

##TRIED & TASTED

Veggie Delight

No wonder then that in India, we eagerly wait for winters to make our favourite seasonal dishes



Come winter and it is the time for indulgence. Well, who can blame anyone? This is the season when the markets are brimming with all sorts of root vegetables, tubers and leafy greens that are robust with natural goodness. No wonder then that in India, we eagerly wait for winters to make our favourite seasonal dishes. Here are a few recipes to relish.

Beetroot Kebabs

- Ingredients
- 1/2 cup grated beetroot
- 1/2 packet firm tofu
- 1/2 Tbsp garlic paste
- 1 Tbsp amchoor powder
- 1 Tbsp roasted and crushed anardana
- Chaata masala, a pinch
- Rock salt, to taste
- 1/4 cup chopped cashew nuts, to stuff
- 1/2 cup crushed oats, to coat

- Oil, to pan fry
- Preparation
- 1. Take a bowl and put the grated beetroot, the tofu followed by garlic, amchoor, chaata masala, rock salt and anardana.
- 2. Mince with your hands and make round patties and insert the chopped cashews as a filling. Make round kebabs.
- 3. Coat the patties with crushed oat powder.
- 4. In a flat pan, heat the oil and lightly fry these.
- 5. Serve with a dollop of green chutney.

Dal Palak Ka Shorba

- Ingredients
- 100 gm yellow moong dal
- 100 gm tur dal
- 10 gm garam masala
- 5 gm turmeric powder
- 15 gm ginger
- 250 gm spinach
- 40 gm oil
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 green chilly chopped
- 8 cloves of garlic finely chopped
- Pinch of asafoetida
- Salt to taste
- Half a lemon juice
- 4 tsp thick cream
- Preparation
- 1. Soak moong dal and tur dal (pigeon pea) in water for a couple of hours. After they have been soaked well, pressure cook them with spinach leaves in 4 cups of water. Make a paste and leave aside.
- 2. Heat oil in a pan. Once



Iraq's leadership, be it Shia, Sunni or Kurds, has indicated that there is broad support for the relationship with the US across the political spectrum, even from those with political and economic ties to Iran. Iraq's Shia leaders may have religious and political linkages to Iran, but they also have their own distinct interests. While Iraq's political leaders have not always acceded to US demands, they have made decisions that advanced Iraqi interests, even when those decisions are at the expense of Iranian interests.

The US Pullout From Iraq A Tipping Point



On 30 September, the last US troops left Iraq, ending more than two decades of US military presence. Since the 2003 invasion, the US-Iraq relationship has been defined by their troop presence.

The security agreement to end Operation Inherent Resolve to defeat the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) was negotiated in September 2024 during the Biden administration in two phases. The first phase included the withdrawal from Central and Southern Iraq, including Balad Air Base North of Baghdad and Ain al-Asad Air Base in Anbar province by September 2025. The second phase includes the withdrawal of approximately 2,500 American soldiers from the closure of the Erbil Air Base. The Trump administration is now implementing the phased drawdown of the operation and a transition to bilateral security cooperation.

Why Iraq Matters

Iraq has weighed heavily on the US psyche after years of US military engagement, billions of dollars spent and thousands of American and Iraqi lives lost. For many

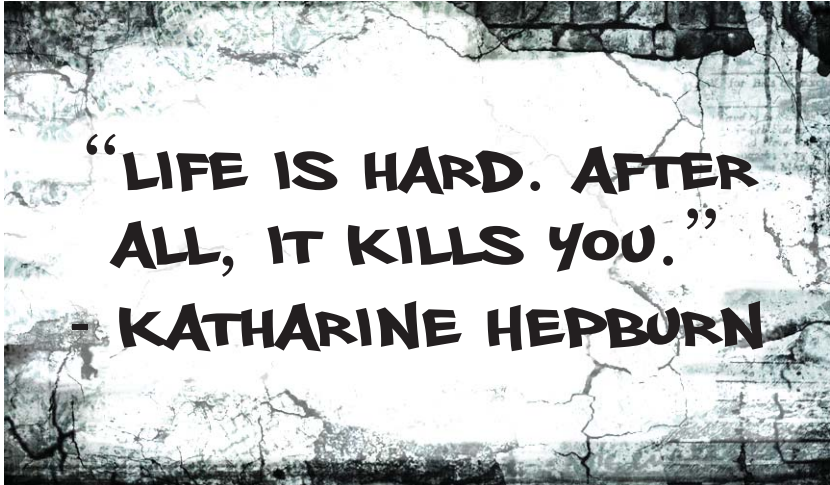
Americans, Iraq is the one of the "forever wars" and the US withdrawal from Iraq aligns with President Donald Trump's vision of reducing the overall US military footprint in the Middle East.

The departure will be celebrated by many Iraqis and by the Iranians, who have long sought the exit of US troops from Iraq. Iran shares its longest land border with Iraq and had fought a ten-year conflict but the US invasion, that toppled Saddam Hussein, removed Tehran's greatest regional threat apart from Israel and paved the way for Iran to increase its influence in Iraq economically, politically, and militarily. Iran backed militias in Iraq grew in the years that followed, providing a potent tool for Iran's asymmetric defence. Though, Iraq's current Prime Minister, Ali al-Zaidi, has promised to disarm these militias.

Even as Iraq seems to be fading from the American consciousness, the US remains paramount for Iraq's rulers, who view the US as a pivotal counterweight to Iranian overreach and a critical economic lifeline. Iraq's leadership, be it Shia, Sunni or Kurds, has indicated that there is broad support for the relationship with the US across the political spectrum, even from those with political and economic ties to Iran. Iraq's Shia leaders may have religious and political linkages to Iran, but they also have their own distinct interests. While Iraq's political leaders have not always acceded to US demands, they have made decisions that advanced Iraqi interests, even when those decisions are at the expense of Iranian interests.



THE WALL



BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman



While security vacuums during such transitions between security phases are expected, the fear of a security breakdown resulting from these vacuums is particularly acute in Iraq as the region is characterised by the willingness of countries to use military force as a mechanism for managing a crisis.

Iraq is at the heart of this geographically, due to its location and interactions of armed factions within it and their external role in supporting one side or the other.

Another significant repercussion is the US dismantling its Air Defence (AD) systems in Iraq, particularly the Patriot system. The US has insisted on not providing Iraq with American AD systems under concerns that such equipment would fall into the hands of ISIS or Iranian-backed factions, thus exposing sensitive technology to US adversaries in the region. Further, the US imposes strict conditions on countries importing American AD systems, most importantly that they not be used to threaten allies, which includes Israel and the Gulf states.

But Iraq cannot acquire any alternative AD system, such as the Russian S-300, in order to maintain Iraq's security dependence on the US.

Adding to the complications is the military doctrine upon which the Iraqi Army was formed after 2003. The US aimed to create an Iraqi Army whose sole mission was "combating terrorism" (first al-Qaeda and then ISIS), rather than one that functioned as a national defence force. This reflects in the nature of its armament.



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#THE "FOREVER WARS"



Why US Needs To Remain Engaged

The argument for the US to remain engaged in Iraq is about long-term US strategic interests. For more than a decade, each US President has attempted to pivot to Asia and reduce US focus on the Middle East. But every administration has found itself drawn back as a result of regional crises, whether it was the return of US troops to defeat ISIS, the conflict in Gaza by Israel following Hamas's 07 October 2023 attacks, the US-Israel war with Iran and the latest being the Houthis offensive in Yemen. The fact is that the US has enduring interests in the region that will continue to keep them engaged.

Iraq is directly involved in the equation of the conflict between Iran and both Israel and the US. The Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) factions, most of which are aligned with Iran, follow the doctrine of the Guardianship of the Islamic Jurist in Qom. From them emerged the alliance of the Islamic Resistance in Iraq, including a number of factions most closely linked to Iran and which claimed responsibility for targeting American bases in Iraq and Syria in response to the Israeli war in Gaza.

Recently, Iran-backed Iraqi militias targeted a Saudi pipeline, and they have launched numerous attacks on US personnel and bases in the region throughout the war.

With consistent US engagement and a modest commitment of resources, many analysts felt that the US could use its substantial influence in ways that advance American interests and help reshape Iraq's political orientation in the region away from Iran and more towards Iraq's own interests. That means maintaining an active security partnership and investing economically.

Further, in case the US needs to launch a land offensive into Iran, Iraq is important as it shares a 1599 km border. But the PMF threat to target American assets across the region, if Iraq is used as a staging ground, can lead to an internal civil conflict. Hence, the other argument is that Iraq is already lost to Iran, hence, continued US engagement will yield only limited gains.

Ending the US presence, with its military infrastructure represented by numerous bases, deprives Iraqi armed factions of the opportunity to continue targeting those bases, and also deprives Iran the opportunity of launching missile

and drone strikes against the same bases. It also eliminates the justifications from various factions in Iraq for retaining weapons outside the official state framework. These factions had linked surrendering their weapons to the Iraqi government and relinquishing their independent military and security structures, which in many cases ran parallel to the state's security role with the ending of the US military presence.

Concerns Remain

Whether it was the first Gulf War, the Iraq War, or the fight against ISIS and now, the Iran War, Iraq's stability has always had a broader regional impact. With its 48 million people, strategic location and enormous oil and gas resources, Iraq remains an important player in the region and its stability matters.

The US withdrawal can lead to a major security vacuum that could be exploited by ISIS cells in two areas. The first is the disputed territories between Baghdad and the Kurdistan Region, which lack a security presence from either Iraqi security forces or Kurdish Peshmerga forces, creating security gaps. The second is the Syrian-Iraqi border region.

#THE JOURNEY

Drawers From India to Europe

What are often referred to as "Arab chests" were not manufactured in Arabia, they were produced in India and then exported through Arab trade networks



The history of drawers in furniture is more global and interconnected than it may first appear. While drawers are often associated with European cabinetry of the early modern period, their origins can be traced much earlier, and significantly, to India.

Early Trade and the Role of India

By the 10th century, maritime trade across the Indian Ocean had become highly expansive, with Arab merchants playing a central role. Traders frequently traveled by sea to India, a region renowned for its craftsmanship, textiles, and fine woodwork. These merchants transported goods back to West Asia and beyond using sturdy wooden chests and boxes crafted in India.

These Indian-made chests were not simple storage containers. They were often ingeniously designed, featuring hidden compartments used to store valuables such as jewels, coins, and important documents. The concept of concealed storage reflects both the practical needs of long-distance trade and the

sophisticated craftsmanship of Indian artisans.

Arab Chests and Indian Craftsmanship

Interestingly, what are often referred to as "Arab chests" date back to as early as the 14th century. However, many of these chests were not manufactured in Arabia itself. Instead, they were produced in India and then exported through Arab trade networks. Over time, these chests became associated with Arab regions due to their widespread use and circulation there. Some of these chests already incorporated early forms of drawers or compartmentalized interiors, demonstrating that the idea of segmented storage existed well before it became common in Europe.

Marriage Chests and Decorative Traditions

India also produced elaborately decorated marriage chests, especially between the 16th and 17th centuries. These chests were often richly adorned and served both functional and ceremonial purposes. They were used to store dowries and personal

belongings, symbolizing wealth, status, and familial heritage. The decorative techniques, such as intricate carvings and brass plating, highlight the artistic sophistication of Indian craftsmen. These features would later influence furniture styles beyond the subcontinent.

European Contact and the Spread of Drawers

With the arrival of European trading powers like the Portuguese and the Dutch in the 16th and 17th centuries, the movement of goods, and ideas, intensified. These traders acquired Indian-made chests, many of which featured brass fittings and complex internal structures. As these items were transported to Europe, they began to influence European furniture design. Around the 17th century, drawers started to appear more prominently in European cabinetry. Initially integrated into chests, drawers gradually became a defining feature of furniture, evolving into standalone units such as chests of drawers.

The Growing Importance, and Silence, around Drawers

The increasing use of drawers addressed a growing need for organized storage. As societies became more complex and material possessions increased, furniture adapted to provide better accessibility and categorization.

Yet, despite their importance, the origins of drawers are rarely discussed in mainstream histories of furniture. There remains a certain silence around the non-European contributions to this development, particularly the role of Indian craftsmanship and Indian Ocean trade networks.

