

Kurdistan Independence Vote

Why in news?

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Iraqi Kurds have planned to go ahead with a proposed referendum on seceding from Iraq.

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Who are the Kurds?

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• Kurds constitute the fourth largest ethnic group in West Asia but don't have a nation of their own.

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- They are scattered in various countries and are a considerable minority in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.
- They have historically been oppressed by their respective governments which has fueled the desire for establishing a Kurdish nation that encompasses the Kurdish regions different countries.
- \bullet In Turkey, Kurdish rebels are involved in a civil war for secession, while in Syria they have already established a regional government. $\mbox{\sc h}$
- As Baghdad is weakened by IS, Kurds have used the situation to enhance the territory under their control.
- \bullet Currently, Iraqi Kurds are planning a referendum on secession on their own. $\ensuremath{\backslash n}$

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What have been the reactions to the referendum?

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- The Iraqi Supreme Court has already asked the Kurdistan Regional Government to suspend the vote, till its legality is settled.
- Although a Yes in the referendum doesn't guarantee secession, it has been perceived as a message to the outside world reiterating that there is popular support for independence.
- \bullet Kurds are an important partner for Baghdad in the fight against the IS, with the U.S. also treating the Peshmerga forces as an ally. \n
- The move by the Iraqi Kurds is being viewed with alarm by the Turkish and Iranian regimes.
- Turkey has in the past treated Kurdish demands for minority rights such as recognition of their language, let alone autonomy, as secessionist.
- Iran is also fighting a minor insurgency by kurds in the mountains of its northern region and has recently closed its eastern borders in the light of the referendum .

• Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria remains tactically silent on the matter for now.

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 \bullet So the referendum has geopolitical ramifications $\ensuremath{\backslash n}$

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What is the current political status of Iraqi Kurds?

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- Iraqi Kurds were granted some autonomy after 1991 when a regional government was constituted at Erbil.
- In recent years, both Baghdad and Erbil cooperated in the fight against the Islamic State.
- Although independence remains the proclaimed goal of Iraqi Kurdis, Mr.Barzani - who heads the regional administration at Erbil, has often personally signalled a compromise.

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• While Baghdad has chosen to ignore such gestures, the current developments makes restarting negotiations essential.

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Source: The Hindu

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