"Iraqi Kurdish Diaspora and State-Building in Kurdistan"

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Abstract

Kurdistan is without doubt the rising non-state actor in the Middle East. For the nonce, the political elite in Kurdistan declares that they will stay as a part of Iraq as long as they are not oppressed by the regime. However, that does not mean that the idea of independence is an assigned claim. What one observes in the region is economic development, which goes hand in hand with institution building. Some authors describe this situation as “a state within a state” (Bengio, 2012) or a “de facto state” (Voller, 2011). Concurrently, the diaspora plays a big role in this process by getting involved in various social, economic and political ways. In this paper, I look at the diaspora-homeland interactions from a three-dimensional perspective: diaspora contributions to state building in Kurdistan, the contributions of the diaspora returnees and finally the expectations of the Kurdish Regional Government from the diaspora and the returnees. The arguments are based on my extensive fieldwork in Kurdistan, Germany, Sweden, France and the Netherlands where I interviewed diaspora entrepreneurs and members, politicians, return migrants from first and second generation.

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