

Research Report
Model United Nations
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ADVISORY PANEL ON THE QUESTION OF
THE FERTILE CRESCENT
(APQ)

CURBING THE EFFECTS OF
NON-GOVERNMENTAL MILITIA IN
POST-WAR IRAQ

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Basic Overview of the Issue

After the 2003 invasion of Iraq by a coalition of countries with the United States of America (USA) at the centre that resulted in the total disbanding of the Iraqi army, the official military strength of the Iraqi government was significantly reduced. Although there were attempts by the US to rebuild the Iraqi army in an effort to stabilise the region for a possible US withdrawal, the new Iraqi army was still primarily weak regarding both professionalism and morale. This made the following war between 2014 and 2017 against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, highly ineffective.

To help combat this issue, along with the fatwa Ayatollah Al-Sistani against ISIS, many citizens of different backgrounds rose to create militia forces and some later became semi-governmental through the establishment of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF.) A large majority of these militias being Shia and being supported directly by the Iranian government made it so that although these militias were officially under the control of the Iraqi prime minister, they still held and continue to hold allegiances to autonomous political parties and outside influencers, which allowed them to act independently causing political and social instability throughout Iraq. Even so, some of these militia groups are considered to be terrorist organisations by countries like the US, UAE, Türkiye and more even if they work under the jurisdiction of the Iraqi prime minister. (Salami)

On the other hand, utilising the power vacuum created by all these political events, many anti-government militias that are also regarded as terrorist organisations by many states found the opportunity to strengthen their foothold throughout Iraq and establish bases of operation for their unlawful endeavours. Some of these militia groups are as

follows: ISIS (working as a decentralised insurgency in northern and western Iraq), The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), Al Qaeda in Iraq (AQI), Ansur Al Islam, and other Baathist insurgents. This is not particularly surprising as Iraq is a nation filled with different ethnicities



Figure 1: A map displaying the ethnic/religious composition of Iraq



and religious groups, which makes it so that different people of different backgrounds have different extremist ideals based around themselves. (map depiction given.)

The active status of both semi and non-governmental militias presents high-level threats to both Iraq's national and international security concerning counter-terrorism and foreign meddling with state affairs. While the very loyalty of the PMF militias to other powers like Iran makes the forces untrustworthy and a threat to national secrecy, the active efforts of the non-governmental militias present a threat to the humanitarian, political, social, and legal stability of the region as a whole. All of this makes the need to reduce the activeness of non-governmental militias in Iraq more felt than it ever was for both Iraq and the international community. Currently, although almost all majorly involved states recognise the need to respond decisively, all nations have mostly taken different approaches in their efforts which made the solution-finding process more challenging than it ever has been. Thus, it has become critical for the advisory panel to propose effective solutions that can finally mitigate the impact of non-governmental militias in Iraq to the Secretary General of the United Nations.

Explanation of Important Terms

Militia

The term "militia" is defined as "*a part of the organised armed forces of a country liable to call only in an emergency*" and "*a private group of armed individuals that operates as a paramilitary force and is typically motivated by a political or religious ideology*". (Merriam-Webster) According to this, a militia essentially is a military group of either professional or non-professional individuals that can operate under or against a governmental entity. In the case of Iraq, it can be presumed that a non-governmental militia refers to militias like ISIS that actively work against the government as well as militias under the PMF that show greater allegiance to foreign parties instead of the Iraqi government.

Islamic Extremism

The ideology of Islamic extremism is simply pushing Islamic beliefs and traditions to extreme levels. Extremism is the "*advocacy of extreme measures or views*" (Merriam-Webster.) Most Islamic extremists tend to call for an active war against



modernity and Western values through means of terrorism or open war, also called Jihad. Islamic extremists often organise under terrorist organisations or militias like ISIS and operate under them as an operative group.

Fatwa

A “Fatwa” is *“a legal opinion or decree handed down by an Islamic religious leader, most often called muftis.”* (Merriam-Webster) A Fatwa holds significant respect and loyalty from many Muslims and whatever is requested by the fatwa works like an order for Muslims who obey the rule of the person who sets out the fatwa. Just as a fatwa can be based on ethical or moral topics and questions, it can also be based on political and even military concepts like the fatwa calling for jihad against ISIS.

Jihad

A jihad is *“a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty.”* In opposition to common belief, a jihad does not necessarily have to be against non-believers of Islam. It generally is a war waged under the guidance of Islamic belief and tradition and holds no special need to be enforced against non-believers. (Merriam-Webster) In the case of the agenda item, this is important as a fatwa against ISIS was issued during the war against terror which was a fundamental step in the creation process of many critical militias.

Terrorism

Terrorism is defined as *“the calculated use of violence to create a general climate of fear in a population and thereby to bring about a particular political objective.”* (Jenkins) The use of terror as a means to achieve a particular political or religious goal has usually been the motive when it comes to terrorism in Iraq and the overall aims of terrorist organizations in Iraq. Therefore to best understand the conjunction of the terms, not all militias are terrorist organisations, but the terrorist organisations that are the agenda of this topic are militias.

Shi'a Islam



Being the second-largest branch of Islam (the other being Sunni Islam,) Shi'a Islam is mostly practised by the peoples of modern-day Iran, Azerbaijan, and Iraq. Being the largest host of Shiite believers, Iran serves as the representative of Shi'a Islam around the world under its Islamic government. Although the details are not necessary, the main difference between the more commonly known Sunni Islam and Shia Islam is that Shiite believers consider prophet Muhammad's son-in-law Ali to be the true successor to the position of caliph while Sunni believe otherwise. (Daftary and Nanji)

Detailed Background of the Issue

The issue of prominent non-governmental militia activity in post-war Iraq has a rather long background and a just as detailed list of negative effects. To better grasp all the knowledge that the agenda item includes, it is best to go over all of these sections separately with individual attention. Thus, this section will include parts ranging from the topic of historical background to modern-day foreign involvement.

Historical Context

The historical background of the issue mostly can be broken down starting with the 2003 US invasion of Iraq as it held significance in the later stages of the 2000s and 2010s Iraq and its development. On the other hand, details concerning events before the 2003 invasion of Iraq are mostly irrelevant to the modern-day military in Iraq so they will mostly be ignored. These events could include, for any experts inquiring and seeking to do more research: Saddam Hussain's rise to power, the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-1988, the Gulf War of 1990-1991, UN sanctions and weaponry inspections for weapons of mass destruction, etc.

The 2003 American Invasion of Iraq

In 2003, a coalition of countries primarily led by the United States while also including other ones like the UK, Poland, and Australia started an invasion of Iraq under the then-dictator Saddam Hussein. According to the statements of the US head of State, George W. Bush, the American government resorted to military intervention due to the possible presence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq that could be distributed to terrorist organisations that threatened world peace, like the ones responsible for the 9/11 attacks. After Saddam and his family refused the American ultimatum of



abandoning the country, the invasion was highly controversial in the eyes of the outside world. Even the closest allies of both the UK and the USA like France and Germany opposed the invasion, calling it to be both uneasy and too violent for no apparent purpose. Regardless, the invasion was a stunning success as the US Marines deployed through Basrah quickly managed to take over many crucial points in their advance like the capital city of Bagdad. Even if it was found that there were no weapons of mass destruction under Saddam's control, the invasion still resulted in the toppling of his regime and the total occupation of Iraq by the USA between 21 April 2003 and 28 June 2004.

The Aftermath of the Invasion

However, what is important in this context is the results of the invasion rather than the invasion itself. After the USA occupied Iraq, the Iraqi army was completely disbanded, leaving approximately 400,000 people unemployed which only worsened public opinion of the US. Although there were attempts by the US to reconfigure the Iraqi army to prepare the state for a US withdrawal, the newly created army was still severely underfunded, unprofessional, and underequipped. In addition, the initial welcomers of the invasion seeking to free the people from Saddam's tyrannical rule, now also resented the US occupiers and sought their immediate exit. This all resulted in a rise in insurgent groups all around Iraq that used the vacuum created by the disbanding of the army and the US occupation as a propaganda tool to popularize their cause. These militia groups and terrorist organisations primarily consisted of previous army officials, regular civilians, Baathists and Islamic Extremists. Of course, not all of these militias had the same ideological beliefs. Some like Al-Qaeda in Iraq called for Sunni Islamic extremism while other Shia parties like the Mahdi Army and Badr Brigade sought to protect Shia rights during the process, allowing for increased Iranian influence in the region for providing funding to these groups. On the other hand, many others that already existed also increased their presence. An example of this was the PKK, which aimed to create a free Kurdish state in Eastern Anatolia and found a zone of influence in weakened Iraq that it could use to continue its efforts without being bothered by government or military intervention in Iraq. There were also other Shiite, Sunni, Kurdish, Communist, and other separatist groups formed during



that time, but the exact details are not needed.

Rise of Terror and Expansion of ISIS

As aforementioned, many terrorist organisations and militias took their chance to establish influence around the power vacuum created by the US occupation and the consequent disbanding of the army. In 2006, Iraq fell into a sectarian civil war where Shia and Sunni sides waged war against one another, often resulting in violations of human rights. This allowed for the rise of many extremist Islamist groups like the AQI.

The AQI in particular served as the predecessor of ISIS or ISIL as it is now famously recounted. In 2006, the AQI, along with other Islamist groups merged to form the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (or Levant which is also why it's called ISIL as well.) ISIS and similar groups were particularly popularized by its anti-American beliefs and jihadist calls that only further strengthened its

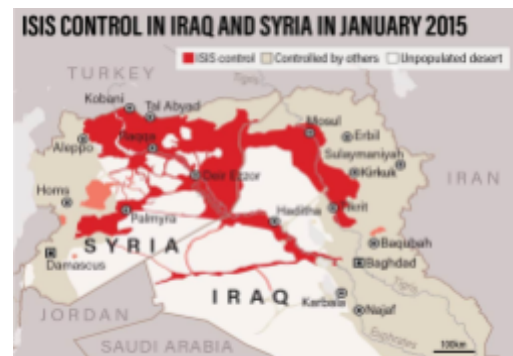


Figure 2: A map displaying the greatest extent of ISIS in January 2015 with important cities.

control over Iraq and its population as the US started to withdraw. After the mentioned US withdrawal from Iraq in 2011, many other militia groups all around Iraq also gained popularity while the Syrian Civil War allowed for further ISIS expansion in the Levant. Its calls for the destruction of Western Democracy alarmed the West for a possible resurgence of terrorist attacks like the 9/11 attacks which resulted in a global call for



Figure 3: Emblem of the Popular Mobilisation Forces or PMF in Iraq

war against the jihadist ISIS in the Levant. ISIS, however, also was not a weak opponent as it was supplied by many Wahadist groups in the Middle East and managed to gain control of many important geographical centres like Mosul. (Chulov) During this time when the already weak Iraqi military failed to defend its sovereign territory from terrorist organisations, an Islamic scholar named “Grand

Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani” issued a fatwa calling for jihad against ISIS as a whole. Motivated by the fatwa as well as the daily worsening situation, many Iraqi civilians



joined politically and religiously motivated militias as a method to counteract ISIS's influence over their homes. These militias happened to be mostly Shia but included a wide range of diversities, such as Turkmen or Christians. Slowly after, the Iraqi government, seeking to put an end to ISIS once and for all, created an umbrella organisation called “Popular Mobilisation Forces” that combined most of these militias under the Iraqi army. After years of guerilla warfare, ISIS was finally defeated in 2017, leaving it as an insurgent organ not able to operate to the extent it had before. These militias, on the other hand, remained a part of Iraq and created several problems that form the agenda item today.

Current Status

Nowadays, the impact of all the wars and major events are still experienced to the extreme. Most of Iraq has been freed from ISIS control. However, the northern parts of Iraq are still controlled by Kurdish separatist forces that work with semi-autonomy from the Iraqi government. What that essentially means is that although the governmental structure of the Kurdish autonomy operates under the legal framework of the Iraqi government, they still appear to be acting independently regarding many topics like the organizations they support and the factions they align with. For example, although the Kurdish autonomy has to usually cooperate with Iraqi foreign policy, they still chose to support political groups and parties in neighbouring states like Türkiye for greater Kurdish involvement without government approval. On the other hand, the militias, now having been semi-integrated into the government with the PMF hold great power in deciding upon military matters with Iraq as a whole. They still gain wealth and employment from the government while working independently to achieve their internal goals. With the consideration of the activities of both fully independent militia groups and ones under the PMF, it is rather evident to argue that these activities not being moderated by any regulatory body makes them a threat to not just Iraq’s national, but the regional security as a whole for several reasons.



Figure 4: A map displaying the targets of Iran-Backed Militia attacks in between 2019 and 2023



Use of Terrorism

These militias, including both the ones under the PMF and the non-governmental ones, have been reported to use methods of violence to achieve their goals. Having the independence to operate without the same regulations as the actual Iraqi army, the militias under the PMF have been reported by many sources to be committing genocide against people who oppose their views. In this understanding, “people who oppose their views” refers to groups or minorities that go against the general policy of the militia, an example could be Christian Assyrians for Kurdish militias or Shia groups for Sunni militias. (Human Rights Watch) Firstly, when it comes to groups like the PKK, PYD, or ISIS, it is no surprise that they use methods of terrorism to achieve their goals as the goals they have are way too extremist, and even if not, they hold no responsibility whatsoever to obey any kind of regional or international rule of law when it comes to human rights. Due to this, fully non-governmental militias like the ones mentioned have taken the primary focus on the international scale as many countries have declared them to be terrorists, and have actively worked both militarily and diplomatically to destroy them. On the part of the scale though, the militias under the PMF with their foreign influence have also resorted to the use of unlawful means to secure objectives. This again comes down to their irregular origin. Even if they technically are under the prime minister in regards to their higher-ups, they still acquire most of their funding solely themselves. And, as a matter of fact, their policies also tend to, unlike other semi-governmental militias around the world, highly oppose the policies of the actual Iraqi government. This has led them to reportedly use methods of extrajudicial killings, human and substance trafficking, and illegal smuggling all without governmental approval. On the other hand, these PMF militias, mostly ones under Iranian influence, were also reportedly responsible for mass murders in places with less government supervision. For example, some Shia militias were reportedly responsible for mass killings in Sunni Kurdish villages near Mosul. This all makes it even more necessary to take a step against these measures.

Foreign Influence



Another factor that makes these militias even more problematic is the foreign influence they obey. As already stated, some Shia militias, for example, have been funded and actively working for the benefit of the Islamic Republic of Iran since their very creation. This, however, is not only regarding Iran. Many other countries like Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, the United States, Qatar, and Syria have all been accused of meddling with the internal affairs of Iran through the militias they support or actively target. The question of how each nation takes a stance on this topic will be highlighted in the next section, however, it is first important to have a grasp of why this influence creates a threat to both the peace within and outside Iraq. Firstly, one must fully realize that there has been an active proxy conflict between Saudi Arabia and Iran over control and dominance over the Middle East since the 1980s. Both countries have taken opposing sides in the internal matters of their neighbours in order to establish states supportive of them in the long war. This has been the case for Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and others. As a person with even the most limited knowledge of Middle Eastern geopolitics could know, all of these states suffered long-lasting military conflicts that only brought destruction to their countries while this cold war only accelerated the destruction. So, it is more than expected to see experts in geopolitics worry about a potential outbreak of conflict within Iraq based on this very faction war. Another way in which some of these militias operate through nations is through conducting operations in other states. For example, the non-governmental militia group PKK has very openly worked against Türkiye since its foundation in the 1980s. It has gone through many missions to destabilise the Turkish Republic at every chance it had, ranging from terrorist bombings of governmental buildings to outright assassination of institutional officials. These actions have made it so that Türkiye, along with many other nations that have experienced similar issues, have been working directly against these militias, even choosing to use military warfare that has only increased tensions between them and Iraq it does not want to allow any foreign nation to enter its territory with the purpose of military attack. So it has become important to re-establish governmental control over these paramilitary groups to avoid another large-scale war in the Middle East.



Major Parties Involved

The Republic of Iraq

As one may easily understand, Iraq is the centermost nation in the entirety of the agenda item. It is not necessary to go into detail about Iraq's history concerning the issue as it has already been detailly covered in the section above. However, it is of high importance to cover Iraq's stance on the issue and its foreign relations for a better understanding of the way it operates its national laws on security. Iraq, since the very first rise of the militia topic in the late 2010s, has made efforts to further centralize its control over all military matters on its soil. This of course, primarily was to fully reintegrate the militias as an official part of Iraq's military. Some efforts of Iraq to achieve this were: centralising funding of the PMF directly from the government, taking records of PMF activities and proposing ways of punishing them when needed, and standardising the use of Iraqi equipment instead of equipment distributed from foreign states. The success of these efforts cannot be easily evaluated, however, it is proposed that it remained an ineffective method. In regards to the fully non-governmental militias like the PKK or ISIS, Iraq has taken a more "hands-on" approach of direct military takedowns on terrorist camps without alerting the world about them more often than not. The primary reason why Iraq is aiming to solve this issue by itself is that Iraq has been reportedly anxious about allowing foreign countries to meddle with its internal matters, even if the country is its closest ally. Speaking of allies, Iraq has slowly become distant towards nearly all states in the Middle East for various allegations. On the other hand, Iraq also is more hesitant about reusing American aid in solving its issues as any mention of the US results in a loss of popularity for the regime. In short, Iraq seeks to solve the issue mainly by itself while caring deeply for its national sovereignty and security.

The Republic of Türkiye

Türkiye, under its current leadership and the ones before it, has been one of the most important powers in understanding the non-governmental militias in Iraq. The reason for this comes from Türkiye's demographic distribution of ethnicities in its country. Although a very large majority of Türkiye is ethnically Turkish, there exists a very large percentage of Kurds



living in Eastern Anatolia and its highlands. In the past, primarily with Syria, many countries have taken this as an opportunity to destabilise Türkiye using methods of propaganda in these Kurdish regions to create a possible rebellion against the central government. This has been the case since the 1980s, with countries like Syria, the US, the Soviet Union, Iran, and others being the primary countries of allegation responsible for Kurdish provocation. However, there also exist many other organisations that serve to achieve the goals of “liberating” an ethnically Kurdish state in Eastern Anatolia, with the PKK being the most influential and renowned. Türkiye, as one could expect, has held very strict views on countries that hosted such organizations and sought to eliminate them through means of military operations when needed. This makes Türkiye highly focused on eliminating PKK efforts founded in the autonomous region of Kurdistan in Northern Iraq, even sometimes choosing to enter Iraqi territory without approval just to achieve its goals. This has sparked tensions between Türkiye and Iraq, two states that worked together to eliminate ISIS in the past. When it comes to the militias under the PMF, Türkiye has not shown a direct side to its beliefs but has stated that it would seek to protect the Turkmen population in Northern Iraq from any possible violation of their human rights.

The United States of America (USA)

Since the fall of ISIS, the US has taken a less involved approach to the topic as the question of whether it is needed for the US to intervene in the Middle East to protect “national security” has become a hot topic of debate in governmental parliamentary organs. Thus, the last few years have mostly been spent with the US working on the issue primarily through the UN or the more involved Türkiye as it is a fellow member of NATO. These efforts however do not mean that the US is entirely isolationist, far from it even. The US has been very closely involved with the events in Syria and has active military personnel in the region, not even mentioning the military situated all around the Middle East using US military bases. This has made it so that although the US is not as keen on intervening, any decision by Iraq or another country could very quickly invade American need of intervention, making them a critical country to be notified of. The US is also a known enemy of many militia organisations like the PKK that operate throughout Iraq and its autonomous territories. So, it is also worth



noting that the US would be more than delighted to put an end to non-governmental military action in Iraq. (Miller and U.S. Department of State)

The Islamic Republic of Iran

Iran, under its Islamic regime, has been known for its cold war in the Middle East with Saudi Arabia, along with its methods of gaining influence through different means in other MENA states. As already deeply explained in the past sections, Iran has been supporting the many Shia militia groups that make up the since their very foundation dating back to 2014. The mentioned funding was not just through providing the militias with a financial sum of liquid, but also with modern military equipment, rations, and weapons of all kinds (some even speculate that the weapons used by the Shia militias in their genocide were produced in Iran.) The reason why Iran is supporting these militia groups is simple. Being the largest centre for Shia Muslims, Iran seeks to establish allies in countries where there is a large Shia population that can show their sympathy for Iran if given the platform, and this is exactly that. By providing them with the equipment needed to increase their influence over Iraq and its army as an unstable force incapable of being directed, Iran is using the Shia extremist militias in Iraq to gain a stronger hand in its cold war against Saudi Arabia with the ultimate goal being to forcefully ally Iraq with its ideological side. With this highly involved position and the very obvious goals sent out to the world, Iran holds a special place in the topic, becoming a key country that Iraq seeks to eliminate the influence of over itself. (Marcus)



Figure 5: A map depicting the estimated distribution of Shia Muslims in the Middle East countries

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Being the opposite power in the Middle Eastern cold war, Saudi Arabia's position on the topic is essentially the opposite of Iran's in many ways. Being a predominantly Sunni state that shares its religious fundamentalist beliefs all around the world, the oil giant also has interests in keeping Iraq as an ally of itself. Similar to Iran, Saudi Arabia has also been accused of being a sponsor of many radical Islamist groups and other Sunni militias in Iraq



like the extremist Sahwa movement that surged in the 2006-2007 era. Again, similarly, this sponsoring campaign was largely centred around the distribution of large amounts of modern warfare equipment that these militias had supposedly used to continue their unlawful practices. Saudi Arabia, in contrast to Iran, has instead chosen to make this alignment more secretive, still choosing to collaborate with the existing Iraqi government whenever possible and denying most if not all of the allegations of sponsoring non-governmental militias. Unlike Iran, Saudi Arabia has also not been as often accused of giving guidelines and orders to these militias to achieve its strategic goals. This complex position of Saudi Arabia has led many experts in international relations to believe that it has the ultimate goal of not letting Iraq at any point fall into Iranian spheres of influence, and so choosing its next move based on the existing opportunities.

Chronology of Important Events

Date	<i>Description of Event</i>
March 20, 2003	US Invasion of Iraq with Saddam's Rejection of US Ultimatum to Leave Iraq
April 9, 2003	Baghdad Falls to US Troops, Saddam Hussein Toppled
June, 2003	Creation of the Mahdi Army
May 23, 2003	US Disbanding of the Iraqi Army through "Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 2"
August 2, 2003 - June 7, 2004	Iraqi Army Restructured
October 17, 2004	Al Qaeda in Iraq Formed



February 22, 2006 - May 15, 2008	Iraqi Civil War (A.K.A. Sectarian War in Iraq)
2004 - 2008	Surge of Extremist Shia and Sunni Militias
March 15, 2011	Start of the Ongoing Syrian Civil War
December 18, 2011	Official US Withdrawal from Iraq
April, 2013	Official Birth of ISIS, Emerging from AQI
June 13, 2014	Fatwa Gets Issued by Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani
June 15, 2014	The “Popular Mobilisation Force” (PMF) Announced Officially
June, 2014	Start of Iraqi War on ISIS, Starts After ISIS Captures Mosul in Northern Iraq
November 26, 2016	PMF Legalised, Some Militias Still Operate Independently
December 9, 2017	Iraqi Proclamation of Victory Against ISIS
2016	Start of Insurgent Group Activity Both Within and Outside the PMF Under Foreign Backing



Relevant International Documents

- The U.S. Joint Resolution 114 where the use of force against Iraq was authorized:
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-107publ243/html/PLAW-107publ243.htm>
- Coalition Provisional Authority Order No. 2: The order that officially disbanded the Iraqi army in 2003
<https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB418/docs/9b%20-%20Coalition%20Provisional%20Authority%20Order%20No%202%20-%2008-23-03.pdf>
- The 2011 agreement between Iraq and the US that resulted in the withdrawal of US forces indefinitely from Iraq <https://www.peaceagreements.org/masterdocument/1577>
- The US Department of Defence document on the Iraqi capture of Mosul served as the official proclamation of victory against them
<https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/1242101/iraqi-forces-liberate-mosul-from-isis/>
- The official government link for the documents related to the creation of the PMF
<https://www.moj.gov.iq/view.2899/> (Arabic)
- An international document for an overview of the Fatwa issued against ISIS
<https://pomeps.org/ayatollah-sistani-much-more-than-a-guide-for-iraqis>

Past Attempts to Resolve the Issue

As one might have assumed by the lack of mention of UN involvement within this document, the UN has not taken any major steps towards alleviating the dangers imposed by the militias of Iraq. This comes down to several reasons. Firstly, any recognition of faultful acts by a militia in Iraqi territory would be a direct callout against Iraq that has, as mentioned, taken steps to revitalize its army over the militias. The reason for this comes from the PMF's inclusion in the Iraqi army. Due to how the PMF technically serves as a part of the Iraqi army and answers to the prime minister, any callout on their deeds by the UN would also be against the government of Iraq, which is problematic as that could have resulted in alienating Iraq from UN matters. Another factor that has made this difficult has been the topic of foreign overview and influence. As aforementioned, many states like Turkey or Iran are very closely



related to the issue and sometimes even get involved against military groups through military endeavours. This has made it so that the UN is unable to identify methods of solving the issue that satisfy the interests of all the involved parties, which serves as a risk of possibly creating diplomatic tensions in the region. Lastly, the UN has not been able to speak vocally about the subject, because any direct measures have a high risk of violating Iraq's national sovereignty and security which Iraq has been known for valuing highly.

In contrast, there have been measures by the regional states to eliminate the influence of militias on their perspective. These have nearly always been very disunited and sometimes even resulted in clashing of interests between parties. Türkiye has taken military measures to eliminate ISIS and PKK involvement in the autonomous region of Iraq and has shown vocal support for protecting the minority rights of the Turkmen populations in Kerkuk and Mosul. The United States has proposed methods of carrying out special missions to eliminate key ISIS insurgent targets to protect its national security. Many Gulf states like Bahrain and Qatar have provided the Iraqi government with funding to standardise its army with many others expressing aid through proposing mutual training agreements. These however have largely remained inefficient as the approaches were mostly temporary and didn't have any noticeable lasting impacts.

Solution Alternatives

Due to the lack of past proposed solutions by the United Nations, the experts must propose out-of-the-box methods that can provide alternative solutions. It would be recommended for the experts to take deep caution in not breaching the sovereignty or national security of Iraq through any means as that would result in the failing of their clauses.

Experts could identify possible ways of further integrating the PMF into the Iraqi government to block them from having the independence to sustain their practices while taking orders from foreign powers. Iraq has already tried some examples of this method and arguably, they may have been the best-proposed solutions until now, even if they were technically ineffective. Thus, it would be possible to further advance these methods and allow for standardization in the militias through the official army. Due to the critical importance of reducing foreign influence over the militias, experts could also propose ways of entangling the very reasons behind foreign countries' aim of gaining influence, which can be traced back



to the cold conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. So, ways of gaining the backing of these states in Iraq's efforts to curb the militia effect could be detrimental. Lastly, it is important to note that the very reason why the militias have become such a relevant issue is their lack of obedience to international laws like the Geneva Convention on Human Rights. This could present an opportunity for experts to solve humanitarian crises that have surged due to militia violence.

When it comes to other militia groups like the PKK or ISIS that operate fully against the government, experts must find solutions that work as counter-terrorism for their efforts. In doing so, they must consider the regional tensions between these parties and other involved states like Turkey, Syria, or the United States. Although not fully impossible, the use of military action would most probably be problematic as that would serve to violate the national sovereignty of Iraq if poorly planned. If the experts think of methods to negotiate with these groups, they must keep in mind that all countries in the region, except for a few that vary according to the organisation, as well as the United Nations all consider them to be terrorist groups and never seek to negotiate with them. Taking the war against ISIS, experts may choose to ally with the countries in the region by solving their general differences and seeking to use this alliance to fight off the terrorist activity of the groups.

Useful Links

- https://cfri-irak.com/en/article/the-role-of-militias-in-iraq-evaluating-their-impact-and-strategies-for-mitigation-2024-02-21?utm_source
- <https://acleddata.com/2023/05/23/the-muqawama-and-its-enemies-shifting-patterns-in-iran-backed-shiite-militia-activity-in-iraq/>
- <https://casebook.icrc.org/case-study/iraq-crimes-militia-groups>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcUogFo9yE&ab_channel=ImperialWarMuseums
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fMTng_Cj99A&ab_channel=MEMO
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