerning what has happened and why. It also has to involve innovative anti-corruption measures and efforts to decentralise and devolve power from the central government to the provincial council level. A workable body of legislation should be designed for the equitable distribution of wealth from Iraq's natural resources.

Complementing these efforts, an assistance programme needs to be set up for individual militia members wishing to either integrate into the ISF or make the transition from fighter to civilian immediately following IS' defeat. If this programme proves capable of producing success stories for ex-combatants, and progress in the other areas is also ensured, an environment in which DDR has a realistic chance of success will be created. Only then can a comprehensive DDR/SSR programme based on formal agreements with all militias be launched as an ultimate solution to Iraq's problem with militias and subnationalisms. This programme will have to be adapted to fit the local context and potentially deviate from conventional DDR standards in its sequencing and overall design. Therefore, the overall strategy to deal with the PMF should be containment, with gradual incorporation whilst Iraqi unity and the army are strengthened, eventually leading to the full incorporation of the PMF. Militias with an especially hostile or

divisive subnationalism and who refuse to abandon such ideological roots may have to be subjected to a strategy of suppression. Due to the dynamics in Iraq, the process cannot be instant and this will have to be a medium-term project gradually progressing over the next five years.

6- Recommendations

Iraqi Government

The subnationalisms associated with various militias undermine national unity and are likely to intensify during the 2017 and 2018 elections. Therefore, Prime Minister Abadi should use the peak in his popularity, likely to follow IS' defeat, to form a political platform based on political and security sector reform, national reconciliation and unity. This platform should be centred around principles of inclusion and diversity and local communities must be given a stake in providing their own security through the national army and police force – which should become the sole provider of security for the people of Iraq.

The Iraqi Parliament should foster a climate in which an open discussion can be initiated concerning the potential adverse effects of having armed groups tied to political parties. A norm should be established designating this situation as undesirable and a broad commitment must be made towards solving the problem in a reasonable timeline.

1. Recognise the importance of the Iraqi army in fostering a shared and inclusive, functioning state. Increase public relation efforts on improving the population's perception of the army.
2. Diversify the ISF and ensure local populations can have a stake in providing for their own security through the conventional security forces.
3. Prepare, in conjunction with international partners, a DDR programme to provide immediate assistance to individual militia members wishing to integrate within the ISF or transition to civilian life following IS' defeat.
4. A broad approach to national reconciliation after IS must be taken and it has to go beyond retribution through criminal trials. More victim-orientated, restorative mechanisms can be used to grant both victims and perpetrators a more active role in the process. Such mechanisms are also better equipped to produce a shared national narrative about what has happened and why.
5. A national campaign for unity through citizenship should be launched including policies that can unite the population, including but not limited to anti-corruption measures, development projects, and political reform.

PMF Leadership

The subnationalisms that are reinforced and exacerbated by the various forces within the PMF undermine the state and go against the territorial integrity of Iraq, which the PMF claims to protect. Both the PMF leadership and the individual forces need to re-evaluate their aims and objectives, as the current short-termism they operate under may lead to power gains, but will come with destabilisation and will essentially devalue the power won and potentially lead to conflict. The political ambitions of many groups within the PMF is a welcome development, however political integration has to be conditioned on disarmament. Political parties should not have armed forces to enforce their will and in the long run security should be provided by the state alone.

6. Individuals or units who want to disarm and demobilise or integrate into the army/police should formally request assistance from the GoI and should be accommodated by PMF commanders and relevant ministries. The PMF leadership should not stand in the way of those members who wish to leave their unit to reintegrate into civil society or integrate into the ISF.
7. There is no place for militias in the electoral process, as there are clear ties between them and political parties/aims. Therefore, during the elections the militias must stay clear of voting areas. Any security provided around voting booths or entry points must be provided from within the state security apparatus and the PMF leadership

should actively support this process.

8. Following on from the point above, there needs to be separation between the political and military wings in the elections. Military wings should not be used for campaigning purposes and should remain neutral.
9. As campaign rhetoric will likely fuel subnationalisms and divisions, all political and militia leaders must publicly pledge to refrain from using violence and intimidation tactics during the upcoming elections.
10. The PMF leadership need to carry out an audit and a programme of reform to address the issues of ghost members, corruption, and human rights abuses.
11. The PMF commanders should seriously consider the gradual integration of the PMF into the ISF in order to enhance Iraqi unity and prevent diluting loyalties.
 - The commanders of forces within the PMF that represent minorities should acknowledge that the security of minorities is best served through the formal security structure. Therefore, individual power gains may have to be sacrificed for the wider security of their group.
 - Likewise, the security of Sunnis would be improved if they form part of the ISF, rather than acting as competition to it.
 - For Shiite commanders there needs to be a realisation that the more forces that exist the more likely it is that internal conflict will emerge and the previous case of Badr and the Mahdi army give credence to this. Moreover, having multiple forces in competition with the ISF undermines Iraqi unity and creates instability.

Iranian Government

Conflict-affected areas are prime recruiting places for global terrorist groups. Tehran must realise that although having several Iraqi armed forces fiercely loyal to its leadership may serve its short-term interests, this will ultimately damage Iran's national interests, as these forces undermine Iraqi unity and therefore the stability of Iraq and of the region. The removal of Saddam Hussein gave way to a multitude of entry-points for mutually beneficial relations for bilateral cooperation in different areas. A functioning Iraq will always be in the interest of Iran. Therefore, it must commit to supporting the gradual demobilisation of the Iraqi sub-state militias it backs.

12. Once IS has been defeated, cease financial and military support for militias and instead transfer this to bolstering the capacity of the conventional ISF.
13. Use leverage over militias to encourage their integration into the conventional ISF.
14. Maintain close links with Baghdad and convert previous support for militias into support for mechanisms which facilitate their integration and/or demobilisation and transition to non-military organisations.
15. Diplomatically support those Iraqi leaders that refrain from playing divisive identity-politics and enhance Iraqi unity.

Kurdistan Regional Government

Following IS' defeat all the communities of Iraq need to come together and the KRG has an important role to play. Any escalation of Arab-Kurd tensions could derail any processes of demobilisation and reconciliation. There are multiple elements that need to be negotiated or coordinated on and the KRG can act as a facilitator or a spoiler. For their own security and future, it is in their best interest to act as a facilitator where possible.

16. Keep dialogue with Baghdad open and seek solutions to the multiple issues that exist in Kirkuk, as well as with relation to oil exports and the disputed territories.

17. Help to facilitate reconciliation efforts and security sector reform in Kirkuk and Nineveh.
18. Avoid actions of identity politics towards minorities that may heighten tensions and undermine unity and allow them to make their own decisions on their future.
19. Try to improve relations between the Peshmerga and PMF, as well as with the Iraqi Army.

Turkish Government

Relations between Baghdad and Ankara have to improve. Turkey is currently witnessing the impact of the instability of its neighbours as conflict spills across the borders. It is therefore in Turkey's best interest to have a stable Iraq. Maintaining a presence in Iraq against Baghdad's wishes does little for stability or relations. If Turkey aims to represent Sunni interests in Iraq it should act as a mediator rather than a spoiler.

20. Support integration of Sunnis into the army, rather than trying to build separate Sunni forces.
21. Cease to fund or train sub-state forces in Iraq and invest resources in order to help to rebuild the Iraqi army.
22. Act as mediator between Sunni factions and the GoI in order to enhance stability and Iraqi unity.
23. Withdrawing Turkish troops from Iraq is essential in order to eliminate yet another reason for the PMF to continue to operate.

International Actors

Although tentative demobilisation of individual militia members will take place and must be supported in the immediate aftermath of IS' defeat, comprehensive demobilisation and integration of Iraq's militias is not likely to occur before significant progress is made in the areas of state security provision and national reconciliation. The United Nations, and the diplomatic and NGO community must therefore support efforts by the Iraqi government in these areas, ensuring local ownership over matters related to reconciliation, unity and security sector reform.

24. Assist Iraq in preparing a DDR programme aimed at assisting individual militia members wishing to make the transition back into civilian life. This programme should also facilitate options for integration of individuals into the conventional ISF.
25. Reintegration packages should include psycho-social support mechanisms, education and health benefits, vocational training and/or job placement.
26. Support and empower leaders in Baghdad who advance national reconciliation by offering assistance and expertise where appropriate, while ensuring local ownership over progress.
27. Facilitate dialogue between Baghdad and Erbil concerning a wide range of issues from resource wealth distribution and oil export rights to the administrative status of disputed territories.
28. Ensure that DDR programming is situated as part of a wider development framework and benefits communities as a whole.
29. Depending on the security context, and considering Iraq's history and culture, it may be better that demobilisation and reintegration efforts are initiated before disarmament can take place.
30. When a broad arms control programme is launched, ensure this includes the civilian population, militias and their members.

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