

# Teim



## TEIM Election Watch Analysis

**OCCASIONAL ANALYSIS:**

**Iraq/ Waiting for a new government**

**Roberto Barroso**

**Latest revision: 12 December 2010**

**Observatorio Electoral**

Taller de Estudios Internacionales Mediterráneos  
Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

[www.election-watch.org](http://www.election-watch.org)

ISSN: being processed

www.observatorioelectoral.es

On 07 March 2010, parliamentary elections were held in Iraq. After a major dispute over the establishment of an electoral law that would satisfy all Iraqi political groups, elections took place with no party scoring an absolute majority. Indeed, the three most voted-for parties obtained less than 25% of the total votes, which greatly hindered the formation of a new government. The "secular" grouping, al-Iraqiya, led by former Prime Minister Iyad Allawi, won 91 of the 325 seats in the House of Representatives. The Rule of Law coalition, led by current Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, won only two seats less, while the list of the Shiite Islamist group, the Iraqi National Alliance won 70 representatives. The remaining seats went to minority groups, mainly Kurdish political parties.

Following more than six months of negotiations between the different stake-holders, Iraq's politicians have not succeeded in forming a government. Initially, experts and political authorities did warn that the process would be long and complicated. But more than half a year after the elections, the political instability and terrorist violence in Iraq continues while an agreement to end the problems facing the state seems difficult.

### ***Why no agreement on the formation of a government?***

The regional situation and the struggle for political power in Iraq among the country's neighbours, as well as the United States, is what has delayed the formation of a majority government. While Saudi Arabia and the major Arab countries of the region have supported the candidate Iyad Allawi (al-Iraqiya), Iran has done the same with the Iraqi National Alliance (INA)<sup>1</sup>. Outside influence thus marginalized to a certain extent the new list created by the incumbent, Shiite leader, Nouri Al-Maliki. To resolve this stalemate, the two major Shiite blocs have met on several occasions since the May elections. However, the known enmity between al-Maliki and Muqtada al-Sadr hindered the formation of a government coalition. Something similar happened in July after discussions between Allawi and the Sadrist leader in Damascus.<sup>2</sup>

According to Article 76 of the new Iraqi constitution, if the majority candidate designated by the President is unable to form a government and see his ministers approved by Parliament within 30 days, a new candidate must be appointed. What this means is that the Prime Minister-elect must have previously formed agreements over ministerial portfolios with the majority of parliamentary political forces in order not to be dismissed if their ratification fails. Many experts see this as being one of the main elements that is delaying the process and consider that this section of the constitution should be amended.

The departure of U.S. combat troops from the country is a further challenge for the fledgling Iraqi democracy. The choice of one Prime Minister or another will influence not only relations with the invader, but also a possible extension of the withdrawal of remaining U.S. military planned for the end of 2011.

Finally, there has, in recent weeks, been something of a rapprochement between Allawi and Maliki – whose relations were broken off by Allawi after Maliki branded the Al-Iraqiya coalition the "Sunni bloc". Meanwhile, the Iraqi National

---

<sup>1</sup> The Iraqi National Alliance (al-Itilaf al-Watani al-Iraqi), formerly known as the United Iraqi Alliance, which gave victory to Al-Maliki in 2005, is formed by mostly Shiite Islamist parties and is supported by Tehran.

<sup>2</sup> Both Nouri Al-Maliki and Iyad Allawi during their terms in office tried to put an end to the Sadrist militia by force.

Alliance has, after six months without naming a candidate, proposed Iraqi Vice-President Adil Abdul-Mahdi as its candidate for the post of prime minister.

### ***A consensus candidate?***

Although initially all the political parties backed a certain amount of change and renewal in the ranks of the government, it seems that in the last few days a consensus has been reached to keep Nouri al-Maliki in power. Even though his bloc came second place in the elections, the incumbent Maliki has unceasingly laboured to remain in office. During the first weeks after the elections, he hinted on several occasions that he still controlled the national army and did not have any intention of giving up power peacefully.<sup>3</sup> Although at first it seemed that it was very unlikely that Maliki would stay as head of the executive, since the recent statement by U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden, it is believed that Iran and the U.S. have reached an agreement over the re-election of Maliki. In addition, it would seem that all of Iraq's Arab neighbours, with the exception of Saudi Arabia, may have given their backing to this decision. Following the visit of Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to Qatar on Monday 06 September, the Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, travelled to Saudi Arabia in an attempt to bring an end to the all out support that Allawi is receiving from Riyadh.<sup>4</sup>

Everything would seem to indicate that after months of uncertainty and waiting, with the end of the month of Ramadan, an agreement could be reached that would ease political tensions in the country. However, one can only wait and see if such an agreement materializes, given the aforementioned constitutional stipulation that it be the most-voted political party, in this case al-Iraqiya, that is charged with forming a government.

---

<sup>3</sup> Alhurriya News: Maliki Refuses to hand over the premiership to someone else, 23 March 2010 (Available at time of publication at: <http://www.alhurriyanews.net/news/18307?language=english>)

<sup>4</sup> Gulf News: U.S. and Iran favour Maliki as Iraq PM six months after polls, 08 September 2010 (Available at time of publication at: <http://gulfnews.com/news/region/iraq/us-and-iran-favour-Maliki-as-iraq-pm-six-months-after-polls-1.678761>)