# Iraqi Election Outcomes

## What is the issue?

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- Elections had recently concluded in Iraq and the Sairoon party under Shia cleric “Muqtada al-Sadr” has emerged as the single largest party.
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- Mr.Sadr’s inclusive domestic agenda is comforting, but coalition compulsions and international hostility against him might create political uncertainties.
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## How did the electioneering proceed?

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- **Sairoon’s Campaign -** Mr. Sadr and his party shed his previously sectarian image and campaigned on social justice and government failure.
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- Iran’s deepening influence in Iraq was opposed from a nationalist perspective and alliances were made with liberals and communists.
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- **Others -** The incumbent PM Haider al-Abadi’s Victory Alliance based his campaign on the successful war under his leadership against the ISIS.
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- The Al-Fatih coalition, who leaders have close ties with the Iranian establishment had campaigned on a pro-Shia agenda. ‘
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- 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).
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- **Result -** Mr. Sadr’s Sairoon bloc emerging as the largest coalition in the 329-member Iraqi parliament, with 54 seats.
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- Mr. Abadi’s alliance came third with 42 seats while the pro-Iranian Al-Fatih coalition secured 47.
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## What does the result imply?

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- Iraq’s parliamentary election results marked a remarkable comeback for Muqtada al-Sadr, the nationalist Shia cleric after many years.
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- Notably, he had been sidelines by the Iraqi establishment and its Iranian backers and was seen as an enemy by the U.S. too.
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- 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.
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- 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.
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- This is because no bloc has absolute majority, and a new government will have to be formed through political negotiation.
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- Considering the political constrains, it is also not clear if the Sairoon bloc will be able to put up its candidate for Prime Minister-ship.
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## What are Iranian concerns?

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- 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.
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- Notably, he had also demanded “Iran-trained popular militias” that are fighting the ISIS in Iraq to merge with the Iraqi National Army.
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- Besides, his Iraqi nationalism contradicts the cross-border Shia brotherhood that Iran is trying to promote in order to gain regional influence.
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- However, it is not in Iran’s interest to trigger further chaos and aid the growth of violent militant groups.
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- Hence, despite the bad blood between them, both sides might possibly find

some common ground for rebuilding Iraq.
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## How does the future look?

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- 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.
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- In this context, Mr. Sadr’s broad-based politics offers considerable hope.
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- Notably, the incumbent PM Mr. Abadi has already offered support for a peaceful transition of power, which is another positive.
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- If there isn’t too much tampering from outside the borders of Iraq, then the future looks promising for the 1$^{st}$ time since the 2003 U.S. invasion.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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