

Al Bayan Observatory



A periodical bulletin to monitor Iraqi affairs in international think tanks

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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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AMERICAN THINK TANKS AND MEDIA



Iraqi Provincial Elections Could Come With Major Political and Security Ramifications

Yerevan Saeed



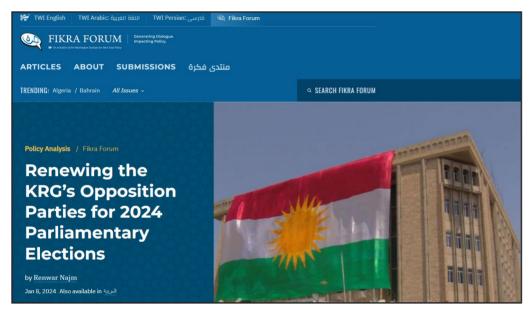
The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington

https://agsiw.org/iraqi-provincial-elections-could-come-with-major-political-and-security-ramifications/



Yerevan Saeed, a non-resident fellow at The Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington, and Mustafa Barzani Scholar in at the American University, writes about the recent election in Iraq that "the victory of pro-Iranian groups in Iraq's provincial elections could exacerbate internal political tensions and raise concerns about regional stability." He concludes that "reviewing these provincial election results nationwide, it seems clear the Coordination Framework was able to capitalize on its victories from the October 2021 parliamentary elections to register a follow-up victory in the recent provincial council elections, despite low turnout. The results strengthen the Coordination Framework's version of Iranian-backed, commanding Shia political influence in Iraq, at national and local levels. Although the elections were local, they could have national and regional implications. How pro-Iranian groups choose to manage their victory – through further marginaliza– tion of non-Shia rivals or with calculated inclusivity – will significantly shape Iraq's political trajectory."

Renewing the KRG's Opposition Parties for 2024 Parliamentary Elections



Renwar Najm, a London-based Iraqi-Kurdish journalist. He has a master's degree in Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Kent and the Philipps University of Marburg, believes that "as the February 2024 elections approach, the quest for a new political era in Iraqi Kurdistan is encountering formidable challenges" He concludes that "mistrust further complicates the dynamics among dissident figures, with Salih contemplating whether to forge his own political path or align with the broader front. Additionally, a palpable apprehension pervades their ranks, a fear that active participation in the upcoming elections could result in a substantial defeat, potentially spelling the end of the careers of certain veteran politicians. This intricate web of internal challenges underscores the complexity of forging a unified front capable of effectively challenging the entrenched ruling parties....The outcome remains uncertain, but the opposition's unwavering determination reflects a broader shift in the political dynamics of the KRG."

Renwar Najm



The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

https://www.washingtoninstitute. org/policy-analysis/renewingkrgs-opposition-parties-2024parliamentary-elections

Babiliyoun Movement Hijacks All Four Christian Minority Seats

Yaqoub Beth-Addai



The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/babiliyoun-movement-hijacks-all-four-christian-minority-seats



Yaqoub Beth-Addai, an Iraqi expert on militias active in the Nineveh Plains region and Mosul, believes that "a group led by U.S.-sanctioned figure Rayan al-Kildani escaped accountability from Iraqi Christian communities by abusing the courts and buying non-Christian votes." According to him, "Kildani, Kataib Babiliyoun, and the Babiliyoun Movement continue to grow in strength and confidence. They have overridden long-brewing Cristian fury toward them by exploiting the federal structure of the PMF and the corrupt judiciary. Suddenly "discovering" the alleged Baathist background of a democratically elected Christian candidate and using it to install a militia-backed candidate is a clear example of electoral and judicial corruption—one that begs for investigation by both the U.S Congress and American organizations focused on religious freedom, democracy, and anti-corruption efforts."

Is the West Repeating Its Iraqi Kurdistan Mistakes in Azerbaijan?



Michael Rubin, a senior fellow at American Enterprise Institute, writes that "as insurgency ravaged Iraq, Iraqi Kurdistan sought to depict itself as an island of stability, security, and even affluence. It pitched itself as a democratic oasis and a haven of religious freedom. Whether out of naivete or greed, Western governments embraced and amplified the fiction." At the end, he concluces that "as with Iraqi Kurdistan, foreign influences also sow internal discord. The Russian General Staff is the predominant influence among the Azerbaijani army, while Turkey dominates Azerbaijan's Special Forces. Aliyev is no longer the paramount influence for either... Western countries may want to gamble on Aliyev to counter Iran or ensure energy, but, as with Iraqi Kurdistan before, internal discord undermines the foundation of stability. The questions today are whether American strategists will make the same mistake twice, and whether Washington can afford another bad bet."

Michael Rubin



American Enterprise Institute & Washington Examiner

https://www.aei.org/op-eds/is-thewest-repeating-its-iraqi-kurdistanmistakes-in-azerbaijan/

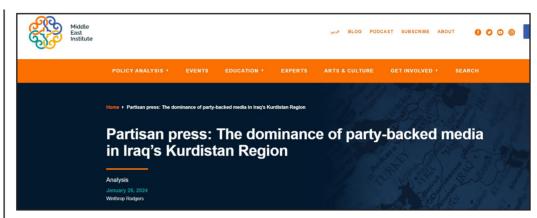
Partisan press: The dominance of partybacked media in Iraq's Kurdistan Region

Winthrop Rodgers



Middle East Institute

https://www.mei.edu/publications/partisan-press-dominance-party-backed-media-iraqs-kurdistan-region



Winthrop Rodgers, a journalist and researcher who focuses on politics, human rights, and political economy, believes that "Attend any press conference in Iraq's Kurdistan Region and the microphone bank on the podium is a swirl of reds, blues, yellows, blacks, and oranges representing different outlets. At first glance, this suggests a healthy press environment with a high degree of opportunity and competition, but in reality the media landscape is dominated by outlets affiliated with political parties." According to him, "A kind of Kremlinology is necessary to parse the partisan affiliations represented... Party factions and individual politicians also fund specific outlets to boost their profiles, adding a further level of complexity. As a result, media coverage in the Kurdistan Region largely promotes the interests of politically motivated patrons, rather than performing a public service mission of providing impartial and high-quality information to all audiences."

EUROPEAN THINK TANKS AND MEDIA

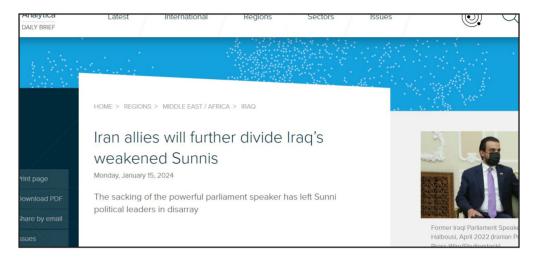


Iran allies will further divide Iraq's weakened Sunnis



Oxford Analytica

https://dailybrief.oxan.com/Analysis/ DB284556/Iran-allies-will-furtherdivide-Iraqs-weakened-Sunnis



Significance

The supreme court deposed prominent Sunni leader Mohammed al-Halbousi in November 2023, during a long campaign against him by pro-Iranian Shia forces. His ally Shaalan al-Karim came out ahead in the latest vote, but failed to achieve a majority, amid brawling between rival blocs and alleged procedural violations by the Shia acting speaker.

Impacts

- 1. Ongoing legal troubles may further diminish Halbousi's scope to make a comeback.
- 2. Support from the Gulf states will likely still ensure Halbousi retains some longer-term political role.
- 3. More Sunni politicians will look to Iran-backed militias rather than to their own leaders as sources of patronage and direction.

IRANIAN THINK TANKS AND AND MEDIA



Intensification of confrontation with the Houthis When Yemen's Ansarullah and Lebanon's Hezbollah act instead of Iraq's Hezbollah

Hossein Fatemi



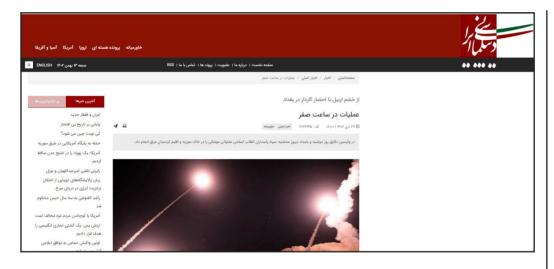
Iranian Diplomacy Web Site

https://tinyurl.com/2xnk9oem



Hossein Fatemi believes that "it seems that although the Iraqi resistance groups have put a kind of temporary halt in their attacks on American forces and positions based on the interests of this country, on the other hand, a part of the resistance axis in Lebanon and Yemen is still playing their roles. The mentioned point indicates the undeniable fact that the axis of resistance acts as an interconnected and structured spectrum in the region, which cannot be prevented from having a powerful presence in West Asia by stopping a part of its forces. In other words, although Iraq's Hezbollah is currently seeking to stop its operations, there will be no disruption in the position and role of the resistance axis, because Yemen's Ansarullah, Lebanon's Hezbollah, etc. are capable of filling the role of Iraqi resistance groups."

Operation at zero hour From the anger of Erbil to the summoning of Chargé d'affaires in Baghdad



According to this report, "In the last minutes of Monday and Tuesday morning, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps carried out a missile operation in the territory of Syria and the Kurdistan region of Iraq. According to the Sharq newspaper, following this operation, the IRGC issued four official statements in the last 24 hours. In the first announcement, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the destruction of spy headquarters and the gathering of anti-Iranian terrorist groups in parts of the region with ballistic missiles. Apart from all these points, it seems that defending Iran against Israel that is the source of attacks against Iran, especially after the terrorist incident in Kerman, it is undoubtedly an inalienable right. Although the above attacks and Iran's military capability can be admired from a national perspective, it should also be analyzed by the intended targets. It is possible to respond decisively to terror. This will be a historic warning"



Iranian Diplomacy Web Site

https://tinyurl.com/26uml5ws

The need to pay special attention to the Iran-Iraq security agreement: Baghdad should pay attention to the wishes of its people in maintaining territorial integrity and national sovereignty

Mohammad Mehdi Maleki



IRANIAN DIPLOMACY WEB SITE

www.sanad.iau.ir/fa/Article/522845?
FullText=FullText



Mohammad Mehdi Maleki believes that "both in the central government of Baghdad and in Erbil, they are well aware of the presence and activities of the Israeli security center in their territory, and there are also documents in this regard in the security meetings between the Iraqi side and the Iranian delegation... Baghdad should pay attention to the wishes of its people in maintaining territorial integrity and national sovereignty... It is better that some Iraqi officials, instead of fueling the space constructions against Iran, put serious measures on their agenda to end the presence of American forces and their extensive interventions in the various affairs of that country, and of course to expel and disarm the anti–Iranian Kurdish movements. They should reconsider expressing some emotional comments regarding the friendly and neighboring country that supported them in the most difficult circumstances"

Iraq can solve Iran's concerns by fully implementing the security agreement



The spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in response to another question about the statements made by the Iraqi authorities against Iran after the missile attack on Erbil in the Kurdistan Region, said: "Our relations with the Iraqi government are strong, friendly, fraternal and solid. Our contacts with the Iraqi government have been continuous and even daily. We have heard the statements of the Iraqi government officials and we have expressed our views, both in the media and through bilateral contacts. Our relations with the Iraqi government will be developed within the framework of bilateral relations. We emphasize the necessity of fully implementing the security agreement between the two countries and meeting the needs to resolve the security concerns of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This is our clear view and concerns can be resolved by implementing the details of the agreement."

zainab fakher jafar, mohsen janparvor, sajed bahrami jaf



IRANIAN DIPLOMACY WEB SITE

https://tinyurl.com/246uv8yw

Explaining the factors affecting the convergence and divergence of the Shiites of Iraq and Iran

Mustafa Qadri Hajat, Majid Diyari Saleh, Ahmed Abdullah Ziyad



POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY STUDIES

https://pg.um.ac.ir/article_44802.html



The findings show that the common culture based on Shiite beliefs, including the issue of honoring the Shiite shrines of Iraq, in addition to major political interests, such as the importance of maintaining the power of Shiite parties and movements in the political and economic structure of Iraq, such as trade, the reconstruction of Iraq, and crystallized security in dealing with the common threats are factors of the main convergence of the Shiites of Iran and Iraq. In contrast, factors such as the internal equations of the two countries, including the internal rivalries of the Shiite parties in Iraq and the existence of Western and Eastern trends in Iran, as well as the influence of foreign actors, are considered the main factors of the divergence of the Shiites of Iran and Iraq. Although in the current situation, the weight of convergent factors is greater than divergent factors, but this superiority is fragile.

The position of economic programs in the public diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran in modern Iraq

جایگاه برنامههای اقتصادی در دیپلماسی عمومی جمهوری اسلامی ایران در قبال عراق نوین

تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۲/۰۵/۲۰ تاریخ پذیرش:۱۴۰۲/۰۶/۲۵ سیدحمید سیدتقیزاده ٔ مهناز گودرزی ٔ

چکیده

دیپلماسی عمومی ج.ا.ایران در قبال عراق نوین شامل برنامههای متعددی بوده و از جمله برنامههایی که کمتر بطور مجزا به آن پرداخته شده، برنامهها و ابتکارات اقتصادی است. لذا هدف این مقاله

The public diplomacy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards modern Iraq has included many programs. Economic programs and initiatives are among the programs that have been dealt with separately. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to explain economic programs in Iran's public diplomacy in modern Iraq. The findings of the research showed that although economic programs lacked an independent place in public diplomacy in modern Iraq, their complete and independent use would place the vast capacities of resources, actors and economic activities in the service of public diplomacy goals. He gave At the same time, due to some cultural and political sensitivities in the Iraqi society and on the other hand, the needs of the economy of this country, more attention and use of economic programs that are less sensitive is of double importance and necessity for Iran's public diplomacy towards Modern Iraq is blessed.

Seyed Hamid Seyed Taghizadeh, Mahnaz Gudarzi



Business Strategies

https://piaj.sbu.ac.ir/article_104181. html?lang=fa

TURKISH THINK TANKS AND MEDIA



Erdoğan's message to US and new phase in Türkiye's Syria, Iraq

Erdoğan's message to US and new phase in Türkiye's Syria, Iraq ops

BY MEHMET ÇELIK | JAN 17, 2024 - 1:58 PM GMT+3



According to the author, "the PKK's presence within Türkiye's borders has been minimized. The PKK threat and fight against this threat, however, continues, as the group has been active in northern Syria and northern Iraq to establish a terror corridor along Türkiye's southern borders. Furthermore, Ankara's Western allies, namely the U.S. and some European Union countries, have been providing support to the PKK/YPG despite most of them listing the group as a terrorist organization... In response, the Turkish state has developed a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that is not only multidimensional but also involves addressing terrorism at its roots, whether within or beyond borders. The cross-border operations in northern Syria and Iraq since 2016, along with highly successful intelligence operations against the PKK's leadership figures, stand as tangible outcomes of this strategy."

MEHMET ÇELIK

DAILY SABAH

Daily Sabah

https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/columns/erdogans-message-to-us-and-new-phase-in-turkiyes-syria-iraq-ops

Iraq's role in the Fight against Terrorism

CAN ACUN



Sabah

https://www.sabah.com.tr/yazarlar/perspektif/canacun/2024/01/27/terorle-mucadelenin-irak-ayagi



According to the author, "Turkey aims to increase pressure by establishing engagements with Erbil and Baghdad in the context of the fight against terrorism... Ultimately, we can say that the PKK is in a strategic impasse in Iraq, that its efforts to establish a new course of action have generally failed, but that it is trying to give the message that it is still standing and strong by carrying out various terrorist attacks at the expense of heavy losses. We see that PKK's legal elements are trying to problematize the presence of the Turkish Armed Forces in Iraq with disinformation and black propaganda activities. Therefore, the meaning and importance of Turkey's presence in Iraq should be better explained to the public. In the strategic context, of course, the presence of the Turkish Armed Forces, based on area dominance, the effective field operations of the MİT [National Intelligence Organization] and the diplomatic struggle in Iraq should continue to remain indispensable components."

The strategic impasse of the terrorist organization PKK in Northern Iraq



Can Acun wrote about the background of the terrorist attacks carried out by the PKK in the north of Iraq. He believes that with the Claw-Lock Operation, the Turkish Armed Forces managed to create a safe line at a depth of 15 to 30 kilometers in some places on the 300-kilometer border line extending from Sinat-Haftanin to Hakurk. According to him, "we can say that the PKK is in a strategic impasse within the context of Turkey's current military doctrine, that its efforts to create a new course of action have generally failed, but that it is trying to give the message that it is still standing and strong by carrying out various terrorist attacks at the expense of heavy losses. We see that the weapon systems and equipment provided by the USA to the terrorist organization YPG are used more frequently in order to carry out these attacks."

Can Acun



Anadolu Agency

https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorusteror-orgutu-pkknin-kuzey-iraktastratejik-cikmazi/3115223

Cooperation with the terrorist organization PKK undermines the PUK

Bilgay Duman



Anadolu Agency

https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/analiz/gorus-teror-orgutu-pkk-ile-isbirligi-kybnin-altini-oyuyor/3118281#



According to Bilgay Duman, "although the PUK, especially its leader Bafel Talabani, aspires to become the "national Kurdish leadership", thinking that it will create space for the terrorist organization PKK and influence the Kurds of Turkey and Syria, it is nothing more than a dream to think that this will be done through a terrorist organization like the PKK...In addition, the erosion in the PUK after the death of Jalal Talabani has already passed the level to be ignored. It is also a fact that Bafel Talabani could not consolidate the PUK's organization and voting base as much as before. PUK's historical role and the credit it has obtained through this historical role may soon be exhausted. If PUK wants to become a more acceptable actor, it should base its relations with regional and global actors, especially Turkey, on more rational strategies.

Latest Local Elections in Iraq in Terms of Political Purposes



Analyzing the recent provincial council elections in Iraq, Watheq Al-Sadoon writes that "a different conflict regarding the governorship is expected to take place in Najaf and Misan. The current governors did not participate in the last local elections because they supported Sadr. The winner in these provinces was the Shiite Coordination Framework. Will there be a conflict between the Sadr Group and the Coordination Framework Group regarding the governor's office?.. On the other hand, former Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbusi is trying to strengthen his position against the opposition Sunnis who are against him and want the governor of al-Anbar, affiliated with his party "Takaddum", to be dismissed. According to the first election results of the Supreme Electoral Council, the "Takaddum" and "al-Anbar Huviyyetuna" lists, led by Muhammad al-Halbusi, gained 9 seats in the 16-seat al-Anbar Assembly. These two lists have the opportunity to obtain the governor's seat without the need for another alliance."

Watheq Al-Sadoon



Center for Middle Eastern Studies

https://orsam.org.tr/tr/siyasi-amaclar-acisindan-irakta-son-yerel-secimler/

Local elections in Iraq and their aftermath (1)

Bilgay Duman



MILLIYET

https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/dusunenlerin-dusuncesi/irakta-yerel-secimler-ve-sonrasi-1-7061839



Bilgay Duman believes that "the balance that will emerge in Kirkuk and Mosul will be especially important for both Turkey and the Turkmens. The fact that the participation in the local elections in Kirkuk, which has not been held for 18 years, is higher than the whole country is an indication of the interest of the people of Kirkuk in the province and their expectations for the future. As of the new period, it seems that the balance of government in Kirkuk will change." At the end, the author concludes that "at this point, although Turkmens could not get seats at a level appropriate to their population potential, they became an important balancing element. At this point, we will discuss in more detail what kind of situation will arise in Kirkuk and Turkmen politics in general in a second article."

Iraq may be unstable after provincial council elections



Feyzullah Tuna Aygün

According to the author, "Iraqi Shiites have entered the elections in a more fragmented manner in every election held since 2005, the Sunni leadership is not capable of covering the Sunni provinces, and for the Kurds, in addition to the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) politics, the separation of KDP and PUK in central politics has made the 2025 elections unlikely. It shows the tension environment he will witness." At the end, he concludes that "the Gaza war, the increasing activism of the terrorist organization PKK in Iraq and Iran's attacks in Iraq constitute other testing factors for the Sudanese government and Iraq's stability." He concludes that "the volatility that these factors will create in Iraq's security and financial discipline or the energy market can be expected to disrupt strategic projects such as the Development Path, which is called Iraq's future vision."



Independent Turkce

https://tinyurl.com/2295zoac

Kerkuk and Turkmen

Bilgay Duman



MILLIYET

https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yazarlar/dusunenlerin-dusuncesi/kerkuk-ve-turkmenler-7068690



According the author and pointing to the post-election era in Iraq, "the upcoming period is much more critical for Turkmens...With the new election, after the formation of the provincial councils, the governorship, deputy governors and provincial council presidents will be elected. At this point, it seems that Turkmens will be an important balancing factor in Kirkuk." He concludes that "it is important for the Turkmens to act strategically and develop a bargaining strategy based on the positions they can take at the maximum level from other administrative authorities in Kirkuk... It should not be forgotten that 2025 will be a new general election year for Iraq. For this reason, the test that the Turkmens will give regarding Kirkuk will be effective not only for Kirkuk, but also for the presence of the Turkmens in other regions and their representation in the general politics of Iraq.