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The 2025 Iraqi Parliamentary Election: Results, Dynamics and Implications

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On November 11, 2025, Iraq held its sixth parliamentary elections since the 2003 regime change, representing a critical juncture in the country's democratic experiment. These elections unfolded against a backdrop of persistent sectarian divisions, economic challenges, and competing regional influences. While the electoral process itself proceeded without major disruptions, the results revealed both the resilience and the fundamental tensions within Iraq's political system. This article examines the electoral outcomes, the underlying political dynamics, and the implications for Iraq's governance and regional positioning.

Electoral Results and Distribution

The elections produced a fragmented parliament reflecting Iraq's ethno-sectarian composition. Prime Minister Muhammad Shiy'a' al-Sudani and his newly established party, *al-'I'mar wal-Tanmiya* (Reconstruction and Development), secured the largest bloc with 46 seats out of 329. Former Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki's Dawlat al-Qanun (State of Law) party obtained 28 seats, while former Speaker of Parliament Muhammad al-Halbusi's *Taqadum* (Progress) party won 27 seats. Notably, *Sadiqun*, representing the

'Asa'ib Ahl al-Haq (League of the Righteous) militia and headed by Qais al-Khaz'ali, also secured 27 seats, underscoring the continued political influence of armed groups.¹

The sectarian distribution of seats reveals the structural foundations of Iraqi politics: Shi'i parties collectively won 197 seats, Sunni parties secured 67 seats, Kurdish parties obtained 56 seats, and small minorities (including Turcomans, Christians, Yazidis, and Sabeans) held 9 seats.² This distribution maintains the established pattern of Shi'i numerical dominance while necessitating cross-sectarian coalition-building to form a government.

Voter Turnout and Participation Patterns

Official figures placed voter turnout at 56 percent, a figure that masks significant regional and sectarian variations.³ Paradoxically, participation rates in Kurdish and Sunni provinces exceeded 70 and 60 percent respectively, substantially higher than in Shi'a-majority provinces, including Baghdad, where turnout hovered around 40 percent. This pattern demands explanation, as it contradicts the expectation that Shi'i voters, as the demographic majority and primary beneficiaries of the post-2003 political order, would demonstrate higher electoral engagement.

The primary factor accounting for this phenomenon was Muqtada al-Sadr's call to boycott the elections.⁴ Sadr, who commands substantial support among Iraq's Shi'i population, particularly among the urban poor and disenfranchised youth, withdrew from electoral politics following his party's failure to form a government, despite winning 73 seats in the 2021 elections. His boycott call represented an attempt to delegitimize what he characterized as a corrupt political establishment. Additionally, an informal boycott by secular Iraqis, particularly intellectuals, reflected a deeper disillusionment with the political

¹ [Iraq election commission announces final results, PM bloc winner](#), *Iraq Business News*, November 17, 2025 [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

² [Surge in Voter Turnout in Iraq's Parliamentary Elections](#), *Iraq Business News* November, 12, 2025.

³ "مقاطعون": مقتدى الصدر يجدد موقفه من انتخابات العراق, [Boycotting: Muqtada al-Sadr Renews his Stance on Iraqi Elections] *Al-Hadath*, July 4, 2025 [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

⁴ *Al Mudoon*, "الانتخابات العراقية بين دعوات المقاطعة والمال السياسي", [Iraqi Elections Between Boycotting Calls and Political Profits], November 5, 2025 [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

system and a perception that electoral participation cannot effect meaningful systemic change.⁵

Al-Sudani's Electoral Strategy and Political Positioning

Prime Minister al-Sudani's candidacy for re-election represents a significant departure from recent Iraqi political precedents. He is the first Iraqi prime minister since 2018 to actively seek a second term through the electoral process.⁶ In preparation for the elections, al-Sudani established his own party in 2024 and strategically resigned from the Coordination Framework - the paramount political structure coordinating all - Shi'i parliamentary parties - as well as from his former political mentor Nouri al-Maliki's State of Law coalition. These moves were calculated attempts to position himself as a reformist figure distinct from the established Shi'i political elite.

Al-Sudani's political platform emphasizes economic development, infrastructure improvement, and pragmatic regional diplomacy. His administration has prioritized addressing Iraq's chronic deficiencies in water, electricity, gas supply, and productive capacity. Diplomatically, al-Sudani has sought to insulate Iraq from regional conflicts, particularly the Iran-Israel confrontation and the Gaza conflict. While pressured by the U.S. to assert state control over militia groups, he lacks the political power to disarm or dissolve them entirely. His foreign policy orientation favors a balanced position between Iran and the United States, while strengthening Iraq's integration into the broader Arab regional system.⁷

Electoral results suggest that this platform resonates with a significant segment of Iraq's Shi'i electorate. Al-Sudani won in eight of ten Shi'a-majority provinces, including a decisive victory in Baghdad, securing support from over one million voters. These results

⁵ [Maliki's party nominates him for prime minister...](#) | [Rudaw.net](#), *Rudaw.net*, November 22, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

⁶ [السوداني يؤكد: الولاية الثانية ليست طموحاً شخصياً | وكالة الرأي الدولية](#) [al-Sudani States: The Second Term is not a Personal Wish] *Al-Rai*, November 18, 2025; Al-Khuwa al-Nathifa (3), Facebook, November 18, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

⁷ "[Domestic Fragmentation and Geopolitical Flux Mark Upcoming Iraqi Elections](#)," *New Lines Institute*, November 3, 2025[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

indicate that, contrary to skeptics who view differences among Shi'i politicians as superficial, al-Sudani represents a distinct political trajectory focused on governance and development rather than sectarian mobilization or militia politics.

Fragmentation of the Shi'i Political Bloc

The so-called 'Shi'i House' (al-Bayt al-Shi'i), despite its collective 197-seat majority, is deeply fragmented into competing factions. This internal division constitutes the primary dynamic shaping post-election coalition negotiations. Four major groupings can be identified within the Shi'i bloc: first, the explicitly pro-Iranian militia parties, controlling 51 seats and representing groups with direct organizational and ideological ties to Tehran; second, al-Sudani and aligned minor parties, commanding approximately 70 seats and representing a more nationalist, development-oriented orientation; third, al-Maliki's faction with 28 seats, occupying a position closer to the Iranian pole than al-Sudani but less subordinate than the militia parties; and fourth, the 'Tishreenis,'⁸ representing the 2019-2020 protest movement, who suffered substantially from the various boycotts and have been nearly eliminated from parliamentary representation.

This fragmentation creates both opportunities and constraints for government formation. While Shi'i parties possess a theoretical parliamentary majority, Iraqi political tradition and the logic of consociational democracy⁹ preclude the formation of an exclusively Shi'i cabinet. All previous Iraqi governments have included representatives from all major and minor ethno-sectarian components, adhering to power-sharing principles designed to prevent majoritarian domination and to maintain systemic stability.

Coalition Formation and the Return to the Coordination Framework

On November 17, despite turbulent relations with other members, al-Sudani returned to the Coordination Framework, which subsequently declared itself the largest parliamentary bloc, thereby claiming constitutional priority in nominating the prime ministerial

⁸ This refers to the month (October 2019) in which the popular protests against the government erupted.

⁹ Consociational refers to an inclusive cross ethnic and cross sectarian representative government in which Shi'is, Sunnis, and Kurds govern together.

candidate.¹⁰ This decision represents a pragmatic acknowledgment of the difficulty of establishing a viable coalition without Shi'i institutional support. Al-Sudani and al-Maliki led separate negotiations with non-Shi'i components, each seeking to construct a governing coalition.

Al-Sudani's return to the Coordination Framework presents a paradox: while it grants him access to the supreme Shi'i political institution, it simultaneously diminishes his prospects for renomination, as many Framework members actively oppose his candidacy. On November 22, al-Maliki's party formally nominated him as its candidate for the premiership, establishing him as al-Sudani's primary competitor.¹¹ As a major power broker in Iraqi politics, al-Maliki represents a formidable obstacle to al-Sudani's re-election ambitions.

External Actors: American and Iranian Influence

The formation of Iraq's next government will unfold under significant external pressure, primarily from the United States and Iran. In October 2025, the Trump administration appointed Mark Savaya as special envoy to Iraq.¹² Savaya, an Iraqi-born American without diplomatic or regional expertise, has adopted an activist approach, placing considerable pressure on the pro-Iranian camp through public calls to disarm militias, cease financing terrorism, and terminate Iranian interference in Iraqi affairs. His close relationship with al-Sudani¹³ and his post-election statement congratulating the Iraqi people while reiterating demands for militia disarmament¹⁴ signal American preference for al-Sudani's remaining in office.

¹⁰ ["الإطار" السوداني يعود إلى حضن - DW - 2025/11/18](#) [Looking for a Second Term? al-Sudani Returns to the Arms of the Framework], DW, November 19, 2025 [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹¹ Rudaw, "Maliki's Party Formally Nominates him as Prime Minister after Arriving in Erbil" ["Maliki's party nominates him for prime minister..." | Rudaw.net](#), November 22, 2025 [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹² 964 Media, "Trump names Michigan entrepreneur Mark Savaya special envoy to Iraq, drawing mixed reactions," October 20, 2025, [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹³ Facebook, "U.S. Special Envoy to Iraq, Mark Savaya, visited the Iraqi Prime Minister in Baghdad and shared a video in which Mohammed Shia al-Sudani extended good wishes on his 40th birthday, expressing that he has 'a love for Iraq,'" November 8, 2025, [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹⁴ "Trump Puts Pressure on Baghdad," *The Soufan Center*, February 26, 2025, [Accessed: December 18, 2025].

The Trump administration holds significant leverage in shaping the composition of the next government. The United States can use access to dollars, the threat of sanctions on banks and businesses, and the threat of air strikes on militias to influence the negotiations. Most critically, the United States may exercise a de facto veto over the inclusion of militia parties in the cabinet as ministers or as dominant forces within ministries. Given that control of government ministries constitutes one of the primary funding sources for militia operations, this potential American intervention could fundamentally alter the power balance within Iraqi politics.¹⁵

Iran, conversely, has also expressed satisfaction with the electoral process.¹⁶ Through trusted proxies in Iraq's political elite, Tehran is expected to advocate for the nomination of a pro-Iranian prime minister and actively work to prevent al-Sudani's re-election. Such an outcome would allow Iran to maintain, and potentially strengthen, its influence over Iraqi decision-making. However, if American engagement intensifies as anticipated, Washington will likely counter Iranian efforts, potentially setting the stage for a tug-of-war between the United States and Iran over Iraq's political direction.

Sunni and Kurdish Political Demands

The primary Sunni party, Taqadum, which achieved a landslide victory in Sunni-majority provinces, has articulated specific demands as conditions for participation in a governing coalition. Most significantly, Taqadum demands that its leader, al-Halbusi, be nominated as President of Iraq. Under current political arrangements, the presidency, a largely symbolic position, is reserved for a Kurdish politician, while Sunnis traditionally hold the speakership of parliament. Al-Halbusi has proposed a swap with the Kurds, a change that

¹⁵ "[US special envoy welcomes Iraqi elections as 'crucial step,' reiterates call to end 'armed militias'](#)," 964 *Media*, November 13, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹⁶ "[Iranian ambassador hails Iraq's elections as 'important step' towards 'consolidating democracy'](#)", 964 *Media*, November 12, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

requires Shi'i approval. Al-Sudani opposes this arrangement,¹⁷ while al-Maliki has offered tentatively positive signals.¹⁸

Additional Sunni demands include the release of prisoners held on terrorism charges, resolution of the internally displaced persons crisis (primarily affecting Sunni populations displaced during the conflict with the Islamic State), empowerment of Sunni-majority provinces through enhanced decentralization including control over natural resource exploitation, and mitigation of de-Ba'athification policies that continue to exclude many Sunnis from public sector employment.¹⁹

Kurdish political actors, with Mas'ud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) winning decisively in Kurdish areas, have articulated their own set of demands. Before the elections, Kurdish representatives clearly stated that oil-rich Kirkuk should be placed under their control.²⁰ Following the September 2017 Kurdish independence referendum, Baghdad reasserted control over Kirkuk and substantially reduced the Kurdistan Region's share of the national budget. Baghdad has employed budgetary mechanisms as a disciplinary tool, repeatedly punishing Kurdish autonomy through payment delays and budget reductions, thereby aggravating the Kurdistan Region's economic situation.

The Kurds are expected to demand a larger budgetary allocation and an end to arbitrary payment delays. The most contentious issue concerns ownership and control of oil fields in the Kurdistan Region and contested territories, particularly Kirkuk. The Kurdish Regional Government insists on its right to sell oil independently and retain revenues, a

¹⁷ ["السوداني حول طلب الحلبوسي بمنصب رئيس الجمهورية بدلا من رئاسة المجلس"](#) [Al-Sudani on Halbusi's demand to Have the Presidency of the Republic instead of the Position of Speaker of parliament: I do not see a reason to change the Political Custom as long as it Guarantees the Interests of all the Iraqis], *YouTube* November 2, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹⁸ ["Maliki, Halbousi hold first post-election meeting, urge fast government formation,"](#) *964 Media*, November 17, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

¹⁹ ["Domestic Fragmentation and Geopolitical Flux Mark Upcoming Iraqi Elections,"](#) *New Lines Institute*, November 3, 2025[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

²⁰ ["صوت العراق | مسرور برزاني: مستعدون لإعادة كركوك التي إلى أحضان الوطن!؟"](#) [Masrur Barzani: Ready to Return Kirkuk to the Arms of the Homeland], *Sot al-Iraq*, October 31, 2025,[Accessed: December 18, 2025].

position that Baghdad considers unconstitutional and has sanctioned accordingly. This dispute over resource control and revenue distribution remains a fundamental source of tension between Erbil and Baghdad.

Conclusions

The extensive boycott of these elections reflects fundamental distrust between the Iraqi public and the political establishment. This alienation is particularly pronounced among younger generations, raising the possibility of renewed mass protests similar to the 2019-2020 Tishreen movement. Al-Sudani's relatively modest electoral performance complicates his prospects for re-election. Like his predecessors - Iyad 'Allawi in 2010, al-Maliki in 2014, and Haydar al-'Abadi in 2018 - he may 'win' the electoral contest yet lose the subsequent political negotiations.

The expectation that a small circle of senior politicians, operating under the competing pressures of Iran and the United States, will ultimately determine the identity of the prime minister exemplifies the weakness of Iraqi state institutions and the persistence of elite-dominated decision-making. Coalition negotiations are expected to be protracted and contentious. Meanwhile, a caretaker government under al-Sudani will continue to function, albeit with limited capacity for major policy initiatives.

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