

Iraq's energy crisis

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Who would have thought that in a country built on oil there would

be a full blown energy crisis? Yet that is the situation in Iraq today. Many places get a few hours of electricity a day. When the power comes back on naturally everyone switches everything back on and the grid cannot cope and goes down again. Of course Iraq's energy crisis does not affect everyone, the rich all have their own private generators. Those who suffer most in the 50 degree C heat are the poorest. The reason for the energy crisis. Several fold. The infrastructure is old, dating from the time of Saddam. Another complication is parts of Iraq are under the control of Isis. But the main reason is corruption. Iraq is not on the face of it short of money and major work was supposed to have been started by now on grid renewal. The problem is that money seems to have gone elsewhere. In a bizarre twist I suppose an outcome of the compromise necessary in Iraq's fledgling democracy each ministry is run by a party or group. Not only does this ensure corruption but means that the oil ministry won't sell to the electricity ministry due to unpaid debts. Iraq naturally gets most of its electricity from oil and gas although there is quite a lot of hydro capacity (in theory). The Mosul dam (above) was briefly captured by Isis last year but was recaptured. As an aside its very surprising that Middle Eastern countries are not going for solar in a big way, after all the one thing you guarantee is sunshine and not a cloud in the sky! The reason has got to be political. However the ultimate solution to Iraq's energy crisis is not infrastructure in the first case, but an end to corruption and that is far harder. Neil

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