

Social Listening:

Al-Mandalawi's Iranian Alignment

October 2025



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“The Iraqi Army Chief of Staff Abdul Amir Yarallah and Deputy Parliament Speaker Mohsen al-Mandalawi are walking on the American flag on the anniversary of Soleimani and al-Muhandis’ demise. Meanwhile, they are welcoming the US ambassador and the American forces’ commander... this is the height of hypocrisy and Iranian insolence.”

Twitter - Abu Osama (@bwsmhly1), February 26, 2023



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OVERVIEW

This report is the third installment in ENODO Global's Social Listening series on Iraq's 2025 parliamentary elections. It examines how political parties, coalitions, and entrenched stakeholders within Iraq's corrupt political system attain power and authority, while exposing how external sponsors influence the Iraqi Government and election outcomes. Central to this analysis is the impact of Israel's recent attack on Iran, Operation Rising Lion, which reshaped regional dynamics and altered Tehran's influence model in Iraq. The conflict revealed both the resilience and the vulnerabilities of Iran's strategy to maintain control through an interlocking framework of political coalitions, proxy militias, financial conduits, and diplomatic coordination. While the strikes exposed Tehran's military weaknesses, Iran has responded by deepening its political investments in Iraq, where power is exercised less through direct military confrontation and more through patronage and institutional capture, which threatens Iraqi sovereignty.

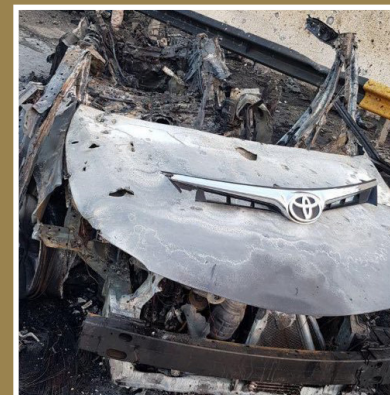
"Operation Rising Lion"

A critical element of Iran's strategy in Iraq is the cultivation of influential individuals who can advocate for and promote Iran's interests within the country's political system. Muhsin al-Mandalawi is a prime example of this tactic. As a senior member of the Shiite Coordination Framework and leader of the Al-Asas Alliance, he has positioned himself as a parliamentary powerbroker for Iranian-backed factions. His ties to groups such as the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahl al-Haq illustrate how Tehran uses political and militia networks to extend its influence into Iraq's legislature, security institutions, and economy.

Al-Mandalawi is not alone, he operates within a broader constellation of figures that include Hadi al-Amiri of the Badr Organization, Qais al-Khazali of Asaib Ahl al-Haq, and Abu Fadak al-Muhammadawi of Kataib Hezbollah whose combined roles buttress Iran's patronage networks. However, al-Mandalawi's unique positioning that spans both parliamentary leadership and coalition-building, makes him a particularly valuable conduit for Tehran's interests as Iraq heads toward the 2025 elections.



"Al-Mandalawi's connections to Abu Fadak, a close associate of assassinated IRGC-QF commander Qasem Soleimani, indicate integration into Iran's primary external operations network."



"It is arrogance for a man who reached the parliament fraudulently and the [Shiite] Coordination Framework gave him the position of First Deputy Speaker of Parliament, putting the wrong man in the right place – a blatant mistake."

Twitter – Abu Osama (@bwsmhly1), February 26, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report sheds light on Iran's strategy to reshape Iraq's political system in the lead-up to the 2025 parliamentary elections. Al-Mandalawi's rise reveals the convergence of militias, political parties, and diplomatic channels into an ecosystem that sustains Tehran's dominance while eroding Iraq's sovereignty and weakening prospects for independent governance. His positions underscore the central challenge facing Iraq's electorate: whether the upcoming elections can serve as a vehicle for accountability and reform, or whether they will reinforce a system built on foreign-backed patronage and entrenched corruption.

Mohsin al-Mandalawi's political ascent embodies Iran's strategy of influence in Iraq, where individuals are cultivated to champion Tehran's interests within the country. As First Deputy and frequent Acting Speaker of Parliament, al-Mandalawi has become a central conduit for Tehran-aligned networks. His role within the Shiite Coordination Framework and leadership of the Al-Asas Alliance have positioned him as both a parliamentary powerbroker and a business façade for Iranian-backed factions. Through alliances with the PMF, Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, al-Mandalawi epitomizes how Tehran connects political coalitions, militia power, and financial patronage into a system designed to control Iraqi institutions.

Al-Mandalawi's frequent engagement with Iranian diplomats further cements this alignment, ensuring that his parliamentary actions consistently reflect Tehran's regional objectives. His career trajectory is a case study in how Iran advances its strategy by merging political allies, armed groups, and civilian intermediaries under the guise of democratic participation. This model, recently tested by regional conflict and international pressure, has proven resilient by shifting from overt militia dominance to institutional capture that is harder to expose and dismantle.



“The committee targeted Basra Governor Asaad al-Eidani, an opponent of Iranian influence, for removal, with committee members selected by al-Mandalawi.”

“Al-Mandalawi's committee member selections demonstrate ‘close ties’ to Abu Fadak, indicating direct operational coordination with sanctioned IRGC operatives.”

KEY FINDINGS

- Al-Mandalawi embodies Tehran's strategy in Iraq, by integrating political, military, financial, and diplomatic networks within an architecture to maintain and expand Iranian influence over the Iraqi Government
 - ▷ The key center of gravity in Iran's strategy remains maintaining and increasing control and influence of the Iraq parliament
 - ▷ Operation Lion exemplifies Iran's recalibrated approach: moving from overt militia dominance to institutional capture disguised as democratic governance.
- His relationships extend beyond the Shiite Coordination Framework, Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, the Popular Mobilization Forces, and Iran's diplomatic networks.
- Each stakeholder provides a distinct pillar of support:
 - ▷ The Coordination Framework supplies parliamentary cohesion.
 - ▷ Badr provides organizational depth.
 - ▷ Kataib Hezbollah ensures coercive enforcement.
 - ▷ Asaib Ahl al-Haq contributes electoral mobilization.
 - ▷ The PMF delivers institutional legitimacy.
 - ▷ The Iranian Embassy coordinates and directs these elements strategically.
- Al-Mandalawi operates at the intersection of these networks, benefitting from their patronage while serving as their civilian face in parliament.
- This system has eroded Iraq's political sovereignty, subordinating state institutions to foreign-backed patronage.
- Al-Mandalawi's trajectory is a case study in how external actors consolidate power within fragile states by fusing coercion, diplomacy, and economic patronage into a single system of control.
- Iran's proxies adapted their operational profile in Iraq, emphasizing political/legal consolidation over kinetic escalation during the height of the war.
- The institutional pathways for influence—coalition management in parliament, committee control, budgetary bargaining, and security legislation—remain intact.
- The PMF law's trajectory, even with delay, illustrates how legal codification is the decisive arena for long-term control.

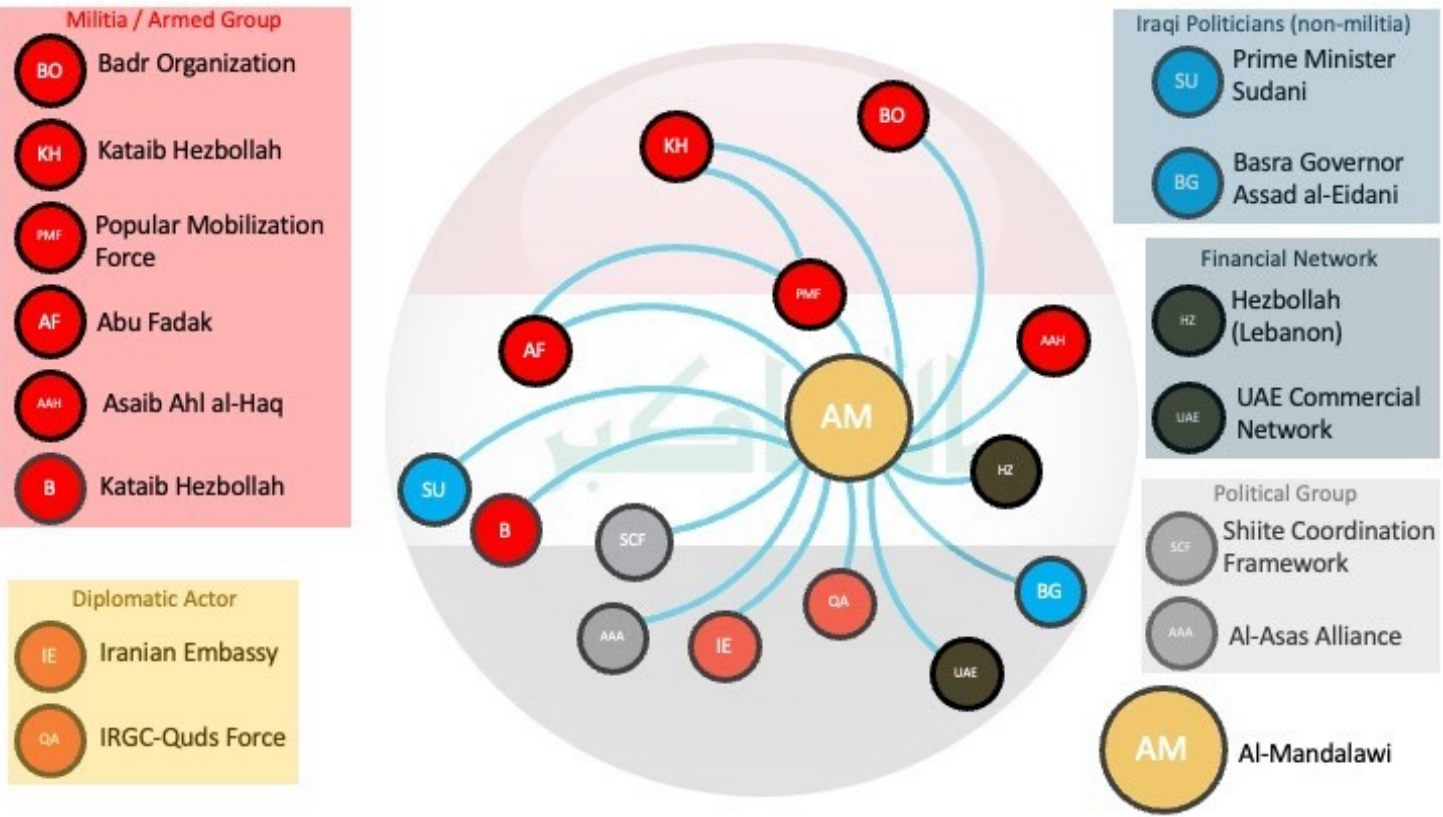


NODAL ANALYSIS OF AL-MANDALAWI’S AFFILIATIONS

The graphic opposite provides a visual representation of the individuals and organizations identified through open-source analysis, news articles, reports and studies that are directly connected to Mohsen al-Mandalawi. It maps the linkages between political coalitions, militia leaders, and diplomatic actors illustrating how these relationships intersect to form a coherent network designed to influence Iraq’s government institutions.

By presenting the data in a visual format, the graphic highlights the inter-connectedness of actors across multiple domains that include parliamentary blocs, armed groups, and external patrons. It reveals how al-Mandalawi operates at the nexus of these overlapping spheres and underscores how his authority is sustained by a robust system of political, military, and economic patronage tied to Tehran’s regional strategy.

It is important to note that this visualization does not capture the entirety of al-Mandalawi’s network. Rather, it illustrates the most prominent connections supported by available information. The full scope of relationships surrounding al-Mandalawi is broader and likely extends into additional political, financial, and regional channels not represented here.



“Al-Mandalawi has been identified as coordinating with Kataib Hezbollah to undermine Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, driving wedges between Sudani and key allies through parliamentary investigations.”

IRANIAN-ALIGNED POLITICAL AND MILITIA NETWORKS



SHIITE COORDINATION FRAMEWORK

The Shiite Coordination Framework represents the central political vehicle through which Iran consolidates and projects influence inside Iraq. Established as a coalition of Shia parties with varying degrees of alignment to Tehran, the Framework has evolved into the dominant parliamentary bloc following the 2021 elections, acting as both a safeguard for Iranian interests and a mechanism to constrain reformist or nationalist initiatives. Its organizational structure unites actors such as the Badr Organization, AsaibAhl al-Haq, and other pro-Iran factions under a single umbrella, allowing Iran to maintain leverage over Iraq's legislature while presenting the appearance of a unified Shia political front.

Mohsen al-Mandalawi's role within this coalition is noteworthy. As a senior member of the Coordination Framework, he has leveraged his parliamentary authority to advance legislative agendas favorable to Tehran, including measures that strengthen the position of the PMF and blunt attempts to limit militia influence. His ability to navigate between competing Shia factions while maintaining loyalty to the Framework underscores his value to Iran as both a reliable political operator and a stabilizing force within the coalition.

What distinguishes al-Mandalawi's position, however, is his Feyli Kurdish identity. Historically marginalized under the Ba'athist regime, the Feyli Kurds occupy a complex position in Iraqi politics, spanning ethnic and sectarian lines. By elevating a Feyli Kurd to a leadership role within the Framework, Tehran has been able to project a degree of cross-sectarian inclusivity, masking the overtly Shia-centric and Iranian-dominated character of the coalition. This dual identity has provided al-Mandalawi with a façade of legitimacy, even as his actions and affiliations consistently reinforce Iran's dominance within Iraqi politics.



In this sense, al-Mandalawi's presence in the Coordination Framework exemplifies Tehran's approach to influence: rather than relying exclusively on traditional Shia political figures who have suffered reputational damage since the 2019 protests, Iran has cultivated newer personalities capable of broadening the coalition's appeal while maintaining strict alignment with its strategic objectives. Al-Mandalawi's ascent is not an isolated political achievement but part of a deliberate recalibration of Iranian influence in Iraq, aimed at preserving parliamentary control and limiting the emergence of genuine reformist alternatives.

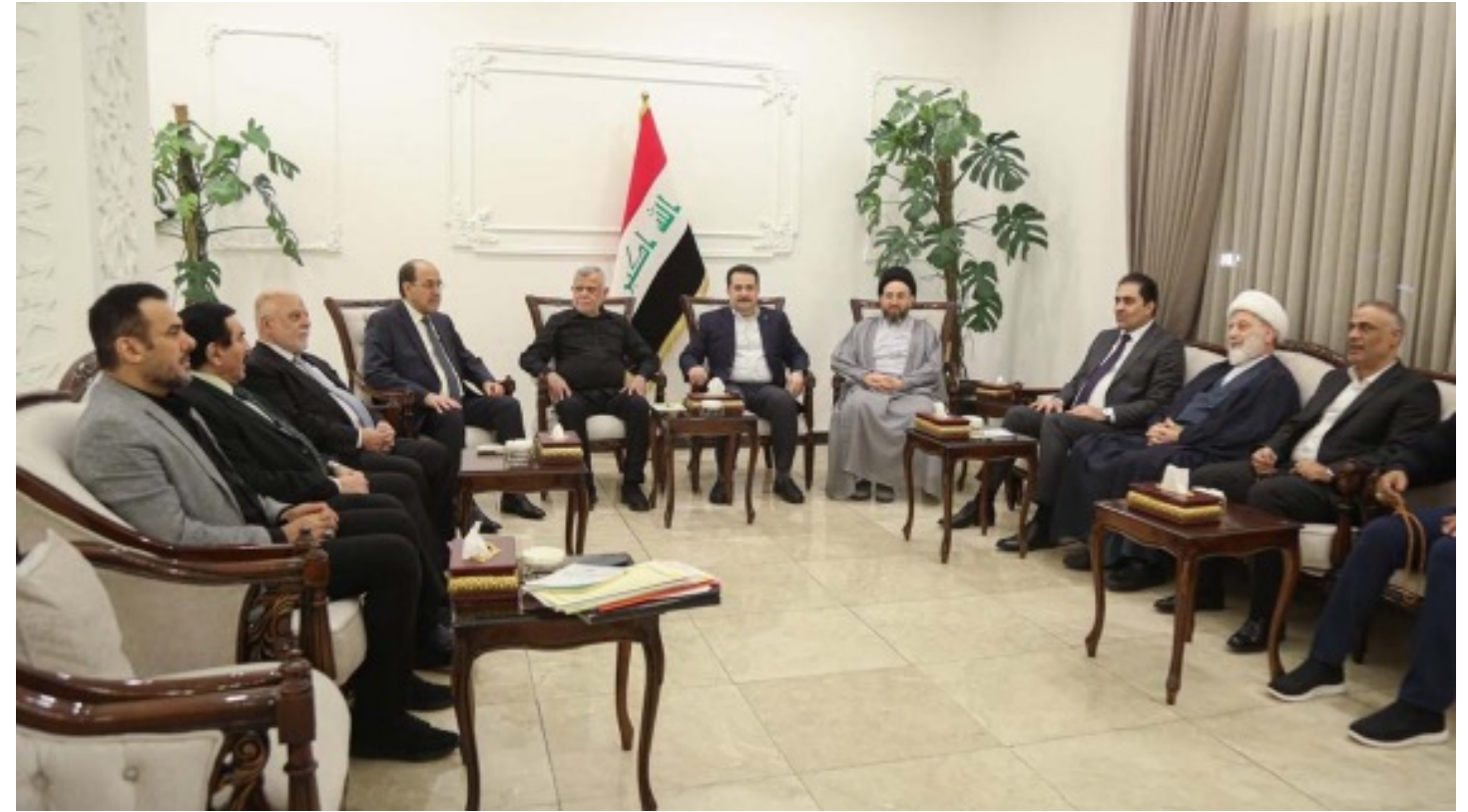
“Al-Mandalawi is a confirmed member of Iraq’s Shiite Coordination Framework, described by multiple sources as having ‘close ties with Iran’.”

THE AL-ASAS (BASIS) ALLIANCE

One of the most overlooked aspects of Mohsen al-Mandalawi's rise is his role in forming the Al-Asas, or "Basis," Alliance in 2023. On the surface, this coalition was presented as a grouping of civil forces and independent parties committed to reform, transparency, and broad-based governance. In reality, it functions as a carefully engineered extension of Iran's political architecture in Iraq. By cloaking itself in the language of civic participation, the alliance provides Tehran with a vehicle to sustain influence at a time when traditional proxies have suffered in the wake of the 2019 Tishreen protests.

Al-Mandalawi's leadership of the Al-Asas Alliance marks a turning point in his political trajectory. The bloc secured a notable share of votes across Baghdad and parts of Diyala, leveraging both his Feyli Kurdish constituency and his ties to the Coordination Framework. The coalition's geographical spread reflects a strategic design: to build legitimacy in urban centers while reinforcing Iranian-backed patronage in Shia-majority regions. Although presented as pluralistic and civilian-led, the alliance is underpinned by financial and logistical support from Iran-aligned networks, ensuring its decisions remained aligned with Tehran's priorities.

This dual character of civilian façade and foreign-backed substance illustrates the evolving sophistication of Iranian influence. Whereas earlier patronage networks relied overtly on militias, the Al-Asas Alliance provides a "softer" political front, more palatable to Iraq's middle class and to international observers. For al-Mandalawi, the alliance enhances his stature as a coalition builder and positions him as a rising figure within the Coordination Framework. For Iran, it extends influence under the guise of democratic coalition politics.



The omission of the Al-Asas Alliance from any assessment of al-Mandalawi risks underestimating both his political capacity and the adaptability of Iranian strategy in Iraq. His ability to construct a viable bloc that combines grassroots rhetoric with foreign-backed resources is instrumental in solidifying his status and continues to shape his role heading into the 2025 parliamentary elections.

“The rise of the Al-Asas Alliance underscores the continued blurring of lines between reformist rhetoric and entrenched patronage.”

“The rise of the Al-Asas Alliance underscores the continued blurring of lines between reformist rhetoric and entrenched patronage.”

BADR ORGANIZATION

The Badr Organization is one of Iran's oldest and most influential proxies in Iraq. Originating as the armed wing of the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) during the Iran–Iraq War, Badr developed as a paramilitary force trained, funded, and directed by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Since 2003, it has transitioned into a dual political-military actor, securing parliamentary seats while retaining an extensive armed wing that controls significant territory, economic networks, and security institutions. Badr's leader, Adi al-Amiri, remains one of Tehran's most trusted allies, serving as a linchpin in coordinating between Iran's Quds Force and its Iraqi partners.

Al-Mandalawi's association with the Badr Organization highlights the intersection between parliamentary authority and power in Iraq. While he is not a militia commander himself, his political rise has been closely tied to Badr's support within the Shiite Coordination Framework. Reports suggest that al-Mandalawi **has** maintains regular interactions with senior Badr figures, facilitating cooperation on legislative initiatives that strengthen the role of Iranian-backed groups in Iraq's governance structures. His willingness to accommodate Badr's political objectives has ensured him the coalition's backing and helped solidify his rapid advancement from a relatively obscure businessman to one of the most powerful figures in the Iraqi parliament.

Al-Mandalawi's value to Badr extends beyond legislative maneuvering. His Feyli Kurdish identity provides an important political cover for a movement widely criticized for its sectarianism and foreign loyalties. By aligning with al-Mandalawi, the Badr Organization can project an image of inclusivity and national reach, even as it remains firmly embedded within Iran's regional proxy network. This relationship underscores Tehran's strategy of cultivating figures who can expand the coalition's appeal to nontraditional constituencies while maintaining strict adherence to Iranian priorities.



At the same time, the partnership with Badr reinforces the perception of al-Mandalawi as a conduit of Iranian influence rather than an independent political leader. His legislative record and committee appointments have consistently mirrored Badr's strategic objectives, particularly regarding the Popular Mobilization Forces and the institutionalization of militia authority. In this respect, al-Mandalawi serves as a civilian face for a movement that is ultimately sustained by its paramilitary power, legitimizing Badr's role in Iraq's political system while advancing Tehran's broader regional agenda.



POPULAR MOBILIZATION FORCES (PMF)

The Popular Mobilization Forces (al-Hashd al-Shaabi) occupy a central position in Iraq's security and political landscape. Formed in 2014 in response to the rise of ISIS, the PMF initially enjoyed broad legitimacy as a defensive force protecting Iraqi territory. Over time, however, the organization became dominated by Iran-aligned militias such as the Badr Organization, Kataib Hezbollah, and Asaib Ahl al-Haq, which used the PMF umbrella to institutionalize their power and secure access to state resources. Today, while officially part of Iraq's security apparatus, the PMF operates as a parallel structure, balancing between nominal government oversight and its own independent command tied to Tehran.

Al-Mandalawi's role in advancing the PMF's institutionalization is one of the clearest illustrations of his alignment with Iran's agenda. As Acting Speaker, he facilitated the progression of the PMF Authority Law, legislation that sought to formalize the group's independence and legalize its role as a parallel security institution. The United States and other international actors explicitly warned that the law would entrench Iranian influence in Iraq and legitimize militias that continue to operate outside state control. Despite these warnings, al-Mandalawi leveraged his parliamentary authority to shape committee membership and scheduling in ways favorable to PMF-aligned factions, thereby embedding militia interests within the legislative process.

Al-Mandalawi's actions demonstrate how political elites serve as indispensable partners for Iran's proxy forces. While groups such as Badr, KH, and AAH wield coercive power, figures like al-Mandalawi provide the parliamentary legitimacy needed to transform that power into enduring institutional influence. In this sense, his involvement with the PMF law was not a peripheral or symbolic act, but rather a strategic step toward the systemic capture of Iraq's security institutions.



This association has come at significant reputational cost. Public discourse across social media frequently links al-Mandalawi to militia agendas, framing him not as a neutral political actor but as a facilitator of armed groups that undermine Iraqi sovereignty. The perception that he used his parliamentary office to entrench militia authority has amplified criticism from both Sunni and independent voices, who view the PMF not as a national defense force but as a sectarian instrument of Iranian policy.

Al-Mandalawi's support for the PMF exemplifies the broader trend of legislative complicity in Iraq's hybrid political order, where state institutions are manipulated to serve militia interests. His actions reveal how the boundary between political office and paramilitary power has collapsed, creating a governance model in which Tehran's influence is institutionalized through the synergy of proxy militias and compliant political elites.

KATAIB HEZBOLLAH

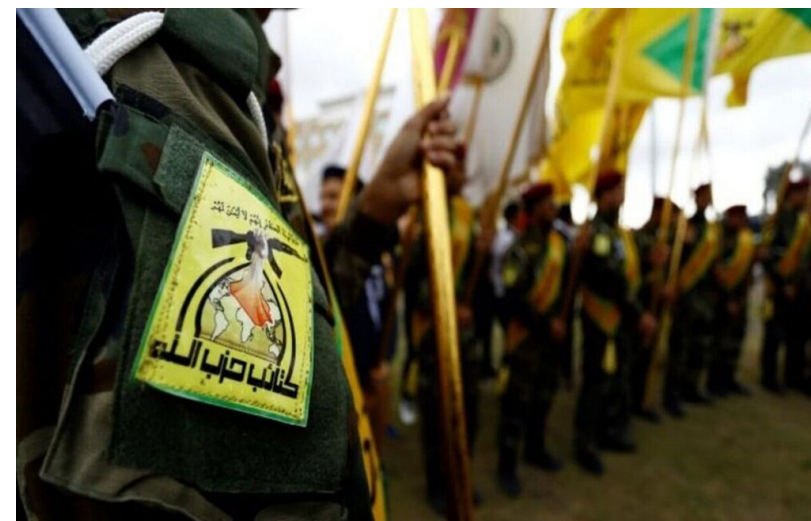
Kataib Hezbollah (KH) is widely regarded as Iran's most disciplined and ideologically committed proxy in Iraq. Established in the mid-2000s with direct backing from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Quds Force, KH has built a reputation as both a military vanguard against U.S. and coalition forces and a critical instrument for advancing Tehran's regional agenda. The organization is formally integrated into the Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF), yet it retains its own chain of command, ideological orientation, and financial links to Iran. Its leadership, particularly Abdul-Aziz al-Muhammadawi, better known as Abu Fadak sits at the nexus of Iraqi militia politics and Iranian strategic oversight.

Al-Mandalawi's relationship with KH reflects the extent to which his political career has been intertwined with Tehran's most powerful armed actors. His documented alliance with Abu Fadak underscores a level of trust and cooperation that goes beyond mere political alignment. Abu Fadak, as Chief of Staff of the PMF and a sanctioned figure under U.S. law, has provided al-Mandalawi with critical support that extends into both parliamentary maneuvering and economic access. This partnership has reportedly allowed al-Mandalawi to secure state tenders, navigate government contracts, and build cross-factional alliances within the Coordination Framework.

From KH's perspective, al-Mandalawi provides legitimacy that the militia itself often lacks. As a sitting Deputy Speaker and frequent Acting Speaker of Parliament, he serves as a public face for legislative initiatives that align with KH's interests, including efforts to formalize the authority of the PMF as an independent security institution. In return, KH's political weight within the Coordination Framework ensures al-Mandalawi's protection and advancement, particularly when navigating factional disputes or public scrutiny.



This relationship exemplifies Iran's broader model of influence, where militias and politicians operate symbiotically to extend control over Iraq's institutions. KH supplies the coercive power and access to Iranian resources, while figures like al-Mandalawi provide parliamentary legitimacy and a veneer of democratic participation. Yet this partnership comes at a cost to al-Mandalawi's credibility. His alignment with one of the most controversial militias in Iraq has fueled grassroots criticism and intensified the perception that he operates not as an Iraqi statesman but as an extension of Iran's proxy network.



ASAIB AHL AL-HAQ (AAH)

Asaib Ahl al-Haq (AAH) emerged in the aftermath of the U.S. invasion of Iraq as one of the most aggressive offshoots of the Sadrist movement, quickly aligning itself with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and Hezbollah in Lebanon. Over time, AAH evolved into both a formidable militia and a political actor, consolidating its power through violence, sectarian mobilization, and strategic participation in parliamentary politics. The group has repeatedly demonstrated its capacity to influence Iraqi security, often serving as one of Iran’s most reliable levers for countering U.S. interests and suppressing domestic dissent.

Al-Mandalawi’s relationship with AAH highlights the interdependence between Iran-aligned militias and Iraq’s political elites. While not a commander or fighter himself, al-Mandalawi has benefitted from the electoral and coercive apparatus that AAH provides. Reports from multiple electoral cycles describe the group’s use of intimidation to secure voter loyalty, as well as threats against its members who failed to register or vote for its candidates. Al-Mandalawi, positioned within the Shiite Coordination Framework, has been able to harness AAH’s coercive influence to secure parliamentary backing, protect his political base, and extend his reach beyond his Feyli Kurdish constituency.

AAH, in turn, has found in al-Mandalawi a useful parliamentary ally who can advance its interests through legislative channels. His authority as First Deputy Speaker and his role in shaping parliamentary committees have given AAH indirect access to levers of governance that militias alone cannot easily penetrate. This includes oversight of legislation related to security, resource allocation, and provincial governance in areas where AAH maintains strong financial and political interests.



The relationship between al-Mandalawi and AAH reflects a broader pattern in Iraq where militias rely on politicians to normalize their presence in state structures, while politicians rely on militias for electoral survival and coercive power. For al-Mandalawi, this arrangement reinforces his authority within the Coordination Framework, but it also deepens his association with some of the most polarizing and controversial armed actors in Iraq. This duality has intensified public skepticism, particularly among Sunnis and independents, who view his proximity to AAH as evidence of sectarian bias and foreign subservience.

In this way, al-Mandalawi’s alignment with Asaib Ahl al-Haq illustrates the relationship between militias and civilian elites in Iraq’s hybrid political order. It highlights how electoral manipulation, coercive intimidation, and legislative maneuvering converge to entrench Iran’s influence while undermining the credibility of Iraq’s democratic institutions.

IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC AND INTELLIGENCE NETWORKS

While militias serve as the coercive arm of Iran's strategy in Iraq, Tehran's diplomatic apparatus provides the formal channels through which political coordination and strategic alignment are sustained. The Iranian Embassy in Baghdad functions as a command hub, coordinating between military proxies, political elites, and economic networks to ensure Iran's interests remain entrenched across Iraq's institutions. Successive ambassadors have played an active role not only in bilateral diplomacy but also in shaping Iraq's internal politics by mediating disputes within the Shiite Coordination Framework and advancing legislative agendas favorable to Tehran.

Al-Mandalawi's regular engagement with Iranian diplomatic figures underscores his role as a partner in this system of influence. Public records and media reports document repeated meetings between al-Mandalawi and Ambassador Mohammad Kazem al-Sadiq, where discussions center on regional security, parliamentary coordination, and the role of the PMF. His participation in Iranian-sponsored delegations and forums further highlight his function as a reliable interlocutor who bridges parliamentary authority with Tehran's strategic priorities.

This relationship is not confined to symbolic gestures of diplomacy. Al-Mandalawi has consistently echoed Iranian positions in parliamentary debates, from advocating the full implementation of the 2020 resolution to expel U.S. forces, to supporting official condemnations of Israeli actions in Gaza, to calling for inquiries into the assassination of Qassem Soleimani. These stances align with Tehran's regional agenda and reinforce the perception that he operates less as an independent Iraqi leader and more as a political extension of Iran's state apparatus.



The connection to Iranian diplomats also complements al-Mandalawi's alliances with militias, creating a dual channel of support that integrates both formal and informal levers of power. Militias such as Kataib Hezbollah and Asaib Ahl al-Haq provide coercive backing, while the embassy offers diplomatic endorsement and coordination. Together, these relationships protect his position within the Coordination Framework and enhance his ability to navigate Iraq's factionalized political environment.

For Iraqi citizens, however, this alignment deepens skepticism about al-Mandalawi's legitimacy. Social media commentary frequently highlights his reliance on Iranian diplomatic patronage as evidence that he prioritizes Tehran's interests over Iraq's sovereignty. The optics of a senior Iraqi parliamentary leader regularly deferring to foreign diplomats erodes public confidence and fuels broader narratives of elite subservience to external powers.

Al-Mandalawi's relationship with Iran's diplomatic networks illustrates the final component of Tehran's model of influence. By coupling militia coercion with parliamentary allies and direct diplomatic engagement, Iran has created a comprehensive system of control that blurs the line between Iraqi governance and foreign tutelage. Al-Mandalawi's role within this architecture positions him as one of the most significant civilian enablers of Iranian strategy in Iraq.

HEZBOLLAH AND UAE NETWORK

One of the most under-reported yet critical aspects of Mohsen al Mandalawi's influence concerns his role in facilitating financial transfers to Lebanese Hezbollah via a sophisticated financial network. While public sources provide limited direct documentation, the structure aligns closely with known conduit mechanisms linking pro-Iranian actors in Iraq to Hezbollah's "Bayt al Mal" (House of Money) in Lebanon, which is Hezbollah's central financial operations hub.

Funds typically traverse a layered path: entering Iraq's banking and currency exchange system through institutions like Al Bilad Islamic Bank before being extracted through cash couriers or front companies to reach Hezbollah-controlled financial channels in Lebanon. Although there is no explicit public attribution of these transfers to al-Mandalawi, his leadership of expansive commercial and banking ventures in Baghdad and sway over currency auction networks positions him as a potential facilitator of such operations.

Complementing this financial conduit is al-Mandalawi's commercial network in the UAE, reportedly overseen by his brothers. This enterprise is believed to play a supporting role serving as both a channel for laundering funds and a platform for expanding influence. The UAE's status as a regional financial and commercial hub allows actors linked to al-Mandalawi to funnel capital, invest in trade, and facilitate cross-border financial flows with relative ease.

Though these operations do not directly equate to official Iranian state diplomacy, they function analogously: weaving a civilian commercial façade over a shadow network of foreign-backed influence. In effect, al-Mandalawi and his family-run UAE network project a form of soft power that complements the harder coercive and political mechanisms already identified in the report.



Integrating this dimension into the broader analysis deepens the understanding of how Iran's proxy architecture in Iraq is sustained not only through militias, parties, and diplomacy but also through transnational financial and commercial networks under civilian control. It underscores that the resilience of Tehran-aligned influence depends as much on economic ingenuity as on military and political patronage.

“Acting Speaker of Iraq’s Parliament Mohsen al-Mandalawi traveled on an official mission assigned by the ruling Coordination Framework – a mission on behalf of Lebanese Hezbollah. Al-Mandalawi’s trip came just hours after a Coordination Framework meeting in which they decided to provide Hezbollah with unlimited military and economic support.”

Twitter – Omar Al-Janabi (@omartvsn), October 22, 2024

CONCLUSION

The 2025 Israel–Iran conflict altered the regional risk calculus but did not dissolve this architecture. Strategic analyses of the conflict reveals that Israel’s ability to strike Iranian targets and degrade capabilities, forced Tehran to adapt by managing escalation and husbanding proxy assets (a pattern visible across Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon). Several studies observed restraint by Iraqi militias during peaks of the war, likely a deliberate decision to preserve forces for contingencies and to avoid triggering U.S. entry rather than a sign of collapse. This restraint underscores a shift from overt confrontation to political entrenchment and legal institutionalization inside Iraq.

That entrenchment is most visible around the PMF law. Independent observers warn that formalizing the PMF as a permanent arm of the state would lock in militia influence beyond the current government cycle; the draft completed final reading on July 16, 2025, and can be brought to a vote at any time. As of today, Iraq’s presidencies have agreed to delay the law until after elections—postponement, not reversal signaling how central this file remains to Tehran’s model of power in Baghdad.

Looking ahead to the 2025 parliamentary elections (scheduled for 11 November 2025), the political terrain reflects that duality: visible fragmentation among parties and alliances, but resilient networks behind them. Iraq’s election authority reports 31 alliances, 38 parties, and 79 independents registered to compete—an apparent pluralism that, in practice, still intersects with Coordination Framework bloc discipline and PMF-aligned patronage at the provincial and committee levels. This is precisely where figures like al-Mandalawi translate external leverage into parliamentary outcomes.



Iran’s networks in Iraq have absorbed the shock of Israeli strikes by privileging institutional consolidation over immediate confrontation. In electoral terms, the decisive contest is not on the battlefield but inside the rulebook: budget lines, security laws, committee chairs, and coalition discipline. Al-Mandalawi’s career is instructive because it reveals how these levers convert external backing into legislative outcomes. Unless those pathways are disrupted—by blocking statutory upgrades to militia authority, breaking bloc discipline around committee control, or altering the incentive structure for coalition formation—the architecture of influence will persist beyond November, regardless of short-term kinetic setbacks to Tehran or its proxies.



This report draws on a comprehensive review of social media activity, open-source reporting, and investigative research conducted between 2022 and 2025. The evidence provides contemporaneous, verifiable insight into how Iran’s Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), its allied militias (Kataib Hezbollah, Asaib Ahl al-Haq, Badr, and others under the PMF umbrella), and affiliated political coalitions (the Shiite Coordination Framework and the Al-Asas Alliance) have facilitated Mohsen al-Mandalawi’s ascent and shaped his role in parliament.

Social media monitoring forms a cornerstone of the analysis. Al-Mandalawi’s Twitter account (@mu_almandalawii), with over 25,000 followers, consistently amplifies Iranian regional objectives. His October 2024 withdrawal from the Inter-Parliamentary Union meeting in Geneva during Israeli participation drew more than 261,000 views, making it one of his most significant digital interventions. Across 2022–2025, analysts documented 15–20 instances of direct coordination with Iranian-backed networks, including joint messaging with sanctioned militia leaders, endorsements of legislation aligned with Tehran, and participation in Iranian-directed propaganda campaigns. Engagement metrics are consistently high, ranging from 93,000 to 261,000 views per post, underscoring his role as a key amplification node in Iran’s regional messaging ecosystem.

Qualitative analysis of these posts reveals recurring themes: rejection of U.S. military presence, unwavering support for Iranian positions on Israel, and open alignment with IRGC-backed militias. Al-Mandalawi’s content often overlaps with messaging from militia figures such as Hassan Salem, generating network effects that multiply reach across Iraqi digital discourse. These patterns demonstrate systematic, not incidental, coordination—positioning al-Mandalawi as both a consumer and producer of Iranian information operations.

Broader research contextualizes this activity within Iran’s sophisticated information warfare strategy. Investigations reveal that Lebanese Hezbollah has trained operatives in Iraq in online disinformation tactics, while the Iraq Radio and Television Union—led by an Iraqi officer tied to the IRGC—provides technical support to militia propaganda operations. The Counter Extremism Project reports that Kataib Hezbollah manages a dedicated propaganda team of roughly 400 personnel, while Iraqi militias have collectively funneled millions of dollars in advertising revenue through platforms such as Facebook to amplify fake news and disinformation campaigns.

Together, these findings demonstrate that al-Mandalawi’s presence is not an isolated activity but an integral component of Iran’s regional influence strategy. By embedding militia patronage, parliamentary authority, and coordinated propaganda into Iraq’s political institutions, Tehran ensures that figures like al-Mandalawi operate simultaneously as legislators and information assets.





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