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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

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Mapping Iraq's Institutional Internet Use for Informational Transparency and Bottom-Up Communication: a Content Analysis Assessment

Abstract

Many empirical studies have demonstrated a positive interplay between the Internet as a radically new form of media and democratic politics. However, two gaps can be identified in the literature: research on the Internet use is centered on a "micro-level" approach and its role is often analyzed in the context of established democracies. The present master's thesis widens this empirical focus, by investigating the Internet use from an institutional "macro-level" perspective in the context of a country at a critical transition point: Iraq. The purpose of this study is to explore to what extent the institutional Internet use can serve as an instrument to enhance the flaws in the functions of information-provision and bottom-up communication characterizing Iraq's fragile representative institutions. More specifically, it aims at assessing how the country's legislative, executive and political parties are adapting to cyberspace and exploiting its potential as a channel for more informational transparency and bottom-up communication. Through a quantitative methodological approach, the performance of these institution's websites (n=95) is measured using a content analysis technique. The results point to a mixed account: a rapid enhanced institutional presence on the www, a notable progress in the learning to use the top-down online information provision, and a largely unexploited bottom-up communication through the web. The findings, discussed in the light of theoretical expectations and contextual factors, reveal that the unidirectional Internet use in Iraq is not contributing to the "stable and bi-directional flow of communication" necessary to strengthen Iraq's nascent representative institutions. While the Internet role may seem unimportant compared to the bigger security challenges facing Iraq since 2003, studying the potential of this instrument at this time where the country is in urgent need to strengthen its democratic practices should not be ignored. This study is a first attempt to map Iraq's institutional adaptation to cyberspace, and the primary results reached could provide an early benchmark against which to judge future advances.

Introduction

A recent study from University of Washington has presented the Internet as an indispensable tool for any democratization process today. By demonstrating through empirical evidence the causal role of ICTS in recent democracy-building experiences, Howard (2011) concludes that no democratic transition is possible today without including the key Internet element. Based on this finding and other studies acknowledging a positive interplay between democracy and the Internet, this research explores the use of the Internet as a building-democracy tool in a country at a critical point of transition: Iraq. With the relatively nascent democratic experience of the country and indications of a "dramatic change" in its Internet's landscape since 2003 (Alexander 2005), it is reasonable to question whether or not the Internet is being exploited as a driving force in Iraq's current transition towards democracy.

I argue that the Institutional Internet use in Iraq for more democracy is characterized today by an enhanced institutional web presence, a notable progress in the use of top-down information provision, and a largely unexploited interactive space. The key purpose of this study is to assess the institutional use of the Internet as a tool for the

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building of the new and fragile democracy in Iraq. Due to the little existing evidence on the subject, explained by the technological and democratic infant phase at which Iraq is, this research takes an exploratory, rather than prescriptive, approach. It therefore seeks to provide a picture of Iraq's institutions adaptation to cyberspace. More specifically, it is an attempt to identify, describe and analyze the democratic use of the Internet by three core representative institutions: the executive, the legislature and the political parties.

This topic is placed within a wide literature of competing visions around the nature of the relationship between the Internet, as a radically new form of media, and democratic politics. "Cyber optimists", who strongly defend the idea of the Internet fostering democracy, would essentially argue that this technology provides increasing opportunities for citizens to directly input in the policymaking process (Margolis 2009). Holders of this radical position believe in the Internet's "transformative potential" towards more direct forms of deliberative or "strong democracy" (Barber 2003). "Cyber pessimists" would, in contrast, highlight the dark side of the technology, which is argued to undermine the health of democracy (Wilhelm 2000). Proponents of this vision associate the technology with a problem particular to highly authoritarian societies, where the Internet would reinforce the traditional centers of power through an increasing state surveillance of speech (Morrisett 2003). Other identified Internet problems are the "digital divide" that it creates between the "have" and "have nots", which exacerbates existing inequalities (Norris 2001), and its threat to fragmentize politics by favoring highly personalized forms of environment (Smith 2009). "Cyber skeptics", however, would simply argue that the Internet does not promote any change since its use is mostly dominated by consumers uninterested in politics (Gibson & Ward 2004). They would therefore argue that the Internet is more likely to encourage "politics as usual" (Needham 2004). Finally, the other position, to which I subscribe to in this study, opposes the "technological determinism" of the previous positions emphasizing on the importance of placing the use of technology in its contextual environment (Chadwick 2006). Scholars like Corrales (2003) argue that the democratic outcome of the Internet largely depends on contextual factors such as the pre-existing degree of democracy.

This large literature reveals two significant gaps. On one hand, it is mostly centered on the analysis of democratic potential of the Internet from the approach of the citizen disengagement crisis currently facing advanced liberal democracies. This focus led to a bias towards assessing the use of the Internet in highly democratic and "sufficiently electronic" societies (Wallis 2002), such as North America and Western Europe, largely ignoring infant democratic and technological countries. On the other hand, the majority of this research tends to study the Internet use from a "micro-level" assessment of whether the individual use expands or not the deliberative process. This emphasis has left the "macro-level" democratic use of the Internet by institutions largely unexplored (Norris 2001).

The desirability of this study lies in its attempt to address both these gaps. By studying the issue in Iraq, it widens the current empirical focus on established democracy, joining therefore the limited number of Internet studies in transitional contexts. Moreover, it departs from the "micro-level" norm, preferring to approach the use from a macro-level institutional perspective. The general question we address is: How are the core political institutions in Iraq- the executive, the legislature and political parties- adapting to the democratic use of the Internet to build and strengthen the country's nascent representative democracy? Three sub-questions follow: How present are these institutions on the WWW? How are they learning to benefit from the Internet's democratic potential of top-down information provision? And finally, how are they exploiting the Internet's interactive attribute to facilitate bottom-up communication? To answer these questions, I undertake an empirical investigation of content analysis, measuring the level of the presence, the top-down information provision and the bottom-up communication of these institutions' websites.

It is fair to assume, at the first sight, that the Internet role in the democratization process may seem unimportant compared to the security challenges faced by Iraq since 2003. However, at this time where the country is in urgent need to strengthen democracy, studying the democratic potential of the Internet as an instrument that could nurture the nascent democratic practices, should not be ignored. It is safe to suggest that this study is amongst the first attempts to map Iraq's institutional use of cyberspace. The primary results that it reaches could therefore provide an early benchmark against which to judge future advances.

Once we have defined the two concepts underpinning this study, I turn to the theory chapter, which identifies the

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origins of the democratic potential of the net to strengthen democracy through top-down information provision and bottom-up communication. Adopting the view which emphasizes that the Internet cannot be studied in a vacuum, I devote the second chapter to presenting two contextual factors: technological and democratic infancy. Chapter 3 will then briefly elaborate on the research methodology employed to answer the research questions. Chapter 4 will consist of the core study: while the first section presents the tables and main data, the second section discusses these findings in the light of the theoretical expectations and contextual factors presented in the first two chapters. The concluding chapter will sum up and offer directions for future research.

Definitions: Internet & Democracy

Chadwick (2006) offers an interesting definition of the Internet combining its technical and comparative components. By understanding the technical dimension of the technology in the light of previous forms of ICTs, he defines the Internet as a “network of networks of one to one, one too many, many to many and many to one local, national and global information and communications technologies with relatively open standards and protocols and comparatively low barriers to entry” (Chadwick 2006 p7).

Our second concept –democracy-is more complex. Amongst the various existing conceptions of democracy, we need to clarify the one we adopt in our study. Since we focus on studying the Internet from an institutional approach, and more specifically exploring how the existent Iraqi representative structures are adapting to its use, we adopt the conception of “representative democracy”. We are therefore not concerned with the deliberative democracy conception suggesting a “wholesale reform” (Norris 2001) of a system featuring more participatory elements. Since we are more interested in examining how the Internet has tended to reflect and reinforce familiar patterns of democracy rather than revolutionizing it, we enclose our study in the limits of “representative democracy”. We therefore use the conception of representative democracy that reflects our approach, and defined as a “system of governance where the power of the decision makers is guided by a set of laws usually embodied in a constitution with regularly elected persons making decisions on behalf of the largest possible part of the population” (Ferdinand 2000).

After these brief, yet comprehensive, definitions, we move to the first chapter which elaborates on these understandings through the conceptual frame of the positive relationship between these two variables.

Theoretical Foundation: Representative Democracy & The Internet

This chapter aims at operationalizing the definitions of representative democracy and the Internet by examining the conceptual framework through which the positive relationship between these two variables is advanced. How is the Institutional Internet use expected to serve the building and strengthening of representative institutions? This chapter is not a discussion of the competing visions, but rather a necessary exercise of laying the theoretical predictions that would allow us later to evaluate the Iraqi institutional use of the Internet for democracy. It is therefore structured around two key dimensions of representative institutions: the top-down “information” provision and the bottom-up “communication”. In each section, I explain how the unique democracy-building features of the “information” and “communication” could provide institutions interesting possibilities allowing them to better accomplish their functions, and as a consequence, contribute to the strengthening representative democracy.

Top-Down “Information” Provision & The Internet

While the emphasis of representative democracy conceptualization is on the free and fair elections mechanism, the theory points to an important dimension regarding the function of information provision of institutions to the public in between the holding of these elections (Norris 2001). Norris (2001) demonstrates the centrality of this information dissemination in the sense where “citizens can only make effective electoral decisions if they can evaluate the record and performance of the government, as well as the programs of the alternative parties and candidates competing for office”(p 129). From here it is argued that an access to a vast and accurate information range from institutions to the public is critical to the holding of electoral processes in which citizens could vote in an accurate accordance with their political preferences (Gibson & Ward 2003). But, what makes the Internet particularly appealing in assisting

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institutions to disseminate information to citizens in between elections?

What makes the Internet distinctive is its “bandwidth” feature. Compared to all forms of media, (TV or newspapers), the Internet provides a radically new opportunity for information dissemination and access (Chadwick 2006). In fact, through its bandwidth, this technology allows the transmission of information at a greater volume and faster speed than ever before. Moreover, it allows a control over huge amounts of information by facilitating its storing, organizing and access (Hoff 2006).

This unparalleled scope of the Internet compared to other forms of information technologies, if properly benefited from, could effectively assist representative institutions in carrying out their top-down information dissemination function (Norris 2001). Obviously, the particular type of information disseminated through the net, as well as its predicted impact on strengthening democracy depends itself on the institution in question. In the executive branch of the government, the net can be employed to disseminate an extremely wide range of governmental information to citizens. This function could be understood in the light of a citizen oriented electronic government approach defined as “the electronic provision of information 24 hours 7 days per week” (Homburg 2008 p 90). Among the realms of official documents that ministries could make available to citizens through the web are official reports, policies, speeches, regulations, tenders announcements as well as relevant and detailed organizational and budget information. This makes the scenario of a “civil servant who may not wish to divulge info” impossible (Norris 2001). Given this wide, open and easy access of information to the public, and the difficulty to hide it results in loosening the government control over information (Chadwick 2006). This lays the foundation for transparent government, which is a precondition for democratization (Ferdinand 2000). This oversight capacity of citizens on the policy making process, argues Ferdinand (2000), can help reduce corruption in the public administration sector and build public trust in government. An increasing transparency brings therefore more democratic pressure, leading in its turn to a virtuous circle of increasing democracy (Simon, Corrales & Wolfesberger 2003).

The Internet can similarly assist the legislature in disseminating comprehensive and detailed information equitably to the public, with an inexpensive cost (Chadwick 2006). Parliaments, local councils and candidates could use the web to regularly publish lengthy full texts of parliamentary proceedings, procedures and pending legislations, as well as relevant information about representatives’ public attendance and their activities. This increased informational transparency that the Internet allows holds a considerable hope in strengthening the legislature by promoting accountability through the ballot box (Norris 2001). In fact, with an increased access to timely and wide range of information, interested citizens could have a much clearer picture of their representatives’ activities, and be enabled to scrutinize and hold the elected members responsible for their actions (Seifert & Bonham 2003).

Political parties, too, could exploit the Internet’s informational capacity to accomplish its traditional function of opinion formation in democracy (Norris 2001). Given its comparatively low cost high reach, the Internet would clearly enhance the opportunity of elite to exchange information about their identities and policies to the public (Ward & Gibson 2003). In fact, online party information can act as storehouses with information ranging from organizational history, orientation, structure as well as documents of internal agendas, parliamentary initiatives, daily press releases, news and party activities. Indeed, the Internet would allow parties, established as well as new, to voice their agenda and control the dosage of content they emit. The value of this information lies in the direct contact of parties with citizens without the traditional distorting and filtering of mass media (Rommele 2003). This specific direct link parties-citizen is seen to have a democratizing impact. By allowing the less established parties to bypass the traditional media in which they rarely receive attention (Wallis 2002), the WWW allows them to promote themselves at a very low cost. Thus, with smaller parties sitting alongside major parties in a virtual world, the Internet is seen as at least partially “leveling of the field” of electoral competition (Mocam, Badescu & Marian 2003), strengthening thus democratic institutions.

In sum, the Internet, given its bandwidth property, could provide an additional channel for the top-down “Information” function, which as a result strengthens democracy by increasing transparency and trust in the decision-making process, accountability through the ballot box and virtual competition between parties. We look now at how the other interactive dimension of this technology could assist the fulfilling of another function in representative democracy: the “bottom-up” communication.

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Bottom-Up "Communication" and the Internet

Another institutional function equally important for the holding of free and fair elections is the initiation of a bottom-up channel of communication from the public to representative institutions. It is argued that at the center of the articulation of representative democracy is this communication between the public and institutions at regular intervals beyond elections (Norris 2001). This communication process is key to the functioning of representative democracy because, for leaders to keep in touch with the grassroots, they must maintain contact with the citizens' concerns (2001). Here again we ask how the Internet could provide an additional channel of communication facilitating the receiving of feedback from the bottom, and resulting therefore in the nourishing of democratic institutions?

The answer lies in another unique feature of the net that is, its interactive functionality. What could be really identified as innovative in the Internet technology is the amount of interactivity that it introduced to the media (Chadwick 2006). Traditional mass media were all based on the "one too many" principle of communication in which the information flows from a restricted group of people –the elites- to a large amount of people –the mass audience (Panagopoulos 2009). This largely one-way downward political communication provided very limited channels of communication from the mass audience to the elites (2009). It is this type of "many to one" media communication that Internet has greatly facilitated. Through interactive elements such as online polls, feedback forms and online discussions, this technology allowed a large amount of people to simultaneously receive and produce information (Chadwick 2006). The increased interactivity that no technology has made possible before could assist representative institutions in initiating channels for citizen communication; leading to a strengthening of ties with their representative institutions (Norris 2001)

The nature of this online bottom-up communication, as well as its specific impact on democratizing the institutions depends on which institution is making use of it. In regard to the executive government, the enthusiasm stems from the expectation that administrators and government officials will exploit the Internet's interactive element to initiate a channel providing citizens the opportunity for getting involved in the formulation of policy programs (Chadwick 2006). Through interactive services such as discussion forums, and the possibility for submitting complaints and requests to policy-makers, citizens would be able to input in public policy decisions. This process is seen by advocates as a chance for citizens to indirectly participate in policy making process, and eventually strengthening representative democracy (Demissie & Rorissa 2010).

On the legislative level, the net can be used to facilitate a more genuine dialogue between citizens and their elected representatives. Through contact services and discussion forums, the Internet allows citizens to easily contact their elected representatives and debate with them on issues touching their immediate living conditions from considerable distances (Norris 2001). This communication is essential to the functioning of representative democracy in which the elected representatives should reflect the views of their constituents and take up "particular administrative grievances on their behalf" (2001). By facilitating better representation of citizens need, the Internet could contribute to strengthening the connection between the public and the legislature.

Political parties, from their side, are the core structure which provides the main link between citizens and the state in representative democracy (Gibson & Ward 2003). Therefore, they have an important communication function to fulfill in representative democracy. The net provides an additional, yet important, channel for political parties to facilitate the engagement and mobilization of citizens in the political process (Norris 2001). The online campaigning, the online membership, as well as internal debates and electronic ballots are all interactive services which provide important opportunities of participation. This amount of participation, allowed by the Interactive functionality, can enrich the connections between citizens and the key intermediary organization in representative democracy, political parties (2001).

To conclude, we have seen how the Internet could assist institutions to initiate bottom-up "communication" leading to greater trust and input in the administrative sector, greater representation of citizens' concerns in the legislative bodies and finally, greater citizen participation and mobilization in the political process through parties. We move now to the contextualization chapter to examine the state of play of the Internet in Iraq and the current flaws in the two functions of information provision and bottom-up communication of Iraqi representative institutions that we expect the

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use of the Internet to enhance.

Context: Technological & Democratic Infancy

As argued above, I adhere to the idea that the Internet democracy-building features are not deterministic in their effects and that their potential depends on other factors (Chadwick 2006). In this chapter, I put the light on two contextual factors: one technological and one political. I firstly present background information about the state of play of the Internet to highlight the relatively new stage at which the Internet adoption is in Iraq. I then examine the status of the relatively nascent democracy in Iraq, to reveal the flaws of “information” and “communication” in the current representative Iraqi democracy.

Technological Infancy

The pre-2003 period was characterized by a high distrust of the Internet in Iraq (Open net 2009). In fact, Iraq was one of the few countries where a total banning of the Internet could be found. This is understood in the highly centralized control of the mass media under the former dictatorship. For 35 years, Saddam has completely manipulated all sources of information and political communication (Rousu 2010). To maintain his hold on power, he restricted all forms of association, political debate and participation (Isakhan 2008). Recognizing the threat of the Internet as an information source which would erode his credibility by clashing with the distorted versions of news his government provided to the public, Saddam preferred to shut it out (Simon, Corrales & Wolfesberger 2003). However, the northern Kurdish zone, which was not under his control, had a relatively fair level of Internet access (Reuters 2011).

The country has however seen a booming in the telecommunications industry after 2003. Iraqis were finally able to experience an unfiltered access to the Internet, and were particularly savvy (Open net 2009). However, this telecommunications revolution is nowhere near its full potential in Iraq when we look at the relatively low level of penetration of the Internet in the country. Despite the little and unclear evidence on the issue, it is obvious that the country is still in its technological infancy. There are highly disparate estimations, with statistics indicating only about 5% of homes with Internet access (Alhaidary 2011), and the estimation of an American advisor estimating the number of Internet users to about 12 million (almost 50% of the population) (Conley 2009). Although this number could seem exaggerated, it is to note that the 5% does not include the number of users who access the Internet through the numerous cybercafés which are spread in many Iraqi towns as well as the use of the Internet set up by neighborhood vendors (Conley 2009). Thus, while it may be greater than 5% and very likely to be much lower than 50%, we can still conclude that the Internet use comprises a relative minority of Iraq's population. The main obstacle to the Internet penetration is the telecommunications infrastructure that has been damaged through many wars, especially the 1999 Gulf war (Deibert 2010). Still, there is a high hope in its increase in the near future, with the launching of the e-Iraq initiative supported by Microsoft and aimed at widening Internet access in the country (Alsumaria 2011).

The post-2003 Iraqi government has adopted policies fostering the development of the Internet use in the state's institutions. In fact, since 2004, Iraq has signed an agreement with Italy to develop an electronic government project to Iraqi ministries (MOC 2010). However, this project has seen light only in 2008, with the Iraqi government developing an e-government strategy to help fight political corruption and increase transparency (MOC 2011). The idea of the e-government initiative is to design a system to publish all information and data to enable citizens and the media to show the movements of public funds, reducing the risk of it being misused (2011). Iraq has been working also with the USAID, UNDP, and DFID to launch training programs for e-government (UNDP 2009, USAID 2010). Among the many training programs was the recently organized workshop by the Ministry of Health under the slogan “e-government is a vital element to reform the public sector in Iraq” (MOH 2011). Moreover, few conferences, like the one in May 2011 “Beyond Internet freedoms, e-governance in Iraq” have been held in the country, highlighting a relative awareness of political leaders to the democratic possibilities of this technology (IREX 2011).

Democratic Infancy

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The pre-2003 Iraq has seen a long autocratic rule led by an executive tradition. Driven by one party –AlBa'th- for over 35 years, the National Assembly was highly unrepresentative because the members had to be elected from this party (UNDP 2009). Moreover, there were high allegations of fraud in elections, and the executive branch of the government held strong legislative powers preventing the assembly from discussing even the most crucial issues (UNDP 2009). With a long tradition of political repression, Saddam's regime prevented any form of freedom of speech or association (Opennet 2009). In sum, it was an environment characterized by an extremely high control of information and almost complete absent form of bottom-up communication.

It was only until early 2005, when a transitional assembly was elected for the purpose of drafting a permanent constitution, that Iraq had its first experience with some aspects of representative democracy (UNDP 2009). Despite the security challenges, Iraq has made significant progress in the democratic development, with steps like the establishment of 18 local councils to decentralize control from the center and bringing "government closer to the people" (2009). Iraq has also held two relatively high free and fair elections: the provincial elections in 2009 and the national elections in 2010. This transition from a hegemonic party system and holding of the mechanism of elections has been a crucial step toward representative democracy in the country. However, Iraq can today be considered among these regimes whose political institutions are democratic but very weakly institutionalized. In fact, underlying the formal mechanism of elections, the Iraqi institutions are fragile and undergoing a painful transition to democracy. Among the many problems plaguing these institutions, we put some light on the ones relevant to the key functions of representative institutions described in our theory: information transparency from the top to the public, and communication from the bottom-up.

Iraq is today amongst the worst performers in terms of the degree of corruption (Aswat 2010). This is very much due to the fact that sectarian and political sharing power, which has made sectors of public administration as territories of one group or another (IREX 2011). This corruption is also due to the weak legislative horizontal checks on the executive government (UNDP 2009). This high degree of corruption, accompanied with inadequate delivery of basic services, has contributed to the low level of trust of citizens of their government (2009). The weakly institutionalized legislative branch of the government is also suffering from eroding public confidence, with Iraqi Council of Representatives largely disconnected from the concerns of ordinary Iraqis. On the one hand, most of the Iraqi representatives hold foreign passports and have lived outside Iraq, which makes it more difficult to connect with their constituents (UNDP 2009). On the other hand, MPs are prevented from freely traveling in the country and meeting ordinary citizens because of the security concerns (Alhaidary 2011). Another problem associated with the legislature is that it has not yet encouraged much participation from the civil society in the legislative procedure (UNDP 2009). All of these problems have added to the low level of trust of representative institutions among the public. As for the political party system in Iraq, it still remains highly volatile despite its transition from the hegemonic party system. The post-2003 period has seen a process of merging and disintegration and parties coming together to secure power (UNDP 2009). Thus, the parties are still at a crucial phase of emerging competition patterns. Moreover, a divide is also found between citizens and these parties since the large proportion of Iraqi existing parties were either formed in exile or, were in exile for a long period of time (2009).

The problems briefly raised above reveal the fragility of the Iraqi representative institutions. In fact, the country is today at a crucial transitional point with a high risk of legitimacy because of the widespread corruption and the low level of trust amongst the public (Kratovak & Yakoub 2010). If the cleavage between Iraqis and their representative institutions persist, the country could fall in a serious legitimacy crisis. However, if it manages to improve this trust and link between citizens and their representative institutions, it follows that representative democracy will be strengthened. Given this important imperative to strengthen representative institutions in Iraq today, we are interested in exploring if the potential of the Internet is being exploited as a channel for more informational transparency and communication. This leads us to our next chapter which elaborates on the methodology employed for the assessment of institutional Internet use in Iraq.

Research Methodology

The research methodology conducted to answer the research questions is detailed below. First, I introduce and justify the choice of the methodological approach and the technique used in this study. Then, I present the unit of

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analysis, sample, determinants, indicators and coding. Finally, I briefly the advantages and limits associated with the methodology.

Methodology

This study attempts to provide answers to the research questions through a quantitative methodological approach. The technique conducted to evaluate the performance of Iraqi institutions online is content analysis, which is defined as a “research technique for making inferences systematically and objectively identifying specific characteristics within a text” (Herring 2010). This methodology has been identified as most amenable to insights about the research questions of this study, first because it the typical and prevalent way amongst this kind of ICTs research, and second because it provides systematic evidence that would help leading us to identifying trends in the online textual data of these institutions (2010).

Unit & Sample

The principal unit determined for this study is the website. A website is known to be the information resource in the WWW, and is defined as “the virtual location of the associated organization with a Unique Resource Locator (URL)” (Parajuly 2007). Since our questions are raised from an institutional perspective, websites have been identified as appropriate units of analysis. A website is considered as the virtual gateway of the organization and a strategic tool in which substantial efforts and resources are expended on it to increase its engagement and outreach (2007).

The websites surveyed in this study comprise of all existing websites of the three Iraqi institutions studied. These include ministerial websites (n=40), legislative websites, both national and local (n=19), and finally, parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties (n=36), with a total of 95 websites.

Determinants, Indicators & Coding

Among the many approaches identified on how to evaluate a website, we use the criteria-based evaluation which allows us the identification and scoring of specific features in the analyzed websites (Homburg 2008). The criteria for this study were chosen to match the elements of our 3 sub-questions: presence, information, and communication. Each of these criteria, with the technical features associated to it, is detailed below.

Presence: To evaluate the web presence of these institutions, we look for three initial indicators for each website: visibility, ownership information and establishment year. Visibility reveals the extent to which the website in question is easily findable through search engines (Parajuly 2007). Holliday's approach of simple visibility test is used by typing the name of the organization -in Arabic /Kurdish- using 3 search engines: Google, Msn and Yahoo. If the website appears within the first 10 hits, the website confirms its visibility (2007). This visibility is then scaled into scores (with 100 if it appears as first result, and 10 if last). The scores are then calculated into an overall average. To trace invisible websites, we do more research. The two other general indicators are the presence of ownership information and establishment year. These indicators reflect the seriousness of the organization to dedicate a team for the web as well as the learning experience of the creators (Demissie & Rorissa 2010). Both these information were captured and taken note of from the copyright message at the bottom of each website (see appendice). This first category is particularly important for our case since the Internet is still at its initial phase in Iraq.

Information: To assess the extent to which the institutions are exploiting the Internets' informational provision, we look for specific indicators of information on each website such as budget information, legislative texts, meeting minutes, and party manifestos (see tables in next chapter). These indicators (as will be noticed) slightly differ from an organization to another to reflecting the nature of information that is expected to be provided by the institution in question.

Communication: This category helps to evaluate the extent to which the institutions are providing opportunities for bottom-up communication on their websites. We look here for specific website devices allowing interactivity and public input such as contact facilities, polls and forums. While most interactive features are common to the three

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institutions in our study, some are more specific to the nature of the organization such as online membership and online campaigning expected to be found only on party's websites.

The names of the organizations as well as their websites addresses were recorded (appendice 1), webpages were coded according to a present/absent rating (appendice 2), and the results were all drawn in simple statistics presented in tabular forms and accompanied with detailed observations and descriptions (see next chapter). This study was conducted in July 2011.

Advantages & Limits

An advantage of the content analysis method is that it does not "disturb the natural setting in which the actors create the text" (Herring 2010). In fact, the study has been conducted without the awareness of the institutions in questions. Compared to the interview method, this method does not put any pressure on the subject in question to supply acceptable responses (2010). It is thus more reliable in the sense where it relies on the actual data available rather than the exaggeration or recollection of an interviewee.

However, this reliability on online data is questioned in another sense. The difficulty associated with assessing the size and scope of data available on a website is explained by the transient nature of the many forms of communication that occurs across the net. As Chadwick (2006) puts it "Websites come and go, so how reliable is a snapshot?" Thus, while the data can help us identify current trends, we should keep in mind that websites change, sometimes very rapidly, and may therefore lead to different results.

Iraqi Institutions Online: Presence, Information & Communication

This chapter constitutes the core of this study. The first section presents the findings for each of the three core political institutions in question through presenting of tables and describing of observation in concern to the presence, top-down information and bottom-up communication. The second section will consist of discussing the results in the light of theoretical expectations and contextual factors.

The Iraqi Executive Government Online

1.1 Ministerial Web Presence

The number of ministries in Iraq is 47, from which 13 for the northern Kurdish region. 40 of them had confirmed their visibility online (See appendice 2). Below are their visibility scores.

Table 1.1 Visibility scores of the Iraqi ministerial websites

Google MSN Yahoo! Average Score 99 76 80

84

As observed, the scores range between 76 to 99, with a total average of 84 for the 3 search engines. The 84 score reflects a high level of users demand on government websites, since the search engines place the mostly accessed and relevant pages on the top. Many ministerial departments scored 100 on the 3 engines from which the Ministry of Education & Interior. In contrast, the lowest score was obtained by the Ministry of Construction & Housing with an average as low as 33. Notable extreme results across engines have been found, such as for the Ministry of Environment scoring 100 on Google and 30 for Yahoo and MSN. An overall trend identified was that ministries seemed to be relatively more attractive to the Google engine.

The 7 invisible ministries that were not found in the first 10 results were, surprisingly, Kurdish. One would have expected the opposite due to the earlier Internet connectivity that the northern region enjoyed. To trace whether they only scored low on international search engines or did not have a web presence at all, we accessed the official

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Kurdistan Regional website <www.krg.org> which provided links to its ministries websites. We were able to find only Kurdistan Agriculture & Water Resources. It is to note that amongst these 6 others were important departments such as Health & Interior. Thus, with the removal of the Ministry of Municipality and Public Work which led to a non-functional link, and the addition of the invisible Kurdistan Agriculture & Water Resource, we could conclude that 40 ministries have dedicated functional websites. This means 85% of the Iraqi ministries were online.

In regard to website ownership information, we noticed that 83% ended with an official domain name (.iq /.krg), which is a reliable source to know the owner of the site. However, only 63% of them explicitly indicated their copyright information. While this information was missing on only 3 Kurdish sites, it was absent from 15 national web pages among which departments as central as Finance and Justice. This raises questions about the extent to which citizens would trust these websites.

As for establishment years, we found that 13 out of 40 ministries, from which only one was Kurdish (Youth & Sport), did not provide this information. The table below presents the number of websites established per year (out of the 27 which provided the information).

Table 1.2 Establishment years of the Iraqi ministerial websites

2000	2003	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	Number of web sites	1	1	1	1	4	3	1	9	6
------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	------	---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

The ministry found before 2003 while the country was under international sanctions was the Ministry of Trade. Notably, apart from the Communication (2003), Kurdistan Education (2005) and the Defense (2006), the rest 23 were all launched after 2007. As noticed, it starts with a slow uptake to remarkably increase later. These findings confirm that the Iraqi government, at least where the date was indicated, is still new on the web, and creators are still undergoing their learning experience.

1.2 Ministerial Top-down Online Information

We looked here at the information infrastructure of Iraqi ministerial websites, and more specifically, how much and what type of material was provided to inform citizens. This table provides an overview of the results obtained.

Table 1.3 Top-down information of the Iraqi ministerial websites

Organization	Who's who	Services	Policies	Budget	Documents	News	Activities	Publications	Media	Release																
Announcement	Average	Frequency	37	29	10	11	5	24	33	18	20	11	25	20	Percent	93	73	25	28	13	60	83	45	50	28	63

Organizational information scored highest, with 93% of the ministries describing their mission, functions and structure online. Surprisingly, the others 7% that did not provide any of this information were key ministries such as Education and Oil. A closer look at the volume of this information revealed a strong variation with some providing very minimal content such as Kurdistan Communication, while most of them where much better at giving an online description of who they are and what they do. The two most extensive websites in terms of organizational information were the Finance as well as Youth & Sport. Both were very detailed with diagrams of internal structures and exact functions of each division.

The weakest score was obtained by budget information, with a score as low as 13%. Only few, however key, ministries such as Health, Finance and Kurdistan Planning, have provided this kind of information. They were particularly rich and updated, with the Finance and Health publishing updated financial statements and accounts of spending in downloadable files. Kurdistan Planning published its budget allocation by governorates as well.

The “who’s who” information scored relatively high (73%). While some of this information was centered on the minister in question, like in the case of the Ministry of Women, many others such as in the case of Kurdistan Higher Education provided detailed information about their officials with their pictures, CVs, and exact roles and functions.

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A large percent of websites provided updated news (83), generally with a section on ministerial news and another on more general ones. Most of these ministries provided relatively voluminous text news. Kurdistan Endowments & Religious Affairs website was notably dominated by news content.

Updated announcements, consisting mainly of tenders, were fairly frequent (63) in key ministries such as Oil and Trade. However, Finance announced about employment opportunities at the Central Bank, Education frequently posted announcements to its students, and the Interior announced the results of draws and competitions.

50% of the Ministries published online their ministry's magazines, such as the Ministry of Agriculture. Other published official documents included annual reports (Health) and useful brochures and guides (Kurdistan Higher Education). Finance had notably a vast array of research publications and official documentation about laws and regulations. Kurdistan Planning and Kurdistan Agriculture were amongst the few providing their strategic plans.

Least frequent information features included services (25%), like in Foreign Affairs. As for policies (28%), they were mainly found on Kurdish Ministries and Foreign Affairs. Finally, only less than one third published media releases (28%).

A substantial variation in the size of informational infrastructure was found across the ministerial websites. Amongst the richest and most comprehensive in information provision were Foreign Affairs, Finance and Kurdistan Planning. In contrast, Ministries of Women and Kurdistan Transportation were very basic and almost devoid of relevant information. It is to note here that while one would have expected a larger information infrastructure online in the Kurdish ministries, these were sometimes much lower than the national websites.

1.3 Ministerial Online Bottom- up Communication

Our next table presents the popularity of the website interactive features facilitating bottom-up communication from the citizens to government officials.

Table 1.4 Bottom-Up communication of the Iraqi ministerial websites

Contact Inquiry/ Complaint Comment/Feedback Automatic updates Poll Guestbook Forms Discussion Forum
Average Frequency 34 20 14 11 12 3 8 3 13 Percent 85 50 35 28 30 8 20 8 33

The most popular interactive facility was that of contact (85%). The Ministry of Youth & Sport was amongst the ones that did not provide any opportunity for citizens to contact even the webmaster. The range of contact facilities varied from simple "contact us" form to other contact means fostering greater interaction such as emails and phone numbers which citizens can use beyond working hours. Ministry of Higher Education & Scientific Research, amongst many, supplied a full list of the telephone and email contacts of all the departments and the personnel associated with it. Others, like Health & Interior have presented their contact information in an attractive manner on their home pages.

The second highest indicator, yet not that high (50%), was the "inquiries & complaints" section providing citizens a channel to lodge complaints or require information. While some, like the Housing & Construction had separate forms of inquiring and making complaints, others like Labor & Social Affairs had especially attractive clickable hotlinks of "ask us" or "make a complaint".

Apart from the web-based feedback/comments feature (35%)allowing citizens the opportunity to submit feedback to department members and respond to other's comments in specific areas, all of the other interactive features scored disappointingly low. Polls providing citizens to input their opinion were present in less than one third of the websites (30%). Finally, only 28% of the ministries allowed citizens to register to receive automatic notifications highlighting particular developments through RSS or e-newsletter. After registering to all the e-newsletter, most of them were received at a regular basis.

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Only 8 websites provided online downloadable forms to submit online or offline. Amongst these were the driver license, visa and passport applications in the Ministry of Interior, the volunteering application in Defense, and the diplomatic college application in Foreign Affairs. Finally, only 8 % of ministries had an online guestbook to collect citizens' comments, and in the few instances where the "Discussion forum" feature existed, like in Ministry of Youth & Sport, it was inactive.

Unlike in the case of information provision, our findings indicate very little variation across policy sectors when it comes to the levels of interactivity. Thus, the pattern of interactivity slightly varied in favor of departments expected to generate considerable interaction with the public in service delivery such as those of health, education, as opposed to those managing minimal direct contact such as Defense.

The Iraqi Legislative Government Online

2.1 Legislative Web Presence

There are 20 legislative bodies in including one national, one regional and 18 local. Only 1 was invisible: Sulaymanya. The table below shows the scores of the other 19.

Table 2.1 Visibility of the Iraqi legislative websites

Google MSN Yahoo! Average Score 100 87 81 87

The legislature also scored high in visibility (87), slightly higher than the executive. Along with the national and regional, many local councils such as Babylon and Basrah appeared as the first result in the 3 engines. Lowest was obtained by Ninevah (60%). Google here was strikingly favorable to all of the 19 bodies (100 %). The most extreme result was obtained by Ninevah (100 in Google Vs 20 in Yahoo), but overall the bodies appeared between the first and the third result. While we tried to trace the invisible council, we found a non-functional link, and our surveyed websites remained 19.

Unlike in the executive, most councils did not use the official domain name (.iq/.krg). Apart from the national, regional, Baghdad and few major governorates, the rest used addresses ending with .org, .net or .com. We found more positive results by looking at the explicit ownership information, with 13 of the 19 bodies clearly mentioning their belonging to the respective body. Many major governorates such as Najaf, did not have this information.

11 out 19 posted their establishment dates. Surprisingly, the national parliament was not among them. The table below shows the number of sites created per year.

Table 2.2 Establishment dates of the Iraqi legislative websites

2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 Number of web sites 2 1 2 1 5

The current year (2011) has seen the highest increase in the number of websites among which big governorates like Babylon. The two oldest established in 2007 were the regional Kurdistan Parliament and local Diyala Council.

2.2 Legislative Top-Down Information

In looking to what extent the legislature makes information available for the public, we looked at the popularity of specific information features on the legislative websites.

Table 2.3 Information provision of the Iraqi legislative websites

Organization Who's who Political Balance Legislative text Decisions Meetings Documents News Media Release Activities Announcements Average Frequency 15 9 0 9 9 4 14 16 11 2 13 9 Percent 79 47 0 47 47 19 74 84 58 11

Following the feature of frequently updated news, the highest score was obtained by organizational information. 79 % of the websites provided information about the legislative body, varying from general history of the institution and simple descriptions of the parliamentary system (like the national and regional parliaments), to more detailed organizational accounts. For instance, Erbil was amongst those who provided very detailed information about the composition, divisions, and diagrams of internal structures of its council. Al Anbar, a big governorate, was amongst the 4 that did not provide any organizational information.

74% of the legislative websites published a relatively good range of official documents including research reports (Erbil), useful brochures for civil society organizations (Babylon), as well as documents about governorate projects and strategic plans for developments (Najaf). The National Parliament had a good range of published documents on its website.

Media releases scores almost twice more than in the executive (58%), and Kurdistan Parliament had a very frequently updated section for that. Announcements (68%) were also a popular feature, mainly about tenders (Diyala), and winners names in competitions (Najaf).

Slightly less than half (47%) of the websites provided a “Who’s who” section with information to identify the members of the council. While only very few (Najaf) provided very basic information about the president, most of them supplied a full list of the president and members (Wassit). Kirkuk was particularly distinctive in providing the picture of each member with his or her email and bibliographical information.

Here too, less than half (47%) provided legislative texts on their websites, including the constitution text, bylaws, specific legislative bills, pending legislation as well as draft bills. Erbil and Wassit provided a particularly vast array of laws and drafted laws, and Najaf and Wassit had direct links to the searchable legal library. The national parliament issued the newest legislative texts.

A list of the decisions and resolutions of the council could be found on 47 % of the websites, with the national parliament being the most comprehensive. Kerbala also provided a list of updated, downloadable and archived decisions per year. However, this information did not include members voting records on these issues. Only 19% published the public attendance of members (national parliament), and daily agenda and meetings minutes (Diywanya). Finally only 11 % informed citizens about the activities and forthcoming debates of the council (Kurdistan). It is to note that only the regional and national parliaments had information about their political balance.

A strong variation across websites was found too, with a few providing skeleton pages with the constitutional text and outdated information, while others, like Diyala and Erbil, were extremely rich in their information provision, having almost all of the features.

2.3 Legislative Bottom-Up Communication

This table presents the results for each of the website features allowing some kind of bottom-up communication from citizens to their elected representatives.

Table 2.4 Interactivity of the Iraqi legislative websites

Contact	Feedback/Opinion	Complaint	Automatic	Updates	Poll	Guestbook	Discussion	forum	Downloadable
Documents	Average	Frequency	19	8	10	7	10	4	0
	Percent	100	42	53	37	53	21	0	53

All of the legislative websites, with no exception, provided on their websites contact facilities, commonly detailed lists of phone numbers and emails allowing the citizens to contact specific people. Many of them had this information posted in an attractive way on their homepages (Diyala), while few provided only a contact us form and very rarely a contact link to the web master (Ninevah).

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The second popular element, yet not with a high score (53) was the opportunity provided for citizens to complaint. While some had section dedicated to that aim, and publishing all citizens' complaints with the answers (Al Anbar), most had hot links on the front page offering the opportunity to send a complaint (Baghdad).

Only 53 % of the websites were designed to draw polls (Missan). Downloadable documents scored the same (53%). Less frequent input mechanisms were the automatic feedback feature such as in Missan (with 42 %), and the automatic updates through RSS such as in Kerbala and Najaf (37%). Whereas the guestbook scored only 21, yet was generally active where it existed (Diyala). None was designed to encourage any form of online group discussion.

Iraqi Political Parties Online

3.1 Iraqi Political Parties Presence

Out of the 35 Iraqi parties with parliamentary seats, we were only able to find 17 (see appendix 1). As for the non-parliamentary parties, we were able to identify 18 with a web presence. The visibility test for all 35 are below.

Table 3.1 Visibility of the Iraqi political parties' websites

Google MSN Yahoo! Average Score 84 75 74 78

The average score (78) is very close from Holliday's benchmark score of high performance. No difference has been found between the parliamentary and non-parliamentary scores (79 and 77 respectively). Many, from both types of parties, have scored 100 on average (Iraqi National Accord and Communist Party of Iraq). The two with the lowest scores (17) were one parliamentary (Turkmenly) and one non parliamentary (Islamic Kurdish Society). Here too, Google was overall more favorable to both types of Iraqi parties.

19 out of 35 parties' websites mentioned their ownership information. A slight difference of 3 points was found in favor of parliamentary parties. Notably, amongst the parties with no ownership information were ones with biggest seats in parliament (Dawa, Iraqi National Accord and Kurdistan Democratic Party).

By looking at their establishment dates, we found that just less than half of them provided this information, from which 8 parliamentary and 8 non parliamentary. The results are shown below.

Table 3.2 Establishment years of Iraqi political parties' websites

1997 1999 2000 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 Number of web sites 1 1 1 2 2 2 1 5

The three parties that were established before the 2003 regime fall were the Iraqi National Congress (1997), the Kurdistan Islamic union (1999) and the Worker Communist Party of Iraq (2000). As we can see, a progressive increase is noticed in recent years.

3.2 Iraqi Political Parties Top-Down Online Information

Our concern here is how far these parties exploit the net to provide information to the public. Here are the results.

Table 3.3 Top-Down online Information of the Iraqi political parties

Party Who's who Agenda/ Program Media Releases Documents Publications Activities News Average Frequency 29
18 16 19 23 5 18 28 36 Percent 81 50 44 53 64 14 50 78 54

Information about the party was the highest (81%). This type of information ranged from very basic party history (Turkmen), to more detailed information about the background, development, principles, vision, values, statements of belief and leadership structure, (Islamic Virtue Party). Among those who did not provide any organizational

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information was an important one: Patriotic Union of Kurdistan. We noted that a 5% difference in favor of non-parliamentary parties. Many of them gave a very detailed account of their identity (Coalition of National Alliance).

The second highest score (78) was obtained by the frequently updated news about the public life of the party as well as general ranging from political & economical to international offered with a particular ideological spin. Non-parliamentary parties slightly did better here (with 83 Vs 78), and few of them acted mainly like news portals (Turkmen). The Kurdistan Democratic Party acted more like a news site in more than 3 languages.

The following popular indicator was the publishing of official documents ranging from texts of leaders speeches, reports, research publication private documents and drafted laws (Gorran). It was noticed here that non-parliamentary parties were much more active (with 78 vs 64).

50 % of parties covered their activities (with 56 % parliamentary parties Vs 44 % of non-parliamentary). The National Reform Trend, for instance, provided a lot of news about its activities. 53% of websites had a daily press room with updated releases such as the Iraqi National Accord.

50 % of websites, this time with a score in favor of parliamentary (56 Vs 44), provided a “who’s who” section. While some were centered around leader bibliographical information (such as Kafaat), others like Ahrar Party and the Iraqi Islamic Party had full lists of their representatives on the local and national levels, with their pictures and bibliographical information.

Less than half of the parties (44%) posted information about their current agendas and political programs, amongst which were the Islamic Virtue Party, the Kurdish Islamic Union. Finally, the publication of e-newsletter scored very weak (14%), and when provided was frequent thus tending to be text heavy and sometimes unfocused.

A strong variation was also identified in the level of information infrastructure across parties. Some were very basic in the information they provided through few pages with the history of the party (Kurdish Islamic Society), while some others have put much more layers and archived information. A notable example of rich party site was the Islamic Virtue Party.

3.3 Iraqi Political Parties’ Bottom-Up Online Communication

To assess to what extent the political parties have exploited the net to provide additional channels of bottom-up communications, we looked at the popularity of different interactive features.

Table 3.4 Interactivity of the Iraqi political parties’ websites

Contact	Membership	Inquiries	Feedback/Opinion	Automatic updates	Online campaigning	Polls	Guestbook
Downloadable posters	Discussion forum	Average Frequency	31	11	3	6	12
14	17	3	13	0	10	5	6
				1	9	Percent	86
				31	8	17	33
				0	28		

The commonest element found was the option for the public to contact the party (86%). A much higher score was noted in favor of non-parliamentary (94 Vs 78). Here too, the facilities varied from contact us forms (Supreme Council) to direct email or number contact with the leader or local affiliates (National Reform Trend). The parliamentary Dawa Party had no contact facilities at all. The Islamic Virtue Party provided a big range of phone numbers for those calling from inside as well as outside Iraq. Gorran and Green Party had detailed contact list, and parties such as the Democratic Liberal Iraq presented the contact details attractively on the front page. Some provided emails only for specific purposes, such as Kafaat only for the purpose of sending an online membership and Iraqi National Congress if the user was interested an article for publishing.

The feature that scored second, with a quite low score (33) was the opportunity to register to receive automatic updates through mail or RSS (National Future Gathering). Following was the opportunity encouraging the public to join the party through an online membership (31%). These were sometimes presented on the front page with a hot

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link "join us" such as in the Upholders of Message and mainly in separate sections with queries about how to become a member and online forms like in the Coalition for National Alliance.

Rest of features scored disappointingly low, exhibiting minimal interest to conducting online polls and posting their results (28), except for few (Islamic Virtue Party who presented the feature with an attractive message of "we want to have your opinion". 17 % provided online feedback and opinion forms and another 17 offered the possibilities to download logos or posters of the party (Renewal). While only 14 had a guestbook to collect the public comments (Republic Gathering), 8% had sections for citizens inquiries with an "ask us" hot link (Ahrar). Only one party had a link for discussion forum and was yet not active (Green Party) and the feature of online campaigning did not exist at all.

Discussion

In this section, I attempt to answer the research questions of this study by interpreting the findings above based on the theoretical predictions and contextual factors outlined at the beginning of this study. How are the core political institutions in Iraq adapting to the use of the Internet as a tool to build and strengthen the nascent democratic institutions of representative democracy? I argue that the institutional Internet use in Iraq is characterized today by a mixed account of results: a rapid enhanced institutional presence on the web, a notable progress in the learning to use the top-down online information provision, and a largely unexploited bottom-up communication through the web. It is to keep in mind that the recent democratic and technological experience can only allow us to draw tentative conclusions on the extent to which this Internet use is likely to have a positive role in the democracy-building process in the country.

An "Enhanced" Institutional Presence

The data findings regarding the web presence indicate that the Internet has become a highly attractive tool for Iraq's institutions today. In fact, the big majority of the executive and legislature, as well as a significant portion of political parties have built a net presence through their websites. While they were overall slow to adopt the Internet in the beginning, they have enthusiastically caught up in the few previous years, and it has quickly become unusual for an Iraqi institution to not be online. Taking into account the paltry Internet infrastructure and low level of penetration, Iraq's institutions have given a considerably high degree of attention to their online presence. This notable expanding of Iraq's official cyberspace allows us to place Iraq in the UN category of "Enhanced Presence", defined as "countries with an increasing number of official websites" (UN 2005).

The overall high level of visibility of these institutions on mainstream international search engines places Iraq in the range of countries with high visibility performance. According to Holliday (2002), a visibility score above 80, in which institutions appear in the top three results, reflects a high level of demand and access from users. Having passed this first visibility test is an initial positive democratic indicator. It is argued that from a democratic point of view, citizens expect their representative institutions websites to be easily findable and accessible from search engines.

As for the websites' establishment dates results, we have noticed that the vast majority has been created during the last three years. For the executive and legislative branches, this increase in the same years can be explained in the light of the electronic government (e-government) policies and initiatives launched (e-Iraq) that have taken place in the recent years (Unknown 2011). However, this fast development of Iraqi parties after 2008 is more likely to be associated another factor. In fact, the 35 parties websites that we were able to identify has more than doubled from what Howard (2011) found in 2008 (14 Iraqi online parties) in his study of online political parties in the Muslim world. What could have most likely encouraged the proliferation of Iraqi parties online after 2008 are the two provincial and national elections that the country held in 2009 and 2010. We can arguably identify as well a "me too" effect amongst parties, which Rommele (2003) explains as parties quickly following others that have moved online because of a fear to be left behind rather than a clear strategy.

However, what remains a weak indicator in the Iraqi institutional presence online is the ownership information. The big number of websites without explicit ownership information is a negative indicator. Viewing it from a democratic

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point, citizens are more likely to trust the website content when they can ascertain that it is the agency itself "tailoring the information" (Parajuly 2007). This problem is more manifested in the local councils whom many, on top of not mentioning this information, did not use the official domain names of the country (.iq / .krg).

In sum, apart from the ownership indicator, Iraqi institutions have a positive account in terms of their online presence. While these are good starting indicators, the impact of a simple presence online on the overall democratization remains limited, since the real democratic potential lies in the utilization rather than the mere presence. Nonetheless, the democratic potential of the presence indicator for political parties can be more significant. Interestingly, the political parties that we have been able to identify online did not reflect the actual political landscape. In fact, only half of the parliamentary parties were online, along with a slightly higher number of non-parliamentary parties. No doubt, the Internet has allowed a much more exposure for these minor parties than on the conventional media dominated by bigger ones. Of course, the extent to which this increased presence could have an impact on "leveling the field" of competition depends on how these parties make use of the Internet, but the fact that no initial divide between non parliamentary and parliamentary parties, with both being equally likely to be present online is an overall positive starting indicator.

A "Progressing" Top-Down Online Information Provision

The content analysis results indicated that Iraqi institutions were fairly benefiting from the speed and capacity of the Internet by placing a relatively mainstream amount of online information for the public. The past two years have witnessed a noticeable progress in the online informational infrastructure across all three institutions. Today, Iraqi officials, legislators and political parties are meriting an increasing attention to publish constantly updated information through their websites. While the overall average volume of online information has seen an increase, we need to analyze the type of content diffused by each of the three institutions in order to assess whether this use is likely to have the theoretical expected democratizing effect.

The extent to which the executive government is making a good use of the Internet's potential can be measured through an e-government approach. By matching our findings with the general model assessment of 5 stage models of e-government provided by the UN, we can place Iraq today in the second stage. By matching our findings with the general 5 stage models of e-government UN-ASPA assessment, we can place Iraq today in the second stage (UN 2002). With the availability of some online available forms, useful downloadable documents such as legislation and policy documents, as well as regularly updated information, the Iraqi government has already passed the first "billboard stage" of static information model. In the context of a widespread corruption, and an Iraqi public increasingly expecting government transparency, this progress in online provision of information can have a significant role in promoting openness and transparency. Iraqis today can learn more about their ministries structures, personnel, activities and policies than would have been the case without the Internet. Even when the information dissemination is not very comprehensive, it does contribute in loosening the control of the Iraqi government on information, helping therefore to "put some transparency in the decision making process" (Howard 2011). While we can suggest that the government is making some progressing efforts to meet the transparency expectations of the Iraqi public in a virtual realm, it is nowhere close of using the net's full potential to increase its transparency. As long as crucial information fostering government openness, such as the budget, remain infrequent on the ministries websites; the likely impact on increasing trust and transparency would remain in question.

Keeping in mind their recent online experience, the legislature branch has also made a relatively fair use of top-down information provision. Given the high score obtained by information published on their websites, the legislative bodies have somehow facilitated public access to information that would be somehow difficult to find elsewhere. In fact, citizens who are interested in finding out about their elected representative or want to track legislation can find this information on many, not all, of the legislative websites. Given the disconnection that exists between Iraqi representatives and their constituents explained in the second chapter, this top-down flow of information can contribute to bridge this gap through the promotion of accountability. In fact, this informational transparency, although to a limited extent, could help the public get a clearer picture of who is responsible for what and hold their representatives accountable. While it opens the process to more scrutiny, the extent to which it could have a significant impact would remain dubious with the rarity of more relevant information such as the councils' meeting

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minutes and member votes.

As for parties, the account is also of a positive progress. The information supplied by the parties online is relatively large and diverse including news with ideological spin, bibliographical information, party propaganda, as well as policy papers and party manifesto. The fact that no divide was found overall between major and minor parties in terms of the amount of political content provided online, and sometimes even with smaller ones being more adequate and updated sources of information, suggests a positive indicator for virtual competition. By proving to provide fairly egalitarian ground for competition, the Internet in Iraq is already showing the potential for a "leveling of the field" by giving the opportunity for smaller parties to get their message across online as much as the bigger parties. In a country with a volatile party system characterized and newly experienced parties, this "virtual leveling of the field" can play a role in shaping these emerging patterns.

In sum, we have clearly noticed a commitment from the part of institutions to make some information available for the Iraqi public. In fact, it has become more possible for citizens to become much more informed about these institutions that were the case before the development of the Internet. Even when it did not provide very detailed information, it was at least adding to the traditional information sources that are crucial for the building of democracy. Howard (2011) argues that in transitional states, this expanded amount of political content is vital to strengthening nascent democratic life. However, there clearly remains much more to do for these institutions in terms of publishing key information such as on the budget, members' vote as well as policy documents.

An "Unexploited" Online Bottom-Up Communication

Our third set of results reveals a more negative account of Iraq's institutional adaptation to the interactive advantages of the net. Results indicate that Iraqi institutions have shown very little progress in initiating bottom-up online channels of communication, while the real interactive potential of the Internet remain largely unexploited. Apart from very few interactive elements, online features fostering genuine communication from the public to the institutions were little popular.

This is not to suggest that these websites were devoid from any interactive use. In fact, detailed contact information of officials, representatives and party leaders were overall very popular web features across institutions' websites. In fact, the wide range of contacts available seems to be promising in the context of the large present gap between the public and the elite. These contact facilities could foster democracy by providing some sort of communication with the state during and beyond working hours (Parajuly 2007). However, as Ward (2003) argues, the democratic potential of contact information on the web remains limited since, after all, there is no guarantee that the representatives will actually be responsive to the email inquiries or phone calls. Thus, the overall democratizing impact of contact information without being combined with other features fostering genuine interaction such as regular online polling or electronic discussions remains limited. Across all three institutions, websites have tended to be centered on contact facilities while scoring relatively very weak on web features providing the public with bottom-up channels of communication.

The ministries have paid very little attention to features allowing real opportunities citizens to indirectly input in the decision-making process. As noticed, the opportunities for citizens to voice their opinion through online polling, or to give their feedback in policies through feedback forms, as well as to lodge complaints were not frequent on institutions websites. Moreover, features fostering real participation and satisfaction such as discussion forums were completely absent. In the context of the low trust and inadequate service delivery of the Iraqi government, the Internet is not being exploited to its full potential of allowing citizens to in offering citizens channels of input in the decision-making process. With the initiation of these online bottoms -up channels remaining a vague aspiration, the Internet is not likely to have an impact on strengthening democracy through citizen involvement in the decision-making process.

With the same infrequency and absence of these critical web features fostering genuine interaction, Iraqi legislative websites also lack of any real way for citizens to participate more directly in decisions that affecting their immediate conditions. Apart from contact details, all other features facilitate a genuine dialogue and feedback from citizens to their elected members scored very low. This leaves citizens with no web channel to express their grievances and

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concerns to representatives, even less to debate issues and exchange ideas with them. Here too, the bottom-up possibilities of the Internet to foster greater links and connections between the public and legislature remain ignored and by institutions and is nowhere likely to bridge the existing gap.

Iraqi parties, as well, do not seem to harness well the participatory possibilities of the net. All parties surveyed did not place a high premium on using the Internet to facilitate dialogue with the electorate or foster greater mobilization. In fact, the online membership is still a rare web feature on Iraqi parties' websites and the opportunity to adhere to an online petition online is totally absent. Apart from few examples, parties have exhibited a minimal interest in gathering citizens' opinions through regular polling. This absence of the Internet use to stimulate participation from the bottom is therefore not likely to play a role in bridging the existing disconnection between the electorate and Iraqi parties.

Conclusion: A Mixed Achievement

As we have seen, our results point to a mixed achievement. On the web presence level, Iraqi institutions have shown an eagerness to develop an online presence, clearly integrating the Internet as part of their communication strategy. As for the online information provision, Iraq's core institutions have made significant progress in this area while they are still at their early learning use of the Internet. However, results show that they have emphasized top-down information dissemination as opposed to bottom-up communication. As seen, the amount of bottom-up communication taking place through the web is minimal, and Iraqi institutions are not expanding the role of the Internet in a more participatory direction. By paying more attention to conveying information to the public than receiving feedback from it, today's Internet use in Iraq tends to be unidirectional. The Internet is therefore not achieving its potential to contribute to the "stable and bi-directional flow of communication" (Norris 2001) that would be necessary for a democratic consolidation.

However, Iraq is still in that stage of institutional experimentation with new information and communication technologies. It becomes thus hard to conclude about any impact of the current use on the strengthening of representative democracy. While the new Internet and democratic practices are emerging, we can only predict a future scenario. I believe that the ambition is not limited. While there is an expected uptake of the Internet and a higher-level penetration in the country, it is expected that Institutions will pay more attention to their communication strategy on the web and making use of its potential to strengthen the link between citizens and their representatives.

Future research could be directed toward measuring the effectiveness of the Iraqi institutions online, hence to what extent are they efficient in delivering their content. More specifically, how are they using features like multi-language and multimedia as well as search facilities on their websites? Is the level of sophistication matched by the content provided, or are they websites devoid from content and desiring only to appear modern? Another interesting area of research would be to the use of the Internet by a more loosely organized institution, the Iraqi civil society. It is argued that the "capacities of the Internet are adopted more easily by smaller and flexible organizations, a process that is particularly important for the process of democratic consolidation" (Norris 2001). It would be therefore interesting to look at how social movements, such as the Iraqi women movement or human rights organizations, are using the potential of the Internet to strengthen the nascent Iraqi democratic society

Appendix 1: Organizations' Names And Their Website Addresses

Iraqi Ministerial Offices

Ministry Website Address Agriculture <http://www.moagr.com/> Communication <http://www.iraqimoc.net/> Construction & Housing <http://imariskan.gov.iq/> Culture <http://www.mocul.gov.iq/arabic/> Civil Society Affairs <http://www.mocsiraq.org/> Displacement & Migration <http://www.momd.gov.iq/> Defense <http://www.mod.mil.iq/> Education <http://www.moedu.gov.iq/> Electricity <http://www.moelc.gov.iq/> Environment <http://www.moen.gov.iq/> Finance <http://www.mof.gov.iq/ar/> Foreign Affairs <http://www.mofa.gov.iq/> Health <http://www.moh.gov.iq/arabic/> Higher Education & Scientific Research <http://moheer.gov.iq/> Human Rights <http://www.humanrights.gov.iq/> Interior <http://www.moi.gov.iq/> Industry & Mineral <http://www.industry.gov.iq/ar/> Justice <http://www.moj.gov.iq/> Labor & Social Affairs <http://www.molsa.gov.iq/> Oil <http://www.oil.gov.iq/> Planning <http://www.mop.gov.iq/mop/> Science &

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Technology <http://www.most.gov.iq/> Trade <http://www.mot.gov.iq/> Transport <http://www.motrans.gov.iq/arabic/> Water Resources <http://www.mowr.gov.iq/> Women <http://www.iraqimow.com/> Youth & Sport <http://www.moys.gov.iq/> Kurdistan Agriculture & Water Resources <http://www.moawr-krq.org/> Kurdistan Electricity <http://www.krgelectric.org/ar/> Kurdistan Education <http://www.kurdistan-moe.org/index.php> Kurdistan Finance & Economy <http://www.mof-krq.org/english/index.php> Kurdistan Higher Education <http://www.mhe-krq.org/?q=node/105> Kurdistan Justice http://www.mojkurdistan.com/arabic_Malper.aspx Kurdistan Labor & Social Affairs <http://www.molsa-krq.com/> Kurdistan Martyrs & Anfal Affairs <http://www.momakrg.org/ar/index.php> Kurdistan Planning <http://www.mop-krq.org/index.jsp?sid=1&id=192&pid=192> Kurdistan Trade & Industry <http://www.mtkrg.org/English.aspx> Kurdistan Transportation & Communication <http://www.moc-krq.com/English/> Kurdistan Endowments & Religious Affairs <http://www.merakrg.org/ar/> Kurdistan Youth & Sports <http://www.mosy-krq.org/>

Iraqi Legislative Bodies

Legislative Body Website Address Iraqi Council of Representatives <http://www.parliament.iq/> Kurdistan Parliament <http://www.perleman.org/Default.aspx> Al Anbar Council <http://www.councilalanbar.com/> Al Diwana Council <http://www.councildiwanayah.com/> Al Muthanna Council <http://www.almuthannacouncil.com/> Al Sulaymaniya Council www.sulygov.com Babylon Council <http://babelcouncil.org/main.php> <http://www.babilpc.com/> Baghdad Council <http://www.baghdad.gov.iq/ar1/> Basrah Council <http://www.basrahcouncil.org/> Dahuk Council <http://www.duhokgov.org/arabic/> Dhi Qar Council <http://dhiqarcouncil.com/ar/index.php> Diyala Council <http://www.diyalacouncil.com/> Erbil Council <http://www.hawlergov.org/ara/home.aspx?ID=36> Kerbala Council <http://www.kerbala-council.com/> Kirkuk Council <http://www.kirkukpc.net/> Missan Council <http://missan-council.net/ar/> Najaf Council <http://www.najafpc.net/ar/> Ninevah Council <http://www.ninevahcouncil.org/> Wassit Council <http://www.wasitpc.gov.iq/> Salahul Deen Council <http://www.sdgoover.org/>

Iraqi Parliamentary Parties

Party Website Address Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council <http://www.almejilis.org/> National Reform Trend <http://www.al-jaffaary.net/> Islamic Virtue Party <http://www.alfadhela.net.iq/> Islamic Dawa Party (Iraq) <http://www.islamicdawaparty.org/> Iraqi National Congress <http://www.inciraq.com/> Turkmenli Political Party <http://www.kerkuk.net/ar/> Iraqi National Accord <http://www.wifaq.com/> Renewal List <http://www.tajdeed-iq.com/default3.asp> National Future Gathering <http://www.nfgiraq.com/> Islamic Dawa Party <http://www.islamicdawaparty.com/http://www.al-daawa.org/main/> Independent Iraqi Kafaat Gathering <http://www.kafaat.net/> Iraqi Islamic Party <http://www.iraqiparty.com/page/leaders/> Kurdistan Islamic Union <http://www.kurdiu.org/> Kurdistan Democratic Party <http://www.kdp.se/> Patriotic Union of Kurdistan <http://www.pukonline.org/kurdi/> Gorran Movement for Change <http://gorran.org/default.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1> Republican Gathering <http://www.iraqrg.com/>

Iraqi Non-Parliamentary Parties

Party Website Iraqi Communist Party <http://www.iraqicp.com/> Iraqi Nation Party <http://iraqinationparty.org/> Assyrian Democratic movement <http://www.zowaa.org/> Assyrian Patriotic Party <http://www.atranaya.com/index.php> Coalition of National Alliance <http://www.cinu-dn.com/index.php> Movement for democratic Society <http://www.hamadiraq.org/> The Kurdish Fayly Democratic Party <http://www.failyoun.com/> Worker Communist Party of Iraq <http://www.wpiraq.net/english/> Islamic Kurdish Society <http://www.islamicgroup.net/English.aspx> The upholders of the Message http://www.altayar-alresaly.com/photo.php?subaction=showfull&id=1283867504&archive=&start_from=&ucat=59& Yazidi Movement

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for Reform and Progress <http://www.ezidi-islam.net/> Leftist Communist Party of Iraq <http://www.socialismnow.org/>
Iraq Green Party <http://iraqgreenparty.com/> The Iraqi Democratic Union <http://www.idu.net/portal/index.php> Ahrar
Party <http://www.ahrarparty.com/ar.html> Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq
<http://liberaldemocraticpartyofiraq.com/serendipity/index.php> Kurdish Democratic Solution Party
<http://www.pcdk.org/pcdk/> Kurdistan Freedom & Justice Party <http://www.dadperweri.com/en/index.php>

Appendix 2: Coding Sheets

Ministerial Visibility Scores

Ministry /Search Engine Google MSN Yahoo! **Average** Agriculture 100 0 60 **53** Communication 100 100 100 **100**
Construction & Housing 100 0 0 **33** Culture 100 100 90 **97** Civil Society Affairs 100 100 100 **100** Displacement &
Migration 100 50 100 **83** Defense 100 90 100 **97** Education 100 100 100 **100** Electricity 100 70 100 **93** Environment
100 20 20 **53** Finance 100 100 90 **97** Foreign Affairs 100 100 100 **100** Health 100 100 60 **90** Higher Education &
Scientific Research 100 0 0 **33** Human Rights 100 70 60 **83** Interior 100 100 100 **100** Industry & Mineral 100 0 100
67 Justice 100 60 0 **57** Labor & Social Affairs 100 60 100 **90** Municipality & Public Works 100 40 **50** Oil 100 100 100
100 Planning 100 70 **60** Science & Technology 100 100 100 **100** Trade 100 70 100 **93** Transport 100 100 100 **100**
Water Resources 100 90 90 **93** Women Affairs 100 100 70 **93** Youth & Sport 100 0 70 **60** Kurdistan Electricity 100
100 100 **100** Kurdistan Education 100 100 100 **100** Kurdistan Finance & Economy 100 100 100 **100** Kurdistan
Higher Education 100 100 100 **100** Kurdistan Justice 100 100 80 **97** Kurdistan Labor & Social Affairs 100 100 90 **97**
Kurdistan Martyrs & Anfal Affairs 100 90 100 **97** Kurdistan Planning 50 100 50 **73** Kurdistan Trade & Industry 100
100 90 **97** Kurdistan Transportation & Communication 100 100 90 **97** Kurdistan Endowments & Religious Affairs 100
70 90 **90** Kurdistan Youth & Sports 70 90 90 **87** **Average 99 76 80 84**

Ministerial Top-Down Information

Ministries/ Information Organization

Who's	who	Services	Policies	Budget	Documents	News	Activities/Events	Publications	Media
Releases	Announcements	Agriculture	***	****	*Communication*	*		****	Construction &
Housing**	*	Culture*	*	*	*Civil Society Affairs**	**			Displacement and
Migration***	**	Defense*	***	***	Education*	***	***	***	Finance***
Foreign Affairs****	**	Health**	***	*	*Higher Education & Scientific Research**	*	*	*	Human
Rights*	*	Interior**	****	*	Industry & Mineral**	***	*	*	Municipality &
Public Work		Oil	***	*	Science & Technology**	*	*	*	Transport*
Resources**	*	Women**	**		Youth & Sport**	*	*	*	Water
Resources****	****	Kurdistan Electricity**	*	*	Kurdistan Education**	****	*	*	Kurdistan Agriculture & Water
Affairs*	**	*Kurdistan Finance & Economy*	****	*	Kurdistan Higher Education****	*	*	*	Kurdistan
Justice**	****	Kurdistan Labor & Social Affairs*	*	*	Kurdistan Martyrs & Anfal Affairs*	****	*	*	Kurdistan
Planning****	****	*Kurdistan Trade & Industry	***	***	*Kurdistan Transportation & Communication*	*	*	*	Kurdistan
Youth & Sport	****								

Ministerial Bottom-Up Communication

Executive Office/ Interactive Feature

Contact Us

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Complaint/Inquiry

Feedback /Comment

Automatic Updates

Poll

Guest book

Forms Download

Electronic Discussion Forum

Agriculture

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Communication

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Construction & Housing

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Culture

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Civil Society Affairs

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Displacement and Migration

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Defense

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Education

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Electricity

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

Environment

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Finance

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Foreign Affairs

Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Health

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Higher Education & Scientific Research

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Human Rights

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Interior

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Industry & Mineral

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Justice

Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

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Labor & Social Affairs

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Oil

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Planning

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Science & Technology

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Trade

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Transport

Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Water Resources

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Women

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Youth & Sport

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Kurdistan Agriculture & Water Resources

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Kurdistan Electricity

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Kurdistan Education

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Kurdistan Endowments & Religious Affairs

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Kurdistan Finance & Economy

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Kurdistan Higher Education

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Kurdistan Justice

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Kurdistan Labor & Social Affairs

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Kurdistan Planning

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Kurdistan Reconstruction & Development

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Kurdistan Trade & Industry

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Kurdistan Transportation & Communication

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Legislative Visibility Scores

Legislative Body Name Google MSN Yahoo **Average (3)** Iraqi Council of Representatives 100 100 100 **100** Kurdistan Parliament 100 100 100 **100** Al Anbar Council 100 60 60 **73** Al Diwanya Council 100 40 40 **60** Al Muthanna Council 100 90 90 **93** Babylon Council 100 100 100 **100** Baghdad Council 100 0 60 **53** Basrah Council 100 100 100 **100** Dahuk Council 100 100 100 **100** Dhi Qar Council 100 100 100 **100** Diyala Council 100 70 100 **85** Erbil Council 90 100 40 **77** Kerbala Council 100 100 100 **100** Kirkuk Council 100 100 100 **100** Missan Council 100 90 90 **93** Najaf Council 100 80 90 **90** Ninevah Council 100 80 20 **67** Wassit Council 100 80 80 **87** Salahul Deen Council 100 70 60 **77** Average **100 87 81 87**

Legislative Top-Down Information

Legislative body/ Information about Organization Who's Who Political Balance Legislative Texts Decisions Meetings News Activities Announcements Iraqi Council of Representatives * * * * * Kurdistan Parliament * * * * * Al Anbar Council * * * Al Diwanya Council * * * * * Al Muthanna Council * * * * * Al Sulaymaniya Council Babylon Council * * * * * Baghdad Council * * * Basrah Council * * * * * Dahuk Council Dhi Qar Council * * * Diyala Council * * * * * Erbil Council * * * * * Kerbala Council * * * * * Kirkuk Council * * * * * Missan Council * * * Najaf Council * * * * * Ninevah Council * * * * * Wassit Council * * * * * Salahul Deen Council * * * * *

Legislative Bottom-Up Communication

Legislative body/ Interactive feature Contact Feedback/Opinion Make a complaint Automatic Updates Poll Guestbook Discussion Forum Access to Councilor page/ email Downloadable documents Iraqi Council of Representatives * * * * * Kurdistan Parliament * * * Al Anbar Parliament * * * * * Al Diwanya Council * * * * * Al Muthanna Council * * * * * Al Sulaymaniya Council Babylon Council * * * * * Baghdad Council * * * * * Basrah Council * * * * * Dahuk Council * * Dhi Qar Council * * * Diyala Council * * * Erbil Council Kerbala Council * * * Kirkuk Council * Missan Council * * * * * Najaf Council * * * * * Ninevah Council * * * * * Wassit Council * * * * * Salahul Deen Council * *

Political Party Visibility Scores

Parliamentary Political Party/ Engine

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Google MSN Yahoo Average Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council 100 100 100 **100** National Reform Trend 0 0 0 **0** Islamic Virtue Party 80 20 0 **33** Islamic Dawa Party (Iraq org) 100 100 100 **100** Iraqi National Congress 100 100 100 **100** Turkmenli Political Party 50 0 0 **17** Iraqi National Accord 100 100 100 **100** Renewal List 100 100 100 **100** National Future Gathering 100 100 100 **100** Islamic Dawa Party 90 60 90 **80** Independent Iraqi Kafaat Gathering 100 100 90 **97** Iraqi Islamic Party 100 100 100 **100** KURDISTAN ISLAMIC UNION 90 100 100 **97** Kurdistan Democratic Party 100 90 100 **97** Patriotic union of Kurdistan 80 90 90 **87** GORRAN MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE 100 70 40 **70** Republican Gathering 20 80 70 **57** Average **83 77 75 79** **Non Parliamentary Political Party/ Search Engine**
Google Msn Yahoo **Average** Iraqi Communist Party 100 90 100 **97** Iraqi Nation Party 0 20 20 **13** Assyrian Democratic Movement 100 60 0 **53** Assyrian Patriotic Party 100 90 100 **97** Coalition of National Alliance 100 100 100 **100** Movement for Democratic Society 100 90 70 **87** The Kurdish Fayly Democratic Party 70 60 70 **67** Worker Communist Party of Iraq 100 100 100 **100** Islamic Kurdish Society 50 0 0 **17** The Upholders of the Message 100 80 70 **83** Yazidi Movement for Reform & Progress 100 100 100 **100** Leftist Communist Party of Iraq 40 80 100 **73** Iraq Green Party 90 50 **47** The Iraqi Democratic Union 100 100 100 **100** Ahrar Party 90 40 40 **57** Liberal Democratic Party of Iraq 100 100 90 **97** The Kurdish Democratic Solution Party 100 100 100 **100** Kurdistan Justice & Freedom Party 100 100 100 **100** **Average 86 73 73 77**

Political Party Top-Down Information

Parliamentary Political Party/ Information About

Organizational history Who's Who Agenda/Program Media Releases Documents Publications Video Clips Activities
News Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council

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-Badr Organization

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-Hezbollah Movement in Iraq

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National Reform Trend

Islamic Virtue Party

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Islamic Dawa Party (Iraq org)

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Iraqi National Congress

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Turkmenli Political Party

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Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

Constitutional Monarchy Movement Iraqi National Accord

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Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Islamic Dawa Party (Eng)

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Independent Iraqi Kafaat Gathering

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IRAQI ACCORD FRONT Iraqi Islamic Party

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KURDISTAN ISLAMIC UNION

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Kurdistan Democratic Party

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Patriotic union of Kurdistan

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GORRAN MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

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Republican Gathering

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Political Party Bottom-Up Communication

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Parliamentary Political Party/ Interactivity Feature

Contact Automatic Updates Membership Inquiries Feedback/opinion Online Campaigning Poll Guest book logos/
posters Discussion forum Supreme Islamic Iraqi Council

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-Badr Organization

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-Hezbollah Movement in Iraq

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National Reform Trend

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Islamic Virtue Party

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Islamic Dawa Party (Iraq)

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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Iraqi National Congress

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Turkmenli Political Party Constitutional Monarchy Movement Iraqi National Accord

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Renewal List

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National Future Gathering

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Islamic Dawa Party Islamic Dawa Party (Eng)

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Independent Iraqi Kafaat Gathering

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IRAQI ACCORD FRONT Iraqi Islamic Party

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Iraq's Institutional Internet Use

Written by Tahira Mohamad Abbas

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KURDISTAN ISLAMIC UNION

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Kurdistan Democratic Party

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Patriotic union of Kurdistan

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GORRAN MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

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Republican Gathering

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Date written: September/2011*