The Struggle for Ninawa

The publication of a parliamentary committee’s report on the fall of Mosul in June 2014 to the Salafi-Jihadist Islamic State (IS) has reignited the debate over responsibility for the debacle, the result of which was the collapse of the Iraqi Army in the northern and western areas of Iraq, a serious aggravation of the region’s security breakdown and the creation of a new humanitarian crisis. That report, endorsed by Iraq’s parliament on Aug. 17, primarily blamed then-Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki and, to a lesser extent, then-Ninawa Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi, as well as a range of senior security figures. Maliki has been quite vocal in attempting to avoid blame, repeatedly claiming – most recently in an Aug. 18 interview with Iran’s Arabic-language al-Alem television¹ – that the army’s collapse was due to a “conspiracy” hatched in Turkey and managed from Irbil between Sunni activists and the Kurds.

This is a compilation of excerpts from Inside Iraqi Politics which cover events in Ninawa generally and the fall of Mosul, its provincial capital, in particular. IIP is a subscription-based publication which analyzes Iraqi politics and policy through native-language sources. Each issue has a “National Scene” section that overviews key events over the two weeks it covers, plus articles of various types, including “Provincial Focus” and “Security Focus” articles, as others on national political, economic and legal topics.

Given the focus on Ninawa, most of the excerpts here are Provincial Focus articles. Some excerpts are also part of the National Scene of the issue in question. Because we have only reproduced segments from the latter where the treatment was significant, and left out issues in which just a paragraph or two were devoted to Ninawa, this document is not comprehensive. Nonetheless it includes at least 90 percent of our Ninawa coverage during the relevant period. The excerpts begin with Sunni protest movement in early 2013 and run through the “post-Fall” struggle for power over Ninawa in April 2015.
Editor’s Note: This article was published on Jan. 18, 2013 as part of IIP No. 53. It marked the beginning of our coverage on the 2013 Sunni protests in Ninawa and came in the context of preparations for provincial elections set for the coming April. Political and security relations between the Sunni Arab-majority province and Baghdad authorities had long been negative, and there was a strongly negative relationship between Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi’s political coalition and Shia leaders in Baghdad, especially Maliki.

Provincial Focus

Ninawa Protests Undermine Nujayfi Rival

Long-simmering discontent among Ninawa’s population against federal security control has exploded into a surge of angry protests following rape allegations against the Army, which the Nujayfis have managed well. The dynamic works in favor of the Nujayfis and against Maliki’s ability to use the Kurdish issue as an electoral wedge.

At the beginning of 2013, Ninawa’s political scene is still defined by the conflict between Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi and Prime Minister Maliki. While Sunnis had long been unified in opposition to Maliki’s dominance of local security (IIP 22/5-9), the governor and his brother, Speaker Osama al-Nujayfi, suffered a fracture in their base last April when they reached a power-sharing agreement with Ninawa Kurds as part of a national-level realignment toward Irbil. Maliki moved to exploit the fissure, making various concessions and promises to Abdullah al-Yawer, head of the Justice & Reform Movement (JRM), the governor’s primary Ninawa opponent (IIP 40/4-5).

Rape Outrage Fuels anti-Army Sentiment

Sunni Arab solidarity in Ninawa has been strengthened in recent weeks by a sensational rape scandal. Governor Nujayfi broke the scandal himself on Dec. 18, saying an army officer from the 2nd Division had raped a 17-year-old girl after forcibly bringing her to an army base. Nujayfi further claimed that Maliki gave officers immunity and would have to intervene. Kurdish councilmen also condemned the officer’s immunity. Yawer’s JRM boycotted the meeting, supposedly to protest the rape, but perhaps also to avoid having to play second fiddle to Nujayfi. On Dec. 20, the Ninawa Sunni Waqf demanded “public retribution” for the alleged officer rapist, invoking Quranic language in praise of lex talionis. The same day, the Defense Ministry announced that it had revoked the accused rapist’s immunity and transferred him to a civilian court.

On Friday Dec. 21, with news that a Mosul hunger striker had died in prison and anti-government protests surging, federal security forces arrested 17 imams in Mosul (video), and questioned them for several hours regarding the Waqf’s statement. Governor Nujayfi described the arrests as “pouring oil on a fire” and as proof of the security forces’ “madness.” On Dec. 28, a group of mosque imams called for protests
in solidarity with the protesters in Anbar province, demanded the release of prisoners and an end to arbitrary arrests. The religious leaders also urged Nujayfi to close all schools and government offices until the protesters’ demands were met.6

The next day, after consultations with Governor Nujayfi, the provincial council voted to close all government institutions for three days, with the exception of hospitals and municipal services.7 On Dec. 31, the government issued a statement calling the termination of services “a violation of the constitution and the law,” threatening that officials who cooperated with the strike could “be held accountable before the law.”8

The JRM fired back on Dec. 29, perhaps concerned that support for the protests was helping Governor Nujayfi, who seemed to be working hand-in-glove with Sunni religious leaders to enable the protest movement. They called on Speaker Nujayfi to resign in protest of the government’s failure to meet the demonstrators’ demands.9 A day later, the JRM proposed that the entire provincial council, the governor, and all MPs from Ninawa issue a joint resignation to protest the government’s policies. Nujayfi and his Hadba party rejected the proposal.10

The same day, the Ninawa Tribal Council responded to Maliki’s televised meeting with Sunni imams who work for the state by rejecting “the sultan’s preachers,” adding that Maliki could meet the people’s demands without intermediaries compromised by their government jobs (video). On Jan. 2, the council voted to extend the strike for five more days, and Nujayfi condemned the government’s threats against striking workers.11 On Jan. 7, after army forces closed the main protest site in Mosul’s Ahrar Square for the third time, Nujayfi and Yawer went in person and convinced army commanders from the Ninawa Operations Command to reopen the site to protesters.12 On the same day, however, there was an incident in which officers opened fire and injured four protestors; federal officials claimed the civilians had tried to seize a military vehicle.13

Intense protests have continued in Ninawa up through the time of this publication, with tensions continuing between security and protestors (video, video, video). With an eye to the provincial elections in April, Yawer and Nujayfi now compete to show voters that they are willing to stand up to Baghdad. For now, the Kurdish issue has receded in prominence, denying Maliki a useful wedge with which to divide Sunni opponents.

Maliki’s Shabak Bid

Recent developments have weakened Maliki’s hand, but one of his gambits may still resonate: an effort to create a 500-man police unit drawn exclusively from the Shabak, a religious minority of some 50,000 concentrated in the Sinjar district north of Mosul. The move was spearheaded by Shabak Councilman Qusay Abbas. Governor Nujayfi and his allies condemned the move as an effort to create “sectarian strife,” but Abbas defended it, claiming that similar all-Christian police units already existed.14 Hanin al-Qadu, head of the Shabak Democratic Assembly, reiterated the need for such a force.15
Ninawa’s minorities have long been used as pawns in the struggle between the federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government for control of the disputed areas. At least some minorities lean towards the KRG, because the Kurdish Peshmerga has a better reputation for providing security than the Iraqi army. Creating special minority units could give minorities an incentive to support the federal government.

Editor’s Note: The Provincial Focus below was published on June 5, 2013 as part of IIP No. 62.

Provincial Focus

The Evolution of the Ninawa Protests

Ninawa’s protests have followed the national pattern of one wing backed by clerics and politicians pushing a Sunni region, and one more militant seeking all-out war. This led first to a split in the protests, and as the country has moved closer to the abyss, the Nujayfi-led political wing has tried to pull back the slide toward violence.

The Sunni protest movement which began in Dec. 2012 has divided into two separate groups in Ninawa, one aligned with the clerical establishment and Speaker Nujayfi’s Mutahidun bloc, and the other a protest group called the Free Iraq Intifada (FII), which we have since concluded was a front for Izzat al-Duri’s Baathist Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia (JRTN). Originally, both groups were united by a demand for the withdrawal of federal security from Ninawa, but have diverged as the former group’s ultimate goal is the formation of a Sunni autonomous region, while the latter has a more extreme vision based on the reestablishment of a Sunni-dominated Baathist dictatorship. (For nationwide background on both, see IIP 58/4-8; 60/4-9; 61/4-7.)

Mosul’s Divided Protests

When protests broke out across Sunni areas Iraq in Dec. 2012, Ninawa was already at a boil. On Dec. 18, two days before the arrest of Finance Minister Rafi al-Isawi’s staff set off protests in Anbar, Ninawa was shaken by reports that an army officer had raped a teenage girl (IIP 53). Backed by the Ninawa Sunni Waqf, the protesters demanded the withdrawal of federal security forces from inhabited areas of the province. The early Ninawa protests were centered in Ahrar Square in central Mosul.

By mid-January, a division emerged between the Ahrar Square protests and its counterparts at various Mosul mosques. Ahrar Square was controlled by the Baathist front, Free Iraq Intifada. Whereas the Ahrar Square protesters flew the Baathist flag and demanded the abolition of the constitution, separate protests at the Hadba mosque flew Iraq’s present flag and presented more modest demands, namely the repeal the 2005 Counterterrorism Law’s infamous Article 4 – which provides for the death penalty.
and which Sunnis claim is used to target them – and the release of women prisoners, who were believed to have been raped in prison.\textsuperscript{19} At this early stage, the two protest sites reportedly drew similarly sized crowds, and preachers at both prayer sites shared a common theme: the religious obligation of protesting against the government.\textsuperscript{20}

By Jan. 25, national protest organizers were acknowledging two sets of Friday protests in Mosul: one at Ahrar Square, and another at the Nebi Sheet mosque, located between Martyrs Park and the Bab Jadid vegetable market.\textsuperscript{21} It should be noted that the two sites are about two kilometers apart in downtown Mosul, suggesting that the split was necessitated by ideological differences rather than geography.\textsuperscript{22}

The clerical wing later opened five more sites in Mosul, as well as one each in the rural districts of Zummar, Sinjar, Nimrud and Mahlabiya.\textsuperscript{23} The FII continued to hold protests exclusively in Ahrar Square, and even produced a video of barefoot men marching through mud and water towards Ahrar from Tell Abta, 30 kilometers away.\textsuperscript{24}

**The Clerical-Nujayfi Wing**

The mosque-based protest group is led by a body calling itself the *Gathering of Ninawa Scholars and Preachers* (GNSP). The Gathering grew out of a group of Sunni religious figures who met in the Ninawa Sunni Waqf building on Dec. 23 to deliver a statement.\textsuperscript{25} The group’s initial start is captured on a video dated Dec. 27 that shows governor Nujayfi addressing a group of protesting clerics on a Mosul street, amid evident confusion on all sides. While praising the clerics’ decision to protest and telling them “I am with you,” Nujayfi emphasized two points: “keep the peace, and preserve public and private property.”\textsuperscript{26} The clerics interrupted Nujayfi several times with chanting.

The GNSP appears to be well-organized and politically well-connected. In February, the Ninawa Scholars received a visit from members of the Iraqi Fiqh Council, a group affiliated with the leading Sunni scholar Abd al-Malik al-Saadi (*IIP* 60).\textsuperscript{27} The Nebi Sheet mosque, where the group holds its Friday protests, was chosen by the Ninawa Sunni Waqf to host its Feb. 7 celebration of Mawlid, the birthday of Muhammad. The celebration was attended by the provincial Waqf head and by Governor Nujayfi. The keynote speaker, Dr. Salih Khalil Hammudi of *Imam Aadham University*, declared that: “we are all gathered as one with the protesters.”\textsuperscript{28}

Like other Iraqi Sunni clerical groups, the GNSP does not have a publicly-identified leader. Nonetheless, they have shown a high degree of organization and discipline in the running of their sites, and in keeping them free of the rhetoric of Ahrar Square.

**The Square Versus the Mosque**

Even before the Ahrar Square-FII/JRTN group’s eventual turn to violence, various disputes arose between it and the Nebi Sheet-GNSP leadership. In late March, amid talk of forming a committee to negotiate with Baghdad, the Ahrar Square group came out
strongly against the idea. A spokesman for FII in Ahrar Square denounced all efforts to negotiate with the government as “grand treason against the people and the homeland.”

Equally ominously, the speakers’ platform at Ahrar Square was draped with banners that read “On to Baghdad,” more than a month after mainstream Sunni leaders, including the hardline Muslim Scholars Association (MSA), had given up on the idea of marching to Baghdad as too dangerous.

Beginning on March 29, in response to an initiative from the GNSP-aligned Ramadi group to negotiate with the government, the two camps began adopting competing slogans. While the Ramadi-GNSP aligned protests adopting the slogan, “Hand in Hand We Retrieve Our Rights,” the FII protest sites the slogan, “No Negotiation,” uniform across Sunni provinces (IIP 58/8). On April 12, the Ramadi-Nebi Sheet protests ran under the slogan, “We Shall Not Surrender – Our Rights or Martyrdom.” Although provocative, this slogan was distinguishable from the FII’s blatantly sectarian slogan, “No to Safavid Intervention.” In a further indication of coming violence, the Ahrar Square protesters marched in military formation and saluted the Baathist flag while wearing white headbands bearing the slogan “On to Baghdad.”

The final parting between the camps came in late April. The FII called on citizens to participate in a general strike on April 22, in solidarity with strikes called elsewhere in solidarity with the (FII-controlled) Huwija protest site then in a stand-off with the Army. The GNSP claimed the national protest leadership had exempted Ninawa from the strike because of its difficult economic circumstances, and instead called for a day of fasting and prayer. Media reports described widespread, but not universal, cooperation with the strike.

Some reports described the protests as an initiative by religious leaders in the six Sunni provinces, suggesting that some Mosul residents may have been confused as to what Sunni religious leaders were requesting of them.

On April 23, after security forces killed dozens of protesters in Huwija, the Ahrar Square protest leadership abruptly announced that it was abandoning the site, and called on the protesters to “take up arms and abandon the peaceful protests.” As of May, Ahrar Square remains free of protesters, and the Nebi Sheet group is the only one still actively organizing demonstrations in Mosul. This followed the “merger” of the FII and the JRTN on April 24 as noted above.

During May, Nebi Sheet protests have focused on promoting a Sunni region, in line with the national trend. This brought a quick rebuke from the JRTN, which associated pro-region Sunnis with “the fraudulent Zionist-Safavid constitution,” and accused them of “abandoning the fight against the regime.” This was logical from their point of view – the JRTN seeks to takeover Iraq and reinstall a Baathist dictatorship, while the Nujayfis and their allies are inextricably tied to the current political system.
Security Forces and Governor Try to Reconcile

Federal security forces initially responded to the protests by arresting organizers and attempting to shut down Ahrar Square. Efforts by security forces to shut down the square in early January met wall-to-wall opposition from governor Nujayfi and provincial opposition head Abdullah al-Yawer (IIP 53). Tensions between security forces and Governor Nujayfi ran high, with Ninawa federal police commander Mahdi al-Gharrawi declaring in March: “Governor Nujayfi cares only for himself . . . we consider him an enemy . . . the man works against the country and its stability; he has sold out Mosul on the cheap.”

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Frequent curfews imposed by security forces inconvenienced citizens, and led some to hoard food, resulting in elevated prices.

In May, after the violent turn of the Ahrar Square protests, army Chief of Staff General Ali Ghaydan visited Mosul for talks with Governor Nujayfi. Ghaydan bemoaned that Ninawa’s government “is the only one which has not made common cause with the security forces.”

Nujayfi held a public reconciliation with Ninawa federal commanders, during which he emphasized the need to “reduce friction” between these forces and Ninawa citizens. In return, security commanders agreed to cut back on the scope of the Mosul curfew they had imposed.

Meanwhile, JRTN insurgents in the city have become increasingly bold. They have issued threats against soldiers and policemen, against taxi drivers taking soldiers home on leave, and even against employees of the Mosul morgue, which is responsible for conducting police autopsies. And their social media almost daily publishes reports on operations by “the sons of Iraqi tribes” against “the Safavid Army.” Governor Nujayfi’s reconciliation with federal security appears to have been driven by this growing violence, part of a broader decision by Sunni leaders nationwide to pursue a less militant line in their confrontation with Maliki.

Editor’s Note: The references to senior officers Gharawi and Ghaydan in this June 2013 article are of special note because of the role they would later play in the fall of Mosul. Gharawi here was head of the federal police, the unit which would bear the brunt of the fight during the June 6-10, 2014 fight for the city. He would be operations commander by June 2014, meaning that he oversaw both police and army units. Both Gharawi and Ghaydan had a very negative relationship with Governor Nujayfi, and this may have played a role in the Mosul disaster.
Editor’s Note: The article below was published on Dec. 20, 2013 as part of IIP No. 75. It was the last feature article we would publish before Mosul’s fall in June. In retrospect we should have given the province more attention during that period. Note, however, that security had collapsed in Anbar in Jan. 2014, and this coincided with a breakdown in Baghdad-Kurdistan relations and the electoral campaign for parliamentary elections which took place in April. The bulk of our provincial affairs coverage during this period was therefore devoted to Anbar.

Provincial Focus

Violence Threatens Nujayfi’s Hold on Ninawa

Skyrocketing violence is threatening Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi’s hold on Ninawa administration, and is squeezed between insurgent attacks and the federal arrests of subordinates. Nujayfi has nonetheless pressed forward with independent oil refinery plans, with support from Kurdish allies. Meanwhile, Nujayfi’s allies in Anbar, suffering a similar onslaught, are pressing Sunni protesters to stand down.

The security situation in Ninawa province has deteriorated in the last few months to the point of severely disrupting daily life and economic activity. Some businesses have shut down because of exorbitant demands from extortion networks run by the al-Qaeda originated Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). ISIS is conducting a similarly-targeted campaign of killing in Anbar and other Sunni-populated areas, even while conducting mass casualty attacks against Shia civilians to undermine state legitimacy. You may wish to listen to our recent podcast, Politics in Iraq and the ISIS.

Ninawa, an Extorted Province

ISIS’ strategy for Ninawa appears to be focused on eating into the state apparatus to raise money and extend control. It has muscled its way into local government, skimming money from the distribution of subsidized oil to gas stations and electric generators. So civil servants face a difficult choice between resisting ISIS’ demands and facing assassination, or cooperating with a terrorist group. The Army has issued arrest warrants for acting municipal administrator of Mosul Yahya Abdullah al-Hajjar, along with five of his staff. Hajjar’s predecessor resigned unexpectedly in August and refused requests for interviews. More than a dozen other municipality employees are also charged with abetting ISIS’s extortion schemes. Nujayfi has supported the accused, describing the charges against Hajjar and other as being “made in bad faith.”

Systematic attacks on officials of the Nujayfi administration suggest that the provincial government as a whole has not cooperated with ISIS’s extortion efforts. Most of Mosul’s mukhtars, the neighborhood-level officials who handle residency papers and other bureaucratic procedures, have quit after more than a dozen were assassinated. Eighty government officials have been killed in recent weeks, including several in a series of attacks on buses taking employees to work at the governor’s office. Mosul Mayor Hussein Ali Hajim was wounded in an assassination attempt.
ISIS in Ninawa is sufficiently confident of its strength that it has started imposing new policies bound to be unpopular with locals. Several teachers of English, a compulsory subject in Iraqi schools, have quit and others have been killed after an ISIS campaign against teaching the “infidels’ language.”\(^{58}\) ISIS has also launched a campaign against journalists, a campaign which may help check investigative reporting on the group’s extortion network, but also runs the risk of angering opinion leaders.\(^{59}\)

Federal security forces have added to the disruption of daily life Mosul through security measures which many residents view as punitive. They briefly shut down the city’s airport in September\(^ {60}\) and then all of its major bridges for three days in October, after an attack on the *Ninawa Operations Command* headquarters.\(^ {61}\)

**Attacks May Inflict Strategic Damage on Mutahidun**

The insurgent attacks may be weakening the political position of Nujayfi and his *Mutahidun* bloc in the run-up to next year’s parliamentary elections. Two former Mutahidun election candidates were assassinated in early December,\(^ {62}\) suggesting that the bloc itself is being targeted, perhaps for its advocacy of Sunni political participation. Voter registration in Mosul for the 2014 elections reportedly stood at four percent in October, and the *Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC)* has resorted to asking the military to airdrop leaflets over the city encouraging voter registration.\(^ {63}\)

Militants have also targeted Ninawa’s religious minorities, possibly pushing these pivotal groups away from Nujayfi and into the arms of the Kurds. Members of the Shabak, a minority sect, have fled Mosul for the plains north and east of the city.\(^ {64}\) ISIS has imposed a ban on Christians buying land in Mosul, driving away the minority with the strongest ties to Baghdad and to its Arabic-language administration.\(^ {65}\) Meanwhile, hundreds of Yezidi students from Sinjar have quit the University of Mosul after a series of attacks. Kurdish officials are trying to enroll these students in Kurdish universities.\(^ {66}\) The move could strengthen the disputed Sinjar district’s ties to Kurdish region.

**Nujayfi Fights The Odds in Push For Autonomous Oil Policy**

Despite the pressing security threats, Governor Nujayfi has had some success in pushing forward his plan for a provincial oil policy independent of federal control. The provincial council voted in September to authorize him to negotiate with international oil companies.\(^ {67}\) In late October, the council approved contract terms presented by Nujayfi for the creation of a new oil refinery in the province.\(^ {68}\) Article 112 of Iraq’s constitution reserves management of oil resources as a federal power, but Nujayfi’s supporters argue that this refers to oil extraction, not refining.\(^ {69}\)

Kurdish support is key to Nujayfi’s plans for a Ninawa oil refinery. A previous attempt to create such a refinery was defeated in January by Arab nationalist councilmen.\(^ {70}\)
Opponents argued that the refinery would be run by the KRG-affiliated *Kar Group*, and would be located in Kurdish-controlled areas of the province, effectively constituting an acquiescence to the KRG’s annexation of the disputed areas of northern Ninawa. Nujayfi’s governing coalition, formed after the July provincial council elections, is made up heavily of Kurds (IIP 67/6) and has thrown its support behind his initiative.

With Baghdad acquiescing to the move – only the *Fadhila Party* has spoken against it – Ninawa is free to move forward. Investors say the refinery would employ as many as five thousand Ninawa residents. More importantly, the flow of a proposed 150,000 barrels a day of oil to the refinery would give Arab and Kurdish politicians a strong incentive to avoid open conflict over the disputed territories. Any move by either side to claim the territories exclusively could disrupt the flow of oil. The refinery’s political impact will likely be enhanced by Ninawa’s inclusion in the oil smuggling networks that underlie retail gasoline distribution in Iraq.

**Anbar Leaders Face Down Protesters**

Anbar’s *Mutahidun*-led government has moved toward direct confrontation with their former protester allies, seeking to suspend protests in Ramadi until after elections in April. Council Chairman *Sabah al-Halbusi* argued that the protests should be suspended to prevent them from being exploited by extremists who oppose the political process. Halbusi was likely referring to a recent statement by leading cleric *Abd al-Malik al-Saadi* (profiled in IIP 54) that the upcoming parliamentary elections were “illegitimate.” Saadi’s remarks stopped just short of a call to boycott the elections.

Protesters have responded with a renewed call to form an “*Army of Pride and Dignity*” (*APD*), a call that is likely just empty rhetoric. The APD first appeared in May (IIP 61/2), but was limited to a brief appearances by armed men and appears never to have been an organized body. The new APD call is backed by some protest leaders, including Mufti *Rafia al-Rifai*. But it has been condemned by Governor *Ahmad al-Dhiyabi*, who promises to “break the back” of anyone trying to form such an extra-legal armed group. Dhiyabi blamed the calls for the formation of an APD on “some high school dropouts,” likely a reference to *Ali Hatem Sulayman*, a tribal firebrand who was nearly arrested in May, and who now reemerged to defend the protests (video).

Insurgent attacks on politicians in Anbar continue, but have not shaken cooperation with federal authorities. The chairman of the Rutba local council resigned after his son was kidnapped, and Fallujah Mayor *Adnan Hussein al-Dulaymi* was assassinated Nov. 13. Twelve candidates have already stepped forward to replace Dulaymi, suggesting Anbaris are still willing to accept the risks attending to political office. The provincial council met again with Defense Minister *Saadun al-Dulaymi* and appointing a new police chief, *Ismail al-Mahlawi*. The replacement of Police Chief *Hadi Rzayj* had been a sticking point with Baghdad (IIP 74/2).
Editor’s Note: The following two articles were published on June 20, 2014 for IIP No. 87.

The National Scene

Fall of Mosul Shakes Nation

The collapse of army and police forces in Mosul escalated the Sunni insurgency’s momentum with mainstream Sunni clerics almost all in support. Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki reacted by seizing emergency powers and rallying Shia mobilization while the Kurds and Shia militias are filling the void as Sunni Iraq heads toward calamity.

The insurgent offensive which began on June 5 with a feigned takeover in Samarra, followed by a complex assault on Mosul June 6 and a hostage-taking at the University of Anbar in Ramadi June 7-8 was unprecedented in its scale and success, though insurgent forces have been recovering strength since 2012. Ninawa was always the strongest front for both the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq & al-Sham (ISIS) and the Baathist Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia (JRTN). Last December, we assessed that Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi’s government was “under exceptional pressure from an organized terrorist attempt to takeover local administration,” noting 80 Mosul officials had been assassinated in just a few weeks (IIP 75/1, 6). Maliki’s politically-motivated raid against Anbar protesters in December (IIP 76) gave insurgents a running start.

Given widespread Sunni desertions, it is clear Maliki was correct to view Sunni TV channels as a psychological warfare threat. The dissolution of security forces recruited from Sunni areas follows a long period during which talk of the “Maliki army” arresting, torturing and killing innocent Sunnis has been daily fare on Sunni TV. Even channels tied to the political process like Baghdad and al-Taghier have provided “soft” insurgent propaganda by daily highlighting government abuses while ignoring ISIS, to say nothing of explicitly pro-insurgency channels like al-Rafidayn and al-Gharbiya.

Mainstream Sunni clerical leaders are nearly unanimous in support of the insurgency, but they are the blind leading the blind. Leading clerics including Shaykhs Muhammad Taha Hamdun (Samarra imam and the protest movement’s leader) and Ahmad Said (Baquba) have been giving interviews praising the “revolutionaries” in an unreal manner, largely ignoring ISIS and calling on Shia to stand aside and let them take Maliki down. Hamdun, for example, speaking from Irbil on June 15, described ISIS as “imaginary” and seemed genuinely perplexed Shia had united against them.

The crisis is likely to leave the security services more purely Shia, with Sunnis cleansed from Baghdad and Diyala, as Shia have uniformly mobilized to replace deserting Sunnis. (See the Political Focus below). We noted Sunni complaints of violent cleansing, especially in Diyala, before the election, and this process should accelerate.
Furthermore, not one Shia neighborhood is likely to fall. They have even defended vulnerable majority-Shia Turkoman Talafar in western Ninawa.\textsuperscript{91}

The Kurds stand to gain the most from the crisis. On June 11, the Peshmerga took the positions in Kirkuk vacated by the army’s 12th Division,\textsuperscript{92} fully controlling Kirkuk for the first time, control they will not relinquish. After days of fighting they also appear to have defeated Sunni insurgents in the mixed northern Diyala districts of Saadiya and Jalula,\textsuperscript{93} and should be able to seize all Article 140 “Disputed Territories” through the crisis. What they will not do is rescue Baghdad, which has spent the past five months choking them economically over oil exports to Turkey (IIP 81).

The Political Class: Paralyzed & Polarized in Equal Measure
Mosul’s fall left the political class in as much of a shock as the rest of the nation. Maliki’s main response was to request martial law powers (video), which parliament refused by failing to make quorum. Maliki responded by having the cabinet give him emergency powers anyway, using the 2004 National Safety Defense Law (which is arguably invalid since it is contradicted by the 2005 constitution).\textsuperscript{94} Maliki then shut down web services supporting social media websites, although many Iraqis are able to get around it.\textsuperscript{95} Maliki has not suggested any change in policy, but released a video of a presentation to military officers during his June 13 trip to Samarra, and another speech to Shia recruits in Baghdad (video). In his June 11 national address, he attributed the fall of Mosul to an unspecified “conspiracy” (video). All contained conventional rhetoric.

The government’s focus has been in controlling the message, so state TV has been running propaganda of military songs and poetry with videos of security services training or conducting operations. Maliki’s Shia rivals have largely fallen in line; Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) leader Ammar al-Hakim even traded his clerical robes for military fatigues in advocating popular mobilization (video). Bloc leaders held two meetings at Ibrahim al-Jaafari’s home: on June 11\textsuperscript{96} with no statement, and on June 17, from which they produced a boilerplate declaration (video).

Sunni political leaders could not be less relevant. Speaker Osama al-Nujayfi and his brother, Ninawa Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi, have been the only prominent voices. They advocated the same policy as during the campaign; an autonomous region for Ninawa. Osama added on June 15 (video) that at the Jaafari meeting, in addition to a region, he proposed an army division with a Ninawa-native-only chain-of-command, thus creating a Sunni version of the Kurdish Peshmerga. On June 11, Uthil announced an interim administration in Talkayf (north of Mosul in Kurdish-controlled territory), and planned to take back Mosul through “popular committees” which would fight ISIS and co-opt nationalist insurgents.\textsuperscript{97} In the interim, Nujayfi’s bloc proposed a “Salvation Government” composed of a Shia-Suni-Kurd triumvirate which would oversee new elections.\textsuperscript{98} None of Nujayfi’s allies speak as if they realize why no Shia Islamists, who collectively just won an outright majority, are even considering the proposal.
Security Focus

Security Forces Collapse in Ninawa, Salah al-Din, Kirkuk

The collapse of army and federal police units in Mosul was due to a mixture of poor leadership and low morale, the shock of which facilitated insurgents’ ability to intimidate units in rural Ninawa, Huwija and northern Salah al-Din into desertion.

The collapse of Mosul security forces during the June 6-10 insurgent offensive was shocking, but more understandable in light of their positioning and inept leadership. The 3rd Federal Police Division (3FPD) was responsible for Mosul west of the Tigris (the “Right Side”) while the 2nd Army Division (2AD) was responsible for Arab areas on the east of the Tigris (the “Left Side,” or northeast Mosul) with two of its four brigades to the south (an Arab brigade is just to the south and a Kurdish brigade farther south in Makhmur). The Peshmerga held Kurdish areas in the east directly across from Mosul city. (From a map, the “Right Side” is to the left/west of the river, and the “Left Side” is to its right; this local terminology reflects someone looking southeast, the direction of water flow.) While contemporaneous reports indicate many personnel resisted the onslaught, each unit operated in isolation for days against a well-coordinated assault that used suicide bombings to paralyze key nerve points.

An Islamic State of Iraq & al-Sham (ISIS)-led offensive beginning June 6 seized several areas in west Mosul quickly, surrounding the 3FPD’s 3rd Battalion, a crucial point because it guarded the Sawlat al-Fursan Brigade headquarters near city administration. On June 7, al-Mada quoted a 3rd Battalion source saying soldiers who had been present on the Right Side withdrew. Attacks in various parts of the city left dozens dead, possibly a factor in the failure to send relief.99 ISIS first tried to enter the Left Side on June 8 with limited forces and were repelled.100 The 3FPD’s Riot Police Battalion lost its commander on June 6,101 and on June 7 the 1st Battalion commander went down.102

The 3FPD is key because it protected west Mosul, which includes the bulk of Arab Mosul and key infrastructure such as municipal administration and prisons. On June 9, at 10 a.m. al-Qartas News reported police were fighting back in several neighborhoods, and that the army was shelling positions in west Mosul (this appears to have been the army’s sole effort to help) while the Left Side remained secure.103

Contemporaneous reports from local sources suggest that on June 9 two of the 3FPD’s battalions (1st and the 7th) withdrew early, then two key commanders were killed by suicide bombers – SWAT Commander Riyan Abd al-Razzaq and 4th Battalion Commander Thiyab al-Obaydi – and these events combined with the 3rd Battalion headquarters’ fall after a three-day siege appears to have broken the back of the federal police.104 While we cannot account for what happened to all nine of the 3FPD’s battalions, there were several other suicide attacks the same day and some may have suffered similar losses. The entire division broke and fled later that evening.105
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>TACTICAL SITUATION</th>
<th>INSURGENT PRESENCE</th>
<th>KEY DEVELOPMENTS</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anbar – Ramadi</td>
<td>Mostly government control with several contested areas</td>
<td>MCTR/ISIS/JRTN</td>
<td>Sporadic clashes continue in the Tamim neighborhood and in southern outskirts of Ramadi, occasional attacks west of the city.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar – Falluja</td>
<td>Insurgent control</td>
<td>MCTR/ISIS/IA/JM</td>
<td>Siege of Fallujah has been loosened somewhat by insurgent advances, including capture of the Maftul crossing point to Saqlawiya.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar – Karma</td>
<td>Contested</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/IA/JM</td>
<td>Months of clashes between army forces and insurgent bands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar – Saqlawiya</td>
<td>Contested</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/IA</td>
<td>Insurgents seized Karabila and Ramana areas of Qaim, but are facing a counterattack by police, army and Al Bu Mahal tribesmen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anbar – Qaim</td>
<td>Mostly government control</td>
<td>MCTR/ISIS/IA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala - Baquba</td>
<td>Mostly government control</td>
<td>MCTR/JRTN/IA</td>
<td>Government has nominal control amid numerous insurgent attacks, including taking the Mafraq police station in western Baquba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala – Muqdadiya</td>
<td>Mostly government control</td>
<td>MCTR/IA/JRTN</td>
<td>Insurgents claim up to 12 different neighborhoods in Diyala; most are in this Sunni area north of Baquba.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala - Khalis</td>
<td>Government &amp; Shia militia control</td>
<td>MCTR/JRTN</td>
<td>Insurgents have carried out multiple attacks, including assassination of ISCI’s communications director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diyala – Jalula &amp; Saadiya</td>
<td>Peshmerga control</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/JRTN</td>
<td>Insurgents made a strong effort to take these two mixed Kurd-Arab sub-districts, but appear to be losing in battles against the Peshmerga.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk - Kirkuk City Center</td>
<td>Peshmerga control</td>
<td>Small IED teams and sleeper cells</td>
<td>All federal army bases, including K-1, are now under Peshmerga control. Local Kurdish police remain active.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk - Riyadh</td>
<td>Mostly Peshmerga control</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/JM/IA</td>
<td>Seized by Peshmerga June 12, reports of sporadic clashes with insurgents in nearby villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkuk - Huwija</td>
<td>Insurgent control</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/JM/IA</td>
<td>Army units dissolved without a fight.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa – Rabia</td>
<td>Contested</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Peshmerga control the Rabia border crossing and most surrounding areas, mostly populated by Yazidis. ISIS is active in Biaj, a mostly Arab area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa – Mosul</td>
<td>Insurgent control</td>
<td>ISIS/MCTR/JRTN/1920/AS/IA</td>
<td>No government security presence remains in Arab Mosul. Some reports of infighting between JRTN and ISIS in eastern Mosul neighborhoods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninawa – Talafar</td>
<td>Contested</td>
<td>ISIS</td>
<td>Fierce fighting since June 13.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah al-Din – Samarra</td>
<td>Government control</td>
<td>ISIS/JRTN/MCTR</td>
<td>Govt repulsed June 5 attack by ISIS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salah al-Din – Bayji</td>
<td>Mostly insurgent control</td>
<td>ISIS/JRTN/MCTR/IA</td>
<td>Insurgent controlled since June 10-11; government forces are holding out at the Bayji oil refinery against ISIS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table is not a comprehensive account but only a snapshot as of June 17. In determining which insurgent group is present in an area, we have relied primarily on insurgent sources since government sources often claim they are fighting ISIS regardless of who is present. **Acronyms:** ISIS = Islamic State of Iraq & al-Sham; JRTN = Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandia; MCTR = Military Council of Tribal Revolutionaries; IA = Islamic Army; JM = Jaysh al-Mujahidin; 1920 = 1920 Revolution Brigades; AS = Ansar al-Sunna. Note that we use MCTR for unidentified non-ISIS insurgents; the other groups all use the MCTR label but operate separately.
Poor leadership sapped security forces’ confidence, contributing to mass desertions. Ninawa Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi foresaw the disaster, warning reporters June 7 that west Mosul could not hold out. On the evening of June 8, Nujayfi went on TV to call on citizens to take up arms and resist ISIS. To dispel rumors he had fled the city, Nujayfi had himself filmed, rifle in hand, visiting checkpoints in central Mosul the evening of June 8 (video). In a press conference in Irbil three days later, Nujayfi alleged he had requested weapons but was refused assistance by Generals Ali Ghaydan and Abud Kanbar, who had arrived on June 7 to direct operations. Both men fled to Irbil June 9 and Nujayfi called for them to be court martialed for criminal negligence.

While at least some federal police put up a fight, the desertion by army units, none of which faced strong assaults, can only be explained by a mixture of poor morale and bad leadership. Ghaydan replaced 2AD Commander Abd al-Muhsin al-Muhammadawi, who appears to have been passive during the crisis, on June 9. The role of Ninawa Operations Commander Mahdi al-Gharawi – who had command over both the 3FPD and the 2AD – is also unclear. On June 10, Iraq Press Agency quoted a “senior officer” as saying the order to withdraw the 2AD from the Left Side had come from Gharawi. And on June 11, Gharawi stated “I will not leave Ninawa other than as a corpse,” but he was in the 2AD’s 5th Battalion headquarters in Khazir, 30 kilometers northeast of Mosul and well out of danger. Maliki relieved him of command later that day.

The 2AD collapsed as soon as Muhammadawi was replaced, and it is not clear whether there was an order to withdraw, as some soldiers have told reporters, or if it was a collective psychological collapse. Insurgent sources claim that many soldiers voluntarily surrendered their weapons in agreements with insurgents, and perhaps that is what happened. The collapse of the 3rd Army Division, stationed in Ninawa’s countryside, is even more mysterious, as it faced no major attack. When on June 17 Maliki announced he was referring its commander, General Hidayat Abd al-Rahman, for court martial, his statement noted only that Abd al-Rahman had “fled from battle to an unknown location” (video). While the 3rd Division’s four brigades were outside the city, as were three of the 2AD’s brigades, they could have made it to west Mosul within much less than three days. In addition to Abd al-Rahman and numerous lower-ranking officers, Maliki also ordered the prosecution of Gharawi, his deputy, and his chief-of-staff.

That Ghaydan (army chief-of-staff) and Kanbar (joint forces commander) were even there may be a symptom of the problem, as both have national-level commands. After returning to Baghdad via Irbil, both men went to Samarra, which had become a frontline city. Yet Samarra has its own operations commander, General Sabah al-Fatlawi....

Editor’s Note: Two facts regarding the narrative here are notable given public claims made about Mosul’s fall. One, many commentators in the international media have claimed that “not a shot was fired” in defense of Mosul when the Islamic State attacked. But this is not true –
some personnel from the 3rd Federal Police Division fought for nearly four days without assistance on the west bank (the “Right Side”) of the river. It is true that army units, some just kilometers away across the bridge on the east (“Left Side”) of the Tigris, stood by and did nothing and then collapsed. This undermines a key element of Maliki’s defense, as he claims that the locally-recruited police commander – though appointed by federal Interior Ministry – sympathized with the insurgents and dissolved his forces without a fight. What is clear from our endnote citations is that the fight in west Mosul was being reported contemporaneously, during the June 6-10 period, so anyone following the fight in Iraq’s own Arabic-language media would have known that these federal police were fighting for their lives.

Two, Maliki also claims the Kurds were responsible for Mosul’s collapse because they ordered Kurdish personnel in the 2nd Army Division to withdraw, precipitating a panic. This obfuscates the reality – the 2nd Division had four brigades, three Arab and one Kurdish. One Arab brigade was across the bridge on the east side of the river, facing the southeast areas of Mosul which are partially Kurdish. One was just to the north, one was just to the south of the city, and then the fourth brigade – the Kurdish one – was farther to the south near Makhmur. What is clear from where Maliki had the Arab brigades stationed is that he had army units perfectly positioned to defend Arab Mosul against a Kurdish invasion. Although the Peshmerga appears not to have had a significant presence right across from Mosul proper, what matters is Maliki’s mindset, which from other public statements was clearly oriented toward the Kurds. This is conjecture we did not mention at the time, but one explanation for why that army brigade in east Mosul stood by while federal police across the bridge were fighting jihadists is that Arab commanders were either directed by Maliki to give a supposed Kurdish threat priority, or perhaps made this assessment on their own. The Iraqi army did have other forces in Ninawa – the 3rd Army Division – but they were in rural areas well away from Mosul and irrelevant to the fight. It was the Arab brigades of the 2nd Army Division which could have saved Mosul but did not.

As we note in the article from June 2013, the relationship was bad not only between Governor Nujayfi and Prime Minister Maliki but also between Nujayfi and federal military commanders. The lack of coordination among government-aligned forces was a clear factor in allowing jihadists to take over Mosul, and these relationships must have been a factor.

Finally, part of this issue, edited out here, included a thank you to Dr. Michael Knights of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy for his assistance with the brigades and divisions of the Iraqi army. His input was essential in providing an analysis of these events.

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Editor’s Note: The following two segments was published on July 19, 2014 in IIP No. 89. The first is a subsection of the National Scene for that issue. The second focuses on Ninawa.

Note that our comment in the first paragraph of the Provincial Focus about the JRTN having taken over Arab east Mosul probably exaggerated the reality. While there was clearly some JRTN presence, and they may well have been the only armed non-jihadist group in that area for a short period, they never managed to really establish themselves there and it is unclear whether they controlled it completely. Our statement was based on news reports – and indeed a
public statement by Nujayfi himself – which may have been based on the JRTN’s own exaggerated projection of its military power.

[Initial sections of the National Scene edited out]......

**Maliki Still Losing to Kurds, Insurgents**

It is one of the ironies of Maliki’s tenure that despite taking a hard line on Kurdish demands to shore up political support, his failure as a military leader has given the Kurds all they ever wanted. On July 9, Maliki tried this once more, claiming in an address (video) that Irbil was the “operations room” for jihadis from the *Islamic State* (formerly *Islamic State of Iraq & al-Sham*, still referred to by Iraqis as *Daash*). Although several prominent Sunni clerics backing nationalist insurgent groups are based in Kurdistan, the claim was unfounded. But it ultimately led to Kurds taking more territory. On July 10, Kurdish ministers withdrew from the cabinet in protest (newscast), so Maliki replaced Foreign Minister *Hoshyar Zebari* with Shahristani, and then the following day the Peshmerga took the Kirkuk and Bai Hassan oil fields. These fields have around 500,000 bpd production, according to *Iraq Oil Report*.117

On the military front, it is ever more clear that Maliki’s security policies based on centralization, politicization and corruption (which we addressed with features in *IIP* 54, 56, 59) have left the country militarily impotent. The most recent high-profile fiasco came on July 15, when the government and pro-government media trumpeted the retaking of Tikrit,118 but it was only a matter of hours before insurgents sprung a trap on advancing forces, requiring a hasty retreat following significant losses.119

The nationalist insurgents held a “Conference of Iraqi Revolutionary Forces” in Amman on July 16. The declaration was vague, focused on calls for the international community to recognize “the revolutionaries” and hold the Iraqi government accountable for its crimes. It made no mention of the autonomous region issue, no reference to there being jihadis or foreign fighters, nor any to “Sunni” demands (a play on non-sectarianism), and not even a reference to Maliki by name (which Jordanian authorities prohibited).120

Yet the conference is notable as the broadest open insurgent meeting so far. It was presided over by the Amman-based *Abd al-Malik al-Saadi*, but included the Irbil-based *Muhammad Taha Hamdun* (respectively leaders of the clerical establishment’s anti-region and pro-region wings). It also included such diverse factions as the *Arab Socialist Baath Party* (the *Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqa al-Naqshbandiya (JRTN)* is its military wing), the *Islamic Army* and its political front, and the *Muslim Scholars Association*. Comments in interviews emphasized the insurgency as a nationalist struggle to end “Iranian control” of Iraq.121 Nujayfi ally *Muhammad al-Khalidi* associated Mutahidun with the conference by making positive statements about it to *al-Mada*.122

Indeed Mutahidun’s alignment with the insurgency is becoming ever more concrete. We have noted previously how Mutahidun rhetoric has closely tracked that of
insurgent political leaders. On July 13 Ninawa Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi effectively declared plans to establish a joint administration with the JRTN – which largely controls Arab east Mosul – and other insurgents, even suggesting he might give up the governorship. Both Uthil and Osama have described nationalist insurgents in neutral or positive terms, anathematizing only the Islamic State. Their apparent belief that Baghdad will fund a JRTN-run Mosul is puzzling. Regardless, we discuss Uthil’s role from Kurdish-controlled Ninawa further in the Provincial Focus below.

Provincial Focus

Ninawa’s Rump Government Shows False Optimism

Ninawa Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi is relying on questionable assumptions to restore himself to Mosul, and the province’s remaining non-IS-held territories are more likely to fall under direct control of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

Since the fall of Mosul on June 10, Nujayfi has remained active in the media, calling for a compromise with non-jihadist insurgent groups. In a July 13 interview with al-Sumaria TV, he predicted IS would soon withdraw from Mosul, and called for negotiations with local insurgent factions, including Jaysh Rijal a-Tariqa al- Naqshabandia (JRTN), the Islamic Army, and Jaysh al-Mujahidin (the JRTN has taken over Arab east Mosul). He predicted Mosul would “return to normal” in just “two or three months.” On July 10 he had called for a local militia force, not affiliated with the army, to liberate west Mosul. More realistically than some Sunni leaders, Nujayfi does not deny IS’ existence, but says that the group is “foreign to Mosul” and will not last.

In practice, IS appears to be strengthening its grip on west Mosul. In the first week of July, the group rounded up dozens of Saddam-era army officers to preempt any challenge to its power. IS has also begun paying partial salaries to Mosul municipal employees, some of whom are still on the job. Employees of other government offices in Mosul are without salaries. Some continue to work, but without any budget from Baghdad, the city’s hospitals are running low on critical medical supplies.

Nujayfi appears entirely devoid of realism about not only IS, but Baghdad’s certain opposition to him governing Ninawa with Baathists and other insurgents which not only Maliki but Shia leaders in general barely differentiate from the jihadists. Nujayfi claims to have convinced Maliki “through some contacts” to fund the formation of an anti-IS militia, but as yet, there is no evidence that such a force exists on the ground. Baghdad has continued paying the salaries of Ninawa provincial councilmen, but not of their staff. Government employees in non-IS territory, including Hamdaniya and Shaykhan, are receiving salaries, but employees and pensioners inside IS territory have been completely cut off. As noted in the NS above, Nujayfi and his brother Osama have consistently predicated their plans on working with insurgents. It is worth noting that the Baathist JRTN currently controls the Nujayfi family estate.
Nujayfi is also undercut by Kurdish efforts to integrate Ninawa’s remaining territories, all of them minority-inhabited, into the KRG. Ninawa Council Chairman Bashar al-Kiki, a member of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), has worked to provide the Christian areas of Talkayf and Hamdaniya with fuel and water from Duhok, while connecting the ethnically diverse districts of Bashiq and Bartalla to the KRG’s electric network. IS control will likely push Christians, Yezidis, and Shabak in rural Ninawa closer to KRG, as their historic ties to Mosul are broken by fear of sectarian killings.

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Editor’s Note: The next two segments appeared on Jan. 20, 2015 in IIP No. 100. The first segment was a subsection of the National Scene. The second section excerpts parts of a Provincial Focus article which deals with all of the Sunni provinces.

[Parts of the National Scene edited out].....

Political Fissures Continue on Security Policy

Abadi’s commitment to establish a decentralized “national guard” continues to face hurdles. (We previously noted opposition to the bill, which is primarily backed by Vice-President Osama al-Nujayfi’s Mutahidun, from Shia factions; see IIP 94/3). On Jan. 14 al-Mada quoted an unnamed Shia bloc source as saying that “40 articles” were deleted from the draft, even as Minister of State Saman Abdullah said that the bill was under revision by National Security Advisor Falih al-Fayyad’s office, and that it would then go to the State Shura Council before cabinet approval. Al-Sabah al-Jadid cited a source as saying that there were disputes over 70 percent of the bill’s provisions. Abadi, nonetheless, continues to signal support for the national guard project.

Defense Minister Khalid al-Obaydi is endeavoring to give security policy a veneer of national unity. The Defense Ministry held a key meeting in Baghdad with Peshmerga Ministry officials on Jan. 7, the first high-level meeting in two years (including defense and interior ministers from both capitals, and US Ambassador Stuart Jones). Afterward Obaydi, along with his patron, VP Nujayfi, visited a Kurdish base in Makhmur, Ninawa. Obaydi has worked closely with Shia leaders, visited Iran on Dec. 29-30 (IIP 99/10), and has boasted of the formation of a Baghdad-KRG “joint operations room,” and “completion of preparations to liberate Mosul,” reported on state media.

Yet Obaydi’s Jan. 9 visit (video) to Makhmur (south of Mosul) only highlighted the Baghdad-Irbil divide on security policy. Baghdad has provided only token weapons to Sunni volunteers, and their force reportedly struggles to feed itself, much less fight. Nujayfi visited the headquarters of General Sirwan Barzani, who commands the (federal army but ethnic Kurdish) 5th Brigade. After praising the KRG, Nujayfi said “we hope for more help” from Baghdad, and claimed to have authority over the force “by commission from President Fuad Masum,” a Kurd who lacks such authority.
Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi, who was also present, later explained that in addition to the 5th Brigade, there would be two Arab forces: the Mosul Brigades, made up of police at Camp Liberate Ninawa, and a new camp for separate “national mobilization” forces.\textsuperscript{145}

A key budget obscurity also relates to this nuanced evolution in Nujayfi rhetoric (from both Osama and Uthil) in referring to “national mobilization.” The phrase is a take-off from the Shia “popular mobilization” (\textit{al-hashd al-watani} instead of \textit{al-hashd al-shaabi}). Osama’s reference to the lack of funding for his force in the budget is apparently an attempt to get around the need to pass a separate bill (the Hashd itself was created in June by Maliki without statutory basis). Yet the budget does not directly fund the Shia Hashd either; instead, it is apparently embedded within the cabinet’s budget, a fact which would explain the cabinet’s otherwise inexplicably large $1.2 billion budget.\textsuperscript{146} This would also give Abadi direct, extra-ministerial control of all irregular forces.

**Provincial Focus**

**Sunni Governors Remain Dependent on Outside Support**

Sunni governors are seeking help against the Islamic State (IS) wherever they can find it as most of their provinces’ territory is under IS control. Ninawa Governor-in-Exile Uthil al-Nujayfi, based in Irbil, risks being sidelined by his Kurdish allies.

[Segments of this article relating to other provinces edited out]........

In Ninawa, Governor Nujayfi clings on from exile in Irbil, where he is plotting an effort to liberate the provincial capital, Mosul, from IS,\textsuperscript{147} an effort we discussed in the National Scene above. Nujayfi’s force is led by former Ninawa police chief Khalid al-Hamdani. Nujayfi and his allies on the council are actively recruiting men for Hamdani’s force, although it seems that only some of the men are receiving salaries.\textsuperscript{148} Nujayfi is clearly the unifying power behind this force: Nujayfi favors Hamdani and has even blamed the fall of Mosul on Hamdani’s removal by Maliki in late 2013.\textsuperscript{149} Defense Minister Obaydi was also with Nujayfi in Mosul as an advisor during those events.

Nujayfi’s administration-in-exile risks being sidelined by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). The chairman of Ninawa’s provincial council, Bashar al-Kiki of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), is actively building ties between Yezidis and other minorities and the KRG, a trend that leaves Nujayfi marginalized.\textsuperscript{150} The Peshmerga are training thousands of Christian, Yezidi, and Shabak volunteers, who will be deployed as mono-ethnic units under Peshmerga control.\textsuperscript{151} Nujayfi has tried to oversee the deployment of Ninawa police to Sinjar and other areas liberated by Peshmerga in mid-December, urging them to help prevent revenge attacks and collective punishment of Sunni tribes in these areas.\textsuperscript{152} But these areas were under KRG security control even before the fall of Mosul, and Sunni police are unlikely to be given any real security role.
Nujayfi may survive in part because he is so weak that he poses little threat to other political players. Ground Forces Commander Riyadh Jalal Tawfiq visited Camp Liberate Mosul on Jan. 4, suggesting the army may cooperate with Nujayfi’s efforts.\textsuperscript{153} Nujayfi’s efforts allow Kurdish and federal authorities to maintain the image of ongoing efforts to liberate Mosul, even though this may turn out to be a substantial period away.

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\textit{Editor’s Note}: The two segments below were published on April 20, 2015 in IIP No. 105. The first segment is a subsection of a Kurdistan Focus article, the remainder of which focuses on internal KRG politics. The second segment is the full text of the Provincial Focus article we published focusing on Ninawa for that issue.

[Section of article relating to internal KRG politics edited out].....

**KDP Pushes to Restore Its Dominion Over Ninawa Yezidis**

The KDP is fighting hard to restore its political hegemony over the Yezidi community in Ninawa, which was undermined by the loss of Sinjar and other Yezidi areas to IS last year. The KDP Peshmerga’s collapse in the face of the jihadist assault, exposing Yezidis to massacre and enslavement, caused them to begin looking for alternative sources of political and military support. On April 7, KDP security forces arrested Hayder Shesho, a member of the PUK’s Politburo and the commander of a Yezidi militia called the \textit{Sinjar Protection Force (HBS)}. They accused Shesho of illicit dealings with Baghdad for having accepted salaries for his men via the Hashd;\textsuperscript{154} we noted previously that Yezidi militia forces were divided between the KDP and Baghdad-funded PUK forces (\textit{IIP 102/7}). The PUK naturally condemned the arrest and called for his release.\textsuperscript{155} Shesho was released on April 13, after promising to end his relationship with Baghdad.\textsuperscript{156}

The question remains whether the KDP can capitalize on divisions among its rivals, but the Shesho affair, and the lack of real interest in fighting IS in Sinjar, shows the priority given to the intra-Kurdish struggle. Media coverage has overstated Sinjar’s liberation, as fighting continues and IS still controls the district center and some outlying areas.\textsuperscript{157} Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK)-affiliated militias are still active, operating separately from the Peshmerga.\textsuperscript{158} The KDP remains a strong player due to its contingent of Yezidi militiamen, led by Qasim Shesho (Hayder’s uncle). Yet as we noted previously, Qasim himself had switched sides last year, and so the KDP’s Yezidi allies may not be reliable.

...... [remainder of Kurdistan Focus article.]
Provincial Focus

Ninawa Arabs Weak, Divided & Marginalized

Governor Uthil al-Nujayfi’s little-armed force to liberate Mosul has been sidelined, but divisions among rivals keep his job safe until the next election. Abadi’s new commander may also undermine him by tying tribes directly to the army.

Governor Nujayfi has been largely marginalized from efforts to liberate Mosul, held by IS since June. His marginalization was emphasized during Abadi’s April 6 visit to Irbil. Abadi met with Nujayfi briefly at the airport on his way back to Baghdad, in a meeting that was not televised, publicized, or even announced by Abadi’s press office. According to Nujayfi, he and Abadi spoke in broad terms about the fight against IS, and agreed to discuss the matter further at a future meeting someday in Baghdad.\(^159\)

The Sunni volunteers under Nujayfi’s direction, based at several camps in KRG-controlled parts of the province, are not a serious military force. Some sources say as many as 8,000 volunteers have been trained so far,\(^160\) but the number actually receiving salaries appears to be lower, perhaps as low as 1,400.\(^161\) The volunteers complete three week training sessions, and according to one volunteer, the majority are civilians, not former police or army personnel.\(^162\) Most volunteers are not issued weapons. Those who complete the training are not assigned to military formations, but are simply sent home to wait for orders.\(^163\) Nujayfi describes the training as being overseen by the international coalition against IS, but the only foreign country openly supporting his effort is Turkey, which has deployed a tiny contingent of about 20 military trainers.\(^164\)

Council Chairman Bashar al-Kiki of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) nominally supports Nujayfi — Kurdish votes secured Nujayfi’s 2013 reelection — but is in practice aiding KRG efforts to annex northern Ninawa. Kiki has praised the Nujayfi-led effort to recruit volunteers to liberate Mosul and has even criticized federal authorities for failing to provide them with weapons.\(^165\) Yet Kiki is also spearheading the KRG’s efforts to recruit Christians and Shabak into a new “Ninawa Plains Protection Force,” under the auspices of the Peshmerga.\(^166\) This force’s primary training camp is at Feshkhabur in Duhok, emphasizing its connection to the KRG rather than to the Ninawa government.

Nujayfi’s Rivals Divided Between Baghdad & Irbil

Divisions among Nujayfi’s rivals should keep his position safe until the next elections in 2017. Nujayfi’s most nationally-vocal opponent from Ninawa is MP Abd al-Rahman al-Luwayzi. Luwayzi has blamed Nujayfi for the fall of Mosul to IS, and has condemned Nujayfi’s ties to both Turkey and the KRG.\(^167\) More controversially, Luwayzi has
defended the Shia Hashd, arguing that they should be given a role in the liberation of Mosul. Luwayzi also accused Sunni leaders of shedding “crocodile tears” over supposed abuses in Tikrit. Luwayzi’s pro-Hashd line may leave him without strong Sunni support, and with the Kurds controlling the largest faction on the Ninawa council, he will likely have to wait until 2017 to challenge Nujayfi.

Tribal leader Fawaz al-Jarba of the Shamar tribe is trying to use his Shia political ties to organize a new Sunni militia to rival Nujayfi’s volunteers. Jarba has historically enjoyed good ties with both Barzani’s KDP and with Ammar al-Hakim of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI), making him something of an outsider in Ninawa Sunni politics. Jarba says that he will create a new force, Nujaba Um al-Rabiayn, to be based in Tikrit. Jarba’s decision to base the force in Tikrit suggests he seeks to ally himself with federal authorities, perhaps using his relationship with ISCI. Like Luwayzi, Jarba’s effort to win support from Baghdad presents no immediate threat to Nujayfi.

Abdullah al-Yawer, a longtime Nujayfi rival, has taken the opposite tack, building ties to the KRG. Yawer had long been a critic of the KRG’s role in Ninawa but he reconciled with the Kurds after the fall of Mosul. Yawer accompanied the Peshmerga forces who retook Rabia from IS in early October, assuring locals that they would be protected from any revenge attacks over IS atrocities against the area’s Yezidi population (video). Like Jarba, Yawer is a member of the Shamar, yet the two cannot unite against Nujayfi. KDP ties to both Nujayfi and Yawer may be an effective “divide-and-rule” strategy.

New Army Commander in Ninawa to Work with US & Tribes

Abadi has chosen a new general with strong US ties to lead the Ninawa Operations Command. General Najm Abdullah al-Jiburi, a native of Qayara in southern Ninawa, whom a commentator for the Christian Ghar Ishtar called “more American than the Americans,” assumed the position in early April. Jiburi served as mayor of Talafar 2005-2009, and has worked since 2009 at a Washington, D.C. research institution affiliated with the US Department of Defense. Abadi may know Jiburi from Talafar, where the two men both worked in 2005-2006 (IIP 92/6). In a late-March interview, Jiburi said that the operation to take Mosul would require lengthy preparations, and that arming local Sunni tribes in Ninawa would be a prerequisite to victory (video).

Jiburi’s appointment suggests not only reliance on the US, but another way to undermine Nujayfi by tying local Sunni tribes directly to Baghdad, bypassing Nujayfi’s force in Kurdish-controlled territory. And Jiburi’s focus on tribal engagement is good news for Sunnis worried about militia abuses, although not all have welcomed Jiburi. A statement issued April 15 by some Jiburi shaykhs from southern Ninawa expressed willingness to work with Abadi but criticized Najm for “abandoning” Talafar.

IS is also engaging in tribal outreach, holding a mass pledge of allegiance in late March (video). The credentials of many of the “shaykhs” are questionable, particularly Abd al-
Salam al-Jiburi and Safuk al-Hanish. VP Osama al-Nujayfi dismissed the meeting as a show, saying that only one of the shaykhs present was a real tribal leader (video).


_Free Iraqi Intifada_, March 25, 2013.


_Free Iraqi Intifada_, April 14, 2013.

_Free Iraq Intifada_, April 21, 2013; _Saeed al-Lafi_, April 21, 2013.


“Statement from the Army of the Men of the Naqshbandia Way on Self-Defense and a Warning Against the Call for Regions,” _al-Naqshbandia_, May 6, 2013.


“Mosulites Prepare for Possible Curfew as Prices Rise,” _Aswat al-Iraq_, April 17, 2013.


“Ninawa Governor Announces Agreement With Security Forces to Reduce Load on Citizens and Cut Back Curfew Hours,” _All Iraq News_, May 9, 2013.


48 The FII’s Twitter account is @intifadat_ahrar. See for illustration this June 2 post, which reads, “The Sons of the Revolting Iraqi Tribes Completed the Burning and Destruction of a Hummer Convoy of the Criminal Safavid Army” and then links to this post on their Facebook page.


Baghdad TV was founded by the Islamic Party and is tied to Speaker Nujayfi’s Mutahidun; al-Taghier is funded by Sunni businessman Khamis Khanjar, the funder of the Dignity Bloc. Although Dignity won only a single seat (in Salah al-Din), the channel’s programs are frequented by a wide range of prominent political figures.

We generally watch these channels live, but videos of programs are numerous on Youtube; see for example this *al-Rafidayn* the week before Maliki’s Ramadi raid.
For Hamdun’s Irbil interview, see this al-Taghier program. Our assessment of clerical leaders’ views is also based on viewing interviews live on this and other channels.

See IIP 82/2 – we called Buhruz an “alleged massacre” at the time, but at this point the evidence is pretty clear the qualification is not necessary. See “Before Iraq Election, “Shi’ite Militias Unleashed in War Against Sunni Insurgents,” Reuters, April 28, 2014.


The constitution requires a request by the PM and the president combined with a two-thirds majority in parliament to declare martial law. This directly contradicts the 2004 law, which grants this power to the cabinet.


Viewed live on al-Jazeera Mubashar.


“ISIS Surrounds Men of the Sawlat al-Fursan Brigade in Western Mosul as They Call For Help,” al-Mada Press, June 7, 2014.

“Attemp from ISIS to Enter Left Side Foiled,” Qoraysh, June 8, 2014.

“Killing or Wounding of 30 Police Including Battalion Commander Fighting ISIS in Mosul,” YNews Iraq, June 6, 2014.


Pro-insurgent sources have made this claim repeatedly on Sunni TV and websites, but none have given examples of specific units. However, while we are unable to verify these claims, collaboration by low or mid-level Sunni officers is the most logical explanation for how so many units simply disappeared.

“Daash” is an Arabic acronym for al-dawla al-islamiya fi al-iraq wa al-sham, or the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.


See this Afq newscast, Iraqi Army Liberates Tikrit Completely.


We’ve posted the video news reports for this event in the July 16 entry in the FTR.

“Iraqi Conference in Amman Holds Firm to Unity and Rejects Formation of Sahwa to Fight the Revolutionaries,” al-Zaman, July 16, 2014; “150 Iraqi Sunni Figures Confirm Unity of Iraq, its People and Land,” al-Ghad, July 17, 2014. See also the July 16 entry in the FTR.

“Sunni Forces Hinge Support for Amman Conference on ‘Sunni Region’ in a United Iraq,” al-Mada Press, July 16, 2014. The phrase “Sunni forces” here refers to those in the political process; as noted, the region issue was left out of the declaration, and some factions present oppose it.

See the interview with Nujayfi beginning around minute three in this al-Sumaria newscast.

See also Uthil’s recent interviews for al-Taghier and Dijla television.


Interview on al-Sumaria TV nightly newscast (video), July 13, 2014.

Dijla TV interview on “Saa Muta’akhira” (video), July 10, 2014.


Dijla TV interview on “Saa Muta’akhira” (video), July 10, 2014.


This assessment of the Nujayfis’ plans is based on watching interviews over the past several weeks. Three of these interviews with Uthil are linked on page four and its citations. Uthil in particular has become more specific about the need to govern jointly with the insurgents.

“Hamdaniya, Bashiqa, and Bartalla Connected to Region’s Electricity,” Bashar Kiki Facebook Page, July 9, 2014.


Everyone who visits the Nujayfis’ “Camp Liberate Mosul” comes away with a depressing picture; see for example this report by Loveday Morris, “Iraqi Police at Nineveh Liberation Camp Aim to Help Free Mosul but Lack Food and Guns,” Washington Post, Jan. 15, 2015.

Under the constitution, the prime minister is the commander-in-chief, although the president has ceremonial duties. Article 73(9) provides that the president’s duties include, “Undertaking the Role of Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces for Ceremonial and Celebratory Purposes.” Nujayfi, along with the Kurds, is actually organizing a Sunni armed force with only tepid support from Baghdad.


This issue has created some confusion as many MPs have asserted that the budget will fund the Shia militias even though it does not mention them. But Deputy PM Baha al-Araji says it is embedded in the cabinet’s budget; see “Araji from Babil: The Budget for the Popular Mobilization is Included within the Appropriation for the Cabinet,” al-Maaluma, Jan. 12, 2015.

For the figures for the cabinet’s unusually large budget, see “Schedule B,” which is linked in the text of the budget provided in the Policy Focus of the preceding issue. Subscribers may also contact us directly for a copy of this document. The figure given there for the cabinet is $1,218,367,924, solely for operational costs. Parliament, by contrast, which is more than ten times the size of the cabinet, has an operational budget of $223 million, about one-sixth as much. With MPs getting 30 security personnel each, they are employing a small army of about 10,000 security guards, so with six times as much money Abadi should be able to fund the militias, whose members are paid less than $1,000 a month.


Ninawa al-Ghad TV (video), Dec. 27, 2014.

“Formation of Popular Mobilization Force in Shengal Was the Reason for PUK Member’s Arrest,” Kurd Press (Farsi), April 7, 2015.

“PUK Central Committee Calls for Release of Hayder Shesho,” PUK Media, April 7, 2015.

“After His Release, Shesho Announces an End to His Relationship With Baghdad and His Intent to Join the Peshmerga,” al-Sumaria News, April 13, 2015.


Uthil al-Nujayfi (Facebook), April 6, 2015.


Al-An TV (video), April 6, 2015.


“Usama al-Nujayfi: 50,000 Officers From Mosul Are Ready to Liberate the City and Are Waiting For Weapons,” al-Sharq al-Awsat, March 12, 2015; see also: “Turkish Officers Provide Training For Iraq’s Sunni, Turkmen Fighters,” Hurriyet Daily News, April 14, 2015.

Al-Fayhaha TV (video), March 25, 2015. LINK MISSING FOR VIDEO


“In a Quarter Hour,” al-Sumaria (video), April 2, 2015.


“Made in Virginia: A ‘Star’ to Liberate Mosul,” Ishtar Enana, April 14, 2015. Jiburi’s first name, Najm, means “star” in Arabic, so the headline is a play on words.

