

Our Presence in Iraq Remains a Vital US National Security Interest

by [David Schenker \(/experts/david-schenker\)](/experts/david-schenker)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[David Schenker \(/experts/david-schenker\)](/experts/david-schenker)

David Schenker is the Taube Senior Fellow at The Washington Institute and director of the Program on Arab Politics. He is the former Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs.



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American withdrawal would doom efforts against the Islamic State, undermine confidence in Baghdad, exacerbate Iraq's economic crisis, and deliver the country completely to Tehran.

When serving as Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs in early 2020, I was asked by a group of analysts what were my “black swans” for the region—events that seemed unlikely but that could be highly consequential. The one that sprung immediately to mind was the prospect, then a dim one, that Mustafa al-Kadhimi, a Western-oriented dual national of the United Kingdom, could fight his way past the opposition of Iranian-backed Shiite militias to become the prime minister of Iraq. I felt then that it could be a game-changer for Iraq and the region. Since then, Kadhimi has indeed proven to be perhaps the best Iraqi prime minister since the 1958 coup...

[Read the full article on the Hill website. \(https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/542223-our-presence-in-iraq-remains-a-vital-us-national-security-interest\)](https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/542223-our-presence-in-iraq-remains-a-vital-us-national-security-interest) ❖

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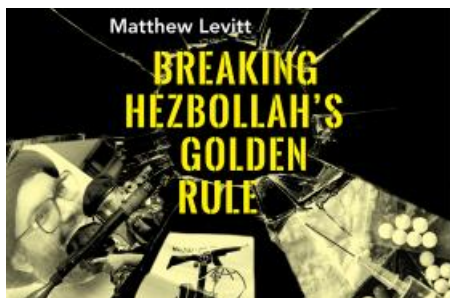
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