

THE 2014 ELECTIONS, ISIS OPERATIONS AND THE FUTURE OF IRAQ

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PRESENTATION

Iraq, which was at the center of regional problems in the Middle East politics after the Cold War, was overshadowed by the Syrian crisis that erupted in 2011. Iraq once again has come to the forefront of the regional and international agenda due to several factors, namely the political ambiguity after the 30 April 2014 elections, the sudden advance of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) towards Mosul, ISIS's control in the Sunni regions and its activities in Kirkuk, Diyala and Baghdad.

This study aims to become a reference source for those seeking to understand the current situation in Iraq. It analyzes the political situation in Iraq before the elections, the election results and ISIS's June offensive. Then the report analyzes the background conditions, i.e., the political situation before the elections, as well as their impact on the elections process and the current situation characterized by the ISIS's June offensive. Finally, the report concludes with the short, medium and long term projections about the situation in Iraq and the scenarios regarding the future of Iraq.

This report is based on an analysis of the literature, the field trips by ORSAM researchers and the analysis of the results of the workshop, "The Future of Iraq after the 2014 Elections," which was organized by ORSAM, with the participation of academics and specialists from Iraq on 13 June 2014. Therefore, the issues that are debated in Iraq are also covered in this report, conveying the Iraqi people's and intellectual's opinions.

I would like to point out that this report presents important observations and data about Iraq, also stressing the point that Iraq's stability is very important for Turkey and the Middle East.

Şaban Kardaş
ORSAM President

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I. THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN IRAQ BEFORE THE ELECTIONS

Before the elections on 30 April 2014, the political situation in Iraq had acquired complex and chaotic characteristics. Pre-election environment influenced the election process and the developments afterwards in a negative way. Nevertheless, the developments such as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria's (ISIS) advance towards Mosul, Kirkuk, Salahaddin, Al-Anbar and Baghdad reheated the debate about the future of Iraq. Analyzing this process and tackling the expectation about Iraq is as important for Turkey and the Middle East as it is for Iraq. Accordingly, this report includes projections and assessments about the pre-elections political conditions in Iraq, the election results and the future of Iraq after the advance of ISIS.

1.1 The Political Situation in Iraq Before the Elections

The 2014 elections clearly exposed the degree of the political polarization in Iraq. This development, which was initially observed in the 2010 General Elections, crystallized in the 2013 Provincial Elections and became apparent just before the 2014 general elections. The Iraqi politics, which was shaped along clear-cut sectarian and ethnic identities after 2003, did not demonstrate similar characteristics before the 2014 General Elections. However, the ISIS operations have, once again, put the ethnic and sectarian differences at the center of the Iraqi politics. This chapter focuses on the distinct

characteristics of the Iraqi politics before the elections; while the next chapter tackles the resurgence of the ethnic and sectarian politics after the ISIS operations.

The Iraqi politics from 2003 to 2010 was mostly about the polarization between the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. It had taken a new direction toward the 2010 General Elections, during which the Sunnis formed the Iraqiyya Coalition and the Shiites were divided into two groups, the State of Law Coalition under Nouri al-Maliki, and the National Iraqi Alliance under al-Sadr-al-Hakim Alliance. Even though these Shiite groups had come together after the elections, the gap between them has crystallized in the 2013 Provincial Elections. Other groups, especially the Sunni groups, have experienced political divisions as well.

The process of deepening divisions among the political groups was observed before the 2014 General Elections as well. Even the Kurds, who pursued a unified policy beyond the borders of the Iraqi Kurdish Regional Government (KRG), suffered from it. The Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), which used to pursue a common policy in Baghdad, formed separate lists for the elections. Therefore, these were the first signs of the transformation of the Iraqi politics, which had been determined by ethnic and sectarian differences between the Shiites, Sunnis and Kurds. Nevertheless, the ethnic and sectarian

polarization and identity politics still had a potential to influence political processes.

The political parties, regardless of the factions they belong to, promoted their ethnic or sectarian identities and failed in giving the impression of a national party. That is because, these factions seek to boost influence at the local level and establish dominance. In other words, political parties from each ethnic and sectarian group move away from each other in their own pursuit of local influence in the places where their own group has the majority. Therefore, the political groups, while maintaining the priority for their own ethnic and sectarian identity, pursued common cause with other ethnic and sectarian groups before the 2014 General Elections, in order to gain power and leverage against their local rivals. This situation also signifies the importance of the local politics in Iraq. Thus, after the Cabinet decision to give Tal Afar and Tuz Khormatou the status of governorate in January 2014, the political outlook in Iraq proved that the Iraqi political culture that was based on the relationship between local and national politics and ethnic and sectarian identity was still effective.

Whereas the Speaker of Council of Representatives of Iraq Osama al-Nujaifi, who bids for the leadership of the Sunnis, opposed the decision, declaring that this was a decision against Sunnis and aims to oppress the Sunnis, Nouri al-Maliki supported the decision. For this reason, Osama al-Nujaifi and approximately 40 deputies withdrew from the parliament meetings. As a result, the period before the elections witnessed the cooperation of diverse ethnic and sectarian groups for boosting local influence, while ethnic and sectarian concerns continued to prevail.

1.2. Political Violence and ISIS Activity in the Pre-Election Period in Iraq

Non-political factors had a substantial influence on the Iraqi politics in the period before the elections. Especially, the developments about security have negative influence on the Iraqi politics. Al-Qaida and its affiliates' increasing activity in Iraq, in addition to the rising politi-

cal violence for the last year, affected Iraq both before and after the elections. The increasing activity of ISIS in both number and extent created extra difficulty for the Iraqi government. Moreover, the loss of government control in Ramadi, Fallujah and Tikrit created further complications for the government just before the elections. The developments in Fallujah and Ramadi during the last six months before the elections adversely affected the government's ability to exercise its authority. ISIS captured and held some portions of these provinces while the government lost its control. Local tribes and the government forces tried to fight against ISIS. In addition, the spread of the clashes in Fallujah and Ramadi paved the way for the advance of ISIS in June 2014. Thus, the government forces lost the district of Sulaymanbeg in Salahaddin (Tikrit) to ISIS forces. Iraqi Prime Minister Maliki forcefully reacted to these developments in order to gain an advantage before the elections. However, his actions invoked the sectarian tension in Iraq and some Sunnis were held responsible. The Sunnis, in turn, claimed that Maliki used ISIS as a pretext for establishing control in the Sunni regions.

In December 2013, in an operation in al-Anbar, Iraqi Deputy Ahmed Alvani was arrested; his brother and guards were killed. The operation, which was conducted based on the allegations about Alvani's al-Qaida affiliation, caused tensions in al-Anbar. After the operation, ISIS increased its activity in the districts of Ramadi and Fallujah, and it almost controlled these two districts. Then the Iraqi government conducted large scale operations against ISIS. It is obvious that there is a significant security gap in Iraq. The government sought to recruit some of the tribes in al-Anbar against ISIS; however it was not very successful. It created problems among the tribes. Besides, in the ongoing protests in al-Anbar, which lasted for almost two years, some tribes came over to the government's side, thus the tribes faced a split among themselves. The operations in al-Anbar shifted the local actors and balance among them. The parties in the al-Anbar operation are ISIS, the government and the tribes. The internal balance of the tribes was broken as well. Some of the tribes supported ISIS, while others were pro-

government. There was also a third group of tribes, which do not support either side. It was well known that autonomous tribes started to organize “Anbar Tribes Revolutionary Military Council.” Prominent Sunni tribes, which organized the strongest resistance against the USA during the invasion of Iraq, were involved in this military group. This council was strong in some provinces and districts such as Fallujah, Qaim and al-Anbar, and it sought to get organized in Baghdad, Mosul and Salahaddin.

In 2012, ISIS primarily targeted the Shiite regions. Back then, Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki launched military operations against ISIS, which had some success in eliminating it temporarily. ISIS, facing strong pressure from the security forces, adopted a new strategy, opting for “territorial dominance” in the Sunni regions, such as Mosul, Tikrit and al-Anbar. In accordance with its strategy for “territorial dominance”, ISIS constantly and systematically attacked Iraqi Central Government’s security forces.

The unstable security situation, as well as the political problems, adversely affected the election process. ISIS intensified its violent attacks. It carried on its extensive activities in Mosul, Salahaddin, Diala, al-Anbar and Baghdad, and especially in some districts of Mosul, Fallujah, Ramadi and the Hawija district of Kirkuk, it caused problems on the election day and prevented people from voting.

There were three main issues that posed problems for political parties and groups. The elections process was strained after the members of the Independent High Electoral Commission (IHEC) resigned and then withdrew their resignation. There were also discussions about postponing the elections. In this context, the IHEC canceled the candidacy of the former Minister of Finance Rafi Isavi, Haydar Molla, Selim Juburi and Cevad Shuheydi, on the grounds that these people have several lawsuits and verdicts against them. This decision caused a political turmoil and the IHEC faced pressures. A decision by the Iraqi Parliament on 19 March 2014 increased the pressure on the IHEC. This decision was about the election law and it decreed

that the IHEC cannot cancel the candidacy of someone who does not have a finalized court verdict. Therefore, the IHEC faced political pressure for the return of the candidates that it had cancelled. Then, the IHEC members resigned from their posts due to the political pressure and the breach of the IHEC code that the Parliament decree had caused. In this process, Serbest Mustapha Reshid, the IHEC President, spoke with Osama al-Nujaifi. Nujaifi promised him a legal immunity law for the IHEC members. In response, the IHEC members withdrew their resignation. However, the Council of Representatives of Iraq has not started working on a legal immunity law for the IHEC members.

As the violent attacks in Iraq increased, the casualty rates were going up as well. Attacks against the candidates caused difficulty for the election process. Hence, ISIS distributed leaflets in Sunni towns, threatening them not to attend the elections. Therefore, there have been difficulties in ensuring voter turnout. Besides, the Iraqi army clashed with the Iraq Revolutionary Military Council in the south of Baghdad. These clashes worsened the security situation. The clashes between the Army, ISIS and the tribes had a negative multi-dimensional impact on security. At the same time, the sectarian violence has kept going. Just before the elections, thirty three Sunnis were killed in the Buhriz district of Diala allegedly by the Asa’ib Ahl al-Haq militias, who were organized by Kays Hazali among the former militias of the Mahdi Army, the defunct military organization of Muqtada al Sadr.

1.3. Arbil-Baghdad Disagreement

In the run up to the elections, the Kurdish politics was undergoing its most complex period after 2003. The Kurdish political groups in Iraq were experiencing a difficult period, because, first of all no new government was formed after the elections on 21 September 2013. When the provincial elections took place on 30 April 2014 in the KRG areas along with the general elections, the PUK under Jalal Talabani was experiencing internal problems. Besides, the disagreement between the KRG and the Iraqi central government on the issues of budget and

energy deals reached a critical stage before the elections. The Kurdish groups, which have been pursuing an integrated policy after 2003 in the Iraqi politics to the extent possible, were facing an inner confrontation for the local politics, which influenced the Iraqi politics. The *de facto* end of the KDP-PUK strategic alliance signified the transformation of the Kurdish internal politics. The emergence of the Gorran movement as a new actor in the Kurdish politics affected both the Kurdish and Iraqi politics. Faced with the rise of the Gorran, the PUK started to fall, since the Gorran was formed by former PUK members and shared the same electoral base. The ambiguity of Jalal Talabani's health and the leadership problem in the PUK created further difficulties. The PUK attended the elections, while it was still having an internal struggle for leadership. The KDP had emerged as the strongest actor within the KRG before the elections. Therefore, the KDP's aims and interests beyond the KRG were framed as the KRG's aims and interests. This was most evident in the issue of energy deals, which was the most controversial issue between Arbil and Baghdad.

The KRG's independent moves about the strategic issue of energy and its efforts for extending its sphere of influence in political and geograph-

ic dimensions caused tensions with the Iraqi central government. The tension, sometimes, gave way to military showdowns. Arbil and Baghdad had been holding talks on the issue of oil exports from the north of Iraq, however; they reached no conclusion. Although, there were rumors in February 2014 that the KRG accepted oil exports through SOMO, the Iraqi oil company, Safin Dizai, the KRG spokesman, told that they declined that offer and insisted that the KRG oil company must be authorized for oil exports. Therefore, there was no conclusion about the oil issue between the KRG and the Iraqi central government. Meanwhile, Arbil started to export its oil to the international market via Turkey. Even though a deal could have been reached inside Iraq about oil deliveries, there remained still an ambiguity concerning which banks were going to be involved in transferring the oil income. The KRG wanted to export the oil from Turkey and favored that the oil income should be transferred to itself via Turkish banks. However, the USA opposed that and wanted to include the US banks in the process, claiming that Iraq was still under the United Nations control. Since the issue has a multidimensional characteristic, it was hard to reach a resolution for the disagreement. As these developments



took place in the context of the election process and the ISIS operations after the elections, the energy deals problem were somehow relegated to secondary importance.

1.4. The Budget Crisis

One of the most important agenda items in Iraq has been the disagreement over the budget, while the country was having a political tension. The Council of Representative of Iraq was unable to pass the budget law before the 30 April 2014 elections. The Council had convened for the first reading of the budget law; however the quorum for the second meeting was not available. A trilateral committee was formed for overcoming the budget crisis, in which Haider al-Abadi, the head of the State of Law Coalition and the Committee of Finance in the Iraqi Parliament, Fuad Masum, the head of the Kurdistan

Alliance group, and Adnan al-Janab, the head of the Iraqiyya group, took part. The committee held talks with political parties, but produced no result and was disbanded. Thus, the Parliament meeting of 6 April 2014 was postponed until there was an agreement over the budget. Almost all political parties and groups utilized the budget crisis in order to gain political advantage. Osama al-Nujaifi, who sought to play a leadership role of the Iraqi Sunnis decided to boycott the Parliament meetings because of the government operations in al-Anbar. Besides, the Kurds had not joined the Parliament sessions, believing that the budget law had some articles that hindered the oil exports of the KRG. Furthermore, the KRG and the Iraqi central government ran into a political crisis over the amount of money to be transferred to the KRG from the budget and the issue of authority about the KRG's oil exports.

II. THE ELECTIONS IN IRAQ AND THEIR AFTERMATH

2.1. The Election Process and the Results

Iraq had general elections on 30 April 2014. In Iraq's eighteen provinces, 48,796 voting stations were established within 8,083 voting centers for 21,503,875 voters. Besides, voting centers were established in nineteen countries, including Turkey, for the expatriate Iraqis. Nine thousand thirty one candidates competed for the parliament's 328 seats. The number of female candidates was 2,607, while the male candidates numbered 6,424. Eight seats were reserved for

the minorities under the ethnic and religious quota. Accordingly, the Christians had 5 seats (1 for Kirkuk, Mosul, Baghdad, Duhok and Arbil), the Yazidis and the Shabaks each had 1 seat for Mosul, the Sabeans had 1 seat for Baghdad. The IHEC declared the voter turnout as 60.5% for the 30 April 2014 General Elections. The table below shows the number of the electors, the number of the voting electors, and the voter turnout per governorate.

Chart 1 The Distribution of Parliamentary Seats According to Governorate, Gender and Candidate Numbers

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PARLIAMENTARY SEATS ACCORDING TO GOVERNORATE, GENDER AND CANDIDATE NUMBERS												
	Governorates	Number of Deputies	Out of Quota	Minority Quotas	Christian	Shabak	Yazidi	Sabean	Quotas	Total Candidates	Male Candidates	Female Candidates
1	Arbil	16	15	1	1				4	139	98	41
2	Anbar	15	15						4	272	190	82
3	Basra	25	25						6	777	560	217
4	Sulaymaniyah	18	18						5	155	110	45
5	Al-Qadisiyyah	11	11						3	394	282	112
6	Muthanna	7	7						2	158	114	44
7	Najaf	12	12						3	301	220	81
8	Babil	17	17						4	573	413	160
9	Baghdad	71	69	2	1			1	17	3304	2316	988
10	Dohuk	12	11		1				3	89	62	27
11	Diala	14	14						4	296	209	87
12	Thi Qar	19	19						5	651	471	180
13	Salahaddin	12	12						3	227	163	64
14	Karbala	11	11						3	306	221	85
15	Kerkük	13	12	1	1				3	314	226	88
16	Meysan	10	10						3	204	150	54
17	Nineveh (Mosul)	34	31	3	1	1	1		8	457	322	135
18	Wasit	11	11						3	414	297	117
	Total	328	320	8	5	1	1	1	83	9031	6424	2607

Graph 1 The Basic Data About the 2014 Iraq Elections

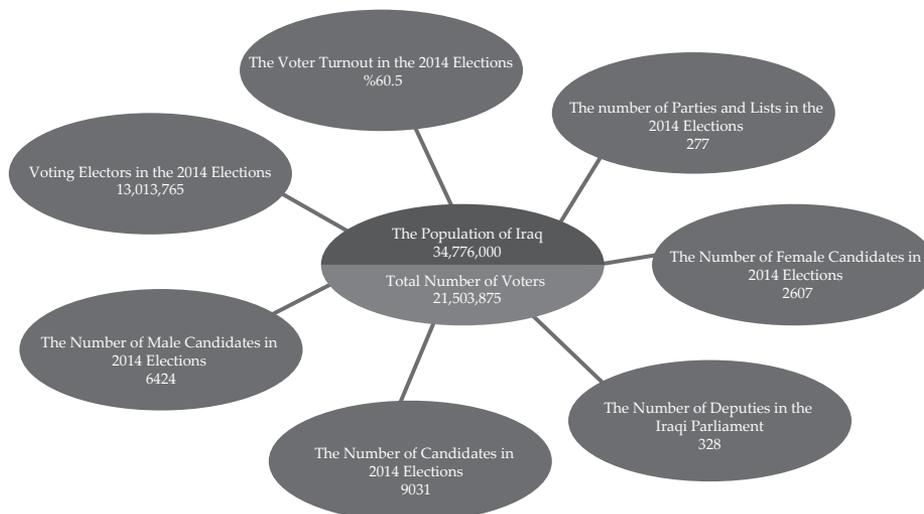


Chart 2 The Number of Electors and Voting Electors in the 2014 Iraq Elections

Governorate	Standard Elector Count	Electors Voting via Letters	Electors Count in Special Voting	Total	Voting Elector	Voter Turnout (%)
Al-Anbar	893,362	527	63,806	957,695	372,610	38.9
Babil	1,041,989	41	30,862	1,072,892	749,173	69.8
Baghdad	4,904,057	496	273,217	5,177,770	2,821,919	54.5
Basra	1,611,794	62	63,651	1,675,507	1,006,533	60
Dhi Qar	1,075,824	34	35,585	1,111,443	729,035	65.6
Diala	887,479	186	53,525	941,190	560,300	59.5
Dohuk	612,065	22,071	29,370	663,506	490,452	73.9
Arbil	971,195	976	81,793	1,053,964	744,489	70.6
Karbala	617,846	202	25,319	643,367	445,458	69.2
Kirkük	841,297	288	35,697	877,282	570,759	65
Maysan	605,031	27	32,951	638,009	372,839	58.4
Muthanna	419,471	19	19,393	438,883	290,139	66.1
Najaf	768,519	186	27,789	796,494	558,584	70.1
Nineveh	1,912,461	172	86,582	1,999,215	987,791	49.4
Al-Qadisiyyah	662,708	81	20,088	682,877	484,624	70.9
Salahaddin	769,572	68	44,489	814,129	440,807	54.1
Sulaymaniyah	1,168,460	901	71,152	1,240,513	893,226	72
Wasit	690,566	13	28,560	719,139	495,027	68.8
TOTAL	20,453,696	26,350	1,023,829	21,503,875	13,013,765	60.5

Graph 2 The Voter Turnout in the Governorates in the 2014 Iraq Elections



Along with the parliamentary elections, the local elections were held in the KRG. As of 19 May 2014, the IHEC has announced the official

results of the elections. The official election results are given in the table below.

Chart 3 The Official Number of Deputies in the 2014 Iraq Elections

	GROUP	NUMBER	VOTE COUNT	NUMBER OF SEATS
1.	State of Law Coalition (Nouri al-Maliki)	277	3,141,835	92
2.	Al Muwatin Coalition (Ammar al-Hakim)	273	982,003	29
3.	Al Ahrar Coalition (Muqtada Al-Sadr)	214	917,589	28
4.	KDP	213	852,198	19
5.	PUK	266	789,519	19
6.	Al Wataniyya Coalition (Ayad Allawi)	239	686,017	21
7.	Muttahidoon (Usama al-Nujaifi)	259	680,690	23
8.	Gorran	234	451,858	9
9.	Al Arabiya Coalition (Salih al-Motlaq)	255	315,858	10
10.	Al-Fadhila and Independent Elite Coalition	219	211,257	6
11.	National Reform Alliance (Al Jaafari)	205	192,763	6
12.	Nineveh Kurdistan Alliance	243	185,804	6
13.	Kurdistan Islamic Union	274	165,856	4
14.	Diala is Our Identity Coalition	246	159,605	5
15.	Iraq Coalition	262	153,672	5
16.	Kurdistan Islamic Group	237	137,504	3
17.	Elites Movement	251	116,268	3
18.	Civil Democratic Alliance	232	112,563	3
19.	National Partnership Gathering	269	110,933	3
20.	National Nineveh Alliance	227	79,071	3
21.	Kirkuk Turkmen Front List	280	71,492	2
22.	Iraqi Loyalty Coalition	211	67,796	2
23.	Competences and People Gathering	230	67,084	2
24.	Kurdistani Peace List	258	61,807	2
25.	Anbar Loyalty Coalition	271	58,994	3
26.	Iraq Sons Unity	233	46,627	2
27.	National Alliance of Salahaddin	249	46,039	1
28.	Independent Civil Alternative Coalition	209	41,090	1
29.	Kirkuk Arab Coalition	242	38,328	1
30.	Karama	286	36,288	1
31.	Al-Sadiqoun Bloc	218	36,026	1
32.	Equitable State Movement	202	31,973	1
33.	Islamic Dawa Party – Iraq Organisation	261	27,515	1
34.	National Coalition in Salahaddin	222	26,910	1
35.	Solidarity in Iraq	283	26,013	1
36.	Al Rafidain List	300	24,353	2
37.	Chaldean Syriac Assyrian Popular Council	302	23,781	2
38.	Khalas Coalition	254	18,229	1
39.	Yazidi Movement for Reform and Progress	291	14,910	1
40.	National Warkaa' List	299	12,626	1
41.	Hareth Shanshal Sunaid al-Harithi (Independent)	295	7,194	1
42.	Shabak Ahrar Council	293	3,375	1
	TOTAL		11,231,313	328

However, the official results might be misleading, considering that each group and coalition formed different alliance in different cities, the candidate a group supported might have won a seat, though he might not carry the group's affiliation. Therefore, the actual distribution of seats in the parliament was be different. For

example, the State of Law, al Muwatin and al Ahrar competed separately in the southern provinces; however they formed the National Nineveh Alliance in Mosul and won three seats. Al Muwatin and State of Law each won one seat in this governorate. Accordingly, the distribution of seats in the parliament is below:

Chart 4 The Number of Deputies according to the Principal Distribution in the 2014 Iraq Elections

Coalition	Number of Deputies
State of Law Coalition	94
Al Muwatin	32
Al Ahrar	28
National Reform Alliance	6
Muttahidoon	26
Al Arabiya	12
Al Wataniyya	21
Al-Fadhila and Independent Elite Coalition	6
KDP	25
PUK	21
GORRAN	9
Kurdistan Islamic Union	4
Kurdistan Islamic Group	3
Iraq Turkmen Front	3
Iraq Sons Unity	2
Islamic Dawa Party – Iraq Organisation	1
Competences and People Gathering	2
Iraqi Loyalty Coalition	2
National Partnership Gathering	3
Solidarity in Iraq	1
Civil Democratic Alliance	3
Al-Sadiqoun Bloc	1
Anbar Loyalty Coalition	3
Khalas Coalition	1
Karama	1
Elites Movement	3
Independent Civil Alternative Coalition	1
Iraq Coalition (Free Iraqiyah)	5
Equitable State Movement	1
Minority Quotas	8
Total	328

According to the election results, the State of Law Coalition of Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki won the elections with 94 parliament seats. Maliki outran its nearest rival, Al Muwatin Coalition, which won 32 seats, by 62 more seats. Therefore, it was expected that Nouri al Maliki would have a stronger advantage in the government formation process, compared to the 2005 and 2010 elections. At this point, political bargains were expected to be influential before the government formation process. After the Iraqi Supreme Federal Court approved the election results, the President would gather the parliament and hold voting in the first session for the Parliament speakers in 15 days. Accordingly, the Iraq Supreme Federal Court ratified the election results on 16 June 2014. After this decision, even if the parliament convenes, political bargaining is likely to go on during the first session of the parliament. For instance, after the 2010 elections, it took 9 months to form the government. Besides, the increasing activity of ISIS is likely to cause the government formation process to drag on.

The government needs to have the consent of 165 deputies in order to be officially formed. Therefore, it is not possible for any group to form the government by itself. The State of Law Coalition of Prime Minister Nouri al Maliki is going to start the government formation process. According to the Constitution of Iraq, the President has to appoint the group with the biggest number of seats, for government formation. However, after the 2010 General Elections, in spite of the fact that Nouri al Maliki's State of Law Coalition took the second place with 89 seats after al Iraqiyya Coalition, which had won 91 seats, Maliki made alliance with the other Shiite parties and was eventually tasked with government formation. Considering the election results, it is expected that Maliki will start the government formation process. Therefore, Maliki has advantages for political bargaining. Although Muqtada al Sadr's group (Al Ahrar), the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (Al Muwatin) and Iraq National Reform Alliance (Al Jaafari) joined the Maliki government after 2010, in reality they acted as opposition forces. Now they are unable to reach the number of Maliki's seats in the parliament, even when all three are

combined. This situation is advantageous for Maliki.

Another important factor is the Kurds' attitude in the government formation process. It took almost 9 months after the KRG Parliamentary elections on 21 September 2013 that the government formation process in the KRG came to an end. The PUK's attitude had a determining effect in this process. Despite the tension between Massoud Barzani and Nouri al Maliki, it was known that the PUK has good relations with Maliki. The KDP and the PUK held the same number of seats in the parliament. However, the KDP has the advantage, because it is able to manipulate the Kurds in other groups and the minorities. Therefore, considering other groups' cooperation, the KDP reached 25 seats in total, while the PUK reached 21. The Gorran group, the Kurdistan Islamic Union and the Kurdistan Islamic Group declare that the Kurds should work together in Baghdad. Therefore, it is expected that the Kurdish parties will set a common attitude in the Baghdad politics.

The Turkmens have preserved their seat count from the previous period. They had 10 seats in the 2010 elections. They have 10 seats after the 2014 elections as well. Unlike the 2010 elections, the Turkmens do not have a deputy for Diala in the new parliament. However, they managed to get three deputies from Salahaddin, which is considered a surprise. In Kirkuk, the Kirkuk Turkmen Front, formed by the Iraqi Turkmen Front, gained approximately 71,000 votes and acquired 2 deputies. It is important for the Turkmens that they have 2 deputies from Kirkuk.

Nouri al Maliki also had advantages against the Sunni groups. The Muttahidoon group of Osama al-Nujaifi, who has ambitions for the leadership of the Sunnis, was unable to perform successfully and acquired only 26 seats. Ayad Allawi, who led the al Iraqiyya list to victory in the 2010 elections, won only 21 seats with its al Wataniyya group. However, Allawi has surpassed the Muttahidoon list, considering the total vote count. Besides, al Arabiyya Coalition, Saleh al Motlaq's list, had approximately 350,000 votes and 12 seats. Saleh al-Motlaq and



other small groups were expected to join Maliki in the government formation process, therefore the Sunni parties' expectations for the government will not be met. Besides, there are signs for cooperation among other Shiite groups. Short after the elections, a delegation consisting of representatives from all the Shiite parties went to Iran. They initiated meeting for government formation and sought a ground for agreement. On the condition that they reach an agreement for cooperation, the government might be formed much earlier.

Two points deserve attention in this context. It will be crucial that the bargaining over the President and the Parliament speaker posts is to be ended before government formation. There is a serious contest about these posts and the bargaining for government formation will be entwined with the bargaining about these posts. It is a point of discussion that the Presidency will be granted to the Kurds once again. The Sunnis and even some Shiites insist that the Presidency post must be given to the Arabs, since a Kurdish president is not appropriate for the country, which is a member of the Arab League. There-

fore, the debates for the presidency will cover a bigger part of the government formation process. Also, the Shiite groups do not favor Nourial Maliki for his third term of Prime Ministry. Therefore, another important point is the reactions of the Shiites for the candidate that Maliki will propose. Besides, they need to include members from other political groups in the new government, in order to nullify the criticism that the Shiites –and Maliki in particular- seek to establish a monolithic political structure in Baghdad. It is possible that a complex government structure will emerge. However, it will not be a national unity government, in which all the political groups in the Council of Representatives will be included. Therefore, small groups will play a major role in the government formation process. As the results show, 42 political parties and groups entered the Council of Representatives. This situation may drag on the government formation process.

In conclusion, there is a complex period ahead for Iraq. There are important problems about the Presidency and the Parliament Speaker's Office in the government formation process, as

well as the discussions about whether the Shiites will be able to form an alliance and whether Maliki will be Prime Minister again. For the Sunnis, the important point is whether the elections will be capable of bringing the Sunnis together, which will affect the political future of the Sunnis in Iraq. If the Kurds adopt a joint approach in Baghdad, the KRG domestic politics might enter a *détente* period. For the Turkmen, the most important issue is whether the Turkmen deputies, who are elected in five different lists, will act together in Baghdad, under a common Turkmen identity. It is crucial for the future of the Turkmen that they work together in Baghdad for the issues that concern the Turkmen and seek to promote Turkmen interests in their own political groups.

2.2. The Mosul Operation of ISIS and the Future of Iraq

While Iraq was in the government formation process after the elections on 30 April 2014, it was shocked by the capture of Mosul by ISIS on 6 June 2014. ISIS moved to Kirkuk after capturing Mosul and its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared that they intend to capture Baghdad. Accordingly, ISIS entered the city of Tikrit, the center of the Salahaddin governorate, Sulaymanbeg, Shirgat, Baiji and then headed towards the Dala governorate bordering Iran. It captured Baquba, the center of Dala, sought to enter Samarra and clashed with the Pashmarga and the Iraqi Army in Hanaqin and Jalaula. However, Baghdad is not as easy a target as the other cities. Yet, Nouri al-Maliki, being aware that it is not possible to face ISIS on a multitude of fronts, focused his efforts on protecting Baghdad. He also asked other countries, especially the USA and Iran, to help fight against ISIS. The USA has deployed a warship to the Persian Gulf in order to provide arms and logistic support for the Iraqi government. Iran declared its support to the Iraqi government for the protection of sacred Shiite sites. Currently, ISIS controls a large swath of territory in the Sunni-populated regions. For this reason, Maliki does not want to lose the control of the Shiite-populated regions and seeks to prevent ISIS from moving there.

ISIS was known as the Islamic State of Iraq before the civil war in Syria. Then it entered Syria. It declared "jihad" and changed its name to the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Al-Dawla al-Islamiyya fi'l Iraq esh-Sham). Its aim is establishing an "Islamic State" in Iraq and Syria. At this stage, ISIS carried on its activities in both Iraq and Syria, despite al-Qaida, which rejected the merger of the Iraq and Syria branches of ISIS. ISIS increased its activity in Iraq by 2012 and the summer of 2013, and controlled Ramadi, Fallujah and Qaim in al-Anbar. After long clashes, the Maliki government gained the upper hand but couldn't acquire the total control of the provinces. Maliki transformed its timely move against ISIS to a political advantage just before the elections. The State of Law Coalition's victory in the elections provided Maliki with an advantage in the government formation process.

However, Maliki's dominance in the government formation process disturbs particularly the Sunnis. The Shiites are growing restless about it as well. When Maliki announced that he would form a majority government if needed, the political tension in Iraq further increased. The Sunnis perceived a threat of exclusion from the political process.

It seems that Maliki lost its confidence as a result of the Mosul operation of ISIS. The Iraqi army's and security forces' dramatic inability against ISIS in Mosul, Kirkuk and Tikrit invoked criticism about Maliki's legitimacy. The Iraqi security forces fled their posts, leaving their arms and uniforms behind in the areas that ISIS attacked. This situation worsened the security gap and concerns in the country.

The people in the areas that ISIS captured flee to safer places. ISIS, unlike the Islamic State of Iraq that was active in Mosul, al-Anbar and Salahaddin back in 2006-2007, seeks to form a power base for itself, while controlling the territory. It seeks to garner popular support in Mosul by allowing the daily life to go on as usual. However, unlike 2006-2007, ISIS may not enjoy a strong support from the Sunnis. The most important reasons for that are its extreme measures and the number of foreigners in its cadres. There-



fore, it may not be possible for ISIS to carry on its activities for a long time. Realizing such dangers, ISIS seeks to include some local groups in order to avert it. Even though ISIS is active throughout many regions, it does not have the capacity to control all the cities by itself. For this reason, ISIS seeks cooperation and power-sharing with the former Baathists, Naqshbandis, other Sunni resistance groups and the tribes opposing Maliki, in the areas that it controls.

2.3. ISIS Activity and the Sectarian Conflict

increasing scope of operations has reached an extent that it threatens Baghdad. After it has taken Mosul under control, ISIS expanded towards the south of Kirkuk. On the condition that ISIS secures the north-south link through Tikrit, it will be easier to head towards Iraq. In this context, it is safe to assume that the security forces fled their posts in the north in order to reinforce and consolidate Baghdad and its surroundings.

All these developments bring about the danger of the sectarian conflict in Iraq. The Shiite tribes began to join together in order to resist

ISIS. Muqtada al Sadr has returned to Iraq and called its followers to protect the Shiite regions and sacred sites. Ammar al Hakim, the head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, who acted moderately for the last few years, sent messages to his followers by posing for the media with military uniform and guns. Prime Minister Maliki called the Iraqi people to resistance against ISIS and declared that those who will stand with the government will receive arms and ammunition. Ayatollah Ali Sistani, the highest ranking Shiite marja in Iraq, called everyone to support the army against the terrorist. This was a turning point in Maliki's war against ISIS. On the one hand, it is remarkable that it is the first time since 2003 Sistani made such a call. On the other hand, it is possible to consider Sistani's call as a support for Maliki. This is a comfortable and advantageous outcome for Maliki. However, the possibility for a showdown between the Shiites and Sunnis are very high. As the Shiite people and militias oppose ISIS's move towards Baghdad, the Shiite and Sunni people may directly clash. If the problem moves down the popular level, Iraq will be dragged towards an unavoidable crisis.

ISIS's *de facto* rule in Iraq will trigger ethnic

conflicts as well as sectarian ones. Thus, the KRG, benefiting from the current situation, deploys the Pashmarga to the territories it seeks to dominate in Mosul, Kirkuk, Salahaddin and Diala. Therefore, it will seek to enlarge its territorial dominance and limit the power of Baghdad, against which it has a conflict over oil incomes. At this point, there is a perception of “common enemy”, shared by ISIS and the KRG that both sides benefit from the situation at hand. Both the KRG and ISIS seek to expand their territories and spheres of influence at the expense of the Iraqi central government, and establish dominance in the contested areas. ISIS direct-

ly targets the Iraqi central government. After ISIS captured some sections of Mosul, Tikrit, Kirkuk and Diala, the Iraqi security forces fled their posts and the Kurdish pashmarga captured some city centers and check points. Therefore, ISIS operations benefited the KRG at the expense of the Iraqi central government. The KRG was able to control the territories that it coveted so far. It is also peculiar that the KRG and ISIS did not fight during ISIS's advance. However, if their spheres of influence collide somewhere, it is strongly possible that they fight against each other.

III. THE FUTURE OF IRAQ AND SCENARIOS

The Iraqi politics has had a complex character both before and after the elections. Each and every ethnic and sectarian group has internal problems within their internal structures. Therefore, there are political cleavages among different groups. After ISIS's Mosul operation, the future of Iraq is a hotly-debated, urgent concern. As of the writing of this report, the scenarios below are likely to emerge due to internal political upheaval and instability:

- As mentioned, the negative conditions in Iraq prevailing before the elections, and the people's unwillingness to participate in politics and administration had had a negative effect on the elections. The political parties and groups had a hard time promoting wide participation in the elections in their election propaganda, since the people's expectations about the politics were low, because of the political upheaval and violence. In this respect, it was also impossible to conduct the elections in a healthy and just environment. It will be very hard for the victor of the elections to overcome the problems of the past and enjoy progress, since the elections lacked popular participation, proper election procedures, and a safe and secure environment for voting process.
- Because of the developments before the elections, sectarianism and nationalism dominated the election process. The voters prioritized their sectarian and national identities. This is the most important factor that affects the government formation process. While the Sunnis and the Kurds were expected to act according to the Shiites' candidates for prime ministerial position, the advance of ISIS in Mosul and beyond completely shook the balance. This situation may deepen ethnic and religious differences in Iraq as well as the sectarian conflict. Therefore, the scenarios for the partitioning of Iraq will come to the fore. From this point on, it is expected that the armed confrontation in Iraq will grow day by day. The unstable and violent environment will determine the path that Iraq takes, towards whether unity or partitioning.
- The calls for "change" during the elections process was a common slogan for the political parties in Iraq. However, the perception about "change" is different according to each group. While the Sunnis seek to change the central government structure and Prime Minister, the Kurds aim the rise of the KRG's status, and the Shiites look for change in the power sharing and distribution of power. Therefore, the difference in the perception of change does trigger the dynamics for confrontation. There are expectations that the state mechanism and administration in Iraq will undergo a change and transformation from its current state.
- The security problems in the Sunni-populated regions before the elections reduced the voter turnout and caused overall inability in the Sunni areas to uphold the elections. Therefore, the Sunnis feel that the government cannot and even deliberately does not protect them and provide security. ISIS

benefited from the restlessness of the Sunnis and received popular support to some extent.

- It is obvious that ISIS did not appear out of nowhere. The Iraqi central government contributed to an unstable environment, which emerged through the central government's oppression and mistakes in its struggle against ISIS in the Sunni-populated areas, the other countries' involvement and the civil war in Syria. Therefore, ISIS was able to gain ground in Iraq once again. ISIS's move towards the Shiite regions will trigger sectarian confrontation. It is possible that the Shiites will consider it a popular resistance against ISIS, since even Ayatollah Sistani has called the Shiites for resistance. Therefore, the sectarian conflict will spread and take root among the people. This situation may take Iraq towards an uncertain future, where irrevocable paths might be taken.
- The critical point here is whether Maliki will be able to gather his strength and disrupt the power of ISIS, before it can reinforce its control in the areas that it captured. In the current state of affairs, Arbil and Baghdad may cooperate and make a joint move against ISIS, since the KRG openly declares that it may assist the central government against ISIS. Another important issue in this scenario is whether such cooperation will have sufficient power to eliminate ISIS. The Arbil-Baghdad alliance will depend on the support it may garner among the Sunnis. The KRG and the Iraqi central government are likely to cooperate since it is possible that ISIS is able to sustain its activities in the long term. Maliki is likely to launch a wave of operations against ISIS when he gathers its strength and garners adequate support. The USA and Iran maintain their support for Maliki. The Shiites do not want to lose the power that they had acquired after Saddam Hussein's fall. Therefore, it is expected that the Shiites will seek to preserve their power. In the worst case, the Shiites will have to form a federative polity in the Shiite-populated areas. As it can be remembered, the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq had projects about a federal region in the south of Iraq back in 2004-2006.
- There is a strong probability of a clash erupting between ISIS and the KRG, even though they did not move against each other and fought yet. They may confront each other especially in places such as the Rabia Border Gate in the north of Iraq. If their objectives collide, the dynamic of confrontation will emerge. ISIS's advance in the contested areas, where the Pashmarga has already been deployed, is increasing the chances for armed confrontation.
- On the condition that Maliki will restore his control, there are three alternatives for the government in Iraq. The first is the establishment of the national unity government once again. There are many diverse ethnic and sectarian groups in Iraq. However, the national unity governments formed after 2005 and 2010 elections did not produce any results. The groups, which are not content about their positions within the national unity government, opt for an intra-government opposition role and hinder the government's activities and cause instability. Nevertheless, it is a paradox that all political groups seek to take part in the government. That is because, the governments after 2003 have strengthened the political parties a great deal. Therefore, all political groups seek to take advantage of the government power, and at least to prevent their rivals' advantages. A second alternative is the majority government. A party has to gather one more seat over the half of the total count (165) in order to form the government. However, it might not be enough to maintain the majority government. The political parties in Iraq frequently shift their alliances and approaches, as it is seen in the former two governments. Therefore, a party has to guarantee at least 185 or 190 votes in the parliament in order to secure its government. In this case, even if some political

groups shift their alliances, the government will be better preserved. The political majority government requires not only ethnic and sectarian majority, but also a political majority. A third alternative is national equality government. This alternative do not bring about the prominence of a political party, rather it promotes equal sharing of power for all the political groups forming the government. Such a government will have problems about the distribution of ministries. A last alternative is a new form of government after a Baath-style coup that is discussed in the wake of ISIS operations in Iraq. Even though it is a distinct probability that ISIS captures Baghdad, this scenario deserves attention. If ISIS captures Baghdad, the Shiites will seek to protect their own regions and the partitioning of Iraq will be hastened. However, it is more realistic to assume that the Shiites, who do not want to lose their control over Baghdad, will go on fighting.

- There is a hot debate going on in Iraq about the government formation activities and possible third term for Prime Ministry of Nouri al Maliki, who won the elections. As of the current situation, the majority of political groups, including many Shiites, reject the third term of Maliki's prime ministry. At this stage, Maliki's and his group's attitude is going to determine the new government. Even though the Shiites support Ma-

liki against ISIS, the developments weaken and put pressure on Maliki about his third term. If Maliki convinces the Sunnis and gains success against ISIS in a short time, he might have chance for his third term. ISIS's advances in the short term will force Maliki to step down. In this situation, Maliki, in order to nullify criticism, may not oppose a prime ministerial candidate, over whom he might have influence. However, it seems that Maliki seeks to transform the Shiites' support against ISIS into an advantage for his third term of Prime Minister's office. At this point, the USA and Iran's attitudes are important.

- A radical change in Iraq will not only affect Iraq but impact the regional countries, especially the neighboring countries as well. Radical groups, gaining power through sponsors, constitute a grave threat not only for Iraq but also for the neighboring countries such as Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, the Gulf states and even Turkey and Iran.
- Such a threat might bring about a cooperation agenda for the regional states, thus they might be opting for determining common threats and common interests. Radical groups like ISIS threaten all the regional states. Therefore, the stability in Iraq remains in the interest of all the countries.