Iranian-backed militias expanded their operations into northern Iraq where they have not previously operated. This expansion is a result of the recent talks between the local government of Kirkuk, the Badr Organization, and the Iraqi government. The launch of these operations represents a major change in the militias' calculus, and the exact reason behind this change remains unclear. If the militias prove effective in the area, this will likely increase their influence, along with Iranian influence, in Iraq. The Kirkuk government has previously rejected the notion of deploying forces other than Peshmerga and local tribal fighters in Kirkuk province. The cooperation with the militias is likely in response to the recent attacks by ISIS on Kirkuk City that originated from the Hawija area. It is also indicative of the inability of the Iraqi Sunni anti-ISIS tribes in the area of generating manpower capable of combating ISIS in southwestern Kirkuk Province. This area is of great strategic importance to ISIS and will likely attempt to escalate its attacks elsewhere to force the militias and the Peshmerga to shift resources away from Hawija. Also, the area has historically been a hub for other groups such as the Baathist group Jaysh Rijal al-Tariqah al-Naqshbandia (JRTN), Ansar al-Islam, and Jaysh al-Mujahidin; this is likely to prolong the fighting. Elsewhere in Iraq, the past two days have witnessed a significant increase of VBIED and Suicide attacks and it will be important to watch for a further escalation in this activity as anti-ISIS forces press further in areas such as Hawija.