

**Thesis Advisor: Professor Richard Shultz**



**The Case for Increased  
U.S. Military Cooperation with Kurdistan's Peshmerga**

**Lawen Hawezy**

**12 July 2015**

Copyright © 2015 by Lawen Hawezy  
Not to be used or reproduced without written permission until publication by the  
author.

## Contents

Abstract.....	iii
Glossary .....	iv
Situation Map .....	v
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Review of Literature.....	5
2.1 Who are the Kurds? A brief history and geography.....	5
2.2 Who are the Peshmerga? .....	6
2.3 The United States and the Kurds.....	8
3. U.S. Military Cooperation with the Kurds.....	11
3.1 Evolution of the Peshmerga.....	11
3.2 Operation Desert Storm and U.S. Kurdish cooperation in 1991.....	13
3.3 Operation Viking Hammer in 2002-2003.....	15
3.4 Operation Iraqi Freedom .....	16
4. Rationale for stronger U.S.-Peshmerga relations.....	18
4.1 ISIS is a shared threat.....	18
4.2 U.S. needs local “boots on the ground” .....	21
4.3 The political context: What do Kurds want and what does Peshmerga want to achieve?.....	24
4.4 Peshmerga are highly capable allies.....	26
5. Peshmerga requirements.....	29
5.1 Logistics and equipment.....	29
5.2 Improvements in command .....	30
5.3 Unification of the Peshmerga.....	31
6. Options for U.S. support to the Kurds .....	33
6.1 Professionalization.....	34
6.2 Institutionalization.....	34
6.3 Reform and restructuring.....	35
7. Conclusion and recommendations.....	37
Bibliography .....	42

## **Abstract**

*The Kurdish Security Forces, Peshmerga, have defended Kurdistan throughout decades and against consecutive threats posed by the tyrants who have ruled Iraq. After the failure of Iraq and Syria to resist ISIS and the latter's control over vast areas, Kurdistan too became under threat and the only effective force that came to its defense was the Peshmerga. This relative success of the Peshmerga has raised their profile internationally <sup>1</sup> as the only effective force on the ground fighting ISIS. While ISIS is becoming stronger due to the U.S. weapons it takes from Iraq, the support for the Peshmerga is limited and burdened because of concerns of an independent Kurdistan. There is need for further understanding of the Peshmerga and why the U.S. should provide a more direct and stronger form of support and cooperation. Not only with the objective of defeating ISIS, but also for the long term strategic security partnership and the protection of Kurdistan as an island of stability in the Middle East.*

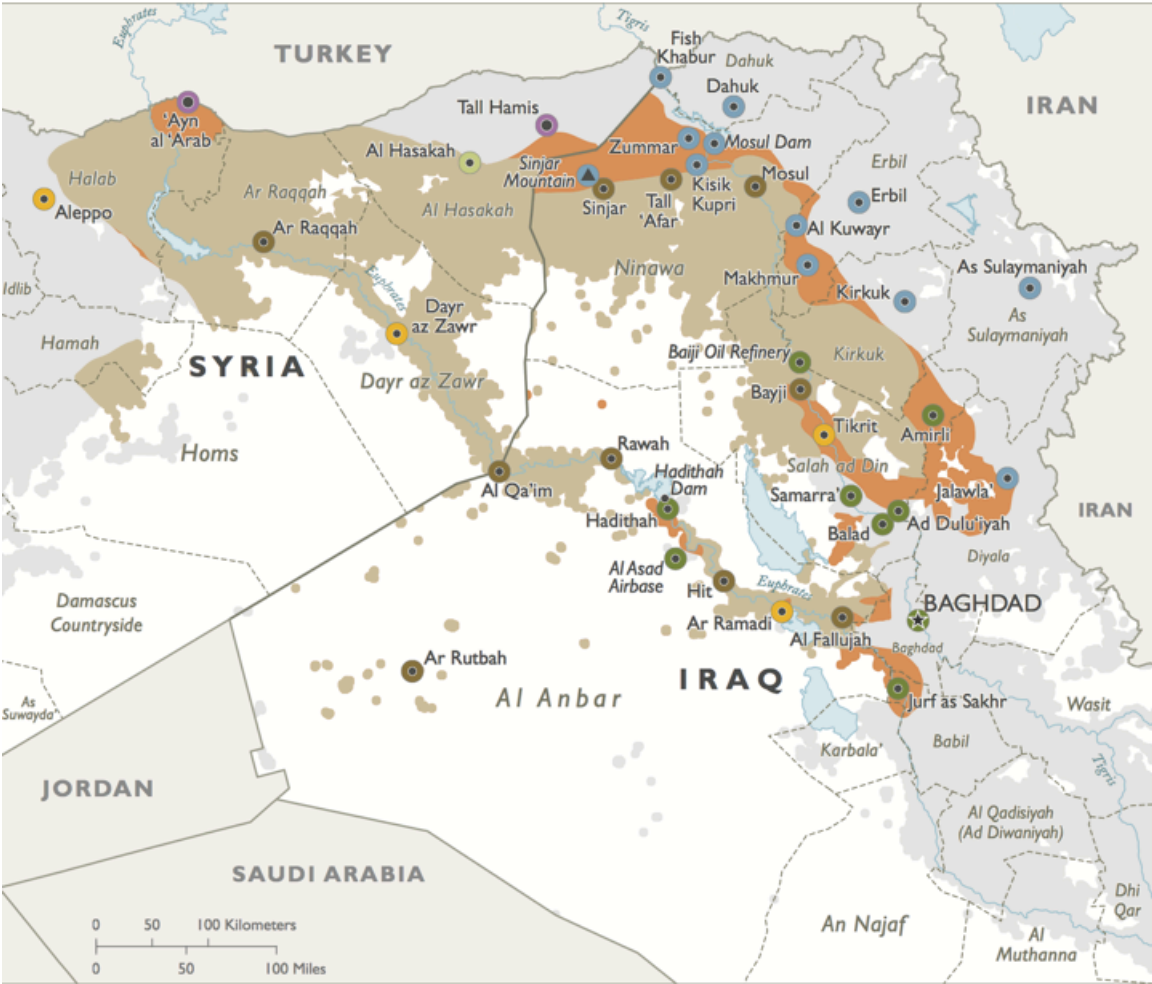
---

<sup>1</sup> The Time of the Kurds. 2015. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed on <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/time-kurds/p36547#!/>

## **Glossary**

<b>F.M.S.</b>	Foreign Military Sales
<b>I.S.F.</b>	Iraqi Security Forces
<b>ISIS</b>	Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (also known as ISIL)
<b>ITEF</b>	Iraq Train and Equip Fund
<b>J.C.C.</b>	Joint Coordination Committee
<b>J.O.C.</b>	Joint Operations Center
<b>K.D.P.</b>	Kurdistan Democratic Party
<b>K.R.G.</b>	Kurdistan Regional Government
<b>N.D.A.A.</b>	National Defense Authorization Act
<b>P.K.K.</b>	Kurdistan Workers Party
<b>P.U.K.</b>	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

# Situation Map



Note: Our judgment as to which group has dominant influence over a particular city is based on a body of sources that we deem reliable.

Source: U.S. Department of Defense. Operation Inherent Resolve. [http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814\\_iraq/](http://www.defense.gov/home/features/2014/0814_iraq/)

## 1. Introduction

The current security challenges and instabilities in the Middle East have had severe consequences for radicalization of populations and breeding generations of extremists that have increased the threat and damage to international security. The Arab spring has caused some regime changes, but so far little improvement has been achieved in the livelihoods of the populations. Moreover, the level of stability in some countries has severely deteriorated.

In Syria and Iraq, governments have responded to escalating protests with heavy hands and suffocating security measures. This has led to further clashes and increased gaps between authorities and civilians. The security vacuum has been filled with religious, tribal, and other informal forms of authority that claim popular legitimacy. At the same time, the rise of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)<sup>2</sup> has created an additional war front and security dilemma.

On one hand the international community has realized that the danger of ISIS will be even more prominent if the regimes are removed, while on the other hand the continuity of the regimes has only intensified the security crisis and increased the atrocities.

In both countries there are Kurdish minorities whose territories were annexed against their will in the aftermath of the drawing of the new maps of the Middle East after World War I. Despite this annexation, these areas have retained their own

---

<sup>2</sup> The term "ISIS" is used interchangeably with "ISIL" (Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant).

identity, apart from the central political authorities (that is mainly dominated by Arabs) through continuous protest and sometimes armed resistance. As a continuation of their struggle for independence, the Kurds are resisting the efforts of ISIS to control their territories.

Over the past decades, the Kurdish population has formed its own fighting forces, the Peshmerga. They have been considered as anarchists and terrorists by the states that are occupying Kurdistan, therefore they have received little international legitimacy. However, the current developments have shown the international community that Peshmerga are not only representing the will of their population and trying to defend them at any costs by fierce warfare, but they have also emerged as the most effective force on the ground and potential partner in the war on terrorism.<sup>3</sup>

While the Peshmerga of Iraqi Kurdistan is receiving cooperation and material support, the Kurdish People's Protection Unit (YPG) in Syria has been excluded from U.S. support. There is a close association between YPG and the PKK, the main Kurdish armed resistance of Turkey's Kurdistan. Given the strong relationship between U.S. and Turkey and because both are NATO member states, the U.S. placed PKK on the terror list. This perception impedes the support of coalition and results in inconsistent pressure by the coalition and enables ISIS to regroup and reengage

---

<sup>3</sup> Robinson, Linda. U.S. Senate hearing on the counterterrorism strategy against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): are we on the right path? Political Transcript Wire [Lanham] 25 June 2015. Ashton Carter made similar remarks earlier. See Carter, Ashton. Senate Hearing on U.S. Policy And Strategy in the Middle East. 2015. Political Transcript Wire, Jun 17, 2015. Accessed on [http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/docview/1690004466?accountid=14434 /](http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/docview/1690004466?accountid=14434/)

on battlefronts where it can maximize its gains.

The scale of the support and the methods of cooperation in intelligence sharing, ammunition and arms, media attention, and political statements have been a quantitative leap in advancing the relationship between the U.S. and the Kurdistan Regional Government (K.R.G.). However, to Kurds it seems that they are not sufficient.<sup>4</sup> Military cooperation is the essential form of cooperation because the region is facing an unprecedented powerful terrorist group that is capable of attack and control of 40% of Iraq's territories where 30% of the population resides.<sup>5</sup>

The U.S. Air Force is providing direct air raids in support of the Peshmerga's defense and counterattacks against ISIS. European countries are providing arms and host Peshmerga (including YPG) commanders in security summits. Presidential and ministerial statements mention the Peshmerga as the official and effective forces fighting ISIS on the ground. U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter has described the Peshmerga as "committed" and "capable", and as what they aspire to "with respect to their Iraqi security forces in general". He further credited the Peshmerga's will and capability to fight.<sup>6</sup>

The Iraqi government meanwhile has cut the defense budget and the monthly salaries of the Peshmerga while the U.S. is reluctant to provide direct support

---

<sup>4</sup> Barzani, Massoud; President of the Kurdistan Region. Interview with France 24 on 19 November 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Gunter, Frank R. 2014. The ISIL invasion of Iraq: Economic winners and losers.

<sup>6</sup> Senate Hearing on U.S. Policy And Strategy in the Middle East. 2015. Political Transcript Wire, Jun 17, 2015. Accessed on <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/docview/1690004466?accountid=14434>



without going through the central government. The Iraqi government objects to any kind of direct support to and cooperation with the Peshmerga that bypasses the central government. This policy causes ineffective and inefficient military aid supply to the warfronts where they are most needed.<sup>7</sup>

Dennis Chapman (2011) argues that the U.S. should consider a policy of more energetic engagement with the K.R.G., including with its security services.<sup>8</sup> This paper contends that especially in the current situation of unconventional warfare, the U.S. military needs to understand, utilize, and develop its ability to cooperate with an unconventional army like the Peshmerga. Of course, cooperation is a continuum that ranges from diplomatic support on the one hand to a full military and political relationship on the other. The paper explores the areas where cooperation can be expanded, moving along the continuum in order to lead to a more effective security partnership over the long term.

---

<sup>7</sup> Barzani, Masrour; chief of the Iraqi Kurdish intelligence services. Interview with Al Monitor on 2 July 2015

<sup>8</sup> Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. Security forces of kurdistan regional government. Vol. no. 10. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers. pp. 292-293

## 2. Review of Literature

### 2.1 Who are the Kurds? A brief history and geography

Kurds are the largest population of stateless people in the world.<sup>9</sup> They are a population of at least 32 million people surrounded and occupied by Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. The estimates of Kurdish population in those countries are, respectively, 15, 8, 6, and 2 million.<sup>10</sup> Other sources estimate the population to be even more, given the estimates of 22.5 million<sup>11</sup> in Turkey, a half million spread over ex-Soviet states, and at least 2 million migrants and refugees mainly in Europe.<sup>12</sup> The political reasons of those countries and their policy of denying Kurdish rights and understating their existence have prevented up to date and accurate statistics.

The division of Kurdistan was based on the Sykes-Picot agreement in 1916, against their will and without consultation. Kurds differ from the majority populations of these states in culture, language, and geography. Because of that they have suffered from discrimination, atrocities, submission and genocide. In the part that is annexed to Northern Iraq alone, between 1980 and 1991, the regime of Saddam Hussein destroyed 4,500 villages, killed 182,000 of their inhabitants. Many of them were buried alive in the Southern deserts, and chemical gas was used to kill

---

<sup>9</sup> Phillips, David L. 2015. *The Kurdish spring: A new map of the Middle East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. p XVII

<sup>10</sup> *The Time of the Kurds*. 2015. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed on <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/time-kurds/p36547#/>

<sup>11</sup> "Over 22.5 million Kurds live in Turkey, new Turkish statistics reveal." Over 22.5 million Kurds live in Turkey, new Turkish statistics reveal. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2014.

<<http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2012/9/turkey4166.htm>>

<sup>12</sup> Phillips, David L. 2015. *The Kurdish spring: A new map of the Middle East*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers. p XVII

5,000 inhabitants of the town of Halabja in just one day.<sup>13</sup> These grave aggressions have left no choice to Kurds except to revolt and to resist throughout history.

Kurdistan's landscape is rugged and mountainous. This has always been an advantage for the Kurdish fighters to defend themselves and the population by establishing strong bases in those mountains and caves. At its center are the Zagros mountains that are surrounded by villages and forests. The landscape flattens away and becomes hilly and the larger part of populations is in established cities in the valleys. This is a key factor as to how Kurds developed a distinct ethnic and cultural identity and are often referred to as having "no friends but the mountains".<sup>14</sup>

## **2.2 Who are the Peshmerga?**

Peshmerga is often translated as "those who face death," as a sign of members' sacrifice and risk-taking. The word Peshmerga is a Kurdish term that combines the words Pesh (front) and Merg (death). The roots of Peshmerga trace back to the 1940's and the first Kurdish Republic of Mahabad.<sup>15</sup> The era of the contemporary Peshmerga that continues to remain in formation started around 1975 with Iraq's unilateral termination of the autonomy agreement<sup>16</sup> that was in effect since 21 March 1970.<sup>17</sup> In the 1980's, with the increasingly oppressive rule of Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and the start of the Iraq-Iran war, the Peshmerga gained more

---

<sup>13</sup> United Nations Security Council. 1988. Note by the secretary-general;1988 IIS 3120-D9; S/19823.

<sup>14</sup> This is an old expression. See for example: Bulloch, John, and Harvey Morris. 1992. No friends but the mountains - the tragic history of the Kurds

<sup>15</sup> Lortz, Michael G., "Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces - the Peshmerga - From the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq" (2005); Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. Security forces of Kurdistan Regional Government. Mazda Publishers P. 37

<sup>16</sup> Kutschera, Chris. 2008. A bitter sweet revenge. *The Middle East* (391): 58

<sup>17</sup> Based on the autonomy agreement the Kurds were allowed to have some power on local administration as well as the right to teach Kurdish language in schools.

volunteers and supporters in its guerilla warfare and tactical attacks. A major contributing factor was the mandatory military draft by the Iraqi government. Every male within selected age groups would have to serve in the army. While the Kurds did not want to be part of the Iran-Iraq war, they decided either to enlist for the sake of training or to obtain a weapon. Others decided to refuse the duty and left for the mountains to fight as Peshmerga.<sup>18</sup> As the battles between Iraq and Iran were moving towards Southern areas, the Peshmerga was more able to claim territories and mountains and clear them of Iraqi forces.

In 1987-1988, and leading up to the peace agreement between Iran and Iraq, the latter launched the al-Anfal campaign that destroyed 4,500 villages and used chemical weapons and cluster bombs against the areas where the Peshmerga had strongholds. The year 1991 was a turning point, as the Peshmerga moved from a guerilla force to a defensive one tasked with protecting territories.<sup>19</sup>

The 2005 Iraqi constitution and the previous Transitional Administrative Law recognized the Peshmerga as a legitimate military protection force from Kurdistan. Prior to this, there were debates about the status and role of the Peshmerga. But now, the development and strengthening of Peshmerga is in line with Article 121 of the Iraqi constitution that grants the Kurdistan region the right to have regional guards. The Kurdistan region does indeed see the Peshmerga as its regional guardians.

---

<sup>18</sup> Hawezy, Sherdil. Former Minister of Peshmerga and head of Parliamentary Committee on Peshmarga affairs

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

The Parliament of Kurdistan issued the Law of the Ministry of Peshmerga as law number 19 of the year 2007, in which it defines its duties and organizational structure. According to this law the ministry is responsible for the following:

1. Protection of the Kurdistan region and its interests.
2. Protection of the political entity of Kurdistan and its democratic governing system and securing its constitutional institutions.
3. Support of the Federal Government of Iraq and its security and sovereignty while reminding them of the necessity of coordination and mutual understanding on responding to crises of war and terror,
4. Establishment of regular military units and providing training on contemporary battles necessary to defend the Kurdistan region.
5. Planning the development and modernization of the Peshmerga forces.
6. Providing all the necessary administrative, logistical, and financial support that is related to mobilization, armament, preparedness, and health services for the Peshmerga forces.

### **2.3 The United States and the Kurds**

Michael Gunter (2011) <sup>20</sup> describes five stages of American foreign policy involvement with the Kurds.

The first stage was after World War I, when U.S. President Woodrow Wilson opened a possibility of Kurdish independence within his Fourteen Points. However,

---

<sup>20</sup> Gunter, Michael M. "The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy Towards the Kurds." *Insight Turkey* 13.2 (2011): 93-106. ProQuest. Web. 25 Apr. 2015.

the Fourteen Points were not welcomed by the colonial powers and there was no leverage from the U.S. to implement them after the Paris Peace Conference.

The second stage was during Mustafa Barzani's revolution in Iraqi Kurdistan in the early 1970s. During that time the U.S. provided some arms and financial assistance. However, the objective was not to support the Kurds to achieve their independence, but a mere tactic to create a counter balance to the central government that was supported by the Soviet Union. The assistance was suspended in 1975 after the Algeria agreement. The U.S. withdrew its support at the request of the Shah of Iran.<sup>21</sup> In return, Iraq gave up parts of its territories, including part of its maritime borders in the Shat al Arab, to Iran.

The third stage was in 1991 during the Gulf War, when the Kurds led an uprising against the Saddam Regime. The U.S. led an international coalition against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and the Kurdish revolt was seen as an additional opportunity to weaken Saddam. That stage led to the establishment of the K.R.G.

The fourth stage started with the American toppling of Saddam Hussein in 2003, where joint operations and coordinated attacks have led to a de facto U.S.-K.R.G. alliance.<sup>22</sup>

The fifth stage of U.S. foreign policy engagement is related to Kurds in Turkey and overlaps with the third and fourth stages mentioned above.<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>21</sup> Wise, David. 1991. A people betrayed: Twice before, Washington let Kurds die to promote foreign-policy designs. now it's the Bush Administration doing the deed. Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File) 1991.

<sup>22</sup> Gunter, Michael M. "The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy Towards the Kurds." *Insight Turkey* 13.2 (2011): 93-106.

<sup>23</sup> In contrast to the other stages, the U.S. supports Turkey as its NATO ally against the Kurdish armed resistance, mainly the Kurdistan Workers Party PKK. Therefore, this stage is beyond the scope of this

The engagement with K.R.G. developed over the past few years can be seen as the sixth stage, which includes a wide range of political, economic, and humanitarian support in addition to military cooperation, as seen by the opening of the U.S. Consulate in Erbil and official high-level contacts between the two governments.

U.S. diplomatic relations with the Kurds developed before the Kurds were a major player in Iraq's future. This was evident in the new government post-2003 when the Kurds had enough parliamentary seats to be the "kingmaker" in every piece of legislation.<sup>24</sup>

The Kurds had semi-autonomy for many years and therefore by 2003 they were the more savvy politicians in Iraq because they established their own political system in the Kurdish areas. They were organized, Western oriented, and understood governance. What made the Kurds progress was that they were willing to put aside Kurdish internal politics for the sake of making a solid national front in Baghdad.<sup>25</sup>

---

paper. Though PKK's Peshmerga is presenting a significant contribution through participation in battles against ISIS in both Syrian and Iraqi Kurdistan.

<sup>24</sup> Confidential Statement by a State Department Official

<sup>25</sup> Confidential Statement by a Former Pentagon Official

### **3. U.S. Military Cooperation with the Kurds**

#### **3.1 Evolution of the Peshmerga**

Chapman (2011) describes the beginning of contemporary Peshmerga to have started after the uprising of 1991.<sup>26</sup> This marked a significant step in Peshmerga's development as they transformed from guerilla forces into more organized larger formations with regular income and tasked with protection of populations and territories. The uprising attracted a large number of Kurdistan's population and people joined the Peshmerga. In addition to the increasing numbers, the Peshmerga also obtained more military equipment, which they took from the defeated Iraqi military.

Before the uprising there were an estimated 7,000-8,000 members. After taking control of the majority of Kurdish territories, the Peshmerga obtained more weapons like mortars, 130mm artillery, and T-55 tanks. The number of Peshmerga grew to 30,000 (not including the personal guards) and it was made an official force through the elected Kurdish parliament that formed a local government that was named Kurdistan Regional Government – Iraq. The government also included a Ministry for Peshmerga Affairs.

The Kurdish parliament issued the Laws No. 2 and 5 of 1992 in which it declared the mechanisms of the Kurdish Liberation leadership and the Ministry of Peshmerga. This made the Peshmerga a legitimate and constitutional institution that was officially recognized as the protector of Kurdistan and its population.

---

<sup>26</sup> Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. Security forces of kurdistan regional government. Vol. no. 10.; no. 10. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers.



The Peshmerga was then centralized and allocated to four districts. Chapman also confirms this in the research of the structure of Peshmerga and the four commands (Lashkir), each one for Kirkuk, Sulaymani, Erbil, and Dohuk.<sup>27</sup> A major development was that the Peshmerga after 1991 was able to have open and organized training facilities. The command structure changed as the Peshmerga started to adopt a relatively more conventional form, implementing brigade-centric organizations, uniforms, and lines of command.<sup>28</sup>

After the official recognition of Peshmerga in Kurdistan by its 1992 Law, it was further recognized by external authorities in 2003, when the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) bolstered the Peshmerga status in the provisions of the Transitional Administrative Law (TAL).<sup>29</sup> Article 54(A) of that law states that

“[t]he Kurdistan Regional Government shall continue to perform its current functions throughout the transitional period, except those that fall within the exclusive competence of the Federal Government as specified in this Law.” This was meant to legalize the existence of the Peshmerga and give it defense responsibilities within Iraqi defense system. It has also created a base for ratification of the status of Peshmerga in the Iraqi constitution of 2005.

By the beginning of the ISIS war Peshmerga reached 150,000 fighters<sup>30</sup> and the number is increasing as people volunteered to join the fight. However, until now,

---

<sup>27</sup> Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. *Security forces of Kurdistan Regional Government*. Vol. no. 10.; no. 10. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers. p. 97

<sup>28</sup> Hawezy, Sherdil

<sup>29</sup> Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. *Security forces of Kurdistan Regional Government*. Vol. no. 10.; no. 10. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers. p. 99

<sup>30</sup> The Time of the Kurds. 2015. Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed on <http://www.cfr.org/middle-east-and-north-africa/time-kurds/p36547#!/>

the weapons taken from defeating the Iraqi military in 1991 and 2003 still count for the majority of Peshmerga's armory. Its light arms consist of AK-47s and other Soviet-era rifles like BKC (also known as PK Machine Gun), and RPGs. The heavy armory is composed of Soviet-era howitzers, mortars, and old T-54/55 tanks.<sup>31</sup> While the Iraqi military has received a tremendous material support and training from the U.S. after the invasion, the Peshmerga has not received similar support.

### **3.2 Operation Desert Storm and U.S. Kurdish cooperation in 1991**

After the Kurdish genocide under the Anfal campaign of the Iraqi military, the Peshmerga realized that it needed to change its tactics from small operations and guerilla warfare to larger scale warfare. Consequently it has regrouped, upgraded the training, and opted for two covert ways of strengthening its capabilities. The first was by taking advantage of pardons by the Iraqi government and sending back Peshmerga to do the mandatory drafting with the Iraqi Army. Second, through increasing its secret alliances with the "jash".<sup>32</sup>

After the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the U.S. raised an international coalition to strike the Iraqi Security Forces (I.S.F). The Peshmerga solicited an alliance but the U.S. refused. Nonetheless, the defeat of the Iraqi military and its engagement in the southern borders with Kuwait took place, and on March 4th 1991, there was a coordinated popular uprising in Kurdish towns.

---

<sup>31</sup> Berman, Lazar. 2015. The Status of Western Military Aid to Kurdish Peshmerga Forces. Accessed on [jcpa.org/article/the-status-of-western-military-aid-to-kurdish-peshmerga-forces/](http://jcpa.org/article/the-status-of-western-military-aid-to-kurdish-peshmerga-forces/)

<sup>32</sup> Jash is the Kurdish word for donkey's foal is the term used to describe a military unit composed of people of Kurdish descent that cooperates with enemy combatants against the Kurdish army. See McDowall, David. 1996. A modern history of the kurds. New York; London: I.B.Tauris

When the Iraqi military was defeated and withdrew from Kuwait, they focused on attacking the Kurdish uprising, especially since the Peshmerga entered the oil rich city of Kirkuk, known as the Kurdish Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> The attacks on both Peshmerga and civilians forced 1.5 million to flee towards the Iranian and Turkish borders.<sup>34</sup> This became a humanitarian crisis that received the attention of the United Nations. The Security Council issued resolution 688 on April 5, 1991.<sup>35</sup> In that resolution the Council mandated that Iraq should allow access to humanitarian organizations and requested the U.N. Secretary-General to report on the populations affected by the Iraqi authorities' repression. In line with the requirements of this resolution and to protect humanitarian operations in Iraq, the U.S., in cooperation with the U.K. and France, established no-fly zones. This meant that the U.S. could protect the Kurdish areas north of parallel line 36 and would conduct airstrikes against any intrusion by the Iraqi military.

Based on that, the U.S. launched Operation Provide Comfort, which entailed sending 12,000 U.S. military service members composed of Joint Task Force Alpha, Joint Task Force Bravo, and the 10th Special Forces Group.<sup>36</sup> This led to the establishment of direct coordination and cooperation between the U.S. military Special Forces and the Peshmerga.

---

<sup>33</sup> This has been repeatedly mentioned in speeches by Kurdish leaders

<sup>34</sup> Peterson, Scott. 2002. Kurds say Iraq's attacks serve as a warning. *Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2002. Accessed on <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0513/p08s01-wome.html>

<sup>35</sup> U.N. Security Council Resolution 688 on repression of Iraqi civilians. Accessed on <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/596/24/IMG/NR059624.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>36</sup> Rudd, Gordon W., and United States. Department of the Army. 2004. *Humanitarian intervention: Assisting the Iraqi Kurds in Operation Provide Comfort, 1991*. 70-78-1.; 70-78-1,

### 3.3 Operation Viking Hammer in 2002-2003

Although the U.S. military presence through Operation Provide Comfort was a humanitarian mission and did not entail any military cooperation,<sup>37</sup> prior to toppling the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in 2003, it represented a new form of cooperation between the U.S. military and the Peshmerga.

The presence of the al-Qaeda affiliated terrorist groups Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam in the triangle between Kurdistan, Iraqi governed territories, and Iranian border led to atrocities and massacre of Kheli Hama.<sup>38</sup> The 10th Special Forces Unit was once again deployed to Kurdistan in the areas near Halabja and launched operation Viking Hammer with the Peshmerga.

The attacks started with Tomahawk missiles. Then the operation was followed by a ground attack of joint U.S. Special Forces and Peshmerga units with close air support. With that the operation succeeded to clear the area from the franchisees of Al-Qaeda in the region. This successful cooperation established a sense of trust between both sides and demonstrated that the Peshmerga is an effective force to cooperate with in order to defeat terrorism, like they did against Ansar al-Sunna and Ansar al-Islam.<sup>39</sup>

---

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Congress. 1992. OPERATION PROVIDE COMFORT. congressional record daily edition. Accessed on [HTTP://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t17.d18.c4b09ab51200083a?accountid=14434](http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t17.d18.c4b09ab51200083a?accountid=14434)

<sup>38</sup> Al-qaeda in northern iraq?: The elusive ansar al-islam. 2002. Strategic Comments 8, (7): 1-2

<sup>39</sup> Lortz, Michael G., "Willing to Face Death: A History of Kurdish Military Forces - the Peshmerga - From the Ottoman Empire to Present-Day Iraq" (2005). Electronic Theses, Treatises and Dissertations. Paper 1038.

### 3.4 Operation Iraqi Freedom

By that time, the Peshmerga became a legend of fierce fighters that Saddam could never defeat. That made them attractive to the U.S. military, and earned their respect and support inside U.S. decision-making circles.<sup>40</sup>

Peshmerga helped achieve another objective of the U.S. military in preparation for Operation Iraqi Freedom, as they were deployed with Special Forces to secure the oil fields beyond the Green Line.<sup>41</sup> The combined Peshmerga-U.S. assault from 21 March to 12 April 2003 defeated 13 Iraqi divisions, prevented Iraqi forces from reinforcing their southern defenses, and captured strategic airfields throughout Northern Iraq and Kurdistan.<sup>42</sup>

Furthermore the Peshmerga played an important role to secure infrastructure and government building in Baghdad, Mosul, Kirkuk, and other large cities in preparation for the new government authorities. They also helped establish the new units of the I.S.F.

The result of these joint operations has contributed to a large extent to establishment and empowerment of the new federal system in Iraq's government and its institutions. The stability that Peshmerga provided to the Kurdistan region has also paved the way for international investment in Kurdistan and its infrastructure. The existence of Kurdistan as a federal region of Iraq has become constitutional, and meanwhile the region has shaped its state-like institutions. Since

---

<sup>40</sup> Confidential Statement by a State Department Official. See note 24

<sup>41</sup> The nominal 1991 demarcation line between the Kurdish northern provinces of Iraq and the remainder controlled by Saddam Hussein

<sup>42</sup> Robinson, Linda. 2004. *Masters of chaos: The secret history of the special forces*. 1st ed. New York: PublicAffairs. p 340.

then Kurdistan has seen a remarkable development in building airports, new universities, hospitals, and the energy sector.

## 4. Rationale for stronger U.S.-Peshmerga relations.

### 4.1 ISIS is a shared threat

When the Iraqi military collapsed and ISIS took over most of Sunni Arab territories in June 2014 and thereafter started attacking the Kurdistan region, the Peshmerga fought back and regained control over almost all expatriated territories of Kurdistan that the article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution<sup>43</sup> had failed to settle for a decade. The battles have secured an additional 30-40% gain in Kurdish territories by the Peshmerga.<sup>44</sup>

U.S. provided air support that helped to halt the ISIS advance on the Kurdish capital city of Erbil, and assisted the Peshmerga in its mission to evacuate the Yezidis who were trapped on Mount Sinjar. In a similar approach the U.S. airstrikes enabled Peshmerga to remove ISIS from the Mosul Dam<sup>45</sup> which ISIS could use to destroy and flood parts of Iraqi cities, villages, and major parts of the capital Baghdad and the U.S. embassy in its Green Zone.<sup>46</sup>

The Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Counter ISIS identifies the first step in the efforts of the coalition as “Providing military support to our partners”.<sup>47</sup> The forces on the ground directly responsible for the territories of the

---

<sup>43</sup> Article 140 proposes a mechanism to resolve the status of the disputed territories and to define the K.R.G. borders with the rest of Iraq.

<sup>44</sup> Robinson, Linda in a U.S. Senate hearing on the counterterrorism strategy against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): are we on the right path? Political Transcript Wire [Lanham] 25 June 2015; Natali D. A New Normal for Iraqi Kurds? Middle East Research and Information Project; 2014. p 2

<sup>45</sup> Obama Praises Success of Humanitarian Operations in Iraq. U.S. Department of Defence News release of August 14, 2014. Accessed on <http://www.defense.gov/news/newsarticle.aspx?id=122928>

<sup>46</sup> See §5.3 for details

<sup>47</sup> Congressional Research Service. 2015. The "islamic state" crisis and U.S. policy. CRS report. p 12. Accessed on

region against ISIS are the Iraqi and Syrian armies, while Turkish and Iranian armies are indirectly involved in the current conflict of civil war in Iraq and Syria as well as in war against ISIS. Iran and Syrian governments are not partners with the U.S.,<sup>48</sup> Turkey has refused to engage in the war on ISIS,<sup>49</sup> while I.S.F. has been defeated by it.

Peshmerga also succeeded in protecting Northern parts of Nineveh province. Consequently Arab tribal leaders in those areas, including Rabia and Zummar, requested the extension of the K.R.G. administration border to include their areas and to establish an Arab defense force under the Peshmerga Command.<sup>50</sup> This request is the result of trust in the Peshmergas' ability to keep order and protect civilians despite ethnic tensions and political differences.

While the I.S.F. has failed to protect those areas, even its comeback with the help of militias is an unwelcomed scenario to the local Arab population.<sup>51</sup> More dangerously, these areas are sensitive to escalation because of their proximity to the disputed territories with Kurdistan.

---

<http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t21.d22.crs-2015-fdt-0103?accountid=14434>

<sup>48</sup> White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by the President on ISIL," September 10, 2014.

<sup>49</sup> Stafford, Ed. 2015. Explaining the Turkish Military's Opposition to Combating ISIS. POLICYWATCH 2356. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis)

<sup>50</sup> Request by Nineveh tribes to join KRG indicates ineffective Iraqi Sunni leadership and hinders reconciliation with Baghdad  
<http://connect.ihs.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/DisplayDocument/Show?source=gi&docid=2790415&connectPath=Search>

<sup>51</sup> See "After Liberation Came Destruction: Iraqi Militias and the Aftermath of Amerli," Human Rights Watch, March 18, 2015.



The U.S. government's policy is outlined as leading a multilateral coalition to "degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS".<sup>52</sup> President Obama announced that the U.S.'s comprehensive strategy is to defeat ISIS and deny it safe haven. The strategy would be implanted along nine lines of effort (LOEs), to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIS:<sup>53</sup>

- Supporting effective governance in Iraq
- Denying ISIS safe haven
- Building partner capacity
- Enhancing intelligence collection on ISIS
- Disrupting ISIS's finances
- Exposing ISIS's true nature
- Disrupting the flow of foreign terrorist fighters
- Protecting the homeland
- Humanitarian support

In January 2015, Secretary of State John Kerry emphasized "undermining the narrative of ISIL, interdicting the flow of foreign fighters, stopping the flow of financial funding to ISIL, is as important as the military campaign itself."<sup>54</sup>

---

<sup>52</sup> White House Office of the Press Secretary, "Statement by the President on ISIL," September 10, 2014. Accessed on <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/10/statement-president-isil-1>

<sup>53</sup> Fact sheet: strategy to counter the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant. States News Service 2014. Accessed on [http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mclin\\_m\\_tufts&id=GALE%7CA382104049&&v=2.1&it=r&userGroup=mclin\\_m\\_tufts&authCount=1](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mclin_m_tufts&id=GALE%7CA382104049&&v=2.1&it=r&userGroup=mclin_m_tufts&authCount=1)

<sup>54</sup> U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry remarks With U.K. Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond Before the Counter-ISIL Coalition Small Group Meeting. Accessed on <http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/01/236183.htm>

President Obama has stated his administration's desire to degrade and ultimately destroy ISIS. But his level of committed resources doesn't match such an objective. The U.S. provided only the minimum possible support to the Peshmerga to keep the K.R.G. from falling under heavier ISIS attack, but no more than that. The critics of such direct support, especially from Iraqi politicians and other anti-Peshmerga figures from Iraq and neighboring countries, should be given only minimum consideration because they are not as effective allies as the Peshmerga is in the U.S. war on terror.

The Peshmerga could be particularly helpful in supporting several LOEs articulated by the U.S.: effective governance in Iraq, denying ISIS safe haven, building partner capacity, enhancing intelligence collection on ISIS and providing humanitarian support.

#### **4.2 U.S. needs local "boots on the ground"**

Yet the U.S. government insists that it will put "no boots on the ground".<sup>55</sup> The Peshmerga, the only force on the ground proven capable of defeating ISIS and protecting civilians, should receive support and partnership with the U.S. While despite the "no boots on the ground" policy, the U.S. has sent 4,000 advisers to Iraq<sup>56</sup> most of them with Iraqi commanders to assist the rebuilding of the I.S.F.

The U.S. Administration supports Iraq in the war against ISIS through an extended training and equipment program and only within that plan it intends to

---

<sup>55</sup> Brooks, Rosa. 2014. Why Obama's assurance of 'no boots on the ground' isn't so reassuring. The Washington Post. 26 September 2014.

<sup>56</sup> McLeary, Paul. 2015. The Pentagon Wants to Build New Bases in Iraq Will More US Troops Follow? accessed on [foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/11/the-pentagon-wants-to-build-new-bases-in-iraq-will-more-u-s-troops-](http://foreignpolicy.com/2015/06/11/the-pentagon-wants-to-build-new-bases-in-iraq-will-more-u-s-troops-)

support Peshmerga.<sup>57</sup> For that it seeks authorization and funding from the Congress based on the FY2015 NDAA and appropriations act that can authorize such a program.<sup>58</sup> In addition the State Department appropriations for assisting Iraq over the same period of FY2015 can also make Kurdistan Regional Government eligible for support.<sup>59</sup>

House and Senate defense committee leaders have recognized the effective role of the Peshmerga in countering ISIS in a joint NDAA statement:

“We note the significant contribution that Kurdish security forces have made to countering ISIL’s advance. We understand that the administration’s plan includes assistance to train and equip 3 brigades of Kurdish peshmerga. Accordingly, we expect that a significant portion of the assistance under this authority will be provided to meet the requirements of the Kurdish security forces and urge the Secretary of Defense to ensure that such assistance is delivered in a timely manner to such forces. We further expect the Secretary of Defense to keep the congressional defense committees fully informed as this plan is developed and implemented, including any arrangements to ensure that such assistance for Kurdish security forces is promptly delivered to those forces.”<sup>60</sup>

Congressman Jeff Fortenberry, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee,<sup>61</sup> has told Congress that the campaign to defeat ISIS requires strong and effective partners in the region such as the Kurds.<sup>62</sup> Furthermore, the Congressman has stated that the Peshmerga has proven to be capable of defeating them with

---

<sup>57</sup> Congressional Research Service. 2015. The "islamic state" crisis and U.S. policy. CRS report. p 12. Accessed on <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t21.d22.crs-2015-fdt-0103?accountid=14434>

<sup>58</sup> 113th Congress Public Law 291. Section 1236. Authority to provide assistance to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 235. Section 7041(c) of Division J. Authority to provide assistance to counter the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

<sup>60</sup> The FY2015 NDAA joint explanatory statement prepared by House and Senate defense committee leaders. Accessed on <http://fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R43612.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> U.S. Congress. 2015. Enhance Military Support for the Kurds. Congressional Record Daily Edition. February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2015

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

strategic victories, as part of their mission to defend values of tolerance and pluralism as well as providing shelter to minorities such as Christians, Yazidis, and to innocent Muslims escaping ISIS rule. These findings on the Peshmerga were further supported in the Congress in its National Defense Authorization Bill section 1223 <sup>63</sup> on “Modification of Authority to Provide Assistance to Counter the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant”. The bill proposed, among others, to support the Peshmerga through direct funding and assistance.

This was a remarkable development in the view of the U.S. Congress on the necessary level of cooperation with Peshmerga. However, the House bill could not guarantee passage by the U.S. Senate. In addition it mentions Peshmerga in the same narrative with Sunni volunteers and tribal forces. It also did not recognize the deeper underlying reasons for Peshmerga’s existence and its goals.

The different views in the Congress were due to the preference by some members for direct support to the Peshmerga in order to ensure that Kurdistan will have a capable and force in the battle against ISIS. Other lawmakers wanted to ensure that the Peshmerga would depend on the central government so they would not seek independence. Eventually the amendment was blocked and did not receive enough votes to pass.

The Peshmerga and U.S. military are fighting a common adversary, and share the interest of a multi ethnic Iraq and the common goal of a stable region free of military aggression and outside influence. In the past occasions where they have cooperated, their joint operations have been successful. This makes them potential

---

<sup>63</sup> 113th Congress Public Law 291. Section 1223.

long-term security partners. In addition, Iraqi Kurdistan's geographic position and long lines of battle fronts with ISIS make it the appropriate location for the U.S. military to launch special operations and attacks against the terrorist groups.

### **4.3 The political context: What do Kurds want and what does Peshmerga want to achieve?**

As a short-term objective, the Kurds want to resist the expansion of ISIS control over their territories. However, the security situation in that area was already tense due to escalations with the Iraqi military since 2012.<sup>64</sup>

Their long-term objective is to follow up on the informal referendum that was held during the 30 January 2005 election, where 98 percent of Iraqi Kurds voted in favor of an independent Kurdistan.<sup>65</sup>

Peshmerga forces have the additional responsibility of filling the security vacuum in territories that were left unprotected by the retreating I.S.F. and those areas that were taken from ISIS. In addition they are the only protectors of persecuted non-Kurdish populations that have fled the ISIS threats. The Peshmerga is in control of an important portion of Iraq's border with Iran, Syria, and Turkey. From there the U.S. can facilitate access to opposition-held areas in Syria.<sup>66</sup> This can

---

<sup>64</sup> With the establishment of Dijla Operations Command with mandates and structures similar to that of Chemical Ali in the Saddam era, the Iraqi government created tensions in the disputed areas with Kurdistan. See for example: Arango, Tim, and Duraid Adnan. "For Iraq, Year Ends The Way It Began, With Guns Drawn." *New York Times* 4 Dec. 2012:.

<sup>65</sup> Does independence beckon? Iraqi Kurdistan. 2007. *The Economist* 384, (8545): 48

<sup>66</sup> Knights, Michael; Metz, Sam. 2014. Last Man Standing: U.S. Security Cooperation and Kurdistan's Peshmerga. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga)

be crucial in defeating ISIS especially because Turkey has refused to open its air base to U.S. combat missions.<sup>67</sup>

The U.S. conditions its support on the approval of the central government as a policy to enhance the Iraqi unity.<sup>68</sup> In doing so, the U.S. seems to ignore Kurdish ambitions and the main reason why the Peshmerga is going to combat. Throughout history the Kurds supported and joined the Peshmerga, and are prepared to sacrifice their lives for the purpose of an independent Kurdistan.<sup>69</sup>

The main objective of the Peshmerga has always been to protect Kurdistan and to fight for its independence.<sup>70</sup> Therefore direct arms supply and military support is crucial for the Peshmerga to have trust in the U.S. strategy in the war on terrorism, whereas the U.S. is mainly seeking additional firepower on the ground to resist ISIS expansion.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, because of the clear objectives and protective role of the Peshmerga, the U.S. should be able with some confidence to support the Peshmerga without major concerns about their offensive and expansionary ambitions.

Despite the complex current situation in Iraq, the U.S. cannot afford to upset the central government, but it remains crucial that the U.S. ensures a timely and

---

<sup>67</sup> Stafford, Ed. 2015. Explaining the Turkish Military's Opposition to Combating ISIS. POLICYWATCH 2356. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis)

<sup>68</sup> Fantappie, Maria. "The Peshmerga Regression." *Foreign Affairs*. June 15, 2015. Accessed June 15, 2015.

<sup>69</sup> Hawezy, Sherdil

<sup>70</sup> Vick, Karl. 2015. The Kurds Are Building a Country With Every Victory Over ISIS. Accessed on [time.com/3932515/the-kurds-are-building-a-country-with-every-victory-over-isis/](http://time.com/3932515/the-kurds-are-building-a-country-with-every-victory-over-isis/)

<sup>71</sup> Gunter, Michael. 2015. Kurdistan Needs New President as Barzani Already Served His Constitutionally Allotted Terms. Accessed on [ekurd.net/michael-gunter-kurdistan-needs-new-president-2015-07-10#.VZ\\_lgrNoG9s.facebook](http://ekurd.net/michael-gunter-kurdistan-needs-new-president-2015-07-10#.VZ_lgrNoG9s.facebook)

effective supply of the aid without the substantive influence from Baghdad, but rather as a formality. However, not recognizing Kurdish ambitions and the Peshmerga's fight for independence can lead only to a temporary solution and a postponement of a security crisis to the future, and not to an effective solution. U.S. policy makers have already acknowledged the lack of cohesion between Kurds and the Shiia and Sunnis of Iraq, and that being stuck with a strong centralized government in Baghdad and resort to working only at the central level would not be a solution. Hence they have repeatedly called upon consecutive Iraqi prime ministers to have an inclusive government.<sup>72</sup>

#### **4.4 Peshmerga are highly capable allies**

The Peshmerga is well disciplined and has sustained through years of hardship, initially with minimum resources. The population trusts and respects Peshmerga for its sacrifice and efforts for the safety and freedom of Kurdistan. Its reputation and legitimacy is reinforced by a very good record on the field of battle where they have fought fiercely without targeting civilians or destruction of infrastructure or taking private properties. Unlike many other insurgency groups in irregular warfare, the Peshmerga has not relied on terror.

That discipline might not be reflected in a standard uniform or communication methods, but it is evident in the sense of following command and fighting with a single purpose, which is defending the Kurdish territories at all costs.

Peshmerga is a force with a strong motivation and team spirit and is capable of rapid mobilization. During the confrontation with ISIS, the Peshmerga is relying on

---

<sup>72</sup> Confidential Statement by a State Department Official. See note 24

improvised tactics, communications, and logistical capabilities, mainly supported by the public. Its heavy weapons are mainly those captured in the war against Saddam Hussein-era Iraq: outdated artillery, tanks, personnel carriers, and antitank weapons.<sup>73</sup>

When they suffered initially from ISIS attacks, they quickly returned to counterattack, much so than the I.S.F.. The Peshmerga has the potential of being the most effective ally against ISIS due to its willingness to fight and its positioning on the ground along 1,200 kilometers of battlefield.<sup>74</sup>

In addition, Peshmerga, in resisting the advance of ISIS, creates a buffer zone for both Iran and Turkey. Even if these countries are capable of repelling ISIS by themselves, at least a strong Peshmerga prevents the reasons for these countries to engage in further military operations in the Iraqi territories.

An example can be seen in the events surrounding the Mosul Dam, near the city of Mosul on the Tigris River. As the largest dam in Iraq, it is a main source of supply for water and electricity to many populated areas including at least 1.7 million population of Mosul. Lack of maintenance or the purposeful demolition of this dam will release 11 billion cubic meters of water that has the potential of drowning many towns, including Baghdad and in particular the U.S. Embassy compound that is located directly on the Tigris River. Whereas the I.S.F. has failed to protect the Dam, the Peshmerga has fought to secure its control over the area and to

---

<sup>73</sup> Knights, Michael; Metz, Sam. 2014. Last Man Standing: U.S. Security Cooperation and Kurdistan's Peshmerga. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga)

<sup>74</sup> Robinson, Linda in a U.S. Senate hearing on the counterterrorism strategy against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): are we on the right path? Political Transcript Wire [Lanham] 25 June 2015



ensure necessary maintenance takes place.<sup>75</sup> Therefore the Peshmerga is playing a direct role in preventing damage to the U.S. Embassy Compound and its 5,500 staff.<sup>76</sup>

In addition to protecting K.R.G. territories, the Peshmerga have also liberated an area of about 20,000 square kilometers from ISIS west of the Tigris River, and to the South and West of Erbil, and the Southwest of Kirkuk. In these battles 1,280 Peshmerga were sacrificed and another 7,000 wounded while the combined ground battles and coalition airstrikes have killed 11,000 ISIS members.<sup>77</sup>

---

<sup>75</sup> Dizard, W. "Doomsday dam could bring Iraqis together". Aljazeera America, accessed on <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/8/20/mosul-dam-water.html>

<sup>76</sup> U.S. officials have declined to say how many staff work there currently. But according to a 2013 State Department inspector general report, the embassy was moving to reduce its headcount from over 11,500 in January 2013 to 5,500 in January 2014.

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/15/us-embassy-baghdad-iraq\\_n\\_5497118.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/15/us-embassy-baghdad-iraq_n_5497118.html)

<sup>77</sup> Barzani, Masrour; Chief of the Kurdish intelligence services. Interview with Al Monitor on 2 July 2015.

## 5. Peshmerga requirements

### 5.1 Logistics and equipment

The government of Iraq has refused since 2003 to fund the Peshmerga through the defense budget and the K.R.G. had to pay them from its own budget. Therefore the maintenance, not to mention the development, of Peshmerga capabilities, equipment, and training have been challenging and posing a financial burden on K.R.G..<sup>78</sup>

The Peshmerga remains relatively underdeveloped for the fight against ISIS. It lacks heavy weapons and air support capabilities. Furthermore it does not have substantial capacities for logistics, maintenance of equipment, and ammunition supply. Its equipment is primitive compared to ISIS' arsenal of modern weapons, which the U.S. had supplied to the I.S.F. This makes it difficult for the Peshmerga to resist or deter ISIS suicidal attacks that are mainly accompanied by explosive armored vehicles. It is also logistically difficult for the Peshmerga to endure counteroffensive operations against ISIS-controlled areas for longer periods.

Insisting that the aid should go through the Iraqi central government, which has not been supportive in the first place, is not an effective strategy. What has been delivered through them so far is a limited supply of rifles, artillery, and rockets, which the Peshmerga commanders consider as a fraction of what is required to battle ISIS.

---

<sup>78</sup> Knights, Michael; Metz, Sam. 2014. Last Man Standing: U.S. Security Cooperation and Kurdistan's Peshmerga. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/last-man-standing-u.s.-security-cooperation-and-kurdistans-peshmerga)

For their battles, the Peshmerga forces require a wide range of weapons, varying from rifles to tanks and helicopters.<sup>79</sup> They require heavy weapons that can reach targets within a long range, but also weapons that are of higher quality than what it currently has in order to block the threat of ISIS' arsenal.<sup>80</sup> In Mosul alone, the I.S.F. left 2,300 Humvee Armored Vehicles that fell in the hands of ISIS.<sup>81</sup> ISIS is the wealthiest terrorist group in the world, with weekly revenues of about \$2 million.<sup>82</sup>

However, Iraq as well as neighboring countries are against arming the Peshmerga.<sup>83</sup> This is out of fear the Peshmerga would become able to secure the further development of Kurdistan Region and bolster its chances for independence.<sup>84</sup>

## 5.2 Improvements in command

In addition to the logistics, the Peshmerga faces many challenges on the command side as well. First of all, many commanders who have experienced decades of war in the mountains and against the Iraqi military have retired or transferred service to civilian positions. The new generation of commanders do not

---

<sup>79</sup> Mustafa, Jaafar. Former Minister of Peshmerga, current commander of 70<sup>th</sup> forces that is fighting ISIS directly in areas near Kirkuk.

<sup>80</sup> Press briefing by the Director of Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. Gen. William Mayville. August 11, 2014

<sup>81</sup> Statement by Iraqi Prime Minister Abadi in an interview with Iraqiya state TV.

<http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/mideast-africa/2015/05/31/al-abadi-iraq-lost-humvees-mosul/28262103/>

See also: Alexander Smith, "Iraq PM Says Forces Lost 2,300 HMMVs Last Year to ISIS," nbcnews.com, June 1, 2015, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/iraqi-prime-minister-haider-al-abadi-says-his-forces-lost-n367596>

<sup>82</sup> Johnston, Patrick. in Hussein, Sara. 2015. A year on, no quick fix to halt IS 'caliphate'. Agence France-Presse. 20 June 2015

<sup>83</sup> Press briefing by the Director of Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. Gen. William Mayville on August 11, 2014.

<sup>84</sup> Confidential Statement by a State Department Official. See note 24

have the territorial and linguistic knowledge of their predecessors in order to gain the support of the local non-Kurdish communities in the mixed or disputed territories.

Even the more experienced commanders were not prepared for such urban warfare and counterinsurgency on ISIS's scale. They are more experienced in guerrilla warfare. As for large-scale battles for villages and cities, the Peshmerga strength was in the support it would gain from local populations. The commanders also prefer a form of bravery and frontline presence, which makes them more vulnerable to ISIS snipers and suicide vehicles.

The Peshmerga therefore needs better formation and positioning of forces in order to meet the challenge of ISIS warfare.

### **5.3 Unification of the Peshmerga**

Another issue is the lack of integration amongst the diverse territorial and partisan units of the Peshmerga. This goes back to the bitter civil war between the major two Kurdish parties, P.U.K. and K.D.P., in 1994-1998 and therefore there is need for better coordination between Command, control, and communications of the Peshmerga units. Although this has not reflected negatively in the battlefield, given the specialization and familiarity of local units and population support, a strong uniting command and control is crucial for large scale and decisive counterinsurgency efforts against ISIS.

Furthermore, this connection to the political parties is because the parties have supplied the Ministry of Peshmerga with the fighters as its founders in 1992 and not a politicization of an existing force. Therefore the parties and their leadership will

play a crucial role in further professionalization and institutionalization of the Peshmerga.

The reform and restructuring of the Peshmerga could aim to modernize and depoliticize the Kurdish forces. The Minister of Peshmerga announced a plan to “build a modern army under K.R.G.'s authority rather than political parties” with the support of the President of the Kurdistan region<sup>85</sup> who is also the leader of a major Kurdish party (K.D.P.) and the Commander in Chief of Peshmerga. However, “without arms and training,” the Minister argues, “the unaccountable militias will continue to exploit the situation and undermine stability once ISIS is defeated.”

However, the process of unifying and organizing Peshmerga is a technically difficult task. After formal unification into a new brigade of 3,000 fighters, it requires arms, joint training, and administrative processes that will take at least six months.<sup>86</sup>

The reform process is further hindered by the challenges and limitations of the Peshmerga budget that lacks the support from Iraqi central government. The U.S. can play a key role in this by putting pressure on the central government to provide the necessary budget and administrative support.

---

<sup>85</sup> Vatanka, Alex; Shamsulddin, Sarkawt. 2015. Forget ISIS: Shia Militias Are the Real Threat to Kurdsitan. The National Interest. Accessed on <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/forget-isis-shia-militias-are-the-real-threat-kurdistan-11982>

<sup>86</sup> Information provided by the office of the Minister of Peshmerga

## 6. Options for U.S. support to the Kurds

The Kurdistan region claims to have sufficient recruits to fight ISIS, but they don't have enough arms and ammunition.<sup>87</sup> In addition they need more training for the Peshmerga forces, closer military coordination with the U.S. led international coalition against ISIS, and air support.

The U.S. can play a crucial role in strengthening the Peshmerga as part of its counterterrorism strategy and international coalition against ISIS, considering the Peshmerga are the only formal forces capable of fighting ISIS on the ground. In addition, the support should be designed to sustain and continue beyond the current fight against ISIS to involve more than supply of U.S. weapons, rather empowering the Peshmerga and engaging them in the post-military and stabilization efforts that will be necessary in the long term.

An important success factor is “what the forces fighting ISIS are actually capable of achieving, or how many lives have been saved, or figuring out what kinds of social and political changes can lead to a long-term solution.”<sup>88</sup>

U.S. support in the ongoing plans to reform the Peshmerga will be a critical factor for the Peshmerga's success over the long term.<sup>89</sup> The U.S. support should be designed to not only sustain the Peshmerga resistance against ISIS but to enable them to advance beyond the current defensive operations in order to establish a

---

<sup>87</sup> Qadir, Mustafa. Minister of Peshmerga

<sup>88</sup> Skinner, Patrick. in Boghani, Priyanka. 2015. What an Estimate of 10,000 ISIS Fighters Killed Doesn't Tell Us. Accessed on [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/iraq-war-on-terror/rise-of-isis/what-an-estimate-of-10000-isis-fighters-killed-doesnt-tell-us/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/iraq-war-on-terror/rise-of-isis/what-an-estimate-of-10000-isis-fighters-killed-doesnt-tell-us/)

<sup>89</sup> Vatanka, Alex; Shamsulddin, Sarkawt. 2015. Forget ISIS: Shia Militias Are the Real Threat to Kurdsitan. The National Interest. Accessed on <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/forget-isis-shia-militias-are-the-real-threat-kurdistan-11982>

long-term partnership. For example, the U.S. should increase the sharing of intelligence and arms, and in a direct manner. It should allow international arms purchases by the K.R.G. Executive action through the Pentagon would be sufficient to arrange this without special approval.

### **6.1 Professionalization**

In addition to supplying the necessary weapons, at least on equal footing with other parts of Iraq, the U.S. can contribute to the further professionalization of Peshmerga by providing training on usage and maintenance of the new weapons. Communication and logistics are another area where the U.S. can play a crucial role in providing assistance, especially for joint operations with the international coalition against ISIS.

The U.S. should encourage the Peshmerga to become a national force regardless of political parties, which can be mainly achieved through conditional arming and training. The Peshmerga only received 10 percent of what is given to Iraq. Furthermore the U.S. should ensure aid supply reaches all divisions of the Peshmerga equally, while observing the requirements of the battlefield.

### **6.2 Institutionalization**

In order to ensure its institutionalization, military support to the Peshmerga should be coordinated with a balanced allocation across regions and administrative areas to induce equality amongst commands, and to eliminate political influences or creation of powerful loyalist groups that could be used in future rivalries. In return, the U.S. can also impose conditions and close monitoring of the responsible and effective use of the weapons.

In this manner, it can ensure that the Peshmerga will be empowered adequately and based on necessities of their battles.

To ensure the Peshmerga focused on the main objective of assessing, preparing for, and countering ISIS, the U.S.-led coalition should maintain a single command that is controlled by the civilian authorities and without the impact of political rivalries.<sup>90</sup> That command should coordinate directly with the Ministry of Peshmerga Affairs. Joint cooperation mechanisms can be established on a tactical level when necessary. But it should not undermine the singularity of the command.

Fragmentation, competition, and personality-driven approaches will expose Kurdistan to even higher risks.<sup>91</sup> By setting up a training center in Kurdistan that is supported by the U.S. military and with a merit-based admission, the U.S. can contribute to the establishment of a new generation of Peshmerga that is less dependent on political influences and more ready for deployments outside of their close geographic locations. Such a training center will ensure a long lasting strategic security partnership between the U.S. and Kurdistan.

### **6.3 Reform and restructuring**

A unique strength of Peshmerga is to have a fluid structure capable of adjustment and improvisation, with its members easily mobilized when necessary and demobilized in peacetime, when they can pursue their regular civil professions. For outsiders it seems this informal structure is difficult to understand and to deal with. This slows down decisions to supply them with the necessary arms and

---

<sup>90</sup> Fantappie, Maria. "The Peshmerga Regression." *Foreign Affairs*. June 15, 2015. Accessed June 15, 2015.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*



equipment. In addition, the absorption of aid slows down due to that organizational structure. In contrast, the I.S.F. has an internationally recognizable structure and hierarchy. Given its formal international status as the official force of the government of Iraq it is easier for it to receive a tremendous amount of training and support regardless of its performance in the battlefields.

The formation of the Peshmerga became more informal after the emergence of ISIS and its strikes on Kurdish borders in August 2014. In reaction to that, the older generation of Peshmerga with battlefield experience returned to arms and quickly deployed. However, despite the issue of organizational form, they proved to be effective in command and direct participation in the battles against ISIS and as major contributor to the success of the Peshmerga.

## 7. Conclusion and recommendations

The political views and methods for countering ISIS differ and are not always clear. However U.S., Iraq, and the international community agree that the establishment of the 'Islamic State' on Iraqi and Syrian territories should not be allowed.

The I.S.F. and the militias have not been capable of offering substantial resistance, nor of halting the advance of ISIS. U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter stated that the Iraqi forces showed no will to fight. For example in the battle to defend Ramadi, the capital of Al Anbar Province, the largest governorate in Iraq,<sup>92</sup> the army vastly outnumbered ISIS, and yet they failed to fight and retreated. "We have an issue with the will of the Iraqis to fight ISIL and defend themselves."<sup>93</sup>

The I.S.F. in its current form has proved to be incapable of gaining the trust of the population or maintaining peace and order in the areas they liberate from ISIS. This is mainly due to revenge and sectarianism,<sup>94</sup> which drives military performance away from professionalism. To build up an effective army in Iraq for the second time since 2003 is a difficult task and its realization is questionable.

The U.S. and allies can provide lots of equipment and training to the I.S.F., but the issues of morale and confidence of those forces is the task of national leaders to

---

<sup>92</sup> The U.S. has also spent a tremendous amount of efforts in securing Al Anbar from al Qaeda and to bring it back to Iraqi control during the surge campaign. See for example Shultz, Richard H. 2012. *The marines take Anbar: The four-year fight against al Qaeda*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press

<sup>93</sup> Carter, Ashton. U.S. Secretary of defense in an interview on CNN State of the Union aired on 24 May 2015. Accessed on <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/24/politics/ashton-carter-isis-ramadi/>

<sup>94</sup> Human Rights Watch documented Shia militias' abuses in Amerli, Diyala, after anti-ISIL operations there in 2014. See "After Liberation Came Destruction: Iraqi Militias and the Aftermath of Amerli," Human Rights Watch, March 18, 2015.

tackle.<sup>95</sup> Furthermore, Iraq does not lack military experts and trainers, nor training centers and other facilities. Iraq had the fourth largest army in the world and<sup>96</sup> has been one of the strongest armies in the region for decades, as it was essentially a military state with unrestricted budgets and facilities. Most of that establishment has remained intact given that the I.S.F. did not provide much resistance against U.S. invasion in 2003.

The U.S. is reluctant to deploy large-scale combat forces to fight ISIS. Peshmerga has proven to be capable of protecting its territories effectively with U.S. air support and does not require additional recruits or U.S. fighting troops. Its training requirements are limited to the tactical needs of using and maintaining weapons if they are delivered.

Over the past decades the Peshmerga capabilities have developed and it is taking serious steps in reform and modernization. Peshmerga has successfully transformed from a revolutionary guerilla force, and emerged as a reliable military one with the main purpose of defending the Kurdistan region. The extent of the objectives it met in rolling back ISIS, maintaining control and in post crisis recovery efforts are a good indicator of its legitimacy and professionalism.

Furthermore, this paper displayed the history of successful joint operations between the U.S. military and the Peshmerga, and argues that this is a valid case for further strengthening direct cooperation based on capabilities that have already

---

<sup>95</sup> Sky, Emma. 2015. Can Iraq Be Saved? Accessed on [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/25/can-iraq-be-saved.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/25/can-iraq-be-saved.html)

<sup>96</sup> Scales, Robert H. 2015. The iraqi army can't be westernized. Wall Street Journal, Jun 26, 2015. Accessed on <http://search.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/docview/1691212434?accountid=14434>

been proven. In addition, alternatives like efforts to rely on the I.S.F. or militias have proven to be unsuccessful<sup>97</sup> and there is the need for immediate action and a further clear strategy to approach the war on ISIS.

The U.S. should consider more direct and stronger forms of cooperation with the Peshmerga. It is clear that the current administration does not want a confrontation with the neighboring countries, nor does it want to undermine Iraq's central authority. However this should not impede the flow of support and joint operations with the Peshmerga.

For the Kurdish leadership the decision should be made about the form of the cooperation and its effectiveness and sustainability. A subtle and strategically sustainable alliance with the U.S. and NATO would be more rewarding for Kurdistan's long-term objectives. It should focus on ensuring the arrival and quality of the support rather than the route and methods. In addition the K.R.G. should ensure the improvement of the distribution and allocation of the support it receives.

One form of cooperation that should be considered is to establish military training bases inside the Kurdistan region to ensure continuous strengthening of the Peshmerga capabilities. In addition, establishment of such bases and continuous presence of U.S. and international coalition's forces would project power and signal the long-term alliance with the Kurds.

Throughout the Middle East, the U.S. has mainly dealt with existing borders and 'known evils', but this approach is no longer sustainable due to the Arab Spring, geo-

---

<sup>97</sup> Former CIA Director and U.S. military commander in Iraq General David Petraeus said "these are fights where if you're not winning, you're probably losing because time is not on your side" during an interview with Charlie Rose on 3 June 2015.

political dynamics, and the generation of highly interconnected youth. The findings of the paper can help the policy towards the Kurds in Syria as well where the Peshmerga is fighting ISIS, proving its popular support in the battle of Kobane. But it can also generate a strategy throughout the Middle East in places where many states have artificial borders that do not reflect cohesion in the population. Many of these states have failed due to sectarianism and tyranny.

### **Areas for future research**

There is the need for further study of the methods and requirements for the transition of Peshmerga from revolutionary guerrilla forces to an establishment of a regular security structure. Furthermore it is necessary to study how to preserve the characteristics of informality and popular support of the Peshmerga into the theoretical approach to security sector reform.

Another area that requires further study is the question of whether to keep the Security Forces of Kurdistan in their current form of the Peshmerga or switch to a standard defense force, and whether to establish an elite unit in the name of Peshmerga within those forces.

For the study of the military cooperation between the U.S. and Kurdistan it is necessary to investigate U.S. objectives in supporting Peshmerga. There is need for further evidence to define whether the U.S. supports the Peshmerga only as a tool to fight ISIS, or does it see the Kurdistan region as an ally in need for protection and therefore support of its forces.

Further study is necessary to recommend a clear strategy in the U.S. policy towards the Kurdistan region, instead of reluctance because of the regional pressure

that prevents its further independence. This requires a study to compare the U.S. interests in Iraq within its instability and security challenges, versus a commitment to support Kurdistan as an island of stability in the region and as a model for future military interventions.

## Bibliography

113th Congress Public Law 291.

Arango, Tim, and Duraid Adnan. "For Iraq, Year Ends The Way It Began, With Guns Drawn." *New York Times* 4 Dec. 2012:.

Barzani, Masrour; chief of the Iraqi Kurdish intelligence services. Interview with *Al Monitor* on 2 July 2015

Barzani, Massoud; President of the Kurdistan Region. Interview with *France 24* on 19 November 2014.

Berman, Lazar. 2015. The Status of Western Military Aid to Kurdish Peshmerga Forces. Accessed on [jcpa.org/article/the-status-of-western-military-aid-to-kurdish-peshmerga-forces/](http://jcpa.org/article/the-status-of-western-military-aid-to-kurdish-peshmerga-forces/)

Brooks, Rosa. 2014. Why Obama's assurance of 'no boots on the ground' isn't so reassuring. *The Washington Post*. 26 September 2014.

Bulloch, John, and Harvey Morris. 1992. *No Friends But the Mountains - the tragic history of the Kurds*

Carter, Ashton. U.S. Secretary of defense in an interview on CNN State of the Union aired on 24 May 2015. Accessed on <http://www.cnn.com/2015/05/24/politics/ashton-carter-isis-ramadi/>

CBS News interview with Former CIA Director and U.S. military commander in Iraq General David Petraeus on 3 June 2015.

Chapman, Dennis P. 2011. *Security forces of Kurdistan regional government*. Vol. no. 10. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers.

Confidential Statement by a Former Pentagon Official  
Confidential Statement by a State Department Official

Congressional Research Service. 2015. The "islamic state" crisis and U.S. policy. CRS report. Accessed on <http://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t21.d22.crs-2015-fdt-0103?accountid=14434>

Dizard, W. "Doomsday dam could bring Iraqis together". *Aljazeera America*, accessed on <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/8/20/mosul-dam-water.html>

Ekurds.net. "Over 22.5 million Kurds live in Turkey, new Turkish statistics reveal." Over 22.5 million Kurds live in Turkey, new Turkish statistics reveal. N.p., n.d. Web. 16 Feb. 2014. <<http://www.ekurd.net/mismas/articles/misc2012/9/turkey4166.htm>>

Fact sheet: strategy to counter the Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant. States News Service 2014. Accessed on [http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mmln\\_m\\_tufts&id=GALE%7CA382104049&&v=2.1&it=r&userGroup=mmln\\_m\\_tufts&authCount=1](http://go.galegroup.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=mmln_m_tufts&id=GALE%7CA382104049&&v=2.1&it=r&userGroup=mmln_m_tufts&authCount=1)

Fantappie, Maria. "The Peshmerga Regression." *Foreign Affairs*. June 15, 2015. Accessed June 15, 2015.

Gunter, Frank R. 2014. *The ISIL invasion of Iraq: Economic winners and losers*.

Gunter, Michael M. "The Five Stages of American Foreign Policy Towards the Kurds." *Insight Turkey* 13.2 (2011): 93-106.

Gunter, Michael. 2015. *Kurdistan Needs New President as Barzani Already Served His Constitutionally Allotted Terms*. Accessed on [ekurd.net/michael-gunter-kurdistan-needs-new-president-2015-07-10#.VZ\\_lgrNoG9s.facebook](http://ekurd.net/michael-gunter-kurdistan-needs-new-president-2015-07-10#.VZ_lgrNoG9s.facebook)

Hawezy, Sherdil. Former Minister of Peshmerga and head of Parliamentary Committee on Peshmarga affairs

Human Rights Watch documented Shia militias' abuses in Amerli, Diyala, after anti-ISIL operations there in 2014. See "After Liberation Came Destruction: Iraqi Militias and the Aftermath of Amerli," Human Rights Watch, March 18, 2015.

Iraqi Constitution

K.R.G. Ministry of Peshmerga

Kutschera, Chris. 2008. A bitter sweet revenge. *The Middle East* (391): 58

McDowall, David. 1996. *A modern history of the kurds*. New York; London: I.B.Tauris

Mustafa, Jaafar. Former Minister of Peshmerga, current commander of 70th forces that is fighting ISIS directly in areas near Kirkuk.

Natali D. *A New Normal for Iraqi Kurds?* Middle East Research and Information Project; 2014.



Peterson, Scott. 2002. Kurds say Iraq's attacks serve as a warning. *Christian Science Monitor*, May 13, 2002. Accessed on <http://www.csmonitor.com/2002/0513/p08s01-wome.html>

Press briefing by the Director of Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. Gen. William Mayville on August 11, 2014.

Phillips, David L. Interviews in May and June 2015

Press briefing by the Director of Operations of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Lt. Gen. William Mayville. August 11, 2014

Qadir, Mustafa. Minister of Peshmerga

Robinson, Linda in a U.S. Senate hearing on the counterterrorism strategy against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL): are we on the right path? *Political Transcript Wire* [Lanham] 25 June 2015

Robinson, Linda. 2004. *Masters of chaos: The secret history of the special forces*. 1st ed. New York: PublicAffairs.

Robinson, Linda. Interviews in July 2015

Rudd, Gordon W., and United States. Department of the Army. 2004. *Humanitarian intervention: Assisting the iraqi kurds in operation provide comfort, 1991*. 70-78-1.;

Shultz, Richard H. 2012. *The marines take Anbar: The four-year fight against al Qaeda*. Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press

Skinner, Patrick. in Boghani, Priyanka. 2015. What an Estimate of 10,000 ISIS Fighters Killed Doesn't Tell Us. Accessed on [www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/iraq-war-on-terror/rise-of-isis/what-an-estimate-of-10000-isis-fighters-killed-doesnt-tell-us/](http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/iraq-war-on-terror/rise-of-isis/what-an-estimate-of-10000-isis-fighters-killed-doesnt-tell-us/)

Sky, Emma. 2015. Can Iraq Be Saved? Accessed on [www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/25/can-iraq-be-saved.html](http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2015/06/25/can-iraq-be-saved.html)

Smith, Alexander "Iraq PM Says Forces Lost 2,300 HMMVs Last Year to ISIS," *nbcnews.com*, June 1, 2015, available at: <http://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/isis-terror/iraqi-prime-minister-haider-al-abadi-says-his-forces-lost-n367596>

Stafford, Ed. 2015. Explaining the Turkish Military's Opposition to Combating ISIS. *POLICYWATCH* 2356. Accessed on [www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis](http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/explaining-the-turkish-militarys-opposition-to-combating-isis)

State Department inspector general report, the embassy was moving to reduce its headcount from over 11,500 in January 2013 to 5,500 in January 2014.  
[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/15/us-embassy-baghdad-iraq\\_n\\_5497118.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/15/us-embassy-baghdad-iraq_n_5497118.html)

U.N. Security Council Resolution Database. Accessed on <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/>

U.S. Department of Defense News release

U.S. Congressional record daily edition. Accessed on  
<HTTP://congressional.proquest.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/congressional/docview/t17.d18.c4b09ab51200083a?accountid=14434>

U.S. Department of State newsbriefs. Accessed on  
<http://www.state.gov/secretary/remarks/2015/01/236183.htm>

Vatanka, Alex; Shamsulddin, Sarkawt. 2015. Forget ISIS: Shia Militias Are the Real Threat to Kurdsitan. The National Interest. Accessed on  
<http://nationalinterest.org/feature/forget-isis-shia-militias-are-the-real-threat-kurdistan-11982>

Vick, Karl. 2015. The Kurds Are Building a Country With Every Victory Over ISIS. Accessed on [time.com/3932515/the-kurds-are-building-a-country-with-every-victory-over-isis/](http://time.com/3932515/the-kurds-are-building-a-country-with-every-victory-over-isis/)

White House Office of the Press Secretary

Wise, David. 1991. A people betrayed: Twice before, Washington let Kurds die to promote foreign-policy designs. now it's the Bush Administration doing the deed. Los Angeles Times (1923-Current File) 1991.