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State and society in Iraq ten years after regime change: the rise of a new authoritarianism

TOBYDODGE

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Abstract

This article examines the rise of a new authoritarianism in Iraq ten years after the invasion that removed Saddam Hussein. It traces the centralization

of political and coercive power in the hands of Iraq's Prime Minister, Nuri al-Maliki. From his appointment in 2006, Maliki successfully moved to constrain the power of parliament and the independent agencies set up by the American-led occupation to oversee the state. He removed key politicians and civil servants who stood in his way. This authoritarian centralization reached its peak with Maliki's control of Iraq's special forces, its army and its intelligence services. The article analyses the civilian institutions of the state, concluding that political corruption has greatly hindered their reconstruction. The result is an Iraqi state with an over-developed armed forces, very weak civilian institutions and a dominant prime minister. Against this background, the sustainability of Iraqi democracy is in question. The article concludes by assessing the ramifications of Iraq's postwar trajectory for military interventions more generally.

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