

Where is Iraq Heading under Mustafa al-Kadhimi?

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Introduction

In the past couple months Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi had intense program and activities which held more than 60 meetings inside and out of Iraq^[1] but of course the content and conclusions of these meetings are more important than numbers. Often Kadhimi mentioned that Iraq should have neutral external policy and national one at home. The general condition of the world and Middle East gives good opportunity to him that even if it's for temporary time make a balance and achieve the goal. And when it comes to internal politics although it's early but there is no real change yet.

Al-Kadhimi and Iraqi Crises!

In his cabinet program; reforms, solve financial issues, fight corruption, solve pending issues between Erbil and Baghdad, and make balance in foreign policy are key principals of Kadhimi's government^[2] although practically he cared more about security and political issues. Out of 60 meetings in two months, 22 of them were on foreign policy and other 38 on internal politics which some of them were normal cabinet meetings. And some meetings were with the families of the victims which they can be important for his popularity. And held more than 10 meetings on security issues, visiting police offices and bases. This show that he cares about security-military issues. The accumulated economic and social issues in Iraq require to care more about economic, education and health issues but in his cabinet meetings these are not in priority each issue about 1 or 2 meetings held for and on education no meeting was held yet.

Although we cannot put all the blames on him, because when he took office already there were accumulated issues from nearly two decades. And is early to decide on his performance, but if in the future goes like couple previous months of his rule then he might eventually hand key issues to another candidate.

Foreign Policy: His Success Story?

Iraq is the heart of international and regional conflicts. And its position has given an opportunity to al-Kadhimi that can play on different spots even if it's for a short of period. Recently he went to Iran, then visited the US and after that he went to the Iraq-Egypt- Jordan summit, and then opened door for European and gulf ministers to visit Baghdad. And in next couple months Iraq and Gulf Cooperation Council meeting will take place. He has some active days in foreign policy which will strengthen his position as PM and practically can become useful to Iraq. For example electricity is an issue that linked foreign policy with internal situation of Iraq. The international and regional competition given a good opportunity to Iraq to have more hope to solve its electricity issue with foreign support. American General Electric Company announced that will connect Iraq and Jordan electrical networks.^[3] Iran also emphasized that will build biggest power plant in Basra.^[4] And until 2021 Iran has electricity deal with Iraq. Also now there is plan to connect Iraqi electrical network with the Gulf to receive 500 megawatts.^[5] Turkey is ready to provide electricity to Iraq from the north and for that Turkish ambassador in Baghdad held meeting with Iraqi minister of electricity.^[6]

For other issues such war on terror, increase foreign investment Iraq can follow same steps, until that point if can Iraq practically become neutral among different blocs. The world is in transitional period and for some time Iraq can move between different and rival powers, but the question here for how long the Iraqi internal situation and world allows Iraq to move in this direction?

New Electoral bloc

One of important issues of internal politics is unknown fate of snap election decree and likely formation of new election

blocs. There are political and technical difficulties for the elections and PM said he won't run in the elections, but then said as much as he can will support " the national party"[7] this means that he might be going to create a list. There are different information on PM's move to form a new bloc with some of the Sunni and Kurdish officials that do not have popular support internally. But is not clear whether finally he will do so or this is just a pressure card against current parliamentary blocs?

However key issue in Iraq is not forming a new political bloc. This can deepen Shia intra and even Kurdish intra issue. This might be PM's or anyone else's right to form a bloc, but the main issue in this country is the Iraq's population rate of growth, unemployment, lack of education and accumulated financial, social ,administrative and political issues which there is not clear vision to solve them.

Conclusion

Is not right to expect much from PM Kadhimi to improve general situation of Iraq, end corruption, control weapons in hands of state and settle real federalism and democracy. He has become PM through Shia intra deal and then through consensus between other components of Iraq. And he moves in the direction based on this agreement on him. Therefore before he visited the US he met with Shia leaders and when back he met with them again! Despite that he is objectively accepted by Iran and US. Therefore expecting radical change in the Iraqi political lines is difficult.

Iraq in Kadhimi's era for certain time can benefits from polarization of international politics. But is not a strong indication that can settle key internal issues of the country.

[1]-Data from PM's website period of June 29 to August 29 2020

[2] <https://www.pmo.iq/press2020/6-5-202002.htm>

[3] <https://www.mawazin.net/Details.aspx?jimare=120025>

[4] <https://www.skypressiq.net/2020/8/29/%D8%A7%D8%A8%D8%B1%D8%B2-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%AA%D8%AD%D8%AF%D8%AB-%D8%A8%D9%87-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B3%D9%81%D9%8A%D8%B1-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%A5%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%8A-%D9%84%D8%AF%D9%89-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%B9%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%82-%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%B1%D8%AC-%D9%85%D8%B3%D8%AC%D8%AF%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D9%84%D9%8A%D9%88%D9%85>

[5] -<https://rawabetcenter.com/archives/113591>

[6] -<https://www.turkpress.co/node/71668>

[7] -<https://www.rudaw.net/arabic/middleeast/iraq/2708202017>