

# The Future of the Iraqi Kurds

by [Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](#)

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



[Soner Cagaptay \(/experts/soner-cagaptay\)](#)

Soner Cagaptay is the Beyer Family Senior Fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute.



In-Depth Reports

**W**hat is the Kurdish Regional Government's current status in northern Iraq, and what implications does it hold for the United States? Is Kurdish independence a likely scenario? To examine these questions, a four-member Washington Institute delegation visited the KRG in February 2008, exploring its political and economic situation, its ties to the rest of Iraq, and its relations with Turkey, Syria, and Iran. The trip resulted in a set of benchmarks to assess the region's future prospects, both domestically and internationally.

In this Policy Focus, Soner Cagaptay, Audrey Flake, Michael Knights, and David Pollock discuss each of these benchmarks, outlining important new findings on issues such as the KRG's little-known financial dependence on Baghdad, its lethargic economic growth, its "love-hate relationship" with Iran, and its tolerance of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) -- a factor that haunts Turkish-KRG and Turkish-Iraqi relations alike. Taken together, these and other findings could give policymakers significant leverage in their efforts to secure a broad spectrum of U.S. interests in Iraq, from human rights concerns to investment opportunities.

## The AUTHORS

**S**oner Cagaptay is a senior fellow and director of the Turkish Research Program at The Washington Institute. He has written extensively on U.S.-Turkish relations and other issues, publishing in scholarly journals and major print media such as *Middle East Quarterly*, *Middle Eastern Studies*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, and *Newsweek*. A historian by training, he holds a doctorate from Yale and serves as chair of the Turkey Advanced Area Studies Program at the State Department's Foreign Service Institute.

**Michael Knights** is a London-based Lafer international fellow of The Washington Institute and director of strategic analysis and assessments for Olive Group. He has authored or edited three previous Institute studies on Iraq, most recently the April 2008 Policy Focus [Provincial Politics in Iraq: Fragmentation or New Awakening? \(templateC04.php?CID=289\)](#)

**David Pollock** is a visiting fellow at The Washington Institute and former senior advisor for the Broader Middle East

at the State Department. His previous Institute publications include the June 2007 Policy Focus *[With Neighbors Like These: Iraq and the Arab States on Its Borders \(templateC04.php?CID=275\)](#)*.

**Audrey Flake** is a Schusterman Young Scholar at The Washington Institute, focusing on Iraq-related issues.

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