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## **The Position of the Kurdistan Region, Transformations in the Middle East, and the Requirements of Political Decision-Making**

### *Introduction*

This report is a summary of several seminars, studies, and analyses prepared on the position of the Kurdistan Region within Iraq's federal system, the impact of international transformations, the U.S.–Iran conflict, the future of the Middle East, and emancipatory education during the first quarter of this year. The purpose of this reformulation is to place these discussions within a logical and strategic framework, so that they may have practical value for political leadership, governance institutions, parliament, research centers, and educational institutions. In general, the discussions identify three interconnected levels.

The first is the internal level of the Kurdistan Region, where institutional problems, political fragmentation, the weakness of parliament, the absence of a constitution, and the lack of a unified Peshmerga force appear as fundamental challenges.

The second is the federal Iraqi level, where the position of the Region in the laws of the Iraqi Council of Representatives has been treated in an unstable and, at times, imbalanced manner.

The third is the regional and international level, where the Kurdistan Region must carefully formulate its survival strategy amid the conflicts involving the United States, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Israel, China, Russia, and proxy forces.

*First: The Position of the Kurdistan Region in the Iraqi Council of Representatives*

The constitutional position of the Kurdistan Region is established in the Iraqi Constitution of 2005, especially in Articles 117 and 141, which recognize the Kurdistan Region as a constitutional federal entity. However, the fundamental problem is that this status has not been reflected consistently and uniformly in federal legislation.

During the fifth term of the Iraqi Council of Representatives, between 2021 and 2025, the legal treatment of the Region varied. At times, it was treated as a federal entity; at other times, as a governorate; sometimes as a party requiring coordination; and in other cases as a neglected entity.

During this parliamentary term, 148 sessions were held and 69 laws were passed. Of these, 23 laws concerned the ratification of international agreements. This means that nearly one-third of legislative work was related to international agreements, most of which apply directly or indirectly to the Kurdistan Region as well. However, the constitutional and legal status of international agreements in Iraq remains insufficiently clear, especially after the Federal Supreme Court annulled the Iraq–Kuwait agreement concerning Khor Abdullah. This represents a serious disruption of international confidence in the Iraqi state.

One important finding is that only 14 out of 69 laws were introduced as proposals by members of parliament, amounting to approximately 20%. In other words, nearly 80% of the laws were government bills submitted by the federal government. This reveals the weakness of the Council of Representatives vis-à-vis the executive authority and the dominance of the federal government over the legislative process. At the same time, eight laws were passed to increase the privileges and rights of members of parliament and their families, raising political and ethical questions about the priorities of parliamentary work.

From the perspective of the Kurdistan Region, the figures show that, out of 69 laws, 17 referred to the Kurdistan Region or to “the Region,” amounting to approximately 24%. Only four laws were considered to be fully in the interest of the Region, or roughly 6%. Three laws referred to coordination with the Kurdistan Regional Government.

By contrast, two laws were imposed on the Region even though they did not fall within the exclusive powers of the federal government. Four laws treated the Region and Iraq’s governorates in the same manner, while one law granted powers to the governorates but not

to the Region. This is a fundamental constitutional error, because the Kurdistan Region is a federal entity, not an ordinary governorate.

Regarding the Kurdish language, there remains a continuous institutional problem. Although some Kurdish members of parliament have spoken in Kurdish during sessions and simultaneous interpretation has been provided, their statements have not been officially recorded in the minutes. Since 2005, neither laws, nor parliamentary minutes, nor Iraq's Official Gazette have been systematically published in Kurdish. This violates the spirit of the Constitution, because Kurdish is an official national language in Iraq.

### *Conclusion of This Section*

The Region's position is strong in the Constitution, but unstable in legislation and federal practice. If the Region cannot conduct institutional, legal, and data-based assessments of the work of the Council of Representatives, the Federal Supreme Court, and the federal government, it will remain in a defensive and reactive position at the legal and political levels, rather than a position of prevention and influence.

### *Second: The Regional Situation and the Impact of Trump and the U.S.–Iran Conflict*

The discussions present Donald Trump as an unstable factor in American and global politics. In foreign policy, Trump acts in an unpredictable manner. This may create flexibility for the United States, but it can also generate uncertainty among allies and adversaries.

Trump's behavior has been analyzed within the framework of the "Madman Theory," meaning the use of abnormal and unpredictable behavior to frighten the opposing side and force it into compromise.

From the perspective of these analyses, the U.S.–Iran conflict is not merely a bilateral confrontation. It is part of the strategic reshaping of the Middle East. The United States and Israel generally view Iran as the principal obstacle to the project of a new Middle East. The objective is not limited to restricting Iran's nuclear program. It also includes weakening Iran's regional influence, limiting militias, protecting Israel, and ensuring that Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and Yemen do not remain under Iran's unilateral influence.

From the perspective of the Kurdistan Region, the key point is that Kurdistan has generally been treated in U.S. strategy as a tactical entity, not always as a strategic ally. When the United States has needed Kurdish forces, it has relied on them. But when its interests have changed, the Kurds have become a subject of negotiation with Baghdad, Ankara, Tehran, or other actors. This is a simple and hard lesson: no great power has permanent allies; it only has permanent interests.

### *Third: The Kurdistan Region Between Threat and Opportunity*

The Kurdistan Region currently faces four main threats.

First, the threat of armed militias in Iraq, which view the Region as a political, sectarian, and security threat.

Second, the threat of uncertainty in Iran and the possibility of deep internal change within Iran.

Third, the threat from Turkey, which, especially after a possible weakening of Iran, may emerge as a more influential and often more dangerous power for the Kurds.

Fourth, the internal threat resulting from political fragmentation, weak institutions, the fragmentation of the Peshmerga forces, and the crisis of public trust.

In contrast, the Region possesses several strategic strengths. First, its constitutional status within Iraq. Second, its experience in governance and institution-building, even if weak and incomplete. Third, its geopolitical position between Iraq, Iran, Turkey, and Syria. Fourth, the Peshmerga forces and their history of partnership in the war against ISIS. Fifth, international relations, especially with the United States and Europe. Sixth, the Kurdish diaspora in the United States and Europe, which can function as diplomatic capital and a lobbying asset.

The fundamental problem is that these strengths are not managed in an institutional and national manner. If the Region does not have an effective government, an effective parliament, a regional constitution, a unified Peshmerga force, a transparent financial system, and a strategic decision-making center, it will not be able to protect its position in the new regional equation. Lobbying in Washington or Europe will be useless if the internal house is not in order.

#### *Fourth: Emancipatory Education and Nation-Building*

The section on emancipatory education is one of the most important strategic parts of the texts, because the Region's problems are not only political and security-related; they are also intellectual, educational, and social. In any society, education is not merely the transmission of information. It is the process of forming citizens, identity, critical thinking, trust in institutions, and the capacity for political participation.

The discussions show that the education system in the Kurdistan Region has deep problems at several levels. First, the absence of a clear educational philosophy. Second, teacher-centered instruction and the continuation of the student's role as a silent recipient. Third, exam-centered education and measuring success through grades. Fourth, the weakness of teaching critical thinking, logic, and dialogue. Fifth, party interference in education. Sixth, the characteristics of the Kurdish language and the absence of a linguistic standard. Seventh, the separation of the school from the problems of society.

Emancipatory education, meaning an education that frees the individual mind from submission, imitation, fear, and ignorance, can be a fundamental solution. This kind of education turns the student into a participant, a questioner, an analyst, and a seeker of solutions. The teacher changes from being the sole source of knowledge into a guide for learning. The classroom changes from a place of memorization into a space for dialogue, criticism, analysis, and the production of knowledge.

For the Kurdistan Region, this type of education is not merely a school project. It is a nation-building project. If the education system does not know how to produce conscious, responsible, patriotic, and critical citizens, then no political or security strategy alone can protect the Region's entity.

#### *Fifth: The Future of the Middle East and the Position of the Kurds*

The Middle East is in a transitional phase. The international system is moving from American unipolarity toward multipolarity, but this transition is not yet complete. The United States remains the principal great power, but China, Russia, Turkey, Iran, Israel, and Saudi Arabia are all playing larger roles. In this transformation, the Kurds face both opportunities and threats.

The opportunities include the possible weakening of anti-Kurdish forces, the growing importance of Kurdistan's energy infrastructure and geopolitical position, the need of great powers for reliable regional allies, and the existence of a Kurdish diaspora abroad.

The threats include the use of the Kurds as a bargaining card, the threat of militias, internal fragmentation, Turkish attacks, and the possibility of rapid change in Iran and Iraq.

The Kurdish question is one question across all parts of Kurdistan, but this does not mean one single tactic. Each part has its own political, legal, and security conditions. What is needed is national strategic coordination, not the unification of all tactics. Iraq's Kurdistan, as the only constitutional and federal Kurdish entity, must protect its entity, strengthen it, and avoid placing it inside an emotional gamble or a proxy war.

### *General Conclusion*

All the discussions, in different ways, arrive at one point: the Kurdistan Region is in a sensitive and decisive stage. The threats do not come only from outside. A large part of them comes from within the Region itself. Political fragmentation, weak institutions, the absence of a constitution, the fragmentation of the Peshmerga forces, the weakness of parliament, the absence of a nation-building education system, and the lack of effective research centers all create a strategic threat to survival.

At the federal level, the Region needs a data-based legal system to monitor all laws, decisions, orders, and rulings issued by Baghdad and the Federal Supreme Court.

At the regional level, it needs pragmatic neutrality, active diplomacy, the preservation of relations with the United States and Europe, and at the same time, the avoidance of becoming part of any side's war.

At the internal level, the Region needs deep institutional and educational reform.

The survival of the Kurdistan Region will not be guaranteed by slogans, personal relationships, or reliance on great powers. Survival will be secured through institutions, law, defense, economy, education, diplomacy, and internal unity.

## *Strategic Recommendations for the Political Leadership*

### 1. Establish a Higher Council for National Strategy

A higher council for national strategy should be established, including representatives of the Presidency of the Region, the government, parliament, the Peshmerga forces, research centers, and experts in law, economics, security, and international relations. This council should place decisive decisions within an institutional framework, not within party-based or personal meetings.

### 2. Create a System for Monitoring Federal Laws

The Region needs a specialized unit to evaluate all laws and decisions issued by the Iraqi Council of Representatives, the Federal Supreme Court, and the federal government. This unit should collect data, identify the impact of each law on the Region, and provide legal and political recommendations to the government and parliament of the Region.

### 3. Strengthen the Status of the Kurdish Language in Iraq

The Kurdistan Regional Government should formally demand that laws, parliamentary minutes, federal decisions, and the Official Gazette be published in Kurdish. This should not be viewed as a cultural demand, but as a constitutional and national right.

### 4. Unify the Peshmerga Forces

No survival strategy can be effective without the unification of the Peshmerga. If the armed forces remain party-based, the Region will be seen, both internationally and internally, as an

incomplete entity. The unification process should be implemented according to a timetable, budget, unified command, and institutional oversight.

#### 5. Draft a Constitution for the Kurdistan Region

The absence of a constitution is a fundamental weakness. The constitution must define the balance of powers, the limits of authority of the presidency, government, parliament, judiciary, armed forces, and the rights of citizens. Without a constitution, the Region's entity can easily fall into power disputes during crises.

#### 6. Develop Institutional Diplomacy and Lobbying

The Region needs professional, data-based, and non-partisan lobbying in Washington, Brussels, London, and other influential capitals. Diplomacy should not be managed only through personal relationships. It requires specialized personnel, a clear budget, a unified strategic message, and cooperation with the Kurdish diaspora.

#### 7. Establish Strategic Research Centers

The Region needs effective research centers in the fields of Iranian studies, Turkish studies, Iraqi studies, U.S. policy, energy economics, security, education, and artificial intelligence. These centers should be connected to decision-making, not merely produce library-style reports.

#### 8. Emancipatory Education and Curriculum Reform

The Ministry of Education should integrate emancipatory education, critical thinking, problem-based learning, civic education, and national identity into curricula and teacher training. Schools must produce responsible and conscious individuals, not merely exam-oriented students.

#### 9. Economic Preparedness for Crisis

The Region must have reserve plans for food, fuel, medicine, finance, and trade in case of an Iranian crisis, border closures, rising energy prices, or militia attacks. The Region's economy must not be built only on salaries, oil, and import-based trade.

#### 10. Preserve Pragmatic Neutrality

The Region should not turn its territory into a base for attacks against any neighbor. At the same time, it must strengthen its own defensive capacity. Neutrality without power becomes weakness. Effective neutrality requires diplomacy, defense, unity, and internal trust.

#### *Final Statement*

The Kurdistan Region is at a stage where today's decisions will affect the coming decades. A politics of temporary positions, emotional reactions, and party fragmentation cannot protect a federal entity in a conflict-ridden region. Decision-making must be based on data, institutions, law, power, education, and diplomacy.

If the Region can organize its internal affairs, protect its constitutional position in Iraq, manage its international relations professionally, and reform its education system and institutions, then in this regional stage it can not only protect itself, but also become a more important actor in the equations of the Middle East.

If these steps are not taken, the main threat will not come from outside. It will begin from internal weakness.