



# Al-Bayan Monitor

# 2025

## MAY



A periodic bulletin to monitor Iraqi affairs  
In international, regional and Arab think tanks

## مركز البيان للدراسات والتخطيط

**Al-Bayan Center for Studies and Planning**



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Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies is an independent, nonprofit think tank based in Baghdad, Iraq. In addition to other issues, its primary mission is to offer an authentic perspective on public and foreign policy issues related to Iraq in particular and the Middle East region in general. BCPS pursues its vision by conducting autonomous analysis and proposing workable solutions for complex issues that concern the political and academic fields.

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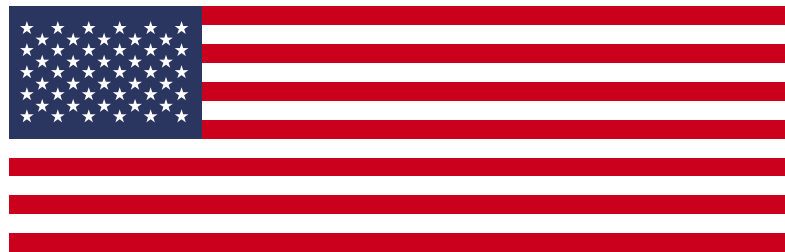
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**Since 2014**

## AMERICAN THINK TANKES



# Climate Change and State Fragility in Iraq: Budgeting, Governance, and the Future of Sustainability

Joy Arkeh and Nourane  
Awadallah

Carnegie Endowment for  
International Peace

The authors believe that “Iraq will need more institutional capacity and financial investment to diversify its economy away from oil and meet its sustainability goals.” In the end, he concludes that “Iraq faces a multifaceted set of challenges exacerbated by climate change, which threaten both its environmental and its socio-economic stability. The country’s over-reliance on oil as its main economic driver, compounded by climate-induced vulnerabilities such as water scarcity and land desertification, places Iraq at a critical juncture. Iraq’s multi-sectoral approach to governance, particularly in integrating water, industry, and agriculture sectors, is a step toward more coordinated and holistic climate action. The regulation of industrial practices to mitigate pollution, as outlined in various laws and instructions, also points to Iraq’s proactive stance in aligning with international best practices in environmental governance. However, the country’s institutional frameworks, while commendable in some areas, still lack the transparency, accountability, and comprehensive disaster management mechanisms required for long-term resilience.”

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ARTICLE

## Climate Change and State Fragility in Iraq: Budgeting, Governance, and the Future of Sustainability

Iraq will need more institutional capacity and financial investment to diversify its economy away from oil and meet its sustainability goals.

PDF ▾



By Joy Arkeh and Nourane Awadallah

Published on May 15, 2025

<https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2025/05/climate-change-and-state-fragility-in-iraq-budgeting-governance-and-the-future-of-sustainability?lang=en>

# Reforming Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces: From Liability to National Asset

Ali Al-Mawlawi

Stimson

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## Reforming Iraq's Popular Mobilization Forces: From Liability to National Asset

Reforming Iraq's PMF to strengthen national stability amid regional tensions

By Ali Al-Mawlawi  
Middle East & North Africa

May 8, 2025



According to the author, “reforming Iraq’s PMF to strengthen national stability amid regional tensions” In the end, he writes that “contradictory and unverifiable estimates persist regarding how many individuals are on the PMF payroll. The absence of reliable data facilitates misuse of funds, political manipulation, and inflated staffing numbers for budgetary gain. Iraq’s Shi’ite leadership should make a clear choice about the future of the PMF. Left unchecked, the PMF risks remaining a divisive and politicized force vulnerable to external manipulation. Calls for its dissolution or absorption into other security agencies are unrealistic, given its distinct identity and social base. However, preserving the PMF cannot come at the expense of Iraq’s national interest as determined by the country’s elected representatives. Its original purpose of defending Iraq from the threat of terrorism should be restored, stripping away the factional agendas and profiteering that undermine both the PMF and the integrity of the Iraqi state.”

<https://www.stimson.org/2025/reforming-iraqs-popular-mobilization-forces-from-liability-to-national-asset/>

# Balancing Security and Diplomacy: Turkey's Dual-Track Policy Towards Iraq

Meliha Altunışık and Derya Göçer

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## Balancing Security and Diplomacy: Turkey's Dual-Track Policy Towards Iraq

Pressure from the Trump administration on Iraq to reduce its dependence on Iran offers Turkey a wider strategic window to deepen engagement

By Meliha Altunışık • Derya Göçer  
Middle East & North Africa

April 25, 2025



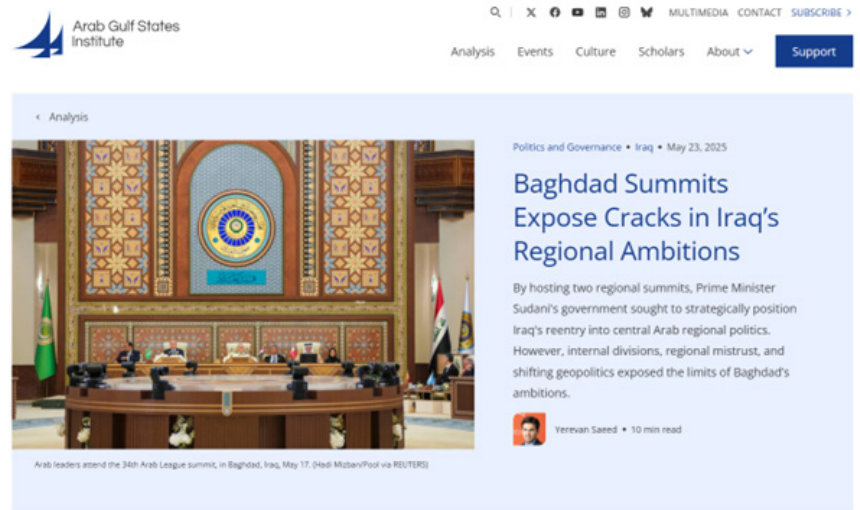
According to the authors, “pressure from the Trump administration on Iraq to reduce its dependence on Iran offers Turkey a wider strategic window to deepen engagement” For them, Turkey’s strategy toward Iraq, faces four critical challenges: Balancing Baghdad and Erbil, Intra-Kurdish Rivalries, Iraqi Internal Fragility, Security Capacity Limitations. In the end, they conclude that “our research demonstrates that Turkish policy towards Iraq over the last five years has been dominated by a dual-track strategy. Turkey has added collaboration with Iraqi actors to its already considerable repertoire of engagements with the KRG and has invested in both diplomatic and military toolsets. This expansion has allowed Turkey to be more adept in times of rapid domestic and regional shifts. Yet, this approach has limitations. Turkey’s ability to sustain this strategy will depend on its capacity to navigate shifting regional alliances, manage internal political dynamics, and balance engagement in Iraq with broader geopolitical constraints.”

<https://www.stimson.org/2025/balancing-security-and-diplomacy-turkeys-dual-track-policy-towards-iraq/>

# Baghdad Summits Expose Cracks in Iraq's Regional Ambitions

Yerevan Saeed

The Arab Gulf States Institute



According to the author, “by hosting two regional summits, Prime Minister Sudani’s government sought to strategically position Iraq’s reentry into central Arab regional politics. However, internal divisions, regional mistrust, and shifting geopolitics exposed the limits of Baghdad’s ambitions.” He asserts that “the Baghdad summits, which were intended to strategically position Iraq’s reentry into central Arab regional politics, fell short. Despite considerable preparations, internal divisions, regional mistrust, and shifting geopolitics undercut the gathering’s aspirations. The absence of key leaders, controversy over Syria’s invitation, backlash from aligned factions, and perception of performative security all contributed to undermining the narrative of a revitalized, sovereign Iraq. Ultimately, rather than demonstrating leadership and consensus-building capacity, the summits exposed the fragility of the Iraqi state, riddled by deep structural dysfunction and competing loyalties, hindering Baghdad’s ability to chart a new regional path amid a broader regional geopolitical realignment.”

<https://agsi.org/analysis/baghdad-summits-expose-cracks-in-iraqs-regional-ambitions/>



# Geopolitical Dynamics Surrounding Iraq's Ambitious Development Road Project

Giorgio Cafiero

Arab Center Washington DC



The author believes that “by making Iraq an important hub and corridor for global trade, the Development Road project can help the country diversify its economy beyond oil. Considering the large sums of money required for this project, the UAE and Qatar are anticipated to make mostly public investments.” He adds that “the leadership in Baghdad is taking the opposite approach, viewing greater infrastructure and logistical connectivity between countries as opening doors to more prosperity, political stability, and security.” In the end, he concludes that “by leveraging its geography and international borders, Iraq sees the Development Road as a valuable opportunity to become a more influential player in the global geopolitical and geo-economic order. Of the many international challenges facing Baghdad as this project moves forward, one of the most salient will be to ensure that countries such as Kuwait and Iran are given enough buy-in to prevent them from hindering what could become a major conduit for global trade.”

<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/geopolitical-dynamics-surrounding-iraqs-ambitious-development-road-project/>



## EUROPEAN THINK TANKS



# Misery loves company: Iraq and Iran's electricity and gas dependencies

Ahmed Tabaqchali

Clingendael International Affairs  
Think Tank and Academy



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ARTICLES / 1 MAY 2020

Misery loves company: Iraq and Iran's electricity and gas dependencies



The author believes that “the common narrative – mostly US – is that Iraq’s critical dependency on Iran’s electricity and gas exports are a manifestation of Iran’s economic dominance of Iraq while also enabling Iran to circumvent US sanctions”. However, according to him, “in contrast, this blog post demonstrates that Iran and Iraq are mutually dependent on these exports/imports. This is not due to any grand design, but rather to similar economic management failures.” In the end, Ahmed Tabaqchali, concludes that “If the US were to revoke its current waiver to Iraq that allows the import of Iranian gas - in addition to the already revoked waiver that used to enable electricity imports - it is more likely that Iraq will experience a major energy crisis than that Iran will experience greater financial pressure”

# Saudi and Emirati engagement in Iraq From sectarianism to investment

Máté Szalai

Clingendael International Affairs  
Think Tank and Academy



MAY 2025

## Saudi and Emirati engagement in Iraq: From sectarianism to investment

The initial engagement of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in Iraq after 2003 was largely ineffective as its sectarian and politicised nature created significant resistance. However, since 2017 there has been a considerable change of strategy towards more state-based, economy-focused and soft power-style diplomacy and investment. This brief assesses the impact of the new Saudi and Emirati engagement on Iraq's political economy. Among other things, it shows that Saudi and Emirati outreach remains limited among key members of the ruling Shia Coordination Framework, although both countries successfully established personal ties with less central Shia elites, most notably Iraq's subsequent prime ministers. Economic investment – especially electricity connectivity and the Iraq Development Road, security of the Iraq/Saudi border and expanding institutional rather than personal relations are Saudi and Emirati top priorities for near-term engagement. If successful, such initiatives would put their influence on a growth trajectory.

### Introduction

The political and economic outreach of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Iraq has intensified significantly in the last few years. In addition to the relative stabilisation of Iraq's situation

in Saudi foreign policy implemented by Mohamed bin Salman (MBS) enabled a shift in focus to broader economic and security engagement.

Policy Brief

Máté Szalai

According to the author, “since 2014, Gulf engagement in Iraq has shifted from a sectarian approach to a more pragmatic one focusing on economic and security interests. From European perspective, Gulf efforts that strengthen the Iraqi state and promote economic growth are beneficial and should be supported. The political and economic outreach of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in Iraq has intensified significantly in the last few years. He concludes that “this brief aims to interpret and map current Saudi and Emirati efforts to build political, security and economic influence in Iraq and the effects of such efforts on the evolution and stability of Iraq’s current political settlement. An overview of the general Saudi and Emirati strategy towards Iraq since 2017 is followed by a mapping of the main security, political and economic engagement of the two countries after 2020, together with a broad assessment of their effects. The paper aims to contribute to a European re-evaluation of the Gulf states’ strategy towards Iraq. It also assesses the effects of this strategy on the evolution of the Iraqi political system.”



## IRANIAN THINK TANKS



# Increasing Demands for the Creation of New Iraqi Provinces; Development-Oriented or Political Requests?

Shahab Noorani

Mersad Think Tank



The author believes that there are challenges and opportunities of making Halabja a province for the Iraqi federal government. According to him, negative point for the federal government is that it increases the budget and facilities necessary to administer the fourth province of the Kurdistan Region. The positive point for the federal government is creating a balance in the power equations between the two major parties in the region. In the end, he concludes that “the multitude of demands for converting regions into provinces is a sign of the religious, ethnic, and regional divisions in Iraqi society that have become more apparent due to political and regional developments. Also, the Sunnis’ efforts to support Zubair becoming a province, while at the same time opposing the formation of new provinces in their own regions, is indicative of the dual criteria of this movement in this regard.”

<https://mersadcass.com/products/commentary/%d8%a7%d9%81%d8%b2%d8%a7%db%8c%d8%b4-%d9%85%d8%b7%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%a8%d8%a7%d8%aa-%d8%a8%d8%b1%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%a7%db%8c%d8%ac%d8%a7%d8%af-%d8%a7%d8%b3%d8%aa%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%87%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%ac%d8%af/>

## The implications of the call for Shara for the Arab Summit in Iraq

Hossein Ahmadi

Strategic Council for Foreign  
Relations



According to Hussein Ahmadi, “the invitation to Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa to attend the Arab Summit is a message from the Iraqi government to the Arab world that Baghdad is seeking to play a pivotal role in rebuilding Arab relations and reducing regional tensions. But it seems that the path ahead for Baghdad will not be easy.” He concludes that “the Arab summit in Baghdad is a unique opportunity for Iraq to consolidate its role as a regional actor, but its success will depend on the government’s ability to manage internal and security tensions. Al-Sharaa’s presence or absence, regardless of the outcome, will reflect the political complexities of the region and the challenges facing the Arab League. This development, which reflects the cautious realism on the one hand and the diplomatic activism of the Sudanese government on the other, could be a turning point in Iraqi-Syrian relations, provided it is managed carefully and tactfully.”

<https://www.scfr.ir/fa/300/30101/344303/%d9%be%db%8c%d8%a7%d9%85%d8%af%d9%87%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%af%d8%b9%d9%88%d8%aa-%d8%a7%d8%b2-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b4%d8%b1%d8%b9-%d8%a8-%d8%b1%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%a7%d8%ac%d9%84%d8%a7%d8%b3-%d8%b3%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%86/>

# Iraq's Liquidity Crisis; Confluence of External Pressures and Domestic Challenges

Abdulrahman Fathallahi

Strategic Council for Foreign  
Relations



Abdulrahman Fathallahi states that “the liquidity crisis in the Iraqi banking system, which is accompanied by a sharp decline in state-owned banks’ cash reserves and disruptions in loan payments and employee salaries, goes beyond a simple financial problem and could have political, diplomatic, and even security implications.” He calls US pressures “financial Instruments as political leverage” and lists domestic challenges and needed structural reforms. For him, “the long-term prospects for Iraq’s economy depend on a delicate balance between embracing reforms and maintaining fiscal sovereignty. A World Bank report last year warned that without structural reforms, the Iraqi economy would remain vulnerable to external shocks, such as falling oil prices or increased U.S. pressure. At the same time, Iraq could benefit from working with international institutions and diversifying its trading partners, including China and India, to reduce its dependence on the United States. This strategy, if managed wisely, could transform Iraq from a fragile economy into a more stable regional player.”

<https://www.scfr.ir/fa/300/30101/344325/%d8%a8%d8%ad%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%86-%d9%86%d9%82%d8%af%db%8c%d9%86%da%af%db%8c-%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%82%d8%9b-%d8%aa%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%82%db%8c-%d9%81%d8%b4%d8%a7%d8%b1%d9%87%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%ae%d8%a7%d8%b1/>



## Reasons for NATO's Interest in Military Partnership with Iraq

Qanadbashi

Strategic Council for Foreign  
Relations



According to the author, “Iraq’s tensions with its neighbors will increase and the country’s borders will become insecure for its neighbors. Also, economically, if Iraq has a greater partnership with NATO, it will become a serious competitor for Saudi Arabia, the Emirates, and Kuwait economically and militarily, and undoubtedly, they will not tolerate Iraq becoming a more prominent player than them in the Western bloc.” He concludes that “Iraq has different and diverse ethnic groups, and NATO’s presence will exacerbate ethnic differences and further tensions. The movements of the Zionist regime may also have an impact on this decision, because the Israelis are present in the Kurdistan Region and do not want to lose this position. It has even been said that some members of the NATO delegation based in the country are cooperating with foreign intelligence services, including the Israeli intelligence service known as Mossad.”

<https://www.scfr.ir/fa/300/30102/344539/%d8%af%d9%84%d8%a7%db%8c%d9%84-%d8%b9%d9%84%d8%a7%d9%82%d9%85%d9%86%d8%af%db%8c-%d9%86%d8%a7%d8%aa%d9%88-%d8%a8%d8%b1%d8%a7%db%8c-%d8%b4%d8%b1%d8%a7%da%a9%d8%aa-%d9%86%d8%b8%d8%a7%d9%85%db%8c-%d8%a8/>

## Is the Iraqi Prime Minister leaning towards the Qatar-Turkey axis?

Shahab Noorani

Center for Iraqi Studies



Examining the possible reasons for Sudani's proximity to the Qatar-Turkey axis, the author states that "in this regard, no definitive or near-real reason can be stated, but possible reasons can be mentioned in this regard, which are: 1- Sudan's closest ally among the Sunnis is Khamis Khanjar, 2- It should be kept in mind that, apart from Iran and the United States, Qatar and especially Turkey have had a high and historical influence on the Sunnis and are considered to be influential and influential actors in Iraq who also have good relations with the West and the United States. Perhaps Sudani's attempt to approach this axis is to attract a significant portion of Sunni politicians to his side in order to guarantee a second term as prime minister, and on the other hand, to mediate between these two countries with the United States to support him in achieving a second term as prime minister."

<https://iraqstudy.com/politics/international/%D8%A2%D9%8A%D8%A7-%D9%86%D8%AE%D8%B3%D8%AA%D9%88%D8%B2%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D9%85%D8%AA%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D9%84-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D9%85%D8%AD%D9%88%D8%B1-%D9%82%D8%B7%D8%B1/>

## If Iraq Returns to Its Position

Muhammad Ali Mohtadi

Iranian Diplomacy



Mohammad Ali Mohtadi writes in a note that “If Iraq gains its proper position in the Arab world, it can be a gateway for expanding Iran’s relations with other Arab countries.” He adds that “Iran has been by the side of the Iraqi nation in the most difficult circumstances. It has repeatedly welcomed thousands of Iraqi refugees. During the siege of Iraq under the name of oil for food, when Iraqi children were dying of hunger, Iran generously provided food and medicine to the Iraqi nation.” In the end, he concludes that “Iran has no problem with Iraq’s Arabness; on the contrary, it believes that if Iraq gains its proper position in the Arab world, it can be a gateway for expanding Iran’s relations with other Arab countries. Finally, Iraq is currently in the throes of parliamentary elections that are scheduled to be held next November; an election that is important for Iraq’s future and examining its dimensions requires a separate discussion.”

<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/2033218/%D8%A7%DA%AF%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%AC%D8%A7%DB%8C%DA%AF%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AE%D9%88%D8%AF-%D8%A8%D8%B1%DA%AF%D8%B1%D8%AF%D8%AF>

# Banning terrorist groups in Iraq guarantees security at Iran's borders

## Judicial cooperation between Tehran and Baghdad; a model for regional counter-terrorism

Abed Akbari

Iranian Diplomacy



According to the author, “prohibiting the activities of terrorist groups in Iraq will not only help strengthen Iraq’s national sovereignty, but will also play an important role in ensuring the security of Iran’s western and northwestern borders.” In the end, he concludes that “people who were attracted to these groups for reasons such as poverty or propaganda deception but now intend to return should not be considered the same as the main perpetrators of violence. The rehabilitation and integration of these people into society requires a precise mechanism and joint security checks between Iran, Iraq, and the Kurdistan Region so that their return can be carried out in a humane, controlled, and effective manner. Investing in economic infrastructure, supporting border jobs, and strengthening border markets can turn these areas into centers of stability and barriers to the influence of hostile groups.”

<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/2032674/%D9%87%D9%85%DA%A9%D8%A7%D8%B1%D-B%8C-%D9%82%D8%B6%D8%A7%DB%8C%DB%8C-%D8%AA%D9%87%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%88-%D8%A8%D8%BA%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D9%85%D8%AF%D9%84%D->

## What does Iraq want from Syria About Al-Sudani's meeting with Ahmed Al-Sharaa in Qatar

Haitham Al-Khazali

Iranian Diplomacy



The author puts forward the question that “What does Iraq want from Syria?” In reply, he writes that “1. Iraq is concerned about the expansion of Zionist influence in Syrian territory 2- Fighting ISIS in Syria, which is expanding near the Iraqi border, 3- Protecting the holy shrines 4- Supporting minorities, including Shiites, Alawites, Druze, Christians and others, 5- Starting a political process that preserves the rights of all components and the territorial unity of Syria” He concludes that “Mr. Muhammad Shia al-Sudani raised all these issues with the President of the Syrian Government, Ahmed al-Sharaa, who emphasized that Iraq is waiting for practical steps from the Syrian government in this direction. When these steps begin their path, Iraqi-Syrian relations will improve in parallel with these paths. I believe that this is consistent with Mr. Al-Sudani's approach (constructive diplomacy) and will achieve the interests of the Syrian and Iraqi peoples.”

<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/2032675/%D8%AF%D8%B1%D8%A8%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%87-%D8%AF%DB%8C%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%AF%D8%A7%D9%86%D-B%8C-%D8%A8%D8%A7-%D8%A7%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%AF-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B4%D8%B1%D8%B9->

# Consequences of the Disputes Between the Kurdistan Regional Government and the Federal Government

Shahab Noorani

Siyagh Think Tank



According to the author, On May 21, the Iraqi Ministry of Oil announced that the Kurdistan Regional Government's contracts worth \$110 billion with two American companies, HKN Energy and Western Zagros, for the development of oil and gas fields were illegal and should have been concluded by the federal government. The author first refers to the existing differences between the Iraqi federal government and the Kurdistan Regional Government on the issue of oil sales. He believes that this difference will manifest itself in three issues: payment of salaries, oil quotas within the framework of OPEC+, and the impact on the Iraqi political atmosphere before the elections. Finally, the author refers to the US's bias in favor of the Kurdistan Region and believes that this is sending a negative message from the Trump administration to the Sudanese government. The author believes that this also has a connection with the case of resistance groups and their disarmament, which the US government demands from the Iraqi government.

<https://syaaq.com/34637>



## Under the pretext of the recent Sudani's trip to Turkey; Ankara's levers of influence in Iraq

Shahab Noorani

Siyagh Think Tank



In this article, the author has referred to the recent visits between Turkish and Iraqi political officials to each other's countries and has emphasized that the Turkish government has always had some kind of political influence among Iraqi Sunnis. However, it seems that in recent years it has tried to make Iraq dependent on itself in various fields. The author believes that the Turkish government is trying to influence the Iraqi government in five ways: 1. The issue of water (the Turkish government's behavior towards the water of the Tigris and Euphrates is reminiscent of Turkey's old strategy called "water for oil") 2. Military presence (occupying parts of northern Iraq under the pretext of fighting terrorism) 3. Economic influence (through large exports to Iraq and participation in the "development path plan") 4. Localizing military influence (through training local military forces in Iraq) 5. Influence among Shiite Arab politicians (especially the Sudanese Iraqi Prime Minister through his cooperation with Khamis al-Khanjar, Turkey's most important ally among the Sunnis in Iraq)

<https://syaaq.com/34498/%d8%a8%d9%87-%d8%a8%d9%87%d8%a7%d9%86%d9%87-%d8%b3%d9%81%d8%b1-%d8%a7%d8%ae%d9%8a%d8%b1-%d8%b3%d9%88%d8%af%d8%a7%d9%86%d9%89-%d8%a8%d9%87-%d8%aa%d8%b1%d9%83%d9%8a%d9%87%d8%9b-%d8%a7%d9%87%d8%b1%d9%85/>



## **TURKISH THINK TANKS**



## Can the US end Iran's hold on Iraq?

Çağatay Balcı

Daily Sabah

### Can the US end Iran's hold on Iraq?

BY ÇAĞATAY BALCI | MAY 01, 2025 - 12:05 AM GMT+3 |



Members of the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) walk past graffiti depicting late Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani (C), Najaf, Iraq, Jan. 2, 2025. (AP)

According to the author, “Washington’s efforts to disarm Iraq’s PMF face significant challenges as Iran’s influence remains strong” In the end, he concludes that “if the U.S.-Iran talks take a negative turn and end in failure, or if Iran fails to meet U.S. demands, a military option could be considered. The U.S. could target Iranian-backed militias in Iraq, as it has done similarly before. This time, however, the operations could be more extensive and systematic. On the other hand, the U.S. may delegate this option to Israel. Iraqi Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein emphasized this possibility in his statements. Fuad Hussein also said that the U.S. had prevented Israel from carrying out airstrikes against Iranian-backed militias in Iraq. Of course, it is unclear what effect this will have on the Iraqi people. This situation clearly shows that the U.S. can indirectly influence the future of the PMF in Iraq. However, when evaluating the options on the table, it is also possible to see that the U.S. approach of trying to rid Iraq of Iran would not produce positive results.”

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/can-the-us-end-irans-hold-on-iraq>

# Iran-backed actors in Iraq undermine Baghdad-Damascus normalization

## Iran-backed actors in Iraq undermine Baghdad-Damascus normalization

BY MEHMET ALACA | MAY 16, 2025 - 10:26 AM GMT+3 |

Mehmet Alaca

Daily Sabah



According to Mehmet Alaca, “Iraq can stabilize the region by supporting Syria’s reintegration, avoiding isolation tied to pro-Iran groups.” In the end, he concludes that “the Middle East is evolving into new geopolitics. Israel’s attacks on Gaza, the regime change in Syria, the Trump administration’s approach to the region, and nuclear negotiations with a fragile Iran keep the region in a pendulum of uncertainty and opportunity. In this picture, Iraq can be a country that establishes balance, rather than being a passive and weak actor as in the past. Therefore, Iraq’s contribution to the integration of the new Syria into the international community will be in its best interest. The fact that pro-Iran groups, currently in the spotlight of the U.S. and Israel, insist on not accepting the new Damascus administration means drawing more anger from the U.S. and regional countries and further isolation.”

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/iran-backed-actors-in-iraq-undermine-baghdad-damascus-normalization>

## Al Sudani's Ankara visit: Strategic realignment in Iraq-Türkiye relations

### Al Sudani's Ankara visit: Strategic realignment in Iraq-Türkiye relations

BY YUSUF CAN AYAZ | MAY 29, 2025 - 12:05 AM GMT+3 |

Yusuf Can Ayaz

Daily Sabah



Yusuf Can Ayaz believes that “Türkiye-Iraq ties strengthen with strategic deals, shared goals and growing regional alignment”. He asserts that “the upcoming elections in Iraq will not only test domestic political stability but also the durability of its emerging strategic partnership with Türkiye. A shift in the political balance could alter Baghdad’s regional approach, particularly its efforts to balance relations between the U.S. and Iran. However, Türkiye is well-positioned to remain a key partner in addressing Iraq’s Syria-related concerns, especially the Daesh threat. Ankara’s ability to balance hard power with diplomatic initiatives will continue to shape Iraq’s stance on both the PKK and broader regional dynamics. If maintained, this cooperation could serve as a model for regional alignment amid systemic uncertainty in the Middle East. Furthermore, the projected withdrawal of the Global Coalition from Iraq by September 2025 may necessitate the recalibration of Iraq’s security architecture through enhanced bilateral cooperation with Türkiye, and could potentially facilitate a more institutionalized engagement of the Quintet Mechanism in Iraq’s security framework.”

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/al-sudanis-ankara-visit-strategic-realignment-in-iraq-turkiye-relations>

# PKK's Dissolution Decision and the Possibility of the Assembly's Dissolution in Kirkuk

Selçuk Bacalan

Center for Middle Eastern  
Studies



The study examines the formation process of the local government in Kirkuk, the political alliances that emerged during this process, ethnic representation problems, the impact of external interventions, the blockages in the functioning of the assembly, and the security and representation risks that this process poses for the Turkmen society. In addition, the new security scenarios that emerged after the decision of the terrorist organization PKK to dissolve itself and their possible effects on the demographic structure were evaluated. The future of the dysfunctional structure of the Kirkuk Provincial Assembly should be addressed not only as a local government problem, but also as a vital issue in terms of the political stability of Iraq and the sustainability of its multi-identity social fabric.

[https://orsam.org.tr//d\\_hbanaliz/pkknin-fesih-karari-ve-kerkukte-meclisin-dagilma-ihtimali.pdf](https://orsam.org.tr//d_hbanaliz/pkknin-fesih-karari-ve-kerkukte-meclisin-dagilma-ihtimali.pdf)

## Iraq's Syria File: Roadmap Extending from Security to Economy



BAKİS 269  
MAYIS 2023

Center for Middle Eastern  
Studies



Sercan Çalışkan This study analyzes the Iraq-Syria relations that have developed over the last six months as a process evolving from a security-first approach to multidimensional cooperation. At the same time, testing factors such as Iran's influence, areas of resistance in Iraq's domestic politics, and the potential effects of the upcoming parliamentary elections on relations will also be addressed. In addition, it will be evaluated how developments such as Syria's increasing legitimacy in the international system, the lifting of sanctions from the United States (US) and the intensification of regional diplomatic initiatives can transform Iraq-Syria relations. In this way, it will be possible to understand the basic dynamics of Iraq's new Syria policy and to consider scenarios regarding the future of this relationship within a holistic framework.

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/irakin-suriye-dosyasi-guvenlikten-ekonomiye-uzanan-yol-haritasi/>



## Turkey-Iraq Relations and Sudani's Visit



BAKİŞ 268  
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Feyzullah Tuna Aygün

Center for Middle Eastern  
Studies



Feyzullah Tuna Aygün believes that “the diplomatic traffic that has gained momentum between Turkey and Iraq in recent years has caused the two countries’ relations, which were also affected by crisis topics in the past, to be redefined. Turkey-Iraq relations, which have been under the shadow of security-focused topics for many years, are now tending to settle on a much more comprehensive and strategic basis.” In the end, he adds “the visit of the President of the Republic of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to Baghdad in 2024 and the mutual visits of Iraqi Prime Minister Muhammed Şiya Sudani to Ankara in 2025 have been the most concrete indicators of this redefinition process. The agreements signed between the two countries show that cooperation in many areas, from security to trade, from transportation to energy, has been brought to an institutional framework. In the upcoming period, especially the elections to be held in Iraq and developments in regional

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/irakin-suriye-dosyasi-guvenlikten-ekonomiye-uzanan-yol-haritasi/>



# Unpredictable Actor in Iraqi Politics: The Sadrist Movement

Feyzullah Tuna Aygün, Sercan Çalışkan

Center for Middle Eastern  
Studies



According to the authors, “Sadr’s decision to withdraw from the political channel is not only an indication of failure, but also an attempt at repositioning. The failure of the government formation efforts as well as the power struggle with the Shiite Coordination Framework, the withdrawal of Ayatollah Kazem al-Khayri from the position of authority and the shifts in the grounds of religious legitimacy were influential in this decision.” They conclude that “whether the Sadr Movement will participate in the 2025 elections is not only a strategy issue specific to this movement. It will also be decisive in terms of the future of the political system in Iraq, the shaping of the balance of Shiite domestic politics and the positions of external actors. Sadr’s decision to participate in the elections will have a direct impact on the legitimacy of the current government, the coalition scenarios that will be formed after the elections, and the public’s faith in the ballot box. In addition, this decision may lead to consequences that may cause regional actors with high influence, such as the United States (US) and Iran, to reconsider their Iraq policy.”

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/irak-siyasetinde-ongorulemeyen-aktor-sadr-hareketi/>

## ARAB THINK TANKS



## Drivers of Tension Between Baghdad and Erbil



**The Emirates Center for  
Strategic Studies and Research**

This paper examines the anticipated Turkish settlement with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), highlighting the political and security questions it raises regarding the future balance of power in Iraq—particularly in the Kurdistan Region and Sinjar—where tensions are escalating between the Iraqi army and PKK-affiliated forces.

While the dissolution of the PKK could help end military confrontations, it may also reshape the role of Kurdish forces in the region and redefine their relationship with Turkey. The emergence of new factions or splinter groups could potentially prolong Iraq's position as a theater for ongoing Turkish-Kurdish conflict.

There is concern among the Kurdish elite that Abdullah Öcalan's abandonment of independent statehood or federalism as solutions to the Kurdish issue—and his call for integration into a unified state project—could negatively influence how Iraqi political actors view the Kurdistan Region within Iraq's federal framework.

Israel fears that a Turkey freed from the Kurdish conflict may seek to expand its regional influence, while Iran is unlikely to welcome the PKK's dissolution, given its strategic use of the group as a pressure tool against Turkey. This could prompt Tehran to attempt to obstruct the settlement process through indirect means.

# Implications of the Visit by the Commander of Iran's Quds Force to Baghdad

The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research



This article explores the significance and potential ramifications of the visit by Esmail Qaani, Commander of Iran's Quds Force, to Baghdad on May 14. During the visit, Qaani met with Iraq's National Security Advisor, Qasim al-Araji, to discuss the implementation stages of the Iran-Iraq security agreement signed in March 2023, as well as border security between the two countries.

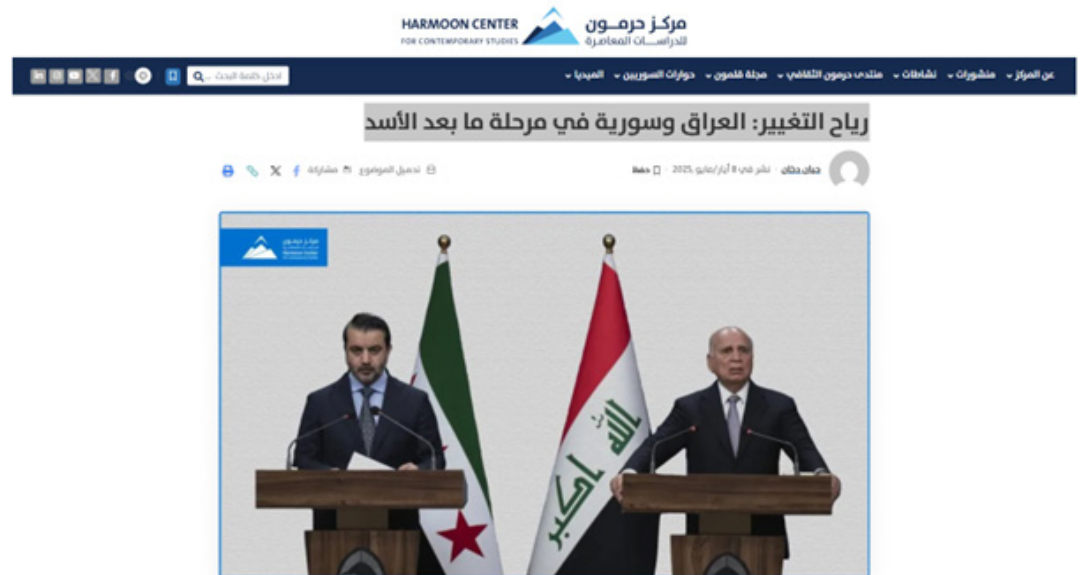
The visit took place just one day after Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs welcomed the announcement by Turkey's Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) of its decision to dissolve itself. This timing suggests that Tehran may be seeking to curb the activities of Iranian-Kurdish separatist groups—particularly Komala—based in Iraq. Tehran may be pressuring Baghdad to expel these groups from Iraqi territory, similar to its earlier efforts to expel the opposition group Mujahedin-e-Khalq, or to extradite their leadership to Iran.

Another key objective of the visit likely involves coordinating and restraining Iraqi resistance factions to avoid any escalation or attacks against U.S. and Israeli interests. This is likely driven by Iran's concern that such actions could jeopardize its ongoing negotiations with the United States.

## Winds of Change: Iraq and Syria in the Post-Assad Era

Hayan Dukhan

Hamroon Center for  
Contemporary Studies



The evolving relationship between Iraq and Syria in the post-Assad era is being shaped by shifting regional dynamics, security concerns, and economic considerations. Historically marked by rivalry, the ties between the two countries have been influenced by tribal affiliations, sectarian politics, and the involvement of external actors such as Iran and the United States.

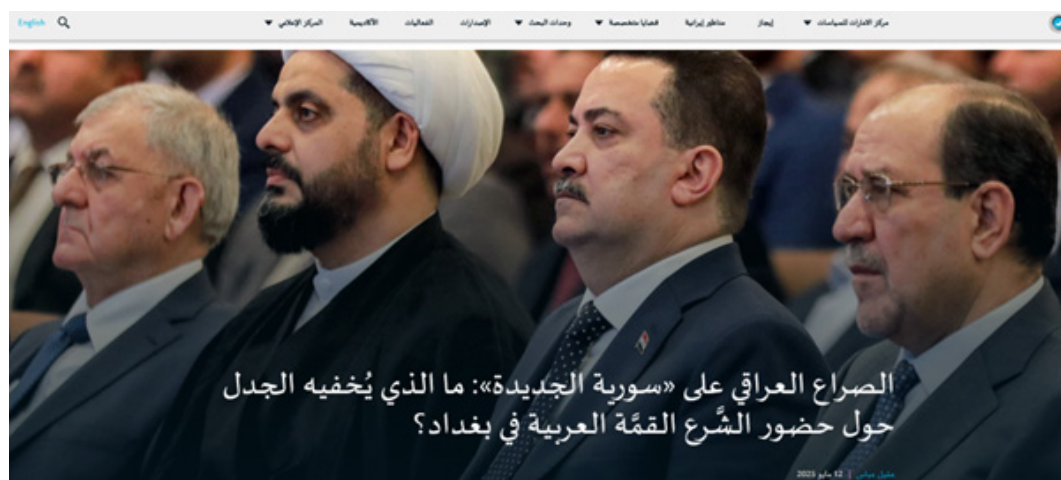
The new Syrian government faces internal instability, Kurdish tensions, and ongoing security threats, while Iraq must manage its own network of alliances and address border security challenges. Economically, Iraq has the potential to support Syria's reconstruction through trade, energy cooperation, and humanitarian initiatives. However, persistent security risks and geopolitical rivalries complicate such collaboration, rendering the future of bilateral relations both uncertain and strategically complex.

<https://www.harmoon.org/researches/%d8%a3%d8%ad%d9%85%d8%af-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b4%d8%b1%d8%b9-%d8%a7%d9%84%d8%b9%d8%b1%d8%a7%d9%82/>

## Iraq's Contest Over the "New Syria": What Lies Behind the Dispute Over President Ahmed al-Sharaa Attendance at the Arab Summit in Baghdad?

Aqil Abbas

Emirates Policy Center



The Iraqi dispute over Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's attendance at the Arab Summit in Baghdad appears largely symbolic and lacks substantive political value on its own. The various Iraqi factions contesting his attendance recognize that the summit itself will not produce any tangible change in Iraq's political landscape.

While the Coordination Framework forces advocate for minimal engagement with the "new Syria," Prime Minister al-Sudani's government seeks a broader, more comprehensive relationship. This includes full normalization on both economic and political fronts, with Iraq providing support to Damascus during its challenging transitional period.

The ruling Coordination Framework may succeed in blocking al-Sharaa's participation in the Baghdad summit. However, even if it achieves this limited goal, it is unlikely to significantly improve the framework's standing ahead of the difficult electoral challenge it faces in November, given its lack of real achievements and the growing number of domestic rivals.

<https://epc.ae/ar/details/brief/alsirae-aleiraqi-hawl-suria-aljadida>



## A Geopolitical Test for a Difficult Settlement: The Future of PKK-Controlled Areas in Northern Iraq

Iraqi Studies Unit

Emirates Policy Center



Amid emerging hopes for an end to decades-long Turkish military operations in the Qandil Mountains and surrounding areas, a significant challenge arises concerning how to fill the potential vacuum left by the withdrawal of Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) fighters from the region—primarily centered around the Qandil mountain range, the party's main stronghold.

The future of territories under PKK control in northern Iraq remains open to multiple possibilities, reflecting the complex nature of the longstanding conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state, as well as the intertwined influences of regional powers and internal Iraqi dynamics.

The proposed path forward depends on achieving a balanced political and security understanding among Baghdad, Erbil, and Ankara, ensuring the reintegration of border villages into formal state structures. The dissolution of the PKK represents a rare opportunity to transition the region from conflict toward stability, provided that concerted efforts are made by the Turkish government, the Iraqi federal government, and the Kurdistan Regional Government—with tangible international support, a condition that remains uncertain at present.

<https://epc.ae/ar/details/scenario/mustaqbal-almanatiq-alkhadiea-lihizb-aloummal-alkurdistani-fi-shamal-aleiraq>