

Private Roundtable with Kurdistan Regional Government Minister and Head of Foreign Relations Department Safeen Dizayee

IRAQ INITIATIVE

Thursday, November 21, 2019

9:00 – 10:30 a.m.

Atlantic Council, 1030 15th St NW, 12th floor

Speaker Bio



Mr. Safeen Dizayee

Minister and Head, Department of Foreign Relations, Kurdistan Regional Government

Safeen Dizayee serves as the top diplomat of the Kurdistan Regional Government's (KRG) 9th Cabinet; he was named head of the Department of the Foreign Relations in July 2019. He was formerly the chief of staff to the prime minister and the spokesperson of the KRG. Prior to that, he served as KRG minister of education. Mr. Dizayee is a member of the Leadership Council of the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). In 1999, he was elected to the Central Committee of the KDP and headed of KDP's International Relations Office from 2005 to 2009. Mr. Dizayee started his diplomatic career in 1992, when he was appointed as KDP's Representative in Ankara, Turkey, a position he held until 2003. After the toppling of Baath regime in Iraq in 2003, he was the second deputy to the KDP's leader, Masoud Barzani, as a member of the Iraqi Governing Council under the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad. Born in Erbil in 1963, his family migrated to the United Kingdom when he was in the secondary school. He graduated from Maidenhead College of Art and Design, studying interior design. From 1980 to 1989, he was an active member of the Kurdistan Students Society in Europe (KSSE), and later elected as a Secretariat member and the Head of the UK Branch of the KSSE.

Introductory Remarks By



Mr. William F. Wechsler

Director, Middle East Programs, Atlantic Council

William F. Wechsler is Director for Middle East Programs at the Atlantic Council and Director of the Rafik Hariri Center for the Middle East. Mr. Wechsler's most recent government position was Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Combatting Terrorism. His portfolio included the Department's policies, plans, authorities and resources related to special operations and irregular warfare, with an emphasis on counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, information operations and other sensitive operations. Previously Mr. Wechsler served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Counternarcotics and Global Threats, where he directed a budget of \$1.6 billion and oversaw military and civilian programs around the globe. During the Clinton Administration Mr. Wechsler served as Special Advisor to the Secretary of the Treasury. He had previously served as Director for Transnational Threats on the National Security Council staff, and prior to that was a Special Assistant to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. He was previously a Senior Fellow at the Middle East Institute and a Senior Fellow at the Center for American Progress. Mr. Wechsler has also had a separate career in finance. He has been Vice Chairman of Capitol Peak Asset Management and Managing Director of Greenwich Associates. Mr. Wechsler is a graduate of Cornell University and received a master's degree from Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs.

Moderator Bio



Mr. Thomas S. Warrick

Nonresident Senior Fellow, Middle East Programs, Atlantic Council

Thomas S. Warrick is a nonresident senior fellow with the Middle East programs at the Atlantic Council. Prior to joining the Atlantic Council, from August 2008 to June 2019 he was the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism Policy at the US Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and a career member of the Senior Executive Service. He was an international lawyer in private practice for 17 years, representing companies in connection with investments in the Middle East and elsewhere. From 1997 to 2007, he served in the US Department of State on Middle East and international justice issues. From 1997 to 2001, Mr. Warrick was Deputy in the Office of the Secretary / Office of War Crimes Issues.

In 2001, he became Special Adviser, then Senior Adviser, to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, working on Iraq, Iran, and other issues. From 2002 to 2003, he led the State Department's "Future of Iraq" project. From October 2003 to June 2006, he served in both Baghdad and Washington. From July 2006 to July 2007, he was Director (Acting) for Iraq Political Affairs. He was briefly Senior Political Adviser on the Iran desk in 2007. Mr. Warrick joined the US Department of Homeland Security in August 2007 as Director for the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia in the Office of Policy. He became Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism Policy, in the Office of Policy, in August 2008. In February 2015, Mr. Warrick was named Deputy Counterterrorism Coordinator for Policy by the DHS Counterterrorism Coordinator and Under Secretary for Intelligence & Analysis. In July 2018, when the counterterrorism policy mission was returned to the DHS Office of Policy, Mr. Warrick resumed his title of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism Policy in the Office of Policy / Office of Threat Prevention and Security Policy. Mr. Warrick concluded his service as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Counterterrorism Policy on June 14, 2019.