



The spatial issue of the disputed territories between the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and Baghdad

The ongoing breakdown of the state in Iraq is somehow veiling the unsettled issue of the disputed territories on the edge of the autonomous Kurdish region, defined by the 2005 post-baathist Constitution. Despite an article in the Constitution and a UN plan to solve the crisis within two years after the Constitution's implementation, the situation of the 30'000sq/km space in-between the two entities of the Iraqi federation stayed unsolved. This presentation intends to highlight the various dimensions and issues at stake with these territories, caught between the identity politics of the KRG claims and the Baghdad sovereign state policy, the latter being held up by the Shi'ite since the end of the Baathist era. In the middle of the disputed territories, one may find huge hydrocarbon resources that are whetting the appetite of the rival parties. These include several regional powers (Turkey, Iran, Russia) and local militias linked to these states in Sinjar, Kirkuk or Tuz Khurmatu, three case studies of disputed territories. In this presentation, we will discuss the type of conceptualization that is required to catch the whole picture, at different scales and different moments of the process – before the ISIS invasion, before the Kurdish referendum of 2017 and after – in order to describe a contemporary form of political in-betweenness.

Readings

Bartu, P. (2010). Wrestling with the integrity of a nation: the disputed internal boundaries in Iraq. *International Affairs*, 86(6), 1329-1343.

Kaval, A. (2013). Kirkuk, histoire d'une ville disputée. *Les clés du Moyen-Orient*. <https://www.lesclesdumoyenorient.com/Kirkouk-histoire-d-une-ville.html>

Natali, D. (2015). The Kurdish Quasi-State: Leveraging Political Limbo. *The Washington Quarterly*, 38 (2), 145-164.