

The Catch-22 in Nineveh: The Regional Security Complex Dynamics between Turkey and Iran

Athanasios Manis
Research Fellow

Tomáš Kaválek
Visiting Research Fellow

Abstract:

This paper argues that the future political stability of Nineveh depends on a two-level normalisation. A potential agreement between competing local actors, such as Baghdad and Erbil, is not the only necessary condition to stabilise the area. It also requires that Turkey and Iran decide to desecuritize Nineveh to the extent that it ceases to play the role of a buffer zone in the Middle East regional security complex. This argument is underpinned by the close examination of Turkey's and Iran's involvement together with their respective local allies in Nineveh in the post-2014 period. Developments referring to the cases of Bashiqa, Shingal, Tal Afar, as well as activities in favour or against Mosul leaders' post-Islamic State (IS) vision illustrate that Nineveh's securitisation has transcended Iraq's borders. All in all, Turkey and Iran are vying for greater influence in Nineveh, or at least attempting to ensure that it will not become a satellite area of a competing power. Partly through their direct diplomatic and military engagement, but most importantly through their military and economic support to their local allies, the two regional powers pursue their security and diplomatic goals. At the same time, their involvement in the area has compounded the friction between local actors. Accordingly, the paper argues that in order to avoid greater polarisation in Nineveh and prepare the ground for constructive negotiations in the post-IS environment, Turkey and Iran should work on institutionalising their relationship beyond trade. Working together on issues of security between them, but also specifically in Nineveh, would improve trust and confidence in their relationship and help overcome the catch-22.

1. Introduction

The war against the Islamic State (IS) in Nineveh continues unabated with the anti-IS local actors pushing for a rapid liberation of the area. Their ad hoc coordination in the battlefield has been essential for the successful implementation of the military plan. Despite the unprecedented coordination, beneath the surface are irreconcilable political differences over the post-conflict political and security arrangements in the area. The recent public disagreement between the President of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI), Masoud Barzani, and the response by the Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider Al-Abadi, regarding the continuous presence or not of Peshmerga forces in disputed areas confirms this point (Al-Jazeera, 2016b). Some analysts have suggested specific political arrangements focusing on, and addressing the complex dynamics inside Iraq (O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2016). This is a necessary approach since the Iraqi internal dynamics partly derive from the particularistic history of the country. At the same time, however, the politics of Iraq are entangled with the wider regional security dynamics. Specifically, employing the Regional Security Complex

(RSC) framework, this paper argues that Nineveh is securitised not only by local actors, but also by their regional allies, i.e. Turkey and Iran. Both have specific security interests that they have been exhibiting through their multifarious support to their local allies and their presence in the area. The local actors have built security and economic dependencies on Turkey or Iran that make for an asymmetric relationship. All in all, Nineveh has become a buffer zone sitting at the heart of the Middle East security complex. Unless Turkey and Iran decide to partly desecuritize the area, it is difficult to imagine how the local actors will move away from their maximalist approaches – that are partly fed by their regional allies’ support – and engage in constructive negotiations with each other. Hence, the paper suggests a two-level normalization in which all actors, local and regional, should act in a coordinated manner to resolve this conundrum of insecurity.

2. The Regional Security Complex: A Framework of Analysis for Nineveh

The end of the Cold War meant a structural transformation of the international security system. The superpower bipolarity that determined international security for decades came to an end allowing for regions to develop their own security dynamics. Putting it succinctly, in their seminal work *Regions and Powers, The Structure of International Security*, Buzan and Waever argued that ‘the relative autonomy of regional security constitutes a pattern of international security relations radically different from the rigid structure of superpower bipolarity that defined the Cold War’ (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 3).¹

Subsequently, the authors underlined that the most relevant level of analysis in terms of security is the region because this is ‘where the extremes of national and global security interplay, and where most of the action occurs’ (Ibid.: 43). On the one hand, the national level of security analysis does not take into consideration that ‘security dynamics are inherently relational’ (Ibid.). Therefore, security analysis has to also integrate the web of security dynamics that exist outside a state, but are in close relation to it. On the other hand, the globe does not reflect the same degree of integration in security terms, such as regions, and accordingly analysis on this level of generality cannot easily reflect ‘real concerns in most countries’ (Ibid.). Drawing on these assumptions, Buzan and Waever, built the Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) as a framework of analysis of security dynamics that brings together input from intra- and inter-state dynamics as well as the interplay between different regions and the global and regional level (Ibid.: 51). The definition of a Regional Security Complex (RSC) is:

a set of units whose major processes of securitisation, desecuritisiation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another (Ibid.: 44).²

The two main characteristics of RSC are power relations and patterns of amity and enmity (Ibid.: 49). The first relates to the idea that countries in a region interact with each other, directly or indirectly, on the basis of a regional balance of power creating certain types of polarity, such as unipolar, bipolar or multipolar. The second element relates to region-specific background factors, such as history, culture, religion, and geography, that ‘trigger conflict or cooperation, take part in the formation of an overall constellation of fears, threats, and friendships that define an RSC’ (Ibid.: 50).

All in all, the RSCT is a useful framework for analysing the current complex security dynamics in Nineveh deriving from the entanglement of many actors, including national, subnational, regional

¹ It falls beyond the scope of this policy paper to review Buzan and Waever’s Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) in light of alternative frameworks based on different theoretical assumption. The RSCT is rather used as a “lense” to frame complex security interactions in Nineveh and organise empirical data accordingly. Buzan and Waever’s work constitutes a point of reference for all researchers working on the RSCs.

² Securitisation is meant as a process by which actors treat an issue or a country as a security issue, whereas desecuritisiation is the process by which actors reverse the process of securitisation.

and international. Its advantage is that it combines a universal approach to actors' behaviour over security matters together with particularistic factors that condition their behaviour. Subsequently, this begs the question of what are the main characteristics of the Middle East RSC and how it affects Turkey's and Iran's interests and actions specifically in Nineveh and in Iraq as a whole.

By and large, the Middle East security complex is characterised by both relations of enmity and amity that 'are remarkable for their convoluted and crosscutting character' (Ibid.:190). Furthermore, the level of security regionalisation, meaning 'a process whereby regional states and actors agree to coordinate security policy and in doing so create formal and informal security regimes', is very low (Louise, 2015: 649-650). The competition between Turkey and Iran in Syria and Iraq, and between Saudi Arabia and Iran in Yemen are cases in point. The levels of political and security fragmentation have worsened considerably, especially as IS' territory is shrinking and the question of post-IS politics is arising. Regional powers are increasingly in a prisoner's dilemma mind set, such as in the case of Yemen (Manis, 2015b).

In the case of Nineveh, despite the unifying effect of the war against IS on multiple actors with diverse interests and perceptions (such as Erbil, Baghdad, Turkey and Iran), Nineveh is a buffer zone, i.e. an area 'standing at the centre of a strong pattern of securitisation' (Buzan & Wæver, 2003: 41). This is even more pronounced due to the collapse of order when first the Iraqi army fled the area and now with the imminent defeat of IS. In order to project a post-IS political and security future in the area, it is necessary first to comprehend how Nineveh fits the current RSC in the Middle East, and particularly how it is affected by the security interactions between Turkey, Iran and their regional allies.

3. Turkey's Redefined Role in the Middle East Security Complex

In late 1990s, early 2000s, it was argued that Turkey played the role of an insulator, namely a country that finds itself located at the edge of three distinct regions of conflict, i.e. the Balkans, the Middle East and the Caucasus, but did not engage with them to a great extent (Buzan & Diez, 1999; Buzan & Wæver, 2003). Turkey did not become a major participant in any of the security complexes adjacent to it, but instead was merely a peripheral actor. More recently, it was asserted that 'even if it is arguably difficult to maintain that Turkey is still an insulator, it is not particularly easy to insert it into one exclusive RSC' (Barrinha, 2014: 179). This argument was based on the fact that with the Justice and Development party's (AKP) ascendance into power in 2002, Turkey gradually became more active in its neighborhood through processes of desecuritisation and positive engagement with countries such as Iran, Syria, Israel, Greece and Armenia (Barrinha, 2014: 271-277). The once influential Ahmet Davutoğlu had argued for, and actively pursued with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül, the goal of placing Turkey 'from the periphery of international relations to the center as an actor sitting at the intersection of multiple regions' (Kirişçi, Tocci, & Walker, 2010: 12). The key concepts underpinning Turkey's AKP foreign policy was 'strategic depth' and 'zero problems with neighbours' (Davutoğlu, 2009). These two concepts can be summarized in Davutoğlu's belief that an inward-looking Turkish foreign policy is in conflict with Turkey's geography and history. He characteristically argued that:

Societies that are located in intersecting areas of geostrategic basins or in the centre of global mainland, or they have been constantly living in their very multicultural paradigm, it is not possible to react to external factors by becoming introvert. Even if it is possible for a short period of time, this cannot produce solutions...It [Turkey] can transform the elements of crisis into elements of power by opening up with confidence and assertiveness. Turkey which finds itself on the central route of the most strategic zone that extends globally from the north to the south and from the east to the west is not possible to be introvert (Davutoğlu, 2009: 555-6).

Despite Turkey's increasing activity in the neighbourhood, Barrinha argued that Turkey does not belong to a particular RSC and therefore one can assume that it remains an insulator country (Barrinha, 2014). However, two major developments challenge this view. On the one hand, Turkey has developed its military presence in Nineveh since 2014 as part of a training programme for Peshmerga and local Sunni forces, in an attempt to strengthen its local allies, while containing the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) role in the region. On the other hand, it is actively engaging in the Syrian war through the Euphrates Shield operation, which has so far captured strategic parts of Syria's north, including the Azaz-Jarablus borderline and parts of Al-Bab. The latter helps Turkey to counteract the plans of the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a PKK-affiliated organisation in Syria, of connecting Afrin to Kobani and ensures that Turkey will have a say in the future political developments in Syria. By and large, Turkey has been significantly engaging in processes of securitisation in Iraq and Syria. Therefore, it can be plausibly argued that Turkey is now part of the Middle East RSC.

4. Turkish Interests in Iraq and Nineveh

Turkey, in turn, has two main objectives in Iraq in light of Middle East's political fragmentation and lack of security regionalisation and in correspondence to AKP's domestic objectives. Turkey wants to contain Iran's growing influence, however it also wants to minimise the political influence and military capacity of the PKK. Specifically, Iran has strengthened its security position in the Middle East with the domination of the Shiite element in post-Saddam Iraq and even more so with the emergence of IS and Iran's direct involvement in the wars in Iraq and Syria against it. Many analysts discuss the emergence of a "Shiite Crescent" that starts from Tehran and expands all the way to the Mediterranean through Baghdad, Damascus and Beirut (Alaaldin, 2015, Economist, 2015, Trofimov, 2016). At the moment, the presence of the Iraqi Army and some pro-Iranian Shiite militias in the area constitute a red flag for the AKP leadership. Subsequently, Turkey is trying to counteract this influence by projecting its own influence over the Sunni element of Iraq, including the Kurds.

In addition, the AKP government's decision to end a two-year ceasefire with the PKK and proceed with the militarisation of the Kurdish issue domestically has put Turkey on guard (Manis, 2015a, 2016), all the more because the PKK-affiliated PYD has seen a significant success in its war against IS in Syria and its expansion along the Turkish-Syrian border. Nineveh's geographic proximity to southeast Turkey and northern Syria (Rojava), paired with the lack of order therein renders it a suitable foothold and passage for the PKK.

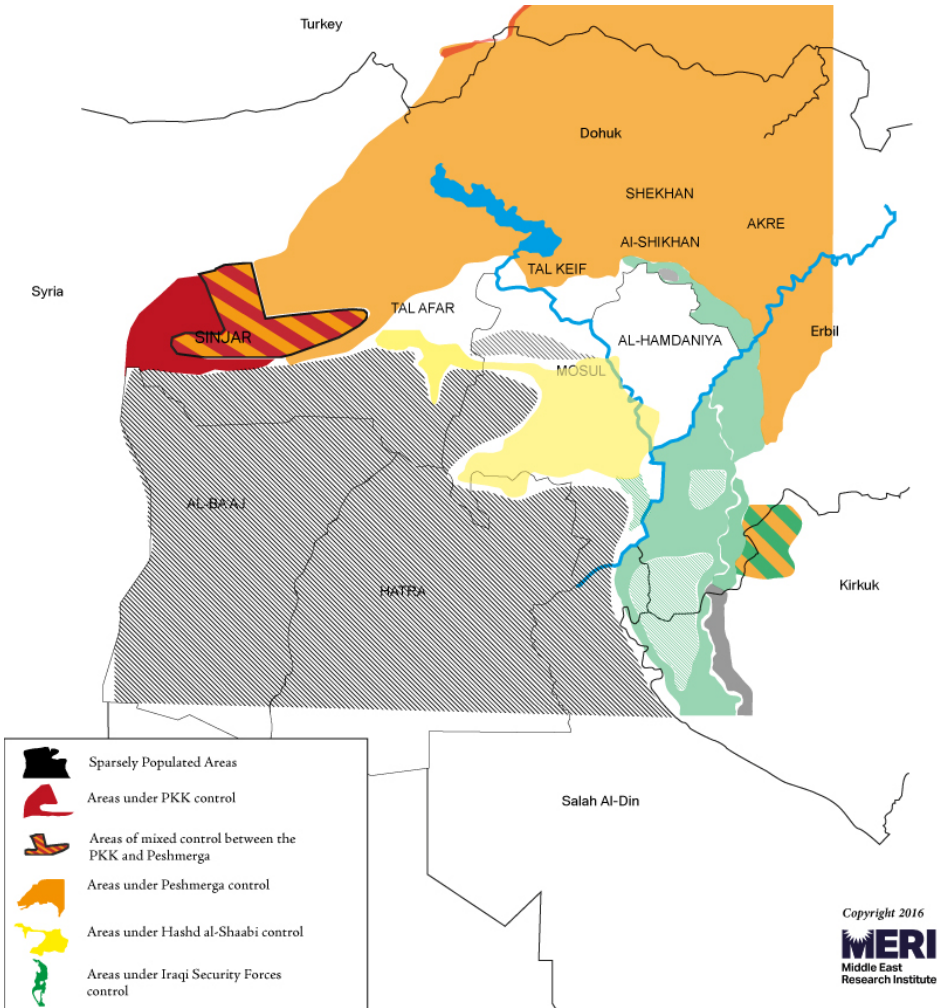
5. Iranian Interests in Iraq and Nineveh

As Kenneth Katzman (2016: ii) argues, Iranian national security strategy is often asserted to be driven by an interest of overturning a power structure in the Middle East that Iran views as in favour of the US and its allies (Israel, Saudi Arabia and other Sunni regimes in the region). By and large, this has been exacerbated by the Iranian revolution of 1979, which placed Iran firmly into the Middle East RSC and created conditions of hostility and securitisation (Buzan & Waeber, 2003: 187-194). In that context, Iran has been driven by an attempt to defend its position and that of its allies such as the Syrian regime, Hezbollah and the Shiite-dominated Iraqi government in a changing Middle East (Katzman, 2016: ii).

One way or another, Iraq is a crucial vehicle for Iran to maintain its position in the region. A key objective of Iranian foreign policy towards Iraq is maintaining Iraqi unity (Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015: 6-7) in order to keep at bay possible Iraqi Kurdish independence (Wilgenburg, 2014), and at the same time to prevent a Sunni region from emerging outside of Baghdad's control. Iran strives to

continue exercising strong influence over the Iraqi government in Baghdad, and aims to extend this to exert control over the whole Iraqi territory.

Accordingly, Tehran is also interested in gaining a stable foothold in the Nineveh governorate in order to pursue its long-standing vision of creating a land corridor stretching from Iran through Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean (Ghaddar, 2016). One might argue that a land corridor connecting Baghdad to Damascus through Anbar province could play a similar role, but the northern corridor dominated by forces friendly to Iran would not only further its grasp over the region and facilitate a land route for Iranian forces, but it would also make it difficult for Turkey to project influence in the vicinity. Secondly, it would also help to keep the Sunni population, in both Iraq and Syria, under tighter control. Such a corridor would constitute of forces hostile towards Turkey such as the PKK-linked forces in northern Syria or in Shingal, Iraq. In the short term perspective, gaining a stable foothold through forces friendly to Iran would provide a convenient entry point for engagement in Syria against IS, namely in the Sunni Syrian heartland in Raqqa. In other words, it can be read as a balancing act against Turkey’s influence in the area. This vision of which Nineveh is integral part is incompatible with Turkish interests.



Map 1. Control of Terrain in Nineveh as of December 5, (zones of control are adjusted from Institute for the Study of War, 2016; graphics by Qasim Botani, MERI, 2016).

6. Convergences and Divergences between Turkey, Iran and their Allies

The relationship between Turkey and Iran is mixed; it is defined by areas of cooperation and areas of competition. In terms of areas of cooperation, inter-state trade was 14 billion dollars in 2014 and 10 billion in 2015 (Yildiz et al., 2016 and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey, 2016). In 2015, Iran was the 10th largest export destination and 8th largest importer for Turkey (TUIK, 2016). In 2014, Turkey was the 5th largest export destination and 4th largest importer for Iran (Observatory of Economic Complexity, 2016). Energy-dependent Turkey also buys Iranian oil and gas which in turn has helped Tehran to alleviate the impact of international sanctions. Turkish companies are also active in Iran in the construction and energy sectors. In contrast to economic relations, cooperation regarding politics and security in the region are minimal and lack institutionalization (for more details see International Crisis Group, 2016). With the wars in Iraq and Syria, the uncertainty over which regional power will benefit the most has increased. These conditions propelled a zero-sum security-driven game in which both players pursue their competing interests at the expense of each other and their respective local allies. The December 20 meeting in Moscow between Russia, Turkey and Iran followed by a 8-point political accord to end the war in Syria could be a sign of Ankara accepting the Russian-Iranian vision for Syria (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2016). Hubbard and Sanger (2016) read the accord as Turkey finally giving up the idea of removing Assad's regime and prioritizing the fight against the PKK in the region. At the same time, the US and the UN were completely sidelined from the negotiations. It is, however, too early to judge the implications of this accord for the situation on the ground, including in Nineveh. Moreover, Iraq, which is a key source of friction between Iran and Turkey, was not mentioned in the deal at all.

One of the flashpoints for this power play is the Nineveh governorate where Turkish and Iranian interests clash. One can identify Turkish-led and Iranian-led camps whose interests in Nineveh are in direct conflict. On the other hand, within each camp, there are considerable overlap of interests and a strong pattern of cooperation. The Turkish-led camp consists of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Sunni actors in Nineveh, namely the Nujaifi family and their allies. The Iran-led camp consists of the Baghdad government along with those Hash al-Shaabi (HS) elements that are backed by Iran, and the PKK-linked forces. Within each camp there are convergences of interests vis-à-vis Nineveh, while between the two camps there are divergences. The intra-camp convergences and the inter-camp divergences have been reflecting in the different activities of the actors on the ground. Moreover, Turkey and Iran have a rather asymmetrical relationship with their allies. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG)³ is highly dependent on importing goods, know-how and technology from Turkey, while it is currently the sole corridor for exporting Kurdish oil. Additionally, Turkey has directly supported the KRG with a 1 billion dollar loan which is a major sum considering that even during the economic boom in 2012 and 2013 the total budget for the KRG amounted to around 13 billion dollars (Salih, 2016). At the same, Atheel Nujaifi (the former governor of Nineveh) is currently hosted by the KDP in Erbil and his militia is backed and trained by Ankara. Iran, on the other hand, exercises considerable influence over the predominantly Shiite government in Baghdad through religious influence and positioning itself as the main political arbiter in Baghdad. It also controls loyal armed groups within the HS umbrella through delivering arms, finance and deployment of military advisors (for a more comprehensive account of Iranian influence in Iraq see Nader, 2015).

The examination of four cases of Turkish and Iranian involvement in Nineveh together with their respective allies illustrate intra-camp convergences and inter-camp divergence. Four cases in the

³ The KRG policies, over the last ten years, have mainly been designed by the President and the Prime Minister who are KDP's top leaders. Also, parts of Nineveh province, namely some of the disputed territories, are geographically within the KDP's zones of influence.

post-2014 period will be examined: a) the issue of the Turkish military base in Bashiqa and its engagement in the Mosul operation; b) the presence of the PKK-linked forces in Shingal; c) the competing stance towards liberating Tal Afar; d) a vision for post-IS governance in Nineveh.

a) The Turkish Garrison in Bashiqa and Its Engagement in the Mosul operation

The Turkish military presence in Bashiqa (a town close to Mosul) repeatedly sparked tensions between Ankara and Baghdad. In December 2015, Turkey bolstered its contingent in the Bashiqa base with additional troops and armour (Gurcan, 2015). Baghdad strongly reacted to the deployment by calling Turkey to withdraw and accusing it of breaching Iraqi sovereignty (Arango, 2015). President Barzani backed Ankara by claiming that Turkish troops are there according to a deal between Turkey and Iraq to train local forces against IS (Nujaifis' Sunni militia, Hashd al-Watani, and also Peshmerga) (Daily Sabah, 2015). The issue resurfaced in the upcoming months and escalated in October 2016 with the looming Mosul offensive. Baghdad renewed its call for Turkey to withdraw and warned Ankara not to participate in the Mosul operation (Al-Jazeera, 2016a). Additionally, Baghdad referred the issue to the United Nations (UN) (Reuters, 2016) and raised the alarm of a potential regional war with Turkey (Abdallah, 2016). In return, president Erdoğan vowed to participate in the offensive, followed by a series of warmongering statements towards Abadi (Guldogan, 2016). In collaboration with Baghdad, Iran-backed elements of HS, such as the Badr Corps, threatened to target Turkish forces in Nineveh both in December 2015 and in October 2016 (al-Salhy, 2016). The KRG once again backed Turkey with its spokesperson, Safeen Dizayee, claiming that Turkish forces were deployed in Bashiqa with the knowledge and consent of Baghdad and that even former Iraqi defence minister Khaleed al-Obaidi visited the camp (Zaman, 2016). Al-Obaidi is a Sunni from Mosul and before the Iraqi parliament voted their lack of confidence in him in August 2016, he was the government's face in the fight against IS and enjoyed a good relationship with Prime Minister Abadi (Mansour, 2016: 14; Sattar, 2016).

Turkey's direct military presence ensures that it will not be left out of the post-IS equation in Nineveh and its interests will be taken into consideration. This position converges with the interests of the KDP. Firstly, if Baghdad and the Iran-backed forces have a free hand in Nineveh, the KDP will face the HS elements that are openly hostile towards the Kurds at its doorstep. Secondly, with Baghdad (and Tehran) unchallenged by Turkey in Nineveh, the KDP would be in a much more difficult position to continue their military presence in the disputed areas and eventually politically negotiate the nature of the disputed territories between the KRI and Baghdad. For Turkey's Sunni allies in Nineveh (the Nujaifis and their supporters), Turkish military presence facilitates training of their militia, the Hashd al-Watani, and in wider sense it helps to secure their role in post-IS Nineveh. On the other hand, Turkish meddling contradicts Iran's interest of gaining an unchallenged foothold in Nineveh.

b) The Shingal Flashpoint

The second issue relates to the PKK-linked forces and their activities in the predominantly-Yazidi district of Shingal in Nineveh. When the Peshmerga forces withdrew from Shingal facing IS' advance in August 2014, the PKK and PKK-linked forces from both Qandil and Syria moved in and opened a safe passage for Yazidis. Since November 2015, when the town of Shingal itself was re-taken, tensions between the PKK and the KDP in Shingal have increased (see for example Kurdistan Regional Government, 2015).

The PKK-linked forces further bolstered their presence through establishing the Yazidi militia Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ) under their control as well as through building political and governance structures similar to those in Rojava (see ANF, 2015 or Vickery, 2015). The PKK, at the same time, views Shingal as an important land bridge between its strongholds in northern Syria and Qandil. The YBŞ and Arab Sunni militias in Shingal are financially backed by the government in Baghdad and have been part of the HS umbrella since June 2015 (Coles, 2016 and Rudaw, 2016a). With rather limited capabilities Baghdad has to counter Turkish ambitions in Nineveh, thus supporting the PKK seems a logical step for Baghdad to counter Turkey's meddling. Tehran has arguably boosted its working relationship with the PKK since its Iranian affiliate the Party for the Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK) largely ceased hostilities on Iranian soil by the end of 2011 (see Çagaptay & Unal, 2014). In Syria, the PYD, despite receiving considerable US support in combating IS since autumn 2014, is embedded in a marriage of convenience with Iran's principal ally - Assad's regime (Hamad, 2016 and Drwish, 2016). Considering that the Shingal mountain range oversees the main road to Syria, it is a strategically important piece of the puzzle to secure a land corridor to Turkey.

President Barzani has expressed an aspiration to maintain a decisive role in Shingal and incorporate the area into the KRI (Rudaw 2015). KDP officials as well as pro-KDP Yazidi leaders have called for the PKK to cease its activities and leave, reportedly even imposing a partial economic embargo in the areas of the Shingal district where the PKK dominates (E-Kurd Daily, 2016a and Toorn, 2016). In convergence with the KDP, Ankara recently objected to the presence of the PKK forces in Shingal and threatened to intervene (Ugurlu, 2016). Shingal borders with Rojava in northern Syria, where the Syrian PKK affiliate, the PYD, managed to gain the upper hand at the expense of the pro-KDP actors (the Kurdish National Council – KNC) in the Syrian Kurdish political landscape. Turkey's long-term perception of the PYD as a threat and the August 2016 Turkish intervention to Syria to counter PYD's influence corresponds with the KDP's interests. The KDP harbours distaste towards the PYD for being gradually sidelined from Syrian Kurdish politics despite KDP-sponsored power-sharing agreements between the PYD and the KNC, for example the Dohuk Agreement of October 2014 (see International Crisis Group, 2015: 27).

c) The Tal Afar Episode

Considering that the Nineveh governorate is largely Sunni Arab, Baghdad/Tehran cannot rely on local (Shiite) allies on the ground, which makes it challenging to control. Tal Afar sub-district has a 70-80 % Sunni Turkmen population, but it is also a home to 20-30 % Shiite Turkmen. The latter have been favoured by the predominantly Shiite governments in Baghdad in the post-Saddam period (however, the vast majority of them were expelled by IS in 2014) (Kaválek, 2016). Tal Afar is one of the few places in Nineveh inhabited by a compact Shiite population supportive of Baghdad, but at the same time it is also a traditional hotbed of Sunni revisionism in the post-2003 era (see Izady, 2016). In a similar manner as with Shiite Turkmen, Baghdad also relies on Shiite Shabaks in Nineveh and the vast majority of them have voiced enmity towards the KRG and its "Kurdisation" policies towards Shabak areas (Human Rights Watch, 2009).

When the Iran-backed elements of HS (such as Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq, Badr Corps a.k.a Kata'ib Hezbollah) opened the front west of Mosul on 29 October with the aim of retaking Tal Afar, it sparked a harsh Turkish reaction when President Erdoğan warned that 'If (the HS) terrorizes Tal Afar, our response will be different', playing the "protection of Turkmen brethren" card (Hürriyet Daily News, 2016). In addition, Ankara also further boosted its military presence in the Turkish border town of Silopi to back Erdoğan's rhetoric (Butler, 2016). Tal Afar oversees the main road from Nineveh to Syria and the

Badr commander, Hadi al-Amiri, noted after the Tal Afar military airbase was retaken that ‘Tal Afar will be the starting block for the liberation of all the area (...) to the Syrian border and beyond’. His statement, also points towards the fact that HS elements will possibly continue to fight IS in Syria along with Assad as soon as Nineveh is cleared (Press TV, 2016). For Ankara, such developments are worrisome, since the HS is openly hostile towards Turkey. At the same time, the KDP is concerned about the proximity of HS elements that are hostile to the Kurds and HS gaining a foothold in Tal Afar, which is considered part of the disputed territories.

d) Mosul Leaders’ Vision for Post-IS Nineveh

In the post-2003 period, Ankara managed to build up a network of local friendly Sunni actors in Nineveh through which it has exercised its influence; the Nujaifi family became a principal ally (Stein, 2015). After the 2010 elections, Turkey mediated a deal between the Nujaifis and the KDP to further amalgamate its key allies in Iraq (see Sowell, 2016). However, since IS swept through Nineveh in 2014, Turkey’s position in Mosul diminished. Moreover, both Atheel Nujaifi, former governor of Mosul, and Osama Nujaifi, former speaker of the parliament and vice president of Iraq, were sidelined in the new Abadi administration (see Mansour, 2016: 14-15; 18).

Atheel Nujaifi commands a Sunni Arab and Turkmen militia, the Hashd al-Watani, which is trained by Turkey. His 2,000–6,000 lightly armed and moderately trained men have so far only played a minor role in the Mosul operation being stationed around Mosul dam close to Tal Kayyaf (lower estimate is given Sagnic & Zeidel, 2016: 3, higher by Mansour, 2016: 22; see Institute for the Study of War, 2016). While their combat power may be questionable, they may have the ambition to act as an indigenous quasi-police force in post-IS Mosul. The Nujaifis, however, cannot be considered the main political representative of Arab Sunnis in Iraq. In the fractious Iraqi Sunni political landscape, they face internal opposition as well, as they were unable to rally Sunni leaders behind them (Mansour, 2016: 14-15; 18).

In the Nujaifis perspective, Nineveh should become a federal region while districts and subdistricts should be made into 6 or 7 governorates, reflecting the ethnic composition (for example Shingal for Yazidis, Tal Afar for Turkmen, Nineveh plains for Christians) (Rudaw, 2016b; E-Kurd Daily, 2016b). The Nujaifis also advocate for a referendum in these new governorates on whether they want to stay within the Nineveh Region or join the KRI (Rudaw, 2016b and 2016c). Additionally, Atheel Nujaifi voiced his criticism over the presence of the PKK-linked forces in Nineveh (Tohme, 2016). At the same time, Atheel Nujaifi is in favour of Turkish engagement in post-IS Nineveh (Kursun & Baban, 2016).

Considering the KDP has a strong presence in many of these disputed areas, it can be argued that in the case of a referendum on remaining with the newly established Sunni-dominated Nineveh Region or joining the KRI, the non-Sunni areas would likely end up incorporated into the KRI. The KDP has a tight grip over the disputed territories in Nineveh through their military presence, patronage networks in minority areas, as well as long-nurtured relationships with certain minority elites who promote the idea of joining the KRI. Past experience also shows that the KRG is intolerant to “dissent” coming from minorities against the KRG (see for example Human Rights Watch, 2009). The newly established Nineveh Region would have a comparably lower presence on the ground in the disputed territories as well as only limited ties to minority leaders. Thus, this vision of a Sunni Nineveh Region serves the KDP’s ambition to annex the disputed territories (Al-Jazeera, 2016b).

Turkey, on the other hand, would have a better position in a federal Nineveh Region dominated by Sunnis over the predominantly-Shiite government in Baghdad. Despite Baghdad, it will then be easier for Turkey to project its influence and capitalise on exporting goods there. Such a development is clearly against Baghdad's interest and would also hamper Iranian ambition for the earlier-mentioned land corridor. One might argue that a good relationship between Turkey and the Sunni actors of the Nineveh Region itself does not necessarily guarantee Turkish influence considering that Baghdad would be still supplying the Region's budget. As shown previously by developments on the ground in the case of the KRI-Baghdad relations, the distribution of the Iraqi budget has not been amicable to help establish continuous working relations between the two. Similarly, this could also be the case between a potential Nineveh Region and Baghdad.

e) Summary of the Cases

The above-described cases illustrate a high level of securitisation of Nineveh between Turkey and Iran and their respective allies. In all these cases the interests of Turkish-led and Iranian-led camps diverge. The increasingly securitised issues, such as Turkey's direct military presence in Bashiqa, PKK's presence in Shingal, HS engagement in Tal Afar and the post-IS vision for Nineveh pursued by the Nujaifis and their allies hint that Nineveh is indeed a highly securitised buffer zone between Turkey and Iran. Diverse views on these issues between Turkish-led and Iranian-led camps combined with the proximity of potentially hostile armed actors on the ground create an inflammable atmosphere, which can result in escalation and regional confrontation if not addressed. For a summary of intra-camp convergences from which clear divergences between two camps can be observed see Table 1 below.

Cases of Securitisation	Turkish-led Camp			Iranian-led Camp		
	Turkey	KRG/KDP	Nujaifis	Iran	Baghdad	PKK
a) Bashiqa	Gaining a stable foothold in Nineveh	Turkish presence as a counterweight to Baghdad's and Tehran's presence and influence in Nineveh	Training militias friendly to Turkey; wants continuous Turkish military presence	Wants to keep Turkish military out of Iraq; wants to establish safe land corridor to Syria	Wants to keep Nineveh under its control	Wants to keep its presence in Shingal; linked to armed conflict with Turkey
b) Shingal	Wants to contain PKK's influence in the region	Rivalry with the PKK over political arrangements in the area	Back Turkish and KDP's interests rhetorically	Has a working relationship with the PKK; counterbalancing Turkey's influence	Wants to counterbalance Turkey's influence; hence, supports the PKK in Shingal	Wants to keep its presence; armed conflict with Turkey
c) Tal Afar	Protecting its local allies (Sunni Turkmen) against the HS presence	Uncomfortable with the HS presence considering their hostility against the Kurds	Back Turkish and KDP's interests rhetorically	Relies in Shiite Turkmen; needs Tal Afar to secure the land corridor	Relies on Shiite Turkmen and Shiite Shabak	Minimal role
d) Post-IS Vision	Sunni region would enable Turkey to promote its interests and counterbalance Iran	Disputed territories would most likely opt for joining the KRI in case Sunni region is established	Desire to govern in the newly established Sunni region	Wants to keep unity of Iraq; establish safe land corridor to Syria; to have a significant influence on governance of Nineveh	Wants to keep unity of Iraq and have a greater say in its governance	More difficult for PKK to operate in a Sunni Region friendly to Turkey, or KDP

Table 1. Convergences and Divergences of Interests between Turkish-led and Iranian-led Camps.

7. Conclusions

What the aforementioned cases illustrate is that Nineveh constitutes a buffer zone in the Middle East Security Complex, whereby it does not only constitute part of an internal struggle between the federal government in Baghdad and subnational elements, such as Erbil. On the contrary, it is a case of securitisation that transcends Iraq's borders and sits at the centre of a regional security complex. The regional powers' interests and activities in the area compound the friction between local actors. All the more since the local actors have no agreed political plan for post-IS governance (O'Driscoll, 2016; O'Driscoll & Zoonen, 2016). In addition, as mentioned earlier, the local actors have built dependencies on Turkey or Iran respectively that naturally leads to the creation of asymmetric relations. This means that solutions in Nineveh cannot be reached and implemented without Turkey's and Iran's interests being taken into account. Therefore, the agreement between local actors is not the only necessary condition for a stable Nineveh. It also requires that Turkey and Iran decide to desecuritize the area to the extent that it ceases to play the role of a buffer zone. Hence, the main argument of this paper is that the political future of Nineveh depends on a two-level normalisation – of local actors and regional powers.

In order to avoid greater polarisation in Nineveh and prepare the ground for constructive negotiations in a post-IS environment, Turkey and Iran should work on institutionalising their relationship beyond trade. Working together on issues of security would improve trust and confidence in their relationship. This should allow them to overcome the zero-sum game in terms of security in the Middle East. Subsequently, the two countries can take the initiative and discuss post-IS Nineveh security arrangements that can diminish the possibility of an outright clash between their local allies in the area. They should also help the local population, including the Sunnis and the local minorities, by developing livelihood opportunities. If Nineveh is not desecuritized by the regional powers, the probability of a local conflict in the medium term is very high given the irreconcilable differences between them. It is in their security and economic interest not be dragged into a proxy war that will create greater chaos and fragmentation at their doorstep.

References

- Abdallah, A. (2016). Abadi: Turkish presence in Iraq may lead to regional war. *Iraqi News*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.iraqinews.com/baghdad-politics/abadi-turkish-presence-iraq-may-lead-regional-war/>
- Alaaldin, R. (2015). Shia crescent: self-fulfilling prophecy, *Open Democracy*, Retrieved on 20.12.2016 from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/ranj-alaaldin/shia-crescent-selffulfilling-prophecy>
- Al-Jazeera. (2016a). Iraq turns down Turkey's help in battle of Mosul. Retrieved on 18.12.2016, from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/10/iraq-turns-turkey-battle-mosul-161022130240266.html>
- Al-Jazeera. (2016b). Baghdad, Kurds at odds over control of post-ISIL Mosul. Retrieved on 20.12.2016 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/11/baghdad-kurds-odds-control-post-isil-mosul-161117150810662.html>
- Al-Salhy, S. (2016). Iraqi forces threaten to attack Turkish troops as Mosul battle looms. *Middle East Eye*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iraqi-army-militias-threaten-attack-turkey-if-it-does-not-withdraw-troops-1700165186>
- ANF. (2015). Êzîdîs want to form their will in Shengal. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://dckurd.org/2015/08/03/ezidis-want-to-form-their-will-in-shengal/>
- Arango, T. (2015). Iraqi Officials Angered by Influx of Turkish Troops. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from http://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/world/middleeast/influx-of-turkish-troops-angers-iraqi-officials.html?_r&_r=0
- Barrinha, A. (2014). The Ambitious Insulator: Revisiting Turkey's Position in Regional Security Complex Theory. *Mediterranean Politics*, 19(2), 165-182.
- Butler, D. (2016). Turkish military deploy tanks, military vehicles to Iraqi border area – sources. *Reuters*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://in.reuters.com/article/mideast-crisis-iraq-turkey-idINKBN12W42P>
- Buzan, B., & Diez, T. (1999). The European Union and Turkey. *Survival*, 41(1), 41-57.
- Buzan, B., & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Çagaptay, S., & Unal, C. (2014). Leadership reshuffle - PKK makes changes in its ranks. *IHS Jane's*. Retrieved from 18.12.2016 from <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/opeds/Cagaptay20140226-Janes.pdf>
- Coles, I. (2016). In remote corner of Iraq, an unlikely alliance forms against Islamic State. *Reuters*. Retrieved from 18.12.2016 on <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-sinjar-idUSKCN0Y20TC>
- Daily Sabah. (2015). Turkish troops in Iraq in line with pre-arranged deal: KRG president Barzani. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.dailysabah.com/diplomacy/2015/12/08/turkish-troops-in-iraq-in-line-with-pre-arranged-deal-krp-president-barzani>
- Davutoğlu, A. (2009). *Stratejik Derinlik: Türkiyen'in Uluslararası konumu* (30 ed.). Istanbul: Küre Yayınları.
- Drwish, S. M. (2016). Why Syria's Kurds are cooperating with Russia. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/06/syria-kurds-accusation-cooperation-regime-russia.html>
- The Economist. (2015). The Shia Crescendo. Retrieved on 20.12.2016 from <http://www.economist.com/news/middle-east-and-africa/21647367-shia-militias-are-proliferating-middle-east-shia-crescendo>
- E-Kurd Daily. (2016a). Yazidi Kurds in Iraq's Sinjar to face cruel economic blockade. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://ekurd.net/yazidi-sinjar-economic-blockade-2016-06-24>
- E-Kurd Daily. (2016b). Iraqi Sunnis demand autonomous region for Nineveh post-IS. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://ekurd.net/iraq-sunnis-autonomous-nineveh-2016-07-30>
- Esfandiary, D., & Tabatabai, A. (2015). Iran's ISIS Policy. *International Affairs*, 91(1), pp. 1–15. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from https://www.chathamhouse.org/sites/files/chathamhouse/field/field_publication_docs/INTA91_1_01_Esfandiary_Tabatabai.pdf
- Ghaddar, H. (2016). Iran's Useful Syria Is Practically Complete. *Policy Watch* 2683. *The Washington Institute for Near East Policy*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/irans-useful-syria-is-practically-complete>
- Guldogan, D. (2016). Erdogan says Turkey to not take instructions from Iraq. *Anadolu Agency*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://aa.com.tr/en/todays-headlines/erdogan-says-turkey-to-not-take-instructions-from-iraq/662750>
- Gurcan, M. (2015). Turkey sticks its neck out again, this time in Iraq. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/12/turkey-iraq-becomes-third-largest-army.html>
- Hamad, S. (2016). YPG and Assad: Pragmatic allies but unwilling bedfellows?. *Al-Araby*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/Comment/2016/8/26/YPG-and-Assad-Pragmatic-allies-but-unwilling-bedfellows>
- Hubbard, B & Sanger, D. E. (2016). Russia, Iran and Turkey Meet for Syria Talks, Excluding U.S. *The New York Times*. Retrieved on 21.12.2016 from http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/20/world/middleeast/russia-iran-and-turkey-meet-for-syria-talks-excluding-us.html?smid=tw-share&_r=0
- Human Rights Watch. (2009). *On Vulnerable Ground. Violence against Minority Communities in Nineveh Province's Disputed Territories*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <https://www.hrw.org/report/2009/11/10/vulnerable-ground/violence-against-minority-communities-nineveh-provinces-disputed>

- Hürriyet Daily News. (2016). Tal Afar a 'sensitive target' amid reports of Shiite offensive: Erdoğan. Retrieved from 18.12.2016 on <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/tal-afar-a-sensitive-target-amid-reports-of-shiite-offensive-erdogan.aspx?PageID=238&NID=105525&NewsCatID=352>
- Institute for the Study of War. (2016). The Campaign for Ninewa Province: November 29-December 5, 2016. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/Campaign%20for%20Mosul%20Map%20Turkey%20NOV%2029-DEC%20PDF%20reduced.pdf>
- International Crisis Group. (2015). Arming Iraq's Kurds: Fighting IS, Inviting Conflict. Middle East Report no. 158. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/158-arming-iraq-s-kurds-fighting-is-inviting-conflict.pdf>
- International Crisis Group. (2016). Turkey and Iran: Bitter Friends, Bosom Rivals. Middle East and North Africa Briefing no. 51. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from https://www.crisisgroup.org/middle-east-north-africa/gulf-and-arabian-peninsula/iran/b051-turkey-and-iran-bitter-friends-bosom-rivals?utm_source=sm&utm_campaign=iran-turkey-briefing&utm_medium=fb
- Izady, M. (2016). Iraq: Religious Composition (detailed). Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from http://gulf2000.columbia.edu/images/maps/Iraq_Religions_detailed_lg.png
- Katzman, K. (2016). Iran's Foreign and Defense Policies. *Congressional Research Service*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R44017.pdf>
- Kaválek, T. (2016). Yet Another Complication in Nineveh: Retaking Tal Afar. *MERI Policy Brief*, 3(17). Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.meri-k.org/publication/yet-another-complication-in-nineveh-retaking-tal-afar/>
- Kirişçi, K., Tocci, N., & Walker, J. (2010). A Neighborhood Rediscovered, Turkey's Transatlantic Value in the Middle East Brussels Forum Paper Series: Transatlantic Academy.
- Kurdistan Regional Government. (2015). KRG Council of Ministers condemns formation of illegal administrative council in Sinjar area. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://cabinet.gov.krd/a/d.aspx?s=040000&l=12&a=52830>
- Kursun, M. & Baban, H. (2016). Ex-Iraq governor calls for Turkish role in freeing Mosul. *Anadolu Agency*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://aa.com.tr/en/middle-east/ex-iraq-governor-calls-for-turkish-role-in-freeing-mosul/643851>
- Louise, F. (2015). Iran and the regionalization of (in)security. *International Politics*, 52(5), 646.
- Manis, A. (2015a). Electoral Failures, Misguided Choices: The Finite Point of the AKP's Kurdish Policy. *MERI Policy Brief*, Retrieved on 15.12.2016 from <http://www.meri-k.org/publication/electoral-failures-misguided-choices-the-finite-point-of-the-akps-kurdish-policy/>
- Manis, A. (2015b). The Yemeni Crisis: The Prisoner's Dilemma for Saudi Arabia and Iran. Retrieved on 15.12.2016 from <http://www.meri-k.org/publication/prospects-for-a-peaceful-resolution-of-the-yemeni-crisis-the-prisoners-dilemma-for-saudi-arabia-and-iran/>
- Manis, A. (2016). A Transitioning Turkey: Out with the Old, in with the New?. *MERI Policy Brief*, 3 (21). Retrieved on 15.12.16 from <http://www.meri-k.org/publication/a-transitioning-turkey-out-with-the-old-in-with-the-new/>
- Mansour, R. (2016). The Sunni Predicament in Iraq. Carnegie Middle East Center. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CMEC_59_Mansour_Sunni_Final.pdf
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey. (2016). Economic and Commercial Relations with Iran. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/economic-and-commercial-relations-with-iran.en.mfa>
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. (2016). Joint Statement by the Foreign Ministers of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the Russian Federation and the Republic of Turkey on agreed steps to revitalize the political process to end the Syrian conflict, Moscow, 20 December 2016. Retrieved on 21.12.2016 from http://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/2573489?p_p_id=101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw&101_INSTANCE_cKNonkJE02Bw_languageId=en_GB
- Nader, A. (2015). Iran's Role in Iraq. Room for U.S.-Iran Cooperation?. *RAND Corporation*. Retrieved on 18.12.2013 from http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/perspectives/PE100/PE151/RAND_PE151.pdf
- O'Driscoll, D. (2016). The Battle for Mosul; Pre and Post 'Liberation'. *MERI Policy Brief*, 3 (11) Retrieved on 17.12.2016 from <http://www.meri-k.org/publication/liberating-mosul-pre-and-post-planning/>
- O'Driscoll, D., & Zoonen, D. V. (2016). Governing Nineveh After the Islamic State: A Solution for All Components. *MERI Policy Paper*, 3(2). Retrieved on 15.12.16 from <http://www.meri-k.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/What-About-the-Minorities-1.pdf>
- Observatory for Economic Complexity. (2016). Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/>
- Press TV. (2016). Iraqi volunteer forces retake more areas in Nineveh from Daesh. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2016/11/18/494165/Iraqi-volunteer-forces-operations-Nineveh-Daesh-tunnels-Tal-Afar-airport>
- Reuters. (2016). Iraq requests U.N. emergency meeting on Turkish troops in north. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-mideast-crisis-iraq-turkey-idUSKCN1260Z2>
- Rudaw. (2015). President Barzani: only Kurdish flag will fly over Shingal; thanks US. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://rudaw.net/english/kurdistan/131120155>
- Rudaw. (2016a). Shingal militia claims Baghdad providing salaries and arms. Retrieved 18.12.2016, from <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/090120161>
- Rudaw. (2016b). Iraqi VP says referendum in Nineveh to solve disputes, backs Sunni autonomous region. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://rudaw.net/english/middleeast/iraq/17112016>

- Rudaw. (2016c). Former Nineveh governor shows support for integration of Kurdish areas with Kurdistan. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://rudaw.net/mobile/english/kurdistan/30102016>
- Sagnic, C & Zeidel, R. (2016). The Politics of the Turkish Military Presence near Mosul. *Tel Aviv Notes*, 9(22). Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.dayan.org/file/17864/download?token=x4otfH3N>
- Salih, M. A. (2016). Low Oil Prices Complicate Iraqi Kurdish Independence. Middle East Institute Policy Focus 2016-7. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.mei.edu/content/low-oil-prices-complicate-iraqi-kurdish-independence>
- Sattar, O. (2016). Who will replace sacked Iraqi defense minister?. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/09/iraq-defense-minister.html>
- Sowell, K. H. (2016). The Regional and Domestic Political Context of the Mosul Offensive. *Sada*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://carnegieendowment.org/sada/64885>
- Stein, A. (2015). Turkey's Weakness in Iraq Tied to Weakness in Nujaifi. *Atlantic Council*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/turkey-s-weakness-in-iraq-tied-to-weakness-in-nujaifi>
- Tohme, A. W. (2016). Former Iraqi Vice President Osama al-Nujaifi speaks out. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/tr/contents/articles/politics/2016/03/iraq-nujaifi-abadi-turkey-forces-interview-hayat-mosul.html>
- Toorn, Ch. M. v. d. (2016). The Wars after the War for Sinjar: How Washington Can Avert a New Civil War. *War On the Rocks*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://warontherocks.com/2016/06/the-wars-after-the-war-for-sinjar-how-washington-can-avert-a-new-civil-war/>
- Trofimov, Y. (2016). After Islamic State, Fears of a 'Shiite Crescent' in Mideast, *Washington Post*. Retrieved on 20.12.2016 from <http://www.wsj.com/articles/after-islamic-state-fears-of-a-shiite-crescent-in-mideast-1475141403>
- TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute). (2016). Foreign Trade Statistics. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/PreTablo.do?alt_id=1046
- Ugurlu, S. (2016). Erdogan says Sinjar will not be 'new Qandil' for PKK. *Anadolu Agency*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://aa.com.tr/en/politics/erdogan-says-sinjar-will-not-be-new-qandil-for-pkk/673511>
- Vickery, M. (2015). VIDEO: Mount Sinjar's Yazidis Are Armed And Ready For The Fight Against ISIS. *Mint Press News*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.mintpressnews.com/mount-sinjars-yazidis-armed-ready-fight-isis/202004/>
- Wilgenburg, W. v. (2014). Iran warns Iraqi Kurds on independence. *Middle East Eye*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/iran-warns-iraqi-kurds-independence-1959919159>
- Yildiz, M. et al. (2016). Nuclear Deal: Impact on Iran-Turkey Economic Relations. *Center on Sanction & Illicit Finance*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from http://www.defenddemocracy.org/content/uploads/documents/FDD_RGE_Iran_Turkey_Economic_Relations.pdf
- Zaman, A. (2016). Iraqi Kurds step into Ankara-Baghdad row. *Al-Monitor*. Retrieved on 18.12.2016 from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/sites/almonitor/contents/articles/originals/2016/10/turkey-iraq-row-deepens-mosul-kr-g-kurds-isis.html>

Policy Paper

Middle East Research Institute
Erbil
Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Email: info@meri-k.org
Web: www.meri-k.org

The views expressed in this publication are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the views of MERI.

MERI Policy papers are the copyright of the Middle East Research Institute. They may be freely copied transmitted electronically. They may not be reproduced in a different form without prior permission from the institute.