



المعهد المصري للدراسات
EGYPTIAN INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES

Analyses

29 NOVEMBER
2021

Iraqi Elections (2021) Variables & Future Scenarios

Mohamed Al-Hadithi



WWW.EIPSS-EG.ORG

[f Eipss.EG](https://www.facebook.com/Eipss.EG) [t Eis_EG](https://twitter.com/Eis_EG)

TURKEY- ISTANBUL

Bahçelievler, Yenibosna Mh 29 Ekim Cad. No: 7 A2 Blok 3. Plaza D: 64
Tel/Fax: +90 212 227 2262 E-Mail: info@eis-eg.org

Iraqi Elections (2021): Variables & Future Scenarios

Mohamed Al-Hadithi

Undoubtedly, the latest Iraqi parliamentary elections (2021) have brought about major changes in the Iraqi political reality, given the transformations that accompanied them, in light of the new election law, in addition to the changes of political forces alliances and the emergence of independent candidates for the first time in the Iraqi electoral race after 2005, and the major transformations of election results and the conflicting political stances following them, particularly from the losing forces, and finally the developments in the Iraqi political scene in light of the escalation of differences between the "Coordinating Framework" forces (the losing Shiite political blocs) and other government circles, particularly PM Mustafa Al-Kazemi and the Independent High Electoral Commission.

Within this framework, the paper attempts to identify the Iraqi electoral reality, including the pre-election stage, in addition to the election results and their dimensions, as well as an outlook of key likely scenarios of the future political scene in Iraq.

First: Election variables

The holding of the early Iraqi parliamentary elections on 10 October 2021 was one of the repercussions of the October Uprising that erupted in October 2019 and led to the overthrow of the Adel Abdul-Mahdi government and formation of the Mustafa Al-Kazemi government in mid-2021, where holding early elections was one of the priorities of Al-Kazemi's government within his ministerial program that was ratified by the Iraqi parliament.

The key changes in these parliamentary elections include:

- 1- Change of the election law in favor of the district-constituency system for the first time in the Iraqi elections.
- 2- Banning participation of Iraqis in diaspora in elections, unlike the previous elections since 2003.
- 3- Exclusion of PM Mustafa Al-Kazemi from participation in elections, based on political agreements signed with the Shiite political forces.
- 4- The participation of independent candidates based on the regulations of the new law.

- 5- The participation of the civil and liberal parties and movements that were formed in the wake of the October Uprising, competing with the traditional Islamic forces.
- 6- Banning the participation of the Popular Mobilization Forces in the vote related to the security services.
- 7- Changing the rules of the electoral game due to the new election law.

Second: Election results

The results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections have revealed unexpected surprises at various levels, including the distribution of parliamentary seats among various political forces, and the loss of prominent political figures. However, the most prominent changes on the Shiite side were manifested in the victory of the bloc led by Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr which alone won 73 seats against 17 seats for its direct competitor, the Al-Fateh Alliance, including Iraqi armed forces and factions, and the major loss for the National State Forces Alliance, including former PM Haider al-Abadi and the Hikma Movement led by the Shiite leader Ammar al-Hakim, in addition to the loss of other political currents, such as the National Contract led by the head of the Popular Mobilization Committee, Faleh al-Fayyad, and other Shiite figures such as Bahaa al-Araji, Adnan al-Zarfi and Abdul Hussein Abtan.

On the Sunni political level, the variables included victory of the Taqaddum Alliance, led by Parliament Speaker Mohammed al-Halbousi, which won 37 seats, against 12 seats for the Azm Alliance led by Khamis al-Khanjar. Meanwhile, a large number of Sunni political figures have lost in elections, such as the former Parliament speakers Osama Al-Nujaifi and Salim Al-Jubouri, along with other ministers and MPs such as Salman Al-Jumaili, Qasim Al-Fahdawi, Dhafer Al-Ani, Muhammad Al-Karbouli, Ahmed Al-Masari, Rashid Al-Azzawi and others.

However, the Kurdish arena did not witness major changes, with the exception of the Kurdistan Democratic Party's winning of 32 seats, which strengthens its grip on Kurdish power in Iraq.

In addition, the election results witnessed major surprises, where a large number of independent candidates won in various Iraqi governorates.

The table below shows the results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections compared to the results of previous elections, despite changes in political alliances.

No.	Electoral Alliances	Seats (2018)	Seats (2021)
01	Sadrist Movement	54	73
02	Al-Fateh Alliance	47	17
03	Victory Alliance	42	2
04	State of Law Alliance	26	34
05	Kurdistan Democratic Party	25	32
06	National Alliance	21	-
07	Hikma Movement	19	2
08	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan	18	16
09	Iraqi Decision Alliance	14	-
10	Taqaddum Alliance	-	37
11	Azm Alliance	-	12
12	Independents	-	40
13	Oct. Uprising Alliance	-	15

Third: Analytical Views

Undoubtedly, the results of recent Iraqi parliamentary elections have showed significant changes, in light of a set of considerations, including the election law employment, and the government forces' benefiting from the potentials of the state, as well as the impact of the October Uprising and the external pressure on the Iraqi political scene. In this regard, there is a set of analytical views that can be provided about the results of the Iraqi parliamentary elections (2021), including:

1- Given the role of the Sadrist Movement in dividing electoral districts in proportion to the reality of its societal spread, the movement won 73 seats with about 885 thousand votes, while the National State Forces Alliance, which brings together Al-Abadi and Al-Hakim, won only 4 seats with approximately 235 thousand votes, which explains the great disparity in the rate of votes for winning the seat in the various Iraqi governorates.

2- Depriving the Popular Mobilization Forces of participating in the voting related to the security services was to a large extent behind the loss of the Al-Fateh Alliance, that includes the armed forces and factions in Iraq.

3- The poor turnout of the Sunni component, especially in the Baghdad Governorate, was behind Sunni representatives' loss of several seats, including 4 seats in the Mansour district and 3 seats in the Adhamiya district.

4- The Oct. Uprising affected the electoral race, especially in the governorates of Dhi Qar and Najaf, where the Oct. Uprising movements won 15 seats, where Dhi Qar Governorate witnessed the highest turnout across Iraq, which indicates the significance of participation in elections against boycotting them upon calls from certain political forces.

5- The victory achieved by a large number of independents, about 40 people in different regions, indicates the role of the new election law in changing the Iraqi political reality.

6- The decline in the number of seats of traditional Shiite political forces in the 2021 parliamentary elections compared to the 2018 elections indicates new changes in the Iraqi political reality, especially the rise of secular currents and independents, which poses a political challenge to the influence of the Shiite political component.

7- The decline in the seats of the traditional Shiite forces may lead to the likely emergence of a new Shiite political class that may be in harmony with the Western and regional powers in confronting the Iranian project in Iraq.

8- The fact that the election losing forces announced the existence of a conspiracy involving several internal and external parties to rig elections and change their results, without disclosing any evidence about such conspiracy, will weaken the position of these parties in favor of the position of the electoral commission, and the Iraqi government and its supporters.

Fourth: Scenarios of post-election political scene

There are several scenarios that emerge within the framework of the study and analysis of the Iraqi political scene in the post-parliamentary elections of 2021, as follows:

Scenario 1: Formation of a Consensual Government:

This scenario is likely to emerge in light of the Shiite political forces' agreement to nominate an agreed-upon figure to form the new government, whether a candidate from the Sadrist Movement or

another consensus candidate to represent the Shiite political component or even Mr. Mustafa Al-Kazemi himself. At the same time, it seems that there are no confirmed opportunities until the present time towards forming a political majority government, as the Sadrist Movement demands, given the complexities of the Iraqi political reality.

The opportunities and challenges facing the crystallization of the consensus government scenario are in the light of the following:

Opportunities	Challenges
The Shiite forces' pursuit to maintain power and not to disperse the unity of Shiite political decision	Inability of Mr. Muqtada Al-Sadr and Nouri Al-Maliki to reach an understanding, being the two poles of Shiite political power after the 2021 elections
Fears of thwarting the formation of government and allowing the opposition currents to exploit the situation to start a new protest movement	The inability to unite the Sadrist Movement with the Al-Fateh Alliance within one axis
The effectiveness of the Iranian role in gathering Shiite political forces	Iran's inability to force Al-Sadr to form a consensus government, contrary to its role in the Al-Fateh Alliance and the Rule of Law Alliance
The role of Al-Sistani's authority in determining Shiite interests	The Coordinating Framework forces' rejection of the election results and resorting to threatening to use armed force to achieve political goals
Fears of Shiite-Shiite dispute and chaos in the country	Iran's failure to unite the Shiite political component

Scenario 2: Failure to form a new government and maintaining the Al-Kazemi government:

Realization of this scenario can be envisaged in light of the failure of the Shiite political forces to choose a PM for the new government and accordingly the continuation of Al-Kazemi's government as a caretaker government for an indefinite period, where opportunities and challenges of this scenario are as follows:

Opportunities	Challenges
Shiite forces' endeavor to preserve the unity of the Shiite component	Inability of the Sadrist Movement (that won highest number of seats) to form a political majority government.
Ability of Sistani's authority to gather all Shiite forces in one project	The Shiite political component's inability to reach a consensual figure to form the new government
Success of the Iranian role in unifying the Shiite political position	Failure of the Iranian role to unify the Shiite political decision
Success of the Iranian-American and Iranian-Saudi understandings and the impact of this on the Iraqi political scene	The role of external powers, particularly Western powers, against formation of a government far from their strategic interests.

Scenario 3: Escalation of political crisis and outbreak of chaos

Realization of this scenario can be envisaged in light of the failure of the Shiite political forces to form a new government and failure to agree on continuation of Al-Kazemi's government as a caretaker government, which leads to the outbreak of chaos and dispute between various Shiite forces, especially in light of their affiliate armed factions and groups, where opportunities and challenges of this scenario are as follows:

Opportunities	Challenges
Role of Al-Sistani's authority in rejecting the outbreak of internal dispute.	Failure of the Shiite political forces to form a consensus government
Shiite forces' awareness of the danger of internal dispute and its repercussions on the future of the Shiite political component in Iraq.	Inability to bring together Mr. Al-Sadr and the Coordinating Framework forces in a unified project
Iran's pursuit of securing success of the Iranian-American and Iranian-Saudi understandings, and seeking to impose control over the Iraqi scene	Failure to accept the waiver of previously achieved interests and the use of armed force to defend them.
External forces' keenness on avoiding emergence of a new arena of conflict due to the danger of this on regional security.	Rejection by the Shiite forces, especially the Al-Fateh Alliance, of maintaining Al-Kazemi's government.
The political forces' consent to waive their partial interests to protect the public interest of maintaining power within the Shiite political component in Iraq.	Weakness of Iraqi security and military services compared to the strength of the armed factions.

Conclusion:

There are major changes in the Iraqi electoral process, some of which relate to the new election law, and others relate to the role of the forces that have control over government institutions, as well as the role of political money in elections, and the impact of the October Uprising and external environment variables on the Iraqi political scene.

Accordingly, there are various potentials for the formation of a new government, continuation of the Al-Kazemi government, or the outbreak of chaos, especially after the sit-in of the Fateh Alliance masses and the clashes with the Iraqi security services, as well as the attempt to assassinate Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Kazemi, which contributed to escalation of the political crisis between the government on the one hand, and the Shiite armed forces and groups on the other.

