



Iraqi Election Outcomes

What is the issue?

\n\n

\n

- Elections had recently concluded in Iraq and the Sairoon party under Shia cleric “Muqtada al-Sadr” has emerged as the single largest party.

\n

- Mr.Sadr’s inclusive domestic agenda is comforting, but coalition compulsions and international hostility against him might create political uncertainties.

\n

\n\n

How did the electioneering proceed?

\n\n

\n

- **Sairoon’s Campaign** - Mr. Sadr and his party shed his previously sectarian image and campaigned on social justice and government failure.

\n

- Iran’s deepening influence in Iraq was opposed from a nationalist perspective and alliances were made with liberals and communists.

\n

- **Others** - The incumbent PM Haider al-Abadi’s Victory Alliance based his campaign on the successful war under his leadership against the ISIS.

\n

- The Al-Fatih coalition, who leaders have close ties with the Iranian establishment had campaigned on a pro-Shia agenda. ‘

\n

- Notably, Iraq’s political landscape is critical for Iran in the midst of the current challenges in West Asia and its ongoing tussle with the US (nuclear deal).

\n

- **Result** - Mr. Sadr’s Sairoon bloc emerging as the largest coalition in the 329-member Iraqi parliament, with 54 seats.

- \n
- Mr. Abadi's alliance came third with 42 seats while the pro-Iranian Al-Fatih coalition secured 47.

\n

\n\n

What does the result imply?

\n\n

- \n
- Iraq's parliamentary election results marked a remarkable comeback for Muqtada al-Sadr, the nationalist Shia cleric after many years.
- \n
- Notably, he had been sidelined by the Iraqi establishment and its Iranian backers and was seen as an enemy by the U.S. too.
- \n
- Mr. Sadr's success is largely a surprise and suggests that his inclusive narrative is gaining popularity even as Iraq is still to recover from recurring wars.
- \n
- Electoral success of Sairoon bloc is certainly a good sign for Iraq, but it may not be easy for Mr. Sadr to convert this into a sustained political win.
- \n
- This is because no bloc has absolute majority, and a new government will have to be formed through political negotiation.
- \n
- Considering the political constraints, it is also not clear if the Sairoon bloc will be able to put up its candidate for Prime Minister-ship.
- \n

\n\n

What are Iranian concerns?

\n\n

- \n
- Iran would be wary of Mr. Sadr's rise, as he has been engaging the Saudis lately and is also critical of Iranian interventions in Iraq.
- \n
- Notably, he had also demanded "Iran-trained popular militias" that are fighting the ISIS in Iraq to merge with the Iraqi National Army.
- \n
- Besides, his Iraqi nationalism contradicts the cross-border Shia brotherhood that Iran is trying to promote in order to gain regional influence.
- \n

- However, it is not in Iran's interest to trigger further chaos and aid the growth of violent militant groups.
- Hence, despite the bad blood between them, both sides might possibly find some common ground for rebuilding Iraq.

How does the future look?

- Iraq is a complex multi-sect society that needs to see the rise of cross-sectarian political forces in order to be stable and ensure lasting peace.
- In this context, Mr. Sadr's broad-based politics offers considerable hope.
- Notably, the incumbent PM Mr. Abadi has already offered support for a peaceful transition of power, which is another positive.
- If there isn't too much tampering from outside the borders of Iraq, then the future looks promising for the 1st time since the 2003 U.S. invasion.

Source: The Hindu



IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering
 A Shankar IAS Academy Initiative