

مركز البيان للدراسات والتخطيط
Al-Bayan Center for Studies and Planning



Al-Bayan Monitor 2024 December

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



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:

The opinions expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the directions adopted by the Center but rather the opinion of its authors.

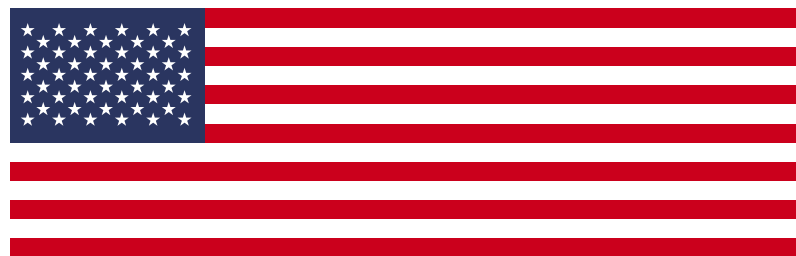
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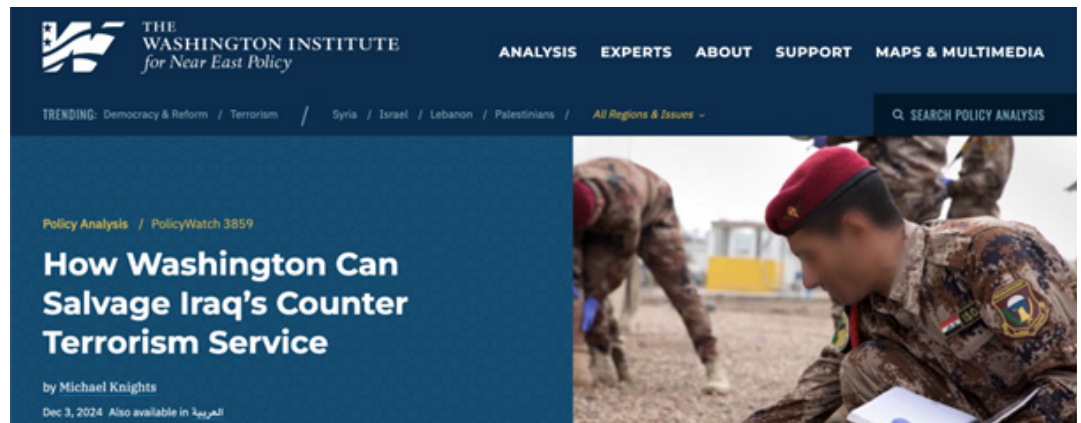
AMERICAN THINK TANKES



How Washington Can Salvage Iraq's Counter Terrorism Service

Michael Knights

The Washington Institute
for Near East Policy



According to the author, “Counter Terrorism Service (CTS) is one of the most cost-effective efforts the United States has supported in Iraq. Between 2003 and 2011, it received around \$450 million—less than 2 percent of the \$24.2 billion put into supporting the overall security forces, and the only part of that effort to truly succeed.” He concludes that “require new CTS leadership. To restore U.S. confidence, Baghdad needs to change the force’s leadership starting at the very top, perhaps reaching back into retired CTS leadership cadres to provide stopgap coverage. The new leadership would then need to repair the ethos of how CTS is administered and recruited, and also improve its operational effectiveness in the field, which is declining due to training failures and other problems. U.S. officials should explicitly warn that CTS funding is at risk unless leadership and procedural changes are delivered.”

Stigmatization Experienced by Families with Perceived ISIS Affiliation in Anbar Province

Osama Gharizi

United States Institute of Peace

Osama Gharizi, a senior advisor for Iraq, the Gulf, and Yemen program at the United States Institute of Peace, has written a discussion paper that “addresses the challenge of stigmatization faced by families in Iraq with perceived ISIS affiliation, particularly in Anbar province, where many have lived in the al-Hol camp. This stigma arises from community beliefs about their connection to ISIS through male relatives or past residence in ISIS-controlled areas. Stigmatization impacts these families’ ability to reintegrate and includes harassment, rejection, property appropriation, and legal and social barriers. The paper includes key research findings and policy recommendations in response to these findings.” This research was funded by USIP’s Middle East and North Africa Center and the US Department of State Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.

DISCUSSION PAPER 24-005

Stigmatization Experienced by Families with Perceived ISIS Affiliation in Anbar Province

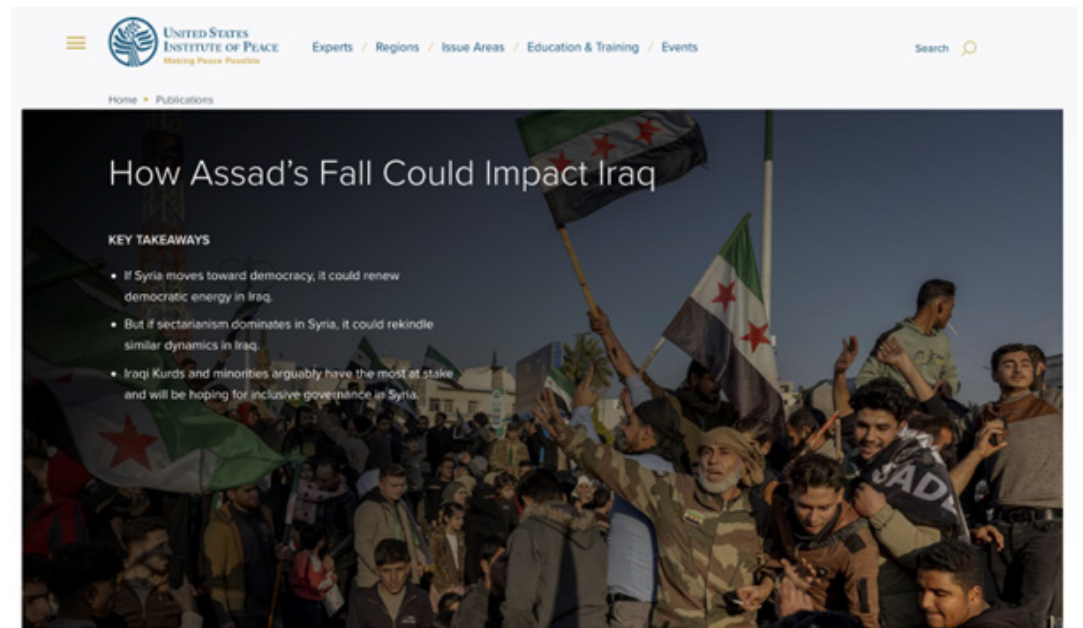
Osama Gharizi



How Assad's Fall Could Impact Iraq

Sarhang Hamasaeed

United States Institute of Peace



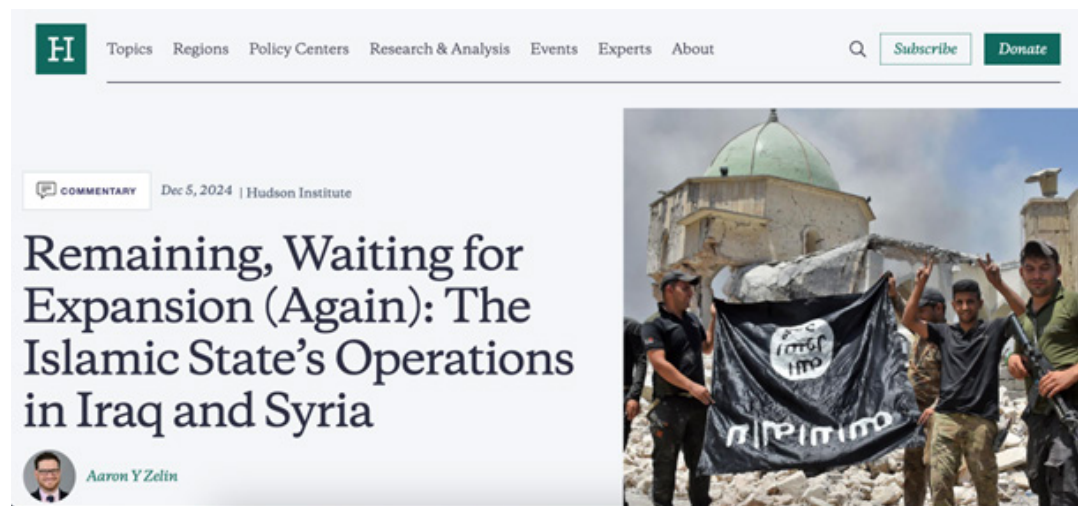
According to the author, “If Syria moves toward democracy, it could renew democratic energy in Iraq. But if sectarianism dominates in Syria, it could rekindle similar dynamics in Iraq. Iraqi Kurds and minorities arguably have the most at stake and will be hoping for inclusive governance in Syria.” He adds that “A stabilizing Syria that tamps down violent extremist organizations would be good for Iraq’s stability.” In the end, he concludes that “The dynamics between Iran and the new U.S. administration will affect Iraq. The U.S. and Iraq have agreed to end the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS’s military mission in Iraq by September 2025 and negotiate a bilateral security partnership consistent with the 2008 Strategic Framework Agreement and Iraq’s constitution...The Kurds, other ethnic groups, religious minorities, and civil society organizations in Iraq and Syria will watch developments closely and hope for proactive U.S. and international engagement in both countries to help move toward inclusive governance and stability as the alternative could be bleak for them.”

<https://www.usip.org/publications/2024/12/how-assads-fall-could-impact-iraq>

Remaining, Waiting for Expansion (Again): The Islamic State's Operations in Iraq and Syria

Aaron Zelin

Hudson



According to the author, “On September 6, 2024, the United States and Iraq reached an agreement on plans to withdraw the U.S.-led “Global Coalition Against Daesh” forces from Iraq and Syria. Under this plan, there would be an initial withdrawal of troops from Iraq proper by September 2025, with the remainder leaving Iraqi Kurdistan by the end of 2026. This would also mean, in effect, a withdrawal from Syria.” In the end, he concludes that “the stakes are therefore quite high. If the United States repeats the same mistake it did in 2010 when it withdrew the bulk of its forces from Iraq, there could be a renewed Islamic state threat within Syria and Iraq with global implications. But, potentially unlike in 2014, the United States might be unable to mitigate this issue militarily, instead being at the whim of adversarial actors who would leave Washington with far fewer options to deal with the problem”.

<https://www.hudson.org/international-organizations/remaining-waiting-expansion-again-islamic-states-operations-iraq-syria>

Book Review “The Ghosts of Iraq’s Marshes: A History of Conflict, Tragedy, and Restoration”

Foreign Affairs



Lisa Anderson writes that “this book follows the life of the irrigation engineer Jassim Al-Asadi. From his childhood in the wetlands to his university education in Baghdad to his lifelong efforts as an advocate and activist to protect, save, and eventually restore the landscapes and livelihoods of the region, Al-Asadi’s life follows the arc of modern Iraqi history. He witnessed the devastating battles of the Iran-Iraq War in the 1980s, the ruinous 1990 Iraqi invasion of and subsequent retreat from neighboring Kuwait, the failed uprising in the early 1990s against Saddam’s government, and the reprisals of a spiteful regime bent on draining and destroying the marshes, and the chaotic collapse of infrastructure in the wake of the U.S. invasion in 2003. Weaving poetry and environmental science, political analysis and ancient history, mythology and hydrology, the book is at once an edifying and captivating tale about a region threatened yet again by human failures, now in the form of climate change.”

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/ghosts-iraqs-marshes-history-conflict-tragedy-and-restoration>

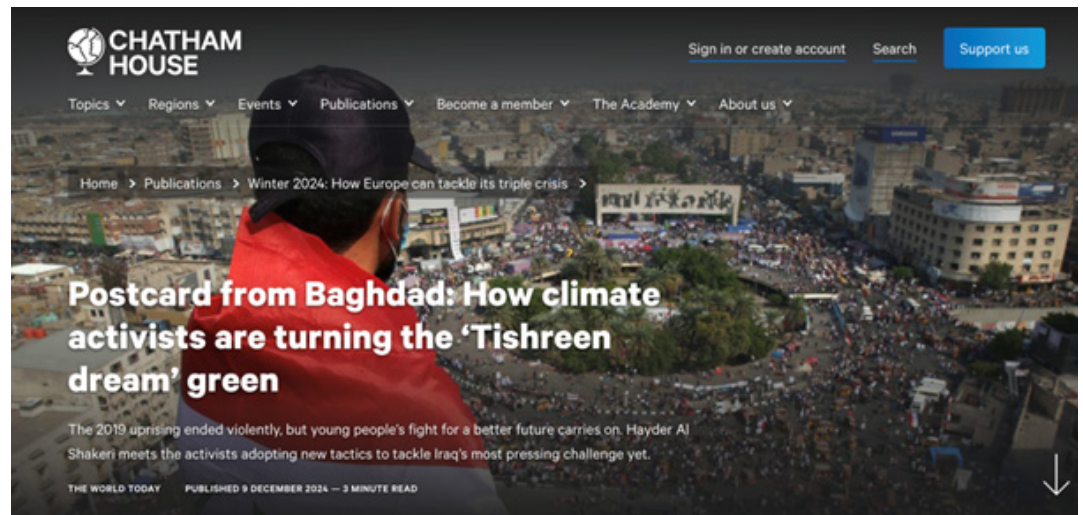
EUROPEAN THINK TANKS



Postcard from Baghdad: How climate activists are turning the ‘Tishreen dream’ green

Hayder Al Shakeri

Chatham House



The 2019 uprising ended violently, but young people’s fight for a better future carries on. Hayder Al Shakeri meets the activists adopting new tactics to tackle Iraq’s most pressing challenge yet. He writes that “by offering a relatively safe entry point into Iraq’s public debate, climate activism has become a gateway for broader civic engagement. But as the climate crisis worsens, the interests of Iraq’s political elite and the ‘red lines’ of government will become harder for activists like Karim and Sara [two of his interlocutors] to circumvent.” He concludes “Nevertheless, by embracing constructive resistance a new generation is forging a different path through climate activism. The hope is that it can lead to tackling other pressing issues in Iraq. Five years on from the Tishreen movement, the fight for Iraq’s future has found new ways to grow. ‘We are still fighting. Just differently,’ says Karim”.

<https://www.chathamhouse.org/publications/the-world-today/2024-12/postcard-baghdad-how-climate-activists-are-turning-tishreen>

Convicted of terrorist membership abroad – and then?

Findings on the rehabilitation of returnees from Syria and Iraq in Germany

Sofia Koller

Fredrich Ebert Foundation

The rise of the so-called Islamic State (IS) has led to tens of thousands of people leaving for Syria and Iraq since 2011, including at least 1,150 people from Germany. More than 40 percent of those who left have now returned to Germany. As a result, there has also been an increase in the number of convicted criminals in the area of Islamist terrorism. This study analyses the experiences and insights gained from the rehabilitation of returnees from Syria and Iraq inside and outside the penal system in Germany. The recommendations for action therefore aim at improving cooperation between the various state and non-state actors involved, focus on building trust, but also see a need for long-term funding for the work of civil society actors. In addition, further research is needed both with regard to the evaluation of the approaches pursued and the role of gender in radicalization, rehabilitation, and distancing processes.



IRANIAN THINK TANKS



Analysis of Iraq's diplomatic moves under the pretext of Sudanese's imminent visit to Tehran Is Baghdad distancing itself from Tehran?

Mohammad Saleh Sedqian

The Iranian Diplomacy



Mohammad Saleh Sedqian emphasizes in an interview that “currently, all regional and extra-regional countries—from the Persian Gulf nations to Europe, and even the United States—do not have a precise and 100% assessment of Syria, and everything is unfolding in a state of ambiguity. However, considering what has transpired in Iraq in recent days, the situation is different from the past.” Discussing the imminent visit of Iraq’s Prime Minister to Iran, he notes, “What has become very important for the Iraqi Prime Minister in the current sensitive situation, especially following the developments in Syria, is the issue of the Popular Mobilization Forces and other resistance groups in Iraq. Serious pressure has been exerted on Mohammed Shia’ Al Sudani’s government. Israel is constantly threatening Baghdad, and there are whispers of the possibility of an attack or assassination, among other concerns. Additionally, the Arab countries of the region and other neighboring nations have also exerted similar pressure on Mohammed Shia’ Al Sudani’s government.”

<https://tinyurl.com/baghdadtehran>

Geography and Regional Development

Abstract

This article seeks to analyze the Zionist regime's efforts to territorialize in Iraqi Kurdistan and its impact on the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The Zionist regime is considered an emerging player in West Asia that has faced major problems due to its lack of legitimacy from some countries in the region, especially the Islamic Republic of Iran. The hypothesis of this article is that since the Zionist regime enjoys geopolitical confinement and high vulnerability in West Asia; Therefore, Tel Aviv, by investing extensively in the energy market and developing trade and security relations with the Kurdistan Region, while supporting the region's independence, will gain a base along the borders of Iran, which, in addition to affecting the national security of the Islamic Republic of Iran, can contribute to the regional siege and isolation of Tehran and the collapse of the Islamic resistance axis circles in West Asia.



TURKISH THINK TANKS

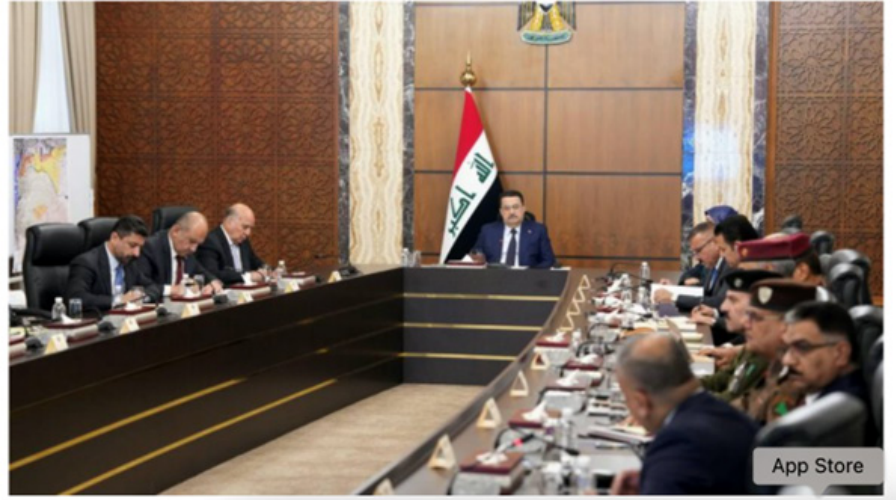


Reflections of Syrian Opposition Operations in Iraq

Suriyeli Muhaliflerin Harekâtlarının Irak'a Yansımaları

Feyzullah Tuna Aygün

Center for Middle
Eastern Studies



According to Feyzullah Tuna Aygün. “the divergence observed in Iraqi politics reveals the need to redefine Iraq’s position in regional crises and shows how different the internal and external dynamics shaping the country’s politics are from each other.” He concludes that “the developments in Syria make it necessary to reevaluate the positions of actors in Iraqi politics and the effects of these positions at the national and regional levels. This process creates the groundwork that can make Iraq’s domestic and foreign policies more dynamic and multifaceted. However, it can be said that the direction of this transformation will be determined as a result of the power struggle between the moderate diplomacy of official circles and the harsh strategies of groups close to Iran. Therefore, the reflections of the developments in Syria have initiated a critical process that may deeply shape not only Iraq’s foreign policy but also the balance of power in its domestic politics”.

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/suriyeli-muhaliflerin-harekatlarinin-iraka-yansimalari/>

Census in Kirkuk: A Demographic Operation?

Kerkük'te Nüfus Sayımı: Demografik Operasyon mu?

Selçuk Bacalan

Center for Middle
Eastern Studies



The author refers to the recent census in Iraq and states, “Although ethnicity data was not collected in the census, the intense population movement has caused Iraqi Turkmens and Arabs to worry. It is possible to determine who belongs to which nationality and sect on a neighborhood and regional basis. For example, the entire Hawija district is Arab, the entire Tuz Khurmatu sub-district is Turkmen, and Karaincir is entirely Kurdish.” He adds, “The first reflection of the census will be seen in the provincial budgets.” He concludes, “It can be said that the parliamentary elections, scheduled to take place in 2025, along with the pressures of the conflict environment in the Middle East on Iraq, will affect provinces with delicate balances, such as Kirkuk. Potential ethnic conflicts and new tensions could disrupt the partial progress and stability Iraq achieved during the Sudanese period and drag the country back into a chaotic environment.”

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/kerkukte-nufus-sayimi-demografik-operasyon-mu/>

Development Path Project: Developments in 2024 and Expectations for 2025

Kalkınma Yolu Projesi: 2024'te Yaşanan Gelişmeler ve 2025'ten Beklentiler

Kenan Aslanlı

Center for Middle
Eastern Studies



According to the author, “The Development Path Project offers a strategic opportunity for the Iraqi economy in terms of creating new sources of income, reducing the risky dependence on the oil sector by providing cumulative effects across different economic sectors, and diversifying the economy.” He concludes, “At the same time, the diversification and sustainability of the financing sources for the Development Path Project may become one of the priority agenda items in 2025. However, while seeking alternative financing sources, potential alternatives should be evaluated comprehensively, considering that Iraq and Turkey are the main actors in the Development Path Project and the strategic goals of their bilateral relations. In the coming period, the states of Turkey and Iraq can develop a unique project management mechanism for the Development Path Project, including its financing model, in a way that will contribute to the institutionalization of their bilateral economic relations.”

<https://orsam.org.tr/tr/kalkinma-yolu-projesi-2024te-yasanan-gelismeler-ve-2025ten-beklentiler/>

The historic and strategic foundations of Turkish-Iraqi ties

The historic and strategic foundations of Turkish-Iraqi ties

BY OBAIDA HITTO | DEC 10, 2024 - 12:05 AM GMT+3 |

Obaida Hitto

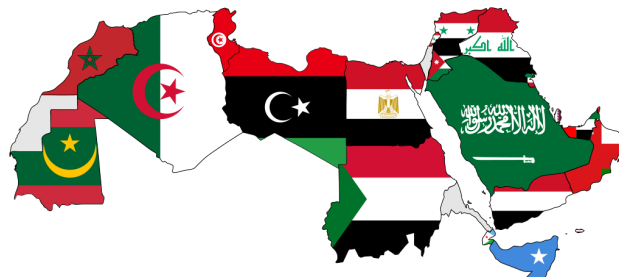
Daily Sabah



According to the author, “For centuries, Türkiye and Iraq have shared a complex and evolving relationship shaped by their common Ottoman past, cultural ties, and overlapping strategic interests. Today, as Iraq navigates its internal challenges and regional dynamics, Türkiye must contend with the reality of Iranian influence in Baghdad, balancing its historic ties and strategic ambitions against the backdrop of growing regional rivalries.” The author concludes that “The historical and cultural ties between Türkiye and Iraq provide a vital foundation for bilateral relations, but the road ahead is fraught with challenges. Ankara’s ability to navigate its rivalry with Tehran while maintaining strong ties with both Baghdad and Irbil will determine the future trajectory of Turkish-Iraqi relations. In this evolving geopolitical landscape, Türkiye must leverage its economic and military strengths, coupled with its cultural diplomacy, to counter Iranian hegemony and promote a vision of regional stability that aligns with its interests.”

<https://www.dailysabah.com/opinion/op-ed/the-historic-and-strategic-foundations-of-turkish-iraqi-ties>

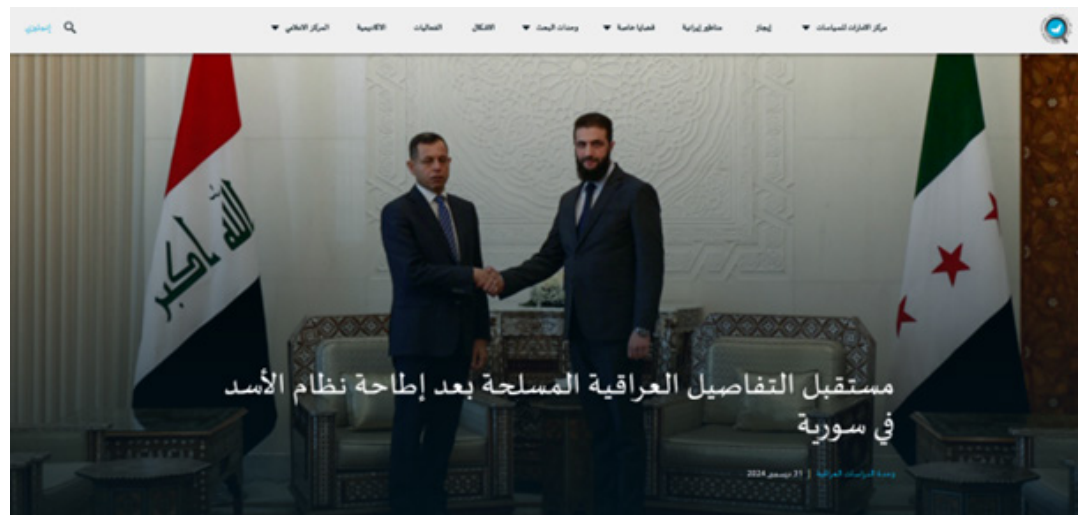
ARAB THINK TANKS



Future of Armed Factions in Iraq after the Fall of Assad's Regime in Syria

Iraq Studies Unit

Emirates Policy Center



The fall of the Assad regime in Syria was a shocking and worrisome event for an influential minority in Iraq. This group includes armed factions that had militarily defended Assad's regime as part of the "Axis of Resistance," politicians allied with Tehran and others with close ties with the deposed regime, such as former Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki. This paper discusses the future of armed factions in Iraq following the fall of the Assad regime and the growing demands to dismantle these groups in light of mounting American pressure. This pressure is expected to intensify with the return of President-elect Donald Trump to the White House and the decline of Iran's regional influence, exacerbated by Israeli strikes targeting Tehran and its proxies.