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# Future Scenarios for the Iraqi government formation

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## Authors

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## **The Constitutional Path**

In the previous parliament terms the constitutional path to designate PM was clear ( based on the large parliamentary bloc), but after 2018 elections this tradition has changed and based on this development both Adil Abdul-Mahdi and Mustafa Kadhimi in one term (fourth) following each other have formed government which neither was not majority even had no parliamentary bloc. In this election which is the fifth term, Sadr is insist to select next PM, as he expecting to become number one and in the same time another coalition like al-Fatih, Maliki , Hakim-Abadi are also keen to fill these positions and will compete for it.

## **The Common Political Tradition**

Despite the constitutional path according to the common political tradition after 2005, formation of government initially is the task of the key Shia parties as they are majority and form more half of 329 parliamentary seats and they made this position as their political achievement and history. Shia parties after they reach a deal then invite Sunnis and Kurds to complete the cabinet through dividing other key posts in government. And due to this in the past two terms there have been political divisions within Shia house and new parties emerged among them, therefore making consensus among the majority entity is more difficult than ever which only in this election there are four key Shia political blocs.

## **Wining Majority Seats**

According to the indications formation of new Iraqi government won't be quick because of multi-electoral districts and possibility of independent candidates and small local blocs to win in the south and middle governorates, also the chance and popularity of four key Shia blocs are close to each other, the Sadrists claim to win 100 seats and talk about Sadr PM, but according to others prediction may get half or less than that, even if the Sadrists reach nearly 100 seats still is not normal majority in parliament which is (50+1) and needs 166 seats and even this number is not powerful enough to form government so to make it more secured need about 200 seats, therefore the scenarios to make alliances and coalition government between strong Shia blocs and with including Sunnis and Kurds is more real and practical way to form the government.

## **The PMF Chances**

The key rival of Sadr is the al-Fatih coalition of Popular Mobilization Forces (PMF) which is the political face of PMF forces, for example if this bloc not make deal with Sadrists then is likely the "armed opposition" to be born and this will lead to likely intra- Shia fight and tensions at time that the country suffering from the financial, health crises and consequences of war on ISIS and accumulated crises of modern Iraq, therefore is impossible the government without understanding between Sadr and PMF to be bright.

Is likely that al-Fatih comes out as second in the elections but they claim to be first, they predict many seats but the key issue is that al-Fatih camp is counted on the direct leverage of Iran, so PM from PMF will not be able to deal with US, EU and Arab neighbors of Iraq, especially that now Iraq need support of these external actors to face with financial crisis and impacts of covid, and more importantly to face with ISIS threat as still Iraq does not have air force and is open for any

threats.

## Non-Traditional Scenario

Out of this traditional scenario which is still in place in this election there is another scenario that some of the key Shia, Sunni and Kurdish parties to form new cabinet based on the clear program and persuade protesters to participate in the government which now most of them are out of the election process and boycotted. According to this optimistic scenario the inclusive cabinet will work to limit external and Iranian interference and return national identity to Iraq, first task will be real reform, but within some political parties that have armed wings and militias is not likely they will give up about power and based on most recent protests in October 2019 which they asked for change and reform in the result nearly 600 were killed and thousands injured then covid dispersed protests and their leaders, therefore this scenario not is likely to work.

## Foreign Influence

Despite the internal factors that mentioned above, formation of Iraqi government is not only the internal process within four main Shia balanced blocs, the evidence for that most of them get signals from Tehran and Washington and Najaf Shia authority also lots of influence, therefore only the internal parties and election results cannot decide and there will be foreign shadow as well, and on this line might be Kadhimy has good chance to become PM again as during his presidency smartly he played with foreign cards and built wide network of contacts and support among America, Europe and Arab world even from Iran also he turned Baghdad as point to connect regional rivals, and he is not counted on any camp and on the base of " there is no winner and no loser" among Shia winners may depend on him especially since he has good relations with Sadr and his government program to some extent been accepted particularly by holding early elections, avoid rivalries, and rescue the country from covid and its economic impacts until now. But this scenario to designate Kadhimy is not that easy, especially since that Sader might want his cousin (Ja'afar Sadr) or other people form his front to become PM and there are 7-8 Shia candidates looking for PM position. Despite different level of their chances, based on the past years of political process experiment in Iraq, re-elect PM is not guaranteed as in the past 18 years some of the former PMs such Allawi, Jaafari, Abadi and Abdul-Mahdi did not have the opportunity to regain the post. And Kadhimy has a lot in common with government under Allawi and Abadi.

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