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Breaking the cycle: Iraq following the military defeat of Islamic State

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BREAKING THE CYCLE

Iraq following the military defeat of Islamic State

Table of contents

Abbreviations	4
Executive summary	5
Introduction	7
Security	11
Islamic State	12
The Popular Mobilization Forces	14
The Iraqi Security Forces	15
The political system	19
The end of sectarianism?	20
Public disenchantment with politics	22
The economy	25
Clientelism	26
Corruption	26
IDPs: fragmented security and the cost of reconstruction	29
Main findings and implications: breaking the cycle?	33
Notes	37
Bibliography	40

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ABBREVIATIONS

ANSA	Armed Non-State Actors
EU	European Union
FFS	Funding Facility for Stabilisation
ICP	Iraqi Communist Party
IDP	Internally Displaced People
IS	Islamic State
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIL	Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant
OIR	Operation Inherent Resolve
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
SSR	Security Sector Reform
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Organization
US	United States

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Islamic State in Iraq no longer controls territory, but although security is better in Iraq than in recent years, with parliamentary elections being held in May 2018, Iraq faces substantial challenges. This report focuses on three areas of special importance, namely the fragmentation of security provision, the lack of legitimate political institutions, and the effects of corruption and nepotism on the economy.

This report sees the stabilization of Iraq as contingent on reforms within the security sector, as well as reform of the political and economic system. Importantly, even though Iraqis are currently united in celebrating the defeat of IS, feelings of marginalization and grievances that have been increasing for decades continue to lie under the surface. This is evident in the challenges facing the security sector. These did not arise with IS and will therefore also not be resolved through its military defeat. Moreover, the Iraqi Security Forces do not have a monopoly of violence. Currently it is especially the military and political influence of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMFs) that poses the main threat to the legitimacy of the security sector.

The political debate leading up to the parliamentary elections in May 2018 fueled hopes that Iraq was moving away from identity politics towards issue-based politics. However, identity remains a key factor in the political system, as exemplified by the continued practice of power-sharing between Kurds, Shias and Sunnis, referred to as the muhasasa system. Moreover, the Iraqi population's trust of the political system and its faith in democracy as a path to change is at an all-time low, as shown by the record low turnout for the May 2018 elections.

Finally, the Iraqi economy is under pressure, despite Iraq possessing substantial oil and gas reserves. Public services have long been neglected, and now the Iraqi state faces the additional cost of reconstruction following the defeat of IS. Hence, whereas Iraq has resources, the practices of nepotism and corruption, undergirded by the muhasasa system, have undermined the Iraqi state's capacity to provide basic services.

The final section of the paper takes a closer look at a key element related to reconstruction, namely the return of Iraq's Internally Displaced People (IDPs). The Iraqi state's current weakness is underlined by the slow pace of reconstruction, despite concerted pressure to see IDPs return and life in the areas most affected by IS to be normalized. A key obstacle in both respects is the fragmentation of security. This study draws on two weeks of fieldwork in Baghdad and Erbil in October 2018, as well as research trips to Mosul, Erbil, Sulaymaniyah and Baghdad in 2017 and 2018. During these research trips interviews were conducted with key Iraqi stakeholders, mainly at the political level, as well as representatives of international organizations working in Iraq. It also draws on documents collected during field visits and interviews, as well as secondary material. The report provides a limited glimpse into some of the challenges that currently face Iraq, but nevertheless provides an informed analysis of aspects of the complex political dynamics that are currently shaping Iraq's future.

Figure 1: Map of Iraq



INTRODUCTION

In 2014, Islamic State (IS) controlled nearly one-third of Iraq's territory, including twenty major Iraqi cities with a total civilian population of more than five million (Revkin 2018). This was the backdrop to parliamentary elections in the spring of 2014, when Haider al-Abadi became prime minister after substantial international and domestic pressure that forced the incumbent prime minister, Nouri al-Maliki, to step down. At this point, Iraq's future looked bleak. However, since then things have changed. In December 2017 Haider al-Abadi declared a military victory over Islamic State, and although IS remains a threat, the security situation has greatly improved.¹ Moreover, in May 2018 parliamentary elections were held, leading to a peaceful transfer of power from Haider al-Abadi to Adil Abdul-Mahdi. These developments, the military defeat of Islamic State and indications that the political environment has become less conducive to overt ethno-sectarianism have raised hopes that the Iraqi state is moving toward a more stable future. Indeed, during conversations and interviews in Baghdad, international representatives frequently referred to the present time as a window of opportunity for Iraq. However, the Iraqi state faces many challenges, some of which are described in this report. The report focuses on three areas of importance, namely the fragmentation of security provision, the lack of legitimate political institutions, and the effects of corruption and nepotism on the economy.

Denmark has been part of the Global Coalition to Counter ISIL/Da'esh (henceforward the Coalition) since 2014. Its contribution has included F-16 fighter planes, later replaced with a radar contribution that provides airspace surveillance in support of the coalition's air operations. Moreover, Denmark continues to support Operation Inherent Resolve (OIR) with the training and capacity-building of Iraqi security forces

in basic military capabilities from the Al Asad Air Base.² Denmark also supports the long-term stabilization of Iraq, in part funded through an inter-ministerial fund called the Peace and Stabilization Fund.³ The stabilization support includes a focus on Security Sector Reform (SSR), support to mine-clearing through both the UN's mine action organization (UNMAS) and other organizations, the UN's programme for reconciliation in Iraq and the UN Funding Facility for Stabilization (FFS), which conducts activities in cooperation with the Iraqi government in areas that have been liberated from IS, such as re-establishing infrastructure and job creation.

The military defeat of Islamic State and indications that the political environment has become less conducive to overt ethno-sectarianism have raised hopes that the Iraqi state is moving towards a more stable future.

Whereas the fact that IS no longer controls substantial territory should be celebrated, this is not the same as declaring that IS no longer poses a threat, as the history of Iraq shows us. Indeed, the emergence of IS was rooted in the collapse of order following the fall of Saddam Hussein. This underlines how quickly victories can be reversed. In addition, it adds a layer of complexity to the current reconstruction, as it must tackle grievances and animosities that in many cases pre-date the emergence of IS. Since state institutions were closely integrated with Saddam's regime until his fall in 2003, the American overthrow of his regime left the institutions of the state severely weakened (Dodge 2012, 115). The process of de-Baathification, a policy to remove the influence of the Baath party by, among other things, purging former Baath members of their public positions and disbanding the army, weakened the capacity of the Iraqi bureaucracy, created a large group of disenfranchised former employees, and became a political tool that is still occasionally being used to silence political opponents.⁴ Instead of reversing this process, Nouri al-Maliki, prime minister between 2006 and 2014, secured control of key institutions and redirected their loyalty towards himself. The resulting limited institutional capacity and deeply divided state structures along ethno-sectarian party lines paved the way for the rise of Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in 2014. A key institutional element is the muhasasa system, a power-sharing system between the three main ethno-sectarian groups in Iraq, the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds. The muhasasa system means that positions are distributed based on

quotas and the time-honored expectations of different ethno-sectarian groups, instead of going through transparent and meritocratic processes of recruitment. Thus, the muhasasa system has come to underpin a system of nepotism and corruption that is hugely difficult to dismantle, despite widespread agreement that it is part of the explanation for the ineffective public sector.

Research for this report was carried out in Baghdad and Erbil in October 2018, but the report also builds on interviews and observations from two previous research trips to Baghdad and Erbil in 2017 and 2018. The report presents the main challenges facing Iraq post-Islamic State based on interviews with key Iraqi stakeholders, as well as media reports, policy reports and academic literature. The report seeks to present an up-to-date account of the Iraqi state. However, current events are the product of historical events and can only be understood through references to them, most immediately the events that took place after the Saddam regime was overthrown in 2003. Hence, whereas this report does not attempt to provide an outline of recent Iraqi history, it does seek to describe the links between current and historical events. The most important source of information has been the interviews conducted with centrally placed politicians, civil servants and members of Iraqi civil society. A handful of interviews were also carried out with representatives of key international organizations involved in the reconstruction of Iraq. The interviews were performed under conditions of anonymity, which means that it is not possible to provide a full list of interviewees. The interviews focused on the Iraqi state and the challenges it currently faces. Despite the interviewees coming from diverse backgrounds, several themes kept reoccurring. Most notably, it was clear that Iraqi state institutions are generally considered weak and controlled more by individuals and informal rules than formal rules, leading to a lack of transparency and accountability. The report points to some of the key challenges facing Iraq in the wake of the military defeat of IS as seen from Iraq. In some cases, these challenges are the result of developments that pre-date the emergence of IS, but the focus is on the current situation. Whereas every Iraqi spoken to recognized that the reconstruction of Iraq had to be Iraqi-led, it was also clear that sustained international attention and assistance are considered key elements in any successful reconstruction of the Iraqi state.



SECURITY

War and violence are not new to Iraq. During the rule of Saddam Hussein, the Iraqi state was a 'fierce state', to use Nazih Ayubi's terminology, meaning a state 'so opposed to society that it can only deal with it via coercion and raw force' (Ayubi 2001, 459). Yet, whereas the Saddam regime had the ability to repress its population, the Iraqi state lacked legitimacy. Consequently, the American invasion and overthrow of Saddam in 2003, followed by the disbanding of the Iraqi army to end the military's influence on Iraqi politics, had the unintended side effect of creating a security vacuum, as there were no state institutions to take over when the regime was dissolved. In this context, there was instead a proliferation of armed non-state actors (ANSAs) that, in many cases, were and still are supported by external actors.⁵

The weakness of the Iraqi security sector and the proliferation of armed non-state actors have deep historical roots.

This included a variety of groups, including former Baathists, Sunni Islamist groups and Shi'i groups. In addition to fighting the American occupation, these groups became enmeshed in brutal ethno-sectarian violence, spearheaded by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, whose group joined al-Qaeda.⁶ These processes laid the foundations for the later rise of IS, but they also underline how the challenges currently facing Iraq did not emerge with the rise of IS. For one thing, the weakness of the Iraqi security sector and the proliferation of armed non-state actors has deep historical roots.

This section of the report focuses on three elements of relevance to a discussion of Iraqi security: first, the current role and position of IS in Iraq; secondly, the role of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), a group of armed non-state actors; and finally, the security forces themselves and the challenges related to creating a professional army.

ISLAMIC STATE

In July 2017, the then Iraqi Prime Minister, Haider al-Abadi, declared that Mosul had been liberated. The declaration marked a critical turning point in the military defeat of IS, setting the stage for the victory declaration in December 2017. There is no doubt that IS has been militarily decimated and, in this sense, no longer poses an existential threat to the Iraqi state. However, IS continues to exist as a terrorist

organization, for it has retained a substantial capacity to carry out terrorist attacks and assassinations.⁷ This is evidenced by a rapid and seemingly increasing pace of attacks, especially in provinces such as Salah al-Din, Diyala and Nineveh. In Diyala, IS mounted more attacks in June 2017 than at any time since 2007-2008, including in the lead-up to its own rise in 2013 (Ahn, Campbell, and Knoetgen 2018, 2). According to Michael Knight, IS mounted 1271 attacks in the first ten months of 2018 including, 135 mass casualty attacks, 270 roadside bombings and not least 148 precise killings of specifically targeted individuals such as village mukhtars (village leaders), tribal heads, local council members and security force leaders (Knights 2018, 1). In 2011-2014 the specific targeting of local leaders and the security forces was one of the methods IS used to deter political participation and instill fear in local populations through low-cost attacks. It has been shown that as early as the summer of 2016, IS began preparing for a return to insurgency tactics (Hassan 2017). This is an important development for two reasons. First, although the frequency of attacks was lower in 2018 than in 2017, violence remains a reality of daily life in Iraq, causing a significant number of civilian deaths every month.⁸ Consequently, the level of activity by IS continues to hamper the establishment of a normal security environment. It also demonstrates that, although IS has been defeated militarily, the idea of IS lives on. Combined with the slow pace of reconstruction in areas previously controlled by IS and what some perceive as a collective punishment of Sunnis for IS crimes, this may lead to what analysts fear will be an 'IS 2.0'.⁹ Secondly, and equally importantly, in addition to the direct threat emanating from the frequent attacks perpetrated by IS, the continued presence and strength of IS threatens to undercut potentially positive steps away from sectarianism and to create a state of emergency that legitimizes the political interference of security actors. For example, whereas reports indicate that Baghdad witnessed fewer jihadi terrorist attacks in 2018 than in any year since 2003, the perception in Baghdad, while based on anecdotal evidence, was that, although large scale attacks were less frequent, targeted strikes and intimidation remained a persistent threat.¹⁰ Examples of this include threats, kidnappings and even assassinations, such as the assassination of the social media star, Tara Faris, who was shot in Baghdad in September 2018.¹¹ Hence, whereas the brutality of IS and its sustained ability to carry out terrorist attacks continues to make it a relevant concern in Iraq, this threat is part of a broader challenge, namely that the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) do not have a monopoly of violence.¹²

THE POPULAR MOBILIZATION FORCES

Currently, the most influential and capable but also complex armed non-state actors are the Popular Mobilization Forces or PMFs. This is an umbrella term for more than fifty subgroups that mobilized after Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani issued a fatwa in June 2014 urging Iraqis to join the security forces to fight IS (Gaston and Derzsi-Horváth 2018, 20).¹³ Although the PMFs are often referred to as if they were a monolith, in fact they consist of a collection of militias that vary greatly in size, organizational capacity and political loyalties. These militias have tended to mobilize along sectarian or ethnic lines, but although some of them consist of local Sunnis, Turkmen, Yazidis and Christians, the PMFs are dominated by Shia groups (Mansour, Toorn, and Bogos 2018). The Shia-affiliated groups can be divided roughly into three distinct factions based on allegiances to Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani and Muqtada al-Sadr respectively (Mansour and Jabar 2017).

Currently, the most influential and capable but also complex armed non-state actors are the Popular Mobilization Forces or PMFs.

The interviewees were somewhat divided on the role of the PMFs, ranging from those who described them as unequivocal heroes that had stepped up and saved Iraq as the Iraqi army was fleeing IS to others who expressed concern about the PMFs' role in Iraqi politics. This ambiguous role between the Iraqi state and the PMFs is reflected in the literature on Iraq. Whereas the PMFs played a vital role in 'saving' the Iraqi state from IS, their very presence is a consequence and a reminder of the weakness of the Iraqi state (Wozniak 2017). In both Baghdad and Erbil stories abound of offences committed by different militias, including looting, targeted intimidation, kidnappings and even killings, which they are perceived as having carried out with near impunity. One of the most influential PMFs is the Badr organization which existed before the fatwa and therefore had the organizational capacity to absorb volunteers in 2014. It now controls thousands of battle-trained fighters who are relatively well-equipped thanks to Iranian support (Steinberg 2017). Throughout the interviews, it was either stated or assumed as obvious that Iran was the most influential external actor in Iraq. The PMFs with ties to Iran are the strongest, as they benefit from greater funding and supplies (Mansour and Jabar 2017, 13). The Badr organization has a strong political wing that headed the coalition

coming second in the May 2018 elections, and it has substantial influence over key ministries such as the Ministry of the Interior. The political system will be discussed further in the next section, where the links between security and politics will be described. The point here is that the PMFs are not only security actors but also political actors with substantial influence.

THE IRAQI SECURITY FORCES

The current perception of the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) reflects its previous performance. Following the disbanding of the Iraqi army in 2003, substantial resources were allocated to building a new, professional Iraqi army. Consequently, the ISF grew rapidly in size after the emergence of IS, making Iraq one of the world's biggest defense spenders, with a nearly a million men employed in the security forces. However, IS was still able to capture nearly a third of Iraq's territory relatively easily (Dodge 2012). The Iraqi Minister of Defense estimated that sixty to seventy percent of the Iraqi armed forces left government employment after 2014.¹⁴ This collapse underlines the need to build a security sector that is professional and able to maintain a monopoly of legitimate violence. This report focuses on two key challenges in this connection. First, the organization of the ISF needs to be restructured to minimize corruption and nepotism. The goal should be to create what Samuel Huntington has referred to as a professional army, meaning an army that uses its specialized knowledge to serve society (Huntington 1957). Second, and related to the previous section, it should have a legitimate monopoly of violence, including fully integrating the PMFs into the ISF.

Claims that the security sector is heavily politicized were confirmed during fieldwork (Knights 2016, 18).¹⁵ For example, it has been argued that allocations of state resources are not being distributed equally but based on partisanship (Mansour and Jabar 2017: 19-20). This entails elite actors placing loyalists in the military and using parts of the military as personal security details. Moreover, the nature of political control of the armed forces is somewhat ambiguous, as the Iraqi constitution states that the military should not play a political role, while also making the prime minister the 'commander in chief of the armed forces' without specifying what this role specifically entails. The Ministries of the Interior and Defense combined are estimated to employ just shy of 900,000 people. This is in fact a reduction from 2015, in part explained by rooting out 'ghost employees' and in part by the casualties sustained in the war against IS.¹⁶ The 2018 Iraqi budget provided for a 4,000

reduction in military personnel focused on the retirement of high-ranking officers.¹⁷ However, the first draft of the 2019 federal budget included an increase in public employees of 46,000 and a 25% increase in funds allocated to the PMFs (Tabaqchali 2018b). The Iraqi economy is overstretched, largely due to the size of this wage bill. According to one estimate, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense employ approximately 31% of public employees. The ISF is a key employer in Iraq, as it is one of the few avenues for young men with limited formal education to gain a steady income.¹⁸ Hence, the combination of an insecure environment, the security sector's role in defeating IS and the politization of the security sector makes it difficult to institute substantial reforms to increase the sector's effectiveness.

The second aspect, the formal position of the PMFs, has already been touched on. The relationship between the PMFs and the state remain unclear as the former are referred to simultaneously as 'independent' and as 'part of the Iraqi security forces'.¹⁹ In early 2018, then Prime Minister Abadi sought to integrate the PMFs further into the state structure by making salaries and pensions dependent on the fighters' abilities to live up to standards similar to those of the regular army (Ahn, Campbell, and Knoetgen 2018, 47). This effort has had only a limited impact at the time of writing. Hence, whereas the PMFs are formally subject to government control, interviewees generally did not believe them to be accountable to the Iraqi state. In fact, concerns were raised that, far from the PMFs submitting to the government's control, they are continually undermining the formal Iraqi state institutions. It has also been reported that Ali al-Sistani, Iraq's highest Shiite Muslim religious authority who played a key role in the mobilization of the PMFs through his fatwa in 2014, will revoke the fatwa now that IS has been formally defeated. However, despite agreement that Sistani's fatwa was intended to be temporary and was understood primarily as a call for volunteers to enlist in the regular army, even he has found it difficult to challenge the influence of the PMFs directly, in part because they provide livelihoods and prestige to people who are poor and marginalized.²⁰

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM



The current political system is a product of an elite bargain that was struck following Saddam's overthrow in 2003. This system not only excluded members of the former elite, it also marginalized the wider Sunni section of society as well as secular and nationalist Iraqis because of the reliance on ethnic and religious markers for political mobilization and influence (Dodge 2012). A key outcome of this that currently defines Iraqi politics is the political practice of muhasasa, a power-sharing arrangement between the three main ethno-sectarian groups in Iraq, the Shias, the Sunnis and the Kurds. This was meant to secure minority representation, but it has had the unintended effect of emphasizing sectarian identity over issue-based politics and entitlement based on networks and not merit. During the election campaign leading up to the May 2018 parliamentary elections, many analysts pointed to a shift from identity politics to issue-based politics. This was spurred by candidates who, more or less across the board, took up the language of anti-corruption, service provision and economic recovery (Mansour, Toorn, and Bogos 2018). However, the elections saw a record low voter turnout. Officially, the turnout was 44.5%, but informally the real turnout was estimated to be even lower. The result of the election was a surprise victory for the Sairoon alliance, headed by Muqtadr al-Sadr, explained by his ability to mobilize his popular movement.²¹ He is one of the few current political leaders who has an anchor in Iraqi society. The election runner-up was Hadi al-Ameri, current leader of the Badr organization, which ran as head of the Fattah (Conquest) coalition. This coalition drew on its credentials earned in the fight against IS to achieve increased political influence. Hence, the top two coalitions are both perceived as relatively outside the political system.

This section of the report focuses on two elements related to the Iraqi political system that were emphasized in interviews as the key to the future of the Iraqi state. The first is the role of sectarianism in Iraqi politics and the extent to which the 2018 elections marked a break from identity politics. The second is the widespread disenchantment with politics as, illustrated by the record low voter turnout in the May 2018 parliamentary elections.

THE END OF SECTARIANISM?

Leading up to the May 2018 elections, analysts and observers of Iraq observed as a positive development that political debates had become less sectarian. During fieldwork, this was linked to a shift in the Iraqi population that saw the rise of IS as resulting from the political elite's misuse of sectarianism for political ends.

Analysts also emphasized the vibrancy of the political landscape, as thousands of candidates and more than two hundred parties competed for 329 seats in the Council of Representatives, the parliament, which is where the next prime minister and the Cabinet would be chosen (Mansour, Toorn, and Bogos 2018). These two observations, the less sectarian nature of political debates and the apparent fragmentation of the political system, undergirded the claim that sectarianism is waning. However, although more than two hundred parties ran in the 2018 elections, the key coalitions were headed by a political elite that has, in most cases, defined political life in Iraq since 2003 (Mansour, Toorn, and Bogos 2018). This is the case for some of the key coalitions such as the Victory Coalition (Nasr) headed by incumbent prime minister Haider al-Abadi, the State of the Law Coalition headed by former prime minister Nouri al-Maliki, the Conquest Alliance (Fattah) headed by Hadi al-Ameri from the Badr organization, the National Alliance (al-Watania) headed by Ayad Alawi, and the Marching Forward Coalition (Sairoon) headed by Muqtada al-Sadr. The dominance of these relatively few coalitions is linked to the current electoral system that favors coalitions over smaller parties (Kouti and Ala'Aldeen 2018). Moreover, despite the focus on, for example, the alliance between Muqtada al-Sadr and the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), which led to the election of a female communist in the religious city of Najaf, one of the most important hubs of Shia Islamic theology, the coalitions remain largely based on confessional affiliations.²²

However, although more than two hundred parties ran in the 2018 elections, the key coalitions were headed by a political elite that has, in most cases, defined political life in Iraq since 2003.

Furthermore, in those cases where an attempt was made to establish a national cross-sectarian appeal, local candidates were regularly put forward who reflected the ethnic or sectarian identities of local communities.²³ An example of the continued dominance of the muhasasa system is the fact that the positions of Speaker of parliament, prime minister and president were given to a Sunni Arab, a Shia Arab and a Kurd respectively following the elections as has been practice since the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.²⁴

PUBLIC DISENCHANTMENT WITH POLITICS

Whereas sectarian and ethnic background remain a key deterrent for how people vote and frame their positions in Iraqi society, there is a shared deep-seated cross-sectarian disillusionment with politicians and the political system in general. During one interview, the interviewee, when asked about her perception of politicians, burst out that she found them 'disgusting'. This statement was not exceptional, but rather an example of a general feeling that politicians are more interested in furthering their own agendas than in working for the good of the country.²⁵

Whereas distrust in the political system is widespread, reactions are less uniform. The low voter turnout in the May 2018 elections indicates that many have lost faith in the political system as a path to change. During fieldwork, one Iraqi described the feeling of apathy as 'living like dead bodies'. Calls for reform can be broadly divided into two categories. The first focused on the need to see a greater emphasis on competence and independence. The politicians interviewed for this report underlined the need for technocrats in government and a more thorough vetting process of political candidates, where their formal qualifications and personal integrity should be evaluated before being allowed to run for office. The current prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, sought to accommodate this trend by issuing an open call for CVs to be presented for ministerial positions, which was answered by thousands of people and resulted in several candidates being put forward during the process of forming the government. During interviews, the initiative was pointed out as an example of how the prime minister elect, with the support of key political actors, is trying to change things, while another reaction consisted of mild amusement and ridicule. The call for independents and technocrats is at least in part a result of the lack of trust in the system, but it does not in itself suggest a cure.

Whereas distrust in the political system is widespread, reactions are less uniform.

Instead, independents and technocrats risk being absorbed into the political backroom deals that currently define politics in Iraq. One example is the rumors and accusations that some political actors have sought to buy ministerial positions in the current government.²⁶ The process of forming a Cabinet following the May 2018 elections has been extremely protracted and is, at the time of writing in late 2018,

still not completely resolved. Besides the failure of any one coalition to win a majority, one reason for this is that, whereas it is considered positive that the current prime minister, Adel Abdul Mahdi, is relatively independent, this leaves him without loyal allies and therefore somewhat hamstrung politically.²⁷

Secondly, other interviewees saw a trend towards increased support for the centralization of power as an antidote to the current ineffective, corrupt and divisive political system. It is noteworthy that whereas the political elite was, in many cases, shaped by sustained repression during Saddam Hussein's regime, as much as 40% of potential voters in the May 12 election now have only a limited memory of life under Saddam.²⁸ Instead, their formative years have been those of the civil war and chaos that has defined Iraq since 2003, largely under the auspices of the present-day politicians.²⁹ There is a certain level of nostalgia for a so-called 'strong' man as a cure for the divisiveness that has haunted Iraq since 2003 (Tabaqchali 2018a). For example, one of the factors hindering the re-election of Haider al-Abadi was seen to be that, although commended for his role in the defeat of IS, he is not seen as a 'strong man'.

THE ECONOMY

Although there is currently a focus on rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure following the defeat of IS, all Iraqis have economic grievances. Given that Iraq suffers generally from poor public services and endemic corruption, the ability of the newly elected government to tackle these grievances is of key importance for the country's future. The importance of the economy was exemplified by Abadi's declaration after the defeat of IS that 'our next fight is against corruption' (Mansour 2018, 20). Iraq has extensive oil reserves but has not yet been able to transform them into wider economic prosperity. Iraq's economy is dependent on its oil and gas revenues, a dependence that is expected to increase in 2019 judging by the early budget proposals for that year. Whereas the oil sector only employs relatively few Iraqis directly, the income from oil has been used to fund networks of patronage. One aspect of this is the inability of the Iraqi state to provide an adequate and stable supply of electricity (Mills 2018). The lack of public services, specifically electricity and clean water, and the high unemployment rates were among the main causes of the prolonged protests in the south of Iraq, especially in Basra, in the summer and fall of 2018.³⁰ Moreover, the strain on the public sector is only rising, as the Iraqi population continues to grow rapidly. Currently, nearly half of the population is under the age of 21.

The next two subsections discuss two aspects that undermine the Iraqi economy, both linked to the structure of the political system, the muhasasa system, namely the practices of clientelism and corruption.

Given that Iraq suffers generally from poor public services and endemic corruption, the ability of the newly elected government to tackle these grievances is of key importance for the country's future.

CLIENTELISM

There is a widespread reliance on family connections to secure work. This is exacerbated by the muhasasa system, in which politicians act as representatives for specific ethno-sectarian groups, not the Iraqi state. The tribal structure also plays a role, as strong tribes can help 'their' representatives get elected, but then expect returns on their 'investment' (Hosham 2017, 19-20).³¹ Hence, while politicians are criticized for their lack of vision and national outlook, it is not uncommon for the same individuals to expect a vote for a specific politician to lead to personal advantages (Abdullah, Gray, and Clough 2018). This expectation helps sustain a political system in which elite actors use their position in the state, where they have control over oil income, to build networks of patronage that extend into the military and the private business sector. Thus, instead of focusing on developing and presenting political visions, political actors use state resources to buy loyalty that allows them to stay in power. The muhasasa system has inadvertently undergirded this system of political inertia and nepotism, as it makes it very difficult to remove specific politicians or key bureaucrats without upsetting the political balance within the government. One of the challenges is that there is a substantial number of public-sector employees who are unqualified for the position they hold. Another is the phenomenon of ghost employees, that is, of salaries paid to employees who either do not exist or do not show up for work.

CORRUPTION

Iraq is one of the most corrupt countries in the world, this being pointed out as one of the greatest obstacles to economic development, if not the greatest.³² The Iraqi population is placing substantial pressure on the new government to move beyond the rhetoric of anti-corruption towards taking real action. In several interviews, it was suggested that the Iraqi population would allow the government a maximum of

a year to demonstrate that at least the most rampant forms of corruption would be acted upon before it would rebel. The protests in Basra were an indication of what the government could expect. These protests, which focus mainly on the lack of public services and employment opportunities (Mansour 2018, 20), have been growing, especially since they won the support of Muqtada al-Sadr in 2016.

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Also, they have gone from being condemned as destabilizing the Iraqi state to being praised as representing the legitimate demands of the Iraqi people. A key moment was when Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, the supreme spiritual leader of Shia Muslims in Iraq, expressed his solidarity with the protesters. The lack of economic development and opportunities is not sectarian in nature, as it is more a matter of an elite exploiting the general population. Another change from previous rounds of protests in the south of Iraq was that in 2018 the protesters began being openly critical of Iran, despite the south being mainly Shia like Iran. However, whereas the need to curtail corruption was high on the agenda in the election campaign in May 2018, there were few concrete programmes or details on how the different political actors intended to tackle it.




IDPS: FRAGMENTED SECURITY AND THE COST OF RECONSTRUCTION

The IDPs and their ability to return have become a symbol of the Iraqi state's ability to move beyond the destruction wrought by IS. The problem of the IDPs touches on both physical reconstruction, such as the provision of housing and public services, and the process of rebuilding trust between different communities and establishing security.³³ In a sense, the return of the IDPs signals the restoration of ordinary life. However, it is estimated that approximately two million people remain internally displaced, more than half of those living outside the camps.³⁴ This is despite a concerted pressure to close the IDP camps, which in some cases has led to unsafe returns.³⁵

Security remains a key impediment to effective reconstruction and return for IDPs, nearly two thirds of IDPs surveyed in a recent study stated (Davis et al. 2018, 5). This is related to the fact that the liberated areas are littered with unexploded ordnance. Both Iraqis and representatives of international organizations working on reconstruction underlined how the potential presence of mines halted efforts to commence with reconstruction. However, this is also a consequence of the fragmentation of the security environment and the fact that the ISF does not have a monopoly of legitimate violence in Iraq. There are several aspects to this, including the continued threat of IS and the role of the PMFs as security providers. As already noted, IS still has the capacity to carry out terrorist attacks, including targeted assassinations and other types of harassment that undermine local communities' ability to recover. However, another key difficulty hampering the return of IDPs is the lack of trust between communities that have been affected by the IS takeover. Among the IDPs are minorities that were hit the hardest by IS atrocities, such as the Yazidis. These may not be able to return as their village has been destroyed, or they might not be willing to return because they do not trust that they will be safe. Another group of IDPs are Sunnis who fled in the last phases of the war against IS as the Iraqi security forces were defeating IS. They lived under IS rule for years. Those IDPs who were forced to leave immediately are suspicious of those who stayed (stayers), as having lived under IS domination, regardless of actual circumstances, can in itself be viewed as a having at least implicitly supported IS (Davis et al. 2018, 10). Hence, it has been documented that some IDPs are not able to return to their places of origin because security concerns related to their not being accepted by the community.³⁶ Mara Revkin has documented examples of how association with IS, a broad and flexible category that includes having family members who joined IS or worked as civil servants in areas occupied by IS, is being used to forcibly evict people (Revkin 2018, 11).

There is also an increasing problem with the militarization of the camps, which has led to unlawful investigations being conducted, physical and verbal assaults against IDPs, and sexual harassment or exploitation.³⁷ One aspect this is Iraqi security forces and, in some cases, PMFs entering camps to check for IS affiliates. There are extensive lists of names, supposedly including more than 45,000 names in various databases, that are wanted for having been affiliated to IS (Revkin 2018, 65). Some IDPs lack proper documentation or are simply unfortunate in having the same name as an IS suspect, making it hard for them to clear themselves for return.³⁸ The main way of dealing with people suspected of IS affiliation is highly punitive, focusing on quick sentencing and confession-based convictions, and thus creating the conditions for wrongful convictions. The Iraqi government has detained more than 19,000 people on terrorism-related charges and convicted at least 8,900 since 2013. Of these more than 3,000 have been sentenced to death (Revkin 2018). Human rights groups have criticized Iraq's handling of IS members, including the very rapid speed of trials, some lasting only ten minutes and with conviction rates of around 98%.³⁹ The legal framework is broad in its scope, meaning that once you are arrested for being affiliated to IS, there are limited legal opportunities to prove your innocence.⁴⁰



In a sense, the return of the IDPs signals the restoration of ordinary life.

The potential destabilizing role of the PMFs was highlighted during interviews and was a reoccurring topic during informal conversations. By some the PMFs are considered to be a greater threat than IS. This is illustrated by a Christian who had owned a house and a business when IS took over his village. IS used his house, but after the area had been liberated, the house was found to be largely intact, and most of his belongings were still there. However, after the defeat of IS, a militia had completely looted the house.⁴¹ During conversations and interviews, it was reported as a matter of fact that some local militias, and in some cases the Iraqi security forces, harass, kidnap, extort, beat or torture local populations. PMFs have been accused of atrocities, especially in Sunni-majority areas, and despite Abadi's promises to the contrary there has been no coordinated effort to hold actors accountable for such violations.⁴² There are signs that different militias, as well as the Kurds, have sought to use their increased fighting capabilities to control territory

thus increasing divisions and distrust between ethno-sectarian communities (Gaston and Derzsi-Horváth 2018, 5). During interviews, it was emphasized that return was dependent on either the presence of the Iraqi Security Forces or a form of localized security that corresponded to the specific communities. For example, in the Nineveh Plains, where numerous Christian villages were overrun by IS, several interviewees claimed that they would feel more secure if a Christian militia provided security or at least worked with other actors to secure fair treatment through checkpoints and in other dealings between local communities and the authorities.

||| **By some the PMFs are considered to be a greater threat than IS.**

During fieldwork, interviewees also gave examples of how PMFs reportedly gave abandoned houses to families, which then created problems when the original inhabitants attempted to return. In some cases, specific communities have been targeted directly by aid. Minorities, such as the Christians, have received direct aid through churches and religious figures, for example, from the US.⁴³ However, the targeting of specific communities might have the unintended effect of contributing to the further polarization of Iraqi society. This includes intra-group disputes, like, for example, those that have broken out among different Christian groups in Kurdish areas and Nineveh Plains. Although it is recognized that the task of physical reconstruction is enormous, there are growing complaints about the speed of reconstruction in, for example, parts of Anbar, Salah al-Din and Nineveh provinces (including West Mosul), where a majority of houses need to be completely rebuilt (Davis et al. 2018, 6). There are schemes in place to apply for funding for house rebuilding purposes, but this requires that applicants can document their ownership, as well as the level of destruction. Even when applicants can gather the required documentation, the process is slow and has so far resulted in limited disbursements. In addition, many areas lack access to clean water, electricity and other basic public services. All these factors not only hinder the safe return of IDPs but how they are dealt with by the Iraqi authorities will most likely impact the future stability of the Iraqi state.

MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS: BREAKING THE CYCLE?

There are hopes that Iraq, fifteen years after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, is moving towards a more inclusive and accountable political system. These hopes have been encouraged by the Iraqi Security Forces' success in reconquering the territory that IS took over in 2014 and the move away from overt sectarian rhetoric. However, although the increased capacity of the security forces should be acknowledged, this should not detract attention away from the more fundamental problems that helped IS gain success in the first place.

||| **There are hopes that Iraq, fifteen years after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003, is moving towards a more inclusive and accountable political system.**

Iraqi society has been referred to as 'hyper-militarized' (International Crisis 2017), and the present report confirms the central importance of the security sector in Iraq. The report has particularly underlined the security sector's fragmentation and politicization as two areas that challenge the future stability of the Iraqi state. The continued ability of IS to carry out terrorist attacks and the current acceptance of the PMFs' ability to act and commit violations with impunity sustains a feeling of insecurity among large sections of Iraqi society. The role of the PMFs is especially problematic, as they are using the legitimacy, they have won through their participation in the battle against IS to maintain their independence as security

actors, as well as increasing their political influence. The PMFs are currently formally directed by the Ministry of the Interior, and it will be a key challenge to integrate them into the formal security sector. The lack of accountability and transparency, including in dealing with people who joined or supported IS, risk renewing sectarian hostilities, as well as being a source of general insecurity. There is a need to build a security force that is trusted by local communities and is willing to respond to their needs. Creating a clear separation of responsibilities between the police and the army, where the police force is responsible for upholding internal order and a sense of local security, poses a considerable challenge. As this report has shown, the security sector places a substantial drain on the Iraqi economy, which is not only a response to the proven need for an effective and capable security sector, but also a consequence of the politicization of the security sector that hampers its transformation into a fully professional army and police force. The links between the politicians and the security forces are an obstacle to attempts to decrease the wage bill, the security sector being one of the major employers in Iraq. Reforms are thus stymied, as they become a factor in inter-elite competition, where loyalists to specific actors are purged under the guise of necessary reforms and with reforms being stalled due to the disinclination of key political actors to anger allies or their own constituents in the security sector.

The security sector's fragmentation and politicization are two areas that challenge the future stability of the Iraqi state.

Hence, whereas the Iraqi state certainly does face a security challenge because of the fragmentation and hybridization of the security sector, the security challenge affects the Iraqi political system and economy. There is a need for politics to be demilitarized and for an increased focus on building transparent state institutions that can provide basic services to all Iraqis. Ultimately, this is the choice of responsible politicians putting long-term development before short-term electoral gains. This is difficult in a country where the practice of muhasasa has undermined the transparency and accountability of the political system. Whereas all interviewees agreed that the Iraqi state, understood as its institutions, needs to be strengthened and depoliticized, very few political actors have presented coherent political programmes with concrete suggestions as to how this end goal should be achieved. Consequently, whereas politicians have adopted the language of reform and the

need for a civil state, there are certainly indications that there is less uniform support behind concrete reforms. One aspect is that the informal practices that currently structure the system are so ingrained that it is unclear how reforms can be implemented. The weakness of Iraq's institutions is complemented by a system that is highly personalized, making it difficult for technocrats and independents to secure the implementation of reforms.

This report has pointed to the widespread distrust of the Iraqi political elite and the void that currently exist between ordinary Iraqis and their supposed leaders as a major concern. This is reflected in all aspects of public life, including low election turnouts, an ineffective public sector and public support for armed non-state actors. Hence, during interviews, Iraq was described as a 'powder keg' where only genuine and fundamental reforms could defuse tensions that have been building for decades. Large portions of the Iraqi population seem to have lost faith in the democratic system, in which political parties compete for power, and are instead either asking for more direct forms of participation or suggesting that greater centralization of power is what is needed to force reform through a system that is believed to be hamstrung by corruption and nepotism. Thus, the Iraqi state, and specifically the current government, must strike a balance between the need to implement visible reforms and not alienating the key constituencies on which its survival depends.

The widespread distrust of the Iraqi political elite and the void that currently exist between ordinary Iraqis and their supposed leaders is a major concern.

Finally, despite a move towards a less overtly sectarian rhetoric, sectarian backgrounds remain a key element in how Iraqis define themselves and are positioned by others. This should not be overlooked or neglected in the eagerness to demonstrate that Iraq has moved beyond using sectarianism as a tool of political mobilization. In addition, although the use of quotas in the political system is legitimized with reference to the need to secure minority representation, it has clearly not prevented the persecution of minorities. In some cases, indeed, it has heightened differences by singling out certain minority communities as different types of Iraqi from the majority. The Iraqi state faces the challenge of having to

balance the need to protect its minorities without further marginalizing them from Iraqi society more generally. Minorities are more exposed to violence, but they also experience structural disadvantages and a lack of opportunities for redress when they are targeted. This has led, for example, to an exodus of Christians, a community that has declined from around 1.4 million in 2003 to current estimates of less than 300,000.⁴⁴

Iraq faces substantial and serious challenges, of which this report has only touched upon a few. However, it is worth noting that, despite the years of internal conflict, the Iraqi state is a point of reference and that the notion of an Iraqi identity has some traction. This does not mean that the Iraqi state is the only or even the strongest point of reference, but it does mean that there is an ongoing struggle among political actors to position themselves as defenders of Iraq. There is a window of opportunity but it can easily close if the Iraqi elite and the international community are not prepared to engage fully in the difficult process of reconstruction and reconciliation. This is the only way to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past and to break the cycle of violence that has haunted Iraq for decades.

NOTES

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- 2 Danish Foreign Ministry, 'Effort against ISIL', <https://fmm.dk/eng/allabout/Pages/The-effort-against-isil.aspx> (last visited 13 February 2019).
- 3 'Denmark's Integrated Stabilisation Engagement in Fragile and Conflict-affected Areas of the World', Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Justice, 2013, Copenhagen, http://danida-publikationer.dk/upload/microsites/um/ebooks/stabiliseringspolitik_uk_web.pdf (last accessed 13 February 2019).
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- 5 Dodge, Toby (2012). *Iraq: from war to a new authoritarianism*. Routledge, Glasgow. External support to armed non-state actors includes American support to Sunni Sheiks during the so-called Anbar Awakening of 2006-2007 (see, for example: Hosham, Dawod. 2017. 'Iraqi Tribes in the Land of Jihad'. In *Tribes and Global Jihadism*, edited by Virginie Collombier and Olivier Roy (London: Hurst & Co.).
- 6 See, for example, Gerges, Fawaz A. (2016), *A history of ISIS*, for a detailed history of the emergence of ISIS, specifically Chapter 2, which focuses on Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh, a.k.a. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi.
- 7 In August 2018, the UN estimated the current ISIL membership in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic at more than 20,000, split evenly between the two countries (last accessed 4 January 2019): http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2018/770&referer=/english/&Lang=E
- 8 See, for example, 'Iraqi Body count that attempts to count civilian casualties': Iraq Body Count, Documented civilian deaths from violence, <https://www.iraqbodycount.org/database/> (last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 9 I myself have made that argument in Danish media: Frederik Buhl Kristensen, 'DIIS-forsker: Tabet af Mosul er en klar svækkelse af IS – men det kan betyde flere terrorangreb', 9 July 2017: <https://politiken.dk/udland/art6028231/Tabet-af-Mosul-er-en-klar-sv%C3%A6kkelse-af-IS-men-det-kan-betyde-flere-terrorangreb>
- 10 This is corroborated by this UNDP-supported survey of perceptions of security in different localities in Iraq, where the respondents in Baghdad felt the most insecure. See *Public Safety and Security Perception Survey Report in Iraq – Comparative Analysis in Six Governorates: Baghdad, Anbar, Diyala, Erbil, Karbala and Salah al-Din*, AlNahrain Center for Strategic Studies, 2017 (last accessed on 13 February 2019): http://www.iq.undp.org/content/iraq/en/home/library/democratic_governance/public-safety-and-security-perception-survey-in-iraq-2017.html
- 11 The female Instagram celebrity Tara Faris was killed by unknown assailants in Baghdad. Her death was part of a string of murders targeting females and as such received substantial attention. However, the perception among the young Iraqi civil-society activist interviewed during fieldwork was that these murders were just the tip of a very large iceberg. Many of them had either themselves been targeted or told stories of friends being targeted by armed non-state groups acting with impunity.
- 12 The Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) include the traditional security forces such as the Iraqi Army, the Iraqi Force, the Iraqi Navy, the Counter-Terrorism Service, the Federal Police, the Iraqi Police Service, the Department of Border Enforcement and the Coast Guard, as well as various other protection units and the Hashd al-Sha'abi (Popular Mobilization Forces).
- 13 During several interviews the fatwa was referred to as hindering the dissolution of the PMFs as it continued to give them legitimacy.
- 14 PressTV, Full Interview with Khaled al-Obaidi (Iraq's Defense Minister), YouTube, 5 August 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3d>.
- 15 The Counter-Terrorism Service, an elite unit supported by the US, has been held out as a model due to its professionalism in defeating IS: see <https://warontherocks.com/2017/07/the-best-thing-america-built-in-iraq-iraqs-counter-terrorism-service-and-the-long-war-against-militancy/>

- 16 Al-Mawlawi, Ali (2018), 'Analysing Growth Trends in Public Sector Employment in Iraq', Middle East Centre Blog, London School of Economics (last accessed 4 January, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/07/31/analysing-growth-trends-in-public-sector-employment-in-iraq/>).
- 17 Information extracted from the interviews conducted in Baghdad in March/ April 2018. See also Ali Al-Mawlawi, Iraq's 2018 Federal Budget: Key Features and Trends. March 2018, <http://www.bayancenter.org/en/2018/03/1461/> (last accessed 15 May 2018).
- 18 Al-Mawlawi, Ali (2018), 'Analysing Growth Trends in Public Sector Employment in Iraq', Middle East Centre Blog, London School of Economics (last accessed 4 January): <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/mec/2018/07/31/analysing-growth-trends-in-public-sector-employment-in-iraq/>
- 19 According to Executive Order 91, passed in February 2016.
- 20 Mustafa Habib, 'What Sistani Did Next: Will Senior Cleric Disband the Militias Who Threaten Iraq's Future?', Niqash, <http://www.niqash.org/en/articles/politics/5791/> (last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 21 Robin, Benedict, 2018, 'Why many failed to predict the leftist-Islamist alliance that won Iraq's 2018 elections', Washington Post, June 7, 2018.
- 22 Alex MacDonald and Mustafa Abu Sneineh, 'First female Communist MP in Iraq's holiest city calls for "social justice"', Middle East Eye, 16 May 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/first-female-communist-mp-iraqs-holiest-city-calls-social-justice>
- 23 See Mansour, Toorn and Bogos. It is worth mentioning that many parties are local.
- 24 Adel Abdul Mahdi, a Shia, became prime minister, Barham Saleh, a Kurd, became president, and the speaker of parliament was a Sunni, Muhammad al-Halbusi.
- 25 One poll carried out in 2018 found that only about 5% had confidence in political parties (the lowest number), whereas the most trusted institution was the ISF: '1001 Iraqi Thoughts, Results of A Nationwide Public Opinion Poll On Iraq's Upcoming Parliamentary Election', 26 March 2018, <http://1001iraqithoughts.com/2018/03/26/results-of-a-nationwide-public-opinion-poll-on-iraqs-upcoming-parliamentary-election/>
- 26 Information extracted from interviews conducted in Baghdad in October 2018. See also, for example, The Baghdad Post, 'Qatar backed by Iran to purchase Iraq's ministries', 20 November 2018: <https://www.thebaghdadpost.com/en/Story/33351/Qatar-backed-by-Iran-to-purchase-Iraq-s-ministries>
- 27 Sowell, Kirk H. 2018, A Fractured Parliament, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- 28 The Dawa party and its members incurred sustained repression during Saddam Hussein's regime. A number of current members of Dawa fled to Iran, where they continued political activity to return to Iraq after the fall of Saddam Hussein in 2003 (Tripp 2002, 220).
This point was made during an interview. The figure of 40% seems to be supported by data: Vivienne Walt, 'How Iraq's Prime Minister Is Trying to Build Peace After 15 years of Conflict', March 8, 2018, <http://time.com/longform/iraq-haider-al-abadi-interview-peace/>
- 29 Despite this, the accusation that one is a former Baath Party member remains a potent threat that has been used, at least as a pretext, for derailing political careers.
- 30 Al Jazeera, 'Iraq: Protests rage over poor public services, unemployment', 14 July 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2018/07/iraq-protests-rage-poor-public-services-unemployment-180714065815048.html>
- 31 Information extracted from interviews conducted in Baghdad in March and April 2018.
- 32 According to Transparency International, Iraq was placed 169 of 180 countries in 2017 in their ranking of countries according to level of corruption: Transparency International, Iraq, <https://www.transparency.org/country/IRQ> (last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 33 Denmark has supported IDPs in Iraq. See, for example: Udenrigsministeriet, 'Danmark styrker indsatsen for fordrevne irakere med 135 millioner kroner', 24 October 2017, <http://um.dk/da/nyheder-fra-udenrigsministeriet/newsdisplaypage/?newsid=25f381b7-39ff-4916-8765-f5db05e12c09>
- 34 OCHA, 'Humanitarian Bulletin', Iraq, October 2018, issued 20 November: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/humanitarian_bulletin_october_2018_as_of_20_november_2018.pdf
- 35 Information extracted from interviews conducted in Baghdad and Erbil, October 2018.
- 36 See 'We Don't Want Them Back', policy brief, October 2017, Social Inquiry. Available at: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5bbb4e4c29f2cc31b47ff50f/t/5c5050ba0ebbe874b7c44e69/1548767429810/Policy+Brief+We+Don%27t+Want+Them+Back.pdf> (last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 37 See the updates of the protection cluster Iraq. Available at: 'Humanitarian response, Protection Cluster Iraq': <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/protection-cluster> (last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 38 See Parry, Jacqueline, Legal Pluralism and Justice in Iraq after ISIL, POMEPS Studies 30, 2018 for more details on this process.
- 39 Margarat Coker and Falih Hassan, 'A 10-minute Trial, a Death Sentence: Iraqi Justice for ISIS suspects', New York Times, 17 April 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/17/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-trials.html>
- 40 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/17/world/middleeast/iraq-isis-trials.html>. See Revkin, The Limits of Punishment for a detailed account of how the Iraqi legal system deals with people accused of being affiliated to IS.
- 41 See the updates of the protection cluster Iraq. Available at: Humanitarian response, Protection Cluster Iraq, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/iraq/protection-cluster> (Last accessed 13 February 2019).
- 42 See, for example: Ahn, Campbell and Knoetgen, The Politics of Security in Ninewa, 45 and Mansour, Rebuilding the Iraqi State, 24.
- 43 Kate Shellnutt, 'Pence: US Will Bypass UN and Aid Persecuted Iraqi Christians Directly', Christianity Today, 26 October 2017, <https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2017/october/pence-us-persecuted-christians-usaid-un.html>
- 44 Information extracted from interviews in Erbil and Baghdad, October 2018.

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