

# Iran and the Iraqi Protests

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The current Iraqi events are related to Iran. Because these events can affect international position and internal situation of Iran. But how that will affect Iran and what kind of impacts can leave on Kurdistan region?

### Iran's view on the protests

The Iranian officials have seen first wave of "Arab spring" protests as sign of awakening Islamic people in the region and they see current protests in Lebanon and Iraq as strife!

And this is somehow repeated by those groups known as ally of Iran. No doubt that there is some hidden interest and political and geopolitical consideration along with these concepts.

However that first wave of the "Arab spring" extended until southern parts of the Islamic and Arab world, but the key change took place in the mount of Africa and Sunni areas not in other places. And this year a number of popular protests in Sudan, Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon and Iraq which can be considered as the second wave of the Arab spring, but as we see this time the trouble is more in the geography of Shia and this is a reason why the Iranian officials call this as strife and foreign hand in the Iraqi events.

There is no confirmed information and indication that prove Iranian officials view on foreign hands behind Iraqi protests. US, Israel and Saudi Arabia do not have such popular support in Iraq that can organize protests. If this was true that these countries behind the protests then Iraqi government situation would not be in the interest of Tehran as it's now.

The protests can become game changer of that political system was established in post -Saddam which was more in the interest of Iran.

The Iraqi protests for US, Saudi Arabia and Israel are opportunity and challenge as well! Certainly the protests can be useful to balance the Iranian power in Iraq but until that point it does not destabilize the country and not create opportunity for terror to emerge again. Protesting against Iran is might be useful to balance the Iranian power but when events are leading to destabilize the region and create gap in political authority this can damage the three countries as well. If preventing Iranian influence will lead to emerge new ISIS, cause civil war and escalate to some countries in the gulf then won't be in the interest of (US, Saudi Arabia and Israel).

### Why Iraqi protests will damage Iran?

The Iraq war in 2003 had ended big regional rival of Iran and US troop's withdrawal in 2011 from Iraq left the country to Tehran. And most people agree that since then Iran is number one winner of changes in politics and structure of Iraqi governments. Iran and Iraq are neighbors which have long rivalry experience against each other. After Saddam all Iranian efforts was to prevent another strong central power in Baghdad because despite common sect between Tehran and Iraqi government , there is no guarantee after Baghdad has solved its problems step by step then stand against Tehran. It seems complicated, but Iran was one of first countries that had opened its consulate in Iraqi Kurdistan and supported decentralized Iraq. And this is not in the sake of Kurds and democracy but to prevent rise another Saddam.

One of the main scenes of October protests is increasing raising Iraqi flags. But this was missing during 2011 protests in Iraqi Kurdistan. This scene represents the strength of nationalism among protesters and Shia population. Moving towards nation instead of sect and raise " we want the homeland " is unlike that policy instead of nation affirm on common sect. no doubt if the new government and political system will be formed based on this demand of protesters or if the current

cabinet change its policy this will reduce Iranian domination on Iraq.

Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei a while ago has stated that will continue their policies in the "defense geography" this at least can be an indication for Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. But new situation in Syria with protests in Iraq and Lebanon led the regional Iranian influence to turning point which can be a beginning to reduce its domination in the region. In the meantime its atomic issue is about to become more difficult which is bad news for Tehran.

If the Iraqi protests lead to start Shia-Shia internal war, Iran will lose its position as high authority to bring all the Shias around the world together, and likely increase ongoing small disputes between Najaf and Qom Seminaries. Therefore as long as Iranian foreign policy towards Iraq stays as sectarian, internal Shia war at this moment is not in the interest of Tehran.

Another issue that made Tehran unhappy is the likely Iraqi events domino's impact on Iran. Bad economic situation, increasing internal factions of power in Tehran, upcoming elections next year which can lead to more tensions it carries potentials for starting new protests in Iran, and continues Iraqi developments can have catalyze role in resuming internal protests in Iran. Therefore Tehran is willing to end Iraqi protests sooner.

#### **Conclusion:**

Is not clear yet what the Iraqi protests will do to the Iraqi political system. But is clear that exiting from this situation won't be in the interest of Iran.

At the international level this will create more gaps in Iran's regional influence and likely there will be more protest inside Iran. If Iraq becomes stronger or at least Iranian influence reduced in Iraq and if the Iraqi events affect internal situation of Iran and start shaking, then Tehran will need Kurdistan region more. This is an opportunity for Kurdistan region to change its unbalanced relation with Iran. Surly Kurdistan region need to have relations with different governments but should also take opportunities to strengthen its bases of power.