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Al-Bayan Center for Planning and Studies

Al Bayan Observatory



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A periodical bulletin to monitor Iraqi affairs in international think tanks

About the Center

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.

Note:

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AMERICAN THINK TANKS AND MEDIA



In Iraq, the Kurdistan Region's Political Fortunes Are Fading

Renad Mansour



World Politics Review

<https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/iraq-kurdistan-politics/>



Renad Mansour believes that “both Baghdad and Erbil—the capital of the Kurdistan Region—view the PKK, which has been designated a terrorist organization by Turkey and the U.S., as a problem. Together with Turkey, they effectively removed it from Makhmour.” He also reiterates that “that they then turned their guns on each other has to do with the broader shifts in post-Saddam Iraq, when Makhmour and other areas in northern Iraq became known as the “disputed territories”—a stretch of land that Kurds, Arabs and other ethnic and religious minority groups all claim to be theirs. Although the 2005 Iraqi constitution outlined a process to settle these claims, the conflict in these areas has never been resolved. Instead, the territories have become arenas in which the “equilibrium of violence” is periodically tested as part of negotiations between the central government in Baghdad and the Kurdistan Regional Government, or KRG, in Erbil.”

Iraq's Supreme Court Removes Parliamentary Speaker



Yerevan Saeed, a non-resident fellow at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington and the Mustafa Barzani Scholar of Global Kurdish Studies at American University's School of International Service states that "Mohammed al-Halbousi's ousting as speaker of parliament opens the door for Sunni adversaries to rise to power and could help consolidate the influence of Shia political movements in Iraq." He concludes that "the Supreme Court's decision deals a substantial blow to Halbousi's political aspirations and ascendancy, yet it is unlikely to have a wider impact on the broader Sunni community or ignite greater political upheaval. Nevertheless, it represents a victory for the Coordination Framework, temporarily granting it control over the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the government. This disruption to the balance of power in Iraq could aggravate political and economic grievances that could unsettle the relative stability amid ongoing regional conflict."

Yerevan Saeed

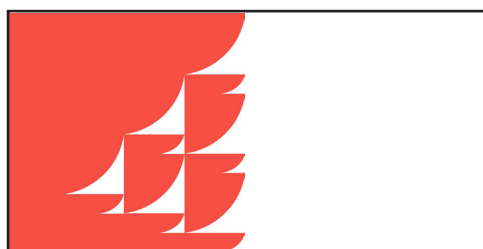


Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

<https://agsiw.org/iraqs-supreme-court-removes-parliamentary-speaker/>

Urgent Reforms Needed to Unlock Iraq's Green Potential

Yesar Al-Maleki



Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

<https://agsiw.org/urgent-reforms-needed-to-unlock-iraqs-green-potential/>



Yesar Al-Maleki states that “without an integrated energy transition strategy and political will to implement difficult reforms, Iraq will be unable to reach its climate ambitions.” He adds “Iraq has all the hallmarks of a country facing a climate calamity. Mesopotamia was once known for its lush palm groves and diverse ecosystems, but those have been decimated by decades of war and mismanagement. Climate change now comes with a more intensive impact: water scarcity, undeterred desertification, and frequent droughts that are adding to Iraq’s preexisting vulnerabilities.” For him, “an economic transition focused on utilizing the oil and gas sector’s competitive edge through low-carbon solutions, such as hydrogen and carbon capture, must be prioritized to sustain revenue while reducing emissions.” He concludes that “the Sudani government has finally woken up to the impact of climate change on Iraq’s fragile ecosystems, but it now must prepare the necessary investment framework and legislation to support a new, green economy.”

A Year of Mixed Results for Iraq's Sudani



Arab Center Washington DC.

<https://arabcenterdc.org/resource/a-year-of-mixed-results-for-iraqs-sudani/>

Rend Al-Rahim, Former Iraqi Ambassador to the US, believes that “Sudani oversaw the expansion of the social welfare network to include hundreds of thousands of needy families and individuals.” She states that “Sudani’s anti-corruption drive has failed to target the powerful political parties and individuals.” and “Sudani has to look over his shoulder at the hardline Shia armed groups both inside and outside the Coordination Framework.” She concludes that “depending on the outcome of these elections, Sudani’s ability to maneuver between the factions, as he does now, may be further restricted. Equally unsettling for the prime minister, the outcome of the provincial elections is likely to determine the outcome of parliamentary elections in 2025 and his own political future. It is thus likely that the post-provincial elections period will be a touchstone for Sudani’s political acumen and resolve, as well as an important moment in the history of the country as it deals with the difficulties facing his multi-faceted and ambitious government program.”

The Rise and Fall of an Iraqi Strongman

Simona Foltyn



Foreign Policy

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2023/11/21/halbousi-iraq-anbar-sunni-shiite-parliament-corruption/>

Mohammed al-Halbousi's ruthless consolidation of power alienated both Sunnis and Shiites.

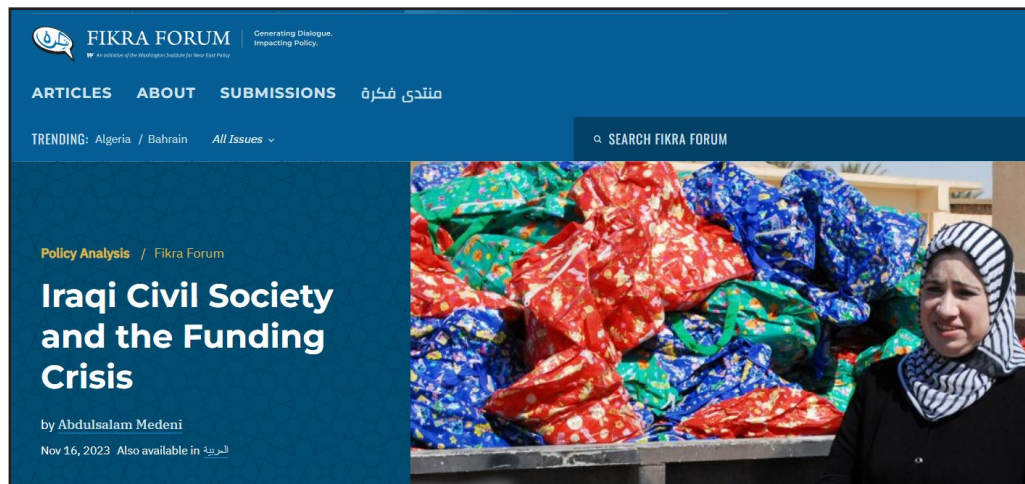
NOVEMBER 21, 2023, 11:13 AM

By Simona Foltyn, a journalist based in Baghdad.



Simona Foltyn believes that “Mohammed al-Halbousi’s ruthless consolidation of power alienated both Sunnis and Shiites.” He concludes that “heading west from Baghdad, the capital’s bumpy roads turn into a well-lit, smoothly paved three-lane highway rarely seen in Iraq. Every so often, billboards adorned with slick pictures of Mohammed al-Halbousi credit Iraq’s recently deposed speaker of parliament with the reconstruction of Anbar, his home province.” At the end, he concludes that “Interviewees, some of whom spoke on condition of anonymity, described three major alleged corruption schemes. Halbousi and his lieutenants are said to have monopolized the allocation of government contracts, channeling them to companies owned by relatives or loyalists in return for kickbacks. They also stand accused of diverting funds intended for beneficiaries of social security schemes, such as pensioners or victims of Islamic State, and illegally selling off public land to private investors.”

Iraqi Civil Society and the Funding Crisis



Abdulsalam Medeni, the chief executive director of the Rwanga Foundation in Iraqi Kurdistan, believes that “financial support for NGOs is a lifeline for their survival and sustainability. For its part, the Iraqi government should realize that a strong civil society benefits the government... It should work to establish a state budget fund earmarked for projects that are in line with the country’s development plans, with transparent and fair mechanisms based on competitive bidding to find the most suitable civil society partner.” He concludes that “the private sector must also assume its social responsibility and begin to actively support NGOs. This should be encouraged through state policies that boost the private sector’s participation. Possible actions include reducing taxes or integrating private sector donations into the tax system imposed on companies. This approach would help incentivize the private sector to actively contribute to sustainable development in Iraq and boost the growth and sustainability of NGOs.”

Abdulsalam Medeni



Foreign Policy

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/iraqi-civil-society-and-funding-crisis>

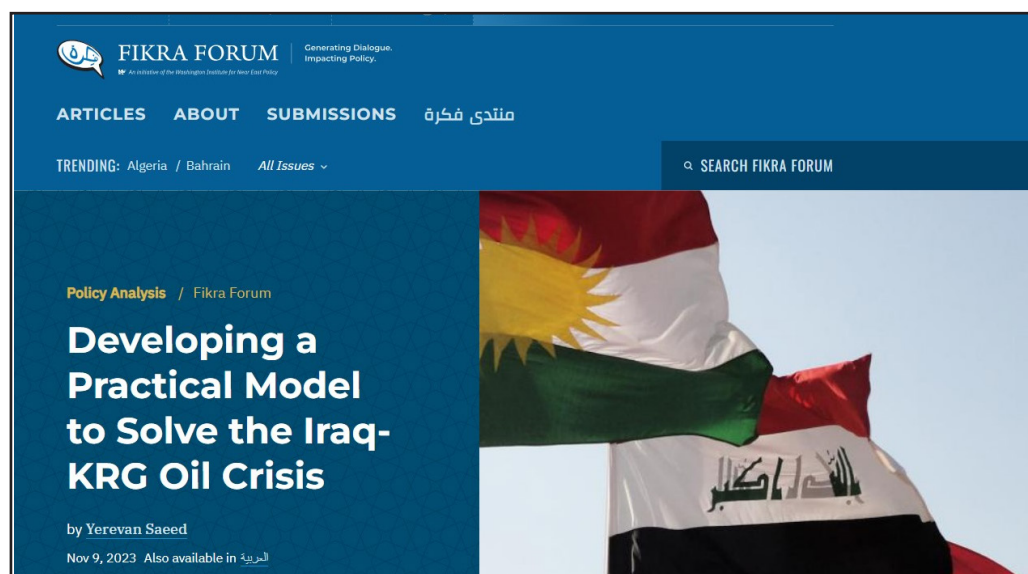
Developing a Practical Model to Solve the Iraq-KRG Oil Crisis

Yerevan Saeed



The Washington Institute for
Near East Policy

<https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/developing-practical-model-solve-iraq-krq-oil-crisis>



Yerevan Saeed, the Mustafa Barzani Scholar of Global Kurdish Studies, School of International Service, American University, believes that “Baghdad should allow Kurdistan based oil operators to invest in the rest of Iraq as a part of a solution to the long-standing oil issue between Erbil and Baghdad, using a proven, practical model currently being implemented.” He concluded that “extending the successful model implemented by Crescent Petroleum to other oil operators in Kurdistan holds the potential to establish a comprehensive conflict resolution framework, facilitating Erbil and Baghdad in their efforts to address one of the enduring conflicts between them. Such a resolution also sets the stage for the enactment of the country’s hydrocarbon law, a pivotal step that will definitively delineate the respective powers of the federal government and the regional government concerning natural resources. Moreover, Iraq would be poised to finally surmount a divisive issue that has impeded its progress for decades”

Kurdistan and the United States: ISIS Defeated, What Happens Now?



Dilek Doski states that “the US partnered with the Kurds in Iraq to combat ISIS, including supporting the Peshmerga in anti-ISIS operations. However, the Kurdistan Region faces security challenges. The US must increase its support for the Kurdish Regional Government to maintain regional stability. One of the key aspects of Washington’s role is to emphasize the need for reform in the Kurdish government’s collaboration with Iraq.” At the end, he concluded that “the Kurdistan Region, known for its mountain ranges, culture, heritage, national identity, and more famously the bravery of the Peshmerga’s defeat of ISIS, has a storied history. It has the potential to be a beacon of prosperity and hope in the Middle East. With the support of their American allies, the Kurds can enjoy their autonomy, security, and prosperity with long-term solutions, while upholding the US interests in the region.”

Dilek Doski



Wilson Center

www.wilsoncenter.org/article/kurdistan-and-united-states-isis-defeated-what-happens-now

Iraq's parliamentary speaker was removed. What's next for the country?

Abbas Kadhim



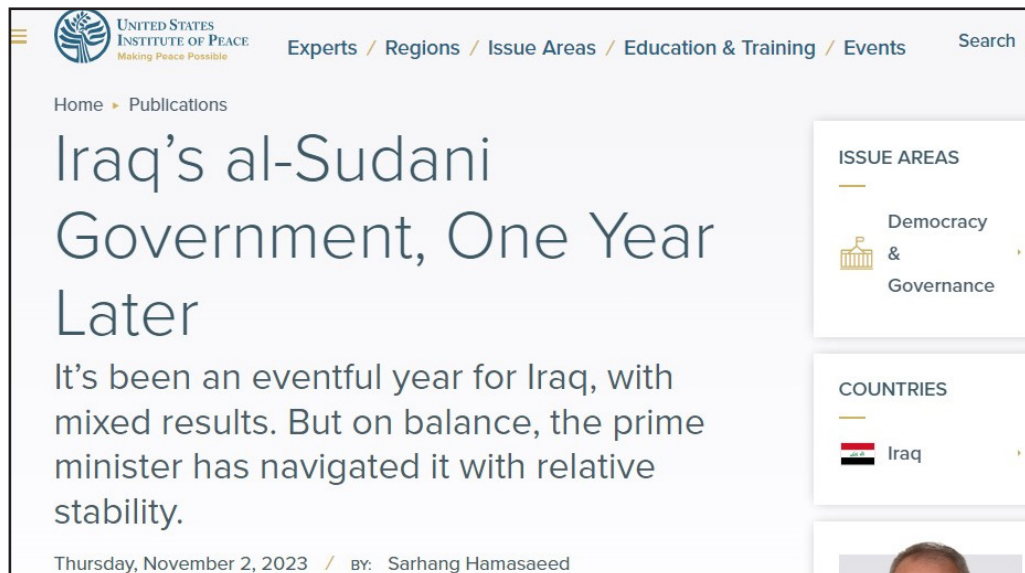
Atlantic Council

<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/menasource/halbousi-iraq-parliament-sadr/>



Dr. Abbas Kadhim, director of the Atlantic Council's Iraq Initiative, states that "an important development to watch for is the position of Halbousi's Sunni allies in the Azm bloc, led by Khamis al-Khanjar, who is leading the collective Sunni coalition that includes Azm and Taqaddum. If they imitate Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Shia rivals and move to fill the positions vacated by Taqaddum, a similar intra-sectarian fragmentation to the intra-Shia and intra-Kurdish fragmentations will be seen among the Sunnis." He concludes that "Sudani's government promised to prepare for an early national election within one year of his term, which began on October 27, 2022, to mitigate the fallout of Sadrist mass resignations from parliament. However, relative political stability and the acquiescence of Sadr to the continuation of the current government have encouraged the Sudani government to carry on for the time being and hold a provincial election instead"

Iraq's al-Sudani Government, One Year Later



Sarhang Hamasaeed

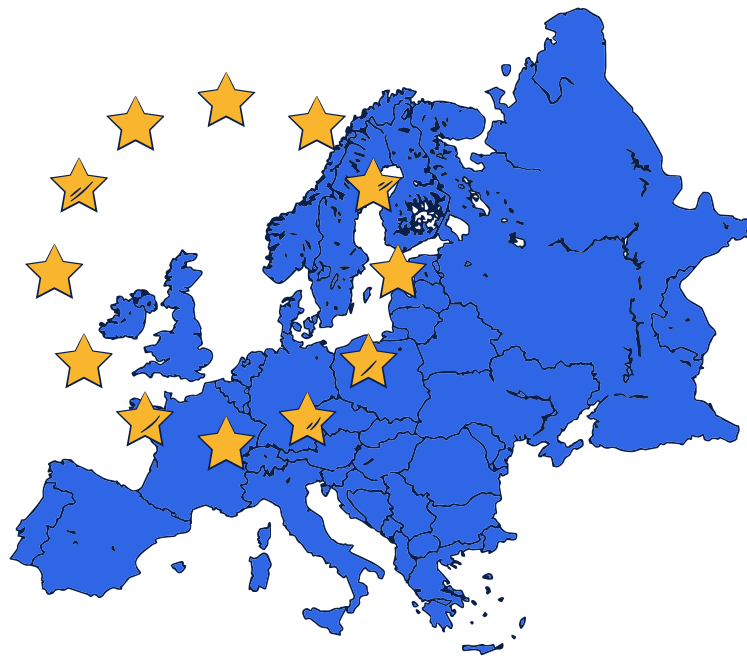


The United States Institute of Peace

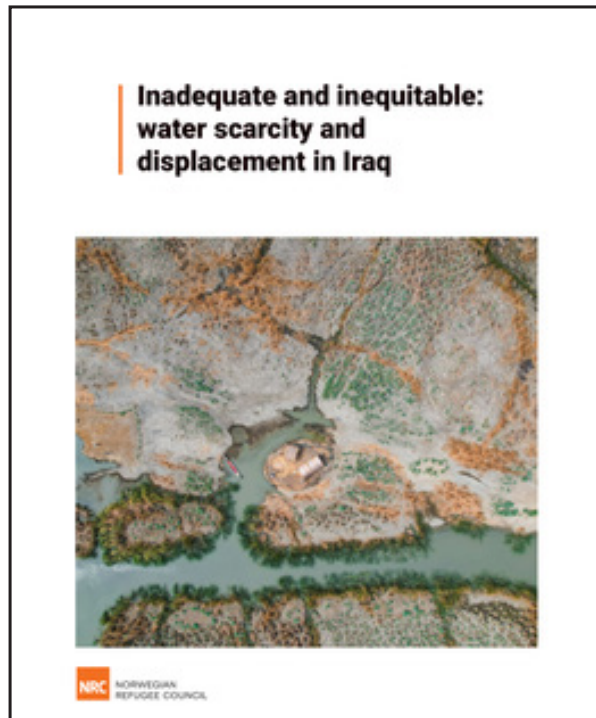
<https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/11/iraqs-al-sudani-government-one-year-later>

Sarhang Hamasaeed, the director of the Middle East program in the United States Institute of Peace, believes that “the fight against corruption and illicit drugs, concerns about shrinking civic space and human rights, the return and reintegration of displaced Iraqis from places such as the al-Hol camp in Syria, and the impact of climate change will remain on the radar of Iraq’s various stakeholders. The outcome of provincial elections this December will be a major insight into the mood of the Iraqi people and will undoubtedly factor into al-Sadr’s next political move. Meanwhile, the stability of the economy and the value of the Iraqi dinar, political partners’ continued patience with the slow implementation of commitments, the actions of regional countries (primarily Iran), and the international community’s level of engagement will all help determine the course of the al-Sudani government’s second year in office and the trajectory of Iraq overall.”

EUROPEAN THINK TANKS AND MEDIA



Inadequate and inequitable: water scarcity and displacement in Iraq



Key findings of this report are “60 per cent of surveyed farmers across Anbar, Kirkuk, Ninewa and Salahaddin were forced to cultivate less land or use less water during the 2023 farming season. 4 in 5 respondents in farming communities in Ninewa and Kirkuk had to reduce food expenditure over the past 12 months. While reported income in farming communities increased in 2023, income security of women declined: 15 per cent of women reported



Norwegian Refugee Council

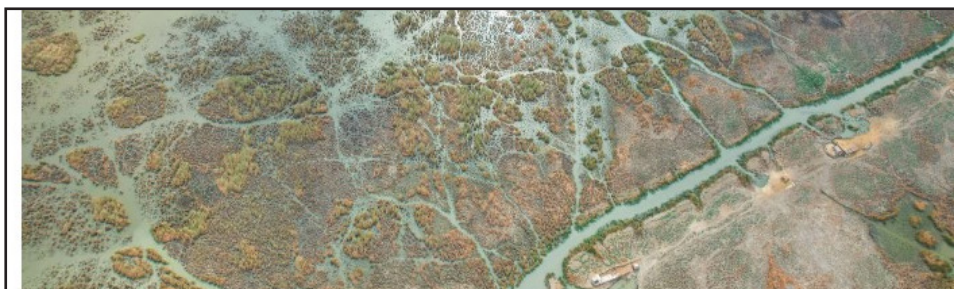
<https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/inadequate-and-inequitable-water-scarcity-and-displacement-in-iraq/>

not earning incomes in 2023, compared to 6 per cent in 2022. The Ninewa Plains show signs of an emerging hotspot, with interlinkages between climate, peace and security exacerbating community trust and movement intentions. 1 in 5 respondents in Ba’aj linked climate change to increased social tensions, and 1 in 4 are thinking of moving because of drought. 1 in 4 small scale farmers in Sinjar and Ba’aj reported being forced to give up farming in 2023, and almost 40 per cent had to reduce expenditure on food.”

Iraq: Climate change causing crop loss, contributing to secondary displacement



<https://www.nrc.no/news/2023/november/iraq-climate-change-causing-crop-loss-contributing-to-secondary-displacement/>

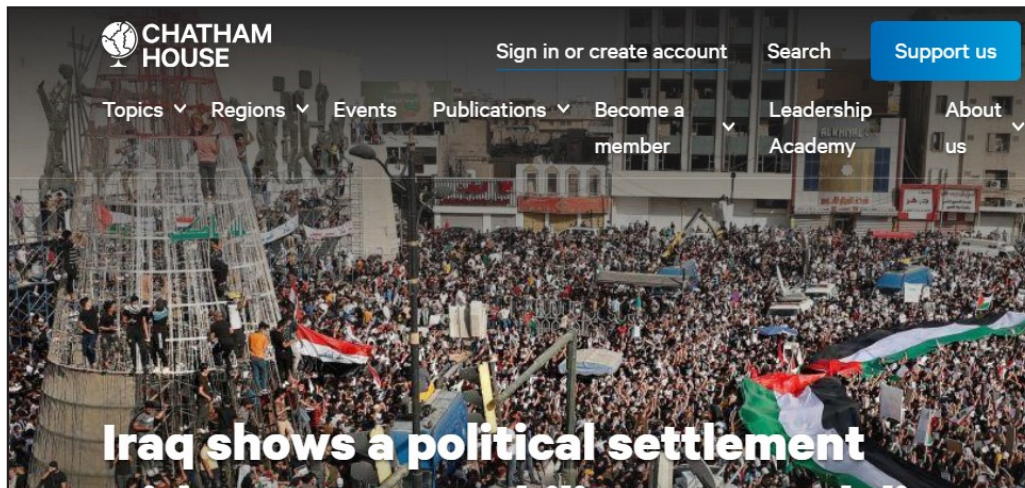


The Marshes of southern Iraq. Photo: Fareed Baram/NRC

Iraq: Climate change causing crop loss, contributing to secondary displacement

Climate change in Iraq is impeding the economic recovery of communities affected by conflict and precipitating risks of secondary displacement, as 60 per cent of farmers struggle with water shortages and reduced crop yield, according to a new report published by the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) today. “Iraq’s climate is changing faster than people can adapt,” said Anthony Zielicki, NRC interim Country Director in Iraq. “For the 1.2 million still displaced by conflict, and the millions who have returned home, resettled or relocated, recovery from years of conflict is being crippled by extreme drought, and undermining hard-won gains in livelihoods and income security.” According to a new survey by NRC, 60 per cent of farmers said they cultivated less land or had to use less water due to extreme drought. Adverse climate conditions have also impeded access and functionality of market systems, exacerbated social tensions, and increased risks of secondary displacement.

Iraq shows a political settlement without accountability cannot deliver peace



Renad Mansour believes that “twenty years after the invasion, corruption has prevented the delivery of real democracy”. He continues reiterate that “Iraq has the trappings of a liberal democracy... but they alone have not led to a lasting peace. The result: Iraq turned into a playground for regional escalation. A more sustainable political settlement requires including the voices of the public. A more sustainable political settlement requires including the voices of the public, who had little say and were handed a political system designed by the US and Iraqi exiled leaders returning to Baghdad in 2003.” He concludes that “Any peace should not look to support certain individuals over others for the sake of short-term stability, but should instead ensure that accountability mechanisms like an independent judiciary, parliament or commission of integrity are able to guarantee the rule of law. If this is achieved, it will improve institutional coherence, increasing the likelihood of a stable and peaceful future.”

Renad Mansour



Chatham House

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/2023/11/iraq-shows-political-settlement-without-accountability-cannot-deliver-peace>

IRANIAN THINK TANKS AND AND MEDIA



Will America leave Baghdad alone? Russia and the repetition of Afghanistan's experience in Iraq

Morteza Gilani



Iranian Diplomacy Website

<http://www.irdiplomacy.ir/fa/news/2022943>

Morteza Gilani writes that “the United States will withdraw all its diplomatic and military personnel from Iraq, and the European countries will do the same, and then it will be the turn of the Cooperation Council countries to do the same. This is exactly what happened in Afghanistan two years ago: we leave you alone and we don’t care what happens.” He concludes that “this situation means the fall of the Iraqi government and the upper hand of Russia’s allied groups in Iraq. Of course, Iraq is not like Afghanistan and has oil and wealth, and who better than Russia, whose companies are active in Iraq’s oil and energy sector right now. Naturally, this situation will cause instability, which may lead to the Ba’ath party regaining power, or at least Iraq’s departure from the satellites of the West and its return to the satellites of “anti-liberal” or “anti-arrogance” powers.”

Nato's ambiguous mission in Iraq; A new program for socio-cultural influence in Iraq

Davud Ahmadzadeh



Strategic Council on Foreign Relations

<https://tinyurl.com/yu39cr88>



Dawood Ahmadzadeh states that “the foreign ministers of the NATO member countries have decided in a conference to expand the missions of this organization in Iraq and also train the military officers, sailors and local police of this country. Although it has been said that this action is aimed at preventing ISIS from regaining power, in fact NATO has decided to expand the scope of its mission in Iraq and enter the deep social and cultural layers of this country. Previously, NATO members had decided to strengthen and expand their presence in Iraq at the Wales Summit in 2014, Warsaw Summit in 2016, and the Brussels Summit in 2017 and 2018.” For him, “this project is being pursued in order to create an internal divide in Iraq and sow differences between Iraq and Iran, and stated: If the influence of foreign powers in Iraq decreases, there is no need to train and expand their security relations with Iraq.”

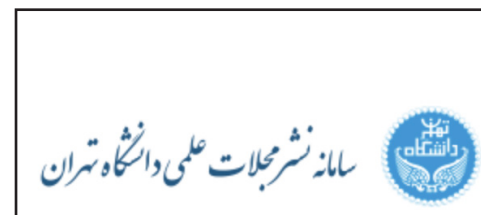
Violation of international rules and the sovereignty of the Iraqi government in the martyrdom of General Qassem Soleimani

Hojjatollah Ebrahimian and
Mohammad hussien Sarmadi



The screenshot shows the journal's interface with the following details:

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- Abstract: فصلنامه مطالعات حقوق عمومی دانشگاه تهران
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[https://journals.ut.ac.ir/
article_94672.html?lang=en](https://journals.ut.ac.ir/article_94672.html?lang=en)

At 1:07 a.m. on January 13, 2018, the United States Army killed General Qassem Soleimani, Abu Mehdi Al-Muhandis and other companions in an operation on the orders of Donald Trump. In this article, an attempt is made to analyze the ambiguities related to the justifications of the United States in the assassination of Gen. Qassem Soleimani, Martyr Abu Mahdi Al-Muhandis and other companions from the perspective of international law, and by using international principles and documents on various issues of terrorist acts and government justifications. Using the descriptive-analytical method based on the collection of library information, the violation of international rules and the sovereignty of the Iraqi government in the martyrdom of General Qassem Soleimani has been investigated. As a result, the action of America in the assassination of General Hajj Qassem Soleimani, citing international principles and documents, is violating the sovereignty of the Iraqi government, and is not justified and legitimate.

Investigating the effective factors of Iraq's geopolitics and its impact on the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran

Abdolreza Faraji Rad, Seyed

Mostafa Hashemi, Rahim Sarwar



international and Political

<https://sanad.iau.ir/fa/Article/522845?FullText=FullText>



Geopolitical sphere of Iraq has integrative and disintegrative forces which act under certain circumstances. These forces are continuously in competition with each other. Iraq has undergone great upheavals in recent years and these developments have led to change in power structure and identity. As a result there has been change in geopolitics and change in the approach of actors and regional players. Ethnic and religious groups, hydro politics, national identity and Arab identity, oil resources and the huge revenue coming from them and access to Persian Gulf have deep impact on Iraq developments. These factors have led to adoption of different geopolitical strategy. Depending on the conditions of Iraq, the type and the composition of government in power, Iran's national security will be affected and Iraq can become an enemy, strategic rival, strategic partner. The present article by examining political geography, interior space, history and geopolitical factors of Iraq, using a descriptive-analytical method deals with set of spatial, political and security compulsions.

TURKISH THINK TANKS AND MEDIA



The Fall of Halbusi: Will Sunnis Be Able to Cross the Critical Threshold in Iraq?

Mehmet Alaca



Center for Middle Eastern Studies

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/halbusinin-dususunu-irakta-sunniler-kritik-esigi-asabilecek-mi/>



According to the author, “although Halbusi is corrupt and has not sufficiently listened to Sunni grievances, his fall from the highest representation of Sunnis in politics is a reminder of past traumas that saw the country’s second-largest religious group marginalized.” He concludes that “because Türkiye is in favor of a balanced diplomacy and politics in Iraq. As a matter of fact, continuing the pressure on Halbusi, who is alleged to have become rich illegally and to consolidate his political consolidation with Machiavellian methods, is likely to harm the legitimacy of the Sudanese government. However, although he maintains his moderate attitude regarding Halbusi, it is doubtful to what extent Sudani, who is aware that a difficult test awaits him, will influence pro-Iranian forces. At this point, both the conflict over Halbusi and the debates over local elections, even if the date has been determined, may negatively affect Sudani’s relatively stable course in the country compared to previous periods.”

Upcoming Local Elections in Iraq: Boycott Calls and Legitimacy Debate

Zaed Abdulvahab



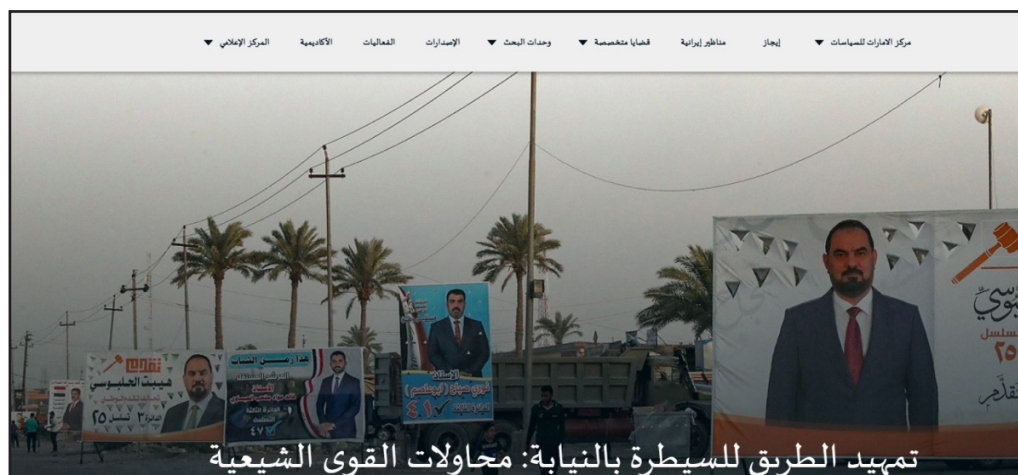
Center for Middle Eastern Studies

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/irakta-yaklasan-yerel-secimler-boykot-cagrilari-ve-mesruiyet-tartismasi/>

According to the author, “the decision of the people in Iraq to boycott the provincial council elections to be held in mid-December 2023 is an indicator of the legitimacy crisis of the political system, which has been in deadlock since its establishment. This situation is the culmination of the failure of the actors in power to manage the state and the system, to believe in the necessity of participating in the decision to change power and in determining who will hold the reins of power. This situation leads to a wide debate about the feasibility of elections in general. This means that parliamentary elections or local elections are not the solution to the country’s problems. On the contrary, the failure of the economic system, the weakness of the legislative system, violations of security and its complex intersections indicate the possibility of this crisis re-emerging.”

ARABIC THINK TANKS

Paving the way for proxy control: Attempts of Iraqi Shiite forces to penetrate Sunni areas electorally and their consequences



EMIRATES POLICY CENTER

<https://epc.ae/ar/details/scenario/muhawalat-alqiwa-alshiyeia-aleiraqia-aikhтираq-almanatiq-alsunyya-entkhabyyan-wamalatuha>

The paper deals with the provincial council elections and the electoral formation by the Shiite political forces to fierce competition in the Sunni-affiliated areas, as in light of the majority enjoyed by the Shiite “al’iitar altansiqiu”, and the domination of the Shiite forces on the reins of the main power in Baghdad, there has been a belief among the Iraqi Sunni forces that they cannot move freely in their environment without passing through the Shiite satisfaction gate, and the Shiite forces proceeded to contest the next local elections in the Sunni areas with six alliances, and include additional candidates in other lists, which proves that they are waiting for the appropriate opportunity to strengthen the presence in the Sunni-majority areas, and reshape the Sunni political scene in Iraq, and according to the current circumstances, It seems that the Shiite “al’iitar altansiqiu” will go on the path of building a balanced equation in Iraq’s Sunni provinces, which is to distribute influence to allies and friends there to ensure that there is proxy control over Sunni

Value alliance” and its rivals: new electoral coalitions of Civilian forces in Iraq and opportunities for Opposition in local elections

Iraqi Studies Unit



Emirates Policy Center

<https://epc.ae/ar/details/scenario/alaitilafat-alaintikhabia-aljadida-lilqua-almadania-fi-al-iraq-wfurs-almuarada-fi-alaintikhabat-almahaliya>



The paper talks about the opposition parties and the nature of their participation in the elections, as most of Iraq’s opposition-oriented parties, formed after the protest movement in October 2019, will participate in local elections to be held in December 2023, through ‘qiam alliance’ who will enter elections in 12 Iraqi provinces across 400 candidates, faces A “qiam alliance” is a difficult competition not only from the forces of the ruling “al’iitar altansiqiu” but also in its popular space by the electoral projects of the current governors in the governorates of Wasit, Karbala, Nasiriyah and, to a lesser extent, Basra, as witnessed by “qiam alliance” waves of internal conflicts between parties involved in it.

Furthermore, the electoral rivalry between the forces of the “al’iitar altansiqiu” and the absence of the “Sadrist movement”; may open the way for a “qiam alliance” to achieve relative success in local elections, due to voters searching for an alternative option, but that requires broad electoral participation, which is unexpected, should it succeed. A “qiam alliance” with scooping seats on local councils, would help the forces involved in it build more entrenched local social bases through the powers of serviceable county councillors. These social rules can be invested in the House of Representatives elections to be held in 2025.